

# **DIGNITY'S REVOLT**

*Threat, Identity, and Immigrant Mass Mobilization*

**A Dissertation**

**Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
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**by**

**John Christopher Zepeda**

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## ABSTRACT

DIGNITY'S REVOLT: Threat, Identity, and Immigrant Mass Mobilization

John Christopher Zepeda, Ph.D.

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This dissertation analyzes the unprecedented, nationwide immigrant rights protest wave of 2006 and its effects on the national electorate and policymaking process. Specifically, the study focuses on three research questions: *1) What explains the surprising rise and abrupt decline of the demonstrations across the country?; 2) How were the marches organized, and what explains variation in the levels of mobilization in both expected and unexpected locations?; and 3) What, if any, effects did the wave of protests produce?* To answer these questions, I use various data sources (e.g., more than 120 in-depth interviews, participant observation, newspaper archives, public opinion research, Census data, and data from the Department of Homeland Security) and perform multiple case studies. My findings indicate that a legislative threat to undocumented immigrants, and those who assisted them, helped create the opportunity for immigrant mass mobilization. This threat – along with the subsequent xenophobic rhetoric and discrimination against both immigrants and U.S.-born people of color from immigrant descent – helped create a collective identity and motivation to take action among supporters of immigrant rights. My results show that, through the utilization of local community resources and networks, immigrants formed broad coalitions to organize the demonstrations and diffused their calls for protest through ethnic media outlets. I find that levels of mobilization varied by the degree to which different immigrant ethnic groups felt threatened. Once the legislative attack had subsided, the movement shifted its focus to more institutional forms of politics. For the policymaking process,

the immediate effects of the protest wave were that it helped prevent an anti-immigrant bill from passing in the Senate, while at the same time hurt activists' attempts to win legalization for undocumented immigrants. In terms of their indirect and long-term impacts, the demonstrations helped provide the momentum and laid the foundation for an unprecedented national campaign to naturalize, register, and mobilize millions of immigrants to vote, an impact that influenced the outcome of the historic presidential election of 2008.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Chris Zepeda-Millán was born in the East Los Angeles *barrio* of Boyle Heights where he was raised by his mother and grandmother. He attended Salesian High School and took courses at East Los Angeles College and Pasadena City College before transferring to Loyola Marymount University where he double majored in Chicana/o Studies and Political Science. Chris is a Chicano scholar-activist, a first generation college graduate, and is the first Mexican-American to earn a Ph.D. from the Department of Government at Cornell University. His maternal grandparents were garment workers in the sweatshops of Downtown Los Angeles and his father and paternal grandparents were bi-national migrant farm workers throughout the Western and Southwestern United States and Central Mexico. Chris has been active in various local, national, and transnational social movements including: the struggle to establish local autonomous community spaces in Los Angeles, the fight to save the South Central Farm, immigrant rights, affirmative action, worker rights, global justice, anti-School of the Americas, transnational migrant rights, and the Zapatista Movement for National Liberation.

## DEDICATION

For my mom, Debbie Millán, y *para mi abuelita*, Julia Millán. Your love, hard work, and constant caring and concern for our family and others throughout my life have served as examples that helped shape me, my thinking, and this dissertation. *Su amor, trabajo, y su constante preocupación por nuestra familia y otros han servido como ejemplos que influyeron en mi formación, mis pensamientos, y esta tesis. Las amo con todo mi corazón.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The first time I met the renowned Chicano Historian, Rudy Acuña, I had him sign my copy of his classic text book, *Occupied America*. In his dedication he wrote, “*Una mano no se lava sola.*” Much as with washing one’s hands, writing a dissertation is in many respects a collective—and often not so clean—effort. For the past six years, several people have supported me throughout this endeavor. While each of them deserves (at least!) their own personal dedication page, due to space constraints I am limited to only a brief reference to their individual or family names to express my gratitude. First and foremost are the members of both sides my family. Throughout my time in Ithaca, we’ve been through tragedies—from illnesses to deaths—and triumphs—such as the births of many new members of our *familias*—which have only served to make us stronger and bring us closer together. Without your love and *apoyo*, I would never have survived my sometimes intellectually, and all too often physically, cold experiences at Cornell. Our families have journeyed from rural and urban Mexico to the agricultural fields of the U.S. Southwest and the garment factories of downtown Los Angeles to the halls of the Ivy League. This dissertation and this Ph.D. are as much the fruit of your labor as they are of mine. Thus, in no particular order, *les quiero dar las gracias a las familias*: Zepeda, Millán, Salinas, López, Chávez, Chidiac, Hernández, Gallo, Morales, Torres, Hamelius, Landeros, and Becerra (I hope I didn’t forget anyone!). I want to give a special “shout-out” to my *prima* Lucy (a radical Chicana poet, writer, and mother) and *primo* Mario (a revolutionary labor organizer). Without the two of you, I never would have discovered the worlds of Chian@ Studies and Zapatismo. Lastly, I want to thank my father who showed me the value of hard work and who pushed me to think more critically about politics by always being more than willing to argue with me over my political beliefs ;). I love you all.

Friends were also integral to the successful completion of this long process, and there are several on the “*Leva-List*” worth noting. Carlos, Paco, Veek, Charlie, Alex, and Mike—you “fooz” are like brothers to me, and the laughs and crazy stories we’ve shared over the years have helped keep me grounded (sometimes literally rolling on the floor busting up!). Other *levas* also played important roles in helping me prepare for and get through graduate school. Through our organizing and (often times literally) endless debates and discussions—from the streets of Los Angeles to the jungles of Chiapas—friends from MEChA, the Eastside Café, *Estación Libre*, *Casa del Pueblo*, and the Autonomous People’s Collective all influenced my thinking and political development (even if the text of this dissertation might not always show it!). Roberto, Miguel, Olmeca, Aura, Pasky, Jessica, Mixpe, Steven Patrick, Fernando, Cati, Oriel, Hildawg, Eddie, Pablo, Sirena, and James, the political and cultural spaces and networks we helped create during the early-2000s were not only historic and inspiring to be a part of, but also proved to be vital for my fieldwork and to the research presented in this dissertation. I’m glad to be home to help continue our struggle to create “a world where many worlds can fit.”

Other friends whom I have come to know and respect through taking part in immigrant rights activism, and who deserve mentioning, include: Xiomara Corpeño, Angelica Salas, Nativo Lopez, Arnoldo Garcia, Cathy Tactaquin, Colin Rajah, and Laura Rivas. Being able to actually know, hang out with, and interview my heroes (the people who organize for immigrant rights on a daily basis), oftentimes made writing this dissertation exciting, while at other times made it all the more difficult. I hope you all can understand the constraints of academic standards, dissertation committees, and limiting my claims to the evidence I was able to gather in a relatively short period of time. I hope you are not too disappointed with the results of this study,

and I promise that while *este libro es para “ellos,”* the ones that follow will be for *el movimiento*.

Cris “Pops” Rosales, Mr. J, Mr. Rodriguez, and Father Jim—although I was never a great student and somehow graduated from high school without being able to really read, write, or spell well, I thank you and the rest of the Salesian family for your faith in me. As an undergraduate at LMU, Deena Gonzalez, Fernando Guerra, Graciela Limon, Juan Mah y Busch, Michael Genovese, Matt Streb, Jodi Finkel, and especially my “big sister” Denise Sandoval were all influential in encouraging me to apply to graduate school—thanks! During my graduate studies, a number of other people also helped me develop confidence in my work, gave me feedback on it, or assisted me with my research in some other manner: Alfonso Gonzales, Hector Perla, Paula McClain, Cristina Hilo, Mrs. Cambron, Laura Hernandez, Tehema Lopez, Gladys Negrete, Ron Hayduk, Ruth Milkman, Caitlin Patler, Alan Gomez, Haven Perez, David Abalos, Chris Lebron, Vessla Weaver, Ricardo Ramirez, Matt Barreto, Silvia Monzano, Cristina Beltran, Lisa Garcia-Bedolla, Adrian Felix, Denise Gonzales, Ramon Grosfoguel, Lowell Turner, Jesse Lichtenstein, Pete Hildebrand, and Perla De Anda—your help and support along the way are greatly appreciated. My research and writing would not have been possible without generous funding from the Ford Foundation, LMU’s Department of Political Science and Bellermino College of Liberal Arts, and Cornell University’s Latino Studies Program, American Studies Program, and Graduate School (especially Terry Plater!).

The members of my dissertation committee merit special recognition for *their* accomplishment of putting up with me—and my book-length chapters—for the last few years! Sarah Soule, I wish that your time at Cornell had been longer, but I learned a great deal from you and appreciate all of your thoughtful, rigorous, and quick (!) feedback. Maria Cristina Garcia, I

thank you and am grateful for your willingness to engage with literatures that were often foreign to your work, even when your health wasn't the best. Sid Tarrow, it was truly an honor to be trained by one of the godfathers of social movement research. You're like a human social movement encyclopedia, you were always extremely generous with your time, and you have always been more than willing to give me "tough love." At the end of my first year, you told me that I was "still too much of an activist" and "not much of a social scientist yet." I hope the over 300 pages of original research presented in this dissertation demonstrate that you don't have to give up being the former to become the latter. Finally, to my dissertation chair, Michael Jones-Correa: I bet you didn't know what you were getting yourself into when you recruited an "angry Chicano from East L.A.," did you?! When I think back to all the silly questions I asked, crazy ideas I ran by you, and all the times I forced you to meet with me, I can't help but be in awe of your patience and commitment to your students. You're truly the nicest person in political science, an academic father and mentor to me, and the best immigration politics scholar in the country that any graduate student could ever dream of working with. Thank you for your constant support and for never making me choose between my family, politics, and scholarship.

Getting through several long and lonely Ithaca winters would not have been possible without an amazing group of friends that entered my life at various stages of my tenure at Cornell. Suyapa, Innael, Maymengua, and Carly, you were my family away from home during my first year of graduate school and I love you all for it! Others, such as Sophia, Davina, and Tariq, I thank for helping recruit and/or welcoming me into the Government Department—although, I am still not sure whether I should be grateful or not for that! ;). Deondra, Phil, Desmond, Igor, Pablo, Don, Julie, Ben, Janice (and Charlie), Jaimie, Idrissa, Zumana, Jen,

Simon Diamond Phillips, Jon, Claire, and the kids, you all saw me through finishing and made my last few years at Cornell fun and memorable. I look forward to our careers together!

Others unfortunately crossed over before I was able to come home. From my childhood friend Ricky, who was shot and killed by gang members the week before I started graduate school, to my spiritual/political mentor Fernando Moreno, who passed away from kidney failure, to my uncle Jeremy, who died during a workplace accident due to corporate greed—in different ways, at different stages of my graduate career, each of your passings helped put things into perspective for me and reminded me to never forget where I came from, my faith, or my family.

This dissertation is also dedicated to a high school teacher who told me that I would never go to (let alone graduate from) college; an undergraduate professor who told me that I “probably wouldn’t get into grad school” (and when I was accepted into several top programs, said that it was “only because I was a minority”); to a study I saw a famous education professor present during my freshman year in college that showed that the chances of a Chicano from East L.A. getting a Ph.D. were *less than* one percent; and to the famous former-Cornell professor who (on my recruitment visit) after a series of ignorant and racist questions about my identity and intellectual ability, asked, “I could tell by your accent that you obviously haven’t quite mastered the English language yet. What part of Mexico is your accent from?” To which I calmly replied, “The northern part—East L.A.” Your lack of faith in kids like me in *barrios* across America has made this accomplishment all the more rewarding. Thank you for the motivation!

Lastly, a note on the “stolen” title of my manuscript. Dignity is an important word for the peoples of this continent, especially for those of us whose families—despite never having set foot off of it—have somehow come to have Spanish last names and skin sometimes more than a

“lighter shade of brown.” For the over 500 years that people of the Americas have found ways to resist oppression, our acts have always been driven by one key ingredient—dignity. Not surprisingly, throughout the immigrant-worker activism literature, scholars have continuously found that immigrants seldom choose to join unions because of “bread and butter” issues like higher wages or health benefits. The main reason they decide to risk losing their jobs and being deported is because they eventually grow tired of feeling invisible and being treated worse than animals by their employers. In short, they chose to organize not for dollars, but for dignity.

In my personal interactions with indigenous peoples in Chiapas, Mexico, they too consistently gave the same reasons and used the same word—“dignity”—when describing their motivation for risking their lives during their historic 1994 uprising. This phenomenon was best captured in John Holloway’s book, *Zapatista!: Reinventing Revolution in Mexico* (1998), especially in his chapter titled, “Dignity’s Revolt” (the chapter whose title was borrowed for this dissertation). In a similar fashion, throughout my more than one hundred interviews across the country with immigrants and immigrant rights activists from Muslim, Christian, South and East Asian, Latin American, African, European, and Caribbean backgrounds, over and over again the word “dignity” was mentioned as a primary motivation for choosing to participate in the unprecedented mass marches that took place in the spring of 2006. They were tired of being blamed for the country’s economic, social, and political woes, and were no longer willing to remain “in the shadows,” while racist lawmakers sought to further demonize and criminalize them. In the following chapters, I attempt to explain the dynamics of why the nation’s immigrants “revolted” in order to fight for their dignity, and how in the process of doing so, they produced not only the largest coordinated series of demonstrations in U.S. history, but also the biggest protests by foreign-born people in world history. Any credit or praise given to this

manuscript should be attributed to these individuals; all the errors and limitations of the dissertation are mine alone.

Chris Zepeda-Millán  
Boyle Heights, East Los *Aztlan*  
*C/S*

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Dignity's Revolt!:  
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### Bibliography

## LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS

***Acción Comunitaria La Aurora (La Aurora)*** – *La Aurora* is a Dominican immigrant, grassroots, community group based in the northern Manhattan neighborhood of Washington Heights.

**Agriculture Coalition for Immigration Reform (ACIR)** – ACIR is a Washington, D.C.-based national coalition that lobbies for immigration reform that favors the interests of U.S. agribusiness.

***Alianza Dominicana (Alianza)*** – *Alianza* is a New York City-based Dominican community development agency. The organization describes itself as “the leading authority on Dominican-Americans.”

**American Federation of Labor - Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)** – The AFL-CIO is the United States’ labor movement. It describes itself as a “voluntary federation of 55 national and international labor unions.”

**Asian Americans for Equality (AAE)** – AAE is a New York City-based nonprofit civil rights and social service organization that works on issues ranging from affordable housing and economic development to immigration and environmental health.

***Asociación Tepeyac (Tepeyac)*** – *Tepeyac* is a New York City-based nonprofit organization that focuses on community and immigrant rights issues related to Latino immigrants, primarily undocumented Mexican immigrants.

**Association of Senegalese in American (ASA)** – ASA is a nonprofit organization based in New York City whose mission is to “contribute to the economic, political, and socio-cultural life of the Senegalese community residing in the United States.”

**Audre Lorde Project (ALP)** – ALP “is a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two Spirit, Trans and Gender Non-Conforming People of Color community organizing center, focusing on the New York City area.”

***Bagong Alyansang Makabayan - United States of America (BAYAN-USA)*** – BAYAN-USA is “an alliance of progressive Filipino groups in the U.S. representing organizations of students, scholars, women, workers, and you.” The New York City affiliate interviewed was the Filipino Forum (described below).

**Center for Community Change (CCC)** – CCC is based in Washington, D.C. and works with hundreds of community organizations across the country. Its mission is “to build the power and capacity of low-income people, especially low-income people of color, to change their communities and public policies for the better.”

**Central American Resource Center - Los Angeles (CARECEN)** – CARECEN is an L.A.-based community organization. Its mission is “to empower Central Americans by defending human and civil rights, working for social and economic justice, and promoting cultural diversity.”

**Centro Hispano Cuzcatlan (CHC)** – The mission of CHC “is to bring local ideas and leadership, backed by powerful community organizing, to address issues that affect the quality of life of the Central American and Hispanic community in NYC.” The organization is based in Jamaica, Queens, New York City.

**Chinese Progressive Association (CPA)** – The CPA is a nonprofit community-based organization in New York City. It works on a wide range of issues, from immigration to housing, related to the city’s Chinese community

**Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice - Los Angeles (CLUE-LA)** – CLUE-LA “is one of the oldest interfaith worker justice organizations in the country. CLUE-LA's mission is to bring together clergy and lay leaders of all faiths to join low-wage workers in their struggles for justice.”

**Coalición de Ligas Hispanas del estado de la Florida (Florida State Coalition of Hispanic Leagues)** – The Florida State Coalition of Hispanic Leagues is a statewide coalition of Latino, primarily Mexican, immigrant soccer leagues. It claims to have over 10,000 players.

**Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform (CCIR)** – CCIR was a Washington, D.C.-based umbrella organization for several national immigration, civil rights, labor, and community organizations. During the 2006 and 2007 immigration debates, it was the lead lobby group for the mainstream faction of the immigrant rights movement.

**Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA)** – CHIRLA’s goal is to “advance the human and civil rights of immigrants and refugees in Los Angeles...and through coalition-building, advocacy, community education and organizing, empower immigrants and their allies to build a more just society.”

**Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence (CAA AV)** – CAA AV “works to build grassroots community power across diverse poor and working class Asian immigrant and refugee communities in New York City.”

**Concilio Mexicano de la Florida (CMF)** – The CMF was a coalition of primarily Mexican small businesses. During the 2006 protest wave, leaders of a statewide immigrant soccer league coalition were also part of the CMF.

**Consejo de Federaciones Mexicanas en Norteamérica (COFEM)** – COFEM is a Los Angeles-based “non-profit organization aimed at creating opportunities for Latino Immigrants in North

America, with a special focus in California.” The organization’s membership is primarily composed of Mexican hometown associations throughout the state of California.

***Damayan Migrant Workers Association (Damayan)*** – *Damayan* is an “independent non-profit grassroots organization based in New York and New Jersey that upholds and promotes the rights and welfare of Filipino migrant workers,” particularly Filipina domestic workers.

***Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM)*** – DRUM “is a multigenerational, membership led organization of working class South Asian immigrants in New York City.”

***Essential Worker Immigration Coalition (EWIC)*** – EWIC “is a coalition of businesses, trade associations, and other organizations from across the industry spectrum concerned with the shortage of both lesser skilled and unskilled (“essential worker”) labor.”

***Fair Immigration Reform Movement (FIRM)*** – A project of the Center for Community Change, FIRM “is a national coalition of grassroots organizations fighting for immigrant rights at the local, state and federal level.”

***Families for Freedom (FFF)*** – Families for Freedom “is a New York-based multi-ethnic defense network by and for immigrants facing and fighting deportation.”

***Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR)*** – FAIR is “a national, nonprofit, public-interest, membership organization of concerned citizens who share a common belief that our nation's immigration policies must be reformed to serve the national interest.” It is the leading immigration restrictionist organization in the United States.

***Fifth Avenue Committee (FAC)*** – FAC “is a community organization in South Brooklyn [New York] that advances economic and social justice by building vibrant, diverse communities where residents have genuine opportunities to achieve their goals, as well as the power to shape the community’s future.”

***Guyanese-American Worker’s United (GAWU)*** – GAWU is a New York City-based grassroots community organization composed of Guyanese Americans and Guyanese immigrants. It works on various social justice issues ranging from war to labor rights.

***Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees (HWHR)*** – HWHR is a Haitian-American and Haitian immigrant grassroots community organization in New York city that works on issues from education and social services to community organizing and democracy in Haiti.

***Hermandad Mexicana-Latino Americana*** – Led by legendary activists Bert Corona until his death in 2001, *Hermandad Mexicana* was perhaps the nation’s first undocumented immigrant rights organization. The group split into several factions after Corona’s death. The *Latino Americana* faction of *Hermandad* is led by Nativo Lopez.

***Hermandad Mexicana Transnacional*** – This faction of *Hermandad Mexicana* is led by Gloria Saucedo.

**Immigrant Communities in Action (ICA)**- ICA is a Queens, New York-based coalition “made up of over 20 organizations of immigrants affected by this issue and non-immigrants concerned with the rights of immigrants.”

***Inmigrantes Latinos Unidos de la Florida (ILUF)*** – ILUF was a small collective of primarily Mexican immigrants in Southwest Florida who first came together in 2005 to fight for state driver’s licenses for undocumented immigrants.

**International Action Center (IAC)** – IAC is an activist organization with several chapters throughout the country. The group “is committed to the building broad-based grassroots coalitions to oppose to U.S. wars abroad while fighting against racism and economic exploitation of workers here at home.”

**International Socialist Organization (ISO)** – With branches across the country, including Los Angeles, the ISO is “committed to building a left alternative to a world of war, racism and poverty.”

***La Placita Working Group*** – The *Placita* Working Group was a small and informal collective of local immigrant rights activists who originally came together in response to the killing of an immigrant by U.S. border patrol agents. In reaction to H.R. 4437, the group grew significantly in size and became the alliance known as the “March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition,” which organized the massive March 25, 2006 protest in Downtown Los Angeles.

**Latino Movement USA** – Latino Movement USA is a national Latino pan-ethnic coalition of different types of organizations that advocate for immigrant rights and comprehensive immigration reform.

**Los Angeles County Federation of Labor (LA County Fed)** – The LA County Fed “is the chartered Central Labor Council (CLC) of the AFL-CIO in Los Angeles County and is the second largest in the country.”

**Make the Road New York (Make the Road)** – Make the Road is the “largest participatory immigrant organization in New York City.” It “builds the power of working class and Latino communities to achieve dignity and justice through organizing, policy innovation, transformative education, and survival services.”

**March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition (M25)** – The March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition was a large alliance in Los Angeles composed of a variety of organizations ranging from labor unions to immigrant rights groups. After organizing a massive protest on March 25, 2006 in Downtown L.A., the coalition split in two, with the radical flank of the group keeping the March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition name. The alliance was

instrumental in initiating and promoting the national May 1, 2006 “Great American Boycott/Day Without An Immigrant.”

**Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF)** – MALDEF “is the nation's leading Latino legal civil rights organization.”

**Mothers on the Move (MOM)** – Mother’s on the Move is a primarily Puerto Rican and African American-based “social justice community organization” located in the Bronx, New York. The group works on issues such as environmental justice, tenants rights, youth, and education.

**Movement for Justice in the Barrio (MJB)** – Is a grassroots immigrant community group in East Harlem, New York. The organization’s focus is on local gentrification issues, but it also works transnationally with the Zapatista Army for National Liberation (EZLN) based in Chiapas, Mexico.

**National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO)** – NALEO is the official association for local, statewide, and national Latina/o elected officials.

**National Council of La Raza (NCLR)** – NCLR is “the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States.” The Washington, D.C.-based group “works to improve opportunities for Hispanic Americans.”

**National Immigration Forum (NIF)** – Based in Washington, D.C., NIF “is the leading immigrant advocacy organization in the country with a mission to advocate for the value of immigrants and immigration to the nation.”

**National Korean American Service and Education Consortium (NAKASEC)** – NAKASEC is a national Korean American organization based in Los Angeles and Washington, D.C. It was established with “the purpose of projecting a national progressive voice on major civil rights and immigrant rights issues and promoting the full participation of Korean Americans with the greater goal of building a national movement for social change.”

**National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR)** – NNIRR is a national organization based in Oakland, CA and is “composed of local coalitions and immigrant, refugee, community, religious, civil rights and labor organizations and activists. It serves as a forum to share information and analysis, to educate communities and the general public, and to develop and coordinate plans of action on important immigrant and refugee issues.”

**New York Civic Participation Project (NYCPP)** – NYCPP “organizes with rank-and-file union and community members in different neighborhoods throughout the City.” The organization works with their “labor partners and community allies to support campaigns for immigrant and worker justice in New York City and beyond.”

**New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC)** – NYIC is a statewide immigrant rights coalition that helps “foster immigrant community leadership and civic engagement, and puts immigrants at the table in the major public policy debates of the day.”

**New York May 1<sup>st</sup> Coalition (May 1<sup>st</sup> Coalition)** – The May 1<sup>st</sup> Coalition is an alliance of several progressive local New York City political organizations. The coalition was formed in response to disagreements with the mainstream faction of the city’s immigrant rights movement over whether or not to support the call for a national boycott of the U.S. economy on May 1, 2006.

**Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights (NMCIR)** – NMCIR is “a non-profit organization, founded in 1982 to educate, defend and protect the rights of immigrants.”

**Pakistan USA Freedom Forum (PFF)** – The PFF is an New York-based organization composed primarily of Pakistani immigrants who are “dedicated to the defense of the [c]onstitution based on human rights and immigrant rights.”

**People’s Global Action on Migration, Development, and Human Rights (PGA)** – The PGA is an annual event organized by progressive migrant rights organizations around the world. It is held parallel to the United Nation’s annual Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD).

**Philippine Forum** – Philippine Forum is a nonprofit grassroots community organization “offering direct services to the Filipino, and larger immigrant community” in New York.

**Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM)** – PICUM “is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that aims to promote respect for the human rights of undocumented migrants within Europe.”

**University of California Los Angeles’s Downtown Labor Center (Labor Center)** – Part of UCLA Center for Labor Research and Education, the Labor Center is “intended to not only build the bridge between the university and the Los Angeles labor community, but also to support collaborative projects between unions, worker centers, and the broader community.”

**UNITE-HERE** – UNITE-HERE is a labor union that was formed as a result of the merger of two unions, UNITE (the Union of Needletrades, Industrial, and Textile Employees) and HERE (the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union).

**United Farm Workers (UFW)** – Founded by Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, the UFW is labor union dedicated to organizing agricultural workers.

**United States Chamber of Commerce (USCC)** – The US Chamber of Commerce is a “business federation representing companies, business associations, state and local chambers in the U.S., and American Chambers of Commerce abroad.”

**United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)** – USCCB is an assembly of the hierarchy of the U.S. Catholic Church. The group’s purpose is to “promote the greater good which the Church offers humankind, especially through forms and programs of the apostolate fittingly adapted to the circumstances of time and place.”

**Service Employees International Union (SEIU)** – SEIU is the nation’s largest healthcare and property services union, and the second largest public services union.

**SEIU 32BJ** – SEIU’s Local 32BJ is labor union in New York City that organizes property service workers (e.g. janitors, security workers, doormen, etc.).

**SEIU 1199** – SEIU’s Local 1199 is a labor union in New York City that organizes healthcare workers.

**SEIU 1877** – SEIU Local 1877 is a labor union in Los Angeles that is most famous for its “Justice for Janitors” campaign.

**We Are America Alliance (WAAA)** – WAAA is a national coalition of immigrant rights organizations and labor unions. The alliance was formed during the 2006 protest wave and helped organize massive immigrant naturalization and voter registration drives leading up to the 2008 elections.

**We Are American Coalition (WAAC)** – WAAC was an alliance composed of labor unions, the Catholic Church, and local immigrant rights organizations in Los Angeles. It was the more moderate (compared to the March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition) faction of the local immigrant rights movement.

**Young Korean American Service and Education Center (YKASEC)** – YKASEC is a New York City organization created to “meet the needs and concerns of the Korean American community through...five program areas: Community Organizing and Advocacy, Social Services, Civic Participation, Youth, and Culture.”

Chapter 1

**Explaining the Dynamics of  
Immigrant Contention**

*Threat, Identity, and Immigrant Mass Mobilization*

## **The Anti-H.R. 4437 Protest Wave**

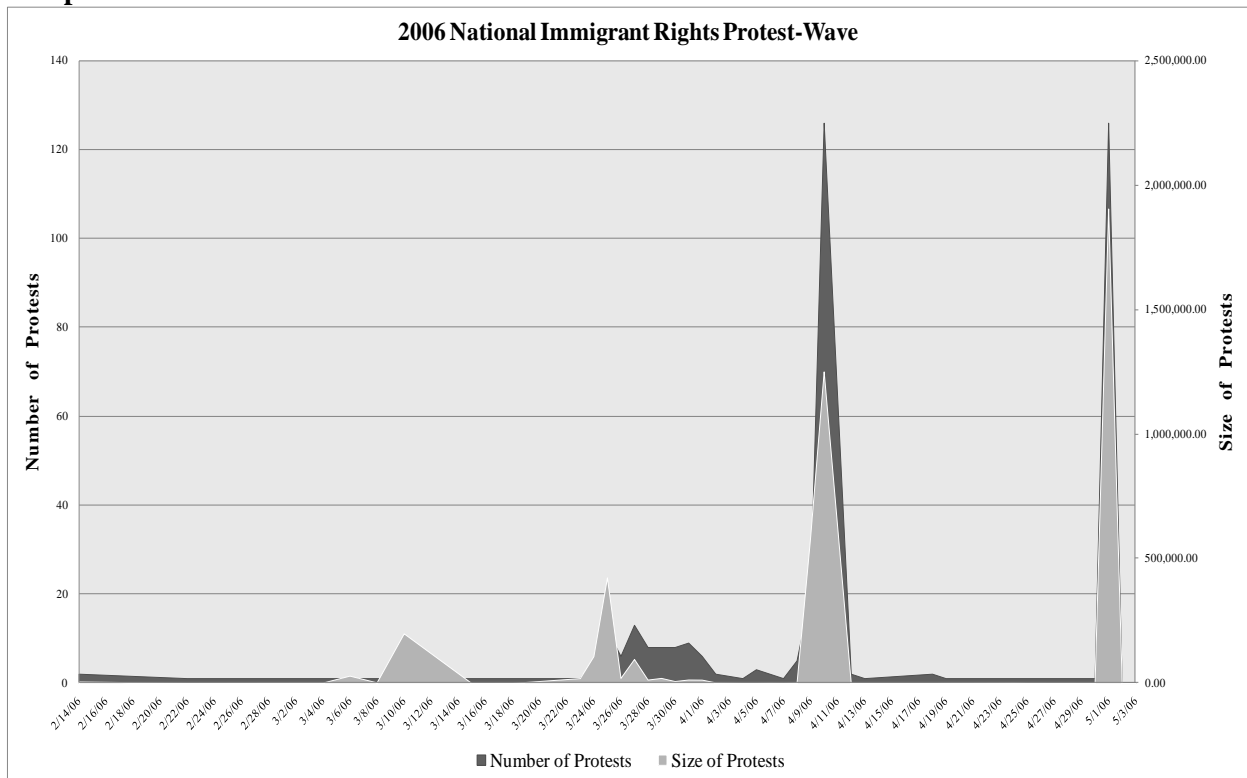
In the spring of 2006, the historic immigrant rights mobilizations that took place across the country captured the nation's attention with a series of mass demonstrations and an array of forms of dissent ranging from hunger strikes and caravans to boycotts and candlelit prayer vigils. Mothers and fathers, children and grandparents—both undocumented immigrants and U.S.-born citizens—took to the streets in hundreds of individual and collective acts of protest against *The Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005*, more commonly known as H.R. 4437, or simply the “Sensenbrenner Bill.” In addition to increasing border control and interior immigration enforcement measures, the proposed law sought to change the penalty for being undocumented from merely a civil violation to a federal felony. The bill also threatened anyone who assisted people without papers in the most basic ways by punishing them with monetary fines and incarceration, potentially criminalizing everyone from priests and teachers to employers and social service providers.

Attempting to capture the organic nature of the rallies, some media outlets claimed that “advocacy groups” were “scrambling to lead and channel the energy sparked spontaneously by the immigrants in marches across the country.” They dubbed the protests as “Day[s] Without Organizers” and wrote articles with titles such as, “Leading Ourselves—A Movement Without Leaders.” Noting the fact that the acts of defiance were not limited to adults, journalists reported that using “cell phones and e-mail, students and youths across the country organized marches and school walkouts to protest anti-immigrant proposals in Congress” (Jayadev et.al. 2006). Others gave the media itself the credit for the mobilizations with headlines reading, “How DJs Put 500,000 Marchers in Motion” and “Spanish Language DJ Spurs Downtown Rally” (Watanabe and Becerra 2006; Avila 2006). At least one article reported that it was actually a

“Strategy Session” held earlier that year by immigrant rights leaders from across the country that “fueled” the marches (Archibold 2006).

Those who asserted that “[e]veryone who participated” would remember the protests “for the rest of their lives” because they had the rare experience of witnessing the “Birth of a Movement” (Shore 2006) were correct in noting the unprecedented nature of the protest wave. The cycle of contention culminated with two of the largest episodes of collective action in U.S. history when up to five million people across the country took part in the April 10 “National Day of Action for Immigrant Justice” (NDAIJ) and May 1 “Great American Boycott / Day Without an Immigrant” (the May Day Boycott) (see *Graph 1*).

**Graph 1.**



Source: Authors 2006 Immigrant Protest Wave Database.

As will be demonstrated below, these events were even more extraordinary given that they seemed to contradict, challenge, and complicate many of the established findings in mainstream American political participation, race and ethnic politics, immigrant political incorporation, and social movement research. In the remainder of this chapter I review the scholarly literature within which this research project is situated and to which it contributes. I then elaborate on the primary puzzles it tackles, describe my methods of inquiry, and present my theory as to why and how these historic mass mobilizations occurred. My findings show that *the identities and individual agency of traditional and nontraditional immigrant activists; the utilization of preexisting community assets; the use of ethnic media outlets and organizational and personal networks to promote calls for action; and the formation of broad and diverse coalitions were all fundamental to the immigrant mass mobilization process.*

## **Literature Review**

### ***Mainstream Models of Participation: Resources, Civic Skills, and Selective Recruitment***

Investigating the dynamics of political participation and incorporation is vital to understanding how democracy in the United States functions (Putnam 2001). Two of the most established explanatory models of political participation that examine both electoral and non-electoral forms of political activity are those by Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) and Rosenstone and Hansen (2003). Verba and company (1995) address the question of who participates and find that the most politically engaged people are those with the most *resources* and *civic skills*. Their findings indicate that in addition to having higher levels of motivation, for the individuals that possess them, the “resources of time, money, and skills are powerful predictors of political participation” (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995, 285). Yet while Verba,

Schlozman, and Brady (1995) claim that it is a certain type of person (with the most resources and civic skills) who *goes to politics*, Rosenstone and Hansen (2003) assert that politics also *goes to people*. The latter authors contend that there are additional social reasons—besides solely the possession of resources and civic skills—that explain why citizens take part in political activities. They find that types of social networks (i.e. family, friends, workplace, civic organizations, etc) help create solidarity incentives and assist in minimizing the effects of “rational ignorance” because they help provide political information that people would otherwise lack. But while these social networks make political participation *possible*, they do not make it *probable* (Rosenstone and Hansen 2003, 23-24). Key to activating these networks is the process of *mobilization*.

Mobilization, as defined by Rosenstone and Hansen (2003), is “the process by which candidates, parties, activists, and groups induce [and recruit] other people to participate” (25). Mobilization increases political participation both *directly* and *indirectly*. For instance, *direct mobilization* includes such acts as calling and inviting people to meetings, providing spaces in which to congregate, making direct contact with people, asking them to sign petitions, etc. *Indirect mobilization* occurs when the efforts of direct mobilization activate the types of formal and informal social networks mentioned above. While these forms of recruitment are key to initiating participation, Rosenstone and Hansen (2003) find that it is “the wealthy, the educated, and the partisan” that “are more likely to be targeted for mobilization...” (32). As a result, their findings indicate that by political leaders focusing their mobilization efforts on those that are most likely to participate—which usually means white middle- and upper-class citizens—this *selective recruitment* “exacerbate[s] rather than reduce[s] the class biases of political participation in America” (33).

Moreover, when it comes to taking part in protest politics, ironically, although it is a form of political activity that is often considered a “weapon of the weak” because it is assumed to be available to those with few economic resources, Verba and his colleagues’ (1995) evidence suggests that the poor are actually also *less likely* to take part in non-electoral modes of participation, such as attending rallies and marches (191; see also Schussman and Soule 2005). Furthermore, while minorities in general tend to have low participation rates (Rosenstone and Hansen 2003, 77), Latinos in particular have been found to be less likely than both black and white Americans to learn the civic skills (in places such as their jobs, churches, and political and nonpolitical organizations) needed for engagement because of their low participation and membership rates (see Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995, Chapter 11). Given that the civically engaged and organized are more likely to be targeted for mobilization (Schussman and Soule 2005), it should come as no surprise that Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) also found that “as usual, Latinos are the least active group”—including when it comes to taking part in contentious forms of politics (234-235). Yet despite these findings, in the 2006 protest wave, not only did Latinos and other ethnic minority groups participate, but they did so at a shockingly unprecedented level. Hence, as informative as mainstream models of participation have been, looking at the literatures of immigrant, ethnic minority, and racial political participation may help us better understand this anomaly.

***Models of Immigrant and Racial/Ethnic Minority Political Participation:  
Context, Mobilization, and “Social Helpers”***

As mentioned above, racial and ethnic minority groups participate in U.S. politics at lower levels than whites. While survey research has shown that traditional influences such as socioeconomic status, “social connectedness,” and psychological factors (such as political

efficacy and trust) affect levels of minority civic engagement (Leighley 1999; Lien 1998; Jones-Correa and Leal 2001; McClain and Stewart 2006), most of this data comes from nationally “representative” samples that are “made up almost entirely of Anglos” (Leighley 2001, 166). In contrast to these individual-level analyses, theories of race and ethnic politics “tend to emphasize contextual characteristics such as candidate and group mobilization” (Leighley 2001, 5). For instance, scholars of Latino politics have found that Latinos *do* tend to participate more when mobilized, especially when asked by a co-ethnic or someone they know (Michelson 2005; Garcia 2003, 92; Leighley 2001, 170). Voter turnout among Latinos also increases with the size of their population (Barreto, Segura, and Woods 2004) because they become more likely to be targeted by elites as the Latino share of the electorate grows (Leighley 2001, 171). Furthermore, more recent studies have shown that “Latino registration and voting increases” in nativist and “anti-Latino” political contexts, suggesting a response to perceived political threats (Barreto and Woods 2005).

Students of immigrant politics argue that foreigners face unique obstacles to political participation and incorporation. Despite citizenship being a prerequisite to vote, mainstream participation models have not adequately explained the importance of naturalization to immigrant political incorporation. As a result, many scholars of immigrant politics have focused on naturalization as a key barrier to incorporation (DeSipio 1996; Jones-Correa 1998; Bloemraad 2006). For example, Jones-Correa (1998) notes that while their length of stay in the U.S. increases the likelihood of immigrants embarking on this process, both the “myth of return” to their homeland and neglect by local political elites and institutions (such as political parties) produce a “politics of in-between” that thwarts, or at least slows, efforts at naturalization (see also Wong 2006). Nonetheless, with the assistance of “social helpers” such as local community-

based organizations, unions, and churches, some studies have shown that even if mobilization is limited and small in scale, immigrants *can* be marshaled to naturalize (Bloemraad 2006) and take part in various forms of mainstream and unconventional politics (Wong 2006).

When disaggregating the Latino electorate by nativity, immigrants are still much less likely to participate than their U.S.-born counterparts. They not only “tend to have the age, education, and income characteristics of the electoral nonparticipants” (De la Garza and DeSipio 1997, 108), but they are also less civically engaged in the types of organizations shown to help facilitate participation and that are targeted by elites for mobilization (Garcia 2003, 98, 183). Regardless of these barriers, context and mobilization *can* increase levels of immigrant participation. For instance, in a study examining foreign-born voter turnout, Barreto (2005) found that “with extensive mobilization drives targeting naturalized voters,” Latino immigrants were actually “significantly *more likely* to vote than were...native-born Latinos” [emphasis added] (79).

In terms of context, Ramakrishnan and Espenshade (2001) added new variables to traditional quantitative models of voting behavior to test the qualitative findings of scholars such as Jones-Correa (1998). Their results showed that while many of the variables (such as those in resource models) for which scholars traditionally controlled *were* statistically significant, new ones—such as duration of time in the U.S., generation, presence of anti-immigrant legislation, etc.—also had varying effects for different immigrant groups. Over all, their expanded model showed that the presence of anti-immigrant legislation had a *positive effect* on participation among immigrants (870). Other studies support and add to these findings. For example, several scholars have found that immigrants who naturalize in a heightened political context (i.e. anti-immigrant) express higher levels of political information, are more likely to see race as a salient

issue, and participate at higher levels than cohorts that become citizens during relatively apolitical periods (Pantoja, Ramirez, and Segura 2001; Pantoja and Segura 2003). Thus, these results are significant because they suggest that despite lacking some of the traditional resources associated with participation and often not being targeted for mobilization, Latino immigrant political participation can increase in certain environmental contexts—such as when immigrants are faced with serious political *threats*.

While context and recruitment are vital to naturalization and voting, given this study's focus on large-scale immigrant collective action, reviewing what we know about Latino—both foreign and U.S.-born—involvement in contentious politics is of the utmost importance. According to Marquez and Jennings (2000), “[S]ocial movement organizations were often the only outlets for political representation and self-defense in a society where Latinos were outnumbered and barred from effective participation in the institutions of government.” They contend that “Latino organizations generated a leadership cadre and served as vehicles through which interests of class, gender, occupation, and ideology were mediated through the lens of race” (541). In spite of their rich history of activism (for examples see Torres and Katsiaficas 1999; Muñoz 1989; Milkman 2006), survey research has shown that Latinos are actually *less likely* to participate in contentious politics when compared to other racial and ethnic groups (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995, 234-235). In terms of Latino immigrants in particular, quantitative studies have shown that they are significantly *less likely* than U.S.-born Latinos to participate in non-electoral political activities (Leal 2002, 353), including protests (Martinez 2005).

Yet, in the face of this body of research, Latinos—especially Latino immigrants—made up the bulk of participants in the historic 2006 rallies. Consequently, as informative as

racial/ethnic minority and immigrant-focused studies have been in helping us understand the political integration of the foreign-born, they are theoretically limited in explaining the dynamics of the immigrant marches. These studies are insufficient because they: 1) either limit their investigations to voting and naturalization, and in effect neglect the undocumented and those with little, if any, chance of gaining citizenship (Ramkrishnan and Espenshade 2001; Jones-Correa 1998; Ramakrishnan 2005; Plotke 1999; Bloemraad 2006; DeSipio 1996); or 2) when they do focus on some aspect of contentious politics and do consider people without papers, they fail to adequately integrate the valuable insights of social movement theory into their analysis (see Wong 2006; Garcia-Bedolla 2005). But as the following review of research on contentious politics will demonstrate, the immigrant protest wave posed some interesting challenges to this literature as well.

### ***Social Movement Theory: Threat, Opportunity, and Collective Action***

Early explanations of contentious politics focused on initiating “strains and breakdowns” in society or among the discontented participants. Buechler (2000) explains that these theorists argued that “the structural origins of collective behavior involved social disorganization, strain, disorder, or disruption.” This early school of thought portrayed collective action as “fundamentally nonrational or irrational behavior that can assume dangerous and extreme forms” (30). In short, for the most part, in “strain and breakdown theories” social movements were seen as disruptive phenomena carried out by unreasonable and disgruntled people with potentially negative consequences to the general public. By the 1970s, though, a new generation of scholars, many of whom had actually participated in various social movements, entered academia and began to challenge the earlier negative portrayals of collective action (Beuchler 2004, 51).

According to the new perspective they developed, which came to be known as *resource mobilization theory* (RMT), social movements were “an extension of politics by other means” that could “be analyzed in terms of conflicts of interest just like other forms of political struggle.” They saw movements as “structured and patterned” and believed that they could “be analyzed in terms of organizational dynamics just like other forms of institutionalized action” (Buechler 2000 34-35). RMT helped shift our understanding of movements from psychological and societal stresses to more organizational and resources-based explanations. These scholars helped “improve the image” of social movements by demonstrating that, rather than random and unreasonable actions, movement participants were driven by their notions of social justice. RMT showed us how activists put these beliefs into action through the various organizations they formed and material resources they mustered.

By the 1980s, however, some students of contentious politics had grown dissatisfied with resource mobilization perspectives. McAdam (1982) contended that three major weaknesses of resource-based theories were 1) the vagueness with which the notion of “resources” was defined; 2) the fact that RM theorists implied that discontent among potential participants was a “constant and therefore of little significance” for mobilization; and 3) RMT’s “top-down” emphasis on the importance of elites’ initiation and sponsorship of protest, which he claimed was counterintuitive (34-35). In addition, early resource mobilization theorists were critiqued for the lack of attention they paid to the context—one of the key foci of early strain and breakdown theories—in which movements developed and operated (Meyer 1993, 36).

In response to these shortcomings, critics developed a new *political process approach* that reintegrated the role of political context into our analysis of social movements through the notion of “expanding political opportunities.” Scholars like McAdam (1982) went beyond a

resource-based explanation of contentious politics arguing that the four major factors that helped generate insurgency were first and foremost the “confluences of expanding political opportunities”; second, the establishment of “indigenous organizational strength” (i.e. the social movement organizations, or SMOs, stressed by RMT); third, the “presence of certain shared cognitions” within the insurgent group; and last but not least, the “shifting control response of other groups to the movement” (59). Key dimensions of political opportunity structures included: “1) the opening of access to participation for new actors; 2) the evidence of political realignment within the polity; 3) the appearance of influential allies; 4) emerging splits within the elite; and 5) a decline in the state’s capacity or will to repress dissent” (Tarrow 1998, 76). Through their expanding opportunity thesis and political process approach (which have become the dominant paradigms in the study of contentious politics)<sup>1</sup>, these theories have gone a long way toward helping us understand the social, economic, and historic foundations of social movements; the political contexts in which they emerge, do battle, and decline; the institutional barriers they face; their chances for success; the organizational structures that they utilize; and various other dynamics of major protest waves (Tarrow 1998; McAdam 1982; Koopmans 2004; Kriesi 2004).

Yet as much as political process theorists have contributed to our comprehension of social movements, some critics have argued that their notions of “political opportunities” are not only too broad, but also seem to have structural biases and tend to ignore the role that grievances play in the emergence of contention (Goodwin and Jasper 2004, 5-9; Klandermans 2004, 362). For instance, while some movements do rise up to take advantage of expanding opportunities, others including the 2006 immigrant protest wave, have emerged when the “window of

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<sup>1</sup> For a critique of these models see Goodwin and Jasper 2004.

opportunity” seemed to be contracting if not outright closed (Meyer 1993, 37). These movements appear to respond not to opportunities per se, but to some type of environmental danger or threat.

External threats have often been conceptualized as “the other side” (Tilly and Tarrow 2006, 59) or opposite of opportunity (i.e. as threats rise, opportunities decline). But according to Goldstone and Tilly (2001), threats should be considered independent factors when analyzing mass mobilization because a “group may also decide to risk protest, even if opportunities seem absent, if the cost of not acting seem too great” (181-183). Adding to this train of thought, Snow and his colleagues (1998) theorize that “the key to the relationship between breakdown and movement emergence” may sometimes lie in the “actual or threatened disruption” of “the routines” of people’s daily lives. They argue that “the kind of breakdown most likely to be associated with movement emergence is that which penetrates and disrupts, or threatens to disrupt, taken-for-granted, everyday routines and expectancies” (2). Other versions of strain and breakdown theories have also argued that when experienced collectively, “changes in taken-for-granted subsistence” may “provoke collective action” (Buechler 2004, 59; see also Piven and Cloward 1977). Moreover, counter to the claims made by early strain and breakdown theorists, rather than demonstrating the social isolation of movement participants, some social movement scholars have claimed that the mass mobilizations that arise from highly disruptive threats actually *increase* solidarity among members of the targeted groups (Snow et.al. 1998, 19).

Thus, Buerchler (2004) asserts that rather than seeing threat and opportunity as completely independent from—or as the opposite of—each other, one could argue that there is actually “considerable conceptual overlap between what classical theorists mean by strain or breakdown and what resource mobilization theorists mean by opportunity” (61). Prominent opportunity theorists agree and conclude that “threats and opportunities co-occur, and most

people engaging in contentious politics combine response to threat with seizing opportunities” (Tilly and Tarrow 2006, 58). They argue that “it is only when a threat is accompanied by perceived opportunities for action and seen as potentially irreversible if not stopped that challengers will risk what often turns out to be a heroic defeat” (Tarrow 1998, 72). But even as various scholars have claimed that threat might even be *more* likely than opportunity to generate collective action (Snow et.al. 1998, 17), Tarrow (1998) reminds us that while these theories may sound convincing, “no field research has been designed to test this hypothesis” (86). Through the case studies presented in this dissertation, I attempt to help fill this research gap by adding to our theoretical and empirical understanding of how the interaction of *multiple dimensions of threats* can impact opportunities for collective action in a variety of ways prior to, during, and after cycles of contention.

### **Central Research Questions**

Three primary theoretical puzzles drive my research project, the first two of which are these: What accounts for the *emergence*—in both expected and unexpected locations—and apparent sudden *decline* of the massive mobilization of stereotypically under-resourced and politically apathetic immigrants? In short, I investigate *why* the rallies occurred *when* they did, and *what* mechanisms facilitated their mobilization and demobilization processes. These two questions are fundamental to understanding this particular protest wave since attempts before and after the spring of 2006 to mobilize immigrants, for naturalization (during times of open opportunities) and against attacks (during times of threat), did not spark the same levels of outrage and collective action by the foreign-born and their allies. Thus, examining the exact

*types* of threats and opportunities that sparked the demonstrations and contributed to their decline is of the utmost importance.

While movements often have widespread cultural consequences (Earl 2004; Goodwin and Jasper 2003), most of the research on their outcomes focuses on their contributions to changes in public policy (Giugni and Yamasaki 2009; Soule and Olzak 2004; Kriesi and Wisler 1999; Burstein 1999). The overall findings of this literature suggest that influential allies, public opinion, the salience of an issue, and the stage of the policy process are all important factors that influence how social movements impact policymaking (Meyer, Jenness, and Ingram 2005; Giugni, McAdam, and Tilly 1999; Giugni 2004; Soule and King 2006). What we know less about is the *mix* of outcomes that protest waves can produce. Thus, the third primary question my research investigates is what, if any, positive *and* negative impacts the movement may have had on the policymaking process and national electoral politics.

### **Research Design**

#### ***Case Studies of Immigrant Mass Mobilization: Los Angeles, New York...and Fort Myers, Florida?***

There were several surprising aspects of the immigrant rallies, including some of the unexpected locations where many of them took place, as well as the over- *and* underperformance of certain cities in terms of the magnitudes of the protests they hosted. The rallies held in locales with no real history of immigrant activism and no established SMOs complicate our understanding of the significance of organizations because both resource mobilization and political process theories tell us that they are vital to the emergence of social movements and mass mobilizations (McCarthy and Zald 1977; McAdam 1982). In addition, some places that *did*

posses organizational resources and histories of immigrant activism arguably *did not* mobilize to the degree that one would have expected them to. These cases also challenge what social movement theory has taught us in that cities where the movement had relatively more resources and had more open political opportunity structures were “out-mobilized” by places *without* these assets and favorable local political contexts.

*Table 1* presents examples of the types of cases mentioned above and from which I selected the cities to investigate. The case studies were *not* chosen from a random or representative sample of the almost 400 protests that took place. Rather, each of these cities can be seen as what Snow and Trom (2002) describe as “synecdochical or revelatory cases.” These scholars contend that a synecdochical case study is one in which “a detailed, holistic study of a specific case is used as a springboard, in almost a synecdochical fashion, for gaining insight into and understanding of the larger movement of which it is a part, and is presumably revelatory as either a repetitive or critical case” (158-163). Following this chain of reasoning, I chose cities based on their *negative, critical, and extreme* natures. Examining such a variety of episodes of collective action can greatly contribute to our understanding of the dynamics of immigrant mass mobilization given that so little is known about the phenomenon (Snow and Trom 2002).

**Table 1.**

Typology of Case Studies			
RELATIVE LEVEL OF ACTUAL MOBILIZATION	EXPECTED LEVEL OF MOBILIZATION		
		Low	High
	Low	Anchorage, AK Cleveland, OH Chattanooga, TN	<i>New York, NY</i> Miami, FL Boston, MA
	High	<i>Fort Myers, FL</i> Dallas, TX Milwaukee, WI	<i>Los Angeles, CA</i> Chicago, IL San Diego, CA

No cases where we would expect little-to-no mobilization, and where relatively little-to-no mobilization actually took place, were examined because they are of minimal theoretical interest to my specific project. Because there were no reasons for us to think mass mobilization would occur, and no instances of large scale collective action actually manifested in these locations, given what social movement theory has taught us about the emergence of insurgency it is safe to say that “things happen as we would have expected.” Furthermore, the dissertation’s goal is not to solely analyze *any* level of immigrant collective action, but to investigate the dynamics of migrant *mass* mobilization.

On the other hand, I selected the City of Los Angeles because—due to its long history of immigrant organizing and a vibrant and well established immigrant rights social movement industry (SMI)—it is a place where high levels of mobilization *would have been expected* to and actually *did* occur: L.A. hosted to the largest immigrant rights protest in U.S. history when five hundred thousand to over a million people descended on City Hall. The city is also home to the largest Spanish-language media market in the country. Given the important role ethnic media outlets are said to have played in the marches, this makes L.A. a particularly important locale to examine. For these reasons, this case is theoretically interesting because it is a successful

instance of migrant mass mobilization where we are able to test and examine how well established social movement theories hold up. Thus, the City of Angels is an example of a *critical case*. In these cases, “the issue of the typicality or representativeness of the case is essentially irrelevant, since it is particular features or characteristics of the case that make it an ideal or critical one for the set of issues or concerns in question” (Snow and Trom 2002, 158-159)—which, again, for the purpose of this dissertation, is large-scale immigrant collective action.

Selection of cases “can also be justified methodologically on the grounds that they are ‘negative’ or ‘deviant’ in relation to other cases of the same genre or some set of principles” (Snow and Trom 2002, 159). Accordingly, New York City is of interest because, while it also has a long history of immigrant activism, highly developed immigrant rights SMI, and the largest citywide immigrant population in the nation, its level of mobilization was nowhere close to the size of protests held in other major immigrant metropolises. Estimates of the Empire City’s largest actions ranged from 50,000–100,000, as opposed to 500,000 to over a million in places such as Dallas, Chicago, and L.A. Because of this discrepancy, I explore what factors local organizers believe account for this underperformance. Moreover, unlike the latter cities whose immigrant populations are more homogenous and primarily Mexican, New York has perhaps the most diverse big city immigrant population in the nation with several groups larger than those of Mexican descent. This demographic context makes it an interesting case to investigate because it allows us to examine how the dynamics of immigrant collective action play out in heterogeneous settings.

Researching *extreme cases* can also be theoretically informative. These cases are chosen “on the grounds that they...stand outside of or beyond the genre of cases with which they are

typically associated” (Snow and Trom 2002, 159). Accordingly, my last case study city is Fort Myers, FL, a city where little to no mobilization was expected, yet where one of the largest marches in the national protest wave took place. The city’s total population was only about 50,000, of which less than 15% were Latinos at the time.<sup>2</sup> Yet despite its small size and its relatively new history of Mexican immigration, according to estimates by local police and activists, 80,000 to over 100,000 people—the vast majority of which were Latino—marched for immigrant rights in this southern city. This context prompts one to ask how a locale with practically no immigrant rights organizational infrastructure, a relatively small Latino and immigrant population, and no real history of prior activism reached such a degree of collective action? Thus, investigating why and how immigrant mass mobilization took place in a “least likely location” is of the utmost importance for both scholars and activists given that the former are often concerned with being able to predict future social unrest, while the latter are mainly concerned with creating it.

Employing a process-tracing approach (George and Bennett 2005), I examined *how* the marches were organized in these three cities by searching through newspapers, protest flyers, and online websites for reports and mentions of rally organizers and coalition leaders. As an active participant in the movement for over a decade, I also utilized the contacts I’ve developed to identify key people and organizations in each region that played fundamental roles in their local protests, and then applied a “snowball” method of sampling to seek out additional individuals to interview. Using the data gained from the over 120 people at both the local and national levels with whom I spoke, I examined the *micro-mobilization* processes—tactics, strategies, etc.—that activists used to coordinate and organize the protests. In addition, I also explored what

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<sup>2</sup> 2000 City of Fort Myers, Florida “US Census 2000 Demographic Profile Highlights.”

mechanisms—fractionalization, institutionalization, repression, etc.—contributed to the demobilization of the national and local movements.

### ***So What? Examining the National Impacts of the Protest Wave***

As mentioned above, because of the unprecedented nature and scope of the nationwide demonstrations, investigating whether or not they had any effects is essential. Many observers of the protest wave have contended that the marches produced little if any positive results. Others have argued that the rallies may have even had a *negative* effect on the population—undocumented immigrants—on whose behalf activists claimed to be fighting, given the increased repression that followed the rallies (see Chapter 5). Because the protests were sparked in response to a proposed anti-immigrant law and during a congressional election year, I use survey and census data as well as in-depth interviews with Washington, D.C.-based immigration reform lobbyists to examine what effects the marches had on the immigration policymaking process and national electoral politics. Leaders of business, labor, civil rights, and immigration-focused national organizations helped reveal some of the direct and indirect, positive and negative, impacts of the mass acts of immigrant contention.

## **Explaining the 2006 Protest Wave**

### ***Threat, Identity, and Immigrant Mass Mobilization***

The research presented in this dissertation reveals how, in response to a proposed legislative attack, certain immigrant collective identities were triggered and made receptive to calls for mass mobilization. Through the appropriation and activation of preexisting local community (individual, economic, and social) resources and institutions (such as local ethnic

media outlets, unions, churches, etc.), both traditional and nontraditional immigrant rights activists were able to diffuse their calls for action and organize perhaps the largest series of coordinated mass mobilizations in American history. The protest wave in turn incited a state and societal backlash that contributed, along with several intra-movement factors, to the decline of the national demonstrations. In response to this repression, and utilizing the infrastructure built during the protest wave, activists regrouped and refocused their efforts to take advantage of the perceived “open opportunities” they saw in the upcoming presidential elections. Thus, *this dissertation demonstrates how threats, opportunities, and the agency and identities of the individuals that take part in activism interact with, impact, and continuously alter each other throughout the different stages of a protest wave.* In short, it examines and explains the various dynamics of immigrant contention and mass mobilization.

### ***The Role of Threat***

The explanation that the rallies were simply a response to a legislative attack is insufficient; *prior* to the demonstrations, several other federal anti-immigrant laws, such as the REAL-ID and Patriot Acts, were not only proposed, but actually enacted without generating any mass public (including immigrant) opposition. Furthermore, *during* and *subsequent to* the anti-H.R. 4437 marches, there were increases in the number of deportations, workplace raids, hate crimes, and other forms of repression that did not prompt large-scale collective action against them by advocates of immigrants. As such, the notion that the marches were a manifestation of solidarity with and between undocumented immigrants triggered by a proposed anti-immigrant law is equally unsatisfactory. People without papers were arguably *more* threatened, and under attack, during and after the protests than they were before them, yet the movement mobilizations

*declined* rather than escalated. Thus, the 2006 immigrant protest wave is a useful case in which to examine the role that grievances play in the mobilization *and* demobilization processes because it provides the opportunity to study the specific *types* and *dimensions* of threats that can serve as a catalyst for mass mobilization.

Here the work by Snow et al. cited above is useful in helping us begin to conceptualize these dynamics. In an important article published in *Mobilization*, Snow et al. (1998) argued that,

[T]he key to the relationship between breakdown and movement emergence resides in the “quotidian” and its actual or threatened disruption. The term quotidian derives from Latin and refers to the routines of daily life...We contend that the kind of breakdown most likely to be associated with movement emergence is that which penetrates and disrupts, or threatens to disrupt, taken-for-granted, everyday routines and expectancies (2).

The authors go on to identify four types of these events. The two most relevant to the 2006 protest wave are the “actual or threatened intrusion into culturally defined zones of privacy” (9) and instances of “dramatic changes in existing structures of social organization and control” (14). In terms of the former, according to immigrant rights activists, H.R. 4437 threatened to disrupt the “quotidian,” or daily lives, of not only undocumented immigrants, but also of their U.S.-born family and community members. Snow et al. (1998) contend that family and community members are part of the types of “culturally inviolable zones” whose “actual or threatened violation” are “taboo and almost sacrilege.” Because of this, “their intrusion and/or violation constitute quotidian disruption and the stuff of which social movements are born” (8). In this fashion, because of H.R. 4437’s severity and far reach, immigrant rights activists asserted that immigrants and their allies had no choice but to respond by protesting against the bill. As a naturalized citizen who helped organize a local march in her city declared, “The law was just made with so much hate...it was an all or nothing thing.”<sup>i</sup>

The motivation to act against the Sensenbrenner Bill also extended beyond the immediate family and friends of undocumented immigrants because of the dramatic changes it threatened to bring about in the structures of social control within the social fabric of immigrant communities. As stated above, the theory of “disrupting the quotidian” contends that the “alteration of interconnected systems of formal and informal control and associated daily routines” can “provide the impetus for collective action” (Snow et al. 1998, 15). The fact that people ranging from teachers, doctors, employers, and priests to institutions such as unions, service agencies, businesses, and community based organizations could potentially be fined thousands of dollars and incarcerated for helping people without papers—including children and the elderly— was a potential dramatic change to the forms of social control and citizen-policing that would have resulted from the enactment of the proposed legislation. Hence, it was not simply a legislative threat that served as the catalyst for the historic mass mobilizations, but more broadly an attack that would have dramatically altered the daily lives, interactions, and routine functions of several sectors of society that interact with immigrant communities.

Snow et al.’s (1998) notion of “disrupting the quotidian” makes a significant contribution to our understanding of how the *scope*—in terms of severity and reach—of a threat can spark collective action. However, their theory is limited in two ways: it fails to account for other important dimensions of threat and how these dimensions combine to produce varying effects on mobilization processes. My research shows that there are *multiple, interactive dimensions to the relationship between threat and mobilization*—two primary ones being not only the *scope*, but also the *source* of a threat. The typology in Figure 2 captures the dynamics of how these two primary dimensions of a threat—its *scope* and *source*—coalesce to produce varying effects on collective action efforts. In addition, though not illustrated in the typology, two secondary

dimensions—the *visibility* and *timing* of a threat—are also important explanatory factors whose interactions with the scope and source of a threat influence the mobilization and demobilization processes. The following two sections explain exactly how and why these four key dimensions of a threat impact collective action in different ways.

**Table 2.**

Typology of Types of Threat and Levels of Mobilization			
		SCOPE	
		Narrow	Broad
S O U R C E	Single	<i>LITTLE to NO</i> Mobilization (e.g. 2005 REAL-ID Act)	<i>MASS</i> Mobilization (e.g. 2005 H.R. 4437)
	Multiple	<i>LITTLE to NO</i> Mobilization (e.g. Pre-2006 Raids, Deportations, Local Ordinances)	<i>LITTLE to DECLINE</i> of Mobilization (e.g. Post-2006 Raids, Deportations, Local Ordinances)

### *Single-Source Narrow and Broad Threats*

The typology in Figure 2 shows that threats that are narrow and emerge from a single source generate no to a low degree of collective action (see top left-hand quadrant in Figure 2). An example of this single-source and narrow threat dynamic is the 2005 REAL-ID Act, which despite its anti-immigrant ramifications failed to produce a significant level of opposition among immigrant rights activists. The bill—which emerged from Congress, thus considered deriving from a “single source”—was narrow, or limited, in the sense that its primary target was a particular segment of society (undocumented immigrants) and its effects were indirect. The REAL-ID Act did not pass as a standalone piece of immigration legislation, but rather as an attachment to a military spending bill, the 2005 *Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for*

*Defense, the Global War on Terror, and Tsunami Relief*. The law did not explicitly focus on undocumented immigrants, but targeted them indirectly by establishing “national standards” (such as proof of legal residency or a valid social security number) for state identification cards and driver licenses. Yet, considering that most states did not—and still don’t—offer undocumented immigrants driver licenses, the bill’s effects were narrow and only impacted people without papers living in particular states. Consequently, activists were unable to form broad coalitions to oppose the bill, and as a result, the level of mobilization against it was minimal.

Alternatively, the Sensenbrenner Bill (H.R. 4437), which emerged from the same single source (Congress), if passed, would have had a “broader” impact for two reasons. For one, it would have equally affected *all* people without papers across the country (regardless of the state in which they resided) by elevating their undocumented status from a civil violation to a felony. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, H.R. 4437 would have also potentially impacted a wide range of people beyond undocumented immigrants—from U.S.-born teachers and social service providers to employers and family members—by punishing them with thousands of dollars in fines and even jail time for assisting people without papers. It was precisely because the proposed bill came from a single source, would have affected several sectors of society, and threatened clear and easily understood consequences that activists opposing the legislation were able to form broad and diverse coalitions to mass-mobilize against it. This dynamic is illustrated in the upper right-hand quadrant in Figure 2, which shows that, when combined, these factors can lead to large-scale collective action.

In sum, the level of mobilization against a single-source threat is to a large degree determined by its scope—whether its impacts are broad or narrow, and degree of its severity and

reach. Threats that minimally affect a limited number of people produce little or no levels of mobilization; however, threats that are extremely punitive in nature and simultaneously affect several sectors of society can produce large-scale collective action. That is, broad threats from a single source make it easier for activists to convince a larger number of people to protest against them (see Chapters 2 and 4).

### ***Multiple-Source Narrow and Broad Threats***

When threats emerge from multiple sources, discerning responsibility for their consequences becomes more difficult. Moreover, the time and resources necessary to address threats that lack a single focal point also dilute the impacts of activists' oppositional efforts. The bottom row in Figure 2 illustrates how threats from *multiple sources* lead to either *no* to *low* levels of mobilization, or can have repressive consequences that eventually contribute to the *decline* of collective action. Again, as with single-source threats, the *scope* of multiple-source threats is fundamental to the effects they contribute to.

Anti-immigrant measures such as raids, deportations, and nativist local and state legislation, are examples of threats that come from multiple sources and that typically produce narrow impacts. For example, the *multiple sources* of raids and deportations include federal and sometimes local law enforcement agents that carry them out in different settings—workplaces, homes, and city streets—across the country. Similarly, the multiple sources of state and local anti-undocumented immigrant ordinances and laws are the hundreds of towns, cities, and state governments that propose and/or adopt them. While these threats (raids, deportations, and anti-immigrant ordinances) could potentially claim *all* people without papers as victims, their effects are *narrow* in scope in that they are primarily felt at the individual level and are limited to the

people who are apprehended (and their families), or to those who live within the jurisdictions of the nativist laws. Consequently, as was the case with the ordinances, raids, and deportations that occurred *before* 2006, forming broad, multi-sector coalitions to protest these immigration enforcement measures is very difficult. As a result, these types of threats generally instigate little to no degree of collective action against them.

The scope of ordinances, raids, and deportations can broaden when there is a sudden rise in their occurrence, when the number of people impacted by them is relatively large, and when they are carried out on a national scale. But due to the difficulties in organizing against multiple-source threats (explained above), rather than sparking mass mobilization, these types of threats usually produce limited levels of collective action in response, or can lead to the repression of existing contention. For instance, *during and after* the 2006 protest wave there was a sharp increase in workplace raids and deportations across the nation, actively promoted by the Department of Homeland Security. Simultaneously, throughout this period there was a rapid escalation in the number of state and local immigration-related measures, many of which were punitive. Because of their broad geographic scale, sudden increase, and co-occurrence with other local enforcement measures that had an impact beyond undocumented immigrants, these factors jointly contributed to the *demobilization* of the 2006 immigrant protest wave (see Chapters 5 and 6).

### ***Secondary Dimensions of Threat: Visibility and Timing***

Although not captured in the typology presented in Figure 2, two additional dimensions—*timing* and *visibility*—interact with the *scope* and *source* of a threat to help explain its relationship to mobilization. These secondary features are particularly important to the types

of threats that led to the rise and decline of the immigrant protest wave. For example, since legislative threats, such as bills introduced in Congress or ordinances proposed in local city councils, represent looming attacks (because they have not yet passed as enforceable legislation), activists have the *time* to organize against them. On the other hand, post hoc threats, such as raids and deportation, are more difficult to organize against because activists only become aware of them after they occur, and are therefore only able to deal with their consequences. Thus, the amount of time activists have to mobilize against a threat is of the utmost importance. When activists have enough time to form broad coalitions to oppose a single-source threat that has far-reaching impacts, the potential for large-scale collective action increases. However, also vital to the outcomes produced by the interactions of these three dimensions—*scope*, *source*, and *time*—is the threat's *visibility*.

The visibility of a threat is determined by how easily it is for potential victims and activists to both become aware of the threat and understand its likely effects. As described in detail in Chapter 3, a key mechanism in this process is the mass media. Narrow threats from both single and multiple sources are harder to make visible because of the limited number of people they affect. Because of their restricted scope, these types of threats fail to draw the media attention needed to make a large number of people aware of the necessity to mass-mobilize against them. On the other hand, broad threats are easier to make visible because their impacts are more widespread. But whether a broad threat leads to low levels of collective action, mass mobilization, or the repression of contention is determined by its multiple or single source.

For instance, one of the key reasons why broad, single-source threats are more likely to spark mass mobilization against them is that they are easier to make visible. The greater the scope of the threat—in terms of its severity and number of people it impacts—the more likely

media outlets are to cover it. Once activists draw the attention of these mass channels of communication, they have the opportunity to diffuse their claims and calls for action across a broad geographical area (see Chapters 2 and 3). In short, media attention makes a threat more visible and can even help create and spread oppositional mobilization efforts if activists successfully get the media to adopt and promote their frames. As illustrated in Chapter 3, because of the severity and far-reaching nature of H.R. 4437, immigrant rights activists gained access to ethnic media outlets and broadcasted their calls for mass protests against the proposed legislation. As a result, in almost every state in the union, millions of immigrants and their allies took to the streets during two national days of action.

Though vital to the mobilization process, it is important to note that the visibility of a threat can be a double-edged sword. While it is fundamental to the rise of contention, it can also contribute to the demobilization process. For example, one of the primary reasons why the multiple-source threats of raids, deportations, and local anti-immigrant measures contributed to the decline of the demonstrations was that they were extensively covered by ethnic news outlets. Consequently, according to activists interviewed from every city examined in this study, it was through such mass coverage of the increases in immigration enforcement measures—and their effects on immigrant families—that immigrants throughout the nation learned there was a price to pay for the continuation of their collective action (see Chapters 5 and 6). Hence, the visibility of multiple-source threats can be broadened by an increase in their scale, and in effect, contribute to the decline of mobilization.

To encapsulate, there are multiple, cross-cutting dimensions in the relationship between threat and mobilization: two primary ones are the *scope* and *source* of threats, and two secondary ones are the *visibility* and *timing* of threats. The central assertion of the theory of large-scale

collective action presented in this dissertation is that *threats that derive from a single source and are looming, highly visible, and generalized in scope interact to produce the optimal environment for large-scale collective action to emerge*. When these contextual factors exist, it falls upon activists to recognize the opportunity for mass mobilization. To succeed, activists must clearly frame and diffuse their demands and proposed actions to as many potential participants as possible. Fundamental to whether activists' target audiences respond to their calls for action is whether or not potential participants in movement activity feel a sense of solidarity with one another.

### ***The Importance of Identity***

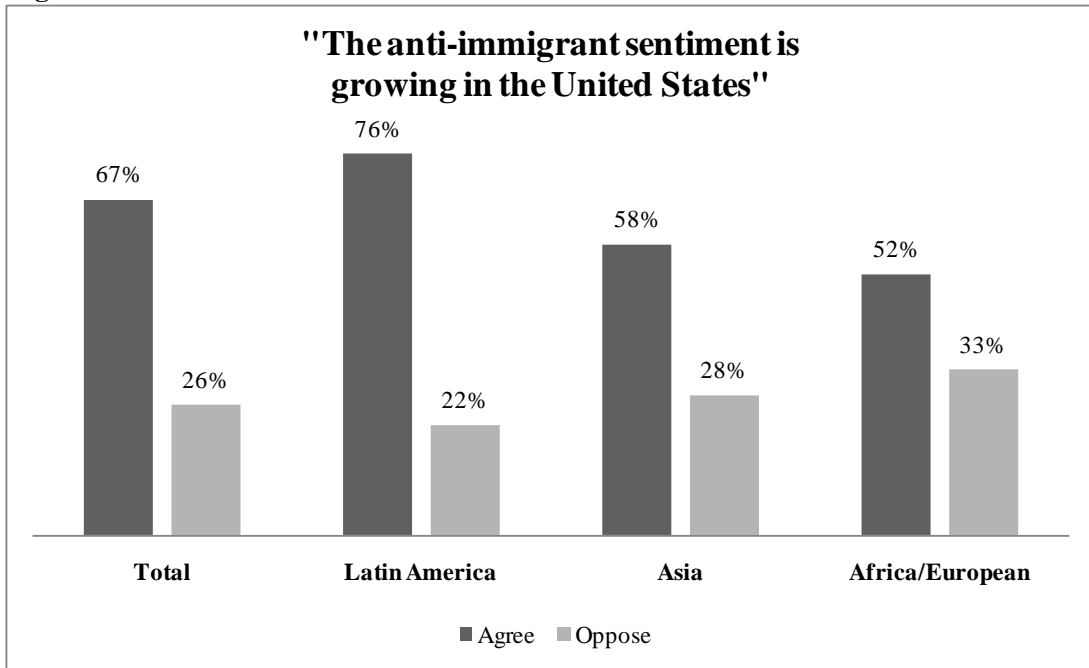
Solidarity, resulting from the activation of collective identities, played an important role in the 2006 mobilizations. Social movement scholars have found that in hostile environmental contexts, the salience of group consciousness can be increased (Bernstein 2008, 280; Bernstein 2003, 244; Klandermans 2003, 682). Moreover, it is not only over time but also through actual conflicts and participation in struggles against injustices done to one's group that collective identities and "cultures of solidarity" are formed, brought to the fore, and reinforced (Morris 1992, 352; Della Porta and Diani 1999, 87; Melucci 1995, 48; Morris and Braine 2001, 25; Fantasia 1988, 17). This is important to note because the existence of a collective identity is "a necessary precursor" to people's participation in movement mobilizations (Hunt and Benford 2004, 433; Snow and Soule 2010, 125; Friedman and McAdam 1992, 156; Gamson 2003, 337; Einwohner, Reger, and Myers 2008, 2). Having some degree of group consciousness is key for collective action efforts because it can help people "see themselves" as "linked by interests, values, [or] common histories" (Della Porta and Diani 1999, 109) and can raise "preparedness to

participate” (Klandermans and de Weerd 2000, 86). Thus, the more one identifies with a group, the more likely one is to take part in collective action on behalf of that group (Hunt and Benford 2004, 437; Klandermans 2003, 687). Therefore, understanding how these collective identities are formed, made salient, and reinforced amongst the foreign-born is of the utmost importance when attempting to explain their mass mobilization.

Immigrant identity formation can take various paths, such as *straight-line* or *segmented assimilation* (Alba and Nee 2003). One manifestation of the latter type is the construction of a “reactive ethnicity.” Rumbaut (2008) asserts that the “process of forging a *reactive ethnicity* in the face of perceived threats, persecution, discrimination and exclusion is not uncommon” for the foreign-born and has occurred throughout U.S. history among various racial and ethnic immigrant groups. He contends that it “is one mode of ethnic identity formation, highlighting the role of a hostile context of reception in accounting for the rise rather than the erosion of ethnicity” (3). In Massey and Sanchez’s (2010) recent study on Mexican immigrant identity formation, the authors find that “the emergence of an increasingly harsh context of reception in the United States in recent years has erected needless and counterproductive barriers to immigrant assimilation.” They assert that these “discriminatory experiences,” accumulated over time, steadily reinforce the emergence of a reactive pan-ethnic Latino identity (2). The authors contend that the nativism that began to develop during the 1990s was intensified after the events of September 11 and the economic recession of early-2000s (18). Together, these factors contributed to the development of a reactive ethnicity among Latino immigrants prior to the 2006 immigrant protest wave. A poll of Latino, Asian, African, and European immigrants taken just before the series of mobilizations adds credibility to their thesis. It revealed that leading up to the mass demonstrations, immigrants were feeling under attack. The survey found that strong

majorities of these immigrant groups agreed that anti-immigrant sentiments were “growing in the United States” (see *Chart 1*).

**Figure 1.**



**Source: Bendixen and Associates, March 2006**

In the same poll, “a majority [64%] of legal immigrants” said they believed that this growing nativism was “being fueled by racism against immigrants from Latin America and Asia and that the debate about immigration policy” was “unfair and based on misinformation.” Furthermore, not only did Latino immigrants feel more strongly than other foreign-born groups that anti-immigrant sentiments were on the rise, but 62% of them also expressed the belief that this racist nativism had personally affected them and their families (New American Media 2006, 3-4). Again, for the purpose of understanding the collective identity formation of immigrants, it is important to note that the results of Massey and Sanchez’s (2010) study showed that, “During a time of rising anti-immigrant sentiment, repressive immigration and border enforcement, and

the public portrayal of Latino immigrants as criminals, invaders, and terrorists, intergroup boundaries brighten rather than blur...” (212). Thus, when feeling threatened and under attack, the boundaries of immigrant group identities are said to strengthen.

The aforementioned mechanisms at play are what social movement scholars refer to as boundary *formation* and boundary *activation*, the “creation of an us-them distinction between two political actors” and the “increase...in the salience” of that same distinction (Tilly and Tarrow 2006, 215). A third identity mechanism is that of boundary or identity *extension*. Snow and McAdam (2000) explain that, “This process involves the expansion of the situational relevance or pervasiveness of an individual’s personal identity so that its reach is congruent with” that of a particular social movement’s (50). These findings are relevant to the immigrant protests because, according to Pedraza, Segura, and Bowler (2011), “Since 60% of the Latino adult population is foreign-born, the vast majority of Latinos in the United States—native born, naturalized, and recently arrived alike—are directly connected to the immigrant experience” since they were either at one point legal or undocumented immigrants themselves, “or because they are children, spouses, in-laws, and neighbors of these very same people” (2). Activists contended that, since leading up to and during the 2006-2007 immigration debate *all* Latinos—particularly those of Mexican descent (regardless of where they were born or their citizenship status)—were stigmatized by the media as potentially being “illegal alien threats” (Chavez 2008), this racialized nativist rhetoric helped activate the identity extension mechanism that made U.S.-born Latinos and legal immigrants receptive to calls for mobilization.

Survey data of Latino registered voters gathered during the protest wave back these assertions. The polling showed that “second-generation and third-generation Latinos” were “as likely to participate in the marches as the foreign-born” (Barreto et al. 2009, 753; see also

Chapter 6). Moreover, a poll conducted by the Pew Hispanic Center *after* the protest wave had declined also affirmed this finding. It showed that, a majority of “Latinos far removed from the immigrant experience in their family histories [perceived the immigration] debate as a source of greater discrimination every bit as much as” recently arrived immigrants. The study showed that this “view was held in similar measures by U.S. citizens and non-citizens, and by those who [were] registered voters and those who are not.” These findings also revealed that the majority of Latinos believed that the marches were the start of a new Latino social movement and expressed a willingness to participate in future protests (Suro and Escobar 2006, 5, 9).

According to Portes and Rumbaut (1996), these findings should not be surprising, given that, throughout U.S. history nativist

[c]ampaigns against the first generation have had a peculiar political consequence...What these campaigns have accomplished, above all, is stirring ethnic militancy among subsequent generations. More attuned to American culture and fluent in English, descendants of the first immigrants have gained “voice” and have used it to reaffirm identities attacked previously with so much impunity. The resilient ethnic identification of many communities and the solidarity ethnic politics based on it can be traced directly to this process of “reactive [identity] formation” (95).

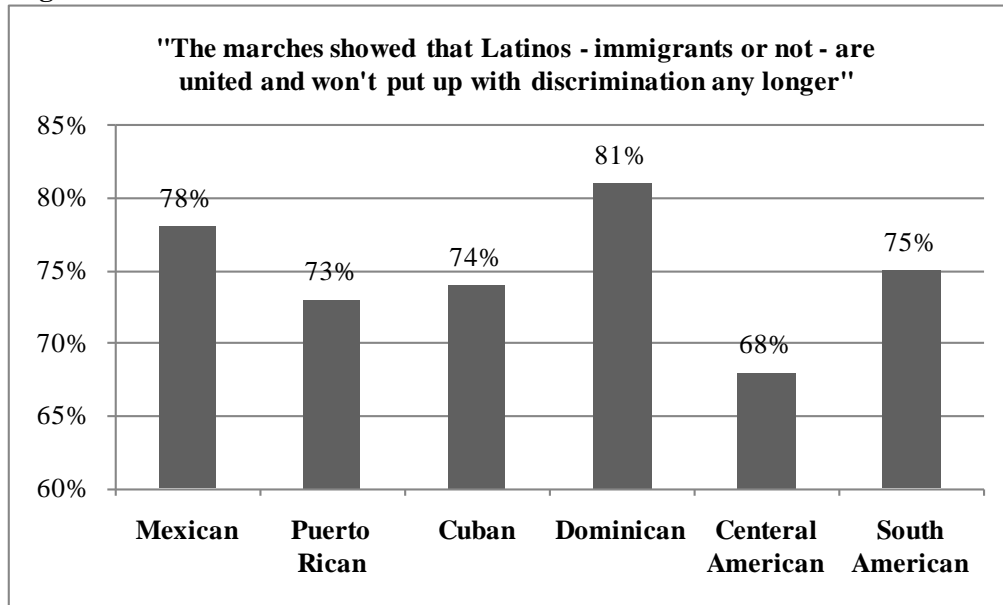
But for collective identities to transform into the “mobilizing identities” that Garcia Bedolla (2005) contends are vital to induce immigrants to take part in contentious politics, a sense of affirmative group attachment and feeling of agency to act on its behalf must also be present. She contends that Latinos (both U.S.- and foreign-born) “must develop a positive attachment to their group and a belief that, however stigmatized it may be, that group is worthy of their political effort” (3). This may have seemed to be a formidable challenge for activists given that, according to previous survey research, people of Latin American descent tend primarily to identify with their countries of origin rather than with politically constructed pan-

ethnic labels such as “Latino” (Suro and Escobar 2006; Beltran 2010). Yet as Fantasia (1988) points out, “A sum of the opinions of individual respondents recorded at a given moment in time may appear wholly different from the ‘consciousness’ expressed by those same ‘respondents’ in the midst of collective action and interaction” (6). Consequently, Latino pan-ethnicity can be situational (Jones-Correa and Leal 1996). And, in fact, according to a unique set of national survey data taken during and after the immigrant protest wave, evidence suggests that in the midst of the marches mobilizing identities were in fact present among Latinos.

In their examination of Latino participation in the 2006 demonstrations, Barreto et al. (2009) constructed an index of Latino support for the rallies and found high levels of backing for them among *all* Latino national origin groups, ranging from 7.1 points (on a scale of 10 possible points) by South Americans to 7.8 points by Mexicans and Puerto Ricans (756). Moreover, demonstrating the existence of a collective identity, a sense of group worthiness, and a belief in the efficacy of action on their group’s behalf— “mobilizing identities”—the vast majority of all Latino subgroups, with Mexicans and Dominicans ranking the highest, believed (as *Chart 2* below shows) that “the marches showed that Latinos—immigrants or not—are united and won’t put up with discrimination any longer.” Despite the media often portraying undocumented immigrants as “taking jobs away” from Americans and being a drain on the economy, a poll taken *before* the protest wave showed that 84% to 90% of Latino immigrants believed that people without papers actually helped the U.S. economy and worked in jobs that “legal residents and citizens do not want to do” (New American Media 2006). Beyond the convincing but static polling data presented here, the chapters in this dissertation demonstrate exactly why and how the presence of a collective or “mobilizing” identity and sense of linked fate were fundamental to various aspects of immigrant mass mobilization. My research does so through examining *identity*

*in action*, showing how group consciousness, triggered by a perceived grave injustice, guided the efforts of activists and individual immigrants throughout in the mobilization process.

**Figure 2.**



*Source: Adapted from Barreto et al. 2009*

### ***Individual Agency and Micro-Mobilization Efforts***

Without the personal skills and agency of activists and the “regular people” that take part in movement activities (Edwards and McCarthy 2004, 127-128), protests, coalitions, and the development of social movements themselves would not be possible. Thus, whether in response to opportunities or threats, activists are fundamental to the process of framing movement grievances and promoting plans for action. During the 2006 immigrant protest wave, individual immigrants and activists developed strategies; came up with ways to frame their demands; made posters and phone calls; sent emails; and traveled all over their towns, cities, states, and even the country to organize their families, friends, neighbors, and other allies to promote the need to protest against H.R. 4437 and fight for legalization. In immigrant communities throughout the

nation, people situated as central nodes in immigrant community social networks took the initiative to play these fundamental roles in their local mobilization processes (see Chapter 2). From members of immigrant rights organizations to small business owners, students, and soccer league captains—these “border brokers” that often help the foreign-born navigate the various barriers they face in their social and political incorporation processes activated local preexisting individual, economic, and social resources to pay for and organize the historic demonstrations.

Fundamental to the local and national mobilization processes was the creation of broad coalitions. In terms of *external* contexts, students of contentious politics have found that both political opportunities (Meyer and Corrigan-Brown 2005; Staggenborg 1986) and threats (Van Dyke 2003; McCammon and Campbell 2002) can foster the formation of these alliances (Tattesall 2010, 155). “When an issue is particularly salient and when mobilization seems particularly urgent, groups have great incentives to overcome or overlook differences” (Meyer and Corrigan-Brown 2005, 339). Thus, a serious political threat can at times create a setting that encourages individuals and groups to overcome their ideological differences and divisions in order to work collectively for a common cause (Van Dyke and McCammon 2010, xxii). The formation of alliances is key to the mass mobilization process because coalitions “that unite organizations and pool resources are able to stage events with more participants, finance larger campaigns, and sustain actions for longer periods—increasing the likelihood of success” (Mayer 2009, 13). As such, my fieldwork in New York, Los Angeles, Fort Myers, and Washington, D.C. revealed that the formation of broad and diverse coalitions at the local and national levels was fundamental to organizing the immigrant mass mobilizations (see Chapter 4).

### *Media Diffusion of Demands, Frames, and Calls for Action*

If in fact, as previously asserted, people are more likely to participate in contentious politics and form coalitions in response to certain types of external threats, then it is up to movement activists to make sure that their target audience becomes aware of these dangers and what needs to be done to stop them. McCarthy, Smith, and Zald (1996) contend that an essential task for movements is to “frame social problems and injustices in a way that convinces a wide and diverse audience of the necessity for and utility of collective attempts to redress them” (291). Activists must put their issues “on the agenda with which other people identify and demonstrate the utility of collective action that others can copy or innovate upon” (Tarrow 1998, 88). Thus, movement emergence is often dependent on how well activists frame their problems and how best to deal with them (McCarthy, Smith, Zald 1996; Snow and Benford 1992; Snow et al. 1998). Key to the successful promotion of movement frames is the extent to which actors are able to diffuse or spread their “prognosis” and “prescriptions” for their grievances. Again, a key mechanism in this process of diffusion is the mass media.

Social movement scholars have found that the mass media can play a variety of roles at various stages in the development of movement mobilizations. Because the “airwaves” are the “master arena” in which public discourses and debates take place, the media has the ability not only to bring attention to matters activists try to promote (Meyer 2007, 96), but also to “certify,” or legitimize, certain issues and actors involved in contention. In addition, news coverage of protests can also “signal elites about citizens’ discontent expressed outside the more direct and conventional channels of political representation” (McCarthy, McPhail, and Smith 1996, 478).

Movements often attempt to stage mass protests in order to draw the media’s attention to their issues and promote their frames (Kriesi 2004, 86; Meyer 2007, 91-96; Gamson and Meyer

1996, 287-288). Moreover, as I also found in my fieldwork from coast to coast, scholars of contentious politics have noted that when there is a shared identity or language, the media can indirectly help spread contention by promoting solidarity and inspiring others in different and unconnected locations to emulate the various tactics and strategies they witness on television, hear on the radio, or read about in newspapers (Soule 2004; Spilerman 1976; McAdam and Rucht 1993; Myers 2000). Consequently, researchers have found that increased media attention is often correlated with an increase in movement protests (Meyer and Minkoff 2004, 1475). Thus, through the process of indirect diffusion, the media can help broaden and make “contention contagious.”

As I elaborate on in Chapter 3, the media played an important role in the 2006 immigrant protest wave. Yet, in contrast to the established literature's depiction of the typical relationship between activists and news outlets, instead of organizing demonstrations in hopes of gaining media attention to promote their cause, immigrant rights activists were actually able to get access to and *use* ethnic newspapers, radio, and television news stations to organize and advertise their rallies. Furthermore, my research shows that contrary to common belief, radio DJs *did not* “lead the marches.” Rather, because most members of the ethnic media are immigrants themselves, many of them identified with the plights of the immigrants under attack—immigrants who also happen to be their audience and community members. As a result, members of the ethnic media were willing to help activists use the airways to diffuse their messages and frames. Thus, this unprecedented access to channels of mass communication was vital in helping mobilize the millions people in almost every state in the union that participated in the April 10 National Day of Action for Immigrant Justice and May 1 Great American Boycott / Day Without An Immigrant.

### *The Interactive Dynamics of Contention*

While the various factors listed above led to the successful mobilization of masses of people, it is important to note that protest waves are not linear or static; rather, they are significantly dynamic affairs. As such, the environments in which they emerge, along with the mobilizing structures and individuals who take part in them, can often be changed by factors both outside and inside of movements. All of these elements can impact and alter each other, causing an array of effects ranging from escalated reaction to complete submission and inaction. In this fashion, many of the same factors, such as threats, coalitions, the media, etc., that contributed to the rise of the marches also played a role in their decline and the transformation of movement mobilization efforts. For instance, in response to both the defeat of the *proposed* threat of H.R. 4437 and the *actual* threat of government and grassroots repression (discussed earlier), movement leaders regrouped, reassessed how best to achieve their goals, and shifted their mobilization strategies and energies from the streets to the naturalization halls and ballot boxes. All in all, the protest wave produced several direct and indirect results. As explained in detail in Chapter 6, while it contributed to the defeat of the Sensenbrenner Bill, the protest wave also helped thwart the movement's chances of gaining the immigration policy reforms it sought. Indirectly, the marches helped create a national network that laid the organizational infrastructure that carried out the massive drives for citizenship, voter registration, and voter mobilization that impacted the historic 2008 presidential elections.

In sum, my research reveals that *the identities and individual agency of traditional and nontraditional immigrant activists, the utilization of preexisting community assets, the use of ethnic media outlets and organizational and personal networks to promote calls for action, and the formation of broad and diverse coalitions were all fundamental to the immigrant mass*

*mobilization process*. What is important to remember, and what should become clear as one reads the chapters throughout this dissertation, is that while a hostile contexts and resources (organizational and individual) matter for collective action to emerge, people often revolt in response to perceived grave injustices, especially when they feel their dignity is at stake. In order to demonstrate how this occurred during the 2006 immigrant protest wave, while attempting not to lose sight of the unique dynamics of mobilization in each of the individual case studies examined, I devote each chapter to one of my chosen cities and to the themes (touched upon above) that I believe the locale best exemplifies. Below I explain the exact themes covered in each chapter.

### **Chapter Roadmap**

Each chapter begins with a review of the relevant scholarly literatures of the major themes highlighted in each case study. Since I've already discussed (in Chapter 1) the established research on mainstream American, immigrant, and race/ethnic political participation, before explaining the dynamics of the rise of the local mobilization in Chapter 2 ("Weapons of the [Not So] Weak") I briefly demonstrate the lack of political opportunities that existed for migrant mass mobilization to take place in the For Myers region in order to bring attention to how this case complicates our understanding of the circumstance under which large-scale collective action can occur. The specific themes highlighted in this chapter are the roles that certain types of threats can play in the activation and transformation of "reactive" collective identities into the "mobilizing identities" *nontraditional* political actors need in order to be receptive to calls for collective action. This case study also draws attention to the importance of the agency and efforts of individual immigrant community members and their utilization of local

preexisting community economic and social resources in the mobilization process. Again, these themes were present in each of the cities studied, but because Fort Myers best exemplifies their significance, they are the focus of the chapter.

As mentioned above, Spanish-language media outlets are often credited as being the driving forces behind the 2006 immigrant rights protest wave. Yet scholars and pundits alike have not sufficiently studied the various mechanisms that made up the process of immigrant mass mobilization through ethnic media. After reviewing the relevant literatures on the role the mass media can play in politics, and social movements in particular, my Los Angeles chapter (Chapter 3: “It’s the Media *Estupid!*”) examines exactly how—in the context of a looming threat and the increased salience of collective identities—immigrant rights activists were able to gain access to the ethnic media. Upon seemingly appropriating these news outlets, this case study shows how and why activists were able to diffuse and amplify their calls for action and frame the issue as a grave threat not only to immigrants, but to the entire Latino community. Furthermore, the chapter underscores the tactical and framing debates that took place within the movement during the protest wave. This case study shows how in the hands of activists, the mass media can help produce an impressive degree of political mobilization among its targeted population.

While the formation of broad coalitions (in a variety of facets, including ideological, racial, type of organization, etc.) was fundamental to the mobilization processes in all of the locales examined, no city had more coalitions and ethnically diverse protests than New York. Thus Chapter 4’s title: “Coalitions of Coalitions: Diversity, Alliances, and Immigrant Mass Mobilization.” Interviews with local Muslim, Christian, African, Latin American, European, Pacific Islander, Caribbean, East and South East Asian immigrant activists that helped organize and participated in the city’s 2006 actions suggest that having a more racially and ethnically

diverse immigrant population resulted in *not* all of the city's immigrant groups feeling equally threatened by the proposed federal anti-immigrant legislation, or equally invested in the proposed alternatives to it. Revealing the importance of paying attention to the unique nature of different individual immigrant group identities, I find that this diversity contributed to diminishing the city's capacity to produce the magnitude of mobilizations found in other major immigrant metropolises. Nevertheless, while facing more formidable challenges than cities with more homogenous foreign-born populations, contrary to what some established research would have predicted, this chapter also shows how local activists were able to successfully form large and diverse coalitions among different racial and ethnic immigrant populations.

The abrupt decline of the demonstrations is as important to examine as their surprising rise. Thus, while the previous and subsequent chapters describe some of the ways in which *traditional* mechanisms of demobilization—such as fractionalization, media channeling, institutionalization, etc.—led to the decline of the protests, Chapter 5 analyzes specific *nontraditional* forms taken by an additional mechanism of demobilization—*repression*—and how this mechanism contributed to the drop in immigrant contention across the country. My findings show that the defeat of the *legislative threat* followed by an increase in *other forms of threats*—state/government (e.g. raids, deportations, local and statewide anti-immigrant ordinances) and societal/grassroots (e.g. hate crimes, nativist English media coverage, etc.) repression—against immigrants and people of color of immigrant descent contributed to the decline of the protest wave.

Chapter 6, “Today We March, Tomorrow We Vote,” examines some of the empirical effects of the unprecedented series of protests. It finds that while the marches across the country did in fact contribute to blocking the passage of an anti-immigrant bill, in terms of the effort to

win legalization the marches did more harm than good by adding to the polarization of an already divided Congress. Consequently, if we judge the movement based on its stated objectives of stopping the legislative threat from becoming law and winning legalization, at best immigrant rights activists could claim a draw. At worst, the mobilizations may have even had a *negative* effect on the lives of immigrants given the increased repression that followed the demonstrations.

Yet, as this chapter shows, a thorough assessment of the impacts of the protest wave cannot be based solely on its direct effects on the movement's stated goals. The results of my research reveal that the marches had major indirect and long-term outcomes as well. Through unprecedented and strategically targeted campaigns, the immigrant rights movement helped dramatically increase the number of immigrants and their U.S.-born descendents that naturalized, registered, and actually voted in the historic 2008 presidential race. As a result, these campaigns helped elect our nation's first African-American president.

The dissertation's concluding chapter, "Dignity's Revolt," summarizes the implications of the study's major findings and underscores each chapter's, and the overall project's, theoretical contributions to the various interdisciplinary literatures it both engages with and bridges. The chapter shows how the 2006 immigrant protest wave provides some valuable insights that contribute to, complicate, and expand our understanding of social movements, immigrant, race and ethnic politics. The chapter also discusses developments in the immigrant rights movement's struggle since the 2006 protest wave to win legalization for the nation's estimated 12 million undocumented immigrants, and closes by pointing out some areas of future research on immigrant activism.

Chapter 2

**Weapons of the [Not So] Weak**  
*Asset-Based Immigrant Mass Mobilization  
in El Nuevo South*

*At a Forever 21 warehouse in Los Angeles, just days before the upcoming March 25, 2006 demonstration, male immigrant workers wrote the date and location of the protest on boxes about to be shipped out across the city. Latino truck drivers loaded then distributed the packages to local retail stores where foreign-born female employees received the merchandise and discussed—in their native language, which most of their managers did not understand—the actions with the drivers and their colleagues. In New York, immigrants of various backgrounds spread the word about upcoming local rallies through family and community networks. Days before the event, several of them spent time after work making signs and lunches for neighborhood protest participants, even if they themselves were not going to be able to take part in the actions. Across the country immigrant communities facing individual and collective threats utilized their personal, community, and workplace networks and resources to facilitate local mass mobilizations. While these networks and resources were fundamental to the large-scale collective action that occurred in each of the cities examined in this study, this chapter uses the example of Fort Myers, FL to illustrate the dynamics of this process.*

### **The Context of Closed Political Opportunities**

If demography is destiny, then it is of the utmost importance for political scientists to examine the changes that occurred over the past two decades in Southern states. For example, while Florida has historically been considered a *non-gateway* region for Mexican migration (Zuniga and Hernandez-Leon 2005, ixv; Durand, Massey and Capoferro 2005, 5), the “Sunshine State” has not been excluded from the recent rapid growth of Latino immigrants in the U.S. South. According to Mohl and Pozzetta (1996), “the number of Mexicans in Florida—about 20,000 in 1970—grew by over 600 percent to 150,000 in 1990” (411-412). The state’s

percentage of recent arrivals from all of Latin America went from 0.6% in 1980 to 6% in 2005 (Massey and Capoferro 2008, 39). According to a recent study of “the fastest-growing metropolitan areas” in the nation for Latinos, the Southwest Florida Cape Coral–Fort Myers region “rose in rank from number eight in the 1990s to number one” between 2000-2004 (Frey 2006, 7). Most of these undocumented migrants (Polopolus and Emerson 1994; Greene 2003d) have gone into the labor intensive and low-waged (Riley 2002; Bowe 2007; Roka and Cook 1998, 1, 28) agricultural (Hirschman and Massey 2008, 17), construction (Mormino 2005, 66-67), and service industries (Crummett and Schmidt 2003, 2).

In the early 2000s, the political climate in which Latino immigrants in the region lived and worked was a hostile one, as noted by a 2004 opinion poll that revealed that 77% of Latinos in the state felt that discrimination against them was a problem, one in four of whom felt it was a “major problem” (Pew Hispanic 2004, 3). These feelings were not unfounded since the state is home to some of the most militant nativist activists in the country and even has its own “Know Nothing-like” anti-immigrant political party (Beirich et al. 2008). At the individual level, most of these new immigrants were poor, worked in some of the most exploited sectors of the economy (Bowe 2007; Greene 2003a; Greene 2003b) and, since many of them lacked proper legal documentation, they also were void of a formal political voice. At the meso-level, since Southwest Florida is a relatively new destination for Mexican migration, a second generation electorate (such as Mexican-American voters in CA) and a political infrastructure (e.g. elected officials and social movement organizations<sup>ii</sup>) that could serve as political brokers, shields, and representatives for the community had not—and still hasn’t—developed.

In the early 2000s, many of Florida’s local politicians were the same growers who benefitted from immigrants as a seemingly docile and exploitable agricultural workforce

(Mormino 2005, 215-218; Greene 2003c). At the national level, the state's senate seats, along with every branch of the federal government at the time, were controlled by Republicans, the more anti-immigrant of the two major political parties. Given these conditions, it is not surprising that scholars recently found that Mexican immigrants in Southwest Florida remained segregated and were among the least politically active in the state. Again, this was largely believed to be due to the fact that many of them lacked the "power of papers" (legal citizenship) that could bring them a political voice (Griffith et al. 2001, 85-89). Researchers contended that a dearth of unity within the community was also partly to blame for the population's social and political invisibility (McDuff 2004). Thus, in the spring of 2006, all doors of political expression seemed to be shut for Mexican immigrants in the Sunshine State.

This political climate is important to note because social movement theory has suggested that having a supportive electoral base, influential elite allies, and established social movement organizations (SMOs) are all key factors in the movement building and mobilization processes (McAdam 1981; McCarthy and Zald 1977; Tarrow 1998). If this is so, then by all accounts the open "political opportunity structure" that scholars have contended as vital for the rise of large-scale collective action was constricted, if not absent for Southwest Florida immigrants. Yet, as described in detail below, lacking access to the ballot box or SMOs did not keep the close to 100,000 immigrants in the region—many of them undocumented farm workers in the peak of the harvest season—from taking to the streets on April 10, 2006 to express their political discontent against a legislative threat that would have affected every aspect of their lives.

## **Border-Brokers as Early Risers: Nontraditional Political Actors, Skills, and Resources**

The results of the previous research on political participation reviewed in Chapter 1 make the massive Fort Myers protest all the more fascinating given that the majority of immigrants who took part in the march were from poor and seemingly under-resourced and under-skilled communities. But as this chapter demonstrates, these immigrant communities *did* possess their own distinct forms of resources and *were* home to individuals (with unique types of civic skills) who played vital roles in facilitating the coordination of the huge demonstration.

### ***Actors, Skills, and Resources***

Scholars have found that immigrants are often assisted by family members, specific groups, or agencies that function as liaisons between them and their new societies (Zuniga and Hernandez-Leon 2005, xix). However, these liaisons are not limited to service organizations that assist with the naturalization process (Bloemraad 2006); unions, churches, and advocacy groups serving as political bridges to electoral politics (Wong 2006); or even children of immigrants who translate for their parents (Parke and Buriel 2006; De Ment, Buriel and Villanueva 2005 ). These *border-brokers*—who aid immigrants in crossing the various barriers, or “borders,” they face in their incorporation processes—can also be local individuals indigenous to immigrant communities who are central nodes in different types of immigrant networks. Thus, it is important to note that many of the key organizers of the Fort Myers march also served as local community border-brokers who, over the years, had assisted recent migrants in adapting to their new country of residence. These individuals were often higher-status, traditionally nonpolitical actors such as local business and civic leaders. Immigrants respected them because of their professions, bilingual skills, and/or histories of participation in local neighborhood activities.

This cast of characters included ethnic business owners of small restaurants, bakeries and grocery stores who sold things from spices and clothes to international phone cards and remittance services. They were also immigrant presidents and founders of neighborhood soccer leagues, managers of agricultural and construction workers, Spanish-language radio DJs, and owners of local weekly ethnic newspapers.

These individuals often wore “multiple hats” in their communities, as in the case of Moises from South Florida, who worked his way up from fieldworker to manager, helped start a local soccer league and a parents-of-migrant-students association, and whose family owned a popular local Mexican restaurant.<sup>3</sup> Zebedeo from Central Florida is was another person with many skills; he not only organized his area’s annual *Cinco de Mayo* parade, but was also a small “Mexican store” owner and hosted his own independent radio show called “*La realidad en la Florida.*” Other local leaders gained a certain level of status and respect in the immigrant community partly due to the fact that they were one of the few, if not the only, bilingual Latinos in their professions. For example Marcos, a Mexican-American attorney, was known throughout the region because of his bilingual skills and history of helping local residents with workplace abuse and immigration issues.

Many of the skills and resources that immigrant leaders in Fort Myers possessed were not solely acquired in their new locations. While the neoliberal economic restructuring of the Mexican economy during the 1980s and 1990s displaced traditional rural workers, it also forced many educated, urban and middle class Mexicans to migrate as well (Hernandez-Leon 2008, 3-8; Massey, Durand, and Malone 2002, 12). Consequently, most of the immigrants interviewed for

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<sup>3</sup> Though I never asked directly, throughout some of my interviews it was revealed that people mentioned by interviewees, and in some instances the interviewees themselves, either had at one time in their lives been or currently were undocumented. Because of this, for confidentiality and security reasons the real names of participants have been replaced with pseudonyms.

this chapter first came to the United States during the last two decades. One of these educated urban migrants was Tacho of Southwest Florida. He and some of his siblings were able to take advantage of the 1986 IRCA amnesty provision.<sup>4</sup> Before he emigrated, Tacho had been attending college for three years on his way to obtaining two degrees, one in civil engineering and another in English. In the United States however, he and his family worked in the fields of Southwest Florida as farm workers, and while his brothers later left agricultural work for jobs in the construction industry, Tacho stayed in the fields. By 2006 he had “moved up” and become an agricultural labor contractor, or “crew leader.” The status he’s gained among immigrants in his area is largely due to his bilingual skills, his experience as a farm worker and supervisor of countless fieldworkers, and as the president of the first Latino soccer league in his community, which his family founded close to 20 years ago.

Ana Maria of South Florida is also a college educated migrant. A school teacher in Mexico before immigrating “without papers” to the U.S., she was unable to transfer her credentials to her new country of residence despite learning English and obtaining the equivalent of a *U.S.* high school degree. Consequently, Ana Maria had few options other than farm work. While living in Texas she learned about a recruiter looking for people to pick in the fields of Florida. Though she claims that labor contractors during this period preferred to enlist male farm workers, Ana Maria was able to convince the recruiter to take her with him. Days later when they arrived at the Florida field where she was supposed to work, the grower did not believe she had done farm labor before. After demanding to see Ana Maria’s hands as proof of her work experience, he barely glanced at them and signaled to the contractor that he had no use for her.

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<sup>4</sup> The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, also known as the Simpson-Mazzoli bill, had several major provisions including penalizing employers for “knowingly” hiring undocumented immigrants and granting “amnesty” to qualifying undocumented immigrants.

Eventually, the grower and the contractor agreed to a price for the male workers, but since the recruiter “didn’t have change” he “made a deal and sold” Ana Maria for the \$60 he owed the farmer. Subsequent to witnessing and experiencing several abuses in the farm's fields, and after “becoming legal,” Ana Maria realized she could use the skills and resources she possessed from “having papers” and being bilingual to help other immigrants. Thus, throughout the 1980s she traveled around the state working with the Catholic Church and the Mexican Consulate assisting immigrants in applying for the IRCA amnesty provision. By 2006, Ana Maria had become a secretary for a local immigration attorney.

Moises, Zebedeo, Marcos, Ana Maria and Tacho are just some of the local Southwest Florida residents who spearheaded the coalition that led the Fort Myers march. None of them was a “professional activist” or SMO organizer. Yet because of the roles that these border-brokers and others like them played in the daily lives of immigrants, they were central nodes in the social fabric of their local communities. These immigrants often migrated with human capital, as well as civic and political organizing experiences gained in their countries of origins—many of the same characteristics that studies have found to be correlated with political participation, but that scholars have argued most immigrants lack. As the following section will show, the local networks, activities, and social statuses that these immigrants developed over the years in their neighborhoods and surrounding communities were key “resources and civic skills” used by them to organize the largest demonstration in the State of Florida during the 2006 immigrant rights protest wave.

## **The Rise of Immigrant Mass Mobilization**

### ***Motivations for Action: Collective and Direct Threats***

Motivating reasons given by the “early risers” (Tarrow 1998, 77), the activists who first initiated the local mobilization against H.R. 4437, are of particular interest, given that most were what scholars would consider traditionally nonpolitical actors. Unlike social movement organizations and professional activists, Southwest Florida march organizers were neither paid nor expected to invest their personal time and resources in coordinating the mass protest—yet they did so anyway. Understanding why this was so is of the utmost importance for both social movement scholars and activists, since the former are often concerned with being able to predict future social unrest, while the latter are many times interested in creating it. The majority of the Central and Southwest Florida immigrant activists (most of whom before the march did not consider themselves “activists,” but became so by virtue of their role in organizing the protest) gave a combination of reasons for deciding to participate. All of them stated the different ways in which they felt they were threatened by the Sensenbrenner Bill (H.R. 4437) as both individuals and as part of a larger group. As an immigrant construction worker and coalition member put it, “It was going to affect us directly and indirectly.”<sup>iii</sup>

### ***Collective Threat and the Cultivation of Mobilizing Identities***

Most of the Florida activists asserted that the punitive nature of H.R. 4437 was the main motivating factor that pushed them into action because “it would have been a disaster” for their communities.<sup>iv</sup> The “felonization” of people without papers and criminalization of those that assisted them was continuously stated by local coalition members as a primary reason for deciding to organize the march. One Mexican businessman remembered that the Sensenbrenner

Bill “made everyone nervous” because “it was a total anti-immigrant law.” He felt that “if you even helped someone you became a criminal...It was just inhumane...As a person you couldn’t even help someone that needed help.”<sup>v</sup> Another immigrant community leader and founder of a local soccer league contended that the “community was offended. It was worried that [H.R. 4437 was]...going to criminalize” everyone. “You weren’t just an undocumented person anymore,” he explained, “now you were an actual criminal. So the whole world reacted and said ‘No!...We aren’t criminals, we’re workers’” [emphasis his].<sup>vi</sup> Pointing out the potential (real or perceived) far-reaching nature of the proposed legislation, Rosalinda, an apartment manager and Central Florida coalition member agreed with this analysis of the bill, stating that if passed the law would have criminalized “anyone that had anything to do with undocumented people, which could have been a church, a hospital, [etc.]...It was the inhumane wording of the policy, you [couldn’t even] give your brother a plate of food because that made you a criminal.” She felt that “there was no way that we could sit back as human beings and let someone else be treated like the scum of the bottom of your shoe.” Thus, the proposed bill was interpreted as being a broad and severe threat. Activists felt it was an attack on both immigrants and the broader immigrant community’s ability to provide basic familial, neighborly, and humanitarian assistance. As a result, a naturalized citizen in the coalition expressed that she had no choice but to respond because, “the law was just made with so much hate...it was an all or nothing thing.”<sup>vii</sup>

Many activists also stated that they felt H.R. 4437 was a threat to their community’s self-worth as human beings. Revealing the importance to immigrants of having a sense of dignity while living in a foreign country, Ramona, a Honduran domestic worker in the Tampa area, explained that “more than anything I think that the law woke up in our people a feeling of not letting ourselves be humiliated, that we were worth something, and it was as if they saw us as

less, a great feeling of racism. But thank God that that helped wake up the sleeping giant that the people had inside of them. So in reality it was a good thing, they did us a favor because it united us.” A small Mexican store owner in Central Florida described the far-reaching nature of the proposed bill in stating that “the law wasn’t giving any space for relationships, for friendship, for compassion, for brotherhood. That law [had to have been] proposed by someone who didn’t realize what they were doing because...people need hope, humanity, compassion, and with that law, all human values would have been taken away.”<sup>viii</sup> Lastly, Moises, a South Florida labor contractor, remembered that people were saying, “Wait a minute. I’m not a criminal, I’m undocumented. I haven’t done anything bad. All I’ve done is cross the border without permission, but I haven’t killed anyone. I haven’t stolen anything or things like that. So when people saw they could lose all their dignity, their credibility, their rights, their personhood, they had to come out to the streets to say, ‘No! I’m not what you’re saying I am.’...That’s why people reacted. It didn’t matter [anymore] because there was nothing left to lose” [emphasis his].

Immigrants interpreted H.R. 4437 as an attack on their national origin as well. Fidelia, a South American-born female radio disk jockey who independently from the coalition helped promote the march, explained the importance and connection between one’s ethnicity and self-respect. She stated that, “Dignity is something you carry inside of you and you lose it when you stop believing in who you are. If you’re Latino and you come here and lose your roots, that’s losing your dignity. I think we have to keep our roots like blacks and Jews do. They respect and value their roots and we have to do the same.” As discussed in Chapter 1, the racialized tone of the immigration debate triggered a “reactive ethnicity” (Williams, Vasquez and Steigenga 2009, 10). Since people from Latino descent in general, but of Mexican ancestry in particular, have become the “face of illegal immigration” (De Genova 2009), many of the Mexican immigrants in

Southwest Florida felt that their particular national identities were being directly attacked. An agricultural contractor in South Florida remembered, “I think what happened was that all Latinos, not only the undocumented...felt the necessity to express ourselves in one way or another. To say... ‘We need to make a change’...That was my sentiment as a [naturalized] citizen [of the U.S.] and that’s how lots of other people felt too that wanted to send that message.”<sup>ix</sup> A restaurant owner went even further stating, “I don’t like to sound like a nationalist, but if you watch the media and when a Mexican [does something bad] it’s all over the TV and radio...They always only talk about Mexico, to criticize it, to screw it over, only Mexico, Mexico, Mexico. And [Mexican workers are] the ones that [have] contributed most to the economic development of this country.”<sup>x</sup> Thus, these immigrants felt not only that they were being discriminated against because of their race, but also that their contributions to this nation as community members and workers were being negated.

The few adult children of immigrants that participated in the coalition also felt the threat as a collective one. For instance, the only female Mexican-American mechanic of a small rural Central Florida town stated, “Our father was illegal when he first got here. [People without papers] work hard and they need to be respected...We’re all human, we’re all created the same. We [may] have different color skin, but we’re all the same, we all came from the same [God]...Don’t put us down because we have Mexican blood and because our skin is brown with black hair and brown eyes. That don’t make us bad people.”<sup>xi</sup> Marcos, the only Southwest U.S.-born group member recalled that he and his family had been “aiding and abetting” undocumented immigrants “since [I] was born...Our family [back in Texas] always helped [them out] one way or another...My mom...always made sure we didn’t give anything away unless it was to them...And I always remember my mom [who worked for the U.S. State Department]

and dad [who was a Latino Republican in the U.S. Army] being upset at how the raids would take people...It used to bother them and they'd say, 'These people are just working and they're taken advantage of.'" These feelings of group solidarity were prevalent throughout my interviews with coalition leaders. One Central American immigrant activist *with* papers, but who was previously undocumented, best captured these sentiments of linked fate (Dawson 1995). Ramona declared, "Thank God that I already had [my citizenship], but everyone [without papers] around me was scared to go to work...[And for me] to be so close to them, their pain [was like] mine. I would put myself in their situation...That made me feel as if I was the one living what they were going through. That's what motivated me to act."

The collective identity apparent in these descriptions was not limited to people in their local communities or that they personally knew. Many also stated that the marches that occurred in other cities throughout the country before the Fort Myers demonstration also inspired them and made them feel as if they were part of a larger group. Identifying with this bigger "imagined community" (Anderson 1991) is important to note given that immigrants in new destinations such as Southwest Florida are still very much minorities and often have not yet developed ethnic enclaves. Since they are usually completely excluded from the upper socioeconomic and political classes in these areas, immigrants in new migrant-receiving destinations such as the U.S. South often feel a sense of disempowerment. Consequently, the feeling of being part of a larger—and seemingly empowered—group that existed across the country helped minimize their feelings of isolation and reaffirmed their desire to act on behalf of and in solidarity with other Mexican and Latino immigrants. This demonstrates the mental and material power of imagining oneself as part of a larger collective that is geographically separated and dispersed, but cognitively grounded and united by similar experiences of state and cultural repression, a shared ethnic

identity, and the inspiration that this mental geographic remapping created during the protest wave.

For instance, Omar, a Mexican clothes store owner, recalled that the marches in other places “got all of our attention and since Florida wasn’t doing anything we said, ‘Well, [we need] to also stand up and say we want immigration reform, too.’” A soccer league president remembered that the protests in other places were “a big motivation.” He said, “When we saw there were protests in big cities, then we started to think of doing it like that too...When we saw them we identified with them, we even chose to do our march the same day as them. We wanted to be part of what was going on and felt that there had to be representation in Florida, too.”<sup>xii</sup> A founder of a different soccer league recalled, “Then there were the big protests in other states, in strong states, so the whole world was wanting to do it...People would come up to me and ask, ‘Hey what are we going to do here?... Let’s do something here, we have to...’ People on the streets, soccer players, our clients from the restaurant, the owner of the sports store told me” that they wanted to take part in a march too.<sup>xiii</sup> In all of the cities examined in this dissertation, protest organizers continuously concurred with these remarks, stating that after seeing the marches in other places on the news, family and community members would express their desire to also take part in a demonstration. Thus, pressure “from below” also motivated early risers to respond to the desires of their communities.

The media’s diffusion of the images of large rallies in other cities showed Southwest Florida immigrants not only the strength, but also the security in numbers. According to several coalition leaders, in seeing millions of immigrants—with and without papers—march in the streets without being deported or harassed by *la migra* or local police, they learned that it was also safe for them to march without any fear of repercussions. Watching these acts of defiance

and political expression from people just like them helped give immigrants the confidence to also take action. Moreover, seeing the participation of members of the Catholic Church, Latino elected officials, and nationally recognized organizations in other cities served as certifiers legitimatizing the rallies and signaling to immigrants in the Fort Myers region that it was safe to protest.

Most of these early risers had never really participated in any form of contentious politics before. Their collective identities were more often expressed through personal acts such as assisting individual co-ethnics by giving them food or advice on how to adapt to U.S. culture, helping them with money to pay for rent or send the body of a deceased loved one back to Mexico, and through cultural events such as organizing soccer leagues and annual celebrations for Independence Day and *Cinco de Mayo*. It is important to note, though, that while most had been aware of anti-immigrant laws enacted prior to 2006, *none* of these laws had motivated them—particularly the businessmen and soccer league leaders—enough to organize and publicly protest. Thus, because some degree of group solidarity was present before 2006 and these traditionally nonpolitical actors had been aware of previous attacks on undocumented immigrants, the question then becomes what was so different about the Sensenbrenner Bill and why did they feel the urgency to act this time and not before? My findings indicate that unlike past threats against the immigrant community, H.R. 4437 would have affected not only their fellow immigrant community members, but would have personally and directly impacted these border-brokers as well.

### ***Direct Threat and Personal Interest***

The Sensenbrenner Bill proposed to increase the criminalization of being undocumented from a civil offense to a federal felony; additionally, it stipulated fines of thousands of dollars, as well as the possibility of jail time, for people who aided undocumented immigrants in the most basic ways. As one protest organizer put it, “You have to understand, Sensenbrenner would have affected *EVERYBODY*...We're not talking about arresting a few hundred people...This was bigger than anything that had ever happened before. They woke that monster up” [emphasis his].<sup>xiv</sup> Nontraditional immigrant rights activists were responding not only to a *broad threat against their communities and identities*, but in opposition to a *direct threat to themselves and their personal interests* as well. For example, Marcos, the sole attorney in the coalition, admitted, “I could have been charged with multiple felonies. Most of my clients don’t have papers...At that time I counted...65–75 felony counts of aiding and abetting.” Hortensia, the small town mechanic, also bluntly confessed, “I would have been affected...for the main reason that 95% of my customers [are undocumented].” A farm labor contractor added, “In my case I don’t have a problem...I’m an American citizen so I’m not affected directly as a person...But in the area where I work, in agriculture, 99.9% of the workers are undocumented. So what would [have] happen[ed]? I wouldn’t have the opportunity to do my work without those people working for me.”<sup>xv</sup> In addition, Susana, a radio disk jockey who invited activists on the air on several occasions and consistently announced the protest on her program, also admitted that the station had a personal interest in the issue because they were a primarily “Mexican music station” with a mostly “farm worker audience” that tended to be undocumented. She said that the station would have been “really badly affected” if H.R. 4437 had become law. Listeners apparently shared the sense of urgency. The DJ recalled people calling in to radio programs and saying that if the bill

became law, they were going to get fired anyway so they might as well go to the protest and try to stop it from passing.

Immigrant-operated local businesses would have been especially impacted by a law targeting their customer base. Studies have shown that immigrant entrepreneurs are often dependent on their co-ethnic community members—who many times are undocumented—not only as a source of cheap labor but also as their primary pool of clients (Waldinger, Aldrich, and Ward 1990; Efrat 2008, 697-698; Light and Karageorgis 1997; Shinnar and Young 2008, 246; Teixeira 2001, 2067). My findings show that the business owners who formed the coalition that organized the Fort Myers protest were well aware of this dependence. Immigrant entrepreneurs clearly understood their “financial linked fate” to the undocumented immigrant population in their communities.

Despite these vital personal motives, it is important to note the difficulty in attempting to determine which of the two types of threats—collective (e.g. against their group interest as Latinos or immigrants) or direct (e.g. against their personal interest as businessmen or undocumented immigrants themselves)—was the more important of the two types of motivating factors. Both existed simultaneously. For instance, David, an immigrant business owner who was also previously undocumented, explained, “I was there before [undocumented] so I couldn’t let that happen to our community. Plus, all of my businesses have only been possible because of the community. So if the community does badly, I do badly.” Yet while both identities (as businessmen and as immigrants) previously existed together, the two had not been equally or concurrently targeted before. When first asked what motivated them to act, most immigrants gave a social justice / threat to their collective identity response. But when pressed on how they personally would have been affected by the law and what they felt was different about H.R.

4437, many expressed that the key factor was the far-reaching consequences of the law that would have affected them directly.

Noting the latter personal motives is not to say that claims of group solidarity as a motivating factor were false or nonexistent. Studies of the role of collective identity in social movements have found that people possess multiple identities—as in the case of those business owners and managers who were themselves undocumented—that are more salient at different times and under different circumstances (Della Porta and Diani 1999). For some of the immigrant entrepreneurs the direct and personal threat the bill posed to their identities as businessmen *combined* with the broader attack on their ethnic identities seems to have pushed them over the hump from moral and ethnic solidarity to a concrete willingness to act. The direct and personal threat posed by H.R. 4437 helped change these individuals' consciousness from solely a *collective identity* into the *mobilizing identity*, “an identity that includes a particular ideology [e.g. being pro-immigrant] *plus* a sense of personal agency [the feeling of having the ability and need to act]” that Garcia Bedolla (2005, 6) has shown as being vital for immigrants to take part in political activism.

Again it is important to remember that these immigrant entrepreneurs were not solely businessmen in their neighborhoods and crew leaders were not simply managers in the farm fields; they were also community border-brokers. As will be discussed in further detail in the next section, because of the services they provide, ethnic businesses in new destinations are often central nodes and meeting places for immigrant communities who are not uncommonly segregated from each other (Fortuny, Solis, and Williams 2008, 84-85; Griffith 2005, 59). Moreover, managers, whether at construction sites or agricultural fields, are many times also neighbors with and soccer teammates of their employees and coworkers. As a result, their

relationships often extend beyond the workplace. These border-brokers serve as central nodes in their communities and are seen as local leaders and confidants by immigrants to whom the border-brokers feel loyal and accountable. In fact, two of the crew leaders interviewed—who also served as presidents of their respective soccer leagues—both almost lost their jobs because of their roles in organizing their workers to strike and take part in the march.

Tacho, a crew leader and president of a local soccer league, best exemplifies the interconnectedness between one's personal interest, sense of group consciousness, and linked fate. As mentioned earlier, he and his family were among the first Mexicans to arrive in Southwest Florida over two decades ago. Tacho began as a fieldworker, but by 2006 had become a crew leader for a company that employed him for over a decade. In his interview he stated that everyone in the community knew him because over the years he had worked with so many people in the agricultural fields or played with them in the soccer leagues. He felt that because he had lived in his town for so long and had “made it” (had a family, owned a home, worked as a manager, etc.), people always went to him for advice about things ranging from personal family issues to expressing their difficulties in adjusting to life in the U.S. Although he was a labor contractor that was technically “the boss” of undocumented farm workers, Tacho unnecessarily risked—and eventually quit—his job of over a decade because of his disgust with the lack of sympathy the company owners had for their workers during the protest. He demonstrates the acknowledgment of a simultaneous dependence on and loyalty to one's workers as their manager, fellow immigrant, and community member. The following story shows the interconnectedness of the various motivations to act that resulted from both the direct and indirect threat that H.R. 4437 posed. Tacho recalled that the morning of the demonstration,

[t]hey called me to the company office and they sat me down with all the other crew leaders...One by one they went down the role asking us what we knew about the

march... They sat us in front of the owner of the company and [the supervisor] asked each one of us what we knew about the work stoppage... When they got to me I told them... “Don’t even ask me because you already know that I’m part of the movement”... [To which the supervisor replied] “The problem is that all those people that are going to the march are ungrateful... because the very people that we [the company] extend our hand to [by giving them jobs], now want to turn around and bite it.” So I [Tacho] told him, “You know what? Because of those people you’re talking about, you eat, I eat, and all of you eat... Without those people that work in the fields, this company isn’t worth anything. In the 10 years [that I’ve worked here] I’ve seen that everything this company is, is because of the fruit of the workers labor, *undocumented* people” [emphasis his]... [Then the supervisor] said “Well we don’t care, we want them all to be here [working]... You have to be on the side of the company.” But I told them, “I can’t be on the company’s side because I eat because of the people that are at the march. You guys may pay me, but those people that work for me are the ones that feed me”... They told me, they needed me there [at the job site], but I told [the boss] “Don’t count on me, I’m going to Fort Myers,” and then I walked out... They didn’t care about the people, all they cared about was their pockets. They didn’t care about the wellbeing of the people, their own workers... We care about money too, but we also have to see those workers as people.

Throughout his interview Tacho—as did other crew leaders and store owners—repeatedly spoke about how close he was to his workers’ families and how tight-knit the community was. Scholars have found that immigrant neighborhoods are often composed of dense social networks with a strong sense of community (Brown 2002; Schmidt 2007). Thus, Tacho’s story demonstrates how in the midst of a protest wave and heated immigration debate, the interconnectedness of both his personal interest as a manager and collective interest as a Latino immigrant can serve as motivation to take part in high-risk forms of activism. His loyalty to his workers (whom he saw more as *coworkers* and fellow community members) and his identity as an immigrant made him take the personal risk, and eventually pay a personal cost, for taking part in a protest in defense of his community. These actions reveal a different way of understanding the identities of some immigrant “bosses” and the relationships they have with their immigrant employees. A different social relation between them seems to have emerged by collectively affirming their dignity. The draconian and far-reaching nature of the proposed law

was an unprecedented direct and indirect threat against many of these nontraditional political actors. It attacked their personal interest, heightened the salience of their ethnic group consciousness, and in the process created the mobilizing identities that eventually motivated them to act. Their first endeavor was to form the unique coalition that coordinated the mass mobilization.

### **Coalition Formation**

Unlike the other cities examined in this study, the Fort Myers coalition was the only one that was founded and led entirely by immigrants.<sup>xvi</sup> The group was composed of two primary factions, the *Concilio Mexicano de la Florida* (CMF, or the *Concilio* for short), a group of mostly Mexican small businessmen and soccer league presidents; and the second made up of a few unofficial independent activists such as the collective that called itself *Inmigrantes Latinos Unidos de la Florida* [United Latino Immigrants of Florida] (ILUF), made up of less than a handful of individuals.

According to one of its founders, ILUF came out of a small protest in Arcadia organized by Daniel, an undocumented Mexican crew leader, and Fidelia, a radio DJ and naturalized Peruvian immigrant. The rally was in response to the 2005 REAL-ID Act, which, among other provisions, sought to prevent undocumented immigrants from obtaining driver's licenses.<sup>xvii</sup> Fidelia used her local radio program, which often focused on immigration-related issues, to promote the march and discuss the negative effects the bill would have on the immigrant community.<sup>xviii</sup> Since Mexican and immigrant activism in the area was virtually nonexistent, the few independent advocates in the region had over the years heard about each other through Spanish media or word of mouth. For instance, because he had previously received some news

coverage in the area for being an outspoken Mexican-American lawyer, Marcos was contacted and asked to speak at the rally by Fidelia and Daniel.<sup>xix</sup> In addition, when Daniel drove to Miami to visit the Mexican Consulate to ask for support for the protest, the consulate suggested he contact a woman named Ana Maria because of her long history of helping immigrants throughout the state dating back to the 1986 IRCA amnesty. After the small Arcadia rally, Daniel, Fidelia, and Ana Maria decided to stay in contact and form an unofficial group that they eventually called ILUF. Early the following year when ILUF learned about the Sensenbrenner Bill, it decided to call for a protest in Fort Myers, home of Republican Congressman Connie Mack, a supporter of the proposed law. It was at this small (about 500 people)<sup>xx</sup> late-February protest where Ana Maria said she first called for a weeklong work stoppage and rally against H.R. 4437.

The *Concilio Mexicano de la Florida*'s development followed a much different trajectory. David, the group's president, arrived in Southwest Florida in the early 1970s and started off as a dishwasher and cook, but eventually went on to establish several ethnic businesses. In the late 1990s he decided to "get involved with the community" because he and several other local businessmen saw the need to form an informal group that could help the local community with many of the issues it was dealing with. These issues included supporting local soccer leagues, creating emergency contact lists in case of an accident, and figuring out how to send bodies of deceased loved ones back to immigrants' hometowns. In response to these types of community affairs, David, several community members, and local merchants formed an informal community council. By 2006, in Clearwater alone there were close to 30 local businesses that were part of the council, along with a membership of roughly 26,000 community residents.<sup>xxi</sup> When word got out about how bad H.R. 4437 would be for Latinos, David began to

discuss with the informal community council and Filemon (the publisher of a local Spanish sports magazine) about the need for all the Mexican merchants in the region to get together to do something about the bill.

While the Clearwater-Tampa area was the first to actually form a merchant-led group, many local unofficial Mexican community leaders throughout the region had been discussing the need to do the same because they felt they lacked any form of organized representation. As a South Florida coalition member explained, “We realized that the Cubans and the Puerto Ricans had their own [organizations] and it was time that Mexicans came out and showed their face. So we said we were going to start a council of Mexicans in Florida.”<sup>xxii</sup> Another businessman in a different part of the state remembered feeling that because the more established Latino groups in the region (e.g. Puerto Ricans and Cubans) neglected the Mexican population, he and a few others, including a Spanish newspaper owner, had “been talking about having something Mexican for years now...some [type of] Mexican group.”<sup>xxiii</sup> Spanish newspapers and magazines came to play an important role in connecting not only Mexican small business owners with each other, but also in linking them with another previously untapped community asset/resource—the Central and Southwest Florida coalition of local immigrant soccer leagues.

As will be discussed in further detail later, soccer leagues in new immigrant receiving destinations are often the sole social outlets and community gathering spaces for immigrants. It’s not uncommon in Southwest Florida to see up to 500 immigrants and their families gathered together for a soccer match on any given weeknight or weekend. Local and regional Spanish-language newspapers and magazines, which are extremely popular in immigrant communities, cover events including the results of immigrant soccer league games. Zebedeo, a small Mexican store owner, described one of these local papers in the following manner: “Most people in

Florida read it. It's like a sports magazine. You could find it in all the stores for free. It covers all the soccer teams of all the different immigrant communities. It takes pictures of people [that attend the games], so people like seeing it because they sometimes see themselves in it."

Because of their popularity, immigrant businessmen use these types of local Spanish print media as their primary ways of advertising to immigrant communities (Shinnar and Young 2008, 253; Teixeira 2001, 2069). As one business coalition member put it, "In this area its either radio or magazines, so obviously we [businessmen] know all the radio and magazine guys, because if you want to target the Mexican or Latino population you [use the local Spanish media]."<sup>xxiv</sup> In addition, since team captains and league presidents are the ones that report the weekly game results back to the papers, they also have personal relationships with the owners and writers of the magazines. Thus, local Spanish print media owners were key links between local soccer leagues and local businessmen. They were the "common thread" because as they went around the state dropping off their weekly papers, they also informed local Latino business owners about the Sensenbrenner Bill and invited them to a meeting of Mexican merchants that was being planned.<sup>xxv</sup> While they eventually backed off from being *directly* involved with the organizing of the actual protest, these local and regional magazine and newspaper owners whose markets covered all of Central, Southwest, and South Florida, were the initial links that brought the Mexican social and economic immigrant community leaders together in early 2006 to form the CMF.

The first meeting convened about 30 to 40 local businessmen from different parts of the state. One attendee described the discussion that took place at this first gathering in the following manner:

We met and everyone gave their opinion about what we should do. Sending cards, sending a group to Washington, talking to our representatives [to tell them that] those of

us that are American citizens want immigration reform. But then we asked ourselves... “How many of us are actually citizens and how much political power does that make us be able to exercise?”...We found out that we were only like 2% of the population that could vote and that we couldn’t make a change in that way...Those 2% weren’t important for anything at the political level to get votes...So we looked for another strategy that would work...We decided to do something else at the level of civil society...We asked ourselves, “Where could we have an impact?”...So we said, “You know what? We’re going to stop working. We’re going to march. Nobody’s going to go to work and we’re all going to march”...We decided we would make people leave work, leave the restaurants, leave the fields, leave everywhere so that they would go and participate in the march.<sup>xxvi</sup>

At first, many of the immigrant business owners were wary about the idea of calling for an immigrant work stoppage, but supporters eventually “convinced every single one of them that it was in their best interest and benefit to stick by their people.” By the time the meeting was over they had all agreed to support a “seven day strike” in which they envisioned all Latinos and immigrants staying home from work.<sup>xxvii</sup> Because of the efforts of these initial members to convince other merchants and soccer leagues to join, the CMF eventually garnered the support of the entire regional coalition of Latino immigrant soccer leagues and over 300 Latino small business owners (the vast majority of whom were Mexican) across the state of Florida.<sup>xxviii</sup>

As the CMF promoted the stoppage in newspapers and on the radio, ILUF began to call for another Fort Myers demonstration and a weeklong work stoppage as well. After discussing it with other *Concilio* leaders, Marcos, who was familiar with ILUF from the small 2005 Arcadia rally, called Daniel and told him that they wanted to unite for the next Fort Myers protest. By early March, then, the CMF was spearheading the coalition and had begun to utilize all of its assets to promote the one-day demonstration and strike. Its quick dominance of the coalition came from the fact that, as one ILUF leader put it, “It had all the financial power.”<sup>xxix</sup> Prior to the *Concilio*’s involvement, independent immigrant activists had only been able to draw a few

hundred people to their actions. This all changed once the local ethnic businesses and soccer leagues got involved.

**Immigrant Networks in Abeyance and Asset-Based Mass Mobilization:  
Activating Preexisting Community Individual, Economic, and Social Resources**

In his classic text *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, James Scott notes the importance of autonomous social spaces created by marginalized groups for the development of political action on their behalf. He asserts that “the practices and discourses of resistance” cultivated by the oppressed cannot exist “without tacit or acknowledged coordination and communication within the subordinate group.” For this to occur, “the subordinate group must carve out for itself social spaces insulated from control and surveillance from above” (Scott 1990, 118; also see Guidry and Sawyer 2003; Kelley 1996; Harris-Lacewell 2004). Scholars of contentious politics have also noted the significance of these “free spaces” that are “defined by their roots in community, the dense, rich networks of daily life; by their autonomy; and by their public or quasi-public character as participatory environments which nurture values associated with citizenship and a vision of the common good” (Evans and Boyte 1986, 20). My research demonstrates that immigrant soccer leagues and businesses can serve these purposes in new immigrant-receiving locations. In fact, despite being socially and geographically isolated from the broader public (Massey 2008; Zuniga and Hernandez-Leon 2005), migrants in these new destinations confirm the findings of studies demonstrating that “subordinate communities residing in the most highly segregated places are often the most likely to find the privacy and cultural resources to develop oppositional cultures and oppositional consciousness” (Morris and Braine 2001, 29).

### ***The Political Abeyance of Immigrant Social and Economic Networks***

Passy contends that “networks play a mediating role by connecting prospective participants to an opportunity for mobilization and enabling them to convert their political consciousness into action” (2003, 24). It is important to note though that there are various types of networks that can serve multiple purposes in communities and are not always egalitarian or horizontal in nature (Diani 2003, 9; Diani and McAdam 2003; Escobar 2007). For example, some of the networks into which immigrant communities in Southwest Florida are organized serve economic purposes. In terms of the agricultural industry, farm workers are grouped in “crews” ranging from a handful to over a hundred workers. Each “crew” is assembled and led by a crew leader. During harvest time fields are worked by several crews of farm workers whose crew leaders are hired directly by company supervisors or farmers themselves. Thus, growers have their group of supervisors who are in charge of the collective of crew leaders they employ, who in turn hire and oversee their crews of farm workers. At every level of this workplace hierarchy, networks are established both vertically and horizontally between those above and below each worker’s particular position in the agricultural workforce. As a result, the farm workers and crew leaders who played vital roles in the Fort Myers mobilization were in a sense already organized within various overlapping networks, for economic rather than political purposes. In fact, the workforce hierarchy was arguably organized in a manner that exploited undocumented immigrant labor and insulated growers from employer sanctions laws since it was the crew leaders not the actual growers that were technically the ones hiring the “illegal labor.” Nonetheless, because crew leaders were often themselves *legal* immigrants, when they chose to they were able to utilize their ties with their undocumented coworkers in order to mobilize for the one-day work strike and demonstration.

At the community business level, new immigrant-receiving destinations are often set up in a similar manner. These immigrant communities have not yet developed official political representation so they many times function in a “*cacique* type of environment where the business owners are the center of the universe.”<sup>xxx</sup> As a member of the CMF explained, “Remember, when somebody dies and you need to send the body back to Mexico, who do [immigrants] go borrow the money from? Who do they get help from? It’s the business owners. The [immigrant] business owners in this area hold the power and key.”<sup>xxxi</sup> Immigrants visit these ethnic stores for many of their daily needs. Consequently, these businesses serve as central meeting points and information distribution centers for immigrant communities (Fortuny, Solis, and Williams 2008, 84-85; Teixeira 2001; 2067; Light and Karageorgis 1997; Light et.al. 1993). As a result, within immigrant community networks businessmen are often central nodes and carry a great deal of influence.

The horizontal and hierarchal relationships in networks can exist at a more social level as well. For instance, in immigrant soccer leagues certain people associated with the leagues (such as star players or league presidents) often acquire an elevated status and level of respect within the immigrant community (Price and Whitworth 2004, 185). In addition, as was the case with several of the men I interviewed, being league president put these people in contact with networks of team captains who were in charge of their distinct teams, which are themselves part of their own networks made up of individual players, their friends, and family members. Thus, whether they were crew leaders, construction foremen, local immigrant businessmen, or presidents of soccer leagues, these border-brokers served as central nodes in the various and overlapping networks into which their communities *were already organized*. Though these networks were set up for particular purposes—to play soccer, to perform low-skilled but high

intensity labor, etc.—their political nature was highly dependent on the motives of the individuals occupying the most central nodes in them. While immigrant networks have been found to sometimes be used for exploitive purposes (Cranford 2005; Menjivar 2000), as the remainder of this chapter will demonstrate, they can also be used as important resources and activated for liberatory means.

### ***Asset-Based Mass Mobilization***

Contrary to common belief, the under resourced and under skilled segregated locales in which immigrants reside are actually filled with various types of individual, economic, and social resources that, while they may not seem overtly political in their routine functions, can in fact become activated for political purposes when needed—such as against a broad and severe threat like H.R. 4437. Thus, rather than focusing on what immigrant neighborhoods lack and need (their “deficits”) as primary explanations for their low political participation rates, taking an “asset-based approach” (Kretzmann and McKnight 1997; Flores 1999) that highlights *preexisting* community resources better explains how immigrants in Fort Myers utilized indigenous local assets to facilitate their own mobilization process.

While resource mobilization and political process theories assert that social movement organizations and resources from external actors are vital for movement-building and mobilization purposes (McCarthy and Zald 1977; McAdam 1982), Morris contends that the “basic resources that allow marginalized groups to engage in sustained protest are well-developed internal social institutions and organizations” that “provide the community with encompassing communication, networks, organized groups, experienced leaders, and social resources” (1984, 282). My findings demonstrate that even without formal institutions (such as

the local churches central to Morris' study) and mainstream organizations (such as SMOs), the basic and preexisting assets that immigrant communities have within them are sufficient for the development of large-scale collective action. Below I explain the dynamics of exactly how mass mobilization occurred in Southwest Florida *without* the coordination of mainstream social movement organizations and external resources. The march was organized solely because of the *individual* agency of community residents, and the *economic* and *social assets* already present in local immigrant communities. In short, I show that Fort Myers was not a case in which a *social movement community* (e.g. SMOs, professional activists and organizers, outside funders, etc.) “parachuted in” with external resources to appropriate local institutions in pursuit of an outside political agenda (Gamson 1992, 62), but rather an instance of a *community in movement* using its various indigenous assets for its own self-defense and desire to demonstrate its dignity and discontent.

### ***Individual Agency and Human Capital as a Community Resource***

As stated in Chapter 1, studies of social movements, including this one, often highlight the contextual, organizational, and/or social aspects of movement mobilizations. Yet without the personal skills and agency of individual activists (Edwards and McCarthy 2004, 127-128), protests, coalitions, movement frames, and the very development of social movements themselves would not be possible. This is also true in the case of the Fort Myers mass mobilization. For example, Southwest Florida immigrant organizers drove literally hours from their homes (to as far north as Tallahassee and as far south as Homestead) to speak to crowds (ranging in size from less than a dozen to several hundred) to educate them about the potential negative effects of the Sensenbrenner Bill and to invite them to participate in the upcoming

march. Ana Maria best described the dynamics of these efforts. Her testimony is worth quoting at length:

So we [started having] different meetings in different places. I was in charge [along with several others] of doing from Homestead to Miami, Sarasota, Plant City, Tampa, Wimauma, Sun City, and Ruskin. We would get groups of people together...we started to educate people about what was going to happen to them if they didn't come out and speak up...I would just drive and stop [in places] wherever I saw [Latino immigrants] and with a megaphone would just start saying out loud, "Your attention please! You're attention please!" And then I would tell them what was going on. People would come up to me and say, "Hey, where I live there's a lot more people. Why don't you come [to speak there?]"...I would tell them that I'd go if they got me 50 people together. Then I'd try to show them how to talk to [other] people about [the Sensenbrenner Bill and the marches] so that they could then go [and do the same]...We ended up doing meetings like Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays...I had meetings in people's houses. People would come up to me and say, "Look, I could get you 20 families to come if you meet with them." And we would go...We would even go to people's work and talk to them with the megaphones. We'd just show up at construction sites and start speaking to the workers with the megaphones. [Sometimes] they would chase us out...So what we would do is wait and see if we saw a manager that was Mexican, and if we did we would talk to him and give him flyers to give to the workers for us during their lunch. They'd even ask us for more because they'd say there were a lot of people where they lived that they could give them to.

At these meetings Ana Maria would ask people what they were willing to do for legalization. She'd ask, "Are you willing to stop working for a week? Are you willing to invite 50 people to make 250 flyers and give them out in one week?" According to her, "the people themselves would commit to it. Other people would jump up and say, 'I'll do the same!'" She recalled, "I'd give them one copy of the flyer and tell them to make 250 copies from it and...[be] in charge of passing them out. I'd say, 'All of you that have family in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, call them. This law is national, call your people, tell them to look for and find other people in their areas.'"<sup>xxxii</sup> Different coalition members would go to various immigrant neighborhoods, churches, flea markets, restaurants, grocery stores, agricultural fields, and as Ana

Maria mentioned, even construction sites to hold community meetings and spread the word about the march.

One of the construction foremen that she spoke to in Sarasota was Isaías. Isaías “got the message” from various sources including Spanish-language radio and newspapers. The call for action resonated with him so he eventually went on to “speak to a lot of people in the construction industry.” He explained, “A lot of people know me in construction. I talked to them about the law and how it was going to affect us and [about] the better bills that we could fight for.” According to Isaías, “During that time there was a lot of construction work...and of course if there was work there’s Latinos there. I’d go talk to them during their lunch and break and we’d agree to a meeting place for later. So like that I spoke to tons of people. We use to have frequent meetings at the park on Sundays. A lot of times we’d meet at soccer fields too. There would be like 300 to 400 people that at the meetings.”

Up in Tampa a Honduran domestic worker and single mother of two—who had gained some political experience through volunteering for a conservative political party in her home country and participating in the struggle to get Central American immigrants Temporary Protected Status (TPS) when she first arrived to the U.S.—also helped get the word out for the Fort Myers rally. She said that at the CMF meetings people would distribute flyers and divide amongst meeting attendees the places where they would go pass them out. According to Ramona, “We’d give the flyers out everywhere, Laundromats, in the evening at night clubs, on cars...at restaurants” and other places. During the day she would go to work, “but at night I’d go to all the places I knew [Latino immigrants lived]...Sometimes I’d show up and I wouldn’t see any flyers, but other times I’d show up to a place and it was already all full [of them].”

Other examples of immigrants who migrated with valuable human capital were two of the radio DJs that helped promote the march. For example, one of them was a journalist in South America before coming to the U.S. and another had a degree in radio and television broadcasting.<sup>xxxiii</sup> These DJs possessed important media and public speaking skills that they utilized to promote the protest. Many of the college educated professionals in the CMF were extremely articulate and clever in their messaging. Explaining the strategy they used when promoting the march on the radio for close to two months, one coalition member stated, “We spent a lot of time on what the Sensenbrenner Act was. In other words, why [immigrants] should be mad, and then we started to fill them full of pride.” They would tell them things like, “This is what we give to this country... [Then] it was like, ‘Go march! Go march!’ We would end like that.” When people called into the radio stations expressing fears about potentially losing their jobs if they participated in the strike, organizers would tell them, “Look, so you lose your job. You could get a job by the next day and you guys know it’...And at that time it was true, there was so much work to go around so nobody was really scared about losing their job. The only thing we had to work on was to really rile them up, get them excited like we were excited.” The group’s goal was “to let them know that they were just as human and had just as much a right to be here as somebody with that piece of paper [citizenship]. They had sacrificed their lives for their children, they came here, they were working in the fields with pesticides, and we were trying to tell them that they should admire their [own] efforts.”<sup>xxxiv</sup>

Another individual resource that coalition members possessed was the status many of them held in their communities due to their professions, length of residency in the area, role as border-brokers, etc.—which made many of these individuals “certifiers” (Tilly and Tarrow 2006, 34) who helped legitimize “*la causa*” (the cause). Again, to understand how activists felt this

dynamic played out, it is worth quoting at length one of the college educated immigrant disk jockeys who promoted the march:

I think all the publicity gave people confidence. For example, to say that the businessman Gustavo, who everyone knows, not only supported but was participating as a main organizer—that gave a lot of people confidence. To know that the lawyer Marcos was participating and was one of the main promoters; to see that Ismael and his magazine *Aguascalientes* was promoting; to see that the sports newspaper *Los Caracoles* and its owner Mr. Filemon was supporting; to see that Mr. David, someone with papers [citizenship] and an owner of several restaurants was involved and giving support; Tacho who runs the biggest soccer league in Florida was involved; to see that Javier with the biggest Mexican boot store in all of Florida...to see that Zebedeo was on the radio talking about all of this without fear; to know that all the commercials were sponsored by all the merchants, the same merchants that were part of their community...That gave all the people the confidence to participate...because they knew we were all going to be there...that all the media was going to be there. It gave the confidence and the complete security of them knowing that the whole community was going to be there, not only the workers and the contractor, but everyone was going to be there, and immigration, or the police, or whoever [wouldn't be able to] take everyone away.<sup>xxxv</sup>

The agency and effort that people exerted to make the march happen was not limited to those in the coalition. Before and during the protest individual immigrant community members and march participants also contributed to making the demonstration a success. People would show up to meetings or call CMF members and say, “I have a lunch truck so I’m going to take it with water, ice, and sodas at this certain spot and I’ll donate it for free. Someone that sold corn just showed up and started making and giving them out to people for free...A truck came from a store with [bottles of] water and started giving them out.”<sup>xxxvi</sup> The day of the rally several neighborhood residents gathered at a local church (that was not involved in organizing the protest) to make over 2,000 plates of food to distribute to marchers.<sup>xxxvii</sup> One protest participant recalled that during the actual rally, “There wasn’t even anyone directing it, the monster was moving on its own. The stage was set and people would just jump on and talk about the movement. They’d say ‘*Ya basta* [Enough] with the abuse! *Ya basta* with them ignoring us! *Ya*

*basta* with them not passing immigration reform!’ Then they’d get off and someone else would jump on the stage. The people would respond to them saying, ‘*Yes! No!*’ [Then] they’d clap...by then there was no agenda, there was no program, everything just happened on its own” [emphasis theirs].<sup>xxxviii</sup>

The agency of individual community members, who possessed skills and experiences that they either brought with them from their countries of origin or acquired over the years while living in the U.S., was a fundamental preexisting community resource that proved vital to the immigrant mass mobilization process. Without coalition and individual immigrant community members putting in the efforts that they did—driving hours away to educate others about the issue at neighborhood meetings, going to multiple radio stations several times a week to talk about the importance of the march, developing strategies of how best to convince people to leave work, getting local store owners to support, etc.—there is no doubt that the demonstration would not have been possible. Thus, despite media pundits describing the rallies as being “leaderless” (New American Media 2006), the marches were in fact coordinated, organized, and led by local immigrants themselves.

### ***Economic Community Resources***

Edwards and McCarthy (2004) contend that the “resources crucial to the initiation or continuation of collective action are unevenly distributed within societies and among them” (118). Because of this, they point out that “middle-class groups remain privileged in their access to many kinds of resources” and that “the mobilization of...poor groups [is] quite rare in advanced industrial democracies” (117). When marginalized people do attempt to initiate collective action, resource mobilization theorists have argued that external assets from external

actors are key (Buechler 2000, 35-36; McCarthy and Zald 1977). While funders, activists and academics have all debated about the negative and positive effects that resources from external sources (e.g. private foundations) can have on the development of social movements, all acknowledge their importance (Jenkins and Eckert 1986; Bothwell 2000; Marquez 2003; INCITE! 2009; McAdam 1982). Yet movement resources do not only “come from above,” they can come “from below” as well. From the African-American cab drivers that supported and helped make the historic Montgomery Bus Boycott possible by driving local residents to their destinations (Piven and Cloward 1978, 209), to the small neighborhood businesses that helped sustain the famous 1912 Lawrence “Bread and Roses” (Cameron 1993, 128) and 1968 Memphis Sanitation Workers strikes (Beifuss 1985, 48), local communities have often provided key economic support for various forms of movement activities in their neighborhoods. These types of economic resources “from below” were also fundamental to the organizing and coordination of the Fort Myers demonstration.

In indirect ways, across the country, major U.S. corporations highly dependent on undocumented immigrant labor supported the 2006 protests by closing and allowing their workers to attend local marches. For example, the *Associated Press Business Wire* reported that “Tyson Foods Inc., the world's largest meat producer, shut five of nine beef plants and four of six pork plants in anticipation of widespread absences. Perdue Farms Inc., the nation's third-largest chicken producer, closed eight processing plants in seven states. Cargill Meat Solutions, the nation's second-largest beef processor, gave more than 15,000 workers the day off and closed plants in six states” (Carpenter 2006). Something similar occurred in Southwest Florida where several major agribusiness companies, revealing their own fear of the bill and dependence on immigrant labor, not only allowed their employees to skip work, but in a few instances even

provided buses to transport workers to the rally.<sup>xxxix</sup> The most vital business support for the mass mobilization in Fort Myers came not from big business, though, but from small local Latino immigrant merchants.

As mentioned above, the network connecting regional Spanish-language newspapers, local immigrant businesses, and soccer league representatives was the key link that initiated the formation of the CMF. After the coalition was established, members used their local certifier statuses and economic resources to help bankroll the mobilization. As one coalition member described the situation, “In our community their customers follow them. Their customers go to them for every problem. They are the little mini-leaders in our community.” If an immigrant business owner “in his store says something, it trickles down [to the rest of the community.] It’s powerful...they’re powerful in their neighborhoods.”<sup>xi</sup> One of these store owners agreed and explained that “the businessmen are the ones with the most direct contact with people. Here locally, as a merchant I’m the central contact point for everyone. I know the whole world here.”<sup>xii</sup> Research on immigrant businesses in ethnic enclaves supports these statements. Ethnic entrepreneurs have been found to use migrant networks to spread information about their businesses to potential clients and employees (Teixeira 2001; 2067; Light and Karageorgis 1997). These community economic networks serve as communication channels “along which all kinds of messages easily and inexpensively flow.” According to Light and Karageorgis (1997), these migrant network messages are particularly “credible because of the relationships of mutual trust that link members” (10; also see Light et al. 1993, 38). The local immigrant businessmen that led the CMF used these economic networks made up of immigrant merchants and their customers to promote the protest. Yet these ties were not the only economic resource local businesses utilized to gain support for the movement; they used their financial assets as well.

The more than 300 small ethnic-owned businesses involved in the CMF invested tens of thousands of dollars in the organization of the march. For example, while other members also made large financial contributions, David, the president of the CMF, said that he personally donated several thousand dollars of his own money to the local movement to help pay for things such as food, t-shirts, flyers, and transportation.<sup>xlii</sup> He said that he decided to give so much because as president of the CMF he wanted to lead by example and encourage other Mexican businesses to do the same.<sup>xliii</sup> A small Mexican clothing store owner remembered that, “We all chipped in. For example, I spent more than \$1,000 on the event. Other...smaller stores would give \$100, \$200, \$150 dollars. All my friends around here gave money.”<sup>xliv</sup> CMF members drove all across the state to gather support and donations from as many Latino store owners as they could find. “There were lots and lots of small businesses that helped. From Arcadia, Wauchula, Tampa, Clearwater, Fort Myers, Immokalee, they participated by giving food, trash bags, transporting people. Lots of labor contractors, they didn’t go to work and gave their workers the day off.”<sup>xlv</sup>

Advertising the march on local Spanish radio stations throughout the region was fundamental to spreading the word about the rally. Local merchants played a vital role in making this happen as well. As one store owner and radio DJ recalled, “We bought ads on all the radio stations. Yes they [the radio stations] helped, but how did we pay for publicity? All the local merchants of each community did. We would go and ask them for money. Not all of them were able to give, but the majority of them, mostly Mexican, supported.” Both the local businesses and radio stations that supported were convinced by CMF members that it was in their best interest to help.<sup>xlvi</sup> Zebedeo remembers “telling them why we wanted to do the march and how all of their clients were undocumented and that if they all got thrown out, they wouldn’t have any

more customers.” Protest organizers also gave the small businesses some incentives to support. For instance, the commercial that promoted the march and was played all across the region would end by listing the names of all the ethnic businesses that had sponsored the ad and endorsed the march. In addition, store owners were told, “If you give us \$300, we’ll also make you 100 t-shirts. If you give us \$500, we’ll give you 150 t-shirts with the store’s logo and the *Concilio’s* logo, and then we’ll put a nice quote in Spanish and English saying ‘We’re All Equal Under Gods Eyes’ or ‘We’re Not Terrorists, We’re Workers,’ or ‘I’m Not Your Enemy, We Want to be Your Friends.’”<sup>xlvi</sup>

While the CMF did pay for some of their advertisements, it also got a lot of free airtime and publicity from many local radio stations and print media outlets. Local magazine and newspaper owners donated sections of their papers to cover coalition meetings and inform the public about what was being discussed, why it was so important to come out and support, and what to wear and how to behave at the march. DJs would allow activists to take the airwaves, sometimes for hours at a time, to promote the protest and answer callers’ questions (the role of the media is discussed further in Chapter 3). Yet the free airtime and print publicity was not given completely for altruistic reasons. As business owners, CMF members had considerable influence over local radio and newspapers because these media outlets were financially dependent on the advertisements of Mexican businesses as their primary source of revenue. One coalition businessman revealed that they got advertisements for the protest for “two months and every single publication [was] free in this area, free space. I spend about \$80,000 on advertisement [a year] so I didn’t ask anybody. It was more like, *you’re gonna* put [this flyer promoting the march] in, right?”—and the newspaper owners would do it.<sup>xlviii</sup>

While Latino businesses contributed substantial financial resources to the movement, individual immigrants were also an economic asset leading up to the mobilization. Not only did the non-business-owner members of the coalition donate their own time and money to pay for the gas they used to drive around the state to organize people, make and pay for flyers out of their own pockets, etc.<sup>xlix</sup>, but the economic power of the immigrant population as a whole itself was perhaps *the* most dangerous weapon in the movement's arsenal. Immigrants felt that they were the driving force behind the local economy. Consequently, the very point of the April 10 work stoppage and rally was to demonstrate to the United States how vital they were to the financial wellbeing of the nation. Moreover, since agriculture is so vital to the Florida economy, growers were scared of the threat that an immigrant boycott could pose to them. Local farm owners were especially vulnerable to a work stoppage given that not only did many workers *not* fear being fired because they could easily get rehired somewhere else, but the fields were also in the peak of harvest season (Roka and Cook 1998, 33; Figueroa 2006) which meant that literally billions of dollars of crops could potentially rot if not picked.<sup>1</sup>

The goal of the immigrant strike was to “hurt them in the pocketbook,” and the larger American business community knew this. After the massive April 10 march, the threat of a one week immigrant work stoppage would have devastated the Florida economy and thus prompted several of the region's most powerful Chambers of Commerce to immediately contact CMF leaders. When a *Concilio* representative spoke to an influential businesswoman in the area, she asked him, “Do you really think you could get people to strike for seven days?” To which he replied, “You know what the scary part is? I think we could get them [the region's immigrant workers] to do anything we want right now.” Soon after, various regional Chambers of Commerce representatives called for a meeting with the CMF where the *Concilio* agreed to do

only a one day (May 1) instead of a weeklong boycott in exchange for the various local Chambers agreeing to request that their members *not* fire or intimidate any employees that participate in the strike (Figueroa 2006).<sup>li</sup>

Thus, in contrast with the stereotypical view that immigrant communities are financially deprived, my evidence indicates that immigrant communities can in fact muster sufficient economic resources needed for large-scale collective action. No external economic resources (e.g. from private foundations or national immigrant rights groups) were used to fund or coordinate the Southwest Florida protest. Estimated at 80,000 to over 100,000 people, the rally demonstrated that immigrant communities possess *preexisting* economic assets—from individual immigrant activists and protest participants to local ethnic businesses and the immigrant population as a collective labor force—that are capable of being applied successfully to the political purpose of mass mobilization.

### ***Community Social Resources***

Immigrant communities also possess non-economic resources that come in the form of autonomous local social spaces where community members congregate and interact with one another. These “social spaces play a vital supporting role” in sustaining immigrant culture and ethnic identity (Frazier and Reisinger 2006, 267, 271). One of the ways Latino culture has manifested itself in Florida and other new destinations is through the creation of the types of immigrant soccer leagues described earlier (Steigenga and Williams 2008, 114; Souza Alves 2008, 142). These soccer leagues “create a cultural space that is familiar, entertaining, practical, inexpensive, transnational, and ephemeral, where immigrants gather to reaffirm their sense of identity and belonging” (Price and Whitworth 2004, 168). Soccer is also a family and community

affair in many immigrant enclaves. For instance, at soccer matches not only do several of the same types of ethnic businesses mentioned above sponsor many of the teams and games (Price and Whitworth 2004, 181), but the women in the community also regularly sell food on the sidelines or take part in their own all female teams, children watch or participate in their own youth leagues, and spectators socialize with each other and share information about jobs, housing, news from their home countries, etc. (Steigenga and Williams 2008, 114; Price and Whitworth 2004). While scholars have pointed out both negative and positive effects associated with this particular social/cultural space (Delgado 1999; Muller and Van Zoonen 2008), soccer leagues are nonetheless “vital yet underappreciated nodes of immigrant social networks and place-making activities” (Price and Whitworth 2004, 168).

Case studies examining the tactics and strategies of immigrant rights organizations have demonstrated that these leagues and games can also be used for political means. For example, as in this study, soccer league leaders have been found to be vital links in getting team members to take part in political actions. Leagues have served as key recruiting grounds for immigrant rights SMOs and union organizing drives and games have been central places where activists can distribute important information about the rights of immigrants and campaigns that they could take part in (Fine 2006, 55-56; Gordon 2005, 118). Thus, local community soccer leagues can serve as the “social spaces insulated from control and surveillance from above” that Scott (1990) contends subordinate groups “must carve out” for themselves in order to coordinate and communicate their “practices and discourses of resistance” (118). As I demonstrate below, this seems to be the case with regard to the role the leagues played in the Fort Myers protest.

One local coalition member jokingly stated that “Mexicans come to the U.S.” for three reasons: to “work, send money back, and [play or watch] soccer.”<sup>lii</sup> To understand how central

soccer leagues are to Southwest Florida immigrants, it is important to point out that in a sense it is misleading to refer to the places where immigrants live as “immigrant communities,” in that unlike in other historic immigrant receiving destinations (such as L.A. or New York), full-fledged Mexican “ethnic enclaves,” as defined by Portes and Rumbaut (1996, 21), have yet to develop. Because of this, soccer leagues have become the central gathering and socializing spaces for immigrants throughout the region. As one league president described, “Here we live differently, we don’t have complete neighborhoods here like in other places. Here we hardly see each other. On weekends the only time we gather, besides church, [is] the soccer field.”<sup>liii</sup> Another league founder agreed, adding that soccer “is one of the ways we’ve been able to gather, unify, bring our people together and organize them.”<sup>liv</sup> In one locale, “the soccer league emerged out of necessity. People needed a way to relax or to find some type of escape for the community. When people get here [to the U.S.] they think that the only thing you do here is work and then go home...In this community, there’s no Latino theatres or areas with big stores that relate to our countries.”<sup>lv</sup>

Because of the sport’s importance to community members, league founders and presidents feel they have a certain responsibility to their fellow immigrants, and are held in higher esteem. Again, it is worth quoting a league president at length.

The reason why I got involved [with the marches] was because despite my family and me not having any problems with our papers, there are people that earn their bread working very difficult jobs [here] and that make their living honestly...And every Sunday I see that people are just waiting to come release their stress on the soccer fields...That’s the reason why I got involved more than anything...I have lived and worked with these people...for 18 years in the soccer league...People [that] always come and ask me about my opinion on things...I don’t consider myself a community leader, but because I know these people so well I feel obligated to them. If you come around here and ask for the ‘Soccer Man,’ everyone [knows it’s me]...That’s what’s happen over the years because I’ve lived here so long. So I try to give them advice on things at soccer meetings.<sup>lvi</sup>

Thus, given their important role as border-brokers in their communities—as coworkers, bosses, confidants, league leaders, etc.—it should come as no surprise that once all the various soccer league presidents throughout the region decided to join and support the march, “the soccer leagues [became] the seedbeds of the movement.”

Each league can have several hundred to over a thousand members. For instance, in Palmetto “when there was still construction work, we had more than 76 [adult male] teams, 10 for veterans, 12 women’s teams and more than 1,500 players in this league alone...All together we were close to 100 teams.”<sup>vii</sup> Tacho, the president of the more than 10,000-member *Coalición de Ligas Hispanas del estado de la Florida* (Florida State Coalition of Hispanic Leagues), contends that after meeting with all of the region’s league presidents and getting them to support the march, they each went back to their respective communities to organize the various teams in their leagues to participate. It is important to point out that both the players and the league presidents were taking substantial risks as individuals and as a collective in participating. Not only had many of them struggled just to establish their local leagues in their predominately white and many times nativist communities, but since several of the players were undocumented they were also risking the possibility of deportation. Despite these dangers, CMF soccer league representatives said that the vast majority of teams and players still wanted to take part in the march. One league leader recounted, “When I met with the soccer coaches I warned them that this could potentially change things in the league. This could maybe cause a raid on the soccer field because they [immigration officials] knew I was there and was helping direct things [for the march]...I asked them if they were in agreement, that I’d represent them and that if they didn’t agree that it was ok and that we didn’t have to participate. So we spoke about it and everyone

was in favor and said they wanted to participate.”<sup>lviii</sup> A different league president who was undocumented recounted what happen when he met with the teams in his league in the following manner, “We’re undocumented [he and everyone in his family] and lots of the players don’t have papers either, [but] even if they did have papers they came to support [the protest].” He explained, “Every Sunday I have meetings with representatives of the teams, so we made flyers and when they came one Sunday I told them that they had to support...[and] all of the community and all the players supported” by taking their wives and children with them to the rally.<sup>lix</sup>

It is important to note that these soccer players—most of whom were also agricultural workers—and the friends and family members that watched them play every week, were the same people that were hearing on the radio and reading in their local newspapers about the harsh nature of the Sensenbrenner Bill and the need for them to come out and protest against it. Oliver and Myers (2003) have found that “social influences between groups increase and deepen information flows beyond the information presented in the mass media” and that the “messages delivered to individuals by their personal contacts and by the media can also reinforce each other during the critical time when the individual is presented with an opportunity to decide whether or not to act” (184-185). This is what happened in Southwest Florida with regard to the 10,000 immigrant soccer league members. They not only heard calls for action from their local Spanish radio and print media outlets, but those invitations were then reinforced by highly respected people with whom they had personal relationships, such as their team captains and league presidents. That they would respond to these calls for action is consistent with other research demonstrating that Latinos are more receptive to calls for political mobilization by co-ethnics and people they know (Michelson 2005; Garcia 2003, 92). The more important finding here,

though, is the fact that “from Central to Southern Florida” the “soccer leagues were the seedbeds of the movement” to oppose H.R. 4437.<sup>lx</sup> This provides another example of how a preexisting community asset / resource was utilized in the process of the large-scale mobilization of migrants.

### **The Decline of Immigrant Mass Mobilization**

Social movement scholars have found that the decline of mobilization can be attributed to a variety of factors, such as internal divisions within a movement, concessions, cooptation, and disillusionment. Several of these “mechanisms of demobilization” (Tilly and Tarrow 2006, 97) were also present in the Fort Myers movement. Ironically, many of the same factors that led to the formation of the coalition and success of the mobilization also contributed to their demise. Again, the themes of both direct and indirect threat came up in my interviews when asking activists why they felt they were not able to muster the same level of support for the second national day of action (the May 1 “Day Without an Immigrant / Great American Boycott”) as they were for the first (the April 10 “National Day of Action for Immigrant Justice”). In the last sections of this chapter I examine the factors that led to the decline in the local movement’s ability to mass-mobilize, then briefly discuss some of the aftermath, effects, and implications of what the Southwest Florida march can teach us about the dynamics of mass mobilization.

As was the case with the other local movements examined across the country, subsequent to the success of the first major march, divisions about tactics and strategies that were present *before* the demonstration became more salient *after* it. Also as in the other cities, certain coalition members’ “egos” caused tension within the coordinating group. Describing one of the most active ILUF leaders, one CMF member recalled that after the protest, Daniel became “like

a little god” in the farm labor camps and “started walking around like it...I noticed a change in him.”<sup>lxi</sup> Apparently, once the Spanish and now English media saw the amount of people the coalition was able to put out on the streets, “Everybody wanted the credit for everything.”<sup>lxii</sup> Since there was no set protocol on how to or who should deal with the media (which was now *coming to them* instead of *visa versa*), various coalition members independently began to make public claims about plans for future actions that the coalition had not yet agreed upon. Also, similarly to what happen in Los Angeles (the other case study location with a majority Mexican Latino population), some non-Mexican members complained about the “nationalist” and “majority rules” beliefs of several coalition leaders.

ILUF suffered the loss of one of its founding members, who was also one of the most active radio DJs, because, according to her, ILUF became too Mexican nationalist and people in the group felt that since Mexican immigrants were the majority in the area, the main and most visible leaders of the organization should also only be Mexican.<sup>lxiii</sup> The *Concilio* also lost one of its most important certifiers, and only connection to the English language media, when the Mexican-American (whose parents were immigrants) in the group suggested “mainstreaming” the coalition (expanding it to include non-Mexicans and non-immigrants) and was called a “damn gringo” at a meeting for doing so. He never returned to the CMF after the insult.<sup>lxiv</sup> Thus, instances of what had become an overly nationalist form of “group consciousness” turned some of its most important allies away from the local movement.

Collective identity also contributed to internal divisions within the coalition in another manner. While both the *Concilio* and ILUF had been calling for a weeklong work stoppage since February, the fact that the national movement was proposing only a one-day boycott on May 1 gave the already weary businessmen within the CMF a reason to pull out of their initial

weeklong commitment to strike. “We were starting to listen and we noticed that national [the national movement] is not gonna go seven [days], national is talking about one day and we start getting a lot of slack [from] the business owners [who were] worried.”<sup>lxv</sup> Another CMF participant remembered, “What happen was that certain people said we weren’t going to do a week after all, we’re only going to do one day because the television said only one day...It was the media, when they saw we were serious about doing it for a week they started to change it [on us]...The media started working the people...I remember it started in California, they said we were going to stop for only one day after all.”<sup>lxvi</sup> According to several coalition members, “that’s when the divisions started.”<sup>lxvii</sup> Thus, this negative-movement diffusion, which had the effect of helping create a downward scale shift in contention, contributed to one of the main factors that my interviews on both the East and West Coasts revealed as being a divisive issue within local coalitions—how to go about participating (or not) in the May 1 “Day Without an Immigrant / Great American Boycott.” On top of these factors, as I explain below, both direct and indirect threats also influenced the decline of the local movement.

### ***Collective Threat, State and Societal Repression***

As discussed further in Chapter 5, my contention is that scholars should begin to research and theorize about how several forms of state (e.g. raids, deportations, anti-immigrant ordinances) and societal (e.g. firings and employer threats of calling I.C.E., anti-immigrant hate crimes, explicitly nativist and/or sensationalized media coverage of immigration issues) repression can impact immigrants’ efforts at initiating and sustaining collective action (also see Gonzales 2009, 52). While it is difficult to prove the state’s motivation for employing the above tactics without government leaders admitting their intentions, what scholars *can* examine are the

consequences that these state and societal actions have on activists' mobilization strategies and how receptive their target audiences are to them when dealing with these forms of repression. Hence, we must expand our understanding of what constitutes repression to include state and societal actions that not only are intentionally meant to be repressive, but also those that regardless of their motivations have suppressive anti-movement effects and consequences.

As briefly mentioned above, and illustrated in subsequent chapters, while Spanish media was fundamental in spreading the word about the need to mobilize against H.R. 4437, it also served this function with regard to creating a sense of fear in the Southwest Florida immigrant community through its reporting of various instances of state and societal anti-immigrant backlash and repression. For example, in terms of *state repression*, a Central Florida coalition member described the community's feelings of uneasiness by asserting that, "People were in panic...because of the fear that started with the raids and massive deportations."<sup>lxviii</sup> Another South Florida CMF member contended that, "After the marches the attacks on the community increased. I think [it was] because they got worried that we were so many and they hadn't really realized that that many people [immigrants] lived here...They needed in one way or another to stop or control [us]...so they found those ways to attack us."<sup>lxix</sup>

Several coalition leaders recalled community members telling them that they thought the increase in immigration enforcement was a result of the marches. Yet when asked if any raids had occurred after the protests in their own particular communities, almost all said no. Nonetheless, most asserted that the fact that people were hearing all over the news about raids in other states and cities created a feeling of insecurity within immigrant communities, even if they didn't personally know anyone that had been affected by them. Thus, the same media coverage of the marches that had created a feeling of "security in numbers" through showing other

immigrants “like them” marching across the country without being deported, also contributed to the creation of a sense of *insecurity* once immigrants were back in the isolation of their small Southern towns, individual homes, and workplaces.

One agricultural labor contractor described what happened in the following manner: “[For] immigrants and undocumented people that work in the fields...during that time nothing was happening to them...there was no Immigration after them...We had never been impacted by raids until the media started scaring people.”<sup>lxx</sup> A radio DJ confirmed these fears, stating in an interview that after the protest people started to call the radio station constantly to report what they thought (inaccurately) were raids occurring or about to happen when they’d see some type of government looking officials in their neighborhoods. This happened so much so that eventually the station stopped reporting the claims until they were able to confirm them because the mistaken information was fostering a sense of fear within the community.<sup>lxxi</sup> Despite the fact that raids *did not* occur where Southwest Florida coalition leaders lived, immigrants’ fears were not completely unfounded. According to a report published by the Human Rights Immigrant Community Action Network, there was indeed a sharp increase in raids all across the country during and after the 2006 marches (NNIRR 2008). In fact, as part of I.C.E.’s “Operation Return to Sender,” in September of 2006 immigration officials conducted the largest raid in Southwest Florida’s history when they arrested 163 immigrants from Naples to Fort Myers (Mills 2006).

These forms of state repression reported by the Spanish-language media weren’t the only types of backlash that collectively threatened undocumented immigrants. There were also several forms of *societal repression* that contributed to the sense of terror that developed among the foreign-born. At the employment level, it is important to mention that several immigrants *did* get fired from their jobs for not showing up to work and taking part in the local march. In addition,

the major agricultural companies that supported their employees' participation in the initial Fort Myers demonstration were not willing to keep supporting worker strikes, especially a seven day one in the middle of the harvest season. Some even attempted to create divisions amongst their employees and prevent them from participating by offering to pay some workers extra money if they didn't go to the march.<sup>lxxii</sup> While activists mentioned that the media did cover the firings, perhaps more important to fostering the sense of fear in immigrant communities was the rise in anti-immigrant hate crimes that happened all over the nation (LCCREF 2009, 14; Mock 2007; Hsu 2009). Though I was not able to substantiate the claims, according to one community leader, Southwest Florida was not excluded from this trend. He said, "I think that we woke up the racism in Americans. Since [the marches], there's been several Latinos attacked regularly by both blacks and whites and they've even killed some. We believe its racial resentment...and unfortunately its [immigrants] that make the products for them at McDonalds that allows them to buy their hamburgers for 99 cents."<sup>lxxiii</sup> Thus, local community leaders felt that the same mass media coverage that helped unite and mobilize the immigrant community also may have had the effect of mobilizing a nativist backlash against them at both the national and local levels. News coverage of this anti-immigrant repression created a context less receptive to subsequent calls for action.

There were also other more "everyday forms" of societal repression mentioned by Southwest Florida protest organizers, such as a store owner refusing to sell to customers that couldn't "prove they were in the country legally."<sup>lxxiv</sup> One local merchant even claimed that because of their central roles in the demonstration, "Lots of the members of the *Concilio* after the protest...were targeted by the government and sent [IRS] audit notices" which "really discouraged a lot of them" from continuing to participate.<sup>lxxv</sup> Hence, Southwest Florida coalition

leaders asserted that a combination of state and societal anti-immigrant repression fostered a sense of collective threat and fear in immigrant communities that contributed to creating a much less hospitable mobilizing environment for them (see also Chapter 5). As one organizer put it, “We said no more marches because we were scared that there would be some confrontation, that some anti-immigrant group would attack us, or that even some crazy would come and shoot us...So I was really nervous for the safety of my people that something like that would happen.”<sup>lxxvi</sup>

### ***Direct Threat and Personal Interest***

By late April it was clear that the Sensenbrenner Bill was not going to pass, at least not as it was originally proposed. The movement both nationally and locally had shifted its focus from demanding that the broad and severe threat (H.R. 4437) be stopped to fighting for the legalization of the over 12 million people living without papers in the United States. It is unclear if this played a role in the businessmen of the *Concilio* choosing to back away from the seven-day economic boycott that they had initially proposed. What is clear, though, is that one of the main driving forces behind the April 10 march—with their local community status as border-brokers and certifiers, and ability to generate local social and economic resources—no longer supported the weeklong work stoppage.

CMF members gave several reasons for this change of heart. Many of them claimed to want to be in solidarity with the national movement that was calling for only a one day boycott. Others expressed that soliciting people to come out and risk deportation and losing their jobs again would be irresponsible and asking too much of them. “We already did what we had to. We demonstrated our people’s face and they’ve [the broader American public] seen it. But we can’t

keep risking our people because...we're not going to feel good about it if something happens to someone on the streets...Or if they keep firing people, how are you going to justify a family being left without a job and not be able to sustain themselves?"<sup>lxxvii</sup> They felt that they had made their point clear—that immigrants contributed to and were part of American society and that they disapproved of the Sensenbrenner Bill. All of these are legitimate reasons for deciding not to support an upward scale shift in the level of movement militancy. But the threat against the personal self-interest of immigrant merchants—who to be fair had already invested tens of thousands of dollars in the first one-day boycott and had the most to lose financially from a seven-day work stoppage—also seemed to have played a role in their decision not to support the weeklong strike.

According to one of the main ILUF leaders, "What happened was that when people started being willing to stop working for a week, I said let's do it so that the *gringos* could hear and they way up in Congress and the Senate, they'll say 'Wow, [if] they're going to stop for a week, they're going to screw-up the economy, let's do something'" about legalizing them.<sup>lxxviii</sup> But then, "the *Concilio* started saying, 'No lets tell people just to buy from us [Latino businesses] because we all know that Walmart isn't going to close. The people are just going to end up going to the American stores because they aren't going to close. Why don't we just tell our people don't go to American stores, just shop at our stores?'"<sup>lxxix</sup> According to ILUF, CMF members went as far as even offering to "pay...all of us [that supported the seven-day boycott] for all the money we had [already] spent" on advertising the work stoppage.<sup>lxxx</sup>

A local merchant that was part of the coalition admitted, "We talked about the economic situation of all the stores, we thought that stopping for a week or two would cost too much. In the end, the businessmen said no, hold on."<sup>lxxx</sup> The CMF president confirmed this stating that they

didn't think it made sense economically to boycott the very immigrant store owners who were supporting the movement. He was in favor of the boycott personally, but only of the larger American businesses (e.g. Burger King, Walmart, etc.).<sup>lxxxii</sup> The hesitancy of immigrant businessmen to shut down their operations while donating money to the movement was actually present before the April 10 march. In fact, one of the coalition's biggest donors himself at first refused to close down one of his largest businesses the day of the protest. When some of the non-business members of the coalition found out, though, they threatened to boycott him as well.

According to Rosalinda:

We actually boycotted businesses here in town that didn't close and allow their workers to go. We [even] put signs out in front of the stores, Mexican stores [too]...A store owner that we boycotted was even one of our biggest supporters...He has a restaurant down here, plus a store, plus a *tortilleria*, he has over 300 workers. For the [April 10 Fort Myers protest] he didn't close [so I called the local news media on him]...He told me, "You're nobody to tell me what to do. I could do what I want. I've donated thousands of dollars that you can't." And I told him, "I don't care what you've given or haven't given, you better close this place down or we'll be here boycotting." And sure enough, [he closed] and was there [at the march], even his daughter was there with him.

Nonetheless, despite pressure from boycott supporters in the coalition, most of the businessmen within the *Concilio* were no longer willing to support the weeklong work stoppage. Moreover, several other forms of self-interest within the coalition also emerged. According to one CMF member, "You're talking about business owners and what do business owners care about? Business owners care about money and they wanted to start putting out propaganda, like a little *Concilio* directory, every *Concilio* member putting in \$500 bucks to make a directory of Mexican businesses and do these parties...it was all about the money."<sup>lxxxiii</sup>

Because of the alleged lack of unity within the immigrant community and explicit lack of unity within the coalition to support another demonstration and weeklong economic boycott,

some of the main leaders in the group thought it would be wise to “negotiate” with the local white American business community—the various regional Chambers of Commerce discussed above that asked them not to go ahead with the seven-day boycott. CMF leaders said they hoped to minimize some of the social backlash they worried might result from the escalation of movement militancy.<sup>lxxxiv</sup> While they gave different accounts of how this “compromise” came about—the person that made the agreement claimed that he had permission from the rest of the group to “cut a deal,” while several non-business coalition members stated that he made the deal without everyone’s permission—the result was an increase in tension and division within the movement. Tellingly, supporters of the week long boycott—both within the *Concilio* and broader coalition—were mostly the non-business owners. They felt that the failure to keep their promise of a seven-day work stoppage when growers were the most vulnerable made them lose credibility with the immigrant masses, the government, and the American corporations they were targeting.

Our failure was that we didn’t do what we said we were [going to do]...We had agreed that we were going to not work for seven days, a week. We were in the peak of harvest, in an industry that is worth millions of dollars. In the middle of harvest for tomatoes, in the middle of harvest for oranges in Central Florida, we were in the middle of harvest season for all of Florida. When you talked about the question of who needs these workers most, it was California and Florida...These states had the power [in Congress] to say we need these [immigrants]...Who had more to lose, them or undocumented workers? They were the ones that would have lost out. That’s what would have showed them how much they needed [immigrants] because everything would have been stopped...One day [wasn’t] enough to demonstrate what a week could have.<sup>lxxxv</sup>

Thus, it seems as if after the success of the Fort Myers march their identities as businessmen became more salient than their collective ethnic group consciousness. This doesn’t mean that they didn’t care about the issue of immigrant rights anymore, but the initial broad and direct threat of H.R. 4437 had passed and they felt that the strategy of a seven-day boycott would

not work and weren't willing to lose more of their financial profits trying it. ILUF kept calling for more protests despite not having the CMF's support. But without the pressure from the immigrant business community, the local Spanish media also decided not to endorse the weeklong strike. As a *Concilio* member explained, "Remember, business owners buy advertisement space. Here's the difference, people like ILUF weren't giving anyone any [advertisement] money... If you're a radio station and you piss me off, I'm gonna pull my advertisement...So the radio stations went the opposite way and they were telling people no boycott. They were crushing the idea" of the seven-day strike.<sup>lxxxvi</sup> Consequently, much like before the *Concilio* joined the coalition, ILUF and the boycott supporters had only minimal success with their subsequent actions. Without the social and economic influence of the CMF, the personal agency of a few hardcore activists wasn't enough to mass-mobilize immigrants again.

### **Protest Aftermath and Movement in Abeyance?**

Several of the factors that contributed to the creation of divisions within the local coalition could be attributed to the fact that there seemed to be no stabilized permanent structure to the group. Fights over who was responsible for money raised by individual coalition members, how decisions within the coalition should be made, and how much autonomy each person within the group had were all related to the decentralized, fluid, and ad hoc nature of the coalition. These features were assets in the initial mobilization process. But as the coalition grew and as the focus shifted from what they were all *against* (H.R. 4437) to what they were individually *for* (and how best to go about getting it), the group's cohesion proved to be unsustainable. Unlike professional social movement organizations (SMOs) who usually have stable (to some degree)

sources of funding and an often hierarchal but consistent decision-making process, the informal nature of the Southwest Florida coalition of nontraditional political actors was unable to sustain contention. Thus, while permanent and official organizations were not needed to initiate the rise of migrant mass mobilization in Southwest Florida, SMOs or some type of more permanent and stable organizational structures may still be required for the sustainment of contention that defines full-fledged social movements.

The fact that most of the main players in the coalition were political novices also may have contributed to the disillusionment that followed the protest. Many activists said that they and their local immigrant community members were disappointed that the mass mobilization didn't win them legalization. Over and over again, immigrant leaders expressed that they thought they would "at least" get driver's licenses out of the march. Their lack of understanding of not only whom to target in order "to get driver's licenses," but also of how immigration policy is made in the U.S., led many of them believe that a single protest *would be* enough—yet it obviously wasn't. Those members who felt that, for victory, votes were more important than protests, were also disillusioned given that they knew that most of the protest participants and local immigrant residents lacked proper legal documentation and thus were unable to vote. Unlike in other cities where there existed a large *documented* immigrant population that was eligible for naturalization and voter registration, the Southwest Florida immigrant community was practically excluded from the national movement's strategy of mobilizing the Latino and immigrant vote (see Chapter 6).<sup>lxxxvii</sup>

Despite these setbacks and disappointments, there were also some important events that took place after the march that demonstrated that while *national immigration policymaking* might have been beyond their direct control, immigrant rights activists could still have an impact

on their *local politics of immigration*. For instance, in one small Central Florida town, after the marches local police began to set up checkpoints to harass the undocumented immigrant population. When former coalition members began to get phone calls from local residents about this, they went to where the police were halting drivers and took pictures of them stopping only immigrants. According to these activists, this made the police furious, forcing them to start stopping *all* drivers after allegations of racial profiling were made. The police eventually stopped conducting the checkpoints altogether.<sup>lxxxviii</sup>

Local Spanish media was also mobilized to address some of the protest backlash. For instance, when the City of Fort Myers alleged that security for the demonstration ended up costing it over a million dollars, and anti-immigrant residents started saying that the organizers should pay because it was a waste of their city tax dollars, immigrant rights activists took to the airwaves again. As Ana Maria recalled, “I went on the radio and said, ‘All my people that are listening, we’re going to tell you where each of you could stop and leave one dollar. If we were 80,000 people [at the march], then we could pay the city what they’re charging us.’” After the announcement was made, “People started calling and saying, ‘Don’t worry, I’ll give you \$100! I’ll give you \$1,000! I’ll give you \$500! I’ll give you \$200!’...People would call and say ‘Where should we pay? Where could we mail it? We could pay that and more.’ It was beautiful, really beautiful.” The radio waves were used in other ways as well. For example, after the march when people started reporting being fired, coalition members would “go on the radio and say, ‘If they fired you from your job, call us and we’ll help you find a job. And if you don’t have a job, we’re going to pay, give you some money to help you out’...Financially we helped [about 6 families] for one or two weeks, but right away people would react and call the radio and say, ‘I have work,

tell those guys to come here because I have work for them.’ The people responded. It was incredible.”<sup>lxxxix</sup>

Immigrant merchants used their local economic muscle as well to respond to both the inaction and negative reaction they received from a few local non-Mexican Spanish media outlets. For example, when a Caribbean radio DJ was making fun of the lack of results the marches produced, one former *Concilio* member organized all the local Mexican store owners that sponsored the station to pull their advertisements. In another case, because a white American-owned local Spanish-language newspaper had refused to support the CMF leading up to the march, this same *Concilio* member started a campaign to persuade the Mexican businesses not to allow the free newspaper to be distributed in their stores. In both of these instances the owners of the media outlets eventually apologized and offered to start letting the local Mexican business community announce important community events free of charge.

Thus, these are just some of the many stories activists recounted about the local struggles that took place during and after the marches. As shown from the examples mentioned above, using some of the same local individual agency (through their “cop watch” tactics), local media (helping fired protest participants find jobs), and local economic influence (being promised more sympathetic future press coverage), Southwest Florida immigrant activists were able to influence some of their local politics of immigration.

### **Conclusion and Summary**

In conclusion, this chapter has demonstrated that immigrant communities, even in the “Deep South,” contain the capacity for large-scale collective action. In response to a broad and severe threat to both the collective identities and individual interests of immigrants, *preexisting*

local individual, economic, and social community resources were sufficient for the initiation of the rise of immigrant mass mobilization. The personal risks immigrants took were also lessened by the fact that ethnic media outlets broadcasted the literally millions of examples across the country of people just like them, many of whom were undocumented, taking the same risks without suffering any consequences. Through the efforts of local border-brokers and community networks of immigrant soccer leagues and small businesses, between 80,000 and over 100,000 migrants protested against H.R. 4437. Together, these factors combined to make the Fort Myers protest the biggest in the State of Florida (with more people attending it than in rallies in major cities such as Miami, Orlando, and Tampa) and one of the largest in the national protest wave.

Nonetheless, the high level of mobilization could not be sustained. Due to a change in context (the broad and severe threat had narrowed), internal divisions, and a combination of state and societal forms of repression, the regional coalition that had organized the first major march was not able to remain united. The immigrant masses were unwilling to continue to come out and put themselves at risk during subsequent calls for action because of fear fostered by the Spanish media, the same media outlets that initially helped mobilize them. Nonetheless, it is important to note that the original cause for protest, the Sensenbrenner Bill, was stopped by the protest wave across the country (discussed further in Chapter 6). And while immigrant activists *were not* able to win the *national war for legalization*, using their same preexisting local community resources local residents *were* able to win several *local immigration battles*.

Unlike in other social movements, no national organization “parachuted in” with its resources to organize the mass mobilization and then left. *All* of the local community assets utilized, and most of the people that helped mobilize, are still present in these locales. In fact, several protest organizers stated that as a result of the marches, not only do they know what they

are capable of doing and how to do it, but their networks are tighter now than ever before. As one soccer league president described it, the experience of the protest “brought everyone from the soccer league community closer together....Whenever there’s a problem, now people come together to talk about it. Or if anyone ever sees like someone they think might be from Immigration, people will call each other to let everyone know where they’re at. These things have become normalized in the community.”<sup>xc</sup> Thus, given that all the elements that were needed for the rise of migrant mass mobilization still exist within these communities, it might be more fitting to describe the situation of the local movement not as a passed or failed one, but as a “movement in abeyance” (Taylor 1989) with the potential to rise up again when needed and if the conditions are right.

Chapter 3

**It's the Media, *Estupid!***

*Ethnic Media and Immigrant Mass  
Mobilization in Los Angeles*

*From coast to coast, during the 2006 national protest wave, immigrant rights activists gained unprecedented access to ethnic media outlets which they used to frame the issue of the Sensenbrenner Bill and broadcast their calls for action against the proposed legislation. For example, in Southwest Florida, local Spanish magazines, newspapers, and radio stations reported on the severity and potential negative impacts of H.R. 4437 on documented and undocumented immigrants. These news outlets disseminated the information discussed at local rally-planning meetings and encouraged people to participate in the April 10 demonstration held in the city of Fort Myers. According to Chung-Wha Hong, Executive Director of the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC), the ethnic media was also an indispensable mechanism used to promote the protests that took place in the Empire City. The strategy of New York organizers was to saturate and marshal the ethnic media's entire "communications infrastructure with information about [the] rallies" (Miller 2006). The following chapter draws on the case study of Los Angeles, CA, to expound on how local organizers in this city appropriated multiple channels of mass communication and used them for political purposes.*

### **Ethnic Media and Civic Journalism**

Throughout American history, from the African American newspapers that fought to abolish slavery and counter negative stereotypes of blacks, to the hundreds of foreign-language newspapers published by European immigrants during their period of mass migration (the late 1800s to early 1900s) that sought to present their particular communities "in a positive light" and politically mobilize them when they deemed necessary, ethnic media has been used by minorities as a key tool in their struggles for social justice (Castaneda and Campbell 2006). Its record in the Latino community is no different. Since the invasion and annexation of half of Mexico during

the mid-1800s (Acuna 2000), “Spanish-language media has been part of the experiences and struggles” of Latinos in the U.S. (Ayon 2006, 27). For instance, according to media scholar America Rodriguez, in the 1800s most Spanish-language newspapers often “exposed atrocities and demanded public services” for Latinos, “all the while urging their readers to fight back against European American mistreatment...” (Rodriguez 1999, 15). While they have often been proactive—such as helping Latinos register to vote and win political office—from the Great Depression and Operation Wetback to California’s Proposition 187 and the 2006 Sensenbrenner Bill, the Spanish-language media has mostly mobilized its community during times of crisis (Rodriguez 1999; Ayon 2006; Garcia 2008).

The reach of Spanish-language news outlets has grown in parallel with Latino immigration. As a result, during the period of the anti-H.R. 4437 demonstrations, estimates put the number of Spanish-language TV stations at over 400, while there were more than 600 radio stations and at least 700 daily and weekly newspapers nationwide (Lafayette 2008; Ayon 2006, 28). In 2006, *Univision* Radio boasted about its “unmatched ability” to reach more than 11 million listeners from L.A. and Houston to Chicago and Miami (Garcia 2008, 75). During the time of the protest wave, *Piolín* (Tweety Bird), the radio DJ most credited for helping promote the Los Angeles demonstrations and whose station is owned by *Univision*, was heard in more than 20 cities across the country including in the metro areas of California, Nevada, Texas, Arizona, and even as far away as Arkansas (Hernandez 2006; *Business Wire* 2003; Garcia 2008, 75). *El Cucuy* (The Boogieman), another L.A.-based DJ that publicized the marches, could be heard on any given weekend by more than 3 million listeners from Southern California all the way to Utah (Baum 2006). California alone is home to nearly a third of the country’s ethnic media outlets, with Los Angeles being the largest Spanish-language market (Garcia 2008, 2). For

example, *La Opinión*, the city's largest Spanish-language newspaper, claimed to have over 500,000 daily readers in 2007 (Garcia 2008, 39). On any given day, KMEX, *Univision's* Los Angeles affiliate station, has a viewing audience of several hundred thousand in five different counties throughout Southern California. Thus, as Latino immigration has expanded throughout the country, including in various new Latino migrant receiving destinations throughout the Midwest and U.S. South, so has Spanish-language media's ability to reach this population, as reflected by the fact that on a regular basis eighty-seven percent of Latino adults consume Spanish-language newspapers, radio, or TV (Poole 2006). In the spring of 2006 we saw to what extent these media outlets' capacity had also grown to mobilize their audience for political purposes. To better understand these dynamics, below I examine the ways in which studies have shown the media can affect social movements and U.S. politics.

## **The Role of the Mass Media in Mainstream and Contentious Politics**

### ***The Media and American Politics***

Political scientists have found the mass media to have a variety of effects on American politics. These influences have very real effects on the public's political thinking. Mainstream survey research and experimental methods alike have consistently shown the media to have profound effects on how, what, and to what extent Americans think about politics—whether through subtly triggering racial attitudes via political advertisements (Valentino, Hutchings, and White 2002), steering the public's views on foreign policy (Baum 2002), diverting people's attention away from topics of greater relevance and more immediate concern to themselves (Sabato 1991), rendering the public “less likely to hold public officials accountable” for social problems (Iyengar 1991, 3), serving as a channel through which elites can influence the opinions

of the population at large about public policy (Zaller 1992, 113), or by dictating “how political alternatives are evaluated” (Kinder 2003, 364; Iyengar and Kinder 1987, 4). Thus, while the mass media’s influence on American public opinion is not a new topic of political inquiry, as discussed below, it has often been a controversial one.

People concerned with progressive politics have consistently portrayed the mass media’s impact in a negative light, claiming that the effects discussed above are far from being politically neutral. They contend that because the “U.S. media landscape is dominated by [a handful of] massive corporations,” their “control over what we see, hear and read” has grave implications for American democracy.<sup>xci</sup> Liberal critics contend that through this “media monopoly,” the press’s primary function has been to manipulate the masses and promote a conservative, pro-corporate ideology. By neglecting issues of political importance, it pacifies and keeps the public ignorant of its (the public’s) own self-interests (Bagdikian 2004; Herman and Chomsky 1988). They assert that the major media is an “instrument of class power and domination” that “works to advance the interest of the wealthy few, rather than the many” (McChesney and Nichols 2002, 15, 47). By ignoring the “real issues,” skeptics believe that the mass media fans “the flames of depoliticization” and in effect discourages people from political participation (62). These allegations paint a grim picture of the state of one of the Founding Fathers’ main pillars of American democracy—a democratic, free, and fair press. If the latter biases are in fact true, these critics’ fears are not unfounded given the important role mainstream scholars have found political information to play in U.S. politics.

In their authoritative study *What Americans Know About Politics and Why It Matters*, Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) find that the reasons “democracy functions best when its citizens are politically informed” is because this knowledge “assists citizens in discerning their individual

and group interests, in connecting their interests to broader notions of the public good, and in effectively expressing these views through political participation.” Thus, they argue that “the more equitably information is distributed among citizens, the more likely that the actions of government will reflect the public’s interest and, thus, the public will be supportive of those actions” (1996, 1). Echoing these thoughts but in a much more radical manner, in their now classic activist handbook titled *It’s the Media, Stupid*, renowned media scholar-activists John Nichols and Robert McChesney contend that “access to communications is a nonnegotiable demand in a democratic society.” They believe that “real victories” by movements for social justice “will be made all the more possible by opening up and democratizing the media” (Nichols and McChesney 2000, 25). Critics envision a time when people “will start to see media not as something that happens to them, but rather as something that they have a right and an ability to shape ...” (Nichols and McChesney 2000, 119). In the spring of 2006, Americans witnessed a glimpse of what the political capabilities of the mass media can be when it is put in the hands of activists and promotes their causes. But before we analyze the media’s role in the anti-H.R. 4437 protest wave, let us first examine what students of contentious politics have found in terms of the media’s relationship to social movements.

### ***The Media and Social Movements***

Activists have long noted the importance of the mass media in contentious politics (Alinsky 1989, xiv; Ryan 1991; Shaw 2001, 150; Bobo, Kendal and Max 2001, 158; Sen 2003, 148). Scholars have found it to play a variety of roles at various stages in the development of social movements and mass mobilizations (Hackett and Carroll 2004, 2). In fact, according to Ferree and her colleagues (2002), “the mass media forum is *the* major site of political contest”

because all of the political actors with whom movements engage—from allies to rivals—“*assume* its pervasive influence (whether justified or not)” on both themselves and their constituents [emphasis theirs] (10; also see Gamson 2004). The media not only can bring attention to matters activists try to promote (McCarthy, Smith, and Zald 1996, 293; Meyer 2007, 96), but it can also “certify,” or legitimize, certain issues and actors involved in contention as well (Gamson and Meyer 1996, 285; Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993). Furthermore, activists have found that media attention can help not only mobilize their bases and attract new recruits (Bobo, Kendall, and Max 2001, 158; Sen 2003, 150), but that news coverage of protests can also “signal elites about citizens' discontent expressed outside the more direct and conventional channels of political representation” (McCarthy, McPhail, and Smith 1996, 478).

Yet while activists often seek out its attention because of its potential influence, they quickly discover that “there is no guarantee that the media will report what [they] would like” (Ferree et. al. 2002, 13; Gitlin 2003; Klandermans and Goslinga 1996, 324). Consequently, “even when movement organizers succeed at obtaining the attention of mass media coverage,” the reports can also “represent the protest events in ways that neutralize or even undermine social movement agendas” (Smith et. al. 2001, 1398; Gitlin 2003). In addition to hyping-up internal movement divisions and giving standing to more moderate groups, by selecting certain individuals to interview and represent movements, the media has been found to “create leaders” that are often times people with no organized bases or with sensational personalities that distort the movement’s image to the broader public (Gitlin 2003). Thus, the media “are not neutral to this process, since they lend themselves to different rhetorics and images, [and] to rendering the salience and intensity of issues” (Zald 1996, 270; McCarthy, McPhail, Smith 1996, 478). Nonetheless, despite the risk of misrepresentation, movements often attempt to stage mass

demonstrations in order to draw the media's attention to their issues and to promote their frames (Kriesi 2004, 86; Meyer 2007, 91-96; Gamson and Meyer 1996, 287-288).

Activists are fundamental to the process of framing movement grievances and promoting plans of action. Key to the successful promotion of movement frames though is not only how well these frames resonate with their target populations and the general public (Snow and Benford 1992; Tarrow 1998, 109), but also to what degree movement actors are able to diffuse their messages. According to Soule (2004), diffusion can occur in both *direct* and *indirect* ways. She explains that “with respect to direct channels of diffusion, the primary mechanisms” are the “network ties that facilitate direct...spread of innovation” (295). The key *indirect* mechanism of diffusion is the mass media. Soule (2004) contends that the media “can both broadcast the actions of the transmitter to the potential adopters *and* connect otherwise unconnected individuals via a shared response to events covered” [emphasis hers] (296). Studies of contentious politics have shown that when there is a shared identity or language, the mass media can indirectly help sustain and spread contention by promoting solidarity and inspiring others in different and unconnected geographic locations to emulate the various tactics and strategies they witness on television, hear on the radio, or read about in newspapers (Olesen 2007; Singer 1970; Spilerman 1976; McAdam and Rucht 1993; Tarrow 1998, 44; Myers 2000). Consequently, scholars have found that increased media attention is often correlated with an increase in movement protests (Meyer and Minkoff 2004, 1475). Thus, by activating the types of *direct* mechanisms of diffusion mentioned above (Oliver and Marwell 1992, 268; Oliver and Myers 2003, 185), through the process of *indirect* diffusion the media can help broaden and make “contention contagious.”

As previously mentioned, during the 2006 protest wave immigrant rights activists across the country were somehow able to obtain an unprecedented amount of support from and access to major Spanish-language media outlets. They utilized this *indirect* diffusion mechanism to amplify their calls for action and mobilize millions of people in what may have been the largest coordinated episodes of collective action in not only immigrant, but also U.S. history. Below I explain how the dynamics of this process played out in the largest Spanish-language media market in the nation, which by no coincidence is also the metropolis with the most people from Mexican descent and undocumented immigrants in the country—the greater Los Angeles area.

### **Manufacturing Dissent: Media Appropriation and Movement Message Amplification**

#### ***Pre-Mass Mobilization Actions***

Activists have long expressed the difficulties of drawing media attention to their causes (Ryan 1991, 8; Sen 2003, 148). They often must spend valuable time and resources on organizing demonstrations that they hope will be large enough to force the media to pay attention to their issues (McCarthy, Smith, and Zald 1996, 308; Meyer 2007, 96). But in the spring and summer of 2006, rather than attempting to stage large rallies in order to draw the media's attention, *immigrant rights activists actually used the mass media to promote their demonstrations*. The two protests—the March 25 “*Gran Marcha*” and May 1 “Day Without An Immigrant/Great American Boycott”—that together drew millions of people onto the streets of Los Angeles, serve as informative cases in which to examine the latter phenomena because of the extent to which activists were able to seemingly appropriate the media and use it to amplify their calls for action.

To be sure, the two mass demonstrations did not occur in a vacuum. On December 22, 2005, less than a week after the Sensenbrenner Bill had passed in the House of Representatives, organizations such as the National Korean American Service and Education Consortium (NAKASEC), the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA), and other local immigrant rights groups staged a rally of about 300 people at H.R. 4437 supporter and Republican Congressman Gary Miller's Los Angeles office. They presented him with a "Grinch who stole Christmas award" along with "the gift of dignity and respect."<sup>xcii</sup> In January of 2006, Los Angeles Cardinal Roger Mahony announced the launching of the Church's Justice for Immigrants Campaign which he hoped would "remind Catholics of the wonderful history of migrants coming to this country from the earliest days and the church's constant outreach to them" (USCCB 2006). On February 1, in the East Los Angeles neighborhood of Boyle Heights, Dolores Mission Church declared that its parishioners would begin a month-long fast and "dared Los Angeles to get by one day without immigration" (Gencer 2006). Also in early February, local immigrant rights groups held actions outside both the DNC and RNC's Los Angeles offices and sent 15,000 "Valentine's Day" postcards to California Senator Dianne Feinstein to demonstrate their opposition to the bill.<sup>xciii</sup> On February 4, foreshadowing the wave of protests to come, independent journalist and longtime immigrant rights activists Javier Rodriguez published an article in *La Opinión* in which he summarized the history of the local immigrant rights movement and called on Los Angeles activists to galvanize the nation by uniting and staging a mass march in opposition to H.R. 4437 (Rodriguez 2006). In addition, during this same month, activists, mostly from Southern California but also a few from the Midwest, met in Riverside, CA and called for a national day of action to take place on March 10, though no one but the Chicago delegates followed through with the plan.<sup>xciv</sup>

But it wasn't until March 1, 2006 that the call to oppose the Sensenbrenner Bill began to garner national attention. On that Ash Wednesday, Cardinal Mahony publicly "vowed a campaign of civil disobedience" against the bill (Pomfret 2006). In the largest Catholic archdioceses in the country, made up of some 5 million members and close to 300 parishes, "Mahony said he would instruct his priests to defy [the anti-immigrant] legislation" if it were approved by Congress (Watanabe 2006). According to Xiomara Corpeño of CHIRLA, the Cardinal's statements were "a turning point because he is pretty conservative and doesn't really overtly come out for progressive issues." So when he did, "it really got everyone's attention." Reverend Alexia Salvatiera of Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE), an interfaith group made of over 600 religious leaders throughout L.A. County, agreed, adding that, "It reframed the whole debate because it framed immigrants as children of God, brothers and sisters, rather than...people that were a drain on our society." Thus, several small anti-H.R. 4437 actions were organized and had to some degree put the issue on the Spanish, and to a lesser degree the English media's radar.

Also early in the year, a small group of activists calling themselves the "*Placita Working Group*" (named after the Olvera Street church where they held their meetings), who had begun to meet in response to the shooting death of an immigrant by a border patrol agent, shifted their focus to the Sensenbrenner Bill and decided to organize a protest against it. According to longtime Chicano activist Rosalio Muñoz, he proposed that the group stage its demonstration on March 25 because the following Monday, March 27, the Senate was supposed to begin debate on their own version of an immigration bill. Muñoz recalled thinking, "if we have a big demonstration in L.A., the people in D.C." would hear about it through the media and it would "have an impact." The campaign for the mobilization went public on March 3, 2006. According

to a “media advisory” sent out a week before to announce their press conference, the coalition declared that “a major mass mobilization against the passage of the Sensenbrenner Bill [was] to be held in downtown Los Angeles...[demanding] an integral, comprehensive and family oriented immigration reform that will lead to the legalization and eventual citizenship for the 12 million undocumented immigrants in this country.”<sup>xcv</sup> At the press conference, Gloria Saucedo of *Hermandad Mexicana Transnacional* stated, “People should not be scared” to come out to the protest “because the [U.S.] Constitution is on our side, [so] we should be united for this common cause. We want to keep our families united and we’re fighting to gain permanent residency for the 11 million people without documents” (Almada 2006).<sup>5</sup>

### ***Diffusion of Tactics, Collective Identity, and Friendly Competition***

L.A. coalition members learned through news coverage about anti-Sensenbrenner protests erupting in different and unexpected parts of the country. According to Jesse Diaz, a local graduate student and activist, these other marches “kind of led us to the idea of having a mobilization here in Los Angeles.”<sup>xcvi</sup> What really got their attention, though, was the first major demonstration that drew tens of thousands of participants in Washington D.C. According to Latino Movement USA’s Juan Jose Gutierrez, “We said, wait a minute—here we are thinking that we’re going to be able to mobilize 25 or 50,000 [people in L.A.], but these guys [in D.C.] already did 30 to 60,000.” He remembered asking, “What’s gonna happen next?” What happened next was a massive 300,000-person demonstration in Chicago that “took everybody by surprise,” recalled Gutierrez. “I think it kind of woke everybody up.”<sup>xcvii</sup> When L.A. organizers saw that

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<sup>5</sup> The number undocumented immigrants in the United States in 2006 ranged from 11-12 million. See reports by the Pew Hispanic Center (<http://pewhispanic.org/files/factsheets/17.pdf>) and the Department of Homeland Security ([http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ILL\\_PE\\_2005.pdf](http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ILL_PE_2005.pdf)).

Chicago activists were able to muster an impressive multitude of immigrants to demonstrate against the Sensenbrenner Bill, many of them said they saw it as a friendly challenge. Because they claimed Los Angeles was the heart of the immigrant rights movement, activists felt they needed to surpass the bar set by Chicago. In an example of the media's capability to diffuse movement tactics across geographic areas, L.A. organizers said that they took particular notice of the role that local *locutores*, Spanish-language radio disk jockeys, had played in the mobilization. This "Chicago Model" of attempting to get local ethnic radio stations to help promote their marches would later be copied, both consciously and unconsciously, by immigrant rights activists throughout the country.

According to Jesse Diaz, one of the key organizers of the first major L.A. demonstration, as late as March 10 "we still didn't have all our planning yet for the March 25<sup>th</sup> *marcha*, but we knew we had to get it together and kick it up a notch," because of what they had witnessed in Chicago and other cities. Coalition member Sarah Knopp of the International Socialist Organization (ISO) remembered thinking that the media coverage of the other demonstrations taking place across the country was also showing potential immigrant protesters that there was not only strength, but also safety in numbers. For instance, when immigrants saw the size of the Chicago demonstration, Knopp recalled, "that gave people the confidence" to participate because they witnessed other immigrants like themselves not being "punished" for protesting because "the police [or Immigration and Customs Enforcement] wouldn't be able to arrest so many people."

The week after the huge March 10 protest in Chicago, Nativio Lopez of *Hermandad Mexicana-Latino Americana* had the idea of bringing key Chicago rally organizer Artemio Arreola to Los Angeles. He and Arreola began to talk to both Spanish television and radio

stations about the significance of what had occurred in Chicago, how and why it was organized, and the need for Los Angeles immigrants to do the same.<sup>xcviii</sup> Independent of the local coalition, other activists such as Angelica Salas of CHIRLA had also been sporadically talking to schools and churches, as well as doing interviews on a few radio stations about the dire consequences the Sensenbrenner Bill could have on the immigrant community.<sup>xcix</sup> But it was on the day of a March 14 “media breakfast” that what would come to seem as the activists' near-total appropriation of Spanish-language radio in Los Angeles began.

According to Diaz, holding a “media breakfast” where organizers would express their desire for Spanish-language news outlets to become active participants in the promotion of a demonstration was not a new tactic. During the mid-1990s anti-Prop 187 campaign, many of the media outlets had accepted similar invitations. Gutierrez recalled that the goal of the event was to explain to the media the significance of the march and to express the “hope that they [the Spanish media] would assume their social responsibility” by fulfilling the “important role” of informing “the public about what we were planning to do.” The basic strategy was “to go after the media and use the media as a venue to be able to connect with our people,” added Javier Rodriguez. He explained, “It consisted of going after the media and convincing...media members, the reporters, the camera people, the studio people, everybody” to support the protest. “Because many of them are [or have been] undocumented, too,” he said, “and of course with the majority of them being Mexican, they identified” with the cause. “Their nationalism was motivated. In short, we went after their hearts and minds.”<sup>c</sup> Below I explain just how they were able to do so.

### *Appropriation of Radio Stations*

Given the protests that had recently occurred in places like Portland, Philadelphia, Washington D.C., and now Chicago, according to local activists, it was no surprise that the media breakfast was covered by local Latino news outlets.<sup>ci</sup> Protest organizers felt that all eyes were now on Los Angeles, the capitol of Latino and immigrant America. Thus, after what they deemed to be a successful media breakfast, Jesse Diaz and Gloria Saucedo discussed the absence of the popular Spanish-radio DJ *El Cucuy* from the event. They had hoped to convince him to play the same role played by Chicago DJs in galvanizing the local immigrant population in that city. Since Diaz had previously been on one of *El Cucuy's* competitors' (*El Piolín*) radio show to discuss the anti-Minutemen campaign he had been involved with, he asked Gloria if he should attempt to contact the DJ to see if he'd be willing to put them on his show again. But before Diaz had an opportunity to do so, he noticed that he had several missed calls on his cell phone from *Piolín's* producer. According to Diaz, "Univision radio [which owns *Piolín's* program]...was calling us before we were calling them." A few members of the coalition immediately drove down to the station to speak with the producer. One of these activists recalled, "We told [the producer] about the *marcha*, H.R. 4437, and how it was going to affect the community. We told them that we wanted to call for a march and that we wanted them to help us [by doing] the outreach." Essentially they presented to the media outlet "what had been done in Chicago."<sup>cii</sup> The producer agreed to give the activists 20 minutes of airtime for them to discuss the issue later in the week. But that afternoon, as they were on their way home from the station, the activists received a call from *Piolín's* producer. Instead of waiting two days, he wanted them to come back the following morning to do the interview. Diaz and Saucedo got the sense that, "They didn't want us going nowhere else. In other words, they wanted exclusivity."<sup>ciii</sup>

Social movement scholars have found that news outlets are sometimes subject to getting caught up in “media attention cycles” where coverage of a protest event is minimal at first, but then rapidly increases and suddenly leads to overexposure when news producers think their issues capture their audiences’ interests (Oliver and Myers 2003, 184; McCarthy, Smith and Zald 1996, 298; Meyer 2007, 95). Gitlin (2003, 270) contends that in these instances reporters can sometimes lose their objectivity by over-representing activists’ sides of the issues. The first interview on *Pioli*’s show marked the beginning of one of these cycles. According to Rodriguez, since the show was syndicated across various states, “The moment we got on *Pioli*’s program we began talking to the nation. We began explaining why we had to demonstrate. We began talking about the history, giving people perspective of what we did before, of how we gained the amnesty law of 1986. They heard us motivating them. They heard us saying the undocumented community is us, we are them...we are one people...They listened to our calls for solidarity, for tenderness, for love, and for hope.” While they were only supposed to be on the air for 20 minutes, because of all the attention they received from callers, the activists ended up broadcasting live for over 4 hours that day. Rodriguez remembered, “From there we kicked off. That was the qualitative leap.”

There had been some disagreement within the local movement about whether to have a protest specifically dedicated to H.R. 4437 on Saturday, March 25, or to encourage people to attend an already planned annual Cesar Chavez mass at the Los Angeles Cathedral on Sunday, March 26, and then hold a small rally against the bill afterwards. Despite the fact that the local coalition reached an agreement to hold two separate events, during the activists’ radio interview famed United Farm Workers cofounder Dolores Huerta called in and spoke critically about having two actions on the same weekend. Because of these signs of division within the

movement, *Piolín* ended the show by stating that although he agreed with their opposition to H.R. 4437, he wasn't willing to commit to promoting the protest because there wasn't complete unity amongst the activists. The following day Juan Jose Gutierrez also had an interview scheduled to discuss the bill and march with another local DJ named *El Mandril* (The Baboon). He invited some of the other coalition members to appear with him. Again, the activists were able to get a significant amount of airtime—over 2 hours—to answer callers' questions and discuss the need to demonstrate. It was also on *El Mandril's* show where one of the activists told the DJ that if the Spanish media complained about the Latino community always being divided and felt justified in demanding that activists work out their differences in order to forge greater unity for their common cause, then organizers felt “entitled to demand from them [the Spanish-language media]...to also unite in order to serve as a catalysts” to mobilize the community to attend the protest.<sup>civ</sup> This led to an extraordinary moment later in the show when not only did *El Mandril* and *El Piolín* speak live on the air to each other and commit to joining forces, but subsequently *Piolín* also called several other DJs and invited them to join in promoting the mobilization. On the air, *Piolín* attempted to ease people's possible fears of protesting by promising that it would be “a peaceful march, a civilized march, an organized march.” During this on-air multi-DJ call for action, another disk jockey proclaimed, “This isn't about radio stations and competition, it's about something bigger” (Baum 2006). From this point on, the March 25 demonstration media attention cycle was in full effect.

From the week they first appeared on *Piolín's* show through the day of the actual mobilization, activists used several strategies to draw and hold the Spanish media's attention and keep themselves on the air. For instance, organizers held “press conference after press conference...with different characters, leaders, [and] organizations...announcing their entrance

into the movement.” According to Rodriguez, activists felt that this strategy “was real important and helped us to build the hype from the press conference, to *Piolín*, to the [coalition of] radio stations, to the TV stations. We built the hype in order to maintain” the media’s attention.<sup>cv</sup> Once they did get the media attention and access they wanted, as one organizer put it, “We went into a frenzy where the main thing was [trying to] figure out how get people to all the places that all of a sudden opened up” for us to “take our message of calling on the community...to participate on March 25<sup>th</sup>.” Another organizer recalled, “Practically every [Spanish] news outfit, every information outlet, every mass communication outlet became accessible.”<sup>cvi</sup> “It was free press, free public announcements over and over again,” remembered Mike Garcia, President of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 1877, the famous Los Angeles “Justice for Janitors” union.

Once this media attention cycle began, the activists that had initiated it were not able to completely manage it. News outlets began to interview and allow on the air other immigrant rights groups and activists that hadn’t necessarily been part of the March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition from the start, but who also opposed to the Sensenbrenner Bill. As one organizer put it, “They started to bring in other people, too. It was kind of convoluting [our] message, but...we couldn’t control it anymore, it was taking [on] a mind of its own.”<sup>cvi</sup> Even traditionally non-politically focused organizations and actors began to lobby the media to support the rally. According to Arturo Carmona of COFEM (a coalition of California Mexican immigrant home town associations [HTAs] which at the time had about 50,000 active members and anywhere from 100,000–150,000 general members), various HTAs began to “put a lot of pressure on the media” by beginning to “call them and schedule meetings” where they’d ask managers to “open up the airwaves to promote this historic opportunity.” When he was subsequently interviewed on the air

by *Piolín*, then president of COFEM Salvador Garcia pledged that his organization alone would bring “tens of thousands” of people to the march (Garcia 2008, 63).

Despite the diversity of protest supporters that were suddenly in the media, their call to action was uniform and the amount of access they obtained was unprecedented. Harkening back to the early days of the immigrant rights movement, Nativo Lopez remembered, “When we were organizing in the '70s there was only one television station and not everybody had it, you had to have a special box...and there were only two Spanish radio stations” that would only make themselves available to immigrant activists “on egregious occasions.” But in 2006, “for the first time in our history, [Latino activists] had access to Spanish-language media like never before.”<sup>cvi</sup> Another historic event took place on Monday, March 20, when, on the steps of Los Angeles City Hall, ten Spanish-language DJs officially announced their coalition and support for the demonstration. According to an interview conducted with *Piolín*, “he decided to promote the cause” by getting all the DJs to unite because “rally organizers” had convinced him about the negative “ramifications of the legislation” (Watanabe and Becerra 2006).

Thus, contrary to the usual narrative, the radio DJs do not deserve sole credit for mobilizing millions to march. Activists helped convince the DJs to give them free rein on the airwaves to answer callers’ questions, frame the proposed legislation as potentially having widespread and horrendous effects on the entire Latino community, and amplify their calls to protest. There was a mutual cyclical relationship between sympathetic members of the media and activists united by a common ethnic identity, which resulted in both parties reinforcing each others’ efforts. Once the medium of the ethnic media made itself available to protest organizers, the audiences joined the cycle and responded to them by engaging in the flurry of on-air discussions. On radio shows, listeners from throughout Southern California, and even other

states, began to call in stating that they were planning to fly or drive to Los Angeles to attend the demonstration. People from out of town started inviting themselves. Latino citizens and undocumented immigrants alike pledged to participate. According to Gutierrez, Latino citizens expressed the feeling that despite the fact that some of them had gained their “papers,” they still weren't seen as equals in the eyes of American society. “They understood and they lived the fact that those new undocumented persons...were their family members, their brothers, cousins, [or] at the very least their *compadres* or *paisanos*” [countrymen]. Despite many of them having citizenship, one naturalized citizen activists that helped lead the march remembered him and other “legal” immigrants asking themselves, “How can I think of myself as a full-fledge[d] American when I'm viewed [by U.S. society] not as the American that I am, but as the ‘illegal’ that they see in me?”<sup>cix</sup> Hence, organizers contended that given the vicious nature of the bill and racist rhetoric of the immigration debate (Chavez 2008), a feeling of linked fate and a general understanding developed that the Sensenbrenner Bill wasn't solely an attack on people without papers, but an assault on the entire Latino community—both immigrants and U.S. born (see also Chapter 6). While radio was the primary vehicle activists used to broadcast and reinforce this message, television was also fundamental to the diffusion process.

### ***Support from Spanish Television***

In addition to radio, practically all of the major Spanish-language television broadcasters in L.A. were also promoting the march, including *Univision*, *Azteca America*, and a few other smaller local stations. This is important to note because studies have shown that television news is an educator “virtually without peer” because it “shapes the American public's conception of political life in pervasive ways” (Iyengar and Kinder 1987, 2). Unfortunately, because of its costs

of production and “scarcity of time and space,” scholars have found that “activists face a steep uphill struggle in trying to get coverage on television news” (Meyer 2007, 94). Thus, while they were never able to reach the same level of media appropriation that they did with radio, when their protest received free promotion by almost all of the major local Spanish TV networks, including the largest Spanish-language television station in the nation, activists saw it as an amazing boost to their cause.

The night before their March 14 media breakfast, Javier Rodriguez received a phone call from an *Univision* reporter asking if he would be willing to do a series of interviews starting at 5am and leading up to the 9am press event. He agreed and together with Gloria Saucedo did about four interviews. To the activists, it seemed as if “*Univision* had made a political decision to take up the charge before anybody else.”<sup>cx</sup> By “political decision” activists meant that it appeared as if the station had chosen to take a political stance against the Sensenbrenner Bill and as a result began to give the local protest organizers an unprecedented amount of coverage and promotion for their march. For example, according to Rodriguez, “The first interview was taped and made into a promo right on the spot.” Diaz remembers seeing the promotional ad from his home:

I started looking at them on the news and...at 5 o'clock they started showing [the promo] one time and then at 5:30 showed it again, [at] 6 they showed one, 6:15, 6:30, 6:45, [and] before you know it they were looping it like very commercial break. They're showing them and they're saying “*Vete al Gran Marcha!*” [Go to the Grand March!]. They kept showing them and by 9 o'clock, when the press conference was supposed to start, they were looping that shit every few minutes. It would fade out and show the *Gran Marcha cartelones* [posters]...It was just like they took it up. I thought, “Damn! Wow!”

These protest promos were the first extensive TV coverage the movement received for the march. In order to maintain the outlets' attention and draw more television coverage, activists

attempted to play the various news outlets off each other by questioning their commitment to the immigrant community in its time of need. According to Nativo Lopez, “We were successful in getting the media to compete with each other to get our message out.” For example, if activists went to *Telemundo* and the station was reluctant to give them airtime to promote the rally, they would then call *Azteca America* and try to get an interview there. Once that station committed, they would then immediately call *Telemundo* back and say, “What’s up with that? *Azteca America* is giving us coverage. Aren’t you guys with the people, or what?” According to Lopez, “We would kind of shake them up to convey the message” by forcing them to compete with each other. While this tactic worked on several occasions, activists speculated that Spanish TV and *Univision*—the largest Spanish television network in the country—in particular had made a “corporate decision” to support the march. One sign of this was that the major networks were all broadcasting the same professionally made commercial advertising the upcoming march.

According to Angela Sombrano of the Central American Resource Center (CARECEN), “I think there was an agreement, a political agreement by the networks to support the march” because “we had a lot of openings to be on the talk shows.” More skeptical coalition members felt that the “corporate owned media” decided to “use the mass movement” when it was “in its interest to defend its market.”<sup>cx1</sup> These activists felt that one of the media’s main motivations for assisting with the mobilization against the bill was because the proposed law was directly targeting their viewers. Thus, if millions of undocumented immigrants were forced to flee the country, the stations’ audience (or “market”) would shrink by that same amount. Both of these hunches were half right. As will be explained later in detail, a decision by local Spanish television stations *was* made to promote the march, but it wasn’t a “corporate” determination made by top executives; rather, it was a local, managerial decision. Before I explain how this

came about, let us briefly review another reason why activists felt ethnic media members were sympathetic to their cause.

Organizers also thought Spanish-language news outlets had additional reasons for promoting the protest. They contended that the fact that the vast majority of the Spanish media's employees—from janitors and camera operators to managers and news anchors—were immigrants themselves made members of the media easier to convince to support. As one activist put it, "They're part of the community, they're part of the social group that would have been adversely affected by this legislation [and]...they obviously have sentiments for the people." As a result, "it was an easy play to convince them to come on board."<sup>cxii</sup> Some research exists to support these claims given that most Spanish media do primarily employ immigrants (Rodriguez 1999). Furthermore, Gitlin (2003) asserts that reporters' vulnerability to adopting movement frames depends on several factors including their personal life experiences and beliefs (269). The radio DJ *Piolín* is a perfect example of this because he first came to the U.S. by crossing the desert "illegally," knew what it was like not to be able to leave the country to see his family because of the lack of proper legal documentation, had been fired from a job before for not having papers, had once washed cars and recycled aluminum cans for a living, and had been detained and almost deported before. According to *Piolín*, "I went through" being undocumented, "I know the feeling, and you feel terrible [and] I don't want no one to go through that. It's painful" (Fears 2006).

This also seems to be the case with regard to *Univision* news director Jorge Mettey, the man responsible not only for his station's support of the march, but also for convincing all of his local competitors to run the same promo advertising the demonstration on all of their local stations. Mettey is not a stereotypical Mexican immigrant in that he came from a privileged

family that possessed the resources to provide him with an elite education. But since first moving to the United States he remembered that, “It was obvious that immigrants were treated differently and that bothered me. So when I came to live here, it was already on my map that immigrants were not treated” as equals. According to Mettey, “If you are just a little bit sensitive and a little bit intelligent, you cannot ignore what happens here” to them. When asked why—despite being a successful professional and not being undocumented—he decided to take the unusual step of getting *Univision* involved with promoting the mobilization, he answered, “I felt a part of them [immigrants] and I felt insulted by the way they were [being] treated. I felt compelled to do something precisely because of that.” Thus, one of Mettey’s stated motivations for deciding to get his television station to support the demonstration seems to have been not only the punitive nature of the proposed legislation, but also a feeling of collective identity and solidarity with his fellow immigrants, despite his class privilege and legal status.

It is also important to point out that Mettey and *Univision* had a long history of “civic journalism.” The station had previously assisted with efforts to get Latinos to fill out the U.S. Census, apply for citizenship, and to register and actually vote during elections (Rodriguez 1999; Ayon 2006). According to a station editorial board member, “I don’t care what company you are. If you’re Fox, ABC, or CNN, if you want to be relevant to your community, you [have to] satisfy the informational needs of your audience to the best of your abilities.” Accordingly, when Mettey first moved to *Univision*’s Los Angeles station he already possessed this view of journalism, as evidenced by a news segment he created called *A Su Lado* [On Your Side]. The segment featured various experts on topics relevant to the immigrant community—from how to interact with police officers to education—and encouraged viewers to call the station, free of charge, if they had any questions. The first *A Su Lado* was produced in conjunction with SEIU at

one of their local union halls. According to Eliseo Medina of SEIU, the topic of the first *A Su Lado* was immigration; due to the more than 300,000 phone calls, the union's phone system crashed. The segment was a huge success, especially when it discussed immigration issues, and became a staple of the newscast.<sup>cxiii</sup>

Thus, the issue of immigration was not a new topic for the station, and consequently, the news department had been following the Sensenbrenner Bill since it was first proposed. An *Univision* representative explained, "It was an issue that was on the editorial room table every single day since it was introduced." Because the station had recently run a series of stories discussing the twentieth anniversary of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act's (IRCA) amnesty provision, the news staff was familiar with the slow pace of the immigration policymaking process. As a result, they were shocked and appalled at not only the content but also how quickly the House was able to pass such a horrendous bill. To get a sense of the potential ramifications of the legislation, producers and reporters contacted people such as Angelica Salas of CHIRLA and Maria Elena Durazo of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor (the LA County Fed), both of whom were longtime immigrant rights advocates that the station often turned to for commentary on immigration issues. At an editorial board meeting after the bill had passed the U.S. House of Representatives, a station member recalled saying, "This is terrorizing. This is terrorism at its best. The way it was rammed through Congress...was totally unbelievable, unheard of. I hadn't seen it in [all of my] experience in covering politics and doing journalism in this country."<sup>cxiv</sup> Hence, rather than being motivated by a corporate desire to "protect their market" for financial reasons, at least in the case of *Univision*, members of the media seem to have responded because immigration had always been one of their main issues, because many of them were themselves immigrants and they identified with the plights of the

foreign-born, and because of what they perceived to be the punitive nature of the proposed legislation.

As a result of the severity of the issue, Jorge Mettey decided to get the station behind the march. He explained, “In *Univision* we had the privilege of a lot of freedom to do things, mainly because most of those making the decisions [at the corporation's headquarters] didn't have a clue of what we were doing.” He contended that most of the network's executives did not speak Spanish and those that did “don't feel close to our viewers.” Mettey felt that, “It's very unfortunate that the guys in Miami, they are of a very different origin” than their majority Mexican audience. “Most of them came from Cuban origins with very different challenges in life” so although some of them are fully bilingual, “they don't feel close to [undocumented] immigrants at all.” Another reason why he claimed to have had this “freedom from top management” was because he had been very successful at his job. Under his leadership, “The numbers were great...I had great ratings...The sales were going up and that's what they understood...I had a lot of leverage because of that.” Mettey used this freedom to do something unheard of in American social movement history—he created a promotional ad with his rival television stations and convinced them to all simultaneously run it in order to mobilize their audiences to take part in the March 25 demonstration. The promo “was not the result of a company vision,” Mettey asserted. “What you saw on the air was my very own” creation.

According to Mettey, “I decided to call all the other stations to do the campaign together to send a message of unity, being mature, and that we can come together.”<sup>cxv</sup> He personally contacted the general managers of all of his rival stations to explain to them what he had in mind, and all but *Telemundo* were very supportive and open to the idea. Mettey recalled, “At the end of the day we had a great promo.” The ad showed all of the main newscasters from almost all of the

major Spanish-language television stations standing in a line with each consecutively saying one of the following statements:

Demonstrate that you're good. That it matters to you. That you are big. That we could be united. Participate with Pride. With Dignity. With Order. With Maturity. Do it for your people. Do it for your children. Do it for our community. And for what's to come.

Then while standing in line and putting their arms around each other, in unison they all said, "Unite! Unite! Unite!" A narrator then titled the march "Standing Firm" and stated the date and the location of where the protest was set to begin.<sup>cxvi</sup>

While the other networks ran the promo on their local stations, Mettey dedicated himself to making sure *Univision* viewers saw the ad as much as possible. The amount of people exposed to this promotion for the march was massive. The Los Angeles media market, which covers not only all of Los Angeles County, but also Riverside, San Bernardino, Ventura, and Orange counties, had a potential viewing audience of 14 million people at the time, about half of whom were Latinos. *Univision* was (and remains) the most watched local newscast in the country (regardless of language), so of those 7 million potential Latino viewers, hundreds of thousands were likely watching on any given day.<sup>cxvii</sup> The thought of not only *Univision* but also its rival stations playing the same promo throughout their newscasts is impressive. According to Mettey, "I canceled promotions of our newscast, risking my ratings...I said no promos of the newscasts. I wanted [people] to get sick and tired of this [protest] promo. I wanted the viewers of the *telenovelas* [soap operas], of the newscasts, of the kids programming, everybody to get sick and tired of this message." In addition to these promos for the March 25 action, throughout the protest wave *Univision* and other Spanish TV stations consistently interviewed rally organizers about the bill they were opposing and goals of the march. Thus, television viewers were being

exposed to the calls to participate in the rally not only during regular newscasts, but throughout the day for about a week and half before the protest.

Hence, despite activists not reaching the level of access that they had achieved with Spanish radio, they were still continuously being interviewed on TV and getting free advertising for their march, which exposed hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of potential protest participants across the region to their framing of the issue and their calls to action. The evidence in this section suggests that the ability of activists to secure this level of access had much to do with members of the media's own agency, actions, and interests—which sometimes were congruent with the aims of activists, and, as will be shown later, other times were not. Nonetheless, the fact that for the first time in history viewers saw rival TV newscasters uniting to promote the rally undoubtedly helped legitimize the march. Tarrow (1998) contends that “television with its unique capacity to encapsulate complex situations in compressed visual images” has brought about a “revolution in movement tactics” because of its ability to diffuse movement strategies and tactics (115). While survey data shows that there is a strong correlation between participation in the marches and Spanish TV and radio viewership (Barretto et al. 2009), we may never know exactly how much of the Spanish speaking population that participated in the protest wave was motivated to act because of—or learned about the action through—the media. What we do know is that while social movement scholars contend that television is the most difficult type of coverage for activists to attract, in the case of the 2006 protest wave Spanish TV stations not only covered, but actually helped promote the marches organized by immigrant rights activists. The results of this unprecedented support from the ethnic media was the massive “*Gran Marcha*” of March 25, 2006—the largest protest in Los Angeles and California history.

### *La Gran Marcha de Los Angeles*

According to Victor Narro of the UCLA Downtown Labor Center, the original permit application for the march was approved for about 3,000–5,000 people. But after the Chicago protest and as the Spanish media news coverage of the event grew, he went back on several occasions to amend the permit size. Two days before the protest, coalition members tried to rent ten more buses to bring people in from other counties, but they claimed that there were no buses available to rent in all of Southern California. Due to activists' personal and online networks, and the syndication of many of the radio DJs' shows on which they had been promoting their march, buses of protesters came from "all over Arizona, Colorado, and other states," recalled Diaz. He even heard of people from as far as Chicago, Washington, Alabama, Wisconsin, and Louisiana coming in for the demonstration. On one of Narro's visits to amend the permit two days before the protest, he recalled the police telling him, "Victor you're getting unrealistic with us... In L.A. you could never bring out 50,000. Chicago was an anomaly." The officer he was speaking with expressed concern about overstaffing the rally and having to pay officers for unneeded overtime. In the end, the officer told him, "I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll have enough police officers for 10,000 and then we'll call reinforcements if we need to. But we can't have enough police for 50,000 and then you only bring 2,000."<sup>cxviii</sup> By early morning the day of the march, hours before it was set to take place, the number of people waiting to protest had already more than tripled Narro's highest permit estimate. Buses throughout the city's Eastside were full and unable to make their regular stops on their way downtown, leaving hundreds of white T-shirt-wearing (a sign that they had heard the calls on the radio for marchers to wear white to symbolize peace) would-be protesters stranded at bus stops. In response, the masses began to walk across the various bridges that link East Los Angeles to the city's downtown. Since there seemed to be no

parking for miles away, family members served as shuttles dropping kin, friends, and neighbors off as close as they could get to City Hall.

Despite the expense of using helicopters for a newscast, Mettey decided to deploy one from the onset of *Univision*'s live coverage, which began at around 6am. Mettey specifically warned all of his anchors that activists and even radio DJs would probably try to exaggerate the amount of people attending. He told them, "We have to be very careful with the way we handle numbers" and instructed his news desk to call the LAPD every 15 minutes to get an official count. By early morning, hours before the march was set to begin, the official police estimate was 150,000. According to Mettey, "It was ridiculous because they kept the number 150,000 for more than an hour when we saw" from the helicopter coverage "that it was getting bigger and bigger by the second." The station kept calling and asking the LAPD for an updated count, but the police stood firm at the 150,000 figure. At a little after 10 am *Univision* went live on the air and reporter Norma Roque announced, "So far they have a half a million" people. According to Mettey, "I got so mad. So when we finished that insert I called the helicopter" and said, "What the hell are you doing? Why did you say half a million? That was absolutely wrong. I have been telling you to be very careful" with the numbers. She responded by saying, "I'm sorry Mr. Mettey but we heard that from the LAPD helicopter that is flying right by us. We are listening to their conversations and we heard their helicopter telling the LAPD that they have an expert in the helicopter and they told them that their official number is half a million. That's why we said half a million." Mettey immediately called the police station explaining what had just occurred and demanded an updated number that was *not* 150,000. About 50 minutes later the LAPD held a press conference stating that the protest size was 500,000. According to Mettey though, it wasn't even noon when police made their announcement, yet the march had continued to attract

participants. In fact, one news outlet reported that over four hours after the march was set to begin, and “well after the speaker program...had ended, marchers were still coming...unaware that the event was officially over” (Hernandez 2006).

Hours before the protest was supposed to begin, people started marching. Organizers were unable to lead the rally and were left behind by the immigrant masses. The “human river” of marchers stretched over two miles long from “Broadway all the way down past the 10 freeway and into South-Central L.A.” (Hernandez 2006). The official march route was so packed that ralliers began to spill onto parallel streets. According to protest participant and organizer Carlos Montes, “At one point there were three streets going all the way to City Hall.” Narro remembers the marchers occupying four of the downtown’s biggest arteries: “Broadway was too packed so they took over Spring and then they took over Main St. So you had marches coming down Los Angeles [Street], Spring, Main, and Broadway simultaneously...The people figured it out. The whole experience was pretty cool.” According to the *L.A. Weekly*:

It felt entirely organic. Grandmothers, elderly vaqueros [cowboys], toddlers in strollers, people in wheelchairs, the blind. Skater kids, dudes with gang tattoos, emo-punks, gays, cha cha chicks, transsexuals, Che Guevara adherents. Gardeners, nannies, construction workers, taco truck guys, contractors, business owners. Guatemalans, Nicaraguans, Venezuelans, Hondurans, Puerto Ricans, [and Mexicans]. It seemed that no subsegment of the region’s Latino population was left unrepresented.<sup>cxix</sup>

All along the protest routes there were “mini-rallies,” where radio stations had set up their own stages and were talking to the audiences around them. The mood was festive with all sorts of live and recorded celebratory music being played and food vendors sprinkled throughout the massive crowd trying to keep up with peoples’ orders. While there were several sizable contingents of various Asian groups and even some African Americans present, Latinos were clearly the vast majority of those in attendance, and among them, the crowd seemed to be

primarily Mexican. While a few flags from various countries from across the globe were spotted, the American flag without a doubt predominated.<sup>cxx</sup> People held handmade signs such as, “AFTER I BUILT YOUR HOME AND GROWED YOUR FOOD, WHY DO YOU TREAT ME LIKE A CRIMINAL?” (Hernandez 2006). Cardboard placards in various languages called for “Amnesty,” “Immigrant Rights Now!,” and still others revealed their own “illegal status” while announcing that their children were off “fighting for freedom” in Iraq.<sup>cxxi</sup> Rally organizers didn’t even have a stage so they were forced to attempt to speak to the crowd from the steps of City Hall with, as one participant put it, “a sound system for like a backyard *quinceañera* [a Mexican “sweet fifteen” coming of age party].”<sup>cxxii</sup>

Legendary immigrant rights activists Soledad “Chole” Alatore remembered decades earlier, in what could arguably not even be called a “movement” at the time, marching down the same route with only a few brave participants terrified of the armed police officers that walked beside them. When they arrived on the steps of City Hall, more officers were there to greet with dirty looks the lonely but intrepid immigrant rights activists. In stark contrast to this earlier march, in 2006 it was the police who were overwhelmed by the massive and peaceful crowd. The mayor of Los Angeles himself, who had roots in the immigrant rights movement that Chole Alatore and Bert Corona founded in the 1960s, welcomed the crowd by stating publicly, “We are workers, not criminals... We say to Sensenbrenner that there are no illegals here. The only thing illegal is a proposal that would demonize and criminalize eleven million people.”<sup>cxxiii</sup> Yet as I will explain in the following section, although the advocates were united in their opposition to H.R. 4437, there was much disagreement concerning how to transition from mobilization and protest against this nativist legislation into a movement that could win legalization for millions of people without papers.

## **America, Love It or Boycott It: Intra-movement Disputes over Tactics and Media Frames**

Soon after the massive March 25 mobilization it became apparent that the Sensenbrenner Bill had been defeated and that the battle had now shifted to how the movement might use this newfound momentum and media attention to win legalization for undocumented workers. Because of ideological and tactical disagreements, what had originally been known as the “*Placita Working Group*” was now split into two factions: the March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition, led by the radicals that had initiated the first protest, and the We Are America Coalition (WAAA), made up of more mainstream immigrant rights NGOs, labor unions, and the Catholic Church. As will be elaborated on in the following section, these divisions manifested themselves in how each faction chose to frame its claims to the media. How movements frame their grievances is of the utmost importance because, as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, frames influence how social movements’ constituents, the broader public, and policymakers view them.

### ***We Are America!***

Given the magnitude of the March 25 protest and the fact that more and more demonstrations began to occur throughout the country, the issue of legalization and the upcoming May Day rallies kept immigrant rights activists on the media’s agenda. “There was a lot of press...we had nothing to do with...It was just feeding off each other and the press wanted to talk to a lot” of people about the protests.<sup>cxxiv</sup> Thus, because the cycle of media attention continued, the issue of how activists should frame their claims became fundamental. In fact, Maria Elena Durazo of the LA County Fed contended that the split in the movement had much to do with how each side felt the issue should be framed. She explained that “the difference of

opinion” was over “what resonates with the general public.” Durazo stated that in order for the immigrant rights movement to gain the public’s support and “build a true movement for social justice,” it had to develop frames that would resonate with people beyond the immigrant community.

Consequently, as soon as it became obvious that the two factions would not be working together on future actions, through funding from SEIU’s national headquarters, the We Are America Coalition immediately hired professional media consultants and formed a media strategy team.<sup>cxv</sup> Though the media consultants specialized in and were originally hired to deal with Spanish news outlets, given the growing interest in the topic by English media, they ended up incorporating these outlets into their strategy as well. For instance, through examining polling data and conducting focus groups, the coalition found that a sizeable portion of the American population sympathized with immigrants’ desire to gain citizenship. WAAC members wanted to turn this sympathy into political support. To do so they felt they had to operate under a pro-America “master frame” (Snow and Benford 1992). According to media team member and spokesperson for the LA Archdiocese Carolina Guevara, “We wanted to focus on the positive contributions of immigrants to our community and our economy and to our society... This whole idea that they’re not paying taxes, they’re burdening the system, overcrowding the schools, those are the misconceptions that we needed to clarify.” Rosaline Cardenas of OC Media, the firm hired to do media consulting for WAAC explained, “Our message was no boycott, come to the march after your job, the economy is important, we want our jobs, we need our jobs. We didn’t want to show in any way, shape, or form that we were anti-America or anti the American economy.” To demonstrate their U.S. patriotism, they asked people to wear white to symbolize peace and wave American flags in order to show the nation their desire to be full-fledged

members of it. While being pro-America was the general image the coalition was hoping to project, in order to turn sympathy into political support they developed a two-prong tactical approach—diversify and personalize.

The strategy for personalizing the issue was to use not only local immigrant rights leaders as talking heads, but also to make “the actual people who were fighting the struggle every day (actual immigrants)” the spokespeople of the movement.<sup>cxxvi</sup> To do this, WAAC conducted several media trainings for immigrants and then attempted to get them in front of the camera and the mic so that they could express their plights. One of the first things they worked on was trying to get these individuals not to spend interview time talking about the groups to which they belonged. Javier Gonzalez, one of the main leaders of WAAC, explained the rationale behind this strategy: “We would say, 'Look, man, [members of organizations and unions] are fucking combatants. American people don't give a fuck about combatants. They care about the villagers that got killed and had nothing to do with the dispute. So that's what we want you guys to be. You guys are the affected people. Tell your story.’” Another tactic taught in these trainings was how to stay on message. Cardenas explained that although an immigrant might be interviewed for twenty minutes, the fact of the matter was that only about 12 seconds of the footage would actually be used. Because of this, WACC leaders would tell the interviewees that no matter what questions were asked by reporters, “if you keep stating your message and you keep repeating it over and over, then they [the media] are going to walk away” having to use your one consistent message. Their motto was, “If it's about people, we win; if it's about policies, we lose.”

WAAC wanted not only to show that foreign-born people contribute to the U.S. in a variety of ways, but also to contest the image that they believed the general public had of all immigrants: that of a Mexican day laborers who illegally crossed the border and didn't want to

assimilate, an image that very few Americans could relate to. To diversify the perception of the movement, WAAC hoped to show Americans this was “a personal story of people, this is your gardener, this is your janitor, this is your maid, this is a guy who worked himself up to own his own small business,” etc.<sup>cxxvii</sup> In the hopes of getting these types of stories covered, the media team would pitch and funnel different interviews and spokespeople to different media outlets, telling them that they were each getting “an exclusive story.” For example, to highlight immigrants’ religious values the coalition would get various religious figures to discuss how important immigrants were to their congregations. The team would find a mother who was legally in the U.S. but whose husband had been deported, and have her discuss how such enforcement measures had impacted her children. They’d get students to talk about how, despite having lived virtually their entire lives in the U.S., the fact that they’d been brought to the country as babies without proper documentation meant they now couldn’t go to college or get a job. To show the public that some people didn’t choose to migrate, the media team would ask a war refugee to discuss why she was initially forced to flee her country and how, although she obtained temporary legal status, her lack of full citizenship meant she was unable to return home to see her children. WAAC would try to get the media to interview pro-immigrant Labor and business leaders in order to demonstrate the importance of immigrants to the American workforce. Immigrant rights advocates and legal experts would give their perspectives on the legislative proposals. Hence, the media strategy team “would pitch a specific story to a certain news director” because they “wanted to do exclusives for everybody, so everybody would have different stories running on different stations...We wanted to cover all angles. We wanted to balance it out.”<sup>cxxviii</sup>

Besides emphasizing the various ways they contributed to and were part of America, WAAC wanted to also demonstrate the racial and ethnic diversity of immigrant groups. For example, in order to demonstrate to the public that there were “white people affected, too,” the coalition highlighted the story of a Polish immigrant janitor whose family was broken apart when his wife was deported and forced to take their child with her back to Poland. In another instance, they got interviews for a white American who owned a small landscaping company that was completely dependent on immigrant labor to speak about how she’d have to go out of business if all her workers were deported. The small business owner also shared the story of her Russian immigrant grandparents who “just like immigrants today” worked horrible jobs when they first immigrated in order to provide a better future for their children. To attempt to show the parallels with African Americans’ history of labor and forced migration, a black union worker told media outlets how his family originally was forced to leave the South because they feared the KKK, and how when his parents first got to California they started off as janitors and gardeners, too. He emphasized how his family’s was “the same story” as that of immigrants coming from other countries today.<sup>cxxix</sup>

While members of the We Are America Coalition knew that they could count on support for their efforts from the Latino and immigrant communities, they also felt that “nothing happens in America unless you affect white people.”<sup>cxxx</sup> Because of this, they knew they had to have a strategy that spoke to two different audiences—their immigrant base and the general (white) U.S. public. Consequently, Cardenas explained that they “had to do multiple targeting because you have a message that resonates with the immigrant community and a message that resonates with the non-immigrant community.” For the “Spanish-language media it was more a message of we understand where you’re coming from, we’re with you, we’re going to support you, let’s stick

together.”<sup>cxxxix</sup> Guevara explained that for the immigrant community, they wanted “to continue to bring a sense of hope and encouragement” because “it’s a difficult time” for them since they were feeling under attack. For the “non-immigrant community who might have some misconceptions of what it means to be ‘illegal’ immigrants,” they took a different approach.<sup>cxxxix</sup> Surveys had shown them that about 15–20% of the public was completely anti-immigrant, while another 15–20% was sympathetic to their cause. Thus, their goal was to reach the 60–70% that they thought “could be swayed either way with compelling stories.”<sup>cxxxix</sup> According to one of the professional media consultants, “The message to the English language world was a very different message than to the Spanish speaking world.” She explained, “The message to the English media was...that legalization of these immigrants was important to our economy, was important to all of us because it would provide better jobs and better pay for everybody” and it was trying to show “the injustices that occurred in all of these [immigrant] communities; it was trying to get more sympathy.”<sup>cxxxix</sup>

Thus, the We Are America Coalition felt that to get public opinion to support its quest to win legalization, they had to demonstrate immigrants’ love for, contributions to, and desires to be incorporated into the U.S.. Its goal was to show through the media that immigrants were part of American society: they were soldiers in the military willing to die for the nation, they were fellow churchgoers, and they were friends. WAAC wanted to convince Americans that the foreign-born weren’t threats, but rather peaceful neighbors and hard workers who didn’t adversely affect (and in fact helped) the U.S. economy. Snow (2004) contends that activists often attempt to frame events in ways that are meant to mobilize potential supporters (2004, 384). Out of “a cultural reservoir of possible symbols, movement entrepreneurs choose those that they hope will mediate among the cultural understandings of the groups they wish to appeal to, their own

beliefs and aspirations, and their situations of struggle” (Tarrow 1998, 109). Berbrier (1998) adds that political “actors who deploy culturally resonant master frames to explain their motives are trying to manage impressions by appealing to the fundamental sentiments of a generalized other” (440). This is exactly what the We Are America Coalition had hoped to do during the mass immigrant mobilizations of 2006. Because they knew they needed to garner the general public’s support, rather than focusing on the sentiments that immigrants had for their home countries (which they never dismissed), WAAC’s leaders attempted to “wrap themselves [in] the American flag” and show the rest of the U.S. all the different ways immigrants contributed to the nation and were “just like them.” As I will describe below, however, the March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition took a much different approach.

### ***Boycott AmeriKKKa!***

According to March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition member and boycott supporter Juan Jose Gutierrez, “You have to understand that this is a war. The people that get...handcuffed, humiliated, and deported or removed from the United States of America, divided from their families and loved ones...those are real casualties. It’s not a joke. Those things are happening every day.” Given the severity of how they viewed the issue, Alvaro Maldonado of the ISO asserted that, “Our strategy was to continue more militant street protests” and call for a national boycott. While WAAC chose to hold their demonstration in the afternoon so that people could attend after work and school, the March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition told youth not to go to classes and people not to go to work in order to show Americans how dependent the nation was on immigrant labor. Nativo Lopez explained, “I believe children have more to learn protesting on the streets with their parents, expressing their rights, than in the classrooms” (Becerra and Blankstein 2006). According to

Jesse Diaz, the idea of the one-day boycott / economic strike came from all the anti-immigrant rhetoric that claimed immigrants were a drain on the economy. Since the Sensenbrenner Bill seemed to have been defeated, the March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition wanted to also show their disagreement with the bill the Senate was in the process of debating.<sup>cxxxv</sup> To prove the nativists wrong, activists wanted to attempt to shut the American economy down—at least the sectors most dependent on immigrant labor—to demonstrate just how much immigrants were needed. In short, they wanted to teach the country a lesson by giving it a taste of what it would be like without all the services immigrants supply. Moreover, they weren't *asking* for just any “pathway to citizenship” as many moderates were. They were *demanding* immediate and unconditional amnesty for undocumented immigrants, no more border militarization, and a stop to the raids and deportations taking place (Robinson 2007). Thus, their rhetoric was a lot more militant than WAAC's and their demands much more radical.

Boycott supporters were also very critical of those elements of the movement that opposed their tactic. As one March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition member put it in his critique of the labor movement's unwillingness to support the boycott, “The last weapon the worker has against the employer is the strike, and the very institutions [unions] that live or die by the strike” came out against it. “I think it's shameful that the supposed leader of the working class in America [the U.S. labor movement] was telling [immigrants] that they should behave” and not boycott.<sup>cxxxvi</sup> In essence, the radical flack of the movement's dominant frame was that the U.S. *needed* immigrants, and to force the country to recognize this, they were going to make it suffer by attempting to hurt the economy through calling on the immigrant masses to strike. They envisioned Americans having to take care of their own children, since immigrant nannies would be at the march; having to feed themselves, since immigrant restaurants workers would be on

strike; and having to clean their own office buildings, since immigrant janitors would be protesting. As longtime radical Chicano activist and boycott supporter Armando Navarro put it, “We are going to hit them where it hurts...in their pocket books” (Carter 2006).

Not surprisingly, rather than wrapping the U.S. flag around themselves, boycott supporters were also much more willing to assert that the anti-immigrant sentiments of the day were not merely expressions of disagreements on policies, but a continuation of America’s long history of racism towards people of color (also see Chapter 4). According to coalition member Isabel Rodriguez, WAAC's belief that waving American flags was going to win it sympathy from white people was “a superficial analysis of the extent of racism in this country.” In her view, the March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition felt that not only should immigrants not be ashamed of their home countries, but that the U.S. public should also “know where the immigrants that do their labor come from.” Because of this, the coalition did not discourage marchers from bringing and waving foreign flags. In fact, the coalition explicitly declared itself not an American, but an “internationalist” movement (Robinson 2007). Meanwhile, they criticized mainstream immigrant rights groups and labor unions for telling people not to carry Mexican flags and “scabbing” on the national boycott.<sup>cxvii</sup> Thus, it seems as if the March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition also had a two-prong framing and targeting approach: the group wanted to further radicalize its immigrant base, while at the same time making the American public feel what life would be like without the immigrant labor upon which it was so dependent.

Given the importance of the cultural resonance of movement frames discussed in the previous section, it would seem that the March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition’s internationalist “Boycott America” frame and action was a tactical error if it hoped to convince the general U.S. public to be more sympathetic to its cause. Yet it is important to note that its calls for immigrants to be

proud of waving the flags of their home countries, and threat of “teaching Americans a lesson” by showing them how vital immigrants are to the U.S. economy, *does* make sense when we understand that the targets or goals of movement frames might not always be to draw sympathy from the general public. As with many identity politics groups, immigrant boycott supporters’ radical frames may have been “directed more at the affirmation of self than at the genuine conversation with others” (Epstein 1999, 64). In short, the March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition’s frames in all likelihood did not resonate with the broader public. In fact, they may even have played right into Middle America’s fears and the anti-immigrant movement’s “immigrants want to hurt America” rhetoric. But as evidenced by the fact that millions of foreign-born people across the nation “boycotted” work and school on May 1, it is indisputable that to a large degree the March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition's frames *did* in fact resonate with, and in all likelihood helped politicize, at least some of their targeted audience—hundreds of thousands of immigrant workers and their allies.

### ***The May Day Without An Immigrant***

On the morning of May 1 the *Los Angeles Times* reported, “Marches in Los Angeles and Chicago, demonstrations in New York and boycotts that forced closures of Midwest and Southern meat-packing plants marked a day when immigrant rights activists again called for a new [immigration] policy...”(Muskal and Williams 2006). “Thousands of businesses were shuttered...as workers and their families, most of them from Mexico, participated in a boycott of work and commerce, rallying to demonstrate their importance to the U.S. economy and to demand changes in immigration law that would give illegal migrants a path to citizenship.” Media outlets noted that the Los Angeles Unified School District alone “reported 71,942 absences in grades 6 through 12” (Gorman, Miller and Landsberg 2006). The California State

Senate and Assembly passed resolutions acknowledging the boycott and declared that the state government would not “conduct business” in observance May 1 (Becerra and Blankstein 2006). In Tijuana, Mexico, activists “succeeded in blocking the busiest international border crossing in the world for two hours” (Hernandez 2006b). And in the middle of the estimated 250,000 people that showed up to support the morning boycott, “under pale and merciless midday sun, a chorus of women made revolution with their hips” as the “May Day marchers were shaking it hard, jubilantly, to a euphoric beat made by guys pounding upon drums, their lips pursed in revelatory fury.” As one of the dancing domestic workers explained: “What do you mean why am I so happy?...We are a united *pueblo!*” She proudly proclaimed, “I clean houses, very honorably,” and, “If they fire me, I don’t care!” (Hernandez 2006b). Official police estimates put the March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition morning boycott at 250,000 and the later We Are America Coalition rally at 400,000 (Gorman, Miller and Landsberg 2006).

While the March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition’s protest could be described as an astounding success in terms of turnout, the We Are American Coalition’s event was nothing less than a spectacular professional production. One of its coordinators described it:

We paid for media risers for the media...We had Anderson Cooper [of CNN] on the roof of the building...The media was like “Wow, it’s like we’re at a presidential campaign”...We had their names, like ABC here, NBC here, *Telemundo* here. We had pre and post media [interview] opportunities. We had a VIP section. We had a professional stage that *La Raza* radio station donated. We had *Los Tigres del Norte*, we had *Paquita la del Barrio*, *Cucuy*, we had *Piolín*, we had the Mayor...We hired a professional photographer. We knew this was a production. America was gonna see this rally [so we asked ourselves], “What do we want them to see?...Who do we want to speak to? What’s the visual?”...We had lighting...We had a professional sound system with 18 speakers. We had 3 crews just on media. The laborers [union] gave us 1,000 of those people dividers. The teachers [union] gave us 10,000 water bottles, we bought 50,000 water bottles. We rented 27 toilets...We raised like \$160,000. SEIU gave us like \$80,000, the [LA County Fed] gave us like \$10,000, the Catholic Church put in \$10,000. [The message we wanted to convey was] “We want to be a part of America. We want full citizenship.”

The reason for the media risers and such meticulous coordination was that since much of the English media had harped on the few foreign flags that were present at previous and other rallies across the country, this time WAAC wanted to make sure that they determined to the best of their ability exactly what the public was going to see. According to Rosalina Cardenas of the media team, “All around the front of the stage...we made sure that in the whole middle section nobody could get in there if they didn’t have an American flag” because that’s where the media would be facing and organizers and wanted to “make sure that aesthetically the camera angels were going to be what we needed them to be.”

Despite the splits within the local movement, in the end the people themselves decided that even if their leaders were divided, the marching immigrants would remain united. The hundreds of thousands of protesters that showed up to the March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition’s noon boycott marched not only to City Hall, but continued all the way to West Los Angeles where the We Are America Coalition was holding its rally. As Carolina Guevara recalled,

I was on stage and I was told that our march was still an hour away. All of a sudden I turn around and I see a sea of people coming towards us. All of a sudden when you get that feeling, the world and everything around you stops, time just stops. All I could see was just thousands and thousands of people. It just became real at that point. Before then it’s all theoretical. It’s all strategy. It’s who are you reaching? Are you really reaching anybody? You can create as much strategy and media talking points as you want, but if it’s not reaching anyone, if you don’t really see it, then how do you know? If the tree falls in the forest and no one’s there to hear it, right? Well they heard the tree fall. All of a sudden there were thousands upon thousands of people coming toward the stage. I just felt completely overwhelmed with really a sense of, “We did it! Our message was heard!” It turned out that it was actually the other group of folks [the boycott supporters] from the earlier march that had been marching alongside another street...So in the end, it really wasn’t about which side you were on. It was [more like], if you can get out of work and go to the earlier event, go to the earlier event, stick around and then go to the other event. That’s what really happened.

The over two hundred thousand people that attended the boycott rally joined at least another two hundred thousand marching immigrants and their allies for the afternoon protest. Yet

despite both coalitions being able to once again mobilize the immigrant masses, the role of the Spanish media had changed from letting activists appropriate the airwaves to promote militant protest, to merely covering (though sympathetically) the more moderate faction of the movements' frames and actions. The media indirectly made people aware of the boycott through its highlighting of the two events resulting from the movement's divisions. After May 1, though, it became evident that the radicals had lost their most important means of communication with the immigrant community. As one March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition member put it, "We became dependent on what the media helped us do."<sup>cxxxviii</sup> Once they lost this "help," they lost the ability to amplify their messages to the millions of people they wanted to continue to mobilize.

According to March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition member Sarah Knopp, "I think that at a certain point [the media became] more critical and less interested" in helping the radicals promote their cause. Isabel Rodriguez agreed, adding, "We were no longer given access to the masses through the media." According to Guillermo Torres, a coalition member that helped organize some of the local businesses to support the boycott, the owners of the stations "put pressure on some of the radio DJs to stop promoting" their actions.<sup>cxxxix</sup> Jesse Diaz agreed with this theory and asserted that "because of their corporate connections," the Spanish media refused to promote the boycott and stopped covering the March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition's demands. He contended that even their onetime ally radio DJ *Piolín* only came out in support of the boycott (just days before the event) due to public pressure because he "was being dogged everyday for not supporting the boycott...On the air, people were calling in and calling him...[a] *traidor*."

Radicals also claimed that "there was a big scandal" about a rumor that "*Univision* circulated...internal operational memos in which they directly gave instructions to the heads of their news department not only not to report on future mass events, but specifically [not to

report] on May 1<sup>st</sup>.”<sup>cx1</sup> Nativo Lopez didn’t put this conspiracy past the news outlets, recalling that DJs became “less accessible to conduct interviews that they were conducting [with the March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition] prior to May 1<sup>st</sup>.” He asserted, “There’s no doubt in my mind that there were corporate decisions made just before May 1<sup>st</sup>, ” and subsequent to it, “that really had an effect on the ability of grassroots organizations to have access to the Spanish-language media to convey their message.” Hence, while many of the radical March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition activists weren’t sure why or how they had lost access to the ethnic media, others felt that there was a conspiracy to deliberately censor them. Their only proof of these allegations was a supposed email/memo that someone in the movement claimed to have obtained from an unspecified source. The final section of this chapter investigates to what degree, if any, the latter “conspiracy theory” was true. It also examines the multiple ways in which the mass media—both English and Spanish—contributed to the demobilization of the protest wave.

### **The Revolution Will Not Be Televised [in Spanish Either]: Censorship and Ethnic Media’s Corporate Limits**

#### ***Relationships with Media Members and Traditional Mechanisms of Media Demobilization***

If immigrant rights activists saw the mass media as equal partners and allies in their efforts, they were mistaken. The members of and the mass media as an institution had their own interests and agendas, which, as mentioned before, sometimes overlapped with those of movement organizers, and sometimes did not. Activists’ expectations should not have been otherwise. While the mass media was indispensable to the rise of the immigrant protest wave, it was equally essential to its decline. Some of the traditional ways scholars have found the mass media to contribute to the suppression of movements, intentionally or not, is through highlighting divisions between activists and creating a sense of fear among organizers’ target

populations (Gitlin 2003). Several of the activists interviewed felt that both of these media mechanisms of demobilization occurred during the immigrant protest wave. For instance, as mentioned above, both English and Spanish news outlets made the public aware of the split in the movement over the May 1 Boycott. While immigrants had originally received an image of a broad (from the Catholic Church to labor unions) and united front against the Sensenbrenner Bill, leading up to May Day they received mixed messages and were shown a now divided leadership.

Moreover, another manner in which activists felt the media contributed to the demobilization process was through their coverage of all the immigration raids and firings of protest participants by employers that began to occur during and after the major mobilizations (see Chapter 5). Activists recalled debates within the immigrant community, including the media, over whether the marches themselves were causing the backlash. Organizers believed that the raids that began to increase in number during and after the protest wave were a deliberate form of anti-movement state repression. Through their coverage of these events, activists felt the Spanish media increased the negative effects of them through inadvertently scaring the immigrant public. This issue is important to note because although several raids did in fact occur in and around the Los Angeles area, interviews with organizers in New York City and Forty Myers, FL revealed that even though raids *did not* happen at the time in their neighborhoods, the fact that the Spanish media was consistently covering those that did occur across the country installed a sense of fear in their local immigrant communities.

According to organizers, the effects of the media's coverage of the raids were that immigrants became less willing to follow activists' calls to mobilize. It is important to note, though, that Spanish TV wasn't the only media outlet covering the raids; radio also contributed

to the spreading of the sense of fear. For instance, in both Los Angeles and other cities immigrants began to call into radio stations to warn people of a potential raid about to occur when saw what they thought were immigration officials in their communities. While activists said that the vast majority of the time these rumors were mistaken, they nonetheless contributed to a growing sense of uneasiness within immigrant neighborhoods. Thus, the same media coverage of the marches that had created a feeling of strength and security in numbers through showing other immigrants “like them” marching across the country without being deported or repressed, later helped create a sense of *insecurity* by demonstrating that there now seemed to be a price to pay for acts of defiance.

While the latter reason affected both the mainstream and radical factions of the local movement, there were also specific reasons why the more established actors continued to receive some Spanish-language press while the radical flank did not. Both scholars and activists have noted the importance of movement actors developing personal relationships with members of the media (Shaw 2001, 152; Gitlin 2003, 263). Some WAAC members had previous and long standing relationships with the Spanish media that seem to have affected their access to it. For example, not only had labor unions assisted *Univision* with some of the station’s “*A Su Lado*” news segments discussed earlier, but along with mainstream immigrant rights groups, certain union leaders often served as sources for the Spanish media on immigration issues. In other words, WAAC members possessed “standing” with Spanish news outlets. Ferree and her co-authors (2002) define standing as “having a voice in the media...gaining the status of a regular media source whose interpretations are directly quoted” (13). Being a regular news source is important because having standing “creates power. Being visible and quoted defines for other journalist and the broader public who really matters...Standing both reflects and enhances

acceptance as a player on a given policy issue...” (87). Despite the fact that the leaders of the more radical March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition were the ones who initiated the first major LA demonstration, *Univision* chose to prioritize its coverage of WAAC leaders because the station had often worked with these individuals before and considered them “the real architects” of the movement.<sup>cxli</sup> Thus, the media identified those with whom they had previous working relationships as the leaders and spokespeople for the movement, and as a result, chose to cover their perspectives at the expense of others.

But having standing with Spanish media wasn't the only contributing factor to activists' access to it. Some of the leadership styles and personalities of certain March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition members also seem to have influenced the media's openness to them. For instance, because one of the coalition's members felt that a local radio DJ, *El Cucuy*, hadn't supported the mobilization enough, during the massive March 25<sup>th</sup> rally the activist refused to allow the DJ onstage to speak to the crowd. As a result of the argument that then broke out, *El Cucuy* refused to work with the radicals and informed members of the more moderate WAAC that he would be supporting their efforts instead.<sup>cxlii</sup> Furthermore, according to a local immigrant rights group leader, because of their success with the first L.A. protest, certain individuals within the March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition “wanted to claim that they were the legitimate leaders” of the movement. She said that this attitude “pissed more people off than you can...think, including the media. I didn't have to say anything. The reporters and everybody who had been following this were really upset.” One of these media people seems to have been Jorge Mettey, *Univision's* news director. He expressed that he was uncomfortable with the fact that these new actors (e.g. certain members of the March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition and some radio DJs) were portraying themselves as the true leaders of the immigrant rights movement. Consequently, he felt the need to correct this image by focusing his

coverage on the people that had standing with his station and that he perceived to be the real leaders of the movement, key members of the We Are America Coalition.<sup>cxliii</sup>

Thus, activists' relationships with media's personnel do in fact matter and influence who gets access to it. These findings also show how the media can contribute to the mobilization and demobilization of movements through giving certain activists access to its channels of mass communication and allowing them to broadcast their views. This is a vital point because scholars have argued that the groups that get "to speak for a large and diverse movement...get to define the profile of the movement as a whole" (Meyer 2007, 99). It is also important to note, however, that the choice made by the Spanish-language TV station with the largest audience in the nation to give standing to more mainstream groups didn't solely have to do with its past relationships with these established actors. As I show below, the decision also had much to do with the previous "blackballing" of some of these movement radicals.

### ***Blackballed and Blacked Out***

When activists are "blackballed" or demonized by the media it can become difficult for them not only to attract new recruits, which is of the utmost importance if they hope to expand their movements or organizations, but also to maintain solidarity with current and potential allies. Boykoff (2007) contends that, "When dissidents are publicly questioned...by the state, their reputations can be tarnished, if not destroyed, in the public sphere, thereby lessening the inclination to join these individuals' groups, to support these groups, or even to make an effort to figure out exactly what these groups are saying" (61, 193). Even if the charges are later found to be false and activists are declared innocent, the damage (potentially permanent) of the intentional or unintentional character assassination has already been accomplished.

This appears to be the case with regard to some of the March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition's leaders, including perhaps the most well known progressive immigrant rights activist in the country, Nativio Lopez of *Hermandad Mexicana* (the oldest undocumented immigrant rights group in the nation). According to an *Univision* editorial board member that spoke about this topic under the condition of anonymity, when this member of the media noticed that *Univision* and other news outlets were interviewing Lopez, s/he wondered, "[Why is he] talking for the Latino community? Has anyone bothered to investigate this guy?" The editorial member recalled that Lopez had once "got in trouble" with federal funds, which tarnished the activists' reputation in the media member's eyes. The *Univision* newsperson admitted, "I don't know the trouble [Lopez's organization] got into later, but for me, their credibility was very much in question." She/he felt that the station should only interview people whose integrity would not be doubted and that because of the previous allegations against them, Lopez and his organization no longer met this standard.<sup>cxliv</sup>

Although the *Univision* representative admitted to "not remembering" what the outcome of the case was, the charges they were referring to were accusations made in 2001 by the California Department of Education that claimed Lopez and his organization "failed to account for \$7 million in federal grant funds intended for citizenship and English classes for immigrants" (Yi 2001). While it took two years, thousands of dollars in legal fees and countless time spent fighting the lawsuit instead of continuing his organizing, Nativio Lopez's case was eventually dismissed (Haldane 2003). This example demonstrates that since media personnel are also members of the general public, they too are potential victims of the effects of media blackballing. Consequently, despite the fact that the case was dismissed, the damage to Lopez's reputation had already been done. Five years after the accusations were made, *Univision* still in

part judged Lopez's credibility based on the allegations. Thus, being blackballed can not only tarnish an activist's image in the eyes of the general public, but it can also affect the level of credibility and "standing" that media outlets grant him or her in the future.

Being *blackballed* can also contribute to being *blacked out*, or censored, by the media. Leading up to the May 1 boycott, immigrant rights radicals were "blacked out" by *Univision*. But the decision to do so was not made in a cigar-smoke-filled room by the corporation's owners in order to stop the "masses from revolting," as activists may have perceived. Like the decision to make and run the promo leading up to March 25, the choice of whom to censor was also a local one made in an attempt to shape the image and direction of the movement. Chomsky (1989) asserts that "those who occupy managerial positions in the media" belong to the "privileged elites and might be expected to share the perceptions, aspirations, and attitudes of their associates, reflecting their own class interests as well" (8). Gitlin (2003) adds that the editors and reporters the mass media "hire are generally upper-middle-class in origin, and although their personal values may be liberal by the conventional nomenclature of American politics, they tend to share the *core* hegemonic assumptions of their class: that is, of their managers as well as their major sources" [emphasis his] (260). Thus, the implications of the latter arguments are that their class and ideological biases can limit what members of the media see as actions within politically acceptable bounds.

If hiring upper-middle-class editors and reporters influences news production in the ways critics suggest, then the Spanish-language media may also be susceptible to these effects given that several Latino media scholars have noted that Spanish news outlets tend to hire elites from Latin America rather than working class U.S. born Latinos (Rodriguez 2009; Castaneda 2009). An example of this is the L.A. *Univision* news director Jorge Mettey, who noted that he came

from a privileged background. His “core” ideological leanings seem to have played a role in his decision to censor radicals and portray the movement, to which he was admittedly sympathetic, in a manner that he personally felt would help it reach its goal—or at least the goals of the faction of the movement he most identified with. His ideological biases played out in at least two ways: in the message his multi-Spanish-language-TV-network promo sought to send leading up to the first major L.A. demonstration, and in his decision to “black out” certain radical March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition members.

Mettey expressed that leading up to the March 25<sup>th</sup> demonstration he was “really concerned” with some of the “Hispanic radical groups” and leaders. He admitted, “I had this instruction in my newsroom [that] that guy [Nativo Lopez] cannot be on the air...because he was so for confrontation. I thought we couldn’t afford that...That is not the way the Hispanic community is going to be respected by the rest of the people...At least that was my vision.” According to Mettey, although Lopez had often appeared on *Univision* before, given the heightened political context, “I felt that it was unhealthy to keep sending that message. I wanted to tone it down.” In addition to his sympathy for the plight of the Latino immigrants under attack, he said that the militant messages and frames coming from radicals in the movement also heavily influenced his decision to make the *Univision* promo. Mettey wanted to counter the calls for confrontation by movement radicals with calls for peace and civility. He personally wrote the script of exactly what each anchor in the promo said because, “We couldn’t afford to send the wrong message.”

In terms of the famous “memo,” it did turn out to exist, but its claimed goal was not to completely censor the movement or tell reporters to stop covering the protests. It merely called for a “toning down” of the coverage. Again the *Univision* news director explained,

[a]s a matter of fact, radio was part of the confrontational voice for the march. I remember meeting with *Pirolín*, his team, and with the people from *Univision* saying, “We cannot be part of this. We have to turn it down”...If you listen to the tapes a couple of [weeks] before the march, *Pirolín*'s message was really confrontational. He was very sensitive [though] after the conversations we had, and after the conversations I'm sure the company had with him because I was very stubborn when talking with his bosses about the danger that [confrontational rhetoric] represented. [And as a result,] he turned it down. He came on board with the message of peace...

Mettey went on to explain that the email/memo was sent out by the vice president of programming for *Univision* Radio in Los Angeles. But he asserted that it did not indicate that the stations “shouldn't cover the marches.” Instead, the email only expressed that, “We have to be very professional and serious and responsible. We have to be careful of who is in front of the mic.” Acknowledging that “someone leaked that memo to one of the confrontational guys,” he claimed that the radicals misunderstood it as “refusing to cover” May Day, but that in fact “it was just the opposite. It was insisting on covering it, but from a very responsible perspective.” Thus, although the media did blackout certain radicals, it did not censor its coverage of the entire movement. Rather, it used its influence to help shape and frame how the public viewed it.

Gitlin (2003) contends that “[media] blackouts do take place” and that the editors and executives who do the censoring rationalize their actions as being those of a “good shepherd's fair-minded act of professional news judgment.” He asserts that, “The closer an issue is to the core interests of national political elites, the more likely is a blackout of news that effectively challenges that interest” (5). The case of *Univision* complicates these claims. A blackout of certain activists does seem to have occurred as a result of an editorial decision made by a “good shepherd's fair-minded act of professional news judgment.” But the news director's choice to “tone it down” was not made to advance the interests of some abstract national political elite. The logic behind his thinking seems to be more aligned with the mentality of the members of

WAAC who felt that a message of peace and patriotism, in order to demonstrate a desire for inclusion into American society, would resonate more with the general public. Taking the literature on “frame resonance” reviewed above in mind, Mettey’s motives make sense given his mainstream upper-middle class ideological background and his identification with the goals of the more moderate faction of the movement.

Whatever the reasoning, blatant censorship of radical frames and messages did take place because of factors both within (e.g. their relationships with certain media members) and beyond (e.g. editorial decisions) activists’ control. As a result, once the initial threat of the Sensenbrenner Bill had subsided and the push for legalization leading up to May 1 began, the immigrant masses were primarily exposed to only one faction (the moderate) of the movement’s frames and in effect primed to side with this branch of the movement. The media seems to have been willing to support the strategy of confrontational protest when its audience was under eminent danger, but once the need for this defensive posture diminished and the push for “comprehensive immigration reform” began (see Chapter 6), it opted to support those movement actors that favored more institutional forms of politics. If the March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition had been able to maintain the same level of media appropriation leading up to their “Day Without An Immigrant” boycott that it had obtained prior to its March 25 demonstration, there’s no telling what the outcome might have been. This isn’t to say that if presented with both the moderate and more militant options immigrants would have chosen the latter. The point is that the various approaches offered by different factions of the movement weren’t equally presented by the ethnic media. However, as we saw during the 2006 May Day demonstration in Los Angeles, despite the lack of complete information the immigrant public was capable of making its own decision by choosing a middle ground in uniting the marches of both factions of the movement.

### *English Language News Coverage and Ethnic Media's Linguistic Limits*

Immigrant rights activists explained that they had very different relationships with the ethnic media than they did with English language news outlets. While they believed the English-language media viewed immigrants and immigration as simply another issue to cover “objectively,” Spanish-language media saw itself as partners with immigrant advocates in helping immigrants integrate into American society. Because some advocates had developed working relationships with ethnic news outlets, in addition to the fact that most Spanish media members were immigrants themselves, activists believed that ethnic media tended to be much more sympathetic to the plights of immigrants when compared to mainstream English news outlets. An example of how the mutually reinforcing relationship between immigrant activists and the Spanish media can overlap was best captured by Eliseo Medina of SEIU:

The partnership with the [Spanish] media is unique. From the beginning we viewed the Latino media as a partner, not as a media source to pitch news releases to...The Latino media, unlike the mainstream [English] media, is an activist media. It's a media that actually takes sides on behalf of their viewers on the issues [their viewers] care about. Be it immigration reform or healthcare...the ways they cover [the issues] and the comments anchors make...are always on the side of the [Latino] community. So what we were doing with the immigrant rights movement was giving them actions to cover that fit in with the message they [already] wanted to give in order to build up their ratings and their viewer loyalty. So it was a match made in heaven. Economic interests coincided with ideological interests.

These dynamics weren't the case with regard to the English media. Thus, by the “linguistic limits” of ethnic media I am referring to activists' inability to reach the English-speaking public through their use of Spanish media, and their inability to counter what they felt was harmful coverage by English news outlets. For instance, another media mechanism of demobilization that has traditionally had detrimental effects on social movements has been what some scholars refer to as the use of “freak frames.” Media outlets use freak frames when they

focus on individuals in a movement that may not demonstrate “mainstream values, beliefs and opinions” (Boykoff 2007, 229; Gitlin 2003b, 304). While they relished the sympathetic coverage they received from Spanish-language media, immigrant rights activists complained about English news outlets consistently using freak frames against them during the protest wave. For example, they often felt the English media would over-hype instances of “students jumping school fences” on their way to protests, or instead of highlighting the thousands upon thousands of U.S. flags at demonstrations, they would focus on the few foreign flags being waved by a couple of individuals. Organizers were also concerned that authorities and the English media would be drawn to the few “freaks” within their marches that might present a non-mainstream or anti-American image. As Javier Gonzalez explained,

[i]f there’s 4,000 women and children and regular people, and then there’s 13 *Mexicas* [radical neo-indigenous Chicano nationalists] who wanna Aztec dance and say, “Fuck the cops,” when the cops come and beat everybody up, do they just beat them up or do they beat everybody up?...And then what’s the TV story? A bunch of Chicanos with Raider jerseys and black bandanas stomping on the U.S. flag.

On top of their concerns over the mainstream English media not portraying the movement in a representative light, organizers also felt they had to contend with reactionary right-wing English media outlets that were directly attacking them. Juan Jose Gutierrez pointed out that while the English-speaking world was quick to complain about the role of ethnic media in the rise of immigrant mass mobilization, they were less willing to highlight the part that conservative radio and cable news stations played in the movements’ demobilization. According to John Tresvina of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education (MALDEF), during the protests mainstream English news outlets, in particular cable news networks such as Fox, played

a very negative role that “really poisoned the atmosphere.” Angelica Salas of CHIRLA explained:

We didn’t have a bully pulpit. We felt that one of the reasons we were completely disarmed was that we didn’t have the capacity to disarm the Right. They used CNN [and] Fox News. We didn’t have [that type of] communications infrastructure... Communication from our end was something we did with the ethnic media to tell our community what to do. We never elevated [our capacity] to a place where we needed...to play in the big leagues and really counter [the Right]...Basically we were really good at activating media to mobilize our base, but we weren’t effective in actually being present and framing the debate in English. In the absence of that, the loudest people, the people who got the most attention, were the Glenn Becks and Lou Dobbses. They framed every issue from the local to the national level.

Thus, by putting the topic of immigration on the public’s agenda (Dunaway, Abrajano, and Braton 2007), the marches also inadvertently created a space for the nativist counter-movement to also enter the public debate. Pro-immigrant activists were forced to painfully realize the limits of solely using Spanish-language media. Although they were enthusiastic about the supportive attention they were getting from Spanish news outlets, only the immigrant community was able to consume this coverage. Consequently, the English speaking world was relatively immune from exposure to ethnic media’s pro-immigrant frames. This is important to note because as mentioned earlier, WAAC had hoped to target the “middle 60–70%” of the English speaking public that polls had told them could possibly be swayed to their side. So although immigrant rights activists received an unprecedented amount of *Spanish* news coverage, the “linguistic limit” of this media attention was that members of one of their primary target groups—*English* speaking Americans—weren’t affected by it at all. Consequently, while Spanish audiences were being saturated with pro-immigrant news from all angles (radio, TV, newspapers, etc), English speakers’ options were limited to “neutral” mainstream coverage that

activists claimed often used “freak frames,” or they received their information from xenophobic right-wing news outlets.

This isn't to say that immigrant activists did not attempt to get sympathetic coverage from English news outlets. As the mainstream faction of the movements' framing strategy during their May 1 rally showed, they actually went to great lengths to attempt to do so. But because of the nature of Spanish media and their previous relationships with ethnic news outlets, immigrant advocates were unable to replicate the success they had with Spanish media when it came to English news outlets. As will be discussed in Chapter 6, though, mainstream immigrant rights advocates learned from this experience. After its failure to win legalization in 2006 and 2007, the movement began to invest in strengthening its ability and capacity to both influence mainstream English news outlets and counter nativist ones.

### ***When Corporate and Community Interests Combine and Collide***

Another contributing factor to the decline of mobilization has to do with the fact that both the mainstream faction of the movement and the Spanish media switched their attention from protest to more institutional forms of politics (see Chapter 6). After the threat of H.R. 4437 was gone, and activists realized that their mass mobilizations were not producing the results they wanted (legalization), they shifted their attention and strategy to the upcoming 2006 midterm election. Several of the leaders interviewed mentioned that because for the first time in years the Democratic Party had a chance of taking back both the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, and because several Republican candidates were running on anti-immigrant platforms, the mainstream movement decided to take its battle to the ballot box. According to

Corpeño, “Part of our analysis was that we needed to change hearts and minds, but we [also] needed to back it up with political power.” Mike Garcia of SEIU 1877 explained:

We got to a point where we said we’re not moving these politicians. If anything, the forces that were moving them were the right-wing [English language] DJs that were creating a larger outcry than they really had behind them. But because they have some power and the threatening vocabulary in their dialogue with America, I guess it really scared Congress into thinking that it was these right-wing DJs—the Lou Dobbses of the world and the [conservative] radio DJs—that were really moving America, not our marches—at least the America that they thought mattered, which was the voting public... So it got to a point where the work we had to do...was the hard work of voter registration and GOTV [get out the vote] to build towards the November elections to show that we could move the vote and that immigration reform was a critical issue to enough of the electorate to [make] the Congress and Senate have to do something [about it]. And we also wanted to keep it on the front burner for the presidential election and all the candidates to force them to...make a commitment to immigration reform.

The results of that 2006 midterm election were bittersweet for the movement. Although the less nativist Democratic Party did take back Congress and the majority of the Republicans that ran on anti-immigrant platforms were defeated, the Democrats that won office seemed to be centrist or conservative, including on the issue of immigration. Thus, although one of the chants that came out of the crowds of the immigrant protests was “Today We March, Tomorrow We Vote,” the few months immigrants had between the decline of their marches and the November elections weren’t enough for them to fully develop and carry out a plan to mobilize the immigrant vote. In addition, as Salas mentioned earlier, the movement didn’t have the communications infrastructure to continue to mass-mobilize.

Also frustrated with the legislative and electoral outcomes were Latino political and media elites. During a lunch meeting between Marcelo Gaete of the National Association of Latina/o Elected Officials (NALEO) and Jorge Mettey of *Univision*, the two men discussed how the image the average American had of participants in the marches was that of an undocumented person without the power to vote. While they agreed that a good portion of the crowd lacked

citizenship, they also felt that many of the march participants were U.S. born and Latino permanent residents—who were capable of voting or naturalizing but for whatever reasons had chosen not to. The two men began to discuss exactly how many Latinos in the country, the state of California, and Los Angeles were eligible for citizenship. What resulted from their conversation were the historic “*Ya Es Hora*” [Now is the Time] campaigns of 2007 and 2008. Although the details and political effects of this campaign will be discussed in Chapter 6, here I will briefly highlight how the Spanish media’s corporate interest helped shape its role in the campaign.

The strategy of this *Univision* and NALEO led effort was to spend a full year consistently promoting a naturalization campaign, followed by several months of an immigrant voter registration drive, and ending with a media blitz to get out the immigrant vote for the 2008 presidential election. To put this idea into action, *Univision* and NALEO joined with other national Latino organizations and media outlets. In the middle of Mettey’s citizenship campaign, *Ya Es Hora, Ciudadanía* [Now is the Time, Citizenship], he received a call from his station’s general manager. During their conversation Mettey said that management wanted him to stop the citizenship drive and only focus on voter registration. When the news director tried to explain his strategy of maximizing the number of people that naturalized because of its importance to the Latino community, Mettey was shocked at their response. He said that the station’s administrators told him they wanted the efforts to focus on voter registration because profits for the corporation were what mattered most and that they wanted to draw as many campaign advertisement dollars as possible from the upcoming presidential election. In short, the corporation seemed primarily to be concerned not with the political predicament or development of their immigrant audience, but with being able to demonstrate to both of the major political

parties that their viewers were voters and that because of this, both parties should invest in political advertising on their network.

While Mettey understood and didn't think there was anything wrong with the network profiting from the campaign (in fact he said that it *should* have tried to do so), he felt that their desire to draw political advertisement dollars should not have come at the expense of maximizing the help they could give their immigrant audience; he believed both goals could be accomplished simultaneously. The news director contended that this disagreement and his insubordination to management on the issue eventually led to his dismissal from the company. According to an anonymous member of the station's news board, Mettey's firing had detrimental effects on the local *Univision* station's coverage of immigration and Latino political issues. The source recalled,

[w]e noticed [and asked ourselves]... "Hey what's going on? Why this reduction [in our coverage of immigration]? Why are we not pursuing it more aggressively? Why aren't we doing the same things as before? Why is *Hablado Firme* [a Latino "Meet the Press" type political talk show created by Mettey after the protests] off the air? Why?" I still don't know to this point. I believe that we were providing a very, very good service to the community...People...would tell us that...this was very valuable information. [But] it was just little by little phased out.

Hence, another manner in which the Spanish media—or at least its most powerful news outlet, *Univision*—helped contribute to the decline in immigrant mass protest was through the shift of attention to the 2006 midterm elections. While they still covered the politically contentious issue of immigration and its role in the election, their focus tilted towards the more institutional strategy of mainstream immigrant rights and Latino political leaders. The lack of legislative and electoral outcomes prompted Latino elites, the largest Spanish-language TV station in the country, and other ethnic media outlets to embark on historic immigrant

citizenship, voter registration, and get-out-the-vote drives. But as the evidence above suggests, the corporation's interests in attracting political campaign advertising dollars seems to have influenced the manner and the degree to which Spanish media's most powerful news outlet, *Univision*, participated in the efforts to increase the Latino immigrant community's political development.

### **Conclusion: It Was [in part] the Media, Stupid!**

Spanish media played a vital, but much more complex role in the mass mobilizations than has commonly been depicted by both scholars and activists. Because of the draconian and far-reaching nature of the Sensenbrenner Bill, a mutually reinforcing relationship emerged between the interests of activists and immigrant members of the Spanish media. When there seemed to be an immediate and imminent threat, the Spanish media was willing to assist activists with confrontational protest tactics in order to help beat the nativist legislation that would have adversely affected the community that makes up its audience. When this threat diminished, Spanish media used its influence to promote the frames and strategies of the more mainstream faction of the movement through its coverage of moderate immigrant advocates and censorship of certain radical ones.

As important as the Spanish media was to the rise of the immigrant protest waves, rally organizers claimed it also contributed to the dampening of immigrants' willingness to heed the activists' calls to take to the streets. This happened indirectly through revealing movement divisions and installing fear in the immigrant community by covering the raids and firings that took place during and after the protests. The media also contributed to the demobilization process in more direct ways as well. Through the censoring of certain radical immigrant activists

the Spanish media potentially helped thwart an upward scale shift in movement militancy. In addition, by the ethnic media shifting their focus from the rallies to the upcoming election, they arguably primed the immigrant masses to participate in the type of political action that certain members of the media felt would most likely yield them their primary goal, which had changed from initially wanting to stop H.R. 4437 to now winning legalization. Once they helped institutionalize the movement's strategy, rather than maximizing the number of Latinos they could naturalize, the corporate Spanish media chose to focus on increasing the number of registered immigrant voters so that it could attract campaign advertisement dollars from political parties.

English language media also contributed to the demobilization process. These news outlets were accused of giving the demonstrations a "bad image" by harping on such divisive images as the foreign flags that a few demonstrators carried, rather than the multitude of American flags the vast majority of immigrants were waving. Immigrant rights leaders felt that their inability to counter the racist and nativist rhetoric of people like CNN's Lou Dobbs, various Fox News anchors, and the plethora of right-wing radio programs, contributed to their inability to move public opinion and Congress in the direction they desired. Thus, activists' strategy of using the Spanish media to mobilize their base was successful but limited. It was successful because of activists' ability to use the media to convince millions of immigrants and their allies to take to the streets, but through no fault of their own, the strategy was limited due to its inability to reach a more politically influential English-speaking public.

In conclusion, the findings of this analysis offer several theoretical contributions to research on the relationship between social movements and the media. For one, most of the American social movement literature that examines the media focuses solely on English

language news outlets. The evidence presented in this chapter suggests that many of the findings of previous studies on social movements and the media may not necessarily apply to how movements of ethnic minorities interact with ethnic media outlets. For instance, much of the established literature contends that activists usually attempt to stage mass demonstrations in order to draw the media's attention and then hope that it covers their issues in a sympathetic light. In the case of the 2006 immigrant rights protest wave, immigrant rights activists instead used the mainstream Spanish mass media to broadcast their pro-immigrant frames and calls for action. Furthermore, while the Spanish media serves as an agent of immigrant incorporation in addition to being a source of information, English media is expected to play only the latter role. Consequently, immigrant advocates who are also dedicated to helping immigrants integrate into American society have been able to develop strong working relationship with members of the Spanish media (who usually are immigrants themselves). Most American social movements do not have this type of a relationship with the mainstream English-language media since activists and this segment of the media do not share the common goal of trying to integrate a specific population into U.S. society.

The findings of this chapter present activists with some vital lessons as well. While immigrant advocates must continue to strengthen their relationships with ethnic media outlets, they have the additional burden of developing a dual media strategy that targets both mainstream ethnic *and* English media. The protest wave also demonstrates that the same frames that may work in mobilizing immigrants and their allies will not necessary move the broader U.S. public to become more sympathetic to their cause. Thus, activists must weigh the long- and short-term costs and effects of their framing strategies. For instance, while using a militant and arguably “anti-American” internationalist frame may hurt the immediate goal of getting the public and

politicians to support legalization, the long term effects of this strategy could be the possible politicization of immigrants and their children, which may make them more ripe for mobilization in the future. At the same time, since most immigrants arguably *do* want to integrate into American society, the longer it takes to pass immigration reform the more vulnerable to discrimination and exploitation undocumented workers are at their workplaces and in their communities (e.g. because of raids, local and state anti-immigrant ordinances, etc.).

This chapter has demonstrated that both the ethnic and English media played important roles in not only the rise, but also the shape and decline of the immigrant protest wave. Since the number of immigrants in American society will continue to grow and immigrants are taking part in not only immigrant rights, but also other forms of activism (e.g. labor, gender, sexuality, environmental, etc.), social movement media scholars must begin to integrate the specific dynamics of immigrant activism and its relation to ethnic media into their analyses of other movements with immigrant participants. Moreover, immigrant activists must continue to develop their capacities to operate in two media worlds simultaneously, dealing with both their particular ethnic and the general English language media. Both of these endeavors are easier to acknowledge than to do.

## Chapter 4

# Coalitions of Coalitions

*Diversity, Alliances, and Immigrant Mass  
Mobilization in New York City*

*During the 2006 immigrant protest wave, small ethnic businesses, soccer league players, farm workers, and local ethnic newspaper owners in Southwest Florida formed an alliance in order to organize a massive march and rally in the city of Fort Myers. In Los Angeles, Filipinos, Mexicans, Koreans, Central Americans, and immigrants from other parts of the world united with their U.S.-born allies to form a broad and diverse coalition that coordinated the huge demonstrations that took place in the city. Throughout the nation, people of different political leanings and different types of organizations came together to oppose H.R. 4437 and to fight for the legalization of undocumented immigrants. While coalitions and diversity (of all types) were important factors in the mass mobilizations in all of the cities researched for this dissertation, the following chapter uses the case of New York to demonstrate the various ways in which these elements can impact large-scale collective action.*

### **Broad Coalitions and Large-Scale Collective Action**

During the 2006 immigrant protest wave, previously-established and newly-developed strategic alliances formed across the country to help coordinate local and national actions. By effectively bringing together people of different ethnicities and policy positions, as well as a broad spectrum of organizations based in a range of geographic locations, the formation of diverse coalitions was fundamental to the immigrant mass mobilization process. Nowhere was this more apparent than in New York City. The rallies that took place on April 10 and May 1 in the metropolis reflected this multiplicity, as people in every borough—from Irish pub owners and Muslim cab drivers to African service and Filipina domestic workers—united to march for immigrant rights. The historic demonstrations that took place in the city were best described by

one local activist as a phenomenon organized by a broad and diverse array of “coalitions of coalitions that came together.”<sup>cxlv</sup> From the local movement’s campaign for non-citizen voting rights (Hayduk 2006), to the organizing of taxi drivers, street vendors, restaurant workers, and families affected by immigrant detention (for examples see Jayaraman and Ness 2005; Biju 2005; Kateel and Shahani 2008), New York conceivably has the most diverse and one of the most dynamic immigrant rights movement in the country. Yet in spite of its well-established local movement and multiple immigrant coalitions, the Empire City’s mass actions during the 2006 immigrant protest wave presented some interesting theoretical anomalies for scholars of contentious and interethnic politics.

For instance, contrary to common belief, coalitions between minority groups are quite rare. In fact, as I will elaborate more fully on below, given the increased levels of tension between racial and ethnic groups in urban areas, some scholars argue that competition, rather than coalition, may be the dominant factor shaping the interactions of various racial and ethnic minorities (McClain and Tauber 2001). However, the case of New York contradicts, or at least complicates, such assertions. Not one, but several neighborhood and citywide multiethnic coalitions formed in the city during the 2006 protest wave. These examples of multiethnic coalition-building merit investigation because they can teach activists and scholars much about both the ways in which diverse alliances form and the challenges that groups face in attempting to maintain them.

Another important question concerns the demographic composition of the New York protests. Despite distinct migration histories, and racial and cultural (among other) differences, over the last few decades elites of Latin American descent in the U.S. (from Chicanos to Puerto Ricans) have worked to establish a pan-ethnic “Latino” political identity aiming to project a

united national front (Beltrán 2010, 7). Polling of Latino public opinion taken during the 2006 marches provides some evidence of their success. The survey data showed that there were “no differences in levels of support” for the immigrant protests among the various Latino “national origin” groups. Based on these findings and noting this chapter’s focus on New York, it is worth pointing out that despite Puerto Ricans being the city’s largest Latino subgroup, and their very high levels of expressed support for the rallies (Barreto et al. 2009, 754), the extent of their approval did not match their degree of actual participation in the marches. According to several New York protest organizers (of varied racial and ethnic backgrounds), Dominicans and Mexicans turned out the largest contingents across all immigrant groups during the city’s biggest rallies. Considering that the marches were a reaction to a proposed immigration law, one might hastily conclude that this turnout can be explained by the fact that Puerto Ricans are born with U.S. citizenship and thus *are not immigrants*, while Dominicans and Mexicans are. Yet according to self-reported survey data taken during and after the protest wave, being a foreign-born Latino was *not* statistically correlated with higher levels of individual participation in the protests. In fact, analysis of these opinion polls found that “second-generation and third-generation Latinos” were “as likely to participate in the marches” as recent immigrants were (Barreto et al. 2009, 753).

The observations made by local New York organizers—that Mexicans accounted for a disproportionate share of protest participants, second only to Dominicans (by far the largest immigrant group in New York)—is supported by Barreto et al.’s (2009) quantitative national study, which revealed that despite widespread support for the rallies across *all* Latino subgroups, *Mexicans were more likely to actually participate* in the demonstrations (754). In fact, subsequent ethnographic research on New York May Day rallies has found that since 2006,

Mexicans have unquestionably comprised the *majority* of protest participants (Gonzales 2011). The fact that Mexicans are neither New York's largest immigrant group (they trail foreign-born Dominicans, Chinese, Jamaicans, and Guyanese) *nor* the biggest Latino national origin group (Puerto Ricans and Dominicans are by far the largest, and up until the 2000 Census, Ecuadorians, Colombians, and Cubans were also more numerous) (NYC Department of Planning 2000; Limonic 2000, 7), makes their level of involvement in the city's 2006 protests a phenomenon worth examining.

Furthermore, unlike such other major immigrant metropolises as L.A. and Chicago—where Mexicans make up the bulk of the foreign-born population, have a long history of immigrant activism, and have established several social movement organizations (SMOs)—*Mexicanos en Nueva York* are notoriously under-organized (Hazan 2006, 211, 264). The extent of turnout given the community's lack of SMOs is intriguing because of the important role formal organizations are said to play in mobilization processes (Meyer 2007, 61; McCarthy and Zald 1977; Clemens and Minkoff 2004). Moreover, given the strong relationship scholars have found between individual resources (e.g. income, education, etc.) and political participation (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995), the fact that Mexicans have the highest poverty rate among all New York foreign-born residents (32%), the lowest percent of high school graduates (34.7%), the least electoral influence of any ethnic group (only 0.2% of Mexicans in the city were voting age citizens), and as a group are relatively new immigrants to the city (NYC Department of Planning 2000; Logan and Mollenkopf 2001, 25) makes the magnitude of their participation puzzling.

Another anomaly that arose in New York during the protest wave was related to the overall size of the city's demonstrations. New York has the nation's largest immigrant

population, perhaps the longest history of immigrant activism, and arguably more immigrant rights organizations than any other city in the country. Yet, the city arrived late to the series of national demonstrations (Gonzalez 2006; Foner and Waldinger 2011) and, unlike other major metropolises, it failed in its first few attempts to mass-mobilize its foreign-born residents (Confessore 2006; Gerson 2006). Even when it finally was able to produce large-scale immigrant collective action, several scholars of New York immigrant politics have pointed out that the city arguably underperformed in terms of the size of its protests (Foner and Waldeinger 2011; Hazan and Hayduk 2011).

For example, while cities like L.A., Dallas, and Chicago boasted demonstrations of 500,000 to 1 million marchers (McFadden 2006; Watanabe and Becerra 2006; Fox, Selee, and Bada 2006), according to the *New York Times* the Empire City's largest turnout and first major mobilization put only 100,000 people on the streets during the April 10 "National Day of Action for Immigrant Justice" (Fox, Selee, and Bada 2006). For the second nationally coordinated day of protest, the May 1 "Day Without an Immigrant / Great American Boycott," participation in New York's noontime "Human Chain" action ranged from 12,000–20,000 participants (CNN 2006; Young, Hart, and Nyback 2006). Estimates of its later Union Square rally ranged from "more than 50,000 protesters" by the conservative *New York Post* (Mongelli, Mazor, and Winter 2006) to just "over 100,000" by the liberal New York-based radio program *Democracy Now!*<sup>cxlvi</sup> Again, given the city's massive foreign-born population and well developed immigrant social movement infrastructure, "There is a question to be asked of New York," as one local activist put it, "which is, why wouldn't we have had the largest...march in the country?"<sup>cxlvii</sup> To be sure, the attendance of 15,000 to over 100,000 people at any political event is an amazing accomplishment in and of itself, and something that most U.S. social movements (and political parties and

politicians for that matter) could only dream of pulling off. Nevertheless, according to local urban politics experts, given that “New York evidently promotes immigrant political participation...to a far greater degree than does” Los Angeles (Mollenkopf, Olson, and Ross 2001, 63; also see Mollenkopf 1999), why the city with one of the most established and dynamic immigrant rights movements in the nation relatively underperformed during the historic protest wave remains theoretically puzzling and necessitates a detailed investigation.

Using New York as a case study, this chapter examines the roles that diversity (of various kinds) and coalitions played in a particular instance of large-scale immigrant collective action: the city’s 2006 immigrant protests. My findings indicate that an initial broad and severe threat (H.R. 4437), and the growing national grassroots response to it, served as the impetus and provided the context for the opportunity to form diverse coalitions (in terms of the types of organizations as well as the racial, ethnic, and ideological makeup of their memberships). New York immigrant rights activists recognized and took advantage of these external factors by activating prior and present social ties to form both local neighborhood and citywide coalitions to coordinate several mass actions. The formation of these coalitions allowed for the creation of new social ties with other organizations and activists from a variety of political ideologies and backgrounds. While this increased diversity broadened the reach of the first citywide coalition that formed, it later contributed to divisions that resulted in the development of a rival alliance.

My findings suggest that Dominicans and Mexicans may have accounted for a larger portion of the protesters (compared to other foreign-born groups) because larger percentages of their populations had more to gain and lose from the proposed legislations. Several non-Latino groups failed to mobilize to the same extent because many of them did not feel as threatened by

the proposed nativist bill and believed that their policy priorities were not being represented in the national legislative debate—they believed it was a “Latino or Mexican issue.”

Furthermore, I argue that these two factors help explain why New York may have underperformed (or at least not reached its maximum potential) with regard to the size of the city's protests. I contend that while New York’s diverse immigrant population contributed to the dynamic nature of the local movement, this same diversity may have limited that population's ability to mass-mobilize. The distinct interests and priorities of different immigrant groups provided local activists with many barriers that organizers in cities with a more homogenous immigrant population did not have to overcome in their mass mobilization efforts. From the types of media outlets they had to target and policy preferences they discussed at meetings, to the varied cultural frames and languages of the flyers they had to produce, immigrant rights activists in New York City faced greater obstacles to rapid mobilization than organizers in predominately Mexican immigrant cities. Thus, after a concise review of the social movement and ethnic politics literatures on coalitions, the rest of the chapter explains in detail the results of my New York case study research and concludes by summarizing the implications of these findings.

### **Social Movement Coalitions and Multiethnic / Multiracial Alliances**

Rucht (2004) contends that “[m]ost social movements would not come into existence, let alone survive, if there was no cooperation between the groups and organizations that consider themselves to be part of a broader entity” (203). Participants in these acts of mutual aid and collaboration are often collectively referred to as an alliance or coalition. Alliances and coalitions can be formal or informal, and while they are many times short-lived, it is not uncommon for them to last for long periods of time. Social movement researchers have defined coalitions as “a

collection of distinct...and often unaffiliated groups whose members cooperate on some issues in order to have” or increase their “political influence” (Meyer 2007, 61; also see Gamson 1961, 374). Scholars have found coalitions to play a key role in activism and political mobilization (Gilmore 2008; Rose 2000; Mayer 2009; Van Dyke and McCammon 2010). Mayer (2009) contends that groups “that work in coalition are typically more likely to achieve success than organizations that work in isolation” (13). As Roth notes, “[C]oalition formation is potentially a strategy that makes extrainstitutional challengers more powerful vis-à-vis institutions, and thus coalitions can be...significant factors in explaining social change” (2010, 101). Thus, given the importance of alliances to collective action, scholars have suggested that social movements themselves are best described and analyzed specifically as “coalition affairs” (Meyer and Corrigan-Brown 2005, 329) or “coalitional networks” (Van Dyke and McCammon 2010, xii). This is so because, according to Van Dyke and McCammon (2010), researchers “cannot fully understand the dynamics of movement mobilization and success until [they] gain a more complete understanding of the factors facilitating organizational collaboration” (xii).

Coalitions among movement groups are hard to create and difficult to maintain (Staggenborg 1986, 388), particularly for grassroots and voluntary organizations (Smith and Bandy 2005, 9). Their formation and fragmentation are influenced by factors both outside and internal to social movements themselves. In terms of *external* contexts, students of contentious politics have found that both political opportunities (Meyer and Corrigan-Brown 2005; Staggenborg 1986) and threats (Van Dyke 2003; McCammon and Campbell 2002) can foster the formation of alliances, as well as their strategies and success (Tattessall 2010, 155). Such external threats and opportunities include economic crisis, outside challenges to movement goals, an imminent legislative attack, government repression, loss of social services and jobs, erosion of

rights, a rise in war-related deaths, and increased levels of racial income inequality (Roth 2010, 102; Reese, Tetit, and Meyer 2010, 269; Meyer and Corrigan-Brown 2005; Van Dyke 2003; McCammon and Campbell 2002).

Given their significance, how exactly is it that opportunities and threats can encourage the creation of alliances between movement organizations? According to Zald and McCarthy (1987), the “need for a united defense” sometimes “transcends ideological differences” (177). External contexts can often provide this need. David Meyer and Catherine Corrigan-Brown (2005) explain, “When an issue is particularly salient and when mobilization seems particularly urgent, groups have great incentives to overcome or overlook differences” (339). With regards to the opening of political opportunities, Staggenborg (1986) contends that, “When movement organizations sense that conditions are ripe for the achievement of movement goals, they share a strong interest in combining forces to make a push for victory” (375). By the same token, research has shown that a “serious or political threat” can at times create a setting that encourages “movement groups to overcome ideological differences” in order “to form coalitions” (Van Dyke and McCammon 2010, xxii). Consequently, the existence of multiple grievances attributed to a single source can provide “a proximate cause to unite a wide range of groups and individuals” (Reese, Petit, and Meyer, 268). This last finding is important to note because the formation of broad coalitions can often help facilitate large scale collective action (Van Dyke 2003, 226). This appears to be what occurred during the 2006 immigrant protest wave, except that it was not *multiple grievances* per se, but rather, a far-reaching and severe legislative threat coming from a single source that would have affected *multiple sectors* of society affiliated with undocumented immigrants.

As important as opportunities and threats are for the formation of coalitions, changes in external contexts can also eventually contribute to the decline or prevention of coalitional mobilization efforts (Meyer and Coorrigal-Brown 2005, 339). Once “the exceptional environmental conditions which make coalition work attractive return to normal,” argues Staggenborg (1986), “[c]ompetition for resources and ideological disputes among organizations make it difficult to maintain” alliances (375). In addition, “When the political context changes and the threat seems less proximate, less changeable, or less important,” individual organizations are “more likely to abandon coalition work, either formally or by focusing their efforts elsewhere” (Meyer and Corrigan-Brown 2005, 342). Meyer (2007) explains that, “A change in political circumstance, by policy reforms or policy failure,” for example, can alter “the calculus for many challenging groups such that a social movement coalition begins to dissipate” (79). As will also be discussed below and more so in Chapter 6, changes in the political context, by way of policy reforms and failures, significantly impacted the dynamics of local immigrant rights coalitions across the country during the 2006 protest wave. Thus, it is imperative to keep in mind that while alliances “often emerge to pursue changes in one issue area,” an alteration of the external circumstances under which they operate may lead to their “breakdown after the issue is resolved or deemed unresolvable” (McCammon and Campbell 2002, 233).

While the review of the research above indicates that *external* “environmental conditions affect the timing and likelihood of coalitions” (Smith and Bandy 2005, 8), as well as organizational decisions to join coalitions and remain in them (Meyer and Corrigan-Brown 2005, 342), Reese et al. (2010) remind us that “external conditions” do not automatically create mobilizations and the coalitions that organize them—they merely “generate the circumstance in which clever activist efforts might meet a responsive audience” (270). Thus, activist alliances are

not inevitable; they need actual “coalition work” and effort to create and maintain them (Rucht 2004, 203). Consequently, while external contexts—whether threats or opportunities—are important, it is individual organizers’ recognition of and strategic responses to these circumstances (Borland 2010, 241; Mayer 2009, 167; Tattersall 2010, 3; Roth 2010, 102; Smith and Bandy 2005, 8) that ultimately determines whether or not coalitions come into being. The agency of activists matters because it is they who ultimately facilitate the formation and trajectories of organizational alliances. In short, factors *internal* to movements and movement organizations also affect the formation of coalitions.

Beyond the actions of individual activists, and with regard to other internal organizational dynamics, research has shown that resources, similar interests, similar identities, similar organizational cultures and structures, similar political ideologies, and prior social ties are among the various elements that can impact the process of coalition formation (Van Dyke and McCammon 2010). For example, resources can influence the dynamics of alliances in a number of ways. Studies have demonstrated that SMOs often form coalitions with other groups in order to combine their resources and enhance their capacities (Zald and McCarthy 1987, 132; Staggenborg 1986); that alliances are less likely to develop during times of scarcity (Mayer 2009, 14) and more probable to form during periods of plentiful resources (Van Dyke 2003, 228); that the disparity in resources contributed by different groups can cause tensions within coalitions (Staggenborg 1986, 384; Van Dyke and McCammon 2010, xvi); that a “certain amount of surplus resources are always necessary for coalitions to form” (Mayer 2009, 16); that “organizations with greater resources tend to reinforce power imbalances” among alliance participants (Smith and Bandy 2005, 10); and that “social movements need allies with

organizational resources across a wide geographic space” if they hope to sustain national campaigns (Almeida 2010, 175).

Political scientists have noted that self-interest goes a long way in determining who opts to participate in politics (Cambell 2002). The same is true for who decides to join coalitions (Tattersall 2010, 11). Since social movements are not single units and are composed of numerous organizations with a wide range of (sometimes competing) concerns (Meyer 2007, 74; Rose 2000, 20), “[g]roups will only participate in collective action” with one another “when they feel that it is in their best interests to do so, when they feel that [working in coalition] is necessary for the achievement of their goals” (Van Dyke 2003, 230; also see Tattersall 2010, 145-146). The most obvious motivation for organizations to unite is a shared objective. As Rucht (2004) states, “It is commonly understood that a set of actors with similar goals strengthen their position when coordinating their activities or even joining forces” (202; also see Mayer 2009, 7). Yet as Rose (2000) reminds us, “coalitions built on self-interest alone are inherently unstable” because “as organizational priorities shift, sides compete for resources, and perceptions of issues diverge” (31). Consequently, the existence of shared ideological beliefs and prior social ties can help supplement mutual interests in encouraging groups and individuals to form coalitions.

While groups sharing common goals can have different ideological positions that prevent them from forming alliances (Van Dyke and McCammon 2010, xix), organizations with similar ideologies are more likely to work together. In fact, ideological congruence has been found to be a vital precursor to formal coalition building (Cornfield and McCammon 2010, 92). Moreover, as stated above, the existence of prior social ties can also help facilitate the formation of alliances because the “dynamics of coming together and growing apart” are partly “mediated by personal relationships” (Meyer 2007, 76). These relationships between activists and organizations are

based upon past experiences with each other and their influence depends on “the degree of trust” among activists (Rose 2000, 11, 24). According to Corrigan-Brown and Meyer (2010), “Individuals who have worked together in the past...have the networks and trust that allow them to more easily mobilize into coalitions, bringing their current organizational ties with them” (9). These “bridge builders” or “brokers” are particularly important for cross-movement coalition building (Rose 2000; Mayer 2009; Griggs and Howarth 2002).

Taking into account the structures of alliances, Tattersall (2010) contends that it is easier to build stronger coalitions, make collective decisions, and share resources when the number of organizations joining forces is small (143). But as protest waves gain steam and movements grow in influence, more groups desire to enter the coalitions that coordinate their activities. And while “a broad coalition affords the prospects of mobilizing a wider range of people, tactics, and entry into a greater number of institutional niches,” organizations that partake in these large alliances run the risk of allowing their “particular profile to be obscured by the movement as a whole,” and can “enable groups that compete for resources to overshadow” them or obscure their agendas (Meyer 2007, 76, 75). Issues of group identity and diversity are particularly salient in multiethnic / multiracial alliances.

Sharing a common identity can be a key mechanism in the coalition formation process. Lacking a mutual identity not only makes alliances between groups less likely to form (Okamoto 2010, 146) but can also prevent coalitions from developing (Bell and Delaney 2001; Mayer 2009, 13). According to Smith and Bandy (2005), when group “members see themselves as sharing a common identity, their solidarity and motivation to work together is enhanced” (10). As such, it is easier for racial/ethnic groups to interact and cooperate with members of their own group than with people of other races or ethnicities (Fearon and Latin 1996, 730). Nevertheless,

cross-racial/ethnic coalitions are said to be the primary vehicles for the political incorporation and empowerment of communities of color (Browning, Marshall, Tabb 1984; Marable 1994; Sonenshein 1989; Jones-Correa 2001; Bystydzienski and Schacht 2001). Park and Park (2001) write that, “one of the most enduring assumptions in the literature on urban politics since the civil rights movement” is that “success in local politics for racial minorities is inextricably linked with their participation” in liberal multiracial coalitions (91). Yet according to McClain and Tauber (2001), not only do Asians, blacks, and Latinos often harbor negative racial stereotypes about each other (129), but “in many urban areas, conflict and competition among racial-minority groups has been increasing” (112; also see Hazan 2006, 207). Thus, “competition rather than coalition building may well be the dominant factor structuring intergroup relationships” among ethnic and racial minority groups in major cities (McClain and Tauber 2001, 114).

Regarding attempts to form alliances across national borders, Smith and Bandy (2005) note that, “Coalitions are difficult wherever they occur, but the diversity of languages, political experiences, and national cultures within transnational coalitions...create some unique challenges for organizers” (7). This chapter maintains that the same is largely true for activists attempting to form alliances across different foreign-born populations because they face the challenge of navigating various forms of *intra-group diversity* such as immigrant cohort, class, economic integration pattern, generation, legal status, and regional differences (Foner 1987; Kwong 2001; Park and Park 2001; Bakalian and Bozorgmehr 2009; Beltrán 2010). But while difficult, forming multiethnic / multiracial immigrant coalitions is not impossible. One of the key factors that can lead to the formation of diverse immigrant coalitions and the mass mobilization of foreign-born populations is the external threat of a severe and far-reaching anti-immigrant legislation. Prior research supports this argument and has shown that in the face of pending

nativist laws, interracial immigrant coalitions can be formed (Okamoto 2010, 144). To do so, immigrant rights activists must not only appeal to the self-interest of the different immigrant groups they target, but they must also attempt to create solidarity among them through relationship building, joint collective action efforts, and by developing multiple messaging and framing strategies that will resonate with the different immigrant populations they hope to unite and mobilize (Tsao 2008, 131-136). As this chapter demonstrates, these were some of the daunting challenges faced by immigrant rights organizers in cities with diverse immigrant populations such as New York.

Groups join movements and alliances for a variety reasons and with various motivations. The decision to join a coalition can carry with it numerous costs and benefits. For instance, “Coalitions that unite organizations and pool resources are able to stage events with more participants, finance larger campaigns, and sustain actions for longer periods—increasing the likelihood of success” (Mayer 2009, 13). However, “[U]nless the incentives of forming a coalition clearly outweigh the disincentives, a movement group will be unlikely to enter into a partnership” (McCammon and Campbell 2002, 234). Forming multiethnic/multiracial coalitions is particularly difficult, especially when the groups attempting to unite are foreign-born. Nonetheless, in the spring of 2006 immigrants of various racial, ethnic, religious, and class backgrounds came together to take part in perhaps the most diverse mass acts of protest in New York’s history. Heeding the call for scholars to examine how both external and internal factors “interact with one another to generate social movement partnerships” (Van Dyke and McCammon 2010, xiv), the remainder of this chapter explains how the dynamics of these momentous events played out in the Empire City.

## Coalition Formation

On Saturday, March 25, in the borough of Queens, a small and racially diverse informal coalition named Immigrant Communities in Action (ICA)—which had previously worked together on a failed campaign to secure driver licenses for undocumented immigrants—organized a neighborhood forum to discuss the potential impact of H.R. 4437 on its community. Organizers were expecting only a few dozen people to attend, but over 500 local residents appeared at a standing-room-only auditorium and gave passionate testimonies about the abuses they endured as immigrants.<sup>cxlviii</sup> On that same day, Families for Freedom (FFF), a multiethnic local organization that works on detention issues, organized about 75 people to rally outside of the federal building in lower Manhattan (Confessore 2006). The protest was originally intended to bring attention to the negative effects of deportations on children. However, as often occurs in social movements when new pressing concerns arise, the planned rally incorporated its opposition to an additional issue—the Sensenbrenner Bill—into its publically stated claims. As Aarti Shahani of FFF explained, it was like “everyone was doing their own thing and then suddenly this big ‘A-Bomb’ got dropped on us...Everything [then became] reinterpreted to respond to the ‘A-Bomb.’”

The first protest in the city to explicitly focus on H.R. 4437 took place in the Northern Manhattan neighborhood of Washington Heights. On Sunday, March 26, a group of Dominican expatriates (many of whom knew each other from activism in their home country during the 1960s) called *Acción Comunitaria La Aurora* (or *La Aurora* for short) held a neighborhood march. Months before, in response to the Sensenbrenner Bill, these “migrating militants” (Pulido 1998; also see Aparicio 2006) had formed a small coalition of local Dominican community organizations, service groups, businesses, and churches, to coordinate their event.<sup>cxlix</sup> Through

the distribution of flyers, on-the-street conversations, and calls for action on a local Spanish radio program and cable TV station, the group had hoped to attract 100–300 people to its protest.<sup>cl</sup> According to Rhadames Pérez, one of the organizers of the demonstration, the group was shocked when about 2,000 immigrants showed up, the first of whom were a handful of Mexicans from Long Island who arrived over an hour early holding a banner of their country's patron saint, the Virgin of Guadalupe. Six days later, on April Fool's Day, following a call by the evangelical Puerto Rican-born New York State Senator Rubén Díaz, several local Latino religious and secular immigrant organizations led a march of over 10,000 immigrants across the Brooklyn Bridge in protest of the proposed federal anti-immigrant measure (Montero and Mongelli 2006). Local organizers and some participating organizations remembered that immigrants from the Dominican Republic and Mexico accounted for the majority of marchers in attendance at both of these early demonstrations.

While not momentous in terms of size, these relatively small and independently organized local actions foreshadowed many of the themes that would later emerge during the city's protest wave and coalition formation process. Local immigrant rights activists recognized and responded to a far-reaching legislative threat, then activated preexisting individual and organizational social ties to form the diverse coalitions that later coordinated local mobilization efforts. The hostile nature of H.R. 4437, the momentum emerging from the growing national protest wave in opposition to it, and the agency of the immigrant masses and activists combined to produce a series of remarkable acts of resistance that surpassed the expectation of many local organizers.

### *The April 10 NDAIJ: Diversity of Organizations and Prior Social Relations*

Chinese-owned businesses, South American cultural associations, and African immigrant social service agencies are just some of the types of organizations that supported, participated in, and helped mobilize people in New York for the April 10 National Day of Action for Immigrant Justice (NDAIJ). Informal neighborhood coalitions, such as the ones mentioned above, also played important roles in mobilizing their local immigrant Muslim, queer, Asian, Caribbean, Pacific Islander, and Latin American communities. But across the board, immigrant rights activists in every borough agreed that while the citywide coalition that emerged was broad and diverse, New York's labor movement—particularly SEIU's 1199 and 32BJ locals—along with the state's largest immigrant-serving organization, and the Manhattan-based New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC), played the most central roles in the alliance and at the actual event because of the resources they had at their disposal. The city's coalition formation process tells us a lot about the dynamics of how different types of preexisting individual and organizational social ties can serve as key mechanisms that help create large alliances composed of numerous types of organizations with the capacity to simultaneously mass-mobilize several sectors of society.

At the Queens community forum on March 25 referenced earlier, Miguel Ramírez of *Centro Hispano Cuzcatlán*, a Central American community-based organization and member of ICA, recalled speaking with Rhadames Rivera, Vice President of SEIU's local 1199, whom he had known from their participation in the 1980s Central American Peace and Solidarity Movement. Spurred by the harsh nature of the Sensenbrenner Bill and the growing number of immigrant protests across the country in opposition to it, Ramírez expressed to Rivera what at the time was on the minds of many New York immigrant rights activists—the need to unite and

organize a major citywide demonstration. Rivera invited Ramírez to share his ideas at an upcoming meeting of unionists working on Latin American solidarity issues. At this subsequent gathering, both men decided to call on local labor, religious, and immigrant rights leaders to meet and discuss the organization of a possible action. Ana Maria Archila of Make the Road remembered how, “People had been kind of meeting in their own universes. We had been meeting with the New York Immigration Coalition regularly. The unions had been meeting with each other regularly. The more left[ist] groups had been meeting with each other regularly. It was only around April 10 that there was a call to action for everyone.”

Within days of Rivera’s and Ramírez’s invitation to congregate, about 150 local groups from all five boroughs gathered at Local 1199’s Manhattan office. Hector Figueroa of SEIU 32BJ, one of the leading organizations of the coalition, explained, “A meeting was simply called by email and everybody showed up, it was quite impressive. The institutions and networks that we had put in place before—fighting police brutality, fighting for immigration reform, fighting for language access in city services—it was those networks that immediately connected people” (also see Cordero-Guzman et al. 2008). The gathering concluded with the groups agreeing to join the national protest wave by organizing a march and rally for the upcoming April 10 National Day of Action for Immigrant Justice. While several of these organizations had worked together before, others knew of each other’s work but had never collaborated. Hence, in the midst of the protest wave, new organizational ties were formed and old ones were strengthened through the coalition formation process.

May Chen, International Vice President of UNITE-HERE, contended that organizing in New York “is not centralized...there are a lot of grassroots organizations and the trick is trying to figure out a way...[to] piece those different groups together.” Mae Lee of the Chinese

Progressive Association concurred, adding, “In New York, the way you organize is that you really have to organize within each community. There are these umbrella groups that are important, but you have to go into each community and do something.” Accordingly, the citywide alliance that formed was literally a “coalition of coalitions.” Many of the initial alliance members were themselves either coalitional organizations or part of other local neighborhood and borough alliances. For example, the statewide New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC) is composed of over 200 mostly New York City-based service organizations. After the citywide coalition was established, NYIC went back and promoted the upcoming march to its members through meetings at its office, conference calls, and emails distributed through its listserv. These members then independently went on to promote the demonstration within their own communities and organizational networks.

According to Margaret Chin of Chinatown’s Asian Americans for Equality (AAE), after NYIC informed them about the protest, AAE “reached out to other groups in [their] community that are not members [of NYIC] to bring them along.” Non-immigrant rights groups also learned about the upcoming action through their personal and virtual ties to members of the citywide coalition. For instance, despite *not* focusing on immigration issues, Mothers on the Move, a Bronx-based predominantly African-American and Puerto Rican community group, was on NYIC’s email list and first heard about the march through this method of communication. But according to the organization’s director Wanda Salaman, it was her personal relationship with longtime friend Raquel Batista of the Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights (NMCIR)—a member of both NYIC and the larger citywide coalition for the April 10 action—that convinced her to join the city’s coalition. Salaman said that her organization decided to support because, “Even if we weren’t working on the issue” of immigration “we had friends that

were.” Thus, organizational, virtual, and personal ties served as multiple reinforcing mechanisms through which activists and community organizations received requests to join the coalitional efforts.

The far-reaching nature of the Sensenbrenner Bill provided an environment that organizers claimed made it easier to recruit traditionally nonpolitical community groups to participate in the coalition and demonstration. As Guari Sadhwani, executive director of the New York Civic Participation Project (NYCPP), explained, “Whether they knew it or not...it actually criminalized whole sectors of our society that supported or in any way provided services...to undocumented immigrants...It really challenged not just the people that were here without papers, but in some ways our entire social fabric that allowed for immigrants, regardless of whether they were documented or undocumented, to be part of our society.” Javier Valdes of NYIC recalled that, “Sensenbrenner was so easy to organize against once we got down how to message it to our communities. It was just so easy to say, ‘This is really bad, the effect is going to be devastating, we need to come out and kill it’ ...It was like 1, 2, 3.” As a result, according to Haeyoung Yoon of the Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence (CAA AV), H.R. 4437 “really brought out people who weren’t necessarily connected to [immigrant rights] organizations to participate in the mobilizations.” Given this hostile contextual factor, local activists were able to appeal to and get the support of groups and organizations in their communities that were not only not overtly political, but sometimes even rather conservative.

For example, after the Young Korean American Service and Education Center (YKASEC), a Korean organization based in Queens and member of NYIC joined the citywide coalition, the group hoped to gain the support of different sectors of Korean society that typically did not participate in political activities. According to Jun Bum Cha, the organization’s advocacy

director, after meeting with the larger city alliance, the group called for a local meeting with leaders of various segments of the Korean community. Heads of local Korean immigrant social services; ethnic associations; and business, religious, and community based organizations met at YKASEC to talk “about the importance of the issue and why we had to step up for this mobilization.” The groups were convinced by YKASEC of the dangers of the bill and agreed to mobilize their constituents and customers against it. Several of the Korean-owned businesses even decided to donate money to help pay for advertisements promoting the march in local ethnic newspapers and radio stations. A similar process occurred in the Chinese immigrant community. According to Mae Lee of the Chinese Progressive Association, after attending one of the citywide meetings, her organization knew that if it “wanted a significant Chinatown mobilization” it would “have to involve everyone, whether or not they’re already involved in immigrant rights.” She explained, “The way you organize the Chinese community is that you have to have a coalition in Chinatown...so the business and civic associations were contacted” and invited to a meeting where the potential impacts of H.R. 4437 on the Chinese community were discussed. As a result, even “rather conservative” organizations such as the massive quasi-business/service organization, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, supported the April 10 action.

Some of the groups that were part of the April 10 alliance also had overlapping membership in neighborhoods throughout various boroughs. This helped coordinate the citywide mobilization efforts with local community coalitions and networks that either already existed or were formed in response to the legislative threat. Organizers asserted that these relationships reinforced the need for members to participate. For instance, the New York Civic Participation Project (NYCPP) is an organizational collaboration between SEIU Local 32BJ, AFSCME DC

37, Laborers Local 78 and 79, UNITE-HERE Local 100, Make the Road, and the National Employment Law Project. The goal of NYCPP is to organize union members in their own neighborhoods around local community issues. The fact that many of the people in NYCPP's membership base were also part of unions and other social service organizations had an echo chamber effect during the protest wave.

According to Zahida Pirani, an NYCPP organizer in Queens, not only were local residents being encouraged to participate at their places of employment by union representatives, but they were also getting motivated to take part in the action at local neighborhood assemblies. Pirani explained, "So you hear from your union and you also hear from NYCPP which is working in the neighborhood" hosting meetings "with your family and friends," too. Sadwani, also of NYCPP, added, "Our base of members...was connected to other networks. People brought it to their churches. People brought it to their workplace. The unions posted it. We got the word out through the radio...We got the word out through [other] organizations." Motivation to take part in the national protest wave also came from the bottom up. Local NYCPP groups in different boroughs were able to communicate with city coalition leaders that community residents seemed ready to participate in a mass action. "It was interesting because I think the established institutions knew there was going to be something, but they didn't know to what extent [people wanted to mobilize]," Pirani remembered. "But because we as an organization are based in the community, we could really communicate" with union leaders, NYIC, and other groups "that there was a buzz in the community."

The agency and effort of the activists who united to form New York's April 10 protest alliance were undoubtedly fundamental to the coordination of and mobilization for the national day of action. While promotion through ethnic media outlets was a key diffusion mechanism

both in New York and throughout the country's immigrant protest wave in general (as demonstrated in Chapter 3), once the main citywide coalition was formed through the mediation of prior organizational, personal, and even virtual social ties, alliance participants then used other types of relationships, networks, and forms of communication to spread the word about the march.

For instance, after forming the larger city alliance less than two weeks before the demonstration, the initial members of New York's April 10 coalition began to meet frequently and recruit other organizations and community residents to join. As Miguel Ramírez of ICA and *Centro Hispano Cuzcatlán* recalled, "We formed work teams...I would have four or five meetings a week. The organizing committee...the programming committee, the logistics one, the publicity committee, outreach," etc. In addition to their committee work, all of the organizational members of the alliance returned to their local communities to promote the march through a variety of channels. For instance, Raquel Batista of the Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights remembered that, "We would go to churches, we would go to the stores, we would go to the schools. We reached out to the leadership in the community...There were always a lot of meetings...and forums." Ana Maria Archila of Make the Road recalled, "We stopped everything else we were doing for two weeks. We did nothing but [promote the march]. We had never in our organization done that before. It was very clear that everyone [who was part of the coalition] was willing to stop their regular normal activities" to focus on promoting the protest.

Members of the neighborhood coalitions in which NYCPP participated distributed flyers and went to speak at local church services, put up posters in small immigrant-owned businesses, and even borrowed tactics from immigrants' countries of origin to diffuse their calls to action. For example, reminiscent of a strategy often used in Latin American political campaigns, Sussie

Lozada, an organizer with both NYCPP and *La Aurora*, said that the groups organized “a caravan of cars with loud-speakers [sic]” and drove it through the streets of local immigrant neighborhoods playing a prerecorded message promoting the march and encouraging community residents to participate. AnaLiza Caballes of Damayan Migrant Worker’s Association, a Filipina domestic worker organization, explained that just like using text messaging to promote protests played an important role in the ousting of former Philippines President Joseph Estrada, this “new media” communication tool was also a key organizing strategy and diffusion mechanism used by Filipinos in New York City during the 2006 immigrant protest wave. She recalled, “At the time we were cooking a lot in members' houses to plan” our actions and “we would send text messages to people to let them know what was happening.”

The punitive nature of H.R. 4437 caused a dramatic reaction from the immigrant masses, which, organizers claim led them to “auto-mobilize.” Ana Maria Archila of Make the Road explained:

People would just call my cell phone randomly because they saw it on a flyer and would say, “Where do I need to be? At what time? All the people at my job want to go.” I remember this one phone call in particular. A woman called me and said, “I heard your phone [number] on the radio. Our boss told us that we would be fired, but we just can’t stay. We have to go. Where do we need to meet?”... It was very, very apparent to us that people were just on a different level of engagement...Regular people were coming [into our office] and saying, “I know there’s something happening, what can I do?”...There was just an incredible level of self-organization and discipline around demonstrating power publicly for the first time...[People were saying], “I’m tired of being invisible. This is about my dignity. It’s not even about the bill. It’s about my family. It’s about my dignity. It’s about not being less forever.” It was a very personal thing for every single person that was involved...Because these people are undocumented, they understand very clearly the connection between policies and their lives.

Even community members that were not going to participate in Make the Road’s rally delegation found ways to contribute. Community residents who feared missing work or were simply unable

to endure the financial costs of losing a day's wages went to the organization's office (often taking family members with them) days before the march to help make signs and sandwiches for the group's contingent.

Immigrant families and community social ties played roles in the mobilization process that were perhaps even more crucial than those of the organizations. In fact, organizers expressed that during the protest wave it often felt as if “the advocates and the organizations followed where the masses were leading.”<sup>cli</sup> According to Artemio Guerra of the Fifth Avenue Committee, a housing and education advocacy organization in Brooklyn, “We were not able to do phone banking” to try to organize community residents for the march “because it was all happening very fast.” Because of this lack of time, a few days before the protest the organization merely suggested that its small group of members invite and “call their friends and family.” Guerra remembered, “We were expecting like 40, 50, or 60 people so we rented a bus.” But the day of the march, “by the time the bus got there we had about 300 people!” The indigenous migrants from the Mexican state of Puebla that made up the bulk of his group used their hometown social networks to mobilize family and friends throughout New York, Connecticut, and New Jersey. “We had people from the Tri-State area show up at our little corner... We had like 100 people on the bus and the other 200 took the subway. It was bizarre because we didn't expect that at all.” Moisés Pérez of *Alianza Dominicana*, the largest Dominican social service organization in the country, recalled a similar self-mobilization phenomenon in Dominican neighborhoods throughout the city:

Word of mouth! It just spread from family to family... People found out from their friends. It became for awhile the major topic of conversation [in the neighborhoods]. It was like everyday people were talking about it... It was like a forest fire. It grew with a spark and then before you knew it you couldn't contain it... Our phones were inundated with calls from community residents. Everyone was asking, “When are we

marching?”...We didn’t organize shit. This was the outrage that our community felt collectively. We just responded to it by trying to put some shape and form into it...People were ready to come out. We just provided a forum for those marches to take place.

On the actual day of the April 10 event, immigrants from several countries—carrying homemade signs and mostly American flags—jubilantly participated in “feeder marches” originating from various neighborhoods and boroughs, which eventually fused into one massive demonstration of approximately over 100,000 people in downtown Manhattan. At City Hall, the marchers encountered a large union-funded, concert-like stage and sound speakers with “jumbotrons” displaying speeches by local labor and immigrant rights leaders from varied religious, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. The diverse “coalition of coalitions” that came together to coordinate New York’s first massive citywide demonstration seemed unified on stage. But as the following section will show, behind the scenes the divisions that often form in large, broad, and diverse coalitions were beginning to show. These fault lines ultimately led to a fracture in the local movement and the creation of an alternative coalition—an alternative “coalition of coalitions,” that is.

### **Coalition Fragmentation**

In the midst of public mass mobilizations, social movement activists attempt to disseminate their messages through a variety of mediums. These include signs and banners with carefully crafted claims and slogans for protest participants to carry, creative chants for people to shout as they march, speeches made by leaders onstage, and live interviews with members of the media. Given the important role of communication in this context, it is not surprising that disputes over messaging often occur not only between, but also within movements (Benford 1993; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996, 17; also see Chapter 3). As such, one of the biggest

sources of tension that arose within New York’s April 10 alliance was the issue of who was going to speak at the rally and how the coalition was going to frame its demands. Ana Maria Archilla of Make the Road remembered, “There was agreement about the action. There just wasn’t agreement about the message.” As the examples below will illustrate, when coalitions are unable to reach an agreement—or when coalitional accords are broken—with regard to what unified message to present at their jointly organized public actions, individual groups and activists are left on their own to frame their claims and grievances. When this occurs, organizations with more resources are able to dominate the frames and the messages disseminated during protest events. However, after the actions are over, these dynamics can lead to the development of new divisions, the exacerbation of preexisting ones, or even to the fracturing and ultimately demise of movement coalitions.

While some members of the “coalition of coalitions” that formed New York’s April 10 alliance were part of smaller local coalitions, some were also connected to larger nationwide alliances. For example, the more mainstream and better funded organizations, such as some of the labor unions and NYIC,<sup>clii</sup> were also linked to the national Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform (CCIR) and the We Are America Alliance (WAAA) based out of Washington D.C.<sup>6</sup> During the protest wave, CCIR and WAAA attempted to frame the demonstrations in a patriotic manner under the banner of “We Are America” (also see Chapters 3 and 6). One of the tactics its foundation-funded campaign employed was the distribution of thousands of signs to its local affiliates, who then gave them out at the rallies for protest participants to hold.<sup>cliii</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> While CCIR focused on policy and WAAA dedicated itself to voter mobilization efforts, both national groups were composed of several the same regional and national organizations (see Washington D.C. Chapter).

According to Monami Maulik of Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM), one of the key citywide coalition members, “when we showed up [on April 10] it was as if the entire event was hijacked by the policy groups.” She said, “We were duped. Everything we had discussed [at coalition meetings] was out the window...For weeks before, nobody in the planning of [the rally] ever told us anything about the ‘We Are America’ campaign.” She explained:

The unions were paying all this money for...all of the media, the placards, the signs, the stage [etc.]...So we realized when we showed up that the entire theme and the messaging of the event was basically decided by the unions and the major policy players, and that none of the negotiations that happened before were reflected. It was quite disappointing because our position was that [their messaging] did not reflect the sentiments or the demands of the people.

According to several coalition participants, at the protest event the more mainstream groups that were connected with national organizations handed out thousands of “We Are America” signs for marchers to hold, gave people American flags to wave, and urged participants not to display flags from other countries (see Chapter 3 for an example of how this same phenomenon played out in Los Angeles). When the Act Now to Stop War and End Racism (ANSWER) Coalition, which was part of the citywide alliance, attempted to distribute several of its own placards that read, “Amnesty for All,” NYIC “had someone...running around trying to take down [the] ANSWER signs so that they wouldn’t be seen by the [media’s] cameras.”<sup>cliv</sup> As another city coalition member recalled, a NYIC leader “went around...to the people in the front [of the stage] and took all of their posters away...because there was a whole debate around” whether to use the term “amnesty” or “stay away from that” word and instead use the term “legalization” in order to “kind of appease” the mainstream public “and not create more polarity.”<sup>clv</sup> The NYIC staffer asserted that while “the more radical groups were pushing for things like open borders...We really did not want that message out there because...we didn’t

want to be dismissed as radical lefties. What we wanted was a consistent message, something that presented our view and spoke to the wider scope of equality and justice and opportunity.” However, how different factions within the coalition understood what exactly constituted concepts such as “equality and justice” largely depended upon their political ideology and analysis of the issue at hand. These factors in turn influenced the tactics that activists hoped to put into practice.

Hence, “April 10<sup>th</sup> was probably the moment that the contradictions that had been building in the immigrant rights movement came to a head and blew up.”<sup>clvi</sup> While after the rally the citywide alliance was technically still intact, the ideological differences that had been present from the start, but which had been set aside for the protest event, could no longer be overlooked. This was especially true as the environment in which the activists were cooperating began to change with the apparent defeat of H.R. 4437 and the attention of the movement shifting to the compromise Senate bill and the upcoming 2006 elections (see Chapter 6).

### ***The May 1 Boycott: Ideological and Strategic Diversity***

Messaging and framing disputes can be symptoms of deeper ideological divisions within movements and movement coalitions. Following the April 10 National Day of Action for Immigrant Justice, it was clear that a national protest wave was in full effect. What wasn’t clear was if it had reached its peak. Some movement activists thought it best to attempt to harness the amazing momentum and direct it towards more institutional forms of politics such as voter registration and citizenship drives. More radical activists wanted to increase the level of contention by calling for a nationwide work stoppage and full-blown boycott of the American economy. Thus, local groups across the country had to decide whether movement escalation or

institutionalization was the most prudent strategy of the two being proposed. New York immigrant rights activists also faced this dilemma.

For weeks, movement radicals from the Los Angeles March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition had been calling for a national boycott and were traveling throughout the country attempting to get other citywide alliances to adopt their idea. Chuck Mohan of New York's Guyanese-American Worker's United asserted, "You gotta give that Los Angeles group a whole lot of credit because they kind of initiated the action out there and then it just swelled around the nation." During their stop in New York, the L.A. activists were allowed to speak at one of the city coalition's post-April 10 meetings. According to Bernadette Ellorin of the Philippine Forum and BAYAN, "I remember distinctly [one of the L.A. activists] saying that the objective [of the boycott] was to halt production by waging a general economic strike—meaning no buying, no selling, just mobilize on that day to prove how immigrants really hold the U.S. economy afloat with their labor contributions." The West Coast activists left New York hoping that the citywide coalition would adopt their proposal and join their campaign to hold a national boycott on May 1, International Worker's Day. Some New York immigrant rights activists did embrace the boycott tactic, but at the cost of the coalition splitting into two rival alliances.

Immediately after the March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition members' departure, the ideological divisions that had previously existed within the New York citywide alliance (but that had been put aside for the sake of organizing a mass mobilization against the Sensenbrenner Bill) rematerialized around the decision of what strategy should follow the successful April 10 demonstration. Some members of the city's coalition wanted to support the May 1 boycott and hold a rally at Union Square, while others proposed a less militant "human chain" action instead. The local movement fractured along these lines as the more radical segment of the city's alliance splintered off into

what became the New York May 1<sup>st</sup> Coalition. The less militant wing of the movement never adopted a formal name, but remained aligned with the national We Are American Alliance and Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform.

While the aim of the work stoppage was to hurt the U.S. economy, the idea behind the human chain was to demonstrate not only the diversity and unity of “immigrant New York,” but also to show how integrated immigrants were into American society. On May 1, people all across New York were asked to step outside onto their sidewalks at exactly 12:16 p.m. to lock arms and form massive human chains throughout the city. The time 12:16 p.m. symbolized September 16<sup>th</sup> (ironically, Mexican Independence Day), the day the Sensenbrenner Bill was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives. The human chains were symbolic of people’s unity against the bill. Thus, reflecting a division that seemed to be national, labor unions and mainstream immigrant rights groups in New York decided to stick with their “pro-America” message, electing to support the human chain action on May 1, and then shifting their mobilization efforts to citizenship and voter registration drives. This faction of the movement felt that ultimately immigrants wanted to become citizens and thus part of the United States. Given these sentiments, they believed that the movement’s image, tactics, and strategies should reflect these desires. Considering that by this time H.R. 4437 seemed to have been defeated, the more moderate segment of the local movement felt that it was important to turn its attention to the upcoming 2006 elections. As a member of this faction explained, “What does it matter if you have a million people on the streets if you can’t vote some jackass out of office?”<sup>clvii</sup> This faction of the movement’s political ideology could best be described as *mainstream integrationist* given its focus on attempting to incorporate immigrants into American society.

According to Aarti Shahani of FFF, “the single biggest divide” within the citywide coalition was over the question, “Are we trying to show ourselves to be American or are we celebrating internationalism?” What became the radical flank of the movement is best understood ideologically as being composed of activists who seemed to understand the issues of migration and immigrant rights through a *militant internationalist* theoretical framework. This sector of the movement supported the national work stoppage and wanted to restore May Day’s historic meaning as “International Worker’s Day.” According to Teresa Gutierrez of the International Action Center and May 1<sup>st</sup> Coalition, while “May Day has a real boogie man connotation” to it and is “seen as a so-called Communist holiday” in the U.S., the group wanted to recover its original intention of celebrating the contributions of workers across the globe, especially because the holiday originated in America in honor of the activism of immigrant workers. Their desire to revive May Day was not the only aspect of their ideology that was internationalist. Organizations within the May 1<sup>st</sup> Coalition also highlighted the United States’ role in creating the very conditions that cause international migration and were very critical of the mainstream groups’ attempt to paint the immigrant rights movement in an assimilationist / patriotic light (i.e. “We Are America”).

As AnaLiza Caballes of the Damayan Migrant Worker’s Association explained, “Some of our members that are a little more aware were offended with [the idea of being told to wave U.S. flags] because for us the American flag means invasion, it means occupation, it means the symbol of what has caused poverty in our country.” Moisés Pérez of *Alianza Dominicana* expressed similar sentiments, stating, “We’re victims of economic and political circumstances that the United States is very much responsible for.” Ironically, he continued, “We end up here because [this country] needs our labor,” but then it wants to “try and criminalize us” for it.

Trishala Deb of the Audre Lorde Project (ALP), a community center that organizes queer immigrants of color, elaborated that she “felt saddened by the U.S. nationalism” and was critical of the mainstream groups’ message that immigrants want legalization because “the U.S. is the best country in the world.” She asserted that “people that are workers [should] have the right to cross borders [and] access benefits and civil rights regardless of their migration status.” Because of how they understood the issues of migration and migrant rights, many May 1<sup>st</sup> Coalition participants refused to carry the U.S. flag and instead attended the Union Square rally waving the flags of their countries of origin.

Activists aligned with the May 1<sup>st</sup> Coalition’s boycott also found the more mainstream coalition’s discourse to be problematic. Deb of ALP maintained that the “U.S. nationalist rhetoric” being used by mainstream groups “played on the whole ‘good-immigrant’ versus ‘bad-immigrant’ divide,” which her organization felt was inevitably dangerous for queer immigrants because, “in that situation, we’re always the ‘bad immigrants.’” Monami Maulik of DRUM, a key member of the May 1<sup>st</sup> Coalition, concurred. She argued that, “A lot of the messaging at the human chain action was around how basically immigrants are workers and we should pass legalization so they could be better, harder workers. It was like immigrants are just labor to be exploited.” The May 1<sup>st</sup> Coalition was also disapproving of the alleged “good vs. bad immigrant” framing by the mainstream faction because they felt that when slogans like “*We* are not terrorist[s]” are used, “you’re saying that those immigrants over there *are*” terrorists. In a post-9/11 context, this train of thought, they argued, unavoidably stigmatized Arab and Muslim immigrants.

Despite these ideological disputes, much as in Los Angeles, the two rival events ultimately seemed to complement, rather than compete with each other because many

immigrants decided to take part in both actions. According to the *New York Daily News*, “[A]t exactly 12:16 p.m., thousands linked hands across all five boroughs and peacefully vented their anger...Short-order cooks wearing grease-spattered aprons and schoolchildren in uniforms joined hands to form a human chain several blocks long” (Siemaszko 2006). The paper documented that, “In Manhattan, human chains formed in Battery Park City, Washington Heights and Chinatown; in Brooklyn, in Sunset Park and Coney Island; in the Bronx, along Fordham Road; in Queens, in Jackson Heights, and at an unspecified location on Staten Island” (Rose 2006). In Jackson Heights, “Mexicans, Dominicans, Peruvians, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Indian, Irish, Korean and many other immigrants held hands on 37<sup>th</sup> Avenue, where a vibrant string of locally-owned businesses are located.” This was the result of “[l]ocal merchant associations such as the Jackson Heights Merchants Associations, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the Bangladeshi Merchants Association” working “together with community activist to make sure May 1 was not only a success, but a grassroots, community organized event that represented the diversity of the area” (Pirani 2006, 2). CNN reported, “In all, 12,000 people turned out to form eight chains: five in Manhattan, one in Queens, one in Brooklyn and one in the Bronx.”<sup>clviii</sup> Another newspaper quoted a local organizer who claimed that “more than 20,000 people took part in the human chains created citywide” (Young, Hart, and Nyback 2006).

Regarding the boycott and the afternoon Union Square rally, the *New York Post* reported that “[d]ozens of stores and restaurants closed or had to curtail part of their business because immigrant employees took the day off with or without permission” and that “[p]ublic school attendance dropped more than 6 percent citywide, not counting students who showed up for morning classes but walked out to attend midday rallies” (Mongelli, Mazor and Winter 2006). The *Daily News* noted that, “The huddled masses who toil in kitchens, clean offices, remove

asbestos, work in car washes—many living in fear of deportation—took to the streets on May Day to show the city what life would be like without them...After massing in immigrant neighborhoods around the city, marchers waving the flags of their homelands and the U.S., converged in Union Square for a rally that overtook the area, then slowly made their way downtown to Foley Square” (Siemaszko 2006). In all, the mainstream and alternative media claimed that 50,000 to over 100,000 immigrant New Yorkers and their supporters took part in the May 1<sup>st</sup> Coalition’s afternoon rally (Mongelli, Mazor and Winter 2006; *Democracy Now!* 2006).

Much like the April 10 action, many local activists contended that again on May 1, immigrant communities appeared to self-mobilize and that coalitions played a secondary role in the demonstration. According to a May 1<sup>st</sup> Coalition activist, “The main thing about our coalition is that we provided a place for immigrants to come out to on May Day...That’s what we can take credit for, that we had a permit, we had sound, and we had a place where everybody could come.”<sup>clix</sup> A member of the more moderate faction of the movement that supported the human chain action concurred, recalling that, “Organizations played a minor coordination role. But by far we did not have anything to do with the hundreds of thousands of people that came out...All these mothers, all these fathers, all these kids, all these grandparents, they were self-directed...It felt like a very genuine demonstration of dignity and power.”<sup>clx</sup>

Small community-based organizations that supported *both* actions said that local businesses and individuals contributed in a variety of ways as well. For instance, according to Rhadames Pérez of *La Aurora*, Dominican-owned neighborhood stores donated what they could afford to the cause. He recalled that leading up to May 1, “I’d just show up at a local business and say, ‘Hey, I need 1,000 copies of these flyers,’ and they would make them” for free or

charge very little. Many of these small immigrant-owned businesses would on their own accord also distributed flyers and posted handmade signs on store walls and doors to declare their support for the boycott and immigrant rights. In addition, during the human chain action on May Day, an immigrant organizer in Brooklyn recounted, “There were like 30 blocks, five people deep on the sidewalk. We shut down traffic, not because we wanted to, but because there were so many people and the cops were not prepared...People just went into Footlocker, Burger King, Dunkin' Donuts, and shutdown those places at 12:16.” At the few businesses that tried to remain open, random “people went in,” blocked the doors, and “wouldn’t let anybody else in until the people stopped working.”<sup>clxi</sup>

In sum, while other cities with similar ideological splits within the movement also hosted two separate demonstrations on May Day, only New York had both a major rally and several smaller local acts of protest. These actions are reflective of the local movement’s structure—diverse, fragmented by neighborhood, loosely connected, but with the potential to unite when deemed necessary. The broad coalition that organized the city’s first major rally on April 10 was formed by various types of organizations with a range of ideological leanings that ordinarily compelled these groups to work independently from each other. However, under the threat of a grave anti-immigrant legislation and in the midst of a growing national protest wave, these organizations were willing to put their differences aside in order to join forces and oppose the nativist bill. Once the context changed due to the defeat of H.R. 4437, the preexisting ideological differences rematerialized around the decision of whether or not to support a national boycott. This issue eventually led to the breakup of the local alliance into two separate “coalitions of coalitions”—a mainstream integrationist wing and a militant internationalist faction. Thus, the case of New York demonstrates that diversity of organizations in a coalition can lead to diversity

of political ideologies and tactical preferences. As we will see below, the diversity of ethnicities and policy interests within the city's foreign-born populations is also significant because it helps explain disparities in the citywide mobilization levels of different immigrant groups.

### **Interests and Ethnicities: Diversity and Magnitude of Mobilization**

The final section of this chapter focuses on two unexpected aspects of the protests: the disparities in the levels of participation by different immigrant groups and the overall underperformance of New York in relation to the size of its immigrant population. Unlike organizers in places with more homogenous immigrant populations, but similar to transnational activists attempting to form alliances across national borders (Smith and Bandy 2005, 7), immigrant rights activists in New York faced arduous challenges in trying to mobilize and form coalitions across various immigrant cultural, linguistic, racial, ethnic, class, cohort, regional, and national "borders." During the protest wave, the diversity of the city's immigrant population revealed that different foreign-born groups had different policy interests and priorities. Not all immigrants *felt*—though many arguably were—equally threatened by H.R. 4437. Nor did they all believe that they would benefit equally from the "pro-immigrant" policies being proposed. As a result, those groups that deemed themselves to be most under attack by the legislative threat mobilized to higher degrees. Below, I argue that these same factors also help explain why the magnitude of New York's demonstrations may have been comparatively less than those of other major immigrant metropolises, such as Los Angeles and Chicago.

### *Diversity and Degree of Immigrant Group Mobilization*

Scholars have noted that the topic of immigration, particularly “illegal immigration,” has been socially constructed by politicians and the mainstream media as a predominately Latino issue, and even more precisely, as a Mexican issue. But while Latinos (particularly those of Mexican descent) have become the “face of illegal immigration” (Chavez 2008; De Genova 2009), other ethnic groups are also greatly affected by changes to the nation’s immigration laws. Nowhere in the United States is this more the case than in New York City, where not only are more than 800 languages spoken (the largest number in any city in the world), but “taken together, foreign-born residents and their offspring account for more than 55 percent of the city’s population” (Roberts 2010; Bernstein 2005). According to a report by the city’s Department of Planning, after Dominicans (369,186) the three largest immigrant groups in New York are Chinese (261,551), Jamaicans (178,922), and Guyanese (130,647). The number of immigrants from Ecuador (114,944), Haiti (95,580), and Trinidad and Tobago (88,794) follow closely behind those from Mexico (122,550). At over 19% of the city’s foreign-born population, Europeans also make up a sizable portion of New York’s immigrants (NYC Department of Planning 2000; CLACLS 2000). Thus, if judged by diversity alone, New York arguably remains America’s biggest “Immigrant City.” Nevertheless, not every foreign-born group in the metropolis interpreted the immigration policy debate of 2006 as affecting them in the same manner. In fact, as discussed below, many felt that the legislative disputes taking place primarily affected immigrants from Latin America, and more specifically, Mexico.

According to Ninaj Raoul of Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees (HWHR), due to the media's portrayal of the issue, when Haitians discussed the proposed changes to immigration laws many believed that these changes pertained only to Mexicans. She recalled, “There was a

lot of confusion about that at the time.” Fallou Gueye, President of the Association of Senegalese in America, also remembers that during the 2006 immigration debate his organization had to constantly explain to their compatriots “that this was not only about them [Latinos], we are also part of this.” Mae Lee of the Chinese Progressive Association (CPA) remembered that sometimes people in her community would ask why her organization was taking part in the city coalition’s actions. They’d question, “Why is the Chinese community here? Why should they be so concerned?” According to Artemio Guerra, an organizer with the Fifth Avenue Committee, such misconceptions were prevalent during this period because “the immigration debate” was being “framed exclusively around *Mexicanos*,” which many New York organizers felt was problematic “because immigration is a much larger phenomenon” that affects a greater amount of the city’s residents than just Mexicans.

One local activist noted that “the perspectives of the different immigrant communities” in New York “come out in the pieces of legislation” which they believed affected them most.<sup>clxii</sup> Consequently, one of the reasons non-Latinos felt that the immigration debate was a “Mexican issue” was because the legislative proposals being highlighted in the media—such as amnesty, guest worker programs, deportation, and border militarization—did not reflect their primary policy concerns. For instance, many organizers in the Filipino and Chinese communities said that family reunification and clearing the visa backlog, *not* enforcement or legalization, were the most pressing issues for their communities. Many people in South Asian Muslim neighborhoods also did not believe the debate affected them greatly. As a result, local activists “had to do a lot of messaging about why the enforcement aspects of the bills,” particularly “the language around national security,” were going to negatively impact them.<sup>clxiii</sup> According to Ninaj Raoul of HWHR, “Since people were hearing things in the press about guest worker bills and things like

that,” immigrants in her community would often ask, “Can we benefit from this [the protests]?” Despite a common status as foreign-born, the importance of immigration reform to specific immigrant populations depended on the details of the policies under debate and whom the media portrayed as being most affected by them. In short, the different immigrant groups knew their different policy interests.

According to Bernadette Ellorin of the Philippine Forum and BAYAN, because “there are more undocumented Latino immigrants” than other ethnic groups and “Sensenbrenner was about” the “criminalization” of people without papers, she believed that “there may have been more fear” about the legislation among Latinos. As such, perhaps because the popular image of an “illegal immigrant” is a brown person with a Spanish accent, it is worth noting that many non-Latino immigrant groups *with* undocumented populations did not feel equally as threatened by the draconian nature of H.R. 4437. Since the image of committing the “crime” of illegal immigration is construed by the media—and accepted by members of society, both U.S. and foreign-born—as that of a Latino illegally jumping over the Mexican border (Chavez 2008), it appears that *how* one becomes undocumented influences the ways in which some immigrants (often mistakenly) understand their own “illegality,” and the vulnerabilities that accompany it.

For instance, Mae Lee of the CPA explained that most of her community’s clandestine immigrant population “overstayed their visa,” but that “it’s not like they got on a ship and snuck here or something...The way they became undocumented is through circumstances,” not through crossing any borders without permission. As a result, according to Haeyoung Yoon of CAAAV, many Chinatown residents believed that, “the Sensenbrenner provision doesn’t really affect us.”<sup>7</sup> Another example given by a NYIC organizer further supports the notion that not all

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<sup>7</sup> She contended that their primary policy interest was family reunification.

undocumented immigrant groups felt equally threatened by the anti-immigrant legislation. This organizer explained that through the process of overstaying their visas, there are now an estimated “50,000 Russians that are undocumented” in the city. Nevertheless, “When it comes to being attacked as an immigrant, they don’t really feel those attacks apply to them,” partly because “they’re white.” As a result, the organizer recalled that these immigrants “didn’t come out” to the demonstrations.<sup>clxiv</sup>

Thus, because not all immigrant groups felt equally threatened by the proposed nativist legislation, the extent to which they took part in the rallies also differed. Accordingly, many non-Latino immigrant rights activists stated that their communities did not participate in the marches to the same extent as Latinos. For instance, there are more Guyanese and Jamaican immigrants in the city than those from Mexico. Yet as Chuck Mohan of New York’s Guyanese-American Worker’s United admitted, “The Caribbean groups were very disappointing, to be honest with you...I’m not saying that there might not have been sprinkles, but for me to tell you that there were 5,000, I would be lying to you...This goes for the English speaking Caribbean in general. They do not come out when it comes to immigration issues.” Monami Maulik of DRUM also recounted,

It [was] much tougher to mobilize in the South Asian community, and I think also in non-Latino immigrant communities...[because H.R. 4437] was very much seen as a Latino thing...The media promoted it as a Latino thing...and even in that, only as a Mexican thing, so people stayed away from it. We spent a lot of time trying to speak at community events, we put out a lot of ads in South Asian papers, we did massive amounts of street flyering and door knocking almost every day to get people out...But it was a pretty poor turnout from what we wanted. Our leadership was pretty disappointed in our own community for not being more at the forefront of this.

The different levels of protest turnout were arguably related to the particular “immigrant experience” of each foreign-born group. For example, Shaid Comrade of the Pakistan USA

Freedom Forum believed that there was “less response and visibility” from Muslim immigrants because of the repression they had endured under the Bush Administration, specifically its “Special Registration Program” (see Nguyen 2005). Many feared being picked up by Homeland Security and getting accused of “being terrorists.” Another organizer in the Muslim community explained, “There was already so much fear that mass mobilization is not something that we’re ready for. It’s taken a couple of years after 9/11 just to get people to join political organizations, let alone get on the streets.”<sup>clxv</sup> Thus, how some immigrant groups interpret and respond to legislative threats can be impacted by their previous experiences with state repression in their host countries.

Many non-Latino immigrant rights activists felt that their communities did not participate in the protests to the extent that they would have liked. All agreed that the Latino immigrant population accounted for the plurality, if not the majority of the demonstrators. More specifically, both Latino and non-Latino immigrant activists consistently pointed out that Dominicans and Mexicans seemed to have mobilized to larger degrees than other Latinos groups. Moisés Pérez of *Alianza Dominicana* recalled, “*Dominicanos* are the largest immigrant group in the New York area,” and as a result he said, they also made up the largest group of protesters. But Pérez quickly added, “There was a lot of Mexicans there, it was like, *Whoa!*” While the marches were definitely diverse and no single national group dominated, a South Asian organizer with NYCPP also recalled that the crowd seemed surprisingly “Mexican, definitely Mexican—a lot of Mexican flags.”<sup>clxvi</sup> What explains this over-representation of Dominicans and Mexicans at the protests? Was this degree of involvement merely the result of the size of these two populations in New York City? While sheer numbers were a major factor, these two immigrant

groups also seemed to have more to gain *and* to lose from the policies being proposed, especially the legalization and deportation features embedded in them.

Arguably, the most devastating aspect of being undocumented is the vulnerability to deportation that accompanies this status (De Genova 2002). Due to changes in immigration laws made in 1996, the Dominican immigrant community has become disproportionately susceptible to deportations. For example, between 1996 and 2007, between 36,000 to 50,000 Dominican immigrants were deported. According to an analysis of the effects of these laws, “Of the top seven immigrant groups deported from the United States in 2007, Dominicans have the highest proportion of those deported for criminal convictions.” However, what particularly enraged local activists and community residents was that many of those who were deported from the country were people with minor violations. The 1996 laws converted several previously-minor infractions into newly deportable offenses, and to make matters worse, the changes were retroactive (NMCIR 2009). As a result, thousands of law-abiding Dominican legal residents who were productive members of their communities had been deported and torn from their families. Thus, during the 2006 protests, Dominicans in New York may have come out in larger numbers than other immigrant groups not only because they were the biggest foreign-born population in the city, but also because a large number of them had more to gain from the possible changes to deportation laws that activists were calling for. The Dominican community organizers interviewed from different groups all stated that the possibility of making changes to the 1996 laws was *the* primary motivator behind the degree of Dominican mobilization.<sup>clxvii</sup>

The impetus for Mexicans in New York to mass-mobilize was more obvious. As previously stated, people of Mexican descent have become “the face of illegal immigration” in the country. Tellingly, a national survey of U.S. and foreign-born Latinos taken during the 2006

demonstrations showed that not only did Mexicans have a more positive view of undocumented immigrants than other Latino groups, but they were also more likely to report feeling increasingly discriminated against as a result of the immigration debate taking place (Suro and Escobar 2006). Mexicans had other motives to mobilize as well. For example, they account for the vast majority of the country's undocumented immigrant population. And while *not* all Mexican immigrants in the nation are "illegal," in order to understand why they over-mobilized during the city's protest wave, it is important to note that *in New York*, virtually all Mexicans in the city *are* undocumented (Bernstein 2005). Thus, because they may have had the most to both gain *and* lose from changes in legalization *and* deportation laws (e.g. with citizenship they would no longer have to live under the fear of deportation), along with Dominicans, more Mexicans participated in the protests than other foreign-born populations.

Contrary to other immigrant groups, it seemed as though the Mexican immigrant community never questioned whether or not the issues being debated were going to have a profound effect on them. A Latina organizer was quoted earlier as saying that "these people are undocumented, they understand very clearly the connection between policies and their lives." This was especially the case with regard to Mexican immigrants in New York. As previously discussed, while activists in other communities often had to make extra efforts to explain to their specific immigrant groups how the laws being proposed would affect them, Mexican immigrants did not need anyone to explain to them that "anti-immigrant," or specifically "anti-illegal immigrant," meant *anti-them*. Because of this understanding, they responded without hesitation. As Joel Magallán of the *Asociación Tepeyac*, the primary (and one of the few) community based organizations to focus on Mexican immigrants in New York, remembered,

May 1<sup>st</sup> wasn't like one of our regular [attempts at] mobilization. Usually for us to organize a mobilization, we have to set up a meeting, explain to people in each community, in each church, what we're going to do, why we want to do it, where we're going to have it, all of that. But that year the motivation was already there. News about it was coming from everywhere and people were ready...We didn't have to mobilize...[Mexican immigrants] moved on their own.

### *Diversity and the Magnitude of New York's Mobilizations*

Describing the magnitude of New York's mobilizations, May Chen of UNITE-HERE noted that, "While they were large, they were nothing like Los Angeles." As stated in the introduction to this chapter, given that the city has the biggest immigrant population in the nation and arguably the most developed immigrant rights movement infrastructure in the country, as Aarti Shahani of Families for Freedom declared, "There is a question to be asked of New York, which is why wouldn't we have had the largest...march in the country?" The answer is twofold. First, the cities with the biggest demonstrations had more homogenous foreign-born populations with larger numbers of undocumented Mexican immigrants. Second, and closely related, because of New York's heterogeneous foreign-born population, organizers had the more difficult task of organizing across multiple "borders" (e.g. linguistic, racial, ethnic, class, cultural, etc.) both between and within immigrant populations. Activists in L.A., Dallas, and Chicago did not have to overcome these challenges (at least to the same extent) in order to produce mass mobilizations of 500,000 to over a million people.

According to a 2007 report by the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Immigration Statistics, California, Texas, and Illinois all had larger numbers of undocumented immigrants than the state of New York (Hoefler, Rytina, and Campell 2007). Moreover, an analysis of 2003-2004 Current Population Survey (CPS) data found that in terms of the percent of Mexicans that made up these states' undocumented populations, California (with 65%), Texas

(with 79%), and Illinois (with 88%), all far exceeded New York, where the Mexican segment of undocumented residents was only 16% (Fortuny, Capps, and Passel 2007, 38). In the major metropolitan areas of these states, the Los Angeles-Long Beach region had 4,569,000 people of Mexican origin (36% of the area's population), Dallas-Fort Worth had 1,507,094 (24% of the area's population) and Chicago had 1,484,885, (16 % of its population). The *Mexican-origin population* of these metro areas far outnumbers the New York–Northeastern New Jersey metro region which only had 502,386 (making up 3% of its population) people of Mexican decent (2009 American Community Survey). Table 3 reveals that within the foreign-born population of these regions, the percentage of undocumented immigrants—and the percentage of these undocumented immigrants that are Mexican—is significantly higher in Los Angeles, Dallas, and Chicago, than in the New York metro area.

**Table 3.**

<b>Metro Area Undocumented Immigrant Characteristics</b>			
	<b>Total Estimated Undocumented Population</b>	<b>% of Foreign-Born that are Undocumented</b>	<b>% of Mexicans in Undocumented Population</b>
<b>Los Angeles</b>	1,000,000	26%	59%
<b>New York</b>	520,000	16%	20%
<b>Dallas</b>	460,000	48%	75%
<b>Chicago</b>	400,000	28%	88%

*Source: Fortuny, Capps, and Passel 2007.*

Together, the above statistics tell us that Los Angeles, Dallas, and Chicago all had larger Mexican *and* undocumented Mexican immigrant populations than New York. Since they

accounted for the largest portions undocumented immigrants in the nation and in these cities, Mexican people without papers had the most to gain from acquiring their citizenship *and* the most to lose from an increase in the criminalization of undocumented migration. Furthermore, it is important to reiterate that undocumented Mexicans were perceived as being primary targets of much of the country's nativism at the time, including H.R. 4437. Given all of these compounding factors, it seems sensible that Los Angeles, Dallas, and Chicago would have the largest citywide demonstrations in the protest wave—even larger than New York's, despite its massive and heterogeneous immigrant population.<sup>8</sup>

One of the New York immigrant organizers interviewed who was originally from L.A. contended that the disparities in size between the cities' mobilizations could best be explained by activists having to reach out to fewer immigrant groups in Los Angeles. She asserted, "In L.A. it's a lot of Mexicans and Salvadorians. So if you get those groups and their leadership on board, you're OK."<sup>clxviii</sup> To some extent, this appeared to be the case during the early stages of the 2006 protest wave. The process of mass mobilizing immigrants seemed to be much more centralized in the City of Angels. Once the leaders of the Mexican immigrant, Mexican American, and Spanish media were on board, the Mexican masses followed (see Chapter 3). The process of immigrant mass mobilization in New York was the opposite. As May Lee of the CPA explained,

One of the characteristics of our city is that our immigrant communities are very diverse and very different so you can't just have one blast announcement for everyone. You actually have to go into each community and have outreach in different languages and different ways that are more culturally appropriate...for different groups in different neighborhoods. Some have a long history of being involved, some may be new immigrants and their whole population is new to the country.

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<sup>8</sup> For data demonstrating how Los Angeles's racial and ethnic makeup is more homogenous than New York's, see Frey 2010 at [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/Programs/Metro/state\\_of\\_metro\\_america/metro\\_america\\_chapters/metro\\_america\\_race.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/Programs/Metro/state_of_metro_america/metro_america_chapters/metro_america_race.pdf).

As demonstrated earlier, organizing across different immigrant groups can be a daunting task, given their varying experiences in the U.S. In addition, New York organizers faced the challenge of navigating the varied *previous* experiences that many immigrant groups brought with them from their countries of origin, which impacted their decision to participate in the protests. For instance, support for the marches from immigrants from formerly Communist Eastern European countries was scarce. According to one local organizer, “They didn’t support it,” their mentality was, “Fuck you. I’ve done my share of forced marching...I had to go to demonstrations as a kid...I’m not dealing with that protest bullshit anymore.” With regard to the level of participation of undocumented Filipina domestic workers, Ana Liza Caballes of Damayan explained, “It was hard for them to come out” because many of them are older women who live with their employers and their class background in the Philippines is also middle class so their thinking is not really, ‘Go out and protest’” when faced with a problem. Thus, New York organizers had to develop messaging and organizing strategies for immigrants with differing U.S. *and* home country experiences.

To further complicate matters, on top of the differences in homeland experiences *between* immigrant populations, there were also differences *within* some immigrant groups, such as the time period and the region from which they migrated. This “diversity within diversity” impacted immigrants’ levels of mobilization as well. As Haeyoung Yoon of CAAAV put it, different immigrant groups responded to the policy debate and calls for collective action “differently because it was affecting them slightly differently.” May Chen of UNITE-HERE provided an example of this dynamic within one immigrant community. She explained that while several of them supported the April 10 action, many Chinese immigrants did not come out for the May Day march. The reason for the decline in support, she said, was the result of Taiwanese immigrants

“viewing May Day as too radical...Some of them felt that May 1<sup>st</sup> was kind of like Communist China’s Labor Day.”

Mae Lee of the CPA concurred and pointed out that this divide also manifested itself in the support that the local Chinatown coalition received from their ethnic business communities. She recalled that while both the long-established Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) and the relatively newer Fujian Association of Businesses (FAB) (which is composed of more recent immigrants) supported the April 10 march, only the Fujianese businesses continued to assist with the May 1 actions. Speaking of FAB's members, Lee stated that “a lot of them were very supportive. They printed t-shirts, signs, and those kinds of things—they spent some money on it. They [even] had a big meeting with all of their business members and told them they had to come out.” On the other hand, since “China is a socialist country,” May Day “is celebrated” there “but not in Taiwan.” As a result, because of the “association of May 1<sup>st</sup> with May Day [International Worker’s Day]” the CCBA was not as supportive of it because most of its members come from Taiwan.

Given this “diversity within diversity,” it is no wonder that in order to mass-mobilize New York’s different immigrant populations, “coalitions of coalitions” were needed. Without a doubt, activists in cities such as New York had a more difficult job in attempting to organize between and within different immigrant groups. To mass-mobilize in a city with large and diverse immigrant populations, activists had to develop multiple frames and messages that resonated across linguistic, racial, ethnic, class, cohort, regional, and national “borders.” Thus, if the Empire City did underperform (or at the very least not reach its full potential), given the obstacles outlined above, the fact that local activists were able to mobilize 50,000 to over 100,000 immigrants from an array of countries was an amazing achievement. Despite not

producing the nation's largest demonstration, New York's mass mobilizations were perhaps the most diverse of the 2006 immigrant protest wave.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

Documenting the development of the momentous New York marches is important not only for historical, but also for theoretical purposes. This chapter has helped shed light on several questions relevant to both the social movement and interethnic politics literatures. For example, despite claims that competition is more common than coalition building among the city's different ethnic groups (McClain and Tauber 2001, 114; Hazan 2006, 207), the research presented here has shown that under particular contexts and through the mediation of various types of social ties, large and organizationally diverse multiethnic immigrant coalitions can form. Furthermore, the evidence presented has also illustrated the important role that ideological diversity, and the strategic decision-making practices that result from it, can play in the fracturing of these same partnerships. In short, the chapter has demonstrated how both external and internal factors *interacted* in the formation and fragmentation of the immigrant-group alliances that organized the most diverse demonstrations in U.S. history.

The chapter has also helped shed some light on why certain immigrant groups participated more than others, and why despite being America's "Immigrant City," New York may have underperformed in terms of protest size. In her book *The Trouble With Unity*, Cristina Beltrán (2010) argues that one of the problems inherent in deliberately created political identities is that they not only imply a shared collective consciousness and mutual interests, but they also erase the internal diversity among the groups being clustered. This is not to say that these groups cannot or do not have common preferences, but that broadly constructed political identities have

the potential to mask or suppress certain interests that may be unique to some of the particular groups within them. The case of New York shows us that the same is arguably true with regard to the political identity of "immigrant," which grassroots activists from several racial and ethnic backgrounds have attempted to construct over the last few decades under the rubric of the "Immigrant Rights Movement."

The dynamics of the 2006 protest wave in the New York show us that the categories of "immigrant" and "illegal immigrant" are socially constructed, and more importantly, that they are understood and adopted differently by the city's diverse of foreign-born populations. These differences of interpretation help explain the disparities in mobilization from one immigrant group to another, as well as the city's relatively modest overall turnout in relation to New York's large immigrant population. Certain immigrant groups did not turn out to protest in large numbers not solely because they lacked large numbers in the city, but also because of their previous experiences in both the U.S. and their countries of origin. Moreover, rather than being passive bystanders waiting to "follow their leaders," different immigrant groups often had their own opinions about their policy priorities; the degree of their participation in the protests reflected this.

The aforementioned dynamic was particularly the case with Dominicans and Mexicans. These two groups made up the biggest contingents at the city's demonstrations because they had the largest number of community members with the most to gain and lose from the proposed immigration reforms. The same factors also affected the overall size of the city's mobilizations. More immigrants participated in places like Los Angeles, Dallas, and Chicago than in New York because the anti-immigrant legislative threat (H.R. 4437), and the alternative pro-immigrant

policies that advocates proposed in counter of it, were constructed by the media (and accepted by immigrants) to be exclusively of relevance to Mexicans. Because all three of the aforementioned cities have larger undocumented Mexican immigrant populations, they produced larger protests in response to both the threat and hope for immigration reform. Thus, under specific circumstances, certain foreign-born groups can come to “understand very clearly” the link “between policies and their lives.”

Chapter 5

**Mechanisms of  
Immigrant Demobilization**

*Anti-Movement Backlash, Repression,  
Social Control, and Suppression*

*While the previous three chapters touched on some of the factors that contributed to the decline of contention (such as intramovement frame disputes, coalition fragmentation, etc.), their primary focus was on key elements that helped facilitate the rise of the immigrant protest wave (such as resources and the ethnic media). The following two chapters in this section highlight additional mechanisms of demobilization. In Chapter 6, I show how the movement's decline was primarily due to the defeat of H.R. 4437 and the subsequent institutionalization of activists' efforts. I also demonstrate how this institutionalization into mainstream politics impacted in the 2008 presidential elections. Here in Chapter 5, my focus is on important nontraditional mechanisms that contributed to the decline of contention, including various forms of state and societal repression and suppression. These two chapters should be understood in tandem with more weight given to the successful prevention of H.R. 4437 from becoming law and the shift in the movement's focus to electoral politics.*

### **The Decline of Immigrant Contention**

While sometimes sudden and dramatic, and other times slow and dull, there is no common way in which protest waves end (Koopmans 2004, 36). Not surprisingly, social movement scholars have found that the decline of mobilization can be attributed to several combinations and types of traditional “mechanisms of demobilization,” such as disillusionment, defection, and repression (Tilly and Tarrow 2007, 97-98). Just as with the key factors that contributed to the rise of contention highlighted in each of the previous chapters, each of these case studies concluded with examples of how these same themes—the media, diversity within coalitions, the dynamics between threats and identity, etc.—had an impact on the decline of mobilization in the cities examined. Again, this is not to say that these themes characterize the

*only* or even the *primary* reasons why protests in these specific locales declined. Disillusionment among participants, the defeat of H.R. 4437, changes in the type of access (or loss of access altogether) to mainstream ethnic media outlets, alterations in the degree and forms of threats potential movement participants faced, intra-movement divisions that led to the fracturing of local coalitions, etc., were among the factors that jointly contributed to the demobilization processes of the national and local protest waves.

For example, although the same issues (e.g. divisions over messaging, strategy, tactics, etc.) played a role in the decline of local coalitions and protests in New York, Los Angeles, and various other parts of the country, there were also splits along the same ideological and organizational-type lines (nationally connected mainstream labor and immigrant rights NGOs vs. local grassroots immigrant rights groups) throughout the nation. It is important to point out that most of the demobilizing factors underscored in the previous chapters have been *internal* to the immigrant rights movement itself. While media channeling and movement institutionalization—two additional types of demobilization—will be discussed further in the following chapter, here in Chapter 5 our focus will be on some *external* mechanisms of demobilization, such as forms of repression, suppression, backlash, and social control.

Although the theoretical concepts of *repression* and *suppression* are often used synonymously, and often produce similar results, it is important to differentiate between the two. According to Boykoff (2007),

Repression is violent, while suppression, a broader term, also encompasses other, more subtle modes of silencing opposition. I prefer to use “suppression” where others might use “repression.” “Suppression” is less drastic or dramatic and lets us see beyond more spectacular instances of governmental coercion. The term suppression is especially appropriate for a study that focuses on the United States, where direct violence isn’t used nearly as frequently as subtler forms of social control. So, “suppression” is a broad term

that encompasses both repression—or, what I call “direct violence”—as well as subtler modes of silencing or preventing dissent (11).

When studying the dynamics of mass mobilization, it's essential to look at the role played by repression in the decline of contention because movement repression “accelerates the demobilization of those with low [levels] of involvement and isolates those whose [participation] is most intense” (Tilly and Tarrow 2006, 101). Moreover, repression “always has important deterrence and socialization components that aim not at the repressed subject [but rather] at the wider public” attempting to deter “those who might consider committing a similar” act of dissent, or symbolically rewarding “and satisfy[ing] those citizens who refrain” from participating in collective action (Koopmans 2005, 161). Despite the importance of the effects of repression on the demobilization of mass movements (see Davenport, Johnston, Mueller 2005), most of the research has been limited to the most obvious cases of overtly violent subjugation by state actors (for an example see Earl 2006; Oliver 2008; Ayoub 2010).

Boykoff (2007) defines *repression* as a form of “state violence” and he considers *suppression* to be “a process through which the preconditions for dissident action, mobilization, and collective organization are inhibited by either raising their costs or minimizing their benefits” (12). Although these acts can often produce the same results as overt forms of *repression*, because “subtler modes of *suppression* are more difficult to observe, and therefore harder to measure, many social movement researchers have sidestepped the issue entirely” [emphasis added] (Boykoff 2007, 12). In response to the dearth of research in this area, scholars of contentious politics should expand their examinations of anti-movement actions “beyond bullets” and begin studying the more covert and seemingly nonpolitical ways in which

governments and individuals attempt to undermine progressive social movements (also see Davenport 2005).

One difficulty that arises when studying *repression* is proving the state's or private citizens' motivations for employing what amount to anti-movement measures. However, when examining forms of *suppression*, it is sufficient to analyze the effects that state and societal actions have on "the preconditions for dissent" that impact activists' mobilization strategies, their efforts, and the receptiveness of their target audiences. Following this train of thought, it is imperative to investigate state/government and societal/grassroots actions that are not only intended to be *repressive*, but also those that despite their motivations have *suppressive* consequences on movements and their ability to mass-mobilize. Hence, while in Chapter 2 I used the example of Fort Myers to illustrate how both state actions (such as immigration raids) and societal actions (such as discrimination against immigrants) contributed to the local movement's decline, in this chapter I further elaborate on the ways in which nontraditional forms of *suppression* materialized across the country.

Before we examine how these mechanisms contributed to the demobilization process of the national immigrant protest wave, it is useful to make an analytical distinction between the various *types* and *forms* that mechanisms can take. For instance, suppression is a *type* of demobilizing mechanism, whereas media censorship is a *form* or way in which this mechanism can manifest. To be more precise, in this chapter I characterize two sources of suppression, state/government and societal/grassroots. Forms of *state/government* suppression are those whose sources derive from official national, state, or local government authorities. *Societal/grassroots* suppression can come from sources ranging from the media and private citizens to full-fledged countermovements. As I argue below, while the latter non-institutional

forms of suppression can have damaging effects on a movement’s ability to organize, the primary focus of this chapter heeds Boykoff’s (2007) call to go “beyond bullets” by examining the nontraditional forms that state/government suppression took during the 2006 immigrant protest wave. The research presented below helps us better understand the dynamics of movement decline, which according to Koopmans (2004) is “perhaps the weakest [link] in social movement theory and research” (37). It also adds to our knowledge of the forms that state suppression can take by deriving data not solely from newspapers—the primary sources usually relied upon for this type of research (Davenport 2005, xxv)—but by utilizing alternative references such as federal, state, and local government statistics on immigration raids, deportations, detentions, and anti-immigrant ordinances. Before the analysis, I first review some nontraditional forms of societal/grassroots demobilization mechanisms that organizers across the country claimed hindered their ability to continue to produce large-scale collective action.

### **Societal/Grassroots Backlash**

Though not the focus of this chapter, the severe societal/grassroots backlash (Navarro 2009) that occurred nationwide during and after the protest wave can be conceptualized as being indirectly suppressive given the chilling impacts it had on the mobilization efforts of pro-immigrant activists. As Deepak Pargava of the Center for Community Change recalled, “I think we all knew a racist backlash was coming, but I don’t think any of us were prepared for the level of it. It was like a tidal wave that just swept the whole country at every level.” Three particular forms of societal/grassroots suppression targeted activists and immigrant protestors across the country: *firings from jobs* for participating in demonstrations; anti-Latino *hate crimes*; and the escalation of the anti-immigrant *countermovement*.

### ***Getting Fired for Protesting***

During the national protest wave, a news outlet reported that “workers and students have paid a price for attending the immigration rallies that have recently swept the nation. They have lost jobs or been cited for truancy for joining the hundreds of thousands who have protested proposed federal legislation that would crack down” on undocumented immigrants (Johnson 2006). For example, in Tyler, Texas 22 immigrant welders lost their jobs for attending a local rally, as did asbestos removal workers in Indianapolis, and restaurant and factory workers in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Bonita Spring, Florida, and Bellwood, Illinois (Davey 2006; Warikoo 2006). In Detroit, Michigan, 15 immigrant women were fired for attending a local demonstration, as were 6 employees at a seafood restaurant in Houston, Texas (Johnson 2006; Wrikoo 2006). In cities and towns from coast to coast, immigrants throughout the nation were fired from their jobs in retribution for their participation in the protest wave, losing their ability to provide the basic necessities for their families. Organizers contended that while the protesters-to-people-fired ratio was rather small, since Spanish and English news outlets repeatedly reported on these instances of punishment for protesters, this increased the costs of contention for potential participants. While there is definitely a distinction between perceived and objective threats (Earl 2006, 132), previous research supports the claims by activists finding that “the deterrent effect of repression”—and I would add suppression—“is likely to be much more powerful [when it] is highly visible...” (Koopmans 2005, 161), such as when broadcasted by the media. Hence, from Los Angeles and Fort Myers to New York and Washington, D.C., local and national immigrant rights activists asserted that after H.R. 4437 had been defeated—and thus the “quotidian disrupting” threat gone—immigrants became less likely to risk losing their livelihoods by participating in marches.

### *Hate Crimes and Threats of Hate Crimes*

Interviews conducted in all of my case study cities showed that *threats* of and *actual* anti-immigrant hate-crimes also contributed to the creation of an environment of fear in immigrant communities. Organizers recounted that various forms of nativism not only led many immigrants to be less responsive to their calls for action—“inhibiting” dissent by “raising the costs”—but also to question the effectiveness of their tactics and whether it was worth the backlash. As one interviewee admitted, “We said no more marches because we were scared that there would be some confrontation, that some anti-immigrant group would attack us, or that even some crazy would come and shoot us.”<sup>clxix</sup> Some evidence exists to substantiate their fears. For instance, the day before the April 10 National Day of Action for Immigrant Justice the media reported that hundreds of flyers were scattered in front of a Latino apartment complex that called for Americans to burn down the homes of undocumented immigrants (Apocada 2006). Also, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), in response to the pro-immigrant national protest wave, anti-immigrant extremist and neo-Nazis began to call for “terrorist violence, including truck bombs, machine gun attacks, and assassinations of U.S. Senators and members of Congress.” For example, Hal Turner, a xenophobic radio host, proclaimed, “All of you who think there's a peaceful solution to these invaders are wrong. We're going to have to start killing these people.” Jim Gilchrist, cofounder of the infamous Minuteman Project, stopped short of calling for violence but declared, “I'm not going to promote insurrection, but if it happens, it will be on the conscience of the members of Congress who are doing this...I will not promote violence in resolving this, but I will not stop others who might pursue” it (Buchanan and Holthouse 2006).

The seriousness of these threats were reaffirmed when even the Republican Governor of California, Arnold Schwarzenegger, a self-admitted supporter of the Minutemen, made a public address to the people of his state opposing these acts of hate speech after Latino elected officials—such as California Lieutenant Governor Cruz Bustamante and Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa—received “disturbing and hateful death threats.” A postcard to one official read, “All you dirty Mexicans should go back to Mexico. The only good Mexican is a dead Mexican” (Williams 2006). Unfortunately, the hate went beyond rhetoric and turned into action. For example, despite the fact that Latinos notoriously under report hate crimes (*El Diario* 2011), acts of violence against people from Latin American descent increased by over 10% from 2005 to 2006, continuing a dangerous trend. The FBI’s compiled statistics showed that of the over 1,000 hate crimes “motivated by the offender’s bias toward a particular ethnicity/national origin,” 63% were directed at Latinos.<sup>clxx</sup> According to an SPLC report,

As anti-immigrant propaganda has increased on both the margins and in the mainstream of society—where pundits and politicians have routinely vilified undocumented Latino immigrants with a series of defamatory falsehoods—hate violence has risen against perceived “illegal aliens.” Each year since 2003, the number of FBI-reported anti-Latino hate crime incidents has risen...as a swelling nativist movement has become larger and more vitriolic (Potok 2008).

An example of one of these acts occurred on the actual day of the April 10 national day of action. On that Monday, in San Diego, California, a small family-owned Mexican restaurant received an anonymous telephone call that “spewed venom against Mexicans.” Later that night after the city’s immigrant rights rally ended, racist nativists broke into the restaurant, graffitied anti-Mexican slurs on its walls, and burned the restaurant down (Krueger 2006). As the report quoted above stated, the increase in anti-Latino hate crimes coincided with a rise in nativist extremist groups in reaction to the immigrant protest wave.

### ***Reinvigoration of the Nativist Countermovement***

In 2005 there were 37 nativist extremist groups in 25 states; by 2007 “there were 255 groups in 42 states.” In other words, between the year before and the year after the mass immigrant demonstrations, the number of nativist extremist groups in the United States “increased in number by 600 percent” (BDI 2007). Not only did the *number of organizations* grow, the actual *number of people* that participated in them also rose in response to the pro-immigrant marches. According to the *Miami Herald*, “Membership began to swell for such groups in 2006—a backlash to massive marches by immigrants in major cities” (Woods 2008). For example, although the group’s membership rosters are not public and thus unverifiable, in early 2006 before the immigrant rights protest wave began, one faction of the Minutemen claimed to have 6,000 members. By the end of the summer, the Minutemen Civil Defense Corps said its membership had jumped to 7,451 (a 24% increase) and that about 60,000 people had made donations to their cause (Navarro 2009, 193).

In sum, while most research on movement *repression* focuses on institutional actors (Davenport 2005, vii), pro-immigrant activists across the country contended that the aforementioned types of discrimination by private citizens, which were often broadcasted by mainstream media outlets, contributed to the creation of a climate of fear in immigrant communities. These actions should be considered nontraditional forms of *suppression* given their effects on the activists’ abilities to continue to mass-mobilize. Yet, while my fieldwork revealed that these societal forms of suppression helped create a hostile mobilizing environment for immigrant organizers and their bases, most of the local and national leaders interviewed claimed that it was the state/government forms of *repression* that had the most harmful impact on, and contributed most to, the movement’s decline.

## **State/Government Forms of Repression and Social Control**

While examining how *non-state* forms of suppression *and* repression effect social movements is important, since the state has a “monopoly” on “the legitimate use of force” and is supposed to be the “guarantor of public order” (Della Porta and Diani 1999, 209), it is not surprising that activists claimed that it was the government’s actions during and after the protest wave that had the most devastating effects on their organizing capacities. Understanding how the government uses its agents to stifle movements is vital because the ways it attempts to control protests “on the streets” can have “important consequences for” the strategic choices organizers and participants make (Della Porta and Fillieule 2004, 218). My research on the 2006 immigrant protest wave reveals that state-sponsored forms of repression and social control came from all three levels of U.S. government: the federal, state, and local. The forms of nontraditional anti-immigrant mechanisms of demobilization that activists claimed were exerted by these agents can be categorized as *enhanced social control*, *complete removal and confinement*, and *sporadic systematic attacks* (the last two being forms of repression) against potential movement participants. Below I elaborate on each of these and explain how they materialized during the 2006 immigrant protest wave.

### ***Enhanced Social Control***

According to Monica Varsanyi (2010), an expert on local immigration policy,

While subnational governments do not have the constitutional power to formulate grassroots immigration policies...they *do* have [the] explicit power to regulate and police public space within their jurisdictions via local land use and zoning ordinances, ordinances that regulate behavior in public space (for example laws that criminalize loitering), and the enforcement of local and state laws (such as trespassing and traffic ordinances)...[A] secondary (and I would argue, intended) effect of controlling and

criminalizing certain behaviors in public space is policing the persons within those spaces—[such as immigrant] day laborers—who, by necessity of their livelihood strategy, participate in outlawed behaviors (139).

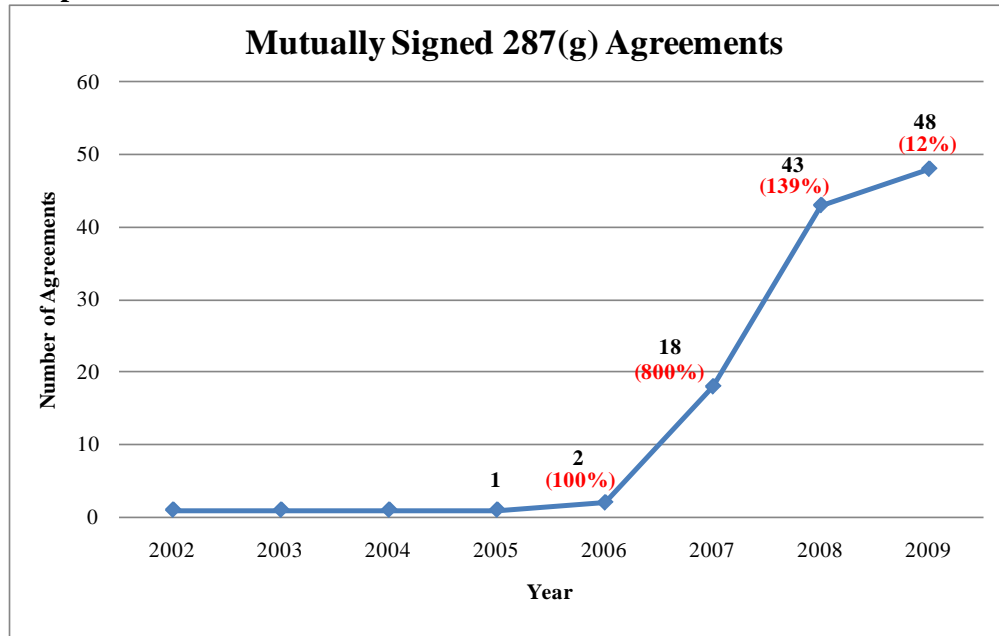
She argues that “an increasing number of cities and states” have been “utilizing [these] tools at their disposal...to constrain the opportunities and/or behavior” of their local “undocumented residents” in order to essentially “get these people out of town.” Varsanyi (2010) asserts that by “invoking, formulating, and enforcing” these local laws, “cities are, in effect, doing local immigration policing by proxy” (135-136). As will be discussed in Chapter 6, there was a drastic increase in the number of state laws related to immigrants and immigration after Congress failed to pass immigration reform in both 2006 and 2007. The number of these types of state laws rose by 115% from 2005 to 2006 and by 186% from 2006 to 2007 (see *Graph 5* in Chapter 6). Many of the local laws enhanced the social control of immigrants in that they ranged from limiting the ability of day laborers to seek employment on street corners, to restricting undocumented immigrants’ ability to rent housing. Interviews with immigrant rights organizers “on the streets” revealed that several of these local and state laws were interpreted by activists and their immigrant bases as punitive and having suppressive anti-movement effects; they believed they were payback for their protesting.

Another form of increased social control, or “immigration policing by proxy,” was in the now infamous 287(g) agreements that city and county law enforcement agencies entered into with federal immigration officials. This program allowed local police agents to be trained in and given the authority to enforce national immigration laws. Immigrant advocates across the country claimed that this program not only increased racial profiling of all Latinos—both U.S. and foreign-born—by police after the series of demonstrations, but also severely restricted the ability of people without papers to travel throughout their communities because of fear of getting

pulled over and questioned about their legal status (see Gardner and Kohli 2009; Shahani and Greene 2009).

If in fact there was an increase in this type of local-federal policing agreements, it would add credibility to complaints by activists. It has long been established by social control theorists that “[p]olicing is almost always differently targeted on subordinate social groups,” such as immigrants and people of color, “and is often one of the tools dominant ethnic groups use to maintain their dominance over” minorities (Oliver 2008, 16). Data from the Department of Homeland Security shows that there *was* a dramatic rise in these local accords after the 2006 protest wave and failure of the movement to win national immigration reform (see *Graph 1*). Immigrant rights organizers contend that the 800% increase in 287(g) agreements local law enforcement agencies entered into from 2006 to 2007 contributed to the creation of a sense of fear in immigrant communities that in effect helped thwart their collective action efforts. Thus, according to the people who actually organized the demonstrations in local communities throughout the nation, such forms of “local immigration policing by proxy,” can also be regarded as “local immigrant *protest* policing by proxy.”

**Graph 1.**



**Source: Department of Homeland Security**

### ***Complete Removal and Confinement***

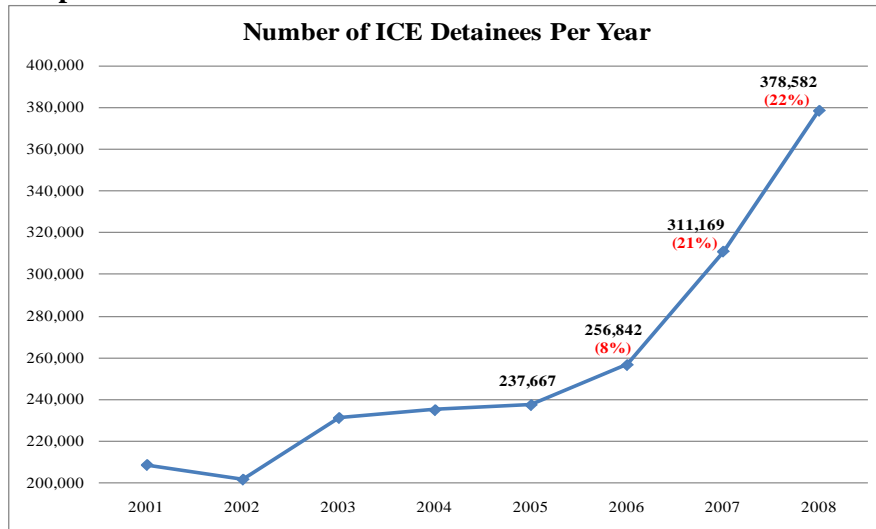
With regard to how *complete removal and confinement* can negatively impact social movements, we must also move beyond traditional accounts of how, for example, key leaders of the American Indian Movement, Black Panthers, and other SMOs were jailed for their political activities. In an important article subtitled “Why Social Movement Scholars Should Pay Attention to Mass Incarceration as a Form of Repression,” Pamela Oliver (2008) asserts that the “acceleration of the mass incarceration of African Americans in the United States after 1980 suggests the possibility that crime control and especially the drug war have had the consequence of repressing dissent among the poor” (1). Examining the effects of black riots during the 1960s and '70s on local policing of black communities throughout the country, Oliver (2008) concludes that,

By 1990, the United States was effectively a police state for its Black citizens, and to a lesser extent for poor Whites as well. The crucial thing to understand is that a repressive strategy initially triggered by massive urban unrest and other social movements was

maintained and expanded long after the riots abated. *It was not aimed at preventing unrest by repressing riots; it was preventing unrest by repressing potential rioters.* People were not arrested and incarcerated for dissent or even for rioting; they were arrested and incarcerated for crimes [emphasis added] (10).

In a similar fashion, my research reveals that immigrant deportations and detention—what I consider nontraditional mechanisms of demobilization—can also be seen as forms of mass *confinement and complete removal* of potential immigrant protest participants, both those that were actually detained and/or deported and those that were made aware of and frightened by these actions through ethnic media outlets. Again, evidence of an increase in these forms of anti-movement state *repression* seems to support activists’ claims. In terms of being incarcerated for the “crime” of being undocumented, while the trend had been increasing steadily the previous two years, statistics compiled by the Migration Policy Institute shown below demonstrate that there does seem to have been a drastic rise in the number immigrant detainees held in immigration prisons beginning after the protest wave (see Graph 2).

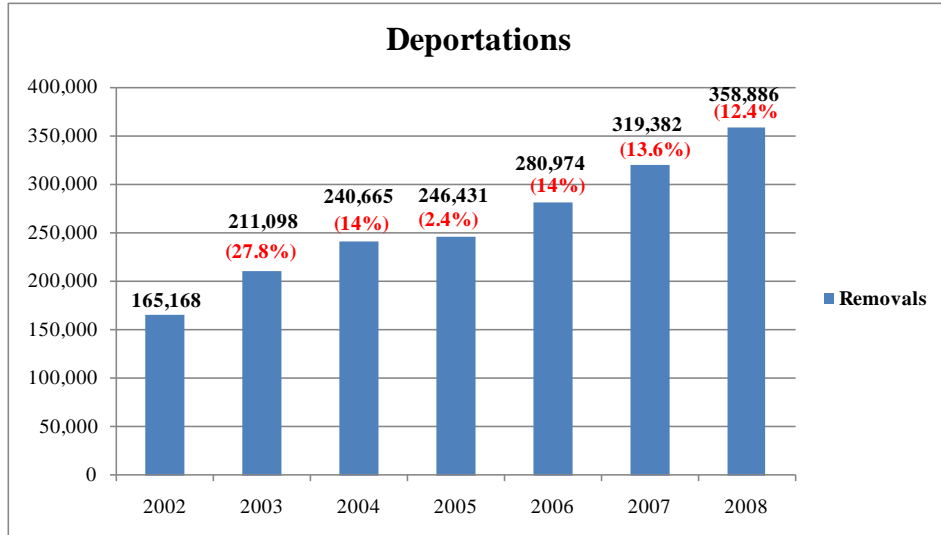
**Graph 2.**



**Source:** Migration Policy Institute

Between 2005 and 2007 (the years before and after the major marches), the number of immigrants held captive in immigration detention rose by over 73,000. Beyond detention, according to the data shown in *Chart 3* there was a 14% increase in the deportation of immigrants between 2005 and 2006 and a 13.6% increase from 2006 to 2007.

**Chart 3.**



**Source: Department of Homeland Security**

Thus, *complete removal* (deportation) and *confinement* (detention) were additional forms of anti-movement state repression “beyond bullets” that activists interviewed on the East Coast, West Coast, and U.S. South contended further hampered their ability to convince immigrant communities to participate in more mass marches. Their logic here is simple. If people are confined in detention cells or deported out of the country their ability to participate in movement activities is completely restricted. This is not to say that the majority of those deported or detained would have participated in the mobilizations. Rather, activists asserted that the fear of potentially being detained and/or deported—being picked up either at the rallies or in their homes—caused enough panic to prevent many of the people that had already taken part in

previous protests, and many of those that would potentially have taken part in future ones, from being receptive to their calls for continued mobilization. Under the context of what amounted to living in an immigration-police state for people without papers, immigrant rights rally organizers argued that it didn't matter that the deportations and detentions were not *explicitly* directed at march participants because they *implicitly* contributed to the prevention of future demonstrations by repressing potential protesters. These government acts inhibited the preconditions for dissent by increasing its costs, which is the definition of suppression.

While the data presented above shows that when comparing the years before, during, and after the protest wave there is in fact an increase in deportations, and while *there is no way to quantify the devastating effects on the families that were torn apart by these state actions*, it is important to note that the escalation is less abrupt than the activists interviewed would have had us believe. Initially the rise seems to be more a continuation of a trend that began in 2003 than a sharp acceleration in reaction to the national movement. It is vital to point out, though, that organizers contended that it wasn't just an increase in deportations that negatively impacted their mobilizing efforts. It was the high profile raids (promoted by ethnic media outlets) which resulted in deportations that had the most chilling effects on the movement's decline.

### ***Sporadic Systematic Attacks***

For example, one of the first major *sporadic systematic attacks* that activists said hampered their mobilization efforts came just days before the May 1 Boycott. As a major news outlet reported, "In raids that set a record for workplace-enforcement arrests in a single day, immigration officials announced...that they had taken 1,187 illegal immigrants into custody at wood products plants in 26 states and had charged seven company managers with crimes that can

carry long prison terms.” These “raids contained tacit warnings for everyone involved in the debate on immigration,” especially immigrant activists since Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff stated that “the operation marked a new commitment to enforcing immigration laws in the workplace.” He declared that Americans were “rightly concerned about the need to enforce immigration law” and proclaimed that his agency was “going to move beyond the current level of activity to a higher level in each month and year to come” (Gaouette 2006). These actual raids, and potential future ones, had a devastating impact on the target population immigrant rights organizers were trying to mobilize. As the *New York Times* reported, “false rumors of federal immigration raids” that were “apparently set off by last week’s announcement by Michael Chertoff” sent “panic through immigrant communities around the country...emptying classrooms, work sites and shopping areas and sending thousands of people into hiding.” Cheryl Little, the Executive Director of the Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center, described the impact of these raids in detail. She explained,

The community is paralyzed...I haven't seen this kind of fear in the immigrant community ever. Immigrants are afraid of going to work, of taking their kids to school, of leaving their home. People are not going to important medical appointments. There are pregnant women canceling their prenatal care appointments because they feel immigration will be waiting for them there (Bernstein 2006).

Throughout the nation the media reported that rumors of and actual raids had suppressive effects on the movement. As one undocumented immigrant bluntly stated, "They are using intimidation to scare us" into not participating in the rallies. The *Los Angeles Times* also reported,

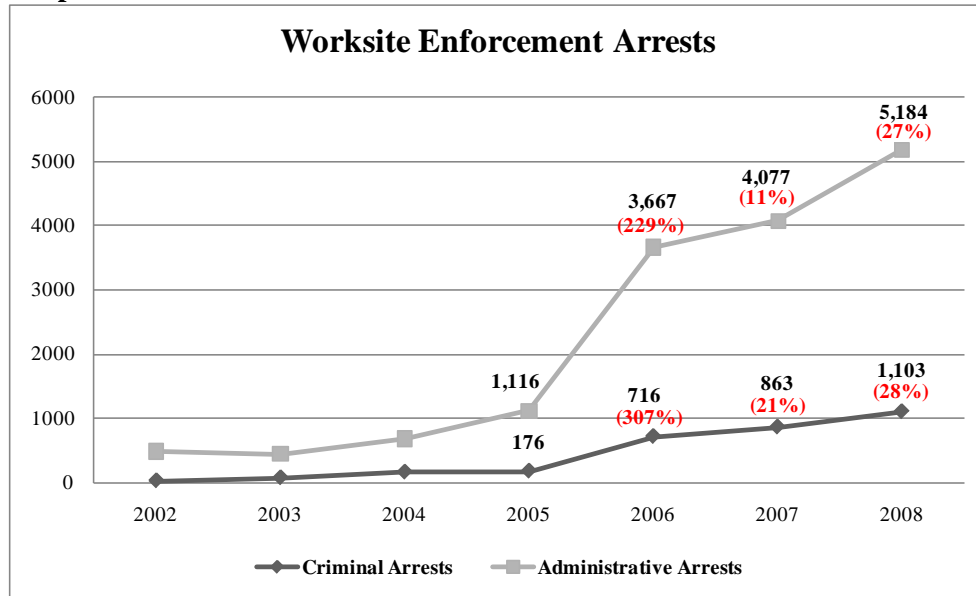
With planned rallies and a boycott for immigrant rights just days away, rumors are spreading throughout California that *la migra* [immigration police] is conducting sweeps at bus stops, schools and work sites... The reports of random arrests by immigration agents have caused fear among many illegal immigrants and prompted them to stay close

to home. Some said they believe authorities are trying to discourage participation on Monday [the day of the national boycott] (Gorman and Garrison 2006).

Thus, throughout the nation immigrant advocacy groups and service providers reported receiving calls from people fearing being caught up in a raid. As an organization in Southern California that provides English and parenting classes stated at the time, “It’s panic, [people without papers] don’t want to go to the laundromat. They don’t want to go to the market. They don’t want to do anything” (Gorman and Garrison 2006).

Both my interview data and information compiled from newspaper archives show that highly publicized raids, as well as rumors of raids, had suppressive effects on social movement mobilization efforts. Nonetheless, it is important to investigate whether these acts of repression occurred to the degree organizers felt they did and that the media reported. While I’m not aware of data existing on local neighborhood immigration sweeps, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has released information on worksite raids that could be used to examine activists’ claims. As it turns out, the official statistics on these state actions do seem to support immigrant rights organizers’ assertions.

**Graph 3.**



**Source: Department of Homeland Security**

The *sporadic systematic attacks* that activists claimed directly impacted their ability to continue to mass-mobilize people without papers were in fact huge increases in workplace raids that resulted in a 230% rise in administrative arrests and an over 300% growth in criminal arrests of immigrants that occurred throughout the country during and after the protest wave. The distinction between “administrative” and “criminal” arrests is important to make because despite the federal government claiming to target “criminal aliens,” as the data shows, the vast majority of people caught in worksite raids were immigrants with administrative violations, *not* criminal records.

Thus, immigrants interpreted the workplace raids and neighborhood immigration sweeps as being forms of anti-movement state repression that had suppressive impacts on their mobilizing efforts. Across the nation these federal government actions produced a chilling effect in immigrant communities as noted by the fact that local immigrant rights organizations and Spanish radio stations were constantly called by community residents to report (more often than

not mistaken) sightings of *la migra* in hopes of helping prevent people from being taken. Debates began within immigrant communities nationwide about whether or not the marches were worth the government backlash, creating divisions within the movement and its base. Organizers from coast to coast contended that even when raids did *not* occur in their local areas, the fact that the Spanish media was covering the ones that did happen in other places made immigrants feel that there was now a devastating price to pay for their acts of dissent.

### **Conclusion and the Cultivation of a “Mental-Migra”**

Similar to Ferree’s (2005) concept of “soft repression” (141), the combination of forms of societal/grassroots and state/government repression, suppression, and social control also seem to have fused to produce an additional type of nontraditional *cognitive* mechanism of immigrant demobilization. The dialectical relationship between the various forms of anti-movement actions examined in this chapter both helped sustain and increase the anti-immigrant contexts in which they were developed and carried out. The result of these dynamics was the development of a “mental-*migra*” mindset among potential foreign-born participants in large-scale immigrant collective action. By mental-*migra* I am referring to a specific cognitive phenomenon reported in every city examined in this dissertation. Both traditional and nontraditional participants in immigrant activism contended that a sense of *fear and self-policing* developed within immigrant communities, where, as a result of the forms of repression, suppression, and social control described above, people felt under attacked for their collective actions. This fear of bringing more attention to themselves and potentially increasing direct and indict attacks on them helped transform their collective “mobilizing identities,” which were so fundamental to the rise of immigrant contention, into collective “demobilizing identities”—as a result of being targeted for

how they looked—that led to the decline of their motivation and willingness to participate in further public protests.

Thus, the 2006 immigrant protest wave helps expand our knowledge of the various mechanisms of demobilization that can contribute to the demise of cycles of contention. The nontraditional forms of state/government and societal/grassroots anti-movement actions covered in this chapter show why scholars of contentious politics must begin to investigate seemingly nonpolitical measures that, regardless of their motivations, have suppressive consequences for movement mobilizations. Furthermore, since repression “is an act of strategic communication in the public sphere,” and “the relationship between [it and] dissent is an indirect *mediated* one in which public discourse and the mass media play a crucial role” (Koopmans 2005, 159) examining how the media’s broadcasting of these nontraditional anti-movement efforts also impact the work of collective action organizers is of the utmost importance. As mentioned earlier, another demobilization mechanism that contributed to the decline of the protests was the *institutionalization* of the movement from mass-street to mass-electoral mobilization. In the following chapter, I explain how these actions also indirectly helped produce some important movement outcomes.

Chapter 6

**“Today We March,  
Tomorrow We Vote”**

*The Impacts of the 2006 Immigrant Protest Wave*

*The outcomes to which social movement mobilizations contribute are often indirect and many times only apparent well after the thrill of large-scale collective action has declined. As mentioned in the introduction to the previous chapter, the primary reasons for the demobilization of immigrant contention were the demise of the highly visible and generalized threat (H.R. 4437), and the shift in activists' energies to more formal expressions of politics—a mechanism known as institutionalization. This chapter shows how the momentum and organizational infrastructure built across the country in the campaign to defeat H.R. 4437 laid the groundwork for the institutionalization of the movement's mobilization efforts. The data presented demonstrates how this change in focus to more formal political engagement produced important indirect national electoral outcomes, rendering the movement a significant political force to be reckoned with for years to come.*

### **How the Movement Mattered**

Building off of the momentum gained from several decades of protest, in the early 1900s the women's suffrage movement finally won the right to vote. With an impressive display of bravery and collective action symbolized by the historic "March on Washington," the civil rights movement of the 1960s culminated with the landmark 1964 Civil Rights Act. Arguably the mass demonstrations by youth across the country during the antiwar movement of the 1970s contributed to the United States pulling its military out of Vietnam. Indeed, American history is filled with examples of how episodes of collective action by marginalized groups can contribute to producing widespread social change. Yet at first look, perhaps the largest coordinated mass mobilizations in U.S. history—the 2006 immigrant rights protest wave—seem to have produced

little, if any, tangible results. In fact, some (including many participants themselves) have argued that the marches may have even done more harm than good with regard to undocumented immigrants' quest to win legalization.

Yes, the movement achieved its immediate objective of thwarting the passage of H.R. 4437, an accomplishment in and of itself. But if the motivation for protesting the proposed bill was to defend people without papers, as the previous chapter has shown, undocumented immigrants were arguably *more* under attack *after* the historic marches than they were *before* them. In fact, if we examine the protest wave closely we see that while mainstream immigrant rights supporters—from unions and the Catholic Church to NGOs and service groups—were willing to call for mass demonstrations *when they were directly targeted* by provisions in the Sensenbrenner Bill, these same groups seemed *not* to have been so willing to take to the streets once *they* were out of the immediate line of fire. As Chapter 5 demonstrated, after the defeat of H.R. 4437 the social costs of not having papers increased due to a dramatic rise in raids, deportations, hate crimes, and local and statewide anti-immigrant ordinances. Ironically, while the repression against undocumented immigrants increased, most mainstream immigrant rights groups shifted their focus to more institutional channels of political expression such as naturalization and voter registration drives. This change in strategy was especially puzzling given that it seemed to *exclude* the very people on whose behalf these activists claimed to be fighting—undocumented immigrants who cannot vote. What explains this shift in approaches and were the reasons for it as cynical as they might seem?<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Some movement radicals claimed that mainstream immigrant rights organizations shifted their focus from mass protest to electoral forms of politics because they were no longer under attack by the Sensenbrenner Bill and were in the pocket of the Democratic Party.

Furthermore, the movement's larger goal of winning legalization for the nation's estimated 12 million undocumented immigrants—an objective of the movement prior to the protest wave and a victory that would have guaranteed more rights, constitutional protections, and the potential for the eventual enfranchisement of this subordinate group—did not even come close to being accomplished. In fact, by the end of 2006 Congress had closed its session not by passing comprehensive immigration reform, but by increasing immigration enforcement measures. Thus, it seems that in terms of the documentable effects of the immigrant protest wave, the movement not only *failed* to achieve its goal of legalization, but may even have contributed to an increase in repression against the vulnerable population it professed to defend. Despite the impressive display of unity, discipline, and desire to be incorporated into American society shown by the mass marches, many immigrants and their advocates began to ask themselves whether the demonstrations were worth the backlash.

This chapter analyzes what, if any, empirical effects the mass mobilizations had. If we judge the movement based on its stated objectives of stopping H.R. 4437 from becoming law and winning legalization, at best immigrant rights activists could claim a draw. At worst, the protests may even have had a *negative* effect overall on the lives of immigrants, given the increased repression that followed the demonstrations. But to answer the query of whether or not the marches were worth the backlash, we must examine not only the immediate, direct, and stated goals of the movement, but also the long-term, indirect, and unintended consequences of the protest wave. This chapter attempts to do just that.

Using data gained from in-depth elite interviews with Washington D.C.-based national business, ethnic, labor, and immigrant rights leaders, I examine what impacts they believed the protest wave had on their lobbying efforts in particular, and on the immigration policymaking

process in general. I find that while the series of marches across the country may have contributed to stopping a bill similar to H.R. 4437 from passing in the Senate, it did more harm than good in terms of the movement's efforts to win legalization during that particular congressional session. The mobilizations seem to have added to the polarization of an already divided Congress on the issue, especially with regard to elected members of the then-governing majority Republican Party. Thus, in the short term, while the movement was strong enough to help stop a wide sweeping anti-immigrant bill from becoming law, it was not capable of passing legislation that would have advanced its cause. Yet, as this chapter argues, the impacts of the mass mobilizations cannot solely be judged based on their direct effects on the movement's stated goals.

My findings show that the immigrant rights protest wave had major indirect and long-term outcomes as well. Through unprecedented strategically organized and targeted campaigns, the immigrant rights movement helped dramatically increase the number of immigrants that naturalized, registered, and actually voted in the historic 2008 presidential race. As a result, especially in key swing states, Latinos and immigrants played a pivotal role in helping elect the nation's first African-American president—a man whose father was foreign-born himself. Several movement allies and activists were also subsequently incorporated into key positions within the new administration and to this day continue to press for comprehensive immigration reform and immigrant rights. Thus, the movement's shift in mobilization strategy from the streets to the naturalization halls and ballot boxes arguably helped change the national electoral landscape, and, in effect, American politics as a whole for years to come. Below I explain exactly how the latter outcomes unraveled. Before I do so, however, I first briefly review the scholarly literature on the effects of social movements.

## Movement Outcomes and Consequences

While research on contentious politics has taught us a substantial amount about when movements emerge, how they function, and why they decline, we know much less about their outcomes (Giugni 2004, 2; Tarrow 1998, 161). According to Giugni (1999), “[T]he study of the consequences of social movements is one of the most neglected topics” in the social movement literature (xiv-xv). Perhaps this is so because there seems to be no agreement among scholars about what exactly constitutes a social movement outcome and what the appropriate unit of analysis should be. If we measure the success of social movements solely based upon whether they achieve their stated objectives—from overthrowing a government to bringing about some type of legislative change—then it would be fair to say that most movements fail most of the time. One problem that arises, though, in judging whether a movement attained its purpose based on its claimed intentions is the fact that social movements are not homogenous and static entities, but are made up of multiple and often changing actors (Tilly 1999, 256; Della Porta and Diani 1999, 231). Consequently, in addition to the fact that “within a given movement different participants may have different goals, or at least a different ranking of priorities,” activists’ objectives may also “shift during the course of a conflict” (Goodwin and Jasper 2003, 347). Furthermore, it is also possible that while movements may consider themselves failures for not living up to *all of their own* expectations, outside actors and benefactors may in fact consider what they *were* able to accomplish a success (Della Porta and Diani 1999, 230). Thus, Amenta and Young (1999) contend that “although it would be foolish to ignore” activists’ declared goals (23), because it is “possible for a challenger to fail to achieve its stated program...but still to win substantial collective benefits for its constituents,” to focus *only* on a movement’s proclaimed

objectives could result in overlooking the “unintended results of challenges that may be beneficial” to a movement’s followers (25; see also Amenta and Caren 2004, 463 ).

These unintended and unexpected consequences are often much more extensive than what social movement actors originally sought to accomplish (Giugni 1999, xxi; Meyer 2007, 171). As Goodwin and Jasper (2003) note, “Some movements affect the broader culture and public attitudes, perhaps paving the way for future efforts,” and can “leave behind social networks, tactical innovations, and organizational forms that other movements can use” (347; see also Whittier 2004). For example, in terms of larger cultural consequences, movements have been shown to have influenced everything from people’s values and fashion to media discourse and scientific practices (Earl 2004, 512). Movements can also help create “collective identities” among groups (Fantasia 1988; Amenta and Caren 2004, 466) and have in many cases significantly influenced the life trajectories of participants (McAdam 1988; McAdam 1989). Thus, “[M]ovements do not simply fade away, leaving nothing but lassitude or repression in their wake; they have indirect and long-term effects that emerge when the initial excitement is over and disillusionment passes” (Tarrow 1998, 164).

Given the array of possible types of movement outcomes reviewed above, as the late Charles Tilly (1999) put it, “This range of effects far surpasses the explicit demands made by activists in the course of social movements, and sometimes negates them.” As a result, “By any standard, ‘success’ and ‘failure’ hardly describe most of the effects” social movements can produce (268). Therefore, rather than solely attempting to measure whether or not challengers attain their declared objectives, it makes more sense for scholars to examine to what *impacts*—if any—a given movement contributed (Amenta and Young 1999). Moreover, the success of a movement in the short and long-term may not necessarily coincide (Goodwin and Jasper 2003,

348). In fact, some students of contentious politics have argued that the “legacies of most movement effects” are not usually observable immediately, but rather “play out over a longer period of time” (Meyer 2007, 165). Following this train of thought, this chapter examines some of the direct and indirect, short- and long-term *impacts* of the 2006 immigrant protest wave.

### ***Social Movements and Policymaking: Issues, Allies, Institutions, and Public Opinion***

Despite knowing less about the impacts than we do about other aspects of social movements, most of the literature that does exist on this topic tends to focus on social movements’ policy outcomes. This is so for two reasons: the difficulty of empirically studying other types of effects (e.g. cultural) and the “prevailing definition of movements as political phenomena” (Giugni 1999, xxii). The literature on policy outcomes has often produced inconsistent findings. For instance, some scholars have argued that large-scale collective action can contribute to producing policy change (McAdam 1982; Tarrow 1998). Perhaps the most famous example of this school of thought is Piven and Cloward’s (1977) classic text *Poor People’s Movements*. In it, they argue that it “is usually when unrest among the lower classes breaks out of the confines of electoral procedures that the poor may have some influence, for the instability and polarization they then threaten to create by their actions in the factories or in the streets may force some response from electoral leaders” (15). In short, proponents of this theory contend that it is through disruptive protest tactics that movements can best bring about the policy changes they desire.

Other scholars assert not only that protest politics may *not* bring about the legislative reforms activists seek, but that mass mobilizations can actually “backfire, resulting in negative consequences for the group that the collective action was supposed to aid” (Amenta and Young

1999, 26). An example of this would be the claim made in Chapter 5 that the increase in raids during and after the 2006 protest wave was a direct response by the state meant to pacify immigrant contention. Showing how protests can negatively impact certain policy outcomes, Yamasaki (2009) finds that “highly mobilized social movements” may actually *prevent* “major policy changes, especially when the policies are high profile” (499). She argues that politically salient policy issues “are easier to change when the negotiations are operated outside of the loud and stigmatized realm of street protest and within closed arenas” (497).

Much of the protest-policy literature examines the degree to which multiple factors, including contextual ones, contribute to social movements’ impacts on policy change. For instance, those working from a political opportunity perspective contend that movements are more likely to achieve their goals when political parties are weak and elites are divided (Kriesi and Wisler 1999, 59). Others have found that it is much more difficult for movements to affect politically salient issues (Giugni and Yamasaki 2009; Giugni 2004), suggesting that public opinion may also contribute to activists’ success rates. Paul Burstein (1999) notes that, “When the relationship between public opinion and public policy is very strong, there is little room” for social movements to bring about policy change (10). While Uba (2009, 439) asserts that public opinion does not always completely “wash out” the impacts of social movements, some studies have shown that public opinion matters most for social movements in an environment of low electoral competition (Soule and Olzak 2004; Burstein 1999).

In addition to context, having influential allies also contributes to a movement’s ability to affect public policy. Policies are ultimately made by actors *within* government institutions and by the lobbyists who interact with them (Walker 1991; Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Baumgartner and Leech 1998). Not surprisingly, students of contentious politics have found that movements

“without allies working in mainstream politics will be hard-pressed to make inroads in the policy process” (Meyer 2005, 3). Thus, having an “insider-outsider” strategy is fundamental for social movements that hope to influence the policymaking process (Gais and Walker 1991, 103) because “only by establishing alliances with important institutional actors” will movements “be in a position that allows them to influence the decision-making process” (Giugni 2004, 5; Soule and Olzak 2004, 492).

The United States government’s structure is a very disaggregated one in which there are a variety of actors that take part in the production of public policy (Baumgartner and Jones 1993, 5). Not only are policymaking responsibilities to a large degree separated between the national and state governments, but power is further divided within governments between their legislative, executive, and judicial branches (Meyer 2007, 12). On top of this, each branch of government is also fragmented into departments, agencies, committees, etc., that present various veto points and areas of possible influence. As a result, “[P]olicy change is normally incremental, with marginal adjustments in spending or rules, even as great conflict surrounds important policy issues” (Meyer 2007, 169). Unfortunately, most research on the impacts of social movements on policymaking tends to focus on the final stage of the process—whether a bill becomes a law or not. Yet as Soule and King (2006) have so aptly pointed out, “[T]he final passage of a bill is not the entire story” (1872). Thus, a “more nuanced approach to the study of state policy change necessitates an understanding” of the several stages of the policymaking process, “beginning with the initial introduction of a bill and following it through to the eventual decision to pass or not pass the legislation” (1872).

In their study examining three stages of this process (the introduction of a bill, its passage by the first house, and its final ratification by the second house), Soule and King (2006)

hypothesize that since “earlier stages of the legislative process have less stringent requirements for success in the sense that introducing a bill requires the support of only one legislator, while passing a bill requires a majority of votes,” it should be easier for “movement organizations to rally legislative support for their issue early on, before proposed policies come to a vote” (1879). Their results confirm their theory. Soule and King (2006) show that “movements are most influential when the consequences of legislative action are low and when the rules regarding legislative action are lax...In legislatures where the support of political allies is available, movements may continue to be influential at moving bills to the voting stage, but beyond that the effects of movement organizations wane.” Furthermore, their findings indicate that “favorable public opinion...becomes increasingly important as the bill moves through the legislative process; the effect of public opinion is strongest when legislative decisions are most consequential (in the final ratification stage)” (Soule and King 2006, 1897).

In sum, the overall literature on the protest-policy nexus suggests that influential allies, public opinion, the salience of an issue, and the stage of the policy process are all important factors that influence how social movements impact policymaking (Meyer, Jenness, Ingram 2005; Giugni, McAdam, and Tilly 1999; Giugni 2004; Soule and King 2006). But how do these findings relate to the literature on the production of *immigration* policy in particular? One consistent finding by immigration scholars has been the fact that public opinion rarely reflects immigration legislation (Simon and Alexander 1993). In fact, many times it is completely at odds with it (Lee 1998) because of the powerful influences interest groups have on the immigration policymaking process (Tichenor 2002; Lee 1998). Where the immigration and social movement literatures on policy production are more aligned is in the importance they give to institutions (Tichenor 2002) and political alliances (Wong 2006; Sierra 1991; Sierra 1999). Rather than

emphasize solely public opinion or the state of the American economy, two of the most thorough examinations of the immigration policymaking process stress the importance of the institutional actors that hold office and control key committees, and the development of seemingly unlikely “left-right coalitions” at both the political party and grassroots levels (Gimpel and Edwards 1999; Tichenor 2002). Thus, both the social movement and immigration literatures have found important patterns that seem to be present when policy is made.

Yet as important as it is to identify patterns between factors (such as allies, institutions, public opinion, etc.) that impact the degree of influence social movements have on legislative outcomes, rarely does “analysis go beyond this or address the mechanisms by which movements affect the policy process” (Meyer 2007, 7). In short, while the studies mentioned above tell us much about *what* contributes to public policymaking and *when* social movements most influence this process, they tell us very little about the inner workings of exactly *how* they do so. Given the dynamic nature of public policymaking in the U.S., for some movement outcomes “there is no way to trace such complex social processes without having robust descriptions and explanations of their operations” (Tilly 1999, 256). The best way to accomplish this task is through in-depth case studies because case studies “advance our knowledge about the mechanisms through which social movements produce their most relevant effects.” As Giugni (2004) explains, “Their value rests above all on their allowing us to examine in detail the processes that lead from protest to social and political change” (9). Through a case study analysis of the 2006 and 2007 immigration debates, below I examine what impacts the 2006 immigrant protest wave had on the immigration policymaking process.

## **The 2006 Protest Wave: Enough to Kill a Bill, But Not Pass One**

### ***Strong Enough to Kill a Bill...***

The party that holds power in each chamber not only controls what legislation gets introduced into Congress, but also the manner in which it is debated. In late 2005, Republican Senate leaders announced that they would be taking up immigration reform in 2006 (Sandler 2006a). Preempting the more moderate bipartisan Kennedy-McCain Bill from setting the tone of the legislative debate, on December 16, 2005, Republican Wisconsin Congressman James Sensenbrenner and other House nativists (including a few Democrats) passed the extremely anti-immigrant “enforcement only” H.R. 4437 (described in Chapter 1). According to National Immigration Forum board member Angelica Salas, the leadership of the Democratic Party had “given a pass” to those members who felt they had to vote for the bill because they represented conservative districts and were coming up for reelection. It wasn’t “don’t vote or vote for it,” explained Salas. It was more like, “Do whatever it is you need to do” to remain in office. As draconian as the Sensenbrenner Bill was, for some GOP members it still did not go far enough. For instance, one of its chief architects, then Colorado Congressman Tom Tancredo, who at the time headed the close to 100 member House Immigration Reform Caucus, was upset at the fact that the final legislation that passed the House did not include an amendment to end birth-right citizenship (Wayne 2005). Given how extreme the bill was, even some Republican supporters of it were skeptical of its chances of ever becoming law (Wayne 2005).

Meanwhile, Republicans in the Senate were divided on the issue of how to deal with the future flow of labor needs, something the House bill completely ignored. The far right of the party supported legislation introduced by Senators Jon Kyle and John Cornyn that “would require illegal immigrants to return to their home countries before applying for a new temporary

guest worker program.” The more moderate wing of the GOP, including President Bush at the initial stages of the process, supported Senator John McCain’s bipartisan (cosponsored with Democratic Senator Ted Kennedy) approach that would have allowed undocumented immigrants “to stay in the country, apply for a new H-5B work visa and *possibly* earn permanent legal status eventually” [emphasis added] (Wayne 2006). Democrats were for the most part “keeping a low profile,” perhaps because of the upcoming midterm elections and the fact that some polls were showing that up to 62 percent of voters felt that “undocumented workers should *not* be allowed to progress towards citizenship...” [emphasis added] (Sandler 2006a).

For weeks the Senate’s Judiciary Committee had been discussing the compromise Kennedy-McCain Bill but could not come to an agreement on it. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, who had presidential ambitions and knew that Senator McCain was the GOP’s frontrunner to lead his party’s ticket, introduced his own strictly-enforcement bill on March 16 and threatened to act on it if the Judiciary Committee did not pass legislation by the end of the month. Frist was “on the far right of this debate, insisting that illegal immigration must be criminalized and the penalties enforced, not just on immigrants but on anyone (employers, doctors, welfare workers) who help them avoid the law” (Rapp 2006). In short, he was ready to propose a Senate version of the Sensenbrenner Bill. By doing so, Frist would be able to build support among social conservatives, the same group of Republicans that John McCain was thought to have the most problems with in winning his party’s nomination for president (Sandler 2006a).

Hence, by early 2006, with a punitive immigration bill having passed in the House, an already compromised bill that could not get through the Senate Judiciary Committee because many Republicans felt it was still too liberal, and an even worse “Sensenbrenner-like” bill

threatening to be taken up by the Republican Senate leadership, the immigrant rights movement was in panic. The challenge of preventing a strictly anti-immigrant / “enforcement only” bill from becoming law seemed overwhelming, let alone actually attempting to pass legislation that included some type of path to citizenship for the nation’s millions of undocumented immigrants.

Advocates hoped that passing legislation in the Senate that included a legalization program would kill any efforts by GOP nativists to ratify a strictly “enforcement only” immigration bill. According to Xiomara Corpeño, whose organization was actively involved with the D.C.-based Fair Immigration Reform Movement (FIRM), “We knew that legalization of any kind would be a poison pill to Sensenbrenner in the Senate and so that was the strategy. The strategy was to defeat Sensenbrenner by making sure that some kind of legalization passed in the Senate.” Unfortunately for the movement though, not only was Senate Majority Leader Frist planning on pushing his own anti-immigrant piece of legislation in the Senate that *did not* include any legalization program, but the Democrats and moderate Republicans in the Senate Judiciary Committee that activists were counting on to execute their strategy seemed to not want to take on the issue. They feared looking soft on illegal immigration in the upcoming 2006 midterm elections. Consequently, according to Frank Sharry, who headed the National Immigration Forum at the time, the feeling of D.C.-based immigrant rights groups was that, “We’re screwed...Unless there is some sort of huge response from the immigrant community, we can’t stop this thing.” The magnitude of the “huge response” that subsequently occurred took immigrant advocates and policymakers by surprise.

On March 10, over 300,000 people demonstrated in Chicago against the Sensenbrenner Bill and in favor of legalization. However, the protest did not get much national attention beyond the immigrant rights world. Many of those within the beltway who did take note of the march

either thought it was an anomaly or felt that seeing thousands of immigrants of color take to the streets could actually hurt their cause. The movement was still banking on moderate Republicans and Democrats in the Senate Judiciary Committee having the guts and skill to negotiate a bill that included legalization. According to *Congressional Quarterly Weekly*, “The immigration debate in Congress presented Democrats with a political choice of keeping quiet and hoping that Republicans would shred each other on the issue, or speak[ing] up and [risking] the same sort of divisions in their own party” (Sandler 2006a). As impressive as the Chicago rally was, it was the 500,000 to over 1 million people<sup>10</sup> protesting in Los Angeles on March 25 that would nudge Democrats into choosing the latter and “speaking up.”

Rosalio Muñoz, a member of the local group that organized the Los Angeles demonstration, remembered specifically convincing the coalition to have their protest on Saturday the 25<sup>th</sup> because he knew that the deadline Senator Frist had given the Judiciary Committee was the following week. He thought, “We have to have an impact on what the committee did and be against Frist because the committee was moving more towards Sensenbrenner than the Kennedy-McCain Bill.” Muñoz hoped that, “If we have a big demonstration in L.A. [on Saturday the 25<sup>th</sup>], the people in D.C. are going to know it and it’s gonna have an impact on what happens” when the committee meets on the 27<sup>th</sup>. The massive L.A. march seems to have helped do just that. According to one D.C. insider, Senator Frist’s proposal “was basically a harsh crackdown bill and if he had introduced that bill it would have passed.” A joint chamber congressional committee would then have had to negotiate between “the Sensenbrenner bill and the Frist bill” and “split the difference.”<sup>clxxi</sup> This scenario would have been the worst of both worlds for the immigrant rights movement. A House bill (H.R. 4437) that

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<sup>10</sup> While organizers claimed that the protest was attended by more than 1.5 million people, media outlets contended that between 500,000 and 1 million demonstrators marched in Los Angeles on that day.

was so extreme that even some of its supporters did not feel it had a chance of becoming law was on the verge of being matched by similar legislation in the Senate.

Fortunately for immigrant advocates, according to several national organizations that had been lobbying Congress, the mass mobilizations in Los Angeles and other cities helped kill a H.R. 4437-like bill from passing in the Senate. John Trasvina of MALDEF remembered that the rallies “raised the profile of the issue. They demonstrated to members of Congress, and really to the country as a whole, that for the first time the people that were most affected by immigration legislation would demand to be part of the discussion—that hadn’t happen before.” In terms of their impact on the legislative process, Clarissa Martínez De Castro of the National Council of La Raza contended, “I think it’s fair to say that the marches played a very important role in stopping the forward movement of the Sensenbrenner Bill.” Eliseo Media of SEIU, the most powerful and pro-immigrant labor union in the nation, agreed and asserted that the protests “absolutely” helped kill any anti-immigrant bill from passing in the Senate. As a result of the demonstrations he said, “That thing [H.R. 4437] died a quick death.” Frank Sharry of the National Immigration Forum explained exactly how this happened.

The rally in L.A. on the 25<sup>th</sup> was so mind-blowing that when these Senators met at the Senate Judiciary Committee, and I was in the room on March 27<sup>th</sup>, the atmosphere in the room was completely different. The Republicans were sort of stunned at the rally. The Democrats were kind of leaning forward and more aggressive and [moderate Republican Senator] Specter went from, “I’m not sure whether we’re going to complete the process or not,” to “Let’s go for it.” And [conservative Democratic Senator] Dianne Feinstein, who had always been someone who was going to vote against McCain-Kennedy, voted for it. So at the end of the day on Monday the 27<sup>th</sup>, [rather than the Frist Bill] it was the McCain-Kennedy bill that passed the Senate Judiciary Committee by 12 to 6 on a bipartisan basis... So there was a direct causal relationship between the L.A. rally...[and] the Senate Judiciary vote that led to—instead of an enforcement only bill—a comprehensive immigration reform bill [that came out of the committee and later passed in the Senate]...<sup>clxxii</sup>

If the immigrant rights movement could claim some credit for helping stop a Sensenbrenner-type bill from passing in the Senate, then big business also deserves at least some amount of recognition for its efforts. According to Craig Regoburger of the Agriculture Coalition for Immigration Reform (a coalition of over 300 national, regional, and state organizations and associations), “Business was passionately against” both the Sensenbrenner Bill and any bills similar to it in the Senate. Their opposition “was vigorous” he said. “You had the U.S. Chamber [of Commerce], the homebuilders, the roofers, the landscapers, all the different construction and contracting organizations. You had all these different business interests working in unison...” against the anti-immigrant measures and in favor of Kennedy-McCain. In fact, almost all the major national business groups (from the Chamber of Commerce to EWIC) “key voted” the bill, sending a message to members of Congress who were planning on seeking their support in the upcoming elections. Thus, given that the GOP was in power and business would most likely have more influence on it than unions and immigrant rights groups, the argument could be made that big business had just as much, if not more of an impact on the Republican controlled legislative process than the marches did.

Nevertheless, if immigrant rights advocates hoped that the mass mobilizations would contribute to the passing of the Kennedy-McCain Bill in the Senate, and as a result prevent an “enforcement only” (e.g. H.R. 4437) bill from becoming law, then they seemed to have helped accomplish their goal. But if they thought that the protests would not only assist them in “killing the Sensenbrenner Bill,” but also contribute to winning legalization under a completely Republican controlled Congress, then they were mistaken. In fact, according to business, labor, and ethnic and immigrant rights lobbyists, the millions of immigrants that took to the streets

during the subsequent weeks probably hurt their chance of gaining legalization more than they helped it.

***...But Not Strong Enough to Pass a Bill***

When passing major immigration policy, the strategy of forming a left-right coalition between big business, labor, and ethnic and immigrant rights groups has been more the rule than the exception throughout American history (Tichenor 2002). The 2006 policy cycle was no different. According to Deepak Pargava of the Center for Community Change, for supporters of the Kennedy-McCain Bill “the strategy was basically a left-right strategy.” It was meant to “cobble together some business support, with a piece of labor and a piece of the immigrant rights community.” John Gray of EWIC (the Essential Worker Immigration Coalition), a group of over forty major national business trade associations and companies that supported immigration reform, explained the rationale behind the unlikely coalition:

On the left you're okay with legalization but you're not okay with guest worker programs. On the right you're okay with guest worker programs, but you're not okay with legalization. So what you need to make this work is...a grand bargain, a compromise. But it's got to be comprehensive immigration reform so that everyone's holding their nose about one part of it and everyone is getting something [in another part of it]...Politically and policy-wise, that's what had the best chance of success.

Thus, the strategy behind the left-right coalition was that business was in charge of garnering Republican support for a bill that included *both* a guest worker program and some type of broad legalization. Supportive labor unions, specifically SEIU and UNITE-HERE, and ethnic and immigrant rights groups were in charge of mustering Democratic support for similar legislation. While the marches and intense lobbying from both factions of the left-right coalition helped thwart an anti-immigrant bill from coming out of the Senate, these actions also seem to

have all but guaranteed that there would be no legalization during the 2006 Congressional session. According to several liberal and conservative pro-immigration reform lobbyists, the protest wave had the effect of polarizing an already-divided Congress. Ana Avendaño of the AFL-CIO recalled that the marches “strengthened the belief of those who were already in support of immigration reform. It gave them a new big talking point” and the ability to say “Look, we also have political power.” On the other hand, “To the extreme right, the ones that were rabidly anti-immigrant, it also gave them the power to raise money” and say, “Look at all these people that are invading our country.” Business lobbyists especially agreed that the protests had a polarizing effect and “hurt on the Republican and the conservative Democratic side.” According to EWIC’s John Gray,

When you’re waving the Colombian or Mexican flag and demanding “*Amnistia ahora!*” or whatever, that doesn’t sit well because if you’re sitting there in Iowa you’re thinking, “Wait a minute. They broke the law to come here, they continue to break the law being here, and I owe them what? If they want to be American, why are they waving the flag from the country they came from?”... Also, “How is it that...more than a million people...can actually get across [the border] undetected?”...Well the marches rubbed that fact right in their nose. It rubbed their nose in the lawlessness...They were waving their country’s flag in brazen violation of the law and demanding something. So if [a Sensenbrenner-like bill in the Senate] said we need to get control of our border, harsher penalties on employers, and all that stuff, I think [the marches] helped...not hurt it.

Craig Regoburger of the Agriculture Coalition for Immigration Reform concurred, recalling that during one of his visits a member of Congress told him, “For God’s sake could you tell them to put away the freakin Mexican flag!” Regoburger also contended that, “the May Day stuff, when you started to get into the socialist labor agenda and all that, I think it really started to spook people...I think the net effect was quite negative before it was all over.” He felt that in terms of business’s efforts to get the GOP to support their bill, overall the marches made things “harder, it polarized things more.” Consequently, the business community failed to fulfill its side

of the “grand bargain” by being unable to get Republicans to support bipartisan legislation. This polarization apparently went beyond Congress and was also reflected among average Americans. According to Frank Sharry of the National Immigration Forum, “There is no question that the rallies had a backlash effect with people who leaned negative but weren’t really concerned. When they saw all these people in the street [they] got kind of angry about it...You can see it in the public opinion research. It did have a polarizing effect...More of them got angry, so it intensified their negative attitudes.” Hence, both factions of the left-right coalition said that while the protests had the effect of pulling moderate Democrats to the left of the debate, they also pushed moderate Republicans and conservative Democrats to the right. Consequently, when the movement’s most likely political allies (the Democrats) were out of power, and most of those in the party that was in the majority (Republicans) were actively opposed to its cause, this polarization resulted in legislative defeat.

After being watered down with more restrictive amendments, the Kennedy-McCain Bill eventually passed not only the Senate Judiciary Committee, but the entire chamber. Senate Majority Leader Frist had come out against the bill as soon as it had gotten out of the Judiciary Committee. He proclaimed that the proposed legislation went too far “in granting illegal immigrants what most Americans will see as amnesty.” The truth of the matter was that the bill’s “path to citizenship” was extremely stringent. Undocumented immigrants would have had to *first* “apply for a six-year, *conditional* non-immigrant visa” [emphasis added]. After six years, “they could then *apply* for legal permanent residence...on the condition that they pay \$2,000 in fines, pay all back taxes, pass a criminal background check, stay employed and demonstrate an effort to learn English and civics” [emphasis added]. All in all, the Kennedy-McCain Bill would have made those undocumented immigrants that qualified merely *eligible* for citizenship *over a*

*decade after* having applied for their visas (Sandler 2006). Despite these limitations, Senator Jon Kyle of Arizona attacked the Senate bill as still being too liberal, saying, “You may have the votes [to pass it in the Senate], but it will never become law. I’ll vote against that. The House won’t even go to conference on that” (Sandler and Crowley 2006). The Republicans kept true to this promise. House GOP members effectively stopped any effort to pass major immigration reform when “[t]hey refused to convene a conference to negotiate a final bill, and instead held two dozen field hearings around the country during the August recess.” When House Republicans “returned to Washington, it was to proclaim what was for all intents and purposes already known—that they would not accept elements of the Senate bill” (Sandler 2006b).

Not only did Republicans fail to pass comprehensive immigration reform that summer, but they seemed to have been emboldened by a growingly vocal anti-immigrant counter-movement. Since President Bush, who at first supported the Kennedy-McCain Bill, had poor and dropping poll numbers, and Congress’s ratings were even worse, rank-and-file House Republicans thought it would be a good idea to “rebel against their leaders and the White House out of fear for their jobs” (Nather 2006). As such, they attempted to use immigration as a wedge issue in the upcoming midterm elections.

### ***The 2006 Midterm Elections: A Hollow Victory***

It is well established that the politically charged environment of the 1990s, created by the passage of California’s infamous anti-immigrant Proposition 187, led to a surge in both naturalization and voting by Latino immigrants (Pantoja, Ramirez, and Segura 2001; Pantoja and Segura 2003). With this historical fact in mind, during the 2006 immigrant protest wave some immigrant rights activists “jumped the gun” and proclaimed that the same would happen across

the country in response to H.R. 4437 and Republican nativism. One of these individuals was Jesse Diaz of L.A.'s radical March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition. When speaking to the media he announced, "You're going to see voter registration like never before." According to Diaz, though, "I didn't mean done by us [the radical flank of the movement]. I knew we didn't want to do voter registration...All the leftists in the group were against the electoral process." He later admitted that he "went a little overboard" and acknowledged, "I shouldn't have said it...I made a mistake. I got caught up in the moment." According to Xiomara Corpeño of CHIRLA, "Because of the November elections that were coming up," some activists in the movement started to "use that [electoral] rhetoric, but lots of the people that made those claims didn't have the money or resources to make that happen."

At the national level the movement did not possess the breadth or infrastructure to carry out the type of massive campaign that would have been needed to significantly increase voter registration and turnout rates. As one key leader put it, "We realized that we didn't have the capacity in the right places."<sup>clxxiii</sup> Many in the movement feared that making and then not being able to live up to such ambitious claims could be extremely damaging to the perception of advocates' political leverage. According to Efrain Escobedo of the National Association of Latina/o Elected Officials (NALEO), when they first heard activists tell the media that there would be a dramatic rise in immigrant voter registration and turnout, "We were a little upset and we voiced our concerns internally [among] advocates about saying that." NALEO told activists that it was "very irresponsible" of them to say that they "we're going to register a million people [to vote]...without thinking strategically" about what that meant. Given that it was an off year election, NALEO did not believe it was possible to get a million new Latino (U.S. and foreign-born) voters because get-out-the-vote (GOTV) work "is not something that is organic, it's

something that is very tactical and very technical” and at the time “there was no infrastructure for mobilizing that many Latinos.”

The 2006 midterm elections turned out to be a hollow victory for the immigrant rights movement. Although Democrats reclaimed control of both branches of Congress, many of those that won office were politically moderate or conservative on the issue of immigration. Moreover, the promised power of the Latino and immigrant vote seemed nowhere to be found. Since the call for massive Latino and immigrant voter registration had been made, mainstream advocates attempted to take on the challenge through campaigns such as a “Democracy Summer” and other efforts by the newly formed national We Are American Alliance (WAAA). But due to lack of funding and the short time span between the spring/summer protest wave and the November elections, the movement seemed to have failed miserably at its publically stated goal. Looking at the raw numbers of the elections immediately before and after the marches, Latino voter *registration* actually *decreased* from 9,308,000 in 2004 to 9,304,000 in 2006. In addition, Latino voter *turnout* also plummeted from close to 7.6 million in 2004 to less than 5 million in 2006 (U.S. Census Bureau). Hence, the Latino and immigrant vote appeared to be all bark and no bite. Exactly what NALEO warned activists would happen did. After the elections the organization received “a flood of calls from the media” asking, “So was it all a hoax? You guys said a million [new Latinos]...were going to vote and from what we’re looking at, it’s only a few hundred thousand that voted. What happened? Why did people not respond? Do people not believe in this [cause]?”

Despite the media, critics, and the immigrant rights movement itself perceiving the 2006 voter mobilization effort as a complete failure, a closer and more thorough analysis of the data reveals more nuanced results. First, the correct comparison that both activists and political

pundits should have made was not between the 2006 midterm and the 2004 presidential elections. Since midterm elections always have lower turnout rates than presidential elections, the 2006 results should have been contrasted with those of the similar 2002 midterm elections. Furthermore, rather than simply assessing the *actual numerical* changes in voter registration and turnout between elections, a proper evaluation should have compared both voter registration and turnout *rates* with those of the Latino citizen voting age population (LCVAP) (the number of potential Latino voters).

**Table 4.**

<b>Latino Rate of Increase for 2002 and 2006 Elections</b>		
	<b>2002</b>	<b>2006</b>
<b>Citizen Voting Age Population</b>	26%	11%
<b>Registered Voters</b>	20%	14%
<b>Voter Turnout</b>	17%	18%

*Source:* U.S. Census Bureau

Once we conduct this analysis we see that the 2006 Latino GOTV efforts were far from disastrous. As *Table 4* reveals, while during the 2002 midterm elections the growth rate of the LCVAP (26%) outpaced that of both Latino registration (20%) and voter turnout (17%), during the 2006 midterm elections Latino voter registration and turnout actually *surpassed* the natural growth rate of Latino voting age population. While the LCVAP grew from 2002 to 2006 at a rate of only 11%, Latino voter registration and turnout increased by about 14% and 18% respectively. In short, in 2002 Latino voter registration and turnout increased *more slowly* than did the eligible voting population of Latinos; conversely, in 2006 registration and turnout increased *more rapidly* than did the size of this same population. Thus, even though the movement did not accomplish

its stated goal of getting a million new Latinos registered and out to vote during the 2006 midterm elections, its efforts apparently were not in vain. Despite its limited resources (in terms of time and funding), the movement arguably *did*, in fact, have some degree of success in its Latino electoral mobilization efforts. Nonetheless, politics is often more about the *perception* of political actions rather than their actual *outcomes*.

The movement's alleged (and admitted) lack of electoral success in 2006 helped perpetuate the notion that the millions of people who had marched in support of immigrants were all "non-voting illegals." Because of this perception, members of Congress could believe that the protests posed no electoral threat to them, and those who sympathized with the immigrant cause could think that immigrants would prove not to be an electoral asset. As the Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform's (CCIR) Maria Echaveste put it, "Our underperformance as a voting bloc made it easier for members of Congress to ignore a million people on the streets." Consequently, Congress ended its session not, as immigrant rights advocates had hoped, by passing comprehensive immigration reform, but instead by passing legislation that augmented border enforcement. On top of this, as the previous chapter has shown, at the behest of the Republican White House federal authorities also increased both immigrant worksite and community raids that terrorized many foreign-born neighborhoods across the country.

Taken as a whole, the marches, along with intense lobbying by both the business community on the right and unions and ethnic groups on the left, contributed to stopping a Sensenbrenner-type bill from passing in the Senate and becoming law. In terms of helping pass the proposed legislation that would have legalized undocumented immigrants, though, the protests actually pushed the governing majority Republican Party further to the right on the issue and as a result contributed to the bill's downfall. Frank Sharry of the National Immigration

Forum summarized the legislative session in the following manner: “Neither organized movement, anti nor pro, was strong enough to get their” preferred legislation “enacted through Congress.” While “the anti-immigrant folks were strong enough to stop McCain-Kennedy, but not strong enough to pass Sensenbrenner, we were strong enough to collectively stop Sensenbrenner, but not strong enough to pass Comprehensive Immigration Reform.” He noted, “Both sides have come close, but neither side has been able to get across the finish line.” Thus, as another immigrant rights activists stated, “the lesson learned from 2006 was that you could mobilize millions onto the streets, but if those people don’t actually exercise political power” through their votes, immigration reform is “not gonna happen.”<sup>clxxiv</sup>

### **Power in Movement, Not Just Protest**

There are many potential weapons in a social movement’s arsenal. Their power does not derive solely from their ability to take to the streets and mass-mobilize. In fact, in many ways the power of mass mobilization is contingent upon the electoral threat it poses to the politicians who hold office and have the ability to make the legislative changes movements desire. Many people often compare the immigrant rights movement of today to the civil rights movement of the 1960s. But perhaps a better comparison would be with the abolitionist movement of the 1800s in that in both cases the “victims” (undocumented immigrants and slaves) seemed to be to a large degree dependent on supporters to serve as political and electoral brokers. Explaining the importance of allies in immigration policymaking, one national organization leader bluntly stated, “Immigrant rights advocates in D.C. have no power—period. It’s always derivative. It’s power that we get lent to us by the Chamber of Commerce, or power that is lent to us by SEIU, or power that is lent to us by foundations and other people. But there is no power that [immigrant

rights groups]...have in its usual sense in D.C.”<sup>clxxv</sup> In terms of the influence that derives from being an electoral threat to politicians, Maria Echaveste, founder and lead strategist of the CCIR, explained that, “To get immigration reform done you need U.S. citizens who vote to push it. That’s who Congressmen are going to look at and listen to...You’re not going to get it by yourself being non-citizen immigrant voices.”<sup>clxxvi</sup> Implicit in this logic is the understanding that a movement whose primary base consists of undocumented immigrants is by its very nature directly electorally impotent. This condition posed a significant challenge for the immigrant rights movement. But as the final section of this chapter will demonstrate, the barrier did not go unchallenged.

### ***“They Just Don’t Fear Us”: Failing Again to Win Legalization***

The first priority of members of Congress is to get reelected and remain in office (Mayhew 1975). As such, because people without papers are unable to vote, not only did anti-immigrant members of Congress *not* feel threatened by the mass demonstrations, but many of those that personally *did* favor pro-immigrant policies did not have an incentive to do so publicly; in fact, it made more political sense for them not to show support. One advocate recalled that when members of Congress saw millions of immigrants protesting, they reacted by saying that those “are not people that threaten my survival as a politician.” Those millions of people marching “have nothing to say about whether I stay in office or not.”<sup>clxxvii</sup> Thus, despite the less nativist Democratic Party winning complete control of the House and a slim majority in the Senate after the 2006 elections, the immigrant rights movement was still unable to wield enough political leverage to pass bipartisan immigration reform during the 2007 policy cycle. With no widespread and imminent threat to organize around, activists were unable to mobilize

the same number of people to come out in support of a bill as they were able to rally when trying to defeat one.

The legislative strategy of the movement in 2007 was the same as in 2006: start from a centrist position by forming a coalition with big business in hopes of bringing some Republicans on board to pass bipartisan legislation. According to an AFL-CIO official and critic of the movement's strategy, "The process started from a compromise" so the only way the coalition was "going to keep Republicans on board" was by "caving into the needs of business."<sup>clxxviii</sup> The radical flank of the movement was also highly critical of the D.C. groups' left-right strategy in both 2006 and 2007. This faction felt that it made more sense to start from an extremely progressive position (e.g. immediate and unconditional amnesty, no increases in border militarization, etc.) and then negotiate from there. Responding to this line of argument, Frank Sharry of the National Immigration Forum stated that in terms of the 2006 debate

[t]heir instincts probably weren't all wrong. In retrospect, our self-criticism of those of us operating in D.C. is that we didn't understand that starting with a bipartisan compromise would then only move us to the right; that wasn't so clear to us. So that critique in retrospect was right. But if we had started from the left, there wouldn't have been a game either. So in 2006 I am much more confident what we did before Sensenbrenner and after worked.

With regard to the following year's 2007 policy debate, however,

Where it didn't work and where the critique is better founded was in 2007 when there was an immigration bill negotiated in the back room. It was designed to lean right to get Republican votes. Then it went further right during the Senate floor process through amendments to the point where it was hard for any progressive to support it, and *still* it didn't get the Republican votes we needed...This was Kennedy in the back room saying we had to follow him because he knew how this was going to work. For groups like us who said, "Well we don't really like the bill, but it will get better in the House," that was our best argument. At that point, starting really Center-Right and then moving further Right and losing, it's hard to argue that that was a good strategy.

Echaveste of CCIR responded to the criticisms from movement radicals by saying that their arguments were “all very nice,” but rhetorically asked, “Can you tell me how you’re supposed to do that when you have Republicans controlling the White House and you’ve got Republicans until 2006 controlling Congress, [plus] you have the 60 vote rule in the Senate?” She conceded that “it’s a valid criticism that it started in the center,” but asserted that CCIR’s legislative strategy “started in the center because there was no viable left [strategy].”<sup>clxxix</sup> D.C. movement moderates believed that “even if their instincts weren’t all wrong,” their “main challenge to people on the left” was that “the idea that we were going to get a bill” that would include instant “legalization, family reunification...and no enforcement” was completely unrealistic. “I don’t know what world they’re living in,” commented Sharry.

Hence, the left-right coalition strategy failed again in 2007. Even when starting from a position of compromise, the immigrant rights movement did not have the political leverage to get a bill passed. Under a Republican White House and centrist Democratic Congress in which anti-immigrant Republicans still carried considerable influence given their ability to filibuster any bill in the Senate, chances of passing pro-immigrant immigration reform were slim. Again the nativist right opposed any bill that included a guest worker program and even a limited path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. On the left, many local activists disagreed once more with D.C. advocates’ proposals because they felt they included too many enforcement measures and their legalization programs were too limited. Many in the movement’s radical flank either did not understand the strategy of supporting a bad bill in the Senate with the hope that it would be improved in the House, or simply did not believe the D.C. groups had the power to “fix it later.” Echoing Soule and King’s (2006) findings, Rich Stolz of FIRM stated, “What it boils down to is how many members of Congress you can get to champion your positions” *before* the

bill goes to a vote in committee and the floor because after that “you essentially lose control” of what happens to it.

Perhaps more central to the outcome than the immigrant rights movement’s internal divisions was the response the compromised bill elicited from the burgeoning *anti*-immigrant movement. While immigrant rights activists were able to mobilize millions of people to protest in favor of legalization, they were unable to organize even a small fraction of that amount to call and lobby Congress in support of a bill they favored. Meanwhile, the anti-immigrant movement did an amazing job of mobilizing its base to flood Congress with electoral threats and calls in opposition of legislation that included any form of “amnesty.” These were individuals whose ability to vote was never in question. As Kevin Appleby of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops put it, “If I’m a Congressman and I’m sort of with CIR [comprehensive immigration reform], but then I’m getting ten-to-one phone calls saying that they’re going to vote against me if I vote for this...I get scared.”

Ira Mehlman of the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), the nation’s leading immigration restriction organization, explained exactly how despite the large pro-immigrant demonstrations, nativist forces were able to put enough pressure on Congress to *not* pass legislation that included legalization.

I’m very impressed that they [the immigrant rights movement] could get 500,000 people out on the streets. We [the anti-immigrant movement] can’t get 500 people out on the streets...[But] rather than going out to the streets they [FAIR supporters] called their members of Congress...It wasn’t 500,000 calls, but having worked on Capitol Hill I can tell you that each call that [members of Congress] get on something, they believe that there’s probably 20, or 100, or 500 people who share that point of view. So it wasn’t that there was no demonstration of public opposition [by anti-immigrant activists], it’s just that it was demonstrated in a different way.

The anti-immigrant movement was well aware of the power of its electoral threat to elected officials. Mehlman contended that the main difference between the pro-immigrant people that were marching and the anti-immigrant people that were making phone calls to Congress was that when politicians saw immigrant supporters in the streets they thought, “But they don’t vote,” whereas when members of Congress get calls from constituents in their districts, “the politicians understand that these are people who” pose an electoral threat to them because they “actually go out and vote.”

While the anti-immigrant movement was, and to a large degree still is, unable to get masses of people out to protests, according to FAIR, “What we *can* do...working through our direct communication” (e.g. their email listserv) and “working with people in the media [is] get our message out and that translates into some kind of political action.”<sup>clxxx</sup> Immigrant rights activists acknowledged the effectiveness of the anti-immigrant movement’s media strategy and ability to get its supporters to inundate Congress with phone calls. According to Eliseo Media of SEIU, “The Lou Dobbses of the world manufactured a response” from the right by “having them make phone calls to Congress to make it appear” as if “everybody in the country was mad about the issue,” and “we couldn’t overcome that.” Clarissa Martínez De Castro of NCLR agreed and added that, “Ironically it takes more effort from both the organizing side and from the participants’ side to be part of a march or be part of a rally” than it does to make a phone call. Nevertheless, she said that it is through actions such as phone calls, faxes, and letters that “members of Congress and many elected officials measure the level of risk” that supporting a bill or not poses to them. Appleby of the Catholic Bishops Conference explained that unlike the nativist forces,

We didn't have people calling in and writing letters. I mean, the other side has a very vocal and passionate group of people who feel strongly that immigration threatens their way of life. We don't have a corresponding vocal group that says the opposite. The people that support us, who are in the middle, are not going to easily pick up the phone and call their legislature on an immigration issue because they don't see how it affects their life positively...[Consequently,] in 2007 we just really got beat in the trenches. I think the other side was just more galvanized, more organized, more well funded, had a simpler message and was able to convey that and won the day.

As a result, the immigrant rights movement was defeated again in its efforts to win legalization. The millions of people the movement was able to put on the streets only a year before were less of a political threat to Congress than the few thousand phone calls and letters Senators received from anti-immigrant voters. In fact, the movement actually fared *worse* in 2007 than it did in 2006. Not only was the 2007 bill less appealing than the 2006 Kennedy-McCain proposal, but, unlike the latter, it was not even able to pass the Senate. The disappointing results reinforced the previous year's lesson that in Washington votes matter more than protests, especially when those marching are thought to pose no electoral threat. The movement heard this message loud and clear. While it was attempting to push for comprehensive immigration reform in Washington, it was also quietly working behind the scenes across the country with its eyes towards the 2008 presidential election.

***“Speaking Their Language”: Ya Es Hora!—Now Is The Time!***

According to one D.C. immigrant advocate, “Politics I’ve come to realize runs on fear. So ultimately Congress was afraid to pass Sensenbrenner and they were afraid to pass comprehensive immigration reform. Only when they are afraid not to will they get it done.”<sup>clxxxi</sup> Another national leader agreed, saying, “Part of our assessment was that these Congressional members don’t fear us, they just don’t fear us. We could put two million people out on the street

and it will just be a ‘wow’ moment” to them. Because of this, the movement decided to start to “speak the language” of elected officials.<sup>clxxxii</sup> While some of them had previously done GOTV work, immediately preceding the protest wave several of the more established immigrant rights coalitions were primarily focused on lobbying to stop H.R. 4437 from becoming law, not on protesting or electoral mobilization. However, by the end of the summer, many of the more mainstream groups decided to deliberately change their tactics from telling people to take to the streets to encouraging them to become citizens and register to vote. This shift in approaches was not because these SMOs were no longer directly under attack, but because they believed the power of mass protest had reached its limits. They felt that what was needed now was more institutional influence.

After the protest wave and leading up to the 2006 elections, various local, statewide, and national grassroots immigrant rights coalitions—a gathering that included everyone from unions to community based groups—met in Chicago in an effort to find common cause. According to Rich Stolz of FIRM, the attempt to form one national “We Are American Alliance” that encompassed both the moderate and the radical factions of the movement completely failed. “It wound up blowing up because nobody could agree on anything” in terms of policy positions. At this meeting, though, several of the organizations that had previously been doing voter registration work decided to continue to work together. According to Stolz, “the only part of the We Are America Alliance that continued on was the Civic Engagement Committee, and so that eventually just took on the ‘We Are American Alliance’ name.” The various local and statewide immigrant rights coalitions affiliated with FIRM, along with SEIU, decided to come together and design a strategy to mobilize the Latino and immigrant vote at the national level. However, as mentioned above, the 2006 “election was only four or five months later. It was too soon for us to

be able to make a political impact. There wasn't enough time to organize...[so] the weight of the votes wasn't felt."<sup>clxxxiii</sup> As a result, many "Republicans still thought for the presidential election that being anti-immigrant as a wedge issue was the winning ticket."<sup>clxxxiv</sup> Nonetheless, the infrastructure that had begun to be built by WAAA would later come in handy.

Despite the historic nature of the marches, both immigrant activists and Latino political elites were disheartened by the lack of policy results the protests produced. During a lunch meeting between NALEO's then-senior director of programs Marcelo Gaete and *Univision's* Los Angeles station news director Jorge Mettey, the two men spoke about their disappointment with the failure of immigration reform and lack of Latino turnout during the 2006 elections. Gaete explained to Mettey how despite their actual numbers, Latino immigrants in the U.S. lacked political strength because of their low citizenship and voting rates. Mettey had a simple suggestion—to naturalize and register a million new voters. Gaete explained that given the previous years' registration rates, it would be "impossible" to meet such a goal. After their meeting the two men went their separate ways. But the following day Gaete called Mettey and said, "I think you're nuts, but we need to talk."<sup>clxxxv</sup>

During this second meeting Gaete presented Mettey with data on exactly how many Latinos in the U.S. were eligible to naturalize and to register to vote but who for whatever reason had not done so. Mettey was shocked to learn that there were 8 million Latino immigrants across the country who qualified to become citizens and thus were potential voters.<sup>clxxxvi</sup> He said, "I did it too. I got married with an American...and I didn't become a citizen until ten years later because what for? I was very comfortable with being a legal resident. I didn't need it [citizenship]." As a result of the second conversation and subsequent meetings, NALEO and *Univision* joined forces to create what at first was just a local Los Angeles initiative, but quickly

became a national campaign to naturalize, then register, and ultimately get Latinos and immigrants to vote during the 2008 presidential election. The mass protests signaled to Latino political elites that Latinos “understood that they were part of this country” and were now ready to become citizens and registered voters.

The fact that you would go out and march for your rights in another country and bring out American flags is a signal that this population now considers itself part of America and that they’re not going to wait and see what America gives it. They’re going to demand what they feel they should get because they understand that they work to make this country better.<sup>clxxxvii</sup>

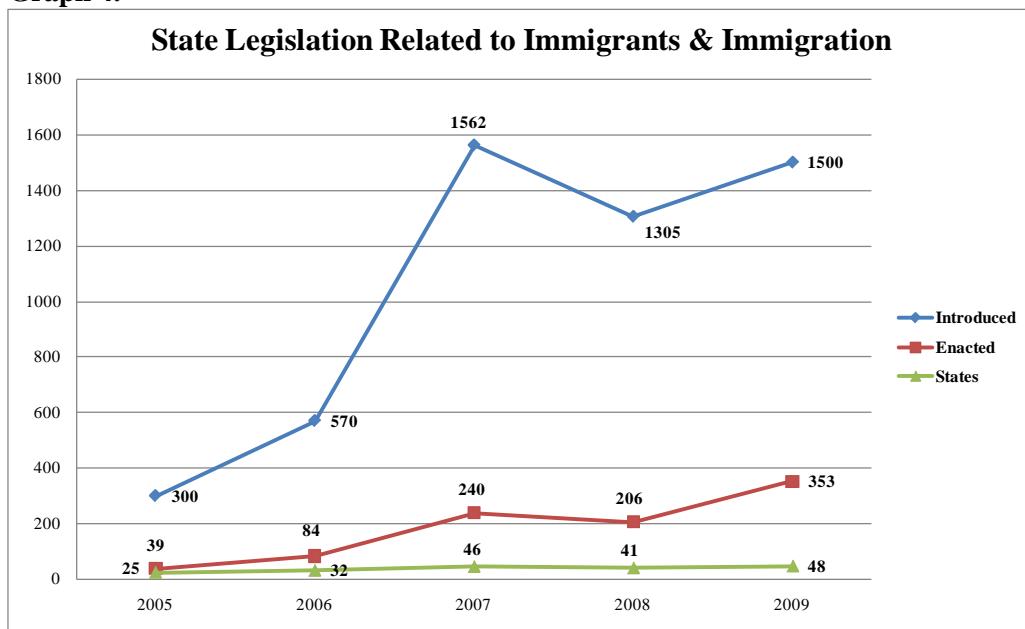
Thus, mainstream Latino political leaders realized that the protest wave symbolized “a pivot point in Latino political history,” but that in order for the unprecedented events to be a “transformative point” there had to be a more institutional political follow-up. National Latino elites (from NCLR to NALEO) who had nothing to do with the mass rallies nonetheless heard the chants from the crowds: “To Day We March, Tomorrow We Vote.” The name of the three-layered campaign that would attempt to make this a reality became, “*Ya Es Hora*” [*Now Is The Time*] (for other accounts of this campaign see Ayon 2008 and Feliz, Gonzalez, and Ramirez 2008).

Interestingly, the previous year (2005) NALEO had commissioned a study that included various focus groups to analyze why those Latinos that were eligible to become citizens were not doing so. In fact, because NALEO was only getting “trickles of people coming in” to seek help with their citizenship process and no philanthropies were interested in funding these types of services, the organization was actually getting ready to cut its naturalization program.<sup>clxxxviii</sup> The internal NALEO study had shown that Latinos that qualified to be citizens had become comfortable with their lives in the U.S. and that while they expressed a desire to eventually start

the naturalization process, they felt no sense of urgency to do so. Ironically, the racist and nativist rhetoric that surrounded the immigration debate would come to provide this vital link and motivation.

According to Deepak Pargava of the Center for Community Change, “I think we all knew a racist backlash [against the marches] was coming, but I don’t think any of us were prepared for the level of it. It was like a tidal wave that just swept the whole country at every level.” The anti-immigrant and anti-Latino rhetoric that became prominent across the country (Chavez 2008) went beyond words and spread into local public policy. One of the reasons D.C. advocates said they had been willing to support compromised immigration bills in both 2006 and 2007 was because they feared that if federal legislation did not pass, then local governments and states where the movement had even less influence would begin to pass their own immigration ordinances that would most likely be detrimental to people without papers. As Graph 4 demonstrates, they were correct.

**Graph 4.**



*Source:* National Conference of State Legislatures

Between 2005 and 2006 there was a 90% increase (from 300 to 570) in the introduction of state legislation related to immigration and a 115% increase (39 to 84) in immigration-related state legislation *enacted*. The spike from 2006 to 2007 is even more dramatic. The number of bills related state legislation *introduced* increased by 174% (570 to 1562) and the number of laws *enacted* jumped an astounding 186% (84 to 240). These new laws were not solely concentrated in a few outlier states either. The number of states that started to introduce and enact immigration related legislation went from 25 in 2005 (the year before the marches) all the way up to 46 out of 50 U.S. states by 2007 (the year after the protests).

NALEO's research of voter data had shown that as Latinos assimilated a gap seemed to form in their opinions on immigration, with those in the third and later generations not identifying as much with the issue.<sup>clxxxix</sup> This posed a problem for immigrant advocates since undocumented immigrants were electorally dependent on Latino naturalized and U.S. born citizens' electoral muscle. Maria Echaveste of CCIR contends that anti-immigrant activists' racist rhetoric helped the movement bridge this divide. "The great thing was the stupidity of the right wing and the Republican Party because their rhetoric just inevitably went from being anti-immigrant to anti-Hispanic...[Which] made it easier for us to talk to second and third generation" Latinos and say, "This is about you!" Eliseo Medina of SEIU concurred, adding that, "The Republican Party was by far the best organizer for us...I think they catapulted the movement a good twenty years." He explained,

When the debate began in Congress it all crystallized around Sensenbrenner. But then it became not an issue about undocumented workers, it became an issue about Latinos. People started talking about the changing face of America, about the diversity and their fear of it. They started talking about English only laws and changing the constitution to take away citizenship from children born [to undocumented immigrants] in this country. So the [Latino] community basically perceived that this was about the color of our skin

and the language we speak, this wasn't about public policy...It was terribly misplayed by the Republicans.

Several conservative business lobbyists tried to explain to Republican leaders that their anti-immigrant strategy was detrimental to the party's future. According to Regoburger of the Agriculture Coalition for Immigration Reform, he told GOP leaders, "You're sowing the seeds of your own destruction ...by alienating...Latinos and business all at once." He felt this was so because, "By and large we're talking about a population of people [Latinos] that has a work ethic, a family values ethic, and a rather conservative outlook on life." On social issues they're "often pro-life" and have "religious Christian heritage." He wondered, "Why is the Republican Party not seeing an opportunity to be attractive to these people?" John Gray of EWIC remembered thinking that, "Republicans have gone with the 'White Guy' thing as far as they're going to get. They've lost the black vote" and "Latinos are already the biggest and fastest growing minority. They're probably still in play, but maybe not for long" if conservatives continue with their racist rhetoric and policies. Gray explained, "National Republican leaders got it. Karl Rove got it...I think those paid to think nationally got it. The people who were trying to win their next election understood, but they also understood [the politics of] their own district and they went with that."

The anti-immigrant sentiments that swept the country ended up providing the exact sense of urgency that NALEO studies had shown Latinos needed to motivate them to become citizens and register to vote. The fact that many immigrant households are of mixed status (including family members who are immigrants—both legal and illegal—and citizens—both U.S. and foreign-born), and that the racist rhetoric spread from fear of undocumented immigrants to opposition to U.S. born Latino citizens, increased the potential pool of people that immigrant

rights activists could possibly mobilize for the upcoming 2008 elections. The growing We Are America Alliance would eventually help provide much of the local infrastructure while NALEO and *Univision's Ya Es Hora!* (YEH) campaign supplied the capacity and breadth for the type of organized and targeted campaign that would be needed to mobilize immigrants and their families to naturalize, register, and then actually go out and vote. The effort was unprecedented in American history.

The YEH campaign came to include Spanish print, radio, and television outlets all across the country. It partnered with SEIU, NCLR, and the We Are America Alliance (WAAA) which included hundreds of local, statewide, and national organizations such as the Center for Community Change, ACORN, *Democracia USA*, the National Korean American Service and Education Consortium, the New York Immigration Coalition, the National Capital Immigration Coalition, *Mi Familia Vota* Education Fund, the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition, the Gamaliel Foundation, the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, and other groups. According a WAAA steering committee leader, the immigrant rights movement decided that it was “going to invest in civic engagement and we’re going to do it in places that matter.”<sup>exc</sup> *Univision* and its media partners such as *Entrevisión* and *ImpreMeda* (the nation’s largest Spanish newspaper publisher, with outlets in 9 states) provided the key diffusion mechanisms that would promote the campaign and provide information to Latinos all over the country. The first phase of their efforts was a massive naturalization drive, “*Ya Es Hora, Ciudadanía!*” [Now is the Time, Citizenship!].

The citizenship campaign was launched in early January of 2007. Organizations were able to be part of the YEH campaign in two ways. They had the option of either just serving as “information centers” where people could stop by and pick up citizenship applications, or

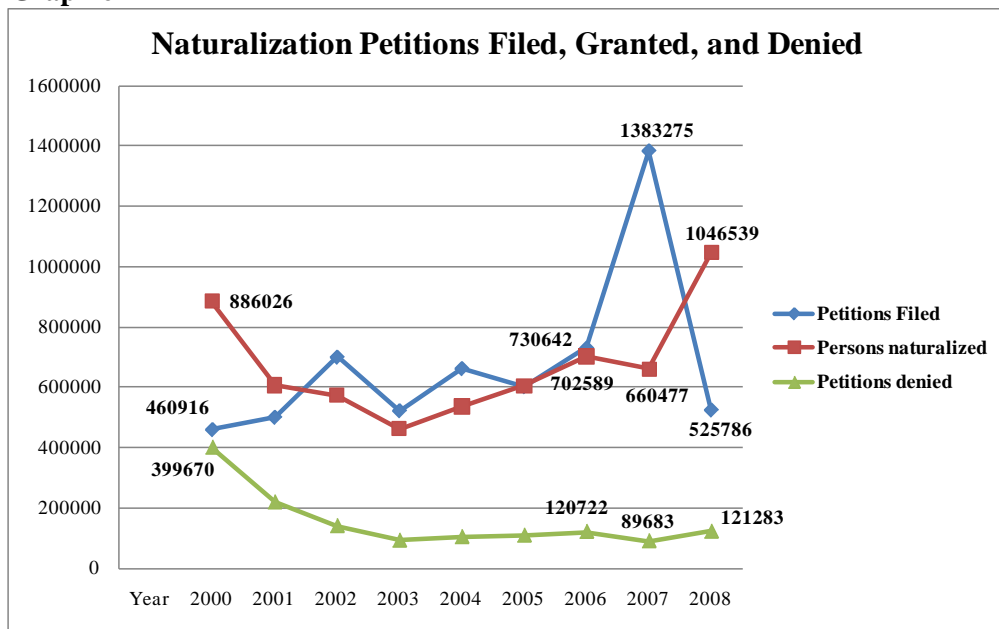
organizations could be full YEH “service centers” that helped individuals with the naturalization process. YEH did several trainings across the country to show community based groups exactly how to assist people with filling out their applications. Meanwhile, Spanish media was adding to the sense of urgency to naturalize. For instance, rather than causing outrage, the fact that immigration officials were planning to raise the fees for becoming a citizen (Gamboa 2007) was used by the ethnic media to provide more fodder for the campaign’s fire. Thus, Spanish news outlets provided the motivation and information, while grassroots groups provided access to and assistance with naturalization. As one of the key NALEO strategist explained,

*Univision* defined its role as saying, “We’re going to be the catalyst for this thing. We’re going to be the people sounding the horn every day reminding people that they have to become citizens. NALEO is going to become the infrastructure because you guys have your hotline, you have websites, you have all the expertise on naturalization and everything that we could need to make this happen.” And *Univision* basically said, “In our news segments, it’s going to be about citizenship. There’s no way that someone will tune in to KMEX [*Univision*’s largest station] and not hear the message that, “You need to become a citizen.”<sup>cxci</sup>

According to an *Univision* representative involved with the initial stages of the campaign, “It started going from day one with reporters covering stories, with anchors inviting people and telling them about the events...Many times we had the reporter going over to the place where they were helping people sign up.” In addition, *Univision* began to air 30-minute public services announcements (PSAs). The first one explained what was needed to qualify to become a citizen. A second PSA detailed how to fill out a naturalization application without the need of a lawyer or notary. The final one gave people advice on “preparing for your interview to make sure that people passed.”<sup>cxcii</sup> *Univision* was promoting the campaign not only through PSAs, but also during its main daily newscasts. “We were pursuing it very aggressively on all fronts: promotions, anchors mentioned it, editorial pieces trying to find new angles...All of that was full

blast,” said an editorial board member.<sup>cxci</sup> Furthermore, print media synergized these efforts by running articles about the benefits of naturalization, fact sheets, Q&A’s about what it takes to qualify for citizenship, and editorial columns about YEH. On top of this, the most popular Spanish radio DJ in the nation, the Los Angeles-based *Piolin*, added to the media frenzy by going on a national campaign to get Latinos to become citizens and register to vote. Thus, the media partners helped build the hype and provided the information, while grassroots immigrant rights groups and service organizations made the process accessible to people at the local community level. As one close to forty-year veteran of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services put it at the time, “I have never seen anything like it in my career. It’s big.” (Jordan 2007).

**Graph 6**



**Source:** Department of Homeland Security

In all, YEH had more than 400 organizations join their campaigns across the country in states like Massachusetts, Connecticut, Florida, New Mexico, Texas, Arizona, Nevada, California, New York, Colorado, Virginia, Illinois, and others. The results of their efforts were phenomenal. As *Graph 6* demonstrates, when compared to the number of *petitions for naturalization filed* between 2006 and 2007, there was an almost 90% increase (from 730,642 to 1,383,275). In terms of those who *actually became citizens* before the end of the 2008 election year, the data reveals that there was an almost 60% increase (660,477 to 1,046,539) from 2007 to 2008. As these statistics show, the movement unquestionably accomplished its objective of getting over a million people to apply for and become American citizens. This was a resounding achievement; however, it is one thing to get people to become citizens (and effectively transform them into potential voters), but it is quite another to get this same group of individuals to register and actually vote. Thus, the next step for the movement was to make sure this voting *potential* turned into actual voter *power*. The names of the subsequent two phases of the campaign were, “*Ya Es Hora, Regístrate!*” [Now is the Time, Register!] and “*Ya Es Hora, Ve y Vota!*” [Now is the Time, Go and Vote!].

The 2008 presidential election provided an ideal environment for the immigrant rights movement to launch voter registration and get-out-the-vote (GOTV) drives. On the Republican side, the one non-anti-immigrant GOP candidate, Senator John McCain, led his party’s ticket. Senator McCain had name recognition with Latinos since he had helped lead the push for legalization in 2006. On the Democratic side, overtly pro-immigrant Senator Barack Obama, a former community organizer with the Gamaliel Foundation (a staunch pro-immigrant rights organization), made history by becoming the first African-American to win his party’s nomination. Liberals across the nation were energized and mobilized by the possibility of

electing a person of color that was a former activist. Both parties launched massive and energetic grassroots campaigns that included specific efforts to target Latinos through Spanish media (Miller 2008). Hence, the historic mobilization efforts by both political parties, but especially the Democrats, to get Latinos out to vote added fuel to WAAA and YEH campaign's fire.

Interestingly, *Univision's* media strategy for the U.S. presidential elections was influenced by the recent Mexican elections. The network's Los Angeles news director Jorge Mettey had covered Mexico's presidential election and was extremely impressed by MTV's "Rock the Vote" efforts there. This prompted him to think,

It's like the *telenovelas*. We just bring the *telenovela* that was successful in Mexico to the U.S.A....You're just putting proven stuff for the same viewers. Those who watch TV in Mexico, they come across the border and they watch TV here. They have the same habits. They have the same tastes. The same with this campaign. It's a proven campaign that had an amazing impact.

Mettey decided to model YEH's media strategy on what he witnessed with "Rock the Vote" in Mexico. In fact, he even flew the two young men that ran the MTV effort in Mexico to Los Angeles to discuss their approach. As a result, much like "Rock the Vote," throughout the day *Univision* constantly went to live coverage of their voter registration drives and interviewed people about why they felt it was important to register to vote. The campaign helped promote the issue from various angles. According to Eliseo Media,

The Latino media, unlike the mainstream [English] media, is an activist media. It's a media that actually takes sides on behalf of their viewers on the issues they care about...They don't editorialize, but the way they cover it and the comments from the anchors...its always on the side of the community. So what we were doing with the immigrant rights movement was we were giving them [the Spanish media] actions to cover that fit in with the message they wanted to give in order to build up their ratings

and their viewer loyalty. So it was a match made in heaven. Economic interests coincided with ideological interests.

While the Spanish media was helping build the sense of urgency for immigrants to register to vote, Latino and immigrant rights groups launched united and independent campaigns to target different segments of the Latino, Asian, and immigrant electorate. Practicing a type of “boomerang effect” (see Keck and Sikkink 1998), even the supposedly electorally impotent undocumented immigrants played a key role in these efforts. Despite being blocked from voting because of their legal status, all across the nation people without papers went “knocking on doors in ethnic neighborhoods, manning the phones in myriad languages and distributing political flyers” to help get those that were eligible in their communities out to vote (Barbassa 2008). The immigrant rights movement specifically targeted places where their efforts could impact the upcoming election, such as key swing states like Florida, Colorado, Nevada, and New Mexico. While they knew that both of the major political parties were going to spend most of their time trying to mobilize frequent (including Latino) voters, activists made an additional effort to target new citizens and *infrequent* voters. Overall, according to their internal numbers, the WAAA registered half a million new voters and targeted over a million people in their GOTV efforts. NALEO alone focused on 170,000 voters and “as far as phone calls being generated,” the organization made about “a quarter of a million” in “7 different states.” Their website alone registered about 26,000 new voters.<sup>cxiv</sup> On top of these efforts, ImpreMedia inserted a million voter registration cards in their Spanish newspapers across the country in states such as Colorado, Florida, California, Arizona, New York, Illinois, and Texas (Sun-Sentinel 2008).

Independent of the YEH and WAAA campaign, other Latino and immigrant rights organizations also launched their own voter mobilization efforts that focused on a different

demographic group—Latino youth. In July of 2008, organizations such as the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project (SVREP), League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the National Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Communities, *Hermandad Mexicana*, and other groups announced a \$5 million non-partisan voter registration effort that mostly targeted “younger voters through 125 organizing committees” in specific states (Watanabe 2008). SVREP and its partners concentrated their campaigns in states such as California, Texas, Florida, Arizona, Colorado, Washington, New Mexico, Virginia, Nevada, Oregon, North Carolina, Georgia, Maryland, Illinois, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, and New Jersey.<sup>cxv</sup> In addition, through the use of internet, email lists, social networking websites like MySpace, text-messages, radio and television PSAs, and concerts and media events featuring such Latino celebrities as Jennifer Lopez, Enrique Iglesias, Rosario Dawson, Jessica Alba, and Ozomatli, the organization *Voto Latino* was also able to reach literally millions of Latino youth and households in key swing states. For instance,

*Voto Latino* conservatively estimates that it leveraged more than \$6,000,000 in *gratis* [free] airtime for its radio and television PSA’s via partnerships with major networks like Comcast, Time Warner Cable, *Univision* Radio, *Entravision*, SBS, MTV, Tr3s, and LATV...we were able to negotiate pro bono voter registration and “get out the vote” airtime that would have cost partisan organizations like the Obama and McCain campaigns millions of dollars. In 2008, *Voto Latino* generated more than 275 million television impressions for its PSA’s and initiatives, 100 million radio impressions, 80 million print media impressions and 75 million online impressions.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to these types of nonpartisan efforts, many immigrant rights activists also took time off from their organizations to do explicitly partisan work for the Obama campaign. A

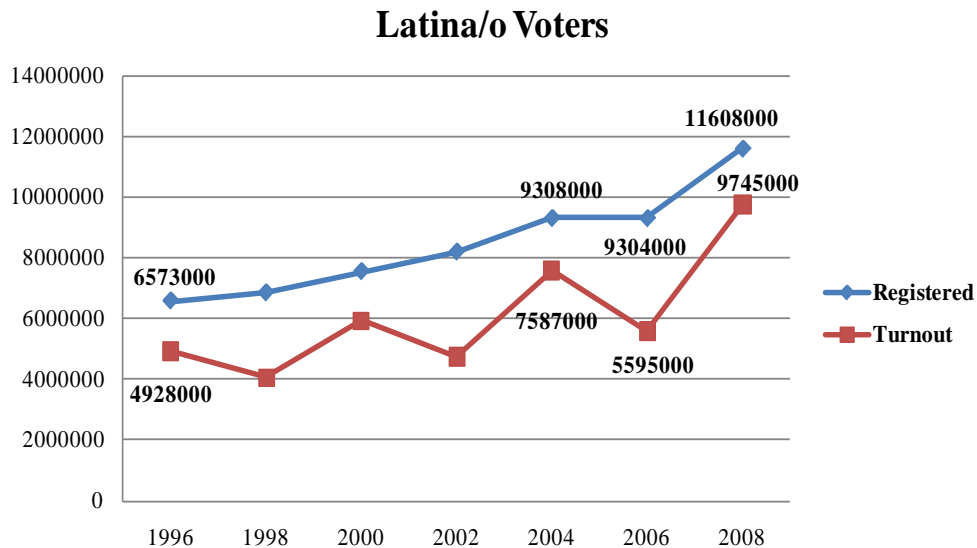
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<sup>11</sup> Voto Latino, “Voto Latino in the 2008 Election Season.” According to the website site [whatis.techtarget.com](http://whatis.techtarget.com), “In Web advertising, the term *impression* is sometimes used as a synonym for *view*, as in *ad view*. Online publishers offer and their customers buy advertising measured in terms of ad views or impressions.” See [http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/0,,sid9\\_gci212334,00.html](http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/0,,sid9_gci212334,00.html).

WAAA member explained, “There was also direct engagement with Barack Obama as a candidate when he said, ‘If this is going to move forward, this is where I need your help.’”<sup>cxcvi</sup> Thus, activists often targeted their efforts to supplement the mobilization work of the Obama campaign. Many in the movement believed that despite McCain’s attempt to help pass legalization in 2006, his party was the cause of much of the nation’s anti-immigrant sentiments. A lot of activists felt that Obama’s history as a community organizer and relationship with one of the movement’s biggest advocates, Chicago Congressman Luis Gutierrez, was enough reason to prefer him in the presidential race over Republicans.

Given all of the aforementioned contextual (a highly publicized presidential campaign, a rise in anti-immigrant and anti-Latino sentiments, etc.) and organizational (YEH and WAAA’s campaigns) factors, then, what were the results of these electoral mobilization efforts? Again, as *Graph 7* demonstrates, the outcomes seem to be impressive.

**Graph 7**



**Source: U.S. Census Bureau**

Looking simply at the actual numbers when compared to the 2004 Presidential Election, *in 2008 the number of Latino voters jumped from 7.6 million to over 9.7 million, an increase of more than 2 million new voters.* Moreover, perhaps even more important for activists seeking post-election talking points, when we look at the improvement from their “failed” 2006 voter mobilization attempt, the results appear even more remarkable. *The increase in Latino voter turnout between the 2006 and 2008 elections was a whopping 4.1 million.* Again though, an examination of the *change in rates* is also in order to more thoroughly assess the impact of the voter mobilization efforts. If the voter registration and turnout rates rose more than the growth of their potential voting population, then activists’ claims of having conducted a successful campaign would be strengthened.

As *Table 5* below shows, in 2004 the Latino citizen voting population rate increased by 22%. That same year, during the contentious Bush vs. Kerry election, Latino voter registration surpassed that figure by one percentage point (22% to 23%) and Latino voter turnout exceeded it by six percentage points (22% to 28%). In terms of rate increases during the historic 2008 presidential race, Latino voter registration outpaced the growth of the Latino citizen voting age population 25% to 21%, and Latino voter turnout exceeded it 28% to 21%. Thus, the data indicates that in both 2004 and 2008 the Latino citizen voting age population, voter registration, and voter turnout rates *all rose*. But during the 2008 presidential election the LCVAP growth rate slightly slowed (from 22% to 21%) while Latino voter registration and turnout rose at faster rates, signifying an additional degree of success in electoral mobilization.

**Table 5**

<b>Latino Rate of Increase in 2004 and 2008 Presidential Elections</b>		
	<b>2004</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>Citizen Voting Age Population</b>	22%	21%
<b>Registered Voters</b>	23%	25%
<b>Voter Turnout</b>	28%	28%

*Source:* U.S. Census Bureau

Overall, looking just at the raw figures, the immigrant rights movement seems to have been able to help dramatically increase Latino and immigrant voter power during the 2008 presidential race. When we compare 2008 Latino voter registration and turnout rate increases to the previous 2004 presidential election, the results seem more modest but nevertheless still positive. It is important to point out, though, that if Latinos voted as a bloc, given the competitive nature of the 2008 race, increases in *actual* mobilization numbers could have in fact impacted the results of close elections in key swing states. Thus, determining whether or not this was the case is the next step in an assessment of the effects of the movement’s GOTV efforts. The evidence below suggests that it was.

According to an analysis of election results conducted by the Pew Hispanic Center, Latinos voted for the Democratic presidential ticket “by a margin of more than two-to-one.”

Nationally, all Latino demographic sub-groups voted for Obama by heavy margins. According to the national exit poll, 64% of Hispanic males and 69% of Hispanic females supported Obama. Latino youth...supported Obama over McCain by a lopsided margin—76% versus 19%...Obama carried the Latino vote by sizeable margins in all states with large Latino populations. His biggest breakthrough came in Florida, where he won’t 57% of the Latino vote in a state where Latinos have historically supported Republican presidential candidates...Obama’s margins were much larger in other states with big Latino populations. He carried 78% of the Latino vote in New Jersey, 76% in Nevada,

74% in California, and 73% in Colorado...The largest increases in the share of voters who are Hispanic occurred in the states of Colorado...New Mexico...and Nevada...all three battleground states in this year's election.<sup>cxcvii</sup>

Political scientists Barreto, Callingwood and Monzano (2010) found that in the 2008 election, "Latinos were very influential in seven swing states: Florida, Nevada, New Mexico, Colorado, Virginia, North Carolina, and Indiana." On top of this, their results also indicate the existence of "evidence of extensive Latino mobilization, though a lesser overall impact, in additional states including Arizona, Ohio, California, Texas, Missouri and Minnesota, perhaps foreshadowing a greater degree of influence in 2012 and beyond" (2; also see IPC 2008).

Despite the apparent impact of the Latino vote, another important question one must ask is whether the issue of immigration was related to these results in any manner? Again, some evidence points to this being the case. According to the Immigration Policy Center, in 2008 75% of Latino registered voters saw immigration as an "extremely" or "very important" issue for them leading up to the election. In addition, not only was immigration a vital issue for Latino voters, but perhaps more importantly immigrant voters themselves made up a significant portion of the Latino electorate. According to a post-election survey of Latino voters done by NALEO, almost half (46%) of Latino voters *were immigrants*. While the poll found that a majority (62%) of third generation Latinos supported the Democratic presidential candidate, second generation children of immigrants and Latino Spanish speakers demonstrated the strongest support for Obama at nearly 80% (NALEO 2008). With regard to actual voter turnout, not only was one in every six Latino voters doing so for the first time (NALEO 2008), but compared to 67% of the overall Latino vote, Obama won 78% of the Latino immigrant vote (IPC 2008). Thus, in 2008 the immigrant vote finally proved to be an electoral force to be reckoned with.

Much as in 2006, the Republican Party attempted to use immigration as a wedge issue in many local races. As a WAAA and YEH campaign leader explained, “The Republicans thought that they were the masters of the wedge issue. Every election cycle it’s either guns, gays, abortion, or taxes...And they thought immigration was the same thing. It’s always about making the people afraid of somebody—divide and conquer.” A former senior adviser on immigration to both Senator John McCain and President George W. Bush admitted to this in a recent statement when he said that immigration was “the most explosive issue I’ve seen in my political career” and one in “which Republicans salivate over short-term gains without much thought to the longer-term damage it will do the party” (Nagourney 2010). But the 2008 election also called the into question the so-called short-term gains. For example, an analysis conducted by a conservative Republican strategist who examined how the issue of immigration related to several key congressional races during the 2008 elections demonstrated that “immigration was a wedge issue benefiting the Democratic Party, but *not* the G.O.P” [emphasis added] (Nadler 2009). A study done by America’s Voice, an immigrant advocacy organization, supported these findings. Their analysis showed that in 21 battleground House and Senate Races, 19 pro-immigration reform candidates beat anti-immigrant hardliners (America’s Voice 2008). One big-business lobbyist explained that Republicans thought that “demagoguing on this issue would get them seats in Congress” when “in fact, it’s been a wedge issue, but it’s been a wedge issue” that’s benefited “the other side [Democrats].”<sup>cxviii</sup> Thus, not only did the racist and nativist rhetoric of cultural conservatives and the Republican Party help unite and motivate the Latino and immigrant vote, but their ant-immigrant and anti-immigration reform policy stances also seem to have worked against them. The 2008 presidential election showed that being anti-immigrant does *not* seem to be in the Republican Party’s short- nor long-term interests.

A longtime D.C. immigration policy insider summed up the effects of the 2006 protest wave in the following manner,

In 2004, Bush and Rove were on the precipice of winning the majority of Latino immigrant voters and maybe wrapping them up for a lifetime if Republicans had played it smart. [But] the Sensenbrenner Bill and the rallies that led to the 2008 election have completely changed the political calculus for the Latino community and therefore for the country. The Republican Party had an opportunity to become a majority party and has now become a minority party...John McCain would be president today if they hadn't passed the Sensenbrenner Bill...So whatever the effects were in the short term on the legislative stuff...the biggest impact of the rallies was to set the stage for the historic election of 2008 that I think has changed the face of American politics, its redrawn the electoral map. The "Today We March, Tomorrow We Vote" slogan became true. So if you step back from what happen in Congress in 2006 and 2007 and ask, "What are the long term effects [of the 2006 protests]?"—well, it was a silent march to the polls.<sup>cxcix</sup>

### **Conclusion and Implications**

Research on the 2006 immigrant rights rallies is scarce and studies on their effects are virtually nonexistent. Two exceptions are analyses done by Dunaway, Abrajano, and Branton (2007) and Cohen-Marks, Nuno, and Sanchez (2008). Using both a media content analysis of newspapers across the country and Gallup public opinion polls, Dunaway and her colleagues sought to examine the possible "agenda setting effects" of the marches. Their results showed that not only did the protests dramatically increase media coverage of the issue, but that the demonstrations also "led to a heightened perception among the American public that immigration was an important policy concern facing the nation" (Dunaway, Abrajano, and Branton 2007). Cohen-Marks et al.'s innovative study looked at voter opinion of Mexican immigrants in the aftermath of the protests. Using exit poll data in three different states, their findings indicated that "the demonstrators failed to win the hearts and minds of American voters." Specifically their results showed that

[the] rallies did not endear immigrants among those who turned out to vote in 2006. Particularly among Whites, conservatives and Republicans, organizers' efforts to virtually wrap the marchers in the American flag proved insufficient to improve perceptions of Mexican immigrants. Our results also suggest that voters who are older, those who have resided in their communities for a relatively longer period, those who perceive their communities are headed in the wrong direction, and voters with moderate incomes were less inclined to look favorably on the demonstrators' demands (Cohen-Marks, Nuno, and Sanchez 2008).

Thus, previous research suggests that the 2006 protest wave possibly had two primary effects: it increased the media's coverage of immigration and as a result put the issue on the public's agenda, and at least in some Western counties the marches did not help improve white and conservative voters' opinions about Latino immigrants. However, we still know little about what impact the protests had on not only the *general public's* opinion on the topic, but also on how the rallies influenced the agendas of the political *elites* that make public policy. And while the demonstrations do not seem to have helped gain sympathy for immigrants from white and conservative voters, these two studies do not tell us anything about what effects they had on the Latino and immigrant national electorates. My findings are a start toward filling this research gap.

The data presented in this chapter suggests that there were several direct and immediate impacts of the immigrant protest wave on the policymaking process. For instance, the marches helped stop the Sensenbrenner Bill from becoming law by nudging moderates in the Senate Judiciary Committee to pass a bill that included a path to citizenship. At the same time, by further polarizing Congress and pushing moderate House Republicans to the right on the issue, the protests virtually guaranteed that no legislation with legalization would pass during the 2006 Congressional session. In terms of anti-immigrant state-level policies, it appears that in the aftermath of the protest wave almost every state assembly in the union began to take matters into

its own hands, often to the detriment of immigrants. Thus, the demonstrations also had the immediate effect of mobilizing an anti-immigrant backlash the consequences of which, as will be summarized below, had lasting implications.

The episodes of large-scale immigrant collective action had several indirect and long-term political impacts as well. For example, the demonstrations helped teach the immigrant rights movement a valuable lesson: protest was not enough. The movement learned that in Washington, mainstream political acts such as calling, writing elected officials, and voting matter more than marches. In addition, the anti-immigrant backlash that initially helped generate the pro-immigrant mobilizations, and then increased in response to the mass protests, created an opportunity for Latino elites and immigrant rights activists to organize a politically complacent segment of their constituencies—legal permanent residents. Also, demonstrating the blurred line between nativism and racism, anti-immigrant rhetoric quickly turned into anti-Latino discrimination, which had the result of politicizing immigrants, their U.S.-born children, and grandchildren. Consequently, not only did immigrant naturalization dramatically increase, but so did Latino voter registration and turnout during the 2008 elections. The results of this new civic engagement proved to be politically powerful as Latino and immigrant voters helped swing key battleground states in favor of Democrats, contributing to the election of the nation's first black president.

There were several other possible effects of the protest wave that are beyond the scope of this study. For example, many organizers interviewed claimed that the rallies helped politicize an entire generation of immigrant and second generation youth who gained valuable activist experience and training during the marches. This is important to note because previous research has shown that taking part in protests often has long term biographical consequences, leaving

participants more likely to remain politically conscious and active (Jennings and Niemi 1981; McAdam 1988; Giugni 2004b). In addition, several activists pointed to the fact that many immigrant rights advocates were appointed to important positions within the new Obama Administration, demonstrating some degree of movement institutionalization.<sup>12</sup> In terms of changes within the movement, pro-immigrant funders and activists learned the importance of having an effective mainstream (especially English) media strategy. As a result of this lesson, a major new feature of the movement—a new organization called America’s Voice—was created to serve as the “communications and rapid-response arm of a reinvigorated campaign to advance immigration reform.” Based on its experiences from 2006 to 2008, the movement has now developed a four-pronged approach to advancing immigration reform that includes *voter mobilization, policy advocacy and research, grassroots mobilization* (e.g. rallies and demonstrations), and *an effective media PR strategy*.<sup>cc</sup>

The implications of my findings for social movement theory are numerous. For example, while Soule and King (2006) find that SMO activity matters most during the initial stages of the legislative process, they only speculate that protests may matter more in later stages (1898). My research provides empirical evidence supporting this possibility. When policymaking is already on its way, mass mobilization can have an impact beyond just the introduction of bills by influencing key committee votes in later stages of the policy process. Also, in line with Lee’s (2002) findings, the results of my study add support to the notion that mobilization by people of color at the grassroots level can impact minority political elites by pushing them into action. In addition, the case of the immigrant rights movement indicates that even when they contribute to

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<sup>12</sup> For example, according to Eliseo Medina of SEIU, the marches and electoral impact of the Latino vote contributed to his appointment by the Obama administration to a special presidential advisory committee on immigration as well as the White House appointment of Cecilia Muñoz (of the National Council of La Raza) to the position of Director of Intergovernmental Affairs.

short-term policy losses, mass mobilizations can still help create long-term political power for social movements.

The impacts of the protest wave examined in this study also have implications with regard to the role of threat in contentious politics. According to organizers, the far-reaching policy threat that initially catalyzed the protest wave produced effects on the ethnic group it targeted that lasted even after the legislative attack had subsided. In fact, this threat helped *create* an opportunity to mobilize a sector of the movement's constituency that had previously been dormant. Moreover, the shift in tactics (from contentious to institutional politics) by mainstream immigrant rights SMOs when they were no longer directly threatened was not a result of simply being "out of the line of fire." Mainstream activists realized that undocumented immigrants would continue to come under legislative attack until they demonstrated some type of electoral clout. As one activist recalled, "Part of our analysis was that we needed to change hearts and minds" through mass mobilizations, "but we needed to be able to back it up with political power" at the ballot box.<sup>cci</sup>

In conclusion, the ability of immigrant rights activists to mobilize their base and allies in a variety of contexts shows that a movement should not solely be defined by its ability to get people to "hit the streets." Dissent and mobilization can be demonstrated in many forms by social movements, including institutional ones. Consequently, the power of political activism resides not only in its ability to conduct mass protests, but also in its capacity to build a movement whose arsenal contains a variety of both informal *and* institutional weapons capable of being deployed in multiple political arenas.

Chapter 7

# Dignity's Revolt

*Conclusion and Theoretical Implications*

*This dissertation has demonstrated that the 2006 immigrant rights protest wave is of great significance not only because of its magnitude, unprecedented nature, and national scope, but also because of the challenges that it poses to established scholarly research. In this final chapter, I summarize these contributions, explain how my research informs ongoing immigration policy debates, and state what these findings suggest for the future study and practice of social movements, immigrant activism, and race and ethnic politics. Because the cities examined were selected due to their different levels of mobilization outcomes and varying organizational, demographic, and regional settings, below I encapsulate the implications of my results comparatively across these different settings.*

### **Theoretical Contributions**

#### ***The Interactive Nature of Threats, Opportunities, and Identities***

Two of the most important questions for both scholars and activists regarding the rallies are *Why did they happen?* and *Why did unexpected actors participate* to such an extent? As discussed in Chapter 1, students of social movements operating from a political opportunity perspective were puzzled by the marches given the relatively “closed” context in which they emerged. Many immigrant rights activists were equally baffled by the rise of immigrant contention given that their previous attempts to mass-mobilize the foreign-born had not produced the results the country witnessed in the spring of 2006. The research presented throughout this dissertation demonstrates that even when windows of political opportunities appear shut, large-scale collective action—including among those considered the least likely to participate—can occur. My findings show that *a key catalyst of protest waves can be a severe threat that comes from a single source and that simultaneously disrupts the daily routines of several sectors of*

*society*. In order for nontraditional political actors to participate in mass mobilizations, though, *personal threats to these individuals must be accompanied by a collective threat to their group identities*. But since all groups do not share the same collective identities, as discussed in Chapter 4 and again below, they will not all feel equally threatened and, as a result, will not mobilize against the threat to the same degree. Thus, both contextual and cognitive factors must be present for oppressed people to jointly act contentiously on a mass scale.

Furthermore, as illustrated throughout the previous chapters, protest waves are dynamic, not static, affairs. Because of this, Goldstone and Tilly (2001) challenge social movement scholars to analyze the relationship between threat and opportunity not as the “flip side” of each other, but rather as independent and interactive environmental variables that can impact and influence one another. My findings provide an example of how these dynamics can manifest. The results of my study reveal that a serious and broad threat, deriving from a single source, can serve as the impetus for large-scale collective action, which in turn can cause a backlash and new threats, prompting a movement to shift its mobilization efforts toward opportunities afforded by more mainstream forms of politics. For example, attempting to capitalize on nativist reactions to the mass marches, Republicans tried to use immigration as a wedge issue during the 2006 midterm and 2008 presidential elections. The Republican Party sponsored and supported several forms of both government (i.e. workplace raids, deportation, etc.) and grassroots (encouraging the mobilization of a countermovement) repression—two additional types of threats the immigrant rights movement was forced to confront. In response, utilizing the infrastructure created and solidified across the country during the protest wave, immigrant advocates regrouped and refocused their efforts on the perceived “open opportunities” they believed existed in key swing states during the 2008 presidential race. Thus, the research presented in this dissertation

demonstrates how threats and opportunities can impact and continuously alter each other throughout the different stages of cycles of contention.

### ***The Resourcefulness of the “Resource-less”***

While necessary, environmental factors are not sufficient for protest waves to develop. As the actions of the various individuals across the country described in my case studies demonstrate, movements are not possible without the agency and efforts of local activists. In each city I examined, community members—from small neighborhood business owners and soccer league players to students and domestic workers—used their personal time, money, skills, and social networks to mobilize their families, coworkers, and friends to participate in the 2006 rallies. Without their individual and collective efforts, there is no doubt that the largest coordinated mass mobilizations in American history would not have been possible. Thus, individual people—with their various forms of human capital—can serve as important resources for community collective action.

My process-tracing of how local mass mobilizations were organized in Los Angeles, New York City, and Fort Myers also illustrates that contrary to common belief, poor and marginalized communities do in fact possess several types of preexisting local social and economic resources that activists can put to political use. The results of this fieldwork show how regular people can utilize the various assets already present in their communities and neighborhoods to facilitate major mobilizations, even *without* the existence of professional social movement organizations (SMOs) or the financial assistance of external actors, such as private foundations. These findings further remind us that resources come in various forms and from a variety of places. In short, my research highlights the importance of the agency of activists and

the political capacities of the resource-rich locales in which they reside, a phenomenon that more structural and organizational-based explanations of social movements sometimes underemphasize.

Resources also help explain differences in *how* the decline of the demonstrations occurred in each city studied. My findings show that the resources vital to the emergence of mass protest aren't necessarily the same ones needed to institutionalize or sustain large-scale mobilization. For example, while New York and Los Angeles saw different levels of collective action in 2006, the local movements in these cities were better able to channel the declining momentum following the protest wave into more formal and institutionalized politics—such as voter registration and voter mobilization drives—because of their organizational infrastructures and past participation in electoral mobilization efforts. On the other hand, organizers of the Fort Myers rally were political novices lacking experiences in both electoral and contentious politics. Since most of the leaders of the Southwest Florida movement were farm workers, small ethnic business owners, and soccer league players—*not* professional organizers for mainstream SMOs—they were not part of the liberal foundation networks and national coalitions that facilitated the electoral mobilization drives discussed in Chapter 6.

Another factor that was vital to the ability of local movements to institutionalize their mobilization efforts was their demographic makeup. Los Angeles and New York both had large pools of second generation (children of immigrants) and legal permanent residents who were eligible for naturalization and voter registration. Activists in these cities were able to target these populations in their GOTV efforts in order to demonstrate the local electoral power of immigrants and their allies. As foreign-born communities became less willing to continue to protest, these two cities were able to help channel the movement's energies to less contentious

forms of political activities. This mechanism of demobilization—or decline of contention—was less possible in places like Southwest Florida. According to local organizers, most of the people whom they mobilized for the Fort Myers march were undocumented, and as a result, were ineligible to vote. Consequently, the decision of national advocates to shift the movement's focus to more institutional forms of politics excluded the very people on whose behalf they were fighting. Places where undocumented immigrants (compared to second generation and legal permanent residents) made up large portions of the local immigrant and protest populations were less able to institutionalize their mobilization efforts. Thus, the demographic composition (especially with regard to generation and citizenship status) of a community that is acting contentiously can impact the manner in which a protest wave declines.

### *Implications for Coalitions and Interethnic Politics*

As the demographic makeup of the U.S. changes due to immigration from Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America, an important issue for both practitioners and students of social movements and ethnic politics to consider is how these immigrant groups and their offspring will interact politically with one another and with native-born segments of U.S. society. Will their interests combine or collide? As reviewed in Chapter 4, some research grimly suggests that the latter scenario is the more common of the two outcomes. However, for those interested in uniting these racial and ethnic minority groups, understanding when and how broad and diverse coalitions can be formed is crucial. The research presented in each of the case studies contributes to a better comprehension of these dynamics.

The cities studied in this dissertation reveal how in response to a specific type of external threat, and through the use of various types of social ties, large coalitions composed of an array

of religious, racial, and ethnic groups can be constructed. When a threat comes from a single source and is as broad and far-reaching as the Sensenbrenner Bill was, activists are presented with the opportunity to draw several sectors of society together and form diverse coalitions in order to mass-mobilize against the attack. Yet, forming coalitions composed of a wide range of actors can be a double-edged sword. While diversity can increase the number of groups that participate in movement mobilizations—and in effect enhance the potential for large-scale collective action—my research shows that it can also pose significant challenges for organizers, since attempting to represent a diversity of groups means attempting to coalesce a diversity of interests.

Having a diverse population to organize across makes multiracial/multiethnic coalitions difficult to form and maintain, and may in fact help diminish a city's capacity to unite and mass-mobilize its different populations. As noted above, this was the case with regard to New York's underperformance during the protest wave. The city's heterogeneous immigrant population resulted in not every foreign-born group feeling equally threatened by H.R. 4437, and thus not as equally invested in the "Comprehensive Immigration Reform" policy alternative offered by the Washington, D.C.-based advocates that set the movement's national legislative agenda. For example, Muslim legal permanent residents interested in preventing another "special registration program" that continued to racialize them as potential terrorists were not as enthusiastic as were, say, undocumented Central American immigrants to take to the streets for legalization and an end to border militarization. Consequently, since not all groups felt the same about the issues at stake, their levels of mobilization also varied.

These results help us begin to theorize about why different cities mobilized to different degrees by arguing that places with large and/or homogenous Mexican immigrant populations

(such as Los Angeles or Fort Myers) produced larger protests because Mexicans (in terms of their total numbers and policy interests) had more to gain and lose from the legislation in question. Accordingly, places such as New York that have more diverse (also in terms of their total numbers and policy interests) foreign-born populations hosted relatively smaller rallies. To add support to this argument, my fieldwork suggests that while New York may have hosted smaller protests than other major immigrant metropolises, the groups that *did* participate the most were Dominicans and Mexicans, the local foreign-born populations most impacted by the proposed laws (both anti- and pro-immigrant).

The difficulty of finding common ground among the variety of threats and policy interests around which different groups are willing to mobilize is not the only challenge to multiracial/multiethnic coalition-building posed by a diverse population. The evidence presented throughout the dissertation illustrates that *ideological* diversity in alliances can also impact decisions about which tactics and strategies coalitions (and factions within them) decide to employ. At first, movement radicals and movement moderates—in L.A., New York, and Fort Myers—were willing to put their political differences aside in order to unite and fight against H.R. 4437. However, as the looming threat of federal legislation diminished, these strategic alliances began to crumble and prior ideological differences resurfaced. In the case of the immigrant rights movement, these differences led to the formation of alternative/rival coalitions in several cities across the country. Thus, my results support previous research that finds that while a severe threat can bring together a variety of groups, once this initial external grievance is gone, ideological diversity within coalitions becomes more salient and can lead to alliance and movement fragmentation. Therefore, for both practical and theoretical purposes, it is imperative

to recognize that diversity can contribute to both the degree of mobilization and the creation of divisions within movement coalitions.

Regardless of the demographic makeup of communities, comparing the coalition formation processes of the three cities examined in this study also tells us a lot about the different pathways the building of alliances can take. For example, in Los Angeles, a group of people (known as *La Placita Working Group*) that had originally begun to meet over the shooting and killing of a young migrant by border patrol agents *transformed* into what later became the March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition, whose primary focus was to organize a mass demonstration to help defeat of H.R. 4437. In New York, the process worked a bit differently. Here, networks that had previously existed and that were originally established in order to organize around other issues were *activated* to form a broad coalition against the Sensenbrenner Bill. Lastly, in Southwest Florida, the coalition that organized the Fort Myers march was *brokered* by key actors that served as central nodes within the social fabric of immigrant communities. The owners of local newspapers and magazines brought together the small ethnic businesses that advertised in their papers and the soccer league presidents of the soccer teams they covered. Encouraging the formation of a coalition between the leaders of these two vital immigrant social networks was fundamental to the successful mass mobilization that occurred in Fort Myers. Thus, while a combination of each of the three mechanisms stated above—*transformation*, *activation*, and *brokerage*—was to some degree key to the coalition formation processes in Los Angeles, New York, and Southwest Florida, these cases highlight the different ways in which alliances can develop.

***Why We Have to Study the Relationship Between Immigrant Activism and the Media Differently***

Fundamental to large-scale collective action is the ability to make a large number of people (however diverse the target population) aware of the need to mobilize. During the immigrant protest wave, this information was diffused through various personal, community, and organizational networks. But as exemplified in detail in Chapter 3, the mass media can also play a vital role in this process, especially because of its ability to broadcast its message across a large geographical area. The results of my research present some important theoretical contributions to our understanding of how news outlets can impact politics, especially contentious politics. For example, most U.S. social movement literature that examines the role of the media focuses solely on English language news sources. My findings suggest that many of the results of these previous studies may not necessarily apply (at least in the same way or to the same degree) to how movements composed of ethnic minorities interact with ethnic media outlets. Much of the established research contends that activists usually attempt to stage mass demonstrations in order to draw the media's attention in hopes of gaining sympathetic coverage. But in the case of the 2006 immigrant rights protest wave, immigrant rights activists actually *used* the mainstream Spanish mass media to amplify their calls for action. As a result, via local newspaper, radio, and television coverage, immigrants throughout the country witnessed people "just like them" participating in marches and were inspired to do the same. Thus, ethnic media was vital in helping the marches spread. Understanding how and why activists gained this unprecedented access to mainstream channels of communication is of the utmost importance for social movement scholars given the large-scale collective action it helped produce.

My data show that while the English media is expected only to serve as a source of information, the duties of ethnic news outlets (beyond playing this role) include assisting immigrants in integrating into their host country. Consequently, immigrant advocates who are also dedicated to helping incorporate the foreign-born into U.S. society have been able to develop strong working relationships with members of the Spanish-language media. These social ties helped make it easier for activists to convince these news outlets to grant them access to the airwaves. However, the media's willingness to participate stemmed from two additional reasons. My research findings indicate that by being immigrants themselves, members of the ethnic media often possess the same collective identities that can be impacted by the types of external grievances previously mentioned. Accordingly, they can also be motivated and convinced to support movement mobilization efforts against these same perceived injustices.

The ethnic composition of a city's immigrant population greatly impacts its ability to be mass mobilized through the ethnic media. For example, as the largest Spanish-language media market in the nation, the Los Angeles area for decades has had a number of well established and far-reaching Spanish newspapers and radio and television stations. In Southwest Florida, though relatively young—and small in terms of the size of their individual audiences—Spanish-language radio and print media outlets are also vital to the spread of information in immigrant communities. In both Los Angeles and Fort Myers, despite the differences in the size of their immigrant populations and broadcast capacities of their ethnic—particularly Spanish-language—media, the fact that its target audiences are primarily Mexicans, who in both locations make up the majority of undocumented immigrants, helped them mobilize this segment of their communities on a mass scale. Because Mexicans compose not only most of the audience but also

most of the staff of the news outlets in both of these cities, the Spanish-language media identified more with the cause and had more at stake during the immigration debate.

These dynamics played out somewhat differently in places with more heterogeneous immigrant populations, such as New York. Various foreign-born groups have different histories and lengths of time in the city. As a result, the development of each community's media infrastructure also differs in terms of size, reach, and format. For example, some immigrant groups may not be large enough to have daily newspapers or television stations that cater to them. Others may have only a radio program (*not* station) that airs once a week or twice a month. In short, every immigrant group does not have the same capability to mass-mobilize through their ethnic media. Moreover, even in places like New York that have large Latino populations, there is a high degree of diversity of subgroups within this pan-ethnic population. For example, whereas in Los Angeles Mexicans have several radio *stations* catering to their musical preferences, New York's major Spanish-language radio stations primarily target the larger Latino Caribbean community. Because of the diversity of some city's immigrant populations, and the varying ethnic media infrastructures of each immigrant group, not all staff members at these media outlets were impacted in the same ways by H.R. 4437, and thus did not identify equally with the threat.

As essential as it was to the rise of immigrant contention, it is important to note that the ethnic media can also play a key role in the decline and institutionalization of movements. In addition, as external contexts change, the manner in which ethnic news outlets support the efforts of activists can also change. For example, after the immediate threat of the Sensenbrenner Bill dissipated, ethnic news outlets used their influence to promote the frames and electoral strategies of more moderate activists while deliberately censoring the radical flank of the movement, and

by so doing may have prevented the escalation of movement contention. Furthermore, as profit-seeking corporations, it is not surprising that the ethnic media's motivation for getting involved in politics is not always completely altruistic in nature. Part of their motivation for helping to shift the movement's efforts to mass voter registration drives was not solely to increase the electoral power of immigrants, but also to draw presidential-campaign advertisement dollars from political parties. Moreover, by highlighting divisions within the movement and creating a sense of fear in immigrant communities across the country—through its coverage of the raids and the work dismissals that took place throughout the protest wave—ethnic media contributed to the decline of mobilization. In short, the same Spanish media outlets that previously broadcasted an image of strength and safety in numbers eventually helped cultivate the belief that there was now a price to pay for taking part in collective action.

Immigrant rights activists also learned other limits of attempting to use ethnic media to promote their movement's activities. While it served as a crucial channel of mass communication during the immigrant demonstrations, the Spanish-language media's capacity to influence society was restricted to the Spanish-speaking public. Thus, the vast majority of the U.S. population was not exposed to the issue frames and calls for protest amplified on ethnic airwaves. Given that American voters, and the politicians that had the power to bring about the legislative reforms the movement sought, were practically immune to the ethnic media's influence, immigrant advocates were forced to develop dual media strategies. In the process, they quickly realized that the media frames and pitches that worked with Spanish news outlets did not necessarily work with English ones. As a result, their degree of success when utilizing the "power of the media"—for both contentious and more institutional forms of politics—also differed.

It is well established that the mainstream English media can influence the trajectories of movements with regard to both the rise and decline of mobilizations. Given the changing demographic makeup of American society, students of the media's effects on social movements must begin simultaneously to analyze the dual strategies that movements composed of ethnic minorities deploy as they engage with both mainstream English and ethnic media outlets (and those outlets' target audiences). Understanding the impacts of these interactions will be imperative to comprehending the dynamics of future movement-media relations.

### ***Traditional and Nontraditional Mechanisms of Demobilization***

The findings presented in every chapter of this dissertation, and Chapter 5 in particular, help expand our theoretical understanding of the dynamics of movement demobilization by revealing elements both internal and external to the 2006 protest wave that contributed to its demise. Social movement scholars have found that the decline of mobilization can be attributed to a variety of factors. Several of these *traditional* “mechanisms of demobilization” (Tilly and Tarrow 2006, 97) contributed to the decline of the 2006 immigrant protest wave, among them state concessions (i.e. H.R. 4437 not becoming law), internal divisions (regarding policies, messaging, strategies, etc.), media channeling (i.e. the shift in media coverage from radical activists calling for more protests to moderate organizers calling for massive citizenship drives), and institutionalization (i.e. the movement’s change in focus from protest to electoral politics). There were also several forms of more *nontraditional* mechanisms of demobilization that occurred during the protest wave that are of theoretical importance for scholars of immigrant and contentious politics to note.

The results of my study show that there were three levels of *sources* (the federal government/agents, state and local governments/agents, and grassroots/societal actors) and three *forms* of nontraditional mechanisms of demobilization (sporadic systematic attacks, enhanced social control, and complete removal and confinement of potential movement participants) that also contributed to the decline of the immigrant protest wave. I conceptualize these mechanisms as nontraditional because the “sporadic systematic attacks” were not the type of arrests or beatings by local police that social movement scholars usually use to measure repression, the “enhanced social control” was not increased covert surveillance by federal agents (e.g. the FBI’s COINTEL-PRO during the civil rights and anti-war movements), and the “complete removal and/or confinement” that took place was not of movement leaders (e.g. Martin Luther King Jr.’s detention in a local Birmingham jail or Leonard Peltier of the American Indian movement being incarcerated in a federal penitentiary).

The *sporadic systematic attacks* that activists in New York, Southwest Florida, and Los Angeles claimed directly impacted their ability to mass-mobilize people without papers were the huge increases in raids that occurred throughout the country during and after the protest wave (and that were broadcasted by ethnic—specifically Spanish—news outlets). According to my fieldwork, both in local neighborhoods and on ethnic media airwaves, immigrants interpreted the workplace raids and neighborhood immigration sweeps as forms of anti-movement state repression. Across the nation, these actions by the federal government produced a chilling effect in immigrant communities as noted by the fact that community residents were constantly calling local immigrant rights organizations and Spanish radio stations to report (more often than not mistaken) sightings of immigration agents (“*la migra*”). Debates broke out within immigrant communities over whether or not the marches were worth the government backlash, creating

divisions within the movement and its base. Organizers from coast to coast contended that even when raids did *not* occur in their local areas, the fact that the Spanish media was covering raids in other places made immigrants feel that there was now a devastating price to pay—such as families being torn apart—for their acts of dissent.

The *enhanced social control* of immigrant communities came in the form of state and local anti-immigrant legislation, ordinances, and law enforcement programs that severely impacted the daily lives of undocumented immigrants. For instance, one form that increased social control took was in the now infamous 287(g) agreements that city and county governments entered into with federal immigration officials. This program trained local police agents and gave them the authority to enforce immigration laws. Activists across the country claimed that this program not only increased racial profiling of all Latinos by police, but also greatly restricted people without papers' ability to travel within their communities because of their fear of being pulled over and questioned about their legal status.

Between 2005 and 2007, the number of deportations increased by over 72,000 nationwide while the number of immigrants held captive in immigration detention centers rose by over 73,000 (see Chapter 5 for charts on these figures). These forms of *complete removal and confinement* were another form of anti-movement state repression “beyond bullets” that activists interviewed on the East Coast, West Coast, and in the U.S. South contended further hampered their ability to get immigrant communities to participate in more mass marches. This is not to say that the majority of people deported or detained *would have* participated in the mobilizations. Rather, activists asserted that the *fear* of being captured in a raid, detained, and deported caused enough panic to prevent many of the people who had already taken part in previous rallies—and

many of those who potentially would have taken part in future ones—from being receptive to their calls for continued mobilization.

In Fort Myers, Los Angeles, and New York, the combination of these forms of repression, along with increases in hate crimes and the galvanization of a nativist countermovement, produced an additional nontraditional mechanism of immigrant demobilization. The dialectical relationship between the forms of state/government and societal/grassroots repression cultivated the development of a “mental-*migra*” mindset among potential participants in large-scale immigrant collective action. This cognitive demobilization mechanism was the sense of fear and self-policing that developed within immigrant communities, whose members came to feel under attack. This fear of bringing more attention to themselves helped transform their collective “mobilizing identities,” which were fundamental to the rise of immigrant contention, into collective “*demobilizing identities*” that contributed to the decline of their willingness to participate in further public protests.

In sum, the 2006 immigrant protest wave helps expand our knowledge of the various mechanism of demobilization that can contribute to the demise of cycles of contention. But as alluded to earlier and discussed below, the *institutionalization* of the movement from mass street protest to mass electoral mobilization also helps explain the decline of the marches, and some of its most significant outcomes.

### ***Did the Movement Make a Difference?***

While we can easily point to examples of the effects movements can have on institutional politics (such as the women’s suffrage and African American civil rights movements), the outcomes social movements produce are still some of the least understood aspects of contentious

politics. My findings help fill this research gap in several respects. In terms of their direct impacts, my results indicate that even when the policymaking process is well underway, large-scale collective action can still exert influence. Sparked in reaction to a nativist bill passed by the U.S. House of Representatives, the 2006 mass marches helped prevent similar legislation from coming out of the Senate. Thus, adding to our theoretical understanding of the movement-policy nexus, the immigrant protest wave proved that widespread political activism can be a key tool in helping stop a federal legislative attack. Furthermore, my study also adds support to the notion that mass mobilization by people of color at the grassroots level can impact minority political elites at the national level. The momentum built by local community activists across the nation reinvigorated the efforts of Washington, D.C.-based national organizations to push for immigration reform that included the legalization of millions of undocumented immigrants. Their strategic location in the nation's capitol and national visibility allowed these organizations to capitalize on the media's and politicians' renewed interest in immigration policymaking by giving these national groups increased access to elected officials and a national platform from which to broadcast their positions—which, during the marches, now seemed to have the support of millions of people across the country.

The case of the 2006 immigrant protest wave teaches us that mass mobilizations can produce indirect results as well. As alluded to earlier, the networks and relationships established during the demonstrations helped create and solidify the organizational infrastructure throughout the nation that later provided the base from which the immigrant rights movement and ethnic news outlets were able to launch massive citizenship, voter registration, and voter mobilization campaigns. An effect of these efforts was that in key swing states immigrants and U.S.-born Latinos contributed to Democrats regaining the presidency two years after the rallies had ended.

Thus, these findings have important implications for social movement theory because they show us how movement mobilizations can take both contentious and electoral forms that yield direct and indirect impacts.

Lastly, the immigrant protest wave brings to light the role external threats can play in producing movement outcomes. The “quotidian disrupting” nature of H.R. 4437, and the countermovement it mobilized, helped not only highlight U.S. nativism, but also brought to the fore the thin line between “anti-immigrant” and “anti-people-of-color-of-immigrant-descent” sentiments, especially with regard to Latinos, and more specifically Mexicans. The xenophobic rhetoric of anti-immigrant zealots—from members of the Republican Party to the Minutemen—quickly went from being nativist to being racist towards all Latinos, regardless of where they were born or their citizenship status. While the primary targets of the Sensenbrenner Bill were undocumented immigrants, the rise in racist rhetoric helped create an opportunity for immigrant rights activists also to mobilize U.S.-born Latinos. As a result, Latinos—both immigrant and native-born—played an important role in helping elect Barack Obama as president of the United States. These findings are of theoretical interest to scholars of contentious politics because they suggest that threats to a particular group can be interpreted as attacks on other sectors of society as well. The participation of these unintentionally targeted groups, in both electoral and contentious politics, can contribute to the creation of unintentional indirect movement outcomes.

### ***What the 2006 Protest Wave Teaches Us about the Present Politics of Immigration***

Political scientists and political activists interested in understanding the current politics of immigration—from immigrant political participation to immigration policymaking—would benefit greatly from understanding the dynamics of the 2006 immigrant protest wave. One of the

most important lessons learned is that when anti-immigrant legislation directed towards people without papers also greatly impacts segments of society beyond the undocumented—such as U.S.-born Latinos, naturalized citizens, and legal permanent residents—we can expect collective action against these laws to occur among the various groups potentially affected. California’s Proposition 187 (in 1994) and Arizona’s SB 1070 (in 2010) both support this thesis. The two laws would have impacted their respective states’ immigrant *and* U.S.-born Latino populations, and as a result prompted broad reaction and mass mobilization. The quantitative studies reviewed in Chapter 1 found that immigrants naturalize, and both U.S.-born and immigrant Latinos vote, at higher rates under anti-immigrant political contexts. The 2006 protest wave teaches us that hostile environments can also influence the these groups’ participation in non-electoral forms of politics.

Another important finding relevant to understanding the politics of immigration today is the lesson that, as with other marginalized groups, but especially for the undocumented, “protest is not enough.” For the mass mobilization of immigrants to maximize its effectiveness, it must be accompanied by the power to pose an electoral threat to policymakers. Too many elected officials—on both the left and the right—easily dismissed the marchers as “nonvoting illegals” who, because they lacked the franchise, posed no electoral threat. If immigrants and their allies cannot impact the chances of a politician winning her next election, activists should not expect the representative to pay attention to their demands. This assertion brings to light another important element of immigrant politics—the dependence of undocumented immigrants (and their chances of ever winning legalization) on political brokers. Since people without papers cannot vote, and policymakers are most receptive to their electorates, for undocumented immigrants to win the legislative outcomes they desire they must gain the support of allies—both

U.S.- and foreign-born—who can exert electoral influence. As such, for the foreign-born who lack proper legal documentation, protest and electoral politics must go hand in hand.

Unlike during the 1990s, when California had a pool of eligible legal permanent residents and U.S.-born Latinos ready to naturalize and register to vote—and who, when they did, eventually helped change the state's politics—a significant amount of undocumented Latino immigration today is going to “new destinations,” such as the rural Midwest and U.S. South. Because the demographics of these new migration locations differ from that of California during the 1990s, we should not expect the same political results anytime soon from the state-level legislative attacks that are occurring in these places. Nonetheless, many of the U.S.-born children of immigrants in new immigrant receiving destinations, such as Fort Myers, do seem to be becoming politicized by the attacks on their undocumented parents, family members, friends, and neighbors. This suggests that while perhaps not as quickly as occurred in California, these potential pro-immigrant voters may in fact eventually come to play important roles in rural Midwestern and Southern politics. If this scenario were to materialize in the coming decade, it could change American politics as a whole for years to come.

### **Developments in the Movement Since the 2006 Protest Wave and 2008 Presidential Election**

Developments in the immigrant rights movements' quest to win legalization since the 2006 protest wave and 2008 presidential elections teach us that while protest is not enough, neither is *contributing* to electing a politician to office. In short, if protest has its limits, so does voting. Immigrant rights activists learned that it is one thing to help someone win an election, but it is quite another to hold them accountable and shape their legislative priorities after they've

taken office. With Obama being the most pro-immigrant candidate in the 2008 presidential race, immigrant advocates across the country had high hopes for his election, especially after Democrats seemed poised to have “super majorities” in each chamber of congress. Unfortunately, several events outside of the movement’s control and later decisions made by the new administration quickly dashed these hopes.

While having a “bulletproof” majority in the House, the 60 votes in the Senate that would have made the Democratic Party’s legislative agenda “filibuster proof” were not so solid. Although Obama claimed on the campaign trail that immigration would be one of his top legislative priorities in his first year in office, three key factors outside of the movement’s—and Obama’s—control contributed to this promise not being kept. Assuming that no Republican and all of the Democratic Senators would have supported Obama’s preferred immigration policy reforms, two state elections and a tragic death thwarted his party from possessing the 60 votes it needed to pass his first year legislative priorities.

In the 2008 Minnesota Senate race between incumbent Republican Norm Coleman and Democratic challenger Al Franken, the results were so close that a recount was necessary and several appeals were filed. While Franken eventually won, it took over 8 months for him to be sworn into office. In addition, after losing in the Democratic primary in Connecticut, conservative Democratic Senator Joe Lieberman ran and won the general election as an Independent. Due to the tension between him and his former party, it wasn’t clear whether the controversial senator—who often sided with Republicans on key issues—would caucus with Democrats or the GOP. Lastly, Obama’s key ally in the Senate and the legislative leader in the fight for pro-immigrant immigration reform, Senator Ted Kennedy, spent the first few months of

the new administration in a battle with brain cancer, which he eventually lost in August 2009. To make matters worse, his seat was eventually taken over by a Republican, Scott Brown.

These three reasons guaranteed the impossibility of any liberal policy proposals, including immigration, becoming law without the support of Republicans in the Senate—who, after losing power, were not in the mood to help their political rivals push their legislative agenda. Moreover, the main policy battle Democrats did choose to undertake in this political environment was health care, which took much longer and required more political capital than they had expected. Furthermore, soon after getting elected, the economic recession that Obama inherited hit rock bottom, rendering any argument to legalize 12 million undocumented workers a hard sell to an increasingly unemployed U.S. public. Thus, again, factors outside of the movement's and the new administration's control severely restricted their ability to pass the legalization that activists had hoped for and that Obama had promised to deliver as soon as he entered office.

In response, perhaps to deflect conservative critics' charges of Democrats' being unwilling to “protect and regain” control of the U.S.'s borders, the federal government decided to employ an “enforcement first” approach to immigration reform (Gonzales 2010). While never proposing anything close to as punitive as the Republican-sponsored Sensenbrenner Bill, and while continuing to state his support for legalization and immigration reform, Obama's administration has “out-enforced” Republicans as deportations and raids have *risen* under the Democratic president (see Chapter 5). As even moderate Washington, D.C. advocates who once supported this legislative approach have come to admit, the strategy of acquiescing to conservative demands to reduce undocumented migration by increasing enforcement measures *first*, in exchange for *later* support for legalization has proven to be a failure for liberals (Wessler

2010). People are being deported at a higher rate under the Obama Administration than under the Bush Administration while Republicans have continued to prevent the passing of even minimal legalization programs, such as the Dream Act, which proposes to grant legal residency to undocumented children who were raised, successfully completed high school, and want to go on to college in the United States.

Thus, having the support of a president it helps elect does not guarantee that the Commander and Chief will prioritize or be able to pass a movement's preferred policies. This isn't to say that the electoral influence the immigrant rights movement deployed during the 2008 elections was expended in vain; it just wasn't enough—more of it is needed. Since laws ultimately are made in Congress, immigrant rights activists must do the slow, long, and hard work of building bases and relationships with allies in locations beyond such traditional Democratic states as California and New York. They must attempt to build electoral and grassroots power in new migration receiving states as well. Whether the foundations that fund and the leaders that devise and drive the movement's strategy will actually do so remains to be seen. Their actions, or inactions, will reveal whether they are committed to building a movement with long-term political power, or merely funding a legislative campaign with a onetime outcome.

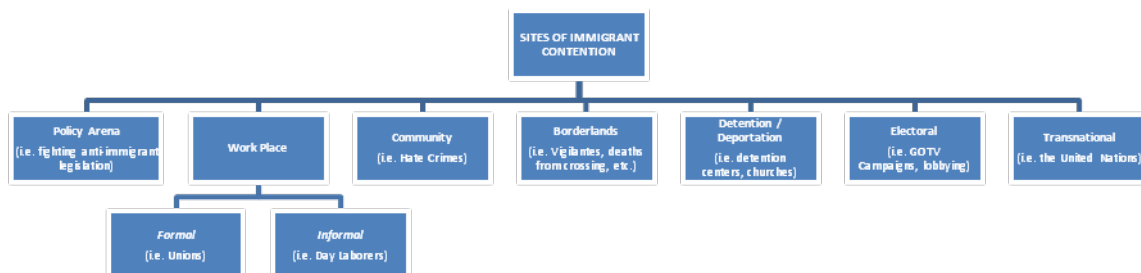
### **Directions for Future Research on (Im)Migrant Activism**

Future research on immigrant activism must go beyond solely examining mass mobilization and both focus within and beyond the national movement. Tilly and Tarrow's (2006) *mechanisms and processes approach* contends that in order to analyze the “dynamics of contention” we must first locate the various sites where these acts take place, then examine the

conditions at these sites. For instance, if we were interested in studying domestic worker activism, we would first have to look at the difficulties of organizing immigrants who work in isolated private homes, away from not only other *domesticas*, but also apart from the general public and organizers. Once we locate sites of contention and review the conditions at these spaces, we must then point out streams of contention and select some apparent outcomes for explanation. Again, in the case of domestic workers, streams of contention might include campaigns such as the one in New York that resulted in the state legislature passing a “Domestic Worker’s Bill of Rights.” After identifying some streams of contention and their apparent outcomes, the model suggests that we then “describe contentious processes by means of episodes,” decomposing them “into their causal mechanisms before reassembling the mechanisms into more general accounts of the process involved” (27).

Applying this dynamic approach to the seven sites of immigrant contention I have identified below (*Diagram 1*), and examining how the various actors who take part in immigrant rights activism maneuver their ways through these sites, will help us better understand the various ways in which immigrant contentious politics manifests itself.

**Diagram 1. Sites of Immigrant Contention**



Furthermore, as this dissertation has shown, movements—including the immigrant rights movement—are often made up of multiple actors with various goals and interests. Consequently, fundamental to capturing the dynamics of immigrant activism is studying not only the mechanisms, processes, and spaces (from borders regions and detention centers to courtrooms and international conferences) where it takes place, but also the diversity of the people that participate in it. Thus, social movement scholars interested in contentious immigrant politics should pay more attention to how groups that are “secondarily marginalized” (Cohen 1999) *within* the movement navigate their politics and try to put their particular issues on the broader movement’s agenda. Examining how marginalized groups such as non-Latino and queer immigrants attempt to fight for their specific interests, both within the broader immigrant rights movement and outside of it through other (e.g. black, Muslim, lesbian, and gay rights) movements, should be another focus for future research.

Finally, one of the major contradictions of the U.S. immigrant rights movement is that it attempts to deal with the effects of a *global* phenomenon—international migration—through *national* policy reforms. Consequently, in the course of my own scholar-activism over the past decade, I have become increasingly unsettled by the “nation-state” focus of both official immigration policymakers and D.C.-based immigrant advocates. I believe scholars should begin to study *migrant* activism not only comparatively, but also through multiple levels of analysis—local, national, and global. This shouldn’t be too difficult given that SMOs such as—at the local and national level—New York’s Movement for Justice in the Barrio and the Oakland-based National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR) and—at the regional and global level—Europe’s Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM) and the worldwide People’s Global

Action on Migration, Development, and Human Rights (PGA) all serve as examples of how immigrant rights activists are beginning to exhibit a more global analysis of the issue, and how, in response, their activism has taken on a transnational character.

Hence, the initial impetuses and root causes (from colonialism to neoliberal economic reforms) of specific migration streams; the development of migrant rights organizations at the local, national, and transnational levels; how and to whom these groups direct their frames and claims; the forms their activism takes; and how they establish networks and coalitions both within and across their countries' borders will be imperative for scholars of immigrant activism to research given that international migration shows no signs of abating. In conclusion, if immigrant activism is beginning to go transnational, so must the study of it. We should move from examining contentious *immigrant* politics—which confines our analysis to within nation-state borders—to studying contentious *migrant* politics—which leads our analysis to move freely across borders (with or without papers).

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## ENDNOTES

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<sup>i</sup> Ana Maria

<sup>ii</sup> An internationally recognized SMO with a history of organizing around farm worker issues, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), is based thirty-five miles outside of Fort Myers. But while on their website the *Sarasota/Manatee Farmworker Supporters* reported that the CIW was a key organizer of the Fort Myers rally (see <http://www.smfws.com/articles2006/2006aprilmayjune/art04162006e.htm>), my interviews with the protest organizers revealed that this *was not* the case. In fact, interviewees asserted that at first the CIW actively opposed the idea of the rally. In addition, in an interview conducted with lead CIW organizer Lucas Benitez, he stated that while his group “didn’t organize” their members for the march, they did attend, talked about it on their low-powered radio station, and spoke to some labor contractors about helping transport participants to the event. Nonetheless, it is important to note that despite their lack of involvement in the organizing of the demonstration, the CIW *was* the only group in the area that continued to successfully organize immigrants in their area as noted by their national victory over McDonalds. See their campaign’s highlights at [http://www.ciw-online.org/McDonald%27s\\_campaign\\_archive.html](http://www.ciw-online.org/McDonald%27s_campaign_archive.html).

<sup>iii</sup> Isaías

<sup>iv</sup> Omar

<sup>v</sup> Zebedeo

<sup>vi</sup> Moises

<sup>vii</sup> Ana Maria

<sup>viii</sup> Zebedeo

<sup>ix</sup> Moises

<sup>x</sup> David

<sup>xi</sup> Hortensia

<sup>xii</sup> Tacho

<sup>xiii</sup> Moises

<sup>xiv</sup> Marcos

<sup>xv</sup> Moises

<sup>xvi</sup> With the exception of Marcos, a Mexican-American child of immigrants.

<sup>xvii</sup> Before the bill became a law people without papers were able to obtain drivers licenses in Florida.

<sup>xviii</sup> Fidelia

<sup>xix</sup> Marcos

<sup>xx</sup> Foerster, Feb 23 2006

<sup>xxi</sup> David

<sup>xxii</sup> Moises

<sup>xxiii</sup> Marcos

<sup>xxiv</sup> Marcos

<sup>xxv</sup> Marcos

<sup>xxvi</sup> Moises

<sup>xxvii</sup> Marcos

<sup>xxviii</sup> David

<sup>xxix</sup> Ana Maria

<sup>xxx</sup> Marcos

<sup>xxxi</sup> Marcos

<sup>xxxii</sup> Ana Maria

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Fidelia and Zebedeo

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Marcos

<sup>xxxv</sup> Zebedeo

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Moises

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Fr. Samuel

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xxxviii Moises  
xxxix Lucas, Immokalee  
xl Marcos  
xli Omar  
xlii David  
xliii David also mentioned that the economy was strong at the time and all of his five businesses were flourishing.  
xliv Omar  
xlv Zebedeo  
xlvi According to Zebedeo, many stations would give them a 50% discount on advertisement. For example, if they bought ten slots from a station, the station would give them ten more for free.  
xlvii Zebedeo  
xlviii Marcos  
xlix Isaias, Ana Maria, Ramona  
l A Coalition of Immokalee Workers organizer also pointed this out.  
li Marcos  
lii Zebedeo  
liii Tacho  
liv Moises  
lv Tacho  
lvi Tacho  
lvii Tacho  
lviii Tacho  
lix Daniel  
lx Moises and Tacho  
lxi Marcos  
lxii Marcos  
lxiii Susana  
lxiv Marcos  
lxv Marcos  
lxvi Tacho  
lxvii Ana Maria  
lxviii Ramona  
lix Moises  
lxx Tacho  
lxxi Susana  
lxxii Susana  
lxxiii Omar  
lxxiv Hortensia and Rosalinda  
lxxv Zebedeo  
lxxvi Moises  
lxxvii Moises  
lxxviii Ana Maria  
lxxix Ramona and Ana Maria  
lxxx Ana Maria  
lxxxi Omar  
lxxxii David  
lxxxiii Marcos  
lxxxiv Marcos  
lxxxv Tacho  
lxxxvi Marcos

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- <sup>lxxxvii</sup> Some interviewees stated that they did remember some outside “American groups” come in during the election season to try to register people to vote, but the CMF never took part in these actions as a collective.
- <sup>lxxxviii</sup> Rosalinda and Hortensia
- <sup>lxxxix</sup> Moises
- <sup>xc</sup> Tacho
- <sup>xc<sup>i</sup></sup> “The Big Six” < <http://www.freepress.net/ownership/chart/main>>
- <sup>xc<sup>ii</sup></sup> Eun Sook Lee, Executive Director of NAKASEC; Xiomara Corpeno, Director of Organizing for CHIRLA.
- <sup>xc<sup>iii</sup></sup> Xiomara Corpeno, CHIRLA
- <sup>xc<sup>iv</sup></sup> Jesse Diaz, March 25<sup>th</sup> Coalition. For other smaller Anti-H.R. 4437 meetings and actions previous to the Riverside Conference see Navarro 2009.
- <sup>xc<sup>v</sup></sup> Email from the “Southern California Human Rights Network”. February 26, 2006. Subject: “MARCH 25 MASS MARCH AGAINST SENSENBRENNER HR4437 -Media Advisory.”
- <sup>xc<sup>vi</sup></sup> Interview with Hank Gonzalez. July 16, 2006. <<http://www.socialistalternative.org/news/article15.php?id=414>>
- <sup>xc<sup>vii</sup></sup> Juan Jose Gutierrez, Latino Movement USA.
- <sup>xc<sup>viii</sup></sup> Nativo Lopez, Hermandad Mexicana and Mexican American Political Association (MAPA)
- <sup>xc<sup>ix</sup></sup> Angelica Salas, CHIRLA
- <sup>c</sup> Javier Rodriguez
- <sup>ci</sup> Javier Rodriguez
- <sup>c<sup>ii</sup></sup> Jesse Diaz
- <sup>c<sup>iii</sup></sup> Jesse Diaz
- <sup>c<sup>iv</sup></sup> Juan Jose Gutierrez
- <sup>c<sup>v</sup></sup> Javier Rodriguez.
- <sup>c<sup>vi</sup></sup> Juan Jose Gutierrez.
- <sup>c<sup>vii</sup></sup> Jesse Diaz
- <sup>c<sup>viii</sup></sup> Nativo Lopez.
- <sup>c<sup>ix</sup></sup> Juan Jose Gutierrez.
- <sup>c<sup>x</sup></sup> Jesse Diaz
- <sup>c<sup>xi</sup></sup> Nativo Lopez
- <sup>c<sup>xii</sup></sup> Nativo Lopez
- <sup>c<sup>xiii</sup></sup> Jorge Mettey, Univision
- <sup>c<sup>xiv</sup></sup> Anonymous Univision Editorial Board Member
- <sup>c<sup>xv</sup></sup> Mettey, Univision.
- <sup>c<sup>xvi</sup></sup> Authors translation from personal copy of promo.
- <sup>c<sup>xvii</sup></sup> Jorge Mettey and Anonymous Univision Editorial Board Member.
- <sup>c<sup>xviii</sup></sup> Victor Narro, UCLA Labor Center
- <sup>c<sup>xix</sup></sup> Hernandez 2006.
- <sup>c<sup>xx</sup></sup> Authors personal observations.
- <sup>c<sup>xxi</sup></sup> Authors personal observations.
- <sup>c<sup>xxii</sup></sup> Javier Gonzalez, SOL/SEIU 1877.
- <sup>c<sup>xxiii</sup></sup> <http://www.csulb.edu/~d49er/archives/2006/spring/news/v12n95-rally.shtml>.
- <sup>c<sup>xxiv</sup></sup> Rosalina Cardenas, OC Media
- <sup>c<sup>xxv</sup></sup> The media strategy team of the coalition was made of several women including: Rosaline Cardenas and Alina Ossen from OC Media, a private media consulting firm; Maria Elena Jauregui who use to be news director for Univision and as a result knew several other news directors across the country; Carolina Guevara who was the media person for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles; and Mary Gutierrez of the LA County Fed who also worked closely with Hilda Delgado formerly of *La Opinion*.
- <sup>c<sup>xxvi</sup></sup> Rosaline Cardenas, OC Media
- <sup>c<sup>xxvii</sup></sup> Mike Garcia, SEIU
- <sup>c<sup>xxviii</sup></sup> Rosalina Cardenas, OC Media
- <sup>c<sup>xxix</sup></sup> Mike Garcia
- <sup>c<sup>xxx</sup></sup> Javier Gonzalez
- <sup>c<sup>xxxi</sup></sup> Rosalina Cardenas, OC Media
- <sup>c<sup>xxxii</sup></sup> Carolina Guevara

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- cxxxiii Rosalina Cardenas, OC Media
- cxxxiv Rosalina Cardenas
- cxxxv Jesse Diaz
- cxxxvi Juan Jose Gutierrez
- cxxxvii Javier Rodriguez
- cxxxviii Robin Potash, UTLA
- cxxxix Guillermo Torres
- cxl Juan Jose Gutierrez
- cxli Jorge Mettey, Univision
- cxlii Angelica Salas, CHIRLA
- cxliii Jorge Mettey and anonymous Univision editorial board member.
- cxliv Anonymous Univision editorial board member
- cxlv Aarti Shahani, Families for Freedom.
- cxlvi See the radio program's May 2, 2006 transcripts at [http://www.democracynow.org/2006/5/2/over\\_1\\_5\\_million\\_march\\_for](http://www.democracynow.org/2006/5/2/over_1_5_million_march_for)
- cxlvii Aarti Shahani, Families for Freedom.
- cxlviii AnaLiza Caballes, Damayan Migrant Workers Association.
- cxlix Sussie Losada, *La Aurora* and NYCPP.
- cl Rhadames Pérez, *Acción Comunitaria La Aurora*.
- cli Monami Maulik, DRUM.
- clii Hector Figueroa, SEIU 32BJ and Anonymous NYC staffer.
- cliii Anonymous NYC staffer.
- cliv Anonymous NYC staffer.
- clv Raquel Batista, NMCIR.
- clvi Monami Maulik, DRUM.
- clvii Anonymous NYC staffer.
- clviii "Thousands March for Immigrant Rights." May 1, 2006. [http://articles.cnn.com/2006-05-01/us/immigrant.day\\_1\\_thousands-march-largest-protests-immigration-laws?s=PM:US](http://articles.cnn.com/2006-05-01/us/immigrant.day_1_thousands-march-largest-protests-immigration-laws?s=PM:US)
- clix Teresa Gutierrez, International Action Center and May 1<sup>st</sup> Coalition.
- clx Ana Maria Archila, Make the Road
- clxi Artemio Guerra, Fifth Avenue Committee.
- clxii Monami Maulik, DRUM.
- clxiii Monami Maulik, DRUM.
- clxiv Anonymous NYC staffer.
- clxv Monami Maulik, DRUM.
- clxvi Zahida Pirani, NYCPP. Other Latino and non-Latino activists also said that Latinos made up the largest groups of protesters, and that within this ethnic group, Dominicans and Mexicans seemed to have the highest turn out.
- clxvii Rhadames Pérez (*La Aurora*), Sussie Lozada (NYCPP), Luis Tejada (*Hermanas Maribel*), Raquel Batista (NMCIR), Moisés Pérez (*Alianza Dominicana*).
- clxviii Zahida Pirani, NYCPP.
- clxix Moises
- clxx Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) 2006 Hate Crimes Statistics. <http://www2.fbi.gov/ucr/hc2006/victims.html>
- clxxi Frank Sharry, National Immigration Forum.
- clxxii Frank Sharry, National Immigration Forum
- clxxiii Angelica Salas, CHIRLA
- clxxiv Xiomara Corpeno, CHIRLA
- clxxv Leader of national organization who wished for his comment to be anonymous.
- clxxvi Maria Echaveste, Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform

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- clxxvii Angelica Salas, CHIRLA  
clxxviii Ana Avendano, AFL-CIO  
clxxix Maria Escheveste, CCIR  
clxxx Ira Mehlman, FAIR  
clxxxi Frank Sharry, National Immigration Forum.  
clxxxii Angelica Salas, CHIRLA and FIRM  
clxxxiii Stoltz, FIRM  
clxxxiv Eliseo Medina, SEUI  
clxxxv Jeroge Mettey, *Univision*  
clxxxvi Jorge Mettey, *Univision*  
clxxxvii Efrain Escobedo, NALEO  
clxxxviii Efrain Escobedo, NALEO  
clxxxix Efrain Escobedo, NALEO  
cxc Angelica Salas, FIRM and CCIR  
cxci Efrain Escobedo, NALEO  
cxcii Anonymous *Univision* editorial board member and Efrain Escobedo of NALEO.  
cxciiii Anonymous *Univision* editorial board member.  
cxciiv Efrain Escobedo, NALEO  
cxci v National Latino Congreso Press Release, July 13 2008. <http://latinocongreso.org/news.php?id=88>  
cxci vi Angelica Salas, WAAA  
cxci vii Pew Hispanic Center. "The Hispanic Voter in the 2008 Election." November 5, 2008.  
cxci viii Craig Regoburger, Agriculture Coalition for Immigration Reform  
cxci x Frank Sharry, National Immigration Forum  
cc See <http://lawprofessors.typepad.com/immigration/2008/03/frank-sharry-ne.html>  
cci Xiomara Corpeno, CHIRLA and FIRM