CHAPTER 1

Immigration and American Society

What does it mean for immigrants to become American? This is an old question in American social science and public discourse that has acquired new importance as immigration has again become a central element of life in the United States. As immigrants incorporate into American society, they undergo social and cultural change. At the same time, they change the fabric of American social structure and cultural dynamics. They also have a great influence on the everyday life of the place in which they live. This book looks at the ways in which Dominican immigrants in Providence become part of American society. Through the examination of one immigrant group in one city, the book aims to participate in the contemporary conversation concerning immigrant incorporation and what it says about contemporary American society.

When I first arrived in Providence in the fall of 1994, I did not know much about the place. I knew about the role of New England in the European settlement of North America and in the formation of the United States as an independent country. I knew that the region had been the cradle of the industrial revolution in America and that it had also been a destination of European migration during the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. I thought that to the extent that I might find an ethnic presence, it would be related to the large historical migration of Italian, Irish, Portuguese, and French Canadians to the region. I did not expect to

find a large and vibrant Dominican community. I knew very well that the post-1965 migration came mainly from the developing world, but at that point I associated it with the large gateway cities of the United States, not with smaller places like Providence. In my imagination, Providence made me think of Lloyd Warner's and Leo Srole's classic Yankee City series. In *The Social Systems of American Ethnic Groups* (1945), one of a series of books on Newburyport, Massachusetts, Warner and Srole described a city with a strong presence of European immigrants and analyzed their ethnic organization and their process of assimilation.

On arriving in Providence, I came to realize that the city I had imagined had indeed existed, but only until the 1970s. To be sure, Providence's immigration history was different from Newburyport's because of the large presence in Providence of black Cape Verdean immigrants (Beck 1992; Halter 1993). The ethnic character of the city and its politics, however, was dominated by the strong presence of European immigrants—particularly Italians, Irish, and Portuguese—and their children. Yet when I arrived in the middle of the 1990s, I found a place that for the last two decades had grown through the toil of new immigrants from Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia (mainly East Asia), and Africa. Immigrants reversed the city's population decline and revitalized abandoned neighborhoods. I realized that Providence was a new kind of Yankee City, one in which minorities constituted the majority of the population. Dominicans are one of the largest immigrant-ethnic groups in town and their presence is felt in all realms of urban life.

Driving on Broad Street from downtown Providence toward the Southside, one soon notices the presence of numerous Dominican small businesses. A part of La Broa, as the street is known by Spanish-speaking immigrants, has been renamed Juan Pablo Duarte Boulevard, honoring the hero of Dominican independence. Turning right on Miller Street, edging Roger Williams Park, one can see a monument to Duarte that was built with the contributions of community members. The southern part of the city, particularly the area between Broad Street and Elmwood Avenue, is the core area of Dominican presence in Providence and the base of the growing political empowerment of Dominicans. Dominicans, however, live in most parts of town.

Encountering American Faultlines examines how race and class shape the incorporation of first- and second-generation Dominicans in Providence, Rhode Island. It focuses on two dimensions of incorporation. First, it examines the position of first- and second-generation Dominicans in Providence's

socioeconomic structure and the paths of mobility across the generations. Second, it explores the identities Dominicans develop as they become part of American society, focusing in particular on the emergence of transnational and panethnic identities and the social practices associated with them. This book, then, attempts to portray a small piece of a large phenomenon in the contemporary American experience: the incorporation of new immigrant groups in new cities of immigration.

This book also joins in the theoretical debates about immigrant incorporation in the United States. Dominicans are an important group to look at in this context. For one, they are one of the largest immigrant groups in the East Coast, particularly in the northeastern states. More important, however, is how they enter American society. Most Dominican immigrants arrive with low skill levels and very few economic resources. As a result, they enter the American occupational system at its bottom. Furthermore, many Dominicans are seen as blacks by mainstream society and all are categorized as Latinos. They thus become part of racialized groups within American society (Aparicio 2006; Candelario 2007). The study of Dominican incorporation allows us to analyze the ways in which race and class shape the process of immigrant incorporation. Furthermore, analysis of the Dominican experience provides a window through which to examine the faultlines that structure American society. Based on the analysis of the process of Dominican incorporation in Providence, this volume proposes an innovative theoretical approach to looking at the contemporary forms and meanings of becoming American.

IMMIGRANT INCORPORATION IN AMERICA

Scholars of immigration use the terms *assimilation* and *incorporation* to refer to the ways in which immigrants become American. In his history of the concept of assimilation, the sociologist Peter Kivisto argued that these two terms refer to the same processes and he advocates the use of the term assimilation (2005). Kivisto was right in arguing that assimilation and incorporation refer to similar processes, but there is an important difference between the two. Classical work on assimilation suffered from two problems. First, it failed to take race into account. Second, it held on to the theoretical expectation of assimilation into what Milton Gordon called Anglo-conformity (1964).[1] It is the failure to address the dynamics of racialization that led scholars to question classical assimilation theory (Glazer 1993).

Although framed within the classic assimilation approach, Warner and Srole's analysis of ethnicity in Newburyport was an exception to the pattern of neglect of race in the study of immigrant assimilation. Warner and Srole argued that the speed with which European ethnic groups assimilated was contingent on their social distance from the American cultural mainstream and the strength of their ethnic organization. At the end of the process, immigrant groups were going to gradually lose their ethnic traits and become part of the American class order. The identity of the children of immigrants would be determined by their position in the American class structure rather than by their ethnic origin. Based on their analysis of the social distance of different immigrant groups from the Anglo mainstream, Warner and Srole presented elaborated predictions on how many generations will take to each ethnic group to assimilate. I get back to those predictions in the conclusions to this book because they serve as a cautionary tale about the risks of making predictions based on current trends in rapidly changing situations.[2] Yet it is important to point out that Warner and Srole correctly identified one insurmountable barrier in the process of assimilation—the color line. African Americans and other immigrants of color constituted an exception to the trend towards the loss of ethnic ties and assimilation into the American class order that Warner and Srole identified. Race trumped acculturation and assimilation. In the 1940s, Warner and Srole argued that racial groups "will not be totally assimilated until the present American social order changes gradually or by revolution" (1945, 292).

American society has certainly changed since their book was published. The massive popular mobilization of the civil rights movement brought a major change in the American social order and since then race and class have become much more intertwined in defining the opportunities of individuals and groups (Anderson 2001; Wilson 1978). Reflecting on these changes and previous critiques, the sociologists Richard Alba and Victor Nee reformulated assimilation theory to address contemporary migration. For these authors, assimilation referred to a process of boundary blurring through which immigrants and their offspring become closer, and eventually hardly distinguishable, from the mainstream of the receiving society along a number of important social and economic dimensions (Alba and Nee 2003). Alba and Nee did not make assumptions as to what is the end point of this process. They found evidence of the blurring of boundaries in the occupational mobility and residential integration of important segments of the immigrant population.

They argued that in spite of the pervasiveness of racialization, since the 1960s American society has become much more open and porous to the mobility of all groups. They added that because racial boundaries have changed in the past they can change in the future and become less important in the organization of social life. Their assumption was that although race and class boundaries are real and affect immigrant's lives, they are ultimately blurred boundaries that can be crossed across generations.

In spite of their optimistic outlook, Alba and Nee recognized that the color line is not disappearing. They argued that a likely scenario is the reconstruction of racial boundaries along a black-nonblack line of differentiation (Alba 2005; Alba and Nee 2003). This scenario would reshape but not eliminate the color line, and many immigrant groups, like Dominicans, would end up on the excluded side. Moreover, although Alba and Nee distanced themselves from the normative elements of assimilation theory, the concept of assimilation carries in the general public a normative expectation that immigrants, and in particular their children, will over time merge and disappear into the general American population. This normative expectation was not too long ago forcefully expressed by Samuel Huntington (2004).

Contemporary immigration, though, takes place in a context of increasing social inequality. Inequality in America has reached levels unseen since the 1930s (Massey 2007). Racialization is also a part of the everyday experience, shaping immigrants' encounters with American society (Grosfoguel and Georas 2000; Itzigsohn, Giorguli, and Vazquez 2005; Vickerman 1999; Waters 1999). The analysis of the ways in which immigrant groups are becoming Americans needs to take into account this growing social polarization and the pervasive forms of racial inequality. The argument of this book is that American society is structured around class and racial faultlines that shape the experiences of migrants and their children.

There is no doubt that immigrants are either participating increasingly in the institutions of American society or that they are acculturating. In this sense, the boundaries between immigrants, their children, and American society are indeed being blurred. On the other hand, the process of becoming part of American society is characterized by the formation of new boundaries along racial and class lines. For immigrants of color, becoming American does not mean the erasure of differences between immigrants, their children, and the mainstream, but finding a place within the faultlines of American society. For these reasons, I prefer to speak of immigrant incorporation rather than assimilation.

SOCIOECONOMIC INCORPORATION

The historical record of immigrants' social mobility in America is mixed. The first generations of European immigrants who arrived during the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century went through severe economic difficulties and deprivations. Nevertheless, within the span of three or four generations, the socioeconomic profile of their offspring was quite similar to that of other white Americans. This process of upward mobility, however, did not repeat itself with Mexican and Puerto Rican immigrants, who after three or four generations in the United States are still overrepresented in the lower income deciles and among those below the poverty line. Their predicament resembles that of African Americans, who though not an immigrant group, show persistent lower socioeconomic indicators than the white population (Bean and Stevens 2003; Grosfoguel and Georas 2000; Lieberson 1980; Massey 2007; Massey and Denton 1993; Telles and Ortiz 2008).

The question of the socioeconomic path of incorporation of the new immigrants has gathered renewed attention since the early 1990s, when the sociologist Herbert Gans first posed the question whether second-generation immigrants were experiencing downward mobility vis-à-vis their parents and joining the most marginalized sectors of American society (Gans 1992). One answer to Gans's question is given by those working within the broad framework of the new assimilation theory. These scholars recognized the difficulties of the incorporation process but rejected the idea that the second generation is experiencing downward assimilation (Alba and Nee 2003). Joel Perlmann and Roger Waldinger (1997) argued that the incorporation of the second and third generation of European immigrants was a protracted process aided by the end of the migration wave in the 1920s and the upward mobility that American society as a whole experienced after World War II, so that it is necessary to wait to see how the current process of incorporation unfolds. They added that with the exception of Mexican Americans, there is no evidence that the children of immigrants are experiencing downward assimilation (Perlmann and Waldinger 1997). Furthermore, after a close look at the available intergenerational data for Mexican Americans, Roger Waldinger and Cynthia Feliciano argued that although second-generation Mexican Americans are not experiencing upward mobility, they are also not falling back in respect to the first generation (2004).

For scholars working within the assimilation tradition, class and racial differences impose harshness in the lives of first- and second-generation immigrants,

but they see a process of slow generational improvement and catching up with mainstream middle-class status. Comparing the incorporation trajectory of contemporary Mexican immigrants with that of southern and central European (SCEN) immigrants at the beginning of the twentieth century, Perlmann argued that because "the Mexican second generation is faring less well in relative terms than its SCEN counterparts, I find it reasonable to join Bean and Stevens (2003) in suggesting that Mexican economic assimilation may take more time—four or five generations rather than three or four" (2005, 124). I find this prediction problematic because it does not take into account the class and racial faultlines that shape the incorporation of immigrant generations.

A different answer to Gans's question is given by segmented assimilation theory. Scholars working within this framework argue that there are two profound differences between the contemporary American social structure and that of the mid-twentieth century, when the children of European immigrants assimilated. They claim, first, that the contemporary labor market is shaped as an hourglass. Well-paid manufacturing jobs that allowed for large segments of the second and third generation of European immigrants to achieve a middle-class life style have disappeared. Higher education is critical today to achieve upward mobility, but for the children of poor and low-skilled immigrants who go to school in the inner cities, college is generally out of reach. The second assertion is that the new immigrants belong to racialized groups; hence, in addition to poverty, they experience the burden of pervasive racial discrimination (Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes and Rumbaut 2001).

Proponents of segmented assimilation argue that immigrants are indeed assimilating but into different strata of American society. Those who arrive with high human capital or with financial resources follow the mainstream path of assimilation into the middle class. For those who do not have human capital or financial resources, the key variable is the strength of the ethnic community. Immigrant groups that have ethnic communities with high degrees of institutional completeness and the ability to enforce social norms can pass the immigrant ethos of hard work and upward mobility to their children. For these groups, the ethnic enclave becomes a springboard to the middle class. Immigrant groups without strong ethnic communities and without economic or educational resources suffer the full impact of poverty and discrimination. These groups, proponents of the theory argue, assimilate into what is often called the urban underclass, developing attitudes that reject American mainstream norms and expectations and give up on their

parents' hopes for realizing the American dream (Portes 2006; Zhou and Bankston 1998).

In spite of the polemic tone of the debate between scholars identified with these two approaches, years of accumulated empirical research have led to a convergence of sorts in the findings concerning the new second generation. In a recent article, Alejandro Portes, Fernandez-Kelly, and William Haller recognized that not all immigrants who do not experience upward mobility become part of the underclass, and that some become part of what the authors call marginal working-class communities. Portes and his colleagues concluded that "it is evident that most of the new second generation is not joining the bottom ranks of society, but that a sizable minority is poised to do so" (2005, 1032).

This picture is not that different from the one Roger Waldinger and Cynthia Feliciano drew of second-generation Mexican Americans (2004). Although Waldinger and Feliciano would probably refrain from using the term *marginal working class,* they agreed that large segments of the second generation are not joining the middle class. Similarly, although Alba and Nee argued that their analysis of the socioeconomic position of the second generation shows an overall improvement over the first generation, they accepted that downward mobility indeed affects some groups: "The segmented assimilation notion that one form of incorporation will move individuals into a disadvantaged minority status is part of the reality of the future. This is especially likely for individuals with combinations of family background features—low levels of parental human capital, certain racial appearances by North American standard, and illegal status—that make it difficult for them to perceive realistic opportunities to advance in U.S. society" (Alba and Nee 2003, 289).

This convergence in empirical findings between scholars using different theoretical approaches is seen also in the results of a comparative study of second generations in New York City conducted by the sociologists Phil Kasinitz, John Mollenkopf, Mary Waters, and Jennifer Holdaway (2008). Their book, *Inheriting the City,* is an important reference for this analysis because it includes the most updated and thorough analysis of the Dominican second generation in New York City. It finds that members of the second generation are doing better than their parents. Moreover, the second generation of racialized immigrant groups is doing better than comparative native groups: second-generation Dominicans are doing better than Puerto Ricans and second-generation West Indians are doing better than African Americans. At the same time, second-generation minority immigrants in New York City

are not doing as well as native whites—second-generation Chinese Americans being the exception to this pattern. For most minorities in New York City, second-generation and native alike, the most common occupations are as support workers, as service workers, and in retail sales. For native whites, on the other hand, the most common occupation is in a professional field (Kasinitz et al. 2008).

Significantly, the New York City study found that the arrest rates of second-generation minority immigrants are similar to those of native whites, showing that the former do not adopt values or behaviors contrary to mainstream culture, at least no more than those born into the mainstream do. Thus, although some children of immigrants do experience downward assimilation, the phenomenon does not affect the second generation any more than it does other groups in American society. On the other hand, Kasinitz and his co-authors argued that second-generation minority immigrants do face differential treatment from the justice system, often receiving harsher penalties than native-born whites (Kasinitz et al. 2008).

This convergence in empirical findings between scholars working within the new assimilation and segmented assimilation approach is the starting point for the arguments developed in this book. I go further by proposing a different theoretical framework in which to interpret the findings. I argue that the study of socioeconomic incorporation should focus on the forms of class and racial stratification that affect immigrant groups. This theme is strongly emphasized by the segmented assimilation approach (Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes and Bach 1985). Scholars working within this framework, however, tend to focus on differences between groups rather than on within-group stratification. I argue that it is necessary to focus on the patterns of stratification within the immigrant generations and compare them to the overall pattern of stratification in American society.

There are two additional important differences between the theoretical argument proposed in this book and the segmented assimilation approach. First, the segmented assimilation research focuses on the part of the second generation that joins the so-called underclass (Portes and Rumbaut 1996). This is understandable because this group experiences the most marginalization. However, to understand the incorporation trajectories of low-skilled immigrants, it is necessary to refocus analytical attention on the predicament of those people working in low-skill, mostly service jobs—the majority of the second generation according to several findings (Kasinitz et al.2008;

Waldinger and Feliciano 2004)—a sector I call the new services working class. Working-class immigrants have generally been considered part of the middle class or on their way to middle-class status, but this an unexamined assumption. The working-class positions into which most unskilled immigrants incorporate constrain their mobility opportunities and those of their children. Moreover, the lives of the working class and the marginalized sectors are intertwined.

Second, the segmented assimilation approach argues that upward social mobility for low-skilled minority immigrants depends on the presence of an ethnic enclave. In making this claim, the segmented assimilation approach overstates the positive effects of ethnic enclaves and misses other available paths for intergenerational mobility. The Dominican experience suggests that second-generation mobility takes place in and through the institutions of mainstream society. Looking at the internal class stratification in immigrant and ethnic communities, at the predicament of working-class immigrants, and at the mechanisms of mobility in American society provides a fuller picture of the socioeconomic incorporation experiences of immigrants, of their children, and of the social structure of contemporary America.

INCORPORATION AND IDENTITY

The identities of immigrants and their children have been a central preoccupation in the study of immigration. The large numbers of immigrants who maintain a differentiated identity and social presence has been a source of anxiety for mainstream society and continues to generate nativist responses (Higham 1955; Huntington 2004). In Gordon's classic elaboration of assimilation theory, identity assimilation—in other words, the erasure of ethnic identities—marked the completion of the process of change immigrants undergo (1964). Gordon proposed seven stages in the process of assimilation. First, immigrants acquired American cultural and behavioral patterns (acculturation). Then—the key stage—they became part of the social networks and institutions of mainstream society. After this, immigrants experienced high levels of intermarriage and developed a sense of self based on the identity of the receiving society. The ultimate outcome of assimilation was the disappearance of ethnic identities and allegiances and the emergence of Anglo-conformity as the dominant attitude among immigrants and their children. Gordon proposed three additional stages—the absence of prejudice, the absence of discrimination, and the absence of value and power conflicts—but these referred

to changes in the attitudes and behaviors of the receiving society rather than to changes in immigrants' practices and beliefs.

This classic view of assimilation was based on the experience of the children of European immigrants, for whom ethnicity became a matter of choice. Ethnicity became a form of symbolic identification expressed occasionally in a number of public events, a marker that can be worn on special occasions and left aside in most daily interactions (Alba 1985; Alba 1990; Waters 1990). The new immigrant groups enter a society that marks them as nonwhite. For minority immigrants, ethnic choices are limited by racial classification boundaries. As immigrants of color acculturate to American society one of the paramount things that they learn is that they are seen as racial others. In fact, first- and second-generation immigrants of color construct their identities around the acceptance or rejection of the American racial categorizations (Halter 1993; Vickerman 1999; Waters 1999).

In her study of first- and second-generation West Indian identities, Mary Waters posited a relationship between race and class in the identity of immigrants and their children. She showed that second-generation working-class West Indians tend to adopt a black identity whereas middle-class people tend to adopt an immigrant or an ethnic identity. Waters asserted that those who identify as black have a very skeptical attitude towards the mainstream themes of mobility through study and individual effort. She found that those attitudes hurt mobility opportunities, but she argued that they reflect the experiences of low-income immigrants (Waters 1999). On the other hand, a recent study of New York City second generations—Waters is one of the authors—indicated that adopting a black identity may allow for access to institutions that promote mobility, such as unions or black studies programs (Kasinitz et al. 2008). These institutions were developed in response to the African American struggle for rights and inclusion and now also serve minority immigrants. Furthermore, the anthropologist Ana Aparicio has showed that adopting a black identity can be a springboard to mobilize and empower Dominicans (2006).

I follow the findings of these authors in arguing that the process of incorporation to a racialized society generates ethnoracial differentiation. American society expects immigrants and their children to assimilate, but the process of acculturation leads in fact to new ethnoracial identities and communities. These identities and communities do not indicate a failure to assimilate; they are the result of the process of incorporation. They constitute a

form of positioning minority immigrants in a society that sees them as members of racialized groups.

Although the process of incorporation into a racialized society leads to the creation of ethnoracial identities and groups, the particular forms and characteristics of those identities and groups are not predetermined. In choosing their identities and in undertaking group practices based on those identities, immigrants and their children forge a place for themselves in American society. They act within the overall constraints of the American system of racial classification, but through their actions they can also change it.

STRATIFIED ETHNORACIAL INCORPORATION

We have considered the limits of new assimilation and segmented assimilation theories. Both capture important elements of the immigrant experience and in that sense contribute to our understanding of incorporation. Yet both also miss relevant aspects of immigrant incorporation. The new assimilation theory does not pay enough attention to racialization and the internal class stratification of the immigrant communities. The segmented assimilation approach does not account for the mechanisms that make the mobility that takes place within these communities possible.

The theoretical approach proposed in this book—an approach I call stratified ethnoracial incorporation—aims to address the complex and sometimes contradictory character of immigrant incorporation. This approach emphasizes class and race as dynamic social forces that shape the trajectories of immigrants and their children. Consequently, to understand the patterns of incorporation it is necessary to examine the stratification and mobility trends that structure American society. The study of incorporation is the study of the immigrant encounter with the American social and cultural faultlines.

A key element in the study of socioeconomic incorporation is the analysis of the internal class stratification of immigrants groups. In this endeavor I draw on the works of Erik Olin Wright and John Goldthorpe, who rework and adapt classical themes in Marxian and Weberian sociological class analysis to postindustrial societies. Class, as used in this book, refers to social positions based on the social organization of production and distribution of goods and services (Wright 2005b). To produce and distribute the goods and services we consume, people enter occupations that convey both different degrees of power and control over the labor process as well as different rewards. The powers and rewards attached to occupations are the result of the institutional organization

of work (Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992; Goldthorpe and McKnight 2004). As Wright aptly put it, class position determines what a person gets and how that person gets it (2005b).[3]

The advantage of this conceptualization is that it brings social relations, human agency, and power to the center of the analysis of stratification. Class stratification is always the result of contentions over how to organize the production system in general and the labor process in particular. In the United States, most people think of themselves as being part of a broad middle class defined by access to mass consumption and, on the face of it, there is no class politics. But decisions that affect the distribution of the power and resources attached to different occupations are ultimately the result of class politics. Although in the United States there are no class-based parties, each party has a distinct class base of support. And though the class base of support of Democrats and Republicans has changed over time, at any particular point in time the class composition of the party voters is different, and these differences affect their policy choices (Brooks and Manza 1997; Hout, Brooks, and Manza 1995). More than once in my research I met first-generation Dominicans who referred to the Democratic Party as the party of the working class, the party of working people, or the party of those who have less. Regardless of whether this perception is right or wrong, this idea anchors the support of many Dominicans for the Democratic Party.

A second element that the stratified ethnoracial incorporation approach emphasizes is the pervasiveness of racialization. By this I understand the structuring of social relations and social classifications to be around racial categories. Here I draw on racial formation theory (Winant 2004). Race is historically constructed and subject to change, particularly as a result of political contestation. But racial categories have also proved to be resilient, and though they have changed they have not disappeared. In the United States, race is institutionalized in labor market, educational, and residential practices (Anderson 2001; Grosfoguel 1997; Massey 2007; Massey and Denton 1993). Racial categories also guide processes of social classification and identity formation (Kibria 2002; Waters 1999).

From this perspective, the question is not whether class or race is more important in determining life chances, identities, or outlook on social life. The question is how class and race intersect to shape the lives of individuals and groups at different times and in different places. Focusing only on class would miss the racialization of the American social structure. On the other hand,

focusing only on racialization misses class stratification within ethnoracial groups. Racialization affects everyone in the United States, but class position mediates the effects of racialization on individual lives. Class position also affects the outlook on American society that minorities hold (Hochschild 1995; Kibria 2002; Kwong 1996; Lacy 2004; Wilson 1978).

Taking the intersection of class and race and its effects on the socioeconomic incorporation and identities of immigrants as a starting point, the stratified ethnoracial incorporation approach argues that in the contemporary United States the process of becoming American for low-skilled minority immigrants is characterized by three trends: first, the incorporation of immigrants into a racialized class structure in which people of color are overrepresented in its lower ends; second, the development of internal class stratification within ethnoracial groups; and, third, the formation and perpetuation of ethnoracial identities and communities.

In studying the formation of ethnoracial identities and communities, I emphasize the link between the identity labels that immigrants choose and the individual and group practices that they engage in based on their identity choices. The study of the individual identities of immigrants and their children is at the same time the study of group formation. This conceptualization draws from the multidimensional model of identity elaborated upon by the social psychologists Richard Ashmore, Kay Deaux, and Tracy McLaughlin-Volpe (2004). The analysis also relies on the work of the anthropologist Richard Jenkins on collective identity formation (1997). Jenkins pointed out that everyday experiences of individuals always transcend the accepted boundaries of collective identities. As a result there are always different interpretations over the boundaries and cultural meanings that define the group.[4]

In assessing the identities that Dominicans build, I pay particular attention to two issues that have generated considerable debate among immigration scholars—transnationalism and panethnicity. It is well established that immigrants engage in practices that link them to their countries of origin and that this is not a new phenomenon. A century ago, European immigrants also established transnational linkages with the places they left behind (Foner 2005; Portes, Escobar, and Radford 2007). The contemporary forms of transnational involvement range from sending of remittances to family members to intense participation in economic, political, or cultural projects in the country of origin. These different practices are rooted in identities and understandings of belonging that transcend national boundaries. In the second part of the book, I assess

the extent to which first- and second-generation Dominicans use a transnational framework in building their identities and I examine the types of transnational practices that they embark on.

I also address the construction of panethnicity. In the United States, immigrants and their children are categorized by state agencies and by civil society as members of broad panethnic groups. These identity labels, however, do not correspond to the forms of self-identification that immigrants bring with them. As a result, many in the first and second generations reject these labels because they lump together groups with different histories and cultures. On the other hand, many embrace panethnicity as a new form of identity that guides common social, cultural, and political projects. Places like Providence, where there are a large number of ethnoracial groups, none of which is numerically dominant, favor the emergence of panethnicity.

Analysis of the incorporation of first- and second-generation Dominicans shows that they invest in the construction of transnational and panethnic identities and organizations. It is worth repeating that from the perspective of the stratified ethnoracial incorporation approach proposed here the construction of these identities does not indicate a failure to assimilate. These are the forms of identity that Dominicans use to carve a place for themselves in American society and the way in which they mobilize to make claims on the American political system.

CASE STUDIES AND THEORY BUILDING

The methodological approach of the book is guided by the logic of the case study: it analyzes one immigrant-ethnic group in one city. The strength of case studies is that they allow for in-depth knowledge of the particular case and its social and political context. Their obvious drawback is the difficulty in generalizing from one instance. How can the researcher know that what he or she sees is not just a particular set of circumstances that are different from every other case? A case study can overcome this limitation and contribute to theory building in two ways. The first is through an intense engagement with existing knowledge and theory. Rather than aiming toward generalization, the case study brings existing theories to bear in one case, permitting the mechanisms implied in different theoretical propositions to be examined closely.

Through the constant weighing of research findings against theoretical arguments, the case study contributes to expand our general theoretical knowledge (Paige 1999). At the same time, cases studies also help us to understand

the contextual limits of particular theories. The Yankee City studies were written in this spirit and much of the cutting-edge knowledge on contemporary immigration, race, ethnicity, and urban issues comes from theoretically informed case studies (Foner 2001; Kasinitz 1992; Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, and Waters 2004; Portes and Stepnick 1993; Waldinger and Mehdi 1996; Waldinger 1996; Waters 1996). In this book, I use the case of Dominicans in Providence to examine the validity of the claims of the stratified ethnoracial incorporation approach presented above.

The second way in which a case study can transcend its own limits is through comparisons. These can be implicit, such as references to the relevant literature on parallel cases, or explicit, when the case is openly compared to others to examine their commonalties and particularities. Through these more or less implicit comparisons the researcher can locate the particular case in a larger universe and in this way assess the extent to which the findings are generalizable. In this book I conduct a number of such comparisons, using the existing literature on the social mobility of Mexican Americans and African Americans to investigate the structure of opportunities open to minorities in American society and thus to assess the likely mobility trajectories of future generations of Dominicans. I also conduct explicit comparisons of Dominicans in Providence with other ethnoracial groups in the city as well as with Dominicans and white Americans elsewhere in the country. These comparisons allow me to establish the scope and limits of the theoretical assertions I derive from it.

The analysis of the incorporation of first- and second-generation Dominicans in American society is based on different sources of information and different techniques of data gathering. This is what is known today as a mixed methods approach. In this volume I rely on several sources of information. First is secondary quantitative data, the main source of which is the 5 percent Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) of the 2000 Census, which give us a rather thorough snapshot of the socioeconomic position of Dominicans. Even though this picture is probably somewhat outdated today, a thorough look at the 2000 data provides a baseline we can use later on to observe trends.[5] I also use Rhode Island state government data to provide a background to the educational situation of Latinos in the state.

Another source of secondary data is the Latino National Survey (LNS), a national random survey that explores the education and employment situation as well as the social and political views of Latinos. Conducted during

the winter of 2006–2007, the New England portion of the survey interviewed 1,200 Latinos in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut. From it, I have selected the subsample of Dominicans in Providence that includes 101 respondents. Ninety were first-generation Dominicans and eleven from the second generation. Given that most respondents are Dominican-born, I use the Latino National Survey primarily to compare and confirm first-generation findings.

Second, I rely on a survey of first- and second-generation Dominicans in Providence that I conducted between the fall of 2002 and the spring of 2003. I organized this survey with the help of a group of first-generation Dominicans from Providence who assisted me both in writing the questionnaire and in conducting the interviews. The sample is not random because there is no list of Dominicans in Providence from which to draw a sample. My goal was to survey the second generation. To do so, we created a list of 400 second-generation Dominicans by asking people in the community for the names of second-generation individuals they knew. From this list we randomly selected 150 names. We soon realized that some of these people had in fact been born in the Dominican Republic and had arrived in the United States at a young age. I decided to interview them nevertheless and to include also a sample of first-generation Dominicans for comparative purposes. This second sample was reached in part through the list and in part through multiple referrals, starting with those we first interviewed. The final sample included 100 second-generation and 81 first-generation respondents. This survey offers a wealth of detailed data on socioeconomic incorporation, identity, political participation, and transnational practices. I rely on it for an in-depth examination of the class stratification and intergenerational mobility of Dominicans in Providence and for the analysis of their identities and worldviews.

Third, I rely on thirty-four in-depth interviews, eighteen first generation (nine women and nine men) and sixteen second generation (ten women and six men). I conducted the interviews—conversations that lasted from one to four hours—between the fall of 2002 and the fall of 2004. Many were taped and transcribed, and in other cases I took detailed notes after the end of the interviews. During these in-depth interviews I gathered information on respondents' experiences growing up, on their education and employment histories, on their forms of self-identification and community participation, and on their transnational engagement. The interviews allow me to look at individual histories and experiences to better understand the meaning of the identities and

everyday practices of both first- and second-generation Dominicans. I also interviewed two Dominican elected officials, State Senator Juán Pichardo and State Representative Grace Diaz. Both provided very valuable insights on local Latino politics and other aspects of local community life.[6]

The last but not the least source of information was my own participation in Dominican community life. Being an immigrant myself—I am Argentinean—finding a Dominican community in Providence was a very pleasant surprise for me. People in this community welcomed me and became a source of friendship and support. Through my immersion in the local Dominican and Latino community, I became a citizen of Providence, a citizen not in the legal sense—though I did become a naturalized American citizen—but in the sense of a person who participates in the public life of the city in which she or he lives. My own becoming part of American society took place amidst the Dominican and Latino community in Providence.

Yet, because my participation was from the privileged position of an academic, I do not make any claim of being an insider. In my interactions I always made clear that I was a researcher and that I was going to write a book about Dominicans in Providence—a book that took so long that most people I know began to doubt that it would ever materialize. Furthermore, studying community formation, I know too well that communities are fragmented and that close access to certain groups and individuals often precludes knowledge of others, to the point that one identifies with the particular view of those with whom one is close. Nevertheless, participating in community life does provide a close knowledge of some of the main actors and insights into the social processes at work (Burawoy 1998).

No degree of closeness, however, can provide an objective and unbiased view. Social life is too complex and any understanding of a situation is mediated through the analytical lenses of the researcher. Furthermore, any representation of a situation carries the imprint of the biases and agendas of the writer, who exercises an arbitrary authorial power. My own biases will become clear to the reader. They are there for everyone to see. The choice of class and race as the key analytical concepts and the critical look at the class stratification and racialization dynamics of American society gives the reader a sense of my own understanding of social life. Still, I believe in the social science project and I hold that though every representation is necessarily partial, arbitrary, and biased, not every representation is equally so. I believe in the validity—partial and fragile as it is—achieved through careful, theoretically informed, empirical work.

Equipped with these different sources of information, I aim to analyze the experience of incorporation of first- and second-generation Dominicans in Providence and what it tells us about the structure of American society. Immigrants incorporate into a society stratified by class and race. To understand how incorporation works, we need to understand how race and class shape the opportunities and the experiences of all people in this country. The study of the immigrant's experience helps us further understand America's faultlines. Ultimately, this book argues that the study of immigration is as much a study of American society as it is a study of particular groups within it.