Strangers at the Gate

Immigrant Political Incorporation in a New Century

United States has been a nation of immigrants for much of its history. Although it has not always extended the ready welcome implied by the Emma Lazarus poem, it has nonetheless long been the leading country for the world's migrants. At the turn of the last century, this absorbed unprecedented numbers of newcomers. Today, at the f a new millennium, the United States is experiencing yet another wave of immigration. More than 25 million immigrants have entered country since the 1960s (Jones-Correa 2002). The current immigra- flow is, in fact, historically unprecedented, both for its numerical proportions and for its demographic composition.

First, the number of newcomers to the United States in the last four has exceeded the high-water mark achieved during the last great of migration to this country from 1880 to 1920. With this latest of immigrants, there are now over 35 million foreign-born peo- living in the United States, that is, more than 10 percent of the total population. The proportions are even more substantial in cities around country. Thirteen of the nation's cities house more than half of the immigrant population. For instance, roughly one of every three New is a person of foreign birth (Logan 2003). Immigrants constitute greater shares of the population in Los Angeles and Miami (ibid.). proportions are expected to continue inching upward, as the current immigration trends show no signs of abating.

more striking than the numbers, however, is the demographic composition of this latest wave of newcomers. The current immigration is the first ever to the United States that has not been dominated by immigrants from Europe. Immigration to the United States until World

Italian, and Polish immigrants who eventually would become the white ethnics of America's melting-pot myth. But major congressional reforms in radically altered the complexion of the immigration inflow.[1] Today's huddled immigrant masses are mostly non-whites from Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. These three regions account for more than percent of all immigration to the United States since 1965 (Passel and Edmonston 1994).

Asian, Caribbean, and Latin American immigrants have expanded and diversified the ranks of the nation's minority population. Taken together, three major minority groups – Asians, Latinos, and blacks – now account for almost a third of all people living in the United States (U.S. Census Report 2001). Even the most glancing review of today's headlines reveals a great deal of popular focus on the growth of the non-white population, especially the foreign born. Again, the numbers at the city level this demographic shift into even sharper focus. Minorities actually outnumber whites in most of the country's largest cities, such as York and Los Angeles. What is more, the term "minority" no longer refers just to African Americans, Puerto Ricans, or Mexicans. Flat-footed minority categories like black, Latino, and Asian have been stretched encompass a diverse mix of new foreign-born groups. In sum, what it means to be an immigrant and a minority in the United States has changed dramatically over the last few decades.

As these unprecedented immigration trends and demographic shifts taken shape, the inevitable questions about what it all means for the United States likewise have emerged. Anxieties about how this latest wave newcomers will change American life dominate the news headlines. they precipitate economic losses for those who are already here, pose terrorist threats, place new burdens on government resources, or unsettle cultural norms and values of the country (e.g., Kelly 2005; Kirkpatrick ; Marosi 2004)? Other headlines and ongoing debates focus on how immigrants will fit into American politics and society (Huntington). How will they adapt to American culture, change our conceptions race, participate in politics, or become dutiful citizens and patriots in

Hart-Cellar Immigration Reform Act of 1965 abolished the restrictive national quota system that had governed American immigration policy since 1924. Designed to reflect racial and ethnic composition of nineteenth-century America, the old quota system favored immigration from Europe, while sharply restricting the number of newcomers regions such as Asia and the Caribbean. The Hart-Cellar law replaced that flagrantly racist system with cumulative limits for the Western and Eastern Hemisphere.

in the wake of this latest immigrant stream.

of the most important of these questions is how the new, non-immigrants will adapt to the American democratic experiment. precisely, how will these newcomers be incorporated into the polit-system? Political incorporation is a vital process for any democracy. Democracies rest on the bedrock principle of equal consideration – if not outright representation – of the preferences and interests of every citizen Schlozman, and Brady 1993). When new groups achieve incorpo-when they secure citizenship and become active in the political – they lend legitimacy to representative democracy. Their pres-and participation mean they have a reasonable prospect of seeing preferences and needs met by government. When new groups fall of incorporation, however, their interests cannot be considered by government and democracy is thus undermined.

question is whether today's newcomers will achieve this basic stan-political inclusion in American democracy. How will they mobi-achieve political influence in the cities where they now consti-significant presence? This is not a new question. As a nation of immigrants, the United States has confronted almost perennially the chal-of absorbing and integrating newcomers. There is a long record, perhaps even some settled assumptions, about how the foreign born incorporated into American political life (e.g., Huntington 2004). current wave of newcomers give scholars occasion to revisit question with a set of new cases that provide an empirical basis generating fresh theoretical insights about the dynamics of political incorporation at the turn of a new century. First, the new immigrants s to test – and perhaps update – conventional accounts of how process unfolds. Second and even more critically, the fact that these newcomers are mostly non-white minorities is an invitation to explore merica's deepest dilemma, the problem of race, affects political incorporation.

1. RACE AND POLITICAL INCORPORATION

American cities are confronting for the first time ever the challenge incorporating large numbers of non-European, non-white voluntary immigrants into the political system. Racial discrimination historically made incorporation a difficult and sometimes uncertain enterprise for minority groups in the United States. For centuries, minority populations

serious or meaningful prospect of achieving incorporation. They were essentially excluded from participation in the American democratic experiment. But since the civil rights reforms of the 1960s, full political rights the other formal benefits of citizenship have been available to all minority groups.

fact, the 1965 change in immigration rules that helped trigger the curwave of non-European newcomers to the United States was enacted in because civil rights leaders and interest groups insisted such reform a necessary step for ending racial discrimination (Tichenor 2002; 2001). Forty years later few would suggest discrimination has ended, the question is how much it has diminished. Is racism still a signifiobstacle in the path of non-white groups seeking political inclusion in country? Studying how the growing numbers of foreign-born minorgroups are faring in their adjustment to American political life is an opportunity to answer this question. It is also a chance to gauge the sucof the civil rights revolution begun in the 1960s and to determine whether the promise of democratic inclusion held out by its reforms actuhas been achieved.

The literature on the experiences of the new, non-white immigrant arrivals is small but growing rapidly. There is only a modest body of research on how these newcomers are adapting to the political process. fewer studies have explored how the racial minority status of these immigrants affects their political adjustment to this country, despite the so much has been made of their predominantly non-European and non-white origins. There is, in short, no settled theoretical framework for analyzing the unfolding dynamics of contemporary immigrant political incorporation (Jones-Correa 2002).

Nevertheless, there are normative guideposts in the wider political sciliterature and the winding course of American history to help us understand the experiences of these newcomers. First, there is an older, classic literature on immigrant incorporation that includes studies like Robert Dahl's seminal work *Who Governs?* (1961). Based largely on the experiences of early European immigrants, this body of research arguably provides predictive cues for charting and understanding the incorporation patterns of today's newcomers. By this light, the current immigrants, like their European predecessors, will overcome initial prejudice, secure economic mobility, and achieve political incorporation in a gradsteady march into the American mainstream – without significant disruption to the political system. A number of scholars have taken their

Portes and Rumbaut 1996; Skerry 1993; Portes and Stepick 1993; 1991).

other researchers believe the fact that today's newcomers are mostly non-European, non-white minorities vitiates any easy comparisons with European immigrants. America's record of incorporating non-whites political system has been deeply problematic. To be sure, some European immigrant groups initially were viewed as non-white, "races" by so-called old-stock white Americans and suffered the f those racial labels; yet, they were all gradually accepted as white incorporated into the political system (e.g., Jacobson 1998; Ignatiev Roediger 1991).[2] Not so for non-European, non-white groups. Americans are the paradigmatic case in this regard. Political incorporation for them has been a slow, tortuous, and arguably incomplete process, complicated by the rigors of American racism (Dawson 1994a; 1988; Pinderhughes 1987). Accordingly, some scholars believe the awaiting today's non-white arrivals will be more like the difficult navigated by African Americans and less like the path traced by early European immigrants.

Most of these researchers acknowledge racism has been receding from American life over the last several decades. They also concede the racial obstacles these non-white newcomers encounter perhaps will not be as formidable or severe as those faced by African Americans. Yet they believe discriminatory barriers remain and are bound to influence how minority groups adapt to the political system. These obstacles, they will complicate and impede the political incorporation process for , non-white immigrants just as they have for African Americans Kim 2001; Hero 1998; 1992; Takaki 1989; Browning, Marshall, abb 1984).[3] They contend these newcomers will follow the same their native-born black counterparts. In short, this argument casts Americans as a kind of "model minority" group for other non- in American society. Their experiences with discrimination and

fact many of today's so-called whites would have been marked as members of alien, races at the turn of the last century underscores the now de rigueur observation racial categories are socially constructed. They may shift and expand to include – as exclude – particular groups over time. But even as the definition of who counts as has broadened to encompass a variety of European groups, blacks have retained distinction as non-white and remained saddled with the disadvantages this ascriptive entails.

analogous historical argument, see Ngai 2003; Takaki 1982; 1989.

groups are likely to follow.

There are thus two major perspectives for understanding how today's newcomers are likely to adapt to the American political process. Each suggests a different empirical model of political incorporation. One, pluralist view, is informed by European immigrant history; the other, minority group view, derives from the experiences of African Americans. Each of these models also carries distinct normative and practical implications about how American democracy works and how these newcomers will affect political life. The pluralist model suggests the system relatively open, liberal, and egalitarian for all groups, notwithstanding the anomaly of the African-American experience. Newcomers thus e expected to secure a firm foothold and a share of influence in the give-and-take of political life in the cities where they live.

The minority group view, however, suggests racial inequalities pose a dilemma for America democracy and render it less inclusive for non-white groups. Full political inclusion for racial minorities is thus anything but certain. Implicit in this minority group perspective is the presumption non-whites will find political common cause and strategy in their shared racial predicament. It places most non-whites on one side of the racial divide and whites on the other. The pluralist view, in contrast, sees no such chasm in American political life and casts blacks as a vexing anomaly – a grim, unfortunate exception to the usually egalitarian workings of liberal democracy.

These two perspectives represent competing sides of an emerging debate about how the new foreign-born arrivals will be incorporated into American politics. Most scholars agree the political incorporation patof whites and blacks have differed sharply. The question is where the non-European, non-white immigrants will fit. Predicting and chartthe political incorporation process for these newcomers is not a matter drawing simple historical parallels between them and early European immigrants or African Americans. After all, what counts as a point of similarity between the current immigrants and one population – say, the voluntary immigrant experience of European ethnics or the racial minorstatus of African Americans – is actually a point of difference with the other.

For instance, although many of today's newcomers share non-white status with African Americans, they, like earlier generations of European white ethnics, are voluntary immigrants to the United States. African Americans can claim no such voluntary immigrant experience. Rather,

discrimination.

> Americans face greater psychological and political barriers to success than immigrant groups . . . [N]o group (except Native Americans, whose story different) has experienced the depth of enmity and height of obstacles blacks have . . . [T]he external barriers and the internal ambivalences are of a order of magnitude than they have been for any immigrant group over period of time. (Hochschild 1995, 167)[4]

Likewise qualifications might be stipulated for comparisons drawn today's newcomers and previous immigrants from Europe. In the parallels between contemporary immigrants and their Euro- predecessors or African Americans only go so far.

What is more, American political institutions, practices, and attitudes race have undergone significant transformations over the last sev- decades. Add to those changes the possibility that this new wave of non-white immigrants actually might destabilize and scramble the Amer- racial system, and easy comparisons with the past become all the untenable. In light of these analytic and historical complications, question of whether either of these perspectives applies to contempo- immigrants is very much open to debate.

II. AFRO-CARIBBEAN IMMIGRANTS

book wades into the debate by evaluating the two models alongside other. It also considers less well-known alternatives such as transna- tionalism that are not well developed in the political science literature but warrant serious attention.[5] The goal is not only to ascertain how well these

about the unique severity of African-American racial suffering sometimes invite disagreement or calls for qualification. After all, other groups have faced racial barri- felt the sting of discrimination. Here, then, is my caveat: The historical record shows some immigrant groups suffered serious discrimination after their arrival American shores – some for a generation or two, others for much longer. But African Americans' history of enslavement and their continued suffering from racial discrimi- over successive generations set them apart from all voluntary immigrants to this . Acknowledgment of the severity and persistence of their racial hardship is hardly enial of the prejudice other groups have faced. Conversely, the historical reality of discrimination against these other groups ought not lead to the mistaken conclusion that African Americans have all borne equivalent racial disadvantages.

the research on transnationalism has been developed in sociology and anthro- Transnationalism emphasizes immigrants' continuing attachments to their home countries. This view stands in contrast to the assimilationist logic of pluralism, which that such ties diminish over time.

light on how race affects their political incorporation patterns. To so, the book turns to the contemporary case of Afro-Caribbean immigrants in New York City, the largest group of foreign-born blacks in the United States.[6] These Caribbean newcomers are among the city's largest fastest-growing immigrant groups (Logan and Deane 2003). But their analytic importance goes well beyond their numbers. These foreign-born blacks furnish a uniquely instructive case for studying contemporary polit- incorporation patterns. Among recent non-white newcomers to the United States, they are the only group that allows for a natural case study the impact of race on the political incorporation process, without brack- the question of black exceptionalism.

Most of the emerging research on today's non-white immigrants has focused on Latino and Asian newcomers: that is, groups that are not black (e.g., Wong 2006; Ramakrishnan 2001; Jones-Correa 1998; Hero 1992).[7] most researchers agree Latinos and Asians, though they encounter prejudice, do not face anything like the harsh, systematic forms of discrimination blacks have tended to encounter in this country. For example, is considerable evidence Latinos and Asians confront fewer racial obstacles in the housing market than blacks, leading one pair of scholars (Massey and Denton 1989) to conclude "it is black race, not non-white per se that matters" in the United States. It is also difficult to know whether the bias these immigrants confront is due to their racial minority foreign-born status. Racism may thus prove to be a far less significant factor in the political adaptation patterns of these two groups than it has for African Americans. In short, Asian and Latino immigrants do allow for a straightforward, rigorous test of the impact of racism on political incorporation process.

Afro-Caribbeans, on the other hand, do. As black immigrants, they share a common racial classification with African Americans. By phenotype, in fact, the two groups are indistinguishable and thus ostensibly vulnerable to the same forms of racial discrimination. They wear the "racial stigmata of subordination" in their physical appearance (Mills 1998, 84). Afro-Caribbeans and African Americans also have some obvious history common: the deplorable legacy of enslavement and racial domination

the term "Afro-Caribbean" to refer to black immigrants from the English-speaking Caribbean and to distinguish them from their counterparts from the French- and Spanish-speaking Caribbean.

small proportion of Latinos identify as black.

ones most likely to encounter and experience the same strain of American racism as African Americans.

Despite these racial commonalities, however, there are significant dif- between the two groups. Unlike their native-born black counter- Afro-Caribbeans are voluntary immigrants who claim a distinctive identity and hail from countries with very different racial dynamics United States'. They migrate from a region of the world where the population is predominantly black. They are accustomed to living as part majority and seeing people who look like them in control of political economic power. The countries of the Caribbean are also largely unfa- with the historical experience of Jim Crow and more contemporary American patterns of racial segregation.[8] Racial classificatory schemes Caribbean also historically have been less rigid and more fluid than fixed, dichotomous black-and-white categorizations that prevail in United States (e.g., James and Harris 1993; Patterson 1987; 1972). there is some evidence whites in this country occasionally make distinctions between Afro-Caribbeans and African Americans, treating immigrants more favorably than their native-born counterparts (e.g., 1999; Kasinitz 1992). With their immigrant background, dis- ethnic heritage, and particular home country experiences, then, Afro-Caribbeans are perhaps more like early European immigrants.

These foreign-born blacks thus have a great deal in common with both Americans and European ethnics. It is precisely this mix of racial, and immigrant attributes that makes these foreign-born blacks especially powerful case for testing the relative validity of the two dominant models of political incorporation. Even more significantly, their experiences provide an unusually clear window for observing and understanding the impact of racial discrimination on the political incorporation process. The question is whether racism still shapes the political adapta- patterns of minorities, especially blacks. It may be that racial hurdles impede the path to incorporation for these groups. Or these barri- loom larger and have a greater effect on blacks than on other

aters (1999) has observed, "the combination of fluid boundaries and demographic majorities of blacks [in the Caribbean has] meant that while racism was endemic it was defining [as it has been in the United States]." This is not to say the countries of Caribbean have been completely free of white or European domination since the abolition of slavery. Europeans left their oppressive mark on these countries through years colonial rule. Today American-style racism makes its way to the Caribbean through tourism, economic involvement, and occasional military deployments.

altogether – as a result of either the recent steps toward racial equality
the gradual collapse of the country's bipolar racial system under the weight of an unprecedented mix of new minority groups that defy easy categorization.

any of these empirical alternatives holds true, its effects should be plainly evident in the experiences of a group of black immigrants such
Afro-Caribbeans. Will they follow the path of political incorporation marked out by their native-born black counterparts and complicated by racism, in keeping with the minority group view? Or will their volun-
immigrant status and ethnic heritage enable them to replicate the easier route to incorporation traced by earlier European immigrants,
the pluralist model predicts? An analysis of Afro-Caribbeans' political incorporation patterns promises to shed light on these questions.

The book also uses the Afro-Caribbean case to consider the political significance of internal divisions within the black population. Over the last
decades, political scientists have begun to pay increasing attention
social differences among blacks, breaking with a long-standing and unfortunate tendency of treating the population as if it were monolithic. Most of this research has focused on the political implications of class and gender divisions (e.g., Gay and Tate 1998; Hochschild 1995; Dawson
a; Tate 1993). Comparatively little attention has been directed to other cleavages such as ethnicity, region, and generation. The rapid growth
the Afro-Caribbean population in New York and other cities over the
few decades is an invitation to shift the analytic lens to ethnic divisions:
is, to consider the political significance of the differences between native- and foreign-born blacks.

The growing literature on Afro-Caribbean immigrants has been dominated by sociologists, economists, and historians. Their research has yielded important insights on how ethnicity influences social and economic differences between Caribbean- and American-born blacks (e.g.,
aters 1999; Vickerman 1999; Model 1995; Kasinitz 1992). Some of
studies actually have contributed to long-standing popular debates about whether non-white immigrant groups, such as Afro-Caribbeans, are "model minorities" by comparison with African Americans (e.g., Sowell
). There long has been considerable media interest in the relative socioeconomic performance of the two groups (e.g., Fears 2003). In fact, popular and policymaking interest in the differences between Afro-Caribbean immigrants and their native-born counterparts has reignited
again, but this time with a new twist.