Introduction

> Instead of a sleeping giant awakened, it's more likely that the giant immigrant workforce never had time to fall asleep to begin with. The immigrant community has been too busy working double and triple shifts harvesting crops, tending gardens, washing dishes, building homes, and taking care of other people's children ... Sometimes the struggle is quiet at work; sometimes it is loud on the streets; there are relative successes along with relative failures – but it has never been asleep ... It might, instead, be the "experts," politicians, and the media ... that has been awakened to the fact that vast portions of the United States are made up of immigrants who will mobilize when threatened ... Hopefully history will get it right this time.[1]
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> – Aura Bogado, immigrant journalist April 18, 2006

The spring of 2006 exploded with a historic wave of protests across the United States. The primarily Latino immigrant rights mobilizations that occurred captured the nation's attention with a series of mass demonstrations coupled with various other forms of dissent – both peaceful and militant – ranging from school walkouts and hunger strikes to boycotts and candlelight prayer vigils. During one action in Dallas, Texas, students, priests, and individuals in wheelchairs rallied alongside Iraqi war veterans, small business owners, and senior citizens walking with canes. As they descended on the city's downtown streets, this "sea of people" – by some estimates, up to half a million large – chanted "*Si se puede!*" and carried homemade signs that read, "Today we march. Tomorrow we vote!"[2] Protests erupted in rural and unexpected places as well. In Siler City, North Carolina, for example, "More than 4,000 people, most donning white shirts and waving US flags, crammed into the streets for a march to the same town hall where former-KKK Grand Wizard, David

Duke, once delivered an anti-immigrant speech."[3] Local organizers had originally planned for a permitted rally of no more than 200 participants, but as one of them later recalled, "We started the march with about 2,000 people, and we had close to twice that many by the time we ended it." She added, "One of the most amazing images" of the action "was going street to street and seeing the invisible become visible, seeing people come out of their homes and basements and waiting on street corners to join the march."[4]

The protests took many forms, individual and collective alike, but they all had a common target: *The Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005*, more commonly known as H.R. 4437, or the "Sensenbrenner Bill."[5] In addition to severely increasing border control and interior immigration enforcement measures, the proposed law sought to change the penalty for being undocumented from a mere civil violation to a federal felony. The bill also intended to punish individuals who assisted – even in the most basic ways – any of the nation's estimated 11 million "people without papers" (undocumented immigrants), by threatening to impose monetary fines and incarceration, potentially criminalizing everyone from teachers and family members to employers and social service providers.

As the marches spread, their historical significance became more and more apparent. Many asserted that "everyone who participated" would remember them "for the rest of their lives"; indeed, the outbursts, as massive as they were varied, were unprecedented (Shore 2006). Members of labor unions, religious groups, hometown associations, and community organizations joined the national "We Are American Alliance" or one of the many citywide "calendar coalitions" (e.g., Chicago's March 10 Coalition and Boston's May Day Committee) that sprouted across the nation to organize local rallies. But the preponderance of protesters were people who did not belong to any of these groups and had never participated in political activism. The bulk of these actions took place across four months, from February to May, and by the end of the protest wave, up to five million people had partaken in close to 400 demonstrations from coast to coast (Wallace, Zepeda-Millán, and Jones-Correa 2014). In all likelihood, the April 10 "National Day of Action for Immigrant Justice" and May 1 "Great American Boycott/Day Without an Immigrant" were the largest civil rights actions in U.S. history, the biggest immigrant rights protests the world has ever witnessed, and marked the dawn of what we understand as contemporary Latino politics (Fraga et al. 2010: 1; Bloemraad, Voss, and Lee 2011: 4).[6]

Although, like so much of the recent past in our fast-moving world, these momentous events may already feel like a distant memory, they have much to teach us. As a group of leading political scientists recently acknowledged, "almost nothing we 'know' about Latinos from the work of social scientists and humanists would have predicted these events" (Fraga et al. 2010: 1). Bringing together insights from scholarship on racial politics, immigration, and social movements, this book offers the first systematic analysis of the 2006 immigrant rights protest wave. Beginning with an overarching theoretical explanation for its emergence, I then zoom in and focus on the local processes and mechanisms that composed the national series of demonstrations through an examination of key episodes of collective action on the West Coast, East Coast, and in the Southern United States. I investigate what accounts for the wave's sudden rise and abrupt decline, theorize explanations for the different degrees of mobilization across varying geographic locations, and examine what – if any – impacts the mass marches had on immigration policy reform efforts and electoral politics. In the process, I hope to reveal how a specific type of legislative threat politicized the collective identities of millions of Latinos and, to a lesser extent, other minority groups with large immigrant populations, in turn making them receptive to calls for mass mobilization. What we know, in retrospect, is that this wave was both created and then ridden by longtime activists and by people who had never held a banner or marched in a rally. This incredibly varied group of individuals appropriated and activated community resources and institutions that already existed, disseminating their calls for protest through ethnic media outlets and organizing one of the largest cycles of coordinated mass mobilizations ever to occur. But while this basic narrative is now clear, there is much that is not.

The Surprising Emergence of the 2006 Protest Wave

American Political Behavior

Research on political behavior in the United States has traditionally shown that the "resources of time, money, and skills are powerful predictors of political participation" (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995: 285); thus, it is a longstanding truism that "the wealthy, the educated, and the partisan" are most likely to be targeted by politicians and political parties for mobilization in electoral politics (Rosenstone and Hansen 2003: 32). In addition, contrary to common belief, although protests are generally thought of as instigated by a society's socially and economically

marginalized members, scholars have found that the poor are actually less likely to participate in political activism (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995: 191; Schussman and Soule 2005). Not surprisingly, given these findings, racial and ethnic minorities have likewise been shown to partake in both electoral politics (e.g., voting) and non-electoral politics (e.g., attending marches or rallies) at lower levels than white Americans (Schlozman and Brady 1995: 234–235; Rosenstone and Hansen 2003: 77; Leighly and Nagler 2013). Since immigrants of color in general, and Latinos (both U.S.- and foreign-born) in particular, were the majority of the 2006 protesters, exploring the factors that influence their political engagement may help us better understand this cycle of contention.

Because citizenship is a prerequisite to vote, many scholars of immigrant politics have traditionally focused on naturalization as a key barrier to immigrant political integration (DeSipio 1996; Jones-Correa 1998; Bloemraad 2006). For example, Jones-Correa (1998) notes that while longer lengths of stay in the U.S. increase the likelihood that an immigrant will embark on this process, both the "myth of return" to their homeland and neglect by local political elites and institutions (e.g., political parties) produce a "politics of in-between" that thwarts, or at least slows, efforts at naturalization. Nonetheless, some studies have shown that with the assistance of "social helpers," such as local community-based organizations, unions, and churches, even if mobilization is small in scale, immigrants can sometimes be marshaled to naturalize (Bloemraad 2006) and take part in forms of both mainstream (de Graauw 2016) and unconventional politics (Wong 2006).

Similarly, research shows that although Latinos have lower levels of political engagement when compared to other racial groups (Leighly and Nagler 2013), they also tend to participate more when recruited to do so, especially when asked by a co-ethnic or someone they know (Michelson 2005: 98; Barreto and Nuño 2009). Voter turnout among Latinos also increases with the size of their population (Barreto, Segura, and Woods 2004), because they become more likely to be targeted by political elites in "get-out-the-vote" (GOTV) efforts (Leighley 2001: 171). Furthermore, studies have shown that Latino registration and voting increases in hostile political contexts, suggesting an electoral response to perceived political threats (Barreto and Woods 2005). When disaggregating the Latino electorate by nativity, research suggests that recent immigrants are less likely to participate in politics than their U.S.-born counterparts (DeSipio 1996; Leal 2002; Highton and Burris 2002; Wong 2006). In general, foreign-born Latinos not only "tend to have the age, education,

and income characteristics of the electoral nonparticipants" (De la Garza and DeSipio 1997: 108), they also are less civically engaged in the types of organizations that facilitate participation and that political elites target for mobilization (Garcia 2003: 98, 183). But this is not always the case.

In a notable study examining foreign-born voter turnout, Barreto (2005) found that "with extensive mobilization drives targeting naturalized voters," Latino immigrants were actually "significantly more likely to vote than were ... native-born Latinos" (79). And, in terms of context, Ramakrishnan and Espenshade (2001) have shown that the presence of anti-immigrant legislation has a positive effect on electoral participation among immigrants (870). Other studies find that immigrants who naturalize in a hostile political (i.e., nativist) environment express increased levels of political awareness, are more likely to see race as a salient issue, and participate at higher levels than cohorts who become citizens during relatively apolitical periods (Pantoja, Ramirez, and Segura 2001; Pantoja and Segura 2003). These findings imply that despite lacking some of the traditional resources associated with political participation and often not being targeted for mobilization, Latino electoral engagement can increase in certain political environments – such as in times of serious political threat.

To fully understand the dynamics of the 2006 protest wave and its aftermath, however, it is also essential to examine what we know about Latino – both immigrant and U.S.-born – involvement in political activism prior to 2006. According to Marquez and Jennings (2000), "social movement organizations were often the only outlets for political representation and self-defense in a society where Latinos were outnumbered and barred from effective participation in the institutions of government." They contend, "Latino organizations generated a leadership cadre and served as vehicles through which interests of class, gender, occupation, and ideology were mediated through the lens of race" (541). But, in spite of a rich history of activism (for examples see Muñoz 1989; Torres and Velazquez 1998; Torres and Katsiaficas 1999; Fantasia and Voss 2004; Ruiz and Sanchez Korrol 2005; Blackwell 2011), polling data have traditionally shown that Latinos are less likely to participate in contentious politics compared to other racial and ethnic groups (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995: 234–235; Leighly and Nagler 2013). Moreover, survey research has revealed that Latino immigrants in particular are significantly less likely than U.S.-born Latinos to engage in non-electoral political activities, including protests (Leal 2002: 361; Martinez 2008: 197; Martinez 2005; Bloemraad, Voss, and Lee 2011: 19).

Yet, as mentioned earlier, Latinos – both U.S.- and foreign-born – made up the vast majority of participants in the 2006 rallies. In fact, second and third generation Latinos were just as likely to attend the demonstrations as recently arrived Latino immigrants were (Barreto et al. 2009: 753; see also Pallares and Flores-Gonzales 2010: xvi). Consequently, as informative as previous research on Latino and immigrant political behavior has been in elucidating the political incorporation of these groups, they are nonetheless theoretically limited in their ability to explain the dynamics of the historic series of immigrant rights demonstrations. These studies are insufficient because of two reasons. Either (a) they restrict their investigations to voting and naturalization, in effect neglecting more contentious forms of politics (e.g., protests) as well as the participation of the undocumented and those with little, if any, chance of gaining citizenship (see DeSipio 1996; Jones-Correa 1998; Ramkrishnan and Espenshade 2001; Ramakrishnan 2005; Bloemraad 2006; Fraga et al. 2011). Or (b) when they do focus on overt forms of political activism and do consider people without papers, they fail to adequately integrate the valuable insights of social movement theory into their analyses (see Garcia Bedolla 2005; Wong 2006; Pallares and Flores-Gonzalez 2010; Garcia-Rios and Barreto 2016).[7]

Social Movement Theory

The dominant paradigm in the study of social movements, known as "political process theory," maintains that four major factors help generate insurgency: first, and foremost, the confluences of expanding political opportunity structures; second, the establishment of "indigenous organizational strength" (because of their networks, leadership, and resources); third, the "presence of certain shared cognitions" (a feeling of perceived injustice that is subject to change through collective action) within the insurgent group; and last, but not least, the "shifting control response of other groups to the movement" (from state officials to countermovements) (59). Key dimensions of political opportunity structures include: "1) the opening of access to participation for new actors; 2) the evidence of political realignment within the polity; 3) the appearance of influential allies; 4) emerging splits within the elite; and 5) a decline in the state's capacity or will to repress dissent" (Tarrow 1998: 76). Through their political process approach – and its expanding opportunity thesis – these theorists have gone a long way toward helping us comprehend the social, economic, and historic foundations of social movements; the political contexts in which they emerge, do battle, and decline; the institutional barriers they face; their chances for success; the organizational structures

they utilize; and various other aspects of major protest waves and political activism (see Tilly 1978; McAdam 1982; Tarrow 1998; Koopmans 2004; Kriesi 2004).

Yet as much as these theorists have contributed to our understanding of social movements, critics argue that their notions of "political opportunities" are not only too broad but also have structural biases that tend to ignore the role that grievances and emotions play in the emergence of contention (Goodwin and Jasper 2004: 5–9; Klandermans 2004: 362). For instance, while some movements have risen up to take advantage of expanding opportunities, others have emerged when the "window of opportunity" seemed to be contracting if not outright closed (Meyer 1993: 37; Ayoub 2016: 15). These movements thus appear to respond not to opportunities per se, but to some type of contextual danger or threat.

External threats have often been conceptualized as "the other side," or the opposite, of opportunities; the standard argument is that as threats rise, opportunities decline. But according to Goldstone and Tilly (2001), a "group may also decide to risk protest, even if opportunities seem absent, if the costs of not acting seem too great" (181–183; see also Buechler 2004: 61; Almeida 2012; Piven and Cloward 1977). Consequently, prominent social movement theorists have concluded that, "Threats and opportunities co-occur, and most people engaging in contentious politics combine response to threat with seizing opportunities" (Tilly and Tarrow 2006: 58). They add, however, that "it is only when a threat is accompanied by perceived opportunities for action and seen as potentially irreversible if not stopped that challengers will risk what often turns out to be a heroic defeat" (Tarrow 1998: 72). Thus, research on activism now takes a more "dynamic" approach (McAdam, Tilly, and Tarrow 2001) and acknowledges the significance of organizations, resources, networks, culture, coalitions, and emotions to the development of collective action (Jasper 2014; Van Dyke and McCammon 2010; della Porta and Diani 2006), as well as the importance of understanding the political contexts (e.g., opportunities and threats) in which social movements arise, attempt to bring their goals to fruition, and ultimately wane (Klandermans and Roggeband 2010: Buechler 2011; Tarrow 2011; Paschel 2016). That said, social movement scholars have nonetheless under-theorized how different dimensions of threat can impact collective action in different ways. As I argue below, the immigrant rights demonstrations can help shed light on this lacuna.

The 2006 protest wave is an example of large-scale collective action emerging during a time of great political threat and closed, or constricted, opportunities. There are three primary reasons why this characterization

fits: (a) the Republican Party (the more anti-immigrant of the two major U.S. political parties) controlled every branch of the federal government;(b) the post-9/11 nativist context in which the marches arose (Abrejano and Hajnal 2015; Gulasekaram and Ramakrishnan 2015; Sampaio 2016); and, perhaps most importantly, (c) the looming legislative threat (H.R. 4437) that rally organizers and participants responded to (Barreto et al., 2009; Pallares and Flores-Gonzalez 2010).[8] This last point is in line with Okamoto and Ebert's (2010) important study that found a positive correlation between nativist legislation and immigrant rights protests, which they speculate may be related to how the former impacts immigrant identity. Unfortunately, their survey data do not allow these authors to further investigate this possibility. Consequently, Okamoto and Ebert (2010) call for future research to "explore the processes and mechanisms" underlying the relationship between threat, identity, and immigrant activism (552). Bloemraad et al. (2011) agree and assert that "a more nuanced account" of the role that "threat and perceptions of threat" played in the 2006 mobilizations is needed to advance our theoretical understanding of this extraordinary series of events (29).

It is my hope that this book will begin to help answer these important questions, given how little we know about the relationship between immigration, social movements, and racial politics (Menjivar 2010; 18). To do so, *Latino Mass Mobilization: Immigration, Racialization, and Activism*, spotlights the actions and motivations that inspired and shaped the trajectory of the historic 2006 protest wave. We will gain these broad insights via a narrow focus on three specific locations (Fort Myers, FL, Los Angeles, CA, and New York, NY), and on what I see as the key commonalities that enabled the mass marches in these places: the utilization of local community resources, the formation of diverse coalitions, and the use of ethnic media outlets to broadcast calls for protests and electoral mobilization. But before we can understand how these unprecedented actions materialized and what explains their varying levels of success, as the scholars cited above observe, we must first grasp the uniqueness of the threat under which they arose and why it impacted certain group identities, particularly specific Latino identities.

Explaining the Emergence of the 2006 Protest Wave

As we get a handle on the particular dimensions of H.R. 4437, we must acknowledge a confounding reality: the argument that the rallies were simply a response to a legislative threat is insufficient (Barreto

et al., 2009; Pallares and Flores-Gonzalez 2010; Bloemraad, Voss, and Lee 2011). Prior to the demonstrations, several other federal anti-immigrant laws, such as the REAL-ID and the Patriot Acts, were not only proposed but also enacted without provoking any mass public opposition, including among Latinos. Furthermore, during and subsequent to the anti-H.R. 4437 marches, increases in the number of deportations, workplace raids, hate crimes, and other anti-immigrant measures and attacks did not prompt large-scale collective action. As such, the notion that the mobilizations were merely a manifestation of solidarity with and among undocumented immigrants and their allies, triggered by a proposed anti-immigrant law, is equally unsatisfactory. People without papers were arguably more threatened and under attack after the mass marches than they were before them, yet the protest wave declined rather than escalated. Thus, the 2006 cycle of contention is a useful case in which to explore the different roles that threats can play in mobilization and demobilization processes.

The work of Snow et al. (1998) helps us begin to conceptualize these dynamics. Specifically, these scholars argue "that the kind of breakdown most likely to be associated with movement emergence is that which penetrates and disrupts, or threatens to disrupt, taken-for-granted, everyday routines and expectancies" (2). The four conditions the authors claim "are especially likely to disrupt the quotidian and heighten prospects of collective action," are: (a) sudden "community disrupting accidents and disasters"; (b) the "actual or threatened intrusion into or violation of culturally defined zones of privacy and control," including people's families, neighborhoods, and sense of safety; (c) an "alteration of taken-for-granted subsistence routines as a result of an emergent disparity between available resources and resource demand"; and (d) "dramatic changes in structures of social control" (1, 6). When movements are *not* based on quotidian disruptions, Snow et al. (1998) believe that they must instead "be rich in the cultural work of framing and identity construction" (18).

According to immigrant rights activists, H.R. 4437 embodied many of these disruptions. That so much of the country – individuals ranging from teachers, doctors, employers, priests and family members, to institutions such as unions, service agencies, businesses, and community-based organizations – could be fined thousands of dollars and/or incarcerated for helping or even just interacting with undocumented immigrants, was a potentially sudden and dramatic change to the normal activities of thousands of organizations and millions of U.S.- and foreign-born people across the nation. Hence, it was not simply a legislative threat that

catalyzed the massive immigrant rights mobilizations but – more generally – a threat that would have radically altered the daily lives, relations, and routine functions of several sectors of society that interact with immigrant communities, particularly Latino immigrant communities. Because of the Sensenbrenner Bill's severity and reach, immigrant rights activists asserted that immigrants and their allies had no choice but to respond. As a naturalized citizen who helped organize a local march in her city declared, "The law was just made with so much hate ... it was an all or nothing thing."[9]

Snow et al.'s (1998) notion of "disrupting the quotidian" contributes significantly to our understanding of how the *scope* – the level of severity and reach – of a threat can help spark collective action. However, their theory has a central limitation: it underestimates the crucial role that identity can simultaneously play in quotidian disruptions and collective responses to these disruptions. Their claim that movements not sparked by threats to "the quotidian" must be rich in identity, suggests that a group's race, for example, is detached from the issues of "safety," "neighborhood," "culture," and "resources" (Snow et al. 1998: 8). Yet nothing could be further from the truth for people of color (e.g., Latinos, Asian-, Arab-, Native-, and African-Americans) in the United States. Research has continuously shown that issues such as segregation, poverty, policing, and public safety are intricately linked and cannot be parceled from their racial identities due to the central role that racism has and continues to play in American politics (Bonilla Silva 2001; Lerman and Weaver 2014; McAdam and Kloos 2014) and socioeconomic inequalities (Massey 2007; De Genova 2002; Soss and Fording 2011). Whether resisting settler colonialism, Jim Crow laws, police brutality, housing discrimination, punitive immigration policies, or disenfranchisement, race has often been the primary lens through which people of color in the U.S. recognize and fight against the injustices and "quotidian disruptions" they endure; in fact, their race was often the principal reason why they suffered these persecutions in the first place.

The 2006 immigrant rights protests teach us that threats have multiple dimensions – including not only their *scope* (whether they are broad or narrow) but also their *source*, *timing*, and *visibility* – whose interactions influence mobilization and demobilization processes. For people of color in the United States, race can be the principal thread that binds these dimensions and the primary lens through which they are understood and acted upon. Therefore, comprehending how the multiple dimensions of a threat influence the identities and actions of individuals is essential and the task I now turn to.