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Placing Agency in Neoliberalism: Contested Citizenship in Spaces of Migrant Organizing

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Contested Citizenship in Spaces of Migrant Organizing

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Abstract

The presence of millions of immigrants without recognition from the federal government presents serious challenges to American democracy and its legitimacy. By analyzing immigration activism in Austin, Texas, this paper will consider how those excluded from formal citizenship seek full membership, or at least its associated rights and protections, and how institutions at a variety of scales responds to these efforts. This activism challenges prevalent notions of what citizenship means, expanding the lines of who deserve rights and protection, and constructs participatory citizenship at the city level rather than relying on the more passive, exclusionary model of federal politics.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Citizenship, as it is practiced by most Western nations, is exclusionary by nature. The granting of membership and creation of a national community for some becomes meaningful through the status it creates for some at the expense of others. While the qualifications for citizenship and its associated rights and responsibilities can be neatly laid out in national law, their application to people's everyday lives depends on a host of contextual factors such as place-based social relations, class, race, gender and state and local policies. In the United States, the enforcement of policies oriented toward finding and deporting non-citizens in violation of immigration procedures often has tragic consequences for immigrants who have built lives in the United States.

A classmate of mine recently shared a story that illustrates these consequences as clearly and potently as any I have heard. Coming to college in the Midwest she met and began dating a young Mexican-American man who was an undocumented immigrant. One year, around the holidays they planned to travel back to her east coast home so that he could meet her family, a plan made more difficult by his immigration status. They decided to take a train, as prior experiences led them to believe they would not face the kinds of tight security and identity checks that are routine at airports. One night, however, at a stop in a rust-belt town on the receiving end of training and funding for immigration "security," Immigrations and Customs Enforcement officers boarded the train. Coming across the two sleeping young adults, they saw the Mexican-American man, and woke them up to ask for identification and proof of citizenship or immigration status. Unable to provide such proof, he was arrested and taken to a detention center while my classmate, a European-American woman was never questioned. The U.S. government held him in

detention, without notifying his friends or family of where he was or when he was transferred between facilities, until giving in to deportation became the best option.

Contrast this case of immigration enforcement through racial profiling with the representations and realities of undocumented immigrants from Canada and a racialized discourse of membership and "illegality" emerges. Canadians are one of the top five ethnicities of undocumented immigrants, yet discourse around immigration and the "need" to secure the border and deport "illegals" focuses almost exclusively on Mexican immigrants (Ebenshade 2000). The divergence in attitudes toward immigration comes through in the popular CBS sitcom "How I Met Your Mother" where one of the central characters, Robin Scherbatsky, is a Canadian working as a news anchor in New York City. When she gets in a bar fight in a season 5 episode she is notified that she has overstayed her work visa and must either become a U.S. citizen or return to Canada. The dilemma is neatly resolved when she acquires dual citizenship and remains in New York. Though this is obviously a fictional story and simplifies legal processes, it mirrors a cultural setting wherein undocumented Canadians in the United States can go about their business working and living relatively unbothered by attacks on "illegals" and rising anti-immigrant sentiment (Slovic 2008). Americans do not seem to be all that bothered by the white, English-speaking, and typically educated undocumented immigrants from the north.

Immigrants come to the United States from all over the world; the five largest immigrant groups are from Mexico, the Phillipines, India, China, and Vietnam. Yet the construction of citizenship and legitimacy in the national community takes place through discourses of "race" and class that define legitimate American citizens in opposition to

poor "illegal" Mexicans (Ebenshade 2000). This is despite the fact that a 1996 study

concluded less than half of undocumented immigrants are unauthorized border crossers.

Throughout history, Americans have attached meaning to citizenship largely in

opposition to what it means to lack that citizenship. Prior to the Civil War, slaves unable

to vote or earn wages for their labor were the group whose exploitation and lack of rights

gave meaning to citizenship (Shklar 1991). Today non-citizens, predominately though not

entirely accurately imagined as Mexican, experience similar inequities in exclusion from

formal political participation and vulnerability to labor exploitation (Workers Defense

Project 2009; Bloemraad 2006). These vulnerabilities disproportionately impact

particular immigrant groups due to processes of racialization and discrimination.

Canadian immigrants, for example, who are typically though not always better educated,

speak English, and/or of European descent are less obviously racialized as "other" and

thus a less obvious foil to American membership, and so they experience the

consequences of lacking citizenship less severely. National immigration enforcement

practices reflect and support the construction of this phenomenon, with efforts of

securing borders and enforcing immigration requirements disproportionately focused on

the Mexican immigration (Ebenshade 2000).

Federal policy treats immigrants as less than full persons deserving of basic

rights, allowing detention without due process for Japanese immigrants during World

War II or Arab-Americans after the attacks of September 11 and limiting the right to due

process in general criminal proceedings or non-criminal immigration courts (Varsanyi

2008; Lee 2006; Coleman 2007). This logic is increasingly being extended to state and

local institutions focused on finding and deporting undocumented immigrants, even after

they are far from the border, as local law enforcement agencies increasingly play a role in checking immigration status (Varsanyi 2008; Coleman 2007). As a result of these shifts, Varsanyi (2008: 882) describes non-citizen immigrants, documented or otherwise, as "neoliberal subjects," characterized by vulnerability to deportation, unequal protection under the law, and a stigma of illegality.

Exploring what this status means and how immigrants respond to and contest it will be the central focus of this thesis, so a definition and brief analysis of "neoliberalism" will be important moving forward. Broadly conceptualized, neoliberalism is a political-economic agenda supporting "economic policies favoring supply-side innovation and competitiveness; decentralization, devolution, and attrition of political governance; deregulation and privatization of industry, land, and public services; and replacing welfare with 'workfarist' social policies" (Leitner, Sheppard, Sziarto, and Maringanti 2007: 1). The implications of these policies extend beyond mere changes in the rules of political and economic transactions, but to the core of what it means to be an ethical person. "A neoliberal subjectivity also has emerged that normalizes the logics of individualism and entrepreneurialism, equating individual freedom with self-interested choices, making individuals responsible for their own well-being, and redefining citizens as consumers and clients" (Leitner, Sheppard, Sziarto, and Maringanti 2007: 2). Varsanyi uses the idea of neoliberal subjects/subjectivity much more specifically than Leitner and her co-authors in applying it particularly to non-citizen residents of the United States, suggesting that the philosophies and institutional and legal relationships of neoliberalism create a particular form of membership for these Americans.

In *Contesting Neoliberalism* (Leitner, Peck, Sheppard, and Sziarto 2007),
numerous authors call attention to how these policies have spread quickly and widely
across the globe, but also emphasize that their implementation and meanings are locally-
specific and often contested, so that neoliberalism is a diverse political project, and just
one of many competing value systems that is rarely implemented without modification.
As a result, the authors call for studies the alternatives embodied by opposition to
neoliberalism and how they interact, partly inspiring the focus of this thesis. When
Varsanyi discusses the unequal and vulnerable status of immigrants under neoliberalism,
an important point of analysis then should be alternative visions of citizenship and
participation put forth by advocates of immigrant rights. A core tenet of this thesis,
therefore, is that anyone, including those formally excluded, embodies and enacts some
form of citizenship; it may simply look different from the norm. Interrogating what that
looks like and the role of immigration politics, specifically pro-immigrant rights activism,
in the contestation or, potentially, reification of dominant conceptions of citizenship is an
important area of research for social scientists, and my goal in this thesis.

Of particular interest to me is what forms of activism emerge in response to the
exclusive and racialized patterns of U.S. citizenship and immigration enforcement, and
how these activists use space and navigate different scales of action to effect change.
These questions relate to ongoing debates in political geography about the role of the
nation-state, the scales at which citizenship is enacted, defined, and experienced, and the
influence of space, place, and scale in political contention. The presence of millions of
residents without membership in the state, effectively third-class (non)citizens, presents
serious challenges to notions of American democracy and its legitimacy. It is also likely

to become a source of major social contention, as categories of exclusion from citizenship, especially if aligned with racial or ethnic identities, define groups for mobilization and struggle toward inclusion (Marx 1995; Tarrow 1994; Shklar 1991). As responsibility for enforcement of immigration regulations shifts from the federal government to state and local institutions, social movements around citizenship are also likely to take on different scalar dimensions (Varsanyi 2008). Through a case study of immigration politics and three immigrant rights community organizations in Austin, Texas, in this paper I will consider how those excluded from legal membership, but still physically present in the U.S. seek that membership, or at least its associated rights and protections, and how structures of society and government at a variety of scales respond to such efforts. I will begin with an overview of existing literature on the meanings and scale of citizenship, the role of geography in political contention, and the connections between social movement activism and citizenship. This will be followed by an overview of my methods, focused on the nature of Austin as a case for immigration politics and the qualitative methods that I used to study it. I will then apply these concepts to the organizing efforts of three immigrant rights groups active in advocating for more just policies around immigration.

In their activism, pro-immigrant groups in Austin reject the nation-state as a defining site of membership and basis upon which basic rights can be denied. They do so on the basis of a much broader conception of inalienable human rights that belong to all people than what the U.S. government currently recognizes. In opposition to neoliberal logics that emphasize flexibility in business practices and minimal regulations for employers, immigrant rights organizations demand government intervention to protect

workers' rights. Through these political efforts, immigrants assert themselves as an important political group in Austin, and despite exclusion from formal participation in voting they are very much a part of shaping the political and economic conditions of the city.

This calls into question the currently dominant notion that citizenship is primarily associated with the nation-state. Policy responses to immigration emerge first from nation-states, but then are implemented, altered, or contradicted by localized state, city, and county government institutions that are increasingly involved in immigration enforcement. The outcomes of these policies are significant to the evolution of citizenship and membership in the United States, and their meaning is constructed through negotiations and contentious politics between individuals and groups including immigrants. In Austin, immigrants actively challenge policies and practices that would position them as exploitable, second-class residents. In this case, the city is a major site through which citizenship is experienced, constructed, and enacted, lending further support to arguments that the nation-state's central role in defining and controlling formal citizenship is increasingly separated from experiences and realities of substantial citizenship. Excluded from the individualized, relatively passive form of citizenship dominant in American politics today, particularly at the federal level, immigrants construct their own citizenship around more active, participatory models at the local level.

Chapter 2: Citizenship, Contentious Politics, and Claiming Membership

Due to American immigration and citizenship policies, millions of people in the

U.S. are excluded from full membership and participation in society. Estimates typically

place the number of undocumented immigrants in the United States at around 11.2

million, though the exact number is by nature impossible to know (Passel and Cohn

2011). Combine this with non-citizen legal residents, and there are over 20 million people

in the American population without citizenship rights (Varsanyi 2008). This means more

than 20 million Americans legally have fewer rights – both personal and political – than

the rest of the nation, as a result of policy that does not allow the "supply" of new

citizenship to meet the demand (Portes and Rumbaut 2006). For these residents,

inequality is legally sanctioned, as the Supreme Court has upheld the federal

government's right to treat immigrants as "nonpersons beyond the protections of the

Constitution" (Varsanyi 2008: 879). State and local governments, on the other hand, have

generally been required to treat immigrants as persons with Constitutional protection

(Varsanyi 2008). Though immigration reforms in the last 20 years have undermined this

shift in significant ways, with state and local governments increasingly involved in

immigration enforcement and welfare reforms that decreased immigrant access to basic

services, this suggests a legacy in which these scales of government may be more

conducive to immigrant rights (Varsanyi 2008; Coleman 2007).

The majority of these residents, come from Latin America, especially Mexico

(Portes and Rumbaut 2006: 20-22). Present day discourses of "illegal immigration" paint

these migrants as criminals taking advantage of American wealth. However, it is crucial to remember that

> "This flow does not represent an 'alien invasion' because an invasion implies moving into other people's territory against their will. In this instance, the movement is very much welcomed, if not by everyone, at least by a very influential group – namely, the small, medium, and large enterprises in agriculture, services, and industry that have come to rely on and profit from this source of labor" (Portes and Rumbaut 2006: 24).

Immigration to the U.S. from Latin America is a result of global economic processes that have created the vast disparity in wealth between the two regions and of American business' demand for cheap labor.

This is just one example of a worldwide increase in rates of migration that has scholars debating the ongoing legitimacy and relevance of the nation-state as the site of citizenship (Castles and Davidson 2000). Large numbers of foreign residents without national citizenship pose a problem for the legitimacy of governments based on inclusive democratic participation (Staeheli 2008a, 2008b). As the majority of these immigrants settle in urban areas, cities become a major site for political incorporation or exclusion and experience with the meanings of citizenship and exclusion from it (Portes and Rumbaut 2006). Governments at all levels shift policy and enforcement relations in response to these incoming flows of immigrants and immigrants negotiate these new political contexts.

Varsanyi argues that modern political and economic processes have created a new logic of membership (or lack thereof) for the noncitizen residents of the United States,

whom she defines as neoliberal subjects: "Membership for neoliberal subjects…reflects, therefore, a particular neoliberalizing constellation of legal and political institutions and is substantively different than noncitizen membership of past eras" (Varsanyi 2008: 882). She argues that this status is now defined fundamentally by a stigma of illegality, increasingly limited access to welfare rights, and escalating threat of deportation (Varsanyi 2008: 882-883).

Further exploring this status is an important task for social scientists, as the presence of so many residents without membership in the state presents important challenges for representative democracy and its legitimacy. It is also likely to become a source of major social contention, as categories of exclusion from citizenship, especially when aligned with racial or ethnic identities, define groups for mobilization and struggle toward inclusion (Marx 1995; Tarrow 1994; Shklar 1991). As the enforcement of immigration regulations shifts from the federal government to state and local institutions, social movements around citizenship are also likely to take on different scalar dimensions (Varsanyi 2008). This paper will focus on the spatial and scalar aspects of contention around citizenship policies, starting with a review of the literature on citizenship and social movements.

Citizenship: Freedom From or Freedom To?

Citizenship is a complex, abstract concept that has carried multiple meanings in different places, for different groups, and at different historical moments (Shklar 1991). In a basic sense, citizenship is a category of membership that nation-states use to define

their members. Tilly (1995: 8) defines citizenship in relation to several sociological concepts: "As a category, citizenship designates a set of actors – citizens – distinguished by their shared privileged position *vis-á-vis* some particular state. As a tie, citizenship identifies an enforceable mutual relation between an actor and state agents. As a role, citizenship includes all of an actor's relations to others that depend on the actor's relation to a particular state." While technically correct, Tilly's definition leaves out many of the important implications of citizenship in peoples' lives. Castles and Davidson (2000: 28) trace the history of citizenship as a concept that pre-dates modern nation-states and conclude that, "Citizenship has always been about empowerment in and over a baffling and changing world context." Agency, the ability to assert one's will in relationship to surrounding people and institutions, is a central aspect of citizenship.

Exactly what this membership and agency within a state should mean is a subject of political and philosophical debate. In the liberal view, the dominant philosophy behind United States citizenship policies,

> "the individual [citizen]…is the sovereign author of her life who pursues
> her private rational advantage or conception of the good. The role of
> politics in this approach remains negative: only to aid and protect
> individuals from interference by governments in exercising the rights they
> inalienably possess and in return for which they have to undertake certain
> minimal political duties…Consequently, citizenship, in the liberal view, is
> an accessory, not a value in itself" (Shafir 1998: 10).

Modern U.S. citizenship is based in this liberal model that prioritizes individual rights and interests and depends upon the notion of a social contract between residents and the

state (Staeheli 2008a; Fraser and Gordon 1998). Given such a conception of politics' role only as negative and for the protection of rights, America's low voter turnout should come as no surprise. The right to vote means more to most citizens as a marker of their status (and its distancing from slaves) than it does through the actual process of voting and its democratic value (Shklar 1991: 27). This individualist philosophy contrasts with the communitarian belief that, "Citizens are who they are by virtue of participating in the life of their political community, and by identifying with its characteristics. Pursuing the common good is the core of the communal citizens' civic virtue" (Shafir 1998: 10-11). These two visions present drastically different philosophies about the role of individuals and government, and the relationship between the two.

Despite an emphasis on the rights of the individual, group identities play an important role in the practice and meanings of American citizenship. Indeed, the history of citizenship in the United States is, in many ways a history of group exclusion. The U.S. Constitution founded what was at the time one of the most democratic systems of government in the world, but in reality women, men who did not own property, and anyone who was not white (most notably African slaves) were excluded from participation. Though never explicitly stated, it was understood that the slave was the opposite of the citizen (Shklar 1991). Immigration and naturalization laws have historically been used to exclude groups from access to U.S. citizenship, often on racial or ethnic grounds, exemplified by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and a series of exclusionary immigration laws and quotas that limited legal immigration to the United States mostly to northwestern Europeans. Birthright and naturalization laws also excluded many from citizenship on the grounds of race until 1940 and 1952 respectively

(Haney-López 1996: 27-34). While immigration policy is no longer explicitly tied to countries of origin, it does discriminate on the basis of class, favoring those with special training or skills in high demand (Portes and Rumbaut 2006). Those factors, however, also create patterns with ethnic correlations, as immigrants from nations like China and India, among others, are more likely to have educational or professional qualifications to take advantage of official immigration procedures (Portes and Rumbaut 2006; Skop and Buentello 2008).

Bloemraad (2006) discusses immigration and citizenship through a model of political incorporation, comparing immigrants and refugees in the United States and Canada to look at the degree to which they acquire legal citizenship through naturalization and feel included and able to participate in the political process. In Canada, government programs support integration through settlement assistance with language acquisition and job placement as well an official multiculturalist policy that funds immigrant organizations. This is in contrast with the U.S., where "immigration policy largely starts and ends at the border. Government attention and resources revolve around border control; later processes of immigrant integration are considered outside the purview of state action" (Bloemraad 2006: 3). The U.S. views immigration primarily as an issue of law enforcement and national security, and that enforcement no longer stops at the border as the government more actively pursues the arrest and deportation of unauthorized immigrants long after they have entered the nation (Coleman 2007; Varsanyi 2008). Such policy variations make up "contexts of reception" with important implications for the lives that immigrants establish in their new homes (Bloemraad 2006; Portes and Rumbaut 2006). In the U.S. the relatively hostile context of reception means

that immigrants are often less likely to be politically active and often become scapegoats in public discourse (Bloemraad 2006; Portes and Rumbaut 2006).

The discussion up until now has focused on citizenship as a formal legal status, but scholars have recognized that there are often differences between the formal definitions and real consequences of citizenship. T.H. Marshall (1963: 94) was an early theorist to articulate the complexities of citizenship, dividing it into three dimensions: civil, political, and social, each covering a different set of rights.

"The civil element is composed of the rights necessary for individual freedom – liberty of the person; freedom of speech, though, and faith; the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts; and the right to justice…By the political element I mean the right to participate in the exercise of political power, as a member of a body invested with political authority or as an elector of the members of such a body…By the social element I mean the whole range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in society."

Marshall's analysis makes clear that citizenship is about more than just voting or official recognition as a member of a nation state, and allows for an analysis that considers those multiple dimensions and how they vary for different groups at different times and in different places. Lake and Newman (2002: 109) offer a definition that captures this fact, focusing on the social aspect of Marshall's framework in defining citizenship as: "inclusion in a polity through the distribution of rights and resources."

As a focus on the distribution of resources would suggest, the real consequences of citizenship are socially constructed through a wide variety of policies beyond just those that define who is eligible for naturalization, such as welfare and housing policies (Varsanyi 2008; Sugrue 1996). A fundamental right linked to citizenship status is the ability to legitimately participate in the governing and law-making practices of the nation (Bloemraad 2006; Castles and Davidson 2000). Recognizing the contradiction to democracy posed by long-term residents without voting rights, some nations – Sweden, Ireland, and the Netherlands, among others – have granted local voting rights to non citizens who meet a length of residence requirement, recognizing their right to participate in policymaking (Pincetl 1994: 898). Citizenship is not only about formally possessing certain rights, but the ability to use and act upon them (Staeheli 2008a; Ehrkamp and Leitner 2003). In order to exercise the right to vote in most states a resident must offer identification or utility bills with their current address to prove their eligibility. For more mobile residents, renters, or the homeless this is more difficult, and thus the right to vote is less accessible. Basic rights afforded to all citizens equally in law may actually be uneven in citizens' ability use those rights, based on class, race, or other social markers of difference.

In the recent decades the U.S. and U.K. have moved toward systems of "conditional citizenship" where benefits are tied to following certain codes of behavior (Fyfe and Milligan 2003: 402-404). To acknowledge the unevenness that such policies inevitably create, Castles and Davidson (2000: 84) offer the concept of substantial citizenship, which they define as "equal chances of participation in various areas of society, such as politics, work, welfare systems, and cultural relations." Shklar (1991: 17)

succinctly summarizes the wide ranging importance of citizenship, writing "To be less than a full citizen is at the very least to approach the dreaded condition of a slave." The ongoing racial inequities in the U.S. for African Americans illustrate the significance of denial of citizenship in ways that reach beyond unequal political participation. Clearly, then, even within formal citizenship in the United States there is significant variation in the degree of substantial citizenship people experience.

Racial disparities exist across a wide variety of social indicators in the U.S. In education, most nonwhite students attend urban schools that are predominantly under-funded, segregated, and underperforming (Orfield and Eaton 1996; Kozol 2005). Students in these schools are disproportionately punished and increasingly sent to a punitive system of courts and youth penitentiaries (Children's Defense Fund 2007). State and federal government constitutions do not explicitly guarantee a right to equal education, and so courts have ruled that racial inequities in schooling do not violate the 14th Amendment (Orfield and Eaton 1996; Kozol 2005). These inequities contribute to and are compounded by differential treatment in law enforcement. Poor, urban neighborhoods have been sites of intense police scrutiny through "zero tolerance" laws for "quality of life" crimes as well as more serious offenses like violent crimes or drug dealing (Wacquant 2009). Vast racial and geographical differences in arrest and imprisonment rates are apparently justified by the racialized public fear of crime and misperceptions about crime rates (Garland 2001). These inequities amount to a lack of equal legal protection for civil and social dimensions of citizenship.

Recognizing these variations, Marston and Mitchell (2004: 101) argue for an analysis of citizenship based on *formations* to "[emphasize] the dynamic and non-linear

quality of citizenship, which may expand or contract in different moments depending on the context in which the state is integrated into the global economy, the types of internal battle occurring within state boundaries, or a host of other variables." They highlight that there are multiple dimensions to citizenship that are extended differently to certain groups depending on the historical and geographical context. In cases of extreme marginalization, like that of inner city African Americans, even those who are citizens may need to organize to meet basic needs that are ignored by government institutions (Heynen 2009). Through these practices, marginalized groups may be able to create conditions of citizenship with or without recognition and/or assistance from government entities.

Those without formal citizenship may still be able to influence local and/or national governance, but it will not happen through traditional institutional practices like voting or constituent lobbying. Groups of Latino immigrants in Los Angeles, many of whom are undocumented, have used neighborhood organizations, vendors' associations, and labor unions to organize to defend or advance their interests, despite their status as illegitimate members in the eyes of the government (Pincetl 1994). In an analysis of the emergence of women's citizenship rights in the U.S., Marston and Mitchell reveal how the state responds to social and economic changes to extend or deny citizenship rights to certain groups. In the late 19th and early 20th century middle class urban white women entered the public sphere to address concerns about industrialization, urbanization, immigration, and their associated "social ills." At the time women were still mostly confined to the private and domestic spheres, so they used a maternalist discourse to assert their legitimacy as caretakers in the urban public. The programs these women's

associations set up are seen as the foundation of the American welfare state that developed in the 20th century. These women were able to change the operation of the state for social welfare, enacting citizenship despite lacking formal legal recognition as citizens, and setting the stage for expansion of voting rights to women (Marston and Mitchell 2004: 102-106). Their success demonstrates the potential of action focused at one scale by an excluded group, in this case urban reforms by middle class women, to impact policies at broader scales and expand the boundaries of citizenship as well as the importance of group identities even in a society where liberal, individualist conceptions of citizenship are the norm.

Citizenship formations also reveal significant scalar variations. Immigrants may assert their rights to participate through organization and mobilization that allows them to have their voices heard at different levels of government. Focusing on Turkish migrants in Germany Patricia Ehrkamp and Helga Leitner (2003: 129) argue that citizenship is primarily "constituted and contested in the concrete social processes of everyday life at the local scale, in the urban neighborhood where immigrants live and work." They demonstrate the importance of immigrant civic institutions for "creating spaces of citizenship and democracy for immigrants in Germany" (134). Local political institutions, like neighborhood-wide Round Tables, also provide important opportunities for immigrants to participate in the political process, even if they lack formal citizenship (142-143). In Marston and Mitchell's (2004) study of late 18th and early 19th century American women's organizations women were able to demonstrate their role in public life at the urban level, despite national denial of that role. These studies of mobilization of American women and Turkish immigrants in Germany show that the national scale is

not always the most important scale to understanding the negotiation and practice of citizenship. One scale of action or political participation may provide different opportunities to be heard than others, through different political opportunity structures of citizenship (Staeheli 1999: 61).

Staeheli (1999: 70) argues that the national state "remains important as a site in which the formal aspects of citizenship are constructed and maintained, but in which responsibility for the substantive aspects of citizenship is less significant." Naturalization ceremonies emphasize individual choice and public equality, attempting to pass on American individualism. Some judges warn the new citizens and their children against turning to their fellow citizens for support through welfare (Coutin 2003). The nation state still determines its membership, but plays an increasingly small role in providing the rights and access to power structures that make that membership meaningful.

As states have adopted neoliberal models, migration of people across international borders has increased as state social services are diminished, creating a unique situation for new immigrants. Trudeau (2008: 670) argues that in such a context, nonprofit organizations become "spaces in which the hybrid formation of state and civil society relationships takes place." He demonstrates a continuum of possible relationships where the state can wield great influence over nonprofits, but where that influence can also flow in the other direction, with nonprofits changing state practices or subtly contesting them. In a similar line of analysis, Ehrkamp and Leitner (2003: 128) argue that, "Citizenship laws and rights are the outcome of negotiations, contestations, and struggles between the state and civil society." Nonprofit social organizations become a site where people, especially immigrants, can assert their citizenship through active

participation in organizations that represent their interests and provide an avenue for

political participation. The opportunity becomes even more powerful when those

nonprofit or activist groups provide feedback that impacts state policies (Heynen 2009;

Marston and Mitchell 2004; Trudeau 2008). Citizenship through such avenues has its

own inequalities as well, as has been documented in non-profit services that are spatially

uneven or miss the needs or preferences of certain clients altogether (Lake and Newman

2002). Still when actively focused on meeting or representing the needs of immigrants,

these organizations can provide another avenue of participation and inclusion, which is

crucial for immigrants, especially the undocumented, who are explicitly and

systematically denied participation in the formal state. Exploring the processes of this

participation and resulting contention around citizenship will be a major goal of this

paper, and so understanding how social movements work will be crucial to my analysis.

Social Movements, Spaces of Engagement, and Asserting Belonging

Immigrant participation in local and national politics, by necessity, often takes

place through social movements. Denied formal rights, particularly voting and the

constituent status associated with it, immigrants must mobilize beyond traditional

avenues of voting in order to have their voices heard and defend their right to participate

(Bloemraad 2006: 1-9). In such a context, community, labor, religious, and cultural

alliances become crucial organizations for immigrants to build strength in numbers and

assert their presence as stakeholders in a local, urban, state, or national community.

In order to develop an understanding of how immigrant groups use these alliances

to advance their interests, an overview of key concepts in social movement theory will be

helpful. Sydney Tarrow (1994: 1) defines social movements as developing "when ordinary people join forces in contentious confrontation with elites, authorities and opponents...Movements are created when political opportunities open up for social actors who usually lack them...At their base are the social networks and cultural symbols through which social relations are organized." A key theoretical concept for studying social movements is political opportunity structure, based on examining how the choices and outcomes of social movement tactics and demands are shaped by accessibility of government institutions, state repression, economic conditions, and elite alliances (Tarrow 1994: 81-99). An important factor shaping how their demands are received by institutions and potential allies is the framing social movements use, or how they define and justify their claims in seeking to change viewpoints or convince people to take action (Tarrow 1994: 122; Snow and Benford 1988).

Two other central theoretical frameworks in the study of social movements focus on the mobilization of resources by different actors and the role of collective identity in shaping people's ability and willingness to take action. Resource mobilization theory focuses on explaining the emergence and success or failure of social movements through their ability to gain access to and effectively use a wide range of resources, such as money, time, personal skills, media connections, elite allies, and more (McCarthy and Zald 1977). Social movements emerge from collective identity formation when a group succeeds in three key tasks: "(1) formulating cognitive frameworks concerning the ends, means, and field of action, (2) activating relationships between the actors, who interact, communicate, influence each other, negotiate, and make decisions, (3) making emotional investments, which enable individuals to recognize themselves" (Melucci 1988: 343).

Each of these frameworks explains different aspects of contentious politics and can benefit significantly from attention to the geographies of their operation.

Bryon Miller (2000), among others, has demonstrated the importance of geography in understanding social movements. Discussing antinuclear activism in the Boston area he demonstrated the importance of differing social, political, and economic geographies of cities and their implications for social movement recruiting, tactics, and success or failure activist demands. Geographers have drawn attention to the importance of place, the local relationships and sentiments attached to a place (which could be as small as a house or neighborhood, or large as an entire nation), in social movement mobilization (Nicholls 2007). "Place-specific circumstances lead to processes of collective identity construction that vary from place to place, even when the identities being formed are not necessarily place-based" (Miller 2000: 60). Thus, Miller emphasizes the role of place in Melucci's (1988) theory of collective identity formation as central to explaining social movement emergence and mobilization.

Doreen Massey (1994: 154) offers a sound definition of place as something "constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus." Particular experiences at a school, church, or other local place will be shaped by one's position relative others in that place, and thus result in particular emotions or attachments to it. Despite the interconnectedness of the world in an era of increased globalization, these intersections of social relations are still unique from place to place. It is within these unique webs of social relations that the cognitive frameworks, shared values, relationships, and emotional attachments of Melucci's collective identity formation emerge.

Uneven economic processes also shape the resources for mobilization available and the receptiveness of local residents to activist demands (Nicholls 2007; Miller 2000). Different places have different political systems and economic relations that shape the factors that make up a political opportunity structure. For example, the importance of high-tech defense research and manufacturing in Massachusetts was something that the antinuclear activists in Miller's study had to work around in their movements and that had important implications in setting the parameters within which the activists operated (Miller 2000). Understanding the social, economic, and political relations where activism emerges is critical to understanding how and why that activism takes the form it does.

One of the most important contributions of geography to social movement research is attention to the role of scale. Activists may choose one scale of contention because of a more favorable political opportunity structure, even if it does not match the scale where decisions are made about the issue at contention as when anti-nuclear activists around Boston pushed for local ordinances against nuclear weapons development when state or federal levels of government were less promising targets for change (Miller 2000). The scale of an issue is not a given, but something that is defined through struggle between different interests, the result of which is critically important in shaping contentious politics. Miller (2000: 53) writes:

> "Representations of scale, moreover, play an important role in social struggle. Scales that provide opponents more political opportunity can be provided as illegitimate; scales that provide opponents the fewest political opportunities may be portrayed as "appropriate"...Attempts to shift the

balance of power frequently entail shifts in the scale of both material

practice and representation."

As the scale of contention evolves so too will the strategies of actors, especially if

activists reach a scale where they begin to threaten fundamental interests of capital

(Miller 2000; Nicholls 2007). The scale at which an issue is defined will have important

implications for the values and loyalties that are triggered for different actors and

observers in responding to social movement tactics and messages (Snow and Benford

1988).

Both national and local political discourses show varying degrees of nativist

trends, but the national frame is most relevant to shaping the discourse around

immigration in American policy debate. In the 2003 Immigrant Workers Freedom Rides,

in the final rallies in Washington, D.C. and New York City, the discourse and actions

became more aligned with mainstream immigration politics and white union leaders and

politicians than it was at earlier, community-oriented stages of the ride as conventional,

nationalist frames became more prevalent and the speakers were mostly white men

(Leitner, Sheppard, and Sziarto 2008). In these large, national rallies, patriotism and

nationalism make it difficult to project messages that question or subvert those central

frames. It is also important not to view different scales of contention as independent from

one another. As Grundy and Smith (2005) demonstrate in their analysis of LGBT

organizing at the urban and national scales in Canada, action at one scale can be crucial

for opening up opportunities at another even when there are important differences in the

agendas and/or ideologies of activists at each scale.

Social movement organizing also creates spaces with values and power relations

that may be different from the dominant cultural norms. Massey (1994: 149) proposes the concept of "power geometry" to discuss the ways people are placed in socially differentiated relations to and degrees of control over space and their mobility and access in it. These power geometries are a result of complex interactions between political and economic structures as well as various facets of identity such as gender, race, age, and economic status. As a result places have very different meanings for different people, and do not have "single, unique 'identities'" (Massey 1994: 155). One of the most important impacts of LGBT organizations in Toronto has been "creating a local social space in which to build a sense of empowerment, community and inclusion" (Grundy and Smith 2005: 399). The Immigrant Workers Freedom Rides in 2003 created spaces on the buses and at the stops along the way where activists forged solidarity and shared identity (Leitner, Sheppard, and Sziarto 2008).

The construction of such spaces is an important step for immigrant movements, as they create spaces that move into the public realm, constructing a more visible and unified community, providing a basis for mobilization (Castles and Davidson 2000: 131-2). This casual growth of immigrant visibility in communities can lead to more dramatic actions claiming public space, such as the 2006 immigration rallies, with important implications for public awareness of immigrant communities (Beltrán 2009). Through such actions immigrant groups take advantage of the fact that "public space is a place within which a political movement can stake out the space that allows it to be seen...By claiming space in public, by creating public spaces, social groups themselves become public" (Mitchell 1995: 115). Public visibility, recognition, and acceptance are crucial steps in claiming citizenship, belonging, and legitimacy for immigrant groups.

Veronis (2006) discusses the implications of the Canadian Hispanic Day Parade in Toronto. The annual parade, held in a marginal suburban neighborhood, contests dominant negative representations of Latinos in Canada and to build a unified Latino community from the diverse national groups present. Veronis describes it as an example of top-down mobilization by elected officials that celebrates diversity to distract from budget cutbacks and shortages of affordable housing and employment in immigrant communities. The parade is designed to advance the argument that Latin American immigrants in Canada can fit the neoliberal model of responsible, self-sufficient citizens (2006: 1659-1665). The strategies and messages of an immigrant rights organization have important implications for the type of citizenship they envision and whether their claim for citizenship offers a more inclusive model.

Uses of space that challenge existing norms of what a space is for, or who belongs in a space, can be a powerful tool in activism (Staeheli and Mitchell 2004; McCann 1999). By transgressing what is expected of a space, activists can draw more attention to their cause and highlight contradictions in existing social and economic relations. "Social movements often seek to strategically manipulate, subvert and resignify places that symbolize priorities and imaginaries they are contesting; to defend places that stand for their priorities and imaginaries; and to produce new spaces where such visions can be practiced, within that place and beyond" (Leitner, Sheppard, and Sziarto 2008). In the Canadian Hispanic Day Parade, "The parade defies the suburban design of Jane Street and transforms it into a political space where the Jane and Finch community can represent itself and make itself visible through the creation of its own images" (Veronis 2006: 1665). Through organizing social movements can turn ordinary, commercial

landscapes into something different. Ultimately, such practices play an important role in shaping the meaning of urban spaces, with important implications for the experiences of those who live and act in them.

Kevin Cox (1998) provides a useful framework for discussing the geographic elements of political contention, suggesting important ways to think about space and scale in political analysis. Cox (1998: 2) draws the distinction between two key types of spaces:

> "Spaces of dependence are defined by those more-or-less localized social relations upon which we depend for the realization of essential interests and for which there are no substitutes elsewhere; they define place-specific conditions for our material well being and our sense of significance. These spaces are inserted in broader sets of relationships of a more global character and these constantly threaten to undermine or dissolve them. People firms, state agencies, etc., organize in order to secure the conditions for the continued existence of their spaces of dependence but in doing so they have to engage with other centers of social power: local government, the national press, perhaps the *inter*national press, for example. In so doing they construct a different form of space which I call here a space of engagement: the space in which the politics of securing a space of dependence unfolds."

As spaces essential to material well being and sense of significance and impacted by global structures and relationships, spaces of dependence as Cox defines them are closely tied to citizenship. As such, the construction of effective spaces of dependence is an

important aspect of settling in a new society for any immigrant community. The types of spaces of engagement that an immigrant group constructs toward that end will therefore likely be indicative of how they relate to a receiving society.

The Intersections of Citizenship and Social Movements

Marston and Mitchell (2004: 94) highlight the economic origins and motivations of citizenship, as it developed as a concept to protect individual property and labor contracting rights for Britain's industrializing economy. The importance of the contrast between the slave and the citizen, as described by Shklar (1991), in contemporary discourses and attitudes toward citizenship suggests that other bases for exclusion will shape further beliefs about what citizenship means. The fact that today those dynamics correlate with ethnic differences, suggests they will create identities for mobilization and significant political action, a suggestion strongly supported by recent politics (Marx 1995; Leitner, Sheppard, and Sziarto 2008; Pincetl 1994). Studying the dynamics of contemporary exclusion and the visions of citizenship put forth by movements for inclusion may provide clues about the future contours of belonging and national identity in the United States.

This all suggests two key questions for my case study of immigrant rights organizations in Austin. The organizations I focus on primarily consist of and/or work with immigrants who do not have citizenship status and/or permanent residence rights, those Varsanyi (2008: 882) would term "neoliberal subjects." The issues these organizations work on will shed light on the dynamics of this citizenship formation, what it means for the immigrants it describes, and how they contest it. The actions those

organizations take will suggest how immigrants, at least in one place, contest their status as "subjects" of a neoliberal state by asserting their agency and belonging. Looking at three different organizations within an immigrant rights social movement should reveal the processes through which immigrants claim membership in a new home and how different organizations, with different strategies and spatial/scalar dynamics, play different roles in that movement. The strategies and framings they use will provide insight into the alternative visions of citizenship that justify their claims to membership, and thus into a major competing vision of how individuals and groups in society relate to one another that exists in contention with that of neoliberal subjectivity.

Chapter 3: A Case Study Approach to Activism and Citizenship in Austin, Texas

In this project I hope to address several key questions: How do immigrants without formal citizenship rights respond to this exclusion with mobilization to assert their claim to the substantial rights associated with full citizenship? What significance do different spaces or scales of action hold in these movements? What does this mean for American citizenship formations and how they are constructed and experienced? Inherent in any concept or definition of nationhood and citizenship is the drawing of boundaries and exclusion of certain people from that membership. Globalization brings increasing challenges to the drawing of these boundaries based on physical spaces and national membership (Castles and Davidson 2000). The purpose of asking these questions is to consider how those excluded from legal membership, but still physically present in the United States seek that membership, or at least its associated rights and protections,

The case study method is well-suited for questions like this, focused on how and/or why contemporary social processes play out in certain ways, because they allow for focus on a range of variables and contextual factors, and in most cases require the use of multiple methods in order to do so (Yin 2009: 3-21). In order to explore these questions I use a case study of immigrant organizing in Austin, Texas with a combination of participatory observation, document-based research, and interviews to gain a fuller understanding of the issues involved and connections between different actors. A core assumption of this project is that social movement organizing and contentious politics are central to efforts to gain, practice, or improve citizenship rights for immigrants. Shut out from conventional avenues of political participation, such as voting, immigrants must

take more active and collective steps to assert their membership and make their voice heard in debates on policies that impact their lives (Bloemraad, 2006). As a result, I decided to anchor my case study of immigrant rights and citizenship in Austin in analysis of organizations that work on such issues.

The field research for this project was conducted over two months in the summer of 2010, as part of the University of Texas at Austin Population Research Center's Research Experience for Undergraduates on Immigration, Geography, and Race/Ethnicity in the United States. Working with a graduate student mentor in the department, as well as fellow students from Austin, I identified the three organizations chosen as ones that would make appropriate cases for this project and contacted staff or board members at each explaining my project and asking about opportunities to volunteer and/or attend meetings. I quickly began volunteering at Workers Defense Project and Casa Marianella, and spent about 15 hours per week with the organizations over the course of July 2010. Austin Immigrant Rights Coalition is structured differently, with fewer regular projects for volunteering, but I was able to attend one of their monthly meetings, and speak to members of the steering committee. Through this initial work I gained a sense of the organizations' day-to-day activities and issue focuses, and made contacts for potential interviews. When the organization and its members were willing I conducted semi-structured interviews, with informed consent, that lasted about an hour to ask questions about their perceptions of the organizations strategies, tactics, and opportunities or roadblocks to success on the issues they work on. Throughout the process I supplemented this fieldwork by reading archival materials, such as past newsletters and media reports,

in order to come up with questions and gain a wider perspective of the organizations'

activities than what they were focused on in the summer of 2010.

Casa Marianella, named after Marianella Garcia Villas, a human rights lawyer

murdered by death squads in El Salvador, was founded in 1986 by the Austin Interfaith

Task Force for Central America to provide shelter for refugees fleeing violence in Central

America. Today the house functions as a shelter for homeless immigrants and refugees,

with assistance to get them back on their feet. They now serve many African refugees in

addition to Latina/o immigrants.

Workers Defense Project was born within Casa Marianella in 2002 in response to

the number of residents reporting unpaid wages. Wage theft is still a major focus of the

organization, but they also address working conditions (especially in the construction

industry), run leadership development courses to empower workers, and host English as a

Second Language classes. It advocates for all low-wage workers, but its membership is

dominantly Latina/o and the organization is just as well known, if not better known by its

Spanish name, *Proyecto Defensa Laboral.*

The Austin Immigrant Rights Coalition (AIRC) formed within WDP in 2006 in

response to harsh anti-immigrant legislation proposed in the U.S. Congress and quickly

grew to become a broad coalition of groups that organized the largest demonstration in

Austin's history to call for just immigration reform. Since then AIRC has continued to

lobby on immigration policy at the local, state, and national levels as well as use

grassroots organizing on local issues such as law enforcement's approach to immigrants.

These three organizations exemplify three distinct approaches to addressing issues of

immigrant rights and citizenship. They use different strategies and work from different

angles, but all three engage powerful institutions at a variety of scales as part of a social movement for more inclusive citizenship and immigration policy. Studying these organizations as multiple cases within the immigrant rights social movement will allow attention to replication and divergence in the strategies of social movement organizations, based on differing missions and constituencies (Yin 2003, 44-51). The observations and results of this analysis will reflect back on theories of social movements and their role in citizenship formation, with attention to the role of scale and space in each, as discussed in the literature review (Yin 2003, 30-32).

Two important foci in analyzing each of the organizations will be the spaces and scales of their actions. Beyond the obvious consideration of what issues they address in attempting to improve the lives of immigrants, I want to pay attention to what scales at which they try to bring about change by engaging with government agencies or businesses (scale being defined primarily by the jurisdictional or commercial range of the target of their action), and if one scale seems more conducive to success than others. I will also look for what types of spaces they use in their activities – for example public spaces like government sites or city streets, private spaces like personal homes or businesses, or spaces in between such as community centers – and how that relates to and/or defines the issue being addressed. Specifically it will be interesting to look for links between the spaces and scales of action and the element of citizenship – civil, political, or social – being addressed. If there are such linkages it will suggest that particular types of spaces or scales of government are particularly important in constructing those aspects of citizenship. One useful way to conceptualize the meanings of those spaces is to consider how they fit into Cox's (1998) framework of spaces of

dependence and engagement. Findings on these issues will provide evidence in formulating answers to the questions about immigrant mobilization, its spaces and scales, and its impact on citizenship formation.

For the last question, about how different organizations play different roles within a social movement, their use of space and scales of activity will remain important factors, along with an attention to how the three organizations relate to one another. The three organizations chosen make for a particularly interesting set of cases in this regard. Staff members and volunteers at Casa Marianella formed workers Defense Project to focus more specifically on a set of issues faced by immigrants that became visible at Casa. Austin Immigrant Rights Coalition, in turn, was formed within Workers Defense Project to address issues that didn't fit with WDP's mission, strategies, or strengths. This high level of interrelation between the three organizations could skew the results toward overstating the degree to which social movement organizations cooperate. However, the way AIRC and WDP grew out of pre-existing organizations offers an ideal set of cases to study why or how different organizational structures and activist strategies emerge to address particular types of issues as a social movement grows and evolves.

Immigration Politics in Austin

Several factors make Austin a compelling place to study immigration activism, and its particularities as a context are worth discussing. Along with California, New Mexico, and Arizona, Texas is one of four states in the U.S. to border Mexico, making it one of the largest destinations for Mexican immigrants to America. Immigration is as visible and contested an issue in Texas as anywhere in the nation, even if its immigration

debates and policies have not received the national media attention of Arizona. Arizona's SB 1070, proposed to require local and state police to investigate the immigration status of anyone they encounter so as to fully enforce federal immigration laws at more local levels, represents efforts to make enforcement of national citizenship and immigration policies a central responsibility of all levels of government. Arizona's policy represents the greatest degree of national attention paid to the growing issue of state and local government involvement in immigration policy. In many cases, particularly in the southwest along the border with Mexico, the response has been to collaborate with the federal government to pursue policies that seek to identify and deport undocumented immigrants to the United States. Though it has not received the national attention that Arizona's proposal, in the aftermath several similarly anti-immigrant pieces of legislation have been brought before the Texas legislature in Austin (Vega 2010).

Austin is the third largest city in Texas and has rapidly gained recognition for its creativity and technology-based economy, intellectual and cultural capital, and reputation as a "the one liberal bastion in Texas" (Skop and Buentello 2008, 257). Rapid economic growth has attracted a significant, growing, and diverse immigrant population. The foreign-born population doubled from 6.9% of the total population in 1990 to 14.2% in 2005. The 95,532 Mexican immigrants are by far the largest ethnic group among the foreign-born population, making up 7.3% of the city's total population. There is also a rising Asian population, but Mexican immigrants are the only foreign-born group that makes up more than 0.5% of the total population of 1.3 million (Skop and Buentello 2008, 260).

There are significant class and skill patterns among the immigrant population, as "less-educated, unskilled, and poorer Mexican migrants have been recruited to fill the lowest and least desirable jobs while the large majority of migrants from India and China arrive with high levels of education, professional training, entrepreneurial skills, or financial resources needed in the burgeoning creative-based economy" (Skop and Buentello 2008, 263). Because they represent the largest and therefore most visible immigrant flow, not just in Austin, but across the United States, these working class immigrants from Mexico and other Latin American nations are at the center of public discourses about immigration. The technological and ensuing economic changes of the last several decades have greatly increased flows of migrants between the world's cities, shaping social, cultural and economic relations. Focusing on the politics of immigration and citizenship in Austin will illustrate the impact of one significant portion of those migrant flows in American cities.

Austin has taken some progressive steps, making it city policy not to discriminate or deny services based on immigration status and declaring itself a sanctuary city where police will not enforce immigration policies (Smith 2007, Gonzales 2011), but there are still issues such as the presence of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers in county jails as well as anti-immigrant state and federal policies for activists to contest. As the state capital, Austin is the primary city for contention over state policies, and thus one of the most visible sites for political activism and mobilization. Austin also has a reputation for progressive politics, certainly related in part to the large population of young people and academics associate with the University of Texas' flagship school.

These are all indicators of a population inclined to activism (Miller 2000), and the fact

that it is a state capital means it is the prime location for addressing state policies.

This is not to say that immigrants in Austin do not face racism, inequality, and

exploitation. Despite its reputation for progressive politics and hippy culture, Austin still

shows signs of the racism that mark so much of U.S. history. In 1928 the city adopted a

plan that designated East Austin as the city's black district, through the exclusive location

of segregated facilities such as schools and parks for blacks in the East side of the city

(City of Austin 1995). This persists to this day, and has influenced the settlement of the

Hispanic population in Austin as well, as both populations are highly concentrated to the

east of I-35 (see Appendix A). These maps were created using U.S. Census data from

2000, and so may be outdated and are likely to miss large portions of the Latina/o

population, especially immigrants and undocumented, who are less likely to respond to

the Census. Given the increased economic hardship and difficulty finding housing for

Latina/o immigrants, especially the undocumented, it is reasonable to believe that they

may be even more segregated than the general Latina/o population of Austin.

Immigrant labor, especially in the construction industry, has been an important

contributor to Austin's rapid economic and population growth in the last 20 years.

Second only to Raleigh, North Carolina, Austin was the fastest growing metro area in the

nation in 2009 (U.S. Census Bureau 2009). With this growth came tremendous expansion

in the construction industry, which tripled its number of jobs to just under 52,000 and

grew by 219% (WDP 2009: I). Latino immigrants filled much of this increased demand

for construction workers. The prosperity that creates and depends on a booming

construction industry, however, was not shared with construction workers. Construction

wages did not keep up with the private sector as a whole in Austin, or with construction

wages nationwide, as a survey of Austin construction workers found that just 35% made

a living wage. Austin's construction workers faced dangerous conditions, with 142 deaths

on construction sites, received few employment benefits, are unprotected by state labor

regulations and safety agencies, and often were denied payment for overtime or even

entire days or weeks of work (WDP 2009: 12-17). The construction industry is the most

visible, due in large part to the work of Workers Defense Project, but immigrant workers

throughout the Austin economy face similar issues, especially in regards to pay and

hours.

Located within the U.S.-Mexico borderland, citizenship and belonging are

contested issues in Texas, and Austin's progressive politics create an environment

conducive to immigrant rights organizing, perhaps one of the most conducive in the

nation. In some ways it can be seen as an ideal case to consider how activist and social

service organizations working on immigration issues in a relatively friendly and open

environment navigate political and economic institutions at different scales in an attempt

to create more inclusive forms of citizenship and immigration policy. Therefore, it is

important to note that Austin should not be viewed as a representative case study.

Immigrant rights groups in other cities are likely to face a different, and potentially more

difficult environment. The point of a study like this, however, is not to generalize results

to an entire population as in statistical analysis, but rather to look for evidence to support,

modify, or challenge theories of social movements and their role in citizenship formation

(Yin 2003: 30-32).

Though Austin's economic growth in recent decades comes primarily from the "creative class" that is often portrayed as progressive and tolerant, this does not mean that Austin is somehow separate from the rise of neoliberalism. Indeed, the fact that Austin and other cities driven by the creative class have been at the forefront of urban grown in this neoliberal era suggests that such economies may be those favored by neoliberalism. Indeed, high-tech cities associated with the creative class tend to have high degrees of income inequality, reflecting the polarization of wealth encouraged by market-driven, low tax policies (Florida 2000: 43). Indeed, there are compelling cultural arguments to suggest that the supposedly rebellious and progressive creative class is the driving engine of capitalism. Heath and Potter (2004: 204-205) reference the analysis of Joseph Schumpeter and argue that because capitalism depends on the constant creation of new products and methods of production, the creative class and rebellious types are in fact crucial to its development and reproduction. With this in mind, Austin's booming success in recent years suggests that it is a poster child for economic growth under the neoliberal paradigm. Yet the population has its progressive reputation for a reason, as the city has adopted strong environmental regulations, declared itself a sanctuary city for immigrants, and many restaurants cater to tastes in organic foods. As such Austin is a compelling site in which to study how neoliberalism and alternative paradigms coexist and contend with one another. Particular cases will always have place-specific contours and determinants, but the processes and outcomes of contention around immigrant rights and citizenship in Austin will suggest the spaces and scales at which these issues are negotiated in the new global economy.

Chapter 4: Enacting Citizenship in Spaces of Engagement: An Analysis of Three Immigrant Rights Organizations in Austin

The presence of millions of residents without membership in the state presents important challenges for representative democracy and its legitimacy. It is also likely to become a source of major social contention, as categories of exclusion from citizenship, especially if aligned with racial or ethnic identities, define groups for mobilization and struggle toward inclusion (Marx 1995; Tarrow 1994; Shklar 1991). As the enforcement of immigration regulations shifts from the federal government to state and local institutions, social movements around citizenship are also likely to take on different scalar dimensions (Varsanyi 2008). Analyzing the spaces and scales through which organizations within social movements contest their exclusion from equal citizenship will reveal the dynamics of immigrant attempts to construct their own agency and belonging in opposition to that exclusion. How and where immigrants construct spaces of dependence and engagement, as well as the scale at which they take action to advance their rights will be indicative of the political opportunity structures in the U.S. today. Considering how the social relations and political contention that emerges from these spaces relates to the civil, political, and/or social elements citizenship will provide insight into the dynamics through which citizenship formations emerge (Marshall 1963; Marston and Mitchell 2004). The sums of these actions will suggest alternative visions and forms of citizenship that exist alongside the neoliberal norms of American society today (Leitner, Sheppard, Sziarto, and Maringanti 2007).

Varsanyi (2008: 882-883) argues that modern political and economic processes have created a new form of membership (or lack thereof) for the noncitizen residents of the United States, whom she defines as neoliberal subjects, experiencing a stigma of illegality, increasingly limited access to welfare rights, and escalating threat of deportation. Immigrants in Austin respond to the social and political marginalization created by this status with active contention, working through local grassroots organizations to make change. In doing so they construct their own participatory citizenship that is more active and participatory than the citizenship enacted by many Americans who have only intermittent and relatively passive political engagement. Immigration focused non-profits, such as those at the focus of this case study provide a primary avenue for this participation. Collectively immigrants can assert a political power that as individuals they are denied on the basis of their national origin and legal status.

Casa Marianella

Casa Marianella exists as a safety net to address the worst failures and oversights of current immigration policies. The homeless shelter, tucked away in a quiet residential neighborhood, operates primarily in the semi-private space of their homes to provide a safe setting for their residents. This space, which clearly functions as one of dependence for the residents, also becomes one of engagement in which the problems faced by immigrants become visible to the organization's volunteers and collaborative programs to address them can emerge. In creating a space where immigrants, regardless of their origin or status, are provided with the basic necessities and given assistance learning English,

finding work, and navigating the U.S. legal system Casa Marianella creates a space that embodies an alternative model for immigrant reception.

Casa Marianella, casually known simply as Casa among its staff, residents, and volunteers, cares for the basic needs of the most marginalized of immigrants, those with no family, friends, or other connections for support in the U.S. If they were not at Casa Marianella, most of the organization's residents would either be homeless or in an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention center, according to one staff member interviewed. The Austin Interfaith Task Force for Central America founded Casa Marianella in 1986 to offer shelter to refugees fleeing political violence in Central America, using a home that had been donated to the Diocese of Austin. Today, the organization receives funding from government programs, individual or group donations, and grants. As violence in Central America subsided, the shelter focused more on serving a broader population of immigrants, and today Casa provides shelter and assistance to immigrants from Mexico, Central America, and South America and refugees seeking political asylum from Africa and Asia. With a nightly occupancy of about 25 people, Casa shelters an average of 400 residential clients every year, and an additional 500 receive food, clothing, or English classes. Over its 25 years of service Casa Marianella has evolved into an important community center to Austin's immigrant population, providing language classes and referrals to low-cost or free legal and medical services, work opportunities, and other services. Casa's 12 full/part-time staff members and many more volunteers provide assistance with day-to-day needs and case management services to the house's residents, and offer referrals or assistance to community members that come to the house.

Casa's residents fall into two basic categories, in regards to citizenship status: those with legal resident status or in court proceedings seeking asylum status, and those without a likely path to citizenship under current policies. The services, case management approaches, and day-to-day challenges and opportunities differ for each. In both cases the end goal is to help the resident find a safe, long-term residence and a job to provide the means to support themselves and their families.

Casa Marianella still serves many residents fleeing political violence, but today they are more likely to come from Africa or Asia than from Central America. Many of the residents seeking political asylum or refugee status contact Casa from detention centers, and if a bed is available the organization will get them released by agreeing to sponsor them – helping them document their case for asylum, making sure they attend their hearings, and providing basic needs. Other residents may be seeking legal status through programs that offer visas to victims of crimes, particularly domestic abuse. Helping these residents navigate the legal processes of asylum and citizenship through partnerships with lawyers who provide pro-bono assistance and staff who are familiar with the process and options available is a major part of the organization's work. Seeking asylum is a long process for residents; the first court hearing usually takes place about six months after filing for asylum and then it takes three to four more hearings before a final decision is made. Throughout this process the staff members at Casa work with the resident to find legal assistance, document their story (which is crucial for receiving asylum), and attend check-ins and hearings with ICE officials 80 miles away in San Antonio. Casa works with the Center for Survivors of Torture to provide counseling for residents who have been through torture or other traumatic events.

The uncertainty about legal status throughout this long, drawn-out process shapes residents' lives. Asylum seekers are not allowed to work before being granted permission to stay, and therefore must depend on the charity of others or be held in a detention center. The psychological strain of such uncertainty and fear over potential deportation, along with the trauma of experiences back home, makes settling in, focusing on English classes, and developing employable skills difficult. Residents who have spent long periods in refugee camps often struggle to adjust during this time.

For undocumented residents without options for gaining legal residency, Casa operates more like a traditional homeless shelter. For these residents, Casa Marianella provides assistance to find work, save money, and move on to a safe home of their own. The men go out to day labor sites, where they may be picked up for temporary construction or landscaping work, and for women Casa maintains a worklist of people looking for housekeeping or childcare work, reflecting and reinforcing gendered divisions of labor. For families with children, Casa helps find a place in the public school system. These residents also participate in English classes. The shelter also serves residents with different needs, including some elderly undocumented residents are now too old to work and will likely spend the rest of their lives at the shelter.

Casa Marianella also functions as a community center, offering social services to the wider immigrant population in Austin. These services include referrals to free or low-cost legal advice, a worklist of locals looking for childcare or housekeeping assistance, referral to the Medical Assistance Program (MAP – free or low cost medical care for low-income Travis County residents), and connections to the Center for Survivors of Torture.

Mirroring its residents' need to maintain a low profile in society, Casa Marianella does so spatially. Casa operates its shelter and community center from a house tucked away on a quiet, dead-end residential street in east Austin. The location provides a quiet, safe setting for residents who may have come from traumatic experiences and are trying to adapt to a new culture and society. Apart from an occasional fundraiser at another community center, all of the organization's activities take place at the house.

Working with a vulnerable and frequently excluded immigrant population, positive relationships with local and federal government agencies are crucial to Casa's effective operation. Casa receives a reimbursement for utilities costs from the city of Austin, which covers about 10% of the organization's budget according to one staff member. Residents at Casa Marianella are also automatically eligible for MAP, and staff members regularly refer community members in need of medical assistance there as well.

Casa also must maintain a working relationship with the Austin Police Department (APD), which has a station right behind the house. Because Casa is an emergency shelter, they can host anyone regardless of immigration status. The organization's relationship to the Catholic Church also helps in this regard, according to one staff member. "Whenever they bought the house they told the police that this house is under the diocese of Austin, and so it kind of gave a little more protection from them just coming in, like this is not like a regular business, a regular organization, it's kind of protected because it's under that church." The continued religious affiliation allows a degree of protection for residents who may otherwise be vulnerable to deportation or detention, as the first amendment offers religious organizations a degree of autonomy from state policies.

According to staff members at Casa, the APD recognizes that in the interest of public safety immigrants need to be able to trust the police department so that they will report crimes and serve as witnesses. Several residents at Casa have been victims of crimes themselves, and in this case the organization works closely with APD to document that in the hopes of getting that person a U-Visa, which grants legal status and the right to work to victims of serious crimes. One staff member explained:

"We've also gotten people who are on the process to getting a visa for being a victim of a serious crime. For instance, right after the crime was committed and they're escaped and then the police have taken their statement, then they have to put them somewhere and they'll take them here and then from here they can keep working with the police and move somewhere else as long as they maintain that relationship, to get a U-visa for cooperating."

In cases like this, and when community members come to Casa with legal issues or as victims of crimes, Casa serves as an intermediary so that immigrants can feel safe in dealing with the police.

Working with immigrants seeking legal status means that staff and residents at Casa frequently interact with federal immigration offices as well. Immigrants seeking asylum or refugee status must attend regular check-ins and hearings with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services in San Antonio. There are also occasional visits from ICE officials, which provide opportunities for dialogues or demonstrations of alternatives to current policies. One staff member discussed this relationship at length:

"I think it was in February or March, Obama sent a woman from DC who was in charge of reforming their asylum seeking process and the ICE officials from

Texas came here and visited the house and they thought it was a really good

alternative to detention and they said it was a community alternative and they

were really impressed that 100% of our people from what we know of at that time

had returned to their immigration court, they hadn't just decided to be AWOL and

be undocumented in the US. And so, yeah I think that by getting to talk to them

we were able to tell them, like these people need to get the work permits, they

need to have more transparency with their whole proceedings and be able to

contact people in ICE and deportation officers easier. Just trying to help them

realize that these people, that are going to be citizens a lot of them, need to be

treated right and that a lot of them are not treated well between coming and

getting it."

This staff member had commented earlier that the need to maintain a positive working

relationship with the police and with ICE limits Casa's advocacy potential, but those

relationships also present an opportunity for staff members at Casa to provide feedback to

law enforcement and immigration officials about how the process could be reformed.

In their work, Casa defends the civil and social citizenship rights (using

Marshall's classification) of their residents against federal policy that does not

acknowledge those rights. At Casa, asylum seekers live in a community where they can

come and go as they please and are connected to legal support in the asylum process,

rather than held in federal detention centers without contact with the outside world. This

provides asylum seekers with something closer to the equal protection of the law and due

process that civil citizenship entails. When possible Casa attempts to do similar work for

undocumented immigrants, but the lack of process for an immigrant to establish

residency rights after entering the country without approval makes this uncommon. For undocumented immigrants without an asylum case, civil citizenship, the most basic of Marshall's three categories, is essentially impossible. By meeting basic needs of housing and food, Casa provides a minimal degree of support for the social citizenship rights to its residents. Casa does this is in the context of a federal immigration system under which their residents would likely be vulnerable to indefinite detention without legal representation and otherwise assumes little to no responsibility for their welfare. The immigrant population Casa works with, for the most part, has no guaranteed right to be in the United States. As a result, their rights in any of Marshall's dimensions of citizenship go only so far as organizations like Casa Marianella can protect them and provide for them.

On the surface, Casa Marianella seems like a clear space of dependence, which is indeed its primary role for its residents, but it also serves as a space of engagement from which movements to meet the needs of the broader immigrant community can emerge (Cox 1998). Obviously, Casa's residents certainly rely on the social relations at the shelter for their basic livelihood, as their needs are unlikely to be met anywhere else in Austin in the same way. As a result, one could argue that Casa Marianella is a social service or welfare organization not an activist one, and does not belong in a discussion of social movements for immigrant rights. There is some truth to that, but such an argument overlooks the crucial role an organization like Casa Marianella can play in community activism. In conditions of extreme marginalization like homelessness or indefinite detention that the immigrants Casa works with experience, basic services may be necessary before more active advocacy is even possible. In providing these services Casa

creates a space in which the needs and problems faced by the immigrant community in Austin become visible to a wider network of volunteers and activists. From this space solutions can be identified and networks can form to work toward those solutions, and so Casa also becomes a space of engagement for the immigrant community in Austin.

One staff member I interviewed described Casa as a place where community and solidarity create an environment that redefines the role of a citizen. At Casa Marianella those who do not have formal citizenship or even legal residency status, who have been termed "margizens" (Castles and Davidson 2000), are valued and given the assistance they need to establish a life in America. That staff member even went as far as stating that within Casa Marianella, "if you look here, it's like immigration reform has already happened." While that may seem like an outlandish statement, it gets at the fact Casa Marianella has built a space where assistance is available for all who arrive regardless of national origins or circumstances, something that could be seen as a model for what American immigration and citizenship policy should do. "This sense of community here, and support is...what we want immigration reform to be." Providing that model is an important aspect of the work Casa Marianella does, especially when it can be demonstrated to federal immigration authorities.

Another staff member made a similar point in suggesting that Casa Marianella provides a space where immigrants can feel safe, and begin to work toward getting back on their feet. "We want the people that are kind of in the shadows and afraid to live normally, like US citizens, to have the ability to come out of the shadows and to have the ability to feel protected under the laws just as much as a citizen were." In this way it functions similarly to that of the LGBT organizations discussed by Grundy and Smith

(2005: 399), in "creating a local social space in which to build a sense of empowerment."

In effect, Casa Marianella creates a space where lacking the status of citizenship or legal

residence is not a cause for marginalization and exclusion, but for compassion and

assistance.

The significance of this space is clear when one considers the fact that both

Workers Defense Project and American Gateways, an organization that promotes

immigration justice through free or low-cost legal services, grew out of work that began

at Casa. According to interviews, almost everyone that works or volunteers at Casa

Marianella is involved in other organizations that are more explicitly activist in their

approach to immigration issues. Many staff members and residents attend demonstrations

and protests organized by other immigrant rights groups. When these people come in

contact with marginalized immigrants in an open setting, the problems that face

immigrants become clear and strong efforts to address those problems can grow. In this

way, spaces like Casa Marianella have the potential to play a significant role in building a

strong immigrant rights and social justice movement.

Workers Defense Project

Workers Defense Project provides proof of that potential. Started as a project of

Casa Marianella employees in 2002 to help residents and other community members

recover unpaid wages, WDP has grown to be one of the leading workers rights centers in

Texas. According to their website they have recovered over $575,000 in unpaid wages,

educated 7,000 workers on how to defend their rights, graduated over 150 workers from

their leadership development course, played a role in defeating several anti-immigrant policies at the city and state level, and led the nation's most comprehensive study on construction working conditions (Workers Defense Project 2009). On their website, they state their platform on immigration reform, emphasizing that policy reforms should provide a pathway to citizenship for immigrant workers, strictly enforce workers' rights regardless of immigration status, reunite families, give children educational opportunities regardless of immigration status, and end the militarization of the border (http://www.workersdefense.org/immigration/immigration-2/). Worker empowerment is a crucial part of WDP's ideology and practice, as their website claims, "those who have experienced oppression first hand are the ones who should lead social justice movements, due to the fact that these individuals are intentionally excluded from decision-making processes that most affect their lives." This language directly addresses the issue of substantial citizenship (Castles and Davidson 2002). A crucial part of WDP's mission is creating an organization where immigrant workers control the decision-making processes and have the tools to create substantial positive changes in their living and working conditions. Those who go through the organization's leadership development course take on roles as community leaders and workers rights advocates and participate in workers' committees within the organization. The organization is directed by a ten-member board of directors, several of whom are low-wage workers and the majority are either immigrants or from immigrant families. Six of the board members are women, reflecting WDP's commitment to gender equality.

By empowering immigrant workers to stand up to abuses like wage theft and unsafe working conditions, WDP asserts the labor rights of employees who are

marginalized and viewed as inferior by many employers. To do this they sometimes hold

demonstrations at worksites of employers who resist paying owed wages or who are

particularly egregious violators of safety regulations (Schwartz 2009; King 2009; Welch

2008). In one case they even held a demonstration and distributed fliers outside the home

of a contractor who owed back wages (Price 2005). In that case they forced the employer

to recognize workers' rights by bringing their economic claims into his personal space.

This crossing of spatial categories was an innovative strategy to shame a reluctant

employer into paying the wages owed.

In order to bring about more systemic change WDP engages government agencies

to protect workers rights and safety. One recent campaign built upon their research into

working conditions (WDP 2009) by pressing the Austin city council to implement

regulations guaranteeing access to drinking water and rest breaks. They presented to the

council and held demonstrations and vigils outside city hall (West 2010) and the

resolution eventually passed (Fox7 2010). Bringing their efforts to an even larger scale

they entered a partnership with federal agencies, the Department of Labor's Wage and

Hour division and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, to improve

enforcement of safety regulations and workers' access to the claims process in each

agency.

Through organizing efforts with WDP, immigrant workers, forced the federal

government to protect their labor rights and entered into an active partnership with state

agencies to ensure that they do so, though the final results and success of the partnership

are still being shaped. In this advocacy, immigrant workers can be seen as building on the

tradition of 19th century women's organizations in constructing "a powerful relationship

to the local and the federal state…to operate as citizens without actually being ones"
(Marston and Mitchell 2004: 104). Workers Defense Project serves a vital function of
protecting rights that should be guaranteed by the state, but often go unprotected and
unenforced.

Looking at WDP through Marshall's dimensions of citizenship, the organization
benefits the civil and political citizenship standing of its immigrant members. WDP's
work primarily defends the civil citizenship rights of its members, protecting their right to
work and receive just compensation for their work. This is an important right to protect
for their members, many of whom are undocumented immigrants without the legal right
to work in the United States. This leaves them vulnerable to a variety of workplace
abuses such as unsafe, sometimes fatal, working conditions and wage theft. WDP
counters this, connecting workers to advocates who work to recover unpaid wages and by
protesting unsafe conditions and lobbying for increased enforcement and regulations of
labor standards. In doing so they increase their members' degree of civil citizenship,
protecting their contract rights and protection under labor laws. Indirectly, WDP also
increases the political citizenship of its members, creating an avenue through which they
can participate in the political process through WDP's efforts to influence city and state
policy. Despite lacking the right to vote, WDP's members manage to influence policy
through more active, participatory means than electoral participation.

Workers Defense Project creates a vital space of engagement for immigrants in
Austin. Through the activism there immigrants take action to make their spaces of
dependence more effective at facilitating the social reproduction of immigrant
communities.

Further developing activism toward social justice, both within and beyond the immigrant community is a major goal for WDP. With this in mind they partnered with Third Coast Workers for Cooperation and Third Coast Activist Resource Center to open 5604 Manor, a community center with offices for the three organizations, the opening of which was celebrated in May 2010. The center's website, 5604manor.org, explains the ideas and vision behind its founding,

> Committed to expanding real democracy and economic justice in a sustainable world, these groups hoped to find a building centrally located that could provide office space for non-profit groups, a large room for cultural and educational events, and a spacious outdoor area for gardening and socializing. We found all of those at 5604 Manor Road in East Austin. One central goal of the project is to create a truly multi-racial/ethnic/cultural center where we can transcend the divisions that so commonly undermine creative collaborations. While we continue to read, study, and analyze the problems created by unjust systems, it's essential to progressive politics that we come together in collective effort toward mutual goals. Community is an experience, not just an idea. We make community by coming together in solidarity, not to ignore our differences but to deepen our understanding of each other.

Toward this goal the center hosts events like an "Austin Progressive Potlucker," film screenings, and presentations/lectures to bring people together for informal gatherings as well as more formal political discussions and education. Through these events the organizations create opportunities to bring together diverse residents of Austin and build that community committed to "real democracy and economic justice." By collaborating

with the Third Coast organizations and helping provide space for these events, WDP connects their local immigrant rights work to broader foreign policy and economic and social justice movements that call for drastically different social relations and working conditions.

Austin Immigrant Rights Coalition

In 2006 the Austin Immigrant Rights Coalition formed, with WDP as a co-founding member, from which it expanded to include 50 organizations and organize the largest demonstration in Austin history to oppose restrictive anti-immigrant legislation proposed by Representative James Sensenbrenner in the U.S. House. The organization continues to work on immigrant rights issues through grassroots action and policy advocacy. AIRC calls for immigration reforms that,

> "Support basic human dignity and promote civil and human rights;
> strengthen worker rights and recognize the full humanity of immigrant
> workers; promote diverse communities that are inclusive of immigrants;
> support policy initiatives that offer a path to humane legalization fairly
> and in a comprehensive manner; reunite families; stop enforcement-only
> policies, such as the militarization of the border, detentions and
> deportations; address the root economic causes of migration while
> promoting sustainable development and fair trade agreements; and provide
> equal access to housing, health care and education"
> (www.austinirc.org/whoweare.html).

Essentially this platform, which is very close to that of WDP, calls for a complete re-envisioning of immigration and citizenship policy from the federal government.

In many ways, AIRC is the most conventional organization among the three considered in this paper, or at least the one most in line with popular imagination of an immigrant rights activist organization. They organize the annual May Day demonstration to recognize International Workers Day in Austin every year, as well as marches or demonstrations focused on specific issues at other strategic moments. For example on July 29, 2010 the coalition held a vigil to recognize and oppose the scheduled implementation of Arizona's anti-immigrant policy, SB 1070. Even if they don't have a strong direct influence on policy considerations, public demonstrations like these play an important role in immigrant rights organizing. Discussing the 2006 immigration demonstrations, including the one organized by AIRC, Nestor Rodriguez, a migration expert at the University of Texas said, "The undocumented - the invisible - became visible. They established themselves as a presence and said, 'We are here.' You may not like their voice and what they want, but they became actors" (quoted in Castillo 2007). Similarly to Beltrán (2009), Rodriguez acknowledges the importance of immigrants, especially the undocumented, entering the public realm and making claims to assert their presence and belonging. This claim to belonging and legitimacy is based not in neoliberal norms of responsibility or tax-contribution, but in universal human rights and continental, rather than national definitions of American (a common slogan at rallies is "We didn't cross the border, the border crossed us").

The Coalition's work is divided into four committees, each with a different focus. The policy committee works on local, state, and national levels to promote just, comprehensive immigration policies. They are particularly active at the state level where they are able to organize grass roots pressure on legislators through participation in lobby days, phone and letter campaigns, and meeting with legislators. One steering committee member noted that the Coalition's work in this area has been important in consistently defeating anti-immigrant bills, but that they have few opportunities to push progressive reform in the conservative Texas state government. They lobbied to defeat over 60 anti-immigrant bills in the 2007 Texas legislative session (AIRC 2010). A Raids Preparedness Committee has trained immigrants on how they can protect their rights in case they are involved in an immigration raid, although a steering committee member has said this committee has had to rethink their work as federal enforcement strategies have shifted away from large-scale raids under the Obama administration. The ICE-Out committee works to keep local law enforcement and county jails from sharing information and granting access to Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers. One important accomplishment of the coalition in this area was persuading the Austin Police Department to issue citations rather than arrests for misdemeanors, which reduced Austin deportations by 60% (AIRC 2010). The focus of this committee's work is on organizing grassroots opposition to the Criminal Aliens Program and Secure Communities, two federal programs that create collaboration between ICE and local law enforcement. The final committee in AIRC is the Welcoming Committee, which works to educate the broader public to improve awareness of the positive contributions of immigrants. Initially this committee tried to organize educational meetings at local businesses or churches on

the benefits of immigration, but has decided to shift to a media campaign according to one member of the committee.

AIRC's work in combating anti-immigration policies at the state level is particularly important, as it is something that the individual organizations of the coalition would be less effective doing on their own. In November 2010, one Texas representative had seven pieces of legislation that could be considered anti-immigrant ready for introduction at the start of the session, ranging from one that mimics Arizona's SB1070 to making English the official state language, prohibiting undocumented immigrants from bringing claims to court, and limiting the ability of children born in Texas to undocumented parents to receive state benefits (Vega 2010). With combined efforts and resources coordinated through the Coalition, immigrant rights groups in Austin have been successful in defeating policies like these in past years and continuing that success will be a key part of their 2011 agenda.

The AIRC plays an important role in bringing together different organizations within the Austin activist community so that they can collaborate on certain issues and maintain awareness of what different groups are doing. One member of the steering committee considered the diverse tactics of the different members of the coalition a key strength because it allows groups to coordinate goals and ideas, without tying them into one approach. It creates a forum through which immigration organizations in Austin collaborate to protect immigrant rights from restrictive policies and to encourage local practices that promote more inclusive communities for immigrants in Austin. It creates a space of engagement through which different groups representing immigrant interests in Austin can come together to combine resources toward those interests.

Most significantly, this space allows the Coalition to represent the interests of immigrants to government agencies, suggesting a degree of political citizenship for Austin immigrants. Though they still lack the right to vote, which obviously makes any argument that they have full political citizenship unreasonable, the AIRC creates a platform through which immigrants can have a voice in state politics that would otherwise be unlikely. They use this voice then to support the civil and social citizenship rights of immigrants in Texas through influencing policy debates at the state, county, and city levels of government.

Forming a Social Movement for Substantive Citizenship

Immigrant rights social movement organizations defy simple scalar classification. Their work necessarily involves engaging issues and actors at multiple scales, often at the same time. This is inherent to the nature of working on immigration issues. Because the population impacted by such work is internationally diverse by nature, immigration activism has an inherent international dimension. Immigration policy is generally thought of primarily the domain of the national government as they make decisions about border policy, who to allow in, and how to enforce them. These policies have significant impacts on the work of all three organizations and they all engage those issues in some way, even if only through participation in national networks and policy statements. At the same time, state governments regularly make policy on how to treat immigrants, even if it is rarely as draconian as Arizona's recent bill. These policies are a major focus for immigrant organizations in Austin, which is to be expected given that Austin is the state capital for Texas, where immigration is a more significant issue at the state level than in

most parts of the country. And of course local practices by police departments, schools, employers, and city governments are central to defining the day-to-day lived experience of immigrants in a community. State and local government agencies have become increasingly prominent in shaping and enforcing immigration policies since 9/11 when immigration became a prominent security concern in the American mindset (Varsanyi 2008; Coleman 2007). These are the issues that draw the majority of immigrant organizations' efforts in Austin, but even at this level the organizations engage networks and agencies so that describing the efforts as simply "local" would be inaccurate.

The Austin-based organizations in this case study embody this complexity. Because of the diverse arenas in which immigrant rights and citizenship are negotiated and enacted, organizations necessarily operate across different scales depending on the issue at hand. Further, these scales are not mutually exclusive. WDP works primarily at the local level, on basic working conditions, such as access to water on the job, wage theft, and safety regulations. Yet even this work reaches beyond the local scale. They have spread their local organizing model by training similar groups across the nation on wage recovery and leadership development. The Mexican Consulate also supports their work, adding an international dimension to their base of support. Through partnerships with the federal government they expand the scale of actors involved in determining local labor conditions for immigrants. Clearly efforts to reform citizenship at one scale can and do filter up to alter larger state structures. Through their involvement with the AIRC, WDP coordinates and participates in demonstrations that address local, state, and national policies toward immigrants. The AIRC formed within WDP in response to proposed national legislation that would have drastically curtailed immigrant rights. The AIRC is

currently running a major campaign focused on altering the relationship between local

law enforcement in Austin with federal agencies that seek to deport immigrants from city

and county jails, an issue that involves actors that stretch across scales. Casa Marianella

is somewhat easier to pinpoint to the local scale. Their focus on the basic needs and

settlement of homeless immigrants and refugees is grounded in helping the most

impoverished members of Austin's local community. But even this work defies simple

scalar definition, in some ways. The engagement with immigration bureaucracies to help

their clients establish residency means they work with national agencies, and the

international origins of the residents influence every aspect of the organization's work.

This suggests significant scalar complexity to citizenship formations, wherein immigrant

rights organizations draws upon resources and relationships with localized and globalized

expanses in order to claim membership and legitimacy in the U.S.

Immigrant rights organizations in Austin are a crucial arena in which immigrants

assert their citizenship to claim rights and equality in government and economic practices

at a variety of scales. National government policies make it very difficult to enter the

country legally, and difficult to obtain citizenship once one is here, so that many are here

without official recognition by the federal government. This has important impacts for

residents who are unable to vote, have difficulty finding work, and are the people Castles

and Davidson (2000) call "margizens" and Varsanyi (2008) designates "neoliberal

subjects." But this does not make them passive subjects who are unable to influence their

circumstances. Non-profit and activist organizations like Casa Marianella, Workers

Defense Project, and the Austin Immigrant Rights Coalition create important local spaces

from which immigrants are able to advocate for their rights, reach out to influence the policy across scales, and assert themselves as legitimate members of society.

Casa Marianella is the only one of the three organizations discussed in this paper that obviously fits Cox's definition as a space of dependence for meeting the material needs of immigrants in Austin. Correspondingly, it keeps the lowest profile of the three organizations: it is the least overtly involved in contesting public policy and its activities occur most in the semi-private space of the shelter itself, tucked away in a quiet residential neighborhood. In the context of federal policy that creates the status of "neoliberal subjects" that Varsanyi describes, Casa can best serve the immediate, basic needs of its residents by keeping a low profile and cooperating with, rather than overtly challenging, federal authorities. In doing so, Casa serves some of those most marginalized by the current immigration system, highlighting its flaws, and does so in a way that suggests an alternative model. By bringing together immigrants and volunteers in such a setting, it becomes a space of engagement from which important initiatives for immigrant rights can emerge.

Workers Defense Project and Austin Immigrant Rights Coalition both take a much more public profile, creating community spaces, marching on public space, and engaging city, county, and state authorities in their work to overhaul immigration and citizenship policy. The drastic changes they call for could not be supported any other way. In doing so they construct spaces of engagement, in an attempt to make Austin, and often Texas as a whole, better serve immigrant needs as a space of dependence. In a way, through this work, the organizations also become spaces of dependence by supporting the "sense of significance" of immigrants in Austin (Cox 1998, 2). The agency that

immigrants enact through these organizations begins to provide the "empowerment in and over a baffling and changing world context" (Castles and Davidson 2000, 28) that is central to citizenship.

These three organizations collectively prove that Varsanyi's "neoliberal subjects" respond to that status quite actively, by forming community organizations that create spaces of engagement where they can contest that status and try to improve their standing in Austin, Texas, and the United States. Together Casa Marianella, Workers Defense Project, and the Austin Immigrant Rights Coalition form a cohesive social movement for immigrant rights in the United States that, when successful, redefines the dimensions of citizenship in the United States. Behind their advocacy lies the belief that national citizenship cannot be used to deny many of the rights that it currently does, such as the right to work and live in the U.S. with full protection under the law. Workers Defense Project and the Austin Immigrant Rights Coalition overtly call for policy changes that would essentially unmake the status of "neoliberal subjects" by reducing the threat of deportation, the stigma of "illegality," and increased protection and provision of working, housing, and education rights.

Chapter 5: Alternative Citizenships in Austin

Monica Varsanyi (2008: 882-883) presents the "neoliberal subject" as a term to describe the noncitizen residents of a nation-state, a status that in the United States is associated with the stigma of "illegality," inferior protection under the law and access to social programs, and the threat of deportation. This term, while indicative of some ways in which neoliberalism shapes membership for non-citizens, covers too broad a group of people and suggests too little agency. The primary consequences she identifies do not apply equally to all non-citizen residents in the United States. The stigma of "illegality," for example, is applied primarily to unauthorized border crossers from Mexico or Central America, as a result of government policies and social practices, despite the fact that significant numbers of undocumented immigrants come from Canada and Poland as well (Ebenshade 2001: 31-32). Even those Mexican and Central American immigrants who experience that stigma most acutely do not do so as passive subjects of some vast neoliberal order, but actively contest the negative impacts of this status in their lives.

Even if pushed to the United States by forces such as the disruption of livelihood patterns or political violence, often associated with neoliberal policies, the act of migration remains a choice. Never an easy one, or even a happy one, but it is still usually an active decision. Once they arrive many contest their unequal status, actively engaging government and businesses to alter exploitative conditions. Casa Marianella, though run primarily by citizen staff and volunteers, provides a space for a more humane model of immigrant and refugee reception and a space where the exploitation immigrants face becomes visible. Members of Workers Defense Project, many of whom are immigrants,

engage city and state government institutions to increase protections for workers' safety on the job, enforcement of those protections, and to collect unpaid wages. They explicitly and publicly target the employers most egregiously guilty of wage theft and exploitation of workers through unsafe conditions. They do this while organizing and educating at the grassroots level in their communities to build community empowerment for social justice and increased immigrant rights. Austin Immigrant Rights Coalition organizes across the immigrant population in Austin to represent the interests of immigrants by working against anti-immigrant policies at the local and state levels, and supporting progressive reforms when the opportunity arises.

The degree of organization in Austin largely supports Ehrkamp and Leitner's (2003) arguments about Turkish immigrants in Germany, where community organizations organized at the neighborhood or city level primarily engage political institutions to shape the aspects of their lives in which they construct citizenship. Citizenship is constructed and experienced in the daily lives of immigrant communities in cities. In Austin, immigrant rights organizations represent a vital organizing network that engages diversely scaled political institutions to shape policy. The role of place in this organizing supports theories of place as intersections of social relations (Hayden 1996; Miller 2000). Actors on all sides of the debate organize around shared location in Austin, but what that means is crucially shaped by the practices and policies of people and institutions from state, national, and global scales. International economic forces shape individual decisions to migrate; national and state government policies create a context of reception; and these policies construct urban realities that diverse actors negotiate.

The practices and impacts of the organizations I studied in Austin, and Casa Marianella in particular, support Grundy and Smith's argument about the importance of "creating a local social space in which to build a sense of empowerment, community and inclusion" (Grundy and Smith 2005: 399). Similar to the LGBT organizations in Toronto, Casa Marianella creates a safe, inclusive space within which the problems immigrants face, such as unpaid wages and lack of access to legal representation, can come to light. In this setting, combined with the resources and social capital of citizen volunteers and staff, further empowering organizations like Workers Defense Project and Austin Immigrant Rights Coalition can develop. Activists elsewhere could learn from the role Casa Marianella has played in the development of the immigrant rights movement in Austin. By creating a humanitarian space to meet basic needs, relationships can form to create organizations that address those needs more systemically. These sites further empower immigrants to direct to take action in their own interest, in spaces that assume the value and importance of immigrant contributions to American life, as well as the dignity and entitlement to basic rights of all people regardless of national origin.

The development of spaces like these is crucial to the process of immigrant incorporation, in which both the immigrants and the receiving societies adapt. Irene Bloemraad (2006: 5) argues that U.S. policy, with its focus on individual immigrant decisions, "appears to produce political apathy and alienation, rather than incorporation." She attributes this to U.S. immigration policy that views immigrants as a security threat and economic liability rather than people that enrich the nation culturally and bring new experiences and ideas (Bloemraad 2006: 102). While Bloemraad successfully proves that U.S. policy creates a "context of reception" that discourages political participation and

incorporation of immigrants, the responses observed in Austin are anything but apathetic. Indeed, the immigrant community in Austin actively engages the policy process to assert their membership and rights. This assertion is based in a set of principles that cannot see national origin as grounds for discrimination, but sees residence in a place and simple humanity as sufficient claims to food, housing, education, a living wage, and equal protection of the law.

In this way, Workers Defense Project and Austin Immigrant Rights Coalition directly challenge much of contemporary citizenship policy in the United States, asserting visions based in labor solidarity and human rights. Veronis (2006) discussed how an annual immigrant festival in suburban Toronto reflects and in some ways supports neoliberal social relations and norms of citizenship. The annual march coordinated by WDP and AIRC, on the other hand, takes place on May Day as part on an international workers' day, promoting solidarity and inherent rights in contrast to the individualist, consumer-oriented logics of neoliberal citizenship.. These three organizations from a social movement around assertion of citizenship for immigrants, using different actions, tactics, and spaces together to advance civil, political, social citizenship. They operate across scales, but primarily at the local level, to assert immigrants as valid members of community. This activism emerges in crucial ways from localized relationships at the grassroots level in Austin suggesting that cities are a site where the global and multiscalar dynamics that create neoliberal citizenship meets local philosophies that support, undermine or modify it to create particular local forms of membership and participation. At this local level, immigrants in Austin construct for themselves a participatory, collective citizenship.

This suggests the importance of local efforts for immigrant organizing, even if in many cases the local context will be less friendly than it is in Austin. As immigration policy shifts to depend further on local agencies, city and county governments will play an increasingly important role in shaping the daily lives of immigrants. Working at the local level also impacts the framing of issues. Local framing of policy debates is less likely to invoke nationalist discourses about what it means to be American, because the more relevant questions will be about what it means to belong in the given city and discrimination based on national origin will be harder to justify. Making such strategic decisions focuses immigration activism on more favorable political opportunity structures, as local governments are more open to grassroots movements than the dense, bureaucratic federal government that more easily excludes or ignores immigrant participation. By doing this in Austin, immigrant rights organizations create a movement that addresses the civil, political, and social citizenship of immigrants in their day to day lives.

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Appendix A: Map of Hispanic population in Austin Metro Area

Hispanic/Latino Population in Austin-San Marcos, Texas

% Hispanic/Latino
by Census Tract

3.19% - 13.06%
13.07% - 26.06%
26.07% - 41.92%
41.93% - 63.27%
63.28% - 86.58%

0   15   30 Miles

Joe Rasmussen
10/31/10
Source: US Census Bureau, ESRI