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Preface and Acknowledgments

On some level, I have always been fascinated by the ways in which context, and becoming the “other,” can change one’s own identity and perspective. My maternal ancestors hail from Poland and Macedonia, whereas my father’s side of the family is Cuban-Jewish, a community that challenges generalizations about either group. More than half a century after my relatives fled Cuba, for many family members, this experience continues to color their perspective on politics and life in the United States. This enduring influence has helped to shape my own ideas about the diversity underlying the “Latino” experience and has also guided my search for a better understanding of the dynamic relationship between politics and identity.

In particular, my paternal grandmother, who passed away in 2009, defied stereotypes in ways that continue to inspire me both professionally and intellectually. At an age when most grandparents retire, she became the first author in our family, publishing a book about sewing in both Spanish and English. Although we regularly talked politics, the most emphatic I ever heard her was in 1999, when protests erupted surrounding the case of five-year-old Elián González, whose mother drowned at sea while bringing him from Cuba to the United States. Miami’s Cuban community mobilized in support of Elián’s Florida relatives, who sought to keep him in the United States, while his father fought to bring him back to Cuba. Nearly four decades after leaving the island, my grandmother insisted that were she younger and healthier, she would have stopped traffic alongside the protesters to keep Elián from being sent back to Cuba—marking the first and only time I ever heard her threaten civil disobedience. This exchange was one of many reminders of the fascinating ways in which premigration experiences can shape an individual’s political views far into the future.

As with many first books, this project began as my doctoral dissertation at Brown University, though it has morphed into something far beyond that. Over the many years during which this book has been a work in progress, I have benefitted from the support of many people who have contributed to my scholarly development. Most importantly, I owe
a tremendous intellectual debt to my two mentors. My dissertation chair, Marion Orr, remains an advisor, friend, and ongoing source of advice, inspiration, and insightful feedback. My former advisor, the late Alan S. Zuckerman, was instrumental in encouraging me to undertake this project and in shaping my early theoretical ideas. During my dissertation research, we lost Alan prematurely to pancreatic cancer. I am one of many who were fortunate to learn from Alan’s keen intellect. Both Alan and Marion spent countless hours reading my work and helping me to develop my ideas. I have benefitted immeasurably from their wisdom and guidance as well as their kindness and patience.

Other faculty at Brown provided essential feedback and motivation throughout this process. Wendy Schiller always pushed me forward, giving me critical direction, strategic insight, and all-important deadlines. Jim Morone enthusiastically shared his visionary perspective and incredible knack for big picture ideas. Both Wendy and Jim offered comments, advice, and intellectual support invaluable to the development of my work. Marty West provided crucial methods training and helped me to test some of my early ideas. I was also fortunate to receive intellectual support and generous feedback from other faculty members at Brown, including Melani Cammett, Pauline Jones-Luong, Richard Snyder, Susan Moffitt, Rebecca Weitz-Shapiro, and Jack Combs. Brown’s Graduate School and the Department of Political Science provided essential institutional and financial support for much of my dissertation research. I was also privileged to work as a dissertation fellow at Brown’s Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America, and I am grateful to the center and to Evelyn Hu-DeHart for providing that opportunity.

I finished the manuscript while an assistant professor at Clark University, where I received tremendous support from my colleagues, particularly Valerie Sperling, Ora Szekely, Johanna Vollhardt, Mark Miller, Rob Boatright, Odile Ferly, Kristen Williams, and Janette Greenwood. The university also provided essential financial support through faculty startup funds as well as the Elmer Plischke Annual Faculty Research Award.

Beyond Clark, I benefitted enormously from the excellent feedback I received through the Gender and Political Psychology Writing Group. I am especially grateful to Mirya Holman for inviting me to join the group, for her constant advice and encouragement, for sharing her many insights on the mysteries of publishing, and for helpful comments on a number of chapters. Emily Farris has provided both friendship and
scholarly advice since the earliest days of graduate school. Other group members gave extensive feedback on various chapters, including Jennie Sweet-Cushman, Tiffany Barnes, Julie Wronski, Ray Block, Nichole Bauer, Angie Bos, and Anna Mahoney. I am also thankful for the constructive suggestions provided at various stages by Melissa Michelson, Nicholas Valentino, and Ezra Zuckerman. Additionally, I am indebted to the anonymous reviewers for their insightful and detailed feedback, which helped me to significantly improve this project.

Much of this book analyzes data from the Latino National Survey (LNS), the largest survey of the Latino electorate in history. I am deeply grateful to the survey’s principal investigators, Luis Fraga, John García, Gary Segura, Rodney Hero, Michael Jones Correa, and Valerie Martinez-Ebers, for what they have produced, for quickly working to make their groundbreaking dataset available to scholars, and for their consistent willingness to respond to questions large and small about their data.

I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to many other dear friends, new and old, who have been an essential source of support and motivation through the ups and downs of writing a book. Sònia Muñoz has consistently shared her wisdom and expertise, helping me to navigate all aspects of the PhD and beyond. My dear friend and study partner, Eli Feiman, provided critical support throughout this process, particularly in the early years. I am grateful to many others for their encouragement, advice, friendship, and laughter, which sustained me throughout this process. Although I could not possibly mention them all, some deserve special recognition, including Jenn Lucas, Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz, Maria Angelica Bautista, Mila Dragojevic, Angelica Duran Martinez, Trisha Nakano, Julianne Fisher Breitbeil, Katie Callahan Durcan, Kathryn Dunkelman, Kate Marin, and Jennifer Prewitt-Freilino. I am also thankful to Mercedes Weekes, who provided so much care and assistance to our family during the book revisions.

I am especially grateful to Chuck Myers, former director at the University Press of Kansas, for his patience, expert advice, constant professionalism, and ongoing encouragement, and to Kelly Chrisman Jacques and the editorial team at UPK for their help throughout the production process. I am also thankful to Nathan Cruz for his research assistance, particularly toward the end of this project, and to Tess Reichart for her prompt and precise proofreading skills. Some portions of Chapter 5 appeared as “The Boundaries of American-ness: Perceived Barriers among Latino Subgroups” in Latino Politics en Ciencia Política: The Search for
My family has been a constant source of love and encouragement throughout this process. My mom, Esther Negrin, instilled in me a love of learning and worked to ensure that the best educational opportunities were always available to me. I am also deeply grateful to Rachel Silber Anderson; Darrell Anderson; and Seema, Wali, and Shabana Mohamed.

Most importantly, I am thankful every day for my husband, Nick, whose endless support, advice, wisdom, patience, and love have made this entire endeavor possible. Nick has helped me work through the challenges and celebrate the joys of this process, always providing critical perspective and encouragement along the way. He has read and re-read my work and has provided indispensable assistance, particularly in the final stages of this project. I could not ask for a better partner. I dedicate this book to him and to our daughters, Miriam and Lilah. Both girls quite literally grew with this project. Miriam, six, was born during the dissertation-writing stage, and Lilah, three, was born while I was in the midst of the book revisions. Their love and laughter brighten my day, and their enthusiasm and curiosity bring me new perspective on the world. Their arrival in our multiracial, interfaith family has further deepened both my scholarly and personal interests in questions of identity and belonging, as I wonder how they will see and describe themselves someday. I look forward to the day when they are able to read and understand my work.
The New Americans?
In December 2005, the US House of Representatives passed far-reaching legislation for immigration reform. H.R. 4437 (US House of Representatives 2005), also known as the Sensenbrenner Bill, contained a range of proposals that opponents viewed as highly punitive, including increased penalties for illegal immigration, expanded construction of a nearly 700-mile fence along the US-Mexico border, and classification of unauthorized immigrants and anyone helping them enter or stay in the United States as felons. As the Senate moved to consider its own immigration proposal, between 3.5 and 5.1 million people, mainly of Latino descent, protested across the country in an unprecedented demonstration of “Latino pride and power” (Félix, González, and Ramirez 2008; Janiot 2006; Oz 2006).

Yet, the language used at these events emphasized Latino pride in a unique way—by affirming that Latinos are part of America. At these protests, which are often seen as the start of the contemporary immigrants’ rights movement, participants advanced claims of belonging and citizenship in the United States (Rosman 2013). US flags were widely distributed and displayed, along with other patriotic songs and symbols. Protesters carried signs proclaiming “We Are America” and “Today We March, Tomorrow We Vote” (Fraga, Garcia, Hero et al. 2010; Oboler 2014; Pallares and Flores-Gonzalez 2010).

With their emphasis on inclusion and patriotism, these events contrasted starkly with earlier decades of Latino organizing, which typically highlighted differences with the Anglo majority. In 1994, for instance, California voters considered Proposition 187, a popular referendum that sought to deny undocumented immigrants access to social services. Across the state, the Latino community took to the streets to protest the referendum in mobilizations dominated by foreign flags and images and the Mexican flag in particular. After California voters passed the referendum, critics argued that these foreign images fostered a sense of ethnic threat among white voters, leading many who had been undecided to support the proposal (Martin 1995).
A decade later, following a media backlash in which memories of the Proposition 187 vote were invoked, Latino organizers took a different approach to protesting H.R. 4437 (Chavez 2006; Pineda and Sowards 2007; “The Power of Symbols” 2006). Rather than emphasizing a distinct culture or community, the spring 2006 protests highlighted the commitment of Latinos to the United States as well as their claims of belonging in this country.

What led to this change in symbolic imagery? What effects did the protests, and their patriotic frame, have on Latino attitudes and self-perception? Also, what did this new identity mean? As Citrin and Sears (2014, 38) explain, “The choice of identities is often regulated by politics.” I build upon that idea by demonstrating how the debate over immigration policy, the protests that emerged in response, and their patriotic frame, or storyline, reshaped Latinos’ identities as Americans. This book was written prior to the 2016 presidential election, in which Republican nominee Donald J. Trump brought questions of immigration policy and what it means to be American back into the forefront of US politics. The increased prominence and polarization of these discussions underscore the timeliness of the arguments made throughout this book.

The discussion over who counts as American, and whether “new” Americans should be created, defines the United States as a country as well as the boundaries for who is included in US society. At the most basic level, the federal government defines the categories of “us” and “them” through laws about citizenship and immigration. These regulations provide an objective definition of an American identity (Conover 1984; Huddy 2001). Yet, identities are also frequently subject to contestation, or debate, over their content and meaning (Abdelal, Herrera, Johnston et al. 2009). Thus, like other identities, an American identity can also be more subjective (Citrin, Reingold, and Green 1990; Citrin, Wong, and Duff 2001; Huddy 2001).

As in previous eras of US history, the immigration policy debate in the twenty-first century has created changing categories of “us” versus “them.” In earlier debates, questions of membership and inclusion have targeted a range of groups, including immigrants from Europe and Asia. In the contemporary debate, Latinos have become the new “them,” with questions of immigration and references to immigrants often seen as synonymous with Latinos in general and Mexicans in particular (Chavez 2008; Hero and Preuhs 2007; Newton 2008; Rim 2009).

In recent years, however, Latino leaders have worked hard to frame themselves as the new “us.” This book studies the effects of those efforts,
evaluating the ways in which the immigration debate and responses around a particular frame can affect the broader process of Latino inclusion and political incorporation within US society. A range of existing research assumes the existence of an identity-to-politics link in which self-identification drives policy attitudes (Lee 2008). I view this relationship as more iterative. My theory develops the idea of a politics-to-identity link in which political debate and protest can influence self-identification in multiple ways, focusing specifically on the 2005–2006 congressional debate over immigration reform and the unprecedented wave of Latino protests that followed. My analysis offers a new view of the effects of the immigration debate on Latino self-identification. In so doing, I advance our understanding of the ways in which political debate and protest can influence public opinion and subjective perceptions of identity categories.

Accordingly, my book responds to recent calls for more research to better understand “the role of context in increasing the salience of national identity” (Huddy 2016, 14; see also Schildkraut 2014). To date, much of this research focuses on the influence of political context on the extent to which members of the majority group embrace a national identity. For instance, during times of increased threat—whether related to national security, racialized contexts, or tension over immigration—national identities become more prominent and more influential in shaping political attitudes (Davies, Steele, and Markus 2008; Falomir-Pichastor, Gabarrot, and Mugny 2009; Kam and Ramos 2008; Transue 2007).

With respect to minority groups, similar circumstances are thought to result in a reactive ethnicity in which individuals embrace an alternative “ethnic” identity rather than identifying with the majority group (Aleinikoff and Rumbaut 1998; Bean, Stevens, and Wierzbicki 2003; Massey and Sánchez R. 2010; Neckerman, Carter, and Lee 1999; Rumbaut and Portes 2001; Schildkraut 2005b). In contrast to existing explanations, this book explores the varied ways in which a context of political threat and social movement mobilization can shape Latino attitudes and self-perception. I ask whether, under certain circumstances, contentious policy debate and a hostile political context can lead a marginalized group to have increased feelings of inclusion rather than increased distance from the majority group. I address this question by examining Latino attitudes about immigration policy and self-identification before and after the 2006 protests.

My research also highlights an important paradox: Latinos have
long indicated that they prioritize other policy issues, such as the economy and education, over immigration. Yet, the immigration debate is uniquely poised to mobilize a majority of the Latino population and to influence its political incorporation into the United States. I develop this idea while also studying the variation that underlies this paradox. Because the debate over immigration reform does not affect all Latinos equally, my analysis emphasizes intragroup differences within this population. For instance, Puerto Ricans are born US citizens regardless of birthplace, and Cubans have received preferential immigration status in the United States for decades, making immigration policy less salient for members of these national origin groups. The immigration debate is also less central to more established Latinos, such as those who are more acculturated or have been here for many generations (García Bedolla 2005). I find that distinct subgroups within the Latino population respond differently to the immigration debate and the 2006 protests, with the politics-to-identity link contingent upon issue salience.

Why Latinos?

The US Census defines a person as Latino or Hispanic if that individual is of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race (Ennis, Rios-Vargas, and Albert 2011). As this definition suggests, Latino is commonly thought to refer to an individual’s ethnicity, considered separate and distinct from one’s racial category. Although race traditionally refers to skin color, ethnicity suggests a shared culture or experience and may include individuals of any race. For the Latino population, language and religion are two commonly cited indicators of this shared culture.

In 2003, Latinos officially overtook African Americans as the country’s largest minority group (Segura and Rodrigues 2006). At the time of the 2010 US Census, an estimated 50.5 million Latinos lived in the United States, constituting approximately 16 percent of the overall population. This figure represents a sharp increase from the 35.3 million Latinos counted in 2000; indeed, more than half of the total population growth in the United States during that ten-year period reflected growth in the Latino population (Ennis, Rios-Vargas, and Albert 2011).

As the Latino population grows, so too has this group’s potential to influence electoral outcomes. Between 1998 and 2008, the Latino share
of the national electorate doubled, from 3.6 percent to 7.4 percent (Barreto and Segura 2014). In 2012, for the first time, Latinos constituted an estimated 10 percent of the national electorate (Lopez and Taylor 2012). High concentrations of Latino voters in key swing states such as Nevada, Florida, and Colorado have left this population poised to play a decisive role in the nation’s presidential election process. The Latino electorate was instrumental in contributing to President Barack Obama’s 2012 victory, with the candidates’ distinct positions on immigration policy significantly influencing Latino voting choices (Barreto and Collingwood 2015). Although this book was written prior to the 2016 presidential election, both the Latino electorate and the immigration debate remained central to that contest. Group members have also had a growing influence in local and state politics across the United States (Farris 2013) and in key US Senate and House races (Rodriguez 2012).

Yet, the extent to which the Latino population embodies a set of similar experiences, attitudes, and preferences in US society is less clear. Latinos in the United States hail from more than twenty different countries, representing vastly different historical and political backgrounds. Some arrived seeking economic opportunity, and others came as refugees from a bloody civil war, military takeover, or regime of single-party rule. Some have roots in prosperous democracies, whereas others have no experience with democracy and no understanding of the basic underpinnings of the US political system. Still others have ancestors who became Americans by conquest; for instance, through the acquisition of Puerto Rico in 1898 and territory originally belonging to Mexico in 1848. As will be discussed throughout this book, this diversity shapes the perspective through which individuals view US political life as well as attitudes about their identity as Americans and sense of belonging in the United States.

As the Latino population expands, it is also becoming ever more diverse. Table 1.1 illustrates the growth of the Latino population since 2000, focusing specifically on the five largest national origin subgroups. As this table demonstrates, Mexicans constitute almost two-thirds of the Latino community in the United States today and represent much of the overall growth within this population. However, other national origin groups are growing fast.

Between 2000 and 2010, the Salvadoran population in the United States increased by more than 150 percent, making this community among the fastest-growing national origin groups (Ennis, Rio-Vargas,
and Albert 2011). Indeed, estimates from the 2011 American Community Survey suggest that Salvadorans may have surpassed Cubans as the third-largest national origin group in the United States, with populations of 1.95 million and 1.89 million, respectively. The Dominican population is not far behind, with an estimated 1.4 million living in the United States as of 2010 (Lopez and Gonzalez-Barrera 2013).3

For immigrant groups, experiences before coming to the United States significantly influence political attitudes and behavior upon arrival (Wals 2011). To the extent that existing research on Latino politics in the United States explores variation by national origin, much of this literature focuses on distinctions in attitudes and political behavior between the three historically large subgroups: Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans (Abrajano and Alvarez 2010; DeSipio 1996a; Oboler 1995). The rapid growth of other national origin groups underscores the need to better understand Latino diversity beyond traditional populations, and particularly how group members’ varied experiences influence their identification as American and their political participation.

In addition to national origin, a growing body of research highlights intragroup differences based on factors such as language proficiency (Abrajano 2010; García Bedolla 2003), immigrant generation (García Bedolla 2005), and gender (Bejarano 2014; García Bedolla, Lavariaga Monforti, and Pantoja 2007; Hardy-Fanta 1993; Jaramillo 2010; Jones-Correa 1998a). Immigrants have also moved into “new settlement areas,” adding additional geographical variation to this already heterogeneous population (Marrow 2005; Massey 2008).4 Demonstrating this

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Origin</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
<th>Change, 2000–2010</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>35,305,818</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>50,477,594</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>15,171,776</td>
<td>43.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mexican</td>
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<td>31,798,258</td>
<td>63.00</td>
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<td>Puerto Rican</td>
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<td>4,623,716</td>
<td>9.20</td>
<td>1,217,538</td>
<td>35.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuban</td>
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<td>1,785,547</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>543,862</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dominican</td>
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<td>1,414,703</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>649,758</td>
<td>84.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvadoran</td>
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<td>1,648,968</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>993,803</td>
<td>151.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: US Census Bureau (Ennis 2011)
rapid growth, between 2000 and 2010, the Latino population increased by more than 50 percent in the majority of states and by more than 100 percent in nine states, from South Carolina to South Dakota (Ennis, Rios-Vargas, and Albert 2011). Thus, questions relating to Latinos’ sense of identity as “new” Americans, their political participation via protests, and their incorporation into US society are increasingly national ones. With the contentious debate over immigration policy once again at the forefront of US politics, the distinct ways in which group members’ experiences interact with the heated rhetoric of the immigration debate hold important implications for the country’s political system and polity.

Outline of the Book

My politics-to-identity theory explores varying Latino responses to the 2006 immigration debate as well as the distinct ways in which this debate and ensuing protests influenced Latino political incorporation into the United States. Drawing on a range of primary and secondary accounts, the first part of this book presents important theoretical and historical background to support later arguments.

Specifically, Chapter 2 develops my politics-to-identity theory, incorporating scholarship on policy feedback, social movements, and framing. I also explain key elements of the research design used in later chapters, which employ data from the Latino National Survey (LNS; Fraga, Garcia, Hero et al. 2006a). Interviews for this major national survey were conducted before, during, and after the spring 2006 protests. Throughout the book, I take advantage of this rare natural experiment to study shifts in Latino attitudes about immigration policy and on questions related to social identities.

Chapter 3 places the 2006 immigration debate and ensuing protests in historical context. I begin by describing key developments in US immigration law over time. Then, I explore the varying ways in which Latino groups have framed identity over the last century. Whereas very early advocacy organizations advanced themes of assimilation and incorporation, by the 1960s, a rhetorical shift emerged. Groups began to emphasize differences with the majority, first in terms of national origin identity (for instance, the Chicano and Puerto Rican Nationalist movements), and subsequently around a pan-ethnic (Latino/Hispanic)
identity. This chapter explores this evolution and the eventual shift to the “We Are America/Somos America” message of 2006, which served as a rallying cry to unite a diverse community.

In later chapters, I argue that the immigration debate has varied salience to members of different Latino subgroups and that the effects of the immigration debate will be contingent upon these differences. As a precursor to these arguments, Chapter 3 closes with an overview of the five largest Latino subgroups in the United States and their varied immigration histories.

The second part of the book analyzes Latino attitudes about immigration policy, what it means to be American, and whether Latinos place themselves in this category. In addition to the LNS, these analyses use data from other major national surveys, including the General Social Survey (GSS) and the Pew Research Center’s National Survey of Latinos (NSL).

Chapter 4 introduces the idea of the “immigration paradox”: in national surveys conducted over many years, Latinos have consistently stated that immigration reform is not their top policy priority. Yet, this issue is uniquely poised to influence the attitudes and political behavior of some members of the Latino community. I examine Latino public opinion about immigration reform, establishing the varied salience of this policy debate. I then test the effects of the 2006 protests on Latino attitudes toward immigration policy. My analysis demonstrates that compared with similar respondents interviewed before these events, individuals interviewed afterward are more likely to express support for liberal immigration policies. Yet, even after the protests, significant variation persists in attitudes about immigration reform.

The fifth chapter turns to the question of what it means to be American. Although a growing body of research has begun to examine the varying ways in which members of minority groups define this term (Citrin and Sears 2014; Masuoka and Junn 2013; Schildkraut 2014; Sileber Mohamed 2014), our understanding of differences both across and particularly within minority groups remains limited. Comparing Latinos with other racial/ethnic groups, I explore the extent to which Latinos understand American as a “closed” category, defined by ascriptive characteristics (for instance, skin color, birthplace, language, and religion). Importantly, placing greater emphasis on these characteristics suggests that the category is inaccessible to individuals who do not meet these criteria. I also evaluate intragroup variation in perceptions of what it
means to be American. The final part of this chapter analyzes whether the 2006 protests—and their unique, patriotic frame—influenced Latino understandings of what it means to be American.

Chapter 6 explores variation in the extent to which Latinos identify as American. In particular, in this chapter, I am interested in understanding whether there are gendered differences in self-identification. Within the Latino population, men typically prefer continuity with their home country, whereas women prefer change (Jones-Correa 1998a, 1998b). Latinas are also more likely to participate politically in the United States (Bejarano 2014; Silber Mohamed 2015). Yet, across societies, women are commonly viewed as “carriers of culture,” seeking to preserve traditional cultural values (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, and Vedder 2001; Warikoo 2006). I analyze the ways in which these competing tendencies influence Latino self-identification and attitudes about incorporating into the United States. I also explore variation in self-identification by national origin and language preference.

Chapter 7 returns its focus to the 2006 immigration debate and the ensuing protests. This chapter tests my politics-to-identity theory to see how the protests and their distinct frame influenced Latino self-identification. Consistent with the message of the protests, I show that respondents interviewed after these events are more likely to see themselves as American than those interviewed before and are more likely to say that Latinos should change to blend into the United States. My results counter the assumptions of existing literature, which assumes that in situations of adversity, an increased sense of discrimination will make all members of the Latino community more likely to identify in pan-ethnic terms.

My politics-to-identity theory also emphasizes the importance of issue salience, with the effects of the immigration debate likely to vary based on the relative importance of this policy to different Latino subgroups. Building on the findings of earlier chapters, I show that the shift in self-identification following the 2006 protests is concentrated among subgroups for whom the immigration debate is most salient, including Spanish-dominant respondents as well as Mexicans and Dominicans. This chapter demonstrates the power of political events and messages to shape individual self-perception and also underscores variation within the Latino community.

In the concluding chapter, I outline national-level developments with respect to immigration policy since 2006. Although this book was
written prior to the 2016 presidential election, I also discuss the increasing politicization of this topic during the course of that campaign. Drawing on the theories advanced in this book, I speculate about the implications for Latino political incorporation, including the varying ways that different subsets of the Latino population might be influenced by this ongoing debate.

Conclusion

Although identity is frequently conceptualized as an independent variable associated with certain political attitudes or participatory behaviors, I demonstrate that politics and political debate can also influence identity in varied ways. As Chapter 2 outlines in greater detail, my politics-to-identity theory emphasizes that this process is contingent upon social movement mobilization, frames, and issue salience, arguing that political debates and protest can result in unexpected outcomes.

Throughout the book, I explore the ways in which Latino social movements respond to the politics of the day. Over time, these groups have repeatedly reframed their messages about identity, inclusion, and assimilation. As the United States continues to grapple with questions of immigration reform, and the Latino population continues to increase, my focus on this policy debate also holds important lessons for our understanding of the varied ways in which group members are incorporating into US political life.

In light of the growing political importance of Latinos in the United States, improving our knowledge of the malleable nature of social identity within this population, and the broader political incorporation process, is critical for our understanding of the nation’s polity in the years ahead. Additionally, my analyses emphasize important areas of diversity within the Latino population, identifying variation by level of acculturation, national origin group, and gender. These differences are notable for both scholars and political actors seeking to better understand Latino responses to the immigration debate.