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Educational Attainment of Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Young Blacks

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The United States has experienced resurgence in immigration over the last three decades and the U.S. Black population has been affected by the current immigration patterns. The number of immigrants from Caribbean and African countries to the United States has grown noticeably since the 1970s. Despite this increase and a growing interest in other immigrant populations, little has been written about the educational conditions and attainment of Black immigrant children. To promote academic success for Black students, our society and educators must acknowledge the presence of the immigrant segment in the Black population, be aware of their socioeconomic status and cultural patterns, and further recognize the complexities within the Black population.

The purpose of this chapter is to identify and differentiate the causes of variations in educational attainment among different groups of Black children. The chapter starts with a brief review of the historical significance of the presence of African and Caribbean Black immigrants in the U.S., and provides information about their demographic characteristics and geographic distribution. Based on a synthesis of research and earlier work by the author (Rong, 2005), the chapter discusses educational achievement and attainment patterns, including cultural patterns and schooling behaviors based on self-defined identities for Black students. Then, based on Census 2000 data, we illustrate these variations in educational attainment by discussing socioeconomic, demographic, and parental variables related to Black children's life conditions and their environment. The chapter concludes with recommendations for policy and practice.

6.1. Black Historical Presence

The Black presence in North America has a history of over 400 years, and from the outset this population has been heterogeneous. Different groups of Blacks came to the United States from different origins, at different times, for different reasons, and by different means. Among the people of North America, about

500,000 African Blacks were brought to North America as slaves between 1619 and 1800 before slave importation into the United States was banned in 1808. At present, approximately 90% of the 34 million Black people currently living in the United States are descendants of the 500,000 slaves brought forcibly to the United States before 1808.

Although the Black population has the smallest proportion of the post-1900 immigrants to the United States, the Black immigrant population has increased significantly in the last four decades (especially in the 1980s and 1990s). The foreign-born Black population in 1960 was only slightly more than 100,000, but by the year 2000, over 2 million foreign-born Black immigrants were living in the United States, an increase of about 2000%. The proportion of immigrants among the total U.S. Black population increased from 0.7% in 1960 to 1.1% in 1970, 3% in 1980, 4% in 1990, and 7% in 2000. The U.S. Census Bureau projects a further increase in the foreign-born Black population and their offspring over the coming decades.

Among Black immigrants, non-Hispanic Caribbean natives (mostly Barbadians, Grenadians, Haitians, Jamaicans, Trinidadians and Tobagonians) and Africans (mostly Ethiopians, Ghanaians, Kenyans, Nigerians, Somalis and South Africans) made up the majority of the two million foreign-born people of African origin in the 2000 U.S. Census. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census (2003), the Caribbean Black population is composed of approximately 450,000 Haitians and 600,000 Jamaicans, and they are concentrated in a few states. About half live in New York and approximately 20% live in Florida, primarily in the Miami area. Moreover, virtually all Haitians and Jamaicans live in large cities.

In comparison to the Caribbean immigrant population, only a small number of African Black immigrants (approximately 540,000) were able to come to the United States between 1820 and 2000, although the rate has increased sharply in recent years with more Blacks migrating to the United States from Africa between 1990 and 2003 than in nearly the entire preceding two centuries. As a result, for the first time in U.S. history, more Blacks (50,000 annually) now come to the United States from Africa than those who came during the years of slave trade (Roberts, 2005). Nigerians constitute the largest number at about 100,000 persons. Many African immigrants choose New York City as their place of residence. However, no large ethnic community of Black immigrants from a single African country currently exists in the United States.

6.2. Socialization, Identity, and Achievement of Black Students

Researchers and commentators of the past and present reported adverse living situations, residential segregation, and social isolation as prevalent among the Black American population in the United States and attributed these problems to the combined effects of classism and racism (Du Bois, 1989). Researchers generally agree that children from families with low socioeconomic status are

more likely to experience difficulties in school and attain lower levels of overall academic achievement than their middle-class counterparts in the United States and that, racism has played a significant historical role in the disproportionate numbers of Black and Hispanic children living in poverty relative to White children. The lack of familial resources and unconcerned or ambivalent educational institutions are largely responsible for the historical failure of minority children in schools. However, psycho-cultural factors may also play a role. Research indicates that a low level of academic attainment by Black children is also related to their self-prophecy, in which social-historical negative images and low expectations have a psychological impact on Black children's self-esteem and confidence. This, in turn, affects levels of academic attainment. This could be ascribed to the influence of the peer group and a defensive anti-school culture, which are particularly prevalent among Black students in middle and high school years (Fordham & Ogbu, 1989)

6.2.1. Impact of Socioeconomic Conditions

Researchers generally agree that socioeconomic conditions influence children's level of educational attainment. Race is highly correlated with class and it is, therefore, difficult to disentangle their influences on educational processes and outcomes (Mickelson & Dubois, 2002). In spite of the fact that a considerable portion of the Black American population has moved steadily into the middle class since the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s, a higher percentage of the Black population has remained at or under the poverty level than any other racial group. A significant number of studies have addressed the low socioeconomic status, adverse living conditions, and single parent family structures among certain segments of the Black population in the United States, and the impact of these factors on Black children's education. For example, Lara-Cinisomo, Pebley, Variana, Maggio, Berends and Lucas (2004) found that the most important factors associated with the educational achievement of children were socioeconomic factors, broadly defined (e.g., parental education levels, family and neighborhood income and poverty, etc.). Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate the impact of socioeconomic and social factors on children's education.

6.2.2. Impact of Socialization in School

Research studies of the socialization process for children in school indicate the powerful influences on children from peer pressure and popular culture. The influences divert children's attention from understanding the important link between their academic studies and their future. American teenagers who experience more peer pressure, and who are more influenced by popular culture, relative to their peers tend to do poorly in school. Furthermore, researchers report an interesting phenomenon in which working-class White teens (e.g., Weis, 1985) and oppressed minority children of all classes are affected by an anti-school culture, resulting in disrespect for authority and an increased emphasis

on peer solidarity. To some extent, this phenomenon results in a collectively defensive identity, whereby underprivileged children resist feelings of subordination by intentionally ignoring social customs and school rules in order to protect their self-esteem. Researchers report that black students who pursue academic advancement in school are sometimes viewed as “acting White” and as being less loyal to their peers. These stereotypes among some Black American students can result in negative and counterproductive consequences (Fordham & Ogbu, 1989).

Immigrant children from countries where schools teach values and practice socialization patterns differently from schools in the United States may struggle with different interpretations of, and psychological reactions to, the socialization process in US schools. Such children may also face problems developing effective coping strategies for the difficulties they encounter in the United States. For example, many immigrant teenagers are viewed as strangers and outsiders by their native-born peers, and suffer from social exclusion, and thus may not be as readily influenced by popular culture as native-born children. Many immigrant teenagers also have parents who strongly deny the legitimacy of youth popular culture in the home and community, thus guarding them from being overwhelmed by its influence (Gibson, 1988).

6.3. Cultural Patterns and Identities

Empirical studies indicate that different Black groups developed distinct forms, ways and rates of cultural adaptation, with various and sometimes contradictory strategies. Adaptation strategies are influenced by the structural context of the receiving societies, the immigrant communities, and their interactions. Parents and children developed and applied a variety of adaptive strategies derived from how different groups perceived their vulnerabilities and resources, and how the results of these strategies played out in the specific social and cultural contexts in their home countries and in the United States. One of the adaptation strategies relates to self-perceived identity. Black immigrants may perceive the possibility of renegotiating the meanings of their racial identity with mainstream society in an attempt to change their racial label by reserving their status as immigrants who maintain an ethnic/nationality identity reflecting their parents’ national origins.

It is important for researchers to explore the issues related to the perceptions of Black immigrants and their strategies to cope with difficulties when we examine the role of their identity deconstruction and reconstruction. For example, an increasing number of studies have reported that many Caribbean immigrants want mainstream society to identify them as Caribbean or West Indian, and not as Black Americans, in order to help them cope with issues of racism, classism, and assimilationism. Since most research focusing on Black immigrant identity issues has studied West Indians rather than immigrants from Africa (see Kanya, 1997), the research here uses Caribbean Blacks as examples for the theoretical framework presented.

Recent studies of identity formation among Black immigrants may elucidate implications of studies of identity and educational performance. Scholars (e.g., Foner, 1987; Gibson, 1991; Waters, 1999) have observed a cultural division between Caribbean Blacks and Black Americans. Dodoo (1997) and Woldemikael (1989) identify several major differences between Black immigrant communities and Black American communities that may partially explain their different perceptions of reality and their reactions to societal discrimination. First, the migration ideology of most Caribbean immigrants may be the reason not only for their optimistic perception of the possibility of upward mobility for Black immigrants but also for their motivation to endure hardship and discriminatory treatment. Ogbu (1991, 1994) argues that immigrants who come to the United States voluntarily for economic reasons tend to downplay discriminatory treatment and emphasize progress made in their economic condition and their children's education opportunities because they do not compare themselves to the more affluent White Americans, but rather to the poorer folks back in their home countries.

Secondly, the recallable life experiences of Black immigrants from most Caribbean and African countries are different from those of native-born Black Americans, which is due in large part to different sociocultural histories in the countries from which they emigrated. Most West Indian immigrants were socialized in the more favorable racial and cultural climate of the Caribbean, where they have always been a racial majority and have had more positive role models in all walks of life. This situation may promote self-confidence, leading to high expectations and a more optimistic attitude about the future, which may manifest in higher educational and occupational achievement (Dodoo, 1997).

Thirdly, Ainsworth-Darnel and Downey (1998) suggest that Black Americans and Black immigrants have different interpretations and solutions for the "Black problem" in contemporary America due to segregated occupations and housing situations, lack of knowledge regarding racial history, and inexperience with discriminatory realities in the United States. While many Black Americans may applaud the progress made in the last several decades, they also blame their continuing difficulties on social and economic inequality and racial discrimination. Many Black Americans advocate government efforts, such as affirmative action, to eliminate historical and current barriers for Black people. In contrast, immigrant Blacks may perceive that Black Americans overemphasize their own vulnerability and discount the power of individual initiative and determination. Although some of these perceptions may be due to different sociocultural experiences, they may also be due to the segregated occupational and housing situations of most recent Caribbean immigrants in larger cities. Many Caribbean immigrants living in inner-city areas tend to have more contact with the most vulnerable segments of the Black American population. They may misinterpret their experiences with poor, undereducated, and unemployed inner city Black residents as the typical characteristics of the Black American population as a whole.

These different perceptions and understandings may have produced survival and success strategies for Black immigrants and their children that differ

from those of non-immigrant Black Americans. Kasinitz (1992) reports that Black immigrants attempt to escape the negative racial label attached to Black Americans by holding on to their native culture and national identity. Waters (1999) pointed out that the formation of identity among young Caribbean Blacks allows them to negotiate the meaning of their racial identity, replacing the racial label with their preferred ethnicity or nationality. In Waters' findings, youngsters who identified themselves as Caribbean Blacks were more likely to live in a Caribbean immigrant community where subcultures are built on optimism, self-defined identity, and social networks. Many youngsters and their parents tended to see more opportunities and rewards for their efforts and initiative. Waters also found that immigrant youngsters who identified themselves as Black Americans were more likely to perceive their future less optimistically and see less economic return on their educational investment. Relative to youngsters who chose a Caribbean Black identity, these youngsters were more likely to associate with low-motivation peer groups and tended to do poorly in school (Fordham, 1996).

Related to the above, the strength of the immigrant community is a powerful predictor of the outcomes of children's socialization (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Waters (1999) points out differences in children's behavior result from what children hear from their parents and how they share their interpretation of these messages with their peers. Many Caribbean parents work hard to make rapid economic progress and to achieve middle class status while preserving their immigrant homeland culture, pride, values, and solidarity. They pass on these beliefs and behaviors to their children, individually as well as collectively. As observed by Vickerman (1999), of great importance to the Caribbean Black community is that all parents of second-generation Caribbean immigrant children pass on the same message and values to their children.

6.4. Immigration, Assimilation Models, and Educational Attainment

Although there have been some research studies on Black adults (Bryce-Lairte, 1972), very little comparative work exists on the educational attainment of Black immigrant and Black American children. In this section, we begin by briefly describing the relationship between immigration-related assimilation patterns and educational attainment in terms of classic assimilation and segmented assimilation.

6.4.1. *Classic and Segmented Assimilation*

Past studies were more likely to apply classic assimilation, which assumes quick and complete Americanization and integration into the middle classes. However, this straight-line assimilation model, usually associated in the past with White immigrant ethnic groups, is inconsistent with actual educational and occupational

attainment of third-generation Black immigrants (e.g., Schlesinger, 2002). This model has also been challenged by the persistent educational and economic gaps among minority groups and between minorities and majority Whites. The economic and social outlook for many Blacks and Latinos whose families have lived in the United States for generations may veer in a direction opposite to their immigration dream, resulting in an entry into the economic underclass.

Focusing their research on Hispanic and Asian immigrants, some scholars (e.g., Portes & Zhou, 1993) have proposed a segmented assimilation model that emphasizes the multiple and contradictory paths various immigrant groups take and that predicts complex outcomes as a result of these variations. The earlier segmented assimilation model characterized the immigrants' new home, the United States, as the home of multiple stratification systems with economic, racial and gender hierarchies. When immigrants were absorbed into U.S. society, they were incorporated into these stratified configurations (Ogbu, 1994). The concentration of Black immigrants in central cities made for their easy entrance into the lowest stratum of society. Scholars have argued that central city residency exposed immigrant minority children to the poverty subculture developed by marginalized native youths to cope with their own difficult situation (Portes, 1995).

6.5. Generational Effects

The recent experiences of Black immigrants and those of other immigrant groups have invalidated the theories of the classic assimilation model. Recent quantitative studies have indicated that the segmented/selective assimilation framework is more viable for predicting and interpreting immigrant children's level of educational attainment when examining the gaps among race and generation status (Rumbaut & Portes, 2001). Many studies have reported an intergenerational decline in education and incomes for some groups, as well as persistent educational and income gaps between Whites and non-Whites across generations. Without considering the generational effect, previous research involving cross-racial and ethnic-group comparisons show that Black students generally do not do as well as either White or Asian students in school, but do better than Mexican and Puerto Rican students in terms of number of school years completed, percentage of high school graduates, percentage of college graduates, and most other indicators of educational attainment (Arias, 1986; Grant and Rong, 1999; Matute-Bianchi, 1986).

When the immigrant generation effect is taken into consideration, some studies show a curvilinear pattern for student achievement across generations. The second-generation students (American-born children with immigrant parents) do better educationally than immigrant or native-born groups, though immigrant youths who arrive at a young age may perform at an equivalent level to second-generation students (e.g., Rong and Grant, 1992; Kao & Tienda, 1995). Rong & Brown (2001) reported that second-generation Caribbean Black

immigrant youth have higher levels of educational attainment than Black children without an immigration background.

More recent studies, however, reported a downward trend associated with time of residency, with newcomers attaining higher grade point averages than students whose families have lived in the U.S. longer (Porte & Rumbaut, 2001; Rumbaut & Portes, 2001). Using NELS 1988 data, Kao & Tienda (1995) reported that first-generation (foreign-born) Black children achieved the highest scholastic outcomes on two out of four achievement measures. The *John Harvard Journal* (2004) found that over 50% of the Black undergraduate students at Harvard University are first- or second-generation immigrant youths, though these two generations make up less than 10% of the Black American population. Rong and Preissle (1998) have also reported that Black immigrant children are ahead in schools and are more likely to be ahead of other children in educational measures (e.g., persistence in school, satisfactory academic progress). Black immigrant youth are also more likely than their Black American peers to stay in school until receiving their high school diplomas. All these studies considered the intertwining effects of race, ethnicity, generation, gender, social class, and other important socio-demographic and cultural variables. These findings are also consistent with the higher educational achievement and aspirations among first- and second-generation Black immigrant children in Gibson's qualitative studies (1991).

6.6. Other Factors

Gender is another under-studied pertinent factor that influences the schooling of immigrant students. It has been an established pattern that U.S. female students generally outperform male students (Spring, 1994; U.S. Department of Education, 2003). This includes Black female students who on average achieve higher levels of educational attainment than Black male students at almost all levels of education (Grant and Rong, 2002). Gibson's (1991) ethnographic study focused on the schooling of Black immigrant children in relation to their immigrant generation, gender, ethnicity, and nationality. Gibson found that female students did better than male students, regardless of immigrant status. However, gender proved to be more significant for native-born youths than for immigrants.

Caribbean Black immigrant students performed better than native students, but the differences between females in both groups were minimal, while differences between the immigrant and non-immigrant boys were substantial. Gibson's study also revealed a relationship between gender and immigrant status. In spite of the fact that West Indian immigrants outperformed indigenous students, indigenous female students actually did better in school than immigrant male students, though the gap was fairly small. A similar gender pattern appeared in British schools where, in general, West Indian females outperformed West Indian males in academics, school persistence, and in overall school behavior (Fuller, 1980).

6.7. Findings from U.S. 2000 Census Data

In light of our discussion on the variation of Black educational attainment patterns and assimilation models, we highlight our findings of Black children's educational attainment patterns. Based on the U.S. 2000 Census data, we conducted a demographic study to analyze the factors contributing to attainment variations.¹ The research also involved data from the Public Used Microdata Samples² (PUMS 5%, U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2003), which represented the largest population sample ever used in educational research³.

Our research project first examined the reality of children's lives and their schooling, and compared and contrasted the individual characteristics, family types, and community environments across generations of U.S. residence, race/ethnicity and gender. This project, then, explored levels of educational attainment for each subgroup and conducted comparisons across these subgroups, which examined the relationships between socio-economic and demographic factors and young people's educational attainment.

The variables used in the research related to children's surroundings, the social and physical environments in which children live, related information on immigrant parents, the types of families of the children live, residential areas, local communities, and the states and regions in which they live. Since children are compared based on their residential generations, the following variables were included in the data analysis: language resources, the attrition and retention of their native tongues, and English acquisition.

Socioeconomic Conditions, Generation Effects, and Ethnic Differences. Although many studies have addressed the relationship between the socioeconomic status of the family and children's levels of educational attainment, few studies have compared the socioeconomic condition of a Black population by immigrant generation and ethnic group simultaneously. The findings of this research project were consistent with the reviewed literature. As stated earlier, being Black is likely to be a disadvantage regarding socioeconomic status, family situation, and structure. By contrast, being a member of the Second-Generation

¹ For the purposes of this chapter, we did not elaborate on our research methods and design. Please note, however, "ordinary least squares regressions" were conducted to examine the simultaneous effects of generation of residence, gender, and race and ethnicity on educational attainment along with other socio-economic and demographic variables. Since the primary data analysis revealed interaction between race and ethnicity and generation of residence; therefore, regressions were conducted separately for African Blacks, Caribbean Blacks, and Non-Hispanic European Whites.

² PUMS 5% (U.S. Bureau of the Census (2003)) represents 5% of the total housing units in the United States and 14 million persons residing in them.

³ The population was a stratified sub-sample of the full decennial U.S. Censuses of Population and Housing, approximately 16% of all housing units that received the long-form census questionnaires in 2000. The project used the data of approximately three million children and youth between the ages of 5 and 24 years old who were living with parent(s) or guardian(s) in 2000.

is likely to put that person at an advantage regarding the same set of factors. In combining the effects of race and generation, African American long-term residents (the Third-plus Generation and beyond) are the most disadvantaged in most aspects of social, economic, and family life. Second-Generation Whites are the most advantaged in most of the same respects.

For example, three observations can be made here. First, American-born children of immigrant parents are less likely to be in families under the poverty level and more likely to be in families whose incomes are equal to or higher than 95% of the U.S. population. This observation is consistent for White, Caribbean Black, and African Black children alike. Secondly, the effects of being third-generation on family economic status are varied. At the poorest end of Americans, First-Generation Caribbean Blacks and African Blacks are less likely to live in families at or under the poverty level than those in the Third-Plus Generations. For Whites, the First-Generation is worse off financially than the Third-Plus Generation, as more First-Generation than Third-Plus Generation Whites live at or under the poverty level. At the richest end of Americans, first Generation Whites and African Blacks are more likely to live in families whose incomes are at or higher than the 95th percentile, although First-Generation Caribbean Blacks are less likely to live in families with income levels at or higher than 95% of the U.S. population. Thirdly, race is clearly correlated with family economic conditions. White children are less likely to live in families at or under poverty level, but are more likely to live in families at the top 5% of the population in terms of income than either Caribbean Black children or African Black children across all generations.

Educational Attainment and Other Factors. The educational attainment data suggest complex patterns varied with race or nationality and generation. Several general patterns emerge. The descriptive data indicate that children's educational attainment clearly varies with race and ethnicity as well as with generation of residence. Descriptive statistics also indicate that, for all groups, the cross-generational gender patterns conform to the current U.S. pattern of women attaining more years of school than men for each generation. The examination of the combined effects of race/ethnicity, generation and gender revealed that the African Black males were disadvantaged for each generational phase compared with White and Caribbean Black males. However, Caribbean Black males in the Second-Generation and Third-Plus Generation had more years of school than co-generation White males, and Caribbean Black females in the Second Generation and Third-Plus Generations also compared favorably to co-generation White females measured by the mean years of school. African Black males of the Third-Plus Generation have the lowest years of school, and higher school graduation rates and college graduation rates than any other subgroup.

In examining the simultaneous effects of generation of residence, gender, and race or ethnicity on educational attainment, the socio-economic and demographic variables⁴ were considered the most significant. Assuming that demographic and

⁴ the inferential statistics reveal the significant effects of most socioeconomic variables included in the model.

socioeconomic factors are equalized, the impact of being Second-Generation on years of school attainment is consistent across race or pan-nationality and gender groups. Children of the Second-Generation attain significantly more years of school than members of the First-Generation for all race or ethnic groups.

The greatest increase at this generational phase occurs for Caribbean Blacks, for whom being Second-Generation rather than First-Generation has the most powerful impact on educational attainment. The effects of being Third-Plus Generation on educational attainment reveal two patterns for the three groups. For African Blacks and Whites, educational attainment peaks in the Second-Generation and declines thereafter; for Caribbean Blacks, attainment peaks in the Second-Generation and levels off from the Second-Generation to the Third-Plus Generation.

When levels of educational attainment are compared between the First-Generation and the Third- Plus Generation, it is found that being born of immigrant parents in the United States results in definite educational benefits for a child. Longer residence in the United States, however, may not produce further gains and, in some cases, is even associated with steep declines in levels of educational attainment. White children of the Third-Plus Generation have much fewer years of school than do White children of the First-Generation. For Caribbean Blacks and African Blacks, being born and living in the United States for more generations provides no gains in comparison to being an immigrant.

6.8. Discussion of Findings

The combination of the classic assimilation model and the segmented assimilation model provides a suitable basis for interpreting the empirical findings. The results for our research project indicate that the barriers for Blacks are both socioeconomic and racial. Caribbean and Black youth are more likely to live in families with fewer resources than White children, and difficult family situations jeopardize Black children's educational advancement. Length of residency of generations in the United States exacerbates the difficulties faced by Black Americans and does not necessarily alleviate them. One of the explanations for why the Non-Hispanic White youth in the first generation can move forward more quickly economically and educationally than any other group is that White immigrants may face fewer barriers in a racially stratified society.

In addition to the structural explanation, intergenerational progression acculturation theories also provide valid explanations for the research findings. This acculturation theory illuminates the psychological coping strategies developed from ethnic identity reconstruction as described earlier. In addition, it is important to consider how social/cultural capital can influence community life (e.g., networking, solidarity, transnational and transcultural social space).

The findings also indicate that basic assimilation steps, such as acquiring English proficiency, are significant predictors of higher attainment. More extensive assimilation steps, however, such as abandoning one's heritage language and moving

away from ethnic communities in central cities, can have an adverse impact on educational attainment.

The research literature provides a valid explanation for the economic and educational differences in findings between Black immigrants and Black Americans (Vickerman, 1999). Vickerman reported that earlier writers (e.g., Reid, 1939) advanced the notion that cultural factors, both historical and contemporary, are the determinants of the extent to which upwardly mobile Blacks can achieve higher socioeconomic status and levels of educational attainment in the United States. Doodoo (1997) explains that Caribbean immigrants' socialization is strengthened by the more racially supportive climate of the Caribbean, where they have always been a racial majority. From this point of view, Black Americans may be vulnerable relative to Caribbean Blacks because of the legacy of having endured a harsh racism and post-slavery existence as a racial minority in the United States (see also Sowell, 1994). Therefore, Caribbean Blacks, as well as newly emigrated Africans, bring a different cultural history that may support a stronger desire to overcome the challenges of their immigrant status and race (see also Omi & Winant, 1986).

Regarding the differences in the research findings between African and Caribbean groups, it is speculated that the higher levels of educational attainment of second-generation Caribbean Black immigrant youths over African immigrants, and the third-generation decline in comparison to the first generation (characteristic of African youth rather than Caribbean youth), may be partially attributed to the very large concentration of Haitians and Jamaicans in large cities, such as New York and Miami. In contrast to the Caribbean Blacks, recent African immigrants do not have large African neighborhoods or communities that provide strong social networks. Traveling to Caribbean countries has always been easier than traveling to Africa and the exchange of transnational human resources and material goods is a long-established pattern between North America and Caribbean areas (Rong & Brown, 2001).

However, some scholars (Kasinitz, Battle & Miyares, 2001) have argued that all immigrants have tended to move along the continuum from a national identity for their country of origin towards an American identity when the length of their U.S. residency is taken into consideration:

Since their racial socialization takes place in the United States they have little or no direct experience of societies in which people of African descent are the majority. Without a viable ethnic enclave to serve either as a springboard or a safety net, the future of a West Indian middle class is ultimately linked to that of the larger African-American middle class, into which it is, for better or for worse, rapidly merging. (p. 295).

In terms of gender effects, the research findings are consistent with the findings of other studies when the intertwined effects of race, ethnicity, generation, and other important socio-demographic variables are taken into account. To explain the gender gap associated with immigrant generations, Portes (1996) and Pedraza (1991) have concluded that immigrant communities in the U.S do not necessarily replicate native cultures, but rather combine traditional norms and practices with novel responses to unique structural conditions encountered in the United

States. Thus, they speculate that immigration may enhance women's levels of achievement by freeing them from patriarchal norms in their countries of origin. Gibson (1991) has argued that Black male students may experience more racism and, therefore, may be more strongly motivated to become involved with anti-school cultures. Black teenage girls were less likely than their brothers to develop an adversarial relationship with the school system or to view schooling as a threat their identity.

6.9. Conclusion and Recommendations

In summary, we offer three major categories of recommendations that have emerged based on our chapter (see also Rong & Brown, 2002). These recommendations relate to policymaking, changes in schools, and teacher training and retraining:

6.9.1. *Educational Policies and Children's SES Status*

Since researchers have found that improved socioeconomic conditions among Black children correspond strongly to decreases in test score gaps (Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2004), it is important that structural inequalities (such as poverty, adverse living conditions, inferior education, occupational stratification, etc.) are highlighted and taken into account when educational policies are made. Two concrete recommendations emerge from our chapter:

1. SES Components for Educational Policies: Education policy for disadvantaged families and communities should not be limited to conventional education policy alone; that is, socioeconomic policies that benefit lower-income families and communities should be recognized also as educational policies on behalf of the children in these families and communities.
2. Being Advocates for Children from Disadvantaged Backgrounds: Educators need to pay greater attention to contextual factors promoting or impeding the educational achievement of immigrant and native minority children, as indicated in the findings from our project with census data. Schools and teachers need to be these children's advocates who encourage and urge governments to act affirmatively to promote structural changes and provide equal educational opportunities for all people, especially disadvantaged minorities (Nieto, 1995).

6.10. Diversity and School Reform

Recent waves of immigrants have further diversified the U.S. population, and racial and ethnic identities are becoming increasingly complex as American society becomes more heterogeneous. Educators who work with immigrant

children need to change their simplistic notion that race relations in America are mostly binary. Although this may still be true in many parts of the country, the flood in immigration over the past three decades has redrawn the map of racial and ethnic composition in many communities, where the polyethnic split is now among Whites, Blacks, Latinos, and Asians. In this context, the following three recommendations emerge from our chapter:

1. *Change of Teachers' Perceptions and Attitudes*: Educators need to move away from the conventional thinking that each racial group is represented by one homogenous culture with a single identity. According to earlier scholarly writings, the intragroup variability in the Black American population has always existed, and the modern period has witnessed examples of these differences among African Americans (see Butler, 1991; Horton, 1993; Lee, 1993). Teachers should avoid simplistic expectations about Black immigrant students' attitudes and behaviors, educational aspirations, and academic performance. They need to recognize and respect the wide range of identities and cultural competencies in Black students – immigrant and nonimmigrant alike.
2. *Changes in Instruction and Instructional Environment*: Teachers should devise instruction appropriate for teaching students from diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, teachers need to reconstruct learning environments in such a way that diverse conditions and resources are acknowledged and accommodated. With this in mind, educators working on intervention programs can focus on established patterns of practice to improve the experiences of all Black students in U.S. schools and to look for alternative practices as well.
3. *Promote Cross-group Interactions*: Schools are excellent arenas in which to promote awareness and exchange of a wide range of identities and cultural competencies available to all Black students. Schools need to conscientiously promote and encourage cultural interaction (such as school-community interaction, parental participation in education policy decision-making processes, etc.) and cross-nurturing among native-born Black Americans and immigrant Blacks. Through cultural exchange, empathetic interactions, and mutual understanding and influence, Black immigrants and native Blacks could together challenge the *status quo* in race relations in the United States and build a broader and more inclusive African American community that may provide resources for all.

6.11. Black Teachers and Black Immigrant Students

Since the majority of Black immigrants live in central cities and other metropolitan areas and study in schools with a mix of many minority groups, they are likely to be taught by educators who are themselves minorities, most of whom are Black Americans. Black American teachers need to recognize within-black diversities and give legitimacy to ethnic, national and cultural claims.

Due to the different racial contexts Black immigrants will encounter in the United States, they may not be well prepared to deal with racism in their daily lives. Black educators can help Black immigrant children close the gap between Black immigrants' knowledge of American society prior to their immigration and the current American reality. Although it is an understandable psychological reaction and sociological tactic for newcomers to resist, reject, and distance themselves from involuntary negative race classifications when they perceive they have the option to do so, it is important for Black educators to caution Black immigrant students not to misconstrue the problems of the most disadvantaged Black Americans as being necessarily characteristic of the experiences of all African Americans (Vickerman, 1999).

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