ABSTRACT

Title of Document:	BREAKING INTO THE PUBLIC SPHERE: TEMPORALITY, CONTEXT, AND INNOVATION IN THE POLITICIZATION OF LATIN AMERICAN IMMIGRANTS
	Guillermo R. Cantor, Doctor of Philosophy, 2008
Directed By:	Prof. Roberto Patricio Korzeniewicz, Department of Sociology

This dissertation aims to improve our understanding of the political life of Latinos in the U.S., in specific local contexts and historical moments. To that end, I propose to reframe the understanding of *politics* and *the political*. Borrowing elements from political philosophy, I propose using the concept of *politicization,* which is primarily defined by the introduction of innovation in the public realm; the generation of consequences that affect not only those directly involved in a situation but others as well; and the intervention in a public domain that is not limited to state structures.

To elaborate on this idea of politicization as well as to bring history, context, and in particular, temporality, to the center of this research, I look at two major events that crystallized the most critical landmarks in the recent political history of Latinos in the Washington D.C. area: the Mount Pleasant Riots of 1991 and "La Marcha" of 2006. In order to disentangle the process of politicization in each of the events analyzed, I

examine the interplay of context (including demographic, political, and organizational features of the local Latino community), episodes of contention, attribution of opportunities and threats, social and organizational appropriation, and innovation. I then reconstruct these cases by inscribing them in their contexts and analyzing how, why, and when different consequential actions were performed.

Both the Mount Pleasant riots and La Marcha involved the engagement of ordinary people in the Latino community in contentious public acts which led to the emergence of a transformed ethnically-centered political actor. I argue that this actor constitution was the result of the way in which ordinary people and various collective actors proceeded throughout the exceptional public performances, before, during, and after. My main argument is that the profile and structural location of leading organizations (e.g., dependency on government contracts, foundations' grants, employers, or ordinary people) involved in the events had a decisive impact on the actions adopted by community leaders which, in turn, affected the direction of the political path that the Latino community undertook.

BREAKING INTO THE PUBLIC SPHERE:
TEMPORALITY, CONTEXT, AND INNOVATION IN THE POLITICIZATION
OF LATIN AMERICAN IMMIGRANTS

By

Guillermo Ruben Cantor

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Advisory Committee:
Professor Roberto Patricio Korzeniewicz, Chair
Professor Sonalde Desai
Professor Judith Freidenberg
Professor Dae Young Kim
Professor Reeve Vanneman

Dedication

To the memory of my grandmother Ana Rejina Differding

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The completion of this dissertation represents an extraordinary milestone not only in my professional development but also—and more importantly—in my life. My experience in the doctoral program has been literally and metaphorically an intense, at moments exciting and at moments frustrating, journey. When I started the program in 2003 I immediately realized that the challenges would be multiple: from adjusting to a new life, a new culture, and a way of working and thinking radically different from those I was used to, to embarking in a research project of frightening dimensions. I certainly believe that the latter would have been impossible to achieve without resolving the former. Fortunately, this journey is reaching its end, and looking back I can identify a considerable number of debts.

Although the research process is to a great extent a solitary task, paradoxically it is also an enterprise impossible to develop without the collaboration of a number of people. I want to thank the professors of the University of Maryland's department of sociology for pushing me to explore new universes. In particular, I want to express my gratitude to my dissertation advisor, Patricio Korzeniewicz, whose constant availability, openness, and encouragement for the development of my project have been crucial. I also want to thank the members of my dissertation committee, Sonalde Desai, Judith Freidenberg, Dae Young Kim and Reeve Vanneman, for their incisive reading and comments on my drafts.

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Introduction

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, between the years 1990 and 2000 the proportion of foreign-born residents in the United States jumped from 7.9 percent to 11.1 percent (from 19.8 million to 31.1 million). Among them, those who were not U.S. citizens increased by 58 percent in the same period. Latin Americans, specifically, made up 52 percent of the foreign-born in 2000. As immigration rates continue to grow, immigration has become a hot topic in the public agenda. In the last few years alone, the rising numbers became not only a pressing issue at all levels of government —namely, federal, state, and local—but also a central theme of debate in the media.

Although limited when compared to the literature on economic, cultural, and social aspects of immigration, the academic interest in the political implications of immigration has registered a noticeable increase in recent years. When analyzing the political life of immigrants in the US in general, and of Latin American immigrants[1] in particular, the literature has mainly focused on the following general concepts: political incorporation, political participation, and, to a lesser extent, political mobilization. Although useful in order to understand a variety of problems regarding legal membership, involvement, and organization of the group, these bodies of literature have left understudied some important aspects of the political life of Latino immigrants residing in U.S. territory. These limitations are not only reflected in the definition of *what* is being read as "political" in the activities or status of the group of interest, but also in *how* the political life of the group has been studied.

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[1] The expressions "Latino immigrant" and "Latin American immigrant" are in this piece used indistinguishably.

First, the relatively limited scope of many of these studies in capturing political features of the group is a reflection of the type of conceptualization on which these pieces are based. When the emphasis is placed on the process of becoming part of the polity or engaging in political activity through formalized means, the less obvious gaps through which politics almost exclusively operates for those not formally authorized through membership, remain invisible. In particular, given that a significant proportion of Latin American immigrants are noncitizens, and among them, the majority do not have legal documents that authorize them to live and work in this country, analyses focusing on "formal" politics and institutions of representation leave a meaningful portion of their political activities, as well as their implications, aside. This is the case for many of the studies centered on notions of political incorporation and political participation. Research on the political mobilization of Latin American immigrants, on the other hand, is more sensitive to political activities taking place at the margins of formal political institutions. However, these exemplars are to a great extent limited to organizational aspects of mobilization and centered in the examination of one sector only—usually, campaigns of organization in one particular industry or voters' mobilization for an election. Overall, the literature on political mobilization signals a promising yet insufficiently developed line of research.

Second, many of the studies on political activity of immigrants follow a linear conception in which the relations of causality are based on monolithic patterns—this is especially true for the works on political participation—rather than on a detailed examination of specific historical sequences. In other words, in most of these studies, rates of political activity (such as electoral participation, naturalization, or attendance at

rallies) are examined in relation to certain predicting variables. That is to say, the possession of a certain attribute or a combination of attributes is supposed to predict certain political behavior. Using Abbot's terms, this line of research tends to "attribute causality to the variables—hypostatized social characteristics—rather than to agents; variables do things, not social actors. Stories disappear." (Abbott 1992: 428) In addition, the units of analysis in these works are usually individuals—e.g., Latinos or Latino immigrants—rather than collective actors or categories. In contrast, I propose to look at the politicization of Latinos as a collective process in which collective actors occupy a central role rather than as the possession of certain attributes (e.g., citizenship) or the engagement in certain practices (e.g., voting) by individuals. Such study of politicization, therefore, should be historically grounded. This is particularly important considering that (1) the group's politicization is contingent on Latino and non-Latino actors' practices, the characteristics of the political setting, and prevailing cultural schemas (among other elements); and (2) through the entry into the public sphere, the group also affects those very same actors, practices, and structures. For those reasons, an isolated study of the characteristics of the group without careful consideration of the context would impede a holistic comprehension of the phenomenon under study.

This dissertation aims to improve our understanding of the political life of Latin American immigrants in the U.S., in specific local contexts and historical moments. To that end, I propose to reframe the understanding of *politics* and *the political*. Borrowing elements from political philosophy, I propose using the concept of *politicization,* which is primarily defined by the introduction of innovation in the public realm; the generation of consequences that affect not only those directly involved in a situation but others as well;

and the intervention in a public domain that is not limited to state structures. In addition, as an attempt to bring history, context, and in particular, temporality, to the center of this research, I look at particular events; that is to say, sets of occurrences recognized as exceptional in the fact that they produce transformations in structures. Events as extraordinary moments are worth examining because they present openings for the group to constitute itself as an actor, because they prompt modifications in social relationships, and most importantly, because they have unexpected effects in the political process.[2] Critical political events are the sites in which there is a rupture from the ordinary, and, for that reason, the place par excellence to examine politics understood as the initiation of something different in the public realm.

This research is centered on the study of two major events that crystallized the most critical landmarks in the recent political history of Latinos residing in the Washington D.C. area: the Mount Pleasant Riots of 1991 and "La Marcha" of April 10, 2006 in Washington, D.C. Their relevance is, in turn, presumed by the presence of several elements, including the increase of public visibility of the Latino community[3] during their occurrence, and the understanding by different members of the community that these moments represented turning points in the community.

In the analysis of these cases, the questions that guided my research are as follows: Through what mechanisms do Latin American immigrants, regardless of their legal status, become politicized? To what extent does their entering into the public sphere lead to innovation? What combination of factors accounts for such innovation? In order to answer those questions I relied on varied types of evidence, primarily newspaper

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[2] On the importance of events in the transformation of structures I rely on Sewell (1996).
[3] This visibility is reflected in the substantial amount of media coverage they both received.

articles, and in-depth interviews with leaders of organizations, community organizers, public officials, journalists, and immigrant workers. I also used quantitative data, institutional documents, and direct observation.

In order to disentangle the process of politicization in each of the events analyzed herein I looked at the interplay of context (including demographic, political, and organizational features of the local Latino community), episodes of contention, attribution of opportunities and threats, social and organizational appropriation, and innovation (understood in terms of the formation or transformation of an identity-based political actor). Attention was paid not only to what type of occurrences took place, but also to when they happened.

Both the Mount Pleasant riots and the immigration rally of April 10th 2006 involved the engagement of ordinary people in the Latino community in contentious street performances which led to the emergence of a transformed ethnically-grounded political actor. This actor constitution was the result of the way in which ordinary people as well as different collective actors proceeded at different points during, before and after the exceptional public performances—that is, the violent riots in Mount Pleasant and the massive demonstrations in the Washington Monument. In this study, I reconstruct these cases by inscribing them in their contexts and analyzing how, why, and when different consequential actions were performed. The main argument I make in this dissertation is that the profile and structural location of leading organizations (e.g., dependency on government contracts, foundations grants and employers) involved in the events have a decisive impact on the actions adopted by community leaders which, in turn, affect the direction of the political path taken by the Latino community.

This study aims to foster a better understanding of the innovative contributions of the Latin American immigrant population in the public realm of the nation's capital. Even if the Washington, D.C. area is among the top ten metropolitan areas attracting immigrants and that as the capital is a critical center of gravity, thus far the political life of the foreign-born population in general, and of Latinos in particular, has been scarcely studied in that locale. By providing a historical-sociological reconstruction of the recent political history of the Latino community, this dissertation tries to contribute to fill this gap. Although the study is based on two cases in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area, it uncovers implications of politicization that may apply well beyond this area.

From a theoretical perspective, this dissertation offers more precise conceptual devices capable of capturing hidden aspects of the political life of immigrants that are consequential not only for immigrants themselves but also for the political setting where they intervene. In particular, the research offers important insights into both the formal and informal processes within the Latino social networks and community engagements. By developing a re-conceptualization of immigrants' political life, this study offers insight into the links between political opportunity frames, organizational patterns, events, and the politicization of a seemingly disempowered community. Traditional approaches on political incorporation (i.e. looking at voting patterns or proclivity towards supporting party politics) are insufficient for understanding the myriad ways in which marginalized ethnic communities, particularly a highly immigrant one engage the broader society. This study aims to provide a deeper understanding on how nontraditional modes

for political engagement can provide venues for effectively positioning seemingly disenfranchised groups within the larger U.S. political landscape.

This project looks to expand upon immigration literature in the U.S., with a particular goal of understanding how new immigrants and undocumented migrants insert themselves into the U.S. political landscape. Assumptions about low political participation among immigrant groups are challenged by focusing attention on political events that draw immigrants into riots and protest marches which, in turn, draw them into alternative political engagements.

The research agenda executed in this study aims to engage a number of different audiences. In addition to opening dialogues with stakeholders in different subfields in sociology (such as social movements scholars, political sociologists, and race/ethnicity specialists) and political science, the study seeks to contribute to on-going discussions in the public arena.

This dissertation encompasses five main sections. In the first chapter, I present a critical analysis of theoretically and substantively relevant literature on the political aspects of immigrants—in particular Latino immigrants—in the U.S. This review is organized around four main themes: political incorporation, political participation, the status of the undocumented, and political mobilization. In chapter two, I outline the main conceptual devices on which the proposed research will rely. In this regard, I first introduce the concept of politicization, then I justify the importance of looking at events, and finally, I summarize some theoretical devices borrowed from the contentious politics approach and the political process theory. Chapter 3 is devoted to the specification of the research design. In particular, I pose the research questions, describe the conceptual

model and operational definitions, and specify the evidence and types of analysis utilized. Chapters 4 and 5 are devoted to the analysis of the Mount Pleasant riots and La Marcha respectively. The last chapter contains the conclusions.

Chapter 1: Background

1.1. Political incorporation of Latin American immigrants into the US political system

What does it mean to become incorporated? Etymologically, the word incorporation comes from the Latin term *incorporare*, which can be translated as to embody, or in other words, to become part of the body. However, the extent to which this becoming part of the body takes place might vary according to different definitions. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, to incorporate means "to take in or include as part of a whole"; on the other hand, according to Merriam-Webster, the verb is conceptualized as "(a) to unite or work into something already existent so as to form an indistinguishable whole; (b) to blend or combine thoroughly". Although these differences in semantics might seem slight, they express the varying intensity and scope that the act of becoming part of the whole might consist of.

Distinct conceptions of incorporation are found in the literature on political incorporation of minorities; specifically, political incorporation of immigrants, and of Latino immigrants in particular (e.g., Browning et al. 1984; DeSipio and de la Garza 1998; Hero 1992; Jones-Correa 1998, 2001, 2005; Portes and Rumbaut 1996; Bloemraad 2006). Although political incorporation is conceived of as the particular process through which a certain group becomes part of the polity or acquires a political life, differences arise when it comes to the precise conceptualization, operationalization, and/or explanation of that process. In that sense, the conceptualization of political incorporation can be organized around four main axes that coincide with where the focus of the

explanation is principally placed—namely, (1) the organizational and electoral capacity of the group, (2) the resources provided by the state, (3) the role of community-based organizations, and (4) the acquisition of citizenship.

One widespread understanding of political incorporation of immigrants views political incorporation as a result of the minority group's own capacity. Among studies on Latinos' incorporation into the US political system, Browning et al. (1984) and Hero (1992) are good examples of this viewpoint. In these works, political incorporation is understood as equivalent to influence in policy making. Whereas Browning et al. (1984) suggest that an effective incorporation of minorities requires their major presence in coalitions that push forward their interests in the political arena, Hero's (1992) concerns are focused on the absence of de facto pluralism—characterized as "two-tiered pluralism"—among Latinos who have the formal rights of citizens, but yet have a limited political and social influence.

These types of arguments have some caveats that are worth noting. First, their analyses particularly refer to the unequal and limited actual incorporation of Latino *citizens* into the U.S. political system. They do not specifically refer to the inclusion/marginalization of Latino noncitizens residing in the U.S. On the other hand, both accounts view politics exclusively in instrumental terms, that is, as a tool for minorities to gain impact on policy outcomes.

A second notion of political incorporation stresses the resources available from the state in the process of inclusion. De Sipio and de la Garza (1998), in this line, conceptualize political incorporation in terms of settlement, suggesting that the availability of governmental resources—mainly, through beneficial policies—affects

immigrants' transition into becoming "full members of the society". With this in mind, they focus their analytical lens on the policies that benefit immigrants in the US, and that regulate the relationships between immigrants and U.S.-born populations. Additionally, in looking at the state mainly at the local level, Jones-Correa (2005; forthcoming) asserts that local bureaucracies play a critical role in incorporating new immigrants; and this bureaucratic incorporation, in turn, precedes electoral representation and lobbying. In this account, bureaucracies as the meeting points between citizens (and particularly, non-citizens) and the state shape the process of political inclusion of minorities. Thus, addressing immigrant lobbying toward bureaucracies might operate as a more efficacious channel than focusing solely on electoral representation.

The role of bureaucracies as active actors mobilizing for change is illustrated by the study of different policy issues in metropolitan Washington D.C., such as access to magnet schools, library purchasing policies, and zoning regulations (Jones Correa 2005); education policy (Jones Correa, forthcoming); or the location of day labor sites (Frasure and Jones-Correa 2005). In this last case, however, the argument underscores that the bureaucracy does not act alone over this policy issue, but in conjunction with community based organizations.

Looking at the state apparatus at the different levels (federal, state, and local) is critical for accounting for the ways in which a minority group becomes part of the polity. Jones-Correa's recent work as described above is particularly innovative in uncovering subtle processes through which bureaucracies incorporate immigrants. The theorization of how this incorporation is political, though, still needs further development.

Several scholarly articles have emphasized the role of community-based organizations, and especially immigrant and ethnic organizations, in the social, economic, and political incorporation of immigrants or ethnic minorities.[4] Nonprofit organizations, in particular, have been depicted as playing a critical part in satisfying the needs and voicing the claims of these groups. The political roles of these organizations range from encouraging direct involvement of immigrants—for example, in campaigns, rallies or crafting bills—(Gordon 2000), to promoting immigrants' citizenship acquisition, registration and voting (Garcia and de la Garza 1985), to acting on behalf of newcomers through lobbying or other public actions (Cordero-Guzmán 2005), to pushing issues into the public agenda (Abraham 1995), to preparing or supporting Latinos/as to run for political office (García and Márquez 2001, Koldewyn 1992), to educating them on political issues (Chung 2005). According to de Graauw (2007), immigrant nonprofits have the capacity to bridge the gap between the powerless immigrant community and the powerful political establishment by acting in two levels: the policy process (through agenda setting, access to decision making arenas, advocacy and lobbying), and the electoral process (through actions such as naturalization, voter education, and electoral mobilization).

All in all, through their manifold actions, immigrant/ethnic community-based organizations have been depicted as critical mediators between immigrant or ethnic minorities and the political system. Organizations, in some ways, play the role of brokers between these two levels. This role has been especially important for noncitizens, who by definition are not entitled to participate in formal politics.

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[4] See, for example, Abraham (1995), Bloemraad (2005), Cordero-Guzman (2005), Cortes (1998), Garcia and de la Garza (1985), Hutcheson and Dominguez (1996), Koldewyn (1992), Minkoff (2002), Schrover and Vermeulen (2005), and Truelove (2000).

Finally, citizenship acquisition has also been identified as a constitutive feature of political incorporation (Portes and Truelove 1987; Portes and Rumbaut 1996; Jones Correa 1998; Sierra et al. 2000; Bloemraad 2006). For many scholars, this is an inevitable first stage for any immigrant minority that aspires to make itself heard. In all the cited accounts, political incorporation is critical for a minority group because it is linked to a series of positive outcomes—including the ability to express their interests, achievement of substantial political equality, influence in policy decisions at the local level, increase of programs aiming at minorities, and so on.

Acquiring American citizenship is, in principle, not an option open to all those who immigrate to the U.S. However, even for immigrants eligible for naturalization, there is often a hesitation about making that move.. In many cases, making the decision about becoming a naturalized citizen involves giving up membership in a particular political community (the nation of origin) in order to acquire a new one. As a state policy, the decision to naturalize relies on the will of the individuals (Jones Correa, 1998). In other words, once immigrants meet certain requirements, such as number of years of legal residency in the country, they have the option to naturalize and, through that process, fully participate in the political system in the new community . One element that previous studies have recognized, however, is that even when they have the option, Latin American immigrants show low rates of naturalization (Portes and Truelove 1987; Jones Correa 1998; Sierra et al. 2000). According to Jones Correa (1998), the reasons for immigrants' hesitation with regards to naturalization are not purely of a socioeconomic character, nor are they related to bureaucratic impediments. They are, however, determined by a series of costs from within and without the American political system. In

the former sense, the costs are related to the need for mobilization in order to receive political party attention; in the latter, the political cost of giving up membership (and the associated benefits and duties attached to it) in their home countries as well as the psychological cost of renouncing to their previous citizenship are the primary reasons for immigrants' hesitation. Other explanations emphasize the potential reversibility of migration as perceived by the subjects and fear of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service[5] (INS) as dissuasive factors hindering naturalization (Portes and Truelove 1987).

In all the previous accounts, political incorporation is seen as critical for a minority group because it is linked to a series of positive outcomes. Browning et al. (1984) assert that the achievement of substantial political incorporation is associated with major political equality. A minority group that is sufficiently integrated has the ability to express and advance their interests. This is illustrated in their study by several policy changes at the local level, such as the employment of more minorities in commissions, increasing utilization of minority contractors, and the number of programs aiming at minorities. The exclusion of immigrant groups from political life, conversely, leads to their inadequate representation and, in turn, to an insufficiency in the satisfaction of their needs in education, housing, and health care, as well as an increase in their vulnerability to exploitation (Jones-Correa 1998). In addition, the political incorporation of noncitizens into the political system through voting constitutes a necessary source of legitimacy of democratic institutions (Garcia Bedolla 2006).

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[5] The Immigration and Naturalization Service ceased to exist on March 1, 2003. It current equivalent would be the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

But, what happens to those who are not citizens and, according to the prevalent criteria in use, remain excluded? What does their formal exclusion from the political system mean in terms of their political status? Are there other means through which they can still impact the political process? If so, what are those means? Although some recent works have acknowledged the insufficiency of traditional linear approaches to political incorporation that focus almost exclusively on the formal political arena and have, in turn, recommended, looking at other ongoing and contingent processes through which immigrants gain a voice (see, for example, Lee et al. 2006, Martinez 2005, Leal 2002), not much empirical work has been done on this line. My assertion in this research is that the formal political incorporation into the American system is only one partial way in which the political status of immigrants can be analyzed. A more pertinent schema for analysis should be grounded on specific historical configurations and focus on those mechanisms through which the action of the undocumented immigrants becomes political.

1.2. Political participation of Latinos

Closely related to the general conceptions of political incorporation reviewed above are the works on political participation. Political participation is one of the crucial concepts in political science. Although everyday discourse tend to employ the term political participation in reference to a wide variety of actions whose object is the public sphere, in mainstream political science, the notion of political participation is usually narrowed in accordance with certain conditions. In one of the most classical definitions,

Verba and Nie assert that "political participation refers to those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or actions they take" (1972: 2)

It should be noted that at least two important aspects follow from this definition. The first one has to do with the subjects of political participation understood in this way who are specified as "private citizens". This demarcation presupposes, in consequence, that noncitizens' activities, even if aimed at the public sphere or the orientation of political outcomes, are not covered by such a concept. The second aspect that is worth noting is that the object of political participation is limited to those activities oriented to affect the policy making process and the agents formally responsible for that process, that is, government officials. Along similar lines, Brady adds the condition that political participation "requires action by ordinary citizens directed toward influencing political outcomes" (1999: 737). In other words, an active involvement by authorized individuals, that is those who possess the status of citizenship, in the political process is necessary. This particular understanding of political participation underlies the bulk of the most relevant research on political participation of Latinos in the U.S. (i.e., Garcia and de la Garza 1985; Hero 1992; Hero et al. 2000; Jones-Correa 1998; Portes and Rumbaut 1996). The attention is mostly focused on the trends of the group in terms of naturalization, voting, being elected, and forming coalitions to impact the direction of political outcomes.

The literature on Latino politics has been especially concentrated in the explanation of rates and types of participation of Latino immigrants in U.S. politics. The effect of generations, gender, religion, ethnicity, level of association, length of presence

in the country, characteristics of their native countries, partisanship, and political ideology, in the potentiality and/or types of political participation of Latin American immigrants have been extensively researched. Whereas first-generation immigrants appear to be primarily concerned with old country-of-residence politics—at least in the beginning, given that the passing of time in the new country entails a gaining of interest in domestic matters—the second generation tends to adopt more radical political positions (Portes and Rumbaut 1996). Also, as tenure in the U.S. increases, Latinos tend to become more heterogeneous on policy issues (aside from ethnicity, immigration, or affirmative action issues) and more similar to native-born whites (Pearson and Citrin 2006). Immigrant men tend to monopolize spaces in organizations oriented toward their home country whereas activist women have been predominantly oriented toward local political participation (Jones-Correa 1998). Religion, regardless of denominational differences, has been identified as powerful in explaining political participation regardless of denominational differences, especially because of the civic associational roles played by churches (Jones-Correa and Leal 2001). In fact, participation has been positively linked to level of association and capacity of organization. In some cases, however, organizations emerge as an alternative to formal participation in the political system (Portes and Truelove 1987). Nationality and ethnicity have also impacted the trajectories of new immigrants in American politics (Portes and Rumbaut 1996). Specifically, once Latino immigrants turn to domestic politics and vote, they tend to mobilize along national or ethnic lines. Also, mobilization drives targeting naturalized Latinos have been shown to positively affect their turnout rates (Barreto 2005).

The features of Latino political participation are also tied to the structure of political parties in the U.S., and, in particular, how each hof the dominant parties have mobilized new constituencies (Jones-Correa 1998) or have responded to specific needs of this group (Hero et al. 2000). It has also been demonstrated that in spite of commonsense notions, ideology does not play in the expected way among Latino immigrants. In other words, Latinos do not necessarily identify themselves as liberals or conservatives, but, rather, they are ideologically diverse (Hero 1992).

In the literature on the Latino population in the U.S., political participation is usually regarded as a problem. In fact, two of the most salient questions that scholars have tried to answer is why political participation in this group is so low compared to that of other minorities and how it would be possible to increase the inclusion of this group into political institutions. Many scholars agree in the diagnosis that Latinos show low rates of naturalization (Garcia and de la Garza 1985; Hero et al. 2000; Jones-Correa 1998). Given that in order to participate in the political system in the way that was referred to above, it is necessary to have formal membership in the state, that is, citizenship, the lack of this status constitutes a rigid barrier. Moreover, Latinos are depicted as having limited interest in the American political life (Garcia and de la Garza 1985); low rates of organizational membership (DeSipio 2006); and low rates of voter registration and turnout (Hero et. al 2000).

Among the factors that have been pinpointed as hindering political participation, scholars have identified the following: insufficient group cohesion originated in diverging patterns of self-identification or cultural diversity (Hero 1992); high proportion of individuals in poverty; youthful characteristic of the group, lack of political resources,

absence of recruitment efforts by organizations (Hero et al. 2000); low levels of organizational involvement, low socioeconomic status, and attachment to traditional religious group that do not provide the appropriate context for confrontation of political views (Garcia and de la Garza 1985). In addition, the low citizenship rates of the group are also linked to a variety of causes. Jones-Correa (1998) explains this fact by referring to the costs involved in immigrants' incorporation into the political arena, which stem from their communities of origin and from the new one. In order to become full members of the new community, in many cases immigrants must sacrifice their previous membership, and in the new community, they must mobilize before parties pay attention to them. These costs partially explain what Portes and Truelove (1987) refer to as a reluctance to shift national allegiances among immigrants.

Given that political participation of Latinos is low, and that this fact, in turn, reinforces the exclusion that this group suffers in other fields, students of Latino politics have prescribed different solutions in order to reverse this situation. Some of the solutions that have been prescribed are the "activation" or increase of strategies to integrate the group into political life (Garcia and de la Garza 1985). According to this account, these strategies should come from political parties or other organizations including religious ones. Another potential solution to reverse the low political participation of Latinos is associated with incentives provided by the state either as a desired or, even more likely, as an unexpected outcome of particular policies. One example of the state acting as a source of incentives for political organization and participation of Latinos in the U.S., was the increase of public debate on immigration during the 1990s that followed the multiple attempts at reforms of immigration law, which resulted in an increase of Latino

voters turning out in elections and the pursuit of citizenship through naturalization (Sierra et al. 2000). Some scholars explicitly prescribe the direct adoption of state policies in order to encourage immigrant political engagement (See Garcia Bedolla 2006). Allowing noncitizen voting at the local level and enhancing their opportunities of participation in community decision-making structures are examples of those types of recommendations.

Overall, the literature on political participation of Latinos in the American political system has extensively covered issues regarding what is considered insufficient involvement in the political system and in civic life by the group. As seen above, the majority of the works aim to identify a general pattern of causation of such problems. Within this literature, the emphasis is mostly placed in the "normal", institutionalized political process. Specifically, most of the works on political participation of Latinos in the US focus on the utilization of democratic institutions –mostly state institutions, and to a lesser extent civil society organizations—to advance some sort of influence in political outcomes, which, ultimately will be beneficial for the group. In particular, given the explicit or implicit definitions of political participation embedded in these works, politics through informal arenas and, especially, conflictive ones are left out of these types of analyses.

1.3. The "undocumented" status and its impact in politics

The term undocumented refers to those subjects who do not possess accepted documents to reside in the country. Specifically, it alludes to those individuals who entered the country without legal documents and have not legally "normalized" their

residence in this country since then. Undocumented Latino immigrants are worth studying not only because they possess very unique characteristics in terms of their political capacity and status, but also because they are quantitatively important. According to estimates by the Pew Hispanic Center, around 11.5 to 12 million of unauthorized immigrants were residing in the country as of March 2006. In addition, undocumented migrants accounted for 30% of the foreign-born population in 2005. In regard to national/regional origin, unauthorized immigrants from Latin America represented 78% of the unauthorized population in 2005 (see Passel 2006). Furthermore, the weight of Latin Americans among undocumented immigrants is greater than the share of Latin Americans among the total foreign-born population residing in the US (52 percent, according to the 2000 U.S. Census). In the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area in the year 2000, foreign born Latinos represented 5.4 percent of the total population residing in the area and, among them, 75.3 percent were not U.S. citizens. [6]

According to the literature and commonsense, undocumented immigrant workers tend to be marginalized in the labor market, culturally segregated, and politically excluded. In the labor market, they are heavily concentrated in the secondary sector (Delgado 1993), which is composed of low-pay, high turnover, and temporary jobs. That is to say, they tend to work in peripheral industries with little job security and reduced advancement opportunities. Furthermore, in these types of firms, the relationships between employees and employers are highly personalized, and therefore, discretional.

The presence and constant increase in the absolute number of immigrants in the U.S. has been associated with a response to the constant or increasing demand for immigrant workers by employers (Portes and Rumbaut, 1996) and in many cases backed

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[6] 2000 U.S. Census Bureau

by the US state, for example through the launching of guest worker programs (Garcia Bedolla 2006). This specific demand for immigrant workers in certain industries, such as garment and small electronics firms, is explained by certain characteristics that are usually associated with immigrant workers, such as reliability, diligence, and above all, willingness to work hard for low pay. These features define a comparative advantage of immigrant workers as compared to their American counterparts. Whether this essentialist characterization of the group is accurate or not, it is illustrative insofar as it captures a widespread conviction that there is a need in the economy that is filled by the presence of this particular group.

With respect to their formal relationship with the political realm, even when they are neither citizens nor legal residents, immigrants have responsibilities and rights. The responsibilities that noncitizens have with respect to the state include, for example, the obedience to the law of the land in which they reside, the payment of taxes, the registration for the draft, and the subjection to the same criminal and civil laws as citizens (see DeSipio and de la Garza 1998).

When it comes to rights, the literature tends to emphasize the sets of privileges that noncitizens are deprived of as an inherent feature of their status. The types of rights and privileges that are denied to undocumented immigrants are mainly electoral and occupational, plus access to federal government social welfare programs (DeSipio and de la Garza 1998). First, noncitizens cannot vote in any federal or state elections. In only a few jurisdictions, including Takoma Park, Maryland, can they participate in local elections. This current situation, however, is at odds with the majority of American history in which noncitizen voting was common at the local, state, and federal levels

(Garcia Bedolla 2006). Second, in terms of employment, the undocumented are subject to severe restrictions—especially after the approval of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, when the employment of undocumented immigrants became illegal. If this regulation were completely enforced, immigrants would lose their jobs and employers would be sanctioned as well. The purpose of this measure was to dissuade potential "illegal" immigrants from continuing to enter the country by taking away the employment incentive. Furthermore, noncitizens are denied access to federal social welfare programs, such as food stamps, Temporary Aid to Needy Families, Medicaid, and Supplemental Security Income (DeSipio and De la Garza 1998).

Much of the debate around citizenship has been centered on the status of formally documented membership in a national society. In that sense, the possession of legal status is characterized as shaping immigrants' identities, social networks, participation, and relationship with their home countries (Menjivar 2006). Conversely, the lack of "documents" implies risks and difficulties across a wide range of dimensions, including health outcomes, labor market opportunities, income, domestic violence, abuses by state agents, and so forth.

While the formal allocation of rights and responsibilities among noncitizens defines the initial conditions in which the political emergence, constitution, and operation of the group take place, it does not determine the political status of the group. In principle, the lack of citizenship does not prevent Latino immigrants from participating in other political non-electoral activities. As Leal states, "while voting is still not allowed for noncitizens, there is not prohibition against non-electoral participation"[7] (2002: 355). Based on the 1989/90 Latino National Political Survey, however, works by Leal (2002)

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[7] As Leal (2002) notes, the only explicit prohibition is financial contributions for political campaigns.

and Martinez (2005) found that Latino noncitizens are less likely to participate in non-electoral political activities and civic groups than Latino citizens. In any event, Leal (2002) also found that noncitizen Latino immigrants with a better understanding of politics, a strong ethnic identity, better English skills, and younger in age, were more likely to get involved. The activities range from displaying a sign, to signing a petition, to writing a letter to an elected official, to attending a public meeting or a political rally.

In sum, the horizons of politicization of undocumented immigrants are not necessarily fixed *ex-ante* by legal prescriptions. Although the formal allocation of rights and responsibilities among noncitizens need to be seriously considered in any analysis of political activities among the "undocumented", it should be conceived as a contextual condition within which politics is deployed. As mentioned earlier, it is an explicit intention of my research to uncover processes of political activity that occur through everyday practices at capillary levels, and that operate within the established schema of formal inclusion/exclusion yet are not necessarily and/or absolutely constrained by it. In particular, I will go beyond this demarcation, and focus instead on patterns of cultural and political contestation of policy decisions and norms.

1.4. Expanding the lens to capture political activity: From participation to mobilization and organizing

Mobilization is usually understood as the process by which individuals or groups become active and organized towards social change. Becoming active, then, goes beyond

the utilization of any particular tool, path, or institution. Thus, the concept of mobilization tends to be used to designate a broad range of different things.

Literatures using the concepts of mobilization and organizing in relation to the Latino community (and in particular, the immigrant community) place a particular emphasis on the role of certain constituted groups (mainly political parties, unions, and community-based groups) in bringing people together to act on their common interests. Rather than emerging from below, then, organizing efforts tend to be led by the active effort of established organizations. In other words, political mobilization is usually conceived as operated over a group instead of emerging from the group. In addition, organizing experiences covered in these studies tend to take place through campaigns around a specific issue.

Political mobilization of voters is a common strategy utilized by political parties and elites who want to court the Latino population in election times. Part of the literature on the political life of Latinos in the U.S. views mobilization as a political strategy utilized to increase and control the engagement of Latinos in political participation—i.e., registering and voting[8]. The idea is that "political participation depends significantly on political mobilization, that is, on which persons are targeted for political recruitment" (Hero et al. 2000: 530). This understanding of political mobilization usually refers to the strategies pursued by political parties. However, not only political parties engage in voters' mobilization. As Marwell (2004) demonstrates, some organizations, which he calls machine politics community-based organizations (CBOs), also engage in electoral politics creating voting constituencies for local elected officials. The underlying rationale

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[8] See, for example, Shaw, de la Garza, and Lee (2000), Ramirez (2005), and Pantoja and Woods (1999).

is that CBOs generate greater contract revenues by adding electoral politics to their more traditional roles.

Labor unions appear as another key actor in the organization of immigrants. In fact, one of the big issues addressed by this literature is the organizability of immigrant workers. Contradicting the commonsense notion that Latino immigrant workers are less likely to organize because of their concentration in the secondary labor market and their status of extreme vulnerability with respect to immigration authorities, Delgado (1993) presents a case in which undocumented workers voted for union representation and signed a collective bargaining agreement with their employer. According to Delgado, the organizability of undocumented workers "depends less on citizenship status—which is singled out in most accounts—and more on labor market forces, the legal environment, organizational capacities, forms of labor control, migration and settlement patterns, and other such factors" (1993: 10-11). As a result, the difficulty of organizing undocumented immigrants does not differ much from the difficulty of organizing any group of workers. In the case studied, Delgado acknowledges passions and emotions as key factors utilized by unions in meetings, demonstrations and various group activities in order to foster mobilization.

Unionization of Latino immigrant workers has also been related to previous experiences by immigrants of unions in their home countries (Milkman 2000). Other factors that have been pinpointed as playing an important role in immigrant workers' organization are availability of strong social networks among immigrants, hardships involved in the adaptation to the new home, and length of residence in the country (Milkman 2000). Unionization among this excluded sector of the population is also the

result of a change in policy among unions that moved away from focusing on citizenship toward a more inclusive strategy (Sierra et al. 2000). Among the most visible and successful immigrant workers' campaigns that were carried out during the 1990s were the Justice for Janitors movement (Nissen 2003; Fisk et al. 2000; Gutierrez de Soldatenko 2005)—oriented toward the improvement of working conditions for hotel and restaurant workers—and the campaigns in the agricultural and food-processing industries.

The organizing of Latino immigrants has also been successful in cases in which the claims are not addressed to the employers but to the state itself. In particular, this type of mobilization of Latino immigrants has also occurred as a reaction to the hardening of state policies—the most typical being immigration law. In this line, mobilization has been channeled through campaigns and demonstrations advocating a decrease of militarization and violence along the US-Mexico border, an improvement in opportunities for legal entry to the country, an increase in access to public services for immigrants, an improvement of the regulation of labor, health, and safety standards in workplaces, and access to public school boards for noncitizen parents (Sierra et al. 2000). This type of mobilization against state policies (or legislation proposals) is also illustrated in the case of the mobilizations against the adoption of English-only laws (Santoro 1999).

The political mobilization of Latino immigrants, on the other hand, has been depicted as the effect of the diffusion of a model of political behavior of another minority group. During the 1960s, and following the example of African Americans, a number of Latino militant organizations proliferated throughout the country (Portes and Truelove 1987). These organizations, whose more radical demands were never met, contributed to

the mobilization of the Latino population, in particular Mexican-Americans, as well as the creation of political leaders.

On the other extreme of the spectrum, experiences of political mobilization of Latinos from the action of informal social networks (as opposed to resulting from efforts led by established organizations) are rare in the Latino political literature

In sum, although there are excellent exemplars of studies on political mobilization of Latinos in the US, this literature has mainly focues on top-down efforts spearheaded by established organizations. In particular, these studies are usually concerned with mobilization efforts targeting a particular sector with workers in a particular industry, and voters being the most common. In addition, both political scientists and sociologists have shown less interest in these patterns of political action among Latino immigrants than those defined by the concepts of political incorporation or political participation. There is, then, a need for theoretical specification and empirical analysis of one domain that appears to be increasingly important in the American political scenario and yet has remained understudied.

Chapter 2: Theoretical tools

2.1. A re-conceptualization of immigrants' "politicization"

I will utilize the term "politicization" instead of political incorporation, participation, or mobilization so as to differentiate the understanding of *politics* and *the political* on which my research will be based from those that are prevalent in the literature on political inclusion of immigrants. For that task, I inform my conceptualization from some of the fruitful theorizations of politics of key political philosophers—namely, Hanna Arendt, John Dewey, and Jurgen Habermas. Specifically, elements of Arendt's characterization of action and the political realm, Habermas's theorization of the public sphere, and Dewey's consequential approach to politics are blended into a multidimensional and complex view of political activity.

My understanding of *politicization* or engagement of individuals in political life heavily relies on Arendt's concept of action, a quintessentially political human activity. In "*The Human Condition"*, Arendt maintains that it is in the human condition to have a political life. To act, according to Arendt, means to take an initiative, to begin, to set something in motion. In other words, when men act, they engage in setting up and preserving political bodies which, in turn, create the conditions for remembrance. Action is intrinsically linked to the human condition of *natality,* of bringing something anew. This capacity of initiative is the central category of *the political*. In Arendt's words, "the fact that man is capable of action means that the unexpected can be expected from him, that he is able to perform what is infinitely improbable." (Arendt 1958: 178)

Action, and for that matter politics, is in this conceptualization singularized by

innovation. Unlike the other two activities that Arendt characterizes as constitutive of the human condition—labor and work—action is not imposed on us by necessity or utility. Through action and speech men insert themselves into the human world by beginning something new, which is a product of their own initiative. In addition, action and speech make possible the active distinction of men among themselves.

> Speech and action reveal this unique distinctness. Through them, men distinguish themselves instead of being merely distinct; they are the modes in which human beings appear to each other, not indeed as physical objects, but qua men. This appearance, as distinguished from mere bodily existence, rests on initiative, but it is an initiative from which no human being can refrain and still be human. This is true of no other activity in the *vita activa*. Men can very well live without laboring, they can force others to labor for them, and they can very well decide merely to use and enjoy the world of things without themselves adding a single useful object to it; the life of an exploiter or slave-holder and the live of a parasite may be unjust, but they certainly are human. A life without speech and without action, on the other hand […] is literally dead to the world... (Arendt 1958: 176)

In addition, through word and deed men establish differences with others and, by doing that, construct identities. Men are either engaged in action and speech or are condemned to live in the shadows. In other words, the deprivation of action and speech entails the lack of humanity itself. In the context of my proposed research, this idea implies that the group of interest—Latin American immigrants—would become political by their engagement in action and speech in the public realm (and not before).

The concept of action is also closely linked to Arendt's concept of public realm. First, the public is conceptualized in terms of appearance. In that sense, only something that can be seen and heard by others and ourselves is constitutive of reality. Unless activities become susceptible to being seen and heard, or, in other words, until they become transformed, deprivatized and deindividualized, they entail an unclear and

uncertain existence. Second, the public realm refers to what is "common" to all of us and different from a privately owned place in it.

In sum, for my conceptualization of politicization I will share Arendt's understanding of action and speech as constitutive of political life, emphasizing the fact that to act is to become a source of innovation in the public realm. In addition, my work will draw on the conception that underscores the crucial role of action as a source of differentiation. Furthermore, my analysis will employ the vision of the public realm as the site of the "common to all", where actors are seen and heard by others.

Although Arendt's work is extremely useful in clarifying the notion of political action and distinguishing it from other types of human activity, her definition of the public realm seems to require better specification—at least, for the purpose of my work. In this sense, both Dewey's portrayal of the public, and Habermas' conception of the public sphere are able to provide further clarification of this concept.

Following Dewey's argument, it is important to shed light on the fact that our actions entail different types of consequences. With that in mind, becoming public or entering into the public realm also implies that the consequences of our actions affect others—beyond those who are directly engaged in a transaction (Dewey 1991). In this perspective, public acts are not necessarily socially useful. For my understanding of politicization as I conceive it in this research, I borrow from Dewey the assertion that in order to understand political phenomena it is necessary to look at the *consequences* of political action. With that said, looking at the public realm requires paying particular attention to *whom* is affected by the consequences of the actions of our subjects of interest.

Although grounded on a different perspective, Habermas' notion of the public sphere has some similarities with Arendt's notion of the public realm; as well as some distinct features that appear as complementary to Arendt's and, for that reason, useful for my own specification of the concept of public and political in this research.

For Habermas, the public sphere is defined as "a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed." (Habermas 1974: 49). The term denotes both a social space and a rational discourse that composes free and open democratic opinion (Somers 1995). In addition, Habermas maintains that "citizens behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion […] about matters of general interest" (1974, 49). Like Arendt's second conception of public realm, Habermas' maintains that the concern for what is common or shared by the members of the civil society is a definitional attribute of the public.

However, Habermas goes beyond this point and contends that the public sphere is located in a quasi-institutional structure (see Somers 1995). Specifically, his historical reconstruction of the emergence of the public sphere in contemporary societies is based on material expressions of public opinions, such as newspapers, public coffeehouses, and theaters, rather than something that is subjective or integrated by people's beliefs or ideas. In other words, the public sphere is embodied in a series of institutions and discursive networks.

The public sphere, in this perspective, is different from state institutions and public authority. But it is different from the market as well. In fact, it occupies a third space, an interstitial zone, between the public/political (meaning by this the state bureaucracies) and the private. This distinction between public sphere and state sphere is

key to comprehending a vast series of activities that cannot be framed within the orbit of the state and yet are public and political. This is clear when Habermas states that "sometimes the public appears simply as the sector of public opinion that happens to be opposed to the authorities" (1989[1962]: 2). "Political public sphere" designates the public discussion centered on issues related to the activity of the state. In that sense, it refers to a civic life oriented toward political issues and public life but occurring beyond the mechanisms of control of the official state. One example that is usually bought up in order to illustrate the political public sphere is the case of political activism that occurred in Eastern European countries during the eighties and that ended up overthrowing sociopolitical regimes. There is, in this sense, a parallel between the questioning of authority in Eastern European countries in the eighties with the political activities of non-officially recognized members of a polity, such as undocumented immigrants in numerous countries today.

The recognition of the existence of a public sphere separate from the state opens a gap for the development of a series of political activities even for those who are not formally authorized to be part of conventional politics. In this sense, even if Habermas talks of "citizens" when referring to the constituents of the public sphere, given that this social space is political beyond the state, I argue that formal membership does not really matter as a requirement for inclusion and even those who are not recognized members can find or construct a space in this arena.

The public sphere is, then, characterized as a space of contestation in which the control of public authority might be challenged by "the critical reasoning of private persons on political issues" (Habermas 1989 [1962]: 29). The primary civic task of a

society, in this modern public sphere, is the involvement in critical public debate.

On this point there is also a difference with Arendt's approach. Whereas Arendt sees "the political" essentially referring to human action oriented toward creativity, the beginning of something new, for Habermas "the political" is directly or indirectly referred to state action. In other words, for Habermas, the political relates to either the activity of the state itself—including its bureaucratic apparatus—or the discussion of matters related to state activity by the public. In any case, these diverging interpretations of the concept of "political" are not inherently contradictory. On the contrary, they just express different foci. For that reason, both will be treated as complementary in the conceptual approach I will utilize in the proposed research.

The private sphere, composed of the domain of the market economy and the intimate sphere of the conjugal family, also occupies a central role in Habermas's account of the public sphere, given that it is in that site that political identities are formed and commitment to values is developed. (Sommers 1995).

> The representation of the interests of the privatized domain of a market economy was interpreted with the aid of ideas grown in the soil of the intimate sphere of the conjugal family. The latter and not the public sphere itself (as the Greek model would have it) was humanity's genuine site (Habermas 1989 [1962]: 51-2)

In other words, private individuals communicate in the public sphere through rational-critical debates based on their character as human beings and the experiences of their subjectivity, or in their character of owner of goods about regulation of their private sphere.

This idea is radically opposed to Arendt's conception of political identities. As I

stated above, for Arendt it is in the public realm, through speech and action, that men construct their identities and distinguish themselves from others. Regarding this point, I will argue that this mutually exclusive dichotomy is not theoretically productive. In practice, identities are both nourished from interactions in the private sphere and developed in the actual engagement in political activities. On the other hand, I adhere to the notion that "historical actors' practices, activities, and political ideas must be viewed as symbolic systems with their own histories and logics; and second that these symbolic logics themselves are modalities of politics and power" (Somers 1995: 127). With that said, I will discard any relationship of determination of culture and identities by some exogenous source—such as the market, or the state. However, I will visualize these different spheres as interacting in multiple and complex fashions, which can only be disentangled in empirical studies.

To review, the concept of *politicization* upon which the proposed research will be based is defined by the adoption of actions that lead to the beginning of something new; that is, that bring about innovation in the public realm. Those actions are also distinguished by the fact that their consequences affect not only those directly involved in a situation but others as well. In addition, they take place in an arena that is public— understood in this case as a realm that is shared by all of us, which in turn means that the actions occurring within it can be seen and heard by others. Furthermore, this public sphere or realm is also the site where the discussion of matters regarding general interest, and in particular, the activities of the state, takes place, and where contestation of public authority might arise.

2.2. Making events the privileged site of explanation of immigrants' "politicization"

A core component of the conceptual apparatus that will guide this research is the understanding of events as privileged sites of examination. The rationale in this respect is that in order to capture how and why Latino immigrants, regardless of their citizenship status, become political in the way that was signaled in the previous section of this piece, it is appropriate to focus analytical attention on particular events. This theoretical/methodological decision is also aligned with Lee et al.'s (2006) recommendation for further research on political incorporation of immigrants, in which they suggest looking at processes of political incorporation in "local context and historical moments" (2006).

The centrality of events in historical comparative and political sociology has been underscored by examples of excellent scholarship (see, for instance, Nora 1974, Griffin 1992; Griffin 1993; Abbott 1992; Aminzade 1992; and Sewell 1996). After decades of denial of the critical role played by events and short duration in explaining what was considered to be relevant outcomes and transformations—those occurring or originated at structural levels of society—there has been increasing recognition of events as privileged sites to observe more structural and fundamental social transformations. But, what is an event? And how do we, as researchers, recognize them? In general, events are sets of occurrences whose presence makes a difference in the historical/political process of a social setting. As opposed to "simple facts", events have the property of being carriers of innovative messages (Nora 1974). In addition, following Nora's conception, events make the invisible visible, they echo and mirror society. Furthermore, they reveal and trigger a

series of social phenomena from a depth that, without the event, would keep them buried.

On the other hand, according to Sewell's account, events are defined as historical when they have momentous consequences that reshape history. A historical event, in this perspective, is "(1) a ramified sequence of occurrences that (2) is recognized as notable by contemporaries, and that (3) results in a durable transformation of structures" (Sewell 1996: 844). In Sewell's view, the role of events is portrayed as essentially linked to the concept of structures, defining the latter as cultural schemas, distributions of resources, and modes of power, combined in a mutually sustaining manner that allows for the reproduction of regular patterns of social practice. In that sense, most social practices have a tendency to be steadily reproduced over long periods of time, and changes tend to take place in the form of intense bursts. These moments of intensified transformations, following this argument, are initiated by historical events. The critical role of historical events, then, is explained by their capacity to rearticulate structures and their introduction of cultural transformations.

Placing the study of events at the core of my research implies, in turn, giving an explicit and intentional recognition to the importance of temporality in social and political analyses. In this sense, my analysis will be historical insofar as it will utilize a narrative approach (see Stone 1979; Abbott 1992; Griffin 1992; Aminzade 1992) to capture the temporality of selected historical events. By narrative, I understand "the portrayal of social phenomena as temporally ordered, sequential, unfolding, and open-ended 'stories' fraught with conjunctures and contingency" (Griffin 1992: 405). These stories will compose an indispensable first step of the explanation of the politicization of Latin American immigrants. Specifically, the sequence, order and contingency of

occurrences that establish the way in which events unfold will shape the explanation of the events themselves, and through them, of the phenomenon of politicization of the group. However, it is important to note that the temporality of the events themselves will be one element and not the exclusive or determinant causative factor in the explanation of my outcome of interest. The explanation of the type of political status achieved cannot be determined ex ante, but only after examining the empirical evidence.

In order to reconstruct the unfolding of the events, a detailed identification of the facts and actions that are relevant components of the event, their sequence and order is required. This "ordering" of the event, as well as its delimitation, will necessarily require what Sewell calls an act of judgment. In other words, the decision of which actions or facts are relevant components for the unfolding of the event will require an interpretive contextual approach. This putting together of elements—actions and happenings—that might otherwise seem discrete or disparate into a coherent whole is what Griffin (1992) refers to as "colligation." This concept, in turn, emphasizes the interdependent characteristic of sequential, unfolding actions that constitute the central theme that ties the event together. The idea underlying this type of narrative explanation is that the event needs to be examined and interrogated through its internal temporality—which is also referred to as "unpacked"—and then re-composed as an explanation. Further, through the construction of narratives, the analyst not only attributes causality to the connections among historical particulars, but also assigns meaning to those internal relations (see Aminzade 1992).

Although temporality of the event can be of enormous help for an explanatory comprehension of the event itself and the process that is triggered by it, there are some

precautions that must be taken. First, in historical events there is usually more than one trajectory of change or sequence of happenings to be disentangled (Aminzade 1992, Sewell 1996). That means that the map of occurrences that constitute an event is usually complex and far from a single master process. In other words, events are embedded in overlapping and intersecting trajectories. Second, sequence of occurrences is not sufficient for accounting for causation. As Griffin (1993) states, chronological order does not necessarily imply historical or causal significance. This, in turn, entails that in order to attribute causation and develop an explanation "events and their contexts [should] be openly theorized, factual material abstracted and generalized, and the causal connections among narrative sequences established in a way that can be explicitly replicated and criticized." (Griffin 1993: 1100)

An explanatory study of an event requires a conscious theoretical interrogation of the connections that tie the occurrences together. With that in mind, the utilization of available explanatory frameworks (basically the political process approach) and knowledge about the historical background will constitute invaluable pieces for that task.

For this project, I selected two episodes that are significant for the type of phenomenon analyzed in the present study—namely, the politicization of Latin American immigrants—because of the transformations generated in structures or prevailing cultural frameworks. The close examination of each of these events aimed to identify and uncover the mechanisms that connect causes and effects in each of the cases (see Mahoney 2004). By comparatively examining the relevant linkages between relevant occurrences in these cases, I expect to infer typical patterns of causation of immigrant access to the public sphere as well as their outcomes.

2.3. Borrowing tools from the Contentious Politics and the Political Process Approaches

The events analyzed in this research will be viewed as episodes of contentious politics. Following Tilly and Tarrow, "contentious politics involves interactions in which actors make claims bearing on someone else's interests, leading to coordinated efforts on behalf of shared interests or programs, in which governments are involved as targets, initiators of claims, or third parties." (2007: 5)

In other words, in this perspective contentious politics resides at the intersection of three attributes present in social life—namely, contention, collective action, and politics. Both events analyzed in this research constitute cases of collective claim making in which the government (in one case, the local government and in the other the federal government) appears as an object of claims.

One question I had to clarify in the effort to piece together my conceptual framework for this research was whether to conceive of the processes of politicization examined in my research as social movements. To that end, I examined how social movement scholars—specifically, those aligned in the political process approach (PPA)—define and look at social movements. One definition that synthesizes the way in which PPA scholars define social movements is the one that conceives of them as "a sustained and self-conscious challenge to authorities or cultural codes by a field of actors (organizations and advocacy networks), some of whom employ extrainstitutional means of influence" (Gamson and Meyer 1996: 283). To this definition, McAdam and Snow (1997) add some specification to the purpose to which they are oriented, whether it be the

promotion or resistance to change in the group, society or the world order. Perhaps one of the central questions that PPA poses with regard to social movements is how people mobilize and engage in collective action, which is also the case in the research I am proposing herein. To answer this broad question, the focus is placed on the different stimuli to and intrinsic features of the conformation of collective vehicles that are aimed at generating social change—with the most important factors being the structure of political opportunities and constraints, the forms of organization available to insurgents, and the processes of interpretation, attribution and social construction that mediate between opportunity and action (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996: 2).

The question then becomes, given the cited definition of social movements, can we talk of a social movement when referring to the politicization of the Latin American immigrants in our study? I maintain that the forms of contention analyzed in this research are not cases of social movements. First and foremost, we could hardly find a "sustained and self-conscious challenge" but, instead, bursts of mobilization and involvement in the political process. In addition, although social movements are sustained campaigns of claim making, those claims do not necessarily happen in the political arena.

Thus, given the specific focus that the contentious politics approach places on episodic rather than continuous politics (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001: 5), and the particular attention this approach places on claim-making interactions that take place with relation to the realm of politics (specifically, with agents of government), this approach seems to be indeed pertinent to disentangling the objects of my analysis.

Those clarifications being made, the explanatory apparatus provided by the PPA constitutes an invaluable tool to help explain some of the factors that shape the

emergence and development of Latin American immigrants as a relevant actor in the political process. In fact, there are overlaps in some of the analytic categories present in both scholarships—namely, PPA and CPA. Scholars who theorized the dynamics present in contentious politics have been the main contributors to the study of social movements under the political process perspective. For that reason, some of the concepts used in this research are borrowed from the political process line of research on social movements.

How do I utilize the contentious politics approach in my analysis? Following Tilly and Tarrow (2007), the explanation of the process of politicization of Latinos in this research will include the following steps: (1) description of the process, (2) breakdown of the process into its basic causes, (3) reassembly of those causes into a general account.

In the explanation I look at specific mechanisms, understood as events that produce immediate effects over a wide range of circumstances, and processes, conceived as sequences and combinations of mechanisms that lead to larger scale effects. In particular, I will look at how political attributions of opportunities and social/organizational appropriation occurring at different times lead to a particular type of actor constitution. Specifically, the main process under analysis is the constitution of a political actor—understood as the "emergence of a new or transformed political actor—a recognizable set of people who carry on collective action, making and/or receiving contentious claims" (Tilly and Tarrow 2007). This actor constitution, in turn will emerge from two main mechanisms—namely, attribution of political opportunities and social appropriation.

Because the contentious politics approach does not elaborate much on political opportunities, I will review first how this concept is defined by several social movement

students. State structures constitute one of the critical components of the analytical approach advanced by the PPA. In particular, state structures matter insofar as they provide political opportunities and constraints. But what are these opportunities and constraints? One of the main critiques that PPA has received is that the concept of political opportunity structure, which is central to the account, is not clearly defined (see, for example, Goodwin and Jasper 1999 and Meyer 2004). To illustrate, Gamson and Meyer refer to political opportunity in relation to "the opening and closing of political space and its institutional and substantive location" (1996: 277); and Tarrow defines political opportunity structure as "*consistent—but not necessarily formal, permanent, or national—signals to social or political actors which either encourage or discourage them to use their internal resources to form social movements*" (1996: 54). To sum, political opportunities are associated with the space opening that potential insurgents register through signals, and which push them to act collectively.

In the specification of the spectrum of signals there is some dissent among PPA scholars. McAdam et al., for example, clearly pinpoint four major dimensions of political opportunity structures—namely, the openness or closure of the institutionalized political system, the stability of elite alignments, the presence of elite allies, and the state capacity for repression (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996: 10).

Whereas some of these opportunities appear as more stable, others are mostly fluid. What is important to highlight is that political opportunities encompass not only state institutions and other formal structures, but also the conflict and alliance between different forces (Tarrow 1996: 54). Along the same lines, Gamson and Meyer distinguish between society and state sources of opportunities. Located in the first group are cultural

themes, belief systems, world views and class consciousness, among others. In the latter are strength of political parties, judicial and legislative capacity, centralization of political institutions, strength of social cleavages, shifts in political alliances, and so forth (1996: 281). This complex multidimensional matrix is supposed to back the argument that opportunities are effective only if they are recognized as such by potential (or actual) collective actors. The enumeration of dimensions in the political opportunity structure, however, appears as all-embracing and, in consequence, not conceptually clear. In some ways, it seems like everything and nothing could count as political opportunity.

Although they are crucial, at least in some of the PPA exemplars, there is an explicit effort to emphasize the fact that political opportunities are not determining but necessary in the emergence of collective action. The expansion of political space for action should be complemented by an adequate organization of resources—formal or informal—and the effective operation of frames—systems of meanings shared by adherents (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996: 8)

In the version of PPA I am analyzing herein, the directionality of the relationship between political opportunities structure and social movements is twofold: opportunities mold and restrain movements, but movements might also generate opportunities (Gamson and Meyer 1996: 276). The recognition of the latter direction of the relationship denotes an acknowledgment of the importance of agency and, in particular, of the claims of resource mobilization theory.

Moving away from what is considered a static definition of political opportunities, McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001) propose to look at opportunities and threats not as objective categories but as subject to "the kind of collective attribution that the classical

agenda limited to framing of movement goals." (2001: 45) In addition, this attribution is not only performed by social movement organizations, but also by other groups such as non-constituted political actors and members of the polity. Attribution, in this account encompasses a range of actions oriented at making opportunities and threats visible and perceived as such by potential challengers.

Following the tenets of the contentious politics approach, this dissertation does not look at framing as a distinct component of a 'mobilization structure'. This does not mean underestimating the importance of shared meanings and definitions that people bring to their situation. On the contrary, the view of framing, as used in this research, involves "the interactive construction of disputes among challengers, their opponents, elements of the state, third parties, and the media." (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001: 44). In other words, framing is not viewed as a different stage but appears mediating both the attribution of threats and opportunities and the processes of social and organizational appropriation.

Finally, social/organizational appropriation, in the contentious politics agenda, refers to a challenger's capacity to gather sufficient numbers and organization for mobilization. In particular, Tilly and Tarrow define social appropriation as the utilization of organizational and institutional bases to launch movement campaigns. In my research, however, I expand this concept by including the series of actions adopted by a challenger group, ordinary people, and constituted political actors in the community in order to take advantage of the political space that has opened up. In other words, I do not look at social/organizational appropriation only as a mechanism preceding a public performance but also as a mechanism that follows the performance and is oriented to the formation or

transformation of a political actor.

In sum, this dissertation will draw on three main processes as conceived by the contentious politics approach—namely, the attribution of opportunities and threats, the social/organizational appropriation, and actor constitution. The first two will be regarded as mechanisms that will help us understand the latter one.

Chapter 3: Research design, data and methodology

3.1. Specification of the cases

Given the theoretical understanding of politicization advanced earlier in this dissertation, the analytical strategy pursued herein entails looking at significant historical events in the political history of the Latino community in the area. The underlying idea is that by looking at these critical moments it is possible to capture the formation and/or re-definition of the Latino community as a political actor. The two cases that were selected for this study are events that crystallized the two most critical political moments for Latinos residing in the D.C. area (in particular, for Latino immigrants). Their relevance is, in turn, presumed by the presence of several elements, including the increase in public visibility of the Latino community during their occurrence, and the understanding by different members of the community that these moments represented turning points in the community. The two cases that will be the focus of analysis in this research are as follows: the Mount Pleasant Riots of 1991 and "La Marcha" of April 10, 2006 in Washington, D.C. On the surface, these two cases appear to be very different, considering the level of reach of the problems with which they are associated, the factors that triggered them, their trajectories, and the type of outcomes to which they directly or indirectly led. However, they are both hypothetically connected to the production of innovation in the public sphere.

In early May 1991, a series of violent events including uprisings and looting occurred in the neighborhood of Mount Pleasant, Washington, D.C., following a rumor that spread quickly through the community that a Latino resident had been killed by the police. The neighborhood concentrates the majority of Latino residents living in the District.

The events of May 1991 in Mount Pleasant reflected long term tensions between Latino residents (the majority of whom were undocumented immigrants), the police and other local state officials. Although the incidents lasted only a few days, they synthesized a dense plot of co-existing conflicts. The different interpretations of the conflict by the actors or subjects affected—namely, the police, the city mayor, the Latino organizations, neighbors, and the media—led to a configuration of forces that affected the trajectory of the problem. The chronology of events, interpretations, and negotiations, appears to have a direct relation to the way in which the problem was "resolved".

Latinos were at the center of the local political scene, attracting the attention of the media for several months after the incident. By any account, through their involvement in the facts of Mount Pleasant, they were able to push a series of issues into the local political agenda.

Violence is central to this event. This is not insignificant since the urgency and degree of involvement of public authorities and other actors stems directly from and their actions are often justified by the violent nature of these events. Public officials engaged in giving responses in both the short and the long term, such as pacifying the

neighborhood (through the implementation of a curfew, for example) and guaranteeing some benefits to the Latino community residing in the city.

La Marcha: the rally of April 2006

On April 10, 2006 a rally for immigrant rights at the Washington Monument constituted one of the most important massive public, political manifestations of the Latino community of the D.C. area. This political mobilization, known among Latinos by the Spanish term "La Marcha", was organized in opposition to the Sensenbrenner Bill, more formally known as the "Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005" (HR4437), which was a project to reform immigration law which had already been passed by the House of Representatives in December 2005. Although the April 10th march, which was the largest single event in a country-wide network of rallies, was broadly read as a response to a threat from the state, there was a significant time gap between the date in which the Sensenbrenner Bill passed the House of Representatives and the date of La Marcha. Understanding what happened in this five-month-period is crucial in terms of how resources were mobilized, efforts coordinated, and a lexicon of slogans was crystallized.

Regardless of the actual effects in terms of influence in policy outcomes (the bill has not been passed by the Senate), the rally in April, was followed by a series of protests throughout that year. The events infused a new dynamism to the Latino community initially, but in the end, the political excitement from these events evaporated. Despite the fact that the political momentum was not sustained, the importance of La Marcha was its

capacity to trigger subsequent events.

The rally was characterized as a moment of intensified emotions, and was embedded in a linguistic debate nourished in the terminology of criminology (such as felony, illegality, and so forth) associated with the politics of names embedded in the proposed act.

3.2. Research questions and strategies of inquiry

Historical events can only be fully understood if they are placed in their contexts (Abbott 1995). In other words, demographic, political, and organizational[9] patterns define the initial conditions of mobilization. Those initial conditions contribute to the explanation of how and why a relatively non-politicized group got into the center of the public sphere. Following the contentious politics approach, unorganized ordinary people, organized actors in the community (some with and some without access to government agents), government agents, and other groups engaged in a series of interpretations and actions contributing to (a) the production of the historical event, and (b) the shaping of the political path opened by it.

On the surface, there are clear differences between the two cases under study. Whereas the Mount Pleasant Riots started immediately after a Latino worker was shot by a police officer, La Marcha took nearly five months of organization and planning. In other words, the first one started as a spontaneous social protest; the second one was planned.

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[9] On the importance of organizational context for collective action see, for example, McAdam (1982).

The role of spontaneity, although central to many episodes of contention, has scarcely been studied in collective action, social movements, and contentious politics literatures. Moreover, in the few studies that do look at spontaneity in collective action episodes, the attention is centered on the causal processes that produce spontaneous social protest. (e.g., Killian 1984, Gemici 2003) Little attention is placed on the eventual consequences of such "spontaneous" episodes. Thus, when we confront the implications of that spontaneity (or the lack of it) in the political process, particularly when the spontaneity provides a previously marginalized group with a sudden entry in the public sphere, we find a puzzle.

But, what is spontaneity? Following Killian's definition, spontaneity is characterized by "on-the-spot decisions which are not part of a plan for continuous action and whose consequences are unanticipated." (1984: 779) According to Killian, spontaneity is especially important in early stages of social movements or during transitions from one type of action to another. Even though pre-existing structures such as networks and organizations have a critical influence on the development of social movements, it is important to look at spontaneous actions because they bring about novelty.

In order to achieve a holistic comprehension of spontaneous actions, it is necessary to take into consideration both pre-existing structures or context and improvised, short-lived collective actions. Based on this assumption, I organized the examination of the two cases around the following questions: What configuration of political and organizational patterns made it possible for the Latino community to

suddenly enter in the public sphere[10]? What critical occurrences shaped the direction that the political path started by the public performance? How did the type of entry in the public sphere affect the scope of innovation achieved in the political process? What effect did the timing of the event have: whether the reaction to the threat was spontaneous and occurred immediately after the triggering event or the product of planned organization and mobilization? Did the apparent spontaneity in the deployment of the mobilization give the community (ordinary people) more control over the course of the event and its outcomes?

My first assertion is that the organizational and political profile of the Latino communities at the moment of the two major contentious episodes examined in this dissertation greatly shaped how the communities entered the public sphere. In particular, I argue that the structural location of leading organizations, that is their dependency on government contracts, foundations' grants and employers, or the Latino community, had a decisive impact on the type of actions adopted by community leaders which, in turn, affected the direction of the political path taken. In other words, the network of the leading organization's power strongly influences how the community mobilizes. In the Mount Pleasant Riots, for example, the organizations occupying the political center stage had strong links with governments, foundations, and other private actors, whereas the organizations leading La Marcha tended to depend on the Latino community for the base of support.

Secondly, rather than characterizing each of the two events as either spontaneous or planned, I contend that it is more accurate to suggest the presence of spontaneous

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[10] The entry in the public sphere is understood here as being seen and heard as a distinct socio-cultural formation and/or political actor.

elements, with different degrees of impact in both cases. That is to say, each of the historical events analyzed contains a mix of planned and spontaneous actions. In the riots, for example, the impromptu protest initiated right after the shooting of a Latino man took no time and was the product of various community networks—in particular based on spatial proximity and neighborhood links—; however, the leadership took advantage of this 'unplanned' opening and coordinated actions thereafter. "La Marcha", on the other hand, was the product of intense planning and organizing, which led to an event that exceeded by far the expectations of the planners. The politicization, in this case, was initially activated by this highly planned event and several unplanned protests followed in different localities right after.

My final assertion is that the spontaneous or planned character of the central public performance—namely, the Mount Pleasant Riots and La Marcha—had no direct impact on the degree of control that ordinary people in the Latino community had over the political path adopted and, therefore, to the level of innovation achieved in the political process. The type of subjects or actors that became central in the immediate aftermath of the public performances, and the type of decisions they made determined the political path taken and the political innovation achieved.

In the next section, I describe the conceptual models utilized to scrutinize the two cases.

3.3. Conceptual model

The models I utilize to analyze each event consider the interplay of the following

analytic categories: context, social and organizational appropriation, attribution of opportunities and threats, historical events, and innovation (see Figures 1 and 2). Instead of examining these categories in a static way, the perspective I utilized entails looking at the processes (sequence of events and actions) that form the relationships between these categories. For example, instead of showing how context A corresponds to a type of innovation B, I aim to uncover the mechanisms and processes that link those two variables. Specifically, I show how actors involved in each historical event understood the circumstances they found themselves in, how and why they chose the strategies they did from a range of options, as well as the ways in which they sought out, defined, and were constrained by other present actors, and so forth.

The underlying idea in this model is that contextual conditions constrain and encourage, though not necessarily determine the type of political path adopted by the community as a cultural formation and as a political actor. Being acquainted with demographic, organizational, and political trends in the community aids in understanding the positions adopted by different categories of actors during, before, and after the primary event. In reconstructing the different dimensions of each context, I relied on both secondary sources—such as newspapers, statistical information, surveys, institutional documents and primary sources—namely, transcripts of in-depth interviews that I conducted with key informants.

In unpacking the historical processes of these two events, I needed to reconstruct the events and then identify the patterns. The first step consisted of reconstructing the historical sequence of each of the events, distinguishing central from peripheral occurrences, and inquiring about the necessity and sufficiency of certain conditions in the

production of subsequent phenomena. In particular, for the reconstruction of these narratives I relied on both newspaper stories and interviews. The second task comprised the elucidation of patterns within the story–namely, how to put arguments together. In order to maintain the contextual reasoning, I relied on the interpretations provided by the participants themselves. In other words, the actions and occurrences contained in each the Mount Pleasant Riots and La Marcha, their interconnections, and outcomes were closely examined to determine their meaning—particularly the meaning that different categories of participants attributed to them—, and understood in their context of occurrence.

Given that each of the cases analyzed present singularities in terms of the sequence of crucial moments, two different conceptual models are used to illustrate the main categories and their relationships. The most salient difference is in the level of spontaneity: the Mount Pleasant riots were instant uprisings, whereas La Marcha was the result of intense planning and coordination.

It is important to note here that given the nature of this research, reconstructing historical sequences and attributing importance to organizational context and organizational appropriation to two distinct historical events, the models utilized in the research were semi-structured and fluid. At the start of the research, although I had a tentative model of concepts, dimensions, and indicators, the research process itself was oriented to the finding of signs that ended up transforming and enriching the model originally drafted. In the end, the model was enhanced with indicators or signs that were not originally anticipated.

The main concepts that compose the model and their operational definitions are as follows:

Historical events

As mentioned earlier, I based this research on Sewell's concept of "historical event", understood as a sequence of occurrences recognized as extraordinary by contemporaries and leading to an enduring transformation of structures (Sewell 1996: 844). In this study, I focused on the two single most important events in the recent political history of the Latino community in the Washington, D.C. region: the Mount Pleasant Riots of 1991 and La Marcha, the Immigration rallies of 2006. Although both events are constituted by a ramified series of occurrences that lasted well beyond their peaks when I speak of the events in these conceptual models, I refer to two pivotal moments—namely, the episodes of violence, looting, and disturbances in Mount Pleasant on May 5th and 6th 1991, and the massive immigration rally at the Mall in Washington, D.C. on April 10th 2006 respectively.

Context

Context is defined as the phenomena surrounding each case. In other words, context in this research denotes "the network of other cases and prior times" (Abbott, 1995: 94). Specifically, I will look at three contextual dimensions in each case—namely, the demographic profile of the local Latino community, the organizational landscape, and the political landscape. The demographic profile denotes the major trends in population composition, usually closely related to immigration flows and characteristics. The organizational landscape alludes to the map of organizations that work with and/or speak for the Latino community with specific attention to issues of leadership. The political

landscape dimension refers to patterns of community engagement in politics and the state, including trends of political representation, participation in government structures, and collective actions experiences.

Public performance

Public performances are understood as modes of appearance of ordinary people in the public space in order to advertise their claims. In the case of the Mount Pleasant Riots, the public performance was the taking over of the streets combined with episodes of violence, and in the case of La Marcha, it was the engagement in a massive pacific demonstration.

Attribution of opportunities and threats

Following McAdam et al (2001), I define opportunities and threats as subject to attribution. Under attribution of threats and opportunities, I included the series of concurrent or divergent readings of particular episodes—namely, the shooting of a Latino immigrant worker in Mount Pleasant in 1991 and the approval of the Sensenbrenner bill by the House of Representatives in December 2005—by unorganized persons or groups, constituted political actors with or without routine access to government resources, and agents of government about the need of engaging in collective action. In particular, I analyze how and when each of these categories perceived the moment that encouraged them to mobilize.

Social and organizational appropriation

By social and organizational appropriation, I refer to the actions that contributed to or hindered the process through which Latinos mobilized or were mobilized. In other words, I look at how they constituted themselves as a challenger group. These processes took place through both the intervention of existing organizations and the creation of new ones. Some of the processes looked at include performances by ordinary people and other relevant actors—such as service-providing agencies, community-based organizations, community leaders, churches, unions, and the media.

Innovation

As mentioned earlier in this work, the notion of innovation used in this research can be broadly defined as the introduction of something new into the political sphere. More precisely, the concept of innovative action as used here refers to a type of collective action that "incorporates claims, selects objects of claims, includes collective self-representations, and/or adopts means that are either unprecedented or forbidden within the regime in question." (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001: 7) Although the innovations achieved by the sudden entry of Latinos into the public sphere can be analyzed at a number of levels—ranging from innovations in public policies, to re-accommodations by or reactions from other actors—this research focused specifically on examining the formation of a new identity-based political actor within the Latino community as a result of the collective interactions launched during, before, and after the two major events analyzed. Among the phenomena included in this category are changes and continuities in terms of Latino leadership, community organization and empowerment, political engagement, organizational strengthening, and public visibility of Latinos.

Figure 1
Conceptual model – Historical Event: Mount Pleasant riots

Context
· Demographic profile
· Organizational landscape
· Political landscape

Trigger: Shooting

Public Performance
The riots (3 nights of looting and violence)

Attribution of threat and opportunity

Social appropriation

Innovation in public sphere
Political actor formation/ transformation
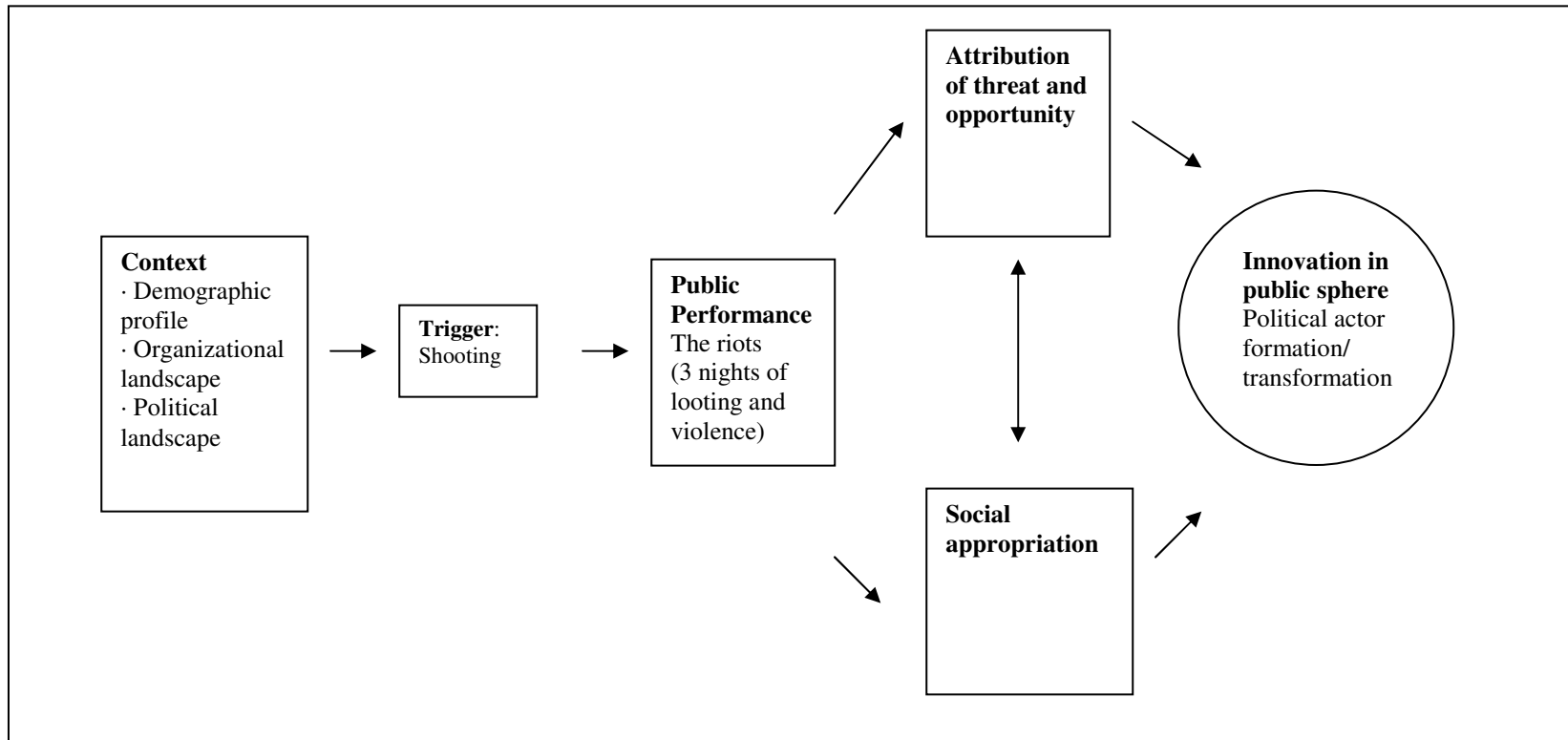
Figure 2
Conceptual Model – Historical Event: La Marcha
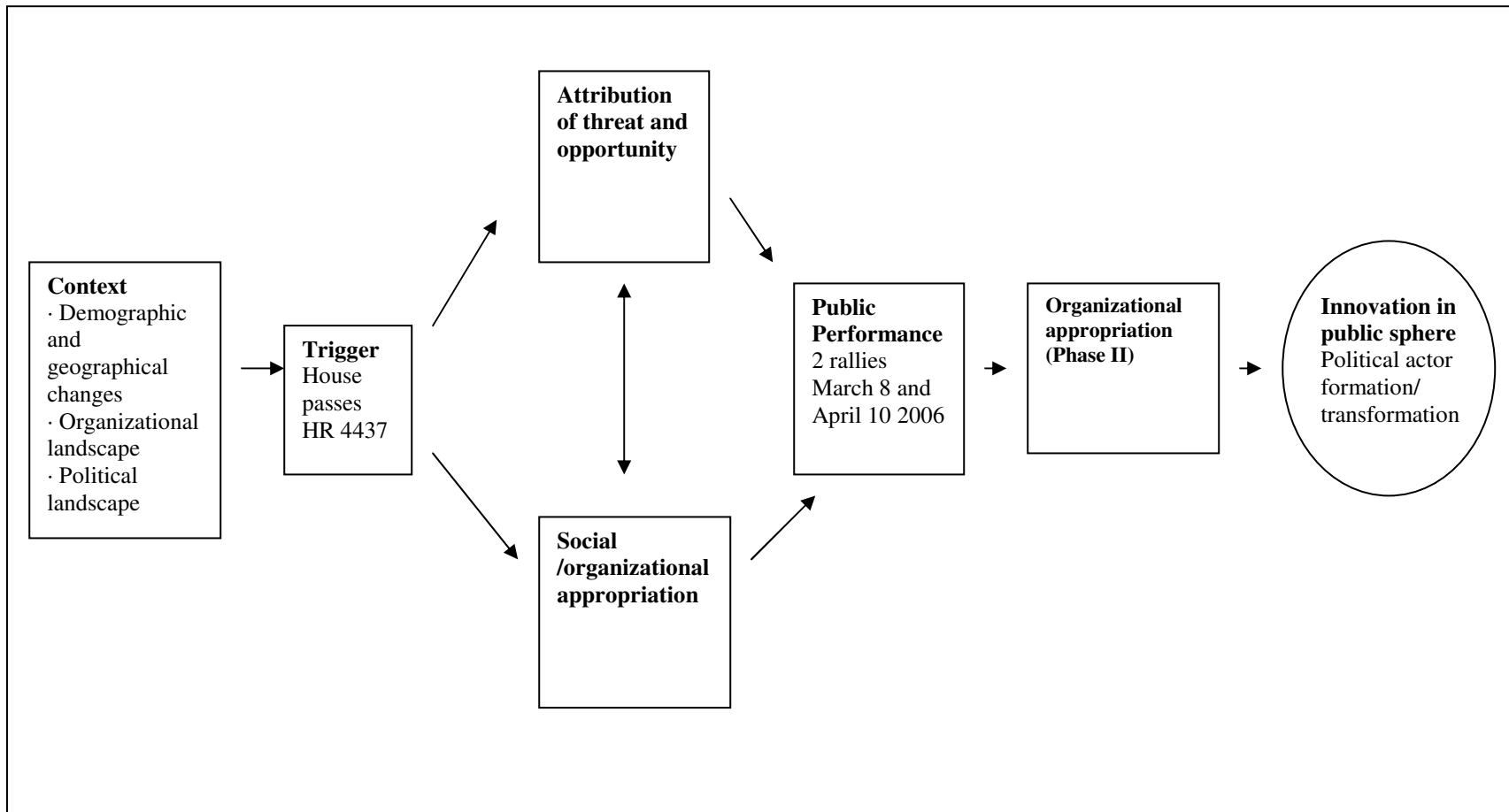
3.4. Empirical evidence and analysis

The sources of information relevant to this research are multiple. My primary data consisted of news stories from local newspapers and in-depth interviews conducted with leaders of social organizations, community organizers, domestic workers, public officials, and journalists. Other evidence was drawn from the National Center for Charitable Statistics, the U.S. Census Bureau, several institutional documents, legislative texts, and direct observation.

News Stories

Reconstructing each of the two events required a detailed study of the occurrences and the sequence in which those occurrences took place. Newspaper articles provided an invaluable source of information, especially, given the assumption underlying this work that media recognition is a condition of existence of events. Following Nora's assertion, events need to be known in order to exist, and in this matter, the press, radio, and images not only operate as means through which events become relatively independent, but they are also constitutive of the events themselves (Nora 1974: 212).

The news stories were surveyed from the two main newspapers in the DC area, the Washington Post and the Washington Times. I first conducted a preliminary survey of news stories that allowed me to familiarize myself with a wide array of issues regarding the Latino community in the area. This first survey covered the years 2005 and 2006, plus the year 1991, which comprised the time periods of each of the two events. The preliminary selection of news stories utilized a broad criterion,

consisting of collecting all the pieces of news that had Latinos or Hispanics in the title or body of the news. After a detailed examination of the contents of each article, only those related to political issues in any aspect were kept. As a result of this preliminary analysis I selected 122 news stories published between May and December of 1991 for the Mount Pleasant Riots case, and 51 articles published between December 2005 and September 2006 for La Marcha case.

The matrix used to register and, thereafter, analyze each of the articles included the following basic items: identification of the news (entry #, date, newspaper), headline, description of occurrence, actors involved, and newspaper perspective.

This analysis of the information made it possible to construct a useful map to systematize the information and signal the place to locate the particular occurrences in the narrative. In other words, it allowed me to create a chronology of the historical particulars that compose each event. It also allowed me to identify gaps in information to fill in using other sources. One clear example is the case of the Immigration Rallies of 2006. The organizing efforts that followed the approval of the Sensenbrenner bill by the House of Representatives in December 2005 and preceded the first mass rally that took place in March 2006 were not covered by the main local newspapers.

In-depth interviews

The in-depth interviews offered additional insight into the two events in three specific ways: (1) to gather factual information about occurrences relevant in the

development of the events of interest and yet missing in other sources and (2) to reconstruct the mechanisms (sequences of events)—which were not accessible in the written press—that account for how the community moved from point A to point B; and (3) to inquire about the *meaning* that different aspects linked to politics have for distinct categories of subjects.

Forty in-depth interviews were conducted with five groups of subjects, including leaders of social organizations, community organizers, immigrant workers, public officials, and journalists. Of the 40 total interviews, Of the 40 total interviews, 18 were conducted with Latino community leaders, 6 with public officials, 6 with immigrant workers, 4 with community organizers, and 3 with journalists, 3 with other community leaders. The interviews lasted between 30 minutes and one hour, and most were conducted between May and December of 2007. A few of these subjects were re-interviewed in July 2008. While the content of the interviews varied with respect to each informant, the following common topics reappeared: the identification of key moments in the history of the Latino community in the area; the types and roles of organizations working with the Latino community; experiences of political participation and mobilization of Latino immigrants in the area; participation of Latinos in state structures; description and significance of each event for the community; gains and setbacks in each episode. Public officials, leaders of organizations or community organizers were also asked about their own experiences during the events and about the role and history of the organizations they lead/work for.

The subjects were recruited mainly through snowball sampling, which is the

process of recruiting new subjects through referrals from current subjects, and directly through phone calls. In addition, the selection of interviewees was based on their capacity as key informants regarding the specific events studied. All of my interviewees participated in this project voluntarily, none received any compensation. The majority of the interviews were conducted in Spanish, which I personally transcribed. In addition, I personally translated to English all direct quotations from the fieldwork. Names and identifying information have been changed or suppressed to protect the anonymity of all interviewees. Most of these interviews took place at either the informants' workplaces or at a mutually agreed on public place.

The analysis of the interviews was done using a qualitative analysis software package, Nvivo 7. The process of analysis included the identification of general themes and sub-themes, the assignment of codes to each of them, the grouping of fragments of text linked to each of the codes, and the separate analysis for each of the thematic modules; the production of findings and uncovering of significant relations; and the elaboration of partial reports.

The information was then organized around the conceptual models developed to analyze each case (see Figures 1 and 2). Dimensions of analysis in the model were changed or added throughout the research process.

Other sources

Throughout the research process, I gathered information from other sources to understand and strengthen particular aspects of analysis. For example, I utilized data from the Urban Institute's National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS), a

national repository of 501(c)(3) organizations that file with the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, to examine the composition and profile of the Latino nonprofit sector.

I also relied on data from the U.S. Census Bureau in order to establish basic characteristics of the profile of the Latino population in the area at different points in time. In addition, I utilized data from the Current Population Survey in order to describe variations in registration and voting among Latinos.

Institutional documents were consulted as a way to understand some formal missions and work of organizations, to reconstruct political initiatives, and grasp tactics of mobilization. Some of these institutional documents included brochures, strategic plans, and flyers.

The analysis of legislative texts was critical to the understanding of the contents and implications of immigration reform proposals. In particular, I contrasted the text of legislative proposal with the way in which it was summarized and interpreted for the mass public by planners and organizers.

Finally, I engaged in direct observation by being present in the sites where the events I am analyzing occurred. I had the unique experience of being present at La Marcha, the April 10th immigration rally at the Washington Monument. Specifically, I visited the premises of one of the organizations involved in organizing the rally, and then went to the demonstration site a few hours before the bulk of people arrived. I also explored the Mount Pleasant neighborhood, where the riots occurred in 1991. I visited the neighborhood several times, and got familiar with some of the main organizations that work with the community. During the interviews I had the opportunity to take a look at the buildings of several community organizations, public

offices, and neighborhood meeting places such as coffee shops. I also had the opportunity to be taken on a guided tour around the Mount Pleasant neighborhood. These onsite visits gave me a different perspective on how and where things happened. I experienced first-hand how close the incidents were from where people lived, and how magnificent or humble some of the buildings where nonprofits operate are. I could also observe how many "barriers of protection," including, secretaries, doors, etc., some of my interviewees had, which revealed the accessibility or inaccessibility that some of my interviewees have in the community. Being physically present and getting this first hand exposure to the sites helped me make sense of some of my informants' narrations during the interviews, as well as have a different personal connection with the research process.

3.5. The analysis of the evidence

For this dissertation I used a triangulated approach both with respect to sources and with respect to methods. The combined analysis of these different types of evidence was aimed at (1) the reconstruction of narratives and (2) the identification of drivers and mechanisms in those accounts.

The reconstruction of narratives

The first general effort in the analysis concerned the reconstruction of narratives for each of the contentious episodes, their contexts, and selected

consequences. As mentioned earlier, I understand narrative to be "the portrayal of social phenomena as temporally ordered, sequential, unfolding, and open-ended "stories" fraught with conjunctures and contingency" (Griffin 1992: 405). The sequence, order and contingency of occurrences that establish the way in which events unfolded shaped the explanation of the events themselves, and through them, of the phenomenon of politicization of Latinos.

In order to reconstruct the unfolding events, I began with a detailed identification of the facts and actions that were relevant components of each event, their sequence and order. This "ordering" of the event, as well as its delimitation required what Sewell calls an act of judgment. In other words, the decision of which actions or facts were relevant components for the unfolding of the event required an interpretive contextual approach. This assemblage of elements—actions and happenings—that might otherwise seem discrete or disparate into a coherent whole is what Griffin (1992) refers to as "colligation". The idea underlying this type of narrative explanation is that the event needs to be examined and interrogated through its internal temporality—which is also referred to as "unpacked"—and then re-composed as an explanation. Through this construction of narratives, it should be underscored, the analyst not only attributes causality to the connections among historical particulars, but also assigns meaning to those internal relations (see Aminzade 1992).

My effort to identify and order actions and events into a narrative faced several challenges. For example, by gathering different stories from different informants and sources (e.g., interviews and newspapers) I encountered points of

convergence, tension, or open contradiction between different accounts. So although there is a general timeline of events that was uncontested, some details about the meaning and importance of certain elements varied across different sources. When those points of divergence on specific issues appeared, I made them explicit in the text.

In terms of actual research tasks, the first stage in the reconstruction of the narratives for each event was the identification and analysis of newspaper stories from major newspapers in the area. This analysis allowed me to identify major turning points in the events, and examine the way in which the occurrences had been made public. This exploration also enabled me to identify gaps of information that needed to be filled by other sources. The examination of news stories provided me with a valuable point of entry into the theme, which proved crucial to informing the way in which I conducted the interviews. The primary question that guided my inquiry of newspapers was what happened immediately before, during, and after each of the episodes under analysis.

The interviews with different key informants, on the other hand, were used to reconstruct the missing elements in each puzzle, but also, and most importantly, served me to identify interpretations and the weight that each of the occurrences had for different actors. The most important rationale behind the conduction of interviews was the identification of arguments as to why the riots and la Marcha occurred the way they did, and what impact it had in the eyes of different community stakeholders. In other words, the interviews allowed me to move from description to explanation.

Following the theoretical perspective depicted earlier in this dissertation, some precautions warranted consideration when developing an explanatory comprehension of a historical event. First, there are usually several trajectories of change and sequence of happenings to be disentangled (Aminzade 1992, Sewell 1996). That means that the map of occurrences that constitute an event is usually complex and far from a single master process. Second, sequence of occurrences is not sufficient for accounting for causation. As Griffin (1993) states, chronological order does not necessarily imply historical or causal significance. This, in turn, means that in order to attribute causation and develop an explanation "events and their contexts [should] be openly theorized, factual material abstracted and generalized, and the causal connections among narrative sequences established in a way that can be explicitly replicated and criticized." (Griffin 1993: 1100)

Thus, the explanatory study of the events relied on a conscious theoretical interrogation of the connections that tied the occurrences together. With that in mind, the utilization of available explanatory frameworks (the contentious politics and political process approaches) and knowledge about the historical background constituted invaluable pieces for that task.

After describing the set of historical particulars that constituted each event, I started inquiring theoretically as to what those connections meant, how they related to previous organizational and political contexts, what roles actors played and why, and what changes occurred in the community as an evolving political actor. In both cases,

I used interviews with key informants to understand the political and organizational background of the community at each point in time. Given the lack of formalized and systematized knowledge on the political history of the Latino community in the Washington, D.C. area, the information provided by key informants was critical. The plurality of voices allowed me to capture points of tension and disagreement with the community, as well as consensus on patterns of development within the community.

The information gathered through in-depth interviews was analyzed, as mentioned earlier, using a qualitative analysis software package. The examination of the evidence, which took the bulk of the time, had two main stages. First, I pinpointed new themes or subthemes to be included in the analysis of each case; and second, I examined each of those themes across different informants. Through this integrated analysis I was able to grasp more thoroughly patterns and tensions that shaped the narratives.

When possible, other available information was also analyzed to make or strengthen some points encountered in the interviews. For example, quantitative information on Latino nonprofit organizations was utilized to describe the context and impact of the riots in terms of organizational strengthening of the community (a topic that is widely present in the interviews). The Census' information on the composition of the community was also utilized to show the demographic characteristics of the community (mainly in terms of nationality) in order to evaluate the presence or absence of nationality claims in the political events and their aftermath. In addition, data on voter registration and participation in elections was used to illustrate a claim

found in the interviews that stated that the immigration rallies and the actions that followed them had an impact in Latinos' electoral participation.

Each of the analyzed cases is unique and the focus of this analysis was on the understanding of each of them separately, by pinpointing logics underlying the sequence of actions and occurrences taking place before, during, and after the political performances in question. However, comparison is utilized to pinpoint similarities and differences in mechanisms underlying Latinos' sudden appearance in the public sphere and the ensemble of actors and actions that preceded and succeeded the appearance. In the last section of this dissertation, I examine how the different political and organizational contexts helped to explain the different trajectories of the political processes opened by the riots and the march, as well as the dissimilar impact that each of the event ultimately had in the emergence or transformation of a Latino political actor in the area.

Chapter 4: The Mount Pleasant Riots of May 1991

In early May, 1991 the neighborhood of Mount Pleasant, Washington, D.C. experienced a great shock. Following a shooting of a Latino worker by a black police officer, the community exploded in a series of riots. These occurrences took place in early May 1991 in the neighborhood that concentrated the majority of Latino residents living in the District.

The events of May 1991 in Mount Pleasant reflected long term tensions existing between Hispanic residents (the majority of whom were undocumented immigrants) and the police and other local state officials. Although the incidents lasted a few days they synthesized a dense plot of co-existing conflicts. The different interpretations of the conflict by the actors or subjects affected—namely, the police, the city Mayor, the Hispanic organizations, neighbors, and the media—led to a configuration of forces that affected the trajectory of the problem. Because of the riots, Latinos found themselves at the center of the local political scene, concentrating the attention of the media for several months after the incident. Under any account, through their involvement in the facts of Mount Pleasant, they were able to push a series of issues into the local political agenda.

This chapter is devoted to the examination of the contextual factors that made the occurrence of the riots possible, the direction of the political process opened for the Latino community by the riots; and the impact the riots had in terms of the process of emergence of a transformed political actor within the Latino community. First, I reconstruct the chronology of the event and the aftermath. Following, I

analyze some prominent contextual features that surrounded the 1991 riots—I specifically look at demographic, organizational, and political aspects. I also examine the ways in which different sectors read the threat and opportunity created, as well as the ways in which the opening produced was taken advantage of. Finally, I review some of the innovative features that Latinos acquired as a political actor.

4.1. A chronology of the event and the aftermath

In this section I describe the main stages of the Mount Pleasant Riots, as depicted in mainstream newspapers[11] in the district. Given the extensive and detailed coverage that the event and the "Latino problem" received in the local media during and after the riots, news stories constitute invaluable resources for the analysis of this case. The chronology of happenings, interpretations, negotiations, and actions appears to have a direct relation with the way in which the problem was addressed. This examination of the "historical particulars" that composed the event and the aftermath has two goals: (1) to reconstruct the "public side" of the political process opened by the riots and (2) to identify those gaps that could not be filled using this source.

The main stages identified include the shooting of a Latino worker, the diffusion of the rumor, the eruption of violence, and the pacification. In addition to the immediate reactions to the shooting, I also singled out some lasting effects,

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[11] The deliberate decision of utilizing mainstream media outlets instead of "ethnic" newspapers responds to an attempt to look at how the event impacted the public agenda.

including organizational impacts, healing efforts, investigation, effect in the local government, diffusion to other locales, and reaction of other minorities.

4.1.1. The trigger and immediate reactions

Triggering occurrence: Shooting of a Latino worker

In the evening of May 5th, 1991, a Latino man was shot by a police officer in the Mount Pleasant neighborhood in Washington, D.C. This much of the story is agreed on. However, the events surrounding the incident are subject to debate.

According to the police officers' official account, backed by the District's Police Department the incident began when a female police officer confronted three Latino men, who were supposedly drinking. The police officer ordered them to put away what they were drinking, but the three men refused., The three men became disorderly, so the officer attempted to put them under arrest. In an attempt to resist the female officer's order, one of the men pulled a knife and started pointing it in the direction of the officer. In return, the officer drew her service revolver, and ordered the man several times to drop the knife. When the man did not obey the officer's order, the officer shot.

This story of the occurrences, however, completely contradicts the version told by several witnesses and believed by the majority of the Mount Pleasant community. According to the witnesses' account, Daniel Enrique Gomez, a 30-year-old Salvadoran resident, was handcuffed and unarmed at the time of the shooting. Gomez, who was not initially involved in the discussion taking place between two

Latino men and police officers, joined the struggle when the police was trying to arrest one of his friends. The fight, then, involved three officers, Gomez and his two friends, and two people that until then had been bystanders. As the police officer took a few steps backward and shouted "freeze". In this account, Gomez had both hands cuffed behind his back and approached the officer who had drawn her revolver. When Gomez was about a foot away from the female officer, she fired a single shot into his chest.

Rumor swept throughout the community

While the details and order of events are in dispute, the fact remains that a Latino man was shot by a police officer. No sooner had the event occurred when the story spread throughout Mount Pleasant.. The version that was passed along from neighbor to neighbor was short, simple and powerful: "The police shot and killed a handcuffed man."

Eruption of violence and immediate effects on the public sphere

The circulation of the story throughout the community led to an immediate eruption of violence on the streets of Mount Pleasant. Hundreds of irate youths began confronting the police, throwing rocks and bottles, setting several cars afire and wounding several officers. During the riot, many store windows were smashed, and two shops were looted. As the riot continued, two to three hundred police officers were called to the area from other districts as reinforcement, with Spanish-speaking police officers specifically requested. In an attempt to control the riot, he police

utilized tear gas. All in all, the Mount Pleasant riots on the night of May 5th lasted 6 hours.

As the Mount Pleasant community erupted, DC Mayor Sharon Pratt Dixon opted to monitor the unfolding events from her home, following the advice from her top aides that evening. It was not until the next day that she walked the streets in the neighborhood to assess the damage. On the morning of Monday, May 6th, she gathered the DC Council members to develop alternative strategies to decrease tensions in the short run, and to reduce the cultural chasm between the Spanish-speaking community and the English-speaking majority. Mayor Dixon's Monday also included a meeting with a dozen clergymen from the Mount Pleasant community. The fact that the Mayor chose to meet with a small group of clergymen rather than with a bunch of community groups that had been requesting an urgent meeting with her was interpreted by one of the clergymen present at the meeting as an attempt to evade the advancement of political agendas so soon after the disturbances.

On the night of May 6th, for a second consecutive night, Latino and non-Latino youths and police officers clashed in the streets of Mount Pleasant. This time, the uproar spread to the neighborhoods of Adams Morgan and Columbia Heights and blacks joined in on what had primarily been a Latino struggle the first night. As had happened the previous night, hundreds of youths fought with the police, throwing bottles and bricks and shouting at the officers. The violence expanded to include the destruction of a Metro bus populated with passengers, the looting of a fast food restaurant and the burning of a public dumpster. The police again utilized tear gas in an effort to reestablish order.

Pacification

To regain control of the communities on fire, D.C. Mayor Sharon Dixon imposed a curfew in the Mount Pleasant and Adams Morgan neighborhood from midnight of May 6th to 5:00 am May 7th. This decision represented a reversal of strategy; from a lenient approach aiming at dispersing crowds and minimizing arrests, the government tactic now was to start rounding up youths. Once the curfew was in effect, peace returned to the neighborhoods.

4.1.2. Lasting effects

Although the violent events of Mount Pleasant lasted fewer than 48 hours, as briefly depicted above, the consequences of these events for the community, the local state, the plans of the public leaders, and the public agenda in the District's politics, as well as cultural schemas developed in the understanding of immigrants' issues, continued for a significant time afterwards. The identification of substantive consequences affecting both Latino immigrants as a group as well as the political scenario of Washington, D.C. presented in this section is a synthesis of a detailed identification and interpretation of 54 momentous occurrences that took place from the beginning of the riots to the articulation of demands of the group four months later.

Through research conducted on this case, I found that the shooting of a Latino worker and, most importantly, the discursive appropriation of the event by the Latin

American residents in the Mount Pleasant area had a significant impact in the way the political process was deployed.

Organization

Although the map of Latino immigrants' organizations operating in the Washington, D.C. area was vast and varied even before the shooting, the sequence of events that followed the riots show a convergence of agendas and efforts and the emergence of a new leadership in the group. On May 7th, soon after the disturbances, D.C. Mayor Dixon met with several leaders of the Latino community and proposed the formation of a multicultural task force directed towards the improved relations between the city government and Latino residents. This task force, however, was intended to function "at the mayor's pleasure". As a response to this attempt, and in an effort to maintain autonomy with respect to local authorities, a second group with the same membership was constituted: the D.C. Latino Civil Rights Task Force (D.C. Latino). Throughout the following months, the D.C. Latino emerged as the unified voice of the Latino immigrant community, constituting itself as the privileged interlocutor of the government officials and responsible for the advancement of a policy agenda.

Conscious of this evolving status of the task force, Pedro Aviles, leader of the D.C. Latino task force, took a step toward legitimating themselves by asking the mayor to recognize the task force as "the body representing the interests of the Latino community".

Healing

After civil order returned to the city, mainly through the curfews imposed by the local government, the community of Mount Pleasant adopted several initiatives attempting to "clean the name" of the neighborhood and reinstate pride into the community. These initiatives included an immediate scheduling of an outdoor celebration on Mount Pleasant Street, including Mariachi music and the installation of banners with the slogan written in both English and Spanish: "Mount Pleasant Invincible/Invencible". Stores also sold posters and T-shirts bearing the same logo. In addition to the new community motto and celebration, there were a number of community clean-up campaigns and several meetings in the neighborhood to address what were considered "neighborhood needs". Furthermore, soon after calm was restored in the area, D.C. Mayor Dixon, city officials and religious leaders from Mount Pleasant gathered at the Shrine of the Sacred Heart Church proclaiming a "day of reconciliation".

The incidents in Mount Pleasant undoubtedly gave visibility not only to the neighborhood, but more importantly to the Latino community and its long standing problems. The Mount Pleasant riots represented both a serious rupture in the community as well as an unexpected opportunity to begin discursively re-thinking about itself.

Investigation/ Reparation

Given the conflicting accounts of what had happened in Mount Pleasant and the dissatisfaction of multiple parties with what had happened and what was implied

in the disturbances of May 5th and 6th, the city's Civilian Review Complaint Board (CRCB), which is responsible for investigating complaints regarding police misconduct, held a forum for residents of Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant. The forum was meant to be a space to discuss concerns regarding police conduct during the disturbances as well as to make community residents aware that there is a mechanism available for reporting complaints against the police. More than 100 people attended the meeting to voice their concerns. Youths living in Mount Pleasant attributed the anger that erupted in the rioting to ongoing police discrimination and harassment. In addition, students provided multiple examples of job and housing discrimination. It became clear that residents had long been feeling discriminated against It was during this meeting with the CRCB that Pedro Aviles, chairman of D.C. Latino, asked for a commission to conduct intensive hearings on the city's treatment of Latinos. Due to that initial request, the US CRCB reviewed numerous complaints that police had regularly harassed and physically abused Latinos and that the city had ignored Latinos and Latino interests in hiring and budgeting.

Two weeks later, on May 28th, the CRCB announced that it would be investigating the economic and social status of Latinos in the District. This decision was based on the claims of abuse that emerged after the shooting. The CRCB would be gathering testimony about opportunities available for Latinos in a variety of areas including employment, training, education, and city services. Although the commission had no enforcement power, this investigation was significant in that it would give the commission the authority to subpoena witnesses and issue a report to Congress about the situation of Latinos in the District. From the perspective of the

Latino residents in D.C. this investigation meant an opportunity to to include not only the particulars of what happened during the riots but, more importantly, a broad range of long-standing issues of discrimination in the community.

Impact in the local government

The incidents in Mount Pleasant had direct repercussions on the District's government. Most of the parties involved read the conflict as one regarding local politics, which explains why the nonappearance of the mayor in the scene of the disturbances during the first night was severely criticized by neighbors and Latino leaders. Furthermore, in the first explanations that circulated just after the riots, various statements tended to point to the insufficient attention that the city government had paid to the Latino population in the District.

The city's Office on Latino Affairs (OLA), created to communicate Latino concerns to the mayor office, was one of the prime targets of criticisms after the riots in Mount Pleasant. Many complained that although OLA had been created to focus attention on Latino needs, its creation had actually released other agencies from their obligations to the Latino community. According to critical voices, OLA had been generally ignored by Mayor Dixon—who had not appointed a permanent director since she took office—and could not provide any warning on the latent troubles present at the heart of the D.C. Latino community.

Three weeks after the riots, feeling pressured by the new political landscape Mayor Dixon appointed an acting Latino Affairs Chief. At the same time, the mayor also promised Latino leaders that she would consider three previously rejected

nominees for the position—the director of OLA was the only Cabinet-level position for which mayor was required to choose from nominees made by an advisory commission.

The figure of the D.C. mayor appeared as a central character in the months after the riots. After securing the pacification of the area, Mayor Dixon committed to a series of meetings with neighborhood leaders, Latino organizations, police officers, and other appointed and elected officials, and businessmen, attempting to negotiate an array of policy changes to address short-term and long-term issues that had been raised during the riots and after.

Diffusion

The fact that the incidents occurred in the heart of the nation's capital, the event resonated in other locales as well. This was particularly the case in neighboring suburban districts. A couple of incidents in Montgomery County, Maryland and Arlington, Virginia, occurring a few weeks after the Mount Pleasant riots, are good illustrations of this point. With respect to the former, a Governor's commission in the State of Maryland recommended that the Montgomery County police force improve its training, hire more Latino officers and increase its sensitivity to the county's rapidly growing Latino community, as a necessary step to avoid incidents like the ones that took place in Mount Pleasant. In regard to the second one, Arlington County community leaders warned that unless the county provided more jobs, and housing incidents could "explode" like it did in Mount Pleasants in early May.

Construction and advancement of a policy agenda

Materially, the transformations achieved by the Latino community residing in D.C. were also noteworthy. Several measures were adopted by the city government, many including businesses of the area as well as community leaders. The demands from different community groups and, in particular, those coming from the D.C. Latino task force, were mostly –though not exclusively—addressed to the city government. The formalization of the agenda took a few months of negotiations within the task force and with other actors. On September 11th 1991, four months after the riots, the D.C. Latino Task Force sent a report to Mayor Dixon requesting parity in jobs, city services, city contracts and education. As a result, one of the first policies adopted by the city was the creation of job opportunities for teenagers—particularly important considering a recent budget cuts in the city that had affected jobs programs for youths. The remaining demands pertained to the spheres of police relations, housing, human rights, employment, education, economic development, recreation and human services. In particular, the Latino community requested the appointment of a Latino deputy chief of police and cultural sensitivity training for police officers

Although Mayor Dixon did not specify how those goals would be addressed, she agreed that the percentage of Latinos in the District's government could be increased. In addition, Mayor Dixon agreed to implement some of the easier, no-cost reforms immediately. For example, signs in Spanish would be installed in police stations informing people about their rights.

Together with the presentation of the report to the Mayor, Pedro Aviles from the D.C. Latino Task Force warned that in the event the mayor and other city officials refuse to execute a policy of parity, Latinos would mobilize and show that quantitative strength can offset a lack of economic or voting strength. Aviles asserted that "We [Latinos] are 10% of the population. We should be receiving 10% of the services". In addition, Aviles announced that community leaders were planning to take their battle for equality to the suburbs soon, and he was critical of Mayor Dixon's administration's response to their petitions so far. Furthermore, Aviles connected the new Latino community claims to what African Americans had requested for their own community in the 1960s and warned that the Latino community could use nonviolent actions similar to those utilized by the black community four decades earlier in their own struggle for equity and equality.

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Reaction of other minorities

The riot of Mount Pleasant revealed a multiplicity of latent racial/ethnic tensions. The fact that the police officer who shot Gomez, a Latino man, was African American was interpreted by many Latino neighbors and community leaders as a reflection of the resentment that blacks have towards Latinos. Testimonies gathered soon after the shooting are evocative in this respect: "They [black police offices] don't treat us [Latino community members] as well as they treat blacks"; or "There is racism by the black community against Latinos" (Aviles, D.C. Latino). Along the same lines, Sonia Gutierrez, principal of the Gordon Adult Education Center, stated "We don't hate blacks, but blacks discriminate against us. What have we done? In

some cases we are coming to this country to escape war." Raul Yzaguirre, President of the influential National Council of La Raza put it this way: "Black leadership in many large cities has failed to address Hispanic grievances such as job discrimination, police brutality, and inadequate bilingual education." This initial rhetoric among Latino leaders has somewhat lessened over time, in an attempt to avoid the intensification of tensions between the two minority groups.[12]

Despite the occasional tensions between the Latino and black communities, there are parallels and connections between the two. Some commentators in the media as well as public leaders (including the mayor) have pinpointed parallels between the Latino communities and riot-oriented black communities of the '60s. One aspect worth noting is the involvement of black youths in the May 1991 Mount Pleasant riots. According to the newspaper coverage of the event, during the second night in particular, black youths joined Latino youths in the clashes with the police.

Race/ethnicity was explicitly used to frame the demands of the organized Latino community to the local authorities: the argument stated that blacks were vastly overrepresented in the city government, and that Latinos deserved parity in the treatment they received from the local government in jobs, city services, city contracts and education. Repeating Aviles assertion: "We [Latinos] are 10% of the population. We should be receiving 10% of the services,"

Some African American residents and leaders expressed disgust with the associations between black struggles for justice and Latino pleas. "Hispanics may suffer some discrimination, but they were never the victims of slavery or Jim Crow laws", expressed one African American resident. In particular, the sudden attention to

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[12] The quotes here were gathered from an article in the Washington Post, May 12, 1991.

the Latino community irritated some black leaders, opening a gap in the politics of the 1990s in a majority-black city. Some African American Leaders rejected the analogy as irrelevant or false, stating for example that "We [African Americans] never came over as illegal aliens, as immigrants" or "They [Hispanics] were never slaves" (Calvin Rolark, United Black Fund). Other leaders acknowledged the similarity of the struggles, but warned that Latino gains could not come at the expense of black residents, who also needed more jobs, contracts, housing and services.

4.2. Context

This section centers on the examination of the demographic, organizational and political background of the Latino community residing in Washington in 1991. The reconstruction of this landscape is meant to help illuminate the development of the occurrences that set the stage for the Mount Pleasant riots of 1991 and its aftermath. In the first subsection, I review some visible trends in the community composition and size. Following that, I examine the array of organizations that were founded by Latinos and/or that work primarily with the Latino community. Specifically, I look at the role of the first leaders in the post-Mount Pleasant community and their impact on the development of service-providing agencies. I also examine the weight these organizations have had in the community, their political role, and their transformations over time. The third subsection focuses on the analysis of the political profile of the community. In particular I look at the relations between

the community and its leaders with the city government and state agents, the patterns of political representation, and the experiences of collective action.

4.2.1. Demographic profile

Like their counterparts in other urban areas throughout the United States, immigrants from Latin America arrived in the District of Columbia in a number of separate waves. Those waves are related to the different social and political events occurring in the immigrants; countries of origin. In other words, what was happening in Latin America had a direct impact on the immigration streams directed to the D.C. region and on the political profile of the Latin American immigrant community residing in the area. As each of these waves landed on the DC shore, they affected the political development of the Latino community.

The first substantive Latino presence in the area were Puerto Ricans and Chicanos, many of whom came to the area after Second World War to work for the federal government. Puerto Ricans and Chicanos had a peculiar status. Because they had citizenship, they enjoyed a series of privileges, ranging from voting, to access to public employment, to knowing how the system worked. From the beginning, the members of the first wave of Latino immigration established support networks and, at the same time, created a political voice within the community.

The 1960s and 70s saw the next noticeable wave of Latino immigrants to the Washington, D.C. area. Cubans, fleeing post-revolutionary Cuba, moved into the District; however, unlike the first wave of Latino immigrants who were moved by a

rather local political agenda, most Cuban immigrants—many of whom were professionals, professors, bankers and intellectuals—were politically more engaged with an international agenda.

During this same time period, a smaller wave of immigrants came to the US from Latin America. Employees of international organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund brought laborers from throughout Latin America to work as housekeepers and domestic workers (Reepak 1995).

The next immigrant wave led to a sort of political radicalization of the local Latino community in the District. In the 1970s, many South American countries experienced military coups, which naturally resulted in waves of emigration. Several political activists arrived in the Washington area escaping from dictatorships in countries such as Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay. According to Sebastian Puentes, a politically involved young person at the time, this process of politicization became especially noticeable after the abrupt end of the Chilean socialist government of Salvador Allende.

> What happens in Latin America has its impact here too. It had impact when they killed Salvador Allende. When they killed him… because I believe they killed him… many people came from abroad… people came from Chile, people from Nicaragua, people from different places… activists that were in Chile. From all the countries… Argentineans came too… when they had all that process with the military there. So then those people resided here. So then, for the first time the community develops a process towards the Left, I would say. The Left begins to have a little bit of impact in the community, a little bit of presence I would say. Chileans who came from over there with experience from their countries, some Argentineans, Nicaraguans…. The community started to form itself politically, with a sort of idea that we have to mobilize people, we have to organize ourselves… politically in that sense. And that has an impact because many of the youths in the area became… I would say… leftist activists. Including myself personally…

The most significant wave of Latin American immigrants to the District occurred in the 1980s as a result of the civil wars in El Salvador. From that point, an unprecedented flow of Central American immigrants relocated to the D.C. metropolitan area. The arrival of Salvadorans escaping from the war in Central America was significant not only because of its quantitative dimension--thousands of immigrants arrived in a short period of time-- but also because of the impact they had in the Latino community and the area's population at large. Julio Cruz, a school teacher who has lived in the area for more than three decades now and who became a key figure in the Latino community in the area, described the significance of the massive arrival of Salvadorans as follows: "all the sudden the gates opened and prrrroom!... the flood of Salvadorans… Before then, nobody knew where El Salvador was located or what was going on there, or what a pupusa was. In the U.S. Senate they didn't have any idea either. It was like what happened with the invasion of Grenada…."

The new immigrants from El Salvador and other areas in Central America introduced a new type of political presence in the District's Latino community. On the one hand, most Central American immigrants came with no political protection of any kind. According to the Central American interviewees, they viewed themselves as second-class residents. On the other hand, given that most of them had escaped a war environment in their countries of origin, immigrants coming from Central America in the eighties had a very distinct political profile, which would ultimately be reflected in the character that the Mount Pleasant Riots adopted. The following description by a community referent synthesizes the features of this group:

People were coming kind of much closer to their militancy. You know what I mean? So that they had been…many of the people that were coming had been in a militant frame in El Salvador or wherever else they were coming from but primarily from El Salvador. And so they had those identities much more intact. And so in thinking of that, there was that. If you look at the photographs or you listen to the kind of framing, it was a very…tactical. It wasn't a riot in the kinda more American sense; it was a riot in the Latin American sense. (Elizabeth Mederos)

By 1990 224,786 Latinos, which represented 5.7 percent of the total population, were living in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area[13], with Salvadorans being the single largest group by country of origin. Furthermore, immigrants from El Salvador and other Central American countries became the city's largest and most noticeable immigrant community (Repak 1995: 1). In fact, in a short period of time, Washington became home to the second largest community of Salvadorans in the U.S and the third largest settlement of Central Americans. This pattern stands out against the make up of the Latino population in the U.S. by national origin, whose largest groups are chiefly of Mexican, Puerto Rican or Cuban descent.

The changes in size and composition experienced by the Latino community in the area were also accompanied by the formation and transformation of a relatively rich organizational network. The next section will be devoted to the analysis of the latter one.

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[13] From the Census 1990 Summary Tape File 1 (STF 1) , 100-Percent Data.

4.2.2. Organizational landscape

A few years after the first noticeable wave of Latino immigrants in the District, new organizations began to emerge within the community, most of them founded by prominent Latino leaders. These organizations adopted multiple roles: from providing services to the Spanish-speaking community in the area, to negotiating policies or distribution of resources with the local government, to giving a voice to the community. It is worth noting that because many of the Latino residents in the area were not citizens, these agencies tended to operate as mediators between the Latino population and the government. Whether they actually reflected the community prevailing will or not, at least in discourse, most of them claimed this role for themselves. These organizations, mostly services-providing agencies, would represent for many years to come the nucleus of power within the community. In particular, the heads of organizations became the 'leaders', representatives and political referents of Latinos residing in the area. Among other things, this symbolical role enabled these community leaders to negotiate with the government, search for funds, and speak to the media with respect to Latino affairs in the area.

The power of this leadership elite, however, was in most cases based on a hierarchical relationship with the bases. Their location in a service providing organization guaranteed them regular contact with the community, and the possibility of being known, and usually respected by the service users. In addition, these leaders had special legal, economic, and cultural status, which differentiated them from the typical Latino residing in the area. Unlike many of the community members, these

leaders were usually bilingual citizens with a relatively comfortable economic status and a solid educational background. At the same time, this privileged position gave them access to a series of resources—including funds, government positions, contacts with key actors such as foundations, among others—which were critical for the operation of their organizations which, in turn, was beneficial for the community at large.

Over the years, several organizations were created and started consolidating in the local scenario. The creation and growth of these organizations has been related to various degrees to a serious of co-operating factors, including the capacity of their leaders to secure funds, the availability of funds from the government and other sources to sustain their programs, the migratory flows arriving to the area, and to a lesser extent the capacity of the community to articulate demands.

In the following subsection I will review different existing accounts on the origins and development of these organizations as well as what they represented for the community.

The old guard and the origins of the Latino organizations in the Washington region

Before the first Latino agencies were founded, the Latino population received most of their social support from churches—predominantly Catholic churches. However, the support provided by churches was neither formalized nor systematic,

which was one of the arguments mentioned by some of the agencies founders to justify the need for the establishment of more institutionalized and permanent channels of services.

Many of the founders or heads of the first Latino organizations are known in the community as the *old guard*, and several of them have been active in the community ever since. Their role in the community has been crucial not only from a symbolic point of view but also as a resource that pushed a 'Latino' agenda in the local government.

> We inherited all that political, social, and economic expression, okay… mostly political and social, from a leadership that was mostly Puerto Rican. Because when Puerto Ricans came here in the fifties and sixties, since they were considered U.S. citizens, they enjoyed a series of privileges that allowed them to vote, well, a spectrum of…. and the knowledge of how the system worked. So then they started to establish to a great extent the networks of support and to create a sort of political voice within the community. (Tadeo Ramirez)

I asked some of these referents how and why these organizations were created. The arguments I found ranged from the necessity of filling a service gap in the community, to the will and tenacity of a group of people, mostly Puerto Ricans— especially Carlos Rosario—who already had political experience before coming to the District, and had become aware of the organizational experience of African Americans which constituted a model to be emulated.

> Carlos Rosario is the founding leader of this community. He was the first one… During the late sixties Latinos started arriving from Central and South America. And then there were many problems because there was not… there were no agencies, there was nothing in place to give services to Latinos. There were no English classes… the only English classes available were those in Americanization School in Georgetown… and that was mostly for…. Those

who went there were mainly diplomats, no? And so Carlos Rosario and the Latinos that were in Washington, D.C., that are citizens and are qualified and have a college degree and so on… have always been mostly Puerto Ricans, Mexican-Americans, and Cubans. But, what happens? Those people didn't want to get involved with immigrants…. But Carlos Rosario did…. He started to realize what was going on. Rosario was an X-Ray technician that came from Puerto Rico and immediately became interested… he said, poor people… one day he saw… you know, Latinos talk a lot with our hands, and we speak loud. And the police came and if they saw that you were in a corner talking… bla bla bla, they thought you were fighting, they arrested you, and stuff like that… and so Rosario started to talk with other people and said, we need to do something to help these Latinos. But as I told you, only a few had the interest [to do so]. (Olga Puglisi).

Although there were other figures recognized as leaders in the community, only Carlos Rosario is valued as leaving a legacy behind him:

In the community voluntary organizations were founded passed First World War, the Korean War… during the 60s, before the great exodus of Latinos to this region… There were three men. Carlos Rosario, of Puerto Rican origin, establishes many organizations… establishes the presence… makes the Latino presence noticeable. There is Mr. Vidaña in Virginia, of Cuban-American origin. They establish an organization in Virginia but mostly in the context of anti-Castro fight. The same thing happens in Maryland, Mr. Perichet Rivas establishes the Hispanic Community I think… But it is now relegated to a third, or fourth order. They simply do some work of translation or assistance with immigration forms, those types of things. So these three men become the principal leaders of each districts (…) Carlos Rosario dies but leaves behind him a legacy… the Center Carlos Rosario, and organizations that in that moment were run in Washington mostly by people of Puerto Rican origin, who had experience because they had come from the Bronx. They had the experience of how to work with a local government… So they came, settled, and created organizations, or improved the organizations already existent, and got involved in the government… (Jorge Inzaurralde)

Many later agencies owe their creation to the original initiatives based on Rosario's "formula to establish those organizations". In other words, Rosario was a pioneer in planting the seeds of what would later become a relatively dense organizational structure providing a range of services to Latinos in general, to

immigrants in particular, and to other minorities residing in the region as well. Demanding services from the government for the Latino community has been seen as the raison d'être of many of these organizations. In other words, the leaders of the old guard played the role of intermediary between government and the community. In fact, government support has been critical in the survival of many of these organizations over time.

> The group [of community leaders, heads of agencies] developed with the goal of asking the government of the District that given the presence of the community in the area it should start providing certain basic services so that the community could sustain itself. This entailed negotiations with the African American community, especially with Mayor Washington. (Vicente Olleros)

For others, the creation of these community organizations seemed to emulate the experience of the African American community and their civil rights struggle, which still dominated the political agenda in the country at the time the first Latino organizations were founded in the 1960s.

> These organizations emerge based on… in my opinion… based on the great necessity. All the struggle of civil rights that existed in the country in that moment made that there were more attention to minority groups. Of course, the African American community had a great impact in the country and started… they saw the problems that existed and the need that these needed attention from the government and so on… And the reforms started. Here there was a Puerto Rican community that was very strong… not strong but it was the one that started the process in the community. Some came with the experience from New York. Others came from Puerto Rico, such as Carlos Rosario who came I believe directly from Puerto Rico… and I think they had a lot of ability in the idea of forming agencies… So then, as I was telling you, African Americans have their organizations, we need to have ours. And so they started to from the different community centers of the community. (Sebastian Puentes, a Latino political activist)

Given the profile of the heads of many of these organizations, it is not uncommon to hear comments about certain 'paternalism' or 'maternalism'[14] in their approach to the community. In particular, the concept refers to the idea that many of these leaders see themselves as fatherly or motherly figures who make decisions on behalf of a group of disadvantaged residents they have under their protection. The relationships established between leaders and the individuals under their safeguard are hierarchical and personal, and, therefore, there is a strong vertical dependency. The paternalist/maternalist approach is captured in the following segment from an interview with the head of a service-providing agency who belongs to the old guard:

> But my school is Salvadoran, my son. Here it is always full of… *Those are my people*. I adore them. They are the best, hard working, most honest people there exist. (Olga Puglisi)

In addition, the organizations' heads or *agencieros*, as many call them, act as brokers with access to some state agents and structures. I will re-take this last point in the section devoted to the community's political landscape. One of the community figures interviewed for this project associated the profiles of these *agencieros* with that of *caciques*, a term used in Latin America to refer to a tribal chief:

> Especially in the 70s there was… now it's a little bit different, now it is more structured, more impersonal… they are institutions. But at that time the thing was very paternalistic. I think… there were Puerto Ricans and Chicanos that *saw these just arrived 'indians' as 'poor people, they don't know anything'… we do, we have to inculcate and educate them* because they don't know and welcome to this country… and those types of things… some personalism in the form of doing it… […] The personalities that in the past emerged as leaders, such as Carlos Rosario, the caciques and cacicas… because women here have called the shots… they aren't shy little flowers, no? they have taken

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[14] The term maternalism refers to the fact that many of the leaders of such organizations were/are women.

up the things… Those caciques don't have any more space (José Bendicente, a long-term community leader)

This comment reveals the conception of an existing divide in the community between those who 'suffer' the process of immigration as a trajectory of hardships, and those who arrived to the community in a more privileged position. In the first group, we have more recent immigrants, primarily from Central or South America, who escaped from their countries under rather tumultuous circumstances. In this second group, we encounter those whose families had been in the United States for several generations, such as many of the Chicano and Puerto Rican immigrants. Included in the privileged group are those who moved to the District to work in international organizations or family members of those who came in those conditions. For the 'privileged' group, citizenship and language was not an issue and their integration in many levels to the community was not as problematic as it was for more recent immigrants

Puerto Ricans and Chicanos at that time were citizens. They had citizenship, a secure residency… even Cubans who hadn't been born here, no? The others yes… They never knew what it was to be standing in an immigration line… they never had the problem of immigration, they had always been citizens, they had always spoken English, and they were proud of being able to move themselves in that sea… swim better that universe than the other recently arrived fish that came from some stream lost somewhere…. (José Bendicente)

Although often criticized for their paternalistic approach and their privileged situation compared to those enjoyed by ordinary immigrants, these long-term leaders had access to different structures of power and resources also made them a critical asset for the community. This access, in turn, was what allowed them to create the

bases of the organizational network that the community would rely on for multiple services.

Growth and strengthening of agencies over the years

Most of the agencies had very humble beginnings—reflected in small budgets, low number of employees, and limited number of programs they could afford to engage in. Over time and, in many cases, after long periods of struggles and negotiation with the local government, some managed to achieve exceptional expansion in their organizational structures, as well as in the activities developed and in the population covered by their services.

> The agencies are now more like institutions, they are bigger…. I was in the board of directors of the Latin American Youth Center. I was there for years. And I remember when the board had to clean the floors, for example, or paint some walls… in the little house where it was back then… now it is not a little house any more… there is center here, a center there… there is a new one in Maryland… it is a great octopus and they have professionals of different levels doing… the accountants, the grant managers and all those people… that before was pure voluntarism and let's see the roof… how far can we get with the resources we have. At that time yes, people, the director and the board of directors I could say, I know this, that and that… now it is… and I am only talking about the Youth Center, but Ayuda too, a lot bigger, Andromeda is still there… the director of Andromeda has his own style, with a lot of personal presence in the agency. But he also has a lot of doctors, assistants, and those things… it is much bigger… (José Bendicente)

Along the same lines, one of the most prominent leaders of the community from the old guard described the beginnings of the school she was in charge of:

> So the school started to grow and we started only with English and a department of services that we still have that was established by Roberto Taibo. So then we were only Roberto and myself…. in '72…. And other girl that was Roberto's assistant… she died as well. But let me tell you that I was

the one who wrote the proposals, I answered the phone, I directed the school, I did everything…. (Olga Puglisi)

The success of an agency, according to the prevailing view I found in the community, is to a great extent expressed in the buildings that the organization is able to acquire for their operations. That is, there was—and still exists-- a prevailing belief that a symbiotic relationship exists between the agency, the person who is running it, and the building where activities are performed:

In the '80s Maria established what was called the Multicultural Career Intern Program, which later became the Bell Multicultural. But that is another story, a beautiful story of how an extraordinary woman who fought… And the story of Maria is another story… Because Bell is there… *And if that building is there it is because of Maria Tukeva. Bell is Maria Tukeva,* okay? (Olga Puglisi) [italics mine]

Struggles for funds and other resources in order to run or expand programs was a constant in the early history of many organizations operating in the District. Although fund availability directly affected the agencies operating capacity, strengthening these organizations also resulted in the increasing needs of the population and the organizations' proven ability to provide services of quality. According to a long-term resident, "everybody sooner or later came seeking medical help, legal assistant, help with housing, or this or that"

In 1991, the Latino nonprofit sector in the Washington, D.C. region was still relatively small, young, and fairly diverse[15]. According to data from the National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS)[16]—based on information filed by

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[15] The Latino nonprofit sector is conceived here as encompassed by organizations whose missions explicitly concentrate on Latino population issues or have a history of primarily serving the Latino community (based on Cordero-Guzman 2005)

[16] From the Urban Institute National Center for Charitable Statistics Core File (Public Charities, circa 1991 and 2005).

organizations with the U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) [17]—30 Latino organizations were operating in the area in 1991, with total combined revenues of 13 million dollars. All of these organizations had revenues of less than 2 million dollars and the majority of them (63 percent) operated on annual budgets of less than $500,000. Additionally, of all the Latino nonprofits active and filing Form 990 returns in 1991, most of them had been created in the 1970s or 1980s (43 and 40 percent respectively). With respect to geographical location, 70 percent of active organizations in the metropolitan area were running their operations in the District of Columbia. The remaining organizations were divided between Maryland (20 percent) and Virginia (10 percent).

Taken as a set, locally based Latino nonprofits offered a broad variety of services, from specialized activities concerning immigration including legal assistance, employment aid and training, language tutoring, and translation services, among others to more traditional areas of education and health care. The majority of these organizations, in turn, carried out several missions simultaneously.

As a result of the creation and development of these organizations, Washington became the organizational hub, where the political expression of the community was concentrated. In the next subsection, I will pay specific attention to the role of agencies in politics.

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[17] Only nonprofit organizations with more than $25,000 in annual gross receipts are required to file Form 990 with the IRS. Consequently, small organizations that do not complete Form 990 are not in the dataset and were not included here.

Role of agencies in politics

The links between Latino organizations and politics started from early in the life of Latino nonprofits. For a variety of reasons, service-providing agencies became the pivotal piece in Latino politics in the city. Given that they served a population composed by many noncitizens, structurally, the Latino organizations took the role of representatives of this group by default. Because of their needs for funds, leaders of agencies also had their own agendas that, according to many informants, were aimed at preserving the existence or guaranteed growth of their organizations. Additionally, the previous political experience of many of their leaders impacted in political profile acquired by agencies.

First, these organizations had the structural and logistical capabilities to facilitate the performance of political activities. Structurally, people in the community gravitated to them seeking services, so the agencies had permanent contact with ordinary community members. Logistically, agencies had the resources to gather people together –e.g., by carrying out meetings. As one of the interviewees put it, "in order to do politics you need to have space and meet". In that sense, agencies could provide the basic resources necessary for people to meet and coordinate meetings—a phone line, a meeting room, a meeting table, etc.

Their increasing visibility in the city made them also become referents of the Latino community for outside organizations, including the government. When trying to address issues concerning the Latino community in the area, the government, the press, and even other private actors went to the agencies. In fact, those agencies and

their directors adopted the role of de facto representatives of the community. However, some voices question the legitimacy of the role played by the heads of these organizations representing the interests of the community.

> The political organization [of the community] was very weak. There were simply the service-providing agencies, which were always and are now in charge of… they played the role of leaders without having been elected by anyone, simply because they supposedly knew more the community because they ran some organizations that worked and continue working with funds from the government and the private sector. (Jorge Inzaurralde, journalist)

The notion underlying this view is that the leaders of these organizations were only interested in getting support for their maintenance and the continuity and enlargement of their organizations. Furthermore, the group of agencies had attracted people with previous political experience. In particular, some leaders who had had political experience in New York City and were used to negotiating urban politics. These experienced leaders not only had the ambition to get involved but they could also identify the spaces where they could get access to the government.

> Those people knew how to move politically, and when they came they were triggering all the cylinders of the engine. They were people that in the agencies had the capacity to move… and the ambition to do it because they were also more "people". And maybe they viewed the spaces where to get into the government. (José Bendicente)

As mentioned earlier, organizations and programs required funding and, although funds from foundations and other private donors were sought, it was the local government which was viewed as the natural supporter of these programs[18]. From then on, the struggle for funds was a constant in the history of the community

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[18] The dependency of Latino organizations on government funds is not unique to this sector. According to Lipsky and Smith (1989-90), for most nonprofit service organizations government funds represent over half of their revenues.

leadership. As one of the interviewees graphically put it, "it wasn't just about establishing programs, it was about maintaining them".

These struggles for maintaining programs were often channeled through negotiation with local authorities. However, when beneficial results could not be reached through negotiations, this network of leaders made their demands more public by organizing small but quite frequent rallies. Latino agencies, especially schools, had the infrastructure ready that allowed them to quickly mobilize a number of people to the street. One of these old guard leaders told me that in the 70s they were "demonstrating" all the time, so I asked her to give me some examples:

> OP: For example, the Sed Center… they didn't give us the money, and we went over there to make a demonstration so they would give them the money…
> GC: And what did you guys do?
> OP: What did we did? Huge scandals, my son… We sent… mostly my students who were the ones who went out because I had the people… So with what they had we made signs and everything and we went to make a picket. Oh… in the 70s, my son, we organized pickets in a way you cannot imagine. All the time, all the time… And so we continued that way… and Rosario was the *cacique* and we were the Indians. He said and we went…

A sequence that went from programs being interrupted because of lack of funding or re-started after a persistent negotiation with government and foundations gave a sense that most of the political activity in the group of 'leaders' was focused on the obtainment and allocation of public monies. At the same time the agencies were growing, moving a political agenda at the local government started to become burdensome for some of their directors who had to split their time between running their programs and negotiating with the government. Consequently, agencies agreed to create an organism that would be exclusively in charge of the negotiation with the

local authorities around issues affecting the Latino community: the Council of Latino Agencies.

> Mayor Washington was not showing any interest in appointing the commission [that would appoint the director of the Office of Latino Agencies]… So then I told Pepe, this cannot continue like this. I mean, all the organizations are growing… at the time we didn't have emails, cells, or anything like that…. We couldn't coordinate anything because we were all up in the air duplicating the effort. So I told Pepe, why don't we establish a Council of Hispanic Agencies. And from there the Council of Agencies emerged, that is now the Federation of Agencies… I established it in 1977. So then that night I called everybody. I remember, all of them were there, Ricardo Galbis, Father John of Catholic Center, Richard Gutierrez from Ayuda, Pepe Lujan as a member of the community, myself… all the directors were there… we were around 10 of us. And I talked to them and said, why don't we make a council of Hispanic Agencies to start coordinating… and there the Council of Agencies was born, which lived during all these years…. So I said, let's be the council the one who names the commission, and once appointed we terminate the Council… but what happened, that the council turned to be a greatly effective political body. (Olga Puglisi)

Formally, from 1977 onwards, the Council of Latino Agencies was in charge of advocating for the member-organizations. The idea was that as a block and with a unified voice, the organizations would be in better shape to advocate, lobby, and conduct negotiations with different levels of government. However, this unity, in reality, hardly existed. In fact, member organizations often negotiated by themselves or entered in a more or less direct competition for funds with the Council or other member organizations.

Agencies as target of criticisms

One constant that marks the development of the Latino community in the D.C. area is the belief that the development and growth of service oriented agencies within

the Latino community imposes a constraint for the community's political development. The following testimony is particularly revealing about this phenomenon:

> I think that unfortunately in our community the political base is in the hands of the people that are in charge of social services' centers. There isn't a more independent political movement. There hasn't been a type of grassroots movement. For some reason way before 1991 the power of the community started to be established in nonprofits. People saw that in them there was a possibility not only of getting money but also of creating services that didn't exist in the government and that the community couldn't access…. But by those means the base of power was created in them […] People talk a lot about the limitations that this creates, because if you receive contracts from the government, then how eager would you be to do this type of political advocacy that needs to be done and at the same time the fight is always to attract resources for these organizations. (Blanca Galindez)

This quote captures an extended perception in the community. On the one hand, service-provided agencies, appear to be solving a problem for the government by reaching out to a community that the government did not or could not reach. For that reason, the local government supported, with ups and downs, the development of some of these organizations. On the other hand, these service-oriented agencies are problem solvers for the Latino community by providing numerous services needed. At the same time, service-providing agencies and their leaders took a vacant place and emerged as the "political nucleus" of the community. Given the fact that a considerable proportion of the Latino population was undocumented, those organizations surfaced as the political voice of those without a voice. However, the structural location of most of those agencies (e.g., dependency of contracts with the government) constrained the range of political actions that it could pursue.

Some of the informants interviewed for this project agreed in that since their settlement, service-providing agencies had "marked the territory" and emerged as the gatekeepers of Latino organization. Throughout the history of the community, however, there had been attempts by some community figures to challenge the agencies' privilege of monopolizing the voice of the community in an 'organized' manner. Examples of these attempts, which were largely unsuccessful, come from both particular businessmen in dispute with social service organizations or from immigrants with a high political profile. One of the most radical anti-agencies positions was held by a group of Latino business owners, who resented the growth of power in the community nonprofits.

> It started to enter a thought, a politics and some ideology… that said that the agencies were a threat for the community because they concentrated too much power, that they were the gravitational weight that formed the time-space in the community. And that nobody else could move and that they wanted to be the leadership… not only at the level of business but in terms of organizing the bases. But that they couldn't do it with the agencies. First of all agencies needed to be destroyed so that…. Trees needed to be cut so that new ones could emerge… new shrub could sprout, new thoughts… (José Bendicente)

Another set of defiant voices came from the immigrant community. For example, when Salvadorans arrived in large numbers throughout the 80s, those among them who had a higher level of education and previous political experience began presenting claims stating that they wanted to be leaders of their own organizations. "There was that critique that the leaders were mostly Puerto Ricans and that now they wanted to be representative of the organizations… they wanted to represent the community…" (Hilda Brunetti)

The criticisms against the Latino service-providing agencies operating in the district will resurface again in the aftermath of the Mount Pleasant riots. These criticisms, in turn, reflect historical internal political struggles within the Latino community leadership.

Community leadership

As mentioned earlier, much of the community organizational landscape, as we know it today, originated from the labor of a pioneer generation of leaders, most of whom were Puerto Ricans. Among the latter, Carlos Rosario was the unquestionable leader throughout the sixties and seventies.

> Look, when Carlos was here the community was less heterogeneous, less fractioned, had less differences… When Carlos started… they were Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Caribbeans, and there was a Central American community. But the Central American community is a phenomenon from the 70s only. Carlos started in 51. So Carlos was an indisputable leader in the whole community. Up to the years 80… 85, when Carlos died. (Rafael Hernandez)

Although most people active in the community in the 60s and 70s underscore the central role that Puerto Ricans had in the community at the time, also visible and working for the community in different capacities were people from other backgrounds, primarily Cubans, and Dominicans. Referring to this first generation of leaders, Vicente Olleros, a long time resident in the area, brought up one element that will be key in understanding the differing organizational development in the District

and in the suburbs. Because they started their work in a sort of "organizational vacuum", they did not encounter serious obstacles:

> They were very effective… because they were not trained by previous communities. They were the pioneers. Okay? So then they… many of they came from Puerto Rico where the environment is different, where politics is hot, and where there is also an absence of massive repression such as the one that occurred in Central and South America. So there is more political sophistication. There is a level of accommodation with respect to African American people, because in the island they already had that experience. (Vicente Olleros)

The idea of tolerance and the capacity to adjust to the socio-demographic environment in the city is an important axis on which to evaluate the difference with more recent generations of leaders, who, according to the same informant, were engaged in more tension with locals because of that. With the arrival of large numbers of immigrants from Central America during the 1980s and the resulting change in the composition of the Latino community in the region, there were also tensions in terms of leadership. Specifically, there was an idea floating around the community that because Salvadorans made up the larger group within the Latino community, they should have a seat at the table. This idea caused some resentment among the directors of organizations serving the community, most of whom, as mentioned before, were not Salvadorans or Central Americans.

> Many of the organizations there in Washington have been fearful that Salvadorans organized themselves because the leadership was not Salvadoran. The old leadership was not Salvadoran…. (Julio Cruz)

This divide and tension came to the foreground when the Mount Pleasant riots exploded in 1991. We will talk about that in greater detail in the next section.

4.2.3. Political landscape

Crystallization of the "Latino issue" in the State apparatus: the creation and survival of the Office on Latino Affairs (OLA)

In 1976 the government of the District of Columbia created the Office on Latino Affairs (hereafter, OLA). The creation of OLA was the result of the pressure from the Latino leader elite to get recognition from the government for the growing Latino community residing in the District. OLA's institutional mission was to serve as community liaison among the Mayor, the City Council, governmental agencies, community organizations and the private sector. Its mission and scope of action has varied over time. In particular, its formal goal was to ensure full access to quality health, education, employment, and social services in the district for the Latino community.

> Rosario went with Vidaña and some friends he had named Chavez… and through Congress they got 50 thousand dollars for the establishment of the first Office of Spanish Speaking Affairs… that was its name. What today is OLA, Spanish Speaking Affairs Office… and their purpose was to work inside the government to help, to see how they could help the community. That office reported not to the Mayor's office, it reported to what then was HEW, Health, Education, and Welfare (Olga Puglisi)

At the same time they established and pushed for the maintenance of community serving agencies in the District, the "founding fathers' pressed the government for permanent institutionalized attention to Latinos. To that end, they engaged in lobbying at different levels of government.

After OLA's creation, however, it was chronically marginalized in the government structure. For example, numerous mayors in office failed to appoint

directors for OLA, a fact that was interpreted by many Latino leaders as a sign of disrespect and lack of interest toward the Latino community. At other times, its performance was perceived as inconsequential by many sectors in the Latino community. For that reason, over the years OLA has been the center of dispute from the Latino community side: the recognition given to OLA by the government, its location in government structure, and the appointment of its authorities have been traditional fields of political struggle.

The inefficacy of OLA as a government facilitator for the needs of the Latino community in the District was vehemently brought to the public attention by several community members and leaders in the course of the Mount Pleasant riots in 1991. Some of the issues that were raised in the riot aftermath were that the office had disregarded the functions it was supposed to perform—namely, to communicate Latino concerns to the mayor's office and to address the needs of the community— and had instead been used to fulfill the mayor's public relation needs; and that the creation of a specific office to focus on Latinos' needs had freed other government agencies to disregard Latinos.

In fact, OLA was depicted as helpless during the weeks that preceded and followed the riots. As the Washington Post put it, "OLA, generally ignored by Mayor Sharon Pratt Dixon (who has not appointed a permanent director) could provide no warning of the brewing trouble and could not dispute the chorus of complaints from Hispanic community activists who feel ignored by the D.C. government" (The Washington Post, May 16, 1991). One of the strongest criticisms brought up during that time—and after—is that OLA was used to co-opt the Latino community's

leadership. In other words, by appointing activists into government positions, the mayor(s) in office would be immune from criticisms from this sector. This relationship of community leaders and the government will be explored in further detail in the following sub-section.

Latinos and the city government

Throughout the history of the Latino community in the district, relations with the District government have never resulted in the election of Latinos in office. In fact, an expression that keeps coming up in the narratives of many Latinos is that 'we [Latinos] have never been able to elect any Latino in a government position'.

In the absence of elected representatives from the community in the D.C. government, the entry of Latinos in the local administration was often a result of negotiations with the mayor or other elected officials to gain special positions 'for the community'. Although many times the appointment of Latinos in government was the outcome of community pressure (or, more specifically, pressures from organized actors in the community), other times the government itself took the initiative and appointed Latino figures to key positions.

Over the years, several noticeable members of the community have been appointed to relatively important positions in the government structure. The argument often utilized not only by those aspiring to fill the positions but also by many community leaders was that this was a way of giving recognition to the Latino community and its contributions—not only to the city in general but, most

importantly, to the government in office. The following quotations illustrate a defining moment in the relationship of the Latino leaders with the city government: the election of Mayor Marion Barry.

In 1979 there was a movement in the community oriented to influence the elections of Mayor. And they created a group pretty well organized to support candidate Marion Barry. Barry won the election and apparently received enough support… both popular and economic support that pushed him to meet a couple of times with the community. And they got to have very big meetings, 30, 40 selected people, representative heads of agencies, people that had something to do… so then the Mayor knew that those who were there weren't inconsequential. So they told him where are the Latinos in the government? You need to put them in. And Barry… it's okay… this wasn't much later than the civil rights movement and there was a follow-up, a trail, a wave that was still there somehow… that Nixon, who had set that wave back wasn't in office any more… and he saw that in any event he would have to put Latinos in the government. The community was growing at that time. So he told them, I don't know them, I don't know where they are, you give me their resumes… so we can choose from them…. (José Bendicente)

Marion Barry was elected Mayor, he appointed José Gutierrez, José Gutierrez took with him Angel Luis Irene, and also took Luis Rumbaut to the government. The leadership of the community got drained… because José took with him a lot of people to work for the government…. (Olga Puglisi)

The opening of government structures to community leaders was repeatedly viewed as co-optation by some of the more politically active Latino leaders or cadres. In other words, many ordinary people and leaders in the community believed that by appointing some of the most visible and potentially disturbing political cadres in the Latino community, the government in office was really trying to subordinate and minimize the capacity of disturbance of Latinos as a political group.

When I asked Ms. Puglisi why the entry of these prominent leaders in the government structures at different stages was harmful, Ms. Puglisi's answer was as follows: "Because they were the leadership… they knew that they were activists.

When you are in the government you cannot be an activist in the way they had been. The community didn't 'bleed to death' but the leadership was gone, it was gone from here with them"

Throughout the years, the relationship between the community and the government was tied to the personal bonds that some of these key leaders had with the mayor in office. In fact, some of the turning points in the position of the community leadership with respect to the local government had been tied to personal/political conflicts of some leaders with the mayor. Some of the interviewees recall, for example, the public discomfort in the community when José Gutierrez, one of the most visible Latinos in the government structure, was fired from the government in 1985 after confronting the mayor[19].

All in all, the type of relationship established between Latino leaders and the local government contributed to the existence and reproduction of a type of elitism. In other words, the politics of the community was resolved at the top level, either through the intervention of heads of service-providing organizations who spoke on behalf of the community, or by some of these prominent figures (also attached and in most cases supported by local organizations) who became part of government structures.

History of tensions with government/state agents

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[19] The incident between Gutierrez and Barry occurred after the first one publicly accused the City Administrator of attempting to influence the assignment of a multimillion-dollar contract (Washington Post, April 26, 1987).

While at the top level of the community, the negotiations with the government for services for the community and positions for Latinos –especially for key leaders— in the government structure were visible throughout the period, at the ground level, the interactions that took place between ordinary people in the Latino community and government agents were rather combative, Specifically, the way ordinary people interacted with the government was through their encounters with agents of public bureaucracy, particularly the police. Most of the key informants interviewed talk about a 'history of abuse from authorities against Latinos'.

According to many, the abuse was rooted in the lack of understanding and obstacles to communication, as many of the Latinos residing in the area were not fluent in English—and only a handful of police agents in the area were bilingual.

> They didn't want to admit that for a long time we had been asking that in this community there had to be more police officers and more attention to the community with bilingual police officers and detectives. They never wanted to accept that. (Avelina Quinteros)

In addition, some community members and leaders also believed that the causes of such tensions with the government had a strong racial component:

> Graciela Vallejos: I can tell you that the government of the District has never welcomed Latinos…. The opposite… It has been quite resistant. (Graciela Vallejos)
> GC: How so?
> GV: Of not welcoming, not embracing the Latino. Very protectionist of its African-American government. The idea was a little bit that it has cost us so much, here we are, we are the ones who rule, the ones who are looking for our interests, and you… what are you coming to ask a place that doesn't belong to you?

In a similar tone, Cesar Barragan, a Latino leader with many years in the area asserted that "back then the majority in the city continued to be black. And there was a

minority discriminating another minority. People here don't talk much about that because nobody wants… But that is in fact what has occurred. Blacks discriminating Latinos…. And there was a clash of forces, the police doesn't respond… the problem of language many times…"

The idea underlying many accounts was that there was a juxtaposition between state authority and race which operated marginalizing, discriminating, and maltreating Latinos residing in the city. Specifically, the prevailing perception was one that emphasized the existence of a *racialized* state apparatus whose tentacles injured Latinos in a systematic fashion.

> For many years a series of tensions have been accumulating with the Latin American community, not only Salvadoran, although in its majority it was Salvadoran. But in general, any immigrant that had a precarious state had had a sort of bad experiences not only with police authorities but also with all the tentacles of the system. *It was a system that primarily existed to benefit the African American community*. Because this was at that time *the city was much more black*. The political institutions, the political power was in their hands, when they take power, they create a whole infrastructure in face of the needs of that community… (Tadeo Ramirez) [italics mine]

According to other accounts, the tensions between the community members and the authorities stemmed from historical frictions that some Latino immigrants had had with the authorities in their countries of origin:

> The Latino communities [in the D.C. area] are in general from Central America, and come escaping from authorities, from people wearing uniform…." (Nicolas Martinez)

The history of misunderstandings of the Latino community by both authorities and ground-level bureaucratic officials were also attributed to an array of cultural

differences that exist in everyday practices. In fact, some talk about how regimes of legality that regulate everyday life differ in some Latin American countries from the United States.

> I think there has been a lack of respect from politicians against Hispanics in the area of Washington, D.C…. Politicians want to see the status of citizenship, how many votes I'm going to get. The community was a young community, a community that has just arrived, a community that still didn't have the documents or had the ability to be able to apply for citizenship…if they didn't even have documents. The maltreatments against Latinos by the police started…. And you know, Latin American culture isn't… one can drink outside, have his little beer or whatever and that isn't considered illegal. And here it is considered illegal… (Hilda Brunetti)

Although the abuses received by the community from the police are overwhelmingly present in interviewees' narratives, there are also a number of other situations in which maltreatments, according to our sources, have taken place. Characterized as products of 'racial prejudice', abuses in schools, episodes in workplaces, and situations in the street were mentioned as well. The accumulation of tensions in these different spheres will be the basis, after the riots of May 1991, over which the community leadership will request a report on Latinos' civil rights.

History of racial tension

As has been documented in other places in the U.S., historically there have been racial tensions between Latinos and African Americans residing in the Washington, D.C. area. These tensions have manifested in an array of everyday conflicts in different shared spaces, such as schools, workplaces, or even the street.

They usually included fights, including both verbal and physical aggression. These conflicts were, in turn, grounded in a series of resentments and prejudices about the presence of the other.

My conversations with people in the area captured several interpretations of this phenomenon, which have in common the idea of lack of communication and understanding of the other group, its realities, previous struggles, and deserved rights. Specifically, both groups, Latinos and African Americans experienced violent struggles against some sort of injustice. For African Americans, the recent struggles came from the Civil Rights Movement and the various efforts to become to achieve inclusion in a series of spheres of social life that were denied to them. For the Latin American immigrants in the city, their struggles often came from experiences in their countries of origin: wars in Central America, dictatorships in South America, or economic poverty all over. In other words, taken as a whole, both groups shared tumultuous histories. However, collaboration based on shared hardships was hard to achieve.

> The African American community says: we scarified ourselves, we moved here against "the white" to achieve certain opening and advance certain social elements such as improve our salaries, have access to housing, improve the school system, etcetera… Where were our people while these battles were taking place here? When these battles were taking place here, we weren't here, my brother…. (Sebastian Puentes)

> We were in the ghetto… blacks were coming from the civil rights movement, and we, Latinos, were entering and that was…. we, Latinos received… I didn't, thank god…but there were beatings every night, in my school, we had ambulances and the police coming in every night… and that because our students were walking to school, and *morenos* would beat them up… (Olga Puglisi)

Experiences of Collective Action

For the most part, Latinos as a distinct political category remained invisible to the public eye. However, prior to 1991 there had been some instances of protest involving the Latino community. Tadeo Ramirez, one of the most prominent leaders emerging from the Mount Pleasant Riots, described the general situation of Latinos before the 1991 riots as follows:

> The social dichotomy was black and white. Latinos still didn't exist… they were like invisible. They had then accumulated so many years of invisibility… and also of economic and social marginality, with badly paid jobs or living in overcrowded houses, not having any political voice or expression, because we didn't even have documents, right? (Tadeo Ramirez)

In the 1970s, for example, small sporadic pickets were mounted by a small elite group of leaders of service-providing agencies. Usually in reaction to a funding cut, these demonstrations were often planned with little lead time. The protests took the shape of small gatherings in front of an office that was viewed as 'adverse' to the interests of the Latino community. On several occasions, leaders used their own organizations to recruit among their 'clients' and bring them with them to the 'demonstration'. A common target group for these mobilization efforts was students from Latino educational centers. The patterns of organization and the repertoires of action utilized in most of these small protests showed little variation despite the different cases. All in all, the relevance of these experiences is that they contributed to certain institutionalization in the community. In other words, each and every threat received from the government (and sometimes from private actors) was read as a sign of the vulnerability of organizations that the community (or the community

leadership) recognized as their own. As a result, the community usually followed a strategy to preserve some organization so as to guarantee its continuity and financial sustainability over time. A few cases that illustrate this pattern are, the cutting of funds that Spanish Education Development Center (Sed Center) received from United Way, the cutting of government funds for the Program of English Instruction for Latin Americans (PEILA), and the attempts to close or relocate the office of Spanish Speaking Affairs.

> In 1974 my bass in the school system called and told me, there is no more money for PEILA, the grant is over and we have to close the school until we see if we renew the grant. And the school was already growing… I called the old man, Carlos Rosario, who was then in the office of Spanish Speaking Affairs and told him…look, they are going to close me the school and he said mmm… they are not going to close anything. I have just received a 50 thousand dollar grant from Right to Read for EOFULA, that grant goes for your program…. So they don't close it. The program continued. But then I said, we are not going anywhere with this. This program needs to be inserted in the budget of public schools. And then the fight started…. (Olga Puglisi)

Another example of community mobilization for collective action is the protest following the closing of the Ontario Theater in the Columbia Heights neighborhood. As opposed to the top-down efforts led by agency leaders to defend the continuity of programs, the collective actions deployed in defense of the only Spanish-language movie theater in the city emerged as a result of informal coordination among neighbors. Since 1951, the Ontario Theater was well-known as 'the only Latino theatre in the city'. Around 1978, all of the sudden the owners changed the profile of the theater, removing all the Spanish language films from its screens. Almost instantaneously, the Latino community took to the streets to preserve the Ontario as collective property of the community:

There was a mini-movement in the 70s… in what is now a bazaar more or less…. In the corner of Ontario and Columbia Road… it still has the sign on top that says Ontario… from when it was an immense theater. The Ontario Theater had 2000 seats or something like that. It was the biggest theater, I believe, the largest movie theater that existed in Washington… luxurious, it had been very nice. And there was a moment in which the neighborhood was run down and before this demographic change… they started showing Latino movies… *Charros* and *churros mexicanos*, the leap against the leprous… and movies… every now and then some interesting movie, and you wondered how could this one get here… but things like that… like Mr. Calimán, a Latin American superman… things like that, movies without major importance but that were in Spanish, and then people came to the movie theater… So the son of a landlord from the neighborhood, who was already older and had his own business and a store on 18th, bought the theater and suddenly decided that it was the moment to change the neighborhood. He started with Fritz the Cat and something like Rolling Stone, and started having programming with Punk groups and stuff like that, which completely changed the thing. So he installed one of those lights Hollywood style which goes up to the clouds, for grand openings and those things… and there was a truck full of those types of things in the little corner of Ontario and Columbia announcing coming now…. And he clashed terribly with the Latino community which saw with that an announcement that… you go, get out of here; this is now a neighborhood for different type of people, from a different level. And the muddle got started. There were demonstrations in the cold, a terrible cold weather at that time; it was December or January… (José Bendicente)

During the demonstrations, people gathered in the streets and played instruments, as a way to show the attachment to their cultural symbols. In fact, one of the participants of the demonstrations described the Ontario Theater protest as a "Latino Festival in December".[20] Another community member commented that there was a "flavor on the streets", referring to a marked Latino undertone in the cultural-political struggle.

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[20] The Latino Festival is an annual community celebration that has been celebrated in the Latino neighborhood of Washington, D.C. since 1970. The festival not only was a place where the Latino community was enjoyed dance, music, and typical foods but also a site of political struggles within the Latino leadership (given the symbolic power associated to being in charge of the organization of the event). An in-depth study of the event can be found in Cadaval (1998).

4.3. The event's aftermath

4.3.1. Attribution of threats and political opportunities

The Mount Pleasant Riots was a significant turning point for the Latino community partly because of the ways the various actors directly or indirectly involved in the riots and their aftermath constructed opportunities for political action. In this particular case, the political opportunities were attributed by a number of collective entities easily identifiable in the scene: unorganized members of the Latino community, constituted political actors enjoying routine access to government agents, agents of the government, outside political actors (i.e. allies from other jurisdictions), and the media. The shooting of a Salvadorian resident by a police officer was the attack which ordinary people residing in the area collectively read—and reacted to. The sequence of "readings" and subsequent actions adopted by other actors both inside and outside the Latino community resulted from this singular event and, especially, the element of violence present in it. The ways in which different actors read the opportunities for action were in many ways simultaneous as well as contingent on other actors' framings and actions.

Ordinary people take to the streets: from a perception of a threat to the externalization of anger

Reading the shooting of Daniel Gomez by a black police officer in Mount Pleasant as a threat, neighbors from Mount Pleasant as along with angry Latino youths (following McAdam et al.'s classification, persons and groups not currently organized into constituted political actors) took to the streets. Their actions in the streets were both intended to and conceived by others as a direct challenge to the authorities. Specifically, the riots were seen as fights against police agents—perceived as continuous perpetrators of abuses against Latinos. However, and most importantly, the engagement of sectors of the community in violent acts caught the attention of local government officials, who read the riots as a challenge to the public order which, in turn, put their own legitimacy up for debate. The question is, then, how and why did the residents get involved in these actions? Why, in a matter of minutes after the shooting, did they come out onto the streets of Mount Pleasant? Why was the story that "the police had shot and killed a handcuffed man" so powerful? And how and why did the rumor spread so quickly? There are several elements embedded in this rumor that when combined, operated as the primary trigger. For this reason, they are worth dissecting and reviewing separately:

a) *The shooter was a police officer*. Latino immigrants residing in the area had a long history of confrontation with the police. In fact, most of the interpretations circulating soon after the shooting stated that the incident was not a surprise but reflected an established tradition of lack of communication

between Latinos and the police, which was further exasperated by language barriers.

b) *The victim was dead.* The fact that the man had been killed represented no second choices and operated for the group as the limit of what was tolerable. Even when the media broadcasted the information that the man shot was actually alive, most neighbors refused to accept it. Rumors that Gomez had died became so pervasive in the Latino community that the police had to ask Gomez's sister to announce publicly that he was still alive and being treated at the Hospital.

c) *The victim was in handcuffs.* Having one's hands tied represents the ultimate inability to defend oneself. In this particular situation, the oppression and injustice of the shooting was maximized by removing any argument that would potentially justify the police action. Most people would agree that it is unreasonable under any circumstance to kill a defenseless man. Moreover, the importance that "the hands" have in immigrant communities also adds greater significance to that element of the rumor. The victim of the shooting was, as most of the Latino immigrants residing in the area, a manual worker. Their hands, in many respects, define their relationship to the world. As one immigrant present at the meeting with the City's CRCB clearly asserted, "All this violence is because of misunderstanding… because we don't speak the language. We try to explain with our hands. They (police) just take out their guns. They think we are going to shoot or something."

When they shot that individual it was like… they had attacked everybody with a sword… in their heart… You know what that means? And above all, because it was the police. For them that meant the same as a soldier in El Salvador, the same as a military in El Salvador. It was too big an offense, no? So to me that was what it meant. Kids, youths, and people in their twenties were already too tired, too exhausted and hurt by all what was going on… (Avelina, head of a community agency).

Having read the shooting as a direct and unacceptable threat, Latino residents of Mount Pleasant and surrounding areas rapidly took to the streets. According to several witnesses of the riots, the outburst of the community was spontaneous and fast.

It happened that an inexperienced policewoman shot a drunk man of Salvadoran origin in a predominantly Latino area. Consequently, all the people who were in their houses, looking through their windows, rose and without any organization, spontaneously expressed their discomfort with the city. In a way that we are very skilled in Latin America… Making barricades, burning whatever… (Jorge Inzaurralde, a journalist working in the Latino media).

As this last quote shows, there was a neighborhood quality to it that facilitated the rapid mobilization of Latino residents. Things were happening right outside people's houses. Events could be seen through their windows. In addition, everybody was talking about it in the neighborhood grocery stores, bakeries, barber shops, and other places of everyday encounter. There was no need for an invitation for mobilization. Things were happening just very close to people's lives.

Because the intense deployment of occurrences located at the initial moments of a historical event has a significant impact on the way in which the political process evolves, the early reading of the threat and the perception of the need to do something

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about it were critical for the actions adopted later on. Also critical was the immediate reaction in the community and the use of violence.

Why use violence?

There was nearly unanimous agreement that violence was the key ingredient needed to mobilize the Latino agenda. With the violent acts, the attention of the government agents and agencies that had long ignored the problems in the Latino community was finally awakened. The repertoire of actions deployed from throwing rocks, to setting cars afire, to smashing windows, put the "Latino issue" at the core of political discussions at many levels of government as well as in the forefront of media coverage. The Latino issue had become "the" most important public problem to be addressed in the city. As one long term Latino resident in the city stated, "What got finally established is that through violence you can capture attention from the government so they [the agencies] can then start providing certain services."

This attention, however, not only came from the government and the media, but also from the group of established Latino leaders—mainly, the directors of service providing agencies—who had long been discussing and trying to seek public attention to the community.

While the demonstration of anger could have adopted many shapes, the protesters ended up utilizing violent means. The question then goes, why was violence central to the protest? Among the arguments I found during my fieldwork

one of them highlighted previous experiences among immigrants from Central America. Specifically, many of those who intervened directly in the acts of violence in the streets of Mount Pleasant in May 1991 have had a dense political background which included conflictive relations with authorities in their countries of origin. Those experiences, according to some of the testimonies gathered for this research, might have impacted their relationships with the police once in the U.S. Additionally, these experiences might have shaped the violent repertoires adopted in the riots.

> I think that the biggest difference was that *people were coming kind of much closer to their militancy*. […] many of the people who were coming had been in a militant frame in El Salvador or wherever else they were coming from but primarily from El Salvador. And so they had those identities much more intact. If you look at the photographs or you listen to the kind of framing, it was a very…tactical. It wasn't a riot in the kind of more American sense; it was a riot in the Latin American sense. In the sense that there were people who were mobilized and people who weren't mobilized and people who had a sense of tactic and others who didn't [….] there was an organized underpinning like people who had been involved in street demonstrations and street destructions in Latin America, particularly in El Salvador as part of the struggle, *you know and so it just wasn't like an organic explosion of people who were angry. It was some of that and it was also some people who knew how to make something happen.* And I think that for some of the Latino leadership, most of whom actually are not from El Salvador, that they didn't really have the framework to understand what was happening […] there was a lot of urban…tactic and people who know how to make a Molotov cocktail – they know that you take the cars out. They know that you come in and you come out. You know, that kind of thing. (Elizabeth Mederos, a director of a Latino agency)

The familiarity that Central American immigrants had with violence is also graphically depicted in the following quotes:

> This was a spontaneous thing that emerged from the base. And someone threw the spark in a field that was already dry or maybe wet but with gasoline. And the thing was set in fire… Puf! Let's go do it… Well, this one is doing it; I do it chiqui chin… and where you go… It was immigration a little different *because those were people who came from Central America, who had seen the*

civil war up close. And it wasn't strange to be fighting against tear gas or painting graffiti, direct action in the street, breaking windows… well; those were small things in relation to what they had live. But for some reason that caught fire and suddenly the leadership were looking at how to control this and how to put themselves in front of this. And how to establish an order… a level of dialogue and negotiation with the government. (José Bendicente, a long-term community resident) [italics mine]

There was here in Washington a community fairly *experimented in issues of war, because former militants from one faction or the other were here.* That is, for them the construction of Molotov bombs and those sorts of things was a matter of minutes… and they set afire buses, police cars… I mean, there was plunder; they were there… (Tadeo Ramirez, an emerging leader in 1991) [italics mine]

Previously, people who came… and with a reason, they had to be understood… they made themselves heard in their countries, burning buses, painting walls, using weapons. And here, those same people… many *of them came fleeing the war… they were in the guerrilla*… and there were ordinary people as well. So here they had to unite in that context guerrilla and ordinary citizens. But that was still infiltrated. Guerrilla elements were still infiltrated. To the extent that they even investigated us… detectives of the FBI…. Because they thought that we were part of the guerrilla (Cesar Recalde, a priest working with the Latino community) [italics mine]

As can be seen from these testimonies, aside from the aversion against some authority figures, the availability and knowledge of contentious repertoires as the ones utilized in guerrilla wars in Central America may have had a direct impact on the types of performances utilized the nights of May 5th and May 6th in Mount Pleasant.

Community leadership attributing opportunity to move an agenda

The most prominent group within the larger group of constituted political actors with regular access to government agents and resources, was the cluster of leaders of service providing organizations who held a pivotal position between the

city government and their clients. These Latino organizations and their formal political arm, the Council of Latino Agencies, had a tradition of discussing policy priorities and resource allocation with different city government administrations. Although they had had a history of struggling with government official for resources, they knew which doors to knock on. They had access to higher level offices in the government often up to the level of mayor. Most of the leaders of these organizations were respected by both the Latino community and by members of the city government, who saw these organizations as indispensable in reaching a community they knew very little about.

The Mount Pleasant Riots spurred these organizations and their leaders into action. The public disturbances were loud enough to awaken the leadership and make them take a closer look at what was happening in the Latino community. They also presented an opening for community leaders to get attention from government authorities. Tadeo Ramirez, who was just emerging as a Latino community leader when the riots happened confirmed that there were Latino issues that had been overlooked or ignored:

> The events of 1991 gave the community leadership of the moment the opportunity to get into an introspective process to see what was happening in our community and well… this is an opportunity to persuade city authorities that we feel marginalized, that we do not have representation, so then we started a process of diagnosis, that is, what is going on in the area of health, what is going on in the area of education… and to promulgate a series of recommendations so that the administration would start to deal systematically with a spectrum of issues […] So then while the community was suffering that maltreatment by the police and continued to host a sense of being marginalized, *the leadership was also looking at how to take up this opportunity*, in order to persuade a black leadership that many times was not sensitive to our needs and was ignorant of what was going on with us and sometimes it was even hostile, characterized by racial prejudice.

Maltreatments in schools, episodes with workers… (Tadeo Ramirez) [italics mine]

That [the riot] was an opportunity for those of us who had been working in the community to see which were the needs, listen to the frustrations and the reality that the government was not responding to the needs of the people who lived in this area…. (Hilda Brunetti, head of one of the Latino agencies).

The riots offered an opening for the old guard leaders to push an old agenda that that had not seen movement in many years. Specifically, in 1986 there had been an attempt to improve the living conditions of Latinos in the city in a variety of areas. Although the attempt stalled in the 80s, it constituted an invaluable antecedent for the actions undertaken in the context of the riots of 1991. Community leader, Tadeo Ramirez explained the agenda in more detail:

This wasn't the first attempt of working with the government. In 1986 there had been a similar process in which for the first time this group mainly directed by Puerto Ricans, and a few Cuban Americans presented what was then called the "Latino Agenda". In 1986… we had worked with the administration that was very open… it was the administration of Marion Barry and it started a process to reform and institute new procedures that would help the Latino community to be better served by the government services in a number of areas. (Tadeo Ramirez)

Several community referents put together a report in 1986, which according to one prominent community member, "did not differ much" from the report prepared in 1991[21], after the Mount Pleasant Riots. Moreover, some informants define the original 1986 reports as the readily available platform that would be reintroduced in as a blueprint for the 1991 policy reforms. The speed with which the traditional

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[21] After a few months of preparation, the D.C. Latino Civil Rights Task Force, an entity formed after the event (we will address the formation of this actor in the next section) submitted a report to city officials "calling for channeling city money, jobs, housing, and educational, health and other services to the Hispanic community in proportion to its growing numbers" (The Washington Post, September 13 1991).

leadership was able to intervene, and the clarity of demands posed to the government and to private funding organizations later on, was only possible, I argue, because the Latino leadership had already prepared, developed and pushed an agenda for public intervention. This helped the Latino leadership in 1991, frame the riot immediately (regardless of whether the conflict per se was related to the issues raised by this agenda) and appear as the "natural" interlocutors for government officials.

The traditional leadership, which were primarily directors of community organizations, as well as the emerging leadership utilized not only local government structures as spaces in which to push their demands, but also federal instances of power, such as the U.S. Congress or the U.S. Commission on Human Rights. They sought out allies from other jurisdictions and support from beyond the local government in order to pressure the local authorities into promoting change. Although this created tension with local authorities (mainly African Americans), who read Latinos utilization of indirect routes as shortcuts around their power and legitimacy, this strategy of creating networks outside the local community constituted a critical piece to push the Latino Agenda.

Although the Latino leadership was quick to act, there were different perspectives on how to make the best use of the opportunity created by the increased attention gathered by the government, the media, and the community at large for the problems affecting the Latino community in the city. In this respect, the biggest split within the community leadership occurred between those leaning towards the adoption of a more aggressive approach against the city (i.e., proposing suing the government), and those privileging a more negotiated exit to the problems (i.e., by

seeking the opportunity to gather more public resources to fund Latino oriented

services). The following testimonies illustrate the rationale underlying the

justification of the more confrontational line of action:

> I have always thought… that that was a fault… that we have failed, period. The leadership have failed in not suing the city… we did not need an incident in the Mount Pleasant, it is not necessary. It is necessary to simply document the faults… the violation of civil rights, the discrimination… and it is easy… well, not easy, it would take work but I believe that it would be very feasible to place a lawsuit against the city, for lack of participation in the electoral, economic, political processes… the marginalization of the community… That is, yes, there are many people that criticize Pedro Aviles and others that were involved in the Task Force… for not having done that in spite of the fact that they had the money and law firms that were willing to do it… and I don't know why they didn't do it. That has been a long term fault of us. I believe that part of the reason is that much of our leadership comes from the community agencies, no?... which depend to a great extent on government grants to be able to function…. And much of the leadership fears losing that money… if they get involved in something like that… but I think it is a misplaced fear…. We should do it…. The black community, black activists, African Americans, have always functioned in that way… Place a lawsuit…. Let's negotiate, yes… but in the meantime let's place a lawsuit and the lawsuit will continue its course. It is a different front of battle, I think…. a front of battle that we weren't able to use. (Esteban Gorostiza, a long time Latino leader).

> With the Task Force Pedro focused so much in developing and maintaining an organization that instead of focusing on the report, which are the recommendations of the report… yes, they sought law firms because all the law firms, everybody wanted to help us to be in the portraits, and to get publicity as you can imagine… And there was no lawsuit against the district. What lawsuit existed…? They couldn't find people who would be willing to sign to take legal actions against the police, against the system of education, there weren't any people who would want to be the plaintiffs to make the case. We were in Ayuda, with all the clients who came… look, sir, would you…? No, Madam, I don't want to get involved in this. There was such passivity that there was no success. There was, yes, a report that documented that the city was not responding to the needs of the Hispanic community. There was success in the sense that there existed that report, that that was documented. But in fact before the Latino Civil Rights Task Force, there was another report…." (Hilda Brunetti)

So from there the Latino Civil Rights Task force emerged in the city… and they brought the National Civil Rights Commission which is a powerful entity. They conducted a hearing, and some people went to testify and others didn't because… in my opinion it declined a little because the agencies did not want to put… did not make a big lawsuit against the city […] The Commission on Civil rights came and documented the thing. And if you look at that document, it is hot! And there should have been a suit of hell with that! And I don't know why there was no lawsuit, and there was a series of lawyers involved and so on… but there wasn't the impact that could have been. (Cecilio Reverte)

Adopting the confrontational approach—that is, suing the city government—was, according to many community leaders risky. First, there was a practical issue: How could they bite the hand that was "feeding" them? In other words, how could they maintain the programs and organizations if the government adopted a hostile political attitude as retaliation for the Latino leaders' actions? The second issue was philosophical. Many people held that the ultimate goal of the community agencies was to deliver services that the government could not and/or would not ever directly provide to the members of the Latino community. As Roberto Couto, a community referent for many years, stated:

The raison d'être is to provide… The argument that was given after the disturbances was that the city was neither prepared nor disposed to provide the services to the community. So there was a requirement of social services […] Fundamentally every political event and every political act in all that period was made with the conscience of the leaders of those agencies of getting more funds or resources so that their agencies could provide services…. (Roberto Couto)

This philosophy of service argument prevailed, and it defined the development of actions and strategies adopted by the community political actors who managed the transition and negotiations following the Mount Pleasant Riots. I will elaborate more on this dispute and how the community leaders and organizations

resolved their actions in the following section, devoted to the examination of social and organizational appropriation.

The media

The media, not only the Latino media but more importantly the mainstream media, placed critical attention on the community as never before. For several weeks the events in Mount Pleasant made headlines in the local newspapers and appeared as a central news piece in television news programs as well as a topic of discussion in radio shows. This media attention turned what had been a Latino community issue into a District-wide concern that occupied the attention of the city. As the story proved to have legs, news about the incidents of Mount Pleasant was picked up and broadcast through media outlets all over the world, showing international audiences what was taking place in the heart of the US capital. The incident in Mount Pleasant had become a serious public issue.

Even as the riots were ongoing, the role of the media was publicly discussed. According to an article in The Washington Post, media members were concerned for their own safety while covering the events in Mount Pleasant. Given the violent nature of the disturbances, local media journalists, cameramen, and photographers were at risk. This sparked an internal discussion in the local media in terms of how far reporters could go to get coverage, without putting themselves in danger.

For government officials, the media itself had become central in the creation and continuation of the event. In other words, by covering the incidents live, the media

were accused of increasing the magnitude of the disturbances. In fact, according to an article in the Washington Post, "Dixon and her aides skirmished with area's news media yesterday [May 7th 1991], attempting to sharply limit their coverage of the MP [Mount Pleasant] disturbance area during last night's curfew" (The Washington Post, May 8th 1991). The Washington Times, the same day reported that "journalists said they are walking that line as best they can, covering the story aggressively without contributing to its outcome." Furthermore, the mayor's office attempted to limit coverage, allowing only a limited number of reporters the area under closely controlled police escort. However, most major news outlet executives ignored these rules, and found alternative ways to get the story. In particular, many of them broadcasted from privately owned roofs in the area.

The local government response

One of the most meaningful immediate results of the riots was the change of attitude of the local government with respect to the Latino community. The violent and, at moments, apparently uncontrollable eruption of events within the predominantly Latino area of Mount Pleasant forced the mayor and other local officials to focus their attention in "the Latino problem".

During her time in office, then Mayor Sharon Pratt-Dixon had been notorious for neglecting the Latino community. This was well-documented by the Washington Post. "Dixon had ignored requests to meet with members of the Commission on Latino Economic Development since January, reinforcing the perception in the

Hispanic community that the city wasn't listening." (Washington Post, May 11th 1991). Another indicator of that lack of attention to the Latino community in the city is the fact that Mayor Dixon had not appointed a permanent director for the Office on Latino Affairs.

In the course of riots, the mayor's attitude remained ambiguous. First, she neglected to recognize the level of seriousness the incidents warranted. On the first night of the riots, Mayor Dixon chose to monitor the situation from her home. Only after evaluating the damages produced by the riots in person the following day, and having conferred with the city council members and her top aides did she become more involved in the situation, In an attempt to regain control after her initial missteps, Mayor Dixon established two goals: in the short run, try to resolve tensions, and in the long run, bridge the gap between the Spanish speaking population and the English speaking majority. These changes from the local authority indicated a real possibility for introducing additional reforms regarding the conditions of the Latino residents in the District. They also reflected the immediate opportunities created by the violent disturbances of Mount Pleasant.

> When there were the disturbances this community has fought a lot. It *is true that we got recognition at the local level of the government of Washington and other local governments* as well. There have been disturbances. There have been dead people. There have been murders. Here the police have killed people. We had told this to them in their face. The same way as I am interviewing with you I have been debating with people from the City Council in Washington, we have interviewed with the president of the local council, with the Mayor…. (Julio Cruz)

However, for many Latinos government officials' initial actions also revealed the lack of knowledge that those officials had of the Latino community, which constituted nearly one tenth of the total population in the district.

> The government had no idea of what was going on. Sharon Pratt-Dixon had recently been elected as mayor. She became notorious for a phrase she told an African American young woman… 'We didn't have a clue', she told her…. We didn't have any idea that that was going on in the African American neighborhoods, which left many people thinking then…. So how is this mayor going to solve the problems in the neighborhood? But if she didn't have any clue on the African American neighborhoods, much less did she know what was going on in the Latino neighborhood (José Bendicente)

With respect to concrete actions taken, Mayor Dixon agreed to form a commission to study the causes of the disturbances and acknowledged that her government had not done enough to solve the crisis in the Latino community. Aside from imposing a curfew and adopting a series of measures in order to pacify the residents, she started meeting with other government officials and Latino leaders in order to define an agenda. As a result, the mayor decided to create a commission whose mission would be to improve the relations between Latinos and the city government. In addition, the mayor commited to asking the members of her cabinet to work in such improvement.

It has been reported that part of the reason the mayor was showing special interest in finding solutions to the Latino problems had to do with the alleged fear that the conflict would expand to the African American community residing in the city. In an evident effort to minimize the racial tensions that could be triggered by the Latino protests, Mayor Dixon referred to the similarities between the Latino struggles and those faced by African Americans in a speech she gave at Howard University on May

11th, Specifically, she called on the African American community to understand the frustrations faced by Latinos, which had led to the outbreak of the riots.

All in all, this change in attitude from government officials and, in particular, in the mayor, would be crucial for the Latino community., As a quote from the Washington Post graphically puts it, "with no more votes or dollars, they [D.C. Latinos] remain dependent on their relationship with the Dixon administration." (Washington Post, May 11th 1991)

4.3.2. Social/organizational appropriation

This section will identify and explore the factors that contributed to and those that hindered the social/organizational appropriation process. During and after the riots Latinos constituted themselves in a challenger group both by utilizing existing organizations and by creating new ones. To explore this process, it is necessary to disentangle the various aspects that compose the concept of "Latinos". It is especially critical to take a closer look at the ways various constituencies appropriated political space; specifically ordinary people (as opposed to subjects organized politically), organized political actors in the Latino community with ties with the government (especially, organizations that provide services to the community) as well as newly formed political actors.

Almost as soon as the shooting occurred, community members began to take action. Leaders of established community organizations as well as other prominent figures in the community intervened immediately on the scene, in the literal sense as well as in the political sense by claiming the right to act as political interlocutors. . The Mount Pleasant Riots were significant in that they allowed community leaders to claim the right to be a part of the political process by the virtue of the fact of their long term presence serving the community. In addition to the existing actors and organizations, the community created an ad hoc political organization, the DC Civil Rights Latino Task Force, which stepped in to negotiate with the local government as well as to fundraise for the community. This new political space created by a shooting in the community, and the shared anger of ordinary people was quickly captured by larger organized structures. From that point onwards, the community's ire was channeled from street-level violence into conventional negotiations and lobbying strategies. These post-riot organizations would impart a notable mark on the political profile of this Latino community for years to come.

In what follows, I will review the involvement of ordinary people, the role of service providing agencies in the process, the significance of the D.C. Latino Task Force, and some of the most visible internal debates opened within the leadership.

The neighborhood got agitated: how ordinary people got involved

Unlike many other public mobilizations, the Mount Pleasant Riots started as a spontaneous gathering of people in the streets of the neighborhood. A few people came out to simply see what was going on. Some came out to nonviolently protest the treatment of the Latino community, and yet many others came out with the intent to express all their rage at years of injustices.

With an elevated degree of frustration already in Mount Pleasant, ordinary people did not need to be organized or prepared to take to the streets when the Salvadorean manual laborer was shot by a police officer in their neighborhood. They were only too aware of the level of discrimination they faced from city authorities/agents. Most residents in the District viewed Mount Pleasant as 'the' Latino neighborhood in the city. The attack to a Latino worker was, for many Mount Pleasant neighbors, conceived as an attack to the Latino community as a whole.

According to local newspapers, the involvement of neighbors in the event was immediate. A large crowd formed minutes after the shooting. Although the police on the scene summoned reinforcements to disperse the crowd, the situation was out of control from the beginning. As the violence escalated, residents from high rise buildings poured into the streets, and in no time, "hundreds of people surged into the street, throwing bricks and bottles at the police" (The Washington Post, May 6 1991).

The massive presence of neighbors in the streets did not take long to form, and neither did the escalation of violence that ensued. The sheer number of people in the streets served to make a statement on the reality that Latinos were facing in the

city, and the violence that followed highlighted the frustration and anger that many people in the community were experiencing in their everyday interaction with the tentacles of the local bureaucracy. These displays of anger, were further articulated when organized political actors entered the scene. In particular, the Latino service providing agencies and their leaders would play a critical role in making a political point by raising the level of discourse, by interpreting the sources of problems embedded in the riots of Mount Pleasant, as well as articulating an agenda of necessary reforms to guarantee the inclusion of this growing community in a number of areas. The leaders of these organizations ended up being informally "chosen" by the local authorities as the privileged interlocutors to negotiate solutions to the "Latino problem".

Role of Service Providing Agencies

While the presence of so many ordinary Latinos in the streets of Mount Pleasant, and especially, when so many of them began engaging in violent activities played a critical role in attracting the attention of local authorities to the Latino community, it would be the more visible figures of the community who would claim the representation of the Latino community as a whole and fully articulate the needs of the neighborhood. Of primary importance was the role played by the leaders of service providing agencies as well as leaders with certain visibility in the community, such as Latinos appointed in the local government, teachers, journalists, and priests. In a sense, whereas ordinary people, and especially Latino youths, played a critical part in opening the gap for a potential political transformation, organizations and

traditional leaders would be readily available to seize an opportunity to control the

posterior stages of the event. These organizations and their leaders constituted the

visible face of the Latino community in the eyes of government officials, and they

were generally well known by Latino residents.

> From the moment the riots occurred in 1991… I live two blocks away from
> where the riots took place. We got together… a group of people in the
> neighborhood who were linked to the organizations or that had done some
> type of work. We were a group of about 15 to 20. So we went and stood in the
> street and we made a blockade in the street between the police and the youths.
> And we maintained that for a long time while we tried to lower a little bit the
> pressure and from there a group of 3 or 4 of us went to negotiate with the
> police and the mayor on how to work with… first of all, calm people down,
> and from there work on resolutions in relation to the complaints that existed in
> the community…. Police related, et cetera. (Blanca Galindez)

Another leader present at the site of tension also expressed a similar story:

> What we [the heads of Latino organizations] demanded was to meet with the
> police, meet with the mayor and inquire about what had happened […] We
> were trying to see how we could… not fix… but how we could talk and open
> a dialogue with the community… of how that had happened… why it had
> happened… and what the government was going to do, what the city would
> do, so that this would not happen ever again, no? And what the police and the
> mayor would do with the community so that it would be heard, so that there
> would be more communication, no? So there were like two… the way in
> which I saw it at the time in which I participated, my part was to try to calm
> down the people. Because, you know, people would come here [to the clinic],
> they wanted to know what was going on, why this was happening… and that
> was our role here inside our organization, right? Go to the radios, go to the
> TV, and talk and say what was going on, why it was going on, and that we
> wanted to open the communication with the government, that the best thing
> we could do was to stop the violence… that violence with violence, there is no
> way to fix anything that way… but that what would indeed be possible is over
> time make a lawsuit, make a difference, and make the changes in this city, no?
> Other people were more in charge of the political part, of meeting with the
> mayor and demand certain things, no? Each of us, *without the need of having
> any meeting and say, you do this, you to that*, you know…? (Avelina
> Quinteros)

As the previous quotations suggest, the heads of community organizations quickly entered the scene and assumed the following two roles. First, they tried to calm the community by being present at the riots and by utilizing various channels of communication such us the agencies themselves, and different media to try to dissuade them from using violence. Second, they negotiated with the local authorities on a range of measures to create a sustainable peace,. No other agents could have taken on these two roles. In other words, the heads of the community organizations were immediate central players in the aftermath of the riots because of their direct connection with ordinary people in the community and their relatively easy access to government offices.

There were, however, several critical voices in the community with respect to the role played by the leaders of service-providing agencies.

> With no organization, with very weak political organizations. There were simply the services agencies, those who ran and currently run the service providing agencies who adopted the role of…. who played the role of leaders without having been elected by anybody, simply because presumably knew more the community because they ran organizations that operated based on government and private sector funds. So those same directors that have been for years taking the role of leaders in the moment of confusion. One of a few authentic leaders emerged as well, for example Mr. Pedro Aviles, although in a way he was manipulated by the leaders… no leaders, the "*agencieros*", who were pursuing their own interests… for their agencies and were trying to defend their small kingdoms…. (Jorge Inzaurralde)

> For some reason that caught fire and suddenly the leadership were looking at *how to control this and how to put themselves in front of this*. And how to establish an order… a level of dialogue and negotiation with the government. (José Bendicente, a long-term community resident and a prominent figure in the community)

This idea of control achieved by simply being ahead of the process opened by the riots reflects the place that the old guard played in the aftermath of the event. As

mentioned earlier, although the organizations did not start the incident that captured the attention of the city authorities, the public and the media, they did intervene quickly and were very effective in controlling the following stages of the political process.

> [The events of 1991] demonstrated the tremendous need for an organized expression in the [Latino] community. The most important element in this event is that it opened the door to develop instruments so the community would have a voice and eventually vote. That it had an organized presence, although obviously, the bulk of the population was Salvadoran, immigrant, and that community for evident reasons of immigration law and etcetera remained at the margin. In my opinion it demonstrated the great need to create forms of organization… The great contradiction was that the same instruments that were created were not political… In part because the population did not have the right to vote. There were the social service organizations …. [The 1991 riots] was a civil rights type of movement. But in a moment in which the civil rights period had ended in the country. It had been co-opted precisely through the complex of organizations that provided social services. So that was the great contradiction because while the leadership that mobilized and participated in the Mount Pleasant riots was trying to organize the voice of the community… the leadership was occupied by the heads of the agencies, who by definition were limited in their political horizon […] Any mobilization that would take place was very limited by the economic needs of the agencies that by definition could not participate in political activities. What was necessary then and continues to be now is the formation of alternative organizational structures beyond the shield of social agencies. (Roberto Couto)

The importance of this quote resides in the fact that although their access to authorities and other important actors in the private and philanthropic sector placed the cluster of service providing agencies at the center stage of the initial negotiations and actions aimed at finding solutions to the emerging "Latino issue", the agencies' role also contributed to the minimization of the "challenging" quality of the Latino presence in the public sphere.

The D.C. Latino Civil Rights Task Force

Two days after the incidents started in Mount Pleasant, Mayor Sharon Pratt Dixon announced that she was forming a task force aimed at improving the relations between the city government and Latinos in the District. This Multicultural Task Force, as it was called, was borne out of the post-shooting community violence. It was constituted after Latino leaders complained to the mayor that "the rioting in Mount Pleasant reflected the city's failure to address a number of issues affecting the Hispanic community, including the problems of homelessness, unemployment, poor access to health care, a high rate of alcoholism and a lack of bilingual officers in the Metropolitan Police Department" (Washington Post, May 9, 1991). However, a second group with similar membership was created immediately after "because participants said they did not want to be considered as serving at the mayor's pleasure" (Washington Post, May 10, 1991). This second group was called the D.C. Latino Civil Rights Task Force. As a result, two groups were constituted in the immediate aftermath of the riots: one created and led by the city government, and the other one conceived by the community as an autonomous instrument to move an agenda of reforms.

In that moment there was a change, a displacement of the old guard… Sonia Gutierrez, Marina Felix, who has already died, Casilda Luna, who is still alive… Doctor José Gutierrez, who was a public official. We made him part of the Latino Task Force because we invited everybody… it was a very broad effort. We called all of those who were Latino government officials who also participated, some of them protecting their jobs, because they were appointed, designated by the mayor. And sometimes we required more from them. But they also helped a lot from their own perspective, with what they knew. Many

of them took the opportunity to help us. So they played an excellent role… So in order to prepare that agenda we also had… also the mayor allowed… sent all her people to work with us. She made her parallel task force, she made a committee, and some of us participated in both. The majority participated in both to take there our perspective but also to maintain our independence and be able to prepare something. We prepared a blue print, the Latino blue print (Julio Cruz, a community leader).

Soon after being formed, the Latino Civil Rights Task Force became the scene of disputes between the old guard and the emerging leadership within the Salvadoran community. The conflict, which was framed in terms of nationality, was also generational and reflected a dispute between insiders and outsiders[22].The Task Force had become the field on which the difference between those who had certain routine access to government agents and resources (also known as the old guard) and those subjects who had emerged as a challenger group in the middle of the riots but who were not yet constituted political actors. This tension was the most salient divide in the community and had a direct impact on the ways in which the community at large capitalized on the opportunities produced by the riots in the long run.

When the Salvadorans arrived, because they were so many, they got into the Latino Civil Rights Task Force and so on… and they adopted the position of 'we are the majority, so we are the leaders now'. They did not take into consideration that they did not know the history of the community, they did not speak English, they weren't American citizens and they didn't know the system. All of us, those who were the leadership said, fine, you are the majority, you do not want our help in anything, we retire. All of us retired. In fact, José Gutierrez, who was elected, because there were popular elections to elect the members of the Task Force and so on, was elected to the Task Force, and started to get resources, and I remember that he got something in the area of health, and he went to the Task Force to tell them. Look, I got this for blab la bla… someone stopped him and told him, okay José, great, but you cannot be in charge of that because you are Puerto Rican, you are not Salvadoran and

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[22] The divide insiders-outsiders with respect to civil society organizations and/or networks usually refer to the attitude toward the official process. While insiders are usually favorable to cooperation and participation in government structures, outsiders usually engage in challenging strategies (see, for example, Korzeniewicz and Smith 2001)

this has to be Salvadoran. And José Gutierrez said ah…, and then left. […] So the Salvadorans wanted to take over, take over…. Down the drain! Because they didn't know the system, they weren't citizens, *they didn't have access and access is power…. And who had the access? We did. And we still do*. (Olga Puglisi)

The members of the old guard had not always enjoyed the condition of insiders. As we saw in earlier sections, it took these traditional leaders a long series of struggles with government authorities to gain recognition as "the faces" of the community. As Olga's previous quotation signals, however, the group's awareness of such privileged condition, referred to as "being part of the system"would eventually be utilized as a tool to demonstrate strength in the power struggles within the community.

The broad membership of the Task Force was a source of tension that would have repercussions on the political positions present and create competition from within. In particular, the presence of directors of agencies would be a matter of debate.

After all, the Latino Civil Rights Task Force, which didn't last for much longer after, was integrated by the directors of agencies as well… because that was the political formation that had taken place in D.C. So I believe that there did not exist a durable formation that could root politically. Everything developed, I believe, in function and around the agencies which were the islands around which the community established itself. We didn't get out of that model, we didn't… (Roberto Couto)

The debate concerned not only the role of agencies in the task force but also—and more importantly—the character that Latino politics should adopt in the city. Two main positions emerged in the city: one embedded in –or attributed to—the agencies, which would be linked to the provision of services to the community and which, in turn, would push for contract negotiation and lobby to get resources to enhance and improve the quality of those services; and two, a more radical position that put them

in direct confrontation with the Old guard, which promoted the development of political mobilization and organization within the Latino community. This last view advocated youth empowerment and elevating the level of other disadvantaged groups in the community.

> Different sectors [participated in the Task Force] because the *viejitos* (old men) were also involved. That is, the directors of the agencies that served the community were at the table discussing the needs of youths, the needs of the elderly, the needs of women, the needs of students. In this case these people were professionals, very well known in the matters in which they worked. And of course, many of them were directors of the agencies that provided these services. On the other hand, there was another sector, I would say much more militant, that weren't representing the sector of agencies that provided services, but were representing a sector that had a sort of political consciousness and which looked this new space for the popular participation in the articulation of their problems and their solutions. And many of them worked, I believe, in those times for groups of solidarity who came with a vision a lot more… We had internal debates on how to mark a political presence beyond the provision of services. That is, if the Youth Center determines that there is a scarcity of opportunities, of extra-curricular activities for youths and we get that, is that all we want? Or is there some method of organization and community mobilization that will allow us to have political power not only today but also in the short, median, and long run. (Tadeo Ramirez)

The prevailing direction that the internal debates in the Latino Task Force adopted would be reflected in the preparation of the Latino Blueprint, a thorough study of the needs of the community, which resulted in the creation of several organizations and the development of platforms of policy agendas for the city with relation to the treatment of Latinos. According to several people who participated in the Latino Task Force, the blueprint was their most important development. Some also view this document as the crystallization of the service-oriented approach. The political struggles within the Latino leadership in the aftermath of the riots will be examined in greater detail in the following subsection.

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Internal Debates in Latino Leadership

   The riots of 1991 gave the Latino community leadership, both the old guard and the emerging figures, a chance to discuss the political profile that the community as a group would adopt. In general terms, two main positions could be distinguished in the debate that occurred within the D.C. Latino Civil Rights task force: one radical, and one conservative. However, interestingly, most members of the so-called old guard, when I interviewed them for this project, expressed the belief that "the fight" could have been taken even further and that the community fell short in posing its claims. No one would admit compromising especially with the government, when in reality, that is exactly what happened. Talking about the direction taken by the community referents, and in particular the task force in the aftermath of the riots, José Bendicente, a long time community figure described the situation in the following terms:

> GC: Although there were marked differences in positions, the community agreed upon a common agenda of demands, right?
> JB: It [The Blueprint] was written and then stored in a drawer… that is the difference… that is the institutional-bureaucratic response. The thing has to be taken to a different level…. With meetings, and analyses and blah blah blah…. And that takes away, steals all content of mass mobilization. All content of something more political beyond an initiative in the sense of 'we expect the response from the director of public works on what he would do with respect to the place where the trash accumulates'. Those are problems of organizational detail. If there is a broad political problem that generates that… that is something different […]
> GC: The task force was formed and came up with a series of recommendations. To what extent was there consensus or conflict in the process?

JB: Consensus was achieved at the level of particular meetings within a chapter. Then we will ask for 3 people here or 5 people in an *x* field of government… or we will request a space for 3 or 6 months…. But that is administration, that is not politics. That is not a movement that would change the relation of forces. Those are the details of accommodation…so as the process unfolds it loses its content… the original impulse… it becomes an administration of details.

Dealing with bureaucracies and requesting responses from the administrative apparatus of both the state and private foundations was clearly seen as one of the political lines to follow. Surprisingly, this line of action stands in the prevailing discourse about the Mount Pleasant aftermath as contrary to a more promising direction that could have invested more effort in community empowerment through "political work". In other words, dealing with bureaucracies is generally understood in these arguments as distracting from the "real work" that the community owed to itself. In part, this suggests more autonomous work would have strengthened the community capacity, rather than relying on its already visible faces to negotiate improvements and acquire benefits from 'outside' in a number of areas.

We had… I tell you this because I was elected to the Latino Civil Rights Task Force… and there was a foundation that gave us $300,000 to do certain things that required a lot of paperwork and very narrow goals… to do something that wasn't in line with the reality that we were living. So then a professional mentality of community work developed…which I do not think should be at the core of community mobilization. It does not have to be through… there must be professionals who support… but they should not be dictating what should be done. There should be people capable of writing something, but there should be a political conscience, community conscience… In that sense, sometimes philanthropic organizations require individuals to produce written reports. That's what universities are for… to study the situation…. We did it at certain moment […] but you cannot limit the community work to the preparation of studies. (Julio Cruz)

Although the political mobilization perspective was brought up by several participants in the Latino Task Force, as well as community actors outside the Task

Force, that road was never taken. In fact, in the few moments in which opportunities of mobilizations could have been created, the community never showed a capacity for mobilization at the grassroots level. According to some Latino figures interviewed, the possibility of sustainable community political development was hindered rather than helped by community leaders, who treated clients as their own bastions. When I asked Roberto Couto, one of my interviewees, why this position that needed grassroots-level political development did not prosper, he related it to the *caciques*-type role that the leaders of organizations played in the community.

> You want to organize *my* clients… No! I organize *my* clients… because the number of clients I have will determine the amount of money we will receive from the foundations or the government. (Roberto Couto)

Another reason for the limited success of the community political development perspective emphasizes the framework often appearing in the Central American political cadres. According to this view, those who could have led an effort to organize the community in order to create a stable 'grounded' political actor did not know how to play the game according to the rules in the US..

> We also tried to look at ourselves. Internally, we had a discussion on how to create a political entity that would give us power. And I believe that in that area we failed in part because we lack the experience of the technique of community organization in the United States. Although the goals are the same in every part in the world…. Because ultimately what one wants is more power, no? But there is a technique of community organizing that many of us did not know at the time. And because we came from another culture, from another form of doing things, many of us didn't have the political experience, and when we had it, it was very different. Many Salvadoran activists had had a revolutionary experience, weapons. A paradigm very different from the one here. Democracy, pluralism, and on top of that they are a minority…. And there were conflicts… Blacks have political power, we don't. So I think that we didn't know how to create the instruments, because in that moment there were no citizens' forum… which exists in every county… there is an

organization at least one of volunteers. There wasn't something like that here.
(Tadeo Ramirez)

Although this view might partially explain why the community did not embrace grassroots development as some expected, it is precisely this alternative political paradigm—based on previous experiences in their countries of origins—that placed Latinos at the center of the public sphere in the first place. In other words, the street struggles with public authorities, the utilization of hand-made weapons, and violent tactics is what caught the attention of the authorities. It is this repertoire of tactics that put the Latino issue in the public agenda—at least for a few weeks. It is true, however, that beyond the initial moments of the riots, the Central American community members lost leadership of the event. It was the presence and rapid response of powerful old guard actors within the community who had the ability, resources, and access to key decision-makers that allowed them to step in front of the unorganized masses and take the lead.

> All those people [the directors of agencies and community political figures] had contacts within foundations…. The thing is that the contacts that had been useful to obtain funds and provide services… direct services, not something more educational or more political, which would have required more activism. So they used their contacts, but many people came to us as well. Resources came to us, tremendous resources, the church supported us "de pe a pa" [meaning a lot]. The Catholic Church was with us, the Protestant Church, the Episcopal Church that is huge here… many churches helped us out (an elected member of the Latino Task Force)

The structural location of community actors with routine access to powerful actors in the government and the philanthropic sector was critical in the route taken by the collective action that followed the riots. However, it was the way in which these actors operated at the time of and right after the riot, utilizing the

traditional/contained means of claim-making (meeting with government officials in order to negotiate resources for the community, aiming at strengthening the structure of services of the community, requesting funds from the private sector, writing proposals, using the media, and especially talking about services) that reinforced the path adopted by the community. This path, in turn, consisted of strengthening a landscape and a structure of power that was already established within the Latino community in D.C.

4.4. Innovation in the public sphere: the formation or redefinition of a political actor

As mentioned earlier in this work, the notion of innovation used in this research can be broadly defined as the introduction of something new into the political sphere. More precisely, the concept of innovation, as used here, refers to a type of collective action that "incorporates claims, selects objects of claims, includes collective self-representations, and/or adopts means that are either unprecedented or forbidden within the regime in question." (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001: 7)

The riots of Mount Pleasant of May 1991 constituted an episode of mixed contention—including both contained and transgressive components. Following McAdam et al.'s characterization of contentious politics, contained contention assumes that all parties are previously established actors employing well-established means of claim-making. Transgressive contention, on the other hand, "consists of

episodic, public, collective interaction among makers of claims when at least some parties to the conflict are newly self-identified political actors, and/or at least some parties employ innovative collective action." (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001: 7) When we look at the actors intervening in the Mount Pleasant event and the actions that were deployed, we can easily notice the presence of well-established and well-connected actors in the Latino community utilizing routine tools of claim-making—specifically, groups of agency directors and government officials with access to centers of decision making—as well as an unorganized group of residents—mostly immigrants—emerging as a group making claims in the name of a Latino identity. This section will be devoted to examining the impact and limitations of the formation of a new identity-based political actor within the Latino community as a result of the collective interactions launched immediately after the violent events of Mount Pleasant. The main questions I address in this section are as follows: Did a new political actor emerge within the Latino community as a result of the political interactions initiated by the riots in Mount Pleasant? If so, what were their features? What factors limited their scope and sustainability?

In order to determine whether a new Latino political actor emerged as a result of the Mount Pleasant riots, we must first clarify the attributes that define a political actor. In the perspective I adopted in this work, based on McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001), political actors are operationally defined as arrays of persons--and relations among them--with an internal organization and links to other political actors with substantial continuity over time. Based on this definition, the question can be reframed by asking to what extent Latinos residing in D.C. were able to organize

themselves into a single entity, in a way that would allow them to speak with one voice (despite internal differences), maintaining a relatively stable structure, and being conceived as an interlocutor in local politics by other constituted actors. In my effort to try to answer these questions, though, I encountered different interpretations of what a political actor is. In other words, many of my interviewees emphasized the 'political' aspect of the actor by relating it to the 'politicization' of the bases. In these interpretations, the political quality of Latinos would develop only if there the ordinary people in the Latino community were politically empowered and if these ordinary people were mobilized as a way to have a noticeable impact on local politics.

The section is organized as follows. First, I analyze internal aspects of the constitution/re-constitution of Latinos as a political actor—in particular, I examine the changes and continuities in leadership, as well the internal competition and actual scope of two approaches in dispute--namely, community empowerment and service provision. In particular, I analyze the organizational strengthening of the community. Following, I review the actor from outside, focusing on the increased visibility of Latinos as political actors and its impact in both the racial paradigm embedded in local politics as well as the formal system of political representation.

Community leadership: a change within continuity

At first sight, the Mount Pleasant riots showed the emergence of a new leadership that reflected the characteristics of the Latino community (primarily in

terms of nationality) in its current make-up. There was, indeed, a change manifested in the appearance of new faces, mainly of Central American descent, intervening and negotiating on behalf of the Latino community.

> I believe that every time that one of those situations take place there is always a change in the local leadership. There is an opportunity for change in the local leadership. In 1991 that was very clear. It was really a moment in which there was the opportunity for a group to take power. And *what you saw in the task force was to some extent those people who felt a little bit marginalized, who were younger, and had not been in the place of being able to negotiate…* (Blanca Galindez)

However, for many voices in the community, this slight modification in visible leadership did not represent a radical enough transformation in the power structure of the community. In fact, there was a relatively broad consensus that those who actually made the decisions regarding agenda in the riot aftermath were the directors of service-providing agencies. An exploration of the chain of events that followed the riots provide more clues to understand the phenomenon in which, both arguments contain some truth.

Given that the Latino population in the District was overwhelmingly composed of residents who had emigrated from Central America, there was an increasing feeling this new leadership had to be Central American—in particular, Salvadoran, which was the largest minority within the community. This need was rapidly noticed by the long term activists in the community, who were trying to find a way to make the most of the opportunities presented by the disturbances. This was the context in which Pedro Aviles, a Salvadoran resident in the area who had grown up under the tutelage of senior community activists, emerged as the visible face of the

community after the riots. The truth is that "Hispanic activists *chose him* to lead the D.C. Latino Civil Rights Task Force" (Washington Post, June 2 1991).

After being elected as leader of the Latino Task Force, Pedro Aviles rapidly acquired a high profile—aside from being seated at the negotiation table across from local government officials and other public authorities, his name was constantly featured in the main newspapers in the District in the weeks following the riots. Of particular significance is a move that Aviles made on behalf of the Task Force requesting that the mayor recognize the Latino Task force as "the body representing the interests of the Latino community" (Washington Post, June 2 1991). This request constituted an attempt to centralize authority—although in a different way from the one in which the community authority had been concentrated until then. As mentioned several times in this work, the community authority had been largely exercised by the heads of service organizations, even after those same organizations had created the Council of Latino Agencies, which was supposed to be the political arm of the Latino nonprofits in the District and, for that reason, the political actor negotiating on behalf of the Latino community at large. The formation and profile of the Latino Task Force, on the other hand, was an effort to create a more legitimate political actor. Backed by the mass mobilization during and after the riots the constitution of the Task Force was an attempt to conform a body that directly represented the community and whose members would be directly elected. This legitimacy contrasted the oligopolistic representation of the agencies embedded in the work of the Council of Latino Agencies. In other words, it is one thing is to represent "people" and another thing to represent "agencies". In this dispute alone, two models

of representation were at stake: a corporate model that for years had prevailed in the community was now juxtaposed and would eventually be overshadowed by a model of direct pluralistic representation.

But despite these attempts to shift the political board, these changes were constrained by several factors. Not only had these leaders been 'chosen' by the old guard to give a new and more representative face to the community collective voice after the disturbances, but the new leadership was still to some extent guided or even obstructed by the established community leadership.

> A young Salvadoran man, with a society, the American establishment, the media, everything opening to him…. was not capable of taking distance and follow a path of protest, of advocacy, and pressure in support of the positions of a community against…. *He let himself be swallowed*. (Rafael Hernandez, a longtime community resident)

> Efforts of coalition, of creating structures have been made, but they always fail because there are people putting obstacles… (Tadeo Ramirez)

The argument made by some of the members of the old guard was that although 'the Salvadorans' aspired to become the new heads of the community, they did not have the resources that members of the old guard had—language, citizenship, knowledge of how the system worked, and most importantly the connections and relations they had established over years of work in the city. In addition, the heads of service-providing agencies had know-how in their respective areas, so when the direction of the claims was finally framed in terms services, their role in the political process was even stronger.

> I think particularly the first three years [following the riots] were very important, sort of a visible organizing coming together of very large numbers of people, mobilizing to be part of that kind of community political process. It

didn't, it wasn't sustainable for lots of reasons. And that kind of died out. I think the immediate pieces were around funding, unfortunately…unfortunately that funding for nonprofit organizations…and I think very quickly, like in a matter of four or five years, […] the impulse from the riots had been incorporated into, recuperated I'd say into kind of the nonprofit dynamic. Funding and services. Unfortunately. (Elizabeth Mederos)

All in all, from the Mount Pleasant riots emerged new visible figures in the community who were not attached to the organizations in leading roles but in many cases had previously done some work in the community at a grassroots level—working as community organizers or in activism. Some of these leaders had, in fact, brought to the table a more political approach—proposing, for example, that they concentrate more on advocacy, community organizing, or political development. Some of the members of the old guard even supported this approach in theory. However, at the end of the day, the most visible outcomes of the political efforts that followed the riots would be the strengthening of the nonprofit sector, which, in turn, revealed the prevalence of the 'service provision' approach.

Community organization and empowerment

The events of May 1991 constituted a moment in which the Latino community mobilized in large numbers and acquired a visible presence. In fact, it is "the" milestone in the political history of the community. The question then becomes, was that mobilization translated into a renovated political organization in the community? In order to answer this question, the narratives of the different figures of the community interviewed for this research suggest looking simultaneously at the

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prevailing approach utilized in the efforts adopted by the leadership right after the event as well as the actors intervening in those sequences. The numerous descriptions I encountered about the impact that the riots had on the articulation of the community as a political actor usually refer to two competing and, to a great extent, mutually exclusive approaches: the first one focusing on community organizing and the second one focusing on providing services. Whereas the first one is framed in terms of community empowerment and 'political subjects', the second one is defined in terms of social needs and clients. Those who saw the context created by the riots of Mount Pleasant as an opening that should have been followed by an active work of community organizing and people empowerment tend to agree on pointing out that such a line was drowned in the strength of the service providing advocates.

> You had a moment where you had a very visible mobilization and the potential for a large membership base, platform, and organization that could really drive for political change and power, and access that then becomes a process in which a small identifiable number of elites negotiate with the city for resources that are constructed as essential service resources rather than economic justice resources. (Elizabeth Mederos)

However, some efforts were made in the line of community organizing and empowering. These efforts were particularly significant in the work of the Latino Task Force and, although this line would not be as visible as the strengthening of the "service-providing apparatus", it did have some in the immediate aftermath of the riots.

> Look, the work in the beginning… we had a tremendous activism. We formed task forces, civil rights committees in all the Washington metropolitan area. We went to the suburbs, to the different municipalities… Fairfax, Herndon… We went to spread information to all the festivals…. to guide people on what was going on. We monitored what was happening in terms of civil and human

rights violations. And we denounced when it was necessary. We were with the media at all moment we needed to do things. We monitored and organized, organized, and organized. But the staff ended up staying stuck in research. And we would fall in such a ridiculous activism that there were folks doing research on the yellow pages…. In the past we used the money to do, to form… we organized a Latino congress each year in which everybody participated… and people came from everywhere to denounced what people were feeling. And people would come to propose ideas to solve those problems… (Julio Cruz)

For some Latino leaders, one of the biggest problems that led to the vanishing of the organizing line was the failure to achieve a sustained contact with the base. Part of it was attributed to the apathy of the community to continue participating in the structures formed after the fever of the riots had calmed down. In particular, the failure in developing a sustainable and grounded political vehicle for the Latino community in the aftermath of the riots is partially attributed to the lack of involvement of ordinary people in the Task Force, which, as a result ended up being poorly attached to the bases.

The Task Force also increasingly losses strength because Latinos are… you have to take into account that it is an immigration of first generation so the roof is the main thing, right? Many of them come from countries were the leaderships have left very deep traces in their families, so they don't want to be involved in politics, they don't want to know of leaderships. So they concentrate in looking for jobs, and working. (Jorge Inzaurralde)

This lack of involvement of ordinary people in the political life of their community was in many cases due to both the fear provoked by their lack of legal status, and also to the absence of an active political work of civic education and organization that would encourage and facilitate their participation.

The lack of legalization, on the one hand, the fact that the majority of that population comes from rural areas in Central America and then it is not used to the whole urban phenomenon and how to conduct themselves in the new

socioeconomic coordinates. And also the fact that there was no vision or priority to really educate them… (Roberto Couto)

The failure of the community empowerment line of action is, then, characterized as the combined product of the weakness of the political strategy adopted by the leadership and the lack of engagement observed in the population, in part due to the precarious immigration status of many of the residents. More important than that, however, was the role played by the nonprofit sector whose actions favoring the providing of services would make this one the prevailing approach in the political strategies deployed by the Latino organizations speaking on behalf of the community. We will cover this extensively in the following subsection.

Services versus empowerment? Agencies blocking community political development

One of the elements that emerged clearly from the interviews I conducted was the notion that although the riots of Mount Pleasant presented an opening for the community to introduce a unified actor with certain weight in the negotiation of local policies, there had been no real political development in the community in the sense of empowering the base and establishing a powerful political organization. As a result, even if there were one Latino voice that grew louder after the riots, this one was largely centered on organizations that did not heavily rely on the support of ordinary people in the community (who were not largely engaged in the actions taken after the riots). In particular, this situation is specifically attributed to the type of participation adopted by certain community actors—specifically, the leaders of

community agencies, who, according to this view, were more interested in protecting and expanding their own businesses rather than empowering the community.

The DC Latino Civil Rights Task Force was meant to be an instrument specifically for community needs and problems, and was constituted as a democratic organism, whose leaders were elected in open elections within the community. Although the Task Force was effective in setting an agenda for reforms that would benefit the community (crystallized in the blueprint), and a promising vehicle through which the community could have a presence in the political sphere, its work and development would soon be jeopardized by established organizations that saw their power affected by the growth of such independent force.

> [The Latino Task Force] *vanished over time because the agencieros themselves saw with displeasure that many of the funds went to an organization that wasn't theirs*. So within them [some] would put obstacles attempting to capitalize such funding for their organization. So there is a very thorough underground struggle within themselves for not supporting…. Frontally supporting but surreptitiously obstructing the work and funding which is the most important thing for the task force. (Jorge Inzaurralde)

Some community political activists even view the formation of the Latino Task force as a problem in itself. In this view, the institutionalization of the fight translated into the creation of an organization which deactivated the political potential of the moment for the community.

> The Latino Civil Rights Task Force was formed, but the problem was precisely that another organization was created. And this organization had to compete with the other organizations that were providing services to get funds. We organized everything, everything… But instead of adopting a political strategy of organizing the community politically, we formed another organization that would supposedly be the spokesman on the needs of the Hispanic community (Hilda Brunetti)

A similar phenomenon occurred with respect to the Council of Latino Agencies, an organization originally created as the political arm of the agencies. According to an informant from the Council of Latino Agencies, this organization was very sensitive to the agency heads' individual interests. Specifically, these agency directors used the agency as an instrument, but other times they cut themselves off. The reason is that because they are trying to get funds for their organizations they prefer not to be seen as doing advocacy.

The link between the perceived capacity of service providing organizations and the lack of political presence of the community at large has to do with the special characteristic of the Latino community. As mentioned before, this community includes a large number of noncitizens, who cannot vote or participate in the formal political system, and who have a number of other limitations that locate them at the margin of a number of social fields. Because they are obviously attached to a partial interest—namely, the growth and continuity of their organization—these service providing organizations have been visualized as not necessarily pursuing the general interest of the community. In other words, while their work in the community is broadly recognized as extremely relevant, their role in politics would not necessarily reflect of the common interest of Latinos, even when they have traditionally acted in their representation.

> The organizations have done an excellent job, but in their areas…sometimes *at the expense of the global growth of the community*. But it is not necessarily their fault. I believe that they have done what they have to do so that their institution could serve the population they were serving. But that has created… it was also at the expense of having a global position (Cesar Barragan)

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In any event, the perception is that the only ones who "won something" with the riots of Mount Pleasant were the *agencieros* (heads of service providing organizations). These agents are depicted as moving by pure economic interests which did not necessarily overlap the general interests of the Latino community at large. Many community members agreed that after the Mount Pleasant riots the community did not gain political power. In this widespread view, it was the leaders of service organizations who were able to increase their political power, crystallized in their ability to negotiate with different entities, and whose success was reflected in the construction of onerous buildings.

> The *agencieros* took advantage of this situation to make themselves heard and to be able to lay the foundations of their base, which in the long run translated in buildings, in very well established organizations. We have the Youth Center, Centronia, La Clinica del Pueblo, Carecen… all of them worked before in skanky rooms or offices, and are now respected entities within the community. (Jorge Inzaurralde)

In this zero-sum logic, the gains achieved by community agencies and reflected in those buildings implied a loss for the community at large. The idea implied in this logic is that there is a divide between agencies and ordinary people in the community. Therefore, following this argument, when agencies achieve gains for their organizations, these gains do not necessarily mean an achievement for the community at large. For some people in the community, however, the Mount Pleasant riots indicated a crisis of a model of representation that had functioned for years, since the organizational capital of the community was developed in DC—that model is the one in which the old guard, largely composed by prominent figures that in the way of *caciques* took for themselves the representation of the community.

However, in practice, although there were some shifts in the leadership that in the aftermath of the riots took on behalf of the community, the power of the old guard was not substantially affected. In fact, it was quite the opposite, they controlled and profited from the following developments of the political process opened with the event (see section on strengthening of service providing agencies).

The lack of an active strategy of community organizing and political mobilization is broadly attributed to the action of so-called leaders in the course of the Mount Pleasant events. However, although the agencies profile and actions in the aftermath of the riots are usually perceived as blocking the community political development, there are also voices that emphasize the fallacy involved in expecting agencies to be the ones directly in charge of such mobilization. The reason is that there is an internal contradiction in such expected behavior from the agencies, given that by definition they could not participate in political activities.

> I don't believe that the organizations have to be the ones mobilizing the community, developing the community politically. I don't believe so… because there is a conflict for many organizations. There is a conflict because in order to sustain your organization, you depend on money… that "they" give you funds to maintain your organization. And if you go to a foundation that believes in I don't know what… in the policies of so and so, they can't find you politically against them because they take your funds away. And the advocacy is not the same as it was when these organizations were formed. And it is that honestly I think there was a change in the organizations. I think many are already established and happy and that's it. (Hilda Brunetti)

Again in this quote, the assumption is that the institutionalization of the community (understood here as the formalization of practices in established organizations) deactivates its political potential by creating new constraints to the actions that these organizations can engage in. These limits, in turn, emerged from

compromises adopted with other actors from which they depend financially (mainly, the government and foundations). In particular, this quote alludes to the fact that the political potential present when the agencies were created (back in the seventies) and fighting for their funds and resources but also for other issues concerning the community, was less promising in the nineties.

Although there had been attempts to organize the community—for example, through the Council of Latino Agencies—those endeavors were frustrated by the position of agencies who viewed the Latino population exclusively as "clients" and not as political subjects.

> [The Council of Latino Agencies] has a structure that replicates the model of an agency of services. It has its board, its executive director… the board was composed by the directors of the agencies that were members of the council… and by definition had the power of veto. The great contradiction…. We wanted to utilize that entity to start organizing people, to empower them… And immediately a conflict took place with the board. Because they said no, 'the *people are my clients*'. There was a big struggle, a big division. It was never possible to… the main reason why there is no political cohesion or a political will or a political projection is because the model is competitive in search for resources to survive…. (Roberto Couto)

Organizational strengthening

During the years that followed the riots the Latino nonprofit sector[23] in the Washington area experienced a remarkable growth, both in number and size.[24] According to the Urban Institute's National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS), a

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[23] Latino nonprofit organizations are conceived as organizations whose missions explicitly concentrate on Latino population issues or have a history of primarily serving the Latino community (based on Cordero-Guzman 2005).

[24] A more detailed diagnosis of the size, scope, and profile of the Latino nonprofit sector in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area can be found in Cantor (2008).

national repository of 501(c)(3) organizations that file with the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, the number of Latino organizations filing Forms 990[25] rose 150 percent (from 30 to 75) between 1991 and 2005.[26] Of all the Latino nonprofits active and filing Form 990 returns in 2005, 46 percent were created during the 1990s. Additionally, the combined total annual revenues of Latino nonprofits in the D.C. area increased 569 percent (from $13 million to $87 million) from 1991 to 2005.[27] If we add to this the wide array of organizations that are not required to file tax returns with IRS, such as the multiple churches operating in the district, we can presume that the size of the nonprofit sector serving with Latinos is today quite extensive.

This jump in the creation of new agencies coincided with the increase in Latino migration during that decade and with an upsurge in the visibility of Latinos in the area that occurred after the riots of Mount Pleasant. It is fair to assume, then, that both the creation of new organizations and the consolidation of older ones suggest the existence of an increase in the availability of funds for social programs targeting the Latino community during the 1990s and an effective effort to appropriate those funds by heads of organizations serving the Latino community.

It is interesting that the organizations tend to be associated with their heads and with their buildings. There is a sort of symbiosis between organization, leader and building. From this equation, people in the community ascribe certain power to each of these units. Nearly everybody I interviewed is aware of how many millions of

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[25] Only nonprofit organizations with more than $25,000 in annual gross receipts are required to file Form 990 with the IRS. Consequently, small organizations that do not complete Form 990 are not in the dataset and were not included in our analysis.

[26] From the Urban Institute National Center for Charitable Statistics Core File (Public Charities, circa 1991 and 2005).

[27] From the Urban Institute National Center for Charitable Statistics Core File (Public Charities, circa 1991 and 2005).

dollars compose the budgets of each of these organizations, and this information was

brought to my attention several times when talking about the organizational landscape

in the community.

> There is no vanguard because, well, BB Otero has a thing of 8 million dollars which is CentroNia, Lori Kaplan has 17 million dollars put in all the programs of the Youth Center. Maria Tukeva has just finished making a building, a school, the Bell Multicultural on 16th, Maria Gomez has a Mary's Center that costs money, she is "the health person", BB's husband has something that is called MI Casa on housing, Ricardo Galvis has Andromeda, Angel has EOFULA… that is, they have created kinds of kingdoms…. (Rafael Hernandez)

> The great majority of organizations have grown tremendously. They could managed to get a big quantity of funds in part based on the disturbances… attention needs to be placed on this community, we need to deal with the problems it is facing, so we are going to give money to these organizations… a result has been an incredible growth of many of the organizations. Budgets of less than a million have become budgets of 12 millions. It is in part the increase in the living cost, but it is to a great extent the broadening of resources that were made available… (Esteban Gorostiza)

The symbolic power of building ownership for an organization is graphically

displayed in the following quote:

> There has been a influx and a strengthening of organizations. Like BB Otero, for example, who now has a building. A building that is worth millions of dollars… A building that is worth 5 or 6 million dollars. And it was given to her by Verizon, which used to be Pacific Bell, or something like that. The Latin American Youth Center did not have a space, now it does. The Latino Economic Development Corporation was formed through the Latino Civil Rights Task Force…. And now has its space. They bought a building. And they receive money from the government so they can guide people in economic matters. (Julio Cruz)

The increase of funds made available to the Latino nonprofits has been reflected in an

organizational sophistication of each of these service centers, many of which are

recognized as models of service provision in their respective areas of activity.

In the last 20 years incredible organizations and institutions have developed, which were able not only to get money from the government and assure that the government be investing in this community but also that the private sector, foundations, etcetera…. We have brought a lot of money to the community in this sense. And we have created employment. Centronia has 250 employees, many of who are immigrants. The Latin American Youth Center, Mary's Center, Clinica del Pueblo… you go to any of those and they are places where many people from our community can start a professional career in a way that maybe they would not be able to do in other places. In that sense, we serve as a source of employment, a source of services and a very strong economic source in the community. So the main development in the last few years since 1991 is that the organizations that were then relatively small and kind of grassroots, have become institutions that if you put together 5 or 6 and add a couple of schools that were formed, with this process of charter schools and so on…. We are talking of a very large economic and political potential. Is this utilized in such a way? I'm not sure… I would say no… (Blanca Galindez)

So pivotal was the presence of nonprofits organizations in the perception of Latinos in the city that one of the people interviewed associated the organizational development (meaning the growth of the nonprofit sector) as "the development of the Latino community". In particular, the permanent status acquired by these organizations is generally valued not only as an asset of the Latino community but an asset of the community at large.

Although the idea that dominates the community is that the Latino nonprofit sector in the district is financially very powerful, over half of the Latino nonprofits filing forms 990 in the D.C. metropolitan area are still small in size, with total revenues under $500,000.[28] At the other end of the spectrum, large organizations operating with budgets of $2 million or more make up only 13 percent of the total.

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[28] Considering that organizations with annual gross receipts below $25,000 are not required to file Form 990 with the IRS and are thus excluded from the analysis, this number of small nonprofits in the area would likely be even higher.

For the most part, Latino-serving nonprofits in the region have few assets upon which to draw in times of financial need. Forty percent of these groups have assets below $100,000, and an additional 10 percent report assets between $100,000 and $200,000. Only 7 of the 75 nonprofits in the study had assets of more than $3 million.[29]

Public visibility: adding one more term to the bi-racial dominant paradigm

Through the Mount Pleasant riots, Latinos in the District of Columbia gained substantial visibility. This increase in visibility is particularly important considering that being able to be seen, heard and acknowledged is a pre-condition for any political actor. As an example, from May through December of 1991 (that is, from the moment the riots broke out in Mount Pleasant to the presentation of the blueprint to the local authorities), 122 news stories in The Washington Post and The Washington Times referred to the social conditions, political status and/or actions of the Latino/Hispanic[30] community residing in the District. In addition, the riots got international coverage. (see The Washington Post, May 9 1991).

> It was a moment to force the politicians to see the needs of the communities and convince them of the needs of the community. Because the complete nation was pending and with its eyes put in what was going on in the capital of the United States. That was a moment in which the whole world was looking at the disturbances that was in one street but, forget it! Those disturbances captured national and international attention. (Hilda Brunetti)

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[29] From the Urban Institute National Center for Charitable Statistics Core File (Public Charities, circa 2005).
[30] The press uses the term Hispanic and not Latino to refer to the Spanish speaking population residing in the U.S.

Maybe the most evident of the implications of the riots, not only for Latinos but also for the community at large, was that a collectivity that had been largely invisible and hidden all of the sudden irrupted and turned perceptible for the public eye.

> I think for a while there [the riots] put the Latino community into the consciousness of the city, do you know what I mean? In a way that it was sort of hidden or it was very much a small enclave. All of a sudden there was kind of understanding, like that you needed to attend to the community, like that there needed to be some effort by the city's leadership, formal and informal leadership, to integrate the Latino community and so I think there were particular people who were reached out to, who were…kind of bridge build with. And I think there were some gains and I think that there were huge gains in general (Elizabeth Mederos)

The entry of Latinos in the public consciousness was important, as was the way in which this entry was framed. It was the race/ethnicity and nationality of the collectivity the factor that had determined so far its fate[31]. Therefore, the claim for inclusion was also framed in terms of recognition of the specifics of a racial/ethnic and nationality-based group. That appears very clear when one of the main characters intervening in the aftermath of the riots affirmed that "we utilized that to bring to light the fact that there was here already a new paradigm, that it was not only the white and the black any longer, but it was the white, the black and the Latino" (Tadeo Ramirez). Also clear in this last quote is the fact that the increase of visibility of Latinos did not just happen but was the product, as mentioned in previous sections, of the attribution of the opportunity by the group. This visibility gained by the group as "Latinos" was also used in the negotiations with agents of government that followed

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[31] The race/ethnicity and nationality determined not only formal exclusion in the group (i.e., it was because the group was largely deprived of the privileges of legal membership in the system that their voice remained shut and their needs largely ignored), but also the everyday abuses some Latinos experienced from government agents, police, and ordinary people from other racial minorities.

the event. There was a Latino issue that needed to be resolved. And there was, according to the claims presented by leaders acting on behalf of the Latino community, a need for an inclusion of a Latino component in the table of negotiations in which public policy decisions were made.

Symbolically, then, the entry of Latinos as a factor in the racial schema in which city politics was organized had a clear impact. At least for a while, this idea of a multi-racial schema, as opposed to bi-racial, was present in the political debates in those instances in which political decisions were made. Interestingly, the argument posed by those figures negotiating in behalf or the Latino community with city authorities was nourished by the logic that had been utilized by the African American community in the past.

> The Latino community in the District of Columbia has constructed that political subject, in a way, trying to insert itself in a paradigm that was of black or white. So it had to go and say 'there is one more'. So there was a question, s kind of incivility, no? And the object of our action was not a typical political structure of the US, let's say, white… No, they were blacks who came from the struggles for civil rights in the sixties. And here there was a minority group requesting, demanding other minority group that with much work and effort had reached the political power of the city because they represented the majority of the population. But without a process of harmony, of reciprocal understanding between both communities… (Tadeo Ramirez)

This increased visibility achieved during and in the immediate months following the riots would fade out later on. In a sense, if we assume that the visibility was accompanied by a capacity to generate pressure in the political process; such capacity would soon depend not so much on conveying public messages through the media, but on the gained spaces that were captured/constructed in the aftermath of the riots.

Political representation of Latino community

In talking about the political status of the Latino community in the District of Columbia, in particular, after the riots, I found a recurring comment: 'We [Latinos in Washington] have been not able to elect a representative of us to the city government'. That phenomenon of lack of formal representatives who are "Latinos" themselves reveal a conception that maintains that Latino interests can only—or mainly—be represented by Latinos in office. In fact, this perception is consistent with a research finding that states that the presence of a Latino candidate mobilizes the Latino electorate, which is revealed in high voting rates and strong support for co-ethnic candidates (Barreto 2007).

The lack of this formal political representation symbolizes, according to several figures interviewed, an inability of the Latino community to place Latinos in elected positions in the government, which, according to this view, would warranty an effective ongoing impact in routine politics.

> We do not have people placed in different positions that could say look, do this… there are many people in the county that put me obstacles doing this or that…. You know what? Do it! Period. It sounds difficult, but if it is necessary you can say that…. What I mean with this is that in Washington and other places we do not have the influence to be able to say, do it! Right? Here in the county it is possible to say that because I was elected by vote, by the people. And that entails a strong message (Sergio Arteaga, an elected official from the Washington suburbs)

On the one hand, the representation of the community is viewed as still embodied in the heads of Latino organizations that have more or less direct access to authorities. As one interviewee put it "unfortunately in our community the political

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base is in hands of people who are running social service centers." (Blanca Galindez).

Since much attention has been placed to this phenomenon in previous sections, I will

not elaborate more on this process here.

On the other hand, the representation of Latino interests has been viewed as

crystallized in the representative/s of the Latino Ward, who need the vote of Latino

residents in order to be elected.

> After what happened in Mount Pleasant… [Latinos in the District] were not
> able to institutionalize a presence. So even now in the Council [meaning the
> Council of Latino Agencies] they do not have the political strength that we
> should have in the district, no? Because Jim Graham is a good person but he
> should not be the one who represent the majority of the Latino area, no? At
> least there should be at least one or two candidates that run against him.
> (Graciela Vallejos)

All in all, there is no clear impact of the Mount Pleasant riots in the electoral

field. Although there were some isolated cases of Latinos running for office in the

District after the riots, they were not the result of active collective efforts. The

political work carried out by the leadership after the riots, as we mentioned, was not

especially concentrated on the electoral arena. Given the low numbers of eligible

Latino voters, voter mobilization did not play a central role either.

4.5. Conclusions

Although the Mount Pleasant Riots impacted the Latino community greatly, no

significant transformation occurred in its structure of power. In other words, even

when new faces representing the new demographic makeup of the community

emerged, the old guard's concentrated power remained essentially intact. In

particular, the new leaders were chosen, guided and, sometimes, obstructed in their work by old guard leaders. In addition, although a new lasting organization was constituted to specifically monitor and speak on behalf of the community after the incidents—namely, the D.C. Latino Civil Rights Task Force—, its operation was far from autonomous from the influence of the established Latino agencies.

Because of the old guard's uninterrupted influence, the approach that prevailed was "service-oriented" even when some advocated for an alternative approach of political empowerment and organizing. As a result of the political path chosen, over the years the structure of Latino service providing agencies was strengthened. In the end, the community did not achieve visible changes in terms of political representation. The lack of significant impact in the electoral arena was reflected in the absence of Latinos elected in local government positions and insufficient efforts of electoral mobilization. With no formal representatives from the community in the government, the voice of the community continued to be channeled through either the members of the old guard, or, eventually, through "Anglo" representatives from "el barrio".

In terms of change and continuity in the prevailing mode of power within the Latino community, these outcomes were partly a result of the local conditions in which the event took place, and were partly a consequence of the way and sequence in which key actors played within it. In particular, the members of the old guard, who had already been central in the community before the riots, were able to shape the course of the event by framing the "Latino problem" in terms of need for services, and deactivating more alternative radical paths of action. Agencies' structural

location as brokers between the government and ordinary people in the Latino community allowed them to become central actors in the political process opened by the riots. The intervention of *agencieros* on the scene occurred soon after the riots started, and their decisions and actions were critical in the political outcome achieved.

When looking at the impact of the riots in terms of the community influence in the local political arena, though, the riots put Latinos and the "Latino problem" on the map. Local authorities were forced to find ways to reach out to the Spanish speaking community in the city, and they did so both through the newly created D.C. Latino Civil Rights Task Force and through direct interaction with leaders of service providing agencies. There was an implicit pact between government officials and service providing agencies whereby the District government would help strengthen the structure of services in the city in order to get the "Latino problem" under control without having to deal directly with it.

Perhaps one of the most significant outcomes of the riots involved raising overall awareness of the Latino community. The various actors were successful in inserting one more term into the prevailing bi-racial paradigm on which the political constitution of the city was framed. That is, rather than the traditional black-white distinction that is often made in public discourse, there were three parties – black, white, and Latino – implicated in this case. Latinos appeared as a minority that expressed the desire and need to be seen and heard, and through the Mount Pleasant Riots that goal was undeniably accomplished. This increased visibility was to a great extent due to the presence of Latino ordinary people in the streets of Mount Pleasant in a contentious performance.

Chapter 5: *"La Marcha"* at the Washington Monument of April 10th, 2006

The mass rally for immigrant rights that took place on April 10, 2006 at the Washington Monument in Washington, D.C., known among Latinos by the Spanish term "la marcha", constituted one of the most extraordinary political moments of the Latino community of the area –which was, in turn, part of a network of rallies throughout the country. Unlike what happened in Mount Pleasant in 1991, where ordinary people took to the streets as soon as they heard about the attack on a Latino worker from a police officer, La Marcha took considerable planning. The period between the approval of HR 4037 by the House of Representatives and the massive rallies in March and April of 2006, was characterized by intense organizing and a massive mobilizing effort by community-based organizations. In fact, the demonstration was a product of effective coordination and planning efforts by different local actors linked to the Latino community, including community based organizations, churches, unions, and different media outlets.

This chapter centers on the examination of the factors that made the production of the event possible, as well as the impact it had in terms of the process of emergence of a transformed political actor within the Latino community.

The analysis of this event will start by describing some critical facts that took place before and after the demonstration as depicted by the media. Then, I will look at some prominent contextual features—which I classified as demographic, organizational, and political. Following, I examine the ways in which different sectors

read the threat and attributed an opportunity to plan a collective action. Finally, I review some of the innovative features that Latinos acquired as a political actor.

5.1. Chronology of the event

In this section I describe the main stages that surrounded "La Marcha", as depicted in mainstream newspapers[32] in the district. This depiction of the event, its antecedents and aftermath, has two main purposes: (1) to reconstruct the "public side" of the political process surrounding the immigration rallies in the district; and (2) to identify those gaps that could not be filled using this source.

The main stages identified include the approval of the Sensenbrenner Bill by the U.S. House of Representatives, the immigration rallies of March and April 2006, the leadership split, and the movement decline.

Approval of the Sensenbrenner Bill by the U.S. House of Representatives

On December 16, 2005 the United States House of Representatives passed the Border Protection, Anti-terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act (H.R. 4437), a bill introduced by House Judiciary Committee Chairman James Sensenbrenner (R-WI). The bill appealed to the fears many Americans had of immigrants and potential immigrants, but for those immigrants, their friends and relatives, the bill itself was terrifying. If enacted, the lives of immigrants, both legal and undocumented, as well as all those who interact with them, employers, clergy, community service providers,

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[32] The deliberate decision of utilizing mainstream media outlets instead of "ethnic" newspapers responds to an attempt to look at how the event impacted the public agenda.

family, friends and mere neighbors could be put in jeopardy. Among the many limitations and restrictions towards immigrations, it called for the construction of a 700-mile fence along the US-Mexican border, a signal to the Latino world that they were unwelcome in the US. Even more offensive to the Latino community was the move to make any unlawful presence in the country a felony, effectively criminalizing millions of undocumented immigrants, many of whom were from Latin American countries. However, the most damaging stipulation was the decision to make humanitarian assistance to undocumented individuals a felony. By broadening the definition of "smuggling" to include assisting a person attempting to remain in the United States when the "offender" knows that the person is in the United States unlawfully, anyone aiding undocumented immigrants could be fined, have property confiscated or even be imprisoned. Moreover, HR 4437 would grant state and local law enforcement agencies the authority to investigate, identify, apprehend, arrest, detain and transfer to Federal custody any undocumented immigrants found in the United States.

The response to H.R. 4437: the Immigration rallies of March and April 2006

On March 8, 2006 the National Capital Immigration Coalition (NCIC) organized a demonstration to protest bill HR 4437 outside the U.S. Capitol. The NCIC rallied thousands of people from across the region. In this first large-scale Latino political experiment in political activism, the NCIC organizers' expectations were exceeded. While organizers predicted a turnout of 20,000, the crowd far surpassed that number. Although the protest was quantitatively significant, it received

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limited media attention. For the planners, however, it was assessed as an important success. The unexpected high turnout at the rally was read by organizers as an indication that with more planning, a bigger protest could be mounted.

After the first successful rally on March 8th, NCIC organizers planned a new rally in Washington, D.C. A month later, on April 10th, an even larger demonstration of immigrants, a majority of whom were Latinos, took place at the foot of the Washington Monument. This massive protest was the flagship in a widespread fleet of simultaneous demonstrations across the country. This mobilization was one of the largest—if not the largest—political protest in the history of the Latino population. The event received wide media coverage before, during, and after the occurrence.

Leadership split: Internal discussions in the Latino community on the next steps

Immediately after the highly successful rally of April 10th, the Latino was faced with new challenges. Finding themselves in a new level of national politics, the leadership debated how best to capitalize on this new 'state of mobilization' and the potential political power that came with it. While some proposed to hold a general boycott on May 1st, others opted for a more moderate approach, aiming at increasing voter roles, petitioning, and opening dialogues with elected officials instead. This debate over the next step resulted in a major split in the Latino leadership that spread throughout the country. In the Washington, D.C. area, in particular, most Latino organizations favored the moderate line.

The faction proposing a boycott continued on their chosen path, and on May 1st a series of rallies and boycotts of schools and businesses took place across the nation to highlight how vital immigrants are to the country's economy.

The Latino leadership in the D.C. area, however, supported the more cautious route. The rally to boycott was minimal, and so was the effect of the boycott in the D.C. area. Despite the lack of higher level support for the boycott, many neighborhoods did organize small demonstrations. In several points of the metropolitan region, including Meridian Park in the Mount Pleasant neighborhood, Herndon, Alexandria and Baileys Crossroads, Latinos gathered to protest.

Post-protests backlash

Local newspapers report the existence of backlash in several localities in the region. Cases of backlash went from arrests of undocumented immigrants, to the impact in local elections (e.g., in Herndon, Virginia, where candidates who supported the establishment of an immigrant worker center were ousted), to the multiplication of local voices that oppose undocumented immigrants.

The decline: Low turnout in new round of immigration rallies

After four months of relative quiet, immigration reform advocates mobilized a new round of protests in Washington and beyond to put further pressure on a returning Congress and to reinvigorate the nascent Latino political movement that had been awakened in massive demonstrations earlier that spring. Local organizers'

declared goal was to gather 1 million protesters from up and down the East coast in the nation's capital to demand legalization for the unauthorized and end to arrest of undocumented immigrants.

After such a promising beginning, the Latino political movement took a serious hit on September 7th. The massive pro-immigration rally that promised to bring the anger of 1 million Latino community members to the foot of the national government managed to draw fewer than 5,000 people. Long before the event, organizers from other localities had already begun expressing concerns about the turnout. They recognized that they were losing the momentum built up by the huge marches in the spring. Moreover, leaders from outside the District were concerned that the movement's national organizers in Washington had lost touch with the people they claimed to speak for.

5.2. Context

5.2.1. Demographic and geographical changes

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Latinos are the second-largest minority group in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area, after African Americans[33]. In the year 2000, 432,003 Latinos (8.8 percent of the total population) were living in the region[34]; and by 2006 numbers had grown to 608,884.[35] This figure represents a 170

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[33] From the Census 2000 Summary File 1, 100-Percent Data.
[34] From the Census 2000 Summary File 4, 100-Sample Data.
[35] U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey

percent increase over the 1990 population (224,786). Much of this growth is attributed to the rise in immigration.

Among the Latinos living in the region in 2006, 59.2 percent were foreign born and 44.3 percent were non US citizens.[36] The proportion of noncitizens grows even higher when limited to only those who could potentially be politically active. Specifically, 58.2 percent of Latinos 18 years and over are noncitizens and, thus, are technically excluded from the formal political life in the US.

These numbers, however, most likely underestimate the real population residing in the area because of the limitations in counting the undocumented. According to several community leaders interviewed, the actual number of Latinos residing in the area was approximately 1 million.

The changes in the region's Latino population since 1991 were not only quantitative but also qualitative. In particular, the characteristics of the new immigrants and their rationale for coming to the country were different than those who arrived earlier:

> In the nineties there was an increasing influx of Central American population. This influx started in the eighties, but then there was a lot of political immigration to the area. In the nineties you have not only political immigration, and you cannot separate them, but also an economic immigration…. people who are poor. (Cesar Barragan)

Latinos in general, and Latin American immigrants in particular, are widely dispersed throughout the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. For the most part, Latin American immigrants did not cluster in ethnically homogeneous residential enclaves (Singer et al. 2001 although there were important concentrations in

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[36] U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey.

Columbia Pike in Virginia, Langley Park/Hyattsville and Silver Spring/Wheaton in Maryland, and Mount Pleasant/Adams Morgan in the District of Columbia.). Adding to the Latino population dispersion, during the last decade, the Latino population also experienced a high degree of suburbanization. In 2000, only 10.4 percent of all Latinos in the metropolitan area resided in the District—down from 14.6 percent in 1990[37]. This proportion was even lower in 2006, with only 7.8 percent of all Latinos in the region residing in Washington, D.C. In addition, whereas in the entire metropolitan area Latinos represent 11.5 percent of the total population, in Washington, D.C., this proportion falls to 8.2 to percent.[38]

This significant growth of the Latino population in the Maryland and Virginia suburbs of D.C. is in part the result of the tremendous increase that housing prices experienced in the District during the last few years. As a resident in Mount Pleasant graphically asserts, "The houses in Mount Pleasant that were bought in the nineties… 93, 96, 97… for 150 thousand dollars are now selling for 750 thousand dollars! What happened? This meant the expulsion of our community" Traditionally Latino neighborhoods were in decline as old residents found that their earlier investments had skyrocketed and new immigrants were priced out of the market.

The change in geographical distribution of Latinos in the region, as revealed in their increasing presence in the suburbs, also had implications for the community organizational landscape and the community presence in formal political institutions—in this latter sense, through the presence of Latino elected officials. The

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[37] From the Census 2000 Summary File 1, 100-Percent Data, and Census 1990 Summary Tape File 1, 100-Percent Data.
[38] U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey.

challenges the community organizations now faced were evolving. How would they respond to the new reality of a region-based community?

5.2.2. Organizational landscape

Portrait of the Latino organizational structure in 2005

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the organizational capital of the Latino community experienced a remarkable growth, both in size and number of organizations between 1990 and 2005. The question then became what were these new organizations doing exactly and how were they functioning? In research I conducted on Latino nonprofits in the area (see Cantor 2008), I found that the organizations primarily serving the Latino community covered a wide spectrum of services, ranging from those affecting the immigrant community in general, such as legal assistance for immigration issues and English language programs, to more general social services that would benefit immigrant and nonimmigrant populations equally. The primary service providers were community organizations and religious congregations. Collectively, these nonprofits made the Latino sector a crucial asset for the community at large.

The most common types of Latino-serving nonprofits were focused on education, including English as a second language, literacy, and computer training services; children and youth services, such as child care, gang violence prevention,

tutoring and mentoring, and sports programs; religion-related activities, which includes a wide array of social services; and ethnic and immigrant centers, which were often multiservice centers structured to meet social, educational, economic, recreational, and other needs specific to the Latino population. Combined, these four types of providers accounted for 57 percent of Latino-serving nonprofits in the study.[39]

Most of the Latino nonprofits operating in the area presented hybrid organizational forms,[40] assisting the population on a broad spectrum of issues. In particular, many organizations combined provision of services with advocacy practices for the community they served.[41] As noted earlier, heads of these nonprofits were commonly charged with giving a voice to, or elevating the demands of, the Latino community, operating as the channels through which Latinos' private problems become public issues.

The universe of nonprofits primarily serving Latinos registered with the IRS accounted for total annual revenues of over $87 million, total annual expenses of over $81 million, and assets of nearly $57 million. The majority of these organizations, were small, as defined by having total revenues under $500,000.[42] At the other end of the spectrum, large organizations, those operating with budgets of $2 million or more, comprised only 13% of the total.

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[39] This data is based on Using data from the National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS) based on information filed by organizations with the U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS).
[40] A detailed analysis of hybrid forms of ethnic organizations can be found in Minkoff (2002).
[41] By formal, we mean explicitly specified in their missions or program descriptions.
[42] Given that organizations with annual gross receipts below $25,000 are not required to file Form 990 with the IRS and are thus excluded from the analysis, this number of small nonprofits in the area would likely be even higher.

By and large, Latino-serving nonprofits in the region had few assets to draw upon in times of financial need. Forty percent of these groups had assets below $100,000, and an additional 10 percent reported assets between $100,000 and $200,000. Only 7 of the 75 nonprofits in the study had assets of more than $3 million.[43]

In the universe of Latino nonprofits operating at that time in the area, we can observe a correlation between size of the organization and age. Not surprisingly, the overwhelming majority of the organizations created or incorporated during the 1970s and 1980s had grown to a medium or large size, while those founded in the 1990s and 2000s were generally small. We can safely presume that either young organizations encounter more constraints affecting their survival than those that consolidated in an earlier era or that financial capacity strengthening merely takes time.

The sector's total revenue was divided rather evenly among government contributions, private donations, and other sources.[44] However, only 55 percent of the nonprofits in the sample received any money from the government—a rather small proportion when compared to the number of organizations receiving funding from private donations (93 percent) or other sources (also 93 percent). Moreover, the distribution of government contributions tended to be more concentrated in large organizations. While 39 percent of the revenues of large organizations came from government sources, government funds in small organizations only accounted for 13 percent of the total revenues. As a result, small organizations needed to rely heavily

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[43] From the Urban Institute National Center for Charitable Statistics Core File (Public Charities, circa 2005).

[44] Private contributions include contributions, gifts, grants, and bequests that the organization received directly or indirectly from the public. Other revenues comprise membership dues, interest, dividends, rental income, other investment, sales of goods, and revenue from special events and activities.

on direct and indirect private support, including contributions, gifts, grants, and bequests from the public.

In terms of area of activity, the largest portion of government funds was allocated to health-related agencies (40 percent), followed by education (29 percent), family services (14 percent), and ethnic and immigrant centers (8 percent, as shown in table 6). Lesser areas funded by the government include children and youth services, housing and shelter, and legal-related services.

To sum up, although the universe and financial weight of Latino organizations in 2005 have grown substantially compared to their profile in 1990, most of the organizations continued to be small. One of the most outstanding aspects of the sector was its diversity, considering both the range of activities covered and the resources it relied on. The range of services spans from traditional areas (such as education and health) to more political activities (such as advocacy). With respect to funding, the sources were diverse, which can be viewed as strength. The distribution of the different types of funds in different organizations, however, was uneven. Government funds, for example, were especially concentrated in larger organizations. This element alone is an indicator of the types of connections that heads of larger organizations were able to create with state bureaucracies over time.

Religious congregations serving the Latino community

According to a survey conducted in 2007[45], churches serving the Latino community are widely dispersed across the Washington, D.C., metropolitan region, with their presence in the suburbs, in particular, holding special significance. Of the 116 churches identified as specifically serving the Spanish-speaking population, only 20 percent were located in the District, while the remaining 80 percent operate in the suburbs of Maryland and Virginia.

Three quarters of those religious congregations, the study found, performed a variety of activities beyond their spiritual missions. Common services included supplying food and clothing, providing financial and legal assistance, and offering English as a second language lessons and other specialized education programs.

The study also showed that the services delivered by congregations often addressed emergency situations. For example, financial help and food assistance were often provided to those who suffered temporary unemployment or extraordinary circumstances. In addition, most congregations surveyed relied almost exclusively on private donations and service provision tended to be dictated by the availability of financial resources.

Although many churches offered direct provision to the Latino community, an important part of their work was accomplished through informal collaboration with local nonprofits. The vast majority of the congregations reported working with other churches or community organizations in various capacities.

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[45] See Cantor 2008.

A number of congregations were cautious about being linked too closely with political issues, yet many of them either had directly or indirectly assisted the political empowerment of the Latino community, through their engagement in various activities. Of the congregations surveyed, 54 percent worked with other organizations or volunteers to assist church members in obtaining documentation, including driver's licenses, citizenship applications, or Temporary Protected Status forms.

In addition to direct service provision, congregations engaged in a variety of advocacy activities. For example, roughly a third of churches reported encouraging members to attend rallies and sign petitions. Other forms of public participation included elaborating on policy issues during sermons and engaging in campaigns or lobbying for issues that would benefit the community they served.

Latino organizations' response to geographical distribution of population

The geographic diffusion of the Latino population in the metropolitan area contrasts sharply with the concentration of Latino organizations in the District (see Figure 3). In 2005, over 60 percent of active organizations in the metropolitan area ran their operations in the District of Columbia. The remaining organizations were split between Virginia (21 percent) and Maryland (17 percent). This trend was accentuated by the fact that 90 percent of large organizations (those with total annual revenues of at least $2 million) and 74 percent of medium organizations (those with total annual revenues between $500,000 and $1,999,999) were located in the District. By contrast, most (55 percent) smaller organizations were situated in the suburbs of

Maryland or Virginia[46]. This pattern, however, has shifted over time. In fact, the proportion of new organizations created in D.C. over the total created in the metropolitan area has decreased each successive decade since the 1970s. By contrast, the establishment of new organizations has increased in the Maryland and Virginia suburbs.

Figure 3

Distribution of the Latino Population and Latino Nonprofits in the Washington, D.C., Metropolitan Area
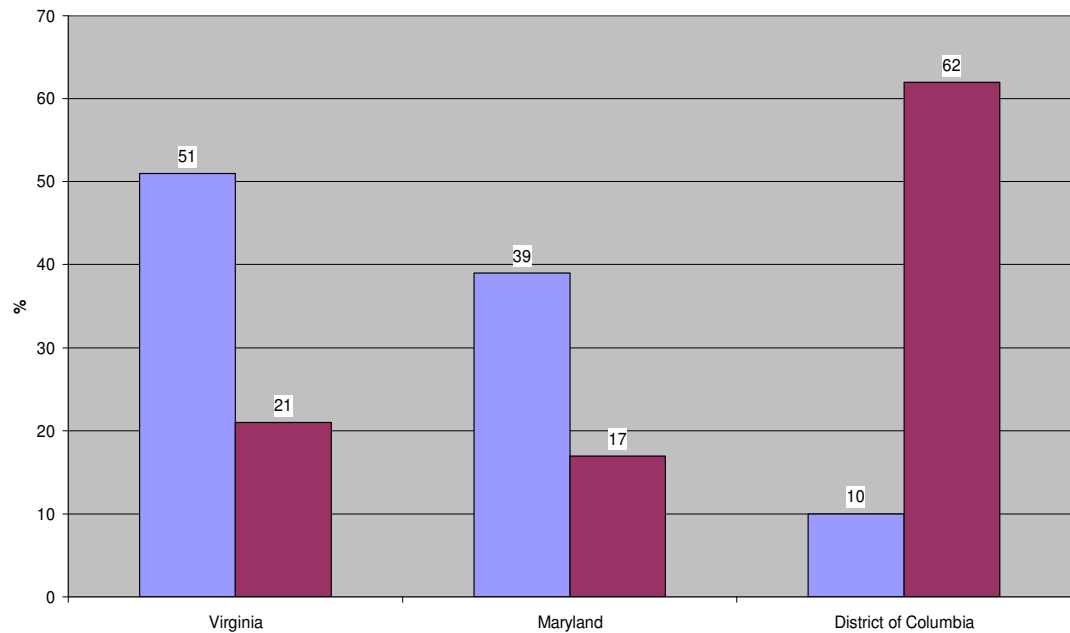
Sources: The Urban Institute National Center for Charitable Statistics Core File (Public Charities, circa 2005) and Census 2000 Summary File 1, 100-Percent Data.

Although spatial proximity is often perceived as an indicator of access to services (see Truelove 2000 and Hutcheson and Dominguez 1986), users of District services quite frequently resided in the suburbs. In recent years, some large

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[46] The Urban Institute National Center for Charitable Statistics Core File (Public Charities, circa 2005).

organizations serving the Latino community in the District of Columbia has adapted to this new geo-demographic reality by either opening new facilities in the suburbs or providing expertise to other organizations situated outside the District. Three of the largest agencies in the District of Columbia, for example, were in the process of opening their branches in a Maryland suburb. This change was even recommended by the Council of Latino Agencies in 2004, stating that 'we need to go where the population goes, and not [expect] that the population [will] come [to] where we are'.

The interpretations of these organizational adaptations to the flows of population differ according to who the interlocutor is. For some, the expansion of services to the suburbs was a positive phenomenon that would cover growing need, although it could cause conflict with certain existing organizations:

> BG: This has been a very interesting phenomenon. Because I think it will create friction with the organizations that are developing there. Because you have sources of funding and the same governments which have seen that there are models that have developed here [in the district] that they need in the same way. In Montgomery County there is a huge growth in the population. A huge need, there are gangs, lack of education, a number of things and they don't even know how to start to address [the problems]. So, in part, *they are pulling us* there. They are opening the door for us.
>
> GC: You mean the government?
>
> BG: The government definitely, and other organizations. To me the most interesting has been that there is an organization in Montgomery County that has always told us 'we need you to do something here, we have no capacity, etcetera'. And now that we have started going in that direction they are freaking out. They are 'what are they thinking… the big ones from DC who come, they are going to take what is ours'… be careful what you wish for, you might get it.

For others, this advancement of established organizations from D.C. into the suburbs was considered to be a sign of the 'colonization' of a growing population by these agencies conceived as "empires". In a sense, the idea implicit in these

arguments is that because the large District organizations were losing their constituents (through the shrinking of the proportion of the Latino population in the District), these organizations needed to expand their base in order to continue receiving funds. In addition, moving to the suburbs provided them access to new sources of funders.

> Now [the agencies] are expanding… into Maryland and Virginia. Because there is more money. We have to follow the base of clients to justify our existence. So if poverty disappears, if gangs disappear, if women stop having plenty of babies… many of these organizations would disappear (Vicente Olleros)

> They definitely fill the gap that exists. Because there are not many organizations here. But it is also in their interest, being able to enter Maryland and enter Montgomery County…they will be able to have access to money from Montgomery County and money from the state, no? (Graciela Vallejos)

In the narratives of many organization leaders I interviewed for this research, there is a very noticeable territorial approach. Each organization had its own jurisdiction and moving into someone else's territory was considered a threat.

> *CASA de Maryland has its place in Maryland*, obviously. The work they do is wonderful, right? It has never been in DC. What happens now is that we are going to Maryland… (Avelina Quinteros, a leader of an organization in DC)

Emergence of regional organizations

As Latinos began settling in the suburbs, new organizational configurations appeared in order to address this new demographic pattern. Examples of these new configurations include the Regional Coalition of Latino Organizations (RECOLAO), the National Capital Immigration Coalition (NCIC), and the Latino Federation of

Greater Washington (which replaced the Council of Latino Agencies of Washington, D.C). What all three of them had in common was that each was umbrella group, i.e. a cluster of different, smaller organizations all operating in different jurisdictions of the metropolitan area. They were all founded in the early 2000s as a way to deal with issues across jurisdictions and create stronger political actors. In particular, the creation of each of these groups was intended, in their own way, to deal with what was seen as an increasingly anti-immigrant environment in the area.

Of these three, the one that would be critical in the 2006 marches was the NCIC. Founded in 2001, this group was explicitly engaged in immigration issues and included the main Latino organizations operating in the region. In addition, it was integrated into and, to some extent, informally led by the capital area district of SEIU local 32BJ, the largest building service workers union in the country.

> The NCIC was formed in 2001, and I was there when it was formed… We had a strategic planning session in 2001 and it started there, no? So the structure, the organization was already formed. We did several things… several political campaigns… we did lobbying… we used the model of freedom rights to launch a campaign for immigrants. The immigrant movement used that model in the year 2004 as part of that campaign. With the Reward Work campaign we collected a million postcards to send to the president. That is, we participated together with the immigrant movement to do things at the national and local levels… since 2001. But last year when everything became national, the movement got to a spike, because every movement goes up and down, up and down… but last year there was a spike, and because we already had the structure, the organization, we were already prepared to participate, you know? So it was easy, well, not easy, but because the structure was there we could do it. All the work in this area was done through NCIC, because the structure was already formed… (Gerardo Cejas, a young Latino leader)

The existence of these bridges of collaboration across jurisdictions reflected an effort to respond to the patterns of geographical settlement of Latinos in the area.

These umbrella organizations differed greatly in regard to their structure. The Latino Federation, for example, was a more formal organization, mounted on a group with a relatively long institutional history, with full time staff, and an Executive director. On the other extreme, NCIC acted more like a network encompassing not only Latino organizations but other groups as well. In particular, its flexible and open framework, which allowed it to quickly redefine and adapt its agenda, would be important for the organization of the rallies.

Development of new types of community organizations: The Case of CASA de Maryland

Over the last few years before the rallies of 2006, a new type of organizations emerged in the suburbs. Based on a discourse of community empowerment, their strategies were explicitly directed to organizing the low income Latino community around issues of public concern.

The most notable of this new type of organization is CASA de Maryland, a community-based group oriented primarily around the promotion of community-based development of low-income Latinos in the State of Maryland. Consistent with this approach, its mission centers on the organization of three groups of immigrants, namely, women, tenants, and day laborers. Like other worker centers across the country, Casa de Maryland filled a void in representation that had occurred due to the institutional narrowness of the contemporary labor movement that did not contain

very low-wage, poorly organized workers such as day laborers and domestic workers (Fine 2006).

The organization's presence in the area is critical for the Latino community because it is recognized as the most important immigrant rights advocacy organization in the region. Whereas the majority of immigrant organizations operating in the area are primarily devoted to providing social services, the work of Casa de Maryland focuses on strengthening and empowering the community. As with other worker centers that successfully organize immigrant workers using a multi-level strategy (see Gordon 2000), Casa's greater focus on empowerment rather than representation was crucial in the constitution of the group of Latino immigrants as a political actor making claims to the government. As mentioned by one of the leaders of the organization, one of CASA's main missions was "to empower our community, so it can have its own voice; we do not want to speak for our community but have it speak for itself".

At the same time, the internal structure of Casa de Maryland and the manner in which this structure shapes its everyday work, presented promising channels through which the problematic of particular segments in the community transformed itself from a sum of private problems to a public issue. Specifically, Casa de Maryland has on staff lawyers, educators, community organizers, and service providers. With such a diverse pool of human resources, problems for one segment of the organization often find solutions in another segment. A service provider might look to one of CASA's lawyers or community organizers or educators to address a recurring problem.

> I used to always come here looking for a job. And once I was in the office and then L. comes and she tells me come in. I came in and she sat down with me. I started telling her my story, the story that I have suffered of domestic abuse. And then I noticed how she felt… we cried together. She got very interested in my case. And a few days later she formed the group. But I didn't know that there were other people that she had already heard of… That was the story of how we started organising ourselves… (Silvia, an immigrant worker)

Not only did Casa de Maryland encourage its members to take action but also it provided them with the resources to do it, including workshops, trainings, leadership development, and legal assistance.

> Maybe a difference that we can pinpoint (with respect to other Latino-serving organizations in the area) is that we put a lot of emphasis on the community side, on leadership, on the political part, where we emphasize the participation of our community regardless of their immigration status. So we can be subjects of their own destiny. (Gonzalo Diaz, a leader of CASA de Maryland).

So whereas most organizations operating in the region have a clear focus on providing services, the main focus of CASA de Maryland has been the political organization of the community. This focus responded to a strategic shift that took place in 1998, when the organization refocused its mission from providing services to supporting political activism and advocacy.

> The political fact that made us decide to focus on leadership, community action, and political actions, at the same time that we worked on services was a demand from the community. They were demanding us that we had to respond more aggressively to the anti-immigrant attacks, more aggressively to the political attacks that were occurring in the 90s and that continue to occur during the 2000's (Gonzalo Diaz, a leader of CASA).

When I asked leaders in CASA about the reasons and conditions for the 'political' profile adopted, most of them referred to the decision made in 1998 as part of the strategic planning based on a diagnosis of a community that needed to be

empowered and not only served. One of the leaders in DC, however, gave an argument that was indeed interesting when providing clues to better understand the emergence of a politically oriented Latino agency like CASA de Maryland:

> They were capable of achieving that because [in Maryland] there were no established agencies as they were here [in the District]… Here there were several of us who wanted to create that type of formation. On the one hand, provide basic services but on the other, the introduction of civic service… with a projection of political education, etcetera… but the field was already taken. I would say that in a sense the fact that they were more pioneers there was an important factor…. (Roberto Couto)

In a sense, what this quote is pointing out is that whereas the dense organizational landscape in the Latino community in Washington, D.C. blocked the emergence of explicitly politically oriented organizations, the lack of a consolidated network of service providing agencies in Maryland opened the territory for the emergence of a community-based organization oriented to advocacy and political empowerment. In Maryland, following this argument, there were no established leaders to act as interlocutors in the community to agents in power (government, the media, foundations, other organizations, etc.), which made it easier to create an innovative structure detached from traditional practices and constraints.

Because most of the work of Latino serving organizations has traditionally been funded by government contracts and foundations grants, the question then comes how it would be possible for an organization to gather resources from these traditional sources in order to deploy political activities. In other words, providing services to underserved minorities might represent a safe bet for those who decide on

funds assignments. Funding "politics", on the contrary, is often looked at with skepticism. Thus, according to a member of CASA:

> [It was necessary to] educate a great number of foundations and people who were frightened to give money to fund political actions, who were frightened to give money to do advocacy, to do lobbying, to fight to organize the community. In the past, ten years ago, talk about community organizing here was a sin. Now we could change that dynamic in a way that, even in the contracts we have with the government there is a strong component of community organizing and we describe it clearly and we have educated bureaucrats on the importance of doing community organizing to make a positive change in our community. (Gonzalo Diaz, a leader of CASA)

In fact, one of the reasons why Casa de Maryland developed the strong presence it had was the robust two-way relationship it had with public officials in the local and state government. That relationship was mutually beneficial: the partnership gave the organization access to funds and resources from the public sector, and it allows local and state bureaucrats to deal more effectively with the problems linked to recent demographic changes (Frasure and Jones Correa 2005). One state official interviewed put it in these terms: "I participate in the session where they are debating. I want to listen to them. The relationship [with CASA] is symbiotic" (Graciela Vallejos, public official).

Given the respectability and reach that Casa de Maryland achieved in the growing Latino population in the area, many politicians who aspired to be elected to public office sought community support through CASA de Maryland.

> Many Latinos and even many American people when they want to be elected go to Casa de Maryland. Of course that Casa de Maryland is a nonprofit organization, but people there can give support personally, not in the name of the organization. And many go and seek the support of the leaders. Because they know that Casa de Maryland is respected (Monica Diaz, elected official).

In addition, as we will see in the next section, (on political landscape) not only did key individuals in Casa play a critical role in the support of Latino and non Latino candidates for public office, but also some of the Latino and non Latino elected officials were necessary for the development and growth of CASA de Maryland and its political profile.

In sum, the emergence and consolidation of a strong politically oriented organization as Casa de Maryland, whose role would be critical in the immigration rallies of March and April 2006, was possible due to a combination of factors, including the existence of a "fertile area" with a growing underrepresented population and a low organizational density; a strategically mutually convenient alliance with local governments in the area; and functional partnerships with political candidates/officials.

In the Virginia section of the Washington metropolitan area, there were efforts in a similar direction, although none of them achieved the magnitude of CASA de Maryland. One of the organizations working directly on organizing low income minorities, including a large proportion of Latino immigrants, was Tenants and Workers United. Throughout its history, starting back in the mid eighties, the organization had conducted successful organizing campaigns in areas such as housing, day labor, living wages for contract workers, and immigration. As Casa de Maryland, Tenants and Workers also received funds from foundations and the government for the explicit purpose of doing political organizing in the community.

> We organize the old way. Knocking on doors, making phone calls, we do some newsletters, we use the media somewhat… we should use it much more but we use it somewhat… we work with our allies churches and unions. So

those are all things that we do. But it's… our focus, our approach to organizing is to build cadre and leaderships… people that understand the sort of opportunity, understand the campaign, understand what we are working on and are leaders and can move other people. That's our approach to work. I mean, unfortunately it's hard to grow massively… a thousand people show up it's only so much leadership you can do if you have that scale. But up to know, for the last 20 years we've really been working on sort of that narrow… you know, find particular issues that are affecting people, organize the people most effective at the core of your work, develop allies around that, make your demands on the state, collect your victory. That's been sort of our approach, right? (Gregory Lopez, leader of Tenants and Workers).

5.2.3. Political Landscape

Latinos in government

From a political point of view, the election of several Latino officials for different positions at different levels (including local, county, and state level) represented a significant change for the community. That process was much more accentuated in the Maryland section of the Washington suburbs. Following the election of Ana Sol Gutierrez to the Montgomery County Board of Education in 1990—which as the first Salvadoran in the history of the US to win an elected position, represented a symbolic milestone—there was a palpable increase in the presence of Latinos in elected offices. In 2006, three Latinos from the metropolitan area (Victor Ramirez, Ana Sol Gutierrez, and Jocelyn Peña-Melnyk) held elective seats in the Maryland House of Delegates; and two other Latinos (William Campos, Tom Perez) were elected members of the Prince George's County Council and the Montgomery County Council respectively. In addition, the town of Edmonston had a

Latino mayor and a few Latinos held elected seats in the City councils of Gaithersburg, Bladensburg, and Mount Ranier. Given the minority status of Latinos in each of the jurisdictions, the election of these officials relied heavily on the support of voters from other ethnicities—whites and, against the odds, also blacks.[47] In the Virginia portion of the metropolitan area, only one Latino occupied an elected office higher the level of school board (Arlington County Board Walter Tejada). The situation in Washington, D.C., on the other hand, diametrically contrasts the one observed in the suburb—especially, in the Maryland portion: No Latino had ever been elected to an office above the school board in the District.

Some of these elected officials in suburban areas had held positions of a leadership in the community, and others had been active members of community organizations. A couple of elected officials in Maryland, for example, had in the past been members of the board of directors of Casa de Maryland. This indicates the existence of a synergy between Casa de Maryland and leaders in some public offices, which would, in turn, be reflected in the impulse of different projects.

> These are people who have been in the organization, they have toughened up here, they have fought with us and now they are assuming serious responsibilities in key positions in the state and in the county. For us this is something definitely historical and in some ways we played a role. (Gonzalo Diaz, a leader from Casa)

Although having Latinos represented in public offices by their peers appeared to be a strong desire within some sectors in the community, many also recognized that it is equally as important to have allies from other ethnicities that would favor

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[47] On the support of blacks to Latino candidates see Lazo, Luz. 2006. "MD Latinos Gain Politically Aided by Black Votes, Allies." The Washington Post, August 18, 2006, final edition.

pro-Latino policies. This is especially important when considering that Latinos themselves did not have the numbers to influence electing "their own" candidates by themselves. They did, however, have sufficient numbers to define an election, and that is the reason several non-Latino candidates courted the Latino vote. In sum, they needed the votes from other communities to get their candidates elected as well as support from public officials from other ethnicities in the formal political arena. One idea that some interviewees raised, in this respect, was the need to create alliances with progressive sectors of other communities in order to coordinate common agendas.

From the perspective of Latino elected officials, the importance of having political representation in public offices is for the community an essential way to gain visibility and to effectively impact the decision making process and from a practical view, an opportunity for Latinos to have of someone 'like them' to go to. The following excerpts of interviews I had with some of them are good examples of that view.

> We don't have people placed in different positions who can say look, do that…. There are many people in this county, staff that constantly tell me…. They put obstacles that this, that that… you know what? Do it! Period. It sounds difficult. But if necessary you can say that […] In Washington like in other places we don't have the influence of being able to be at the level of saying do it! Right? Here in the county, it is possible to say that…. Because I am elected by the vote, by the people. And that commands a strong message (Sergio Arteaga, a Latino elected official from the suburbs of Washington, D.C.)

> If you are not there [in elected offices] you remain invisible. But the most important phenomenon, I think, is that they have seen me and they have the face of someone that is like them, that speaks their language and that is something that psychologically has made a great difference in how they feel less marginalized (Graciela Vallejos, an elected official)

On the other extreme of the spectrum, there were also critical voices that pointed out what they saw as a fallacy of thinking; that having Latinos in elected offices is per se a positive thing for the Latino community. As one interviewee put it "you have to prove yourself."

> I think that this is the Americanization of the community. Have one of us representing at the political level, that does not mean that we will get what we want […] I believe that establishing the political force is not that. Look at the African American communities, when they wanted to have influence in the history of this country. When they wanted people to see that they were there and would not leave. What did they do? They affected the economy with boycotts, they affected the judicial system with legal cases. That's how they achieved a presence, and I think that is what Latinos need to do (Hilda Brunetti).

Organizing efforts aimed at improving legislations that affect Latinos

Throughout the last decade, the Washington, D.C. area witnessed several efforts that led to progressive legislation benefiting Latinos residing in the area. This was especially true in Maryland portion of the suburbs, where several initiatives spearheaded by advocacy organizations and backed by a notable participation of ordinary people led to favorable policies for the community. Examples of these initiatives include the continued non-requirement for drivers license applicants to prove legal U.S. status, the immigrant in-tuition bill initiative, and the defeat of English only legislation in the state of Maryland. In Montgomery County, a good illustration of these efforts is the domestic workers' bill of rights initiative. In

Washington, D.C., on, the other hand, the passage of the Language Access Act[48] was considered one of the most significant recent political victories for the community.

In Maryland, an integral part of the promotion of these beneficial legislations (or the ability to stop harmful legislations) was the mobilization of the community to the state legislature or county councils to lobby for different legislation reform projects. Another big part was played by advocacy organizations (especially, Casa de Maryland) that have acted 'in tandem' with some government offices. Some talk about partnerships between government and advocacy organizations that have worked together to introduce new policies. Some counties in particular, such as Montgomery County, have been perceived as especially receptive with respect to immigrants. This is usually explained by the fact that they were more eager to support progressive legislation and innovative initiatives that would have been rejected in other locales.

One example that illustrates the type of organizing and mobilization occurring before the immigration rallies of 2006 (and which would, in turn, have direct consequences in the organization of the rallies) is the case of driver licenses legislation in Maryland. The state of Maryland is singular in the fact that it is one of the few states in the country in which residents can obtain a drivers' license regardless of their migratory status. The fact that this is still in force has been, in part, the result of a political effort led by Casa de Maryland. This effort involved the mobilization of the community around an issue broadly considered to be critically importance. When asked about the reasons for the success of pro-immigrant

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[48] The Language Access Act (LAA) is a law signed in 2004 whose purpose is to provide equal access and participation to public services, programs and activities for residents of the District of Columbia who are Non-English proficient.

initiatives in Maryland immigrant advocates emphasized the ability of reading the needs of the community which, in turn, assured a broad mobilization around the issue.

> Around 7, 8 years ago… we had annual meetings with the community and one day I had a meeting with the community and I brought my own agenda, right? That it was important for us to fight for education, health, and housing and that those were key agendas in our community. I remember I gave a 20 minute speech, and everybody clapped after. I was taking with some 200 people, leaders that we had invited to the meeting when all the sudden one of the leaders come and tells me… Gonzalo, your discourse was beautiful, we loved it, but you know that that is not what we want. And I was like… what? What we really think is that our priority has to be the driver license. It is not health, education, or housing at this point in time. It is the driver license. So we are calling you to see if you can redirect… they told me in a very respectful way…. Redirect the resources to fight for the driver's license. I was scared but I learned the lesson again. It is to interpret what people are saying. So we redirected our resources and focused on the drivers' license. The result was the participation of thousands and thousands in our community in actions, that if we called for actions in education, or housing they would not have mobilized. Because for them it was a key issue… that allows you to get education, health, right? So the mobilizations were incredible (Gonzalo Diaz, a political advocate from Casa de Maryland)

While the connection between advocacy organizations and their bases was critical in this initiative, so was the connection with public officials that acted as allies in the initiative. In fact, the drivers' licenses initiative was a product of collaboration between Casa de Maryland and some public officials. As one elected official asserted, "with respect to drivers' licenses, that was something that we were able to maintain open with great effort…. And we have worked a lot in collaboration with Casa".

These collaborative experiences between nonprofits and governments have been described by Frasure and Jones Correa (2005) as two-sided relationships. Specifically, whereas nonprofits receive funding and support from local governments, "what governmental actors gain is legitimacy and lower transaction costs as government attempts to grapple with new issues and problems, like those brought

about by the changing demographics of suburbia." (Frasure and Jones Correa 2005: 23).

The mobilization around the drivers' license initiative would in time set the ground for the massive immigration rallies of 2006. In fact, it created a community network readily available for other mobilizations.

> I worked in Casa for three years and we were *building a capacity to fight* in Maryland… and we chose and issue which was driver license as a leading force to mobilize and organize communities all over Maryland… which went really good, we really had a lot of people moving around the driver's license issue… which helped me to also be involved with Virginia and with Washington, DC learning about drivers license, because the way they work is… the triangle here, right? (Eduardo Gonzalez, a community organizer)[49]

Another singular case of mobilization is Noche de Acción Latina (Latino Action Night), an annual event led by Casa de Maryland which draws hundreds of demonstrators to the steps of the Maryland State House. One elected official described this action as follows:

> We have Noche de Acción Latina, in Annapolis. They take 200 buses with people to lobby…It is a very honest Leadership. It is not that someone stands there and say these are the four things we are going to fight for and the good ones should follow, no? On the contrary, there is a process in which people are asked which is the issue they consider most important. And we are not going to have 20 issues…. Which are the 2 or 3 issues… For example, last year it was the Dream Act, which he have approved in previous years at the state level but then it was vetoed…. The driver's licenses… to keep them open… so they choose the agenda… (Graciela Vallejos, an elected official)

I then asked Ms. Vallejos about the process. An element that puzzled me was if and how undocumented people participated in a collective effort that would link them to the formal political system

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[49] Italics mine.

GC: So how is the process? Do they go and talk to different delegates?

GV: They have meetings. They choose the night, no? We have done it in different ways. The first time, which I believe was more effective… that lobbying is done by the Catholic Church, and tons of people, no? But the first time they were small groups that went to visit legislators in their offices. A letter was written for them which said we are going to be there (on the Latino Action Night) and we would like to meet with you, since you represent us, no? And they were workers, workers wearing their *chompas* (jackets), no? It is always cold. So there were thousands and thousands getting into the elevators…

GC: And they weren't afraid…

GV: They weren't afraid because that is what being with Casa has allowed them. Being able to participate in an organized and effective way.

GC: And also feel protected?

GV: And feel protected. Later they changed it because it was too difficult to organize. So in the last two years they booked big rooms and invited different delegates to go and listen to their constituents. Sophisticated, you understand? Because the person needs to know who represents her there, who their three representatives are, who their senators are. And that they have a right to come and demand me and other gringos because that is how it works. Your constituent is somebody that a politician sees as….

GC: But that happens even with undocumented people?

GV: But people don't talk about that. Everything is very mixed. And in general the one who speak say, 'I am a US citizen, I wrote it…' They try to emphasize the thing. The important thing is to mix different voices, and I think that is what gives strength to Casa.

Another example of progressive legislation proposal initiated in the community was the domestic workers bill of rights initiative. Beginning in 2005, an unlikely but profound series of events aimed at providing legal protection to domestic workers unfolded in Montgomery County. Against the odds, a group of domestic workers, together with local advocacy organisations, pushed forward the Domestic Worker's Bill of Rights (hereafter, the Bill of Rights), an initiative conceived to

entitle domestic workers for the first time with the right of a written contract, health insurance, sick leave, and paid vacations, among other provisions. Indeed, the sole preparation and presentation of the Bill of Rights in the County Council has demonstrated innovative characteristics over the course of its development. In particular, the initiative is significant as an illustration of an unprecedented type of legislation introduced by a group (domestic workers) that rarely constitute a political actor[50]. This is even more significant if we consider the fact that the majority of the women workers involved in the campaign, as well as the population that the bill would ultimately affect are immigrants and in great proportions undocumented. Additionally, the pioneer nature of this legislation could inform other efforts in other locales.

In the project's formulation, negotiation, and, ultimately, approval, it was essential the capacity that intervening organizations (especially, advocacy organizations such as Casa de Maryland) showed in appropriating sufficient numbers and, most importantly, a social-organisational base. Such capacity was reflected in a clear participatory role of the workers themselves, multilateral support of organisations with a strong presence in the area, and the adoption of successful models from other contexts. It was also critical the attribution of an opportunity of effective intervention at the local level, in a County appreciated as politically receptive.

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[50] Although a varied body of research tend to emphasize the manifold existing difficulties that hinder the organisation and mobilisation of domestic workers, several studies have shed light on efforts of organisation in different locales in industrialized countries (see, for example, Schwenken 2003; Stasiulis and Bakan 1997, Anderson 2001, Poo and Tang 2005, and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001).

The initiative has also opened up an opportunity for the politicization of the domestic workers in the area. Throughout the process of this initiative, some workers—many of whom are not formal members of the political community because of their immigration status—have constituted themselves as a political actor with an active role in the local political system. On the one hand, they have significantly affected instances of formulation of public policy. On the other hand, their actions have been seen and heard publicly and broadcasted by the media. An example of the increase in the public visibility of the domestic workers was their noticeable role in the massive rally for immigration reform that took place in Washington, DC on April 10, 2006, where members of the Committee of Women came up to the stage.

Whereas in Maryland these 'victories' are more evident, the situation in the other districts is quite different. In the District, for example, one of the scarce political conquests attained by the Latino community in the last decade was the equal access bill.

> I believe that one of the few victories that have been is that they got to persuade the administration, the government, of something called equal access. They passed a law whereby all the instances have to give equal access to all groups regardless of their language. So, as a result of that victory, you now go to any government agency and you will find information in at least four languages… And they have a system where they send you an interpreter to give you the services (Tadeo Ramirez)

In the case of northern Virginia, a series of mobilizing initiatives including mainly but not exclusively Latinos around housing and labor issues have been deployed by Tenants and Workers United during the last couple of decades.

In sum, prior to the mass rallies of 2006 in Washington, D.C., several experiences of organizing/political mobilization of Latinos have taken place in the

area, mostly in the suburbs. Most of these cases were part of issue-related campaigns and the majority targeted local or state governments. These episodes of social mobilization have been to a great extent organized and planned by community-based organizations. In addition, the informal partnerships between governments and community-based organizations played a significant part in the successful cases in which pro-immigrant pieces of legislation were approved. As opposed to these cases of organized mobilization, however, spontaneous episodes of protest were rare.

Anti-immigrant atmosphere

In the few years that immediately preceded the immigration rallies of 2006, an anti-immigrant atmosphere seemed to surface in the U.S. In the Washington, D.C. area this anti-immigrant feeling was rooted in some sectors of the population became it became clear in several actions aimed at seriously limiting immigrants' participation in the community. In other words, anti-immigrant forces became pro-active in trying to ban immigrants' participation in any aspect of public life, including from work, to driving, to getting an education. Examples of anti-immigrant actions go from proposals of "English only" legislations, to attempts to deny drivers licenses to undocumented immigrants, to efforts to close day labor centers in some localities, to proposals to refuse to admit children of undocumented immigrants in public schools.

Because the establishment of work centers has been one of the most prominent arenas of dispute, it is a good illustration of the growing anti-immigrant atmosphere. Conflict around day labor regulation and, in particular, regarding pick up sites has been a persistent issue in the Washington-DC metropolitan area during the

last few years (see Frasure and Jones-Correa 2005). Specifically, the conflicts around day labor sites' locations affected several localities in the area, including Herndon, Silver Spring, Tacoma Park, and Gaithersburg. Day labor, on the other hand, is one of the principal sectors of employment for Latino men in the lower income groups. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in the year 2000 36 percent of Latin American immigrant men in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area were employed in construction, making up the single most important industry for this group. Given that many construction workers are day laborers, issues regarding day labor are of critical importance.

In Herndon, Virginia, whose population according to the 2000 Census was about 26 percent Latino, the conflict around the opening of a day labor site in 2005 led to a very singular conflict scenario. In an effort to organize and formalize the pick-up and drop-off of day laborers in the town, the local government approved the creation of a day labor center, which was largely resisted by part of the neighbors, some elected officials, and a few organizations. This decision, in turn, opened the field for a series of debates around critical issues regarding political inclusion, such as tax-payment, jurisdiction, immigration, rights and entitlements. The conflict intensified after an offshoot of the Minutemen Project—an organization whose explicit goal is to prosecute illegal aliens—became involved, attempting to patrol day labor sites and report illegal immigrants to authorities. This issue resulted in the formation of a pro-labor organization called HEART (Herndon Embraces all in Respect and Tolerance). In this case, the involvement of Latin American immigrants

in the public sphere seemed to come after both the initiative of the state at the local level, and the prosecution of other actors.

The event in Herndon was also, in some ways, an antecedent of some of the events that would occur in 2006 regarding immigration.

> Remember that all this [the debate on immigration] started earlier, in 2005, with all the issue in Herndon, around the day labor center. Then is where the debate on illegal immigration started... that it started being in the media and then all that polemic began in a town as small as Herndon, and then came Sensenbrenner, the rallies, the articles on the division of the Latino leadership…. (Zulma Pizarro, journalist)

According to many voices in the community, the anti-immigrant feeling was particularly aggravated after the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001. In the eyes of many people in the community, being an immigrant became synonymous with being a terrorist, of which everyone was suspicious.

> Everything came together. Now people are more afraid of undocumented immigrants than they are afraid of terrorism. Before undocumented immigrants were not a main concern. Now everyone thinks in that they are mistaken. (Gerardo Cejas)

> Since September 11th, the immigrant community has been attacked from the left and the right… (Ruben Portaluppi, union leader)

All in all, this increased anti-immigrant feeling led to a series of negative outcomes for Latinos, ranging from episodes of violence like the one that transpired in Herndon, to unfriendly public policies. This sentiment partly explains both the hardening of immigration policy (the Sensenbrenner bill being one clear example) and the reaction of the immigrant community and its allies in the April of 2006.

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5.3. Planning a mass mobilization event

As mentioned in the previous section, the Sensenbrenner Bill constituted the starting point of a national movement in the Latino community that represented one of the largest demonstrations led by a singular group in American history. However, although the bill was approved by the House of Representative in December 2005, it was not until March and April 2006 that the community reacted in mass through vast demonstrations. The purpose of this section is to uncover the dynamics that took place during this period both in terms of threat and opportunity attribution by the community (looking at both organized actors and unorganized subjects), and social appropriation and organization led by community leaders and collective actors that made possible the massive demonstrations of march and April 2006 in Washington, D.C.

It is important to point out that although the rallies of 2006 in Washington, DC were part of a national effort, in this dissertation I am going to focus exclusively on the conditions and actions developed at a the local level. In other words, I will particularly examine the local forces that made possible a massive mobilization in Washington DC as well as the impact these demonstrations had for the Latino community locally.

5.3.1. Attribution of threats and political opportunities

In this section I will review the main components that informed the local community actors' attribution of threat and political opportunities in the months preceding the rallies of 2006. In particular, I will examine the factors present in the framing of the threat (the Sensenbrenner Bill passed by the House of Representatives in December 2005) as well as in the construction of an opportunity to act collectively through a mass rally.

Unlike other reactions such as the Mount Pleasant Riots in 1991 in which the reaction from the community is immediate and spontaneous, there was a gap of almost three months between the approval of HR 4037 and the realization of the massive street response. Disentangling what happened in this period is, then, critical in order to understand the occurrence of the unprecedented rallies later on.

In my research I found that the combination of the interpretation of HR4037 as a direct attack against the Latino community and the reading of an existing "community readiness" by local activists were the two main elements that account for the framing of threat and opportunity that contributed to the deployment of the collective action.

Reading the Sensenbrenner Bill as a community threat

In December 2005 the House of Representative passed legislation known as the Sensenbrenner Bill, a bill that would in a few short months become the target of a massive Latino mobilization throughout the country. But, before the Latino community would engage in such unprecedented public activism, the community

needed to become aware of the bill and read it as a threat. This framing required active work by community leaders, heads of organizations and community organizers, and that took time.

Criminalization: Our church, our kids, and our teachers

In the framing of the bill, some organizers involved advocated for the need to frame the bill in such a way so that it would resonate with valued elements in the Latino community. The following quote illustrates clearly in what way the content of the bill was synthesized in order to be presented to the public:

> It's the experience, you know? To tell you the truth for me it's this… when you take a look at our communities there are three things you don't fuck around with: "nuestra iglesia jajaja, nuestros niños y los maestros, verdad? Jajajajaja Sagrado corazón de Jesús, verdad?" (*our Church hahaha, our children, and our teachers, right? Ha ha ha sacred heart of Jesus, right?*) So when I read the bill, I said shit! So this is how it's attacking the church, this is how it's attacking the teachers, and this is how they are attacking our children. So when you got to tell the people in the street, say your children are not going to be able to go to school, you're not going to be able to go to church, the priests can go to jail, the teachers can go to jail… they say shit! So then you do that… then people would react. And that's what we did. Right now we can react and we can cut the issue in a very strategic way… the whole thing around the deportations and incarcerations and stuff… you know what we need to come out and say this is what happening… people are ready to step up… even when there's a lot of fear, they are ready to stand up. The question is how you do it. And how we sustain…So that's like an art… It's how you cut it, how you present it. And the other thing is a lot of people get so busy and so hung up in language… and we didn't think of how to maintain it (Eduardo Gonzalez, a community organizer)

The campaign, then, would be mounted on the notion of the criminalization contained in the bill. When I asked Eduardo Gonzalez, a community organizer active

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in the planning of the rallies, how organizers came up with the framing utilized, he

referred to the use of a bottom-up approach:

> You just know through experience, man. I kind of taste, test it when I am on the streets, talking in the churches, talking to the people because…you see a lot of people in DC, here, that are trying to do legislation from their offices. Those of us who are organizers, we are on the streets, I am in the morning with the day laborers, talking to them, feeling how they feel and based on that you make decisions. Also experience, organizing… (Eduardo Gonzalez, community organizer).

Along similar lines, the idea of "reading" what the community did not want

was also considered as key by other of my interviewees.

> Churches, institutions, schools, hospitals, community organizations, all of us were considered criminals under that legislation. That made our community angry to an extent that it felt physically and morally assaulted. So that was the historical moment that we had the virtue of *reading correctly*. Again, we are always behind the community, the community is always ahead of us. We have to be reading what the community feel and think in order to go out (Gonzalo Diaz, a leader from Casa de Maryland).

> Although many times we said participate, come here, go to a school meeting, go there… there was a lack of participation. But when they put you and say we are going to make you a criminal if you are in this country and help illegal persons… that puts you… I'll go to jail! How can that be possible… if you are a kid and you think… they are going to send my mom to jail! Or my dad, because he is undocumented… that hurts… and we all react to that… (Sergio Arteaga, public official).

In sum, the deployment of an effective interpretive construction of the

problem by organizers, in which several highly socially valued symbols, such as

family, church, and teachers were at the fore, was key in the way ordinary people

would position themselves against the bill.

The notion of community readiness (matching an organizational readiness)

Aside from seeing the approval of the Sensenbrener bill in the House of Representatives as a direct threat toward the immigrant community and, specifically, toward the Latino community, leaders of local community-based organization viewed signs of the readiness of the community to 'go public'. In particular, the growing anti-immigrant environment had created increasing tension and energy in immigrant communities around the country. With respect to local groups, an organizer mentioned that they were 'ready to act'. Thus, there was a widespread feeling of anger in the community that married well to a network of local organizations that had the infrastructure to mobilize people and was eager to do it.

> So Sensenbrenner passed, HR4437, and that's what really said… what we are doing is not enough and we need to figure out how to do something bigger, think bolder, and how do we use this moment in time where the community, the Latino community and the immigrant community in the country saw like outrage by the fact that this thing got out of the hands. So, you know, before the bill passed, it passed on the 12th of December 05, the 11th we had about 500 people in front of the Republican headquarters, same thing in front of the Democratic headquarters the next day, the bill passed anyway. So you know, we said, it's December, it's gonna be hard to do anything so really the beginning of 2006 and the coalition figured out that we needed to do something much bolder. And that's when we hired an organizer to help lead that effort because all of the people in the coalition we have full time jobs. (Rubén Portaluppi, a labor union leader)

Because the critical place that immigration held in the Latino population, the Sensenbrenner Bill touched a nerve in the community that spurred them into action, In fact, among all the issues of particular concern for the Latino community, immigration tended to rank first. As one of my interviewees asserted, "Immigration unifies all of us". Even for those in the community who would not be directly affected by the toughening of immigration laws, the immigration issue was critical.

"Each of us knows someone, a family member, a relative, a friend, who is here illegally"

Combined, the attribution of a threat in the advancement of what was seen as an anti-immigrant bill and the interpretation of a community readiness to engage in public demonstrations triggered a series of organizing efforts that would deal to one of the most massive political demonstrations that existed in recent history in the area.

The need to take the fight to the streets

One point critical to the strategy to defeat the Sensenbrenner Bill was the definition of the best field where to combat the legislation. The plan was to use a highly-visible location that would put the community on stage for the mass public. That rationale, therefore, inspired the decision to take to the streets. In other words, instead of utilizing traditional lobbying mechanisms through the intervention of lawyers and legal experts, the thought behind the strategy designed was to turn the anti-immigration bill into a subject of public debate and, most importantly, to show the power in numbers of the Latino community. This, in turn, required creating a message to back the rallies that would appeal both the Latino community (which was expected to turn to the streets), and the community at large.

> [Sensenbrenner] had the control and nobody… the fight that they were doing to him was from lobbyists and stuff light that. And… (pause) if you are going to fight a politician in creating the law based on the regulations there that you don't know, they will screw you up. Because they know how. We don't know how. So my thinking was *we'll take you to the streets*. I know how to fight the

streets jajaja I'll take you there… I know how to work the media, I know how send this out there… no problem. And we calculated how to move it. The first one was 'we are not criminals'… nothing about legalizations… 'We are not criminals', that was our first movement. That… how we move and you see the first march… 'we are not criminals' and children's shirts, 'we are not criminals'…That's the message, you know… The message is 'we are not criminals'. Then the second message after that 'we are not criminals' is 'we are all together, we are immigrants, we are together fighting for…. at the end was legalization for all. So we elevated… if we go from legalization for all at the beginning we will be bad. We are not criminals was appealing to mainstream America. The politicians do not want to be seen criminalizing children. So that's how we started the whole piece. (Eduardo Gonzalez, community organizer).

Traditional channels of political negotiation where then considered insufficient to stop legislation of this type. In a sense, one assumption was, although many Latinos were in many ways politically invisible—they could not vote, they could not be elected for office, and they were excluded from many rights derived from legal residency or citizenship- and, for that reason, had limited access to instances of political decision making, they did have the power of the number and they were physically present. The most appropriate territory for their fight could then hardly be the institutions of political representation but the street and the public opinion.

This notion underlies the narrative of a Latino organization leader from the area when she mentioned "the issue wasn't gonna be resolved because an elite group was gonna meet with the mayor or with the governor. It really was we think that the possible solution involves massive mobilization so let's do that… which really hadn't been done in forever." (Elizabeth Mederos).

The message was simple and clear: Because the Sensenbrenner bill is a clear attack to what the Latinos considered to be "our community", a community largely composed of immigrants and families of immigrants, "we", as a community, need to stop it. And, as some interviewees asserted, "it is a lot easier to organize people against something than it is for something".

Latino media effectiveness in the delivery of the message

In order to transition from the recognition of a threat to the construction of an opportunity for action, the diffusion of the message was critical. In that sense, the local media played a crucial role. This was especially the case with local Spanish language radios that have a broad reach in the community.

> I think because there was a popular message. I think that the role of the Latino media and the phonation is really important. That there really were the DJ's, there really was a process in newspapers and that kind of thing. (Elizabeth Mederos)

The repeated reference that my interviewees made to the critical role the media played in delivering the message made me raise questions about what motivated the different media outlets to become deeply involved in this case. Gregory Lopez a community leader and organizer explained this media involvement by referring to previous experiences of collaboration with local organizations.

> GL: The media, even if it's corporate media or not was like moving with the people, and was out there… you know, was pushing, you know, pushing the

march. And that really made a huge difference in terms of 'get out in the street, get out in the street, get out in the street'…Whether there was merengue or regaeton it was pushing down the streets… really important…

GC: How did the media get involved in this?

JL: There was a connection between all these little groups and the media. There's always been a history in terms of looking for articles, looking for stories… so we got tons of press clippings over the 20 years… lots of groups do because there's not that much… there's not that many groups, relatively small groups, there is a relatively good relationship. I think the Latino press is also… identifies with his audience in a good way. So it felt like it was living the same thing and it was proud to see this stuff going out there.

A message for outside: an attempt to humanize the debate

In planning La Marcha, organizers placed particular attention to the message that the community at large would receive. The conversations I had with leaders and community organizers involved in the planning of the rallies revealed the presence of a particular effort leading to gain the favor of average voters while trying to engage the immigrant community in general, and the Latino community in particular.

And we had something that was burnt into the public consciousness, these rallies around the country that were a national phenomenon but also very local, where average voters got the opportunity to see… to see Spanish-speaking people who lived differently from them, waving an American flag, having children, having families. We through these events… really humanizing the immigrant community in a way that was shamefully not happening before. So discussions about undocumented communities were done in numbers as opposed to in people, and they were done in terms of budget dollars but not in terms of people. And so when the event happened, as I said, it raised the volume, it provided a news making event, so we were able to lead the news a little bit, and push it from our perspective. And then what happened as a sort of spill out from that is that reporters came and covered the event so… and then the spill out is that then they do the personal interest stories. . So you have the story of the faith community in a certain city who has voted on part of the whole community to be a sanctuary, a place of sanctuary. You have stories about the high school valedictorian who is

undocumented, came here at the age of two, and now can't get financial aid. You have different stories like that that were starting to appear really in mass around the country, definitely here in the Washington area, about people… (Cristian Barbero, a community organizer)

5.3.2. Social/organizational appropriation

This section will address the factors that aided or hindered the process through which Latinos constituted themselves in a challenger group through the work of pre-existing and new organizations. Unlike what happened in Mount Pleasant in 1991, where ordinary people took to the streets as soon as they heard about the attack on a Latino worker from a police officer, La Marcha took considerable planning. The period between the approval of HR 4037 by the House of Representatives and the massive rallies in March and April of 2006, was characterized by intense organizing and a massive mobilizing effort by community-based organizations.

The day before the Sensenbrenner Bill was voted on in the House of Representatives in December 2005, Latino organizations gathered a small number of people in front of the Republican headquarters and a similar number in front of the Democratic headquarters to express their disapproval of this legislation. As we now know, the bill was approved over their protest. It was at that point that leaders of local Latino organizations, grouped under the NCIC, assessed what happened and determined that it was necessary "to do something much bolder". They also noted that something on that much of a larger scale would require considerable planning. In this section I will examine the combination of factors that led to the unprecedented massive mobilization of 2006 in Washington, D.C. I will focus on the series of

conditions present and decisions made in the period between December 2005 and March 2006 that led to the success of La Marcha. Although critical to understand the outcome of the effort, these organizing movements rarely appear in the press and, as a consequence, the reconstruction of these factors could only be analyzed from data gained through interviews with key actors.

In most of my interviews, the media, churches, and unions, were depicted as the trinity necessary to make such a political event possible. Adding to that critical combination, community-based organizations, both Latino and non-Latino, with their rich tradition of mobilizing the community for other political endeavors, would provide an infrastructure that was comparably crucial. With respect to the collaboration with non-Latino organizations, it is worth noting that although it was effective and there were other voices, faces, and languages present at the mobilization, the rallies were clearly led by the Latino community.

The April 10th mobilization on Washington was the flagship in a major series of rallies throughout the entire country. The synchronization of these nationwide demonstrations required considerable planning and coordination. The NCIC, the coalition that led the effort in D.C. took the lead in coordinating with other coalitions and unions across the United States. In spite of the fact that the mobilization in Washington, D.C. was part of a national effort, I will focus exclusively on the factors and dynamics that took place at the local level, in the D.C. area, purposely leaving out from the analysis the nationwide coordination efforts.

Even at the local level, the mobilization represented not only a Latino struggle but a effort involving the immigrant community at large as well as immigration

supporters from various backgrounds. In the District in particular, other communities were also actively engaged in the effort not only by attending the rallies but also helping with logistics (for example, African taxi drivers that are numerous in the area provided transportation for people attending the rallies). However, in this dissertation I exclusively look at the Latino community, which headed the organization of the event.

Profile of organizations leading the effort

The rallies were formally organized by the NCIC, the National Capital Immigration Coalition, a group formed by a number of organizations in the District (including community based organizations, service-providing organizations, labor unions, and churches) with the aim of coordinating strategies regarding immigration issues. The existence of an umbrella organization such as the NCIC was crucial for the coordination of the efforts in the metropolitan D.C. area. The NCIC centralized the strategy discussions and political negotiations. It was also the tool utilized to reach out to other immigrant communities.

From an organizational point of view, the NCIC had a Board of Directors that represented the three different main jurisdictions in the metropolitan region (with three representatives each from Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia respectively). Its executive board also contained one person from each region.. According to some, however, the coalition only existed "on paper" and was only brought to life through the mobilization effort around the Sensenbrenner bill.

While the NCIC provided the umbrella organization, it is important to note that this was a coalition. Within the coalition, not all organizations contributed equally. The unions and local organizations proved to have a strong capacity for mobilization/organization. Such capacity had been evident in a series of mobilizing efforts in the past. Casa de Maryland, for example, which was one of the most visible organizations in the mobilizing efforts of 2006, had utilized the infrastructure already developed in previous campaigns.

> Each year anti-immigrant sectors try to pass legislation to take away our driver licenses. So the creation of the committees in support of the driver licenses had maintained our community active and ready for the struggle. The reason why I mention this is that those committees are the ones in which we supported our effort to mobilize people in 2006. It was those committees the ones that actively mobilize to invite and summon other members of the community to participate in the rallies […] It was incredible…. Thousands, I don't know how many…. Thousands and thousands of phone calls we made. A hundred thousand calls, I don't recall any longer. Voluntaries from our office every day calling, day and night. From their houses, we passed the directories to them because we had the lists with all the people who participated in the drivers licenses. With all the phone numbers, thousands, calling all of them. That was something… a very beautiful organizing process we had. The announcements in churches. Those committees went to all churches to share, and not only in Maryland…. In Virginia, in Washington, to share, to invite, the radios…. (Gonzalo Diaz, a leader of Casa de Maryland)

The role that the infrastructure of these grassroots agencies played in the mobilization of people was described by the leader of one of these organizations as a skeleton:

> You had a bunch of sort of groups like us, Casa… different sizes, I mean, Casa is much bigger. But… enough groups to form a skeleton… a skeleton of communication, a skeleton that could run buses, a skeleton that could do mobilizing, a skeleton that can… you had infrastructure… emerging infrastructure, emerging political leadership, a backbone. It wasn't just a spontaneous thing. You had somebody to help make it happen. (Gregory Lopez, leader of a community based organization)

All in all, the nearly all organizations with a history of work with the Latino community participated in La Marcha. Although the leadership of the effort was concentrated in the more grassroots, politically-oriented organizations, the service-oriented nonprofits were also highly supportive of the march. The service-oriented organization staff went to the rallies; the directors distributed the informational literature to their clients. At affiliated schools, entire student bodies were invited to go.

> This thing with immigration has been very interesting because it is not any more in the hands of "*agencieros*" (heads of agencies). This is a different process. And although many of the agencies are lending their people, or resources, or whatever, they are not guiding the process any longer. (Blanca Galindez, head of a service providing agency)

This quote highlights the transition in community leadership because of this immigration issue. I will return to this point later, when I assess the implications that the massive entry of the immigrant community (especially, the Latino community) in the public sphere in March-April 2006.

The involvement of churches

It is widely known that churches generally play a critical role in the lives of Latinos, both as civic associations[51] and as service providers. As mentioned earlier, within the Washington, D.C. metropolitan region, congregations of different denominations (though overwhelmingly Christian) are spread out all over the map. All together, this network of churches has the capacity to reach nearly the Latino

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[51] See Jones-Correa and Leal (2001).

population quite effectively. Also mentioned earlier, many congregations in the area engage in a range of political activities, including encouraging people to attend to rallies, asking members to sign petitions, and talking about policy issues during sermons. Moreover, most congregations work with advocacy organizations on a regular basis. During the planning of the immigration rallies in 2006, not surprisingly, churches played a key role in mobilizing their members.

> Yes, you know, the Catholic Church… we worked with them very closely. So for April 10th we really organized April 10th the day after Palm Sunday because the idea was, in L.A., and here, and in Baltimore and other major markets, the unions and the coalitions really had a good relationship with the archdioceses. So Palm Sunday we were at all the churches in the region. Or almost all the churches that we could cover, passing out flyers, speaking from the pulpit saying, you know, this is happening, we need to come out and… you know, the next day we had 300,000 people on the street. So the churches played a big role. (Rubén Portaluppi, a labor union leader)

In the case of the Catholic Church, this support was the result of a political stance the Church had taken in the U.S. in support of immigration. This stance is understandable if we take into account that a significant part of the Catholic Church membership in this country is Latino, which, in turn, constitutes the largest immigrant community in the country. In the Washington metropolitan area alone, the Catholic Church has approximately 250,000 Latino members.

> Catholic churches have played a role and will continue to play a role because they have clearly said that they will not do anything that would harm a human being, right. In the legislature I work very closely with the Catholic Church on immigration issues, work issues, licenses… they are the ones who support me. (Graciela Vallejos, an elected official)

Although the Catholic Church holds a special position of power in the Latino community, other religious denominations also have significant influence. The

following testimony by a local priest is illustrative of how the Latino constituency has become a key for the subsistence of those congregations.

> Thank to Hispanics churches have been injected with new blood. They have pushed a movement through the churches. Through the churches new voices have emerged and we have seen it for example in the big demonstrations we have had in the Capitol where the churches have moved all those people to participate. The [Catholic] Church has become a "spokesman", no? So it has been important. Those who have moved this are Salvadorans that are committed with the Church. Other non catholic churches have also grown… evangelicals… *they have also been benefited*. So this has been for everybody…. *There has been everything for everyone*. (Father Cesar Recalde, a local priest)

While the direct and indirect participation of the Catholic Church in the organizing effort was crucial, groups from many other Christian denominations--including Methodists, Lutherans, Episcopal, and different evangelical congregations—as well as Jewish and Muslim groups also supported the effort. What is even more interesting is that this interdenominational collaboration triggered by the immigration cause. The same priest described this cooperation in these terms:

> We got together not only as Catholic church but we also invited other churches… with all of them, with all, we don't look at where you come from, or what you are, or anything. *Immigration has no religion*. Immigration has no political belief or anything. (Father Cesar Recalde)

When I asked how Churches helped mobilize people, one of the organizers asserted "from the pulpit, people were encouraged to go from there". Other informant, pointed out that organizers together with religious leaders framed the invitation to participate using such terms as "welcoming the stranger", or "I am hungry, you feed me". A common mission of many religions, acting neighborly

towards all, united the various denominations in the face of the anti-immigration Sensenbrenner Bill.

The key role of unions

Among the key pieces in the mobilization effort was the work of the unions and, in particular, of the capital area district of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the largest property service workers union in the country. Like in the case of the Catholic Church and other churches, SEIU bases its pro-immigrant commitment in the composition of its membership.

> You know, in SEIU I would dare say… we have 1.9 million members in the union. So it's a very large union. Very powerful. Nationally I would say about 15 to 20 percent of the membership of the union is immigrant. So with large numbers in New York, Chicago and California. So a lot of the… you know, *naturally the union would be involved in issues that matter to the immigrant community because, you know, we have, whether you are documented or not our members would be affected by issues that are passed at the federal level or the local level.* […] And then, our local 32BJ is the local that represents people in the property service division from Northern Virginia to Connecticut. So it covers 6 states and the District of Columbia and our local has about 85,000 members of which I would say about 65 to 70 percent is immigrant or of immigrant descent. So out of 85,000 members in the largest property service local in the union, about 70 percent are immigrants so that's why we do this work. . (Rubén Portaluppi, a labor union leader)

What appeared clearly in both the unions and the churches was a motivation to support pro-immigrant and pro-immigration initiatives; those organizations would not have been able to keep their membership if they had not taken their side on as crucial as an issue as immigration law, which is in turn linked to a variety of other issues.

The unions used to be against the immigrant movement, because it was competition for them. But they have learned now that it is not competition. They have lost so many members because the corporation have been gained so much territory that they have had to include immigrants in their organizing work. It is not so much that they buy it but it is beneficial for them. (Julio Cruz)

The position of unions with respect to immigration is not and has not ever been unified. On July 25, 2005, SEIU (one of the unions that most decisively supported the pro-immigration actions in 2006) broke from the national federation of unions AFL-CIO, alleging irreconcilable disagreements with the conduction of the national organization. SEIU, with 1.8 million members and was the largest and fastest growing union in the AFL-CIO, had a more inclusive approach, consisting of helping low wage people of color, working women, and especially immigrants join the union.[52] This fact would ultimately be key in the leading role that SEIU would adopt in the planning of immigrant rallies in 2006. The difference between SEIU and AFL-CIO became evident once again after the rallies, when they held diametrically opposed positions in regard to the guest workers proposal. Whereas SEIU explicitly supported such proposal, the AFL-CIO believed that it would "flood the U.S. job market and further undercut American workers with cheap labor." (Washington Times, April 14 2006) The elusive support of immigration and immigrant workers by AFL-CIO is usually explained by the dislike among manufacturing unions and others who attribute the displacement of their members to the influx of cheaper workers who are not protected by labor rights in the country.

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[52] See SEIU press release of July 25, 2005 in
http://www.seiu.org/media/pressreleases.cfm?pr_id=1237.

The posture of organized labor regarding immigration has not been consistent over time. A shift in a number of progressive locals occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s when a number of union leaders realized that without embracing immigrants the labor movement in low wage service industries would be seriously damaged (Varsanyi 2005). Although historically unions actually favored restrictive immigration policies, their position change when such measures favor organization of foreign-born workers (see Haus 1995). The rationale of this argument is that unions would attempt to organize immigrant workers in order to improve the interests of American workers.

In any event, and regardless of the multiple motivations for engaging in the support of immigration, the contribution of SEIU-32BJ to the success of the march was clear and decisive. It crystallized in not only its leadership in the planning of the marches, but also in its financial support—sources I consulted confirmed to me that SEIU-32 BJ contributed 200,000 dollars. In addition, leaders of the union directly encouraged their members to attend the rally as well as negotiated with employers to have them allow their workers to go to the demonstration.

The role of media

As mentioned in an earlier section, the media played a central role in the success of La Marcha by disseminating the news. The involvement of the media, however, occurred through an active effort to engage them led by grassroots communities and the NCIC.

The mass media was strategic as soon as they saw the political moment. We, the members of the coalition, had massive meetings with the directors of the means of communication in Spanish, and some other languages. Especially in Spanish… they played a determinant role. Inviting, accepting that they interview us, that they interview our community, and it was something massive… the result of all that. In the first rally that we had on March 7ᵗʰ last year… I remember that according to our analysis we expected between 10 and 15 thousand people and suddenly we had around 60 thousand (Gonzalo Diaz, a leader of a community-based organization)

Of all the Spanish language media outlets, radios stations had the most impact in the mobilization. However, Latino newspapers and mainstream television and newspapers[53] also became engaged in the diffusion of the message summoning community members to the marches.

We could not have done the mobilization without especially the radios. Because people listen to the radio on their way home, they listen to the radio on their way to work, on their way to pick up the kids and so… in this region, we have el Zol which is, you know, 99.1 FM, they are very powerful. They have a huge reaching. (…) I mean, they were as fed up as we were, to be honest with you. And some stations more than others. But el Zol was and has been and is totally on board and we could not have done some of this stuff without them, or Vivo 900? and some of the other smaller stations but… I mean, yeah, media played a huge role. DJs played a huge role in this mobilization. They… *we got on the air for free all the time, to tell people to come out.* Newspapers, some people read newspapers, and they also played a big role. (Rubén Portaluppi, a labor union leader)

The next obvious question is: why did the media get so fully involved in the summoning of the community for the marches? On the one hand, there was a rich history of informal partnerships between community-based organizations in the area and the local media—especially, yet not exclusively, with the Latino media. Over the years, those organizations had a tradition of working together with local mediums of communication. Organizations regularly need the media to share relevant information

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[53] El Tiempo Latino, for example, one of the most important local newspapers in Spanish has a circulation of about 65,000 and 100,000 actual readers.

with the community or, more importantly, as an outlet to rally public opinion around problematic issues the media needs news to cover. In this case in particular, the greater the magnitude of the rallies (especially the second one that was part of a national movement), the more news coverage they would have in the days to come. And that was exactly what happened. Several days after the rally of April 10th, different articles on the implications of the march filled the pages of newspapers and occupied significant space on TV news programs. As one of my interviewees put it, "Newspapers, radio stations and the television all of the sudden have news, they have a hot piece of news and people want to watch the program or listen to the program or see the newspaper to see what is going on" (José Bendicente).

According to the organizers, having media support before, and after the event was one of the explicit goals of the whole organizing effort. Before La Marcha, media coverage was needed to get the people to the streets. After La Marcha, organizers needed the media and its stories to keep the issue alive. One of the graphic assessments on how the media served the purpose established is the following assortment by one organizer: "We moved the media the way we wanted them to move. The media didn't move us".

5.4. La Marcha and its immediate aftermath

La Marcha took place on April 10th, 2006. Hundreds of thousands of pro-immigration demonstrators gathered at the Washington Monument to oppose the the Sensenbrenner Bill, the Border Protection, Anti-terrorism, and Illegal Immigration

Control Act, as we as bring to light the situation of millions of immigrants claiming for inclusion, in Washington, D.C. Although estimates on crowd size vary—with more conservative sources estimating it at 300,000 and some organizers calculating it at around 500,000—there was common agreement about the unprecedented magnitude of the event. In fact, many see the occurrence of La Marcha as the most significant public expression on political issues by the Latino community.

On April 10th, I had the opportunity to attend the rally in the Washington Monument, which allowed me to observe the organizing apparatus in action. I started my observation in the Silver Spring location of Casa de Maryland, where people were gathering to go together down to the Washington Mall. Parking arrangements were made with a nearby Latino market, where volunteers with flags invited me to park. Then, at the premises of CASA, several people were standing in line, waiting for a bus that would take them to the Metro station, where they could take the Metro to the Mall. Participants to the event were given a prepaid Metro pass. Once on the Mall, I saw people slowly arriving from different directions. Although some of them arrived in groups, carrying signs made by event organizers, several people also arrived by themselves, with flags or simple looking homemade signs. Some of the signs read as follows: "Immigrant Nation" , "I'm an immigrant, and I vote", "Brown and proud", "Immigrants built this country", "We vote and pay taxes", "We are Americans, too" "Bring us out of the shadows", "Working is not a crime", "Stop 4437", "El pueblo unido jamas sera vencido", "A gente veio para trabalhar", "Si, se puede". Although some attendants brought flags with them, others picked them up on site. one interaction caught my attention: A seller of flags approached a young man who was

sitting on the ground close to me asked the flag seller how much the flags cost, to which the latter answered: 'American flags are 15 dollars, the others (referring to flags from a few Latin American countries), 10'. It was not surprising to me, then, when the following day a debate about flags in the rallies and their meaning flooded different media outlets.

Once again, as the 1991riots in Mount Pleasant, references to the Civil Rights movement popped up all over. They appeared in the media, emphasizing the similarities of this inchoate Latino movement with the broad African American mobilizations of the sixties.

One of the organizers I interviewed a few months later told me: "I remember that in Washington… people from the Metro was saying that after the march of Martin Luther King Jr. this had been the second largest in the history… that they had had the greatest number of people that rode the metros to attend the rally. And it was massive."

On all accounts, La Marcha was recognized as a milestone in the history of the Latino community. It did shake things up in the community at different levels, including its visibility, its ability to join the public debate, and to move issues into the public arena. Before evaluating the transformations that the demonstration triggered, I will briefly examine one key divide that existed within the local Latino leadership immediately after the rallies.

5.5. The aftermath: Organizational appropriation (Phase 2)

How did actors and leaders involved in the planning of the mass public demonstration on April 10th take advantage of the moment created by it? After the event, one element that became clear was the existence of differing strategies and agendas among those who had been involved in the planning.

One of the key points that revealed such division in the leadership was the contrasting attitude with respect to the proposed national economic boycott for May 1st, 2006. The split was clear within NCIC. Although the majority in NCIC did not support the boycott, a few more radicalized groups not only supported the initiative but actually engaged in community mobilization to entice people to participate. The prevailing position of the local leadership was to abstain from participating in such event, arguing that it would trigger a wave of backlash that the community could not afford to face.

> So when there was a national call for boycott a lot of us thought, shit that would be powerful but is this the right time to do it? Right? Because at this time, if we had a boycott in May 1st, it was a month, a little before a month April 10th where we had a huge mobilization. Congress was just getting back into town. If we had a national boycott, you know, I think it would have had a huge negative backlash. Because, people would say, well shit, you just mobilized your people, you didn't give us time to work and now you are boycotting us, right? (One key planner of the 2006 rallies in Washington, D.C.).

One of the leaders, who advocated for the adoption of a more aggressive line, justified her position arguing that "people are ready, when people are ready in a cause you need to march!" The more moderate members of the group advocated lobbying government officials at different levels and encouraging Latinos to vote in the 2006

mid-term election. One of the arguments that was brought to my attention was that most of the groups in favor of the boycott "don't really have a base". A tough point in the conversations, moreover, was about how to move from an oppositional strategy aimed at stopping the bill to a constructive agenda of reforms.

This division was broadly characterized as sending contradictory messages to the population and, consequently, harming the high motivation achieved with the performance of the rallies.

The actions adopted were, to a great extent, aimed at how to push for the immigration agenda at the national level. However, the events that preceded and succeeded the April 10th demonstration had a significant impact in the formation/transformation of Latinos into a political actor. The following section is devoted to the examination of some aspects of this innovation.

5.6. Innovation in the public sphere: the formation or redefinition of a political actor

This section will be dedicated to the examination of the impact and limitations in the formation of a new identity-based political actor within the local Latino community as a result of the collective interactions launched before, during, and immediately after the immigration rally of April 10th, 2006, in Washington, D.C. In order to be consistent with my treatment of the Mount Pleasant riots, the main questions that I address in this section are as follows: Did a new political actor emerge within the local Latino community as a result of the political interactions

triggered by the immigration rally of April 10th, 2006? If so, what were its features? What factors limited its scope and sustainability?

Based on the definition of political actor that this research relies on, I will analyze the extent to which Latinos residing in D.C. were able to organize themselves in a single entity, in a way that would allow them to speak with one voice (despite internal differences), maintaining a relatively stable structure, and being conceived as an interlocutor in local politics by other constituted actors. A caveat of this examination is that, because the occurrence of the rally was relatively recent, we do not have sufficient perspective to judge whether the emerging patterns will have a substantial continuity over time.

The section is organized as follows. First, I analyze internal aspects of the constitution/re-constitution of Latinos as a political actor—in particular, I examine the changes and continuities in leadership; the community unification and the increase in political engagement; and the increase in Latinos electoral participation, as well as the organizational strengthening and patterns of collaboration among community organizations. Following that, I review the actor from outside, focusing on the increase in visibility of Latinos as a political actor and some signs of backlash.

Local leadership: changes and continuities

Although a number of high profile organization leaders working with the Latino community in the area gained a very strong presence in the media immediately after the rally, one observation that came up during my interviews was that the demonstration of April 10th did not bring about a new "unified leadership".

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Surprisingly, this expression did not allude to the split in the group of leaders that were involved in the immigration movement, but to the inexistence of a broadly recognized single leadership crystallized in one person.

> We don't have Jessie Jackson, we don't have Barack Obama, we don't have a national leader of our people really. And that is really kicking us in the ass because we don't have a person that people follow or a couple of people that people follow in the West or in the East. You know, we have activists like myself and other people. And so we don't have an organized national leader, so *our leaders really is the local activists like us…* (Ruben Portaluppi)

What is interesting is that what was described to me as a problem (the absence of a national or regional leader) was actually the strength of this movement: the existence of decentralized centers of decision-making, with locally-grounded widely respected leaders in the community. Instead of having just a symbolic presence, most of these leaders, in fact, had a direct contact and knowledge of local realities. These local activists and leaders, in fact, had also been able to coordinate efforts at a national level. In other words, the collective action was the result of a coordination of local efforts.

Another remarkable element is the difference with respect to the aftermath of the 1991 riots, in which a new leader emerged (or was selected) and represented, for a while, "the face" of the community. The strong symbolic meaning of the presence of such leader, as we saw in chapter 4, did not directly translate into material power. Behind the scenes, other established actors had the capacity to conduct the political process opened by the riots.

Two main trends could be observed within and immediately after the rallies within the leadership in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. On the one hand, the deployment of the rallies clarified the already existing division between the leaders of organizations primarily devoted to providing services and those organizations which do devote themselves to community empowerment and political action. Whereas the former accompanied the demonstrations of March and April of 2006 in full, the latter were visibly in the lead of the political actions developed. The profile of this divide suggests a distribution of tasks within the organizational tissue of the community that, in turn, reflects different understandings of what it means "to serve" the community.

> This immigration thing is to me very interesting because it is not anymore in the hands of *agencieros* (heads of service oriented Latino agencies). It is a whole different process. And *although many agencies are lending their people, or resources, or whatever, they are not guiding the process*. So you have to give it time […] At the same moment this is happening it is also occurring a change in leadership, and both things cannot occur at once. It has to take place, form, and start doing the political part. The demonstrative part has been done. But from there you have to do a long term work, which is the political work. What we have to see is if there is the power to be able to do it, because that is what is required…. Because this is not question of two days. It is question of whether you decide that you are going to be in the struggle in the next twenty years. (Blanca Galindez, head of a local organization)[54]

On the other hand, within the group of organizations principally devoted to community empowerment and advocacy, there was some division between the more radical ones and those more prudent, who had been successful in organizing efforts throughout the years and had relationships with authorities and founders they need to preserve. The question then is, was this division central of peripheral? For many, this division affected the momentum of the community. In fact, many attributed this broadly broadcasted split among leaders of the "immigration movement"—

[54] Italics mine.

specifically reflected in their different positions with respect to the boycott of May 1st—as the main cause of the downfall of the movement. Along these lines, one local organizer asserted "unfortunately we didn't have the capacity to maintain that movement… because it is a land in which many people thought they were Gods because they moved a lot of people, so they believed they were the leaders and thus had to guide the immigrant movement". It is important to note, however, that this split happened at a national level. In the Washington area, it could be said that although some organizations claimed a more aggressive stance in the aftermath of the massive demonstration of April 10th, the core of the coalition was basically intact and united in the decision of opting for a more cautious approach.

Another element worth noting is, as said before, the type of involvement of the service union and churches in the effort. In the case of the union, SEIU emerged as a clear leading actor with a decisive involvement in the local political process and, given the continuity of its involvement in the events that followed, it was expected to have significance in the local political scene concerning the Latino community. Churches of different denominations had also gotten engaged in the Latino cause on immigration. The involvement of churches in partnerships with local Latino community-based organizations, however, was not entirely new. It showed the continuity of patterns of collaboration already established among them, and with Latino nonprofits, established with the goal of providing services, mutual referrals, and coordination of specific campaigns (e.g., the domestic workers bill of rights).

One aspect that deserves consideration is the fact that, unlike what happened in 1991, there was no conflict within leadership framed in terms of nationality. The

reality is that the Sensenbrenner Bill was conceived of and collectively viewed as a threat to the immigrant community as a whole, and in particular to the Latino community. At the same time that the community was engaged in the actions as a whole, showing a degree of unity "never seen in the past", no serious attempts of contestation of authority based on nationality legitimacy was posed to the visible heads of the mobilization efforts. In fact, the leadership of the effort, crystallized in the Latino component of the conduction of NCIC was varied and no clear nationality patterns can be attributed.

Although, as we mentioned earlier, new actors emerged in the scene, it is still early to anticipate whether these changes will be sustained overtime:

> I think [a new leadership] is emerging… very slowly… of young people that are attempting to change, but I think it is going to take time. The development of leadership and the birth of a new leadership come many times as a reaction to a crisis, not in anticipation. There is no need to sit down and plan, 'let's start to develop a leadership', when?... that just appears, no? (Blanca Galindez, leader of a Latino organization)

Community unity and increase in community political engagement

As someone told me in one interview, it is easy to organize people against something. Following the same logic, unification is more likely to occur when there is a powerful enemy to fight against. Earlier in this dissertation I mentioned the effective role that organizations played in identifying of threat and opportunity around the Sensenbrenner Bill. The organizing efforts around the rallies of 2006 led to the building of stronger cohesion in the community. One journalist who covered La Marcha told me "The community to certain extent got united then… in a way that

was never seen before. So that set a precedent of what can be accomplished with a good organization, without divisions in the leadership".

Interestingly enough, as the quote above shows, not only did the community unite but so did the leadership. The cohesive leadership that contributed to the mobilization effort in April found itself divided soon after.

As opposed to what happened in the Mount Pleasant Riots, when nationality emerged as a divisive element in the Latino community, nationality was basically absent as an issue in the immigration rallies of 2006. In fact, no claims were made based on nationality. The claims presented in the public sphere were in the name of a larger category that even exceeded the category of Latinos. It was an issue of immigrants, who made a statement as residents of the U.S., emphasizing this new belonging instead of their previous ones. This was an issue largely debated in the media in the aftermath of the rallies, and an element that was carefully addressed by organizers of the rallies.

Also different from what happened in 1991 was the dynamics and divisions within the leadership that followed the rallies. Whereas in 1991 the post-event split was framed in terms of nationality and generations—namely, the old guard versus the new leadership and Puerto Ricans versus Salvadorans--, in the aftermath of the 2006 immigration rallies the splits were framed almost purely in terms of political vision, ideology and strategy—specifically, radicals versus moderate. I will address these divisions in the following subsection.

Additionally, the widespread motivation observed in the community was evidenced in a number of ordinary people, especially youths, many of them with no

previous political experience, actively soliciting room for participation. In other words, instead of the traditional efforts of political outreach from the community-organizations to ordinary people in the Latino community, after the rallies people would come to the organizations with the hope they would find room for participation.

> At a local level I think that we have a big opportunity to continue organizing our community, to continue creating leaders, because many leaders emerged and we did not have the capacity to channel them. Because we did not have the capacity or the resources… quantities that you would not even imagine, people calling, 'I want to participate, I want to participate…' And that has questioned us, it has questioned the structure we have. And we are analyzing a change of structure…. So, in sum, that great quantity of leaders that emerged, that big quantity of people ready to fight, ready to say here we are, we could retain many of them, they are with us, but the great majority, we did not have an internal structure, and neither did the coalition because the coalition is still a baby… it hasn't developed yet (Gonzalo Diaz, leader of Casa de Maryland)

This reinvigoration of the community that occurred in the aftermath of the big rally was captured in expressions such as "we accomplished making the community realize that they have power both in numbers and economically", "we knew the mass of people wanted to go out and march [again]" "in terms of pan-Latino, pro-immigrant consciousness that was a big leap", "there is a lot [gained] about leadership… self-esteem, claiming political space, all that stuff that is qualitative and hard to measure". This sudden high degree of political enthusiasm was particularly noticeable among youths.

The 2006 mid-term election: a boost in Latino electoral participation

There is consensus among most of the informants interviewed about the increase and intensification of political engagement within the local Latino community as a result of the rally of April 10th.

> I would say that [the major gain of these rallies was] a very strong politicization, very big in our community… in this case in a massive level. And that is the importance of these rallies and that people be in the streets. People get politicized. And for us that was very important: the politicization of our community. The fact of understanding that if weren't united as a community we wouldn't be able to do anything. A result of that was that people [in our community] voted massively in the elections of 2006. And they voted largely for pro-immigrants candidates. Not only in the metropolitan area but in the whole country… (A leader of a community-based organization)

This idea that the rallies directly impacted Latinos participation in the 2006 legislative elections appeared in the interviews few times, which is not surprising given the exceptional increases in both voter registration and voting rates observed for Latinos in the area. In the Baltimore-Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, census data[55] shows a substantial increase in registration and participation rates among Latinos between 2002 (when the previous mid-term election took place) and 2006. Non-Hispanic Whites and Non-Hispanic Blacks, on the contrary, experienced a considerably lower gain in both registration and voting. About 60 percent of Latino eligible voters registered in 2006, up from 50 percent in 2002. About 78 percent of these registered voters said they actually voted in 2006, up from 61 percent in 2002. By contrast, 75 percent of white eligible voters registered in 2006, four percentage points higher than in 2002. About 78 percent of these registered voters said they voted in last year's mid-term elections, six percentage points higher than in 2002.

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[55] Source: 2006 Current Population Survey voting registration supplement.

Registration rates for Blacks increased from 2002 to 2006 by only one percentage points, to 66 percent, and voting by four percentage points, to 50 percent (See Figures 3 and 4).
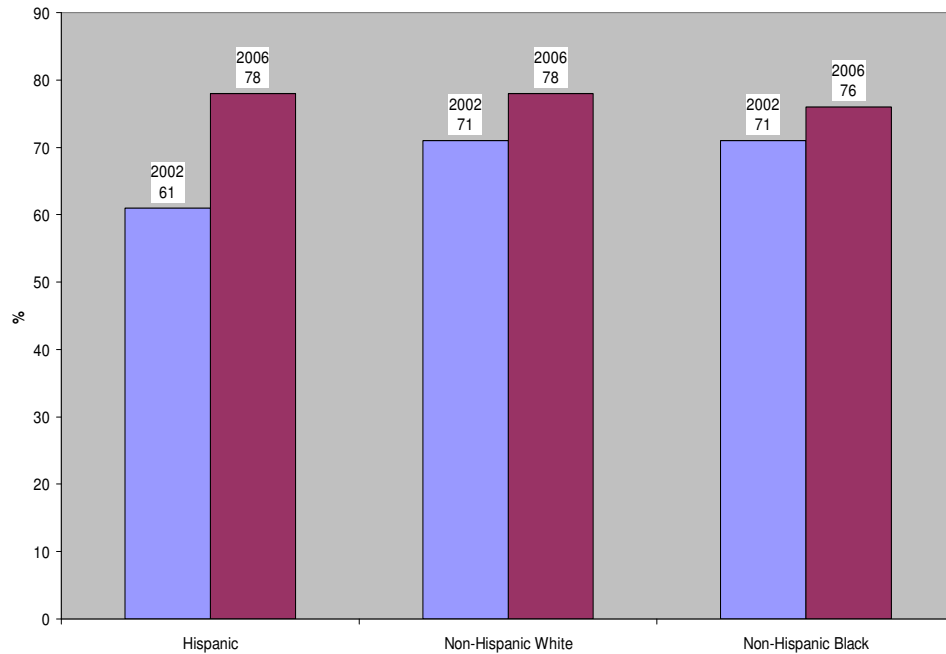
Figure 4

Registration Rate by Race/Ethnicity
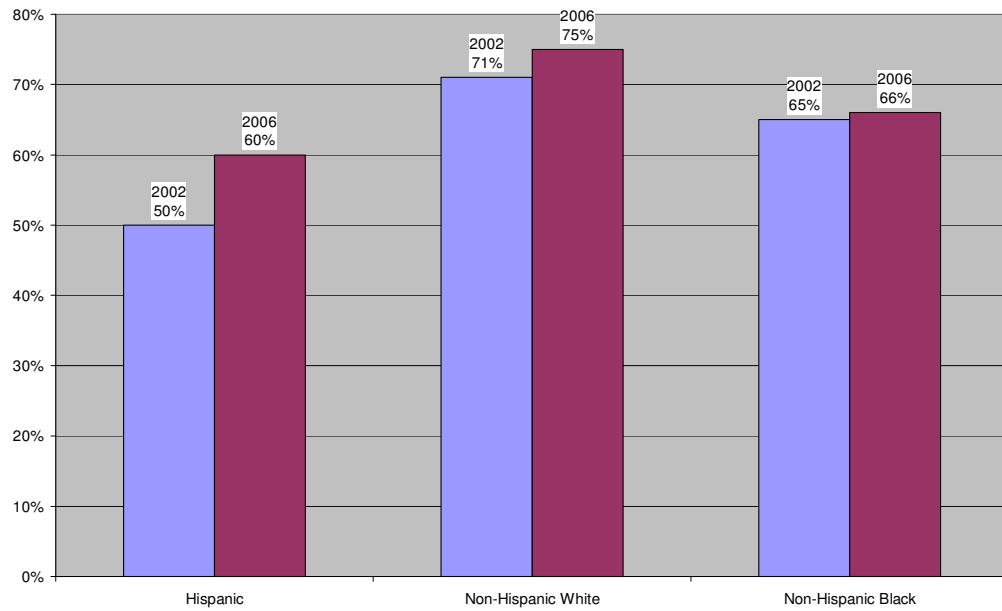
Source: 2002 and 2006 Current Population Survey voting registration supplement

Figure 5

Voting Rate over Total Registered by Race/Ethnicity

These numbers contrast significantly with the distributions observed in the country at large. According to the Pew Hispanic Center (2007), nationally, the increase in registration and participation rates among Latinos between 2002 and 2006 was marginal. Specifically, about 54 percent of Latino eligible voters registered to vote in 2006, up from 53 percent in 2002. In addition, 60 percent of these registered voters claimed they actually casted ballots in 2006, up from 58 percent in 2002. This increase in registration and turnout is not exclusive to Latinos though. Among whites, the registration rate went from 69 percent in 2002 to 71 percent in 2006 and the proportion of registered voters who actually voted increased from 71 to 72 percent in the same period. The shares of blacks who registered and voted, on the other hand, declined. Registration rates decreased from 63 to 61 percent, and voting increased by one percentage point, to 67%.

Looking at voting preferences, evidence shows that in the 2006 mid-term election Latinos leaned strongly in favor of Democrats, taking back part of the support they had provided to the Republican Party in the previous two elections. Based on national exit polls, another report by the Pew Hispanic Center (2006) shows that Latino vote went from 61-37 in favor of Democrats in 2002 to 69-30 in favor of Democrats in 2006. That is, there was a Democratic gain of 8% points among Latinos between these two mid-term elections. This increase, however, is also similar to the gain in Democratic preference among white voters (9%).

Did the rallies really impact Latinos' behavior in the 2006 election? The answer is mixed. On the one hand, as I mentioned earlier, evidence suggests not only that nationally Latinos registration and participation rates in 2006 showed an increase with respect to 2002 but also that their rate of support for Democratic candidates also grew. In the Washington area, in particular, the increase in Latino political participation was quantitatively very important. On the other hand, in order to impute an impact of the rallies on the electoral behavior of Latinos in 2006 it important to look at the roles and actions of different actors involved in the process.

In this regard, some scholars have paid particular attention to the role of political parties in the mobilization of Latino voters. With respect to this, Leal et al. (2008) assert that while several Republican candidates who campaigned on "get tough" proposals did not win re-election bids or open seat contests, Democrats addressed the immigration issue cautiously during the campaign. Additionally, according to Ayón (2006), candidates and leaders from both parties sent ambiguous messages about their immigration views, which, in turn meant that no mandate for a

particular immigration policy was produced by the election. From these works, it is difficult to impute a clear impact of partisan politics on Latinos' electoral participation in the 2006 election.

On the other hand, it is critical to look at the efforts deployed by local organizations to encourage registration and voting among Latinos. In the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, voter mobilization of Latino citizens emerged as the chief strategic line among organizers in the aftermath of the rally. Thus, a considerable amount of the organizing efforts performed by Latino community-based organizations in the area were focused on the encouragement of electoral participation among Latinos. As mentioned earlier, whereas a few organizations suggested getting tougher in the aftermath of the riots, and encouraged people to engage in a boycott on May 1st, this line of action was not supported by the majority and ended up having marginal impact. On the contrary, a number of community-based advocacy-oriented organizations in the area set up a campaign to encourage political participation in elections as a way to capitalize the degree of motivation existent in the community after the event. Looking at the numbers, all these efforts paid off. And this was perceived by several community activists and leaders as one of the most positive consequences of the April 10th rally.

Organizational strengthening and patterns of collaboration

Although it will take more time to get sufficient perspective on the effects of La Marcha to assess whether organizations working with the Latino community were

strengthened and how (in the same way we assessed the organizational changes after the Mount Pleasant Riots), there are some patterns in place that emerged immediately after the rallies. One of which is the consolidation of an existing network of Latino agencies and organizations of different type. Another is the increase in visibility of some organizations previously little known—such as Mexicanos Sin Fronteras— which after the rallies became slightly more visible.

One of the issues I was interested in investigating is whether the participation in this collective effort that resulted in the massive immigration rally of April 10th led to greater collaboration among local organizations. The answers I found can be synthesized by saying that, on the one hand, their participation in this collective effort did enhance the communication among them to a certain extent, and, on the other hand, it was merely the deepening of patterns of collaboration already in place. The first trend is graphically revealed in the following statement by the head of a local community based organization:

> Over the last year particularly around the immigration stuff… the New Virginia and New Maryland initiatives, we developed a much closer relationship with Casa. I mean… one of the beauties of the screwed up Sensenbrenner stuff is that it brings a number of us together. So now… you know, Casa knew about us, we knew of Casa. They would come by one thing or whatever; we'd go there every now and then. But now I think there is much more… it created a structure for much more regular conversation. […] It's like… it's created… just the whole absurd from last year I think helped advance the whole struggle by creating more interactions. So I feel like there's much more possibility of that […] we share a lot about like… how they do services, how we do personnel policy, you know, how to get the word out, communications, they've done trainings and we send people there, etcetera, etcetera. (Gregory Lopez, a local leader)

Part of the synergy achieved by the working together, especially for those organizations that were active members of NCIC, was a product of informal interactions.

If you attended 20 planning meetings with the same people then you actually say hi, how are your kids, and you get to know one another… and something that happened in the Washington area was… not just keep your relationship with coalition partners but… the interest in the stronger organizations of strengthening the weaker organizations. So the African Resource Center was seen as very…. As an important ally to build up in the part of the Latino organizations. And some of the other weaker organizations… you know, they were weak because they were either new or… whatever the case might be. There were more kind of the sense of… we all do better when we are all stronger. So… and that has really had spill over effects on a more collaborative approach when it comes to fund raising, when it comes to media outreach, you know all kinds of things. In terms of the size of one organization to another, Abdul in the African Resource Center, had he been put upfront with the media compared to the other bigger organizations?, probably not. But some of the biggest organizations saw the importance of strengthening his role and some of the other groups. (Cristian Barbero, a local community organizer)

Although the quote above describes an example of collaboration between more established Latino organizations and newer African counterparts, this type of collaboration existed across the board. An interesting element signaled there is that the style of collaboration aimed at fixing perceived imbalances by strategically building a stronger legitimacy base to the movement.

For some, though, the collaboration among organizations is not something new but the continuity of a pattern of joint work that already existed:

I think it's happening that a couple organizations like Mexicanos Sin Fronteras grew… and then the working among themselves among the local groups is happening… have increased the percentage of collaboration. People can say yeah, huge collaboration. But you have to be realistic. There was

some collaboration before… I think it created some awakening… (Eduardo Gonzalez, a community organizer)

Earlier I mentioned that although the organizational infrastructure of NCIC was in place a considerable time before the rallies, it was invigorated throughout the planning of the rallies. After the rallies, however, the NCIC became a communication hub among the politically-oriented Latino organizations—even when many of them continued to have multiples lines of communication among themselves. This was the case at least in the first year after the rallies. In particular, the NCIC became a tool for fundraising and coordination of communication campaigns. Most importantly, after the rally, NCIC became primarily involved with local issues. In other words, although the rallies were mounted to produce an effect at the federal level, after the demonstration, NCIC was used as a vehicle to coordinate actions with respect to attacks or perceived attacks on immigrant communities in different localities in the area. Specifically, some of these activities consisted of campaigns to counteract or respond to raids occurring in the area or to stop anti-immigrant legislation proposals.

All in all, one of the most visible results of the rallies can be read in what Tilly and Tarrow (2007) call coalition formation. In this case, although some coordination of claims existed between the distinct actors grouped under NCIC, this cooperation became strengthened and more visible after the rallies.

The actor seen from outside: Gain of visibility and backlash

The rallies of March and April (especially the one on April 10th) clearly put the Latino community directly in the public eye. Both as a cultural formation and as a

demographic group, Latinos emerged in the public sphere as a group with a very strong presence, evidenced quantitatively and qualitatively; quantitatively, because of the thousands of people who were willing to go to the streets to make claims and qualitatively, because of the turn to visibility and overcoming the fear of becoming coming out from the invisibility that their immigration status condemns them to on a regular basis.

The April 10th demonstration received extensive media coverage, not only during the day, but also before and after.

> After all that, all the headlines of mainstream media, that at least that was also achieved, that mediums such as the Washington Post and the New York Times put a little more interest in the Hispanic community and the fight of the undocumented, no? There started to be headlines everywhere… (Zulma Pizarro, a local journalist)

This media attention meant, in turn, using an expression of one local activist "that that was the issue to deal with". An indication of the impact of the immigration rallies nationally is a speech given by President Bush on May 15th, in which he addressed the nation on immigration reform. In that speech, he specifically mentioned the magnitude of the immigration rallies around the country:

> The issue of immigration stirs intense emotions, and in recent weeks, Americans have seen those emotions on display. *On the streets of major cities, crowds have rallied in support of those in our country illegally.* At our southern border, others have organized to stop illegal immigrants from coming in. Across the country, Americans are trying to reconcile these contrasting images. And in Washington, the debate over immigration reform has reached a time of decision. Tonight, I will make it clear where I stand, and where I want to lead our country on this vital issue. *We must begin by recognizing* the problems with our immigration system.[56] (President Bush)

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[56] http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/05/20060515-8.html; italics mine.

With respect to ordinary people in the community at large, the massive rally also raised awareness about the presence of a category of people—namely, the undocumented—that was coming out to the streets. In the words of one key person involved in the planning, "we generated the debate of immigration very strongly, we were able to educate a lot of people, a lot of politicians". In fact, through the rallies the issue of immigration was fully placed in the public agenda. In other words, the discussion of how to regulate the flow of people into the country as well as how to deal with those already living in the country but without legal permission was displaced from the formal institutions of politics—such as the national Congress, the presidency, the state legislatures, and even local governments—to an arena of public debate. It was not the case that so far immigration was a theme that was not of public concern. However, with the rallies, the theme of immigration was all of the sudden moved into the center of the public agenda of public issues. The nation at large was prompted to consider the issue. In many cases, this also implied taking sides.

On the one hand, according to some interpretations, pushing the issue into the center of public discussion allowed the immigrant community, as a challenger group, to affect the tone of the debate:

> The other thing that those mobilizations accomplished was the fact that this year [2007] the tone of the debate was different. The tone of the debate was not about passing Sensenbrenner, it was about passing a comprehensive immigration reform bill. So it wasn't about you know, let's send everybody back to their countries, you know the antis who have that in their head were always saying that. But really we changed the tone of the debate. From a total anti-immigrant to a okay, this is an urgent matter, you know, a top priority in terms of domestic policy. We need to fix it. You know, and we got really close… (Rubén Portaluppi, a union activist).

On the other hand, one of the results for this demonstration was that "many gringos got frightened to see that the elephant that was asleep woke up". The visual image of the huge quantitative weight of the Latino community revealed the potential political strength that this group could have. According to one of the local leaders "all you need is one more generation", meaning that the children of the undocumented will become full politically-active citizens with a critical influence in the political system.

This fear, in turn, led to a backlash. In particular, some anti-immigrant sectors got better organized and expanded. Several informants interviewed pointed out that "we expect increasing attacks on our community". The attacks that eventually occurred, took the form of raids, deliberately anti-immigrant local ordinances, or even anti-immigrant protests, as well as the hardening of anti-immigrant positions in some mediums of communication.

After the rallies, several local governments started to consider –and eventually pass—legislation with a clear anti-immigrant focus. The case of Prince William's County is maybe one of the more emblematic. In 2007, its Board of Supervisors approved an anti-immigrant resolution that gave local police the authority to interrogate detainees regarding their immigration status and approved a plan to deny certain county services to undocumented immigrants.

In different local governments in the area the issue of immigration was expected to be more central to the discussions and proposals to come. One public official I interviewed described this phenomenon as follows:

I think that we are going to have several [anti-immigrant positions in the legislature]. Because it is like a domino effect, if it is happening in Virginia and other places. Many of my colleagues do not understand and will try to replicate… And we have to be united to gather the community and bring them to the audiences so they can fill those committees and give testimony so we can put a face to the issue. (Monica Diaz, elected official)

In sum, the rallies of 2006 put both the immigrant community (and especially the Latino community) and immigration as a theme, in the center of the public agenda. This exposure had the ability to force a discussion that was already taking place in a relatively fragmented way. It was also capable of taking the debate from the bosom of formal political institutions to a variety of public spaces: from the media to coffee shops, and from academic settings to neighborhood associations. The debate on immigration was definitely capturing broad public attention.

5.7. Conclusions

Although La Marcha was part of a nationwide series of related episodes, the demonstration in Washington, D.C. had significant unique local implications extending both before and after the march that are worth noting. In the former sense, a specific combination of local conditions made the event possible, and in the latter sense, the modes of power and the features of a Latino-based political actor were transformed.

La Marcha precipitated a series of noticeable changes in the internal political organization of Latinos as a collective actor. In regard to the leadership, the demonstration confirmed the centrality of community-based organizations in the political landscape of the community. However, the leadership of these groups were

somewhat divided along ideological lines. This division in the leadership stood out against what happened at the grassroots level. Specifically, La Marcha prompted strong unity and increased political engagement among ordinary people in the community. Although this burst of community activism could not be sustained over time, in large part because organizations were overwhelmed by the sudden mobilization of people wanting to participate, the prevailing political strategies adopted after the rallies did lead to a noticeable increase in registration and voting among Latinos in the 2006 mid-term election. La Marcha also facilitated the consolidation of a network among Latino community-based organizations. In particular, the NCIC, whose role had been pivotal in the organization and planning of the rallies, was re-invigorated as a network that helped share efforts and coordinate activities among organizations in the local level.

The political impact that the immigrant community, and primarily Latinos, achieved in the public sphere through their participation in La Marcha can also be noted in the increased public visibility acquired by Latinos after the demonstration. Through their engagement in the mass public demonstration, Latinos as a group could be seen and heard. Furthermore, according to a widespread interpretation, their large numbers on the streets showed the potential political strength of the group. Of particular importance was the fact that the undocumented, who usually remain hidden from a political point of view, came out and had a say in the political process. More importantly, through their involvement, they made the issue of immigration become a more central public issue.

These indicators of impact in the public sphere were the result of both the initial conditions that made the event possible and the actions that different central actors deployed before, during, and after La Marcha. Preexisting collaborative arrangements among Latino organizations across jurisdictions, the previous mobilizing structure developed by the work a few community-based organizations, and a deliberate pro-immigrant focus in churches and unions and to a certain extent in the media, were necessary yet not sufficient conditions for the organization of La Marcha. The interpretation of a threat in the House approval of the Sensenbrenner Bill and the construction of an opportunity for collective action—through the coordinated planning of the rally—were as critical. The direction of the political space opened by the rally, on the other hand, was the result of a prevailing strategy within the immigration coalition, which prioritized a moderate line of electoral mobilization and lobbying rather than boycotting and escalating in the level of protest. It is not surprising, then, that one of the clearest political consequences of La Marcha and the political work that followed was the increased level of participation of eligible Latinos in the electoral arena.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

The two major events analyzed in this dissertation, the Mount Pleasant riots of 1991 and La Marcha in 2006, constitute the most significant turning points in the local Latino community history from a political point of view. Each of them uncovered dynamics rooted in the community at the same time that they opened the door for substantial changes. It is not my purpose to advance a general theory of political mobilization in immigrant communities, but, rather, to understand each of the cases in its singularity, by disentangling crucial mechanisms that led to their entry in their public sphere and which, in turn, account for the scope of innovations achieved.

In these closing remarks I will go back to the questions around which I organized this research. First, I will look at how the organizational-political context shaped the actions adopted by leaders and, therefore, affected the political path adopted in each case. Following, I will look at the significance that spontaneity or planning of ordinary people mobilization with respect to their control over the course of the events and their outcomes.

Organizational-political context and types of leadership involvement

As seen in previous chapters, each of these major events stemmed from a particular organizational and political context, which, in turn, affected the resources available for mobilization.

The Mount Pleasant riots, in particular, occurred in a context of abrupt demographic change, with Central Americans arriving in large numbers to the area as a result of wars and political instability in their countries of origin. The organizational capital of the community was mainly characterized by the presence of established service providing agencies whose leaders were the visible face of the community. In fact, the heads of these organizations, known in the community as the old guard, emerged as intermediaries between the Latino population and the government. The political representation of the community was, then, mainly channeled through these *agencieros*/as who operated to a large extent as political brokers. This representation was *de facto*, based on the *agencieros*' access to government agents gained through the years, the significance that the services their organizations provided had for the community, and the ties they had with Latino figures appointed to government positions. The main shortcoming of this type of de facto representation was, according to a prevailing view in the community, that in some cases it was not necessarily exerted on behalf of the community but on behalf of their own agencies which they tried to consolidate. It is important to note, however, that since a large proportion of Latinos in the area were noncitizens they could not vote or become formally engaged in the political system. For that reason, service-providing agencies and *agencieros* became so critical not only for the community but also for the government as a way to reach out to the community.

During the 1990s and well into the mid 2000s the Latino population in the metropolitan area experienced extraordinary growth, mainly as a result of an economically-driven immigration wave. While escalating housing costs forced a

number of Latino residents from the District and with newcomers increasingly settling in the suburbs, the community suffered a process of suburbanization during this period. Conversely, the structure of service-providing Latino agencies continued to be concentrated in the district. One of the most interesting phenomena, though, was the emergence or consolidation of a few politically oriented Latino organizations in the suburbs, whose missions were chiefly oriented to community empowerment and advocacy. At the same time, a few regional associations of local organizations were established in the early 2000s. One of them in particular, the NCIC, would eventually become the leading force (as an umbrella institution) in the organization of the rallies. Of special significance was the active engagement of some unions and churches in issues and campaigns affecting the Latino community. During this period, as opposed to what happened in the district, the community showed notable political achievements in the suburbs. In particular, several Latinos were elected for public positions at different levels (including local, county, and state level). In addition, due to informal partnerships with governments, advocacy groups were able to promote several political initiatives that benefited the community (such as driver licenses, domestic workers bill of rights). It is also important to address, though, that after the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, an anti-immigrant atmosphere was palpable in the area, with several attacks registered against immigrants.

Politically, one significant contrast between the pre-riots and the pre-rallies contexts was marked by the change from a model of political representation centered in the role of service-providing agencies and the figure of *agencieros*, and locally appointed leaders, to a more complex one in which *agencieros* still played an

important role but other actors such as advocacy groups, community organizers, and elected officials also emerged as critical players.

The differential organizational-political capital present in the community at both times had a decisive impact on the type of politicization achieved in the community in 1991 and 2006 respectively. However, although the above described contexts are key to understanding the trajectory and transformations achieved in each of the events analyzed; it is not the structure of political organization of the community *per se* that explained its the entry into the public sphere or the innovation that such entry led to. In this dissertation I argue that the profile and structural location[57] of leading organizations involved in the event have a decisive impact on the actions adopted by community leaders which, in turn, affects the direction of the political path taken. I am far from claiming here any kind of structural determinism. However, throughout my research I did find that, in the view of participants of each of the events, the type of organizational arrangement prevailing at each point in time lent itself to particular uses that would ultimately affect the political path that the community would take.

During the Mount Pleasant riots the Latino community surfaced at the center of the public sphere making the "Latino problem" an issue of major concern for local authorities, the media, and the population at large, through the massive presence of people in the streets and the engagement of some youths in acts of violence. However, the community political elite—that is, the set of *agencieros*/as and Latinos appointed in the local government—rapidly got involved taking advantage of the

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[57] By structural location I mean mainly the organizations' dependency on government contracts and foundations grants; their relationship with clients/users/members; and their bonds with other relevant actors.

momentum reached through the continuing violence in the Mount Pleasant neighborhood. The members of this elite were able to do so because they had at hand extraordinary resources. First, they had already developed an agenda with a series of demands for the government in terms of services for the community which gave them the framework to act and frame the problematic of the community. Second, they had this pivotal relationship between the community and government as described above. Third, they had access to the media. Fourth, they had already developed the network of connections among themselves which permitted them to meet and coordinate decisions quickly.

It is important to note, however, that the central role acquired by the community elite was not only a result of their own action but also a product of the place others assigned to them in the process. Examples of this are the role of the mayor who summoned these "leaders" in order to find ways to resolve the "Latino issue"; or the place that the media gave to these leaders or the ones designated by them. Thus, the community elite had a privileged location that favored its involvement in the scene as an influential actor. The set of actions adopted by these *agencieros* or elite leaders, as we saw, would be aimed at reducing conflict (in particular by becoming the mediators with government authorities and avoiding a confrontational strategy) and strengthening their own structural capacity (by capturing more resources and expanding their programs). The dependency with respect to government contracts and also private foundations funding, according to many testimonies, played a significant part in constraining the range of actions that these leaders would be willing to adopt. As one of the interviewees asserted in this

regard, "you cannot go against the government when your money comes from them".

Through their actions, in fact, this elite leadership ending up minimizing the challenging quality of the Latino presence in the public sphere.

In sum, these elite leadership of *agencieros* not only had the resources to become tactically involved in the process opened by the riots of Mount Pleasant, but also had some constraints that shapes the type of involvement they had.

In the 2006 rallies, on the other hand, the involvement of organizations was critical from the beginning. In fact, the event itself was the product of a sophisticated and broad planning effort by different organizations, including the NCIC (which was actually the umbrella organization where the tactical decisions were made), different religious congregations, unions, immigrant organizations working with other communities, and the media. The interpretive construction of the House approval of the Sensenbrenner Bill as a threat to the community—which was done around valued elements in the community that were at risk—was the product of an active work by these organizations. Among all the actors involved, the participation of community-based organizations was key in the sense that it provided feedback from what was perceived as a need by ordinary people in the community. As mentioned earlier, it was within these groups that the decision to take the political fight to the streets and "produce" an event that will put the voice of immigrants into the debate was made.

The structural relations of dependency that constrained the actors intervening in the mobilization effort were largely different from those shaping the actions of *agencieros* in the aftermath of the 1991 riots. In fact, different actors had different

constraints that, as revealed in this research, shaped the types of actions they engaged in.

The social and organizational appropriation that followed the approval of the Sensenbrenner Bill in the Washington area can be divided in two stages—namely, before and after the April 10th rally. Whereas the planning before the rally showed a broad consensus and support from all the groups working with the Latino population in the area, a rift occurred in the aftermath of the rally around how to continue the efforts. Whereas the majority of the groups opted for a "prudent" line of action, consisting of giving the government to react to the event, and mounting a campaign to increase registration and voting among members of the community, another more radical line was sustained by a few groups. In particular, the latter group attempted to adopt a more aggressive approach in an attempt to take advantage of the momentum of political motivation in the community.

As we mentioned earlier, churches, unions, and the media contributed significantly to the extremely high turnout of people in the April 10th rally. In the case of churches (especially the Catholic Church) and unions (in particular SEIU), their participation was, to a great extent, related to an approach they had already adopted on immigration. This approach was a consequence of their membership composition: in both cases, a large proportion of their members were Latinos. So for them, this line was at the very least a matter of survival—and, in many cases, it also coincided with their philosophical approaches. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the media had also a great interest in contributing to the production of a news making event. Community-based organizations, on the other hand, had already demonstrated a

tradition working on pro-immigration or pro-Latino legislations and campaigns. So for them, working on these types of initiatives was part of their missions. In addition, it is important to note that the target of their claims was the federal government. Although many of these organizations had multiple partnerships and rely on contracts from local governments, this was not at all at issue with these types of efforts.

A rift did occur though with respect to the steps to follow after the extraordinary turnout at the April 10th rally. The point of divergence was clearly observed around a planned boycott planned for May 1st. This split occurred in immigrant communities across the country. In the Washington, D.C. area, however, the majority of the leadership did not support such measure. For some of them, such an escalation of aggressiveness in the strategies would clearly jeopardize their relationships with relevant actors. For example, this was clear with one of the unions, which had to protect their members from eventual retaliations by employers, and simultaneously maintain a harmonious coexistence with employers themselves. On the other hand, one of the arguments posed by some of the organizers to justify their lack of support to the boycott or any "aggressive" line of action was that this could eventually create backlash—both by triggering raids from the governments or by activating anti-immigrant groups. As opposed to what happened in 1991, though, dependency from government contracts did not come up as an issue. In fact, a factor to consider is that two of the most active community-organizing groups in the area received government funding explicitly to develop community organizing and political empowerment among low-income immigrants.

In sum, the structural location of the organizations leading the immigration movement in the D.C. area shaped their involvement in the development of the event and its aftermath. In particular, in the adoption of a "moderate" line of action, the reasons encountered for the support of such position referred to potential manifestations of backlash. Thus, this approach sustained by the majority of local organizations can be characterized as protective of their membership and shielding of an incipient immigration movement. In this latter attitude was reflected in the following idea: "we made our point, now we have to wait before striking back."

Spontaneity versus planning

The two cases under analysis are, as we have seen, distinct on many different levels. The most evident aspect is perhaps the sequence in which ordinary people and the elite in the Latino community got involved. In the riots, the community elite irrupted in the public sphere and dominated the political process only after Latino neighbors had come out to the streets spontaneously following the attack of a Latino worker by a police officer. Conversely, the 2006 immigration rallies were to great extent the product of an active and careful process of organization led by community-based organizations. In other words, whereas in the riots the interpretation of a threat in the police attack by ordinary people in the Latino neighborhood took place without mediation and channeled through informal networks, the attribution of threat in the Sensenbrenner Bill required a relatively long and painstaking effort by organizations planning the immigration rallies.

Does it matter whether the reaction to the threat is spontaneous and immediate or is the product of planned organization and mobilization? Does spontaneity in the deployment of the mobilization give the community (ordinary people) more control over the course of the event and its outcomes?

Based on path dependence theory's assumptions (see, e.g. Aminzade 1992) I expected to find that the early and active involvement in the public sphere by Latino ordinary people led to their greater capacity to introduce innovation. In other words, the assumption was that the intense deployment of occurrences located at the initial moments of the event has a significant explanatory capacity of the way in which the political process evolves. For that reason, it also informs the understanding of the ability of the group of interest (in this case Latino immigrants) to generate structural modifications in the public sphere.

In the Mount Pleasant riots the diffusion throughout the neighborhood of a story about the shooting of a working man was the determining factor in opening a gap to allow for some type of inclusion of the Latino community in the political process. In addition, the initial minimization of the occurrences by public officials—especially by the mayor—also contributed to create the conditions for the eruption of more violence and consequently for the subsequent entry of Latino immigrants into the public sphere. Mayor Dixon justified the reason for her absence on the scene during the first night of disturbances, arguing that at that time it seemed little more than "criminal activity." Only when it became clear that the problem was more serious that originally thought did the Mayor and her administration change their approach. Thus, the sustained presence of the residents in the street, and the

engagement of some of them in violent actions, forced public authorities to address the existence of the "Latino problem", which resulted in a series of measures adopted there after.

As seen in Chapter 4, the initial naming and conceptual definition of the problem at the core of the event by Latino neighbors was critical in the following mobilization of the community. However, the appropriation, reframing, and immediate utilization of this story by the Latino elite in their negotiation of a political agenda was critical for the gains achieved by the group. In particular, the Latino leadership intervened in the event, moving the claim from "we are being attacked" to an argument that could be synthesized as "the community is underserved and ignored".

I maintain that that move was key in the shape taken by the political process opened by the riots. In particular, although a new identity-based actor was constituted—reflected in organizational transformations, such as the creation of the DC Latino Civil Task Force and some new figures emerged as speaking on behalf of the community--, there was a widespread agreement, as seen throughout the dissertation, that the main political line adopted consisted of strengthening the service apparatus.

If the framing of the conflict had continued to be "we are being unfairly attacked," it is probable that a more aggressive line would have prevailed, especially considering that one alternative strategy included "suing the government". As we mentioned earlier, this line of action was vetoed by the elite *agencieros*, who

considered such tactic against the main funding source for their organizations and programs to be unviable.

Going back to the question about the spontaneity of ordinary people irruption in the public sphere, I could argue that although their initial presence in the scene was critical in order to create an opening to give the Latino agenda a place, they did not control the contents of such agenda. In fact, the way in which such an agenda was crystallized clearly reflects the impetus of the existing leadership elite. Specifically, the prevailing line adopted favored service expansion and government attention, which, in turn reflects the way in which this leadership elite read the problem underlying the event immediately after the riots got started. Thus, although the disturbances got started with the spontaneous presence of ordinary people in the streets, the community leadership entered the scene immediately. In their entry, these leaders had the capacity (and they put it into practice) to reframe, and control the way in which the further actions on behalf of the community would be adopted.

The 2006 immigration rallies, on the other hand, were, as I mentioned earlier, the result of an initiative generated from an array of community-based organizations and their allies. Given the everyday contact that community organizers and other key planners of the rallies had with ordinary people, some argue that the planning was inspired by these organizers' first-hand understanding of people's needs and feelings. However, the rallies were clearly the result of a coordinating effort led by those organizations. Reversing the question posed earlier, I could then ask: did the lack of spontaneity in ordinary people's appearance in the streets imply that those people had

little control over the way in which the political process opened by the rally was deployed?

Looking at some of the occurrences following the April 10th rally, I would be inclined to maintain that the answer is mixed. One of the main findings in the research was that as a result of the symbolic effect of the massive April 10th rally, an increase and intensification of political enthusiasm was registered within the Latino community. In fact, according to some of the leaders of community-based organizations, the rally "woke up an elephant that was asleep." In other words, many Latinos, especially youths, who had never been engaged in political activities in the past became motivated and developed an interest to participate in other activities. Right after the rally of April 10th many people approached community based organizations asking for opportunities of participation and offering to volunteer. This posed a challenge to the structural capacity of some of these organizations. In fact, some of the heads of these organizations asserted that they felt overwhelmed by the increased demands for participation and could not respond to them. In addition, another example of the increased motivation in some sectors in the community was the occurrence of some isolated protest efforts led by Latino youths in the suburbs.

This increase in ordinary people's motivation to participate was partially capitalized by local organizations. Most of the Latino community-based organizations in the area, as mentioned earlier, set up a campaign aimed at increasing registration and voting in the mid-term election of 2006. These efforts, according to some people in the community, paid off. In fact, compared to the 2002 midterm elections, a

marginal but symbolically significant increase in the rates of registration and voting occurred in the 2006 elections.

A few more radical groups, on the other hand, also tried to take advantage of the political activation of the community, by organizing local rallies. With respect to these episodes, even some of the community-based organizations in the area who favored a moderate political approach maintained that because many in the community wanted to go out they did not want to stop them.

On the other hand, the message that came from the leadership disagreement with respect to the May 1st planned boycott helped to create a decline in the motivation of ordinary people in the community. This became evident in the very low turnout at the rally organized in September 2006.

In sum, although the entry into the public sphere in the rallies of 2006 were not spontaneous, but planned by a broad and sophisticated organizing effort, people did get motivated and there was some "take off" in a community that was usually described as politically apathetic. This increased motivation was of such intensity that it presented a challenge to the capacity of community-based organizations which could not fully take advantage it. Whereas leadership efforts were responsible for the achievement of a large scale mobilization, leadership disagreements also sent a message that was dissuasive for the continuity of the political availability of the community.

In conclusion, in the two cases examined in this dissertation spontaneity—or planning—of ordinary people's entry into the public sphere did not necessarily

account for ordinary people's greater control over subsequent stages of the event. In other words, spontaneous politicization of ordinary people in the Latino community does not necessarily shape their impact in the political process. There is, instead, a twofold process of interaction between symbolic and material actions performed by the leadership, and a range of repertoires and attitudes in the community that contribute toward the construction of a political path. It does not seem accurate to look at whether the leadership follows the community or vice versa. These relations vary over time within each of the events and their aftermaths and initiatives on either side of this divide (leadership-ordinary people) seem to become prevalent at different points in time.

Appendix 1: Mount Pleasant Riots: Detailed chronology of occurrences

1. **Sunday, May 5th. Trigger (enabler): Shooting of a Latino worker**
2. **Rumor swept throughout the community**
3. **First outbreak of violence: Hundreds of angry youths hurling rocks and bottles**
4. **D.C. Mayor Sharon Pratt Dixon: from distant monitoring to gradual involvement**
5. **Monday, May 6th. D.C. Mayor Sharon Pratt Dixon skipped the meeting that Hispanic leaders called to discuss the incident**
6. **Monday, May 6th: Dissatisfaction and anger among Hispanic residents in Mount Pleasant**
7. **Evening of Monday, May 6th. Mayor Dixon visited the area**
8. **Monday, May 6th. Second night of rioting**
9. **Imposition of a curfew**
10. **Success in pacification of the area**
11. **Morning of Tuesday, May 7th. Mayor Dixon, D.C. police chief and other city officials met with Hispanic community leaders**
12. **Tuesday, May 7th. Conformation of a task force aimed at improving relations between city government and Hispanic residents (multicultural task force)**
13. **Meetings between Hispanic community leaders and youths**
14. **Dixon and her aides fought with the area's news media, in an effort to limit their coverage of the disturbance area during the curfew**
15. **Night of Tuesday, May 7th. Imposition of curfew from 7:00 pm to 5:00 am (May 8th)**
16. **Mayor Dixon achieved a broad support for her actions**
17. **Wednesday, May 8th. Mayor Dixon met with multicultural task force of Hispanic community leaders**
18. **Hispanic leaders expressed concerns that officials from the US Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) were helping local courts process those arrested**
19. **D.C. Police Chief denied having requested any assistance from INS**
20. **INS authorities recognize involvement in an informational role only**
21. **Night of May 8th. Third night of curfew**
22. **Rumors that Gomez had died became so pervasive in the area's Hispanic community that the police convinced Gomez's sister to announce publicly that he was still being treated.**
23. **Thursday, May 9th.City offers jobs to Hispanic youths**
24. **News about Mount Pleasant disturbances spread out all over the world**
25. **Thursday, May 9th. Mayor Dixon decided to lift the curfew**
26. **Thursday, May 9th. Dixon extended a formal state of emergency in the city indefinitely**
27. **Thursday, May 9th. Businesses along Mount Pleasant Street (heart of Mount Pleasant neighborhood) planned a celebration for Saturday afternoon**
28. **Thursday, May 9th. Formation of the D.C. Latino Civil Rights Task Force (D.C. Latino)**
29. **Night of May 9th. Life starts to return to normal in the area**
30. **Friday, May 10th. Mount Pleasant merchants announced plans for outdoor party for customers they expect to come back**
31. **Saturday, May 11th. Outdoor party in Mount Pleasant**
32. **The sudden increased attention to the Hispanic community has irritated some black leaders**
33. **Sunday, May 12th. Proclaiming a day of reconciliation, D.C. Mayor Dixon, city officials and religious leaders from Mount Pleasant gathered at the Shrine of the Sacred Heart.**
34. **Tuesday, May 14th. The City's Civilian Review Complaint Board (CRCB), which investigates complaints of police misconduct, held a forum for residents of Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant**
35. **Tuesday, May 14th. D.C. Latino task force chairman requested a commission to start intensive hearings on the city's treatment of Hispanics**
36. **Wednesday, May 16th. City officials are asking businesses, churches and civic groups to hire several thousand teenagers who may not be able to get jobs because of budget cuts**
37. **The D.C. Office on Latino Affairs (OLA) criticized as an impotent organ**

38. May 16th. The US CCRB is reviewing complaints that police have regularly harassed and physically abused Hispanics and that the city has ignored them in hiring and budgeting

39. May 22nd. Diffusion. A Governor's commission was recommended that the Montgomery County police force improve its training, hire more Hispanic officers and increase its sensitivity to the county's rapidly growing Hispanic community, as a necessary step to avoid incidents like the ones that took place in MP.

40. May 24th. Mayor Dixon picks acting Latino Affairs Chief: Mara Lopez

41. May 24th. D.C. Latino approves of Mayor's choice for the OLA

42. May 28th. The US CRC announced it will investigate the economic and social status of Hispanics in the District

43. May 30th. D.C. Latino began meeting with top city officials to discuss how to improve the life quality of Hispanic residents

44. May 30th. In the meeting, Aviles and the D.C. Latino task force took a step toward legitimating themselves by asking the mayor to recognize the task force as "the body representing the interests of the Latino community"

45. June 15th. D.C. police had receptions at two precinct houses in an effort to improve the Department's image among Hispanics

46. June 27th. Coalition of Hispanic and other community groups announced initiatives to improve life for minorities in D.C.

47. July 12th (approx.). A group of merchants discontented with the official efforts to arrest looters and vandals from the Mount Pleasant disturbances, has begun soliciting videotapes and photographs of the violence in order to identify the subjects and report them to the police

48. July 25th. Mayor Dixon and Metro Police Chief restated their plan to step up police programs in the Hispanic communities of Mount Pleasant and Adams Morgan

49. Leaders in the Hispanic community said the problems that triggered the riots were still present for many immigrants in Mount Pleasant and Adams Morgan

50. July 27th. Diffusion. Arlington County community leaders warned that unless the county provided more jobs, and housing incidents could "explode"

51. September 11th. The D.C. Latino Task Force sent a report to Mayor Dixon requesting parity in jobs, city services, city contracts and education

52. September 11th. The leader of D.C. Latino Task force threatened with mobilization

53. September 13th. Mayor Dixon endorsed key goals sketched in the report issued by the D.C. Latino task force

54. D.C. Latino task force questioned the mayor's proposal that all initiatives concerning Hispanic community be handled by the city's OLA

55. Aviles and the D.C. Latino task force have been seeking support from several members of Congress to advance their agenda.

Appendix 2: "La Marcha": Detailed chronology of occurrences

1. December 16, 2005. The United States House of Representatives passes the Border Protection, Anti-terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act (H.R. 4437, also known as the Sensenbrenner bill).

2. Immigrant advocacy organizations plan and coordinate actions

- **Activation of an already existing (in latency) group: the National Capital Immigration Coalition**

3. March 8, 2006. Near Capitol, thousands protest against Sensenbrenner bill.

- **First experiment: (the March rally)—expectations exceeded**
- **The demonstration, organized by the National Capital Immigration Coalition, drew people from across the region, many of them carrying small US flags.**
- **Organizers of the protest had predicted a turnout of 20,000, but a spokesman for the coalition said the crowd far exceeded that.**

4. Different organizations coordinate actions to organize a national rally to oppose the bill. In the Washington area, Intense and aggressive coordination of efforts for the April 10th rally:

- **Use of radios**
- **Active utilization of networks of community organization**
- **Street work**
- **Unions involvement**
- **Churches involvement**
- **Social clubs and community service organizations involvement**
- **Resources invested**
- **Coordination across the country**
- **60 organizations coordinate the Washington demonstration**

5. April 10th, 2006. Massive demonstration in the Washington Monument (part of the massive demonstrations by Hispanics across the country).

- **Hundreds of thousands of pro-immigration demonstrators mobilized in the Mall**
- **Most significant public expression on political issues by the Hispanic community (leading a movement that also included other groups)**
- **Some of the signs seen: "Immigrant nation" , "I'm an immigrant, and I vote", "Brown and proud", "Immigrants built this country", "We vote and pay taxes", "We are Americans too" "Bring us out of the shadows", "Working is not a crime", "Stop 4437", "El pueblo unido jamas sera vencido", "A gente veio para trabalhar", "Si, se puede"**

6. April 14th, 2006. The coalition of grass-roots that staged the huge rallies in March and April torn over an ambitious next step: a massive job and economic boycott that some called "A Day without immigrants"

7. Division in leadership over May 1st protest

- **Some community groups support a general boycott on May 1st**
- **A panel of immigration activists said it would not encourage workers and families to walk off the job and keep their children from school as part of a May 1 boycott, but would hold voter recruitment and petition drives instead (April 20th)**
- **A group cautioned immigrants that it might put their jobs at risk (April 27th)**

8. Some groups use momentum for new fights:

- **Housing activists enlist energized immigrants**
- **Vote registration campaigns**
- **Organizations encourage people to sign petitions**

9. Backlash: arrests of undocumented immigrants after high profile federal investigations in other states spark rampant rumors that law enforcement officials are randomly targeting the Latino community in the Washington region.

10. **May 1ˢᵗ. Many leaders of the April 10ᵗʰ immigration rally on the Mall cautioned against participation in the boycott, and some activists from the Washington region and elsewhere encouraged immigrants to stay away from work, school and stores.**
11. **Tensions in the leadership. Disputes over "who owned the movement".**
12. **President Bush's growing confidence that he will secure a victory on immigration runs in direct contrast to the House Republican leadership, which is prepared to block legislation that offers illegal immigrants a path to citizenship without sending them home.**
13. **May 1ˢᵗ, 2006. Rallies and boycotts of schools and businesses take place across the nation.**
    - **Illegal immigrants and their supporters seek to present a case to the American people that they are vital to the country's economy and should not be subject to deportation.**
    - **Although the protests caught the nation's attention, the economic impact was mixed.**
    - **In the District, more than 1,000 people rallied at Meridian Park in the Mount Pleasant neighborhood, and smaller rallies were held in Herndon, Alexandria and Baileys Crossroads.**
    - **The action may have been stronger had the coalition of grass-roots organizations that advises immigrants not been deeply conflicted over whether to endorse the boycott.**
    - **Some supported the effort to demonstrate immigrant power, but others discouraged it, saying it was premature because Congress has not taken action since the first demonstrations an because the strike might induce a backlash by those born in the United States.**
14. **May 3ʳᵈ, 2006. After protests, backlash grows. Opponents of illegal immigration are increasingly vocal.**
15. **May 3ʳᵈ, 2006. Labor site backlash felt at polls in Herndon. Three who supported immigrant center ousted.**
16. **May 18ᵗʰ, 2006. Immigrant advocates take their case to Capitol Hill. Activists lobby members of congress.**
17. **May 19ᵗʰ, 2006. Immigrants keep close watch on Congress**
    - **Immense hope has been created among some immigrants by the launch of a national immigrant rights movement, huge protest rallies across the country and the perception, largely fueled by the Spanish-language media, that the Bush administration backs their cause.**
18. **June 9ᵗʰ, 2006. Applications for US citizenship surge. Immigrants nationwide responding to threat of congressional crackdown.**
19. **June 30ᵗʰ, 2006. By pushing English-only policies and tough measures against illegal immigrants, House conservatives endanger President Bush's goal of drawing millions of Latino voters to the Republican Party and helping realign ethnic politics for years to come.**
20. **July 14ᵗʰ, 2006. Hispanics cite rise in discrimination since the start of the congressional debate over illegal immigration, according to a survey.**
21. **August 31ˢᵗ, 2006. After four months of relative quiet, immigration reform advocates are mobilizing a new round of protests in Washington and other cities to put pressure on a returning Congress and reinvigorate a Latino movement that awakened in massive demonstrations this spring.**
    - **In the Washington region, activists are distributing leaflets, and Spanish-language radio is buzzing about a Sept. 7 rally that organizers hope will be the biggest yet.**
    - **Organizers say their goal is 1 million protesters from up and down the East Coast for a rally on the Mall and a march to the White House.**
    - **In media interviews and on fliers organizers simplify their focus to key demands: legalization for the unauthorized and an end to stepped-up arrests of illegal immigrants**
    - **The return to street protest, a tactic that galvanized millions this spring, comes after public discord among activists over a May 1 work boycott and a summer when their focus turned to immigrant voter registration drives. At the same time, new immigration legislation grew even more elusive in Congress, which is deadlocked on the issue.**
    - **The immigrant movement is still developing. Regional coalitions are trying to figure out how to work together nationally, and no clear leader has emerged. Locally, the National**

Capital Immigration Coalition -- a network of about 60 organizations that has existed for four years -- is just now defining the qualifications for formal membership.

- **Organizers estimation: Organizers say the movement has not lost steam. Immigrants, they said, are enthusiastic about the coming protests, believing the demonstrations empower them and weaken support for an enforcement-only House proposal.**
- **Other observers are uncertain. Carlos Aragon, general manager of Radio Fiesta (1480 AM), a Woodbridge station that has been broadcasting information about the Sept. 7 rally, said the event is a hot topic among listeners -- but they now sound more cautious.**
- **Unlike previous rallies that drew people from the Washington region, the Sept. 7 event will include participants from along the East Coast. Organizers said at least 100 busloads of marchers will roll in.**
- **To encourage local turnout, organizers are intensifying the strategies they used in the spring. They are playing radio promotional spots each hour on some Spanish-language stations. Volunteers are distributing fliers at churches, soccer fields, Metro stations and construction sites.**

22. **September 7th, 2006. Immigration activists mass in front of the Capitol, renewing their appeal for legislative reform as Congress reconvenes after a recess in which many members experienced a backlash against illegal immigration back home.**
    - **Local organizers say they expect hundreds of thousands of demonstrators from the East Coast, although protests the same week in Phoenix and Chicago drew disappointing crowds.**
    - **Organizers express little hope that Congress would act on immigration that election year.**
    - **Organizers see the new round of protests—and voter registration drives that started slowly in the summer—as part of a still-nascent pro-immigration movement**
    - **"It's obviously really important that we get good numbers but also that the message gets across to Congress", said Contreras, the Chairman of the National Capital Immigration Coalition, organizing the rally.**
    - **Immigrant activists are seeking legal status for all immigrants and a halt to increased raids and deportations.**
    - **Organizers initially predicted a turnout of 1 million, but are now projecting a crowd similar to the one at a rally of April 10. A police official estimated that the demonstrated drew at least 100,000 people; organized pegged attendance about 500,000.**
    - **About 200 buses—half from Eastern states outside the Washington region—are scheduled to stream into the District for the rally. (Local organizers have contracted fewer buses than for previous protests and have encouraged local demonstrators to take public transportation.**
    - **Organizers printed fliers in Arabic, Swahili, Korean, Amharic, French and Chinese, among other languages. African and Asian community organizations publicized the demonstration in news conferences with local ethnic media. In each, they emphasized that the effect of immigration reform would stretch beyond Latinos, by potentially cracking down on the 200,000 estimated illegal Korean immigrants, for example, or by influencing the backlog for relatives' immigration applications.**

23. **September 7, 2006. Immigration rally's low turnout disappoints advocates; fear of backlash, mixed messages, timing are cited.**
    - **A pro-immigration rally that promised to bring tens of thousands of marchers from across the nation to Washington yesterday managed to draw only a paltry number of demonstrators, raising questions about the movement's tactics and staying power.**
    - **With fewer than 5,000 people attending, organizers from other localities expressed two worries about the turnout: that they were losing the momentum built up by the huge marches in the spring, and that the movement's national organizers in Washington have lost touch with the people.**
    - **But, in contrast to spring's huge rallies -- which brought an estimated 100,000 to 300,000 people to the streets of Washington, and even larger turnouts in Los Angeles, Dallas,**

Phoenix and Chicago -- yesterday's march was the latest in a string of protests that drew paltry crowds in the past week.

24. In the four months since the first marches, competing immigration bills have stalled in the House and the Senate.
    - The House bill, favored by opponents of illegal immigration, would force undocumented workers currently in the country to return home before being allowed to work.
    - The Senate bill would permit illegal immigrants to pay a fine and gain permission to work.

25. Immigrants prepare for next step. Citizenship and voting take priority after marches disappoint.

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