

**Newcomers, Outsiders, and Insiders: Immigrants and American Racial Politics in the Early**

**Twenty-first Century.** By Ronald Schmidt, Sr., Yvette M. Alex-Assensoh, Andrew L. Aoki, and Rodney E. Hero. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009. 336p. \$25.95.  
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— Els de Graauw, *Baruch College—City University of New York*

The 2008 election of Barack Obama, a mixed-race person with a Kenyan-born father, was a watershed event for many reasons, not the least of which for spotlighting the nexus between immigration and the political incorporation of historically disadvantaged minority groups. With a book that is a welcome and timely addition to the growing literature on immigration and ethnoracial politics, Ronald Schmidt and his coauthors ask how the recent influx of immigrants of color from Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa has influenced the ability of long-standing US ethnoracial minority groups—blacks, Asian Americans, and Latinos—to become political insiders and gain greater representation and power in American government. Unlike those who point to President Obama's political ascendancy as a sign that racial barriers have been broken and that America has become postracial, *Newcomers, Outsiders, and Insiders* presents a more sober story about the struggle for ethnoracial equality in the United States.

The authors employ four benchmarks—participation, representation, membership in governing coalitions, and the enactment of ethnoracially egalitarian public policies—to assess the nature and degree of the political incorporation of existing ethnoracial minority groups amid continued immigration. They rely on these benchmarks to examine four alternative directions for the future of the political incorporation of ethnoracial minority groups: individual assimilation, political pluralism, biracial hierarchy, and multiracial hierarchy. The authors show that immigrants have helped raise the capacity of ethnoracial minority groups to participate in politics and secure elected and appointed positions in government, evidence supportive of the scenarios of individual assimilation and political pluralism. Yet they also show that immigrants have hindered minority efforts to influence governmental decisions and adopt policies responsive to minority interests, which support a racial hierarchy perspective. Although the authors find support for all four scenarios, they present more evidence for the idea that the increased presence of immigrants of color contributes to a multiracial hierarchy interpretation of American democracy.

The book proceeds in four parts. The first offers an overview of previous research on post-1965 immigration, with a focus on the ways in which the new immigration has changed the demographic profile of the nation and that of each of the three ethnoracial minority groups. This part also presents the book's intellectual and analytical framework. Part II contextualizes the book's main inquiry

into the effects of recent immigration on minorities' political incorporation with a discussion of the history of ethnoracial politics in the United States and ongoing patterns of racial segregation in residential neighborhoods and public schools. Parts I and II will be familiar fare to scholars of race, ethnicity, and immigration, but, for graduate students and upper-division undergraduates, they provide a clear and straightforward discussion of historical patterns of ethnoracial disadvantage and how they have been reshaped and changed, though not diminished, by the arrival of large numbers of immigrants from Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa.

Readers will find the descriptive and analytical core of the book in Part III and concluding remarks in Part IV. Although the authors present no original empirical research, they do provide an original and comprehensive analysis of existing scholarship in order to assess the effect of immigration on the political incorporation of blacks, Asian Americans, and Latinos in the post-1965 period. Their analysis is insightful in several ways. They show that the presence of Latino and Asian Pacific Island immigrants in particular has reenergized social movements and other types of civic organizations as agents of ethnoracial political incorporation. They also illustrate that the new immigrants have raised the capacity of each ethnoracial minority group to influence electoral outcomes and have increased, be it in an uneven way, the representation of the three ethnoracial minority groups in legislative and executive governmental bodies. In what the authors aptly describe as a pattern of "segmented descriptive representation" (p. 181), ethnoracial minorities are more likely to hold elective and appointive offices at the local level than at the state and national levels. Finally, they provide a useful discussion of how the median voter theorem and politicians' need to appeal to centrist voters in the American majoritarian electoral system help explain why blacks, Latinos, and Asian Americans have been stymied in their efforts to gain access to governing coalitions and to win passage of ethnoracially egalitarian public policies.

Schmidt and his colleagues deserve to be congratulated for their comprehensive examination of the ways in which recent immigrants impinge on the political incorporation of ethnoracial minority groups. Unlike many other studies on ethnoracial politics, this book evaluates not one but four competing theoretical approaches in order to describe the evolving relationship between ethnoracial minority groups and the larger American political system. Furthermore, the book is distinguished by a focus on blacks, Latinos, and Asian Americans, as well as on key dynamics and national-origin differences within each of these ethnoracial minority groups. Finally, the book stands out from the pack as a result of its analysis of incorporation dynamics at all three levels of government and its inclusion of multiple benchmarks of political incorporation.

One important omission, however, is that the authors treat whites—unlike the three ethnoracial minority groups

they discuss—as a monolithic group, which is a problematic assumption to make given the vast distinctions among whites. It also is unfortunate that they provide only a cursory discussion of transnationalism. Transnationalism might not be a realistic fifth scenario for the future of US ethnoracial politics, as the authors contend, but increases in dual citizenship, expatriate voting, hometown associations, and remittances do merit a more in-depth discussion of whether immigrants who engage in such transnational behaviors help or hinder the political incorporation of ethnoracial minority groups in the United States. Finally, the book focuses on the impact that immigrants have on the political incorporation of their respective ethnoracial minority groups. In a rapidly diversifying society such as the United States, however, it will be imperative for groups to build political coalitions across ethnoracial lines if they want to have access to the reins of power. To that end, it would have served readers well had the authors examined more closely the effects of immigration on political dynamics among the various ethnoracial minority groups.

These criticisms notwithstanding, *Newcomers, Outsiders, and Insiders* is an important and timely book that does an admirable job of bringing the scholarship on immigrant political incorporation into conversation with the scholarship on ethnoracial politics. It is well written and clearly organized, with numerous fresh insights. Its comprehensive nature makes it a most appropriate text to use in graduate seminars and upper-division undergraduate courses on immigration and ethnic/racial politics. The book also is valuable for scholars specializing in immigration, race, and ethnicity, for whom it will serve as a solid foundation for avenues of future research.

**Crossing Borders: Migration and Citizenship in the Twentieth-Century United States.** By Dorothee Schneider.

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— Philip E. Wolgin, *Center for American Progress*

Dorothee Schneider has written an excellent and comprehensive synthesis of the transnational history, politics, and policy of immigration of the United States. Her work eschews what has traditionally been a split between top-down narratives, common in American political development accounts of changing legislative and bureaucratic frameworks, and bottom-up narratives, evident in recent historical studies that highlight the agency of immigrants. Schneider instead reconceptualizes the migration process as a series of border crossings and transitions that begin in the home country, as a migrant makes the decisions to leave, and continue into the new country all the way through the naturalization process, as immigrant becomes citizen. Her work situates the stories of the people attempting to control immigration, such as border agents, advo-

cates, and legislators, alongside the lives of ordinary immigrants.

Each border crossing involves a struggle between the individual migrant and the overall system and Schneider is clear that, in every part of the process, the negotiation between immigrant and bureaucracy reshaped the identity of both. Attempts to exclude Asian immigrants, for example, led to stricter border controls up and down the West Coast. Even so, three-quarters of all West Coast Asian arrivals gained entry to the country, mainly because the rise of these same regulations led to “well prepared . . . and successful strategizing for the encounters at the border stations” (p. 109). Most importantly, Schneider stresses that border crossings do not occur in a linear fashion, with migrants moving in a straight line from home country to America to citizenship. Instead, the migration process is ever fluid, propelled at a faster or slower rate depending on a range of factors, such as race, national origin, gender, and era of arrival.

*Crossing Borders* is arranged both thematically and temporally, focusing primarily on the early decades of the twentieth century, when the process and structures for crossing the border—the legal framework for inspection in the home country or at the American border, for example—were set in place. She begins in the late nineteenth century with the immigrant’s decision to leave the home country and illustrates that even this first move was fraught with difficulty. Instead of the Oscar Handlin-esque immigrant-as-blank-slate, Schneider details the myriad ways in which potential migrants first negotiated with their own home governments for permission to leave, possibly made a journey through a third country, and, after the quota laws of the 1920s, contended with a US official at their point of departure—all before arriving in the United States.

After detailing the many routes through which immigrants left their countries, Schneider moves forward in time and forward in the process of migration, through the experience of entering the United States, navigating the potential hazards of deportation, Americanization, integration, and finally the naturalization process. In arguably the strongest section of the work, Chapter 5, she traces how the legal process and experience of becoming a citizen shifted from the local and regional contexts of the nineteenth century to federal control in the twentieth. During this same period, the reasons for which an immigrant might seek citizenship also transitioned, from access to the franchise, to access to family reunification visas, to access to the welfare state.

At certain points in the narrative, bureaucrats are firmly in control of the process of defining borders and deciding who qualified for admission. But Schneider is clear that this power was not absolute, and the immigrants in her narrative have more agency than might be expected. People arriving at Ellis Island and other eastern seaboard ports,