

# = Chapter 1 =

## Introduction

Three general questions have long driven debates in social science and public policy about immigration to the United States: How many and what kinds of immigrants are (or should be) coming to the country? How do new arrivals affect both the country and the persons already here? And how rapidly and how well are immigrants being integrated into the economy and American society as a whole?<sup>1</sup> The last of these questions is arguably the most important in the long run. The success or failure of immigrant integration lays bare the values of contemporary American society by showing how the country treats one of its most vulnerable (and increasingly needed) groups. As immigrants constitute ever larger components of the U.S. workforce, the stakes associated with immigrant integration rise ever higher. Because arrivals from Mexico make up the largest single immigrant group, and because so many enter without much education and without legal status, their presence has created the most significant integration challenge now facing the country.<sup>2</sup> This book analyzes how that challenge is being met. Although many immigration issues (such as the country's need for high-skilled immigrants) deserve extended study, research into Mexican American integration arguably addresses the single most significant piece of the U.S. immigration-policy puzzle.

Would the United States benefit from adopting new immigrant policies? Answering this question must take into account how well current policies are working. To what degree has the recent integration of Mexican immigrants and their descendants been successful? If current kinds and levels of integration are satisfactory, new policies might not be needed. But if current integration could be improved, thus suggesting a need for alternative policies, what should these policies be? In such a case, an important corollary question also arises: How important is it for the country to adopt such new policies? This book assesses overall integration among Mexican Americans, strives to understand the causal origins of their integration patterns, and, based on the results of our analyses, makes recommendations

about immigrant integration policies. Note that we speak here of immigrant policies, not immigration policies. The latter refer to laws and practices pertaining to which immigrants come; the former refer to laws and practices affecting immigrants after they arrive. Although conceptually distinct, these two policy domains are interrelated: certain immigration policies often contribute to inadequate immigrant integration outcomes, which in turn point to the need for new immigrant policies.

The number of Mexican migrants entering this country in recent decades has eclipsed the totals from any other country. From 2003 to 2013, the United States granted legal permanent residency to nearly 1.7 million Mexican immigrants, more than twice the total from the next-largest sending country, China.<sup>3</sup> Also, during the 1990s until 2009, more of the unauthorized persons who established *de facto* residency came from Mexico than from any other country.<sup>4</sup> Despite a dramatic drop-off in migration since the Great Recession, the total number of unauthorized Mexicans in the country by 2012 was about 6.1 million people (or 56 percent of all unauthorized residents). Most of these migrants came as laborers, and their skill level is generally low. The schooling level of recent Mexican immigrants is 9.2 years on average (authors' calculations from IPUMS data), the lowest of any major entry group.<sup>5</sup> But if these migrants can nevertheless find plenty of work, the implication for policy is that their labor is necessary for the economy and that their integration also should matter for the strength of the larger social fabric.

Although the full integration of Mexican immigrants and their descendants is clearly desirable, social science research has not yet generated consensus about the nature and degree of this integration. Even when agreement exists on such matters as, say, second-generation education being higher than that of the first generation, or third-generation schooling still lagging behind that of white natives, disagreement arises about the reasons for such patterns. Thus it remains unclear why integration is incomplete. This unfortunate dissensus sometimes comes about simply because researchers assess integration in different ways. Depending on the angle from which they approach the matter, researchers can appear to generate different results, leading some to conclude with guarded optimism that many of today's less-skilled Mexican migrant workers will become tomorrow's prosperous U.S. citizens,<sup>6</sup> while others remain pessimistic about Latino integration.<sup>7</sup> As the literature has noted, optimistic or pessimistic conclusions can simply depend in part on whether researchers exclude the least-integrated immigrant (or first) generation in analyses of Mexican American mobility.<sup>8</sup>

But more substantive factors underlie the various interpretations of research results. The main controversy concerns the role of ethnoracial discrimination in forestalling Mexican American integration. Scholars of assimilation have envisioned such discrimination as diminishing across

generations, especially when institutional structures exist to support attainment for nonwhite minorities.<sup>9</sup> The research findings emanating from this neo-assimilationist tradition tend to suggest little need for further policy reform, beyond maintaining civil rights laws and affirmative-action programs to sustain schooling and labor-market opportunities for immigrants who belong to disadvantaged minority groups. Another research approach emphasizes the persistence of discrimination, which thwarts even third-generation integration.<sup>10</sup> Ironically, the short-term policy recommendations from such studies are similarly minimal, because the prejudice undergirding discrimination is seen as so deeply embedded in culture and institutions that only long-term policies such as improving education have been recommended as ways to ameliorate the problem.

Our emphasis is on altogether different factors and falls between the neo-assimilation and racial-discrimination extremes. It offers the prospect of results that imply concrete and immediate policy needs. We focus on the effects of unauthorized migration status on integration, both for the children and the grandchildren of Mexican immigrants, examined separately by gender. Although the role of unauthorized status has previously been recognized as an integration handicap for first-generation Mexican immigrants, its legacy influence on the children and grandchildren of immigrants has not been sufficiently examined in integration research, either theoretically or empirically. On the theory side, unauthorized status has often been noted by scholars as something likely to constitute an important limiting influence on integration,<sup>11</sup> but it has tended to be viewed mainly as a factor to be considered in analyses rather than as a phenomenon with broader theoretical significance deriving from its institutional embeddedness in official definitions of societal membership.<sup>12</sup> On the empirical side, the lack of data about unauthorized status, especially for the parents and even the grandparents of the U.S.-born second and third generations, respectively, has foreclosed the possibility of examining how much difference unauthorized status makes for integration. Also largely yet unexamined but nonetheless important are assessments of the effects of changes in migration status, by which newcomers to the United States successfully transition from unauthorized to legal status.<sup>13</sup>

The integration patterns of this latter group of migrants may especially matter for policy. If migrants who were able to legalize could subsequently (and relatively quickly) find steadier and higher-paying jobs, and if their children in turn benefited from this status change and from the ensuing incentives to obtain more schooling, this would imply that unauthorized migration status *per se* plays a substantial role in holding back migrants and their children. However, if such legalized migrants and their children showed levels of schooling and income little different from those of migrants who come to the country illegally and remain unauthorized, it would suggest that legalization provides few benefits

and that some other factor, such as ethnoracial status, limits Mexican Americans' integration. In contrast, if those who were able to legalize exhibited substantially higher integration, so that they ended up on a par with those who come legally, the policy implications would be dramatically different. If changes in migration status of parents allowed their children to learn more and earn more, good policy would emphasize providing opportunities for legalization.

Understanding the integration of Mexican Americans thus involves conceptualizing what unauthorized status means, gauging to what degree it handicaps Mexican Americans, and unraveling how this and other forces govern economic and social successes and shortfalls. Integration encompasses multiple dimensions and crosses multiple generations, and unless research tries to cover their sizable scope rather thoroughly, it risks drawing conclusions based on either partial data or unfinished processes. To develop a logic for how unauthorized status, and more broadly lack of early societal membership, hampers many other aspects of advancement, we draw on several theoretical approaches about immigrant integration. Because theoretical perspectives are often not mutually exclusive, more than one may apply. Also, some may pertain to certain kinds of integration better than others, and some may describe certain subgroups more than others. In short, hybrid perspectives may be needed to account for Mexican American integration.

At the level of specific research goals, we seek to assess the effects of unauthorized entry and subsequent changes in migration status on multiple kinds of integration across three generations. We first gauge the effect of unauthorized migration status in the immigrant generation, looking at its relationship with key labor-market indicators (including education and income). Then we ascertain how such parental status affects both the socioeconomic and sociocultural integration of their children, including those born in the United States. But it is crucial not to limit our analyses to the first two generations. We could focus only on mobility from the first to the second generation (that is, on how much integration occurs comparing immigrants with the children of immigrants). Indeed, doing so would constitute a self-contained endeavor in its own right. Instead, we trace out such differences through a third-only generation (not a third-plus generation, as we emphasize later in this chapter) to capture longer-term integration processes. Because the mobility literature has long shown the importance of parents' socioeconomic status on children's outcomes,<sup>14</sup> looking at integration across three generations without considering the legacy effects of unauthorized migration would omit a crucial factor that may influence the overall process. Thus we do both in what follows, using unique data collected in the metropolitan Los Angeles area that provide information on both respondents and their parents.

## Definitions and Use of Certain Terms

Before proceeding further, some terminological clarification may be useful. First, we often use the terms *Hispanic* and *Latino* interchangeably, as well as the terms *Mexican-origin population* and *Mexican Americans*. In each case, we do so with the understanding that we are referring to persons living in the United States who came from Mexico or whose ancestors at one time lived in Mexico, including the period when Mexico extended to much of today's American Southwest. In our usage, these terms are meant to cover unauthorized Mexican immigrants, most of whom are included to a certain extent (although not identified as such) in official U.S. government sources of data such as the decennial census. Our specific focus is the integration of Mexican Americans, although we may introduce heuristic theoretical comparisons involving other immigrant or ethnoracial groups to clarify and sharpen understanding. When we speak of Mexican Americans, we thus mean not only those who live in the United States by dint of geographic annexation or who have moved to the United States from Mexico (either temporarily or permanently) but also their children, their grandchildren, and other descendants further removed.

Although only those who initially moved to the United States from today's Mexico are technically immigrants, to assess the integration experience of the Mexican-origin group in its entirety (a phenomenon that may take place over several generations), we need to go beyond just the experiences of the immigrant generation and consider those of the children and grandchildren of immigrants as well. It might even be helpful to study the great-grandchildren of immigrants, but information on the birthplaces of great-grandparents (which would be required to define who falls into a fourth-generation category) is generally lacking or sketchy. So as a matter of first approximation, we concentrate on three main groups of Mexican Americans, referring to immigrants as the first generation, the children of immigrants as the second generation, and the grandchildren of immigrants as the third generation. We further subdivide these groups, depending on the age at arrival of the immigrants or the nativity of parents and grandparents in the cases of the second and third generations, respectively. Following convention, we may refer to the Mexican-born children of immigrants as the 1.5 generation if they came to the United States before the age of fourteen. We refer to respondents with one foreign-born parent and one native-born parent as the 2.5 generation.

Considerable potential also exists for confusion about the racial and ethnic status of today's immigrant groups.<sup>15</sup> Contemporary social science views racial and ethnic labels as social constructions, meaning that these

labels come not from immutable physical or biological characteristics but from the social meanings (often pejorative and stereotypical) that have been attached to these and other characteristics. Despite this, and all too often consistent with past stereotypes, the concept of race is still often treated as more fixed and immutable than is the concept of ethnicity.<sup>16</sup> In other instances, *race* is often used synonymously with national origin (that is, as in the more “fixed” sense that terms like *African American* are often employed to refer to persons whose ancestors came to the United States from Africa), whereas the term *ethnicity* is often applied to cultural characteristics associated with members of a particular group. In the context of racial and ethnic terminologies used in the United States, especially those constituting the basis for official government classifications, the term *Hispanic* (often used in a national-origin sense) is applied to those persons who self-report themselves in such terms, even though data collection agencies are careful to note that Hispanics “can be of any race” (as the term *race* is used by the U.S. government).

Here, we do not belabor these distinctions, although we recognize their importance. Rather, we mean that both self-reports and attributions of racial or ethnic status may be markers that correlate with other characteristics. The issue for this study is what term we use to designate such statuses. We adopt the term *ethnoracial status* to refer to any “racial” or “ethnic” status that may constitute a basis for self- or other-classification.<sup>17</sup> Thus we speak of both Mexican Americans and African Americans as members of ethnoracial groups. We leave as an empirical matter the determination of the extent to which any two groups are similar or dissimilar in the ways they see themselves and are treated by others rather than beginning with a terminology that presupposes some underlying basis of racial or ethnic group membership.

## Features of This Investigation

This study has numerous distinctive features. Most important, it has a two-pronged focus. It both develops a new approach for analyzing immigrant integration in general and, relying on this approach, assesses the extent of integration for the most important immigrant group in the United States at the moment, Mexican Americans. Within these two broad emphases, four particular features of the book are especially notable.

### *The Meaning and Effects of Unauthorized Status*

The first distinctive feature is that the book develops a new theoretical perspective about why and how unauthorized status, reinforced by immigration and immigrant policies of the United States over the past fifty years, hinders the integration of Mexican Americans. Even as recent

demographic changes in the United States have ensured a growing need for labor migrants, migration policies have all but guaranteed that most of those entrants will be unable to attain the status of legal permanent resident. Furthermore, as enforcement policies have become harsher, such migrants now must live even more on the margins of society than their predecessors may have had to. Although unauthorized Mexican migrants have always lacked full societal membership, the gap between their experiences and full membership has worsened, thereby exacerbating their lack of integration. In any case, studying the adverse effects on today's second and third generations of unauthorized parents or grandparents probably understates the current magnitude of such effects because conditions may now be even harsher than thirty or forty years ago.

We contend that right from the beginning, legal status—or, more generally, societal membership—is crucial for integration, especially socioeconomic integration. The harder the social boundary that delineates who is deemed suitable for social (and particularly legal) citizenship in a given society, the more likely immigrants are to experience formal and informal exclusion and stigmatization to the point of being deemed socially illegitimate.<sup>18</sup> We call this absence of societal membership *membership exclusion*. The nature of membership exclusion can and does vary from country to country, involving variously religion (for example, being Islamic in many European countries);<sup>19</sup> origins in a former colony (for example, Algerians in France during the 1960s and 1970s);<sup>20</sup> race (for example, African Americans before the civil rights era and to a considerable extent even afterward);<sup>21</sup> residency restrictions (for example, Chinese of rural origin living without official papers in a large city);<sup>22</sup> and citizenship restrictions (for example, Turkish and other guest workers in Germany during the 1960s and 1970s)<sup>23</sup> or just second-class citizenship (many Arabs in Israel today).<sup>24</sup> Whatever the particular basis for the existence of a strong exclusionary boundary, its effect in the receiving society is to stigmatize migrants falling outside the boundary and to reinforce the view that their presence and status are illegitimate.

In the United States historically, notable cases of denials of social citizenship include African Americans in the South during slavery, Mexican Americans in Texas in the second half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries, the forced relocation of Native Americans, as in the Trail of Tears, and Chinese exclusion.<sup>25</sup> All these groups were either dislocated or subjected to apartheid-like restrictions that were not officially eliminated until the landmark civil rights legislation of the mid 1960s.<sup>26</sup> Immigrants who face such exclusions today, like these ethnoracial minorities earlier, experience social and psychological distress<sup>27</sup> as the strain and tension stemming from a lack of membership dampen structural forms of immigrant incorporation, such as educational attainment.<sup>28</sup>

Since the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 made it illegal to hire unauthorized workers,<sup>29</sup> migration status in the United States has increasingly constituted this kind of strong boundary, especially for Mexicans, who make up the bulk of the U.S. unauthorized population.<sup>30</sup> Because so many Mexicans have come to the United States as unauthorized entrants and then remained in marginal statuses for long periods of time, their individual geographic and social mobility has been restricted by such social and legal exclusions as the inability in most states to get a driver's license and the risk of apprehension and deportation. The effects of these burdens extend to their children, undercutting their access to opportunities in school, heightening stress, undermining motivations to achieve, and slowing cognitive and emotional development.<sup>31</sup> The membership-exclusion conceptualization thus explicitly emphasizes that structural integration depends on this earliest form of political incorporation. In the case of Mexicans, structured integration depends on having or obtaining legal status or official indication that legal status is imminent.

Empirically, we develop and present an estimate of the education penalty among the children of Mexican immigrants that results from their parents residing in the country as unauthorized migrants. We also evaluate the extent to which the penalty disappears, if at all, when migrant parents are able to legalize. In addition, we assess the relative importance of this penalty compared with other factors affecting incorporation. To our knowledge, this is the first time such relative magnitudes have been calculated and comparatively examined for the second generation. The results provide a basis for developing quantitative assessments of the human-capital gains that could be attained if immigration policy reforms were to provide pathways to legalization.

### *Gender Differences in Integration*

A second distinctive feature of the book involves explicit attention to the role that gender plays in shaping integration. Theories of why migration takes place in the first place have often noted how decisions to migrate emerge from family or household contexts that differentially affect males and females.<sup>32</sup> However, in seeking explanations of immigrant integration after migration, researchers have less often explicitly considered how family and household factors may influence males and females differently, a somewhat surprising underemphasis given that migration itself often both strengthens family bonds and occurs among more cohesive families.<sup>33</sup> Of course, rather than fostering cohesion, migration may also involve family separation and disruption, outcomes that hamper integration.<sup>34</sup> Such different effects of migration on family cohesion point to the possibility that migration itself, especially unauthorized labor migration, may be associated with family-based orientations and cultural frames

and repertoires that facilitate integration in some instances and retard it in others, and differentially so for males and females.

An example comes from recent research findings showing that resource-poor unauthorized Mexican labor migrants develop short-term, family-oriented strategies, both among the immigrants themselves and among their children, as ways to minimize economic risk. Such tendencies may fruitfully be viewed as family-based cultural frames and repertoires that affect not only integration behaviors among unauthorized labor migrants<sup>35</sup> but also behaviors that spill over to their offspring.<sup>36</sup> They include, for example, emphases among both fathers and sons on finding and keeping jobs to maintain stability of income flows and the imposition of protective orientations toward daughters to maintain their marriageability and capacity for caring for parents in old age. Such cultural tendencies may limit investment in the education of sons, sacrificing longer-term maximization of sons' earnings while ironically leading to gains in daughters' education because parents view school activities as providing safe supervision for daughters.<sup>37</sup> Evidence suggests these tendencies do not carry over strongly to the third generation.<sup>38</sup>

### *Different Kinds of Integration for Both Groups and Individuals*

A third feature of the study is that it explicitly conceptualizes how the multidimensionality of integration corresponds with theoretical perspectives on incorporation. Theoretical approaches about integration differ in what they imply about the components of migration, with some (such as classic assimilation) suggesting that integration tends to be a more one-dimensional process. On the other hand, more-pluralist approaches (such as multicultural frameworks) imply a more multidimensional process. If pluralistic perspectives that emphasize sociocultural differences either among groups or across individuals within groups better fit the experiences of many of today's immigrant groups, including Mexican Americans, this would suggest that more than one theoretical approach to integration may be useful in explaining Mexican American integration outcomes.

Multidimensionality of integration thus implies that a given group's experience cannot be adequately assessed without examining each of the several dimensions involved in that experience. Moreover, multidimensionality suggests that individuals can show markedly higher integration on one dimension than another. Observers who focus on assessing integration through only one dimension may misconstrue a given group's progress because a preponderance of group members fare less well on that one dimension than others. Such observers also risk overlooking important individual heterogeneity across individuals within groups. To

reach meaningful conclusions about the overall integration experience of Mexican Americans, it is important to conceptualize the salient dimensions (that is, kinds) of integration and their relationships to one another. We try to do this by not only specifying what various theoretical perspectives imply about the number of integration dimensions but also examining empirically a large number of indicators to ascertain how many dimensions emerge in the data. We can thereby more meaningfully assess which dimensions show cross-generational patterns consistent with the forces implied by various theoretical perspectives.

### *Data for the Third-Only Generation*

A fourth feature is that we assess integration using a measure to isolate the third generation. This helps to overcome the limitations of studies that stop with the second generation and others that include information on a so-called third-plus generation in their comparisons. Using third-only generation data offers two benefits. First, it is predicated on the importance of examining mobility across at least three generations, to the grandchildren of the immigrants, rather than across just two generations of Mexican Americans. This is crucial if for no other reason than that the membership-exclusion theoretical emphasis predicts that unauthorized parental entry will curtail progress among the children of Mexican immigrants in particular. To the extent that such limitations occur, studies comparing only the first and second generations will by definition be unable to reveal the level of integration of subsequent generations.

Second, the approach relies on information specifically for third-generation persons, not third-and-later-generation persons. Some studies attempt to assess integration by making comparisons using a third-plus generation group, but this creates problems. A wealth of recent research shows that notable numbers of later-generation Mexican Americans of higher socioeconomic status marry outside their ethnic group, and many of these (and many of their children) thereby no longer identify themselves as members of the ethnic group. That is, sufficient selective attrition out of the ethnic group occurs to cast considerable doubt on aggregate information on third-plus (that is, third- and later-) generation Mexican Americans.<sup>39</sup> In effect, third-plus generation data provide a faulty foundation for gauging multigenerational individual mobility.<sup>40</sup> In the empirical work presented here, we estimate roughly the aggregate magnitude of this bias using demographic analysis and use a third-only measure in our analyses of individual mobility.

We do this by undertaking multigenerational comparisons using unique data collected as part of a two-decade-long immigrant-integration research initiative begun in 1990 by the Russell Sage Foundation in selected major U.S. gateway cities. One of the target cities, which also included New

York, Miami, and San Diego, was Los Angeles, where we and other colleagues undertook a project called Immigration and Intergenerational Mobility in Metropolitan Los Angeles (IIMMLA).<sup>41</sup> The study collected from Mexican Americans information on the birthplaces of their grandparents, which we use to identify a third-generation-only group (defined as those for whom two or more grandparents were born in Mexico). This enables a much cleaner third-generation comparison than can be obtained from official U.S. data that are often the only kind available—for example, from Current Population Survey data. Because the latter do not collect information about the birthplaces of grandparents, they do not allow the isolation of a true third-generation group, which means multigeneration comparisons using such data must rely on a third-generation proxy made up of an aggregate of third, fourth, fifth, and later generations. As noted, this inevitably causes misleading results owing to substantial downward bias in integration measures from selective attrition. For this reason we use a third-only measure based on the IIMMLA data.

These data provide the major source of information for both our analyses of the effects of first-generation unauthorized status on integration measures among their own adult children and our multigenerational analyses of other integration outcomes. In addition, we also rely on national data sets to conduct analyses that set the context for the Los Angeles work and provide findings that supplement the Los Angeles results. Thus besides the IIMMLA data, we also make use of the American Community Survey, the Current Population Survey, and the Survey of Income and Program Participation data for certain purposes. But the core of our empirical work, assessing the effects of unauthorized status on multigenerational integration, uses the data from Los Angeles.

### *Studying Mexican American Integration in Los Angeles*

These considerations indicate that assessing the effects of immigrant unauthorized status (and subsequent legalization) on integration requires both having data containing an adequate measure of unauthorized status in the immigrant generation and looking at the effects of such status and its change on outcomes examined across three generations of Mexican American experience. To gauge effects on important human capital and labor market factors such as education and income, and to enable comparisons with the new immigrant groups covered in an East Coast project that was a companion to this one (the New York study, noted later in this chapter), these data need to be obtained for adults who are not far past their formative years of experience.<sup>42</sup> Young adults fit this prerequisite, so this study focuses on persons between the ages of twenty and forty.

But if we seek to examine effects on young adults who are the offspring of unauthorized immigrants, their parents could have migrated fifty years ago or more. In what city is there a large enough concentration of second-generation Mexican Americans whose parents migrated during the late 1960s on up through the 1980s and were substantially unauthorized? The answer is Los Angeles. Indeed, it may be the only large city that meets these criteria. As we elaborate later, unauthorized Mexican migration began to increase notably as the U.S. economy rapidly expanded during the decades after World War II and after the end of the Bracero Program in 1964. Enormous growth in agriculture, manufacturing, and defense and aerospace contracting made California the major destination for such migration.<sup>43</sup> Unauthorized migrants emerged conspicuously in official U.S. data for the first time when their large numbers in the 1980 totals initially led the technical experts at the U.S. Bureau of the Census to think that there had been an overcount in that year's census. A substantially disproportionate share of such migrants concentrated in California, especially in Los Angeles.<sup>44</sup> The Los Angeles metropolitan area is thus the best locale in the country in which to conduct interviews of the young adult children (aged twenty to forty) of unauthorized immigrants. There, a large population of unauthorized Mexicans lived in the city some forty to fifty years ago, and there appeared to be no other city at that time that contained anywhere close to as large a concentration of unauthorized Mexicans, and certainly not a large enough population to make it feasible to screen respondents for parental migration background as a prerequisite for survey participation. Thus Los Angeles is probably uniquely qualified for a study of the legacy effects of unauthorized status on the integration of the children and grandchildren of such immigrants.

Studying Mexican American integration in the five-county metropolitan area of Los Angeles offers other advantages as well. For one thing, Los Angeles is the preeminent West Coast gateway for immigrants. With a population of 18 million people, greater Los Angeles approaches the New York metropolitan area in the size and scale of immigration, providing an important counterpoint to the East Coast immigrant experience: about 30 percent of Los Angeles's population is foreign born, more than 6.5 million Angelenos are of Mexican origin, and nearly 44 percent of the city's immigrants were born in Mexico.<sup>45</sup> Also, California was the state in which more people legalized their migration status through the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act than any other state.<sup>46</sup>

Los Angeles also provides a good example of the range and degree of opportunities for U.S. social mobility in the latter half of the twentieth century. A jobs powerhouse during this time, the city kept its manufacturing base longer than other major cities such as New York and Chicago.<sup>47</sup> Whereas Mexican Americans in the Southwest were isolated for decades, those in California enjoyed better access to education and

more opportunity than elsewhere, especially compared with Mexican Americans in Texas.<sup>48</sup> This is not to diminish the historical extent of exclusion in Los Angeles. Ricardo Romo notes that the development of a Mexican American barrio in East Los Angeles constituted a mixed blessing, something caused by discrimination but also ultimately a place that fostered ethnic identity and provided a supportive haven for immigrant workers flocking to the city in search of employment opportunities.<sup>49</sup>

The Los Angeles metropolitan area is also a propitious site for studying Mexican American integration because the education and labor-market opportunities available there to Mexican Americans, although less extensive than those afforded non-Hispanic whites, were still superior to those available to Mexican-origin persons outside California (most notably in Texas).<sup>50</sup> This background enables an upper-bound assessment of the mobility experienced by different generations of Mexican Americans. In addition, in recent decades Los Angeles has been a magnet for college graduates of all ethnoracial backgrounds even as it has lost native-born less-educated populations.<sup>51</sup> In this sense, the choice of Los Angeles as the site for the study may furnish a good approximation of the degree of maximal integration of this important group into the fabric of U.S. society. Of course, relatively strong integration in Los Angeles does not mean that similar integration exists elsewhere, but it certainly would imply that such integration is possible. Better opportunities for Mexican immigrants in Los Angeles (and California more broadly) help explain why the studies of Mexican Americans that rely on respondents from Texas as well as California may show less overall mobility.<sup>52</sup>

## Preview of Our Findings

It is useful here to preview our findings, at least briefly. When we are able to measure certain key variables more adequately than they have been in most past research (especially third-generation status), and when we examine multiple dimensions of integration, including the key economic indicators of both education and income, together, many Mexican Americans appear to be achieving appreciable integration by the third generation. However, others, because of unauthorized migration among many of their ancestors, show attainment levels that fall below those of non-Hispanic whites. Among males, even those whose parents or grandparents came legally, progress is slow. Offsetting education deficits in the second and third generations are marked spikes in achievement among both men and women whose parents or grandparents were all born in Mexico. Also, absent the limiting effects of unauthorized status, third-generation Mexican American women show attainments nearly identical to or surpassing those of non-Hispanic whites. We argue that these results, especially those for males, reflect the influence of both membership exclusion and working-class

delay. Membership exclusion constitutes an important new complement to other theoretical perspectives on integration. Slower integration results from membership exclusion in both the first and the second generations and from third-generation working-class delay, which emphasizes how working-class opportunities to improve income, combined with the high cost of college, limit the attractiveness of attending college among the grandsons of immigrants. These constraints on educational attainment point to the crucial need for the country to provide attainable (that is, not prohibitively costly) and reasonably quick pathways to legalization and citizenship for less-skilled Mexican immigrant workers and their families, especially because the nation increasingly depends heavily on their labor, and to develop affordable ways for the children of working- and lower-middle-class parents, including those of Mexican immigrants, to attend and graduate from college.

Our results also suggest that most Mexican immigrants and their descendants are integrating into American society linguistically and spatially, although the latter is also slowed by unauthorized migration. Overall then, Mexican American integration is slower than it is for many other contemporary groups, especially Asians.<sup>53</sup> But Mexican American integration has nonetheless been occurring steadily and surely over the past half century or so, since roughly the end of World War II, especially for women, although recently the acute stigmatization of unauthorized migrants and the prohibitively high cost of college for working-class families threaten to derail the process. The culmination of integration is thus not inevitable, especially if pathways to legalization and citizenship remain cut off and if current policies allow only for poor-quality schooling and little means of affording higher education for the descendants of immigrants.

In the rest of the book, we elaborate these themes, organizing our treatment of topics as follows. In chapter 2 we outline the major theoretical perspectives on immigrant integration, focusing on their strengths and weaknesses. We also assess theoretically the importance of unauthorized labor migration and its significance for integration, formulating in the process the theoretical perspective on integration we call membership exclusion. The foundational principle of the framework is that initial denial of social citizenship based on migration status puts immigrants in such marginal social and economic positions that their and their children's material integration is hampered. We also outline how family and migration-based cultural repertoires associated with unauthorized status promote work over schooling and thereby retard integration. We also note that membership exclusion envisions legalization as a life-course turning point, the attainment of which may mark the weakening if not end of the inhibiting mechanisms of unauthorized status, whereas several other theoretical perspectives envision sources of cumulative disadvantage as

persisting beyond the point of legalization. The chapter also specifies how cross-generational patterns of integration may vary for males and females.

In chapter 3 we outline specific research hypotheses and important research issues for analyses of immigrant-group integration, including those that affect choice of data, comparisons, and measures. We also describe how a very low level of Mexican American integration in Texas decades ago partly explains overall integration deficits today. In chapter 4 we explore how unauthorized migration relates to socioeconomic attainment in the first generation and to less education attainment among young second-generation adults who come from unauthorized migrant backgrounds, thus also limiting later-generation patterns of schooling. We also investigate a selective acculturation hypothesis that suggests that those with parental or ethnic homogeneity are more likely to become education overachievers. We examine whether this tendency is greater for women than men, and we assess its relative size compared with negative unauthorized migrant background effects.

In chapter 5 we conduct a multigenerational examination of education and income, key aspects of the crucially important dimension of economic integration. We find that income follows a discontinuous pattern consistent with membership exclusion, with notable jumps in attainment among the grandchildren of immigrants. We also find that generational and ethnic differences in education help explain generational and ethnic differences in income, but that the relative increases in income among third-generation over second-generation males substantially exceed their relative increases in education. We suggest that this finding is compatible with the working-class-delay theoretical perspective because it implies that income mobility remains attainable for many working-class males despite minimal increases in schooling, thus ironically possibly dampening motivations to pursue higher education when opportunities to do so are limited and costly.

Chapter 6 examines spatial integration, noting the multiple reasons the different dimensions of incorporation may not vary with spatial mobility. In general, the findings show patterns consistent with membership exclusion (specifically, improved tendencies to live in better neighborhoods in the third generation compared with the second) but with an interesting twist. Those children of Mexican migrants who move to the Inland Empire, where housing costs are much lower than in the rest of the Los Angeles metropolitan area, exhibit quicker improvement in ethnoracial outcomes across generations, suggesting that spatial opportunity in the form of affordable housing may counterbalance some of the constraining effects of initial unauthorized status. In chapter 7 we examine various indicators of sociocultural integration separately because, as predicted by what we call a postindustrial-individualistic theoretical perspective

on immigrant integration, such measures are only weakly related with one another.

In chapter 8 we trace trends in Mexican migration to the United States and outline how public policy, changing demographics, and shifts in the labor market have contributed to the increase in unauthorized and less-skilled migrants since 1990. Specifically, we show that over the past twenty-five years, the decline of U.S. native-born fertility, the aging of baby boomers, and rising education levels in the U.S.-born population have appreciably reduced the availability less-skilled native-born workers and thus probably contributed to the rise in Mexican migration since 1990 in particular. This demographic void constitutes a new kind of “pull” factor for migration and adds a new urgency to the need for the country to facilitate legalization to foster immigrant integration. In chapter 9 we argue that our findings illustrate the crucial importance of adopting immigration policy reforms that provide sensible, realistic, and inexpensive pathways to legalization for Mexican immigrants, whose workforce contributions to American society are becoming ever more important. We also argue for education and economic policies that provide increased and less costly education opportunities for middle- and working-class families.