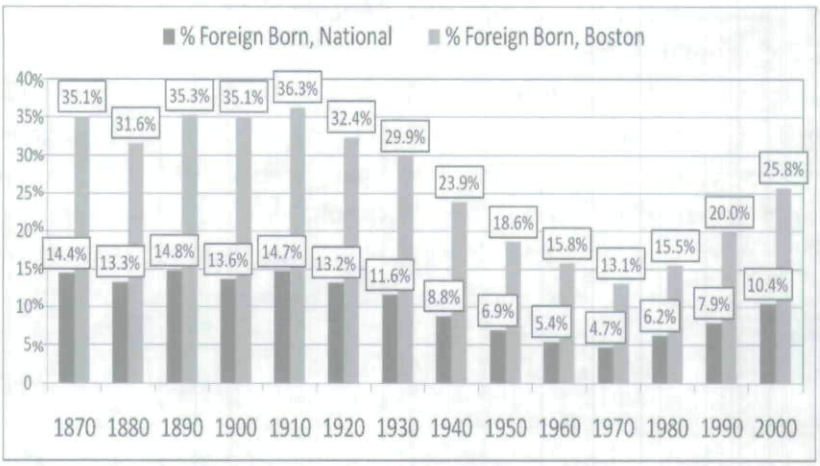
Table I: Foreign-Born Population for the City of Boston and National Average (1870–2000)



Data Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census. American FactFinder.

2006 were small; only 2,000 people rallied at the Boston Common on May 1. Additional rallies were held in East Boston/Chelsea (5,000) and Somerville (1,000), but even allowing for these dispersed sites, the numbers were not large in any terms.[6] More had marched in the previous rallies held on April 10, 2006, but neither reached the level of Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, or New York. Why choose a city where the rallies were small?

Initially, we selected Boston for two reasons: access and demographics. Carlos Yescas had worked in the Mexican consulate for over four years and had excellent contacts both in Boston and in the New England area more generally. We hoped this would allow us to explore and compare both contemporary efforts at coalition building as well as transnational forces shaping immigrant politics in the United States. Second, the presence of large numbers of undocumented Irish immigrants in Massachusetts—currently estimated at 60,000—provided an important opportunity for examining the role of white immigrants in contemporary immigrant rights coalitions.[7] We report on issues of transnationalism and white ethnics in another paper (Hattam and Yescas 2008).

While conducting the research, a third factor emerged that made Massachusetts an especially important research site for innovative coalition-building that is the focus of this paper. The presence of the gay marriage movement (Mass Equality) in support of the 2003 Massachusetts Supreme Court ruling legalizing same-sex marriage in the landmark case of *Goodridge v. Mass. Department of Public Health* (440 Mass. 309, 798 NE2d 941) of November 23, 2008. Our research revealed, somewhat to our surprise, that the cutting edge of coalition politics did not lie at the nexus of immigration and race, but centered instead on emerging affinities and tensions between gay rights and immigrant rights advocates. The intersecting mobilizations around sexuality and migration are changing rapidly. We now believe that new identifications are being forged and discrimination is being reimagined in ways that will likely shape the broad contours of immigration politics for decades to come. The paper proceeds into two parts: part one examines competing coalitions over immigration and race, and part two considers the intersection of sexuality and migration.

Before presenting our research, it helps to map Boston's changing demographics. Population shifts have been rapid over the last three decades, so much so that the nonwhite residents of Boston passed the 50 percent mark in 2000.[8] The change has not only occurred in Boston proper as the ethnic make-up of many surrounding towns has changed as well.[9] According to the U.S. Census of 2000, over a quarter of Boston's population were foreign born.[10] The percentage of foreign born for the year 2000 is comparable with that of the 1930s and 1940s when the city was among the 10 largest urban centers with foreign-born populations. Interestingly, the percentage of Boston's foreign-born consistently has remained at least twice that of the foreign-born population for the nation as a whole (see table 1). In 1950, for example, the foreign born population for the United States was 6.9 percent and rose to 10.4 percent in 2000 while the foreign born in Boston was 18.6 percent in 1950 and 25.8 percent in 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau 2001: 9).

Thus, while Boston generally is not considered a gateway city on a scale comparable to Miami, New York, Chicago, or Los Angeles, immi-

gration has been an important component of the Boston metropole for the past 100 years.

In 2000, the top 10 countries of origin for Boston's foreign-born population were as follows: Haiti (10 percent), Dominican Republic (8 percent), China (7 percent), Vietnam (6 percent), El Salvador (4 percent), Jamaica (4 percent), Cape Verde (4 percent), Colombia (3 percent), Ireland (3 percent), and Brazil (3 percent). This makes recent immigration to Boston very different from that of the 1950s, when the bulk of the immigrant population in Boston was of European descent. Both the city of Boston and the state of Massachusetts more generally are important centers of family reunification for immigrants from Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Cape Verde, and Ireland.[11] Table 2 identifies the country of origin of Boston immigrants as recorded in the 2006 American Community Survey.

Although immigrants are frequently drawn to large metropoles, smaller cities and towns also have been transformed. According to the Census Bureau, the surrounding towns of Chelsea and Lynn have become home to recent immigrants from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Ecuador, while the population of Lowell and parts of Somerville now include large numbers of Dominicans and Brazilians, respectively, as well as other Latino and Caribbean immigrant from Haiti. In Malden, Medford, and Quincy, Chinese, Vietnamese and other Asian immigrants have increasingly replaced an earlier generation of Irish immigrants.[12]

On April 11, 2006, one day after the first rally, the *Boston Globe* published pictures of shuttered storefronts in Jamaica Plain and other immigrant neighborhoods when the "day without immigrants," as in much of the rest of the country, only became a partial reality. The immigrant boycott was mostly felt in Alston-Brighton, Jamaica Plain, East Boston, and East Cambridge, where large numbers of Brazilian, Mexican, Salvadoran, Vietnamese, and Chinese migrants have opened businesses or now staff big chain outlets. Their presence has revitalized main streets and urban malls that had been abandoned decades ago, when many white residents left the city for the outer suburbs.