Órale! Politics: Mobilization of Mexican Immigrants in Chicago and Houston

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This study seeks to explain, from an organizational standpoint, the causes and mechanisms that have led to different types and levels of political mobilization of Mexican immigrant communities in Houston and Chicago. How and why are political mobilization and participation of Mexican immigrants different in Chicago and Houston? To address this question, the research assesses the role of both local and transnational structures in the process of immigrant, non-electoral, political mobilization and participation. The study concludes that the interaction among local political actors and institutions, the Mexican Consulate and the Catholic Church, is the main component that explains mobilization differences of organized Mexican immigrants in urban settings.
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In Beloved Memory of Socorrito Lindura
(Aquí se queda la clara, la entrañable transparencia,
de tu querida presencia…)

Al migrante mexicano que está cruzando la frontera en estos momentos, al migrante mexicano que será deportado el día de hoy y a los hijos estadounidenses de los inmigrantes mexicanos, en cuyas manos se encuentra el futuro de México y los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica.

To the Mexican migrant who is crossing the border in this very moment, to the Mexican migrant who will be deported today, and to the American children of Mexican immigrants, who hold in their hands the future of Mexico and the United States of America.
Órale! Politics

“When you, the Hispanics, register to vote, when you unite with each other, when you stop thinking about someday returning to your country of origin, then, and only then, you’ll be taken seriously in politics.”
Mayor Richard Daley, Chicago City Council, 1972
(quoted by journalist Javier Navarro, Back of the Yards Journal, 1986)

“Going back to Mexico? What for? This is Mexico. Chicago is Mexico.”
A. B., President of a Mexican Hometown Association in Chicago, 2000

“We’ve got illegal immigrants clogging our hospitals, our emergency rooms, our schools, our courts, and we’re not even allowed under federal law to ask them whether they’re citizens. We have to serve them with medical care just like you and me.”
Texas Lt. Governor Bill Ratliff, March 2000

“Undocumented immigrants [living in Houston] are already citizens, citizens of the city”
Gordon Quan, City Council Member, Houston, June 2002

“¡Órale, a rajarse a su tierra!!”
Meeting at the Federación de Michoacanos, Chicago, May 2002

“You can beat the machine if you are organized; if you get unity, you can beat the machine… you have to be disciplined and have to have faith.”
Emma Lozano, Centro Legal Sin Fronteras, Chicago, July 2002

“Houston is the exception for everything, Mr. Cano. You better go and study political mobilization of Mexican immigrants in El Paso or San Antonio; here you can hardly study anything at all.”
Top Mexican Official at the Houston Mexican Consulate, 2001

“I want my children to know their mother is not a criminal. I want them to be as strong I am. This shows our strength.”
B. O., a nanny who came to the U.S. illegally in 1986 from Mexico, participating in an immigrant rights rally with her two children, 7 and 11 years old, in the city of San Francisco on May 1, 2006
ABC News: Immigrants Walk Off the Job in Boycott, May 1, 2006

“You should send all of the 13 million aliens home, then you take all of the welfare recipients who are taking a free check and make them do those jobs. It’s as simple as that.”
Jack Culberson, a retired Army colonel and a counter-protester in Pensacola, Florida on May 1, 2006
ABC News: Immigrants Walk Off the Job in Boycott, May 1, 2006
INTRODUCTION

This work seeks to explain, from an organizational standpoint, the causes and mechanisms that have led to different types and levels of political mobilization and participation of Mexican immigrant communities in Houston and Chicago. How and why is political mobilization of Mexican immigrants different in Chicago and Houston? To answer this question, I develop an analytical framework that assesses the role of both local and transnational structures in the process of immigrant political mobilization.

The puzzle is why Houston, with a similar number (although a higher proportion) of noncitizens, foreign-born Mexicans among its population and with a strong historical tradition of Mexican immigration, exhibits completely different levels and types of organizational, political mobilization and participation in comparison to Chicago? I propose that the role of local and state government politics and policies, and the role of Mexican politics and policies, are essential in understanding this disparity. Specifically, I emphasize the different ways that Mexican immigrants have engaged in non-electoral political activities in Chicago and Houston, with the former being more linked to the Mexican state’s organizing efforts in the United States and to ethnic Machine Politics in the U.S., and the latter being less linked to the Mexican state efforts and more embedded into a “free-enterprise city” (Feagin 1988) type of environment.

In the first chapter of this work, I state that the main hypothesis of this study is that a complete understanding of immigrant political mobilization must simultaneously focus on the relations of Mexican immigrants with relevant political institutions and processes
in their ‘home’ (in this case, Mexico) and ‘host’ societies (United States). Moreover, I propose that in order to understand the how and why of immigrant political mobilization and participation of Mexicans, it is essential to consider the interactions between the local and transnational contexts in which such mobilization takes place, and that this mobilization will vary significantly based on the influence of the local and transnational contexts and their interaction. Finally, I also propose that home state engagement with political mobilization in the host country has led to more, and not less political mobilization and participation of the home population in the host country.

I also describe the preliminary field research of the study, which provided sufficient empirical evidence to proceed with the research. It was during this stage of the research that I ended up convinced that there were huge differences between the context and actors involved in the process of political mobilization and participation of Mexican immigrants in both cities, and that the study and explanation of such differences were important for the theoretical and empirical development of the fields of ethnic political participation and political transnationalism. It was also during this stage that, regardless of all the possible differences that I could observe when comparing two segments of a similar immigrant population in different political contexts, I met again and again with a very familiar word that I first heard when I was a kid in León, my hometown in Mexico: “Órale!” Órale this, órale that! Órale in Chicago and órale in Houston!

Órale! is a Mexican expression that has at least five different meanings: a) Órale!: as in “come on!, hurry up!, let’s move!” b) Órale!: meaning that you are closing a good deal and you are really enthusiastic about it; c) Órale!: as “in stop bothering me!” or “knock it off!” d) Órale!: used as an expression when something goes really wrong, takes us by
surprise, and is hard to believe -we really do not know what is going to happen next; and
e) Órale!: used when two persons are arguing, and they both think that their respective argument is correct. Then one party says órale!, to conclude the discussion and meaning something like “we’ll see who is right!” Órale!, along with the expressions “Quihúbole!” (from ¡qué hubo!, ¡qué hay! what’s up!), “Ándale!” (hurry up!) and “Híjole!” (Oh my god! sort of…), represent the core of verbal Mexicanness that colorfully and vibrantly circulates mostly amongst the Mexican-born population, here in the U.S. and certainly in Mexico.

The story behind the title of this study is also related to the way Mexicans respond to the organizers’ efforts to persuade them to participate in a political action. In accordance with some activists, whenever a Mexican closes the deal by saying órale!, chances are very high that he/she will participate (in non-electoral politics), and is being serious about participating. If a Mexican says only ‘yes,’ ‘yes of course,’ ‘I will be there, no problem,’ chances are very high that he/she will not show up or participate in the action. Órale! politics, it is.

I also expose in the first chapter the theoretical framework and literature review of the research. In this theoretical section, first I address the core assumptions and definitions of political mobilization, then I present a literature review of the theoretical framework that addresses the Latino immigrant mobilization in the United States in this work: mobilization of (Latino) ethnic groups in an urban context from a perspective that considers transnational issues. Finally I describe the objective and expected contributions of this study and explain the most important aspects of the field research and methodology.
Addressing political mobilization and participation of Mexican immigrants at an individual level, one of the most important findings of the fieldwork of this study is the “mobilization triangle,” in which family, work and faith are the most important motivation factors that explain participation, within an analytical framework of political transnationalism. The most important actors (sources of mobilization) in these two cities are community-based organizations, church-related organizations, and unions. Chambers of commerce (Mexican or Mexican American), civic associations (mostly Mexican American), Mexican state federations (which generally are major groupings of Mexican hometown associations), and Mexican political parties and organizations, have played a much lesser role in the dynamics of mobilizing people, but other actors do not disregard their potential involvement in the process. Actors also consider the local Hispanic media an important player in the process. Actors who can be considered allies or targets of mobilization are: the Mexican government, mostly through the Mexican Consulate in these two cities; local politicians, including members of the city council, state representatives and senators, mayors and governors; and at the federal level, U.S. representatives and senators.

Within a local context, the research suggests that business elites in Houston have successfully controlled local government, making mobilization of working class, the poor and minorities all but impossible. Other factors are also influential in the explanation of low levels of mobilization for the Mexican immigrant community, like the lack of zoning regulations and aggressive annexation policies, and the closeness of the Mexican community to the Mexican border. In Chicago, the local government has been traditionally immigrant-friendly towards union and neighborhood organization and
mobilization. In general terms, Chicago is a relatively friendly local context to the formation, consolidation and proliferation of immigrant organizations and immigrant mobilization. High levels of segregation in the city along with low rates of annexations also improve the chances for the immigrant community to mobilize.

Within a transnational context, the research suggests that the Mexican Consulate in Houston is not a significant player in the formation and consolidation of immigrant organizations; that certain Mexican politics and policies are highly influential in the mobilization of Mexican immigrants; and that the Catholic Church shows low levels of influence in direct mobilization efforts, and the use of religious symbols in the process of mobilization is virtually inexistent. In Chicago, the research suggests that the Mexican Consulate is influential in the formation and consolidation of immigrant-related organization and the formation of immigrant leadership; in a similar way to Houston, that certain Mexican politics and policies are highly influential in the mobilization of Mexican immigrants; and that the Catholic Church shows a high potential of influence in direct mobilization efforts, mostly if there is an implicit or explicit agreement with local politicians to mobilize immigrants. The use of religious symbols to mobilize people is highly tolerated by the Archdiocese in Chicago.

The term “transnationalism” can be addressed from three different perspectives: as a notion, as a theoretical concept and as a process or set of processes. In this study, the working definition of the term starts with the notion of “being here and there at the same time.” Immigrants can be here (United States) and there (Mexico) at the same time through their family, their remittances, their religion or through political organization and mobilization.
The process of transnationalism becomes evident through a set of consecutive actions that take place “here and there” by an immigrant group, like increasing their mobilization capabilities and organizational skills through a series of happenings on both sides of the border that directly affect the interest of the group. Finally, from a theoretical perspective, these actions, which are developed within the notion of “being here and there at the same time,” can be framed within different disciplines in the social sciences: anthropology, sociology, economics, international law, political science, etc. The development of the term is influenced by the methodological and theoretical background of each discipline. For purposes of this study, the term transnationalism is used within the theoretical and methodological context of political science.

In the empirical section of this study, first, I show the most important findings of my research on political mobilization of Mexican immigrants from a comparative perspective. Second, I emphasize the main arguments of my work in Chicago and Houston in a brief analysis of the immigrant mobilization actions across the United States that took place during the first half of 2006. This section mainly shows the analytical potential of my arguments through the consideration of mobilization at an individual-institutional level, and from a perspective that addresses the interactions between local and transnational contexts. In the theoretical section, I wrap up my arguments by pointing out theoretical considerations in studying the relationship between the process of immigrant, ethnic political mobilization and the field of political transnationalism.

From an overall standpoint, this work offers field research and analytical considerations on the relation between local and transnational contexts, from a perspective of political transnationalism, and the institutional and individual perspectives within the process of
political mobilization. Within this framework of analysis, the basic idea throughout the whole study is to highlight if, how and why the local and transnational contexts have a decisive influence on the political mobilization process of an immigrant group in a host society within an urban setting. Moreover, through the core research of this study, and emphasizing the main contributions of this research to the theoretical development of political transnationalism, I conclude this work by stating that (1) ethnic political mobilization can be analyzed from a macro, meso (intermediate) and micro perspectives; (2) the meso perspective is the starting point of analysis in a transnational, immigrant political context; (3) the essence of political transnationalism within a framework of political mobilization and participation of an immigrant group in a host society is based on the interactions between local and transnational contexts; and (4) that the consideration of such an analytical framework is promising in theoretical terms, especially in the field of urban politics and the study of religiously based mobilization.
CHAPTER ONE

Theoretical Framework and Field Research

1.1 Introduction

This study seeks to explain, from an organizational standpoint, the causes and mechanisms that have led to different types and levels of political mobilization of Mexican immigrant communities in Houston and Chicago. How and why is political mobilization of Mexican immigrants different in Chicago and Houston? To answer this question, I develop an analytical framework that assesses the role of both local and transnational structures in the process of immigrant political mobilization.

This question is important if we consider the outstanding contrast that these two cities present when comparing demographic profiles and the different levels of political mobilization and organization of the Mexican-origin population. According to U.S. Census 2000 figures (See Table 1-A), there are 530,462 persons of Mexican origin in Chicago (18.3 percent of a total population of 2.89 million), whereas in the city of Houston the figure is 527,442 (27 percent of a total population of 1.95 million). The percentage of foreign-born Mexicans in each city is 9.8 percent and 13.36 percent, respectively. The U.S. Census estimates that 70% of the foreign-born Mexicans are noncitizens in both cities. The activity levels and types of organizational, political mobilization of Mexican immigrants in Chicago are different from those in Houston. Unions, church organizations, community based organizations and state federations that deal with the mobilization of Mexican immigrants are more active and better organized in Chicago than in Houston.
As stated in the introduction of this study, the puzzle is why Houston, with a similar number (although a higher proportion) of noncitizen, foreign-born Mexicans among its population and with a strong historical tradition of Mexican immigration, exhibits completely different levels and types of organizational, political mobilization in comparison to Chicago? I propose that the role of local and state government politics and policies, and the role of Mexican politics and policies, are essential in understanding this disparity. Specifically, I emphasize the different ways that Mexican immigrants have engaged in non-electoral political activities in Chicago and Houston, with the former being more strongly linked to the Mexican state’s organizing efforts in the United States and to ethnic Machine Politics in the U.S., and the latter being less linked to the Mexican state’s efforts and more embedded into a “free-enterprise city” (Feagin 1988) type of environment.

The main hypothesis of this study is that a complete understanding of immigrant political mobilization and participation must simultaneously focus on the relations of Mexican immigrants with relevant political institutions and processes in their ‘home’ (in this case, Mexico) and ‘host’ societies (United States). Moreover, I propose that, in order to understand the hows and whys of immigrant political mobilization and participation of Mexicans, it is essential to consider the interactions between the local and transnational contexts in which such mobilization takes place, and that this mobilization and participation will vary significantly based on the influence of such interaction. Finally, I also propose that home state engagement with political mobilization in the host country has led to more, and not less political mobilization and participation of the home population in the host country.
For the purposes of this research, Mexican immigrants are those persons who were born in Mexico and who live in the United States, regardless of their migratory status. Within the framework of non-electoral politics, this research will focus on the mobilization and participation of Mexican immigrants from an organizational standpoint and consider, as a basic unit of analysis, the actions of organizations that deal with issues that are of the highest concern to Mexican immigrants. Some of these organizations may have Mexican American or other Latino-origin leadership and/or membership, but most organizations included in this study address mostly a Mexican immigrant constituency whose migratory status in the U.S. is officially recognized as ‘unauthorized’ by the U.S. migration authorities. From a theoretical perspective, this work will address political participation by focusing on the mobilization process, also from an organizational perspective at two levels, local and transnational.

The specific actions of mobilization and participation that are addressed in this study, always within a non-electoral framework, are: rallies, public demonstrations (inspired by local or foreign political events), picket lines, public information meetings, media exposure, private or public meetings to coordinate organizations, contacting public officials (foreign or local), prayer vigils, letter-writing campaigns, participating in economic boycotts, recruiting individuals to become members of an organization that performs political actions, networking at individual and organizational levels with political aims, and creating social and political networks among immigrants, city authorities, politicians (foreign or local), etc. Finally, I point out that the formation and proliferation of politically-oriented groups among immigrants, like state federations organized by the Mexican Consulate, are also mobilization actions.
Just as other scholars have found that Latinos and Mexican Americans are not monolithic groups in terms of political behavior (de la Garza et al. 1992, Arvizu and Garcia 1996, Tam Cho 1999, Michelson 2001 for the former; and Garcia and de la Garza 1985, Garcia 2000, Marquez 2001 for the latter), I also find that the Mexican immigrant population is not monolith. This research deals with the study of the Mexican immigrant community under a non-monolithic set of assumptions and from a comparative (intra-group) perspective with the aim to explain the different organizational and mobilization activities of the community in Houston and Chicago.

In this chapter, I describe the preliminary field research of the study, which provided sufficient empirical evidence to proceed with the whole research. Then I expose the theoretical framework and literature review of the research. In this theoretical section, first I address the core assumptions and definitions of political mobilization, then I conduct a literature review of the theoretical framework that addresses the Latino immigrant mobilization in the United States in this work: mobilization of (Latino) ethnic groups in an urban context from a perspective that considers transnational issues. Finally, I describe the objective of this study and explain the most important aspects of the field research and methodology.

1.2 Preliminary Field Research

Preliminary research for this study was conducted in Chicago (in the neighborhoods of Pilsen, Little Village, and Back of the Yards where the majority of the Mexican-origin population lives) and Houston (mainly Magnolia) in August and December 2000, and January 2001.

My observations coincide with those of other authors that have studied political mobilization in these two cities (Rosales 1983, de la Garza and DeSipio 1994,
Menchaca 1994, Valadez 1994, Rodriguez et al. 1994). In Chicago and, to a lesser extent, Houston, residents sought solutions to neighborhood problems through community organizations. In Chicago, the Political Machine still shapes the structure of community organization in Mexican neighborhoods. Whether in support or opposition, community organizations operate in an environment shaped by the Machine. The participation of Mexican neighborhoods has been determined more in terms of acting directly on issues, trying to solve the problems through concrete actions more than in terms of voting.

Furthermore, I noticed that the mobilization of Mexican immigrants in Houston is less pronounced, the focus is mostly on community issues and there is limited emphasis on neighborhood organizing. City and state governments are characterized by a strong regime of pro-business and antiunion laws; and issues like learning English to improve one’s chances of progressing in socioeconomic terms become an important concern for the Mexican community in Texas.

In Chicago, there is a large network of organizations that deal with the concerns of Mexican immigrants. This network includes frequent contacts, and sometimes well concerted efforts, among state and local politicians, business associations, state federations, community-based organizations, church-related organizations, and the Mexican Consulate. In Houston, there is little evidence of such an integrated networking effort, however, Mexican American Associations, the Mexican Consulate and community-based organizations seem to take the lead in addressing the concerns of Mexican immigrants.

Coalitions among community organizations tend to be more stable and institutionalized in Chicago than in Houston. Finally, in this preliminary stage of the
research, I noticed that the Program of Mexican Communities Living Abroad, at the Mexican Consulate, apparently had been more active in Chicago than in Houston when addressing the organizational needs of the community, mostly through the creation and enhancement of social networks and the formation and proliferation of home-oriented organizations like state federations. In short, the context of reception and the initiatives or capacity of response of the Mexican Consulate, when addressing the concerns of the community, seem to matter in the process of political mobilization and participation of Mexican immigrants.

1.3 Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

In this section, I describe what I understand by political mobilization in the context of political participation, and I emphasize the most important elements of the concept that are highly related to this research. Then I present a literature review of the theoretical framework that addresses the Latino immigrant mobilization in the United States in this work: mobilization of (Latino) ethnic groups in an urban context from a transnational standpoint. The literature review provides the theoretical starting point for this research, while the political mobilization model serves as a vehicle to frame the empirical evidence into the theoretical approach. I conclude this section by pointing out what are the main contributions of my research to the theoretical framework.

1.3.1 Political Mobilization and Participation

Political participation is understood as “those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take.” (Verba and Nie 1972), and these actions basically aim “to influence in the distribution of social goods and social values” (Rosenstone and
Hansen 1993). While addressing the questions of why some people participate while others do not and why those participate in the ways they do, Verba and Nie offer a socioeconomic explanation of participation. They clearly state, however, that the environment in which citizens live affects their level of participation and they specifically refer to the kinds of organizational structures (that citizens have been exposed to) and the kind of community (within which citizens live) as the relevant factors.

Political participation is explained by (1) resources like time, money, and skills; (2) motivations like interests, identifications, trust, group consciousness, and beliefs of individual citizens; and (3) mobilization, which is understood as the process whereby persons are induced to participate and are directly persuaded and encouraged to mobilize by organizations and leaders (Verba and Nie 1972, Miller et al. 1981, Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). The strategic choices that leaders make, and the strategic decisions that they reach, shape the who, when, and why of political participation.

More specifically, according to Rosenstone and Hansen (1993, citing Charles Tilly 1978) “mobilization is the process by which candidates, parties, activists, and groups induce other people to participate.” These actors “have mobilized somebody when they have done something to increase the likelihood of her participation.” That is, mobilization can lead to participation. However, not all types of participation are political.

Arenas of political participation are primarily electoral, governmental, and organizational. This research addresses non-electoral political participation in governmental and organizational fields of action. Non-electoral arenas and activities
include involvement in local issues, participating on governing and advisory boards
and commissions, contacting public officials and bureaucrats, and protest activities.
Non-electoral participation can take the form of members of a group or community
working together through a voluntary organization or an ad hoc group organized to
influence the government to accomplish something, such as demanding better access
to public services or changing the school system (Uhlener 2000). An individual’s
participation in nonpolitical secondary institutions like employment-related groups,
church, and civic or voluntary associations serves to expose the individual to political
messages, interactive and focused discussions, and interpersonal relationships that
generally evolve into social networks (Garcia 1997).

The development of certain skills through participation of individuals in these
organizations (such as making presentations, conducting meetings, managing group
efforts, fund raising, and public speaking) is associated with greater levels of political
participation (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995, 1999). In short, people can work
collectively, as in a neighborhood association, or contact officials or news media in
attempts to change policy.

The main function of social networks is to provide political information at relatively
low cost. Social networks expose individuals to political information, leaders, and
organizations (Garcia 1997). Social networks alone, however, cannot make effective
political action possible. Social networks are the natural environment in which leaders
are capable of mobilizing people. Contact through social networks adds the power of
social expectations to the leader’s message of mobilization. Indeed, leaders are more
likely to mobilize people who are centrally positioned in social networks (Rosenstone
and Hansen 1993). Also, social networks and the associated norms of reciprocity are
at the core of social capital (Coleman 1988, Putnam 1993, 2000). To put it simply, individuals who regularly interact with each another in face-to-face settings learn to work together to solve collective problems (Skocpol and Fiorina 1999, citing Putnam).

Group leaders act as political entrepreneurs who increase levels of participation within their group by providing benefits. These benefits are typically consumption goods or public goods and services, and they may be provided in order to secure group loyalty and solidarity. This model of participation works better when groups are well-defined, have fairly stable membership over time, and are more or less homogeneous in political preferences. One would expect the elite to use these mechanisms to increase activity, and the model to be useful when addressing participation by members of these groups. According to Uhlaner (2000), in contemporary American politics, race has served as an organizing principle, and ethnicity has increasingly become a basis for political appeals, especially within the Latino community.

Finally, formal organizational membership does not appear to be a necessary condition in order to form a group or create a membership-based organization. Informal group affiliation is a sufficient condition, especially when it takes the form of ‘group consciousness’ (Verba and Nie 1972, Uhlaner et al. 1989, Uhlaner 2000). Group consciousness exists when a person combines group identity, a sense of unfair treatment by the political system, and a sense that something can be done about the treatment (Miller, Gurin, Gurin, and Malanchuk 1981). Mainstream scholars who study mobilization and participation agree on this concept as having particular relevance for understanding the political behavior of members of minority groups.
1.3.2 Ethnic Mobilization - Latinos

Mainstream literature on political mobilization and participation of the Latino population in the U.S. shares two aspects with its counterpart in American politics: the definition of the basic concepts, and the fact that contemporary research is focused mostly on citizens. There is, however, an increasingly growing literature of non-electoral politics of minority groups. In general terms, we understand ethnic political mobilization as “a process by which groups organize around some feature of ethnic identity in pursuit of collective ends” (Olzak 1983). Within this framework, we can see Latino mobilization as a process of connectedness that represents the action or actual result of interaction among two or more Spanish speaking groups. This process involves individuals and organizations, and it leads to frequent interaction and mobilization as a homogenous population (Hannan 1979, Padilla 1985).

Latino mobilization is the result of the interaction of three forces: structural (economic, social, political), cultural (sharing traditions, language and, for national-origin groups, national identity), and the existence or nonexistence of governmental and public policies (civil rights laws, equal employment opportunities, and affirmative action). In short, ethnicity is considered the basis for interest group mobilization (Padilla 1985, Enloe 1980), and ethnic mobilization cannot be perceived as occurring without a certain external stimulus.

Also, based on Padilla’s study of Latino ethnic consciousness (1985), I infer that national-origin ethnic group formation (the Mexican case, for example) is the basis for the mobilization process, as it includes both, the cultural model, where ethnicity is inherited, and the social organizational model, where ethnicity is developed as an adaptive response to external forces rather than the manifestation of a preconscious
driven force. Other important factors that are related to the emergence of national-origin ethnic mobilization are ideology (which may or may not contribute to unifying a single ethnic group, mostly if ideology is linked to the country of origin), class solidarity and actions, the role of leadership (Vigil 1987), and the role of national-origin symbols.

Garcia and de la Garza (1985) assert that citizen and noncitizen components of the Mexican-origin population show very low rates of organizational involvement. They point out that the most important factors that contribute to a lesser organizational participation are: the lack of information about voluntary organizations or how to join them, low socioeconomic levels, time constraints, lack of organizational skills, low levels of educational attainment, low levels of English language proficiency, and an inadequate opportunity structure. They conclude that “if the noncitizen Mexican-origin residents are actively involved in community, labor, and other types of organizations, those affiliations could result in higher rates of political participation and, potentially, increased rates of naturalization.”

In the early 1990s, the Latino National Political Survey (LNPS) was the first study to offer representative, aggregate data on U.S.-Latino constituencies, according to their national origin. The overwhelming majority of studies generated by this survey had to do with all kinds of problems and issues related to Latino political participation and behavior. The LNPS study (de la Garza et al. 1992), and subsequent studies generated by it, focused mainly on citizens and offered some information about ethnic organizational behavior of noncitizens (in this case, Mexican immigrants, regardless of their legal status). However, the National Latino Immigrant Survey (Pachon and
DeSipio 1994) offers more specific data on organizational activity of legal immigrants (naturalized or not) by national origin in the U.S.

Other studies have addressed the issue of organizational membership and behavior, and the main conclusions include the following: (1) Active membership increases political participation through a process of participant socialization (Diaz 1996). (2) Although Latinos may be less likely to vote, their non-electoral participation patterns are not much different for those non-Latinos when socioeconomic differences are considered (Hero and Campbell 1996). (3) Mobilization variables appear to be the most consistent predictors of non-electoral participation (Wrinkle et al. 1996). (4) Although socioeconomic status provides the skills necessary for political activity of Mexican-origin citizens in California, the political context and the process of socialization determines how the skills will be manifested (Tam Cho 1999). (5) Latinos have mobilized around immigration issues, and that Latinos’ mobilization reflects their domestic policy rather than foreign policy concerns (de la Garza et al. 2000). (6) Mobilization provides a critical point of entry into the political process for predominantly immigrant groups, like Latinos. Lastly, (7) politically active social networks work for Latinos as a bridge to the American political process (Hritzuk and Park 2000).

1.3.3 Immigrant Mobilization in an Urban Context

The role of cities has become an important subject of study in comparative transnational studies (Mahler 1998, Smith and Tarallo 1993, Tardanico 1995, Barkin et al. 1997, Smith P. and Guarnizo 1998, Mollenkopf 1999). It suggests that the structural context (policies and politics) of the “localities,” as well as migration and settlement patterns linked to the labor markets of such localities, do matter in shaping
the social and political construction of the space where the political mobilization and organization of immigrant communities take place.

Moreover, scholars of American urban politics have reached similar conclusions regarding the political role of localities (Katznelson 1981, Harrigan and Vogel 2000, Judd and Swanstrom 1998, Browning et al. 1997, Stone 1989, Henry 1994, Ross and Levine 1996) by emphasizing the roles of state policies and politics as crucial factors in explaining the racial and ethnic divisions in American cities when addressing political mobilization of minorities if compared, for example, to the role of class division. In the case of Chicago, the Democratic Political Machine is pointed out as a leading factor (Langley 1988, Pinderhughes 1987, Erie 1988, Grimshaw 1992), whereas in Houston, evidence shows a strong regime of pro-business and antiunion laws, and a strict enforcement of Texas’ policies on “English only” education (Feagin 1988, Davidson 1972, Thomas and Murray 1991, Bridges 1997, Langley 1988).


The relationship between Mexican migration patterns and global city politics has been addressed mainly through the consideration of the host-locality’s labor market.

For the case study of Mexican immigrants, mostly in urban settings, current research on political participation and mobilization takes several paths, dealing mostly with issues related to assimilation patterns, research on different types of civic or voluntary organizations, the role of leadership, and the influence of Mexican foreign policy on the matter. On the issue of assimilation it is suggested that the Mexican community in general is going through a process of segmented assimilation (this could be downward or upward, and goes in opposition to straight-line assimilationist theories), that integration does not necessarily mean complete assimilation, and that assimilation is corrosive of political trust (Gutierrez 1995, R. Smith 1996, R. Smith 1997, Michelson 2001, Portes and Rumbaut 2001, Ramakrishnan and Epenshade 2001).

Civic organizations are generally funded and managed by native born Mexican Americans and are distinguished by their predominant involvement in domestic U.S. issues. Their work has dealt with issues such as business development, welfare, health, education, equal opportunity, and access to the political system. More recently, these organizations have concentrated their work on issues like immigration and labor rights in the U.S. (as well as Mexican politics in the case of state federations). The mobilization of these groups vis-à-vis Mexican issues happens at two levels. The first
level being completely circumstantial, like organizations mobilizing over the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and the second level being hometown oriented, like Mexican national and state officials initiating bi-national contacts in order to visit important urban and rural centers of Mexican immigration in the U.S. (de la Garza et al. 2000).

In terms of leadership, the majority of Mexican American and Mexican immigrant organizational leadership focuses primarily on issues affecting the well-being of Mexicans within the U.S., such as employment, education, and immigration (de la Garza et al. 2000). It is also suggested that Mexican American and Mexican immigrant activists have played an essential role in formulating, articulating, and acting on the pressing issues facing their communities, and were successful in mobilizing and empowering Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants for them to play a more functional role in shaping their own destinies in the U.S. (Gutierrez 1995).

Mexican foreign policy has also influenced the political activities of Mexican-origin communities. After the implementation of the “Program of Mexican Communities Living Abroad” (PMCLA) in the early 1990s, the Mexican government, via the Mexican Consulate, initiated a deliberate effort to improve their links with local communities. It is also argued that the Mexican Consulate must find the way to expand its relations with the Mexican community without becoming overly involved in U.S. domestic affairs. Finally, Mexico strengthens the ability to engage in dialogue with the U.S. to the extent that Mexican-origin communities enhance their ability to influence the decision making process in U.S. politics, something that it is expected to happen given the growth and the inclination of the U.S. political system to encourage

From an historical perspective in Chicago and Houston (Año Nuevo de Kerr 1978, Rosales 1983, Garcia 1996, De Leon 1989, Massey 2000), the first organizations of Mexican immigrants took the form of mutual aid societies, church groups, and business associations. Inter-ethnic relations were more strained in Chicago than in Houston, and in both places the experience of immigrants was disruptive, characterized by abrupt change, culture shock, and hostile reception. In addition, Chicago has higher levels of residential segregation than Houston.

1.3.4 Transnationalism

The term “transnationalism” is now commonly used by a growing cluster of social scientists. However, some authors state that the term is practically useless: it tries to explain too much, and it ends up explaining nothing, or even worse, its regular users seem not to agree on the definition of the term. Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt (1999), assert that transnational migration studies form a “highly fragmented field that lacks a well-defined theoretical framework.” Ebaugh and Saltzman Chafetz (2002) argue that the concept “is a blurry one, a catchall notion” that includes references to globalization, diasporas, transnational social fields, transnational communities, transnational social circuits, and bi-national societies. As such, these authors state that the term has lost much of its analytical power.

This confusion seems to have its origins in the “generosity” of the term. It is generous in the sense that it can be used across the board in fields like sociology, economics, political science, history, geography, and anthropology. In essence, the term is a multidisciplinary, complex one. This makes things relatively easy for the lightly-
informed critics of the concept. Transnationalism, as a whole, will always lack something; there will always be something that is left out of its explanatory frame. The term itself is developed through several disciplines in a simultaneous way. Different theoretical interpretations lead to the application of different methodologies and different considerations of units of analysis, which go from the individual, the family, organizations, the society, the economy and cultural practices, to the interactive foreign policies between two or more nation-states.

However, there are some common agreements about the nature and essence of the term. It is mainly framed within the study of international migration and the units of analysis show a certain duality regarding its own behavior: duality in the daily life of the individual or the family; duality of the relationship between organizations that deal with immigrants’ issues and the host and sending states; or duality of the leadership’s agenda of these organizations, for example. Additionally, proponents of the theory recognize economic, cultural, political, and social activities as spaces that their protagonists, mainly immigrants, have built and that these spaces cross geographic borders in an endless array of forms. Transnationalism goes well beyond conventional borders of nation-states.

The main consensus among theorists of transnationalism is perhaps the notion of transnationalism as a process, or set of processes. This implies that its elements can be studied either as explained or explanatory variables, depending on the theoretical framework and methodology that the researcher chooses to work with.

Referring specifically to the essence of the term as a process, a new consensus emerges when trying to distinguish this process from others that immigrants have lived through in history, and focusing on how they have been related to their home-
state. According to Portes (1999), things are different this time because, historically speaking, the number of persons that participate in the process is large in relative and absolute terms; because of the advanced status of international communications and technology; and because the cumulative and repetitive character of the process translate this type of immigrants’ participation into a “norm.”

Finally, it is true that for the moment there is no consensus on a definition of the term that could cover each and every aspect of this multidisciplinary concept. There are common starting points on broad methodological and theoretical aspects when doing field research, like transnationalism being developed within a framework of migration theory, but that is the extent of it. This leads researchers of several disciplines into a serious exercise of disciplinary introspection.

The publication of *Nations Unbound*, by Basch, Glick-Schiller, and Szanton-Blanc in 1994, presented a comprehensive definition of transnationalism, which became quickly accepted by a growing cluster of migration scholars as a starting point in the theoretical development of the term; they define transnationalism “as the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders.” However, the authors of *Nations Unbound* recognize that several researchers were “moving in the same direction,” as early as 1979, with Chaney’s “people with feet in two societies.” Others would follow up in an independent way: Appadurai and Breckenridge 1988, Appadurai 1991, Gupta 1992, Kearney 1991, Nagengast and Kearney 1990, Rouse 1989, 1991, 1992, etc.
Since then, several authors have stated their position about the practical and theoretical development of the term in many directions, and through several fields within the social sciences. M. P. Smith (1994) states that transnational political organization and mobilization take place at multiple levels, underscoring the struggle between the “global governance” agenda of international organizations and multinational corporations, and the “survival strategies” by which transnational migrant networks are socially [and politically] constructed. Portes (1996) argues that migrants use a “transnational space” as a way to overcome regulatory obstacles to their social mobility. To make his point, he asserts that changes in the Mexican constitution to allow dual nationality do lead to the consolidation of a larger transnational community. In 1998, Smith and Guarnizo edited *Transnationalism from Below*, a collection of essays that addressed transnationalism from a theorizing perspective, in which the authors point out that the term indeed is a complex process involving macro and micro processes, that affect “power relations, cultural constructions, economic interactions, and social organization at the level of locality.”

Within a context of ‘localities,’ Foner (2001) emphasizes transnational connections of new immigrants in New York City. In the same volume, Pessar and Graham address the reciprocal influence between Dominicans’ transnational political identities and New York politics, and R. C. Smith deals with the main obstacles of Mexicans to mobilize in New York City. Also referring to New York City, Cordero-Guzman, R. C. Smith, and Grosfoguel address migration and transnational processes from an ethnic and racial perspective, taking into account the Dominican (Graham), Salvadorian (Mahler), Chinese (Liang), and Puerto Rican (Conway, Bailey, and Ellis) cases. Cordero-Guzman et al. “add a historical dimension to the study of transnational life and processes among immigrants in New York,” and they contextualize these
processes “in order to examine the local effects of global, national, and local policies and stratification patterns.”

From a broader Latino perspective, Suárez-Orozco and Páez state that “transnationalism turns out to be a complex set of social adaptations,” and that these “transnational adaptations need to be systematically examined over time and across generations.” (2002) They also point out that Latinos are also becoming increasingly relevant actors with influence in political processes both “here” (United States) and “there” (their home country), and emphasize the importance of the Spanish language in the process. Finally, Fitzgerald (2004) mentions that ‘transnationalism’ indeed has been an important part of labor ideology and organization at earlier periods in American history. Moreover, he asserts that given the significance of transnationalism as an “ideology and movement,” it is important to reserve the term for a more explicit usage than the umbrella notion used in the literature of migration studies.

Cano (2004b), in a comparative interdisciplinary study on transnationalism, asserts that the use of the term “transnationalism” has been transformed in the last twelve years to a point in which it is practically impossible to sustain the broader sense of the term beyond its generic roots. The theoretical development of concepts like transnational politics, transnational religion, transnational crime, transnational identity, transnational media, transnational spaces, transnational human rights, transnational communications, transnational corporations, transnational feminism, transnational ties, transnational security, and transnational ruling class, are directing researchers on transnationalism to deal with the issue from its own theoretical perspective, with their own research tools and methodologies, which leads on its own to the formation and consolidation of the term within each research field/discipline.
This process of looking for political and policy solutions to political and policy problems of a migrant community within a bi-national context is a full exercise of political transnationalism. For the purposes of this study, the essence of this process of being is “living here and there” (Suárez-Orozco and Paez, 2002). However, in Spanish the term attains a more complete meaning from a ‘process of being’ perspective: ‘ser y estar, aquí y allá;’ that is, to be (the essence of being as a human being) here and there, and to be (physically being) here and there. Large concentrations of Mexicans have been (physically) in the United States since the 19th Century, but that is not enough for transnational considerations (Cano and Delano, 2007). Mexicans also have the right (or at least the choice) to be (to be in essence, themselves) in the United States. From a perspective of political transnationalism, it is through organization and mobilization that Mexicans can be at once in the United States and Mexico.

Making reference to Smith and Guarnizo (1998), transnationalism, and certainly political transnationalism, can be addressed from three perspectives: the micro level, in which the units of analysis are the individual and the family; the macro level, in which society, state politics, and the economy, are the units of analysis; and the meso level (intermediate), in which organizations are the main unit of analysis. Órale! Politics is framed within the three levels of analysis, referring to the meso level as its analytical starting point; and its main contribution to the debate about the concept of political transnationalism involves different aspects of political mobilization, participation and organization of an immigrant community who live and work in a host society in an urban political context.
Concerning the relationship between urban politics and transnationalism, mainstream literature on urban politics has traditionally focused on topics such as the nature and the structure of city politics and governments (Banfield and Wilson 1967, Caraley 1977, Kemp 1999), the process of urban growth and decline (Peterson 1985), regime politics (Stone 1989, Keating 1991), urban political economy (Imbroscio 1997), budgeting and financial issues (Ladd 1994, Rubin 1997, Judd and Swanstrom 2004), urban planning and development (Turner and Kolo 1997), politics and urban administration (Morgan and England 1999), the emergence of metropolitan America (Harrigan and Vogel 2003), the challenge of governance (Peterson 1994, Vogel 1997, Box 1998, Judd and Swanstrom 2004), and comparative studies of urban politics and/or municipal governments (Banfield 1965, Bernard and Bradley 1983, Abbott 1987, Savitch and Thomas 1991, Bridges 1997), to mention the most important.

The role and importance of immigrants within urban politics has been addressed mostly through scholarly work on race and ethnic minorities (Pinderhughes 1987, 1997; De Leon 1989; McClain and Stewart 2002; Browning, Marshall, and Tabb 2003), Political Machines (Ross and Levine 2006, Harrigan and Vogel 2007, Judd and Swanstrom 2006), community empowerment (Torres 1991; de la Garza, Menchaca, and DeSipio 1994), and neighbourhood politics (Clavel and Wiewel 1991, Bennett 1997), also to mention the most relevant. Most of this mainstream literature focuses mainly on the citizenship and voting appeal of the immigrant community within a local analytical context.

During the 1990's, academic research on transnationalism and globalization appeared on the urban politics scene. Most of these works address the transnational process of immigrants in New York City (Smith 1995, 1996, 1998; Foner 1997, 1999; Guarnizo,
Sanchez, and Roach 1999; Mollenkopf 1999; Cordero-Guzman and Grosfoguel 2000; Cordero-Guzman, Smith, and Grosfoguel 2001), and the dynamics of globalization and global cities (Sassen 1988, 1991, 1996; Robinson 2002). Literature on urban politics currently begins to incorporate the influence of immigrants and transnational processes into the political dynamics of city and metropolitan areas (M.P. Smith 1999, Judd and Swanstrom 2006, Cano 2004d). However, there are practically no works that include simultaneously local and transnational political considerations from a comparative perspective in urban politics.

1.4 Objective

The objective of this research is to analyze the formation, structure and impact of contemporary, organizational, non-electoral, mobilization and political participation of Mexican immigrants from a comparative perspective. I plan to do this by proposing an analytical framework that aims to explain the development of migrant membership practices, their increasing importance to home states, the influence of localities, the different levels of (home and host) state intervention, and the relevance of the interaction between local and transnational contexts in the process.

From the literature review described above, particularly in the sections of Latino ethnic mobilization and immigrant mobilization in an urban context, I infer that, besides some historical comparative research, there are virtually no comparative studies about non-electoral mobilization for different Mexican immigrant communities in separate urban settings. Current immigration research addresses the political adaptation of immigrant communities under a system in which the sole action of one state (the host state) is used as a point of reference to explain mobilization and political participation of these communities. Moreover, globalization theorists
(Appadurai 1996, Perez Godoy 1999, Tarrow 1998, Sassen 1996) and transnational scholars (Basch, Glick-Schiller, and Blanc-Szanton, 1992, 1994) see global forces causing the state to decline in importance, and argue that the nation-state has been surpassed as the main structure that organizes political, social, and economic life, and that global capitalism is the main force driving transnational politics.

Like Robert Smith (2000) and others (M. P. Smith 1999, Goldring 1998, Guarnizo 1998, Graham 2001), I acknowledge that the formulation of these perspectives is highly debatable. Globalization approaches stand out for their homogenous predictions of globalization effects, which cannot explain the evolution in migrant membership practices, the increasing importance to home states (in this case, the Mexican state), the influence of localities in the process (cross-case variation, urban politics, Chicago vs. Houston), the role of translocal politics in the process (from locality to locality in both countries), and the different levels of state intervention in the process of formation and consolidation of transnational organizations (federal, state and local governments on both sides of the border affecting the development and actions of state federations, for example). This work contributes to the idea that the role of the state is by no means in decline; on the contrary, the role of the home state becomes crucial to explain mobilization and political participation of the immigrant population in a host society.

I also agree with the position that there is a need to do comprehensive research on the role of organizations that mobilize low income, Latino noncitizens (Montoya 2002). This study is a step in such direction. This research focuses on political mobilization and participation of Mexican immigrants in Chicago and Houston from an organizational perspective in order to understand the mechanisms, procedures, and
political potential that represents to American society and polity the mobilization and non-electoral political participation of this population, whose majority are non-U.S. citizens, according to the Mexican Consulates of Houston and Chicago.\textsuperscript{iv}

This research also emphasizes the importance of incorporating research work on transnational politics into the mainstream research body of urban politics. The research suggests that different types of city politics exert influence on the organization and mobilization processes for the Mexican immigrant community. This leaves the door open for mainstream literature in urban politics to consider transnational issues as a major component in the study of politics and policies of global cities and metropolitan areas.

The development of the term ‘political transnationalism,’ based on an intermediate, organizational, level of analysis is another contribution of this work. I acknowledge that different transnationalism approaches have already started to distinguish themselves from the typical umbrella term of “transnationalism,” and tend to focus more on developing their own methodology, working hypotheses, conceptual references, and levels of analysis, within a specific disciplinary framework in the social sciences, like economics, sociology, anthropology, history, etc. (Cano 2004b).

Rainer Bauböck (2003) offers an interesting insight into theory building within the field of political transnationalism. Along with the premises of Smith and Guarnizo (1998), he enforces the idea that political transnationalism is better understood if three levels of analysis are considered in the research: micro (i.e.: the individual, the family), macro (i.e.: the state, the polity, the society, the economy) and intermediate or meso (i.e.: organizations, institutions, the community). Bauböck’s research suggests that there is a connection among these three levels, and he uses the macro
perspective as the starting point for the analysis by distinguishing among international, multinational, supranational and transnational relations. Organizations, communities and the rights of immigrants from a citizenship perspective are also included in this analysis.

My work is a solid contribution to this theory building effort within the field of political transnationalism from a parallel perspective: First, I develop a research agenda in which the meso level of analysis is the starting point. Second, I identify the actions and strategies of immigrant organizations (intermediate level); and analyze (1) interactions at a meso-macro analytical level, which are embodied by the relationship between these organizations and the home and host state, and (2) interactions at a meso-micro analytical level, which are embodied by the relationship between the same organizations and the Mexican immigrant community. Third, I conclude that the interaction between the local and transnational contexts becomes the essence of political transnationalism within a theoretical framework of migration studies. I make use of the basic theoretical premises of political mobilization as a vehicle to perform this theory-building effort.

A complete understanding of immigrant political mobilization must simultaneously focus on the relations of Mexican immigrants with relevant political institutions and processes in their ‘home’ (in this case, Mexico) and ‘host’ societies (United States). This work also suggests that the local context is formed by the relations among the host state, immigrant organizations and the Mexican immigrant community and, in a similar way, that the transnational context is formed by the relations among the home state, immigrant organizations and the Mexican immigrant community.
Again, what I propose in this study is that, in order to understand the how and why of immigrant political mobilization and participation of Mexicans, it is essential to consider the interactions between the local and transnational contexts in which such mobilization takes place, and that this mobilization will vary significantly based on the influence of such interaction. From this perspective, the interaction between local and transnational contexts becomes the essence of migrant political transnationalism.

More specifically, although it is important to understand how city regimes (Machine Politics vs. Free Enterprise Politics) influence the development of Mexican immigrant political mobilization and participation, it is equally important to include the analytical framework of political transnationalism in the whole process. The idea is to show that without the understanding of the notion of transnationalism (to be here and there at the same time) from the immigrant perspective, the analysis of the mobilization process of Mexican immigrants in an urban context remains incomplete. From a macro perspective, the comparative analysis of this work focuses on the actions of the Mexican Consulate and the Catholic Church in the mobilization process; from a meso perspective, it considers the influence of the Mexican Consulate, the Catholic Church, and Mexican politics and policies on immigrant-related organizations; and from a micro perspective, it focuses on the influence of the Church and organizations over the Mexican immigrant.

Finally, most scholars of immigrant political mobilization think that it is necessary and sufficient to explain ethnic political mobilization through the analysis of one group, or the interaction among relatively similar ethnic groups, within a specific local context. As a result of my work, I hope they will consider new ways of studying ethnic political participation and mobilization through the inclusion of comparative
intra-group perspectives, and through the analysis of the simultaneous influence of local-urban and transnational political structures on different groups in their process of non-electoral, political mobilization in American politics. I also expect that mainstream scholars in urban politics will weight the inclusion of local and transnational political considerations from a comparative perspective in urban politics.

1.5 Methodology

As stated above, preliminary research for this study was conducted in Chicago and Houston in August and December 2000, and January 2001. Field research was then conducted between February and July 2002, mostly in Houston and Chicago. I conducted a total of 156 formal interviews with 122 interviewees during this last period of time. Of these interviews, 79 took place in Chicago or in Illinois, 75 in Houston or in Texas, 1 in New York City, and 1 in Mexico City. I observed more than 25 events (public demonstrations, workshops, conferences, organizational meetings, masses, etc.). Appendix 1 shows the complete list of interviewees.

I interviewed leaders, activists, organizers, chairmen, and priests within a wide range of organizational backgrounds, such as community-based organizations, service providers, unions, church-related organizations, chambers of commerce, civic associations, and Mexican State Federations. I also interviewed immigration scholars, Mexican officials from the Mexican Consulate and from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Mexico City, as well as city officials in Chicago and Houston, and several local politicians whose names were mentioned by activists and leaders in the first set of interviews. These local politicians consisted of five state representatives, one state senator, and four city council members in the Houston area; and three state representatives, one state senator, and three aldermen in the Chicago area.
Whenever the source requested anonymity for certain sections of the interview, the request was honored completely. Through this study, the comments of the interviewee or reflections derived from such comments are followed by the name of the person and the date of the interview. Inferences that were made out of a set of comments of a group of interviewees are marked by an endnote in which all the interviewees are fully credited.

Semi-structured, snowball interviews were performed in this stage of the research. Appendix 2 contains the questionnaires that were employed in the field research. The first questionnaire was answered by leaders of immigrant-oriented organizations in general, the second by the leadership of Mexican state federations, the third by selected members of the Mexican Consulate, the fourth by City Hall officials, the fifth by Church officials and priests/pastors, and the sixth by local and state politicians. Most interviews were conducted in Spanish and, whenever possible, the full questionnaire was applied to conduct the interview. These interviews were complemented with an analysis of secondary printed sources in order to corroborate the processes that I am investigating. Whenever possible, I compared the results of such analysis to what the interviewees may or may not have argued or documented. Research for this complementary analysis took place at the following libraries: the Municipal Archives of the Chicago Public Library, the Library of the University of Chicago, the Texas Room at the Houston Public Library, and the Library of the University of Houston. The main secondary sources in Spanish publications became the printed newspapers ¡Éxito! in Chicago (currently known as Hoy) and La Voz de Houston. Finally, whenever possible and available, I had access to records and archives of the organizations mentioned in this work.
This study addresses the events related to the mobilization of the Mexican immigrant community from an organizational perspective, that is, the units of analysis are the mobilization activities performed by different organizations. While some of these activities were performed more than twenty or thirty years ago, the majority of mobilization activities considered for this work took place mostly between 1990 and 2003 in both localities.

1.5.1 Operationalization of the Variables

In this study the dependent variable is political participation of Mexican immigrants, emphasizing the mobilization component of the concept, and considering the resources and motivation employed through the process. The independent variables are both home and host political actions that are involved in the process. The immigrant organizations that form part of the process of mobilization and participation are considered intervening variables.

The non-electoral mobilization actions of immigrants considered in this study are: writing letter campaigns, picketing, attending rallies or protests, contacting public officials, media exposure, prayer vigils, networking at an individual or organizational level with political aims, participating in boycotts, formation of voluntary organizations in order to address a problem in the community, attending a school board meeting, voting whenever and wherever allowed, being a member of an organization that takes a position on political issues; and persuading those who can vote, and that are part of the family or the community, to do so for this or that candidate.

To measure the dependent variables I created a data set in matrix form that codes different levels of political mobilization and participation of the Mexican immigrant
population in Chicago and Houston, mostly for the period 1990-2003, and some activities of certain organizations were tracked back to the 1970’s. Appendix 3 offers a chronology with historical data and the most important events related to this study up to 2003 for both cities. My goal here is to identify the kind of political activities that immigrant-related groups or organizations were engaged in, and make a thorough analysis of the process of mobilization and participation to determine how and to what extent they have/had mobilized the community. With these measures of mobilization over a certain period of time, I was able to compare across cities and, also within a particular city, I was able to trace the development of organizational structures and mobilization practices for each group.

The data collection for the independent and intervening variables included coding of all relevant information with regards to the context related to each case in which political mobilization and participation took place: different contexts of reception (Machine Politics vs. Free Enterprise Politics), different relations to the Mexican state (involvement of the Mexican Consulate, any Mexican government agency or any Mexican state government), different relations to the home state (city/state politics and policies), different styles of leadership (focusing on the creation of immigration networks, and the use of social and political networks), and different types of organizations that intervene in the process (neighborhood or community-based organizations, business organizations, church-related groups, Mexican American associations, labor unions, state federations, etc.).

A summary of the classification and coding for the information generated by the field research can be found in Table 1-B. A total of 1331 entries comprise the basic body of references for this research: 684 entries for Houston and 647 for Chicago. Each entry
contains information about a specific topic and is a specific reference/guide for relevant information about the topic within the original responses to the interviews. A response to any question of the questionnaire may generate one or more entries, and one entry may include the response to one or more questions. Table 1-C includes a sample set of the matrix of entries, one for Houston and one for Chicago. The names of the interviewees in these samples are coded for confidentiality reasons. The whole body of coded entries of the interviews is available upon request. Appendix 4 offers the guide to the codes of entries of table 1-C.

By allowing different measures of political mobilization about a specific immigrant population, I expect that the data generated by the project can be used in future comparative historical research on Mexican, and other immigrant groups, who are related to the politics of their home country, while developing at the same time local political interest in these ethnic groups in American cities.

1.5.2 The Organization of this Work

Chapter Two describes the process of mobilization of Mexican immigrants based mainly on the field research of this study. I break down the process of mobilization into several components, which are addressed in this chapter: the recipient, the message, the perception of the message by the recipient, the issue or problem that triggers mobilization, and the actors (who can be either the source or targets of mobilization). Also from an empirical perspective, other important components that I address in this study are: the action of mobilization (Chapter Three), and the context in which mobilization takes place (Chapter Four).

In Chapter Two, I introduce the main actors within the political arena of mobilization; in Chapter Three, I address the mobilization actions of the same actors. The main
objective of this chapter is to point out the main differences in terms of mobilization and participation of Mexican immigrants between Chicago and Houston.

Indeed, field research for this study shows that there are six major differences between Chicago and Houston regarding mobilization and political participation of organized Mexican immigrants in these cities: 1) There are higher levels of institutionalization among organizations that deal with Mexican immigrant issues in Chicago in comparison to Houston. 2) In both cities there are different ways to deal with different issues from an organizational standpoint. 3) Coalitions and networking are more developed in Chicago than in Houston. 4) In both cities there are different levels of performance of parallel organizations. 5) There are more state federations in Chicago than in Houston. 6) And Mexican issues mobilize Mexican immigrants in both cities. I conclude this chapter by stating that levels of political mobilization and participation in Chicago are higher than in Houston.

In Chapter Four, I analyze the most important factors that explain different levels of political mobilization of Mexican immigrants between Chicago and Houston. I propose that the first set of explanations about why political mobilization is different in these cities involves the transnational context in which political mobilization takes place. The second set addresses the local context in which actions of mobilization takes place.

The main explanatory motivational factors of mobilization for Mexican immigrants in Houston and Chicago at an individual level are family, work and faith. Whenever these factors are triggered by the context, local or transnational, the chances for Mexican immigrants to mobilize will increase. However, in Houston these three factors are identified as “weak,” whereas in Chicago they tend to be “strong.” The
importance of the interaction between local and transnational contexts for the political participation of Mexican immigrants in non-electoral politics is also pointed out in this chapter.

In Chapter Five, I conclude my work by addressing empirical and theoretical considerations about mobilizing an immigrant constituency within a framework of interactions between the local and transnational contexts by referring explicitly to the massive mobilizations of Mexican immigrants in the first half of 2006. Appendix 5 of this study shows a detailed chronology of the mobilizations triggered by the U.S. House of Representatives passing of the H.R.4437 during the first semester of 2006. The chronology also shows the intense legislative activity around the passage of the controversial bill and the role of the Catholic Church and other actors in the whole process.
According to Nicholas De Genova (Columbia University) and the Lewis Mumford Center (LMC) for Comparative Urban and Regional Research at the State University of New York at Albany, there is an undercounting by the U.S. Census for this type of population (The LMC worked with data based on Primary Metropolitan Statistical Areas and Metropolitan Statistical Areas). Researchers at the Lewis Mumford Center place Los Angeles, Chicago and Houston as the first, second and third cities respectively with major figures of Mexican-origin population in the U.S. [Source: Personal communication with Nicholas De Genova, 12/29/02] Officials at the Mexican Consulates of Chicago and Houston also agree that the 2000 U.S. Census figures are undercounted for those cities, although they agree that there is a similar number of Mexican immigrants living and working in both cities, with Houston holding a major proportion of Mexican-origin population and immigrants in comparison to Chicago. [Houston: E. Buj Flores (2/02) & T. García (2/22/02). Chicago: C. Sada (5/02) and D. Gómez (5/02)]

In this study, the terms ‘unauthorized immigrants’ or ‘undocumented immigrants’ are used in an interchangeable way.

In this study, “high levels” of political mobilization and participation of population A in comparison to population B occur when (1) population A incurs a larger number of actions of this type when compared to the ones in which population B participates. (2) When the number of participants in any given action is larger in population A in comparison to the numbers of participants of population B in the same type of action. In chapters 3 and 4, levels of institutionalization of organizations are linked in a direct, positive way to levels of political mobilization and organization of the population.

Tammy García, Mexican Consulate-PCME (2/12/02), Houston, and Dante Gómez (4/02), Mexican Consulate-PCME, Chicago.

Most interviews lasted between 90 and 150 minutes; the shortest interview took 17 minutes, the longest eight and a half hours, both in Texas.

The available material was highly limited to Mexican American or Chicano activities, and a minor proportion of this material was related to mobilization actions of the Mexican immigrant population. Another limitation was that the referred libraries mainly keep records of English publications, which leaves out of the scope of the research many local bilingual and Spanish publications. Finally, these libraries generally do not keep record of local community newspapers, which are relatively rich sources of information on political activities, mobilization and organizations of Mexican immigrants.

The terms “immigrant organizations” and “immigrant-related organizations” are used in an interchangeable manner in this study.
The term “Free Enterprise Politics” is derived from Feagin’s referral to Houston as the “Free Enterprise City” (1988).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Houston</th>
<th>Texas</th>
<th>Chicago</th>
<th>Illinois</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>5,071,963</td>
<td>530,462</td>
<td>1,144,390</td>
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<td>27.00%</td>
<td>24.32%</td>
<td>18.32%</td>
<td>9.21%</td>
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<td>1,766,133</td>
<td>283,531</td>
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<td>Foreign Born Mexican/Total Population</td>
<td>13.36%</td>
<td>8.47%</td>
<td>9.79%</td>
<td>4.81%</td>
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<tr>
<td>In Labor Force (16 yrs. and older)</td>
<td>931,236</td>
<td>9,937,150</td>
<td>1,358,054</td>
<td>6,230,617</td>
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<td>Mexicans in Labor Force (16 yrs. and older)</td>
<td>214,765</td>
<td>2,094,888</td>
<td>216,917</td>
<td>492,626</td>
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<td>Mexicans in Labor Force/Total Labor Force</td>
<td>23.06%</td>
<td>21.08%</td>
<td>15.97%</td>
<td>7.91%</td>
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<td>Per Capita Income Total Population in 1999 (dlls)</td>
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<td>19,617</td>
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<td>Per Capita Income Mexicans in 1999 (dlls)</td>
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<td>9,147</td>
<td>9,058</td>
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<td>Not Hispanic or Latino Population</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not Hispanic/Total Population</td>
<td>62.59%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) White alone</td>
<td>962,610</td>
<td>1,215,315</td>
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<td>White/Total Population</td>
<td>49.27%</td>
<td>41.97%</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>b) Black or African American alone</td>
<td>494,496</td>
<td>1,065,009</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black/Total Population</td>
<td>25.31%</td>
<td>36.77%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>730,865</td>
<td>753,644</td>
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<td>Hispanic/Total Population</td>
<td>37.41%</td>
<td>26.02%</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Mexican</td>
<td>527,442</td>
<td>530,462</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican/Total Population</td>
<td>27.00%</td>
<td>18.32%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Born Mexican/Total Population</td>
<td>13.36%</td>
<td>9.79%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic, Not Mexican/Total Population</td>
<td>10.41%</td>
<td>7.71%</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Puerto Rican</td>
<td>6,906</td>
<td>113,055</td>
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<tr>
<td>Puerto Rican/Total Population</td>
<td>0.35%</td>
<td>3.90%</td>
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<tr>
<td>c) Cuban</td>
<td>4,970</td>
<td>8,084</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cuban/Total Population</td>
<td>0.25%</td>
<td>0.28%</td>
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<tr>
<td>d) Central American</td>
<td>60,642</td>
<td>23,339</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central American/Total Population</td>
<td>3.10%</td>
<td>0.81%</td>
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</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000, Fact Sheets for Ethnic Groups, Summary File 2 and Summary File 4; Summary File 1 - 100 Percent Data
### TABLE 1-B
CLASSIFICATION OF INTERVIEWS: MAJOR TOPICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CITY</th>
<th>MAJOR TOPIC/CODE</th>
<th>QTY. OF ENTRIES</th>
<th>ENTRIES MAKE REFERENCE TO</th>
<th>OTHER CODES INCLUDED IN THIS TOPIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHICAGO</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Immigrant-related legislation in 1986</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOUSTON</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Immigrant-related legislation in 1986</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHICAGO</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Immigrant-related legislation in 1996</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOUSTON</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Immigrant-related legislation in 1996</td>
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<tr>
<td>CHICAGO</td>
<td>9/11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Terrorist attacks, NYC Sept 11, 2001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOUSTON</td>
<td>9/11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Terrorist attacks, NYC Sept 11, 2001</td>
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<tr>
<td>CHICAGO</td>
<td>AGENDA</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Mexican immigrants, political agenda in the city</td>
<td>CIME, CSF, ARCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOUSTON</td>
<td>AGENDA</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mexican immigrants, political agenda in the city</td>
<td>CIME, CIVIC, COO, ARCA</td>
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<td>CHICAGO</td>
<td>ASIM</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Assimilation</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Assimilation</td>
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<td>CHICAGO</td>
<td>CBO / ORG</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Information about Organizations: Community Based, Community Oriented (structure, membership, activities, etc.)</td>
<td>CIME, CSF, ARCA</td>
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<td>CBO / ORG</td>
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<td>Information about Organizations: Community Based, Community Oriented (structure, membership, activities, etc.)</td>
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<td>Chambers of Commerce (Hispanic, Latino, Mexican American)</td>
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<td>Chambers of Commerce (Hispanic, Latino, Mexican American)</td>
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<td>Information about Coalitions</td>
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<td>Information about Coalitions</td>
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<td>Mexican Consulate</td>
<td>IMCE, MATCON, PMCLA</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Level of education of Mexican Immigrants</td>
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<td>Empowerment of the Mexican immigrant community</td>
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<td>Empowerment of the Mexican immigrant community</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Ejercito Zapatista de Liberacion Nacional</td>
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<tr>
<td>CITY</td>
<td>MAJOR TOPIC/CODE</td>
<td>QTY. OF ENTRIES</td>
<td>ENTRIES MAKE REFERENCE TO</td>
<td>OTHER CODES INCLUDED IN THIS TOPIC</td>
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<tr>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOUSTON</td>
<td>EZLN</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ejercito Zapatista de Liberacion Nacional</td>
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<tr>
<td>CHICAGO</td>
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<td>Vicente Fox</td>
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<td>FOX</td>
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<td>Vicente Fox</td>
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<td>Future of the Mexican immigrant community (politics)</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Future of the Mexican immigrant community (politics)</td>
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<td>Immigration and Naturalization Service</td>
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<td>Immigration and Naturalization Service</td>
<td>NATUR</td>
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<td>IMRGT, LEGAL</td>
</tr>
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<td>Opinion of Local Elected Politicians on Immigrant Issues</td>
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<td>Mobilization Actions, Strategies, Tactics - Organizations</td>
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<td>MOB/ORG</td>
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<td>Mobilization Actions, Strategies, Tactics - Organizations</td>
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54 OTHER CHICAGO AND HOUSTON ENTRIES

1331 TOTAL ENTRIES
### Table 1-C: Chicago -SAMPLE: 31 Entries-

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Table 1-C: Houston -SAMPLE: 37 Entries-

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| 553 P| AFSC COO    | JUNHO | ANH8  | 2        | 1   | MOB/STRAT | ** AGO-26, 2001: CUANDO JUNTARON A LOS POLITICOS DE AMBOS LADOS, DETONADOR DE MUCHAS COSAS...
| 156 Q| SEU UNION   | MARHO | 2002  | 3        | 57  | MOB/STRAT | * DRIV FAILS, LEGAL, APPEARS
| 173 R| SEU UNION   | MAR/HO| 2002  | 3        | 59  | MOB/STRAT | * VOICE-EARS
| 225 S| NOA COO     | MARHO | 2002  | 3        | 97  | MOB/STRAT | * MOB AS A PROCESS
| 228 T| NOA COO     | MAR/HO| 2002  | 4        | 72-73| MOB/STRAT | * GOING NATIONAL FROM LOCAL
| 301 U| EECC US     | MARHO | 2002  | 6        | 9   | MOB/STRAT | * COMPASSION, CONCERN, NETWORKING: SOLVING PROBLEMS |
| 323 V| NOA COO     | MARHO | 2002  | 6        | 21  | MOB/STRAT | * ARCA: ACTIVISMO ESTRATEGICO
| 327 W| NOA COO     | MARHO | 2002  | 6        | 33  | MOB/STRAT | ** POLITICAL PROJECT, STRATEGIC ALLIES |
| 342 X| ACAD        | MARHO | 2002  | 6        | 43  | MOB/STRAT | ** VOICE-EARS IN TX...
| 376 Y| CCHD COO   | MAR/HO| 2002  | 6        | 80  | MOB/STRAT | ** VOICE-EARS CCHD WAY |
| 488 Z| MOIRA LOCAL | MAYHO | 2002  | 10       | 8   | MOB/STRAT | * EDUCA (A. RINCON'S STRUGGLE): MOB THE YOUNG, HOWEVER, IMPORTANT TO GIVE EARS TO THE EARLESS |
| 489 AA| MOIRA LOCAL | MAYHO | 2002  | 10      | 8   | MOB/STRAT | * MAYOR PRESS SI SE ATACA EL PROBLEMA A NIVEL ESTATAL Y LUEGO LOCAL, AUNQUE DEPENDE DEL TEM A...
| 517 BB| ARCA CBO    | JUNHO | 2002  | 10       | 36  | MOB/STRAT | * KEY FOR SUCCESS FUERZA, CONSTANCIA Y PRAGMATISMO POLITICOS PLUS POLITICAL TIMING, MOSTLY ELECTORAL TIMING...
| 557 CC| AFSC COO    | JUNHO | ANH8  | 2        | 2   | MOB/STRAT | * EMMA LOZANO'S REMARKS |
| 307 DD| SEU UNION   | MARHO | 2002  | 3        | 55  | MOB/STRAT | MEXIM |
| 179 EE| CTD A MEET  | MAR/AUS| 2002  | 3        | 75, 82| MOB/STRAT | CONTACTING US-MEX LEGISLATORS |
| 187 FF| MAC COO     | MARHO | 2002  | 4        | 16  | MOB/STRAT | * VOICE-EARS |
| 227 GG| NOA COO     | MARHO | 2002  | 4        | 72-73| MOB/STRAT | * VOICE-EARS |
| 248 HH| AFL-CIO UNION MARHO | 2002 | 5 | 15-17, 26-28 | MOB/STRAT | STRATEGY TO ACCOMPLISH GOALS |
| 341 I| ACAD MARHO | 2002  | 6        | 42  | MOB/STRAT | MEXIM - ORG. GOALS |
| 426 JJ| AFSC CBO    | MARHO | 2002  | 6        | 113 | MOB/STRUC | ** HOUS DIFF WAYS OF INSTITUTIONALIZING |
| 429 KK| AFSC CBO    | MARHO | 2002  | 6        | 114 | MOB/STRUC | ** STRUCTURAL DIFFS BET CHIC & HOUS, YELLOW SHEET |
CHAPTER TWO

Political Participation of Mexican Immigrants in Chicago and Houston: The Process of Mobilization

2.1 The Process of Mobilization

In this chapter, I examine the dynamics of political participation and mobilization in Chicago and Houston for the Mexican immigrant community in order to expose and explain the main differences and similarities on the matter between these two communities. For this purpose, Rosenstone and Hansen’s work on mobilization provides a model to explain the origins and causes of mobilization of Mexican immigrants in an urban context from both transnational and comparative perspectives.

As stated in the first chapter of this work, and according to Rosenstone and Hansen (1993), “mobilization is the process by which candidates, parties, activists, and groups induce other people to participate.” These actors “have mobilized somebody when they have done something to increase the likelihood of his/her participation.” The essence of the process of mobilization is about how certain actors try consistently to persuade the recipient (in this work, Mexican immigrants) to participate politically in order to solve the recipient’s problems or issues. In this study, the primary indicator of political mobilization is the degree to which there is evidence of political participation.

I break down the process of mobilization into several components, and most of them are addressed in this chapter: the recipient, the message, the perception of the message by the recipient, the issue or problem that triggers mobilization, and the actors (who can be
either the source or targets of mobilization). Also, from an empirical perspective, other important components that I address in this study are: the action of mobilization (Chapter Three), and the context in which mobilization takes place (Chapter Four). The following sections are based on the findings of the field research of this study, unless otherwise indicated.

2.1.1 Mexican Immigrants: The Recipients

The recipient is the object of mobilization. Organizations in Houston and Chicago address immigrants in general, regardless if they are documented or unauthorized aliens. Their average Mexican constituency, for mobilization purposes, shows low levels of education; they come from rural locations in Mexico (the leadership in these two cities have perceived since the early to mid 1990s an increasing number of professionals born and raised in Mexican urban centers that migrate to the U.S.); and they join in the local work force in the industrial, service, and construction sectors. Their work is highly appreciated by their employers. A peculiar feature about Mexican immigrants is that nobody really knows their exact numbers in both cities. Depending on whom you ask (Mexican Consulates, union or organization activists, church officials), estimated figures could reach somewhere between 1.5 and 3 times the official figures of the U.S. 2000 Census.

The average immigrant, whenever taking the decision to go and work in the U.S., considers the present and future well-being of the family. Nonetheless, the decision to leave his/her hometown is basically personal. This said, in some states of Mexico, migration to the U.S. has become a family tradition, constantly fed by economic need,
and facilitated by job networks that have been created by members of the family that emigrated earlier.

The difference between average U.S. and Mexican daily wages for the period 1975-2005 and a 3 to 1 ratio loss of the real value of the Mexican minimum wage versus the U.S. minimum wage for the same period of time (see Table 2-A), seem to cover the opportunity cost of Mexican individuals in leaving their families and getting a job in the U.S. Even the economic cost of exploitation is covered in the sense that unauthorized immigrants may not get paid what is established by law, and they may contribute to a social security system that probably will never return a dime to them; yet, as long as they are hired, and as long as they can afford their living costs and send money back to their family, the flow of immigrant workers from Mexico to the U.S. shows no rationale to stop.

One of the key significant differences between the average Mexican immigrant in Houston and Chicago, is that Houston’s immigrants are closer to their home-community, in the sense that most immigrants come from the states of Nuevo Leon, San Luis Potosi, and Tamaulipas (in addition to Guanajuato, Michoacán, Guerrero, and Jalisco), which can be reached in a relatively short period of time by bus. The majority of Chicago’s Mexican immigrants come from seven Mexican entities (Michoacán, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Guerrero, Distrito Federal, the state of Mexico, and Zacatecas) and it is harder for them to keep in touch with their communities of origin, at least according to Houston standards. Another difference is that, even if most immigrants definitely believe that they are in the U.S. only temporarily and plan to go back to Mexico, Houston is
generally used as a port of entry to the U.S. job market in Texas, the Midwest, and the East Coast, whereas Chicago’s immigrants generally consider Chicago their last stop.iii

2.1.2 The Message

The Mexican immigrant is considered dispossessed in many ways. When Mexican immigrants arrive to the U.S. they tend to lose many things, like the direct contact with their family, their social life, their traditions, sometimes their language and even their given Spanish name and, to a certain extent, their identity. However, as they grow in numbers and as they concentrate over time, the process of “vanishing identities” becomes a complex adaptation process in which a new “Mexican living in the United States” identity emerges.

In general terms, from the standpoint of activists and leaders of Mexican origin, there are three types of Mexicans living in the United States: the Chicano, the Mexican American, and the Mexican immigrant (or just “Mexican”). From this perspective, Chicanos are perceived to be living and interpreting their present as a function of the past. The spirit of going back to their roots, “to recover what was stolen from us,” to Aztlán,iv to where “we all come from,” is very present in their interpretation of reality, which is also seen as a highly political interpretation. Mexican Americans are perceived as living their present as a function of the future. Generally well adapted to the system, their lifestyle focuses on what to do now to have a better future for themselves and their families. They tend to pay attention to the education of their children, to their health and retirement plans. Their patterns of political behavior (becoming Democrats or Republicans as a function of level of income), and consumption (buy now, pay later) are very similar to those of the average
American. For Mexican Americans and Chicanos, downward integration in the system is also perceived as a reality: low levels of income, lack of access to health care or quality education, unequal access to justice, gang life destroying family integration, etc.

Mexican immigrants, mostly the unauthorized, live in the present on a day-by-day basis. The past is back in Mexico, alive only in their hearts and minds. In the present they have to work six or seven days per week, sometimes 10-12 hours per day, sometimes double shifts. The future is measured in terms of the present. They have a job today, tomorrow nobody knows. They got paid this time, but there is no guarantee that another payment will come next. They are in the U.S. today, but there is no way to know if they will be in the U.S. tomorrow. They send money today to Mexico; maybe tomorrow they will send nothing. Only the present matters. However, the more time they spend in the U.S., the more they become more confident in building a future, and most of them feel the need to maintain a connection with the past, with their roots. They may even become documented aliens and stay in the U.S. for the rest of their lives, but the majority of them consider themselves Mexicans, and will never abandon in their minds the plan to return to Mexico “one of these days.”

Activists deal with questions of how, when, with what frequency and how much it costs to transmit the message, and how to make it appealing to their constituency in order to mobilize them. Experienced activists are well aware of the aspects that the Mexican immigrant keeps to him/herself through the process of immigration. They know that not everything is lost in the process, and they appeal in their messages to what immigrants tend to keep with them in a permanent way, in a life that proceeds one day at a time. In
addition to their strong preference for Mexican food and their language, these permanent ties include their family, their work, the Virgin Mary, and the Mexican flag.

Messages based on workers’ rights or related to work issues tend to be linked to the possibilities of improving the well-being to the family, as far as improvement of work conditions is perceived as feasible. Activists frame the legalization process as a way to directly improve work conditions. However, they are aware that most unauthorized immigrants compare their marginal income with the opportunity cost of the home labor market, which includes the marginal cost of immigrating, instead of comparing it with the opportunity cost of the host labor market. This happens mostly among unauthorized workers. Whenever appealing to the need of improving their work conditions, they find that unauthorized immigrants usually do not consider that they have the same rights at work than the locals, regardless of their migratory status. Instead, they compare their current economic position to the one that they would have if they had not migrated.

This makes things harder in terms of mobilizing for labor rights. It is hard to mobilize a segment of the population that perceives its salary mostly as fair given the circumstances, even if they have very few or no labor rights in the host labor market. However, activists know that the best moment to mobilize people is when immigrants see their job threatened on the spot.

Activists recognize that one of the most important incentives for an immigrant to migrate is the well-being of their immediate family. However, after many years of continuing immigration, the concept of family now takes a double, transnational dimension: family in Mexico and family in the U.S. at the same time, and generally they tend to merge.
Family in Mexico can be the parents, brothers and sisters, wife and children; family in the U.S. can be the same, however, a strong emphasis is put on the formation of the extended or direct family that emigrates from Mexico in relatively slow, but constant patterns. Activists in both cities calculate that forty to sixty percent of Mexican immigrant families living in the U.S. (this is, families whose at least half of their members were born in Mexico) have at least one family member who is an unauthorized immigrant. The concept of family itself becomes a strong symbol for activists to mobilize people, although this happens more frequently in Chicago in comparison to Houston.

The Virgin Mary is probably the most powerful religious symbol to mobilize people. Here the rationale is that you may have problems at work, and even lose your job, or you may have problems in your family or the family is far away; however, the Virgin Mary will always be there for you and your family. On the other hand, when a 25 year old unauthorized Mexican immigrant arrives for the first time in U.S. soil, he may not have family in the U.S. or a clear idea about what kind of work he will be performing, but chances are very high that he/she already has in his/her heart and mind an average “religious baggage” of at least nine hundred Catholic masses.

The transnational character of the Catholic Church definitely helps Mexican immigrants to feel at home whenever they go to mass. The format and dynamics of the masses are practically the same in the U.S. or in Mexico, regardless if you are at Pilsen (Chicago), Magnolia (Houston) or any city in the state of Guanajuato or Michoacán. Mexican immigrants’ relationship with the Virgin Mary is an essential factor which defines their identity once they arrive to the U.S. Another important religious symbol is the priest himself. Mexicans are considered to be extremely faithful to the Virgin Mary, and they
are very obedient to the counsel of the priest in a diversified set of matters, mostly about family and faith. Sometimes political matters are discussed in the Sunday sermon; however, they deal mostly with solidarity causes, and not direct mobilization. Activists and politicians are conscious of the powerfully appealing potential of the church to mobilize people through religious symbols, although they are also conscious that the highest levels of the U.S. Catholic hierarchy generally have the last word on the matter.

The pride of being and feeling Mexican, is also considered an important factor in the process of mobilization. In this context, the Mexican flag is the preferred symbol by most Mexicans. There are even flags with the green, white, and red, but with the image of the Virgin Mary instead of the official eagle at the center of the flag. Aztec dancers and pre-Hispanic conch players are also a very important symbol of the ethnic proud or Mexicanness of the people. Frequent references to certain Mexican heroes such as Morelos, Hidalgo, and Zapata, as well as negative references to seventy years of “PRI-gobierno,” are also important components of public speeches in the early 2000’s.

These symbols of Mexicanness are generally part of the process in reaffirming the immigrant’s identity on U.S. soil, but their use in the process of mobilization, through the message of the activist, is generally limited to the capacity of relating the sense of Mexicanness to the other three major topics for mobilization: family, work and faith. The appeal to the Mexicanness of the immigrant is most relevant where the Virgin Mary and family are the driving forces for mobilization. On the other hand, workers rights activists sometimes lessen, in an implicit manner, the appeal to the Mexicanness of their constituency because of the multi-ethnic composition of the constituency itself. Central Americans in Houston, and Puerto Ricans and Poles in Chicago give the “not-only-for-
Mexicans” touch to a demonstration for immigrant and/or workers rights, for example. Moreover, the Service Employees International Union’s (SEIU) national campaign to collect one million signatures to push for legalization is an example that the Mexican flag and the Virgin Mary are not *sine qua non* conditions to mobilize Mexican immigrants.

In sum, the Virgin Mary and the Mexican flag have become strong symbols of identification in the process of mobilization, whereas the notions of family and work are the driving forces of mobilization. Most activists are very aware of this, and try to incorporate a combination of these elements into the message whenever trying to mobilize the community: family, work and faith are the main components that explain mobilization of immigrants at an individual level. In Chicago, these elements are the basic components in the process of mobilization of Mexican immigrants. In Houston, the Virgin Mary and the Mexican flag are used to a lesser extent, however, their potential of mobilization remains intact. Also in Houston, the appeal to the family is not used as frequently as in Chicago; activists appeal basically to the community in a very broad sense or to the individual in their message. In both cities, mostly after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, it is common to see both the Mexican and American flags waving together in public demonstrations.

### 2.1.3 Perception of the Message

Perception is the link between spreading the message and getting people into action. The decision whether to participate or not in a political activity relies basically on the process of perception of the message. Activists identify some central features that affect how the message is perceived by their Mexican constituency. First, Mexican immigrants tend to
distrust politicians or political institutions. This seems to be the result of approximately seventy years of not trusting politicians and political institutions back home, unions included.\textsuperscript{vii} This directly affects the potential of participation in any initiative proposed by activists. Indeed, Mexican immigrants tend not to differentiate between activists and politicians.

Second, and highly related to the first point, Mexican immigrants are generally skeptical about democratic procedures.\textsuperscript{viii} Again, this seems to be the result of an intensive lack of contact with any sort of democratic culture for a period of seventy years. They tend to concentrate their attention on a small number of major leaders, and grant them their nominal trust along with a high dose of indifference regarding their acts. In the long term, this has led to weak levels of institutional organization, a spreading lack of accountability from the leadership toward its constituency, and the proliferation of organizations whose leaders assert that they count on the support of the (whole) community, but they cannot prove it.

However, this is changing in both cities. Attitudes towards democratic procedures are being pondered more realistically by leaders of Mexican origin (mostly émigrés from urban localities in Mexico) and their Mexican constituency. In both cities, for example, the struggle for a better education for their children within the Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) has led Mexican parents to acquire organization, negotiation and mobilizations skills that have been extremely useful in reinforcing democratic procedures in the formation, and functional organization, of community-based organizations.\textsuperscript{ix}
Third, the majority of Mexican immigrants never say “no.” Whenever they are approached and introduced to a situation that requires their participation in a specific action, whenever they are invited to participate in demonstrations, rallies, or picket lines, they almost never tell the activist “Sorry, I cannot or I will not be able to be there or do that.” On the contrary: “Yes, I will be there; yes, I can or I will do that, no problem.”

According to experienced activists, and depending on the subject, approximately for each five Mexicans that assert that they will participate, actually only one participates.⁴ Fourth, there is a widespread attitude among Mexican immigrants to state that “we cannot do this or that, it is not possible.” Activists attribute this attitude to the fact that their unauthorized migratory status leads them to believe (in an inaccurate manner) that exerting their rights in the U.S., any kind of rights, is practically impossible.

Fifth, Mexican immigrants play it safe, mostly if they are undocumented. The attitude of “if I do nothing, nothing happens” is an unwritten rule that the majority of immigrants tend to follow without any question in their everyday life. Activists perceive that behind this attitude is the rationale of immigrants to voluntarily become and remain invisible in a host society that strongly prefers things to stay that way. Moreover, the fact that they are potential subjects of deportation at any time, makes them extremely cautious in engaging in public activities that could strip them of their invisibility with unexpected and potentially catastrophic consequences. In this sense, la migra (the ICE –U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, formerly known as the INS-Immigration and Naturalization Service) becomes la ausente siempre presente (the absent one that is always there, always present) in their lives. In any instance, the rationale is that la migra cannot do anything against invisible people.
These five major attitudes form a set of perception barriers that are difficult to overcome whenever trying to persuade Mexican immigrants to engage in political actions. The key element to penetrate those blocking impediments for people to participate is trust, *la confianza*, gaining people’s trust. Within Rosenstone and Hansen’s model, social capital and social networks are essential for leaders to mobilize people, and this is not the exception. However, we also have the issue of how to gain the immigrants’ trust to build social networks and facilitate mobilization. In general terms, the most effective way to transmit the message is targeting families more than individuals, and women more than men. It is definitely better if the message can be transmitted in Spanish. Indeed, the most efficient way to transmit the message is by “spreading the word” among the members of the community, better if it goes from family to family. In Chicago, most activists speak Spanish or are bilingual, and most of the meetings or communications with Mexican immigrants are in Spanish, whereas in Houston it is not rare to find activists or heads of organizations that only speak English, and sometimes meetings with Mexican immigrants take place in English with a Spanish translation, when available.

Among all potential activists, the Catholic priest has the highest “trust rating.” Immigrants generally listen to what the priest has to say on a particular matter during mass. The contribution to the process of the local Hispanic TV is very important: its news section sensitizes the whole community to their own problems, and creates the notion that they are not merely individuals affected by some situation but rather they can face and solve those problems as a community.

The most difficult aspect of mobilizing immigrants (and people in general) is persuading them to participate in an activity for the first time. How immigrants perceive their first
experience is crucial for them to decide if they will participate again. The ideal conditions vary from activity to activity, but we can say that, in general terms, the participant needs to see transparency in the organization of the event (knowing every possible detail of its planning, for example), and highly appreciates honest and sincere leadership, as immigrants expect the leader to speak the truth. Whenever immigrants decide to participate, they feel more comfortable if they see the priest or the activist doing exactly the same things that they have been persuaded to do; all this in a moment in which the organizational hierarchy vanishes and everyone supports each other. In this sense, they also are attracted to the idea of the leadership working with and for them, and not them working for the leadership. After the first experience, they also need to see results of the mobilization. Mobilization without (major or minor) victories for its constituency has no future.

Finally, immigrants prefer, by far, to be part of an organization in which its leadership is more committed to deal with the working plans and strategies in solving specific problems, than dealing with organizations that spend most of the time in the ever debilitating and usually nondemocratic procedures of assigning hierarchical posts within the organization. The perception that organizations are truly democratic in their functioning is becoming a must for immigrants to join them, and/or get mobilized by them. In any case, activists know that the best incentive for immigrants to mobilize tends to come not from the organizations themselves, but from the outside, directly from the ever-changing context.
2.1.4 Political Participation through Mobilization: Actions

The most recurrent mobilization actions of Mexican immigrants in non-electoral politics are: writing letter campaigns, picketing, attending rallies or protests, contacting public officials, media exposure, prayer vigils, networking at an individual or organizational level with political aims, and participating in boycotts. Also recruiting individuals to become members of an organization that performs political actions; creating social and political networks among immigrants, city authorities and politicians (foreign or local); formation of and participation in voluntary organizations in order to address a problem in the community; attending a school board meeting; voting whenever and wherever allowed (participation of heads of family in PTA’s decisions, internal elections in a state federation, assembly votes within an organization on specific issues or actions to be taken, etc.); being a member of an organization that takes a position on political issues; and persuading those who can vote, and who are part of the family or the community, to do so for this or that candidate.

Specific targets of mobilization can be individuals or institutions, and the main goal generally is aimed to change the establishment’s rules of the game or, if it is already stipulated in the rules, to make sure that everybody exerts the same rights under the same rules. The type of mobilization action depends on the issue and the geographical impact of the issue. From this perspective, mobilization takes place at the following levels: local-neighborhood or local-community (health, housing, justice and education issues, and labor rights), state (state issues related to workers’ rights, driver’s licenses), national (legalization or amnesty issues), and transnational (issues related to Mexican politics or
actions taken by the Mexican government). Mobilization for any of these topics can link two or more levels simultaneously.

Although the traditional concept of mobilization deals mostly with empowering the people in a bottom-up fashion (mobilizing the “bottom” in order to make the “top” change things), activists have realized that such a dynamic is a necessary but not a sufficient condition to make ends meet. Pancho Argüelles (National Organizers Alliance, Houston), a professional organizer in Houston put it bluntly: “This is not only about giving voice to the voiceless; it is also about giving ears to the earless.” Adriana Cadena (Service Employees International Union, Houston) stated that activists report better mobilization results after making direct eye contact with the targets (generally politicians). Adriana Fernandez (Association for Residency and Citizenship of America, Houston), Emma Lozano (Centro Legal Sin Fronteras, Chicago) and Teresa Fraga (Pilsen Neighbors Community Council, Chicago) also stated that the best way to make allies among targets is talking directly to them, explaining why they are doing what they are doing, what are the next steps to be taken, and invite them to join the struggle in order to solve the problem. In this sense, lobbying and mobilizing politicians also become an important part of the process. Of course, politicians who are more likely to be targeted under this perspective at the local level are those in whose state or city districts the Latino population represents an important share of their constituency.

According to María Jiménez (American Friends Service Committee, Houston), activists tend to evaluate very carefully the results of mobilization actions. A full set of questions sometimes needs to be answered quickly in order to proceed with the next activity. Some questions have no answer in the short term, and some questions have only partial
answers: What were the main accomplishments of the activity? What was the response of
the target? Were the organizers’ expectations met regarding the number of people that
participated in the activity? How can you enhance participation? In what sense can the
mobilization be considered a success? After the event, is the struggle going forward or
backwards? How does the action affect the problem? How does the action affect the
activists themselves and/or other organizations? How does the activity affect the structure
of the message? How did the activity affect the context in which it took place? What are
the future actions that should or should not be taken? How the activity affects the
chances of enhancing future coordination of activities with other organizations? How
does the activity affect the functioning of the coalition, if the organizations that
participated in it form part of one? How do participants feel about it? Finally, the best
incentive for people to get increasingly involved in the mobilization process is for them
to see that the action in which they took part has done something, or has had an effect, in
changing things for them for the better. From this perspective, according to Emma
Lozano, “no victory is a small victory.”

2.1.5 Issues

Two issues or problems arise in Chicago and Houston as the most important topics in
terms of mobilization of Mexican immigrants from an organizational perspective: issues
related to the legalization of unauthorized immigrants, and issues related to the defense of
immigrant workers’ rights in the United States. In Chicago, a third relevant issue is the
right to participate in Mexican electoral politics for those Mexican citizens who live in
the United States. Other major issues that are addressed by the Mexican immigrant
In Houston, most organizations that address the concerns of Mexican immigrants focus on legalization, workers’ rights issues, and driver’s licenses. Most leaders of community organizations in Houston support the right of Mexicans to participate in Mexican electoral politics. However, they assert that this had not been considered an issue for mobilization purposes. On the other hand, legalization and workers’ rights issues are highly related in terms of organizational efforts to solve the problems that constantly affect immigrants. In Houston, within the issue of legalization, late amnesty cases are especially important from an organizational perspective.

Generally speaking, in Chicago, two groups have formed around these issues. One group of activists and organizations work on Mexicans’ rights to participate in Mexican electoral politics, and a second group of activists and organizations work on legalization and workers’ rights issues. Of course, there are organizations and activists that include all three issues in their agenda. In general terms, mobilization related to legalization and the defense of workers’ rights is more pronounced than mobilization related to defending the political rights of Mexicans abroad. Indeed, there are no signs of mobilization efforts on this last subject in both cities.

In Chicago, similarly to Houston, most legalization issues are related to workers’ issues in organizational terms. Activism around legalization seems to take the lead in the agenda in terms of priority, unlike Houston, where both issues are addressed with similar levels of priority. In both cities, local issues related to education, health, and housing are
common, and most organizations that currently deal with legalization and workers’ rights issues have capitalized on their own experience, or the experience of other organizations, when mobilizing people for these purposes. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in New York City (9/11), two additional issues have appeared as well: the no-match letters sent by the Social Security Administration to employers who presumably employ unauthorized aliens, and the driver’s licenses that became more difficult to get if you could not prove your legal migratory status in Texas and Illinois.

Regarding the nature of the issues, activists consider legalization of unauthorized immigrants and the no-match letters as federal issues. Driver’s licenses are considered to be state issues; and access to health, education, housing and justice are considered local issues. However, activists may target federal, state, and/or local politicians regarding any of these issues. Additionally, organizations in these two cities have started to adopt a double agenda, in which, depending on the issue, they address certain problems from a double perspective, trying to engage politicians and/or institutions from both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border in the solution process. A double agenda sometimes also implies that the organization deals with issues on both sides of the border. Finally, more frequently in Chicago than in Houston, some organizations address certain issues within a neighborhood context, in addition to the usual community level.

2.2 Actors

The most important actors (sources of mobilization) in these two cities are community-based organizations, church-related organizations, and unions. Chambers of commerce (Mexican or Mexican American), civic associations (mostly Mexican American),
Mexican state federations (which generally are major groupings of Mexican hometown associations), and Mexican political parties and organizations, have played a much lesser role in the dynamics of mobilizing people, but other actors do not disregard their potential involvement in the process.

Actors also consider the local Hispanic media (mostly TV, radio and newspapers) an important player in the process. Actors who can be considered allies or targets of mobilization are: the Mexican government, mostly through the Mexican Consulate in these two cities; local politicians, including members of the city council, state representatives and senators, mayors and governors; and at the federal level, U.S. representatives and senators. Activists also target candidates campaigning for any of these posts.

2.2.1 Organizations that Work with the Mexican Immigrant Community

In both cities, community organizations can be classified by the way they are organized. Some are considered to be top-down organized, in the sense that they do operate using funds from a grant of a sponsoring foundation, government or church programs, to address certain needs of the immigrant population. The sources of financing require the organization to be accountable for its actions more to the funding entity than to the community. Most organizations that are service providers fall into this category. Most of these organizations work for, with and within the community, but they do not work on a membership-driven basis.

On the other hand, there is the bottom-up type of organization. These organizations generally work with a budget financed by membership fees, which generally are
voluntary. These organizations consider themselves community-based organizations mostly because they address the concerns of the community as a whole, regardless of the nature of the problem, and because chances are very high that their leadership has emerged from the community itself.

There are also organizations that are a combination of both, community-based organizations that provide legal or educational services to the community, with a budget supported by service and/or membership fees, and grants. These three types of organizations may differ in organizational strategies, ideology, work philosophies, and legalization goals (i.e.: partial legalization vs. general amnesty for unauthorized immigrants), but they tend to converge on the common goal of empowering the community. A fourth type of organization is the coalition of organizations that are generally formed around an issue, the common characteristics of its members or a common set of goals.

The four types of organizations can be found in both cities. In Chicago, a significant number of these organizations are located in Mexican neighborhoods, and they generally conduct their business by addressing the needs of the community in those very specific neighborhoods. In Houston, this neighborhood model is not as evident as in Chicago. Moreover, organizations in Houston tend to be part of statewide coalitions, whereas in Chicago it is more likely for organizations initially to be part of local coalitions. Another difference is that in Chicago, community-based organizations seem to rely on the family as the basic component of the organization, whereas in Houston this rationale is not that evident, although things are changing in this aspect.
In the following sections, I introduce the most important organizations that deal with political mobilization of Mexican immigrants. In general terms, I focus on organizations with a strong Mexican constituency, regardless of their migratory or citizenship status. At the end of the section for each city, I include a brief discussion on types and formation of coalitions and alliances, and mention other organizations that are related to the process of mobilization of Mexican immigrants. Tables 2-B and 2-C provide a description of the basic characteristics of the most important organizations that deal with the mobilization of Mexican immigrants in Houston and Chicago, respectively. In such tables, organizations are classified by the function of their relationship with the Mexican immigrant community from two perspectives: in function of their internal organizational structure (bottom-up or top-down), and in function of their relationship with the Mexican immigrant community in terms of mobilization actions.

Indeed, these tables offer us an overall perspective of the most important characteristics of the Mexican immigrant organizations in these two cities. Most of these organizations are community-based, which means that their financial health relies mostly on the immigrant community; or community-oriented, which means that their finances rely more on financial sources other than the community, like grants from foundations, government grants, etc., although their activities are oriented basically towards the immigrant community. Also, almost half of the most important organizations in Houston are bottom-up in their organizational structure, which means that their structure is highly dependent on what the community has to say, whereas in Chicago most organizations are top-down in their organizational structure, which means that the leadership takes the initiative whenever an opportunity to mobilize the community presents itself. The
leadership tends to decide what battles are fought in Chicago, whereas in Houston the community, through an organizational structure focused on addressing issues, more than on institutionalized actions, implicitly decides what battles to fight.

Finally, the last column of both tables, “Type of Mobilization Performed or Mobilization-Related Activities,” shows the complex world of political participation and mobilization actions that organizations tend to perform. Generally, the most powerful organizations perform organizational networking; organizations that perform only networking, tend to maintain efforts to form coalitions, although in a very inconsistent manner. In what follows, I present a closer look of the organizational scenario in both cities, organization by organization.

2.2.1.1 Houston

The Association for Residency and Citizenship of America (ARCA). ARCA was founded on February 18, 1998, and its main goal is to assess immigrant aliens in late-amnesty cases. Its creation is a direct consequence of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA). They define themselves as an organization in which immigrants work with and for immigrants. They have about one thousand registered members, an average of two to three hundred persons attend their meetings twice per month, and more than eighty percent of its membership is Mexican. The organization gets financed through voluntary fees of its members, and they have chapters in San Jose and Los Angeles in California, and in Florida, New York/New Jersey, Atlantic City, and Seattle.
The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). This organization was founded in 1917. The AFSC-Houston has been working on immigrants’ projects since 1987, through the Immigration Law Enforcement Monitoring Project (ILEMP), however, the presence of this organization at a national level in dealing with immigrants’ issues dates back to 1939. From a broad perspective, the main goal of AFSC-Houston is to improve the capacity of local immigrants to get organized and mobilized, through a solid assessment of programs and projects that implicitly or explicitly enhance the formation and proliferation of organizations that deal with immigrants’ issues. Most of its budget comes directly from individual contributions to AFSC and foundation grants; however, its national headquarters in Philadelphia directly addresses important budgetary decisions. The decision to close the AFSC-Houston branch in 2003 came, in fact, from Philadelphia. Basically, from 1987 to 2003, most organizations that have dealt with immigrants’ issues in Houston were somehow related to AFSC-ILEMP.

The National Organizers Alliance (NOA). NOA’s mission is “to advance progressive organizing for social, economic and environmental justice… [NOA’s members] are organizers who are responsible to a defined constituency and who help build that constituency through leadership development, collective action and the development of democratic structures.” This organization was created in 1992, although in the Houston area it has been working with immigrants since 2000. In Houston the main accomplishment of NOA is to improve immigrant community organizing, mostly through leadership development, and constituency and networking building.

Mexicanos en Acción (MAC). Its main goal is “to defend the civil and human rights of Mexican immigrants, and every immigrant, inside and outside U.S. borders, and the
protection of the environment.” Founded in November 1999, MAC is the direct product of the mobilization that emerged among Mexican immigrants when President Zedillo’s administration tried unsuccessfully to increase the monetary deposit for foreign vehicles entering Mexico. MAC is also a very representative unit of relatively small organizational efforts that regularly appear on the Houston scene, mainly as a consequence of an issue that affects the community.

The Metropolitan Organization (TMO). The TMO defines itself as a broad-based, interfaith-based, nonpartisan “coalition of congregations, schools, and voluntary associations which are dedicated to teaching ordinary citizens how to participate in the decisions which affect their families and communities.” The organization’s involvement in immigrants’ issues is relatively new, and has focused on issues like access to health, lobbying for the construction of a day labor center, and active participation on leadership workshops related to immigrants issues in the Harris County area. Activists in the field describe TMO as a “white-lead, middle class, faith-based,” organization that has recently targeted the immigrant population as a potentially strong constituency.

2.2.1.1.1 Coalitions in Houston

From 1990 to 2003, coalitions in Houston have shown different levels of institutionalization. According to Benito Juarez, the head of the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs in Houston (MOIRA, founded on May 19, 2001), there are three different types of coalitions in Houston. The first type is when organizations exchange information and coordinate actions mostly through networking efforts, focusing on specific issues and activities (protest rallies outside city hall or the Mexican Consulate,
for example), and mostly forming non-permanent, informal alliances. Generally, one major organization leads the networking effort. The main supporters for this type of organizational alliances have been the AFSC-ILEMP, and more recently the AFL-CIO’s Service Employees International Union (SEIU).\textsuperscript{xvi}

The second type is a group of organizations or committees that try to empower the community through a bottom-up type of organizational structure, in which the opinion and the needs of the immigrant community are the driving force of the coalition’s actions. The SEIU-backed Houston Coalition for Dignity and Amnesty (HCDA) is an organizational effort of this kind. The third type is a group of organizations that deals with immigrant issues from a top-down perspective, also with the aim to empower the community, but mostly through leadership meetings of organizations that include service providers. The actions of these coalitions do not necessarily address the most urgent needs of the community, mostly because these actions also depend on the available budget of the organizations that form the coalition. During the 1990s, the Houston Immigrant and Refugee Coalition (HIRC, strongly supported by the CCHD) was an organizational effort that dealt with immigration issues in a similar manner.

Finally, coalitions like the Coalition of Higher Education for Immigrant Students (CHEIS) are an organizational effort that deals with education issues of immigrants in a similar way to the second and third type of organizations. They have direct contact with parents who have their children in school, they try to prioritize their needs when planning their actions, and they also have service-provider organizations on its board. CHEIS was founded in 1998, and the purpose of this organization is “to promote research and policy development, build collaborative partnerships, secure funding and conduct community
outreach to provide broader educational opportunities for immigrant students. Among the main accomplishments of the coalition is the lobbying effort to pass the bill HB1403 by the 77th Texas legislature, and signed by the governor on June 17, 2001. Under certain conditions, this bill allows unauthorized students the possibility of attending college paying tuition at in-state rates, and the possibility of receiving state financial aid. After Texas, and up to mid-2003, California, Utah, New York, Washington State, Oklahoma, and Illinois, in that order, had adopted similar bills.

Some of the main characteristics of coalitions in Houston are the lack of institutionalization in their structure, their high levels of informality, their issue-driven nature, and the fact that most of their administrative members are voluntary workers or the payment that they receive is by no means competitive in the labor market. Pancho Argüelles (NOA) points out that the concept of coalition in Houston acquires the meaning of “circumstantial associations.” This condition is confirmed by Juarez (MOIRA): “the fact that you don’t see a coalition actively working or having meetings, it does not mean that the coalition does not exist anymore.”

However, things are changing in Houston in organizational terms. The recent formation of the Alliance to Support Hispanic Immigrants is the first formal macro-organization that groups not only organizations that work at a community level with Latino immigrants –and not only Mexican immigrants. Among its 27 members, one finds the Mexican Consulate, several agencies from the local government, civic organizations, universities, banks, clinics, service providers, and even the Internal Revenue Service. This alliance has three major objectives: “provide orientation and support to Hispanic immigrants about services available in their own language; organize community events
that promote the well-being of the Hispanic immigrant community; and develop the cultural competency of professionals providing services to the Hispanic immigrant community."\textsuperscript{xix}

### 2.2.1.2 Other Organizations in Houston

Finally, other organizations, coalitions or institutions in the Houston area that are indirectly or sporadically involved in, or somehow related to, the mobilization process of Mexican immigrants are: the Center for Mexican American Studies and the Center for Immigration Research, both from the University of Houston; Central American Resource Center (CRECEN), Gulfton Area Neighborhood Organization / Central American Refugee Center (GANO-CARECEN), Justice for Serafin Olvera Committee, Houston International University, De Madres a Madres, Asociación de Mujeres Hispanas, Houston Area Women’s Center, Texas Coalition for Dignity and Amnesty, The Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), La Rosa, the Association for Advancement of Mexican Americans (AAMA), Amigos Volunteers in Education and Services (AVES), the Houston Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, and Avance Inc. Organizations that no longer exist are the Texas Immigration and Refugee Coalition, Aldape Guerra Committee, Comité de Solidaridad con el Pueblo de Mexico, and the Coordinadora de Autodefensa y Participación Ciudadana.

### 2.2.1.2 Chicago

**Centro Legal Sin Fronteras (CSF).** Founded on August 10, 1987 by Emma Lozano, the CSF is a community organization that deals with immigrant issues from several perspectives. It also works as a service provider, mostly assessing people in legal matters
regarding immigration issues. It mobilizes people to address a wide open agenda on issues that span a general amnesty for the unauthorized and gentrification issues, to the improvement of education conditions in the Chicago school system and the organization of registration and voting rallies in local, state, and U.S. Congressional elections.

CSF is also known for its networking, lobbying and, when necessary, confrontational actions against federal, state and local politicians when trying to accomplish its goals. Among its main accomplishments are the creation of the “Rudy Lozano” primary school and a strong lobby effort to promote a general amnesty for unauthorized immigrants at the federal level. The CSF’s decisions on mobilization, agenda building, networking, and lobbying are generally taken by the Asamblea de los Pueblos Sin Fronteras (PSF), which works as the democratic body and consciousness of the CSF, under the Principles of Zapatismo. In general terms, the CSF leadership calls for a PSF meeting whenever an important decision needs to be taken. The main goal of CSF/PSF is to empower the community of immigrants and the disadvantaged, regardless of nationality or migratory status.

Pilsen Neighbors Community Council (PILNE). This organization was founded in 1953, and adopted its current structure in 1972. Since then, PILNE organizes annually the street festival “Fiesta del Sol,” in order to finance other activities of the organization. The main goal of this organization, according to Teresa Fraga, is “to empower the Mexican-origin community who live in the Pilsen neighborhood, mostly through the generation of leadership and [the formation and proliferation of] other organizations.” Most of its activities address neighbors’ health, education, public services, gentrification, and housing. Immigration rights issues are also addressed from a broader perspective. Among
its main accomplishments throughout the last 30 years is the creation of self-financed neighborhood organizations and programs that directly address the neighbors’ needs (Proyecto Vivienda, El Valor, Alivio Medical Center, El Técnico).

Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights (Heartland Alliance). Founded in 1888, and formerly known as “Travelers and Immigrants Aid,” this organization defines itself as “an anti-poverty, human rights organization that provides housing, health care and human services to improve the lives of impoverished Chicagoans.” ^xiii Currently, “Enlaces America” is a program within Heartland Alliance that evolved from the bi-national migration project known as the “Mexico-U.S. Advocates Network” (1995-2001). Enlaces America “facilitates the empowerment of transnational communities in their commitment to building an equitable, sustainable, and dignified way of life for peoples in the Americas.” This program “seeks to maximize the potential for transnational leadership and regional policy advocacy within Latino immigrant communities in the United States.” ^xxi The work of this organization is developed in three areas: Immigrant Community Leadership Development, Migration Policy and Human Rights, and Regional Linkages.

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). Between 1992 and 2001, the main efforts of AFSC-Chicago in dealing with Mexican immigrants took place through the program “The Mexican Agenda.” The main goal of the program was “to involve the most politically active segment of the Mexican community” in the Chicago area through uniting “Mexican and Mexican-American community organizations and residents around issues of common concern, such as U.S. legislation, political developments in Mexico, and treatment of Mexican immigrants.” ^xxii The program’s results were twofold:
“increasing the coordination among community activists and leaders, and promoting the formation of more, new and better community organizations.”

In the last years of the program, though, significant efforts were made in order to promote and lobby for the right to vote of Mexicans living abroad.

More recently, first through the “Latino Community Empowerment” program, and then through its current nationwide “Project Voice,” AFSC-Chicago has focused on enhancing its immigration and refugee work by working in three areas: base building through leadership development, alliance building through public education, and networking for policy impact on immigration grounds.

Also starting in 2001, AFSC has shown, at a national level, open and strong support for the legalization of unauthorized immigrants in the United States.

The Resurrection Project (TRP). This organization was founded in 1990 as the Pilsen Resurrection Development Corporation. In 1994, Interfaith Community Organization and Pilsen Resurrection merged to become TRP. Through the accomplishment of community organizing, community development, and community programs, TRP galvanizes “financial, human, physical and spiritual resources to build new homes and build hope” in the highly Mexican-origin populated neighborhoods of Pilsen, Little Village, and Back of the Yards. Most local Catholic parishes from these neighborhoods form part of, and/or actively participate in TRP’s activities. Basically, TRP’s community organizing efforts are directed to empower residents though networking, alliance, leadership, and trust building. According to Salvador Cervantes, the lead organizer of TRP, the idea is to relate the people’s faith and family values to the solutions of the community’s current pressing issues.
Chicago Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues (CIC or Interfaith). This organization is the Chicago chapter of the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice. Under the philosophy of “religion and labor working together,” the objectives of Chicago Interfaith Committee are: “1) support workers by helping to encourage companies to recognize unions and negotiate contracts in good faith; 2) rebuild a working relationship between the religious and labor communities; and 3) educate the larger interfaith community about the role of unions and the labor movement in securing justice for workers.”\textsuperscript{xxvi} One of the most important projects sponsored by this organization is the “Interfaith Workers’ Rights Center,” which deals with violations of the working rights of unauthorized workers.

Casa Aztlán. This organization was founded in 1970, and addresses mostly the needs of the Mexican community in the Pilsen Neighborhood. Casa Aztlán offers a diversity of services and programs to the immigrant community; however, Casa Aztlán is also known for encouraging the development of the arts among the community, and for its readiness to form or be part of coalitions or alliances that defend and/or enhance the political rights of the Mexican immigrant community in the United States or Mexico. Currently, Casa Aztlán is a milestone organization in which two major historical forces, the Chicano Movement, and the school of thought that emerged from the Mexican student movement of 1968, converge in Chicago to frame, from an ideological perspective, the backing and patronage of the organization and mobilization efforts of the Mexican community in the Pilsen neighborhood.

Unión Latina de Chicago (Unión Latina). This organization was founded on March 2000, and is presented as a coalition of organizations (mostly parishes, unions, and small community organizations) that work together against gentrification and for workers’
rights. Unión Latina has focused mainly on the wrongdoings of temporary employment agencies, the creation of day labor centers, leadership formation, and labor and political education of the community. They do coordinate some of their actions with the local chapter of the AFL-CIO, tend to target local authorities and politicians (city agencies, council members), and are a good example of an organization that exerts in a persistent and efficient way mobilization of immigrants with relatively ample coverage of the Hispanic media.

**West Town Leadership United (WTLU).** This organization is the result of the merger of two West Town community networks in 2000, the West Town Leadership Project, and the West Town United. WTLU defines itself as a “family-focused, multi-issue community organization dedicated to serving the West Town/Humboldt Park neighborhoods on three levels: leadership development, building a network of relationships between people, and community organizing to improve the quality of life in the neighborhood.” Their goal as an organization is to “promote, safeguard, develop, and build a multi-ethnic, mixed income, racially diverse, and family-friendly community through ongoing education, leadership training, and organizing in West Town.”

Gentrification and affordable housing, parent leadership development of educational issues, the support of immigrant rights groups, and attention to the relationships among youth, parents, community, and police, are the main fields of action for this organization. In April 2002, WTLU had registered 31 institutional members, amongst schools, community organizations, parishes, and service providers.
2.2.1.2.1 Coalitions in Chicago

In general terms, coalitions in Chicago tend to be more formal and institutionalized than their counterparts in Houston. Many of Chicago’s coalitions have accumulated considerable experience on issues related to immigrant political mobilization through years of working on the matter. Also, their sources of funding are relatively stable and their personnel tends to be professional with competitive wages. Most of them are a combination of bottom-up and top-down organizations, and it is common for them to work on networking building at an institutional level, and address immigrant issues through fairly well established projects and programs.

Some activists and organization chairs emphasize the difference between alliances and coalitions in Chicago. Most of them agree that alliances are mostly issue driven, and that they require a certain level of commitment with the cause; although the formation of a coalition, commitment and compromise are all required. According to Rebekah Lusk, from the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR), there is always a way to deal with these issues: “your organization can be a nonmember of the coalition, which leaves the doors open for you to become our ally.” Lastly, another difference between Chicago and Houston is that organizations in Chicago are already working towards forming strong and stable coalitions on race and class grounds, for which they expect a substantial compromise and involvement of major U.S. unions in the process of mobilization. Two major umbrella organizations in Chicago are the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR), and the Coordinadora de Organizaciones Mexicanas del Medio Oeste (COMMO).
The Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR) was founded in 1986, and currently is formed by more than 90 public and private organizations. The coalition’s mission is “to promote the rights of immigrants and refugees to full and equal participation in the civic, cultural, social, and political life” of American society. Also the coalition “educates and organizes immigrant and refugee communities to assert their rights; promotes citizenship and civic involvement; monitors and analyzes policies affecting immigrants and refugees and raises public consciousness about the contributions of newcomers to the United States.” The Ford Foundation and the Illinois Department of Human Services are important sponsors of the coalition, among other organizations or institutions. The ICIRR provides to the immigrant community the following services and programs: Public Information and Outreach, Training and Technical Assistance, Policy Evaluation and Monitoring, Advocacy and Civil Participation, Information and Referral Services, and Organizing and Leadership Development.

The Coordinadora de Organizaciones Mexicanas del Medio Oeste (COMMO) was founded in June 2001, and is a coalition of more than 20 organizations (seven of them, Mexican state federations) in the Chicago area. Its main purpose is “to evaluate, coordinate, implement and support proposals made by Mexican and Mexican-American Organizations in relation to political, humanitarian, educational, economic, and civic activities that would contribute towards obtaining dignified living conditions for individuals of Mexican extraction in Mexico and the United States.” They also look forward to “speak on behalf of the member organizations before local, state, and federal governments of Mexico and the United States.” COMMO is one of the first
organizations of Mexican immigrants that started to address its agenda from a binational perspective, mainly dealing with local government and politicians in the U.S., Mexican government and politicians, and the Mexican Consulate in Chicago. However, it has not performed any type of mobilization action of Mexican immigrants.

2.2.1.2.2 Other Organizations in Chicago

Other organizations, institutions, or coalitions in the Chicago area that are directly, indirectly or sporadically involved in, or somehow related to, the mobilization process of Mexican immigrants are: Concilio Hispano - Bensenville, Centro Cultural Puertorriqueño, United Network of Immigrant and Refugee Rights (UNIRRR), Latino Organization of the Southwest (LOS), Instituto del Progreso Latino, Logan Square Neighborhood Association, Little Village Community Development Corp., Erie Neighborhood House, Coordinadora 96-2000, Latino Leadership Project, Mujeres Latinas en Acción, Unión de Braceros Mexicanos, Bracero Justice Project, Association for Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), Chicago Homeless Coalition, Centro Romero, Coordinadora Internacional de Apoyo al Pueblo Mexicano, and Pilsen Alliance.

2.2.2 The Catholic Church

In Houston, the most important church-related organizations that deal with mobilization issues of Mexican immigrants are:

The Catholic Campaign of Human Development (CCHD), officially launched at a national level in November 1970 by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, has
been successful in assisting and financing the creation of community-based
organizational efforts and self-help projects. One of its goals is to enhance the education
and awareness of the whole Catholic community about the problems that face
unauthorized immigrants in Houston. The idea is to engage wealthy Catholics with the
poor and the needy. The organization is part of the Secretariat for Social Concerns of the
Galveston-Houston Archdiocese.

Casa Juan Diego (CJD), founded in 1980, is a good example of an organization that deals
with the daily and most elemental needs of unauthorized immigrants, and that has the
support of the community and the Catholic and Protestant churches in order to
accomplish its tasks. Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Galveston-Houston (Catholic
Charities) was founded in 1943 and this organization, “as an advocate of social justice,
empowers the community through action and education…” Its vision statement reads
“people of faith helping people in need achieve self-sufficiency.”xxx The Hispanic
Ministry in Houston focuses its efforts on collaborating with “any secular organization
that shares the same principles and values of the Church’s doctrine of social justice,”
according to its director, Jorge Delgado.

In Chicago, the actions of priests with Latino constituencies, along with the actions of the
Hispanic Ministry, take place in a context heavily influenced by the Polish, Irish and
mainstream Anglo sectors of the archdiocese. Latino priests are considered a minority
within the ecclesiastical body, despite their large Latino constituency. Priests (regardless
if they are Latinos or not) who openly discuss with their constituency legalization and
workers’ rights issues are considered the minority within the minority. Other churches,
like the United Methodist Church are also involved in the process, although the Catholic
Church is considered to be the leading force.

Religiously based organizations in Chicago fall into two main categories of community-
based organizations. The first category, founded by religious authorities, generally works
in coordination with Catholic authorities. The second has some organizational links with
religious authorities, and uses Catholic symbols to mobilize people, but shows high levels
of autonomy in financial and logistical matters. The Resurrection Project and Centro
Legal Sin Fronteras are representative organizations of these two categories, respectively.

These types of organizations can be found all over the city, but they are mainly
concentrated in Mexican neighborhoods, and address the needs of Mexican-origin
population generally within the neighborhood’s or the alderman’s district’s limits. All of
them have to work within a dense network of organizations that address the same
problems, but from different perspectives: unions, service provider organizations, local
and state coalitions, and Mexican state federations (macro associations that generally
group Mexican hometown associations). Additionally, in Chicago there are also
organizations that address immigrants’ rights from an interfaith perspective, like the
Chicago Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues.

Additionally, in Chicago, the most important church-related organizations that deal with
mobilization issues of Mexican immigrants are: the Office for Peace and Justice of the
Archdiocese of Chicago (OPJ), “based in the Catholic Social Tradition, educates,
advocates, and empowers through the Catholic Church, parishes, schools, institutions and
with community partners to transform lives and society,”xxxii and the Catholic Campaign
for Human Development chapter (CCHD). Within the Archdiocese of Chicago, the latter
is part of the services offered by the Office of Peace and Justice. The role of this office is very similar to the Houston branch; they finance organizations or programs oriented to helping people help themselves.

2.2.3 Unions

On February 16, 2000, the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) launched a statement in New Orleans in which they asserted that the “AFL-CIO believes the current system of immigration enforcement in the United States is broken and needs to be fixed.” Among their starting points to fix the system was the recognition that unauthorized workers should be provided permanent legal status through a new amnesty program; that regulated legal immigration is better than unregulated illegal immigration; and that a guest program on its own is not a solution.

This policy shift of mainstream unions towards unauthorized immigrants has represented a major advance in the mobilization process of immigrants regarding legalization and labor rights issues. Mainly through the AFL-CIO’s Service Employees International Union (SEIU), union activists have coordinated a national campaign advocating for legalization. Indeed, their vision goes well beyond building a successful campaign. They are working hard to create a national movement around legalization for unauthorized immigrants, who happen to be mostly workers. They prioritize legalization in their agenda because once legalization is attained, many problems related to workers’ rights will be easier to solve. A first step towards this direction is the SEIU-sponsored grassroots campaign “A Million Voices for Legalization” in 2002.
Unions see themselves as key players in this process because of their experience with workers’ mobilization, the relatively large amount of available resources, their capacity to create inter-ethnic alliances among workers, and because when they knock on the doors of politicians at local, state, and national levels, most of them (particularly Democrats) open the doors and listen. For unions, advocating for legalization of unauthorized immigrants is both a matter of potential membership and a matter of survival.

In Houston, unions’ efforts to mobilize people are an uphill battle most of the time. Texas is a right-to-work state, and Houston in particular is a pro-business city, a combination that makes labor activism a little bit more complex than expected, regardless of what kind of expectations union activists may have. In Chicago, a union-friendly city, things go “smoother” in that respect. Complications arise when not all unions in the city, even within the AFL-CIO umbrella, agree or understand the goals of SEIU’s effort. Some unions may support the effort very lightly; some may not support any kind of effort at all.

In both cities, the strategy is to work directly with the community, and in both cities activists had to start from zero in this task. In a paradoxical way, the task is challenging in both cities. In Chicago, where there are so many community organizations (which include not only Mexicans, but other ethnic groups as well), sometimes it becomes extremely difficult to deal with all of them within a specific and unique agenda. On the other hand, in Houston, the relative lack of community organizing makes things extremely difficult to handle, and short-term results are difficult to achieve. Finally, other actors also see unions as essential links towards the formation of race and class alliances for mobilization purposes.
In addition to local chapters of the AFL-CIO and the SEIU, other union organizations that are directly or indirectly related to mobilization efforts of unauthorized workers are in Houston: Harris County AFL-CIO Council; Sheet Metal Workers International Association – Houston Project; United Brotherhood of Carpenters Local 551; United Food and Commercial Workers International Union; Meatcutters and Allied Food Workers District, Local 408. In Chicago: United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, Local 881; Chicago Federation of Labor, and UNITE HERE.

2.2.4 Chambers of Commerce and Civic Organizations

Mexican American chambers of commerce limit their participation in the process to meetings with the Mexican Consulate in which the legalization and workers’ rights issues are mentioned in a sporadic way. Mexican-immigrant chambers of commerce are not only related to the process via the Mexican Consulate, but they are seen as a potential tool to introduce the immigrant business community into the process. Civic associations like the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund limit their participation to their respective fields of action, through its legal program in Chicago, and its program in Community Educational Leadership Development in Houston. Other organizations, like the National Council La Raza or the League of United Latin American Citizens, have participated in public events related to the cause. In any case, the participation of chambers of commerce and civic organizations, in terms of mobilization, is generally marginal.
2.2.5 Media

Main actors see the role of the local Hispanic media from three perspectives. First, most actors agree that the media is a business after all, and that they will report whatever they need to report in order to keep themselves profitable and competitive in the market. However, community organizations and unions generally report good relations with the Hispanic media (mostly printed media and TV) in both cities, and this opinion will be held as far as their activities are routinely and fairly covered. Almost all actors agree that the state of affairs in radio in both cities, at least until 2003, was a total disgrace in terms of their programming, and they underline the relative lack of radio air space to address community issues in a serious manner. This situation would change radically during the mobilization events of Latino immigrants in the first half of 2006.

Second, the media is seen as an essential tool to mobilize people, and its potential is perceived as not yet fully developed, especially in terms of radio coverage. However, local Hispanic television news (Telemundo and Univision) is seen as an essential factor to familiarize the immigrant community with itself, and to make them aware of the problems that they share in common, regardless of their migratory status and generational barriers.

Third, most actors see the urgency to go beyond the exclusive diffusion of the Latino community’s issues by the Hispanic media, and to introduce the mainstream Anglo media into the Latino reality of these two cities. The fact that the major Anglo newspapers in both cities had bought in the early 2000s the most important local Hispanic weekly newspapers raised concerns and hopes among actors. On the one hand, some actors were
concerned about the potential influence of a newspaper’s Anglo-dominated board of directors on the diffusion of the Latino reality to Latinos themselves. On the other hand, some actors saw this as a good starting point to sensitize the Anglo-dominated mainstream media into Latinos’ reality, and the potential diffusion of that reality between Anglo and black readers in both cities.

As for print media, the Chicago Tribune and the Houston Chronicle have recently begun considering immigrant related news as an issue on its own, in addition to the use of the traditional “Hispanic” umbrella when referring to issues of the Spanish speaking community in both cities.

The most important Hispanic printed media in Chicago are: La Raza, ¡Éxito! (Chicago Tribune’s, currently known as Hoy), Nuevo Siglo Newspaper, El Viento de Chicago, El Imparcial, El Otro, Extra, Chicago Ahora, La Esperanza (formerly known as La Adelita, the publication of the Centro Legal Sin Fronteras), Nueva Vida (The Resurrection Project’s), Enlace (Mexican Consulate’s), Chicago Católico (the official newspaper of the Archdiocese of Chicago), Vision 2000 (Elgin), Back of the Yards Journal, and Vida Nacional (Melrose Park).

In Houston, they are: El Día, Semana News, La Voz de Houston (Houston Chronicle’s), El Mexica, Ultimas Noticias, La Prensa de Houston, Caminantes (Hispanic Ministry, Diocese of Galveston-Houston), Catholic Worker (Casa Juan Diego’s), El Misionero (an interfaith newspaper), The Texas Catholic Herald (the official newspaper of the Diocese of Galveston-Houston), La Información, Rumores, and ¡Qué Onda! Magazine.
Most of these publications appear on weekly or monthly basis, some are bilingual, but most of them are published in Spanish. Also, the majority focus on local and/or community issues, and almost all of them offer news or analysis related to Mexican and/or Latin American politics. Some Mexican state federations also publish their own magazines in Chicago.

2.2.6 The Mexican Consulate

The Mexican Consulate in these two cities generally is seen as an ally and/or a target, depending on the actor, the timing, and the issue that is being addressed. In general terms, the Mexican Consulate in Chicago deals more frequently and intensively with an organized community than its counterpart in Houston. In Chicago, the state federations, and a set of local coalitions (which may include some or most of the following: community-based organizations, religious-based organizations, chambers of commerce, activists from the Mexican left, and representatives of Mexican political parties), regularly exert pressure on the community agenda of the Consulate. In Houston this pressure is sporadically exerted by community-based organizations and issue-driven alliances.

Before the election of Vicente Fox to the Mexican presidency, the immigrant leadership in these two cities used to consider the Mexican Consulate as an extension of the “PRI-government,” and lack of trust was the dominant note in their relationship. After Fox became president, the Mexican Consulates were perceived mainly as representatives of the Mexican government, which has given the Consulate a significant ability to earn the confidence of the local leadership. In both cities the relationship between the Consulates
and the community leadership is based on strategic calculations, and an intense pragmatism.

Additionally, the community leadership in both cities does pay attention to the personality of the Consul General. Immigrant leaders point out, in general terms, that there are two types of Consuls: those who care about the community and those who do not. From this perspective, the personality of the Consul General does matter whenever they decide to approach the community as a whole, instead of approaching only the leadership or approaching neither the community nor the leadership. In Houston, regardless of the Consul type, leaders tend to interact with the Consul, or they both exert mutual indifference on each other. While the cohabitation scheme also applies to Chicago, there is no way to think in a relationship of mutual indifference between the leadership and the Consul. Indeed, the Mexican Consul frequently needs to adapt his agenda to the dynamics imposed by the proactive social and political life of the Mexican community in Chicago.

### 2.2.7 Mexican State Federations

Mexican state federations are organizations that group mostly hometown associations and remain the big question mark in the process of mobilization. Low in numbers and influence in Houston, but mushrooming in Chicago, these organizations are seen by other actors as natural allies in the campaign for legalization and labor rights. Other organizations and actors refer to them in terms of their mobilization potential, and some leaders introduce their organizations in these terms, asserting that they represent thousands and thousands of members of their community of origin living in Chicago.
The most important state federations in Chicago are: Durango Unido en Chicago, Casa Guanajuato en Chicago, Federación de Guerrerenses en Chicago, Federación de Clubes Jaliscienses del Medio Oeste (FEDEJAL), Federación de Clubes Michoacanos en Illinois (FEDECMI), Federación de Oaxaqueños del Medio Oeste, Asociación de Clubes y Organizaciones Potosinas del Estado de Illinois (ACOPIL), Federación de Clubes Unidos Zacatecanos en Illinois, Federación Chihuahuense en Illinois, and Hidalguenses Unidos de Illinois. The first steps to create a macro organization that would group most state federations, the Confederación de Federaciones y Asociaciones Mexicanas del Medio Oeste, were given in early 2003. In Houston, only the Federación de Zacatecanos has survived. Attempts to create other federations have systematically failed in the Houston area. Most of these organizations were founded during the 1990s.xxxiv

2.2.8 American Politicians and Local Governments

From an historical perspective, Houston and Chicago diverge in many aspects regarding the political mobilization of their minorities. In Chicago there is a strong relationship between ethnic-based politics and Machine Politics and this has modified the structure of city politics at its core. The raw material for the development of Machine Politics in Chicago in the early 20th Century was the significant amount of immigrants who arrived and were concentrated geographically in the city. The wards paralleled the boundaries of ethnic neighborhoods and they were also used as boundaries for city council seats (R. Vogel and J. Harrigan 2007). Through this structure, at the beginning the party leader would pay attention to the immigrants within a framework of ethnic politics, later on, it is the Mayor of Chicago who takes over this role. The core of this ethnic-based political dynamics was an ongoing relationship between the alderman, immigrants and City Hall.
The mobilization of immigrants by their aldermen throughout the history of Chicago is a permanent component of the political development of the city and its legacy; the political structure of the city, has remained in place for almost 100 years now. Local immigrant leaders recognize the aldermen as a force that cannot be ignored in the political arena and certainly their actions focus on a neighborhood by neighborhood basis, whenever mobilization is needed.

In Houston, the political structure of the city is identified more as an elite movement that follows an “efficient business enterprise” model, closed to minority or ethnic politics. (Hays 1964). From an historical perspective, in Chicago the “trust” component becomes an important cultural factor to carry out politics between Machine politicians and minorities; in Houston the “trust” component grows mostly among business and government elites, leaving out of the game minorities. In Houston, there is a weak relationship between organized labor and local government; there are low levels of government responsiveness to organized workers and minorities and there is not the development of a sense of community among their minorities (D. Judd and T. Swanstrom 2006). The legacy of this dynamic is a closed government for immigrant or ethnic-based politics in comparison to Chicago.

From a non-electoral political mobilization and participation perspective, American politicians are initially considered to be clear targets in the struggle for legalization and labor rights, for the simple reason that they can modify the laws that affect directly the life of millions of unauthorized immigrants. However, some politicians, depending on the issue, can also be considered as allies. In general terms, activists in both cities face a difficult decision regarding what kind of politicians to target. On the one hand, activists
know that for legalization issues the members of the Congress and Senate are preferred targets, yet, the effectiveness of their mobilization efforts towards these targets depends on the political position of the issue taken by the U.S. legislative branches, always from a national perspective. This also requires a national coordination of actions which is not easy to put together.

On the other hand, activists try to influence local politicians while dealing with local and state issues, like workers’ rights, education related issues, or getting driver’s licenses for unauthorized immigrants. Targeting local and state politicians for local issues on a regular basis has provided the necessary experience for some activists to deal with U.S. politicians at a national level. Nevertheless, a clear strategy to involve local and state politicians (including governors and mayors) to advocate for the legalization of unauthorized immigrants has yet to emerge. Interestingly, most local and state politicians in Houston and Chicago, who deal with immigrant issues on a regular basis, are already expecting the move and some have firmly expressed their support to form part of such an effort. For the moment, it seems that efforts in this sense have tried to compromise current candidates at every level of local and state elections.

In Chicago, community-based organizations form part of local and statewide coalitions and, when trying to solve a problem in their community, they tend to deal first with their respective alderman, then with their respective State Representative and/or Senator. In Houston community-based organizations tend to join statewide coalitions and, until very recently, whenever dealing with local issues they consider the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (MOIRA) as a useful resource for solving certain problems. Interestingly enough, the MOIRA office was modeled after its counterpart in
Chicago during Harold Washington’s term as Chicago’s Mayor. Union activists and community-based activists are well connected and quite familiar with Democratic politicians and politics state-wide, whereas their counterparts in Chicago tend to focus more on local aldermen first. In both cities, activists spend an important amount of their energy targeting their respective U.S. Representatives and Senators. Some activists identify several members of the U.S. legislative body as allies or sympathizers of their struggle.

2.3 Final Remarks

This chapter has addressed some of the most important aspects of the process of mobilization for Houston and Chicago. The recipients, Mexican immigrants, regardless of their migratory status, are the objective of mobilization. The main difference between Houston and Chicago is that Houston’s immigrants are closer to their home community, and Houston is generally used as a port of entry to the U.S. job market in Texas, the Midwest, and the East Coast; whereas Chicago’s immigrants generally consider Chicago their last stop.

Whenever trying to mobilize Mexican immigrants, activists are well aware that the Mexican immigrant lives in a day-to-day basis reality, and they have found that the Virgin Mary and the Mexican flag have become strong symbols of mobilization, whereas the notions of family and work are the driving forces of mobilization. When compared to Chicago, the Virgin Mary and the Mexican flag are generally used to a lesser extent in Houston, however, their potential of mobilization remains intact.
Building social networks and links of trust (la confianza) between activists and Mexican immigrants, are essential to overcome perception barriers, and facilitating the engagement of Mexican immigrants to mobilize and participate. Among all potential activists, Catholic priests have the highest “trust rating.” Immigrants also prefer to join an organization or to be part of a mobilization action performed by an organization which exerts democratic principles in the way it conducts business. No major differences in this aspect were found between Chicago and Houston.

Addressing political mobilization of Mexican immigrants at an individual level, one of the most important findings of the fieldwork of this study is the “mobilization triangle,” (Figure 2-A) in which family, work and faith are the most important factors that explain mobilization. In chapter four, explanations about mechanisms of mobilization, and their importance from a transnational perspective, are fully addressed.

The most recurrent mobilization actions in non-electoral politics for this group are: writing letters campaigns, picketing, attending rallies or protests, prayer vigils, contacting public officials, participating in boycotts, formation of voluntary organizations in order to address a problem in the community, attending a school board meeting, voting wherever allowed (participation of heads of family in PTA’s decisions, internal elections at a state federation, assembly votes within an organization on specific issues or actions to be taken, etc.), being a member of an organization that takes a position on political issues; and persuading those who can vote, and that are part of the family or the community, to do so for this or that candidate.
One of the most important aspects of mobilizing Mexican immigrants is to be aware that it is not enough to give voice to the voiceless: mobilizing the “bottom” in order to make the “top” change things. It is also necessary to give ears to the earless, which leads activists to enter in contact directly with the targets of mobilization, who generally are public officials or politicians. “Mobilizing the top” (or making the ‘top’ responsive in a positive way to mobilization actions from the ‘bottom’) is an essential component in the mobilization process of Mexican immigrants.

Two issues or problems arise in Chicago and Houston as the most important topics in terms of mobilization of Mexican immigrants from an organizational perspective: issues related to the legalization of unauthorized immigrants, and issues related to the defense of labor rights of the immigrants in the United States. In Chicago, a third relevant issue is
the right to participate in Mexican electoral politics for those Mexican citizens who live in the United States. Other major issues that are addressed by the Mexican immigrant community in these two cities are access to education, housing, healthcare, and justice.

The most important actors (sources of mobilization) in these two cities are community-based organizations, church-related organizations, and unions. In Chicago, the Mexican Consulate has played an important role in terms of mobilizing the Mexican immigrant elite. Chambers of commerce (Mexican or Mexican American), civic associations (mostly Mexican American), Mexican state federations (which generally are major groupings of Mexican hometown associations), and Mexican political parties and organizations, have played a much lesser role in the dynamics of mobilizing people, but other actors do not disregard their potential involvement in the process.

Actors also consider the local Hispanic media an important player in the process. Actors who can be considered allies or targets of mobilization are: the Mexican government, mostly through the Mexican Consulate in these two cities; local politicians, including members of the city council, state Representatives and Senators, mayors and governors; and at the federal level, U.S. Representatives and Senators.

In the last section of this chapter, I introduced the most important actors in the process of mobilization in both cities. Chapter Three addresses specific activities of mobilization from these actors, with strong emphasis on the main differences regarding political mobilization and participation of Mexican immigrants in Chicago and Houston.
Endnotes Chapter 2

i In section 2.1.1 Mexican Immigrants: The Recipients the information about the origin of Mexican immigrants in Chicago and Houston was obtained from interviews and archives from the Mexican Consulates in Houston and Chicago. In the section 2.1.2 The Message the information about the three types of Mexicans living in the U.S. was inferred from interviews with Teresa Fraga, Emma Lozano, María Jiménez, Benito Juárez and Carlos Sada. The information about how to mobilize Mexican immigrants (sections 2.1.2 and 2.1.3 Perception of the Message) was inferred mainly from interviews with Emma Lozano, María Jiménez, Oscar Tellez, Joaquín Pastrana, Fernando García, Adriana Cadena, Gonzalo Arroyo, Francisco Bermea, Joel Magallán, Oscar Chacón and Dante Gómez. In the section 2.1.5 Issues the information was mainly obtained from the historical archives of local Hispanic newspapers in Houston and Chicago, specially Hoy and the Nuevo Siglo Newspaper in Chicago and La Voz de Houston in Houston. The whole section 2.2 Actors is a direct product of the field research for this work in Chicago and Houston. The information about organizations was obtained via interviews with their leaders and/or access to the different archives of immigrant-related organizations. Special thanks to Ricardo Benitez, Tom Brannen, Roberto de la Cruz, Adriana Fernández, María Jiménez, Emma Lozano, Elliot Nashtat, José Oliva, Richard Shaw and Mark Zwick for their patience in illustrating the relationship between the undocumented immigrant population and unions in Chicago and Houston. Finally, Figure 2-A (Family, Faith and Work) was inferred from the field research in both cities and several conversations with Pancho Argüelles, Nestor Rodríguez and personnel from the Illinois Coalition for Immigrants and Refugee Rights.

ii The minimum wage is a relative measure from the Mexican perspective. During the sexenios (six-year terms) of De la Madrid and Salinas it became a not-so-reliable unreliable indicator for accurate levels of personal income in Mexico, with exception of very poor communities. From the U.S. standpoint, it is also relative, mostly because only half of the states of the Union (in 2005) have the same minimum wage rates than the established by federal legislation, 18 states have minimum wage rates higher, 6 states have no minimum wage law, and only Kansas has minimum wage rates lower than the one established by the federal government. These state-based differences have persisted within the Union for the period exposed (1970-2005). Additionally, wage differential is not the only cause of immigration, there are many other factors that intervene simultaneously: lack of employment in the sending country, availability of employment in the receiving country, political instability/violence/international conflicts in both or any of the countries involved, as well as levels of underemployment in the sending country or even sudden, deep economic crises in the sending country (Mexico: 1976, 1982, 1994), etc. However, wage differential, whenever thinking in terms of addressing the present and future basic needs of the family, is an important decision factor whenever the potential migrant is considering leaving home to get a job in the United States. It certainly becomes a decisive factor when the daily wage differential between the U.S. and Mexico jumps from an average of 4.5 to 1 (1970-1981) to an average of 9.7 to 1 (1982-2005). Moreover, the 3 to 1 ratio in deterioration of real wages between Mexico
and the U.S. for the period 1970-2005 is a strong indicator of the worsening conditions in terms of purchasing power for Mexican salary-dependent workers in comparison to their counterparts in the U.S.

iii Although this situation is rapidly changing in Houston as it is becoming harder to cross the border without proper documentation.

iv According to Maria Hsia Chang, “Aztlán was the ancestral homeland of the Aztecs which they left in journeying southward to found Tenochtitlan, the center of their new civilization, which is today's Mexico City. Today, the "Nation of Aztlán" refers to the American southwestern states of California, Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, and portions of Nevada, Utah, Colorado, which Chicano nationalists claim were stolen by the United States and must be re-conquered (Reconquista) and reclaimed for Mexico. The myth of Aztlán was revived by Chicano political activists in the 1960s as a central symbol of Chicano nationalist ideology.” Source: “Multiculturalism, Immigration and Aztlán,” paper presented at the Second Alliance for Stabilizing America’s Population Action Conference, Breckenridge, CO, August, 1999.

v In this work, the Virgin Mary refers to Our Lady of Guadalupe or la Virgen de Guadalupe (or la Virgen Morena), who appeared speaking Náhuatl to a Mexican Indian on the Hill of Tepeyac in December 1531. The Basílica of Our Lady of Guadalupe was built in the site of the apparitions, which is currently located in a northern borough of Mexico City. After the Basílica of Saint Peter in the Vatican, the Basílica de Guadalupe is the second most visited Roman Catholic holy place in the world.

vi The Pew Hispanic Center (2007) estimates that, among Hispanics, the Mexican-origin population shows the highest percentage of Catholics (74%) and the lowest rate of conversion from Catholicism to other religions (85% of non converts). “Levels” of Catholicism are expected to be stronger among foreign-born Mexicans in comparison to other foreign-born Latinos.

vii That is, through 70 years of authoritarian ruling by the Partido Revolucionario Institutional (PRI).

viii Joaquin Pastrana (4/02) and Dante Gómez (4/02), Mexican Consulate, Chicago; Tammy García (2/22/02) and Norma E. Aguilar (6/02), Mexican Consulate, Houston.

ix Idida Perez, WTLU, Chicago (4/02); Patricia Cabrera, MALDEF, Houston (3/02).

x Ema Lozano, CSF, Chicago (7/02); Adriana Cadena, SEIU, Chicago (3/6/02).


xii Gonzalo Arroyo, Federación de Michoacanos (8/00); Emma Lozano, CSF (5/00); Teresa Fraga, Pilsen Neighbors (7/02); and Juan Mora (4/02) in Chicago. Pancho
Argüelles, NOA (3/14/02); María Jiménez, AFSC (3/02); Adriana Fernández, ARCA (6/02); Benito Juárez, MOIRA (3/1/02); and Adriana Cadena, SEIU (3/30/02) in Houston.

xiii See http://www.noacentral.org

xiv Mexicanos en Acción, undated leaflet.

xv See http://tmohouston.net

xvi The SEIU disaffiliated from national AFL-CIO on July 25, 2005. On September 27 of the same year, the SEIU formed the Change to Win Federation, along with the Teamsters UNITE HERE, The United Food and Commercial Workers, the Laborers, the Carpenters and the United Farm Workers. One of the main objectives of the SEIU after disaffiliated from the AFL-CIO is to “help unite the 90 percent of workers that have no union.” Source: SEIU website, http://www.seiu.org/about/seiu%5Fhistory/. In this study, the information related to the SEIU activities in the Mexican immigrant community in Chicago and Houston was gathered before the disaffiliation.

xvii See http://www.go2college.org (the website does not exist anymore)

xviii Alejandra Rincón, Houston Independent School District, Houston (2/02).


xx See http://www.heartland-alliance.org

xxi See http://www.enlacesamerica.org

xxii AFSC’s undated leaflet “AFSC’s work with immigrants in the United States.”

xxiii See http://www.afsc.org/greatlakes/afscchic/AGENDA_M/LAM3.HTM

xxiv See http://www.afsc.org/immigrants-rights/project-voice.htm


xxvi Chicago Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues, undated leaflet, early 2000’s.

xxvii Source: West Town Leadership United, organization documents and by laws.

xxviii ICIRR leaflet, undated, early 2000’s.

COMM, bylaws of the organization, Article III, May 11, 2002.

See http://www.catholiccharities.org

See http://www.archchicago.org/departments/peace_and_justice/peace_and_justice.shtm

See http://www.aflcio.org

In 2005, in Chicago there are more than 250 hometown associations and 14 state federations; whereas in Houston there are very few hometown associations and still there is only one state federation as such: Zacatecas. Source: Boletín Temático IME, “Mexicanos en el Exterior,” vol. 2-2 (August 2006); and vol. 1-14 (April 2005).

Miguel Del Valle, State Senator, Illinois; Elliot Naishtat, State Rep., 49th District, Texas; Rick Noriega, State Rep., 145th District, Texas; Cynthia Soto, State Rep., 4th District, Illinois; and Gordon Quan, Houston Council Member, At-Large Position 2.

Carol Alvarado, Houston Council Member (6/02) and María Jiménez, AFSC (6/02).
### Table 2-A

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For the period 1970-2005, the minimum wage in the U.S. has lost 23.1% of its real value (2005 dollars)
For the period 1970-2005, the minimum wage in Mexico has lost 68.2% of its real value (2005 pesos)

Sources Mexico: Salarios Minimos, Secretaria de Trabajo; several sources from the Banco de Mexico; Instituto Nacional de Geografia y Estadistica; Mexico Maxico <www.mexicomaxico.org>; and calculations from the author.
Approximate values for the Mexican minimum wage and the exchange rate.
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<tr>
<td>Alliance to Support Hispanic Immigrants</td>
<td>Community-Oriented</td>
<td>Top-Down; Coalition type</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Networking, contacting public officials, alliance building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Campaign of Human Development (CCHD)</td>
<td>Community-Oriented, within the Church Structure</td>
<td>Top-Down</td>
<td>1995-2002</td>
<td>Networking, contacting public officials, leadership development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casa Juan Diego</td>
<td>Community-Oriented, Service Provider</td>
<td>Top-Down</td>
<td>2000-2002</td>
<td>Networking, contacting public officials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Galveston-Houston</td>
<td>Service Provider, Community-Oriented</td>
<td>Top-Down</td>
<td>2000-2002</td>
<td>Service provider activities, addressing some needs of the immigrant population, mostly documented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Ministry of the Diocese of Galveston-Houston</td>
<td>Community-Oriented, within the Church Structure</td>
<td>Top-Down</td>
<td>1998-2002</td>
<td>Networking, contacting public officials, alliance building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization / Institution</td>
<td>Type of Organization</td>
<td>Relationship with Community</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Period Analyzed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Employees International Union (SEIU, AFL-CIO)</td>
<td>Community-Oriented, Union</td>
<td>Top-Down</td>
<td>2000-2002</td>
<td>Working hard in improving relations with the community, and building the basis for a top-down / bottom-up type of organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayor's Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (MOIRA)</td>
<td>Assesses the needs of the immigrant community in the city</td>
<td>Local government office</td>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>Meetings among its members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican Consulate / Program of Mexican Communities Abroad (PCMA)</td>
<td>Assesses the needs of the Mexican immigrant community, responses through community programs</td>
<td>Mexican government office</td>
<td>1990-2002</td>
<td>Systematic attempts to persuade Mexican immigrants to form state federations, limited success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalición Internacional de Mexicanos en el Exterior (CIME-Chicago)</td>
<td>Political, Locally-based</td>
<td>Continuous attempts to make it Bottom-Up, but basically elite-driven</td>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>Have participated in mobilization activities; development of leadership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: The Program of Mexican Communities Abroad (PCMA), became the Institute of Mexicans Abroad (IME) in 2003
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization / Institution</th>
<th>Type of Organization Relationship with Community</th>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Period Analyzed</th>
<th>Type of Mobilization Performed or Mobilization-Related Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Centro Legal Sin Fronteras (CSF)</td>
<td>Community-Based, Service Provider</td>
<td>Bottom-Up / Top-Down</td>
<td>1987-2002</td>
<td>Community mobilization, networking, contacting public officials, leadership development; lobbying with local, state and national politicians; alliance building, vigil prayers, signing letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilsen Neighbors Community Council (PILNE)</td>
<td>Community-Based</td>
<td>Bottom-Up</td>
<td>1972-2002</td>
<td>Community mobilization, networking, contacting public officials, leadership development, formation of other organizations, alliance building, signing letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights</td>
<td>Community-Oriented</td>
<td>Top-Down</td>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>Leadership development, networking, alliance building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)</td>
<td>Community-Oriented</td>
<td>Top-Down</td>
<td>1992-2001</td>
<td>Working hard in building relations with the community, and building the basis for a bottom-up type of organization; leadership development, alliance building, networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Resurrection Project (TRP)</td>
<td>Community-Oriented, Church Organization</td>
<td>Top-Down / Bottom-Up</td>
<td>1994-2002</td>
<td>Networking, alliance building, leadership development, community mobilization, contacting public officials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues (Interfaith)</td>
<td>Community-Oriented, Interdenominational Organization</td>
<td>Top-Down</td>
<td>2000-2002</td>
<td>Networking, alliance building, union organizing, picket lines, vigil prayers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casa Aztlán</td>
<td>Community-Oriented, Service Provider</td>
<td>Top-Down</td>
<td>1990-2002</td>
<td>Networking, contacting public officials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Latina</td>
<td>Community-Based, Union</td>
<td>Bottom-Up</td>
<td>2000-2002</td>
<td>Community mobilization, networking, contacting public officials, leadership development, alliance building, vigil prayers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Town Leadership United (WTLU)</td>
<td>Community-Based</td>
<td>Bottom-Up / Top-Down</td>
<td>2000-2002</td>
<td>Parent leadership development, networking, contacting public officials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR)</td>
<td>Community-Oriented</td>
<td>Top-Down, Coalition type</td>
<td>1999-2002</td>
<td>Community mobilization through the participation of member-organizations, networking, lobbying with state politicians, leadership development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinadora de Organizaciones Mexicanas del Medio Oeste (COMMO)</td>
<td>Community-Oriented</td>
<td>Top-Down, Coalition type</td>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>The organization itself as a product of mobilization from the visit to Chicago of presidential candidate Fox, and his triumph in Mexican elections in 2000. Organizational networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization / Institution</td>
<td>Relationship with Community</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Period Analyzed</td>
<td>Type of Mobilization Performed or Mobilization-Related Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office for Peace and Justice of the Archdiocese of Chicago</td>
<td>Community-Oriented, within the Church Structure</td>
<td>Top-Down</td>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>Organizational networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD)</td>
<td>Within the Church Structure</td>
<td>Top-Down</td>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Employees International Union (SEIU)</td>
<td>Community-Oriented, Union</td>
<td>Top-Down</td>
<td>2000-2002</td>
<td>Networking, alliance building, leadership development, community mobilization, contacting public officials, signing letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican Consulate / Program of Mexican Communities Abroad (PCMA)</td>
<td>Assesses the needs of the Mexican immigrant community, responses through community programs</td>
<td>Mexican government office</td>
<td>1990-2002</td>
<td>Successful attempts to persuade Mexican immigrants to form state federations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican Political Parties: Partido de la Revolucion Democratica, Partido Revolucionario Institucional, and Partido de Accion Nacional</td>
<td>Political, Mexico-based</td>
<td>Political parties have official representations in Chicago</td>
<td>1992-2002</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalición por los Derechos Políticos de los Mexicanos en el Extranjero (CDPME)</td>
<td>Political, Locally-based</td>
<td>Top-Down, but mostly elite-driven Bottom-Up, most of the time, elite-driven, some times service provider</td>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>Mobilizing Mexican Congress and politicians; development of leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalición Internacional de Mexicanos en el Exterior (CIME-Chicago)</td>
<td>Political, Locally-based</td>
<td>Top-Down, but mostly elite-driven Bottom-Up, most of the time, elite-driven, some times service provider</td>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>Have participated in mobilization activities; development of leadership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: The Program of Mexican Communities Abroad (PCMA), became the Institute of Mexicans Abroad (IME) in 2003
CHAPTER THREE

How are Political Mobilization and Participation of Mexican Immigrants Different in Houston and Chicago?

3.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the actions of mobilization and political participation of organized Mexican immigrants in both cities and points out the main differences between Chicago and Houston regarding the mobilization of this ethnic group in each city. In this chapter, Table 3-A shows the main differences between Chicago and Houston in terms of immigrant political participation and mobilization. Tables 3-B and 3-C summarize the most important mobilization characteristics of the immigrant-related organizations and institutions in Chicago and Houston that are considered in this study. The information in this table covers the analyzed period for each organization, (which was stated in Table 2-C) unless otherwise indicated. The information covers the following fields for each organization/institution: main focus of mobilization of Mexican immigrants, capacity of mobilization, levels of mobilization and political participation within the Mexican immigrant community, and the context in which such mobilization actions took place in the U.S.¹

The information offered in Tables 3-B and 3-C point out that immigrant-oriented organizations in Houston and Chicago deal with a wide spectrum of issues and objectives when reviewing the main focus of mobilizations. However, in Chicago the activities around these mobilization actions are more solid in terms of numbers of people who are mobilized. In Chicago, regular meetings, with regular attendance are the norm, whereas
in Houston they are more of an exception. In Chicago the contexts in which mobilization takes place is very wide, such as local, state, national, and transnational, etc.; whereas in Houston it is mostly local. Finally, less than 10 per cent of organizations in Houston are classified as performing a high level of direct community mobilization, whereas this number is 30 per cent for Chicago. Most organizations in Houston are issue-oriented and show low levels of institutionalization.

In what follows, I address and compare the mobilization activities of organizations that deal directly with a constituency mainly formed by Mexican immigrants, mostly the undocumented, in both cities. The research for this work concludes that Chicago shows higher levels of mobilization and political participation of organized Mexican immigrants in comparison to Houston.

3.2 Major Differences on Mexican Immigrant Mobilization between Houston and Chicago

Based on the field research of this study, Table 3-A shows the six major differences between Chicago and Houston regarding mobilization and political participation of organized Mexican immigrants in these cities: 1) There are higher levels of institutionalization among organizations that deal with Mexican immigrant issues in Chicago in comparison to Houston. 2) In both cities there are different ways to deal with different issues from an organizational standpoint. 3) Coalitions and networking are more developed in Chicago than in Houston. 4) In both cities there are different levels of performance of parallel organizations. 5) There are more state federations in Chicago than in Houston. 6) And Mexican issues mobilize Mexican immigrants in both cities. I
conclude this chapter by stating that levels of political mobilization and participation in Chicago are higher than those in Houston. In what follows, I present an analysis of these differences.

3.2.1 Levels of Institutionalization

For the purposes of this study, I understand an “institutionalized organization” to be an organization that has full- or part-time personnel, exerts a budget of its own and has an established place where to meet. The organization is also recognized as a nonprofit organization by the state where it is officially established, and it has the following: documented actions, files or archives with such documented actions, minutes of its meetings, stable funding mechanisms and sources, written bylaws, minimum standards of organizational planning, clear succession rules and established rules to change the bylaws. It is recognized by, and conducts business with, other organizations/institutions, and is able to “survive” the change of leadership if and whenever necessary. Different levels of institutionalization can be generated depending on the number of the aforementioned conditions that are met.

There are low levels of institutionalization in Houston in comparison to Chicago for organizations that mobilize Mexican immigrants. In Chicago, organizations like Centro Legal Sin Fronteras, Pilsen Neighbors Community Council, the American Friends Service Committee, The Resurrection Project, Chicago Interfaith, and the West Town Leadership United have well established offices, permanent personnel, control over their own budgets and most of them are officially registered as nonprofit organizations in Illinois. In general, they have documented actions, files or archives, minutes of their
meetings, stable funding mechanisms and sources, written bylaws, organizational planning, clear succession rules, established rules to modify bylaws; they are recognized by, and conduct business with, other organizations/institutions, and are able to overcome a change of leadership if and whenever necessary. In Houston, only the Association for Residency and Citizenship of America (ARCA) shows comparable levels of institutionalization. This research states that the higher the levels of institutionalization for these kind of organizations, the higher the chances to efficiently organize and mobilize Mexican immigrants.

3.2.1.1 Chicago

Institutions like the Pilsen Neighbors Community Council (PILNE) show high levels of institutionalization for more than four decades. Jesuit priests brought the ideas and mobilization methods of Saul Alinsky into PILNE during the 1960s. Since then, the relationship with the Catholic Church has been constant and stable, although in the last ten years such a relationship takes place more within the terrain of sporadic cooperation than that of regular coordination. Throughout the last 30 years, PILNE has struggled with several issues that range from fair access to education, housing and health for the community to improving public services and mobilizing against gentrification. Among its main accomplishments, in addition to successful mobilization campaigns, is the creation of self-financed neighborhood organizations and programs that directly address neighbors’ needs, like Proyecto Vivienda, El Valor, and Alivio Medical Center.

PILNE has engaged in every imaginable mobilization action throughout the last 30 years: formation of other immigrant-oriented organizations; concerted mobilizations efforts of
neighborhood organizations and faith-based organizations; marches, public information meetings, media exposure, private meetings of coordination with other organizations or institutions (targets or allies); networking at individual and organizational levels; meetings with public officials, protest rallies, parades; and the creation of social and political networks between immigrants and city authorities and politicians. For PILNE, the main unit of mobilization is the family.

According to Teresa Fraga, one of the most important leaders of PILNE, there are several aspects that are worth considering when trying to mobilize the community and each attempt certainly deals with its own circumstances. First, the mobilization of the Mexican community of Pilsen has always been directed to strengthen community building, and to establish Mexican roots in the Pilsen area. The most important campaign in this sense has been against gentrification over the last three decades. “La tierra es de quien la compra” (the land is owned by whoever buys it) has been the principal axiom behind this organization’s mobilization efforts. The neighborhood has been mobilized to get subsidized credits and loans from banks that initially were not willing to grant them, and then they started to get property rights in Pilsen. During the 1970s, mobilization over fair access to education took place and resulted in better education conditions in Pilsen. During these mobilizations, PILNE discovered the powerful effects of well organized boycotts. They also learned that good mobilization is not enough; good and continuous organization is a necessary step too.

Fraga asserts that an organization makes the difference for the community when mobilization is successful. In order to implement a successful struggle, it is important to have clear targets and allies. Mobilization should have short-term goals and be realistic,
people must understand what the struggle is about and organizers must have a very well-defined media strategy. However, the formation and development of an organization is essential if a particular struggle as a whole is expected to take an undefined period of time. Good organization will give the necessary tools for the leadership to detect the needs of the community and to start to work with the community when addressing such needs. Good and permanent organization also opens the door to deal with the main political actors under Chicago’s typical premise that there are no permanent friends and no permanent enemies, only permanent interests.

Strong emphasis is put on the financial independence of the organization. The income generated by the street festival “Fiesta del Sol” is the main source of independent community actions, which are highly oriented to protect the interests of the Pilsen community. Also, PILNE tends to target public officials and authorities that can make things happen when dealing with the community’s most important needs; they avoid dealing with politicians who guarantee little action in response to neighborhood needs.

Another highly institutionalized organization in Chicago is the Centro Legal Sin Fronteras (CSF). This organization is known for its networking, lobbying and, when necessary, confrontational actions against federal, state and local politicians when trying to accomplish its goals. Among its main accomplishments is the creation of the “Rudy Lozano” primary school and a strong lobby effort to promote a general amnesty for unauthorized immigrants at the federal level.

The CSF’s decisions on mobilization, agenda building, networking and lobbying are generally taken by the Asamblea de los Pueblos Sin Fronteras (PSF), which works as the
democratic body and consciousness of the CSF under the ethical principles of Zapatismo.

In general terms, the CSF leadership calls for a PSF meeting whenever an important decision needs to be made. The main goal of CSF is to empower the community of immigrants and the disadvantaged, regardless of nationality or migratory status. Similarly to PILNE, the main unit of mobilization is the family.

One of the main characteristics of this organization is its continuous struggle against the Political Machine in Chicago. From the early stages of organization and mobilization activities, the CSF has learned that a united family and sound community solidarity are invaluable assets, which become essential to deal with the intervention of the Machine with the decision process of the PSF. The PSF determined that any proposal, under consideration for a vote had to include the signature of at least 50 families, who were members of the assembly themselves. Also, in order to become a member of the assembly, candidates have to go through a course to raise consciousness about the principles, objectives of the assembly itself, as well as their membership rights and obligations. Finally, new members must take an oath of loyalty to the assembly.

The CSF tends to design its mobilization strategies with maps of political districts. Gentrification of the area around West North Avenue, West Division, North Damen, and North Ashland of Chicago obliged the CSF to move from its original headquarters towards the West side of Armitage Avenue, close to the city limits with Cicero, and to change the nature of their constituency. Although its constituency remains the same on paper (the disadvantaged and the immigrants, regardless of their nationality), the main difference is that the CSF now deals with a constituency that is spread throughout Cicero and the Center, South and West of Chicago. Their struggle is less neighborhood-based,
addressing more the specific needs of their constituency, regardless of their place of residence.

Financial independence is also an important concern for the CSF. They organize several annual fundraisers and obtain grants for the community service activities of the CSF. In their mobilization activities, they target politicians and public authorities, although more the former than the latter, because of the issues that they address the most: legalization, labor rights, and access to fair education, health and justice for immigrants. The CSF has practically no contact with Mexican political parties, and contact with the Mexican Consulate is kept to a bare minimum and only when necessary. They also have included the Zapatistas’ Principles in their organizational philosophy. Contact with Mexican politicians is sporadic.

Through the accomplishment of community organizing, community development, and community programs in Chicago, The Resurrection Project focuses on building new homes in neighborhoods with a high Mexican-origin population, which includes Pilsen, Little Village and Back of the Yards. The TRP directs its community organizing efforts at empowering residents though networking, alliance, leadership, and trust building. Most local Catholic parishes from these neighborhoods form part of and/or participate in the TRP’s tasks. Also, the TRP has a rich networking agenda with other community-based organizations, church-related organizations, unions, local media, and local politicians and public officials. The TRP is funded by city funds, private foundations, and membership fees.
Direct contact with the community is also considered essential to achieve TRP’s goals. TRP offers periodic workshops about community organization and mobilization strategies, based on the teachings of Saul Alinsky. Through this type of contact, according to Salvador Cervantes, the lead organizer of TRP, the idea is for the community to create its own agenda, analyze their chances of implementation, and identify their political allies and targets though the mobilization process.

Within this context, the main objective is to relate a family’s faith and values to the solutions of its community’s current pressing issues. Strong emphasis is placed on people’s education and spreading information on what they can achieve if they are well organized. At an individual level, self-interest and a shared concern for particular issues are also very important to convey sophisticated levels of mobilization and organization. Under this perspective, issues like legalization, the defense of labor rights, and fair local access to justice, health and housing are by far more important for immigrants than obtaining and/or exerting the right to vote in Mexican elections, for example. Another essential aspect in this process is the formation of leadership, and the openness of the organization to form interracial, interclass, and interfaith alliances.

For the TRP leadership, community empowerment, in this optimal sense, is given within a transnational framework, which is a similar approach to the exerted by the AFSC in Houston. Each time that Mexican and American politicians or government officials convene in the United States, something can be arranged or certain commitments can be obtained. The possibility of working together on behalf of both the Mexican community and American society is always present. Working towards a shared agenda between
decision makers from both sides of the border is a sign of “community empowerment in progress.”

Also in Chicago, according to the Worker’s Rights Center (WRC) Director, Jose Oliva, the basic principle of their mobilization and organizational activities is autodetermination. The WRC project, called Interfaith, is a means for the immigrant community to empower itself through the defense of its labor rights. The WRC’s main activities are: encouraging workers to organize collectively; assisting them to fill administrative complaints with the proper government agencies; connecting workers with attorneys; assisting them in the organization of direct actions (i.e., mobilization) such as picket lines or vigil prayers in order to improve the conditions in their working environment; and developing education programs with workers, so they can take advantage of the organizational and mobilization actions through a well planned strategy.

Interfaith’s funding comes from the AFL-CIO, private foundations, religious organizations and individual donors. This combination of funding resources gives Interfaith an independent aim when choosing their battles against labor exploitation of immigrants. Interfaith considers it a priority to create a legalization movement for immigrants to obtain better and fair conditions in their participation and contributions to the U.S. economy. In the meantime, they strongly advocate with several government agencies that are related to the well-being of the worker (the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission-EEOC, Occupational Safety and Health Administration at the U.S. Department of Labor, etc.).
3.2.1.2  Houston

In Houston, only the American Friends Service Committee and the Association for Residency and Citizenship of America (ARCA) have reached similar levels of institutionalization to those of their counterparts in Chicago. Certainly there are organizations with high levels of institutionalization, like Casa Juan Diego, Catholic Charities, or The Metropolitan Organization; however, these organizations exhibit no signs of direct mobilization of Mexican immigrants.

The Association for Residency and Citizenship of America (ARCA) gives priority to organization over mobilization in their struggle to assess immigrant aliens in late amnesty cases. The leadership of the group focuses in creating a relationship based on trust between the group and its leadership. They like to define themselves as immigrants working with and for immigrants. In 2002, ARCA had chapters in San Jose and Los Angeles in California, in Florida, New York/New Jersey, Atlantic City and Seattle. In the Houston area most members are of Mexican origin; however, in other cities, membership is truly multinational and multicultural: Mexican, Central Americans, South Americans, Indian, Pakistani, other Asian, etc.

ARCA leadership always speaks the truth to their membership, even if sometimes there is no good news to tell. In their meetings ARCA leadership focuses on changing the mentality of the immigrant, whom deeply distrusts any kind of leadership. According to Francisco Bermea, one of the ARCA leaders, they follow strict rules of checks and balances between the plenary group and the leadership. They periodically evaluate the actions of the leadership and corrective measures are taken frequently. They also try to
take advantage of the organizational skills of any member under the premise that anybody can contribute in order to strengthen the organizational structure of ARCA.

According to Pancho Argüelles (NOA, Houston), mobilization in Houston is highly correlated to the strategic skills of the leadership, to the financial resources of the organization, and the knowledge of the leadership about how to deal with these resources. Financial and voluntary work that comes directly from the community is the best scenario for successful mobilization, as far as the mobilization and organization efforts try to address the community agenda. Under this perspective, leaders focus mostly on choosing battles and networking with specific purposes. Their accountability is due directly to their membership or the community.

The second best scenario is when leaders obtain financial support from institutions or organizations that will not impose restrictions on membership mobilization. Here, leaders are accountable to the membership and the institution that financially supports their activities. Under this scenario, a potential threat for the organization is that its activities could rely heavily on external financing and that such support may disappear suddenly (this tends to happen with religious-based institutions that support these organizations), affecting negatively the organization’s actions, and threatening its own existence. Finally, the third and last scenario is when external sources of financing will determine what the community’s agenda is and how it will be addressed. They will only give money for certain issues and the leader basically becomes an administrator of the resources given by the sponsoring institution.
For the first type of organization, we have the Aldape Guerra Committee, Comité de Solidaridad con el Pueblo de México, the Coordinadora de Autodefensa y Participación Ciudadana, and the Justice for Serafín Olvera Committee. These organizations dealt directly with specific issues at the time, which is one of the main reasons for their lack of institutionalization: once the issue is “solved,” there is no need to institutionalize. The Aldape Guerra Committee was extremely important to the movement to free Aldape Guerra from death row in 1997; the Comité de Solidaridad took solidarity actions with the people of Mexico right after the Zapatista rise in 1994; the Coordinadora participated in coordinated actions at the national level related to the implementation of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) in 1996; and the Justice for Serafín Olvera Committee, which was created after his death due to the brutality of INS agents in Houston in 2002. These organizations were financially supported mostly by the community and their leadership focused mostly on addressing and solving specific issues, and only one of them became institutionalized: the Justice for Serafín Olvera Committee.

ARCA and GANO-CARECEN are a combination of the first and second scenarios; and Catholic Charities and NALEO are very good examples for the third scenario. ARCA and GANO-CARECEN are accountable to their financial sponsors (institutions and the community) but the agenda is established by its membership, and mobilization is strategically used. Catholic Charities and NALEO deal directly with certain needs of the community, but mobilization efforts are definitely way out of their scope. Finally, about AFSC, before its disappearance in 2003, it was one of the most institutionalized
organizations in Houston, and its financial independence really gave the organization a strong capacity of addressing community issues (section 3.2.4.2 of this study).

The institutionalization of ARCA made its leadership conscious that, at an institutional level, the Mexican Consulate or the INS or the Texan polity would always be there, and that it really made no sense to close the door on these key players. Generally, for individual activists or non-institutionalized actors, whenever dealing with an issue, they would mobilize people and, regardless of the result of such mobilization, doors may end up closed on either sides of the conflict, making future cooperation more difficult to reach. Institutionalization helps keeping the doors open throughout the process and always leaves a small common space to establish dialogue and reach (partial or full) agreements, issue after issue. Mobilization has more possibilities of success if doors of dialogue are kept open during the struggle, mostly because targets and allies are aware of the potential influence of certain mobilization actions: allies would support (or not) an issue and targets would think twice (or not) before resisting to reach a deal with an institutionalized organization that sooner or later will face them in another battle later.

The whole process is what Pancho Argüelles (NOA) refers to as “giving voice to the voiceless and giving ears to the earless.” Immigrant mobilization and organization are important; however, keeping doors always open to targets is also important. Most of the time, targeted politicians or institutions are willing to hear what the organization has to say; however, the organization may not approach directly the targets for several reasons: ideological constraints, lack of resources or time, commitments with other organizations, strategic considerations, lack of institutionalization, etc. Permanent networking among these actors will improve the chances for them to understand the problem in a thorough
way, look at it from different perspectives in a simultaneous manner, and definitely open
the doors for both parties to work on viable solutions on the spot or throughout time.
Continuous and improved networking standards are reached through the
institutionalization of organizations.

Also, the strategic use of mobilization is about identifying allies as well as targets.
Although there is no need of institutionalization in order to design the strategy,
institutionalization itself is highly related to the use of mobilization against a target.
When a fight involves a specific issue, the use of mobilization against X or Y authority is
straightforward and allies may or may not support the struggle. Without
institutionalization there are no future considerations about the contact with X or Y, as
the issue that led to mobilization may arrive to a favorable or unfavorable solution,
sooner or later. When organizations advance into a stage of institutionalization, today’s
strategic allies can become targets in the future (or vice versa), and this calculation has
strong influence whenever mobilizing the community (today) for any purpose.

For example, some organizations consider the Mexican Consulate as a strategic ally;
however, over time and depending on the issue, it may become a target, depending on the
attitude of a new Consul, or depending on certain actions that the Mexican government
may take towards Mexican immigrants. ARCA considered certain Consuls as allies
whenever they would do everything they could to assist them, especially by openly
supporting ARCA’s actions or opening doors with local and state authorities and
politicians. In contrast, other Consuls would offer ARCA limited assistance in whatever
they could: “so late amnesty cases could return to Mexico safely,” instead of assisting
ARCA in fighting for those cases. These Consuls became targets as soon as the ARCA members left the building of the Mexican Consulate.³

Although ARCA shows high levels of institutionalization, Houston as a whole shows low levels of institutionalization in comparison to Chicago. In the latter, organizations have in some cases more than 20 or 30 years of institutionalization, they tend to deal with different issues from an institutional perspective and they show high levels of financial independence, whereas in Houston political mobilization and participation of Mexican immigrants still are issue-oriented and the lack of financially independent organizations tend to compromise the organizations’ actions within a community agenda.

### 3.2.2 Issues Do Matter

Issues do matter in terms of mobilization in both cities. In the case of driver’s licenses for unauthorized immigrants, mobilization was performed by contacting selected members of the House and Senate, and governors in both states (TIRC in Texas; CSF and ICIRR in Illinois). However, in matters related to labor rights, organizations in Chicago, in coordination with an extensive network of unions, have developed a complex agenda that deals with the issue mostly at local level (SEIU, Union Latina, CSF, Interfaith, and more recently AFSC). In Houston, labor rights at the local level are important, but most of the lobbying takes place by contacting state politicians, in order to count on their support to address the issue locally (AFSC, SEIU). Legalization and amnesty mobilization efforts in Houston tend to be addressed, in coordination with other organizations, at state and national levels, whereas in Chicago, in addition to local, state and national networking of
organizations on the matter, there is a direct, permanent contact with members of the U.S.
Congress (CSF).

Organizations in Houston tend to deal with immigrant issues mostly from a state-politics
standpoint, whereas Chicago addresses mobilization issues at every possible level: local,
state and national. Organizations in Houston also tend to do networking with activists
across the state in cities like San Antonio and the Rio Grande Valley Region; similarly,
mobilization actions in Houston related to Mexican politics and policies develop in a
local context. In Chicago there are higher levels of mobilization within city limits:
contacting public officials and local politicians, mobilization actions taking place
throughout the city and, depending of the issue, intense networking among organizations.
Whenever necessary there are mobilization actions in Springfield that target state
politicians, and certainly there are mobilization actions that involve national-level
politicians.

A good example of how immigrant-related issues are addressed in these two cities is
education. In both cities, organizations like Coalition of Higher Education for Immigrant
Students (CHEIS, Houston) and West Town Leadership United (WTLU, Chicago)
mobilize immigrants with the aim to reach better standards of education for the
community. However, CHEIS tends to deal with the issue from a state perspective,
whereas the starting point of WTLU is purely local.

Among the main accomplishments of CHEIS is the lobbying effort to pass the SB 1526
bill by the Texas Senate, then the HB1403 bill by the 77th Texas legislature, and finally
signed by the governor on June 17, 2001. Under certain conditions, this bill allows
unauthorized students the possibility of going to college at in-state tuition rates and the possibility of receiving state financial aid.

CHEIS focused principally on mobilizing young immigrants and their families. The basic challenge for this organization was to convince high school students and their parents, that “yes, it is possible” to continue college studies regardless of their migratory status. CHEIS creates lists of potential candidates, then makes the first contact, and starts to circulate basic information in different ways: by letter, phone, and personal contact.

Attitudes of individuals change in a gradual way when parents and students start to get convinced that, first, they are able to change things and, second, that the feeling of being part of a group constantly reinforces the belief that things can really change.

The most serious obstacles about the feasibility of any change for the immigrants are in the mind of the immigrants themselves. According to Alejandra Rincon, the head of CHEIS, Texas mainstream society’s beliefs like “being immigrant or Mexican is a bad thing,” or constant reminders like “not you, not for you, you cannot, you will not, makes no sense to try, don’t even think about it, don’t ask…” is a strong deterrent from positive, proactive actions in immigrant youth. Parental attitudes are another problem. They tend to reinforce such beliefs by being totally convinced that there is no way for their children to get a college education, and that nothing can be done about it. The situation worsens if they held an unauthorized migratory status.

In addition to a constant and personal follow-up from CHEIS, potential high school candidates trying to get an affordable college education are invited to spend from two to seven weeks in selected universities. During that period of time, according to Ms.
Rincon, they go through a series of talks that create consciousness about the convenience and feasibility of becoming college students in the near future. Generally students return from those tours with new, positive thoughts about their possibilities of achieving a college education. The most powerful tool to change the attitude of other students is when those who initially went to the tour spread the word about the experience, and eventually convince other students that it is possible to achieve higher educational goals. Also, parents start to believe in the possibility of a college education through this word of mouth process. A “sí se puede!” (yes, we can; yes it is possible) attitude is developed within the family and within the community.

These parents and students were the same who participated through the whole lobbying process that ended with the approval of the SB1526 and the HB1403 bills in Austin. Mostly by signing letters, attending lobby days in Austin, and/or offering testimonies to the Texas’ House Committee of Higher Education, participants would become an important part of the process as CHEIS activists needed to show the level of support of the initiative to state politicians.

CHEIS is a revealing case of giving voice to the voiceless, and ears to the earless in a successful mobilization process. On the one hand, mobilization of students and parents was essential to achieve changes in the Texas legislature. On the other hand, state politicians were directly contacted and started to pay attention to CHEIS proposals as a direct consequence of the student-parent mobilization, and also because of the firm belief, from Latino state politicians with high percentages of Latinos in their districts, that there is a positive multiplier effect among Latino voters in Texas that is directly related to
positive actions from the polity towards the Latino immigrant population. Certainly, some state politicians view today’s immigrants as future citizens of their districts.

On the other hand, WTLU in Chicago is the result of the merge of two West Town community networks in 2000: the West Town Leadership Project and the West Town United. WTLU defines itself as a “family-focused, multi-issue community organization dedicated to serving the West Town/Humboldt Park neighborhoods at three levels: leadership development, building a network of relationships between people, and community organizing to improve the quality of life in the neighborhood.” In April 2002, WTLU had registered 31 institutional members, including schools, community organizations, parishes, and service providers.

The main fields of action for this organization are: gentrification and affordable housing, parent leadership development in education issues, the support of immigrant rights groups, and attention to the relationships among youth, parents, community, and police. Whenever approaching the community, mostly through workshops and organizational meetings, and selecting the battles in which the organization shall get involved, the general rule is to detect and cultivate the three levels of interest: self-interest, family-interest, and community-interest. The main goal is getting people involved in the issues in which they are most passionate.

Within the model that they call “Community Organization through Family Issues,” a basic premise of the group is to form and prepare community leaders to identify community problems, to design strategies to deal with such problems, and to solve those problems through family mobilization and participation. According to its leader, Idida
Perez, WTLU became involved in immigrant issues as a natural step after years of dealing with education and housing issues within the Latino community, and after years of building trust with the immigrant community through the achievement of visible solutions to housing and education problems.

At the WTLU, parents become leaders who shape the future of their children with their own hands through the formation of the Parent Policy Committee. They address different topics that are directly related to the improvement of the community’s quality of life in Chicago: human rights, tenants’ rights, education rights, and the right to live with dignity. Parents also become active members of different school boards, and most important of all, educate their children about becoming leaders, about not getting upset or frustrated when they get a “no” for an answer, and about always finding a creative solution whenever they deal with any difficulty in life.

In this example, CHEIS, although working with families and obtaining an important legislative victory at a state level, they focus their strategy on an issue-oriented basis. WTLU has a more comprehensive approach that also includes working with families, but it also involves the progress and empowerment of the community as feasible and indispensable goals in the field of housing and education at a local level. More important of all, CHEIS’ agenda, and activities with the community, rely highly on the guidance of the leadership of the organization, whereas WTLU’s agenda is strongly determined by the community as a whole, in this case, the incursion of immigrant parents on school boards and the formation of leadership at both, parent and student levels.
Within the rationality of giving ear to the earless, organizations in Houston, like Casa Juan Diego, although they have no direct influence in the community in terms of mobilization, they certainly contribute to facilitate the potential targets of mobilization to have a better understanding about the issues and problems of the immigrant community. Casa Juan Diego is an organization that deals with the everyday and most elemental needs of unauthorized immigrants, and that has the support of the community and the Catholic and Protestant churches in order to accomplish its tasks. It has become a strong, reliable organization for the Latino community in Houston, acting according to the principles and philosophy of the “Catholic Worker Movement,” which are pointed out as the main strengths of the organization by its leadership. The organization holds as a core belief the notion that it needs to adapt continuously to a changing environment, and that these actions need visibility and approval to maintain the community’s continuous support. Casa Juan Diego tries very hard to make people “think out of the box” at an individual level. It is not unusual to find local or federal officials that have changed the way they look at problems, and come across with innovative solutions related to unauthorized immigrants, in large part because of entering in contact with this organization.

The agenda of other organizations in Houston, like ARCA and AFSC, deal with the problems of undocumented immigrants through a well-defined strategy of involving state and national actors. This is certainly related to the nature of the problems themselves: driver’s licenses or legalization issues. However, similar organizations in Chicago, like PILNE, CSF, Interfaith or TRP, in addition to dealing with similar issues, are well-
known in the community to deal at a local level with issues that are also important to the community or the neighborhood, like housing, education or gentrification.

3.2.3 Coalitions and Networking Are More Developed in Chicago than in Houston

Coalitions are more solid and developed in Chicago than in Houston. No coalition in Houston equals the level of organization, institutionalization, and membership of the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR) and the Coordinadora de Organizaciones Mexicanas del Medio Oeste (COMMO). The ICIRR includes more than 70 different organizations and institutions registered as members, and it shows a high capacity of mobilization among immigrants across the board in Illinois, not only in Chicago, and not only among Mexican immigrants. COMMO includes mainly Mexican immigrant organizations and it was an initiative of state federations and local Mexican commerce organizations. However, no major mobilization activities were led by COMMO in the early 2000s.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, the most important characteristics of coalitions in Houston are the lack of institutionalization, their high levels of informality, their issue-driven nature and the lack of professionalization of their personnel. Indeed, in Houston, instead of powerful coalitions, there are organizations that work constantly in creating and supporting strong networks that will help the Mexican immigrant community to mobilize and politically participate whenever necessary, this is, they behave in a very similar way to WTLU, PILNE and the CSF in Chicago, although the networking capacity of Houston’s organizations is relatively weak (with exception of ARCA), and they rarely focus on neighborhoods’ politics.
In Houston, ARCA’s leadership pays special attention to the creation of political networks between immigrants and city, state, and national authorities and politicians. They have an extensive network of contacts that cover practically the whole political spectrum related to immigrant issues. These contacts go from the INS to Democrats and Republicans (local, state and national), Mexican politicians and authorities from the Mexican government, the Mexican Consulate, the Catholic Church, the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), National Council La Raza (NCLR), Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), National Immigration Forum, etc. Their philosophy on this issue, according to Adriana Fernandez (another ARCA leader), is “always knock the door, always.”

Another organization of this type in Houston is the Catholic Campaign of Human Development (CCHD), which is part of the Secretariat for Social Concerns of the Galveston-Houston Archdiocese, and has been successful in assisting and financing the creation of community-based organizational efforts and self-help projects. One of its goals is to enhance the education and awareness of the whole Catholic community about the problems that face unauthorized immigrants in Houston. The idea is to engage wealthy Catholics with the poor and the needy.

The principle of action is never to back an initiative unless it comes from the community itself. The origins of the Association for Residency and Citizenship of America (ARCA, mostly Mexican constituency), De Madres a Madres, and the Gulfton Area Neighborhood Organization / Central American Refugee Center (GANO-CARECEN, mostly Central American constituency) are directly related to the work of CCHD in providing the
immigrant community in Houston with self-financing, highly effective, community-based organizations. The CCHD in Houston is also characterized by traditionally funding organizational efforts of the Metro Houston Interfaith (formerly known as The Metropolitan Organization –TMO, from the Industrial Areas Foundation).

According to Stephanie Weber, CCHD coordinator until May 2002, the main challenge of the office is how to do justice work among the poor and the needy among the several objectives assigned. For example, CCHD started only recently (in the second half of the 1990s) to fund organizations that worked directly with immigrants. This shift apparently triggered TMO’s efforts to include immigrants in its working agenda. Each CCHD in the country has a high degree of discretion whether to support or not immigrant organizational efforts. The most active, pro-immigrant CCHDs, up to 2003, are in New York City, Los Angeles and Palm Beach.

CCHD’s rationale is that spreading (1) information, (2) trust-building efforts, and (3) strategic networking lead to community empowerment in the process of bringing justice to the poor, regardless of their religion and migratory status. In addition to funding organizations, CCHD also spends a good part of its time networking with the main actors, depending on the issue: with the INS when dealing with issues of legalization; with the Department of Labor and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) regarding labor rights; with the Mexican Consulate regarding Mexican immigrants’ issues; and with other organizations, like MALDEF, AFSC, NOA, etc. In an increasing manner, over the last 15 years, the agenda for this type of institutional networking is more related to deal with the problems of immigrant communities.
The trust-building efforts are handled mostly at an organizational level. CCHD opens doors through networking, but the final decisions about agenda-building come from the organizations themselves, from the communities that form such organizations, from their leaders, and not from the CCHD. An organization’s agenda is not affected by the finance it gets from CCHD. Therefore, mobilization is an option for CCHD-related organizations. Some exert this option (ARCA, GANO-CARECEN); others do not (TMO). However, CCHD’s support pays attention to the organizational education of the members (in coordination with the Hispanic Ministry of the Galveston-Houston Archdiocese), and the development of leadership skills within each organization.

Also, within the Catholic Church, the Hispanic Ministry of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston focuses its efforts on collaborating with “any secular organization that shares the same principles and values of the Church’s doctrine of social justice,” according to its director, Jorge Delgado. The Hispanic Ministry supports political mobilization of Latino immigrants mainly through leadership development programs (“Power to Serve”), and through an intensive networking effort among institutions and organizations that deal with immigrant issues. There is no direct contact in mobilization terms between the Hispanic Ministry and the Mexican immigrant community.

The activities of the National Organizers Alliance (NOA) in Houston are conceived under the premise that after the civil rights movement, the immigrants’ rights movement is next. NOA identifies itself as a natural ally in the struggle of the African American labor force, and considers the AFL-CIO and other labor organizations as key players in the movement. The role of the AFSC, the CCHD and the Hispanic Ministry of the Galveston-Houston Archdiocese is considered essential in the immigrant mobilization and
organizational evolving process in Houston. Indeed, NOA states that these institutions have strongly contributed to the institutionalization of immigrant organizations, going from leaders organizing campaigns and mobilizing constituencies, to getting organized, institutionalized, and using mobilization from a strategic perspective. NOA points out ARCA as an organization that has evolved from addressing one problem (late-amnesty cases) in a local environment (Houston), to an organization that is extending its scope to deal with immigrants’ problems at a national level.

Finally, the Texas Immigrant and Refugee Coalition (TIRC) was a state-level nonprofit organization, founded in Texas in 1993 and disappeared at the end of 2001. The peak of activities for this organization, funded mainly by the Ford Foundation, took place in the period 1999-2001. During the “Driver’s License Campaign,” along with the NCLR and MALDEF, TIRC lobbied and mobilized the immigrant population across the state to press the Texas Congress to pass bill HB 396 in both chambers in May 2001. The bill would have allowed immigrants in Texas to obtain their driver’s licenses regardless of their migratory status. The bill was passed by both chambers of the Congress, but it was vetoed by Texas Governor Perry on June 17, 2001 based on the argument that “people who are here illegally should not have the privilege of having a driver’s license.”

In Chicago, coalitions and networking are strong. The WTLU had registered 31 institutional members, including schools, community organizations, parishes, and service providers. The ICIRR has a strong logistical and financial capacity to build coalitions and mobilize the people of the organizations that form such coalitions. PILNE has a history of more than 30 years of participating in coalitions and networking with other organizations at a local level; whereas CSF has more than 20 years of networking among other
organizations and politicians or public officials at local, state and national levels. In a similar way, TRP and Interfaith’s networking efforts involve the community, the Catholic Church, public officials and politicians.

### 3.2.4 Different Levels of Performance of Parallel Organizations

An important difference between Chicago and Houston is the performance in terms of mobilization that shows parallel organizations. During the 1990s, AFSC Houston was highly involved in mobilization actions of Mexican immigrants, whereas AFSC Chicago dealt mostly with the right to vote for Mexicans abroad, exerting very low levels of mobilization among Mexican immigrants. SEIU Chicago is more active and effective in mobilizing Mexican immigrants than its counterpart in Houston. Catholic Campaign of Human Development (CCHD) in Houston was more effective in supporting mobilization than its counterpart in Chicago.

#### 3.2.4.1 Service Employees International Union

On February 16, 2000, the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) declared in New Orleans that the “AFL-CIO believes the current system of immigration enforcement in the United States is broken and needs to be fixed.” Among their starting points to fix the system was: the recognition that unauthorized workers should be provided permanent legal status through a new amnesty program, that regulated legal immigration is better than unregulated illegal immigration, and that a guest program on its own is not a solution.
This policy shift of mainstream unions towards unauthorized immigrants has represented a big boost to the mobilization process of immigrants regarding legalization and workers’ rights issues. Mainly through the AFL-CIO’s Service Employees International Union (SEIU), union activists have coordinated a national campaign advocating for legalization. Indeed, their vision goes well beyond building a successful campaign. They are working hard to create a national movement around legalization for unauthorized immigrants, who happen to be mostly workers. They prioritize legalization in their agenda because once legalization is attained, many problems related to workers’ rights will be easier to solve. A first step in this direction was the SEIU-sponsored grassroots campaign “A Million Voices for Legalization” in 2002.

In Houston, the union’s effort to mobilize people is an uphill battle most of the time. Texas is a right-to-work state, and Houston in particular is a pro-business city, a combination that makes labor activism a heroic mission. According to Richard Shaw, from the Harris County AFL-CIO, about 25 percent of AFL-CIO union membership in the Houston area is immigrant-origin. In addition to the “Million Votes” campaign, the AFL-CIO chapter in Harris County makes a concerted effort in order to understand the reality of the immigrant community.

First, the union hires and deploys people deeply involved in past mobilization efforts in Texas, like Adriana Cadena, who was an activist during the TIRC campaign to obtain driver’s licenses for immigrants. Adriana’s initial task was to be in contact with the community and try to network in order to channel the needs of this population regarding the improvement and respect of their labor rights. According to Robert Shaw, the fact that Adriana is a native Spanish speaker has made a big difference in approaching the labor
immigrant force within the Mexican community. Mexicans tend to mistrust any type of union organization because of their preconceptions of Mexican unions, in which government manipulation and corruption seem to be more the rule than the exception. For unions to approach Mexican immigrants, the best way to go is to approach them in Spanish and through a Mexican or Mexican-origin activist. Language and knowledge of immigrants’ organizational culture are two essential aspects that the AFL-CIO considers first whenever approaching this new constituency in Houston.

Second, the AFL-CIO’s networking efforts at every level are extremely important to achieve short-term objectives, create strong alliances and, most important of all, create links of trust between the union and the immigrant community. Once this is achieved, mobilization is possible. Robert Shaw and Adriana Cadena have contacted the Mexican Consulate (as well as other Consulates from Central America and Colombia), the church leadership, local and state politicians and government authorities, Mexican politicians, and immigrant organizations to deliver their arguments on pro-legalization and pro-immigrant labor rights. The No te dejes! program, in which immigrant workers are introduced to the world of defending their working rights, regardless of their migrant status, is one of the early results of this pro-immigrant alliances among principal actors. The goal is clearly to increase the union membership of immigrants, and to support a pro-legalization movement among immigrant communities. So far, significant advances in terms of mobilization have not been made, but expectations are high.

In Chicago, the SEIU’s work with an immigrant constituency follows the same patterns and lines of action of its counterpart in Houston. However, in addition to considering community mobilization a priority regarding legalization of unauthorized workers, they
also consider organizing for the community from a bottom-up approach a priority, and then deal with the legalization issue from a movement-like perspective. The main difference is that Chicago’s SEIU has a full agenda of networking contacts, which include local, state, and national politicians; the Mexican Consulate and local Mexican state federations; churches (mostly Catholic and Protestant) and faith-based organizations; independent community and neighborhood organizations of immigrants (not only Mexicans, but also Koreans, Poles, etc.); several school boards across Chicago; The Metropolitan Organization; local Hispanic and Anglo media; other unions and the Chicago Federation of Labor, which includes over 300 Chicago area unions affiliated with the AFL-CIO. Houston’s SEIU definitely has a less developed agenda regarding this type of networking.

The grassroots campaign “A Million Voices for Legalization” in 2002 was the initial step to enter fully in contact with the immigrant community in Chicago. In a similar manner to Houston, such contact is in its initial stage, and it will take some time to consolidate a relationship of trust between the Mexican immigrant community and a large union organization, like the AFL-CIO. The SEIU approaches immigrants with a deep understanding of the essentials of mobilization: it hires people who speak their same language, and who share their same culture. The approach towards the community relies heavily on addressing directly the family of the immigrant.

However, things are not easy according to Roberto de la Cruz, who is responsible for mobilizing and organizing the immigrant community within the structure of the SEIU in Chicago. The grassroots campaign deals with collecting one million signature cards to ask for legalization legislature in Washington D.C. Some Mexican immigrants do not
sign the cards at all. There is no confidence in a union member who asks them for a 
signature, mostly if they are unauthorized aliens. It is easier for them to sign the cards if 
their local church priest asks them to do so, or if the state federation of their home state in 
Mexico asks them to do so.

3.2.4.2 American Friends Service Committee

The AFSC-Houston has been working on immigrants’ projects since 1987, through the 
Immigration Law Enforcement Monitoring Project (ILEMP). From a broad perspective, 
the main goal of AFSC-Houston is to improve the capacity of local immigrants to 
become organized and mobilized, through a solid assessment of programs and projects 
that implicitly or explicitly enhance the formation and proliferation of organizations that 
deal with immigrants’ issues. In the last 15 years, most organizations that have dealt with 
immigrants’ issues in Houston were somehow related to AFSC-ILEMP and its historical 
leader, María Jiménez.

The AFSC-Houston assessed the formation and development of the most important 
immigrant organizations and institutions in Houston from 1987 to 2003. The AFSC has 
intervened in the formation of skilled immigrant leaders and/or formation and 
consolidation processes of institutionalization of the following organizations: The 
Association for Residency and Citizenship of America (ARCA), the Mayor’s Office of 
Immigrant and Refugee Affairs in Houston (MOIRA), the Houston Immigrant and 
Refugee Coalition (HIRC), the Texas Immigrant and Refugee Coalition (TIRC), the 
Justice for Serafín Olvera Committee, the Texas Coalition for Dignity and Amnesty 
(TCDA), the Houston Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, the Aldape Guerra
Committee, the Comité de Solidaridad con el Pueblo de Mexico, and the Coordinadora de Autodefensa y Participación Ciudadana.

AFSC-Houston periodically offers workshops about mobilization and updates immigrant organizations constantly about the changing political spectrum on both sides of the border. Throughout TCDA’s meetings, the basics and not so basics of mobilization are laid out and discussed: goals, objectives, allies, targets, available resources, timing, specific actions of mobilization (what to do or what not to do, depending on the circumstances), potential problems, and what to do if victory (or defeat) is met. In general terms, from 1987 to 2003, the AFSC participated in or organized marches, public information meetings, media exposure, private meetings of coordination among organizations, networking at individual and organizational levels, meetings of public officials with organizational leaders, and protest rallies.

In addition to mobilization and organization assessments, networking among political actors of all sorts in Mexico and the United States is also a priority for the AFSC. The AFSC develops its networking activities based on the notion of giving ears to the earless. They met with the Mexican Consulate and American local, state, and national authorities regarding several issues directly related to the immigrant agenda: driver’s licenses, legalization, labor rights, fair access to justice, education, housing, etc. In addition, AFSC talks with Mexican politicians about the same issues, although AFSC recognizes that they are more interested in the Mexicans’ right to vote abroad. However, the main objective for making direct contact with these players is for both of them to work on a common agenda, and to put aside the protocol meetings that are perfect photo shots for the newspapers’ front pages, but are not very helpful in advancing the immigrant cause.
Between 1992 and 2001, the main efforts of AFSC-Chicago in dealing with Mexican immigrants took place through the program “The Mexican Agenda.” The main goal of the program was “to involve the most politically active segment of the Mexican community” in the Chicago area through uniting “Mexican and Mexican-American community organizations and residents around issues of common concern, such as U.S. legislation, political developments in Mexico, and treatment of Mexican immigrants.”

According to Norman Ospina, who was responsible for launching the “Latino Community Empowerment” program (LCE), within the AFSC’s nationwide “Project Voice,” AFSC-Chicago made a significant effort to promote (in Chicago and the U.S.) and lobby (in Mexico) for the right to vote of Mexicans living abroad. However, virtually no mobilization or organizational approaches were made with the immigrant community in Chicago, through the implementation of “The Mexican Agenda” program. This led the AFSC-Chicago to start from zero in the implementation of the LCE program.

Within the LCE program, AFSC-Chicago has focused on enhancing its immigration and refugee network by working in three areas: base building through leadership development, alliance building through public education, and networking for policy impact on immigration grounds, all three aimed to support a thorough legalization program for unauthorized immigrants. The long-term objective of the program is to legalize, then promote citizenship, and finally, drive new citizens towards electoral participation. The approach is to create an immigrant rights movement, which would address labor and civil rights of the immigrant population.

AFSC-Chicago is optimistic towards getting commitments from politicians from both sides of the border. Whenever politicians from Mexico come to Chicago, local politicians
pay attention, and if they meet together with community leadership, generally good things come out from those meetings, the most important being the recognition by both politicians that community leadership is capable of bringing to the table several, bi-national components to address and solve certain community’s issues. However, Ospina is certain that the Mexican immigrant community power in Chicago is not in the community itself, but in its leadership, therefore such power is weak, as it does not come from the base.

3.2.4.3 The Catholic Campaign of Human Development

Whereas the Catholic Campaign of Human Development (CCHD) in Houston became an extremely active institution to improve and develop the creation and formation of other immigrant-related organizations, it also became more effective in supporting mobilization of the immigrant community as a whole. Its counterpart in Chicago was basically an administrative section within the Office for Peace and Justice of the Archdiocese of Chicago, without any real independence in its actions or budget to perform similar activities to those performed by CCHD Houston.

Parallel organizations have common origins and most of the time they share the same objectives, however, the role of a specific organization in the community can be shaped by the resources available in the locality, by the personality or leadership skills of its personnel or the relationship between the branch and the headquarters of the organization. This difference in the performance of parallel organizations can change in a relatively short period of time, like in the case of AFSC-Houston, in which the office was closed suddenly by the headquarters of AFSC.
In the early 2000s, the proliferation of state federations showed different patterns in Houston and Chicago, with high numbers for Chicago in comparison to Houston; although the level of community mobilization performed by ten state federations in Chicago and the one in Houston is extremely modest. Generally speaking, Mexican state federations in Chicago and Houston have an office in which mostly voluntary personnel work full- or part-time. They have an annual budget, their own bylaws, and a directory of members. Membership is defined in two different ways, by the number of hometown associations or committees, and by their capacity of mobilization.

The range in number of committees that may form a state federation in these cities currently goes from 5 to 30 units; however, this parameter is relative because sometimes a large membership could mean not much in terms of mobilization capacity. For example, according to Frank De Avila, the president of COMMO in Chicago, and former president of ACOPIL, “within a federation of 25 committees, you may have 15 committees which are ‘active,’ and from those active committees you may have 7 which are really ‘active-active.’” On the other hand, state federations’ leadership asserts that a small number of committees may be able to mobilize one, two or three thousand people in a relatively short period of time; however, mobilizations led by state federations in the thousands remain to be seen. The range of membership, and potential mobilization, for these organizations may be measured in individuals or in families, and it can go from 100 to 3600 individuals, and/or from 40 to 800 families.
The most important feature regarding membership is that the regular constituency for the meetings of the state federations is made of presidents of hometown associations, who are seen as extremely active individuals when the need for mobilization arises. Members generally meet once per month, and make decisions in a democratic way generally with the “fifty percent plus one” rule. Some federations allow reelection of the president and/or board of directors, whereas others do not allow the reelection of their president. In most cases each hometown association handles its own agenda regarding the type of project to be accomplished in a specific community in Mexico; whereas state federations deal mostly with the Mexican government at a state and federal level in order to facilitate the achievement of such projects, or to promote major state-level projects.

In terms of their local constituency, state federations in Chicago and Houston organize social and cultural events that are open to the Mexican community and the public in general. Most federations organize an annual ball and a beauty pageant. The election of a queen in these balls is seen by the immigrant leadership not only as a social event, but also as a way to approach younger, second-generation, constituents. First-generation Mexican immigrants who are formally established in the United States generally form the membership and leadership in state federations. They assert that the main sources of legitimacy and empowerment of their organizations are: (1) the high levels of autonomy from the Mexican government; (2) their ability to deliver in a consistent manner; (3) the voluntary nature of the organization; and (4) the official recognition of their organizations by different levels of the Mexican government (i.e.: the Mexican Consulate, state governors, Mexican governmental agencies, the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Mexican Ministry of Social Development, etc.).
One of the main goals of state federations is to deal directly with their respective state governments in Mexico in order to increase the volume of remittances at an institutional level for social development purposes and make such transfers more effective and efficient. All this with the aim to enhance the living conditions of their communities of origin in Mexico. Some state federations have been extremely successful in this matter, while others still try hard all the time but with less success. State federations have been extremely useful to give a voice to Mexican immigrant elites, and have allowed them to politically participate in a transitional way, that is, simultaneously on both sides of the border, and at local, state and national levels.

Involvement of these organizations in local politics is already happening in Chicago: some leaders express publicly their support for union mobilization efforts regarding legalization of undocumented immigrants, and others have been called to testify before the City Council on behalf of the community when addressing the recognition of the Consular ID (Matrícula Consular) as an official ID in the City of Chicago. Some federations have had introductory meetings with the Hispanic Caucus of the Illinois Congress. Other federations take an active role in forming coalitions that deal simultaneously with Mexican and local politics by organizing rallies to celebrate the anniversaries of President Fox’s arrival to power (and later on that of President Calderon). These activities bring to Chicago Mexican candidates who are running for local or state legislative posts back in Mexico, and they participate in such events as speakers or guests of honor. For state federations, socialization at the elite level is the starting point for participation in politics.
Although the main difference between Chicago and Houston is an overwhelming ratio of 10 to 1 in terms of Mexican immigrants organizing and participating in political terms around state federations, in terms of direct community mobilization, state federations are extremely cautious in becoming committed to any specific activity in both cities.

### 3.2.6 Mexican Issues Mobilize Mexican Immigrants in Both Cities

Rates of participation in mobilization actions are higher in both cities whenever Mexican political issues arise, however, the response of Houston is less impressive than in Chicago in terms of numbers. Also, political elites of Mexican immigrants in Chicago are better informed about Mexican party politics in comparison to Houston. In both cities community organizations contact Mexican politicians and try to build a common agenda, or at least they try not to lose contact with politics back home; however, political mobilization of Mexican immigrants in the United States directly linked to Mexican party politics had not materialized in the early 2000s.

Political parties definitely have a major impact on the elites of Mexican immigrants in Chicago in comparison to Houston. This is best reflected in the modest, but vivid representation of Mexican political parties in Chicago, but virtually nonexistent in Houston. Nevertheless, Mexican politics generated by Mexican political parties in Mexico show no important levels of mobilization among Mexican immigrants. In contrast, Mexican politics and Mexican government policies, do have a major impact on the mobilization of the elites and the community in both cities.

In this section I address the transnational mobilization-related issues in Houston and Chicago regarding the influence of Mexican policies and politics. I address the most
important Mexican political parties: the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD), the Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN), and the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI). I also point out the role of immigrant political organizations, such as the Coalición por los Derechos Políticos de los Mexicanos en el Extranjero (CDPME) and the Coalición Internacional de Mexicanos en el Exterior (CIME-Chicago). Finally, I describe the influence on immigrant mobilization of three political events that took place in Mexico: the Zedillo’s cars episode, the presidential victory of Vicente Fox, and the Zapatista Movement.

3.2.6.1 Mexican Political Parties

According to Juan Andrés Mora, a self-defined Mexican political operator in Chicago, Mexicans that migrate to Chicago are not only immigrant workers; some of them are also members of different political parties and organizations in Mexico and they do like the idea of politically participating in the local context. Besides Chicago, only in Los Angeles is it possible to find so much interest among Mexican immigrant elites in Mexican politics. However, the Mexican political elite in Chicago is extremely pragmatic. In 1988 and 1994, Chicago was considered a secure stronghold for Cardenismo by the local Mexican immigrant leadership, whereas in 2000 it became a location that strongly supported Fox in the presidential elections. Symbolic presidential elections in Chicago gave Cardenas victory in 1988 and 1994; Fox won such elections in 2000.xix

The three most important Mexican political parties do have some presence in Chicago’s Mexican politics. The Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD) was the best
organized in the early 2000s, and their members certainly tended to be influential with other community organizations or coalitions. The Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN) practically started its activities in Chicago right after the victory of Fox in the presidential elections through the grouping of its representatives in Pro-PAN Illinois, and it has been reinforced after the victory of Felipe Calderon in 2006. Finally you have the “priístas” from the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) who, until 2003, had never been officially represented as such in the city; at an institutional level, the priístas have a relatively modest presence in the city.

In general terms, it seems that Mexicans in Chicago always have something to say about politics and political parties in Mexico. However, the leaders who openly identify themselves with any political party are more the exception than the rule among the local Mexican leadership (although this has been changing after 2005), and the capacity of mobilization on their own is considered by other immigrant-related activists to be close to zero. Moreover, Mexican political activists and operators who work with Mexican immigrants prefer to identify themselves (or are identified by others) with left (mostly with the Zapatista ideology), right, center, or ‘opposition-to-the-Mexican-government’ political positions, more than with a specific Mexican political party.

In Chicago there are two organizations that have strongly made their point (at local and national levels) about Mexicans’ right to exert their electoral rights from abroad. The Coalición por los Derechos Políticos de los Mexicanos en el Extranjero (CDPME), and the Coalición Internacional de Mexicanos en el Exterior (CIME-Chicago). Leaders from both organizations generally identify themselves with the PRD and/or the Mexican left.
The CDPME was founded on December 1, 2001. However, according to one of its founders, Raul Ross, the origin of this group goes back to 1998, with the formation of the “Coalición de Mexicanos en el Exterior Nuestro Voto en el 2000” during a meeting of migrant delegates in Mexico City, who were there to lobby for the vote of Mexicans living abroad. Raul Ross was the head of the AFSC’s program “The Mexican Agenda” from 1992 to 2001. The main objective of the CDPME is to claim the electoral rights of Mexicans living abroad, 95% of them are in the United States. Their most recent proposal on the matter was presented by the CDPME on April 2003 to the Mexican Legislative and Executive powers, and the electoral authorities (Instituto Federal Electoral). This proposal was by far the most complete of its kind and, more remarkably, it was the first proposal in which Mexican immigrants in the United States (mostly elites: the leadership of a wide range of community organizations, hometown associations, state federations, chambers of commerce, Mexican American associations; and even university scholars from Canada, Mexico and the United States) were mobilized to post their signature on a document at a national level.

The CIME was initially founded in February, 2000, in Dallas, as a direct result of the Mexican government’s failed attempt to increase the monetary deposit for foreign vehicles entering Mexico. However, after its second national convention in Chicago, on August 2000, the organization split into CIME and AIME (Asociación Internacional de Mexicanos en el Extranjero). In real terms, the Chicago section of the group took control over the Dallas group, and AIME ended its existence shortly after the split. The heads of AIME and CIME became members of the Advisory Council of the Institute of Mexicans living abroad (CC-IME), at the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
CIME-Chicago is a political organization that has developed a multi-set of activities that go from taking passport pictures outside the mobile Mexican Consulates in the Chicago suburbs, to the PRD-CIME co-sponsored presentation of the Sexta Circunscripción, which was a proposal presented to the Mexican Congress on October 2001. In this unsuccessful proposal, Mexicans living abroad would be able to vote and elect their own representatives. This migrant leadership, representing the district of Mexicans abroad or the Sexta Circunscripción, would become part of the legislative chambers with full membership rights. CIME also has a branch in Houston, but its level of activity is basically symbolic. In both cities, CIME generally depends on the structure of other organizations to mobilize people; however, mobilization to defend the electoral rights of Mexican immigrants can hardly be considered an issue in both cities.\textsuperscript{xx}

Both organizations, CDPME and CIME-Chicago, have their respective Internet discussion groups, which have become an intensive political forum of discussion on several matters that affect immigrants’ lives. In cyberspace, though, great emphasis is put on the struggle for Mexicans living abroad to exert their electoral rights, as stated by the Mexican constitution in 1996. Very little action has derived from these two groups has emerged on the issue of mobilizing Mexican immigrants to legalize the status of the undocumented, although the CIME has been more active than the CDPME on the matter.

Moreover, in terms of mobilization, no Mexican political party has ever directly mobilized Mexican immigrants in the U.S. The CDPME and CIME-Chicago have channeled actions mostly towards the Mexican Congress in order to lobby for the approval of the law that would allow Mexican immigrants to vote abroad. However, the CIME-Chicago has participated in mobilization processes regarding the endorsement of
the Zapatista movement, and the Zedillo-cars episode, mostly by organizing or participating in public demonstrations against the Mexican government, and generally targeting the Mexican Consulate.

With exception of the CIME chapter, no other organizations of this type exist in Houston, nor are other organizations linked to Mexican political parties.

3.2.6.2 Zedillo’s Cars Episode, the Election of President Fox, and the Zapatista Movement

Two events in Mexican politics in the 90s have had a deep impact on the political mobilization of Mexican immigrants: the Zapatista movement, and the Zedillo government’s attempt to increase the monetary deposit for foreign vehicles entering Mexico, from $11 to a range between $400 and $800. In broad terms, the Zapatistas’ abrupt entrance into Mexican politics in January 1994 motivated people to unite in order to obtain information about what was really going on, and then see what type of solidarity acts and/or protest measures against the Mexican government they could enforce together. According to Jorge Mújica (CIME-Chicago), the Zapatista movement brought mixed results to the leadership of the Mexican immigrant community in Chicago. On the one hand, it created consciousness that Mexican political problems really were an issue for Mexican immigrants. On the other hand, immigrant leadership got polarized and part of it became “extreme left.”

In December 1999, “Zedillo’s cars” created a similar reaction to that of the Zapatismo (in terms of short-term mobilization) among the Mexican community; however, this time there was no ideological component in the discussions, and they were directed mostly to
decide what kind of protest measures were the most effective in order to make the Mexican government know that the community was against the measure. The simultaneous coordination of actions among several Mexican communities in different American cities became a fact in a matter of hours. Luckily for the Mexican Consulates in these cities, Chicago and Houston included, the “Zedillo’s cars” crisis lasted only some hours. It ended with the Mexican government canceling the measure.

In both cases, and in both cities, people surpassed the leadership’s capacity for a response at the beginning of the events in terms of mobilization. In the long term, new leaders, activists, and organizations emerged as a net outcome of those initial meetings. Some of the people who met for the first time in those meetings, became leading activists in legalization and immigrants’ rights issues, or became the driving force behind the creation of local coalitions of organizations that deal with immigrants’ issues (the CIME in Chicago and Houston, for example). On the other hand, some organizations have embraced several aspects of the Zapatista philosophy (CSF in Chicago, for example), as they found many similarities with the Zapatista movement in their everyday struggle for the dispossessed. Moreover, Mexican immigrant leadership from both cities met with U.S. politicians in Chiapas during the early years of the Zapatista Movement. The Zapatista movement still remains present in the minds and words of some Mexican leaders and activists in both cities. Indeed, both mobilization experiences created new views about how to deal with the Mexican authorities in times of crisis.

According to the Mexican Consul in Chicago, Carlos Manuel Sada, and to Maria Jimenez of Houston (AFSC), the election of Vicente Fox to the presidency in 2000 was also a significant event. Before Fox’s election to the presidency, some of the leadership, mostly
in Chicago and mostly from state federations, were identified with the PRD (however, this does not mean that they were really perredistas), but most of them would gladly wave the opposition flag in practically any matter in which the Mexican Consulate or the Mexican government had something to do or say. After Fox became president, some state federations dropped the flag at the beginning of the sexenio, half because of a ‘wait-and-see’ attitude towards the Fox regime, and half because the traditional speech opposing 70 years of PRI rule became suddenly out of fashion. Some state federations in Chicago openly supported the Mexican government under Fox, some did not, but no clear signs of an organized or systematic opposition emerged as it emerged during the Priísta ruling.

In Houston, the arrival of Fox to the presidency facilitated the strategic framing of political relationships with the Consulate: not a permanent ally, not a permanent target; everything depended on the circumstances and on the personality of the Consul. However, no direct mobilization actions were related to the arrival of Fox to the presidency, with the exception of minimal mobilization efforts that took place in Chicago during the Presidential symbolic election of Fox in 2000. Such mobilization, which was organized by several organizations (mainly CSF and CIME), brought in more than 1200 voters to the polling stations, and it certainly exceeded the expectations of the organizers.

3.3 Higher Levels of Mobilization of Mexican Immigrants in Chicago than in Houston

From an organizational standpoint, it is more difficult in Houston to directly mobilize Mexican immigrants in comparison to Chicago. Organizations in Houston definitely have a hard time trying to mobilize people. With the exception of ARCA, it is difficult to find
organizations that are able to effectively persuade people to attend organizational or public information meetings, recruiting sessions, public demonstrations, picket lines, media exposures, prayer vigils, or even sign letters. Mobilizing Mexican immigrants in Chicago is less difficult; more organizations have developed extended networks among the community, and more people tend to attend meetings, rallies, sign letters, etc.

I expose such differences in Tables 3-B and 3-C. In Houston, only ARCA shows high levels of direct political mobilization and participation of Mexican immigrants, whereas in Chicago at least nine different organizations show high levels of immigrant mobilization and participation: Centro Legal Sin Fronteras, Pilsen Neighborhood Community Council, Heartland Alliance, The Resurrection Project, Chicago Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues, Union Latina, West Town Leadership United, Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights and the Service Employees International Union.

In both cities, the relationship of these organizations with the Hispanic media is stable and extremely useful to keep the community informed about what is necessary to do and how it can be done whenever an issue arises. In Chicago, the constant mobilization activities that are performed by several organizations in the city sustain a permanent stage of political participation of the community. In Houston, it is through strategic media exposure that organizations like SEIU, AFSC, NOA, and TIRC have compensated for the lack of mobilization of large numbers of Mexican immigrants in their struggles.

In sum, levels of institutionalization are more and better consolidated in Chicago than in Houston. In Chicago PILNE, CSF, TRP and Interfaith, to mention the most important,
show high levels of institutionalization, whereas in Houston only ARCA and AFSC can be compared to those in Chicago. Throughout time, high levels of institutionalization in these organizations allow for the sustainment of strong and continuous networking efforts that contribute to build a relationship of trust with the community. Regarding the type of issues, a main finding is that organizations in Houston deal with immigrant issues mostly from a state politics standpoint, whereas Chicago addresses mobilization issues at every possible level: local, state and national. Moreover, organizations in Houston are more issue driven than their highly institutionalized counterparts in Chicago.

Coalition building and organizational networking are better developed in Chicago than in Houston. Although in Houston there are remarkable efforts on this respect by organizations like the Association for Residency and Citizenship of America, the American Friends Service Committee, the National Organizers Alliance and the Catholic Campaign of Human Development, they are very modest in comparison of the huge coalitions and networking activities that operate in Chicago on a permanent basis: ICIRR, COMMO, WTLU, PILNE, CSF, etc. Another big difference is the proliferation of state federations in Chicago in comparison to Houston, the ratio of 10 to 1 in favor of Chicago in 2003 is significant.

An interesting aspect regarding the response of the community to calls for mobilization is that in both cities people tend to participate at higher rates whenever the issue has to do with Mexican-related issues, like the rise of the Zapatista movement, the episode of the Zedillo’s cars, or the symbolic electoral victory of Fox in Chicago; however, the main difference was that quantities of mobilized Mexican immigrants remained high in Chicago when compared to Houston. Finally, the performance of parallel organizations
shows ambiguous results in both cities. The performance of AFSC and CCHD in Houston in terms of mobilization and participation of Mexican immigrants is better than their counterparts in Chicago; whereas the performance of SEIU in Chicago is better than its counterpart in Houston.

In the following chapter of this study, I explain why political mobilization and participation of organized Mexican immigrants is more active in Chicago in comparison to Houston.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Differences</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>One</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Two</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Three</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Four</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Five</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Six</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The elaboration of the sections of this chapter was based on information collected from direct or indirect access to the archives of 53 immigrant-related organizations or institutions and/or interviews with their respective leadership in Chicago and Houston. Information related to Mexican political parties in the U.S. was obtained from interviews with Jorge Mújica, Raúl Ross, Omar Mora and Juan A. Mora. Finally, I am grateful to the personnel of the Institute of Mexicans Abroad and the personnel of the Mexican Consulates of Chicago and Houston for their assistance in the process of scheduling some of the interviews in both cities.

Proyecto Vivienda was useful for some neighbors to get their own housing during the 1990s.

“El Valor seeks to be an international model for inclusion of people with disabilities, to be the best in the nation in early childhood development and youth enrichment, and to become the premier organization developing Hispanic leadership.” See: http://www.elvalor.org

“Rudy Lozano was a trade union official, community activist, organizer and Midwest Director of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. Born in Texas, he moved with his family to Chicago in the early 1950s and settled in Pilsen. He was a primary organizer of the Near Westside Branch of the Independent Political Organization. As a member of Harold Washington’s transition team, he attempted to unite African American and Latino groups. In 1983, he lost a close race for alderman of the 22nd ward. Shortly after the election, he was shot to death in his Pilsen home.” Source: Rudy Lozano: His Life, His People. Chicago: Taller de Estudios Comunitarios, 1991.

Salvador Cervantes, The Resurrection Project, Chicago (4/02).

Juana Rosales, Aldape Guerra Committee, Houston (3/02).

Heladio Pizarro, Comité de Solidaridad con el Pueblo Mexicano, Houston (3/02).

María Jiménez, American Friends Service Committee, Houston (6/02).

María Jiménez, American Friends Service Committee, Houston (6/02).

At this point, NOA and AFSC had been strong advisors to ARCA, mostly in aspects related to strategic mobilization and organizational procedures.

At the time (February, 2002) Ms. Rincón was also the head of the Emergency Immigrant Education Program at the Houston Independent School District.

Source: West Town Leadership United, organization documents and bylaws.
xiii Mark Zwick, CJD, Houston (3/02).

xiv As of March 1, 2003, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) was abolished and its functions and units incorporated into the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).


xvi See http://www.aflcio.org

xvii AFSC documents facilitated by Raúl Ross (5/02), coordinator of “The Mexican Agenda” project.

xviii Although there are state federations that that work with no more than 5-10 families and real membership may include no more than 50 people. This gap between reality and the leaderships’ perception of such reality is a factor that researchers of Mexican immigrant organizations in the United States have to be very careful with whenever trying to measure the real capacity of mobilization of this type of organizations in general, and the state federations in particular.

xix In accordance to the Instituto Federal Electoral, Felipe Calderón, from the Partido de Acción Nacional, obtained 57.4% of the vote of Mexicans living abroad with 33,131 votes in the presidential elections of 2006. Source: http://www.ife.org.mx/documentos/Estadisticas2006/presidente/nac_vm.html

xx Sources: CIME-Chicago files and documents; interviews with Jorge Mújica (7/02) and César Miranda (7/02) in Chicago; and Higinio Martínez (3/02) and Félix Rodríguez (3/02) in Houston.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization / Institution</th>
<th>Main Focus of Mobilization of Mexican Immigrants</th>
<th>Actions and Capacity of Mobilization</th>
<th>Context in Which Actions Take Place</th>
<th>Levels of Mobilization and Participation Among the Mexican Immigrant Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Association for Residency and Citizenship of America (ARCA)</td>
<td>Late amnesty cases</td>
<td>Meetings twice per month, attendance of 100-250 persons</td>
<td>Local-Community, State and National</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)</td>
<td>Assessing other organizations in mobilization issues, legalization/amnesty issues</td>
<td>Regular meetings with leaders of other organizations, courses / workshops on mobilization basics and strategies throughout Texas, community mobilization. Organization of rallies (low levels of attendance), media exposure</td>
<td>Local-Community, State, National and Transnational</td>
<td>High, however, this organization contributes to mobilization and political participation of the community, mostly in an indirect way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The National Organizers Alliance (NOA)</td>
<td>Assessing other organizations in mobilization issues, legalization/amnesty issues</td>
<td>Regular meetings with leaders of other organizations, courses / workshops on mobilization basics and strategies throughout Texas</td>
<td>Local-Community and State</td>
<td>Medium, mostly in an indirect way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexicanos en Acción (MAC)</td>
<td>Defense of Mexican Immigrants' interests</td>
<td>In general terms, low or null levels of community mobilization</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Null</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldape Guerra Committee</td>
<td>To liberate Aldape Guerra from the death row</td>
<td>Sporadic meetings, community mobilization: low</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Low, ad-hoc: mostly issue oriented mobilization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comité de Solidaridad con el Pueblo de Mexico</td>
<td>Solidarity actions with the people of Mexico after the Zapatista rise in 1994</td>
<td>Sporadic meetings, community mobilization: low</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinadora de Autodefensa y Participación Ciudadana</td>
<td>Coordinated actions at national level related to the implementation of the IIRIRA in 1996</td>
<td>Sporadic meetings, community mobilization: currently low.</td>
<td>Local, National</td>
<td>Low, ad-hoc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice for Serafín Olvera Committee</td>
<td>Justice for Serafín Olvera who was killed by the INS</td>
<td>Community mobilization: relatively low; however the committee have reached high institutionalization levels and have regular meetings</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Low, ad-hoc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas Immigrant and Refugee Coalition (TIRC)</td>
<td>Drivers licences to undocumented immigrants (not only Mexicans)</td>
<td>Meetings/workshops with communities along Texas, mobilization in the hundreds</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>Medium, ad-hoc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Metropolitan Organization (TMO)</td>
<td>In general terms, low or null levels of community mobilization</td>
<td>Meetings/workshops with communities in Houston, 50-100 persons</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition of Higher Education for Immigrant Students (CHEIS)</td>
<td>Education issues</td>
<td>Regular meetings with other organizations/of institutions. Mobilization of high school students and parents. Attendance in the 20-50s.</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>Medium, ad-hoc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliance to Support Hispanic Immigrants</td>
<td>Several immigrant-related, multiethnic issues</td>
<td>Regular meetings among member organizations / institutions. Attendance in the 10-20s.</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Low, ad-hoc, mostly in an indirect way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Campaign of Human Development (CCHD)</td>
<td>Financing other pro-immigrant organizations, but strong support to activities of other organizations that mobilize the community</td>
<td>Regular meetings with sponsored organizations, mostly in a one-to-one basis. No direct community mobilization is performed.</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Medium, community mobilization in an indirect way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization / Institution</td>
<td>Main Focus of Mobilization of Mexican Immigrants</td>
<td>Actions and Capacity of Mobilization</td>
<td>Context in Which Actions Take Place</td>
<td>Levels of Mobilization and Participation Among the Mexican Immigrant Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casa Juan Diego</td>
<td>Addressing the needs of newly arrived immigrants</td>
<td>No community mobilization is performed, however CJD contacts an average of 600-1100 newly arrived immigrants per day</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Null</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Galveston-Houston</td>
<td>Addressing the needs of selected immigrants</td>
<td>No community mobilization is performed</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Null</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Ministry of the Diocese of Galveston-Houston</td>
<td>No direct community mobilization is performed, however, it supports activities of other organizations that mobilize the community</td>
<td>Regular meetings with other organizations/institutions, workshops on leadership development, mostly in a one-to-one basis</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Null</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Employees International Union (SEIU, AFL-CIO)</td>
<td>Assessing other organizations in mobilization issues, legalization/amnesty issues, labor rights</td>
<td>Plans to create community-based organizations, signing letters</td>
<td>Local, State</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Federations: Federacion de Zacatecanos</td>
<td>In general terms, low or null levels of community mobilization</td>
<td>Regular meetings among its members</td>
<td>Local, Transnational</td>
<td>Null</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayor’s Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (MOIRA)</td>
<td>No mobilization actions known for the period of study</td>
<td>Regular meetings among its members, although mobilization is not a goal</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Null</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican Consulate / Program of Mexican Communities Abroad (PCMA)</td>
<td>Community organizing, formation and proliferation of State Federations</td>
<td>Formation of 1 State Federation; developed weak links between the community and the PMCA (in comparison to Chicago)</td>
<td>Local, Transnational</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalición Internacional de Mexicanos en el Exterior (CIME-Houston)</td>
<td>Mexican vote abroad, Sixth Circumcision, Legalization/Amnesty</td>
<td>Sporadic meetings, no community mobilization is performed.</td>
<td>Local, Transnational</td>
<td>Null</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** The Program of Mexican Communities Abroad (PCMA), became the Institute of Mexicans Abroad (IME) in 2003
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization / Institution</th>
<th>Main Focus of Mobilization of Mexican Immigrants</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Centro Legal Sin Fronteras (CSF)</td>
<td>Gentrification, legalization/amnesty, education, health, public services, fair access to justice</td>
<td>Regular assembly meetings with attendance of 50-200 people. Have organized marches with participation in the thousands</td>
<td>Local-Community, Local-Neighborhood, National and Transnational</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilsen Neighbors Community Council (PILNE)</td>
<td>Health, education, public services, gentrification, and housing.</td>
<td>Regular assembly meetings with attendance of 50-300 people. Have organized marches with participation in the hundreds</td>
<td>Local-Neighborhood, Local-Community</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights</td>
<td>U.S. migration policy</td>
<td>Regular meetings with other organizations/institutions, workshops on leadership development. High levels of contact with State Federations</td>
<td>Local, National, Transnational</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)</td>
<td>Mexican vote abroad, legalization/amnesty</td>
<td>Low levels of contact with the community, plans to improve the capacity of the community to organize and mobilize</td>
<td>Local, State, National and Transnational</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Resurrection Project (TRP)</td>
<td>Community development, housing</td>
<td>Regular meetings with community members and neighbors, attendance of 20-100 people</td>
<td>Local-Neighborhood, Local-Community</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues (Interfaith)</td>
<td>Labor rights, justice for workers</td>
<td>Regular contact with immigrant workers, union organizing activities</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casa Aztlan</td>
<td>Political rights of Mexicans, community education and development</td>
<td>Regular contact with community/neighbor members. Reach 50-250 people per month</td>
<td>Local-Neighborhood, Transnational</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Latina</td>
<td>Labor Rights</td>
<td>Regular contact with day laborers, attendance to meetings in the 50-100s</td>
<td>Local-Community</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Town Leadership United (WTLU)</td>
<td>Gentrification, housing, education</td>
<td>Regular meetings with parents, workshops on leadership. Attendance in the 20-60s</td>
<td>Local-Neighborhood, Local-Community</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR)</td>
<td>Naturalization, legalization/amnesty, U.S. immigration policies</td>
<td>Regular meetings with members organizations / institutions. Attendance in the 15-30s</td>
<td>State, National, Transnational</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinadora de Organizaciones Mexicanas del Medio Oeste (COMMO)</td>
<td>In general terms, low or null levels of mobilization</td>
<td>Regular meetings among its members, attendance in the 10-20s</td>
<td>Local, Transnational</td>
<td>Low, ad hoc: mostly issue-oriented mobilization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office for Peace and Justice of the Archdiocese of Chicago</td>
<td>Does not perform community mobilization</td>
<td>Sporadic contacts with the community or its leadership</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Null</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD)</td>
<td>Does not perform community mobilization</td>
<td>Sporadic contacts with the community or its leadership</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Null</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Employees International Union (SEIU)</td>
<td>Legalization/Amnesty, Labor Rights</td>
<td>Intensive contact with community and community leaders. Regular meetings, attendance in the 30-100s</td>
<td>Local, State</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization / Institution</td>
<td>Main Focus of Mobilization of Mexican Immigrants</td>
<td>Actions and Capacity of Mobilization</td>
<td>Context in Which Actions Take Place</td>
<td>Levels of Mobilization and Participation Among the Mexican Immigrant Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Federations (10): Durango Unido en Chicago, Casa Guanajuato en Chicago, Federación de Guerrerenses en Chicago, Federación de Clubes Jaliscienses del Medio Oeste (FEDEJAL), Federación de Clubes Michoacanos en Illinois (FEDECM), Federación de Oaxaqueños del Medio Oeste, Asociación de Clubes y Organizaciones Potosinas del Estado de Illinois (ACOPIL), Federación de Clubes Unidos Zacatecanos en Illinois, Federación Chihuahuense en Illinois, and Hidalguenses Unidos de Illinois.</td>
<td>In general terms, low or null levels of community mobilization. However, these organizations do strong networking with the Mexican Consulate, Mexican federal agencies, Mexican State Governments and Municipalities</td>
<td>Low levels of contact with the community, regular meetings among their members. Attendance in the 10-300s</td>
<td>Low local, high transnational</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican Consulate / Program of Mexican Communities Abroad (PCMA)</td>
<td>Community organizing, formation and proliferation of State Federations</td>
<td>Participation in the formation of 10 State Federations, mostly during the 1990s; developed strong links between the community and the PMCA (in comparison to Houston)</td>
<td>Local, Transnational</td>
<td>Medium, mostly in an indirect way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican Political Parties: Partido de la Revolución Democrática, Partido Revolucionario Institucional, and Partido de Acción Nacional</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Null</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Null</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalición por los Derechos Políticos de los Mexicanos en el Extranjero (CDPME)</td>
<td>Mexican vote abroad</td>
<td>In the U.S.: Null. In Mexico: High, mostly among Mexican members of Congress and politicians</td>
<td>Transnational</td>
<td>Null</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalición Internacional de Mexicanos en el Exterior (CIME-Chicago)</td>
<td>Mexican vote abroad, Sixth Circumscription, Legalization/Amnesty</td>
<td>Low for local standards; CIME participates in/supports mobilization activities of other organizations. Significant links to the PRD in Mexico</td>
<td>Local, Transnational</td>
<td>Null</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** The Program of Mexican Communities Abroad (PCMA), became the Institute of Mexicans Abroad (IME) in 2003.
CHAPTER FOUR

Why are Political Mobilization and Participation of Mexican Immigrants Different in Houston and Chicago?

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I expose and analyze the most important factors that explain different levels of political mobilization and participation of Mexican immigrants between Chicago and Houston. The first set of explanations about why political mobilization is different in these cities has to do with the transnational context in which political mobilization takes place. I also analyze the role of the Catholic Church in the process of mobilization from a transnational and a local perspective. The second set addresses the local context in which actions of mobilization take place. Finally, I argue that the interaction between the transnational and local contexts is a major explanatory factor to determine different levels of political mobilization and participation of Mexican immigrants.¹

One of the most important factors for Mexicans to participate in a mobilization action at an individual level is to be persuaded to do so through the development of *la confianza* (the trust, a relationship of trust). For a Mexican to participate in any mobilization action, first it is important to create direct and strong links of trust between the organizations, leaders or institutions and the Mexican community. The relationship of trust between Mexican immigrants and the actors in the mobilization process is an important explanatory factor from both the local and the transnational perspectives.
Within the paradigm of political participation, it is not enough to try to mobilize Mexican immigrants in the U.S., even if the organization mobilizes all the financial resources and human capital to do so, in order for them to participate in non-electoral politics. It is basically through the development of a relationship of trust that political participation takes place as a product of mobilization. Within this framework, the higher the levels of mobilization, the higher the chances of political participation; however, the interaction between transnational and local contexts will be an important factor to determine if such mobilization is effective in terms of participation. The type of motivation that Mexican immigrants need in order to participate in politics is also determined by both contexts and the interaction among them.

Within the transnational context of this chapter, I address the role of the Mexican Consulate in the formation and consolidation of immigrant organizations (i.e.: state federations); the role of Mexican politics and policies in motivating Mexican immigrants to participate; and the role of the Catholic Church in mobilizing Mexican immigrants from an individual and institutional perspective. Within the local context of this chapter, I address the main differences between Chicago and Houston from an institutional perspective within a framework of city politics. Finally, I point out that a major factor to explain why there is (or is not) a positive response of the Mexican immigrant to mobilization efforts is highly related to the interaction between the local and the transnational contexts in which mobilization takes place.

Table 4-A presents a summary of the major differences between Chicago and Houston in terms of mobilization and participation, the context in which these differences take place and a brief explanatory reflection on the matter. Major differences are given under the consideration of several perspectives: the role of Mexican politics and
policies, state federations, the Catholic Church (at an individual and institutional level) and coalitions and parallel organizations. Also, the mobilization of immigrants by organizations, the family, general issues of mobilization, the local and regional issues and levels of institutionalization are important aspects of the analysis. These differences are situated within a local or transnational (or both) context and the explanations are provided from a comparative perspective. Moreover, I explain how the exposed differences between Chicago and Houston affect political mobilization and participation in both cities.

4.2 The Context

The context is the space and time in which mobilization takes place. Indeed, the context is formed by the actions and consequences of such actions by the Mexican or U.S. governments or by political events in Mexico and the United States. From the U.S. perspective, actions from the U.S. government (at a local, state or national level) or certain political events are the elements that trigger mobilization (local context). From the Mexican perspective, the role of the Mexican Consulate, the Mexican federal government, some home-state governments, and certain political events, are the sources or explanatory factors of mobilization and participation (transnational context). This scheme suggests that the structural context (policies and politics) of the host society (the U.S.), and the home society (Mexico), do matter in shaping the social and political construction of the space where political mobilization of the Mexican immigrant communities takes place.

Moreover, the ever changing context generally affects the key components of the mobilization process: it can create new problems, increase their complexity, or contribute to their partial or whole solution. It also affects the strategies of the
activists and other actors. Furthermore, the actions of mobilization and participation can affect the context. Indeed, the context will be the stronger source of mobilization and motivation, mostly by acting as a triggering factor based on the population’s perceptions of the problem. In what follows, I expose the most important factors that directly or indirectly affect the process of mobilization for Mexican immigrants to participate in non-electoral politics.

4.3 The Transnational Context

The transnational context addresses the relationship between the Mexican immigrant community and the home state. By transnational context I understand a setting in which interrelated actions take place on both sides of the border. In this section I address: (1) the role of the Mexican Consulate in the formation and consolidation of state federations in both cities; (2) how Mexican politics and policies mobilize Mexican immigrants in both cities; (3) and the role of the Catholic Church in the process of mobilization from an institutional perspective (at a local and transnational level), as well as its influence on different levels of institutionalization of immigrant-related organizations.

4.3.1 The Mexican Consulate

The role of the Mexican Consulate in the process of mobilization of Mexican immigrants is important mainly from two perspectives: the first is related to a trust-building process between the Mexican Consulate and the (mostly Mexican-born) leadership; and the second refers to the role of the Mexican Consulate in the formation and consolidation of immigrant organizations, like state federations, which is on its own a type of direct mobilization. A good relationship between the Mexican Consul and the local Mexican-immigrant leadership is essential for the Mexican
Consulate in building bridges of communication and understanding with the community as a whole, and developing a strategic relationship based on trust. Here, every little detail counts: good if the Consul welcomes the leadership into his office and listens to its demands; good if the Consul attends periodically their celebrations and meetings; good if the Consul eats and drinks the same food and beverages that the community eats and drinks; good if the Consul is available “24/7.”

This trust building process is extremely helpful for each party to understand each other whenever conflict arises, which can be at any time, for any reason. The leadership may not agree with the way the Consul sees this or that problem, or with the solutions that the Consul may offer to solve their problems, however, what really matters here is that communication channels must remain as open as possible. Activists of Mexican origin definitely prefer to have the Consul as a potential ally, rather than as a potential target of protests, however, there are leaders in both cities that tend to consider the Mexican Consulate as the ‘usual target,’ and they would hardly initiate or follow up an ally-type of approach with the Consul. On the other hand, if no communication channels are created, chances are very high that the Mexican Consulate will be the target of mobilization as soon as the opportunity arises.

In order to earn the community’s trust, it is not enough for the Consul to listen to their problems, or to attend most of their celebrations: his capacity to deliver is the most appreciated issue. The more the Consul delivers, the higher the level of trust in the relationship. Indeed, from this continuous trust building process with the Consul, the leadership is always processing basic information about the limits of action of the Mexican government regarding a whole set of local issues that affect the community. Leaders who exert this strategic approach with the Consul, end up knowing perfectly
what struggles they will be supported by the Mexican Consulate, and what struggles
they will be on their own. This knowledge becomes essential when taking the decision
to mobilize people for whatever the purpose.

How the Mexican Consulate can “support” the cause, is generally up to the Consul’s
discretion. The Consul himself may become a facilitator by creating an informal
network with local and state authorities in order to solve problems that can be solved
through Consular means. He may differ his participation in the process by channeling
the specific demands of the community through one of his subordinates, or he can
become an active player, by intervening directly in the solution of the problem, and
even personally supervising the implementation of the solution. Or he can do nothing,
which is always an option, mostly because there are issues in which the Mexican
Consulate can do nothing at all (defending Mexicans under arrest for drug trafficking,
for example). Finally, a General Consul ‘who delivers’ also creates higher
expectations of Consular collaboration among the leadership whenever a new Consul
arrives.

In addition to building a trust-based relationship with the Mexican immigrant
leadership, some direct actions from the Mexican Consulate are linked to the
mobilization process of the Mexican community in their host cities. The best example
for this is the formation and consolidation of state federations. With the
implementation of the “Program of Mexican Communities Living Abroad” (PMCLA)
in 1990, the Mexican Consulates in Chicago and Houston actively encouraged the
formation of state federations through leadership meetings in the locality. The
rationale to encourage the formation of organizations within the community is
twofold. First, it is important for the community to get organized on its own to
address problems that only an organized community in a local context could deal with, without the intervention of the Mexican Consulate, such as police or community or education issues with local authorities, or labor rights issues. Second, it is easier for the Mexican Consulate to deal directly with some leaders in order to address the problems of the community, instead of dealing with the problems of each and every member of the community. The personnel of the Consulates generally are overwhelmed with administrative work, and issues that affect the entire community can take an enormous amount of time if addressed on individual-by-individual basis; therefore, the incentive to promote community organization is enormous.

Some federations in Chicago assert that the Mexican Consulate had nothing to do with their formation process (indeed, one organization –from the state of Oaxaca- already existed in the federation format even before the implementation of the PMCLA), and almost all of them attest that they organized themselves without any kind of support from the Mexican government. However, the majority of these organizations point out that it was through meetings that took place in the Mexican Consulate in the early to middle 1990s, that a number of leaders, representing hometown associations or families from the same state of origin in Mexico, met each other for the first time, triggering the formation process of the state federation. In Houston there is no evidence of regular efforts by the Mexican Consulate to recruit Mexican leadership to create state federations.

Addressing the process of consolidation, the role of the Mexican Consulate in Chicago has been essential in negotiations to unify federations whenever a split in their membership leads to the emergence of two different federations for the same state.iii The Mexican Consulate has also played the role of mediator between state
federations and Mexican state governments when conflict arises. Finally, the implicit, and in some cases explicit, recognition that the Mexican Consulate extends to state federations, is pointed out as one of the major contributions of the Mexican government to the consolidation process of state federations. In Houston, special emphasis is made about the lack of an established network of organizations that addresses the concerns of Mexican immigrants, like the “Protection Network,” established by the Mexican Consulate in Chicago since the 1990s.

The formation of Mexican immigrant organizations requires mainly two things: people to meet and trust each other, and people to attend meetings regularly. The formation of immigrant organizations thus becomes a product of a continuous socialization and trust-building process that takes place through substantive periods of time. Without meeting these conditions it is very difficult to form and consolidate a hometown association and, therefore, the formation, consolidation and proliferation of state federations or any other type of immigrant organization also becomes a difficult task. Presidents of state federations and hometown associations in Chicago have been members of these organizations for a minimum average of four years (up to 2003). They attend meetings on a regular basis, they point out that their community is well established in the city and that membership is generally stable. In Houston, one of the main problems to overcome is that people do not go to meetings, and many times people who become regulars tend to leave the neighborhood or town mostly for work reasons. The formation of hometown associations, generally the raw material to form state federations, is very irregular in Houston; this could explain the apparent lack of efficiency of the Mexican Consulate whenever trying to recruit local leadership in order to create state federations.
In addition to the role of the Mexican Consulate in the formation and consolidation of state federations, and based on arguments that were given by community leaders interviewed in Chicago and Houston, I construe that the difference in numbers of state federations and immigrant organizations in Houston and Chicago is also explained by three other related factors: immigration patterns; internal immigration within the city, which is related to the structure of local labor markets for immigrants; and the geographical position of the cities relative to the Mexican border.

First, the Mexican immigrant populations in both cities tend to follow the dynamics of chain migration. Houston’s floating population, however, is larger than Chicago’s, mostly because Houston, since the early 1900s, has been used as an “initial step” for a significant portion of Mexican immigrants. After a certain adaptation period in the city, they migrate to other work destinations in the Midwest and, more recently, the Northeast. On the other hand, the majority of immigrants who arrive to Chicago consider the city as their final destination.

Second, the level of internal immigration within Houston is higher than Chicago, and this is related, on the one hand, to the continuous expansion of the city of Houston, and the construction boom that took place in the city during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s; whereas in Chicago there has been no significant expansion of the city limits in the last four decades. On the other hand, most Mexican immigrants in Houston work in landscaping or the construction sector, whereas in Chicago their scope is wider: they work in the service industry, construction, landscaping or factories. With a significant part of the immigrant labor force in Houston linked to the construction sector, the immigrant population tends to change their address frequently within a city that is continuously expanding its limits. In Chicago, home addresses are more stable;
this certainly contributes to the formation of an established community and allows people to meet and socialize on a regular basis; and also it allows trusting each other after several years of knowing each other, which is an essential factor for the formation and proliferation of immigrant organizations.

Third, Houston is closer to the Mexican border than Chicago, making it easier and cheaper for its immigrant population to have frequent access to their home-communities all year around, although it is becoming more and more difficult to cross the border without proper authorization. This has led Mexican immigrants in Houston to channel organizational resources, such as time and money, in a more direct and personalized way to their community of origin, rather than getting organized locally with members of their same community in their neighborhood in order to deal directly with local issues, which would be the case for Chicago.

The combination of these three factors suggests that the flows of the immigrant population are less stable in Houston than in Chicago. Moreover, this factor has influenced the formation and proliferation of immigrant organizations (including hometown associations and state federations), which has its own influence on the mobilization process of Mexican immigrants. In Houston the few existent immigrant-oriented organizations really have a hard time trying to persuade Mexican immigrants to mobilize because of the lack of *confianza* (trust), and this is reflected in the message and the way these organizations try to spread it. Whereas in Houston the main focus of the message addresses the individual and the needs of the community as a whole, in Chicago it addresses the needs of the family, the neighborhood, and the community. In Chicago the word is spread from family to family in the neighborhood;
whereas in Houston, activists have problems to pass on the message directly to a community of immigrants that is widely spread throughout the city.\textsuperscript{iv}

The only state federation that existed in Houston during the period of study had the same origin that its counterparts in Chicago - an introductory meeting in the Mexican Consulate for leaders of hometown associations to meet with each other and talk about the idea of forming a state federation. In addition to this state federation (the Zacatecas Federation), there are people from other states willing to create new or bring back to life former state federations. During the period of study, state federations in Chicago (sometimes through coalitions, sometimes on their own) are increasingly developing a network of contacts in local politics at city and state levels, this in addition to a growing influence on their states of origin through direct interaction with the office of the state governor. State federations are highly autonomous in their actions, and their potential of mobilization starts to be recognized and appreciated by other actors who deal with legalization and workers’ rights issues.

State federations in Chicago have become an efficient mode for the political incorporation of the Mexican immigrant community, as well as an active source of empowerment, at least from the standpoint of the Mexican immigrant leadership. Also, the initiative of the Mexican Consulate (mostly through its section of attention to communities), in the process of formation and consolidation of these organizations, has been decisive for them to become the role model of an evolving transnational organization in the political arena of a global city.

In Houston, the model of building a trust-based relationship between the leadership and the Mexican Consulate still is an option for the Consul. The intensity of such a relationship depends on the Consul’s discretion, and this is highly related to the lack
of pressure that state federations and other community-based organizations may exert on the Consul. Indeed, in the last twenty years, activists and Mexican-immigrant leaders in Houston can only remember two Consuls that have voluntarily followed the Chicago model. In Chicago, the Consul apparently has no other choice than becoming a player. A demanding and organized community has implemented an informal system of checks and balances that is constantly reinforced by a very dynamic leadership, who quickly learn the rules of the game in transnational and local politics.

Also, within the Mexican Consulate, the role of the personnel of the PMCLA (Institute of Mexicans Abroad –IME– starting in 2003) is very important in building the trust-relationship with the Mexican community. During the period of study, in Chicago the number of people that worked directly for the program would vary between three and five, and generally they are very well coordinated with the Department of Protection of the Consulate in order to address the basic organizational needs of the community. It was through the activities of this section of the Consulate that most of the state federations were created and consolidated during the 1990s. The personnel of the PMCLA made it very clear that the work with the community starts at 5 pm. The personnel of the PMCLA in Houston generally numbered no more than three and their contact with the community would be more casual, more related to the development of cultural activities and educational issues. The Department of Protection of the Consulate in Houston would be generally very busy dealing mostly with all the Mexicans citizens on death row in Harris County, and the coordination with activities of the PMCLA would be practically non-existent. Most of the personnel of the PMCLA in Houston during the 1990s, generally would consider 5 pm the end of the work day.
This does not mean that in Houston nothing is happening. On the contrary, things are changing at a fast pace. A new generation of Mexican, Central, and Latin American-origin leaders are getting along very well with the traditional leadership, and what is more appreciated of the “new guys” is that they not only know how the system works in local politics, but that they bring with them new and ingenious ideas about how to change things and, most important of all, they do not accept “no” for an answer.

A common denominator in both cities is that an increasing number of Mexican leaders have realized that it is not enough to know and play by the rules of Mexican politics, but that is also necessary to know how the local system works in many aspects. In order to be efficient it is important to think and act through the consideration of the “here and there,” on both sides of the border. The quality of the meetings in most state federations has remarkably improved by adopting democratic voting procedures that everybody tends to accept and exert, regardless of the final outcome of the procedure. In the past, for example, whenever a conflict would arise in a meeting, a little screaming would be more than enough for somebody to call the police leading to an uncomfortable end of the meeting. Now, depending on the meeting, people may arrive with their lawyers, have no need of yelling at each other, and if the police are called, lawyers deal directly with it. A good relationship with the Hispanic media is essential to capitalize on mobilization efforts; however, new ways of entering in contact with the mainstream Anglo press are currently being pondered.

The role of the Mexican Consulate is essential to understand the formation and consolidation of state federations in both cities. Although there is the same commitment to deal with the organization of Mexican elites in both cities by the PMCLA, the Mexican Consulate in Chicago has shown better results in terms of the
formation, proliferation and consolidation of immigrant organizations; more precisely, they have done a better job in the formation and consolidation of state federations in comparison to the achievements of Houston on the matter. Although the proliferation and consolidation of state federations have led to higher levels of trust and communication between the Mexican Consulate and the Mexican immigrant elites, and these elites have mobilized to organize themselves, it has not translated into major political participation by the average immigrant community as a whole.

4.3.2 Mexican Policies and Politics

The explanation of the different levels of mobilization and participation between Houston and Chicago within a transnational context is not complete if Mexican politics and policies are not included in the picture. Events that take place in Mexico or certain actions from the Mexican government can trigger (or not) a mobilization process in the community.

On the one hand, as stated in the third chapter, two events in Mexican politics in the 1990s have had a deep impact on the political mobilization of Mexican immigrants: the Zapatista movement, and the Zedillo government’s attempt to increase the monetary deposit for foreign vehicles entering Mexico, from $11 to an amount between $400 and $800. The Zapatistas’ abrupt entrance into Mexican politics in 1994 motivated Mexican immigrants in the U.S. to gather in order to obtain information about what was really going on back in Mexico and see what type of solidarity acts and/or protest measures they could all work out together. The influence of the Zapatismo in immigrant leadership is very important in the sense that new leaders materialized as a result of the developing events in Mexico and strong, ideological networks were created among immigrant leaders as they met with each
other in “revolutionary tours” that were organized by the Zapatistas for activists in the U.S. and Europe, mostly during the second half of the 1990s.

The “Zedillo’s cars” episode created a similar reaction (in terms of short-term mobilization) among the Mexican community, however, this time there was no ideological component in the discussions, and these discussions were mostly to decide what kind of protest measures were the most effective to take. The simultaneous coordination of actions among several Mexican communities in different American cities became a fact in a matter of hours. The “Zedillo’s cars” crisis lasted only a couple of days, and it ended with the Mexican government canceling the measure.

The mobilization of Mexican immigrants regarding these two issues shows that Mexicans are generally eager to respond in the U.S. to political events and policies that take place in Mexico. There is a strong interest for national impact issues back in the homeland; the main difference between the Zapatista case and Zedillo’s cars is that the former did not affect directly the interests of the immigrants, whereas the latter did affect directly their interests. In the Zapatista case, the concern was directly associated with the uncertainty that is generated among immigrants whenever the homeland is heading towards what is perceived as serious political and military unrest. In both cases, however, there are three characteristics that are shared by Chicago and Houston. The leadership was surpassed by the immigrant community in its response to both events, new leadership emerged during the development of these two events, the antigovernment sentiment was highly present in both communities and, in both cases, the Mexican Consulate was directly targeted in their demand for immediate answers and protests were held outside the Mexican Consulate.
On the other hand, the right for Mexicans to vote abroad and the relationship between Mexican state governments with their communities abroad, both affect in a different way certain aspects of immigrant mobilization in both cities. In Houston, both issues generally get very little attention from activists. When a governor of a Mexican state comes to Houston, generally the Mexican Consulate and the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce are the main reference points when planning the governor’s agenda. Regarding the right of Mexicans to vote abroad, most activists in Houston show solidarity with the subject, and some of them may voluntarily work on the issue, generally in coordination with Chicago or Los Angeles, but the subject on its own is not an issue for the mainstream Mexican immigrant community. However, when it comes to legalization issues, Houston’s activists have strategically developed (more implicitly than explicitly) a working agenda with several members of the Mexican Congress, generally Representatives and Senators from border states.

In Chicago, both issues are related in a very specific manner: both function in a way that they generally have not required any major mobilization efforts by the activists. During the period of study, the struggle for the right to vote had absorbed large amounts of time and human resources, mostly among the leaders that were involved in the issue. After more than five years of letter writing, national activism on the subject, information campaigns, and meetings with electoral authorities and members of Congress in Mexico, the outcome was extremely disappointing. The main thrust was not only for Mexican immigrants to obtain the right to vote in Mexican elections while working and living in the United States, but to elect their own representatives in order to get direct representation in the Mexican Congress, which is much more complicated than simply casting their vote for presidential elections every six years. Finally, in 2006, during the presidency of Vicente Fox, a total of 33,131 Mexicans
living abroad casted their vote by mail in the presidential election out of an estimated pool of 10 million potential voters, most of them living in the U.S. This number reflected the fact that no mobilization of Mexican nationals took place during the whole process.

The simultaneous contact of state federations with politicians from their homeland (Governors, City Mayors, Representatives and Senators) and local politicians allows them to have a transnational vision of certain problems that affect the Mexican immigrant; and they find themselves, from then on, in the privileged position of choosing allies or targets in the Mexican or American political arenas, depending on the issue and the timing. However, during the initial period of study, state federations did not see themselves in any need to mobilize their constituency. It seems that the issues of legalization and/or workers’ rights sooner or later would knock their doors, and time would tell if they really have a strong mobilization capacity, as it actually happened in the first half of 2006, with the pro-legalization rallies that took to the streets hundreds of thousands of immigrants in Chicago.

Finally, the fact that Mexican political parties are more active in Chicago than in Houston is mostly due to the type of Mexican leadership that migrated to Chicago. As stated in Chapter Three, many immigrants in Chicago were already active members of political parties or organizations before migrating to the U.S.; whereas in Houston this was not the case and this is one of the most important reasons for which there are no organizations like the CDPME or any other immigrant organization linked to a Mexican political party in the city. However, during the period of study, there were no mobilization actions of the Mexican community directly linked to Mexican political parties in both cities.
In sum, Mexican politics and policies trigger mobilization actions among Mexican immigrants in the U.S. with a similar response in Chicago and Houston. This type of mobilization tends to generate new leadership and it may incorporate an ideological component into the mobilization actions from an organizational perspective. These experiences also become extremely useful for the leadership to illustrate and convince the community that problems can be solved through mobilization and participation.

### 4.3.3 The Catholic Church

The influence of the Catholic Church in the process of mobilization is seen at two levels, the transnational and the local. In the local context, the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church and its relationship with local politics play an important role in order to understand different scopes and actions of mobilization of the Mexican community. In the transnational context, as stated in Chapter Two, the Virgin Mary and the Mexican flag are powerful symbols of mobilization. Along with family and work, which are the driving forces of mobilization, faith becomes an extremely important factor for immigrants whenever deciding to participate in a mobilization action.

In general terms, the church’s actions are performed at four different levels. The first level of action relies on priests, who lead or can be part of a parish. Priests work directly with and within the community, and are either Latinos or Anglos. The Hispanic Ministry, which is considered the second level, is an intermediary between the first level (parish priest) and the third level: the office of the bishop, archbishop or cardinal. The Hispanic Ministry sometimes takes the lead in coordinating a strategy to deal with the problems of the immigrant community, and in bringing certain issues to the attention of the highest levels of authority within the diocese or archdiocese. The
Office of the Hispanic Ministry may be occupied by a priest, a nun or a member of the laity. In this process, the office of the bishop/archbishop generally ponders how to deal with issues that can be of major interest to the church. Parallel to the three first levels, there is the fourth level, which is composed of organizations that are financed totally or partially by the Catholic Church; although this does not necessarily mean that they depend directly on the bishop/archbishop/cardinal in order to act. For the clergy, as a whole, advocating for immigrants in their struggle for legalization and workers’ rights issues is a matter of social justice; although a pastoral, nonpolitical approach is the dominant trend in Houston, more than in Chicago.

As stated in Chapter Two, in Chicago, the actions of priests with Latino constituencies, along with the actions of the Hispanic Ministry, take place in a context heavily influenced by the Polish, Irish and mainstream Anglo sectors of the archdiocese. Latino priests are considered a minority within the ecclesiastical body, despite their heavy Latino constituency. Priests, regardless if they are Latinos or not, who openly exert an activism concerning legalization and workers’ rights issues are considered the minority within the minority. When referring to religiously based organizations in Chicago, I refer mainly to two types of community-based organizations. The first type is one founded by religious authorities and generally works in coordination with Catholic authorities. The second type has some organizational links with religious authorities and use Catholic symbols to mobilize people, but it shows high levels of autonomy in financial and logistical matters.

At least for the last thirty years in Chicago, members and leadership of religious-based organizations have gone through a set of different mobilization experiences in order to defend immigrants’ rights in several fields. These experiences include: (1)
parents taking an active role in the local school’s Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), and assuming a decisive role in the current well-being and future of their children’s education; (2) activists mobilizing and lobbying at the federal level to obtain general amnesty or legalization for undocumented immigrants; and (3) dealing with issues of gentrification, to mention the most important. These experiences have proved to be extremely useful through time, mostly because activists became aware of the usefulness of institutionalization processes in order to deal with these issues and also have become familiar about how the political system works, who and when to trust and, most important of all, when and how to mobilize people.

During the period of study, Mexican parish constituents in Chicago tended to show a lack of commitment with immigrant issues. However, the relationship of trust between the church and the immigrant community makes attractive for other organizations to contact the church when trying to motivate people to participate politically. In any case, in accordance to Father Charles Dahm, there are low levels of social and political consciousness among Mexicans, whereas they show high levels of solidarity and financial generosity when problems of national concern rise in Mexico.

The lack of interest in politics is explained from different perspectives by members of the Hispanic branch of the Catholic Church. Mexicans come from a culture in which politics have been dominated by the PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional). For most Mexicans, politics is a synonym of corruption, and they are very distrustful towards local and Mexican politicians. Some priests in Chicago think that definitely it is more difficult to work on political issues with Mexicans, than with other Latino-origin constituents, like Salvadorians, Colombians or Nicaraguans. However, it seems that in terms of labor rights, the Hispanic leadership is on the rise in both cities.
From a local context perspective, according to Rev. Walter Coleman, from the United Methodist Church in Chicago, Irish and Polish clerics currently control the Catholic Church in Chicago. Although it is considered an immigrant church, for practical purposes, the church in Chicago is also part of the Chicago Political Machine. Even if Mexicans arrive with a high number of constituents, there is practically no space for a popular Catholic Church in Chicago. Sometimes Mexican priests arrive to Chicago and they start to find obstacles at the very moment that they start to attract big numbers of Mexicans to their services. These obstacles include such things as the main parishioner forbidding the new priest to say masses in Spanish, in order for him “to practice his English.” In accordance to Father Raúl Martínez, most of these new priests end up leaving Chicago.

On the other hand, also in accordance with Rev. Coleman, the Catholic Church and Chicago’s City Hall have created organizations that address the needs of communities and neighborhoods. In these cases, the mobilization becomes issue oriented, and they tend to finance every single detail of it. Nevertheless, initiatives rarely come from the Mexican community itself. Generally, there is an alliance between wards (Political Machine) and parishes (Irish, Polish), that decide who, what, when and why to mobilize in Chicago. This alliance determines when, how and to whom mobilization resources are channeled. Throughout time, this becomes a huge incentive for the formation, consolidation and institutionalization of ethnic organizations in Chicago. During the period of study, it seemed that Mexicans were ready to be mobilized; however, the ‘alliance’ generally mobilizes nothing when dealing with issues related to Mexican immigrants.
The Catholic Church can be a strong force to enact changes and can be the basis of a deep transformation in Mexicans’ minds regarding their disposition to mobilize, but the church generally does not take any major initiative on its own. However, the church’s support of the Service Employees International Union’s campaign to collect one million signatures for a general immigration amnesty in mid-late 2002 was a sign that things have started to be handled in a different way. In general terms, however, any mobilization action is left to the priests’ initiative, and it is not rare to see priests participating in public demonstrations in Chicago supporting issues related to Mexican immigrants.

In Houston, the actions of religious organizations and the Hispanic Ministry have to take into account the mainstream Anglo majority of the archdiocese. Mexicans in Houston also form the majority of the Latino constituency of the Catholic Church, although the Central American constituency is also significant. Within the context of mobilization, there are three types of organizational efforts led by religious organizations: organizations that are supported by the church and the community, organizations that enhance the creation of other secular organizations that mobilize immigrants, and organizational actions that advance political education, and develop leadership formation among immigrants.

At a parish level, the Latino Catholic Church follows the speech and action of their bishop’s office: a church seen as the society’s conscience, the voice of the voiceless, and one which has the explicit support of actions to defend the human rights of the immigrant community. Within this context, the church’s support of the Service Employees International Union’s campaign to collect one million signatures was
active proof of such policy. However, priests that participate directly in mobilization or organizational efforts are, by far, more the exception than the rule.

For the Mexican American and Mexican cases, in general terms, mainstream studies suggest that the image of the Virgin is a source of empowerment for the community, and a symbol of Mexican consciousness (Rodríguez 1999). Moreover, the Virgin expresses not only a collective Mexican identity and cultural pride, but also enhances the struggle for justice and even resistance to assimilatory pressures (Matovina and Riebe-Estrella 2002).

At an individual level, the transnational character of the Catholic Church clearly helps Mexican immigrants to feel at home whenever they go to mass. The format and dynamic of the masses are virtually the same in the U.S. or in Mexico, regardless if the attendee is in Chicago, Houston or Guanajuato. Mexican immigrants’ relationship with the Mother of God is an essential factor that defines their identity once they arrive on U.S. soil. In addition to the Virgin Mary, the priest himself is another important symbol within the religious scheme. Mexicans are extremely faithful to the Virgin Mary, and they are very obedient to the directions of the priest in a diversified set of matters, largely concerning family and faith. Sometimes political matters are discussed in the Sunday sermon; however, they deal mostly with solidarity causes and not direct mobilization. Activists and politicians are conscious of the powerfully appealing potential of the church to mobilize people through religious symbols, although they are also aware that the highest levels of the U.S. Catholic hierarchy generally have the first and last words on the matter.

The use of symbols for political purposes varies from locality to locality. In Chicago there is a strong debate about using the Virgin for mobilization purposes. On the one
hand, the Virgin is considered the symbol of independence and revolution, a symbol of liberty and dignity for the Mexican people in general, and the indigenous in particular. The use of the Virgin as a symbol is highly encouraged along with the use of patriotic symbols, such as the Mexican flag, or by the visible presence of priests at public demonstrations. On the other hand, some priests instead assert that the devotion to the Virgin is not and should not be political, but personal. Its politicization is considered either as a matter that should evolve over a long period of time, or that it should not occur at all. In Chicago, the formation of group consciousness about the problems of immigrants is mostly found at the organizational level of immigrant workers, and not necessarily from a religious perspective.

In Houston, the debate over the use of the Virgin for political (mobilization) purposes is practically nonexistent (during the period of study, no use of the Virgin is evident), it is not common to see priests in public demonstrations, and group consciousness is found at an organizational level, but far from religious references. Moreover, the official speech of the church generally makes no explicit reference to the Virgin (in terms of mobilization), and it is more oriented towards disseminating the principles of social justice from a pastoral standpoint, in which there is more talking about praying for this or that cause than mobilizing the community on behalf of such principles. Activists of Mexican-origin regard the Catholic Church in Houston as a very conservative institution, more a potential ally than an actor in matters of mobilization. However, the church’s efforts to improve organizational skills, leadership formation, and the proliferation of community-based organizations within the community are considered to be a pivotal approach to make things change (i.e.: the role of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development in the community during the period of study). Indeed, a common characteristic of the organizations that deal with issues
related to Mexican immigrants in Houston is that they address the need to change the Texas labor rights system, largely focusing on its laws and their implementation.

Research for this study suggests that it is possible for Mexican immigrants, the majority of them Catholics, to reach high levels of political participation. This would depend strongly on the religious symbols that are used and the initial official support of the upper hierarchy of the Catholic Church for these kind of organizational and mobilization efforts to materialize. In Chicago, the question is if the alliance between the mainstream Church and the Political Machine is the main obstacle for this to happen. In Houston, the support of the high hierarchy seems to be on its way, within its own timing. In any case, organizations like Houston’s ARCA are proof that there are many ways to invite the community to participate, that the direct involvement of the church is not a necessary condition and that high levels of institutionalization can be reached in a context in which there is little contact between the Catholic Church and its immigrant constituency in mobilization terms.

Although in both cities the trust-based relationship between the Catholic Church and its Mexican constituency is very solid, initiatives for mobilization generally do not come from the constituency itself and, from an institutional perspective, the Catholic Church in Chicago is definitely more active than in Houston in terms of mobilization efforts.

In short, at an institutional level, priests are more active in Chicago than in Houston in spreading the doctrine of Social Justice of the Catholic Church from a mobilization standpoint. However, top hierarchies in the church efficiently control the actions of individual priests. Even in Chicago, levels of involvement of priests in actions of mobilization are considered low. Strategic alliances between the church and local
government or local immigrant organizations are important to mobilize people in Chicago. In Houston, these alliances exist on a smaller scale and most of them assist the community to get organized; mobilizing is more the exception than the rule.

Finally, there is a higher involvement of church-related organizations in mobilization issues in Chicago in comparison to Houston.

In Houston, the lack of involvement of priests in mobilization actions contributes to create a culture of passive understanding of the doctrine of Social Justice, a culture of no-mobilization among members of the community and it is a strong factor that leads to low levels of institutionalization among immigrant-related organizations. In Chicago, priests and religious-based organizations contribute to create a culture of potential, permanent mobilization among the members of the community, in addition to the positive institutional side benefits that create the existence and use of the huge organizational network of the church by immigrant-related organizations.

From an individual perspective, in Chicago, the use of the Virgin Mary as a symbol of mobilization originated in the community with the consent of the priest; and the use of the Mexican flag along with the Virgin is very common. Both are seen as a sign of national-origin identity, which arises from the need to distinguish your community from other well-defined ethnic groups in the city. This does not happen in Houston, mostly because the Catholic Church’s doctrine of Social Justice, when addressed from a pastoral standpoint, does not encourage any political use of any religious symbol. Faith, family, neighborhood and ethnic identity (as Mexicans living in the U.S.) join together in mobilization actions in Chicago, but not in Houston. The use of the Virgin Mary as a political symbol increases enormously the trust-based relationship between
the priest/church and the Catholic immigrant community, leading to higher levels of political mobilization whenever the priest considers it is necessary to do so.

4.4 The Local Context

The local context, or local context of reception, refers to the relationship between the Mexican immigrant community and the relevant political institutions and processes in the host state. This perspective addresses specifically the role of localities (Chicago vs. Houston), and the context of reception at a national level. It is basically within the local context that political mobilization and participation take place, and where the interaction between local and transnational contexts also takes place. The research for this dissertation points out that levels of mobilization and participation are higher in Chicago than in Houston.

In this section, first, I analyze the structure of city politics regarding the most important issues that are related to Mexican immigrants and then I address the main differences between Chicago and Houston regarding the following subjects: coalition building and organizational network, parallel organizations, levels of institutionalization and the fact that issues do matter. Finally, in section 4.5, I address the interaction between local and transnational contexts in order to reach a complete explanation of why Mexican immigrants get (or not) mobilized and if they do (or do not) participate in non-electoral politics.

4.4.1 City Politics: The Institutional Perspective

From an institutional perspective, there are major structural differences between Chicago and Houston in terms of the development of organizational efforts among the population of these two cities. In Chicago there is a long tradition of union and
neighborhood organization, making Machine Politics a “school of politics for working-class” in comparison to big reform cities, like Houston, which leaves an “inherited structure” (Bridges 1997) ready to use for mobilization purposes by unions and neighbor organizations. In Houston, workers’ organizations started to lose impetus since Texas became a right-to-work state (1947), and business elites have ruled the place literally since the last of the strong Mayors, Oscar Holocombe, left office after 11 (nonconsecutive) terms in office, in 1958 (Feagin 1988, Bridges 1997).

Indeed, during the eighties and nineties, the organization of Civic Clubs and the actions by The Metropolitan Organization (TMO, Houston’s chapter of the Industrial Areas Foundation) were the only game in town in terms of organization, and these were mostly efforts directed to address the needs of the middle class. The TMO would start to see for the needs of the immigrant poor in the second half of the nineties when the grants from the Catholic Church started to address such type of constituency. With this constant lack of exposure of the general population to mobilization actions, an “acquiescent citizenry” (Mohl 1990) has been shaped with relatively high success: the Civil Rights movement and antiwar activity (Vietnam) were practically nonexistent in Houston, and the Civic Clubs were mainly an instrument of the dominant white majority “to impede racial and ethnic integration.” (Capek and Gilberbloom 1992)

In Chicago, there is an extensive history of constant support and organizing of neighborhood organizations by the Political Machine (Judd and Swanstrom 2006, Harrigan and Vogel 2007), which would leave a solid government structure to channel grassroots input into local politics including, of course, a relatively supportive and immigrant-friendly politics towards immigrant groups. The support for Latinos
was evident mostly during the period of Mayor Harold Washington from 1983 to 1987 (Torres 1991). In contrast, neighborhood organizations among the poor (which include unauthorized immigrants), as well as workers’ organizations, are practically invisible in Houston, where no tangible structure to channel grassroots input into local politics existed until the creation of the Mayor’s Office of Immigrants and Refugee Affairs (MOIRA).

From a perspective of party politics, historically speaking, Chicago, along with cities like New York and New Haven, had strong party organizations, substantial patronage resources and concurrent elections (Bridges 1997), whereas Houstonians showed an anti-organizing ideology and nonpartisanship made the organization for electoral purposes practically impossible; moreover, the city tends to have no responsive structure to meet any possible demand from minorities (immigrants included) and the local business elites became a highly politicized group who, even today, dominate governmental decisions on any major political or policy issues (Feagin, 1988, Mohl 1990).

The above described differences are also supported by the main findings of this work: in Houston there is poor union or neighborhood organizing among immigrant communities, whereas in Chicago organizing of this type is strong; in Houston, levels of networking among organizations is very low in comparison to Chicago; and in Houston there is a trend among immigrant-related organizations to work around grants or specific issues: once the financial source of the activity is over or the issue is solved (or there is no hope to be solved) the organization is also gone. As a result of this, institutionalized organizations in Houston are the minority in comparison to Chicago. Also in Chicago, immigrant-related organizations tend to institutionalize
around community or neighborhood needs or issues. Grants play a less important role for organizations in Chicago in terms of membership, whereas in Houston grants still play an important role.

Coalitions are more solid and developed in Chicago in comparison to Houston. This is related to the fact that in Chicago there is a long tradition of neighborhood, party and workers' organization in comparison to Houston; and that Texas is a right-to-work state and neighborhoods’ organizations in Houston have existed basically to protect the interest of middle to high income whites. Also, the lack of institutionalization of immigrant organizations in Houston in comparison to Chicago includes coalitions themselves.

The actions of parallel organizations depend upon the interaction of the local branches with its headquarters, with local governments / other organizations / communities, and also upon the personalities of their leaders. These organizations may have the same objectives on paper, but results may be totally different from location to location: AFSC is extremely active in Houston in defending immigrants’ rights, sometimes through direct mobilization of the immigrant community; whereas in Chicago, the organization is not active at all regarding mobilization efforts. Within the Catholic Church, the Catholic Campaign of Human Development in Chicago played a very passive role, mostly knocking and opening doors at the highest levels of city politics; whereas its parallel organization in Houston got more involved in supporting the formation and consolidation of community-based immigrant organizations. Within both institutions, the initiative (or lack thereof) of their leadership became an extremely important component to determine the path of action that the branches of these institutions would follow over time.
High levels of institutionalization of immigrant-related organizations and a set of well-organized coalitions make organizational networking a more effective task in Chicago in comparison to Houston. As a direct product of all this, levels of mobilization are higher in Chicago in comparison to Houston. The actions of parallel organizations bring ambivalent results in terms of mobilization in both cities. The main lesson here is never to assume anything in terms of mobilization if organizations share the same name or even if their institutional life has a common origin and they report to the same headquarters.

One of the most important aspects that affect the way activists mobilize Mexican immigrants in these two cities, is related to the fact that Chicago activists are influenced by their past and present experiences in dealing with the Political Machine. Whenever a local problem arises, activists are inclined to deal directly with their alderman, and they try to solve the problem from a neighborhood-community perspective, although the unit of mobilization remains the family.

As time passes, activists and aldermen start to know each other, and a quid pro quo relationship tends to emerge, in which a constant process of negotiation becomes the basic language of communication. It may also happen that when the alderman does not pay attention to the demands of neighborhood organizations, other contacts are developed within the local political structure with state and/or U.S. Representatives and Senators. However, the relationship with the alderman becomes the starting point to solve neighborhood-community problems, and “other contacts” in the local political scenario will be developed sooner or later. In any case, Chicago’s City Hall policies and politics are considered traditionally to be relatively immigrant-friendly by the immigrant-based organizations.
In Houston, organizations that deal with immigrants’ issues are spread throughout the city. They rarely follow the neighborhood format, and they do not have the practice to deal directly with a council member or other local authority in order to solve their problems. Before the creation of the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (MOIRA), on May 19, 2001, there was practically no office within City Hall that could deal directly with immigrants’ issues. Indeed, most organizations tend to deal directly with nongovernmental agencies that address immigrants’ needs, which means that whenever trying to solve a set of problems that the community faces, these organizations have to split efforts and address several issues with several agencies at the same time.

This process actually has led in Houston to the systematic proliferation of top-down organizations that deal with specific needs of the community as a whole, and they may look forward to empower the community, but there are practically no traces of mobilization in the process. Over time, bottom-up activists in Houston have become specialists in developing a wide-open agenda of political action, which includes a high dependence on local media to spread the message and to develop contacts with state and federal elected officials, and even out-of-state federal elected officials. For activists in Houston, Houston is only part of the agenda.

In Chicago, an interesting example of an institutional door of access to immigrants to City Hall that remains highly symbolic is the Commission on Human Relations, which has an Advisory Council of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs, which is formed by eight Advisory Councils that are representative of a wide array of constituency groups across the city: African Affairs, Arab Affairs, Asian Affairs, Gay and Lesbian
The duties of each Council, according to the Chicago Human Rights Ordinance are: to design educational and enforcement programs for the implementation of policies to eliminate discrimination; to act as a liaison between city government and community organizations to promote cooperation between the two; and to cooperate with other advisory councils in the remediation of practices and actions that have a discriminatory impact on council constituents. The Advisory Councils are composed of 21 members appointed by the Mayor to three-year terms. Although the role of the Advisory Council looks impressive on paper, in practice the Advisory Council under no circumstance addresses the needs of the Mexican community from a mobilization perspective. Interestingly enough, the MOIRA office in Houston was modeled after the Advisory Council of Harold Washington’s mayoral period in the 1980s and is much more active in terms of contacting immigrants on a regular basis when compared to its counterpart in Chicago.

Of course, not everything is symbolic in Chicago. The City of Chicago, through the Department of Consumer Services, offers protection from unfair and deceptive practices by immigration consultants. The Office of the Mayor also opposes anti-immigrant initiatives that may be proposed in the U.S. Congress, that is, initiatives that single out immigrants for different treatment simply because of their immigrant status. Finally, there is an increasing interest in City Hall for the activities of the organized Mexican immigrant community, and this is shown by increasing contact between the Office of the Mayor and some Mexican state federations and the Mexican Consulate.
Local politics towards immigration issues in Houston and Chicago are changing rapidly because of demographics. Council members in Houston and aldermen in Chicago are also paying more attention to their immigrant constituencies because of their increasing numbers, as reported in the last U.S. census. Many (city and state) districts have dramatically changed their ethnic composition in the last twenty years and, in some cases, the Mexican-origin population has become the ethnic majority or even the majority of the district. Most politicians in these districts argue that regardless if their Mexican-origin constituency does exert their right to vote, they have the obligation to address the needs of their constituency. Moreover, some of them accept that they definitely cannot ignore the voting potential of the Mexican-origin community.

The majority of these politicians in both cities recognize (1) the right of immigrant workers to defend their workers’ rights regardless of their migratory status, and (2) the right for undocumented immigrants to legalize their migratory status. Although there is a wide set of opinions about how to reach this last point, and noting that the legalization process is in the hands of the federal government, the majority of these politicians agree that unauthorized immigrants have earned the right to legalize their status because they pay taxes, because of their economic contribution to the city is unquestionable, and because of their consistent monetary contributions to the social security system of the country.

On the other hand, union and community-based organization’s activists are skeptical about politicians’ intentions on the matter [in Chicago: del dicho al hecho hay mucho trecho (there is a long distance between saying and doing), and in Houston: they talk the talk, let’s see if they walk the walk]. They assert that politicians’ interest in their
Mexican-origin constituency is also related to the influence that the undocumented members may exert on the voting members of the immigrant family. *El voto de rebote* (the rebounding vote) does matter in local politics.

In any instance, these city or state politicians are the minority in their respective political arenas in Chicago and Houston. In Chicago, some activists do not trust politicians (especially those who are identified as part of the Machine), and they consider that there is very little that local politicians with an immigrant-based constituency can do in the struggle for legalization. In Houston, the level of distrust towards these politicians is definitely lower than in Chicago; however, Houston’s activists are deeply sensitive to the moves of mainstream local politicians regarding the defense of immigrants’ rights.

Depending on the type of issue, it can lead to different levels of mobilization in Chicago and Houston. As explained above, in both cities, transnational issues have a major appeal whenever mobilizing the immigrant community. Local issues affect in different ways the capacity of mobilization of the immigrant community in Chicago and Houston. As expressed in chapter 2, local issues include fair access to education, justice, housing, healthcare; and labor rights and at a state level they include basically driver’s licenses.

At a local level, higher levels of institutionalization in Chicago allow immigrant organizations to channel mobilization actions depending on the issue; whereas in Houston issues are the basic factor that leads organizations to mobilize people. Moreover, organizations in Chicago have a larger timeframe when planning mobilization as soon as an issue arises, whereas in Houston, issues dictate the timing.
Dealing with local issues, indeed, becomes easier for Chicago activists than for Houston activists. In Houston there is a dispersed immigrant community; there is no tradition of contact/relationship among neighborhoods or families within the community. Local issues may affect the community as a whole, but there is not a well established trust relationship within the community itself, which makes it very challenging for leaders when trying to mobilize the community at a local level.

In Chicago, issues are also related to the influence of Machine Politics in the political life of the city. For example, faith-based accounts and education have been an important factor throughout the institutional life of the Centro Legal sin Fronteras. According to Emma Lozano, during their 1990-1995 struggles against the “Rostenkowski Machine”

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to improve the most elemental conditions of education for their children, which led to the construction of the “Rudy Lozano” primary school, the priest and nuns from the St. Stanislaus Kostka church became the best allies of the Machine; first in the struggle for the control of the school board, and then for the acquisition of the school by the community. The CSF’s break with the Catholic Church went beyond anybody’s expectations; the whole leadership switched religion, became members of the United Methodist Church, and founded the Adalberto Memorial UMC. At the beginning, a significant number of CSF members joined the UMC; however, after some time, most of them decided to return to the Catholic Church.

Mobilization activities of CSF have been affected more by the 9/11 attacks, than by the religious conversion of its leadership. Relations with the core of the assembly, and the overwhelming Catholic immigrant community as a whole, remain strong. However, religious figures have become an issue of their own. The Virgin Mary
became an extremely important symbol to keep the relationship leadership-community strong, and it also leaves open the channels of mobilization: Adalberto Memorial UMC has included the Virgin Mary among the worship figures within the church, in addition to hanging up on the wall of the church a picture of the Zapatista Subcomandante Marcos. The Mexican-origin population seems to have no problem in dealing directly with a Protestant leadership, as long as the Virgin is an active part of the reality of the Protestant Church. Although this quid pro quo relationship seems to go both ways: Jose Landaverde, the former leader of Union Latina, converted to UMC and now is the Pastor of Amor de Dios UMC in Chicago. Rev. Landaverde also has the Virgin Mary in his church, and is widely known for being deeply involved in the struggle to defend the rights of day laborers.

The structure of City Hall and city politics in Houston channel the community to private or nonprofit agencies in order to attempt to solve its problems, whereas in Chicago there is a major involvement of local authorities and politicians in dealing with the problems of the community. The appearance of Houston’s MOIRA in the political scenario is relatively new, and there are big expectations that this office will be able to channel immigrants’ concerns in an efficient way. In Chicago, most of the time, the starting point for the community to deal with local issues is the office of the aldermen.

In Houston there is a lack of well established organizational networks to mobilize locally and to exert pressure on local authorities; whereas in Chicago the networking starts at a local level, and goes all the way to state and national levels. This creates a huge incentive for Houston leaders to meet and network with other regional/state
organizations in order to deal with state-level issues and exert pressure together on the Texas Capitol.

In sum, local issues lead to higher levels of mobilization and participation of the immigrant community more in Chicago than in Houston, although transnational issues may have a major impact in terms of mobilization and participation for both cities.

4.5 Family, Work and Faith: The Interaction between the Local and the Transnational

It is within the local context where the interaction between the local and transnational context takes place. Motivations, resources and mobilization will determine to what extent Mexican immigrants may or may not participate in non-electoral politics. The organization in charge of mobilization may count on the necessary resources to mobilize Mexican immigrants; however, the motivation for an immigrant to participate, whenever he/she is mobilized, will determine his/her political participation. Faith, family and work are the main components of this motivation to participate. The interaction between the local and the transnational will determine the motivation for Mexican immigrants to respond positively to mobilization issues and efforts by immigrant-related organizations. Amongst these three factors, faith seems to be the leading force behind political participation of Mexican immigrants.

From this perspective, the trust factor plays an essential role in making the connection between motivation and mobilization. In Chicago, the family is considered as the basic unit of mobilization among Mexican immigrants. In Houston, the individual and the family are the basic units. However, the transmission of the message, in order to mobilize people, flows more easily among Chicagoan families than among Houston’s receptors. Mobilization among Mexican immigrants is about trust. The message is
better perceived if it comes from somebody you know and trust, from the priest, from a member of your own family and, in some cases, your neighbor. From this perspective, we can say that there are higher levels of trust among Mexican immigrants in Chicago than in Houston.

In what follows, I point out a structural explanation of why this difference of trust levels between Chicago and Houston in a local context, then I address the interaction between local and interaction contexts as a explanatory factor for Mexican immigrants to participate in non-electoral politics whenever organizations try to mobilize them.

4.5.1 Building Trust in the Local Context

A structural explanation about this difference in trust has to do with the place of origin and immigration patterns of the Mexican migrants, and with the politics of annexation and zoning in their respective host cities. For trust to emerge among the community, three things are identified as sufficient, although not necessary conditions: families or individuals have to share the same physical space as neighbors during a long period of time, and they need to speak the same language and share similar habits.\textsuperscript{xii} That is, the longer we know the same neighbors, and if they speak the same language than us, and have the same habits that we have, the higher the chances are that a relationship of trust will emerge.

On the one hand, a significant difference between Mexican immigrants in Houston and Chicago is that Houston’s immigrants are relatively close to their home-community, as an important segment of Mexican immigration comes from the states of Nuevo Leon, San Luis Potosi, and Tamaulipas. In some cases, their communities of origin can be reached in a matter of hours by bus, whereas in Chicago, the majority of
immigrants come from a larger variety of Mexican states, and it is relatively harder for them to keep in touch with their community of origin, mostly because of the large distance between Chicago and the closest Mexican border. On the other hand, Houston is generally considered a port of entry to the U.S. job market in Texas, the Midwest, and more recently, the East Coast; whereas Chicago is generally considered by Mexican immigrants as their final destination. These conditions suggest that the floating immigrant population in Houston is higher than in Chicago, and that there are more incentives in Chicago for Mexicans to develop community life far away from home.

Additionally, the city of Houston has a well-known tendency to constantly expanding its limits, whereas the limits of the city of Chicago have remained practically the same. Generally, and at least officially up to 1999, there has been no real restrictions to annexation policies in Houston. The free market rationale working at its best: city developers would buy important extensions of land, they would develop them, and the city would annex them mostly because those new pieces of developed land represent a fresh source of tax revenues. In the process, Mexican and Central American immigrant labor was needed first, to join the construction business (as construction workers, of course) in developing the areas; then, they were hired to provide services to the newly developed and annexed areas. Considering that there are no zoning restrictions in Houston, an important portion of immigrant population ends up distributed throughout the whole city, following the job markets, which are driven by the annexation dynamics of the place, and establishing themselves in a way that neighborhood life is all but a feasible project in the long term.
In Chicago, an inactive annexation policy, a relatively efficient reinforcement of zoning rules, and more diversified sources of employment in the city (construction, services, and commerce), have led Mexican immigrant populations to get established in “their own” neighborhoods for relatively long periods of time. Indeed, for this matter, gentrification becomes a periodical important mobilization issue in Chicago, which has lead Mexican immigrants to either sell their properties and migrate to the suburbs (or simply migrate to the suburbs for those who do not own any property), or to stay in their neighborhoods, organize themselves, and mobilize people to fight for the community’s right to stay in their neighborhood, sometimes successfully.

In short, organizations in Houston, because of not being able to transmit the message as efficiently as in Chicago, tend to depend more on the media to try to mobilize people and to spread the message; and most organizations are not considered seriously by the political establishment in comparison to Chicago. In Chicago, the message is spread through families in neighborhoods, although the media is also important for this purpose. Contacts between immigrant organizations and local authorities in Chicago take place practically at every level of government, whereas in Houston these contacts are sporadic and not at the highest levels of government.

4.5.2 Motivation to Participate: Transnational and Local Interaction

Motivation is an essential component for a positive response in terms of participation from the individual whenever mobilization efforts take place. Research for this dissertation points out that the most important factors of motivation for Mexican immigrants to participate in politics are family, work and faith. Whenever these factors are triggered by the context, local or transnational, the chances for Mexican immigrants to mobilize will increase. Figure 4-A depicts the trend followed by these
explanatory factors in each city: in Houston these three factors are identified as “weak,” whereas in Chicago they tend to be “strong.”

Figure 4-A

MOBILIZATION OF MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS: INTERACTION BETWEEN THE LOCAL AND THE TRANSNATIONAL

Whenever the issues that may lead to mobilization affect the family, or are framed in a way that convinces the immigrant that the family may get affected if no action is taken, the possibilities to mobilize increase. Spreading information about mobilization actions is more persuasive and effective if spread from family to family in a neighborhood context. Also, levels of trust in order to participate generally are higher
when families from the same neighborhood decide to participate in a mobilization action. This tends to happen in Chicago, but not in Houston.

Whenever the work (source of income) of the immigrant gets affected by the context, the possibilities of mobilization increase. For example, issues like increasing possibilities of getting deported, more than trying to legalize the migratory status of the undocumented worker, creates an effective motivation for mobilization to transform into political participation. Here, union or neighborhood organizing and high levels of institutionalization of immigrant organizations play a decisive role in order to increase the possibilities of participation. As described in this chapter, in Chicago these conditions do exist, whereas in Houston they mostly do not.

It could be the case that the immigrant’s family and work are threatened in order for mobilization to occur; however, the decisive call to trigger mobilization generally relies on the local parish, mostly within the Catholic Church. The use of the Virgin Mary in a rally, the call to participate in a mobilization action by the priest, and the participation of the priest himself are strong motivations for Mexican immigrants to participate. In Chicago this happens with more frequency than in Houston; however, the Catholic Church is a very institutionalized and hierarchical organization within the context of mobilization, which means that there is a strict top-down control of the church elite over the parish priests and other institutions within the church, like the Hispanic Ministry.

In Chicago, whenever there is an explicit or implicit agreement to mobilize immigrants between the local politicians and the Catholic Church, the chances for the immigrants’ participation increase in a significant manner. Mobilization may also take place without this agreement, at the parish level; however, this mobilization is
generally limited and would depend of other factors to be successful, like the
intervention of unions or neighborhood organizations. In Houston, there is virtually
no direct support for mobilization from an institutional perspective and the use of
religious symbols is practically out of the question. The Catholic Church in Houston
may support organizational efforts in an indirect way, like leadership workshops or
grants for the formation and consolidation of immigrant organizations, which could
lead to higher levels of political participation in the future.

The transnational factor is an important component within the three explanatory
features of political participation. The Mexican immigrant generally deals with family
issues “here and there” through remittances, which is the direct product of his/her
work and that is sent to Mexico generally on a monthly basis. The immigrant is here
and there at the same time through his/her family and through the money that he/she
sends to the family back in Mexico. The Mexican flag, the use of the Virgin Mary and
the presence of the priest in mobilization actions, become the core of a deep
transnational motivation in the sense that their use or participation increases the levels
of trust whenever the immigrant decides or not to participate in a mobilization action.

It is also important to state that the fact of being Mexican (ethnic identity) is a
constant in the motivation process that facilitates mobilization actions for experienced
activists. At an individual level, if the message is spread not only in Spanish, but from
Mexican to Mexican, from Mexican family to Mexican family, the level of trust
becomes more solid and the possibilities to persuade Mexican immigrants to mobilize
become also stronger. The Mexican flag also has an effect of increasing the
confidence of the Mexican community, family and individual to join a rally.

However, immigrant-oriented leaders (who can be or not of Mexican-origin) are very
careful in framing the whole mobilization process mostly within a framework of faith, family and work, and they appeal to the Mexicanness of their constituency only as an enforcing mechanism in the process, but not as the main engine of mobilization. This is mostly because the issues that affect Mexicans also affect immigrants from other nationalities, and the use of Mexicanness through the process can be interpreted as ‘exclusionary’ by other populations of immigrants in the U.S.

Moreover, most organizations in the Southwest of the U.S. tend to avoid the exaltation of the Mexicanness component in a mobilization process, mostly because of probable misunderstandings of historical origins (the war with Mexico still is an active component in the collective mind of Mexicans and Americans on both sides of the border) and because such an attitude could lead to xenophobic reactions of the local population that would bias and distract the real objective of the mobilization: generally issues related to work, education, family, lack of security in the neighborhood, poor health care, even immigration issues or discriminating attitudes against Mexican-born or Mexican-origin populations.

How the interaction between the transnational and the local contexts affect the different levels of response of Mexican immigrants to mobilization efforts is better seen from an individual perspective. Family generally is “there” and the subject of mobilization, by definition, is “here,” in a locality of the host state. Most Mexican immigrants have family links in Mexico. Work is “here,” but the product and remuneration of such work has a strong presence “there,” back in Mexico, in the family, in the community. Finally, faith is also “here and there,” with all their imported rituals and beliefs and, most important of all, the categorical trust that the average Mexican gives to religious authorities. The “Mexicanness” component is an
implicit enforcing mechanism in the mobilization process, certainly transnational, but it does not play such an indispensable role as the other three components.

At an institutional level, the local context also plays an important role in determining the main differences of mobilization and participation between Chicago and Houston. Within a local context, in Chicago the government has been generally an implicit or explicit supporter and guarantor of immigrant mobilization and participation and it has a well-defined structure of organizational networks (union, neighborhood based); this makes the process of mobilization easier for immigrants to develop. In Houston there is an ongoing history of lack of organizational networks and lack of institutionalization of such organizations, and the local government has achieved a state-of-the-art “acquiescent citizenship,” in which no major mobilization generally takes place, this being true mostly for the working class, the poor and minorities, immigrants included.

From an institutional, transnational context, the role of the Mexican Consulate has proven to be extremely important in the process of formation and consolidation of immigrant-led organizations, and the formation of an immigrant leadership. Generally the favorite target of Mexican activists in both cities, the Mexican Consulate also plays the role of ally for certain issues; however, the most important aspect within the mobilization process is that the Mexican Consulate in Chicago has been more active than Houston through the actions of community involvement by the members of the PMCLA (today the Institute of Mexican Abroad, IME). Also, Mexican policies and politics are an important factor in generating mobilization actions in both cities, as well as generating new waves of leadership. However, transnational factors on their own do not necessarily translate into political participation of Mexican immigrants:
the struggle to obtain the right to vote abroad is a clear example that the lack of both, mobilization efforts and well-defined motivations, lead nowhere in terms of political participation. Also, the Mexican Consulate rarely involves in direct mobilization actions of the Mexican immigrant population in the U.S., indeed its work is more focused to deal with and motivate elite leadership to get organized. When a Mexican Consul gives advice to his/her Mexican constituency about political participation in the United States, he/she knows that he/she is risking the job.

In institutional terms, organizations deal all the time within the local and transnational contexts to obtain financial and human resources to mobilize Mexican immigrants. Sometimes the motivation for Mexican immigrants to politically participate comes from abroad or within the locality, but the way of how organizations deal with one or another context (or both) becomes a powerful influence and motivation for organizations to get institutionalized in the process, and for the immigrants to start to trust the organizations in their everyday struggle to live a life as an immigrant human being.
In section 4.3.1 The Mexican Consulate, the information about the role of the Mexican Consulate in the process of mobilization of Mexican immigrants within a context of state federations was obtained from interviews with personnel of the Mexican Consulate and the following leaders: Gonzalo Arroyo, Federación de Michoacanos, Chicago; Frank de Avila, Asociación de Clubes y Organizaciones Potosinas, Chicago; Fidel Barrios, Federación de Clubes Zacatecanos del Sur de Texas, Houston; Joaquin Damian, Federación de Guerrerenses Unidos en Chicago; Rosalba Ruiz, Federación de Zacatecanos Unidos en Illinois, Chicago; Marcia Soto, Durango Unido en Chicago; and Antonio Zepeda, Federación de Jaliscienses. In the same section, when identifying explanatory factors other than the role of the Mexican Consulate regarding the mobilization of Mexican immigrants, the information used in the elaboration of the argument was inferred from interviews with Maria Jimenez in Houston; Emma Lozano in Chicago; John Raia, Planning and Development Department, City of Houston; Jerry Wood, Department of Planning, City of Houston; and Steve Valenziano, Department of Planning, City of Chicago. In section 4.3.2 Mexican Policies and Politics, conversations held with Consul Heriberto Galindo (Chicago), Consul Carlos Sada (Chicago), Consul Rodolfo Figueroa-Aramoni (Houston), Consul Enrique Buj (Houston), Melba Pria (Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mexico City), Juan A. Mora, Raúl Ross, Jorge Mújica, Omar Mora, Oscar Tellez and Martín Unzueta (all of them in Chicago) were extremely useful in the elaboration of the section. In a similar way, in section 4.3.3 The Catholic Church, interviews and/or first hand material provided in Chicago by Rev. Walter Coleman, Father Charles Dahm, Father Raúl Martínez, Salvador Cervantes, Jose Oliva, Bill Purcell, and in Houston by Jorge Delgado, Father Miguel Solórzano, Stephanie Weber and Mark Zwick were extremely useful in the elaboration of the section. Finally, in section 4.4.1 City Politics: The Institutional Perspective, inferences were made from interviews and/or first hand material provided by Edward Acevedo, State Rep. Illinois, 2nd. District Chicago; Ed Burke, Alderman, 14th Ward, Chicago; Leonel Castillo, Office of the Mayor, Houston; Garnet Coleman, State Rep., 147th District, Texas; Miguel Del Valle, State Senator, Illinois; William Delgado, State Rep., 3rd District, Illinois; Jessica Farrar, State Rep. 148th District, Texas; Jeanette Feliciano-Jones, Commission on Latino Affairs, City of Chicago; Benito Juárez, MOIRA, City of Houston; Joe Moreno, State Rep., 143th District, Texas; Elliot Naishat, State Rep., 49th District, Texas; Rick Noriega, State Rep., 145th District, Texas; Cynthia Soto, State Rep., 4th District, Illinois; Carol Alvarado, Houston Council Member, District I; Ada Edwards, Houston Council Member, District D; Rafael "Ray" Frias, Alderman 12th Ward, Chicago; Gordon Quan, Houston Council Member, At-Large Position 2; Ray Suarez, Alderman 31st Ward, Chicago; Gabriel Vasquez, Houston Council Member, District H; and Leticia Van de Putte, State Senator, 26th District, Texas.

In April 2003, the PMCLA became the Institute of Mexicans Abroad (Instituto de los Mexicanos en el Exterior, IME).

In 2004 the Mexican Consulate in Chicago started to recognize more than one state federations per state, creating a revolt among existing state federations, which accused
the Consulate to try to divide the Mexican community. Officials at the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs expect that in the mid or long term, this new position of the Consulate will generate more democratic, competitive and community-focused state federations.


v The members of the PMCLA (IME) indeed have to deal with a peculiar circumstance in order to perform their duties in any Consulate. They have two bosses: the Executive Director of the Institute of Mexicans Abroad, at the headquarters of the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Mexican Consul. Sometimes this situation is not easy, mostly when the Mexican Consul is not convinced about or supportive of the tasks of the IME. The members of the IME who work at a Mexican Consulate really have to be “here and there at the same time” within the Mexican government.

vi The Zapatista National Liberation Army (Los Zapatistas) carried out a military rebellion in the South of Mexico (Chiapas) the first day of 1994, the same day that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) went into effect. The Zapatistas demanded that the Mexican government put an end to poverty in Mexico and to the exploitation of Mexican Indians. In accordance with their communiqué dated June 12, 1994, "the demands of the EZLN are summed up in the 11 points affirmed in the Declaration from the Lacandon Jungle: Work, land, shelter, food, health, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice and peace." The Zapatista name makes specific reference to a Mexican revolutionary hero, Emiliano Zapata, who defended the poor and the ownership of the land by the peasantry. Currently, the Zapatista movement still is alive and its military influence is reduced to some spots in the South of Mexico.

vii During the mobilizations of the first half of 2006 there is no evidence of any direct coordination (in organizational terms) between the Catholic Church and the Political Machine or the Free Enterprise Government in the participation of Latino immigrants in the rallies, most of them Mexicans. At least both city governments cooperated in the logistics of the first set of rallies, and the Chicago City government always facilitated logistical support to subsequent rallies during this period of time.

viii Stephanie Weber, Catholic Campaign of Human Development, Houston (3/02).

ix http://www.egov.cityofchicago.org/city/

x María Jiménez, AFSC, Houston (6/02) and Carol Alvarado, Houston Council Member, District I (6/02).

xi A direct reference made by Emma Lozano to the way that U.S. congressman Don Rostenkowski used to deal with domestic business in Chicago. About Rostenkowski, he was a Chicago-born democrat who “was first elected as a U.S. representative from Illinois in 1958. Rostenkowski became chairman of the House Ways and Means
Committee in 1981. In 1994, Rostenkowski was indicted on corruption charges and stepped down as Ways and Means chairman; he lost his House seat in the Congressional elections later that year. He pleaded guilty to mail fraud in 1996, and was fined and served (1996–97) a 17-month sentence... Rostenkowski was pardoned by President Clinton in 2000.” Source: The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth ed., 2001-2005, Columbia University Press.

xii Marfa Jiménez, American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), Houston (6/02) and Teresa Fraga, Pilsen Neighbors Community Council, Chicago (7/02).

xiii Jerry Wood, Department of Planning, City of Houston (6/02).
Major Differences between Chicago and Houston

Context Explanation

Mexican Politics, Policies. Rates of participation in mobilization actions are high in both cities whenever Mexican politics become an issue, however, the response is less impressive in Houston in terms of numbers.

** Mexican politics and policies trigger mobilization actions among Mexican immigrants in the U.S. ** Generally the Mexican Consulate is the target of such mobilization. ** This happens (or not) in both cities in a simultaneous way.

State Federations. High levels of formation, consolidation and proliferation of state federations in Chicago in comparison to Houston.

** Immigration patterns of Mexicans different in Chicago than in Houston. ** Internal immigration in the city of Chicago different than in Houston because of the structure of the labor market. ** Higher levels of concentration of population in neighborhoods in Chicago in comparison to Houston. ** Houston is closer to the Mexican border than Chicago. ** The Mexican Consulate is more active in Chicago than in Houston in endorsing the formation, consolidation and proliferation of state federations.

Church - Individual Level. In Chicago the use of the Virgin Mary (in combination with the Mexican flag), for mobilization purposes is more common in Chicago than in Houston.

** In Chicago, the use of the Virgin as a symbol of mobilization is originated in the community with the consent of the priest; the use of the Mexican flag along the Virgin is very common. Both are seen as a sign of national-origin identity, which arises from the need to distinguish your community from other well defined ethnic groups in the city. This does not happen in Houston, mostly because the doctrine of Social Justice, when addressed from a pastoral standpoint, does not encourage any political use of any religious symbol. ** Faith, family, neighborhood and ethnic identity get together in mobilization actions in Chicago, but not in Houston.

Table 4-A Explaining Major Differences of Pol. Mobilization and Participation Between Houston and Chicago

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<td>Mexican Politics, Policies. Rates of participation in mobilization actions are high in both cities whenever Mexican politics become an issue, however, the response is less impressive in Houston in terms of numbers.</td>
<td>Transnational</td>
<td>** Mexican politics and policies trigger mobilization actions among Mexican immigrants in the U.S. ** Generally the Mexican Consulate is the target of such mobilization. ** This happens (or not) in both cities in a simultaneous way.</td>
<td>This type of mobilization tend to generate new leadership; it may incorporate an ideological component into the mobilization actions from an organizational perspective. These experiences also become extremely useful to illustrate and convince the community that things are possible to achieve through political mobilization and participation.</td>
<td>Mexican immigrants mobilize in both cities (or not) at similar levels of response.</td>
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<td>State Federations. High levels of formation, consolidation and proliferation of state federations in Chicago in comparison to Houston.</td>
<td>Transnational</td>
<td>** Immigration patterns of Mexicans different in Chicago than in Houston. ** Internal immigration in the city of Chicago different than in Houston because of the structure of the labor market. ** Higher levels of concentration of population in neighborhoods in Chicago in comparison to Houston. ** Houston is closer to the Mexican border than Chicago. ** The Mexican Consulate is more active in Chicago than in Houston in endorsing the formation, consolidation and proliferation of state federations.</td>
<td>Higher levels of trust and more efficient channels of communication within the community are achieved with the creation and proliferation of state federations for potential mobilization purposes. However, the leadership of these organizations rarely recurs to mobilization actions.</td>
<td>Mexican elites get mobilized in order to lead the organization and potential mobilization of the community; however, no major mobilization actions arise from the state federations within the immigrant community.</td>
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<td>Church - Individual Level. In Chicago the use of the Virgin Mary (in combination with the Mexican flag), for mobilization purposes is more common in Chicago than in Houston.</td>
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<td>The use of the Virgin Mary as a political symbol increases enormously the trust-based relationship between the priest/church and the Catholic immigrant community, leading to higher levels of political mobilization whenever the priest considers it is necessary to do so.</td>
<td>This leads to higher levels of political mobilization in Chicago than in Houston among the members of the immigrant community.</td>
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### Major Differences between Chicago and Houston

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<td><strong>Church - Institutional Level. In general, low levels of participation of the Catholic Church, however, higher levels of involvement are perceived in Chicago in comparison to Houston.</strong></td>
<td>**Priests are more active in Chicago than in Houston in spreading the doctrine of Social Justice of the Catholic Church from a mobilization standpoint. However, top hierarchies in the church control efficiently the actions of individual priests. Even in Chicago, levels of involvement of priests in actions of mobilization are low. **</td>
<td>In Houston, the lack of involvement of priests in mobilization actions contributes to create a culture of passive understanding of the doctrine of Social Justice and a culture of no-mobilization among members of the community; whereas in Chicago, priests and religious-based organizations contribute to create a culture of potential mobilization among the members of the community.</td>
<td>The higher the disposition and availability of the top hierarchies of the Catholic Church to get involved in mobilization actions, the higher the chances that priests will lead mobilization actions, and the higher the chances that Mexicans immigrants will join in mobilization actions.</td>
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<td><strong>Transnational, Local</strong></td>
<td>**Strategic alliances between the church and local government or local immigrant organizations are important to mobilize people in Chicago. In Houston, these alliances exist in a smaller scale and most of them assist the community to get organized; mobilizing is more the exception than the rule. ** <strong>There is a higher involvement of church-related organizations in mobilization issues in Chicago in comparison to Houston.</strong></td>
<td>In Houston, organizations tend to depend more on the media to try to mobilize people and to spread the message; and most of the contacts are sporadic and not at the highest levels of government.</td>
<td>This leads to higher levels of political mobilization in Chicago in comparison to Houston among the members of the immigrant community.</td>
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<td><strong>Mobilizing People. More difficult for organizations in Houston to mobilize people in comparison to Chicago.</strong></td>
<td>**In Houston it is difficult to spread the message, information does not circulate as efficiently as in Chicago. ** **Houston's immigrant population is spread throughout the city, whereas Chicago's immigrant population is highly concentrated in neighborhoods. **</td>
<td>In Chicago, the family is the basic unit of mobilization, whereas Houston focuses more in the individual.</td>
<td>By invoking the family in the mobilization process, the message is spread in an efficient way and it also increases the levels of trust between the community and the leadership. This increases the chances of for the whole community to mobilize.</td>
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<td>Local</td>
<td>**In Houston, the Catholic Church is not as committed as Chicago regarding mobilization actions at a parish level. **</td>
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<td>**In Houston there is a lack of institutional/organizational networks that deal with immigrants' issues. **</td>
<td>**In Houston there is a lack of institutional continuity in organizational and mobilization terms. **</td>
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<td>**In Chicago neighborhood life is highly developed. ** **There are high levels of segregation in Chicago in comparison to Houston. **</td>
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<td>**In Chicago immigrant population is more stable; immigrants arrive and tend to stay, they generate families. **</td>
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<td><strong>Chicago: Low levels of floating population in comparison to Houston.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Mobilization Issues.</strong> Issues do matter in terms of mobilization in both cities.</td>
<td>Local, Transnational</td>
<td><strong>Higher</strong> levels of institutionalization in Chicago allow immigrant organizations to channel mobilization depending on the issue; whereas in Houston issues are the basic factor that leads organizations to mobilize people. <strong>Organizations</strong> in Chicago have a major margin of timing or they even can choose their battles, whereas in Houston issues dictate the agenda and the timing.</td>
<td>In both cities transnational issues have a major appeal in mobilizing the immigrant community. Also in both cities, local issues and context affect the scope of action of organizations. However, in the case of Houston, as issues dictate mobilization patterns, levels of institutionalization are lower in comparison to Chicago.</td>
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<td><strong>Dealing with Issues from Regional/Local Perspectives.</strong> Organizations in Houston deal with immigration issues mostly from a state-politics standpoint, whereas Chicago goes local, state and national.</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td><strong>In Houston</strong> there is a dispersed immigrant community, there is no tradition of contact/relationship among neighborhoods or families within the community. <strong>Structure</strong> of City Hall and city politics in Houston channel the community to private or non profit agencies in order to attempt to solve its problems, whereas in Chicago there is a major involvement of local authorities and politicians in dealing with the problems of the community. <strong>In Houston</strong> there is a lack of well established organizational networks to mobilize locally and to exert pressure to local authorities; whereas in Chicago the networking start at a local level, and goes all the way to state and national.</td>
<td>In Houston, depending on the issue, becomes easier to exert pressure at a state level by organizing sporadic actions of pressure with other immigrant organizations in Texas. In Chicago, organizations can deal practically with any issue and decide to what extent it is convenient to deal with the issue at local, state or national level.</td>
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<td><strong>Institutionalization.</strong> Low levels of institutionalization of immigrant-related organizations in Houston in comparison to Chicago.</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td><strong>In Houston</strong> there is poor union or neighborhood organizing among immigrant communities, whereas in Chicago organizing of this type is strong. <strong>In Houston</strong>, levels of networking among organizations is very low in comparison to Chicago. <strong>In Houston</strong> there is a trend among immigrant-related organizations to work around grants or specific issues; once the grant is over or the issue is solved (or not), the organization is also gone. In Chicago, immigrant-related organizations tend to institutionalize around community or neighborhood needs or issues. Grants play a less important role for organizations in Chicago in terms of membership.</td>
<td>Whenever a new issue arises in Chicago, institutions / organizations / networks respond more efficiently in terms of mobilization and with higher probabilities of success in solving the issue in a way or another. Whereas in Houston, when an issue arises, people start to organize, then mobilize, and networking is not very common, generally actions are taken in a case per case basis.</td>
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<td><strong>Coalitions.</strong> Coalitions are more solid and developed in Chicago in comparison to Houston.</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td><strong>In Chicago</strong> there is a long tradition of neighborhood and workers’ organization in comparison to Houston. <strong>Texas</strong> is a right to work state and neighborhood’s organizations in Houston exist basically to protect the interest of middle to high income whites. <strong>Lack of institutionalization</strong> of immigrant organizations in Houston in comparison to Chicago. <strong>Lack of institutionalization</strong> of coalitions in Houston in comparison to Chicago.</td>
<td>In Chicago strong coalitions reinforce the formation and consolidation of immigrant organizations as long as the coalitions perform a role of entities capable to distribute financial, organizational and human capital resources. In Houston, the lack of permanent and institutionalized coalitions does not contribute to the formation and consolidation of immigrant organizations.</td>
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<td><strong>Parallel Organizations.</strong> Parallel organizations in both cities show different levels of performance and commitment towards mobilization actions.</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>&quot;The actions of parallel organizations depend upon the interaction of the local branches with its headquarters, with local government / other organizations / community, and also on the personalities of their leaders. **These organizations may have the same objectives in paper, but results may be totally different from location to location.&quot;</td>
<td>The effect is ambivalent. In Houston an organization does networking and mobilize people, whereas in Chicago its counterpart does not, and vice versa. The main lesson here is never to assume anything in terms of mobilization if organizations share the same name or same headquarters.</td>
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<td><strong>City Regime. Political Machine vs. Free Enterprise Politics</strong></td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>&quot;From a broader perspective, the Political Machine in Chicago has shaped the way every organization in the city does business; whereas in Houston, the dynamics and rationale of Free Enterprise Politics has empowered a business elite and has been very effective in lowering the capacity of organizations to address the concerns of minorities and the disadvantaged.&quot;</td>
<td>Organizations in Chicago are highly experienced and institutionalized when addressing mobilization issues of immigrants; whereas in Houston, organizations show very low levels of institutionalization and are less effective whenever trying to mobilize immigrants.</td>
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CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I address the conclusions of this study from both empirical and theoretical perspectives. In the empirical section, first, I point out the most important findings of my research on political mobilization of Mexican immigrants from a comparative perspective. Second, I emphasize the use of the main arguments of my work in Chicago and Houston in a brief analysis of the immigrant mobilization actions across the United States that took place during the first half of 2006. This section mainly shows the analytical potential of my arguments through the consideration of mobilization at an individual-institutional level, and from a perspective that addresses the interactions between local and transnational contexts.

In Chapter Two of this study I explained the process of mobilization of Mexican immigrants in Chicago and Houston, and pointed out the main actors within such process. In Chapter Three, I addressed how political mobilization and participation in Chicago and Houston are different and, in Chapter Four, I proposed an explanation of why there are such differences. Through the whole explanatory process I have shown that in order to understand the political mobilization and participation of Mexican immigrants, it is necessary to focus on the relations of Mexican immigrants with relevant political institutions and processes in their home and host societies.
Moreover, in order to understand the how and why of immigrant political mobilization of Mexicans in the U.S., I have shown the importance of considering the local and transnational contexts and their interaction. Higher levels of mobilization in Chicago have to do more with the active role of the Mexican Consulate in the city and with a more immigrant-friendly scheme of local government’s policies and politics. In Houston, the lack of an active role of the Mexican Consulate in the city and a ‘free-enterprise’ local scheme of government policies and politics have led to lower levels of mobilization. Also, considering the direct influence of Mexican politics and policies, I have shown that the home state engagement with political mobilization in the host country has led to more, and not less political mobilization in the host country.

In Chapter Four, I also have emphasized, as a major explanatory factor, the role of a nongovernmental actor in the whole process of mobilization of Mexican immigrants: the Catholic Church. This actor plays an important bi-dimensional role in the whole mobilization process: at a local-transnational level, and at an institutional-individual level. In any instance, the interaction between local and transnational contexts, including the home and host states and the Catholic Church, becomes the essence of migrant political transnationalism when addressing political mobilization and participation of immigrants in a host society.

In the theoretical section of this chapter, I point out the relationship between the process of ethnic political mobilization and the field of political transnationalism. I frame this basically by arguing that ethnic political mobilization can be analyzed from a macro, meso (intermediate) and micro perspectives. In the section of final remarks, I emphasize the importance of considering such a framework for other fields of study in which also
political transnationalism has a promising future in theoretical and practical terms: urban politics and religiously-based mobilization. I conclude this study with some reflections about the importance of the relationship between political mobilization of Mexican immigrants and the notion of political participation through naturalization.

5.2 Discussion on Political Mobilization and Participation

Within an empirical framework, this research confirms that a complete understanding of Mexican immigrant political mobilization focuses simultaneously on the relations between Mexican immigrant organizations and relevant political institutions and processes in their home and host societies. One of the main conclusions of this work is that home state politics (via direct Mexican government politics or policies or through the Mexican Consulate) is related to the formation and consolidation of political mobilization of the Mexican population in the U.S. In this sense, home state engagement with political mobilization in the host country has led to more and not less political mobilization of the immigrant population in the host country. This mobilization will vary significantly based on the context of reception, which includes local political institutions.

Within a transnational context, the role of the Mexican Consulate is important to explain different levels of political mobilization and organization of Mexican immigrants in Chicago and Houston. In Chicago, the Mexican Consulate has cultivated a relatively strong relationship of trust with the immigrant leadership, and it also has contributed to the formation and consolidation of immigrant political organizations with an important potential to mobilize people (i.e.: state federations). In Houston, the role of the Mexican Consulate tends to be considered marginal by immigrant leaders in their effort to
mobilize people. The Mexican Consulate in Houston shows practically no relevant interventions in the process of leadership formation and consolidation in the community.

Mexican policies and politics are an important trigger to mobilize the community in both cities. The episode of the Zedillo’s cars and the Zapatista Movement show that there are national-origin issues that can trigger a mobilization process in the host society, which also generates new leadership among immigrants. Not every issue of this type, though, triggers mobilization among immigrants. The right to vote for Mexicans abroad was obtained in 2006; however, institutional restrictions enacted by the Mexican Congress to vote abroad, and levels of mobilization practically close to null, explain the low turnout of Mexicans in the presidential elections of that year: 33,131 voters out of a potential pool of 10 million.ii

The Catholic Church is also an important transnational factor of mobilization at an individual and institutional level. At an individual level, the Virgin Mary and the priest become important symbols of mobilization. Mexican Catholics have strong confidence in priests and generally are very attentive and even obedient to any advice that a priest offers. Faith, family and work are the three main explanatory components of the mobilization of the Mexican community. Faith and family are components deeply embedded in a transnational perspective.

From an institutional perspective, the Catholic Church is a highly organized institution in which the top hierarchy generally decides why, when, how and who to mobilize. It is within an institutional framework that the relationship between local government and the Church has been important to mobilize minorities, at least in the case of Chicago. For
Houston this relationship is practically nonexistent. The top hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Chicago has been always attentive to the most important problems of its immigrant population and, although the Mexican population seems not to be its priority, the attention paid to Mexican immigrant issues, for good or for bad, exceeds by far that of its counterpart in Houston. Church-related organizations in Chicago are part of a consolidated network of work-related and neighborhood organizations, whereas most parishes in Houston deal with the issues of Mexican immigrants mostly from a pastoral perspective, in which prayers are given strong preference over concrete mobilization actions to solve the problems of the community.

From a local context perspective, the local government of Houston, through a political framework of “free enterprise politics,” has a long history of non-mobilization of minorities; whereas in Chicago, the long tradition of Machine Politics, and more recently “Global Machine Politics” (Simpson et al. 2004), has created a web of formal and informal contacts between immigrant-focused organizations and City Hall, the City Council and even the state government. One example of the latter is the creation of the “New Americans Immigrant Policy Council” by the State of Illinois in 2005, with the aim to “recommend strategic directions for Illinois immigrant policy in the areas of U.S. citizenship; acquisition of English; education; healthcare; human services; security; entrepreneurialism and workforce development; and home ownership and housing.”iii The Policy Council was created under the assistance and supervision of the Illinois Coalition for Immigrants and Refugee Rights, the Migration Policy Institute and the National Immigration Forum. The state government also created the “Office of New Americans Policy and Advocacy,” in order to assist the Policy Council with its work, and in order to
examine, department by department, how state government can “address the rapidly changing population of the State.” It was no coincidence that the first head of the new office was José Luis Gutiérrez, a Mexican immigrant and former president of the state federation of Michoacán in Chicago.

Also within the local context, the role of immigrant-related organizations becomes essential to understand differences between Houston and Chicago in terms of mobilization of Mexican immigrants. In Chicago, years and years of labor and neighborhood activism, always within a context of Machine Politics, has led to the formation and consolidation of organizations and networks of organizations that are capable to deal directly with authorities on immigration issues at practically every level of government: local, state and national. In Houston, activists point out the lack of unions and neighborhood organizations as one of the main factors that impede the formation and consolidation of immigrant-related organizations. In Chicago the formation and consolidation of coalitions of organizations are two of the main issues for immigrant organizations, whereas in Houston, most organizers are struggling with the institutionalization of their organizations.

At an individual level, unions and neighborhood organizations in Chicago tend to deal directly with the ‘work’ factor as one of the most important explanatory factors of mobilization; whereas in Houston, and generally in Texas, the lack of mobilization led by work-related and neighborhood organizations have a strong negative impact on the mobilization capacity of Mexican immigrants.
In sum, levels of political mobilization and participation of Mexican immigrants in Chicago are higher than those in Houston. This is explained, from an institutional perspective, because of a more participative role of the Mexican Consulate and the Catholic Church within a transnational context in Chicago; and because of higher levels of openness to immigration issues on the part of the Political Machine regime in Chicago in comparison to the Free Enterprise government in Houston. At an individual level, the different ways to persuade immigrants to participate are highly effective when channeled through work and family channels, as in the case of Chicago, whereas this method is weakly pursued in Houston. The use of faith-related symbols and proactive arguments for mobilization purposes is relatively strong in Chicago and very weak in Houston.

The link between the macro context (local and transnational) and the micro context (the individual, the family) in terms of mobilization is clearly determined by the role of immigrant-related organizations, at an intermediate, meso-level of actions. Depending on the relationship of the immigrant-related organizations and the contexts of action, the mobilization of Mexican immigrants can be strong or weak. In Chicago, highly institutionalized organizations or coalitions, such as Centro Legal Sin Fronteras, the Resurrection Project, Enlaces America (Heartland Alliance), Chicago Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues, Pilsen Neighbors Community Council, American Friends Service Committee, Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, West Town Leadership United, more than 15 state federations and even the Institute of Mexicans Abroad in Chicago, consolidate and enforce a solid network of continuous mobilization actions and political activism that deal directly with the government branches or government agencies within a local and a transnational context. In Houston only
organizations like the Association for Residency and Citizenship of America, National Organizers Alliance and American Friends Service Committee are capable of mobilizing immigrants and to call the attention of governmental actors within local and transnational contexts.

The political mobilization of Mexican immigrants that took place in the United States during the first half of 2006, as a direct response to legislative action regarding immigration issues, offers a unique opportunity to illustrate at a national level the most important empirical premises about immigrant mobilization that have been proposed in this work through the comparative analysis between Chicago and Houston. Through this study, I have addressed the differences of mobilization and political participation of Mexican immigrants in Houston and Chicago, however, an interesting issue arises when researchers address the question of why Mexican immigrants participate in low numbers in proportion to their population living and working in American cities.

The standard response is that Mexicans prefer to remain invisible, mostly if they are unauthorized immigrants. The best strategy is to stay out of the radar of U.S. immigration authorities. They perceive that they have more to lose by avoiding political participation, than what they could win by getting involved in non-electoral political participation. However, this does not explain the fact that millions of immigrants (most of them Mexicans) participated in huge political rallies in the first half of 2006. A brief analysis of such mobilization process (Cano 2006), in which the local and transnational role of the Catholic Church is shown at its best, is presented in the following four last subsections of the empirical perspective of this chapter.\textsuperscript{9}
5.2.1 Mobilization of Mexican Immigrants and the H.R. 4437

On December 16, 2005, the United States House of Representatives passed the bill H.R. 4437 titled “Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005.” This bill would make illegal presence in the United States a felony. The bill also required the department of Homeland Security to construct a double security fence across several portions of the Mexican border; encouraged local police to enforce immigration law; made it a felony “to assist, encourage, direct, or induce to enter or remain in the country with knowing or reckless disregard” of the fact that immigrants reside in the country illegally; and imposed a maximum fine of forty thousand dollars per undocumented worker that an employer would hire or that an agency would help to find work. At this point in history, between 11 and 12 million unauthorized immigrants were estimated to live in the United States. About fifty six percent of Latino unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. are of Mexican origin.¹

This legislative action triggered the mobilization of millions of persons across the U.S. in the first half of 2006. The first major rally against H.R. 4437 took place in the city of Chicago: between 100,000 and 300,000 individuals took to the streets on March 10, 2006. For the period March 11-April 7 the rallies expanded to 76 cities with an estimated mobilization of 500,000 - 900,000 persons. A number between 1.4 and 1.7 million people took to the streets in 108 localities during the weekend of April 8-10. Finally, on May 1, a figure between 1.2 and 2 million people participated in organized rallies associated with an economic boycott in 63 localities across the U.S.
In Table 5-A, we can see that high levels of mobilization were observed in 32 cities across the country for this period of time. The following cities held at least one rally with 50,000 participants or more: New York NY, Los Angeles CA, Chicago IL, Houston TX, Phoenix AZ, San Diego CA, Dallas TX, Detroit MI, San Jose CA, Washington D.C., Seattle WA, Denver CO, Atlanta GA and Fort Myers FL. Cities that held at least one rally with 10,000-49,000 participants were: San Antonio TX, Indianapolis IN, San Francisco CA, Austin TX, Memphis TN, Milwaukee WI, Boston MA, Nashville TN, Fresno CA, Oakland CA, Omaha NE, St. Paul MN, Bakersfield CA, Madison WI, Orlando FL, Salt Lake UT, Salinas CA, and Salem OR. From January to July 2006, there were four major rallies in Houston: March 25 (6,000 participants), March 27 (1,000), April 10 (50,000) and May 1 (10,000 – 15,000). In Chicago, for the same period of time, three rallies took place: March 10 (100,000 – 300,000 participants), May 1 (400,000 – 750,000) and July 19 (10,000).

Large rally participation in localities can be associated to high proportions of Hispanic populations in large U.S. urban centers. In table 5-B, we can see that the mobilized population tended to be young, predominantly male, highly concentrated in urban centers in terms of the labor force, and showed higher levels of poverty at a family level in comparison to those of the average population. There is no reliable data to determine the migration status of the participants, however, most of them were considered by national and regional media as immigrants or U.S.-born family of immigrants, mostly of Latino origin, from which a large majority were Mexicans and Central Americans.

During the first half of 2006, in Chicago, the Catholic Church (at a top hierarchy level and at a parish level), the local governments, the Hispanic media (mostly radio), unions
(mostly SIEU) and immigrant-based organizations were the major players in the organization of mobilization actions of the immigrant community. In Houston, the MOIRA office was an important channel in spreading information about the mobilization actions. However, the major players were immigrant-based organizations, the Hispanic media (mostly radio) and some Catholic parishes. In Chicago, the people’s response was extraordinary in March and May. Also, the response in Houston was extraordinary for Houston standards. Although, for these two cities that hold similar numbers of Mexican-born population, the response was deeply uneven: a range between 500,000 and a million for Chicago in three rallies, and no more than 75,000 for Houston, for four rallies combined.

5.2.1.1 Mobilization and Participation: Institutional Perspective

Although socio-demographic indicators can highlight the profile of participants in the most important localities in terms of mobilization, the role of the Catholic Church is a major explanatory factor in the variations of participation in such locations for the whole mobilization process. At an institutional level, the role of the Catholic Church in the mobilization process is mostly explained by a strong opposition of the top hierarchy to the application of the Congressional bill. Appendix 5 of this study shows a detailed chronology of the mobilizations triggered by the U.S. House of Representatives passing of the H.R.4437 during the first semester of 2006. The chronology also shows the intense legislative activity around the passage of the controversial bill and the role of the Catholic Church and other actors in the whole process.
Two weeks after the H.R. 4437 was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives,
Cardinal Roger M. Mahony of Los Angeles wrote a letter to President George W. Bush,
in which he voiced his opposition to the bill. Cardinal Mahony pointed out that “the bill
imposes incredible penalties upon any person assisting others through a Church or social
service organization.” He stated that “one could interpret this bill to suggest that any
spiritual and pastoral service given to any person requires proof of legal residence.” He
added “Are we to stop every person coming to Holy Communion and first ask them to
produce proof of legal residence before we can offer them the body and blood of Christ?”
He expressed concern regarding the immediate consequences of the bill if becoming law:
“In effect, priests, ministers, rabbis and other involved in various church-related activities
will be forced to become ‘quasi-immigration enforcement officials.’”
Cardinal Mahony’s concerns were directly related to the whole infrastructure and mission
of the Catholic Church regarding charitable assistance to the low-income population in
the United States. The Catholic Charities network, founded in 1910 and currently
structured by 1400 local agencies and institutions across the nation, provides emergency
services to more than seven million people per year. These services include food,
clothing, financial assistance, utilities, medication assistance, community-building,
transitional housing, disaster response and temporary shelter services. The Catholic
Charities network reported revenue of 2.7 billion dollars in 2000, and 90 percent of that
amount was spent on these programs and services. Under a strict application of H.R.
4437, it would be virtually impossible for the Catholic Church to verify the migration
status of at least 7 million people on a permanent basis, let alone checking the migratory
status of every churchgoer that receives Holy Communion every time that he/she attends
Mass. If the church or associated institutions failed in verifying the migration status of all these persons, it could risk the incarceration of its personnel, and certainly the progressive destruction of the Catholic Charities network.

From March 6 until April 10 the position of the Catholic Church against H.R. 4437 remained steadfast without any alteration; although the church has always been clear about not supporting illegal immigration because “it is contrary to federal law” and because it exposes the immigrant to abuse and exploitation. Instead, the church advocates “changing a broken [immigration] law so that undocumented persons can obtain legal status… and enter the United States legally to work and support their families.”

During this period of time, the power of mobilization of the Catholic Church was fully displayed through the impressive numbers of the Church’s nationwide structure and faith-based network that includes more than 63 million Catholics in the United States. This membership also includes more than 19,000 parishes across the nation; over 40,000 priests and almost 80,000 religious brothers and sisters; more than 8,000 elementary and high schools with over 2.6 million students enrolled, and 230 Catholic colleges and universities.5 This infrastructure, and a major institutional interfaith networking effort, helped to spread the word about the problems that H.R. 4437 represented to the immigrant community and also about the whole set of mobilization actions that would take place throughout at least 108 cities during this period of time.

In addition to the infrastructure of the Catholic Church, another important factor became essential for the successful mobilization of millions of people against the H.R. 4437: la confianza (the trust). In order for mobilization to take place, the trust between the
“mobilizer” and the mobilized is an essential factor to persuade the latter to participate in the mobilization. This is particularly true between the Catholic priests and their constituency, mostly that of Hispanics. Regardless of their migratory status, Catholic Hispanics in the United States highly appreciate and deeply trust the priests of their parish. Through this period of time the organizational backbone was the Catholic Church, and it showed its strength by initially supporting organizational efforts that took millions of people to the streets in well organized, peaceful rallies. Frequently, priests and other religious leaders rallied along with their constituency.

It is also during the period January-April 2006 that the Senate prepared its own version of legislation to address the issue of illegal immigration in the U.S. Indeed, since May 2005 there were clear signs that no progress was made in building consensus between the House and the Senate with the introduction of the “Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005,” a bipartisan, bicameral bill that considered legalization for unauthorized immigrants and the implementation of a guest workers program, in addition to a provision that addressed a national strategy for border security. This bill accentuated the differences on the matter not only between the House and the Senate, but also between Democrats and Republicans, and eventually between Republicans themselves in the House and the Senate.

Polarization of positions among legislators first materialized with the House passing H.R. 4437 in December 2005, which placed great emphasis on (Mexican) border-security and criminalized unauthorized immigrants without any chance of legalization or implementation of any type of guest worker program. The introduction of S. 2611 in the Senate by Arlen Specter (R-PA) confirmed such polarization on April 7, 2006. The
Senate bill, which was approved on May 25, proposed strengthening border security, establishing a guest worker program, and providing the means for most unauthorized immigrants to become legalized and even achieve citizenship. At this point, President Bush favored the Senate approach within the U.S. immigration debate.

For the period April 10-30, 2006, an informal network of hundreds of organizations across the U.S. made the call for a new peaceful rally at a national level and an economic boycott, both scheduled for May 1. Initially, the economic boycott included calls to walk-off jobs, perform school walk-outs, and not to buy or sell anything for 24 hours. At a later stage, calls were made in most cities to skip work only if the worker did not put his/her work at risk, and for students to join in the rallies after class. On April 16, Cardinal Mahony made a call for potential participants to avoid any type of boycott, not to rally, and to pray instead for the legalization process to materialize in the legislative process. The new position of the Catholic Church apparently was originated by the perception that the Senate, though the introduction of S. 2611, would neutralize H.R. 4437, and that sooner or later an agreement would be reached between both chambers on the matter without affecting the interests of the Church. The criminalization of Church activities with immigrants was no longer perceived as a feasible threat at this point.\textsuperscript{x1}

The new position of the Catholic Church was practically unanimous among the top hierarchy. Although most high-ranking Church authorities did not pronounce against the economic boycott or the rallies, they did not promote them either. Most Archbishops and Cardinals offered masses on May 1 on behalf of the immigrant cause (mostly legalization) at a time when most workers had already finished their workday.
Mobilizations between April 10-30 slowed to a halt; no rally of more than 3,000 participants was reported anywhere in the U.S. during this period of time.

Despite several Cardinals, along with President Bush and Senate leaders, stating that rallies and boycotts were not helpful to the cause, on May 1 a number of protesters similar to the April 10 rallies took to the streets. The economic boycott became more noticeable on the West coast.

On May 1 an estimated 1.2-2 million people took to the streets. This time, only 63 localities hosted rallies, a low figure when compared to the 108 participant localities on April 10. A major explanation for this is that the top hierarchy of the Catholic Church, in general terms, withdrew its support for the rallies. However, mostly in large cities, pro-immigrant organizations, some of them highly independent of the Catholic Church, had already created in a matter of weeks a relatively solid network or set of networks that would drive a successful mobilization campaign, including advice to workers on how to negotiate with employers on their participation in the marches and what to do in case they get fired because of their job walk-off. Also in large cities, similar to the April 10 experience, these networks of organizations would coordinate with Spanish-speaking radio stations to spread information about the rallies, the boycott and reasons to mobilize, and these broadcasts would contribute to a strong spirit of solidarity and confianza within the immigrant community about participating in the mobilization.

In small cities the situation was different. The number of organizations that could advise a worker what to do if his/her job is threatened because of a probable walk-off definitely would be very low in comparison to the numbers of organizations as well as the
organizational and networking experience of large cities. In small cities, the formation of
organizational networks depends more on the initiative of the local parish or religious-
oriented/financed organizations. In these localities, if a priest did not consider it
necessary to participate in the rally or the boycott, he would advise against such
participation and no organizational meetings would even be held. After the rally of April
10 many workers were notified by employers that another job walk-off could mean that
the workers would lose their jobs. In a large city, if workers lose their job, chances were
very high that they could get another job in a relatively short period of time. In a small
city, job offers would not be as easy to find.

In small cities, Spanish-speaking radio stations would broadcast information about the
rally and the boycott, however, organizations and leaders would struggle more financially
to purchase mobilization ads in comparison to relatively well financed organizational
networks in large cities. In large cities, some Spanish-speaking radio stations not only
broadcasted information about the rallies and boycott, but the disk jockeys of certain
radio programs became public figures that supported and promoted the actions, which
proved extremely efficient in advising people what to do and what not to do during the
protests.

In short, on May 1, workers in small cities had more to lose by participating in rallies, the
Catholic Church represented a major demobilization force, organizational networks were
relatively weak in terms of mobilization, and the Hispanic media was not as efficient as it
proved to be during the April 10 rallies. In large cities, the emergence of large
mobilization networks, mostly supported by organizations highly independent of the
Catholic Church, and the important role of radio personalities, compensated for the demobilization forces of the church.

From an institutional perspective, the process shows that the main motivation to rally against the likely application of anti-immigrant national legislation was not only to take action against the harm that the passage of the bill may have caused to undocumented immigrants, but also to protect the interests of the Catholic Church in its work with immigrants. And the church responded accordingly: right after the interests of the church were at risk no more, mobilizations of immigrants ended.

In Chicago, although there is no evidence of any organizational coordination between the Political Machine and the Catholic Church, the strategic alliance between these two actors worked very well and the immigrant-oriented organizations, knowing how to persuade Mexican immigrants to participate from a transnational perspective, became a very efficient complement in the mobilization process. The national impetus for mobilization also dragged in Houston, but the lack of practice and experience of the organizations and, in general terms, the implicit influence of the Free Enterprise Politics government, as well as a generalized lack of support towards the marches by the Catholic Church, had a toll of its own: the response was very light in terms of numbers of participants (Table 5-A and Appendix 5: Houston had four marches with a total estimated participation of 67,000-72,000 people, and Chicago had two marches with a total estimated participation of 500,000-1,050,000), despite that both cities have a similar number of Mexican-origin population.
5.2.1.2 Mobilization and Participation: Individual Perspective

At an individual level, as stated in Chapter Four, the process of mobilization and participation among Mexican immigrants is explained through the ‘mobilization axis’ of the unauthorized immigrant in the United States: family, work and faith.

In the last forty years, Mexican immigration to the United States has been motivated by ample opportunities. Mexicans decide to cross the border to get a job because their level of revenue in Mexico is not enough to cover the basic needs of their family: food, health and education. Once Mexicans cross the border, under normal economic conditions in the U.S., they do find work, otherwise they would migrate somewhere else or would not migrate at all. Mexican migration to the U.S. has been traditionally from rural, poor areas in Mexico to agricultural areas in the United States. However, during the last fifteen to twenty years, Mexican migration has expanded to almost any destination within the U.S., rural or urban. Mexicans migrate by the hundreds of thousands annually to the U.S. because of work and family.

The last time that the U.S. granted the opportunity of legalization to unauthorized immigrants was in 1986, through the Immigration and Reform Control Act. During the period 1986-2006, chances are very high that the average unauthorized immigrant now has family of his/her own and/or belongs simultaneously to a family “here” (in the U.S.) and “there” (back in Mexico). The approximate 3.1 million U.S.-born children of unauthorized immigrants are American citizens, according to the U.S. Constitution. The first mobilization incentive for unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. is family. Family unification in the U.S. is represented in the rallies by Mexican and Central American
flags being waved along with American flags. The protester (U.S. citizen or authorized or unauthorized immigrant) is attending the rally because of the potential damage that legislation criminalizing unauthorized immigration can cause to his/her family. The flag of the foreign country represents the foreign-born part of the family; the American flag represents the U.S.-born part of the family.

The defense of the workplace is the second powerful mobilization factor. Unauthorized immigrants and their families see the need to publicly manifest their disagreement with legislation that threatens workers with deportation because they were hired when they asked for a job. Moreover, deportation itself is a powerful disruptive factor not only for family life and its regular revenue flow, but also for the individual that has been living in the U.S. for years, and whose life “back home” becomes extremely difficult once the immigrant is deported. In large cities, mostly within non right-to-work states, the political consciousness of the magnitude of this problem is generally raised by community-based and workers rights’ organizations, regardless of the relationship of these organizations with the Catholic Church.

Faith is the third and probably the most powerful mobilization factor of Mexican undocumented immigrants and their families. As explained above, the trust the Hispanic Catholic constituency has in the priest is extremely influential. This may be explained by the transnational institutional origin of the Catholic Church. “Here” (in the U.S.) and “there” (back home) the Church offers the same or similar spiritual comfort and assistance to its constituency. As stated in Chapter Two of this study, when a twenty-five-year-old immigrant arrives to the U.S., he may not know where he will work or stay initially, but he already has a spiritual baggage of about 900 religious services in his heart.
and mind. When new immigrants arrive, and have no family already established in the U.S., chances are very high that they will start to adapt to the new environment through the use of temporary charity services offered by Catholic Church networks across the U.S.

The relationship between the local parish and its constituency in the mobilization process is manifested in several ways. Some organizational meetings could take place in the parish or church-owned property; some organizations may be financed partially or totally by the church itself; sometimes the priest or religious-oriented leader is the one who takes the lead in creating the network of organizations in charge of the mobilization, etc. At an individual level, it is the priest, through the Sunday services, that has the capacity to convince his whole constituency to mobilize or not for this or that issue. The average immigrant may perceive that his/her family and work may be threatened by this or that government action, but if he or she does not receive the “green light” of the priest, chances are very high that he/she will not consider mobilization seriously.

The decision to participate in a mobilization action involves simultaneous consideration of the three mobilizing factors. An unauthorized immigrant definitely wants to rally to defend her family, however, the act of participating in a rally may affect her family in a direct and negative way (i.e.: getting deported by the ICE). Depending on the political culture of the immigrant and to the extent that the threat of getting deported is perceived as feasible, the immigrant weighs whether or not to participate in a mobilization action. However, if the priest makes the call to participate, chances are very high that Mexican immigrants and their families will participate, trusting that the priest overcomes the immigrant’s probable mistrust of other organizations that make the call to
participate, or the fear that participating will affect in a negative way his/her own family. If the three factors act in a simultaneous way, millions of people take to the streets. The trust of the Catholic Church would be reflected in several ways: peaceful, family rallies showing flags and images of religious symbols. But most important of all is the priest, who will march, generally smiling, throughout the whole rally, shoulder to shoulder with his constituency. This occurs when he is allowed to participate by the top hierarchy of the church, of course.

From early March to mid-April 2006, millions of unauthorized immigrants and their families impressively took to the streets peacefully in more than 100 cities throughout the U.S. The initiative of the Catholic Church served as a major trigger for the rallies and boycott of May 1, through which the organizational structure of nonreligious organizations was strong enough to replace the original impetus of the church to mobilize people, mostly in major and midsize locations. On May 1, priests also participated in rallies, but not in the same numbers than they did on April 10, and they definitely stopped making calls for mobilization after May 1. From May 2 to July 31, only Chicago would organize a major pro-legalization rally (July 19, 10,000 participants) in the U.S. In early September 2006, a new mobilization effort took place at a national level. This effort did not have the explicit support of the Catholic Church; numbers of participants across the country remained in the thousands and not in the hundreds of thousands as it was expected by the different pro-immigrant organizations that led the mobilization attempt.

From an individual perspective, the enormous trust of the Mexican immigrant constituency on the Catholic Church played a major motivational factor for immigrant participation in massive, well organized rallies across the United States. Immigrant-
related organizations played an important role in implementing the rallies, however, the powerful role of the church in the overall mobilization process of immigrants was obvious when, once the Church was assured that the legislation that affected its interests would not pass the Senate, the mobilization process ended. The power of the Catholic Church in the U.S. manifests itself by both taking and certainly not taking actions.

On this occasion, the fact that record-breaking historical numbers of Mexicans in Houston and Chicago participated in non-electoral politics show the power of the interaction between local and transnational contexts. Churches and local organizations organized well coordinated manifestations; whereas immigrants participated to protect their work (here) and their family (here and there), motivated mostly by a strong trust of the religious (transnational) authorities. After the protests ended, undocumented Mexican immigrants remained in a vulnerable position: they still could lose their work and their families would pay the consequences “here and there.” The only thing that became evident was that the Catholic Church has the power to change things in the life of Mexicans who live and work in the U.S. However, the use of that power, based on the enormous confianza (trust) of the Mexican immigrant towards religious authorities, seems to be more related to protecting the institutional interests of the church than protecting and advancing the interests of its immigrant Mexican constituency.

5.3 Discussion on Transnationalism

In this, the last section of the study, I point out the relationship between the process of ethnic mobilization and the field of political transnationalism. I frame this basically by arguing that (1) ethnic political mobilization can be analyzed from a macro, meso
(intermediate) and micro perspectives; (2) the meso perspective is the starting point of analysis in a transnational, political context; (3) the essence of political transnationalism within a framework of political mobilization of an immigrant group in a host society is based on the interactions between local and transnational contexts; and (4) that the consideration of such an analytical framework is promising in theoretical terms, especially in the fields of urban politics and religiously-based mobilization.

5.3.1 Mobilization and Political Transnationalism: The Micro Perspective

The most important contribution of this study to the development of ethnic political mobilization is the consideration of transnational factors in the process of individual mobilization of an immigrant group. As stated throughout this study, within the process of immigrant mobilization, the importance of faith, work and family becomes evident when analyzed within a framework of political transnationalism. This is reflected through the fact that Mexican immigrants are influenced by a context that is developed here (in the U.S.) and there (in Mexico) whenever weighting to politically participate in any mobilization action.

From a family perspective, the decision to migrate to the U.S. for the Mexican immigrant for most of the 20th Century is generally based on family survival considerations. Once in the U.S., whenever the immigrant has the option to participate in a mobilization action, it is the family in Mexico (and more increasingly in both places, the U.S. and Mexico) which is one of the main components of his decision to participate. He definitely will participate on behalf of his family if there is a perceived threat against the family or one of its members, like feasible threats of deportation. From a labor perspective, the threat of
losing a job through deportation of the individual is a strong motivation for the immigrant to participate in a mobilization action. However, Mexicans tend to mistrust labor organizations and leadership, mostly because of their political experience with unions back home; therefore, an extra effort must be performed in order to mobilize them from this perspective alone.

Within this context, religiously-based mobilization seems to be the most powerful factor in comparison to family and work. Although the union of the family and the job itself can be totally lost by suffering deportation, the Mexican immigrant will be more willing to be part of a mobilization action if the priest advises him/her to participate. This solid trust between the priest and its constituency is the product of a profound religiosity that the immigrant has cultivated through generations back home. The image of the Virgin Mary is as powerful as the Mexican flag for immigrants to identify themselves as members of a specific ethnic group. The results of this research enforce the postulate of Verba et al. (1995) that people are likely to participate in politics if they are asked to do so. In Chicago, the Catholic Church, implicitly or explicitly tends to ask Mexican immigrants to participate, whereas in Houston’s parishes this rarely happens.

Another important aspect at a micro level within transnational politics has to do with leadership formation amongst Mexican immigrants. The short-term explanation to the process of leadership formation of this group has macro-origins, which is the point in which ‘East meets West.’ One of the long-term goals of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA, January 1, 1994) was to generate enough jobs in Mexico through local and foreign investment in order to deter migration flows of Mexican laborers into the United States.
On the American side, additionally, the ‘Southwest Border Strategy’ was launched by the Clinton administration in the mid-nineties. The strategy “treats the entire border as a single, seamless entity,” and “specifically calls for ‘prevention through deterrence,’ (with the aim of) elevating the risk of apprehension to a level so high that prospective illegal entrants would consider it futile to attempt entering into the U.S. illegally.”


After 15 years of starting measures, almost nothing has changed; and what has changed, has changed for the worse for the average Mexican. Mexicans keep on emigrating for economic reasons. Levels and flows of foreign investment in Mexico have not reached its theoretical optimum, and an average of one undocumented immigrant dies per day in his/her attempt to cross the border through the desert, nonetheless, the flow of successful attempts of trespassing the border by undocumented aliens have gone up from 750 persons per day, to approximately 1,000 persons per day.

However, organizations that deal with immigrant issues in the U.S. are by no means on the scene just by chance. They are a direct product of a set of macroeconomic and political conditions. The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) produced a new generation of Mexican immigrants in the United States. The immigrants who benefited from the amnesty started to trust, and to get incorporated into, the economic and financial system to the extent that they began buying properties, and started to invest their capital in U.S.-established businesses, from taco shops to jewelry stores, and from furniture stores to construction businesses. They also invested in their children’s
education. Since then, no other major legalization action of that type has taken place.

Through that period of time, more than twenty years now, those immigrants have become a political and financial elite within the Mexican community who lives and works in the U.S.

This elite started to consolidate hometown associations, to form state federations (with the assistance of Mexican Consulates), and Mexican-businesses’ chambers of commerce. In the U.S., the Mexican immigrant elite networks regularly with local and state politicians, while in Mexico they do the same with Mexican state governors, local politicians, and members of the Mexican Congress. At the end of the day, this elite has a strong voice about what is best for the Mexican community as a whole, regardless of what the Mexican community has to say.

Globalization has not worked as expected, and this has generated a whole new generation of transnational politicians and leaders. In theory (that is, neoliberal economics theory), globalization rationale points out that the higher the levels of invested capital in Mexico, the higher the levels of employment in Mexico, and the lower the levels of low-skilled Mexican immigration to the U.S. The model would be reinforced in the short and midterms through a bold strategy to ‘persuade’ undocumented aliens to abstain from trespassing the southern border of the U.S.

A reality check says the following: in the aggregate, no higher levels of productive investments have been produced by NAFTA in Mexico, at least for employment purposes in real terms. Nevertheless, the reality check also points out that the accumulation of Mexican capital that gets established on U.S. soil is real and has two visible effects. First,
this capital accumulation is a direct response to a growing ‘Latino’ market in the U.S., and expectations are that the accumulation will keep on growing. Second, this capital accumulation has not created only an homogeneous elite, but several elites, among Mexican immigrants, mostly as a product of the 1986 amnesty. These elites differ from each other, depending on several factors, like the place of origin in their homeland, the American city in which they have established themselves, their level of education, and the type of business that they develop. The common factor among them is their transnational behavior: these elites have a growing interest in getting involved (and they are already getting involved) in U.S. local and state politics (national levels might be coming soon), and they are definitely involved in Mexican politics at different levels. Most important of all: they act within the interaction of both political arenas.

These elites also plan to invest in Mexico; however, it seems that major levels of capital accumulation are needed to carry on significant enterprises. In the meantime, business, activist, and intellectual elites dedicate most of their time to criticizing the Mexican government from every possible angle and in influencing the rules of the game of local and state Mexican elections. Interestingly enough, only a small minority of these elites actually do any community work to enhance the lives for the approximately 4-5 million unauthorized Mexican immigrants who live and work in the U.S.

In Chicago, right after the 1986 Amnesty, the Mexican immigrant elite started to consolidate its financial, social and political positions, to the extent that they are currently recognized by local and Mexican authorities as an example of a successful case of economic integration of an immigrant group. In Houston, this successful elite is mostly formed by Mexican Americans and Mexican businessmen. Mexican immigrant
leadership in Houston tends not to get involved in business. One of the main reasons is the transient nature of their residence in the city. Most Mexican immigrants use Houston as a port of entry and transit, whereas immigrants in Chicago arrive to the city generally as the last stop in their search for a better life.

However, most of the leadership that leads Mexican community-oriented or community-based organizations in Houston, and that tend to mobilize immigrants, are not Mexican-born. Continuous or discontinuous flows of relatively highly educated Mexican immigrants are likely to determine the rise or decline of the Mexican-born leadership.

5.3.2 Mobilization and Political Transnationalism: The Macro Perspective

At a macro level, an important conclusion of this work is that the interaction between local and transnational politics explains different levels of empowerment of the home community in the host society. Mexican immigrants who live in cities in which the Mexican Consulate constantly addresses their needs and concerns are better off than Mexican immigrants who live in cities in which the Mexican Consulate does not address their non-administrative needs and that does not get involved with the community. At a local level, a relatively immigrant-friendly government will work better for immigrant organizations whenever an issue arises for the immigrant community; whereas things will hardly work for organizations in an environment in which there are no clear channels to deal with immigrants’ issues from a local government perspective, and in which no development of unions and neighborhood organizations for minorities is favored. The role of the Catholic Church at a local level is also important in the process: the support of
the church for political participation can be decisive whenever immigrant organizations are seeking to mobilize immigrants.

Chicago’s and Houston’s local authorities have started a process of political incorporation of Mexican immigrants into their political systems. This process takes place within a framework of political mobilization in nonelectoral politics. However, the effect of this process is quite different in each city. In general terms, in Chicago, Mexicans are highly conscious of their potential force as an ethnic group within city politics. The issue generally is not about being “Latinos” or “Hispanics,” but about finding the most efficient way to exert their “Mexicanness.” In Houston, and all over Texas, assimilation processes into mainstream, pan-ethnic political incorporation, are definitely the name of the game. In both cities, transnational politics are highly influenced by local politics.

Mobilization efforts of Mexican immigrants in Chicago have been linked more to the Mexican government’s organizing efforts in the U.S., and to ethnic Machine Politics in the city. Mobilization efforts of Mexican immigrants in Houston have been less linked to the Mexican government’s efforts and, to a certain extent, more linked to mainstream, ‘Anglo’ assimilatory processes of political incorporation. Mexican immigrants in Chicago are experiencing a process of segmented assimilation, and expectations are that full political incorporation of Mexican immigrants can be reached through a major legalization of undocumented immigrants. In any case, most actors consider that political mobilization of Mexican immigrants is already a way of incorporating this population into the political system of the city.
In Chicago, Machine Politics is an essential factor in understanding the political incorporation of minorities by the local political system. Although Mexicans generally have been considered the last of the “major-league players” in the process, the political structure of the city in the last fifty years has affected their slow integration into local politics. Moreover, Chicago is one of the most segregated cities in the country, and this is pointed out as a potential source of strength for political mobilization of an immigrant group.

The majority of Chicagoans have lived in neighborhoods with strictly delineated *de facto* borders, giving the inhabitants and each neighborhood an impression of being permanently isolated from the rest of the city. Such isolation enhances nationalist feelings and group consciousness among ethnic groups whenever the community has to solve a problem. This leaves the door open in developing a process of segmented political assimilation, as ethnic community leaders deal with their community-neighborhood problems by consulting their options first with their respective aldermen. In theory, this works if the alderman shares the ethnic identity of their constituency, although this is not always the case, and even if it were the case, the fact that the alderman has a Mexican-origin ethnic background “does not mean that the results will always favor the interest of the Mexican community,” according to PILNE’s Teresa Fraga.

In terms of formation of transnational communities (Castles 2003), Chicago would be an interesting case, in which high levels of segregation, as a practice of exclusion, and relatively high levels of political tolerance for multiculturalism, interact to reinforce the formation process of a transnational community within a transnational political context. xvii
In Houston, assimilatory tendencies work in a straightforward manner, with practically no middle-of-the-road points in the process. Although legalization is also seen as an essential component in the process of political incorporation, it seems that Mexicans get involved in a winner-takes-all dynamic, in which the winner goes from being a Mexican immigrant to becoming a U.S. (Latino or Hispanic) citizen who lives in Texas, and then the individual is incorporated into political life. This generally happens with second generation immigrants. There is no hard evidence about systematic or institutionalized processes of political mobilization of Mexican immigrants in Houston. Low levels of political mobilization among Mexican immigrants have led to low levels of political incorporation and participation. In Texas, citizenship does matter.

Also in terms of Castles (2003), Houston would be a model to emphasize how practices of exclusion (with virtually no incorporation into the political landscape without citizenship) and the lack of political tolerance to multiculturalism (with pro-assimilatory policies in Texas, and the lack of open channels in local government to deal with immigrants’ issues) interact against the formation of a transnational community in a transnational political context.

However, things are changing in Houston. On the one hand, some local politicians, like Council Member Gordon Quan, consider that regardless of their citizenship status, Mexican immigrants are already “citizens of the city.” They represent more than ten percent of the total population, and they are a component of the city’s economy that cannot and should not be ignored. They represent tax revenues for the city and the state, and they require the most elemental services from the city as well. From this perspective, mainstream local politicians can no longer afford to ignore the presence of Mexican
immigrants, mostly when it comes to the allocation of city resources in order to address their constituency’s needs.

On the other hand, recent organizational and mobilization efforts among immigrants in Houston have proved to be extremely successful at a local level. ARCA’s ingenious dealings with the former INS regarding late amnesty cases, and the Coalition for Higher Education for Immigrant Students’ efforts to grant higher education to the immigrant population, are cases that reinforce the idea that through the process of non-electoral mobilization, political incorporation is definitely a reachable goal for noncitizens in Texas. Through the whole process of mobilizing and organizing immigrants in order to reach their objectives, the leadership of these organizations has built strong links with local, state, and national level politicians. They single out these links as essential in accomplishing their aims, although they also point out that hardly anything can be done without a good mobilization plan and well developed organizational skills.

Finally, in both cities, the interaction between local and transnational actors at an organizational level determines not only the agenda, but also different levels of empowerment of the community. In Chicago, the relationship of the immigrant leadership with local politicians, Mexican state governments, and the Mexican Consulate gives them credibility with other players, and allows them to become active players in terms of defending the community’s interests in every possible arena. Leadership in Houston has learned to relate to Mexican politicians and Consular functionaries in order to attract the attention of local politicians and the mass media, and try to commit both of them in activities that might empower the community as a whole. The lack of
institutionalization of these efforts in Houston is one of the main components that differentiates the city with other urban centers, like Chicago and Los Angeles.

5.3.3 Mobilization and Political Transnationalism: The Meso Perspective

From an organizational perspective, Houston tends to mobilize on an issue-by-issue basis, while Chicago exercises a more institutionalized approach in dealing with issues. This also explains the dormant character of local coalitions in Houston; coalitions that are created for a specific issue tend to lower their activity through time, to the extent that it may even seem that they do not exist anymore. In Chicago the problem is how to sustain coalitions, while in Houston it is how to institutionalize community-based organizations. In Chicago, the unit of mobilization is the family and the neighborhood whereas in Houston it is mostly the individual.

In Chicago, the traditional Mexican leadership is rapidly becoming familiar with the political advantages of knowing how the local system works. In Houston, a new generation of leaders, along with the traditional leadership, both are combined through a similar process. However, it is not enough for organizations to have an immigrant constituency; indeed, it is the agenda which can be considered the essence of transnational politics from an organizational, meso-perspective. In Chicago, legalization, Mexican electoral politics, and immigrant workers’ rights are the main issues; whereas in Houston the issues are the same with the exception of Mexican electoral politics.

Mexican state federations are important actors recognized by both, local and Mexican authorities. Their agenda tends to consider issues from both sides of the border and, most important of all, a double, transnational agenda is considered a survival strategy for the
majority of these organizations. They do care about political and economic actions of their homeland authorities, mostly at a state level; they do care about their –political, social, and economic- relationship with local authorities; and some of them really do care about what can be done to solve the community’s problems that they assert they represent. In organizational terms, some of these organizations are extremely well developed, and have survived complex democratic change-of-command schemes.

Regarding mobilization, their capacity is always expressed in potential terms. The big question mark regarding state federations is to what extent all these relations with local and Mexican authorities offer tangible benefits to the immigrant community as a whole.

The issue itself also becomes an important component of the transnational context. For example, in Chicago, the struggle for Mexicans to vote abroad is an important issue, whereas in Houston it is hardly considered an issue. According to Joel Magallán, from Asociación Tepeyac in New York, one of the main obstacles to overcome for the Chicago immigrant leadership in order to accomplish tangible positive actions towards its local immigrant constituency, is precisely the separation in human, economic and intellectual resources that has caused the decision of some leaders to push for the vote of Mexicans abroad, instead of launching a national campaign for the legalization of the undocumented.

In Houston, depending on the issue, coalitions of immigrant organizations are created and/or destroyed. Immigrant organization and mobilization in the area are strongly issue-based, according to María Jiménez (AFSC). Indeed, service providers, government-sponsored institutions, and the Catholic Church tend to establish the immigrant agenda through the flow of grants and resources that are assigned for specific projects/issues.
This is one of the main reasons organizations and coalitions are relatively easy to form, but extremely hard to consolidate. At this point, the capacity of financial independence for most organizations and/or coalitions to lead the agenda is low.

However, the capacity of setting a transnational agenda ‘step by step’ in Houston is actually occurring through the involvement of Mexican authorities (and not only the Mexican Consulate) in processes and activities that local authorities are interested in. Activities like official visits of Mexican politicians to discuss the problems of the immigrant community have led to important lobbying actions between local and immigration authorities, and the local immigrant leadership, which have been translated into specific tangible benefits to the members of grassroots organizations like ARCA.

Finally, there is the interaction generated by all the organizations that deal with immigrant issues in their everyday struggle. In Houston, the AFSC, right until its last day of duty, and the Catholic Campaign of Human Development, were both very efficient promoters of immigrant organization and mobilization. Their influence was present in the formation of several coalitions (though not in their consolidation), and immigrant organizations. They certainly emphasized the need for new organizations to be financially independent in order to become successful in long-term projects.

In Chicago, the universe of interactions is much more rich and complex. Organizations like Centro Legal Sin Fronteras, Heartland Alliance, Erie Neighborhood House, Casa Aztlán, Unión Latina, West Town Leadership United, COMMO, ICIRR, the Pilsen Neighbors Community Council, the Resurrection Project, the Chicago Interfaith Committee, the CDPME, and the CIME, to mention the most important, form a complex
web of transnational actions that determine a transnational agenda as a whole. Indeed, this agenda is constantly modified, mostly in terms of the interactive relationship of these organizations with local or state authorities, and with the Mexican Consulate and/or Mexican authorities and politicians.

Chicago and Houston both have transnational agendas at the organization-basis and aggregate levels. At the core of these agendas is the interaction between their transnational and local components, and this interaction becomes the essence of transnational politics in these two cities. The aim to deal with the problems that Mexicans immigrants face during their stay as an important component of the local labor force is the fuel that feeds this huge transnational political engine.

5.4 Final Remarks

The study of political transnationalism, through mobilization and political participation of ethnic groups, shows a rich theoretical interconnection with specific fields of research, specifically urban politics and religiously based mobilization. Additionally, this study also highlights future trends in the research of the relationship between political mobilization and participation of noncitizen Mexican immigrants and naturalized Mexican Americans.

The inclusion of transnational perspectives will be essential to explain different levels of empowerment among different immigrant communities in a city or group of cities. The study of “transnational urbanism” (M.P. Smith 1999) deserves more attention on the part of political scientists. Moreover, the study of the interaction between local and transnational politics around an immigrant constituency has a promising future within the
fields of the structure of city politics, regime politics, urban planning and development, urban administration and budgeting, the political dynamics of urban and metropolitan areas, studies of municipal productivity, community values, the relationship between City Councils and City Hall, and the role of the foreign born labor factor in the economic and political development of global cities.

Studies on religious traditions -and/or symbols- and their relationship with immigrant groups have been developed mainly within a transnational context. They include implicit or explicit references to transnational religious networks (Williams 1998, Ebaugh and Chafetz 2002, Sandoval 2002); transnational religious ties (Levitt 1997, 1998, 2001); the relationship between transnational religious groups or communities, the church and the nation-state (Garrard-Burnett 1998, Haynes 2001); the importance of church relations with future immigrant generations as a key factor for a transnational religious field to survive (Cook 2002); and the consideration of the Virgin of Guadalupe as a powerful religious, national, and political symbol for Mexican-origin people in the United States (Goizueta 2002; Matovina 2002; Levitt 2002, 2003). Also, as stated in Chapter Four, the Virgin becomes a source of empowerment for the community, and a symbol of Mexican consciousness (Rodríguez 1999), and the Virgin expresses not only a collective Mexican identity and cultural pride, but also enhances the struggle for justice and even resistance to assimilatory pressures (Matovina and Riebe-Estrella 2002).

The results of this study complete these research efforts by reassessing the political role of religious symbols and traditions in the immigrant community from a comparative, intra-group perspective. Moreover, the fact that the actions of the Catholic Church became such an important explanatory factor in the mobilization process of Mexican
immigrants in these two cities during the initial period of study, and later on during the political mobilizations of the first semester of 2006, offers a challenge for future research of transnational scholars on the matter. The Catholic Church in any country represents the interests of a powerful, third transnational state -the Vatican- and the study of its political influence on immigrant or religious groups within a context of political transnationalism, in addition to the study of the role of host and home states, is very promising for the theoretical development of the term.

Rosenstone and Hansen (1993, pp. 5-6) state that “political leaders, in their struggles for political advantage, mobilize ordinary citizens into American politics. The strategic choices they make, the strategic decisions they reach, shape the contours -the whos, whens and whys- of political participation in America.” This study enforces such a statement through the analysis of ethnic mobilization in America from a transnational perspective. We can then state that leadership of immigrant organizations, in their struggles for political advantage, mobilizes ordinary noncitizens into home and state politics. The strategic choices they make shape the contours of immigrant political participation in America.

Mobilization of an ethnic group is also shaped by the context in which it takes place. For the case of Mexican immigrants in a transnational context, the Mexican Consulate, the Catholic Church and policies and politics in Mexico definitely shape the organizations and their leadership in their effort to mobilize people. From a local perspective, local government policies and politics can make a big difference for mobilization efforts to take place within an ethnic community.
Different aspects of the mobilization process, like agenda setting, the elite formation process, the mechanisms of individual mobilization and the influence of local and foreign politics in organizational and mobilization actions of the immigrant community offer a solid idea about the complexity of the whole process, and what mobilization is about in global cities. The research presented in this study suggests that transnational politics in American cities is the core subject of the study of political transnationalism at an organizational (meso) level in American politics.

The essence of political transnationalism is about the interaction between local and transnational contexts at an organizational, governmental and individual level. However, it is at an organizational level in which the mechanisms of immigrant, individual mobilization are constantly explored through a complex web of transnational symbols, practices and appeals by the leadership of immigrant organizations. At a macro level, the influence of local and transnational contexts, and even third transnational states, in the agenda setting process and the formation process of immigrant-origin leadership are just the starting points in order to explain the causes and effects of urban transnational political activities and empowerment of a growing immigrant community in a host state.

Finally, there seems to be consensus among Latino scholars about the mobilization and political participation of the naturalized population of Mexican-origin in the following aspects: naturalization does not necessarily translates into political participation (DeSipio 1996) and, more specifically, that “we cannot say with certainty that immigrants who are naturalized citizens are more likely to participate than those who are noncitizens” (Barreto and Muñoz 2003:443); naturalized Latino citizens who have a longer length of time in the U.S. are more likely to politically participate (Bass and Casper 2001,
Ramakrishnan and Epenshade 2001); context of naturalization matters: in a hostile, anti-immigrant climate (i.e.: California during and after the Proposition 187), mobilization and participation through naturalization becomes a reality among the Mexican origin population (Pantoja, Ramirez and Segura 2001; Barreto 2005); and that Mexican immigrants do participate in electoral political activities despite their non-citizenship status via union mobilization (Varsanyi 2005).

In general terms, this study establishes sound parallels between mainstream Latino research and the research of political participation and mobilization of Mexican immigrants from an organizational perspective: for the formation of Mexican immigrant leadership, context and length of stay in the U.S. matters. The consolidation of Mexican immigrant leadership (not Mexican American leadership) starts to develop in Chicago and Houston right after the amnesty of 1986, as most of these leaders legalized their status through the Immigration Reform and Control Act, and keeps on developing and maturing through events that take place “here and there,” like the Zedillo’s cars episode and the mass mobilizations of 2006 in American cities.

Future research on the topic should address the question of to what extent political mobilization of Mexican immigrants influence the political mobilization of future Mexican-origin naturalized citizens. Important anti-immigrant actions, like that of California’s proposition 187 or the Congress’ HR 4437, definitely have left their mark on the political mobilization process when analyzing the links between the political participation of Mexican immigrants and political participation through naturalization: in accordance with Pantoja, Ramirez and Segura (2001, 2008) such events (here) have led,
along with changes in Mexican nationality laws (there), to a real increase in the number of petitions to naturalize.

This topic certainly is research material of incredible proportions for the analysis of U.S. legislative actions in terms of migration policies for the presidency of Barack Obama and subsequent generations. Within this context, the expectations about the participation and mobilization of the Mexican-origin population (foreign-born or not, naturalized or not) in the process seem to be completely linked to whatever the Catholic Church has to say (or not) about the way the U.S. political system deals with the legalization process (or not) of millions of undocumented Mexican immigrants.
Endnotes Chapter 5

1 The reflection about the different faces of the power of the Catholic Church from both a local and transnational contexts, and from individual and institutional perspectives, is the product of the field research of this work and was deeply enriched through personal communications between the author and Joel Magallán Reyes, Executive Director of Asociación Tepeyac de New York.

ii MX Magazine, several articles, July 2006.


iv Idem.

v The four subsections are based on Cano’s “Political Mobilization of Mexican Immigrants in American Cities and the U.S. Immigration Debate” (2006) www.mexnor.org


x Catholic Information Project, December 2003.

xi After the Senate passed S. 2611 in late May 2006, expectations were high that the House and Senate would reach a feasible commitment on a comprehensive immigration reform through a conference committee that would work out the differences in the two bills (H.R. 4437 and S. 2611). However, in an unusual action, the House decided on June 20 to hold a series of public hearings on the matter across the nation. The Senate also
decided to have its own hearings. Since July 2006, after President Bush signaled public opinion that he is open to prioritize an enforcement-first approach, there seems to be consensus in Washington, mostly among Republican members of Congress and the Executive branch, that border security programs should be given priority over guest worker programs and over any legalization options for unauthorized immigrants. Indeed, the only legislation that was enacted by Congress after this historical episode of immigrant mobilization in U.S. soil was the Secure Fence Act of 2006, which became law in October and authorized the construction of new infrastructure along the border with Mexico.

xii Approximate figure disclosed by the Pew Hispanic Center in “Size and Characteristics of the Unauthorized Migrant Population in the U.S.” (2006)

xiii For Mexican immigrants, for example, unions (sindicatos) could mean corruption and cooptation, for Central Americans they could mean government opposition, and for the Poles, they could mean government control. Even among Mexicans, community organization could mean several things: if previous experience is related to community organizations led by Jesuit priests, the organization could mean high standards of service and commitment to poor communities along with high levels of political consciousness. If the experience is related to community organizations organized by the Partido Revolucionario Institucional during the 70 years of PRI-government, it could mean high levels of corruption and personal gratification for the leadership. Levels of confidence of organizations that pursue political mobilization of unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. vary in accordance to the political culture of the immigrant.


xv For the period 1990-2003, in accordance to data from the Mexican Population Council, and the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

xvi Although there is a well established Mexican elite who lives and does business on both sides of the border.

xvii Castles defines transnational communities “as groups based in two or more countries that engage in recurrent, enduring, and significant cross-border activities, which may be economic, political, social, or cultural” (2003, p. 433)
### TABLE 5-A

#### Political Mobilization of Latinos in 32 American Cities: Selected Indicators I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group A: Major Locations</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Population Hispanic or Latinos</th>
<th>Population Mexicans</th>
<th>Population Central Americans</th>
<th>Population Mexicans + Central Am.</th>
<th>% Hispanics / Total Population</th>
<th>% Mexicans + CA / Hispanics</th>
<th>% Hispanics Foreign Born / Total Pop FB</th>
<th>Number of Rallies March-May 2006 Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New York, NY</td>
<td>8,008,278</td>
<td>2,160,554</td>
<td>166,872</td>
<td>99,099</td>
<td>285,971</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>3/25; 3/26; 4/1; 4/10; 5/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles, CA</td>
<td>3,694,820</td>
<td>1,719,073</td>
<td>1,091,686</td>
<td>238,191</td>
<td>1,329,877</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>77.4</td>
<td>63.8</td>
<td>3/24; 3/25; 3/26; 3/27; 3/28; 3/31; 4/6; 4/10; 5/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago, IL</td>
<td>2,896,016</td>
<td>753,544</td>
<td>23,339</td>
<td>1,239,812</td>
<td>553,801</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>73.5</td>
<td>54.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Houston, TX</td>
<td>1,953,631</td>
<td>730,865</td>
<td>60,642</td>
<td>588,084</td>
<td>120,966</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>80.5</td>
<td>71.2</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phoenix, AZ</td>
<td>1,321,045</td>
<td>449,725</td>
<td>25,085</td>
<td>381,181</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>84.7</td>
<td>76.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Diego, CA</td>
<td>1,223,400</td>
<td>310,752</td>
<td>25,921</td>
<td>286,296</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>85.1</td>
<td>61.2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dallas, TX</td>
<td>1,188,580</td>
<td>422,587</td>
<td>35,094</td>
<td>365,463</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>86.5</td>
<td>69.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detroit, MI</td>
<td>951,270</td>
<td>7,167</td>
<td>1,134</td>
<td>8,301</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>72.1</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>San Jose, CA</td>
<td>894,943</td>
<td>269,989</td>
<td>22,148</td>
<td>282,137</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>84.6</td>
<td>64.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Washington, D.C</td>
<td>572,059</td>
<td>44,953</td>
<td>5,094</td>
<td>50,047</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>66.5</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seattle, WA</td>
<td>563,374</td>
<td>29,719</td>
<td>17,886</td>
<td>41,505</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>66.9</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver, CO</td>
<td>554,636</td>
<td>175,704</td>
<td>12,064</td>
<td>187,768</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>69.8</td>
<td>69.4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Atlanta, GA</td>
<td>416,414</td>
<td>18,720</td>
<td>12,115</td>
<td>30,835</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>72.2</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Myers, FL</td>
<td>48,208</td>
<td>6,984</td>
<td>2,588</td>
<td>3,576</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>1,734,767</td>
<td>510,049</td>
<td>266,751</td>
<td>340,806</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>66.5</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Ratio A/B

| New York, NY             | 3.7              | 5.1                           | 3.9                      | 9.4                          | 4.2                             | 1.9                           |                               |                                   |

#### United States

| United States            | 281,421,906      | 35,305,818                    | 20,640,711             | 1,666,837                     | 22,327,648                      | 12.5                          | 63.2                          | 45.5                              |                                      |

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**Group A:** Locations in which at least one rally was held with 50,000 or more participants.  **Group B:** Locations in which at least one rally was held with 10,000 - 49,000 participants.

**Sources:**
- Author's estimates based on (1) U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Demographic Profile Highlights, Fact Sheets for several ethnic groups (2) the "Mexico-North Collection on the U.S. Immigration Debate," and (3) Xochitl Bada et al., "El levantamiento migrante en números," *MX Sin Fronteras* Magazine, June 2006. Averages were rounded.
### TABLE 5-B
Political Mobilization of Latinos in 32 American Cities: Selected Indicators II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group A: Major Locations</th>
<th>%Hispanic Males</th>
<th>%Hispanics under 18 yrs</th>
<th>%Total Population under 18 yrs</th>
<th>%Labor Force Hispanics / LB Total Population (16 yrs old and over)</th>
<th>%Families Below Poverty Level Hispanics / FBPL Total Population</th>
<th>Number of Rallies March-May 2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New York, NY</td>
<td>48.2</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>41.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles, CA</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>41.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago, IL</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>45.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston, TX</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>45.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix, AZ</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>62.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Diego, CA</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>20.4</td>
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<td>Dallas, TX</td>
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<td>35.6</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>46.1</td>
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<td>Detroit, MI</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>4.8</td>
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<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Jose, CA</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>45.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington, D.C</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seattle, WA</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver, CO</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>57.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlanta, GA</td>
<td>62.8</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Myers, FL</td>
<td>58.1</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>53.6</strong></td>
<td><strong>32.6</strong></td>
<td><strong>24.8</strong></td>
<td><strong>20.2</strong></td>
<td><strong>24.8</strong></td>
<td><strong>34.9</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Group B: Mid-size Locations

| San Antonio, TX          | 48.5            | 33.0                    | 28.5                          | 53.8                                                          | 78.7                                                          | 2                             |
| Indianapolis, IN         | 58.5            | 31.4                    | 27.5                          | 3.8                                                           | 5.8                                                           | 1                             |
| San Francisco, CA        | 52.8            | 22.6                    | 14.5                          | 12.4                                                          | 18.7                                                          | 3                             |
| Austin, TX               | 53.6            | 31.8                    | 22.5                          | 26.8                                                          | 54.2                                                          | 1                             |
| Memphis, TN              | 63.6            | 28.6                    | 27.9                          | 3.2                                                           | 2.3                                                           | 3                             |
| Milwaukee, WI            | 53.1            | 39.9                    | 28.6                          | 10.2                                                          | 15.2                                                          | 2                             |
| Boston, MA               | 49.1            | 32.7                    | 19.8                          | 11.5                                                          | 30.6                                                          | 2                             |
| Nashville-Davidson, TN   | 61.2            | 28.3                    | 22.1                          | 4.7                                                           | 7.8                                                           | 1                             |
| Fresno, CA               | 50.8            | 39.8                    | 32.9                          | 36.4                                                          | 52.6                                                          | 4                             |
| Oakland, CA              | 53.6            | 34.5                    | 25.0                          | 18.2                                                          | 22.2                                                          | 2                             |
| Omaha, NE                | 55.8            | 37.1                    | 25.6                          | 6.3                                                           | 12.1                                                          | 2                             |
| St. Paul, MN             | 54.0            | 38.6                    | 27.1                          | 6.7                                                           | 10.1                                                          | 2                             |
| Bakersfield, CA          | 50.3            | 41.6                    | 32.7                          | 28.7                                                          | 46.7                                                          | 4                             |
| Madison, WI              | 55.7            | 28.7                    | 17.9                          | 3.8                                                           | 11.6                                                          | 2                             |
| Orlando, FL              | 49.5            | 28.9                    | 22.0                          | 18.3                                                          | 22.7                                                          | 2                             |
| Salt Lake, UT            | 54.8            | 35.8                    | 23.6                          | 14.9                                                          | 36.4                                                          | 4                             |
| Salinas, CA              | 53.7            | 38.1                    | 32.0                          | 60.4                                                          | 82.7                                                          | 1                             |
| Seattle, WA              | 57.0            | 40.5                    | 25.4                          | 12.6                                                          | 30.3                                                          | 3                             |
| **Average**              | **54.2**        | **33.9**                | **25.2**                      | **18.3**                                                      | **30.1**                                                      | **2.1**                       |

**Group A:** Locations in which at least one rally was held with 50,000 or more participants.

**Group B:** Locations in which at least one rally was held with 10,000 - 49,000 participants.

**Sources:** Author's estimates based on (1) U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Demographic Profile Highlights, Fact Sheets for several ethnic groups; (2) the “Mexico-North Collection on the U.S. Immigration Debate;” and (3) Xochitl Bada et al., “El levantamiento migrante en numeros,” MX Sin Fronteras Magazine, June 2006. Averages were rounded.
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Houston: A Twentieth Century Urban Frontier, Associated Faculty Press, Port Washington.


APPENDIX 1
Órale! Politics
Interviews

2. Aguilar, Norma Edith. *Mexican Consulate*, Houston. (2/22/02; 6/7/02)
5. Alvarado, Carol. *Houston Council Member, District I*, Houston. (6/20/02)
6. Amelia, Ivonne. Austin, Tx. (3/9/02)
9. Argüelles, Pancho. *National Organizers Alliance (NOA)*, Houston. (3/14/02; 3/19/02)
13. Bermea, Francisco. *Association for Residency and Citizenship of America (ARCA)*, Houston. (3/1/02)
18. Bustos, Miguel Ángel. Chicago. (4/3/02)
21. Cárdenas, José. *Association for Residency and Citizenship of America (ARCA)*, Houston. (3/1/02)
22. Cano, Lorenzo. *Center for Mexican American Studies, University of Houston*, Houston. (1/08/01)
23. Carlos L., Roberto *Centro Legal Sin Fronteras*, Chicago. (5/21/02)
30. Cruz, Marisol. *Chicago Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues (Interfaith)*, Chicago. (5/8/02)
34. De la Cruz, Roberto. *Service Employees International Union (SEIU), AFL-CIO, CLC*, Chicago. (8/16/2000, 5/18/02)
39. Díaz, José. *Federación de Clubes Michoacanos en el Exterior (FEDECMI)*, Chicago. (5/15/02)
41. Edwards, Ada. *Houston Council Member, District D, Houston*. (6/20/02)
44. Fernández, Adriana. *Association for Residency and Citizenship of America (ARCA)*, Houston. (6/18/02)

46. Figueroa-Aramoni, Rodolfo. General Consul, *Mexican Consulate in Houston*, Houston. (1/10/01)


48. Frias, Rafael "Ray". Alderman, 12th Ward, Chicago. (7/9/02)

49. Frieventh, Benjamín. *Semana*, Houston. (3/13/02)


51. García, Fernando. *Coalición de Texas por la Dignidad y la Amnistía*, El Paso, Tx. (6/16/02)

52. García, Jesús G. *Little Village Community Development Corporation (LV CDC)*, Chicago. (5/7/02)

53. García, Luis. *University of Houston*, Houston. (3/20/02)

54. García, Tammy. Program Coordinator, Program of Mexican Communities Abroad, *Mexican Consulate in Houston*, Houston. (1/08/01, 2/12/02; 2/22/02)


57. Gore-Brown, Allert. *Institute for Latino Studies, University of Notre Dame*, Chicago. (5/2/02)


59. Hernández, Guillermo. *Comerciantes Latinos Unidos de Houston (CLUH)*, Houston. (3/12/02)


61. Jiménez, Maria. *American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)*, Houston. (2/15/02; 3/26/02; 6/18/02)


63. Lozano, Emma. *Centro Legal Sin Fronteras*, Chicago. (5/28/02; 7/25/02)


67. Martínez, Higinio. Coalición Internacional de Mexicanos en el Exterior (CIME), Houston. (3/16/02)
68. Martínez, Manuel. Federación Guerrero, Chicago. (5/10/02)
69. Martínez, Raúl (Father). Holy Family Parish, Waukegan, Ill. (5/26/02; 7/7/02)
70. Mendoza, Patricia. Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), Chicago. (7/12/02)
71. Mindiola, Tatcho. Center for Mexican American Studies, University of Houston, Houston. (2/22/02)
72. Miranda, César. Coalición Internacional de Mexicanos en el Exterior (CIME), Chicago. (5/7/02; 7/1/02)
73. Monsivais, Alma. Houston International University, Houston. (3/19/02)
74. Mora, Juan A. Operador Político, Chicago. (4/24/02)
75. Mora, Omar. Pro-PAN Illinois, Chicago. (5/25/02)
76. Morelos, Antonio. Ex-Federación de Guerrero, ex-COMMO, Chicago. (5/3/02)
77. Moreno, Joe E. State Rep. Texas, 143rd District, El Paso, Tx. (6/14/02)
78. Mújica, Jorge. Coalición Internacional de Mexicanos en el Exterior (CIME), Chicago. (7/3/02).
81. Núñez, Anna. El Dorado Communications Inc., Houston. (3/6/02)
82. Núñez, Marco A. Press Attaché, Mexican Consulate, Houston. (2/20/02; 3/4/02)
83. Ochoa, Juan A. Mexican American Chamber of Commerce of Illinois, Inc. (MACC), Chicago. (5/22/02)
84. Oliva, José. Chicago Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues (Interfaith), Chicago. (5/15/02)
85. Oranday, Nora. Chicago. (5/17/02)
86. Ortiz, Francisco. Casa Guanajuato, Houston. (3/15/02)
87. Ospina, Norman. American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), Chicago. (5/16/02)
88. Pastrana, Joaquín. Consul, Protection Department, Mexican Consulate in Chicago, Chicago. (April 1999, August and December 2000, and 4/22/02)
89. Pérez, Idida. West Town Leadership United (WTLU), Chicago. (4/30/02)
90. Pizarro, Heladio. Comité de Solidaridad con el Pueblo Mexicano (CSPM), Houston. (3/17/02)
91. Pría, Melba. Director, Programa para las Comunidades Mexicanas en el Exterior, Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Mexico City. (8/7/02)
92. Purcell, Bill. *Office for Peace and Justice, Archdiocese of Chicago*, Chicago. (5/29/02)

93. Quan, Gordon. *Houston Council Member, At-Large Position 2*, Houston. (6/18/02)

94. Raia, John B. *Planning and Development Department, City of Houston*, Houston. (6/18/02)


96. Ramos, Mary. *League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)*, Houston. (3/27/02)


99. Rodríguez, Félix. *Coalición Internacional de Mexicanos en el Exterior (CIME)*, Houston. (3/16/02)

100. Rodríguez, Nestor. *University of Houston*, Houston. (1/10/01; 3/20/02; 3/26/02)

101. Rosales, Juana A. *Aldape Guerra Committee*, Houston. (3/16/02)


105. Shaw, Richard. *Harris County AFL-CIO*, Houston. (3/15/02)

106. Solórzano, Miguel (Father). *St. Philip of Jesus Church*, Houston. (6/21/02)


108. Soto, Marcia. President, *Durango UNido en Chicago*, Chicago. (8/22/2000; 1/01/01)


110. Tellez, Oscar. *United Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (UNIRR)*, Chicago. (7/20/02)

111. Torres, Ma. De los Ángeles. *De Paul University*, Chicago. (7/5/02)


113. Unzueta, Martín. *Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD)*, Chicago. (7/20/02)

114. Valenziano, Steve. *Department of Planning, City of Chicago*, Chicago. (7/9/02)
116. Vasquez, Gabriel. *Houston Council Member, District H*, Houston. (6/18/02)
120. Wood, Jerry. *Department of Planning, City of Houston*, Houston. (6/21/02)
122. Zwick, Mark. *Casa Juan Diego*, Houston. (3/22/02)
APPENDIX 2
**QUESTIONNAIRES**

**Questionnaire #1**  
**Organizations**

1. **Nombre de la organizacion/asociacion?**  
Title of the organization/association?

2. **Cuenta con direccion propia la asociacion?**  
Address? Does the association have its own address?

3. **Cuenta con personal propio? Tiempo parcial o voluntarios?**  
Full time personnel? Part time? Voluntary work?

4. **Cuanto tiempo lleva la asociacion trabajando? Fundada cuando?**  
The organization was founded in what year?

5. **Cuales son las fuentes de financiamiento de la organizacion? Cuenta con presupuesto anual?**  
Sources of funding of the organization? Annual budget?

6. **Cuenta con directorio de miembros?**  
Is there a directory of members?

7. **Cuenta con sucursales?**  
Any branches?

8. **Cuantos miembros?**  
How many members?

9. **Los miembros pagan cuotas?**  
Do members pay fees?

10. **Quien puede pertenecer a la organizacion/asociacion?**  
Who can join the organization?

11. **Dan recibos deducibles de impuestos? Es la organizacion una NPO?**  
Are you authorized to extend tax deductible slips? Are you officially a NPO?

12. **Cuenta con registro la asoc. en el estado, en la ciudad, en el consulado? Que tipo de registro?**  
Are you registered as an association/organization in the state, the city or the Mexican consulate? What status?

13. **Principales caracteristicas del migrante mexicano en Chicago/Houston, pasado vs presente. (los ultimos 20 años)**  
What are the main characteristics of the Mexican immigrant in Chicago/Houston. Think in terms of comparing the past vs. the present. (last 20 years)
14. Hay diferencias marcadas entre mexicanos y Mexicanosamericanos en Chicago/Houston? Como se relacionan entre sí? Are there specific differences between Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Chicago/Houston? Do they differentiate from each other? How do they relate to each other?

15. Como se origina la organizacion? What are the origins of the organization?

16. Cuenta con estatutos la organizacion? Does the organization have internal written guidelines?

17. Cuales han sido los principales logros de la organizacion? What have been the most important accomplishments of the organization?

18. Como funciona la organizacion? (elecciones, comite directivo, flujo de decisiones) How does the organization work? (elections, board of directors, how do you take decisions)?

19. Principales caracteristicas de los lideres/miembros de la organizacion. Todos nacieron en los Estados Unidos o en Mexico? Ocupacion? Main characteristics of the organizations’ leadership/membership? Were most of them born in the United States or Mexico? What do they do for a living?

20. En que radica la fuerza de la organizacion? What is the principal strength of the organization?

21. Su asoc. tiene mas que ver con Mexicoamericanos o con mexicanos? Your association deals more with Mexican Americans or with Mexicans (immigrants)?

22. Prales. problemas/preocupaciones de la comunidad mexicana en Chicago (ref/imigrantes) In your opinion, what are the main problems/issues of the Mexican community?

23. En terminos generales, cual es la capacidad de respuesta de la comunidad ante los problemas que la aquejan? Ha mejorado o a empeorado la situacion? In general terms, what is the capacity of response to solve the problems that face the Mexican community? Are things better or worst now than before?

24. Nivel de coordinacion/cooperacion entre grupos mexicanos? What is the level of coordination/cooperation among Mexican groups/associations?

25. Relaciones con macroasociaciones (CIME, NCLR) Any relation with or are you part of macro associations (umbrella organizations)?

26. Papel de otros grupos (Ha habido acercamiento o coordinacion con otras organizaciones como organizaciones comunitarias, school boards, sindicatos, organizaciones religiosas de apoyo a la comunidad, asociaciones de oriundos?) The role of other groups? (Is there any contact/relation/coordination with other organizations, like community organizations, school boards, unions, religious and/or community based organizations?

27. Politicas de la ciudad hacia la comunidad mexicana en Chicago/Houston. Policies/politics of the city towards the Mexican community in Chicago/Houston?
28. Ventajas de pertenecer a la asociación?
What are the advantages of joining the organization?

29. La no perdida de la nacionalidad mexicana, afecta en algo la situación del migrante?
Do you think that the non-losing of Mexican nationality (which opens the possibility of holding double nationality for Americans of Mexican origin), affects the Mexican immigrant? How?

30. Comunidad mexicana, justamente representada en la ciudad? Que se puede hacer al respecto?
Do you think that the interests of the Mexican community are fairly represented in the city government? What do you think it can be done?

31. Como contactan generalmente a sus miembros? Telefono, correo, en persona, email…
How do you generally enter in contact with your members? Telephone, mail, person to person, email…

32. Publicaciones de la asoc.?
Publications of the organization?

33. Esfuerzos de reclutamiento?
Recruitment efforts?

34. Ud. cree que es facil o dificil organizar y mobilizar a los inmigrantes mexicanos en Houston/Chicago?
Do you think that it is easy or difficult to organize and mobilize Mexicans (immigrants) in Houston/Chicago?

35. Que acciones de movilización/organización ha llevado a cabo su organización con los inmigrantes mexicanos?
What actions of mobilization/organization have your organization performed with Mexican immigrants?

36. Cuando se organiza/mobiliza a la gente, que es lo que funciona y que es lo que no funciona?
When dealing with the organization/mobilization of the community, what works, and what doesn’t?

37. Ventajas y desventajas que ofrece la ciudad de Houston/Chicago para que la comunidad pueda organizarse/mobilizarse?
Pros and cons of getting organized/being mobilized in a city like Houston/Chicago?

38. En su opinion, de que depende que la gente se organice, que sea mobilizada?
In your opinion, what are the conditions for people to get organized, to be mobilized?

39. Posibilidades de exito. De que dependen?
Possibilities of success. What do they depend upon?
El papel de otros actores en la organización y movilización de mexicanos:
The role of other actors in the organizing and mobilizing efforts of the Mexican community:

40. La iglesia?
The church?

41. Sindicatos?
Labor unions?

42. Camaras de comercio?
Chambers of commerce?

43. Organizaciones comunitarias?
Community-based organizations?

44. El gobierno de la ciudad?
City government?

45. En terminos generales, cual es el papel del consulado en lo que se refiere a la organización/mobilizacion de los mexicanos?
In general terms, what is the role of the Mexican consulate regarding the organization/mobilization of Mexican immigrants?

46. Si usted pudiese comparar esta ciudad con cualquiera que ud. conozca, me podria decir como esta organizada la comunidad mexicana en Houston/Chicago? Existen diferentes niveles de organizacion? En que aspectos?
If you could compare this city with another that you are familiar with, how is the Mexican community in Houston/Chicago organized? Are there different levels of organization? In what aspects?

47. Que piensa sobre la siguiente frase: “Los intereses colectivos no explican la membresia de las organizaciones, en cambio, las actividades de reclutamiento si lo hacen”.
What do you think about the following phrase: “Collective interests do not explain membership in organizations, in contrast, recruitment activities do explain membership.”

48. Efecto Fox?
Do you consider that there is a “Fox effect” for Mexican immigrants?

49. En terminos generales, como ha sido la relacion de la organizacion y/o de la comunidad con el consulado?
In general terms, how is the relationship of the Mexican consulate with your organization? With the community?

50. Papel del INS el Houston/Chicago?
The role of the INS in Houston/Chicago?

51. Por que y como fue que decidio involucrarse en esta organizacion?
Why and how come that you decided to get involved in this organization?

52. A quien me recomendaria que hablara sobre lo que acabamos de platicar?
Who would you suggest/recommend me to interview/talk about the topics we have just talked about?

*********************************************************** ********************

**Questionnaire # 2**
State Federations

1. Nombre de la organizacion/asiacion?
Title of the organization/association?

2. Cuenta con direccion propia la asoc.?
Address? Does the association has its own address?

3. Cuenta con personal propio? Tiempo parcial o voluntarios?
Full time personnel? Part time? Voluntary work?

4. Cual tiempo lleva la asociacion trabajando? Fundada cuando?
The organization was founded in what year?

5. Cuales son las fuentes de financiamiento de la organizacion? Cuenta con presupuesto anual?
Sources of funding of the organization? Annual budget?

6. Cuenta con directorio de miembros?
Is there a directory of members?

7. Cuantos clubes la conforman?
How many clubs or hometown associations have the federation?

8. Cuantos miembros?
How many members?

9. Los miembros pagan cuotas?
Do members pay fees?

10. Quien puede pertenecer a la organizacion/asiacion?
Who can join the organization?

11. Dan recibos deducibles de impuestos? Es la organizacion una NPO?
Are you authorized to extend tax deductible slips? Are you officially a NPO?

12. Cuenta con registro la asoc. en el estado, en la ciudad, en el consulado? Que tipo de registro?
Are you registered as an association/organization in the state, the city or the Mexican consulate? What status?

13. Como se origina la federacion / asociacion?
How does the association originate?
14. Cuenta con estatutos la federacion? Does the organization have internal written guidelines?

15. La federacion esta formada por ____ casas clubes. The federation is formed by ___ hometown associations.

16. Como funciona la federacion? (elecciones, comite directivo, flujo de decisiones) How does the association work? (elections, board of directors, how do you take decisions)?

17. En que radica la fuerza de la federacion? What is the principal strength of the federation?

18. Principales caracteristicas de los lideres de las casas clubes. Todos nacieron en Mexico? Ocupacion? Main characteristics of the hometown associations’ leadership/membership? Were most of them born in Mexico? What do they do for a living?

19. Donde nacio? Where were you born?

20. Por que y como fue que decidió involucrarse en esta organizacion? Why and how come that you decided to get involved in this organization?

21. Prales. actividades de la federacion a nivel de clubes? What are the most important activities of the federation?

22. Cuales han sido los principales logros de la federacion? What have been the most important accomplishment of the federation?

23. Usted a que cree que deba la proliferacion de este tipo de grupos? (Casas, clubes, asociaciones) For hometown associations: What do you think are the principal causes for proliferation of this kind of associations?

24. Nivel de coordinacion/cooperacion entre grupos mexicanos (inter-clubes, inter asociaciones)? What is the level of coordination/cooperation among Mexican groups/associations?

25. Relaciones con macroasociaciones (COMMO, NCLR) Any relation with or are you part of macro associations (umbrella organizations)?

26. Papel de otros grupos (Ha habido acercamiento o coordinacion con otras organizaciones como organizaciones comunitarias, school boards, sindicatos, organizaciones religiosas de apoyo a la comunidad?) The role of other groups? (Is there any contact/relation/coordination with other organizations, like community organizations, school boards, unions, religious and/or community based organizations?)

27. Ventajas de pertenecer a la asoc. What are the advantages of joining the organization?
28. Publicaciones de la asoc.?
Publications of the organization?

29. Contactos o actividades de los clubes en Mexico y relaciones con el gob. del edo.?
What are the contacts/activities of the organization/hometown association in Mexico, and (for hometown associations) how is their relationship with the state government?

30. Como contactan generalmente a sus miembros? Telefono, correo, en persona, email.
How do you generally enter in contact with your members? Telephone, mail, person to person, email.

31. Esfuerzos de reclutamiento?
Recruitment efforts?

32. Es facil o dificil organizar/movilizar a los mexicanos en Houston/Chicago? Explain.
Is it easy or difficult to organize/mobilize Mexicans (immigrants) in Houston/Chicago? Explain.

33. Que acciones de movilización/organización ha llevado a cabo su organización con los inmigrantes mexicanos?
What actions of mobilization/organization have your organization performed with Mexican immigrants?

34. Si usted pudiese comparar esta ciudad con cualquiera otra que ud. conozca, me podria decir como esta organizada la comunidad mexicana en Houston/Chicago? Existen diferentes niveles de organizacion? En que aspectos?
If you could compare this city with another that you are familiar with, how is the Mexican community in Houston/Chicago organized? Are there different levels of organization? In what aspects?

35. Principales caracteristicas del migrante mexicano en Chicago/Houston, pasado vs presente. (los ultimos 20 años)
What are the main characteristics of the Mexican immigrant in Chicago/Houston. Think in terms of comparing the past vs. the present. (last 20 years)

36. Hay diferencias marcadas entre mexicanos y Mexicoamericanos en Chicago/Houston?
Como se relacionan entre sí?
Are there specific differences between Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Chicago/Houston? Do they differentiate from each other? How do they relate to each other?

37. Prales. problemas/preocupaciones de la comunidad mexicana en Chicago (ref/imigrantes)
In your opinion, what are the main problems/issues of the Mexican community?

38. En terminos generales, cual es la capacidad de respuesta de la comunidad ante los problemas que la aquejan? Ha mejorado o a empeorado la situacion?
In general terms, what is the capacity of response to solve the problems that face the Mexican community? Are things better or worst now than before?

39. La no perdida de la nacionalidad mexicana, afecta en algo la situacion del migrante?
Do you think that the non-losing of Mexican nationality (which opens the possibility of holding double nationality for Americans of Mexican origin), affects the Mexican immigrant? How?
40. Comunidad mexicana, justamente representada en la ciudad? Que se puede hacer al respecto?
Do you think that the interests of the Mexican community are fairly represented in the city government? What do you think it can be done?

41. “Los intereses colectivos no explican la membresía de las organizaciones, en cambio, las actividades de reclutamiento sí lo hacen”.
What do you think about the following phrase: “Collective interests do not explain membership in organizations, in contrast, recruitment activities do explain membership.”

42. Efecto Fox?
Do you consider that there is a “Fox effect” for Mexican immigrants?

43. En términos generales, como ha sido la relación de la comunidad con el consulado?
In general terms, how is the relationship of the Mexican consulate with the community?

FORMACION Y CONSOLIDACION DE LAS FEDERACIONES DE LOS ESTADOS FORMATION AND CONSOLIDATION OF STATE FEDERATIONS

44. Cual fue el papel del Consulado Mexicano en la formación/consolidación de la federación?
What was/is the role of the Mexican consulate in the formation/consolidation of hometown associations/state federations?

45. Papel del gobierno del estado?
The role of the (Mexican) state government?

46. Papel de los partidos políticos mexicanos?
The role of (Mexican) political parties?

47. Papel de otras organizaciones? MALDEF, LULAC, Heartland Alliance, NCLR, Casa Aztlan, CIME, COMMO...
The role of other organizations?

48. Papel de los comerciantes? Camaras de comercio?
Business community? Chamber of Commerce?

POLITICAS DE LA CIUDAD
CITY POLITICS & POLICIES

49. Politicas de la ciudad hacia la comunidad mexicana en Chicago/Houston.
Policies/politics of the city towards the Mexican community in Chicago/Houston?

50. Nivel de involucramiento?
Level of involvement with city politics/policies?

51. Relaciones con councilmen, líderes locales?
Relations with councilmen, local leaders?
52. Contacto con legisladores estatales?
Relations/contacts with state legislators?

53. Ud. se imagina que la federacion se involucrara tarde o temprano en asuntos locales, politica local?
Do you think that sooner or later or never there will be a certain level of involvement of the association with local politics?

54. Ventajas/desventajas para la organizacion de ubicarse en un lugar como Chicago/Houston?
What are the advantages for the organization to be in Chicago/Houston?

**INMIGRACION**
**IMMIGRATION**

55. Ud. cree que haga la diferencia para migrantes el que la ciudad a la que emigran este cerca o lejos de la frontera mexicana? Ud. cree que eso afecta la cantidad y calidad de la inmigracion?
Do you think that it makes the difference for Mexican immigrants how far the target city is from the Mexican border? Do you think that such distance affect quantities and quality of immigration?

56. Ud. cree que existe alguna relacion entre flujo de inmigrantes y la formacion de casas clubes?
Do you think that there is a relationship between (Mexican) immigration flows and the formation of hometown associations?

57. Como afecta la vida de los migrantes la existencia de los HTA’s?
What is the effect of hometown associations on Mexican immigrants?

58. Principal caracteristica del migrante recien llegado, nivel de educacion, empleo?
What are the main characteristics of the recent immigrant (education level, what kind of jobs they perform?)

59. A quien me recomendaria que hablara sobre lo que acabamos de platicar?
Who would you suggest/recommend me to interview/talk about these topics?

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**Questionnaire #3**
Mexican Consulate

1. Principales caracteristicas del migrante mexicano en Chicago/Houston, pasado vs presente. (los ultimos 20 anos)
What are the main characteristics of the Mexican immigrant in Chicago/Houston. Think in terms of comparing the past vs. the present. (last 20 years)
2. Hay diferencias marcadas entre mexicanos y Mexicoamericanos en Chicago/Houston?
Are there specific differences between Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Chicago/Houston?
Do they differentiate from each other? How do they relate to each other?

3. Politicas de la ciudad hacia la comunidad mexicana en Chicago/Houston.
Policies/politics of the city towards the Mexican community in Chicago/Houston?

4. Relaciones de la comunidad con lideres locales, councilmen, la oficina del alcalde?
Relations between the (Mexican immigrant) community and local leaders, councilmen, the mayor’s office?

5. Relaciones de la comunidad con legisladores estatales, la oficina del gobernador?
Relations between the (Mexican immigrant) community and state legislators, the governor’s office?

6. Problemas/preocupaciones de la comunidad mexicana en Chicago (ref/imigrantes)
In your opinion, what are the main problems/issues of the Mexican community?

7. En terminos generales, cual es la capacidad de respuesta de la comunidad ante los problemas que la aquejan? Ha mejorado o a empeorado?
In general terms, what is the capacity of response to solve the problems that face the Mexican community? Are things better or worst now than before?

ORGANIZACION Y MOBILIZACION
ORGANIZATION AND MOBILIZATION

8. En terminos generales, que tan bien estan organizados los inmigrantes mexicanos en la ciudad de Houston/Chicago? En que areas estan mejor organizados?
In general terms, to what extent is the Mexican community well organized in Chicago/Houston? In what areas are they better organized?

9. Ud. cree que es facil o dificil organizar y/o mobilizar a los mexicanos en Houston/Chicago? Cuales son los principales obstaculos que deben ser superados? Explique.
Do you think that it is easy or difficult to organize and/or mobilize Mexicans (immigrants) in Houston/Chicago? What are the main obstacles? Explain.

10. Que aspectos le llaman la atencion en la manera como se organizan/movilizan los mexicanos migrantes en Houston/Chicago?
What aspects call your attention when dealing with the way Mexican immigrants get organized/mobilized in Houston/Chicago?

11. Si usted pudiese comparar esta ciudad con cualquier otra que ud. conozca, me podria decir como esta organizada la comunidad mexicana en Houston/Chicago? Existen diferentes niveles de organizacion/movilizacion? En que aspectos?
If you could compare this city with another that you are familiar with, how is the Mexican community in Houston/Chicago organized? Are there different levels of organization/mobilization? In what aspects?
12. Ventajas y desventajas que ofrece la ciudad de Houston/Chicago para que la comunidad pueda organizarse/mobilizarse?
Pros and cons of getting organized/being mobilized in a city like Houston/Chicago?

13. Por qué ud. cree que no existen en Houston macro organizaciones en Houston, en comparación con Chicago o Los Angeles, por ejemplo?
Why do you think that there is no macro associations in Houston, in comparison to Chicago or Los Angeles, for example?

14. Como está estructurado el Consulado?
What is the structure of the Consulate?

**TOPICOS**

I world like to know your opinión regarding the following topics:

a) Formacion y consolidacion de asociaciones de oriundos (casas clubes y federaciones de los estados). Cual es el proceso?
Formation and consolidation of hometown associations and state federations. What has been the process?

b) Esfuerzos para conseguir una amnistia (general o parcial) en la ciudad.
Amnesty efforts.

c) Esfuerzos de naturalizacion de mexicanos.
Naturalization efforts.

d) Lo que significan los migrantes mexicanos para los políticos locales.
What Mexican immigrants mean to local politicians.

e) Esfuerzos de educacion. (niveles de educacion y educacion bilingue)
Education efforts. (levels of education and bilingual education)

15. Cuales son las organizaciones mas importantes que estan involucradas en el proceso de organizacion y mobilizacion de mexicanos?
What are the most important organizations that are involved in the process of organizing and mobilizing Mexican immigrants?

16. En su opinion, de que depende que la gente se organize, que sea mobilizada?
In your opinion, what are the conditions for people to get organized, to be mobilized?

17. Posibilidades de exito. De que dependen?
Possibilities of success. What do they depend upon?

El papel de otros actores en la organización y movilización de inmigrantes mexicanos:
The role of other actors in the process of organizing and mobilizing Mexican immigrants:
18. La iglesia?
The church?

19. Sindicatos?
Labor unions?

20. Organizaciones comunitarias?
Community-based organizations?

21. El gobierno de la ciudad?
City government?

22. En términos generales, cuál es el papel del consulado en lo que se refiere a la organización/movilización de los mexicanos?
In general terms, what is the role of the Mexican consulate regarding the organization/mobilization of Mexican immigrants?

23. A quien me recomendaría que hablara sobre lo que acabamos de platicar?
Who would you suggest/recommend me to interview/talk about the topics we have just talked about?

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**Questionnaire #4**

**City Hall Officials**

1. Que significa Houston/Chicago para la migracion mexicana?
What does Houston/Chicago mean for Mexican migration?

2. Hay diferencias marcadas entre mexicanos y Mexicanoamericanos en Chicago/Houston?
Como se relacionan entre sí?
Are there specific differences between Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Chicago/Houston?
Do they differentiate from each other? How do they relate to each other?

3. Prácticas, problemas/preocupaciones de la comunidad mexicana en Chicago/Houston (ref/immigrantes)
In your opinion, what are the main problems/issues for the Mexican (immigrant) community?

4. En términos generales, cuál es la capacidad de respuesta de la comunidad ante los problemas que la aquejan? Ha mejorado o empeorado?
In general terms, what is the capacity of response to solve the problems that face the Mexican community? Are things better or worst now than before?

**CONTEXTO LOCAL**

**LOCAL CONTEXT**

5. En términos generales, como ha sido la relación entre el gobierno de la ciudad y la comunidad (inmigrante) mexicana en Chicago/Houston? Alguna cambio en los últimos 20 años?
In general terms, how has been the relationship between City Hall and the Mexican (immigrant) community in Chicago/Houston? Any remarkable change in the last 20 years?
6. Cree ud. que los inmigrantes mexicanos son importantes para el gobierno local? Para los políticos locales? En que aspectos (políticas públicas)?
Do you think that Mexican immigrants matter for local government? For local politicians? In what aspects (public policies)?

7. Cual es la estructura de la alcaldía en relacions a los asuntos que tienen que ver con los inmigrantes (mexicanos)?
What is the structure of City Hall regarding the affairs that have to do with (Mexican) immigrants?

8. Bajo que circunstancias se podria dar mayores niveles de involucramiento entre la comunidad (inmigrante) mexicana y los politicos/gobierno locales?
Under what circumstances do you think that higher levels of involvement between the Mexican (immigrant) community and local politicians/government are possible?

En relacion a la organizacion/movilizacion de inmigrantes mexicanos, cual es…
Regarding the organization/mobilization of Mexican immigrants, what is…

The role of the (US) state government? State legislature? State representatives and senators?

10. Papel de los democartas y republicanos?
The role of Democrats and Republicans?

11. Papel del INS en Houston/Chicago?
The role of the INS in Houston/Chicago?

12. Otras organizaciones? MALDEF, LULAC, Heartland Alliance, NCLR, Casa Aztlan, CIME, COMMO…
The role of other organizations? (Mexican American civic organizations, umbrella organizations, immigrant organizations)

13. Comerciantes? Camaras de comercio?
Business community? Chambers of commerce?

14. Papel del Consulado Mexicano en la organizacion de inmigrantes?
What has been the role of the Mexican consulate in the organization of Mexican immigrants?

15. Papel de otros grupos (Ha habido acercamiento o coordinacion con otras organizaciones como organizaciones comunitarias, school boards, sindicatos, organizaciones religiosas de apoyo a la comunidad?)
The role of other groups? (Is there any contact/relatlon/coordination with other organizations, like community organizations, school boards, unions, religious and/or community based organizations?)

16. Ud. cree que es facil o dificil organizar y/o movilizar a los mexicanos en Houston/Chicago? Cuales son los principales obstaculos que deben ser superados? Explique.
Do you think that it is easy or difficult to organize and/or mobilize Mexicans (immigrants) in Houston/Chicago? What are the main obstacles? Explain.
17. Si usted pudiese comparar esta ciudad con cualquier otra que ud. conozca, me podría decir cómo esta organizada la comunidad mexicana en Houston/Chicago? Existen diferentes niveles de organización? En que aspectos?
If you could compare this city with another that you are familiar with, how is the Mexican community in Houston/Chicago organized? Are there different levels of organization? In what aspects?

[Questions 18-20 for Houston only]

18. En su opinión, por qué no hay “Machine Politics” en Houston? Cual es el sistema que predomina en la ciudad? Como llamaría a ese sistema?
In your opinion, why there is no “Machine Politics” in Houston? What is the system that exists instead? How would you call it?

19. Pros y contras del sistema político prevaleciente en Houston, en lo referente a la incorporación y organización de inmigrantes?
Regarding the political incorporation and organization of Mexican immigrants, what are the pros and cons of the prevailing political system in Houston?

20. Si se diera un sistema de “Machine Politics” en Houston, como cambiarían las cosas?
If there would be a “Political Machine” in Houston, how would this change things?

21. Ud. cree que haga la diferencia para migrantes el que la ciudad a la que emigran este cerca o lejos de la frontera mexicana? Ud. cree que eso afecta la cantidad y/o la calidad de la inmigración?
Do you think that it makes the difference for Mexican immigrants how far the target city is from the Mexican border? Do you think that such distance affect quantities and/or quality of immigration?

TOPICOS
TOPICS

Me podría dar su opinión acerca de los siguientes temas:
I would like to know your opinión regarding the following topics:

a) Esfuerzos para conseguir una amnistía (general o parcial)
Amnesty efforts.

b) Esfuerzos de naturalización de mexicanos.
Naturalization efforts.

c) Lo que significan los migrantes mexicanos a los políticos locales.
What Mexican immigrants mean to local politicians.

d) Esfuerzos de educación. (niveles de educación y educación bilingüe)
Education efforts. (levels of education and bilingual education)

23. Cúales son las organizaciones más importantes que están involucradas en el proceso de organización y mobilización de mexicanos?
What are the most important organizations that are involved in the process of organizing and mobilizing Mexican immigrants?

24. En su opinión, de qué depende que la gente se organice, que sea mobilizada?
In your opinion, what are the conditions for people to get organized, to be mobilized?

25. Posibilidades de éxito. De qué dependen?
Possibilities of success. What do they depend upon?

26. Que ha funcionado y que no ha funcionado?
What has worked, and what has not worked?

El papel de otros actores en la organización y movilización de mexicanos:
The role of other actors in the organizing and mobilizing efforts of the Mexican community:

27. La iglesia?
The church?

28. Sindicatos?
Labor unions?

29. Organizaciones comunitarias?
Community-based organizations?

30. El consulado mexicano?
The Mexican Consulate?

34. A quien me recomendaría que hablara sobre lo que acabamos de platicar?
Who would you suggest/recommend me to interview/talk about the topics we have just talked about?

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Questionnaire #5
Church Officials and Priests/Pastors

1. Characteristics of your constituency, and numbers. History of your parioch. (if applicable)

2. What do you think are the most relevant problems for the Mexican immigrant community in Chicago/Houston? Political problems?

3. Do you or your church perform any activity related to improve the chances of legalization of undocumented immigrants or to defend immigrants’ rights in general? Has your church directly performed actions of mobilization with Mexican immigrants?

4. If the response to question #3 is positive: Why the church gets involved in this type of activities?
5. Within an organization/mobilization context, do you use to have contacts with the following organizations/institutions/persons (and what type of contacts if the response is positive):
   a) Community-based organizations
   b) State Federations
   c) The Mexican Consulate
   d) Mexican Officials
   e) Local or state politicians
   g) Other

6. What are the most important organizations/institutions that defend the rights of immigrants in Chicago/Houston? (labor, human, civil rights)

7. What is the meaning of the Virgin of Guadalupe for Mexican immigrants? (mention other symbols and celebrations)

8. Do you perceive the existence of any kind of inter-ethnic or racial alliances with Mexican immigrants in order to form coalitions to solve their problems? Do you think that such alliances would be / are useful?

9. What do you think about or perceive as the role of the Mexican government in the solution of the problems of the Mexican immigrants who live and work in the U.S.?

10. What do you think about or perceive as the role of the American government (at a local, state or national level) in the solution of the problems of the Mexican immigrant who lives and works in the U.S.?

11. Do you have or have you had contact with other churches (Catholic or not Catholic) when trying to find solutions to the problems of Mexican immigrants?

12. Do you think that there are different levels of political mobilization among Mexican immigrants? What type of mobilization is more effective and why?

13. In terms of mobilization, what is the role of lay people in your church?

14. What is the relationship of your church/parish with the Mexican clergy?

15. Who would you suggest/recommend me to interview/talk about the topics we have just talked about?

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Questionnaire #6
Local/State Politicians

1. What do immigrants represent to Houston/Chicago, Illinois/Texas, the U.S.?

2. What do undocumented immigrants represent to Houston/Chicago, Illinois/Texas, the U.S.?
3. What are the problems that immigrants face in your district/city/state?

4. What is/should be the role of state legislators / council members in solving these problems?

5. What is your position about legalization of undocumented immigrants?

6. What do you think about immigrant-labor initiatives like a guest worker program?

7. What do you think about the undocumented worker’s right to defend their labor rights?

8. Have you had contact with Mexican officials regarding legalization/workers’ rights issues?

9. Houston: What do you think about the MOIRA office?
   Chicago: In your opinion, are there any legacies of former Mayors Daley or Washington about the way the city of Chicago deals with the problems of immigrants?

10. What do you think about local police working with the INS in matters related to undocumented immigration?

11. What organizations/institutions have made a better job in advocating for immigrants’ rights? Church, unions, CBO’s, politicians…

12. What do you think about the following phrase: “No taxation without representation.”
APPENDIX 3
Orale Politics! - CHRONOLOGY

HOUSTON
1800-2003

1800 - 1969
1810-1821 Mexico’s war for independence against Spain
1813 The first Republic of Texas is proclaimed. It lasted some months only
1821-1836 Texas is part of Mexico within the Legislatura de Texas y Coahuila
1836/May/14 Santa Anna agrees to recognize the independence of Texas
1836/Aug/30 Houston is founded
1837-1840 Houston is the capital of the Republic of Texas
1845/Dec/29 Texas becomes the 28th state of the Union
1846-1848 War with Mexico, which ends with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo
1861 Houston and Harris County vote to secede from the Union.
1861-1865 American Civil War
1870 Texas readmitted to the Union
1917 American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is founded
1920s-30s Oil refineries proliferate
1929 City Planning Commission recommends that Houston adopt a zoning ordinance, but finds no support
1931-1934 More than 300,000 Mexicans are deported nationwide by the Hoover administration
1939 AFSC starts to deal with immigrant issues in the US
1942 The Programa Bracero begins
1943 Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Galveston-Houston is founded
1948 Houston voters reject proposed zoning ordinance
1953 Operation Wetback
1962 Houston voters reject proposed zoning ordinance
1964 The Programa Bracero arrives to an end

1970-1995
1970/Nov The National Conference of Catholic Bishops adopts the resolution on the [Catholic] Campaign for Human Development (CCHD)
1973 Arab oil embargo quadruples oil prices in 90 days, fueling Houston’s 1973-1981 economic boom
1974 The newspaper El Mexica is founded
1979 The newspaper La Voz de Houston is founded
1979 The newspaper La Información is founded
1980 Casa Juan Diego is founded
1986/Nov/6 Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA)
1987 American Friends Service Committee’s program: Immigration Law Enforcement Monitoring Project (ILEMP) begins working in Texas
1990/Feb The Mexican government creates the Programa para las Comunidades Mexicanas en el Exterior
1991 Houston City Council mandates development of first zoning regulations
1993  Houston voters reject proposed zoning ordinance
1993  Texas Immigrant and Refugee Coalition (TIRC) founded in Dallas
1994  The newspaper *Semana News* is founded
1994  The newspaper *Qué Onda! Magazine* is founded
1994/Jan/1 Zapatista movement erupts in Mexico
1995  The interfaith newspaper *El Misionero* is founded

**1996 - 2000**

1996  The National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice is founded; and the Houston Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice is one of its affiliated institutions
1996  The newspaper *El Día* is founded
1996  The newspaper *Rumores* is founded
1996/Jul/31 The Mexican Constitution is modified in order to allow Mexicans who live abroad to exert their right to vote
1996/Sep/30 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA)
1996/Dec  The Mexican Constitution is modified in order to allow Mexican citizens to retain their nationality even if they already have another one
1997/Apr/16 After spending 15 years on Texas’ death row, Ricardo Aldape Guerra is liberated. He would die months later in a car accident in Mexico.
1998  The Coalition of Higher Education for Immigrant Students (CHEIS) is founded
1998  Coalición de Houston por la Dignidad y la Amnistía (CHDA) already working in Houston
1998/Feb/18 The Association for Residency and Citizenship of America (ARCA) is founded
1999/Mar  Federación de Zacatecanos is founded
1999/Apr  Driver’s License Campaign [TIRC, NCLR, MALDEF] begins
1999/Nov  Mexicanos en Acción (MAC) is founded
1999/Dec/1 The Zedillo’s cars episode: Border deposits of as much as $800 for US registered cars began. On December 2, Pres. Zedillo suspended the controversial border car-deposit program under angry opposition.
2000/Feb  The Coalición Internacional de Mexicanos en el Exterior (CIME) is founded in Dallas.
2000/Feb/16 AFL-CIO’s policy shift favoring legalization of undocumented immigrants
2000/Jul-Ago  Coalición de Texas por la Dignidad y la Amnistía (CTDA) is founded
2000/Oct  National Organizers Alliance (NOA) begins its activities in Houston
2000/Nov/16 Resolution on Immigration Reform by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops

**2001 - 2003**

2001/Jun/17 Gov. Perry signs HB 1403 (Access to higher education)
2001/Jun/21 Gov. Perry vetoes HB 396 (Driver’s license)
2001/Jun/23 AFSC statement favoring Legalization for Undocumented Immigrants in the US
2001/Sep/11 WTC terrorist attacks in NYC
2001/Nov TIRC disappears
2002 SEIU as the driven force behind CHDA, working on creating comunidades de base
2002 The newspaper *La Prensa de Houston* is founded
2002/Feb/24 Serafin Olvera dies as a direct consequence of INS agents’ brutality back in March 25, 2001
2002/Mar/22 Declaration of Monterrey – AFSC and 29 other organizations, mostly Texan
2002/Jun/8 First official meeting of the Alliance to Support Hispanic Immigrants
2002/Mar/22 Declaration of Monterrey – AFSC and 29 other organizations, mostly Texan
2002/Mar/22 Declaration of Monterrey – AFSC and 29 other organizations, mostly Texan
2003/Mar/1 The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) is abolished and its functions and units incorporated into the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).
2003/Mar AFSC-Houston is closed
2003/Mar The first meeting of the Consejo Consultivo del Instituto de los Mexicanos en el Exterior (CC-IME) takes place in Mexico City
2004/Feb/2 Three INS officers to serve prison terms for violating the civil rights of Serafin Olvera

**CHICAGO**

**1800 - 1969**

1861-1865 American Civil War
1870 Erie Neighborhood House is founded as Holland Presbyterian Church
1886 Martyrs of Chicago
1888 Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights is founded
1917 American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is founded
1916-1921 The very first immigrant communities of Mexicans settle in Chicago
1925 The Confederación de Sociedades Mexicanas is founded, and disappears the very next year
1926 The Comisión Mexicana Independiente is founded
1931-1934 More than 300,000 Mexicans are deported nation-wide by the Hoover administration
1933 The Comité Patriótico Mexicano is founded
1939 AFSC starts to deal with immigrant issues in the US
1942 The Programa Bracero begins
1953 Operation Wetback
1953 Pilsen Neighbors Community Council (PILNE) is founded
1964 The Programa Bracero arrives to an end
1970-1995
1970 Casa Aztlán is founded
1970/Mar The La Raza newspaper is founded
1970/Nov The National Conference of Catholic Bishops adopts the resolution on the [Catholic] Campaign for Human Development (CCHD)
1971 The newspaper Chicago Ahora is founded
1972 PILNE adopts its current structure; the festival “Fiesta del Sol” takes place for the first time
1975-1978 PILNE vs. City Hall’s Plan 21
1979 The Office for Peace and Justice of the Archdiocese of Chicago is founded as the Office for the Ministry of Peace and Justice
1983/Jun/10 Rudy Lozano is assassinated
1985 The official newspaper of the Archdiocese of Chicago, Chicago Católico, is founded
1985 The newspaper El Imparcial is founded
1986 The newspaper El Imparcial is founded
1986 The Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR) is founded
1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA)
1987 Concilio Hispano – Chicago is founded
1987/Aug/10 Centro Legal Sin Fronteras (CSF) is founded
1990 Pilsen Resurrection Development Corporation is founded
1990-1995 CSF: from the Kosciusko School to the “Rudy Lozano” Primary School
1990/Feb The Mexican government creates the Programa para las Comunidades Mexicanas en el Exterior
1991 Asociación de Guerrerenses is founded
1991 Chicago Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues is founded
1992 AFSC’s “The Mexican Agenda” program begins
1993 First agreements between some Hometown Associations and the Mexican federal and state governments to finance social and community infrastructure
1994 The Interfaith Community Organization and the Pilsen Resurrection Development Corporation merge to become The Resurrection Project
1994/Jun/1 Zapatista movement erupts in Mexico
1994/Aug/21 Symbolic presidential elections take place in Chicago, Cuauhtémoc Cardenas (Partido de la Revolución Democrática) wins the race by far
1995 Heartland Alliance, Mexico-U.S. Advocates Network is founded
1995 Federación de Clubes Jaliscienses del Medio Oeste is founded
1995 Federación de Clubes Unidos Zacatecanos en Illinois is founded

1996 - 2000
1996 The National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice is founded; and the Chicago Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues is one of its affiliated institutions
1996 The West Town Leadership Project (WTLP), in association with Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI), is founded
1996 The newspaper Nuevo Siglo is founded
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996/May</td>
<td>Asociación de Clubes y Organizaciones Potosinas de Illinois (ACOPIL) is formally founded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996/Jul/31</td>
<td>The Mexican Constitution is modified in order to allow Mexicans who live abroad to exert their right to vote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996/fall</td>
<td>West Town United (WTU) is founded. The initiative had been launched previously by Erie Neighborhood House in January 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996/Dec</td>
<td>The Mexican Constitution is modified in order to allow Mexican citizens to retain their nationality even if they already have another one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Durango Unido en Chicago is founded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Federación de Guerrerenses in Chicago is founded; the Asociación de Guerrerenses does not exist anymore at this point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997/Oct/2</td>
<td>Federación de Clubes Michoacanos en Illinois is founded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>The “Coalición de Mexicanos en el Exterior Nuestro Voto en el 2000” is founded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999/Dec/1</td>
<td>The Zedillo’s cars episode: Border deposits of as much as $800 for US registered cars began. On December 2, Pres. Zedillo suspended the controversial border car-deposit program under angry opposition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000/Feb</td>
<td>The Coalición Internacional de Mexicanos en el Exterior (CIME) is founded in Dallas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000/Feb/16</td>
<td>AFL-CIO’s policy shift favoring legalization of undocumented immigrants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000/Mar</td>
<td>Unión Latina de Chicago is founded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000/May/2</td>
<td>WTLP and WTU do merge, and West Town Leadership United (WTLU) is founded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000/May/31</td>
<td>Chicago’s Concilio Hispano formally ends its activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000/Jul/2</td>
<td>Symbolic presidential elections take place in Chicago, Vicente Fox (PAN) wins the race by far</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000/Sep</td>
<td>CIME splits after its second national convention in Chicago. CIME-Chicago and the Asociación Internacional de Mexicanos en el Exterior (AIME) emerge from this situation. AIME disappears shortly after.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000/Nov/16</td>
<td>Resolution on Immigration Reform by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**2001 - 2003**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>AFSC’s “The Mexican Agenda” program arrives to an end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Federación de Oaxaqueños del Medio Oeste is founded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001/Jun/10</td>
<td>The e-group “Derechos Políticos Sin Fronteras” is founded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001/Jun/21</td>
<td>Coordinadora de Organizaciones Mexicanas del Medio Oeste (COMMO) is founded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001/Jun/23</td>
<td>AFSC Statement on Legalization for Undocumented Immigrants in the US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001/Jul/20</td>
<td>Inauguration of the Centro Cultural Zacatecano</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2001/Aug/1 Heartland Alliance, Susan Gzesh (Mexico-US Advocates Network) departs, Oscar Chacon (Enlaces America) arrives to the organization
2001/Sep/11 WTC terrorist attack in NYC
2001/Oct/5 A group of activists, that later would become the CIME, and the PRD introduce to the Mexican Congress the “Sexta Circunscripción” proposal
2001/Dec The Mexican Consulate’s gazette Enlace is founded
2001/Dec/1 Coalición por los Derechos Políticos de los Mexicanos en el Extranjero (CDPME) is founded.
2002 Federación Chihuahense en Illinois is founded
2002/Jan/19 Hidalguenses Unidos de Illionis is founded
2002/Feb Coalición Internacional de Mexicanos en el Exterior (CIME) is founded
2003/Mar/1 The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) is abolished and its functions and units incorporated into the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).
2002/Mar The e-group “CIME-Chicago” is founded
2003/Mar The first meeting of the Consejo Consultivo del Instituto de los Mexicanos en el Exterior (IME) takes place in Mexico City
2003/Apr Mexicans’ right to vote abroad: the CDPME presents to the Mexican legislative and executive powers, and federal electoral authorities, the “Propuesta Ciudadana de Ley que Reforma Diversos Artículos y Adiciona un Libro Noveno al Código Federal de Instituciones y Procedimientos Legales”
2004/Jan CDPME’s MX Sin Fronteras Magazine is founded.

Sources: The author’s own research from primary sources, and

Houston Facts 2000, a publication by the Greater Houston Partnership Research Department, 1999, Houston, Tx.


Texas Almanac, several years, published by The Dallas Morning News, Dallas, Tx.

APPENDIX 4
## GUIDE TO THE MATRIX OF ENTRIES AND CODED INTERVIEWS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column Title</th>
<th>Meaning and Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Number of entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERSON</td>
<td>Family name of the interviewee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORG</td>
<td>The organization/institution to which the interviewee belongs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIELD</td>
<td>Type of organization/institution or institutional membership:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>Activist, not member of any organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community-Based Organization (Generally Bottom-Up type)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBO/CHU</td>
<td>Church-Based Community-Based Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHCOM</td>
<td>Chamber of Commerce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHCM</td>
<td>Chicago, City Council Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHUR</td>
<td>Church, generally Catholic Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIVIC</td>
<td>Civic Organizations (Generally Mexican American organizations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COAL, MACRO</td>
<td>Coalitions, Macro or Umbrella Organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONS</td>
<td>Mexican Consulate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COO</td>
<td>Community-Oriented Organization (Generally Top-Down type)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COO/CHUR</td>
<td>Church-Based Community-Oriented Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOCM</td>
<td>Houston, City Council Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILREP</td>
<td>Illinois State Representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILSEN</td>
<td>Illinois State Senator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOCAL</td>
<td>Member of Local Government (non-elected official)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIA</td>
<td>Media Organization (TV, Radio or Printed Media)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEXGOV</td>
<td>Mexican Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEXPOL</td>
<td>Mexican Political Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFL, ACAD, MEET, BOOK, ORGS</td>
<td>Researcher’s remarks or thoughts on certain interviews / topics / meetings / literature / organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SERVPROV</td>
<td>Service Provider (Top-Down type org.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SF</td>
<td>State Federations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TXREP</td>
<td>Texas State Representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TXSEN</td>
<td>Texas State Senator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNION</td>
<td>Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>U.S. Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CITY/2002</td>
<td>Month and city where the interview took place in 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BK</td>
<td>Booknote # or Group of Notes #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAGE</td>
<td>Page(s) or question(s) #’s where the reference(s) can be found</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFER</td>
<td>Code of the topic to which the entry is making reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAT</td>
<td>Status of the entry:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>** Essential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Extremely Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No asterisk: Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(***) Extremely important personal notes on the topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REMARKS</td>
<td>Remarks about the entry, generally key words (in English or Spanish) that hint the core content of the reference. An entry may refer to a specific answer in an interview, to a set of answers in the interview, or to specific aspects of an answer or set of answers in an interview. Blank space: specific reference to a question/answer of the questionnaire.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 5
### Political Mobilization of Mexican Immigrants in American Cities and the U.S. Immigration Debate

#### CHRONOLOGY
January 2005 - July 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2005</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-Jan</td>
<td>* The “REAL ID Act of 2005” (H.R. 418) is introduced in the House by Rep. F. James Sensenbrenner (R-WI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-Feb</td>
<td>* The “REAL ID Act of 2005” passes in the House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-May</td>
<td>* Rep. Sheila Jackson-Lee (D-TX) introduces the “Save America Comprehensive Immigration Act of 2005” (H.R. 2092) in the House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-May</td>
<td>* “Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005” (S. 1033/H.R. 2330) is introduced in the Senate by Senators John McCain (R-AZ) and Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA) and in the House by Jim Kolbe (R-AZ), Jeff Flake (R-AZ), and Luis Gutierrez (D-IL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-July</td>
<td>* Bishop Gerald R. Barnes, Chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Migration, issues a statement in support of the “Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-July</td>
<td>* Rep. Thomas Tancredo (R-CO) introduces the “REAL GUEST Act of 2005” (H.R. 3333) in the House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-Oct</td>
<td>* “Comprehensive Enforcement and Immigration Reform Act of 2005” (S. 1438) is introduced in the Senate by Senators John Cornyn (R-TX) and John Kyl (R-AZ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-Oct</td>
<td>* “Interfaith Statement in Support of Comprehensive Immigration Reform” is signed by 47 national organizations, 90 local organizations, and 45 faith leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-Dec</td>
<td>* “Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005” (H.R. 4437) is introduced in the House by Rep. F. James Sensenbrenner (R-WI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-Dec</td>
<td>* Cardinal Roger M. Mahony of Los Angeles writes a letter to President George W. Bush, in which he voices his opposition to H.R. 4437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2006</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-14 Jan</td>
<td>* U.S. Catholic Church’s National Migration Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-Jan</td>
<td>* Cardinal Mahony announces the launching of the “Justice for Immigrants Campaign – A Journey for Hope”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
23-Jan  * The United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (USHCC) unveils its principles on immigration reform
22-Feb  * Rally in Fort Myers, FL with 1,000 participants
24-Feb  * Chairman Arlen Specter (R-PA) introduces his “Chairman’s Mark” in the Senate
1-Mar   * Cardinal Mahony states publicly that he will instruct his priests and faithful lay Catholics to disobey the H.R. 4437 if it becomes law
6-Mar   * Rally in Washington D.C. with 30,000 participants
10-Mar  * Rally in Chicago, IL with 100,000-300,000 participants
3/11-4/7 * Rallies expand to 76 cities with an estimated mobilization of 500,000 - 900,000 persons
16-Mar  * “Securing America’s Borders Act” (S. 2454) is introduced in the Senate by Sen. Bill Frist (R-TN)
21-Mar  * Cardinal Edward M. Egan of New York City speaks out about the “need to extend to new arrivals the understanding and opportunities that were extended to others in the past”
23-Mar  * Rally in Milwaukee, WI with 10,000-30,000 participants
24-Mar  * Rallies in the following cities:
          Atlanta, GA with 80,000 participants
          Los Angeles, CA with 2,700 participants
          Phoenix, AZ with 20,000-25,000 participants
25-Mar  * Rallies in the following cities:
          Dallas, TX with 1,500 participants
          Denver, CO with 50,000 participants
          Houston, TX with 6,000 participants
          Los Angeles, CA with 200,000-500,000 participants
          New York City, NY with 200 participants
26-Mar  * Rallies in the following cities:
          Dallas, TX with 1,500 participants
          Los Angeles, CA with 3,500 participants
          New York City, NY with 1,000 participants
          San Francisco, CA with 5,000 participants
27-Mar  * Rallies in the following cities:
          Boston, MA with 2,500 participants
          Dallas, TX with 1,500-4,000 participants
          Detroit, MI with 50,000 participants
          Houston, TX with 1,000 participants
          Los Angeles, CA with 8,500-36,500 participants
          Phoenix, AZ with 400 participants
          San Diego, CA with 1,500-2,000 participants
          Washington D.C. with 1,000 participants
27-Mar  * The Senate Judiciary Committee completes the markup of Chairman Arlen Specter’s (R-PA) proposed immigration legislation
28-Mar  * Rallies in the following cities:
          Dallas, TX with 3,000-4,000 participants
          Los Angeles, CA with 6,000 participants
Phoenix, AZ with 2,000 participants
San Diego, CA with 1,500-2,000 participants

29-Mar
  * Rallies in the following cities:
    Nashville, TN with 9,000-15,000 participants
    San Diego, CA with 1,500-2,000 participants

30-Mar
  * Rally in San Diego, CA with 1,500-2,000 participants
  * A survey by the Pew Hispanic Center reports that “among white Evangelical Protestants, 64% see immigrants as a burden, compared with 56% of white Catholics and 52% of white mainline Protestants. There are also differences according to political ideologies, with 58% of conservatives seeing immigrants as a burden, compared with 42% of liberals and 52% of moderates who feel this way.”

31-Mar
  * Rallies in the following cities:
    Fresno, CA with 50 participants
    Los Angeles, CA with 100 participants
    San Diego, CA with 1,500-2,000 participants

1-Apr
  * Rally in New York City, NY with 4,000-10,000 participants

5-Apr
  * Rally in Fresno, CA with 150 participants

6-Apr
  * Rally in S. Los Angeles with 100-900 participants

7-Apr
  * Sen. Arlen Specter (R-PA) introduces the “Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2006” (S. 2611) in the Senate, this bill will be passed after several amendments until May 25

8-10 Apr
  * A number between 1.4 and 1.7 million people take to the streets in 108 localities, among the most important:

9-Apr
  * Rallies in the following cities:
    Dallas, TX with 350,000-500,000 participants
    Detroit, MI with 100 participants
    Orlando, FL with 2,000 participants
    Salem, OR with 5,000-10,000 participants
    Salt Lake City, UT with 20,000 participants
    San Diego, CA with 50,000 participants
    St. Paul, MN with 30,000 participants

10-Apr
  * Rallies in the following cities:
    Austin, TX with 10,000 participants
    Atlanta, GA with 40,000-50,000 participants
    Bakersfield, CA with 10,000 participants
    Boston, MA with 10,000 participants
    Denver, CO with 7,000-10,000 participants
    Detroit, MI with 20,000 participants
    Fort Myers, FL with 75,000 participants
    Fresno, CA with 12,000 participants
    Houston, TX with 50,000 participants
    Indianapolis, IN with 10,000 participants
    Los Angeles, CA with 10,000 participants
    Madison, WI with 10,000 participants
    New York City, NY with 100,000 participants
Oakland, CA with 5,000 participants
Omaha, NE with 8,000-10,000 participants
Phoenix, AZ with 100,000-250,000 participants
Salem, OR with 10,000 participants
Salt Lake City, UT with 20,000 participants
San Antonio, TX with 18,000 participants
San Jose, CA with 25,000 participants
Seattle, WA with 25,000 participants
St. Paul, MN with 30,000 participants
Washington D.C. with 180,000 participants

10-30 April
* Several organizations across the country make a call for a national economic boycott and rallies for May 1

16-Apr
* Cardinal Mahony asks people to devote time on May 1 to understanding the “dignity of work, the value of education, and the important role immigrants play,” rather than supporting the boycott or missing their work to attend rallies

19-Apr
* Rally in Denver, CO with 1,000 participants

20-Apr
* The Department of Homeland Security arrests seven managers and 1,187 illegal immigrants from IFCO Systems North American in 26 states

22-Apr
* President Bush states that “massive deportation of the people here is unrealistic” and that “it’s not going to work”

23-Apr
* Rally in San Francisco with 2,000 participants

26-Apr
* Senate approves amendment providing $1.9 billion for upgrades to border-security equipment

28-Apr
* Cardinal Roger Mahony of Los Angeles, Cardinal Sean Patrick O’Malley of Boston, and Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick of Washington D.C. lobby on Capitol Hill in order to push for immigration reform and call for immigrants to ignore plans for a nationwide day of walkouts
* President Bush asks immigrants to reject work boycotts

29-Apr
* In Chicago, Rev. Jesse Jackson and his Rainbow Coalition pledge to participate in the national boycott
* In accordance to the Los Angeles Times, “In Los Angeles, some African American community leaders, Korean American churches and businesses, Filipino workers, South Asian immigrants, Jews and Muslims have all announced their intent to march on May 1”
* Senator John McCain (R-AZ) announces that he does not think the boycott will help and that it may have a negative impact on the cause

1-May
* An estimated 1.2 - 2 million people participate in organized rallies associated to an economic boycott in 63 localities across the U.S., among the most important:
  Atlanta, GA with 4,500 participants
  Bakersfield, CA with 3,000 participants
  Chicago, IL with 400,000-750,000 participants
  Denver, CO with 50,000-75,000 participants
  Detroit, MI with 1,000 participants
  Fresno, CA with 15,000 participants
Houston, TX with 10,000-15,000 participants
Los Angeles, CA with 400,000-700,000 participants
Madison, WI with 3,000 participants
Milwaukee, WI with 10,000-70,000 participants
New York City, NY with 3,000 participants
Oakland, CA with 15,000-17,000 participants
Orlando, FL with 20,000 participants
Phoenix, AZ with 2,400 participants
Salem, OR with 8,000 participants
Salinas, CA with 13,000 participants
San Antonio, TX with 18,000 participants
San Diego, CA with 2,500 participants
San Francisco, CA with 30,000 participants
San Jose, CA with 100,000 participants
Seattle, WA with 10,000-65,000 participants

* Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN) introduces a resolution declaring that the national anthem should only be sung in English

2-May
* Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA) states that the boycotts were ill-advised, yet they were largely peaceful and he was inspired by the heartfelt nature of the demonstrations
* Rep. Bill Frist (R-TN) says that attempts at a reconciliation would focus on “border security first and foremost.” He also says that “we don’t know who the [illegal immigrants] are. They’re in the shadows and we need to devise a plan to bring them out of the shadows, short of amnesty, but treats them in a fair and compassionate way.”

3-May
* Rep. Russell K. Pearce (R-AZ) states that he is “fed up” with his own party’s management of the immigration issue and that Washington is “ducking its responsibility”

8-May
* Lockheed Martin Information Technology is awarded a $120 million, five-year contract with the Department of Homeland Security in order to set up new immigration-information call centers

11-May
* Senate leaders announce an agreement to resume the debate on immigration legislation

12-May
* Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA) urges President Bush to get involved in the Senate legislation

15-May
* Bishop Gerald Richard Barnes of San Bernardino (CA) releases a statement, prior to President Bush’s public address, supporting comprehensive immigration reform and stating that an enforcement-only approach will not solve the illegal immigration problem
* Gov. Janet Napolitano (D) of Arizona and Gov. Rick Perry (R) of Texas support Bush’s initiative to send National Guard troops to the border while Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) of California and Gov. Bill Richardson (D) of New Mexico express concern
* President Bush addresses the nation and calls for Congress to pass comprehensive immigration reform that strengthens border security by
sending 6,000 National Guard troops to the border, enforces immigration laws, and includes a guest-worker program

* Based on information from the Department of Homeland Security, the Star Telegram (Forth Worth, Texas) reports that “under President Bush, the U.S. has already deported more people than under any other president in U.S. history.” The Bush administration has already deported 881,478 and it is likely that they will be the first to deport more than 1 million people.

16-May

* The Senate refuses to remove a guest-worker program from legislation, yet an amendment passes to reduce the number of yearly visas available to foreign workers from 325,000 down to 200,000

17-May

* The Senate approves the construction of 370 miles of fencing along the U.S.-Mexico border that will cost at least $1 billion
* Senate passes an amendment that will tighten restrictions in the temporary worker program
* About 400 church, union and civic leaders meet with elected officials on Capitol Hill to press for legalization of all immigrants and express opposition to current proposals

18-May

* Senate passes amendments declaring English the “national” language and also the “common and unifying” language of the U.S.

22-May

* Senate approves an amendment by Sen. John Ensign (R-NV) that sets parameters for the use of the 6,000 National Guard troops in support of the Border Patrol

25-May

* The Senate passes the “Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2006” (S. 2611)

1-Jun

* Texas Governor Rick Perry (R) announces his plan to implement a border-patrol program by using $5 million to set up hundreds of internet-connected surveillance cameras along the Texas-Mexico border

3-Jun

* 17 Canadian residents are arrested on charges of plotting a terrorist bombing attack which raises new U.S. fears that the next terrorist attack could come from the north

6-Jun

* Some 55 soldiers from the Utah National Guard are the first to take up positions along the U.S.-Mexico border

7-Jun

* About 2,300 Texas National Guard troops are deployed to the state’s southern border

19-Jun

* The Independent Institute releases its “Open Letter on Immigration,” reminding President Bush and Congress of the benefits of immigration. The letter is signed by more than five hundred economists, including five Nobel Laureates

20-Jun

* In an unusual decision, House Republican leaders announce that they will hold summer hearings around the nation on immigration policy. Usually, the two chambers would go to conference committee to work out differences in the two immigration bills (H.R. 4437 and S. 2611)
* The new commissioner of Customs and Border Protection, W. Ralph Basham, states that he does not favor building a wall along the Mexican border, “it doesn’t make sense, it’s not practical”
22-Jun  * The U.S. Senate announces its own immigration hearings
29-Jun  * A report by the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights suggests that the impact of new citizens and the U.S.-born children of immigrants on the 2008 election can be significant at a national level and in the following states: Arizona, California, Florida, Hawaii, Iowa, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin

3-Jul  The National Conference of State Legislatures announces that over 500 pieces of legislation addressing immigrant issues have been introduced in more than 42 state legislatures in the United States in 2006. For the same year at least 57 bills on the matter have been enacted in 27 states, which represent an increase of more than 50 percent on similar bills approved in 2005

5-Jul  * In accordance to the New York Times, President Bush switches his original position of supporting a comprehensive immigration reform and is now open to an "enforcement-first approach that would put new border security programs in place before creating a guest worker program or path to citizenship for people living in the U.S. illegally"

13-Jul  * The Senate approves the Homeland Security bill. The $32.8 billion bill includes money for additional law enforcement agents and more beds in detention centers to facilitate the deportation of unauthorized immigrants
* In accordance to the 2006 National Survey of Latinos, the Pew Hispanic Center asserts that “more than half of Latinos surveyed say they see an increase in discrimination as a result of the [immigration] policy debate, and three-quarters say the debate will prompt many more Latinos to vote in November. Almost two-thirds think the pro-immigrant marches this year signal the beginning of a new and lasting social movement”

14-Jul  * The mayor of Hazleton (PA) signs a city ordinance that, among other provisions against unauthorized immigrants, fines landlords $1,000 per day for each unauthorized immigrant living on their properties. Hispanic immigrants make up about one-third of the town’s 31,000 population

19-Jul  * In Chicago, about 10,000 persons attend a pro-immigrant rights rally

25-Jul  * A poll by the Tarrance Group shows that 71 percent of Americans agree with a solution to immigration issues that includes border security, a guest worker program, and a pathway to citizenship
* Sen. Kay B. Hutchison (R-TX) and Rep. Mike Pence (R-IN) announce a proposal that, after securing the borders first, would require certain unauthorized immigrants (citizens of the North American Free Trade Agreement and the Central American Free Trade Agreement – Dominican Republic) to leave the country to apply for a temporary worker Good Neighbor SAFE (Secure Authorized Foreign Employee) visa, which could be renewed for five periods of 2 years each. The process itself could represent a 30 year-wait for eligible immigrants to become U.S. citizens

Chronology: References

Bada, Xóchitl et al. (June 2006). MX Magazine “El levantamiento migrante en números.”
