Chapter 2

The Hidden Face of New York: Undocumented Immigrant Parents' Routes to the City

Flood-tide below me! I see you face to face!
Clouds of the west—sun there half an hour high—I see you also face to face.

Crowds of men and women attired in the usual costumes, how curious you are to me!
On the ferry-boats the hundreds and hundreds that cross, returning home, are more curious to me than you suppose.
And you that shall cross from shore to shore years hence are more to me, and more in my meditations, than you might suppose.

—Walt Whitman, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" (1856)

In 1647, there were already eighteen languages being spoken on the narrow streets of the fledgling settlement of New Amsterdam at the southern end of Manhattan Island.[1] In the 1850s, when Walt Whitman, the great sage and bard of New York City, wrote "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," he saw throngs of immigrants, from the newest group—Irish escaping the Great Hunger of the 1840s—to Germans, English, and forced migrant African slaves as well as free African Americans, making their way to work from Fulton Street in Brooklyn to Fulton Street in Manhattan from his vantage point on the ferry. By the late nineteenth century, two-thirds of the city was foreign-born. As the central city for commerce in North America, blessed with the best harbor on the Eastern Seaboard, New York has drawn the peoples of the world for 450 years.

The particular countries represented in the crowds of humanity on the streets, ferries, streetcars, and subways of New York varied dramatically

from decade to decade. Let us fast-forward to 1970. If you were making your way to work on the A train—the Brooklyn ferry of the twentieth century—you would have been relatively unlikely to hear a foreign language other than Spanish. If you did hear a foreign tongue, chances were it was a European language. At that time, New York City was just beginning to undergo a demographic shift that would radically change the face of the city. Eighteen percent of the city's population in that year was born outside the United States, and the ten leading countries of origin of the city's foreign-born were largely European: Italy, Poland, the Soviet Union, Germany, Ireland, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Jamaica (in that order). Fifteen percent of the city was Latino (largely Puerto Rican). About one-quarter of the city's population was black or African American. This was the tail end of three great waves of migration in twentieth-century New York City: the waves of European migration that had transformed New York starting in the mid-nineteenth century; the wave of Puerto Rican migration from the commonwealth to New York that started in the 1930s and had begun to decline by 1970; and the Great Migration north of black Americans from the South, starting in the 1890s and ebbing as well by the 1970s.

On the same subway line thirty years later, in 2000, you would have been roughly twice as likely to hear a foreign language as in 1970. If you were sensitive to differences in the Spanish language, you might have heard several different dialects in a single subway car. The indigenous languages of Central and South America were now more likely to be part of the mix, and you also would have heard a range of Caribbean languages and dialects. As in 1970, just about one-quarter of the city's population was black or African American. However, at 37 percent, twice as large a proportion of New Yorkers in 2000 were foreign-born.[2] More than 60 percent were either immigrants or children of immigrants. Latinos had by 2000 overtaken blacks as the largest panethnic "minority" group in the city. The list of leading countries of origin had almost completely changed: the Dominican Republic, China, Jamaica, Mexico, Guyana, Ecuador, Haiti, Trinidad and Tobago, India, and Colombia.

Shifts in documentation status among immigrant groups in the city played a hidden but powerful role in this transformation of New York City over the thirty years before our study took place. This story, largely untold in studies of the changing face of the metropolis, affects many parts of a New Yorker's daily experience. The demographics of the undocumented explain the surprisingly few ethnic backgrounds of the busboys, deliverymen, and line cooks who serve the much wider array of ethnic foods served in restaurants, delis, and groceries; the affordability of a housekeeper for middle-class New Yorkers; and the unusually low (and stable) price of a piece of fruit from a street cart, a lunch special at the local

Chinese takeout, or flowers from a street vendor. These regularities of New York's social fabric are a result of the demographic, policy, and economic forces that have shaped undocumented migration to the city in recent decades. And in turn, these regularities affect the everyday experiences of undocumented immigrant parents and their children.

The top five immigrant groups in the city in 1970 came to the city largely through legal channels—either under the hemisphere-specific quotas for immigration established in the Hart-Celler Act of 1965 and expanded in 1990 or as refugees. In contrast, in 2000 a large proportion of immigrants from Mexico, a substantial minority of immigrants from China, and a small minority of those from the Dominican Republic had entered the country without documentation or had become undocumented at the point when they overstayed a work or tourist visa.

With their origins in three of the top four immigrant groups in the city in the 2000s, Emiliana, Elena, and Ling represent the face of the new New York. The differences in their documentation status as parents of young U.S. citizens were representative of their groups as well. We cannot consider how undocumented status affected their daily lives without acknowledging that a variety of societal and policy factors in their countries of origin and the United States accounted for their migration in the first place. This chapter tells the story of these push-and-pull factors in Mexico, the Dominican Republic, China, and the United States. I show how the dramatic stories of how Emiliana, Elena, and Ling each came to New York City reflected a much larger narrative of Mexican, Dominican, and Chinese migration to the United States at the turn of the twenty-first century.

THE UNDOCUMENTED IN U.S. FEDERAL POLICY

As of 2010, there were 10.8 million undocumented immigrants in the United States, representing a slight decline from 2008, due to the global recession, but still almost one-third of the foreign-born.[3] This number amounts to 4 percent of the nation's population and just over 5 percent of its workforce. The public's concerns about a recent rise in the number of undocumented are supported by the numbers: in 2000 an estimated 8.4 million were in the country, and the increase to 10.8 million represents a 29 percent increase over ten years.

The households of undocumented migrants in the United States are dominated by the voices of children. Over half of undocumented adults have children, and so the bulk of their households are made up of families, not single adults. Children of undocumented immigrants represent a significant segment of Americans. They are estimated to make up 6.8 percent of U.S. children in elementary or secondary school and nearly one-

third (31 percent) of children of immigrants in schools.[4] In other words, on average, there is more than one child of undocumented parents in every public school classroom. In gateway cities like New York, the proportions are likely to be much higher.

Some recent policy debates have concerned whether the undocumented cross into the United States while pregnant in order to have a child born as a U.S. citizen. The national evidence, calculated by the demographer Jeffrey Passel, shows that, to the contrary, more than half of U.S. births to the undocumented occur five years or later after immigration.[5] Thus, rather than being "anchor babies" who give their undocumented parents a foothold in the United States, these children have immigrant parents who have generally been living and working in their new homeland for years prior to giving birth to their first U.S. citizen child.

Despite recent increases in nontraditional gateway communities, New York City continues to be a major draw for immigrants to the United States, including the undocumented.[6] Between 1892 and 1954, the city was the primary gateway for all immigration to the United States, with millions making their way through the halls of Ellis Island. In the decades since, California, the Southwest, Florida, and Illinois have also become gateways for both legal and undocumented immigration. The undocumented immigrant population was much more dispersed in 2008 than it was in 1990. Despite this scattering of new undocumented immigrants to many states that have not been traditional gateways of immigration, New York State, from which all of the parents in our study were drawn, remains a major draw. The state was eighth in the nation in the proportion of undocumented workers in the labor force in 2008, with an estimated 6.7 percent of its labor force undocumented.[7]

A common misconception is that all undocumented immigrants in the United States are Mexicans—and conversely, that nearly all Mexicans are undocumented. This belief is not accurate: border-crossers include not just those crossing the U.S.-Mexico border but also those who arrive from the sea or across the Canadian border. Approximately 45 percent of the undocumented are visa-overstayers who technically become undocumented at the point when their visa expires.[8] The two most common types of visas that are overstayed are tourist and work visas; the majority of undocumented from the Dominican Republic, for example, have overstayed a tourist or work visa.

Why are there so many undocumented immigrants in the United States now? Much of the answer lies in changes in federal policy, which have affected particular immigrant groups in different ways. Three major waves of legislation, enacted in 1965, 1986, and 1996, altered the mix of countries from which immigrants to the United States came, as well as immigrants' access to residency and citizenship.

The watershed federal immigration law of the last fifty years was the 1965 Hart-Celler Act. In place of the unequal nation-specific quotas for immigration of the 1924 Johnson-Reed Act, based on racial and regional preferences, the Hart-Celler Act instituted equal quotas and extended them to the Western Hemisphere. The 1924 law, for example, included much higher annual quotas for northern European immigrants than for their Asian, Jewish, and southern and eastern European counterparts. The numbers of Chinese, Japanese, and East Indian immigrants allowed into the country, for example, were minuscule. The 1924 law retained many of the features of the racial exclusion laws of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882—which created, for the first time in the history of the United States, the category of "illegal immigrant."

The Hart-Celler Act also retained the priority given to family reunification in allowing immigrants into the United States legally, and it included occupational preferences. Both priorities had the purpose of favoring European immigrants; people from these countries were more likely to have relatives already living in the United States and to have advanced skills of interest to American employers.[9] However, the 1976 amendment to the Hart-Celler Act closed a loophole that had allowed children of the undocumented to sponsor their parents for legal residency. Since then, only at the age of twenty-one can a citizen child of an undocumented parent sponsor that parent for legal residency. To start that process, the parent must return to the country of origin and apply for citizenship from there.

The most far-reaching effect of the Hart-Celler Act was to increase immigration from Latin America and Asia. Hart-Celler in large part produced the "new second generation" of children born of Latino and Asian American immigrants to the United States, a demographic that has profoundly changed the face of America. In New York City, the transformation of immigrants from the still largely European list of countries of origin in 1970 to the largely Latin American and Asian list in 1990 was a direct result of this law.

Our story, however, is not yet complete. Policy changes since Hart-Celler have drastically altered the access of undocumented immigrants to legal residency. The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 instituted for the first time sanctions for employers who knowingly hire undocumented immigrants. In addition, it provided amnesty to undocumented immigrants who could provide proof of continuous residency and employment since 1982. This law was an odd mix of punitive and generous, reflecting conflicts among the interests of several concerned parties: conservative policymakers trying to stem the tide of illegal immigration; advocates and Latino and Asian rights groups fighting discrimination; agribusinesses trying to attract more foreign, low-wage labor; and

the broader business sector, which was concerned about potential sanctions against employers who unknowingly hired illegal immigrants.[10] Between the initial bills and the passage of the legislation, employers' concerns were lessened by a provision that they would not be required to check the authenticity of immigrant workers' documents. The sanctions against employers have therefore largely not been enforced since 1986, although the Obama administration is currently moving toward stronger enforcement. The amnesty provisions of IRCA ultimately resulted in legalization for the majority of the undocumented then residing in the United States (roughly 1.7 million, or 70 percent).[11] It also reduced the flow of migrants across the U.S.-Mexican border in the two years following enactment of the legislation.[12] As we will see later in the chapter, this law was largely responsible for the low rates of undocumented status among recently arrived Dominicans in New York.

The second major shift since Hart-Celler occurred after a majority Republican Congress swept into power in the 1994 midterm elections. Republican net gains of fifty-four seats in the House and nine in the Senate dramatically altered the policy landscape for legal and illegal immigrants in the United States. Two major laws subsequently restricted access to federal programs as well as to residency and citizenship and broadened the circumstances leading to deportation. The federal welfare reform legislation of 1996 (the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, or PRWORA) sharply restricted eligibility for federal means-tested programs for legal immigrants arriving after 1996. Guidelines differed by program.[13] For example, post-enactment (after 1996), legal immigrants became ineligible for welfare and Medicaid in the first five years after their entry into the United States. To receive food stamps, legal immigrants had to prove that they had worked in the United States for at least ten years. A few select groups were not subject to this restriction (refugees or asylees in the first seven years post-entry, children who arrived before 1996, and some elderly and disabled). States could provide their own funding to replace these programs for post-enactment immigrants; they have varied in the degree to which they have done this.[14] Undocumented immigrants' federally funded benefits were restricted to Medicaid emergency care. U.S. citizen children continued to be eligible for these programs, even if one or both of their parents were not.

In New York State, the focus of this study's data, the restrictions on Medicaid for legal immigrants were lifted through the New York State Court of Appeals in June 2001 in the *Aliessa v. Novello* decision.[15] The state restored full Medicaid eligibility to legal immigrants who met the program's income guidelines, with benefits paid for entirely by the state. The welfare reform law did not change eligibility regulations for undocumented immigrant parents in New York. They remained ineligible for the

majority of means-tested programs in the state, except for emergency care and prenatal and postnatal (up to six months) care.

Although PRWORA's immigrant provisions were aimed at restricting access for recently arrived legal immigrants, the policy produced a "chilling effect" on take-up of programs for a wide range of eligible populations among immigrants.[16] This broader impact of the law is relevant to our story. In the next chapter, I present the enrollment rates of citizen children of undocumented parents in programs and benefits for which they were eligible.

The Illegal Immigrant Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA), passed in the same year of 1996, instituted additional restrictions in many areas governing migration. The law responded to concerns that increases in illegal immigration to the United States were harming, not helping, the economy. The uneasy balance between the demands of agriculture and the service economy and lawmakers tilted toward exclusion and deportation. Under IIRIRA, anyone who had been in the United States unauthorized for a year or more and who had left the country became inadmissible with any legal status for a period of ten years. Prior to the law, individuals who overstayed their visas could become legal permanent residents by paying a fee.

The 1996 IIRIRA legislation greatly expanded the circumstances under which immigrants suspected of being undocumented could be deported. For the first time, local law enforcement and other officials could declare individuals to be inadmissible to the United States, thus initiating deportation without judicial oversight or review. IIRIRA also greatly expanded the definition of prior "aggravated felonies," which made a legal resident subject to deportation, to include crimes more minor than under previous laws (for example, perjury, failing to appear in court for a crime where the potential sentence was two years or more, drunken driving, and shoplifting). Serving a sentence for a crime prior to 1996 also qualified an immigrant for deportation. Finally, "public charge" provisions to ensure that immigrants applying for citizenship did not rely on government assistance were made more demanding. Relative sponsors of legal immigrants (except for immigrant spouses or children of U.S. citizens) were required to provide a legally enforceable affidavit of support indicating that they took responsibility for ensuring the immigrant's income for ten years following the entry of that person into the United States.

Overall, the sequence of laws since IRCA in 1986 has made pathways to citizenship more difficult. But the ways in which the Hart-Celler law and its amendment, IRCA, and the laws of 1996 affected flows of migration from particular nations depended in part on economic and immigration policies in those countries of origin. The causes and course of undocumented flows of Mexicans, Dominicans, and Chinese in twenty-first-

century New York City cannot be told as a single story. Thus, the narratives of how the mothers from these groups in our study came to the United States are dramatically different. Both the overall demographic characteristics of arriving immigrants from these three countries and each immigrant's "adventures," as one Mexican mother euphemistically called the circumstances of her crossing, were shaped by the policy and local economic contexts in Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and China.

MEXICAN PARENTS AND EMILIANA'S JOURNEY

Emiliana's migration to New York City is part of the latest chapter in a long history of migration from Mexico to the United States. The large and recent wave of migration from the Mixteca region of Mexico to the city has fairly high rates of undocumented status and lacks the long-standing ethnic enclaves and associated organizations to which Dominicans and Chinese in the city have access. The high rates of undocumented status in this group are a reflection of the latest phase in a long history of conquest, economic interdependence, and shifting inclusion and exclusion of Mexicans in the States. Emiliana's journey to the United States was typical of the journeys undertaken by the most rapidly growing immigrant group in New York City—a group scattered across the city whose numbers are still relatively low but one that is slowly transforming the economic and cultural life of the city.

Mexicans made up 56 percent of all undocumented immigrants in the United States in 2008. Viewed another way, it is estimated that just over half of the foreign-born Mexicans in the United States—55 percent—are undocumented.[17] Of the remainder of undocumented immigrants, roughly two-thirds are from other Latin American countries (particularly the poorer nations of Central America), and one-third are from Asia (principally China, India, Korea, and the Philippines). Mexican undocumented immigrants usually arrive by crossing the border on foot.

Policy debates about illegal migration are dominated by concerns about Mexican immigration. "Illegal alien" has become synonymous with "Mexican." Some of the policy options floated during the 2006 cycle of policy debate—which ultimately did not result in congressional action—included establishing temporary guest worker status; allowing unauthorized immigrants who had been in the United States more than a certain number of years to pay a fine and progress toward citizenship; and setting employment history requirements (for example, requiring a period of continuous employment). These concerns have roots in the long and complex history of U.S.-Mexico border and immigration policies. I concentrate here on the recent history, since 1965.[18]

The Hart-Celler Act had the paradoxical effect of increasing undocumented migration from Mexico. Because of the new per-country restrictions, the annual quota for Mexico (40,000) represented a large reduction in potential numbers allowed from Mexico compared to the prior Johnson-Reed Act and the "bracero" (guest worker) program in place from 1943 to 1964. Undocumented migration rose as a result.[19] An amendment to Hart-Celler in 1976 placed a further restriction on the Western Hemisphere. Following this new cap of 20,000 per year, huge numbers of Mexicans—over three-quarters of a million in 1976—were deported.[20]

Undocumented migration from Mexico also rose in the 1990s because of what was happening in both the Mexican and U.S. economies. After the peso crisis of December 1994, the Mexican economy was in tatters. The simultaneous sustained expansion of the U.S. economy in the 1990s and early 2000s—the largest and longest period of growth since World War II—provided plenty of job opportunities up north. These two factors drove the extraordinary increases in undocumented migration from Mexico in the late 1990s and 2000s, which occurred despite tougher border enforcement and increasing deportation rates under President George W. Bush. The growth in undocumented migration did not begin to slow until 2008 and 2009, and then only because of the recession of late 2008 and 2009, which hit low-wage immigrant workers particularly hard. Unemployment soared among immigrants in the United States, surpassing unemployment rates among the native-born by early 2009.[21]

How do undocumented immigrants from Mexico compare in their education and work skills to either those who do not emigrate at all or those who arrive with a visa or residency? Studies show that the answer differs depending on the comparison group. Undocumented Mexican immigrants are often of somewhat higher educational status than others in the same geographic region who do not depart, and the former also tend to have more network members in the United States already. This "positive selectivity" has been observed for many immigrant groups.[22] If we compare undocumented to documented migrants, however, the undocumented are more likely to be poorer, to have less education, and to come from a rural area.[23]

Mexican migration to different cities in the United States is specific to particular sending regions in Mexico. Most in the recent group of undocumented migrants came to New York City from the Mixteca region, an area that has in common a set of indigenous languages and cultures. It spans much of the state of Puebla and parts of Guerrero and Oaxaca.[24] The beginning of this migration from Mixteca has been traced to the mid-1940s. By 1980 there were still only 40,000 Mexicans in New York City. Their incomes were quite high relative to other Latino groups—this initial small group of migrants were on a par with Cubans, for example, in their socio-

economic indicators. The big surge in migration from this region did not occur until after the passage of IRCA, when 9,000 Mexicans in New York applied for papers.[25] By 1990 there were 100,000 Mexicans in New York, and by 2000, roughly 275,000. Their average incomes were much lower than those of the group of Mexicans in the city in 1980, which is in accordance with there being a higher proportion of undocumented among them.[26]

Most of the Mexican mothers in our study arrived from the Mixteca region during the mid to late 1990s, when the economy of Mexico was particularly weak and the U.S. economy was soaring (see figure 2.1). The states making up the Mixteca region are some of the poorest in Mexico; in 2000, Puebla, for example, ranked seventh in socioeconomic disadvantage among the thirty-one Mexican states.[27] Of the ten Mexican mothers in the qualitative study who were undocumented (out of a total of eleven), none had an immediate family member with papers. The group in our sample thus had almost no links to the amnesty of 1986 to 1988; this makes statistical sense in that the growth from 40,000 Mexicans in 1980 to 275,000 in 2000 could not have been driven entirely by close relatives of the 9,000 Mexicans who applied for amnesty through IRCA. Instead, a chain-migration process occurred in which family or wider network members who had crossed the border and done well—by sending back remittances that supported their families and communities—spread the word about economic opportunity in New York.[28]

Emiliana grew up in a large family that struggled to make ends meet in a town in the state of Puebla. Their house was a relatively flimsy wooden one that was rebuilt with bricks only in recent years. Emiliana took care of her seven younger siblings while her mother and father worked. Her father, in addition, was "celoso" (jealous) of his eldest daughter and kept her inside. She was not allowed to ever visit friends and was only allowed outside their house to go to school. In 1994 her father went to the United States, crossing the border without papers to seek work. He came back to Mexico with the news that opportunities were good. Despite his emphasis until then on keeping Emiliana indoors, as soon as he felt that she was old enough, he sent her with her younger brother Hector to the United States, telling them that they needed to help out the family. She told Ana, the field-worker, that both she and Hector had wanted to continue their education (she finished secundaria, or ninth grade, but did not go on to preparatoria).

Arriving as single adults, Emiliana and Hector brought a large family's hopes and economic needs with them in their crossing. Emiliana called her journey "the Adventure," and like many of the other Mexican aventuras we heard about, she crossed in the pitch-black of the southwestern desert night into her new life. The journey across the border involved

Figure 2.1 Origins of Mexican Mothers in the Mixteca Region of Mexico

Source: Author's graphic utilizing data from the Early Childhood Cohort Study (Center for Research on Culture, Development, and Education 2009).

walking in the cold over grassy hills, without any clothes except what she was wearing, in a small group of about eight. Nobody carried food or water. Anything heavy would have slowed them down too much if they had needed to run during the several-hour-long night crossing. The coyote who had picked them up guided them and told them on occasion to roll down a hill, "as if we were rocks," in order to evade la migra, who were patrolling in helicopters. As she was walking, Emiliana thought a lot about her mother. It was very difficult for her to leave her mother, knowing that she would not see her for a very long time. She felt torn between this loss and the obligation to support her mother financially.

Unlike some of the other Mexicans in our study, Emiliana arrived after only one try. For a few, it took as many as three tries over several weeks, with single crossings taking as long as a week. One of the mothers talked about a friend who had traveled with an infant through a tunnel, crouched over (as in the film *El Norte*, noted the field-worker, who was very surprised that an infant had made the crossing). This friend spoke of her fear of what she might find at the other end—the exit closed up, for instance, or la migra waiting.

When Emiliana came to the United States, a crossing cost about $1,500 a person for an adult and somewhat less for a child. (For those who came in the early 1990s, the cost was roughly $800; by the mid-2000s it had risen to $2,000.) As was common during that time, successful border-crossers were picked up one by one in cars, to be taken to a hotel. At the hotel they could contact their relatives in Mexico, and it was there that they had to pay the coyote. They then received plane tickets to their final destination—in this case New York.

When Emiliana arrived, her first impression of New York was that it was dirty. Although she wanted to go out and explore Manhattan, her brother Hector was protective and did not allow her to leave the apartment during his very long work hours. Other mothers in our Mexican sample reported similar first impressions of New York as they compared it to Mexico. Indeed, the two legendary metropolises of North America, New York and Mexico City, are often compared. For the mothers in our study, New York suffered in the comparison; most who had been to "D.F." (the Distrito Federal, or Mexico City) were not impressed by New York, finding the rats and cockroaches a nasty contrast to the cleanliness they associated with Mexico City. "Filthy" and "not that big a city" were some of the reactions. (Indeed, New York is not that big compared to the largest city in the Western Hemisphere.) Several mentioned how lonely and painful the first weeks in New York were. Husbands or fathers often prevented them from leaving the house in the first weeks.

The women who had come directly from rural areas, most commonly villages in Puebla, were more impressed by the night lights of New York

City, but the transition was more jolting for them. One Mexican mother, Victoria, reported a particularly drastic contrast between life in her village and the transition to the United States. During her border crossing, she saw two animals—ironically, they looked like coyotes—which she called nahuales. These, she said, are animals that used to be children whose parents wanted them to be evil. Such parents take their newborn baby to the mountain and allow an animal (coyote) to lick the baby clean. Then the animal leaves. When the parents want to complete the transformation, they take the child to an ant nest and roll the child in the ants. At this point, the baby takes the form of the animal that licked him or her clean. The nahuales live around people and change to animals when they want to steal them. Victoria was astonished to see nahuales on her walk across the border. When she arrived finally at the airport in Los Angeles for her flight to New York, she was stunned anew by her very first view of airplanes. She thought they were large animals. When she finally got on board, on the first airplane flight of her life, she felt dizzy, as if she would throw up. Another mother, Adelina, said that one of her male relatives, upon seeing his first New York snowfall after arriving from rural Morelos, was amazed and asked when the penguins and polar bears would start to fall. She explained that "that is the way it is when you come from a small town in Mexico where you have not had a lot of exposure to the outside world."

Why did we find such high rates of undocumented status in the Mexican mothers in this qualitative sample, relative to the participants in Robert Smith's study, the largest prior study of Mexicans in New York?[29] There may have been some variation in who agreed to be in the study; however, our recruitment rates for both our main study and its qualitative part did not appreciably differ across ethnic groups. And as we will see in chapter 4, the neighborhoods that the Mexicans in our study lived in were representative of New York City neighborhoods with Mexican residents in the 2000 census. Our population of parents, however, mothers of newborn infants, were much younger than the parents in Smith's sample, and they were also part of a newer generation of migration with lower rates of documentation than the group whose arrival here was linked to IRCA. In addition, most of Smith's sample first came to the United States before IRCA; he describes a large decline in the undocumented status of members of this group between their first trips back to Mexico and 1992, by which time many had achieved documented status thanks to IRCA. Finally, our group was sampled from a public hospital rather than transnational organizations and networks, as was the case in Smith's study of Mexicans from one of the original sending towns in Puebla; Mexicans in our qualitative study did not report the extensive transnational ties and travel depicted in his study.

DOMINICAN PARENTS AND ELENA'S JOURNEY

Unlike the migration story of Emiliana, who had relatively few connections to predecessors who had already come to the United States, Elena's migration story was the latest in a chain of transnational travel in her family. Recently arrived Dominicans in the city like Elena often follow a well-worn path taken by hundreds of thousands of their predecessors from the cities and countryside of the Dominican Republic to the decades-old ethnic enclave of Washington Heights. This path is eased from a legal standpoint by tourist and work visas, as well as by sponsorship of green cards through family reunification provisions, although a small proportion of recent arrivals become undocumented after overstaying a visa. Dominicans now live all over the city, its suburbs, and the Northeast, but the Heights and its neighboring communities continue to represent the hub of Dominican life in the United States, decades after migration began.

The relationship of the Dominican Republic to the United States has been one of violent entanglements—the United States has invaded the D.R. twice, in 1916 and 1965—and economic dependence, especially under the economic policies of the dictator Rafael Trujillo, who ruled the D.R. from 1930 to 1961. During the Trujillo period, the nation's subsistence agriculture was transformed on a massive scale to cash crops (mainly sugar), with accompanying industrialization and the growth of export industry. Consolidation and monopolization of the sugar industry drove the increased mobility of agricultural workers. During this period, however, few Dominicans were allowed out of the country—the ones who did leave were well off and came from the Cibao region, from which some of the mothers in our study also came (see the area between Santo Domingo and San Francisco de Macoris in figure 2.2).[30]

New York City looms large in the Dominican diaspora. Emigration rose from an average of 1,000 a year in the 1950s to an average of 10,000 a year in the 1960s, with the bulk of emigrants going to New York City and other cities in the Northeast.[31] The second U.S. invasion of the Dominican Republic in 1965 was intended to prevent a Communist government and bolster an alliance of military officers, industrialists, and international traders.[32] After that invasion, the two countries encouraged migration in order to siphon off political discontent; most of these legal migrants went to New York City.[33] The economic policies of Joaquín Balaguer—Trujillo's former presidential secretary who ruled the nation from 1966 to 1978—continued to emphasize consolidating land ownership, keeping agricultural prices low, and fostering industrial growth that required investments in capital rather than labor. These policies drove rural-to-urban migration,[34] and the overseas migration encouraged by the Dominican government helped to keep unemployment rates relatively low during those years.

In New York, Washington Heights grew as an ethnic enclave for Dominicans during the 1970s and 1980s—so much so that it acquired a mythic status in the Dominican Republic as El Alto (the Heights). Dominicans in New York reached the mainstream milestone of their own Broadway musical—named after an ethnic enclave, just as *West Side Story* had been named for Puerto Ricans fifty years before—with the opening of *In the Heights* in March 2008.

The Heights had been a mix of small farms and larger estates as recently as the early 1900s; it became a neighborhood of Irish immigrants and European Jews in the 1920s and 1930s and then, prior to the Dominicans' arrival, a Cuban and Puerto Rican enclave. Dominican migrants have typically arrived with visas; some become undocumented when their visa expires.[35] At this point in history, after decades of migration, most of the arrivals already have relatives in El Alto or in the neighborhoods of the South and West Bronx, where Dominicans have increasingly moved as rents rose in Washington Heights.

Most of the migrants from the Dominican Republic to the United States have not been the poorest Dominicans from rural areas but rather their somewhat better-off counterparts from urban areas.[36] The bulk of our overall sample of Dominicans came from the country's two largest cities, Santo Domingo and Santiago (see figure 2.2). Many had lived middle-class lives in the Dominican Republic; quite a few mothers in our sample, for example, were registered nurses prior to arriving in the United States.

Between 1986 and 1988, owing to the IRCA provisions, a large number of undocumented Dominicans in New York (an estimate of 12,000) became legal permanent residents.[37] As a result, first-generation Dominicans who arrived in the 1990s—like most of the Dominican mothers in our sample—were more likely to come sponsored by relatives already in New York than had been the case for their predecessors in previous decades. Judging from our qualitative sample, in fact, the majority of our Dominican mothers were legal permanent residents or citizens by the time of our study.

The undocumented among Dominicans in New York are usually visa-overstayers, not border-crossers like the majority of the undocumented Mexicans.[38] Short-term visas are relatively easy to come by in the Dominican Republic, although paperwork requirements have shifted over time and their complexity has fostered a mini-industry of visa preparation.[39] Prior to the 2000s, long-term (up to ten-year) tourist visas were common, with requirements to return to the Dominican Republic every six months. (Long-term visas were also given to some Mexicans, but in very small numbers and generally to the well-to-do.) With increased restrictions after 9/11, long-term visas were no longer issued in the 2000s. This is another reason why the proportion of undocumented among Dominicans in New York has most likely decreased since the mid-1990s.

Figure 2.2 Origins of Dominican Mothers in the Dominican Republic

Source: Author's graphic utilizing data from the Early Childhood Cohort Study (Center for Research on Culture, Development, and Education 2009).

Unlike the Mexican mothers in our sample, most of whom had arrived in the ten years prior to the birth of their child, the Dominican mothers varied a great deal in the timing of their arrival. (Variation in their age at arrival was one-third larger than for the Mexicans.) Some had been preschoolers when they arrived in the United States, brought over by a parent or relative. After spending decades in the United States—and most importantly, by arriving before IRCA—most of this group who had arrived in early childhood were residents or citizens by the time our qualitative study started. Others had come as late as in their twenties.

Elena came at the age of eighteen (the mean age of arrival of our Dominican sample). Like most of this group, she was not the first in her family to emigrate. By the time we began our study in 2004, pioneer immigrants like Emiliana—the first in their families to come to the United States—were relatively rare among Dominicans. A long chain of relatives in Elena's family had navigated friendlier immigration policy contexts in the United States in prior years, often first arriving with a tourist or student visa. She had aunts who had come before she was born to find "a better life, a better future." Then, when she was still in school, her father went to the United States for the first time, on a long-term tourist visa. He returned to the Dominican Republic about every six months, as one has to do on a tourist visa. He eventually applied for legal permanent resident (LPR) status and obtained it. With his help, her brother then went to the United States on a student visa. He did not enroll in school, however, but started working.

Elena herself was not sponsored by her father (although her younger sister was). Instead, her husband, who was steadily employed in the Dominican Republic working for the government, got a tourist visa and went to New York in the early 1990s. Then Elena went to New York, with the process facilitated by her husband. So despite migrating at virtually the same age as Emiliana (eighteen), Elena arrived with the security of multiple connections in the new land. The trip itself was relatively easy for her: she reported none of the sort of hardships that were common in the crossing stories of undocumented Chinese and Mexicans. Her husband Ramon, on one of his trips back to the Dominican Republic, helped her gather her documents to get her own tourist visa, and she then accompanied him back to New York City, where she was reunited with her mother and father—her mother telling her she was "gorda" (fat) and she in return telling her mother she looked "flaco" (skinny). Although she did not like New York in her first month, she soon adjusted. After spending a month or two at her aunt's apartment, she moved in with her husband in an apartment in Washington Heights. Eventually, her father was able to sponsor her green card.

The Dominicans in our qualitative sample were much more likely to be

documented than the Mexicans. This difference is not explained by the fact that Dominicans have been coming to New York City in large numbers for much longer. In fact, the flow of Dominicans to New York City never went through a period with the very high proportion of undocumented of the recent Mexican flow. There were several other reasons why Dominicans were more likely to be documented: first, much of the initial wave of migration was supported by the U.S. and Dominican governments; second, after the initial waves, the principal mode of entry was a visa under family reunification provisions; and third, the Dominican Republic does not share a land border with the United States.

CHINESE PARENTS AND LING'S JOURNEY

Ling's story, like the stories of other Fujianese in New York City, is part of a pattern of regional succession: mainland Chinese from a specific sending area are remaking the Chinatowns of the city after a long history of Cantonese migration. Exclusion from the United States was followed by the easing of migration restrictions in the United States in the 1960s and in China in the 1970s. Most recently, a surge in low-income migration in the 1990s was spurred by international smuggling organizations operating across Fujian province, Taiwan, and the United States. These forces are the backdrop to Ling and her husband Wei's particularly harrowing story of migration to New York. The couple are representative of the substantial proportion of mainland Chinese immigrants to New York who arrived undocumented (likely close to 50 percent among our sample, recruited in a public hospital serving many low-income Chinese).

The history of undocumented migration from China to the United States has been shaped by the history of Chinese exclusion. Beginning with the passage by Congress in 1882 of laws barring the Chinese from admission and naturalization, and continuing through the Johnson-Reed Act—which put restrictions in place that effectively excluded not only Chinese but East and South Asians (particularly Japanese and Indians) from migrating to the United States—the Chinese case was central to the sea change in U.S. migration policy from nearly unfettered migration in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to increasing restriction in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[40] Although the exclusion of this group was relaxed during China's war with Japan in 1937 (then tightened again during the Communist Revolution in 1949), even the repeal of exclusion laws in 1943 restricted legal migration to a mere 105 a year. (Nevertheless, for the first time since 1882, the 1943 repeal allowed for family reunification and sponsorship.) Because of restrictions like these, unauthorized migration represented a substantial percentage of immigration flows from China throughout the twentieth century. In 1950, for example, at least one-quarter of

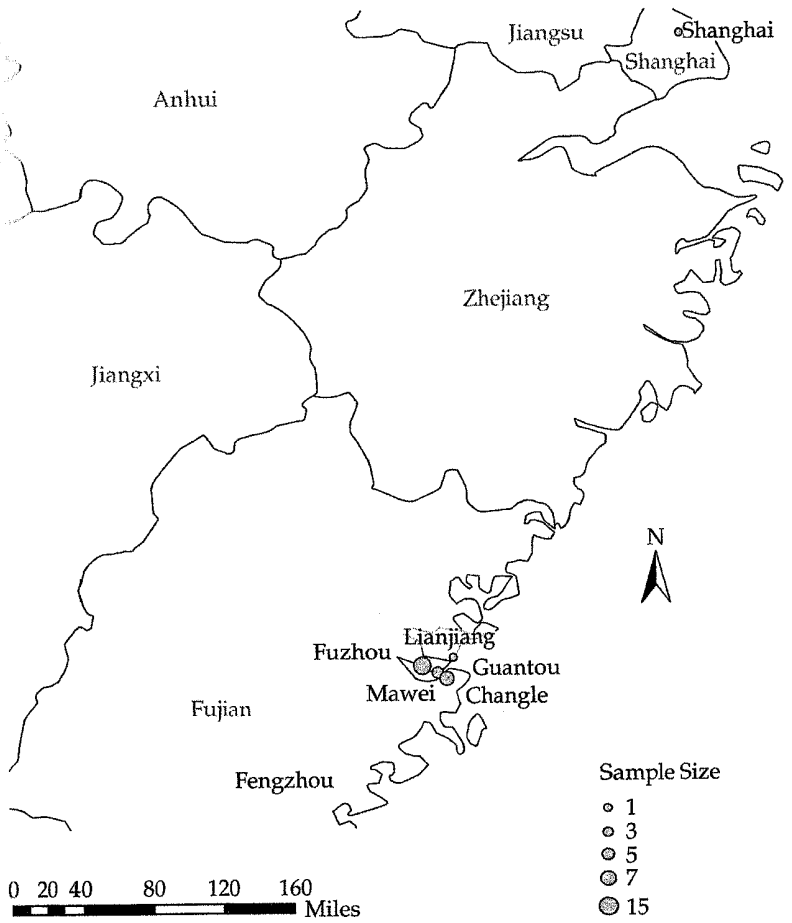
Chinese in the United States were undocumented.[41] Scrutiny of Chinese immigrants' papers increased dramatically as a result of the Cold War, beginning in the late 1950s and continuing through the 1960s.

The Hart-Celler Act created an enormous new flow of migration from Taiwan and Hong Kong, and then China, that led to huge increases of ethnic Chinese in New York City. The number of ethnic Chinese in 1960 in New York City was 33,000; that number rose to over 300,000 by 1990, and to over 500,000 by 2000.[42] Since China's loosening of emigration restrictions following the death of Mao in 1976, the country has sent hundreds of thousands of young emigrants to the United States to study. In addition, because spouses and children of U.S. citizens are exempt from the 20,000-per-country limit within a hemisphere set by the act, more than 20,000 Chinese come to the United States legally each year. And finally, preferences based on professional skills tend to favor immigrants from Asia over those from Latin America. Legal immigrants from China have therefore come to the United States unusually positively selected on characteristics like educational background.

The recent wave of undocumented migration from China, however, has quite a different narrative. Unlike prior Chinese migration, which was largely from Guangdong (Canton) province, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, this new wave, which began in the 1980s, came primarily from Fujian province. (See figure 2.3 for a map of the origins of our overall sample of Chinese parents.) There were three reasons for this shift: China's loosening of emigration restrictions; the passage of IRCA in 1986; and the ability of an international smuggling industry based in Taiwan and Fujian province to swiftly change its focus from heroin smuggling to human smuggling. From 1949 to 1978, during the Cultural Revolution, Mao's severe border restriction policies allowed very little emigration from mainland China, whether undocumented or documented. Thus, China was not among the top ten countries of origin of immigrants in New York City in 1970, despite the flourishing ethnic enclave of Chinatown. The Chinese government relaxed these policies in the 1980s, however, to allow increased emigration.

Economic growth in Fujian province, as in much of eastern China, was rapid after Mao's death, and it accelerated further in the 1990s. Beijing focused on Fuzhou City, the provincial capital, as a venue for economic development, albeit not at the level of investment that the Shanghai urban area enjoyed. Despite the region's economic growth, the Fujianese tradition of sending migrants overseas, as well as continued large wage differentials with the United States, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan, drove a process of chain migration.[43] In the United States, this process was greatly accelerated by IRCA's amnesty provisions. The announced deadline of November 1988 for providing documentation for amnesty (including proof of residence and employment history in the United States) unleashed a flood of unauthorized migration from Fujian province. Smuggling fees, which had been less than $2,000 as recently as a few years before, skyrocketed to $18,000 by 1990.

Figure 2.3 Origins of Chinese Mothers in Fujian Province, China



Source: Author's graphic utilizing data from the Early Childhood Cohort Study (Center for Research on Culture, Development, and Education 2009).

As with the migration from the Dominican Republic, most of the mi-

grants came from areas near the capital city (specifically, the counties surrounding Fuzhou). Processes of chain migration drove the "specialization" of particular counties in sending emigrants to particular regions of the world. For example, most of the Fujianese migration to the United States is from Changle County, a county about an hour outside of Fuzhou that includes the city's airport. Other counties send high proportions of emigrants to Japan, Europe, and Australia. Those who went overseas and then returned and spent lavishly, constructing modern new homes and contributing to the infrastructure of Fuzhou City and surrounding counties, created an additional incentive to emigrate. For example, a lavish public gate can be found in one of the high sending neighborhoods in Changle County. We observed this gate on a trip to Changle County in 2007. Emblazoned with Chinese poems on the two marble pillars (for example, THE SUN SHINES UPON MORNING DEWS REFLECTING A THOUSAND RAYS IN THE GOLDEN WORLD), the arch of the gate reads: DONATED AND BUILT BY CHINESE AMERICAN MR. YANG YEZHUN IN OCTOBER 2003.

Smuggling organizations now have well-developed networks across China, Southeast Asia, and the receiving regions of the world. The beginning of the surge of migration was characterized by relatively dangerous modes of passage. Some migrants came in rickety boats. When one vessel, the *Golden Venture*, hit a sandbar off Rockaway in Queens in 1993, with 286 immigrants on board, ten people dived into the rough waters and struggled to swim to shore. This boat had been four months at sea. All on board were told to swim ashore after the pilots of the 150-foot boat intentionally grounded it 200 yards from Queens. Eventually the key smuggler in this case, Cheng Chui Ping, known as "Sister Ping" in the Fujianese community, was sentenced to thirty-five years in prison.[44] This event was one of the first that drew the attention of New York and the United States as a whole to the new wave, post-IRCA, of undocumented migration from Fujian province.

The story of Ling and her husband Wei reflected the hardships of the early phase of Fujianese migration. After Wei left their home, she was "worried to death" for several months. She heard nothing about him. She went regularly to the Stone Bamboo Mountain, about twenty miles south of Fuzhou, to pray at the temple there. This beautiful temple overlooks a lake where for centuries the Fujianese have prayed for safe passage to foreign lands. "If we pray there, only need to wait a few months, or one to two years, we can come to the U.S." It turned out that her husband had climbed the foothills of the Himalayas to get to Thailand. The crossing through the mountains was hazardous; the group of Fujianese were tied together with ropes as they made the trek. About ten people had to share one pot of soup and one chicken. One died during the journey. Once they

arrived in Thailand, the group had to stay in fields because the danger of being caught was greater in hotels. In the tropical heat, mosquitoes were everywhere, and it was nearly impossible to sleep. Then Wei was caught by the military in Thailand and spent several months in prison. His money to pay the snakeheads for the rest of the journey was stolen from him; his brother, already in the United States, had to wire him several thousand dollars to cover the rest of his passage.

In contrast, three years later, Ling's own journey was relatively easy. Several relatives and friends already in the United States loaned her several thousand dollars each, enough to help her pay the snakeheads. She told Yong, the field-worker, that it was normal for friends already in the United States, who understood the costs and consequences of migration, to lend such amounts of money. In her first years in New York, she worked twelve-hour days in garment factories near the Manhattan Bridge in Chinatown, repaying her debts. In her words, the Fujianese "are small circles, and very generous" with their close friends and relatives. She herself had loaned her relatives and friends thousands of dollars over the years, all of which had been paid back.

The cost of passage paid to the snakeheads for papers was roughly $25,000 at the time when Ling and her husband came to New York. (It was $30,000 for the privilege of enduring the voyage on the *Golden Venture*.)[45] By the time of our study, this fee had risen to between $60,000 and $80,000, owing to the huge expansion in the Chinese economy, particularly in the eastern provinces, and subsequent rises in income there. The *Golden Venture* incident had largely ended smuggling on boats in favor of individual bookings by air.

The Chinese undocumented from Fujian province are relatively better off in terms of education and income than their counterparts who do not emigrate. As Zai Liang and Wenzhen Ye point out, the high cost of leaving simply requires more financial and network resources.[46] Not surprisingly, in our study the Chinese were the oldest upon arrival in the United States, compared to the Mexicans and Dominicans. In the sending counties of Fujian province, those who leave also increase their social status. Men who do not leave, in particular, are viewed as having "no great future" (mei chu xi). On the other hand, undocumented emigrants from China are of lower socioeconomic status on average than those who leave with papers.

CONCLUSION

Our three groups of immigrants had drastically different rates of documentation status, owing to the very different histories of recent Mexican, Dominican, and Chinese migration to New York. For Mexican immi-

grants, New York is not a historically important destination city in El Norte, like Chicago and Los Angeles, but rather a relatively new gateway to the United States. New York is a city where Mexican low-income parents of young children are quite likely to be undocumented. The Mexicans in our sample were often pioneers in their families—the first to come to the new land. They arrived after the amnesty provisions of the 1986 IRCA law went into effect. They also arrived without tourist or work visas and thus, before 1996, did not have the option of paying a fine and applying for residency. Their sole path to residency and citizenship will require decades of being Americans in waiting. Under current law, their eldest U.S.-born child will be able to sponsor them for residency when he or she turns twenty-one. At that point, of course, the child's development, together with any influences of parental undocumented status upon it, will largely be over.

For the Dominicans, in contrast, New York has been a destination city—especially the near-legendary neighborhood of Washington Heights—since the midtwentieth century. With decades of undocumented migration behind them, culminating in the 1986 passage of IRCA, the large majority of Dominican parents with young children in New York, as reflected in our qualitative sample, appear either to be residents or citizens themselves or to have a resident or citizen among their close relatives. The proportion of undocumented among arrivals since 1986 is likely to have decreased substantially. As we will see in chapter 4, the proportion of undocumented in the networks of Dominican undocumented adults in our qualitative sample was much lower than among their Mexican counterparts. This difference, I argue, has implications for access to resources and opportunities for learning among the children of these two groups of immigrants.

Finally, the current wave of low-income Chinese migration to New York represents a unique case in the history of this destination city. A transition in Chinese policy from being completely restricted to having more open borders spurred a highly localized (in China) but international smuggling operation aided by transnational investment. The publicized deadline of November 1988 for amnesty under IRCA spurred the smuggling organizations. These far-reaching organizations have also benefited from a strong occupational niche in Chinese restaurant work (which requires little English) in storefront and buffet establishments all over the eastern half of the United States. The amazing concentration of this wave's origins in Changle County, a tiny area near Fuzhou City, testifies to a highly successful marketing strategy and the visible wealth that remittances buy in that area. The personal and economic risks that families undergo, incurring massive debts to smugglers, create in their wake a generation of U.S.-born children with an unusual transnational developmental trajectory. These children spend the first years of their lives in China being raised by their grandparents as their parents work seventy-two-hour weeks in the new land. The percentage of infants sent back was far higher among our Chinese families than among the Mexican or Dominican families. The implications of this unusual transnational pattern for child development are explored in detail in the next chapter.