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# Review of *The Latino Threat: Constructing Immigrants, Citizens, and the Nation*, by Leo R. Chavez.

Dennis G. Hodgson  
*Fairfield University*, [hodgson@fairfield.edu](mailto:hodgson@fairfield.edu)

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## SHORT REVIEWS

by John Bongaarts, John Casterline, Dennis Hodgson, Landis MacKellar, Geoffrey McNicoll

LEO R. CHAVEZ

*The Latino Threat: Constructing Immigrants, Citizens, and the Nation (Second Edition)*

Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013. xi + 297 p. \$22.95 (pbk.).

The population categories of “Hispanic/Latino” and “non-Hispanic white” are relatively recent creations. In 1976 the US Congress passed Public Law 94-311 requiring the Office of Management and Budget to “develop a Government-wide program for the collection, analysis, and publication of data with respect to Americans of Spanish origin or descent,” and since that date the decennial census has asked all Americans to identify themselves as being either Hispanic/Latino or not. Eleven years earlier Congress had revamped the nation’s immigration laws, eliminating national origin quotas and drastically reducing Latin Americans’ legal avenues for entry into the US. Predictably in the decades that followed, most of the millions of Latin Americans who flowed into the US were unauthorized. By 2011 the US had an aging population of 197 million non-Hispanic whites experiencing just 50,000 more births than deaths and a young population of 52 million Latinos experiencing an excess of 900,000 births over deaths. This “invasion” of Latinos, seemingly poised to overwhelm non-Hispanic whites, attracted a coterie of politicians and pundits willing to exploit the displacement fears of the country’s “majority” population for political gain. Leo Chavez, a professor of anthropology at the University of California at Irvine, describes the “Latino Threat Narrative” that they constructed to do this: unwilling to learn English and having a “pathologically” high fertility rate, Latino illegal aliens, showing no desire to integrate into the social and cultural life of the nation and harboring a secret desire to “reconquer” the Southwestern states that had been forcibly taken from them, swarmed across the border and began weakening the American education and health care systems. In chapters 1 to 4 Chavez presents convincing documentation of how components of this narrative came to permeate the media even though the empirical evidence suggested that the narrative was more myth than fact, especially with respect to Latinos being slow to learn English and having a high fertility rate. In chapters 5 to 7 he focuses on the “media spectacles” that both opponents and proponents of immigration reform have been using to solidify their cases: an unauthorized immigrant “stealing” organ transplants that rightfully should have gone to citizens; the vigilante “Minutemen” mounting a citizens’ surveillance program along the Arizona–Mexico border in 2005; the nationwide immigrants’ marches in 2006 opposing legislation that would have made unauthorized immigrants into felons; and contrasting presentations of the children of unauthorized immigrants. Anti-immigrant activists focus on children born in the US to unauthorized mothers, labeling them “anchor children” who exist simply to help their parents gain legal status for themselves. Pro-immigrant activists focus on young children who entered the US with their unauthorized parents, labeling them “dream children” whose ability to succeed in this country is threatened by their

undocumented status. Chavez documents the political machinations associated with recent Hispanic immigration flows and raises important questions about the shifting meaning of "citizenship" in a world where evermore individuals are immigrants, both authorized and unauthorized.—D.H.

AMELIE F. CONSTANT AND KLAUS F. ZIMMERMANN (EDS.)

*International Handbook on the Economics of Migration*

Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 2013. 573 p. \$245.00.

This addition to the Elgar International Handbooks series in economics fills a significant gap. Although international migration is a subject of great and rising concern under the current globalization regime, there has been no comprehensive collection on the economic analysis of the phenomenon. This state-of-the art review, consisting of an introduction by the editors and 27 chapters by contributing authors, provides such an overview. The editors are affiliated with the Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA) at the University of Bonn.

Traditionally, migration research has focused on a relatively compact set of questions: why do people migrate, what and how well do they do when they arrive in countries of destination, and what are the implications for those left behind? This volume covers aspects of these broad questions, of course, but has a wider span.

The first section, covering the decision to move, contains the expected chapter on modeling individual decisionmaking (from a life cycle perspective), as well as chapters on circular migration, migration of health professionals, child labor migration (virtually new territory), and human smuggling. The last, often confused with human trafficking, involves a contract between the smuggler and the smuggled, and perhaps an employer at the end of the line. It is a chain phenomenon characterized by agents and intermediaries, with information asymmetries at every link. As such, it is subject to microeconomic analysis, summarized by the authors, but the lack of empirical data has prevented research from moving much beyond theory.

The second section of the book, on labor market performance of immigrants, covers much familiar ground. The lead chapter assesses the effects of the 2004 and 2007 European Union enlargements on labor markets in the EU 15 and the enlargement states. While perhaps not the landmark study promised in the Introduction, this summary of empirical research firmly rebuts the pessimists' fears of labor market disruptions. Wages and unemployment in the receiving countries were not affected, there was no "welfare migration," and sending states on balance have benefited from the improved distribution of human capital and brain circulation. A chapter on immigrant entrepreneurs finds that immigrant startups tend to be slightly better capitalized than non-immigrant ones, pointing out that this is largely the result of personal and family savings. Access to capital markets is limited, especially by the fact that fewer immigrants than natives own property. Other chapters deal with problems that immigrants face in the labor market such as educational mismatch (being overeducated for their job), ethnic discrimination in hiring, and consignment to risky occupations, albeit usually, as with native workers, with compensating higher wages. The final chapter in the section looks at a sub-section of immigrants: obese ones.