Chapter 5
Bridging the Gap: Black Immigrant Identities and Dreams of Home

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"Since leaving Guyana at the age of 3, I've never really felt like I fully belong anywhere. Due to the British school system and being a kid who wanted to blend in, I sacrificed my native tongue. Only to find out that I was still an outsider. To the kids at school I was an African booty scratcher. When I got around my family and only replied back to them in English, I was a sellout and an Akata. Outside I was embarrassed and fearful to show my 'Africanness'. Then at the same time, fearful to show too much of my Black British and African American side at home. Then I came across Nkrumah, Fela, Sankara, Dubois and many other Pan-Africanist leaders and then I understood that my burden was a blessing and that I had a mission. I'm stuck in this limbo and I know now that I'm here to bridge the gap...I believe that no black, African, Moor or what ever you may call yourself, will gain any respect around the world, unless Africa is respected first. We children of the "gap" shouldn't take our position lightly. So when I say "I'm not Black enough for Brooklyn and not African enough for Accra". I say it with pride, because I understand my mission and I see my position as a strength and not a weakness" (K Abbensetts, personal communication, November 7, 2015).

The preceding quote personifies the experience of many Black immigrants, particularly those who move from predominantly Black home countries to majority White domiciles. For numerous Black immigrants, the challenge to redefine themselves and figure out their identities in a new racial and ethnic context can be quite daunting. Who am I? Where do I belong? Where do I call home? These are new questions several Black immigrants grapple with, which can have multifaceted answers depending on a variety of factors. These factors can include age at the time of migration, reasons for migration, push factors (circumstances in the home country that contribute to the decision to leave) (Holder, 2007), and pull factors (the host

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country's attitude toward migrants, opportunities in the host country) to name a few. In addition, the salience of one's national identity is prone to shift depending on context. Nationality is just one of various identities that Black immigrants hold. Other important identities could include race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and disability status that intersect and influence how the immigrants might view themselves, as well as their engagement in interpersonal relationships with members of the host country and other immigrant groups. Deaux (2011) suggests that the American experience is a diverse one particularly for immigrants. She observes, "and certainly, the immigrant, who has begun life in a different country with its own unique history and cultural practices, experiences the United States in quite different ways (p. 70). While modern-day immigrants have similar aspirations of creating better lives for themselves and their families as their predecessors, they 'are not always accepted as being part of the American purpose, even if they become naturalized citizens or if their children are born here and are legally citizens from birth'" (Deaux, 2011, p. 71). What does it mean then for the Black immigrant who may identify as a naturalized American or hyphenated American, but who is not recognized as such by his or her fellow citizens? Is developing a flexible identity that can adapt to shifting cultural dynamics the most effective strategy for Black immigrants to adopt?

This chapter will highlight the multidimensional experiences of Black immigrants in the United States as it relates to the complex process of establishing and maintaining their continuously evolving national, racial, and ethnic identities in a predominantly White context. A brief overview of relevant identity and acculturation theories will be presented. Descriptions of the experiences of Black immigrants in the United States as depicted in the literature, as well as anecdotal data from individual interviews from an ongoing study of first- and second-generation Black Caribbean immigrants, will be integrated throughout the chapter. Seventy-four Caribbean immigrants and second-generation Caribbean Americans, including 46 women and 28 men, shared information about their racial identities, encounters with discrimination, and unique acculturation experiences as part of a sabbatical research project which began in 2007 and continued with follow-up interviews of some participants in September 2011. Participants were recruited from Caribbean organizations in Washington DC, Maryland, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Florida, and Georgia. They migrated from Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Grenada, Haiti, Montserrat, St. Croix, Barbados, Dominica, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Ranging in age from 19 to 73, they shared their migration stories, coping strategies, and cultural traditions as part of the research project. An additional ten participants (six women and four men), ranging in age from 36 to 75, were recruited in a similar fashion to the process described earlier during the summer of 2015, to answer similar questions about their acculturation experiences and cultural identities. Finally, whether and how Black immigrants attempt to cultivate assimilationist, traditionalist, bicultural or flexible, and transnational identities as an adaptive survival strategy while living in the United States is explored.

Identity Development

Questioning one's identity and place in the world is a natural phenomenon experienced by adolescents and emerging adults as they navigate the terrain of identity development proposed by Erikson (1968). One's identity consists of all "beliefs, ideals, and values that help shape and guide a person's behavior" (Cherry, 2005). Erikson's stage theory of psychosocial development examined the impact of social influences on the development of personality across a person's life span. Erikson proposed that all people go through a series of eight stages of development throughout their lives and that at each stage an essential conflict or crisis must be resolved in order to fully master and integrate the key quality of that stage. Erikson believed that the formation of a coherent identity was one of the key tasks in one's life. The identity conflict emerges most significantly during adolescence, though Erikson did not believe that establishment of one's identity was restricted to adolescence. Rather, one's identity is modified and develops throughout the life span, as individuals face new challenges and encounter various experiences (Cherry, 2005). According to Erikson, identity is "...a subjective sense as well as an observable quality of personal sameness and continuity, paired with some belief in the sameness and continuity of some shared world image. As a quality of unself-conscious living, this can be gloriously obvious in a young person who has found himself as he has found his communality. In him we see emerge a unique unification of what is irreversibly given – that is, body type and temperament, giftedness and vulnerability, infantile models and acquired ideals – with the open choices provided in available roles, occupational possibilities, values offered, mentors met, friendships made, and first sexual encounters" (1970). Identity crises occur more often with the advancements and increased cross-cultural contacts that ensue frequently across the world. These conflicts happen throughout the life span, especially during moments of significant change including starting a new job, the beginning of a new relationship, the end of a marriage, or the birth of a child. These changes facilitate the opportunity to investigate diverse parts of oneself (roles, values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors) in distinct areas of one's life (work, family, and other interpersonal relationships) (Cherry, 2005). The transitions and challenges that accompany migration from one country and culture to another are particularly salient opportunities for identity crises to emerge. Black immigrants from the Caribbean and Africa must negotiate the various aspects of their social/cultural identities which include national origin, race, and ethnicity among many others (i.e., religious affiliation, sexual orientation, etc.). For many Black immigrants whose heritage culture was predominantly Black (i.e., they were born and raised in majority Black countries), race was a less salient part of their identity than other aspects (i.e., nationality, socioeconomic status, professional affiliation, etc.). One immigrant from the Caribbean island of St. Vincent, who participated in a study of acculturation experiences among Black Caribbean immigrants, stated "here in the US it's more about color…it is more class based in St. Vincents, the divisions are more class-based…we are mostly Black and non-Blacks are not seen as white…they are Vincentian first" (U. Mars, personal

communication, October, 2007). This statement is a common example of the primary salience of nationality and class in terms of cultural identities, as compared to race which is considered the more significant identity in the United States. Migrating to a country where they are now part of a visible racial minority that is often viewed with suspicion or associated with negative attributes can be quite jarring. Race becomes much more prominent in terms of how these migrants are viewed and defined by others in the host country and thus becomes more significant for many Black immigrants' identities (Benson, 2006). Contending with what it means to be "Black" in a sometimes hostile host country climate while also navigating how (if any) you are distinct from traditional African-Americans because of your migrant status is a complex endeavor (Roopnarine & Krishnakumar, 2006). An examination of the process of racial identity development is an important aspect of understanding the Black immigrant experience.

Black Racial Identity Development Theories

Racial identity can be defined as the degree to which a person recognizes and appreciates himself or herself as a racial being within a hierarchical social structure (Neville & Walters, 2004). There are a number of Black racial identity development models, the most prominent and well documented being the Cross model of psychological Nigrescence first proposed by William Cross in 1971. This model was established during the Civil Rights Movement in the United States during the 1960s and outlines a five-stage process during which Black people in America progress from espousing a White frame of reference to a positive Black frame of reference (Sue & Sue, 2013). African-Americans begin at the *preencounter stage* where they "consciously or unconsciously devalue their own Blackness and concurrently value White values and ways" (Sue & Sue, 2013, p. 291). Black individuals in this stage typically experience "self-hate, low self-esteem and poor mental health" (Vandiver in Sue & Sue, 2013, p. 291). During the *encounter stage*, the individual first experiences a significant crisis or incident that contests previously held beliefs and behaviors (i.e., the murder of Martin Luther King Jr. was a profound and earth-shattering event for African-Americans in 1968). As a result, a modification in worldviews transpires, and individuals often feel guilt and anger at being "brainwashed by White society" (Sue & Sue, 2013 p. 291). In the *immersion-emersion stage*, individuals retreat from White society and immerse themselves in Black culture resulting in the emergence of Black pride and the eventual reduction of guilt and anger. During the *internalization stage*, general anti-White sentiments dissipate, and an increased sense of inner security, tolerance, and flexibility appears, as conflicts between old and new identities are settled. Finally, in the *internalization-commitment stage*, African-Americans embrace a solid commitment to civil rights, social justice, and social change.

Cross updated his theory in 1991 to include the concept of *race salience* during the initial *pre-encounter* stage to capture "the degree to which race is an important

and integral part of a person's approach to life" (Sue & Sue, 2013, p. 292). Therefore, an individual's race can play a major or minimal role in his or her identity, and one can have a positive, pro-Black or negative, anti-Black frame of reference. *Race salience* replaced the term "pro-White," and an individual in the *pre-encounter* stage can have a *pre-encounter assimilation* identity (an individual with low race salience and neutral feelings toward Blackness), a *pre-encounter miseducation* identity (an individual who accepts the negative and stereotypical misinformation about Black people from the wider culture and compartmentalizes this information in order to protect himself or herself from these negative images and to preserve a positive personal self-image), or a *pre-encounter anti-Black* identity (an individual who has high race salience and strong negative feelings about Blackness). Someone with a *pre-encounter assimilation identity* would not consider race as an important part of his or her identity and would embrace an "American" framework that would not necessarily include low self-esteem or self-hate. Vincent A. (2016), a Nigerian immigrant, posted in MIT Admissions Blog on July 8, 2016: "I moved to the United States of America three years ago…And in Nigeria, virtually everyone has the same dark skin. Sure, there's a substantial number of white people and Asians and a tapestry of races, but mostly, we're black, and because we're mostly black, 'being black' was never a term that was part of my daily vocabulary. You were tall or short or fat or skinny or intelligent or a complete and utter idiot, but you weren't black. It was as weird as saying 'you're human'…mostly I didn't know if I had the 'right' to consider myself black. The word referred to African-Americans right." This is an example of the experience of low race salience without necessarily having a negative view of one's racial identity. Cross does contend, however, that someone with a *pre-encounter anti-Black* identity would have low self-esteem and self-hate as a result of being exposed to a racist society where negative images of Blacks are commonplace in the media and larger society. These negative images are integrated into the racial self-concept, resulting in self-loathing (Cross & Vandiver, 2001).

Vincent A. (2016) continues in his blog post to describe a harrowing encounter experience that dramatically increases his race salience and ignites further exploration and development of his Black identity. "A few months here, and I decided to go to the post office…after I'm done at the post office, I'm walking down Central Square feeling pretty good…I'm almost at my dorm when I hear someone screaming 'Hey? HEY!' I turn around to see a heavyset, middle-ages white man racing towards me. I start to panic. I'm clumsy as hell so I probably dropped my ID card or my debit card on the sidewalk and he spotted it. I reach into my pockets, but even as I'm tapping around feeling both cards secure and in place, I start to realize something is wrong because his face is contorted in rage…Next thing I know, his arms are around my shirt, and he's shaking me telling me to confess. 'I saw you?' he says. 'I saw you grab her wallet. Where is it? Where is it?'. He's screaming in my face…I notice one of the MBTA buses parked on the side of the road, but only vaguely, because my head is somewhere else, adrift in confusion, and as it sinks in what he's accusing me of, and as he begins to say 'why can't you niggers – ' I completely lose it. I start to scream at him…I start to yell about calling the police. 'Call the police!' he tells me. 'Call them right now'. We're interrupted by someone hanging out the

bus, yelling at us to get our attention. It's another man and he's saying, 'You got the wrong guy! You got the wrong guy!' For whatever reason the man holding me chooses to believe him. He lets me go. Without saying a word – a single word – he turns around and beings to walk towards the bus. I stand there…stunned, waiting to see if he'll say anything, but he keeps walking…I've been in America for 3 years and I feel wholly unqualified to speak about matters like this. In Nigeria, they floated past my radar, so why take them on now? I don't know. I can't hide under some fancy little idea that there's a barrier between black and African…because what matters to these people – you know who these people are – is that they can take one look at the color of your skin, and populate their minds with the entire backstory of you."

Additionally, in his updated model, Cross created two distinct identities during the *immersion-emersion* stage, *anti-White and pro-Black*, resulting in three potential combinations of identities *anti-White*, *pro-Black*, *and anti-White/pro-Black combined*. Finally, Cross combined his previous fourth (*internalization*) and fifth stages *(internalization-commitment)* into one stage *internalization* with the accompanying three possible identities *internalization* (*Black*) *nationalist* (an individual with high Black positive race salience), *biculturalist* (an integration and valuing of both Black and American identities), and *multiculturalist* (high salience of multiple identities including race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.) (Cross & Vandiver, 2001). Cross' model of psychological Nigrescence has been widely studied (Cross, Smith & Payne, 2002). He developed the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS) to assess his revised model, which has demonstrated high predictive validity (Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Cokley, Cross, & Worrell, 2002; Worrell, Cross & Vandiver, 2001). For example, greater endorsement of pre-encounter self-hatred attitudes has been associated with decreased self-esteem (Vandiver et al., 2002).

Building on Cross' Nigrescence model, Janet Helms created a racial identity development model for Black Americans (Helms, 1990), which was expanded to apply more widely to all racial minorities or people of color (Helms, 1995). Helms also developed a parallel theory of racial identity development for White Americans. In the expanded model, Helms revised Cross' five racial identity stages into "ego statuses" that outline the various beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors African-Americans (and other people of color) utilize to form a positive racial identity within the context of a hierarchical racial system that oppresses racial minorities. The term status was used instead of stages to highlight "dynamic evolution rather than static personality structures or types" (Helms & Cook, 1999). In the initial status *conformity*, an individual has internalized overall White middle-class ideology of what it means to be Black in society with images associated with being Black are typically negative and White are usually positive. Race is also considered inconsequential. In the *dissonance* status, a major shift in the individual's worldview regarding race occurs as an increased awareness of race and racism emerges. Individuals contend with disputing previously internalized negative perceptions of Blackness while also attempting to determine what it means to be Black on a personal level. In the *immersion/emersion* status, one fully immerses oneself in the Black experience and ultimately emerges from this experience with more nuanced and flexible beliefs about race. At

this stage, all associations with Blackness are considered good, while Whiteness are perceived as bad. Additionally, meanings of Blackness are externally driven. In the *internalization* status, meanings of Blackness are now internally defined and other relevant social identities (e.g., sexual orientation, gender) are beginning to be considered. In the *internationalization commitment* status, there is an incorporation of a positive racial identity as well as the utilization of a multicultural framework that fosters coalition building with others from historically oppressed groups (Neville & Walters, 2004). A post by Michelle Denise Jackson in September 2014 on the *For Harriet* blog exemplifies the internationalization commitment status: "To my dear white folks, I want you to know that I sincerely love you. Really, I do. But I love social justice too. And my love for social justice does not mean that I hate you… Social justice is not meant to exclude you. Indeed, I believe actually engaging white people to be anti-racist allies is necessary for social progress…my belief in social justice means I believe in equality, in the dignity and value of all human lives. It means that sometimes not everything is about you."

The Racial Identity Attitudes Scale (RIAS) was developed by Helms and Parham (Helms, 1990), to assess the first four statuses in the model, which has generally received some strong empirical support. In particular, relationships between Black identity development and psychological adjustment as well as counseling process and outcome have been supported (Atkinson, 2004), though there have been some questions regarding the internal consistency of the scale (Fischer & Moradi, 2001), subscale compositions and scoring procedures (Ponterotto, Fuertes & Chen, 2000), range restrictions for pre-encounter and internalization items, and social desirability for the pre-encounter items (Fischer & Moradi, 2001). In terms of empirical support, an association between racial identity attitude and mental health has been demonstrated, suggesting that increased internalization of a positive racial identity is related to increased psychological well-being and better coping skills among African-Americans (Neville & Walters, 2004). More psychological distress and lower psychological well-being have been associated with less comfort and awareness of one's racial identity. "*Conformity* attitudes have been found to be related to greater perceived stress, self-derogation, and suppressed anger, while *internalization* attitudes have been found to be related to greater problem-solving efficacy, increased self-esteem and positive identification with one's ethnic origin" (Neville & Walters, 2004, p. 93). Black racial identity development has also been positively associated with self-concept (Wilson & Constantine, 1999) and self-esteem (Phelps, Taylor, & Gerard, 2001).

If the aforementioned Black racial identity development models are useful for understanding the experience of race as part of one's identity for African-Americans, what implications do these Black racial identity development theories have for Black immigrants living in the United States? Do Black immigrants develop their racial identities in similar ways to African-Americans? Or are there differences in how Black immigrants develop and view their racial identity, particularly those who are born and raised in majority Black countries? In a study of racial identity (measured by Helms and Parham RIAS), experiences of perceived discrimination and racism, and coping style among African-Americans (*n* = 40) and English-speaking

Black Caribbean immigrants (*n* = 64) conducted by this author, African-Americans were more likely to idealize their Black/African-American racial identity and immerse themselves in stereotypical behaviors reflecting Black identity than Caribbean immigrants as indicated by a significant difference in their average scores on the immersion subscale (Brooks, James & Mogard, 2008). Interestingly, within this same sample, African-Americans reported higher scores on the integration subscale than Caribbean immigrants, suggesting that they were also more likely to take a less reactive stance and incorporate positive aspects of White culture into their own cultural identity while maintaining positive pro-Black attitudes than Caribbean immigrants. The Caribbean immigrants' scores on the encounter (related to the aforementioned *dissonance status*) and immersion racial identity subscales were significant predictors of depression and anxiety, which is consistent with previous research that has found immersion attitudes in particular to be associated with poor self-esteem, high anxiety, and high levels of anger or hostility (Parham & Helms, 1985).

Researchers who have studied racial and ethnic identification among Black immigrants have arrived at a variety of conclusions. Mary C. Waters, a sociologist who has studied Black Caribbean immigrants (first and second generation) over several years, highlights a fluidity in the salience of race for some Black Caribbean immigrants that is determined by context (Waters, 1999; Kasinitz, Mollenkoph, Waters, & Holdaway, 2008). "The situation determines the identity chosen by most people, and there is a great deal of ease in moving back and forth between different identities. This interchangeability of identity labels also extends for many people for whom their racial identity as black is foremost in their consciousness. Many respondents stated they thought of themselves as black when they felt threatened by whites" (Waters, 1999, p. 62–63). One of Waters' interviewees from a study of West Indian immigrants and their children in New York City, a 36-year-old Guyanese man who had been living in the United States for 2 years, stated "When I am in the situation in which blacks are threatened as such by whites generally, I assume a position of a black man. Whenever you have general problems at work, for example it may not be against a Guyanese or a West Indian, it may be against a black American, and in that context therefore I assume a black posture. And whenever the conflict relates mainly to Guyana, of if I am discussing an issue in the Caribbean of which there is a particular feature of Guyana which would play an important part in the discussion, then in those circumstances I am Guyanese" (Waters, 1999, p. 63). Another interviewee, a 38-year-old Jamaican women, shared that in situations when she could be a distinct minority, such as when she entered an unfamiliar neighborhood, she would seek out a Black face: "It's good to identify a face that's you know, looks like yours, but Black is Black, it's not Jamaican" (Waters, 1999, p. 63). It did not matter if the individual was Jamaican to this respondent; the fact that the person was Black was what would provide her with a sense of comfort and safety. In the previously mentioned study of experiences of perceived discrimination and racism among African-Americans and English-speaking Black Caribbean immigrants conducted by this author, both African-Americans and Caribbean immigrants selected their primary racial identification as "Black," but when Caribbean immigrants were

given the option to choose between West Indian and African-American as their primary *cultural* identification, they chose West Indian (Brooks, James & Mogard, 2008). Several of these respondents also indicated in follow-up structured interviews that they disliked having to choose Black/African-American on demographic forms because they did not consider themselves to be African-American per se but rather Caribbean born Black or West Indian, suggesting a preference for ethnic or national identity or at least a desire to distinguish themselves from African-Americans. A respondent from St. Lucia answered the question "do you feel pressured to consider yourself African American?" by saying "Not really, I make it clear that I'm not. I get slightly upset when I fill out forms and there is not space for Black, only African American. I shouldn't be forced to choose African American" (C. Augustine, personal communication, October, 2011). As Waters suggests, Black Caribbean immigrants are not necessarily "choosing *between* race and ethnicity" when faced with situations that determined whether their race or national identity was more important. Many respondents in her study and in my own research have expressed a great deal of pride in their racial identity as Black people and did not see a conflict between having strong national or ethnic identity (i.e., Jamaican, Trinidadian, West Indian) and being Black. They resented the idea of not having both their national and racial identities acknowledged (in demographic forms) or in encounters with Americans who make assumptions about their ethnic identity based on their race. This phenomenon of distancing on the part of some Black Caribbean immigrants from African-Americans has been explained in models of immigrant incorporation. It is a strategy by which becoming American and utilizing one's social capital as an immigrant while achieving success requires a complex negotiation between maintaining a strong ethnic and cultural identity (as an immigrant), and assimilating into American culture and losing one's immigrant cultural distinctiveness (Habacker, 2012). The challenge for Black Caribbean immigrants is that if they choose the latter option and attempt to assimilate, they become not just Americans, but African-American, which, according to some, results in downward mobility, given the historical and present-day levels of discrimination and prejudice against racial and ethnic minorities in general and Black Americans in particular within American society (Waters, 1999). A Trinidadian respondent from my study of Black Caribbean immigrants shared "I think I've had the best of both worlds as a Black person representing a different kind of Black person…I've been given better opportunities than people who are African American…I also feel that white people have dealt differently with me because I am a different kind of Black person…I wonder if they don't know that I am Black….Even though white folks have been accepting, some of them make assumptions…(being) Black from a 'third world country' (I) couldn't have had certain experiences, they are shocked that you do have these experiences" (C, Francis, September 6, 2011, personal communication). While the maintenance of one's distinct ethnic identification may seem advantageous to Black Caribbean immigrants, Showers (2015) argues that the same advantage may not hold up for Black African immigrants. Black African immigrants who migrate with high levels of education, obtain Canadian citizenship, and already have English-speaking ability still experience downward social and economic

mobility, racism, and exclusion (Creese, 2011). In one study of a group of West African immigrant women working in the healthcare sector in Washington DC, entrenched perceptions of the African continent as "backward and inferior" served as barriers for professional advancement and upward mobility, despite their robust educational backgrounds, professional experience, and English proficiency (Showers, 2015). The nuanced responses to the issue of racial and ethnic identification and how Black immigrants select, amplify, and integrate their multiple identities within their new cultural context make an examination of acculturation important for understanding their experiences.

Immigrant Incorporation/Acculturation and Identities

The pervasive climate and the degree of support for and openness toward immigrants that is present in the host/receiving culture have a significant impact on how immigrants behave and view themselves in the new society (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind & Vedder, 2001). "Policies toward immigration in immigrant-receiving societies, provide a context that supports or hinders in varying degrees immigrant parents' transmission of systems of beliefs and values" (Dion, 2006, p. 305), which influences the degree to which immigrants will maintain heritage beliefs and customs that shape their self-concepts. An example of this was reflected in Canada's policy of multiculturalism that existed since the early 1970s, which emphasized respect for heritage cultures, intergroup tolerance, and respect for different groups within Canada. In this climate, one would expect immigrants to have support for preserving connections to their original culture while adapting to their host culture, including the upholding of a strong national identity to some degree. In receiving countries where there is a strong anti-immigrant sentiment that is also reflected in official policies including legislation, the pressure to assimilate is much stronger. However, for visible racial minority immigrants who face prejudice and discrimination at various levels, the opportunity to assimilate within a predominantly White context is often difficult and for some impossible, as race and racism become barriers to progress. So how do non-White immigrant groups, specifically, Black immigrants, become incorporated into America's racial structures?

Scholars who have studied this phenomenon have various perspectives. Some present an assimilation approach, stating that all immigrant groups must lose their ethnic culture in order to gain acceptance in mainstream White American society (Gordon, 1964). Others argue that due to the intractable nature of racism and discrimination in the social structure of the United States, a segmented assimilation approach was more applicable and realistic (Portes and Zhou, 1993). Black immigrants and their children face daunting odds and must develop multifaceted strategies to successfully acclimate within the culture. These strategies are heavily influenced by whether or not immigrants enter the country with significant educational and economic advantages. Those with these exceptional advantages can often

make a relatively smooth transition, while those without these assets end up on a downward trajectory and become part of impoverished, urban, predominantly Black enclaves leading to racial exclusion from the mainstream. There are others who suggest that because more recent immigrants have intermarriage patterns and linguistic assimilation similar to the first generations of Southern European and Irish immigrants in the early twentieth century, this is evidence that the racial categories in the United States are more adaptable and flexible (Alba & Nee, 2003). "This makes it possible for at least some non-white immigrants to eventually blend into mainstream America…much the same way that Irish, Italian and Jewish immigrants did" (Habacker, 2012). Habacker contends that the process is much more complex, at least for some Ethiopian and Eritrean immigrants who consider themselves to be Habasha, a separate, non-Black ethno-racial category that highlights their Semitic roots. In her ethnographic field study of first-generation African immigrants in Washington DC, she found that many were not assimilating into African-American communities or relating to African-American experiences of racism and exclusion. Rather, they were either situating themselves exclusively within their own ethnic Habasha community in Washington DC, or "strategically assimilating" if they were financially well-off, curtailing their experiences with racism by remaining connected to their ethnic community and engaging with Whites as members of the upper and middle class.

Other research suggests that more immigrants are adopting a transnational identity (Glick-Schiller, Basch & Blanc, 1995 ; Upegui-Hernandez, 2012) which allows for the maintenance of ethnic identification with the home culture, adopting particular attributes from the new culture with attempts for strategic assimilation, and, within this framework, engaging in combinations of "plural civic and political memberships, economic involvements, social networks and cultural identities that link people and institutions in two or more nation-states in diverse, multi-layered patterns" (Morawska, 2007, p. 149). This approach allows for even greater flexibility in identity that can be both internally and contextually driven. (Ferguson, Bornstein & Pottinger, 2012)

Because racial categories are more complex and fluid in many countries in Africa, the Caribbean, and South, Central, and Latin America, the ways in which one defines one's race could be quite different than how race is defined in the United States with discrete categories for Black and White. For example in Jamaica, with a motto reflecting racial tolerance "Out of Many One People," rigid Black and White racial categorization is rejected and "a more complex system in which a multiplicity of factors (e.g., ancestry, complexion, social standing, and education) determine "race." Consequently, "Jamaicans hardly think about race…especially since all their role models both social failures and society's leaders are black" (Vickerman, 2007, p. 485), and race essentially becomes detached from achievement. More recent immigrants from Jamaica are apt to adopt an ethnic identity that is semi-independent from African Americans with the ability to uphold a strong national identity, while at the same time express a racial identity that is in solidarity with African-Americans, particularly as they still face anti-Black racism and discrimination as African-Americans do (Vickerman, 2007).

In a recent edited book about the experiences of immigrant professors, Hutchison (2016) posits that immigrant professors (IPs) strive to become a "good fit" in both their professional and broader social contexts and that this pursuit for acceptance necessitates "a shift in one's psychological landscape, creating a new identity" (p. 13). He describes identity as fluid and suggests that in their interactions with individuals in the new host culture, IPs must reconcile their original identities from their homelands, with new identities imposed upon them in their new environments, creating a third hybridized identity which is more expansive. Hutchison indicates that his Ghanaian identity became African, and a Lithuanian professor's identity became Eastern European, "because it is easier for locals to remember broader regions people come from, as opposed to specific, unfamiliar countries" (p. 14). Mfum-Mensah (2016), another Ghanaian-born professor teaching in the United States, describes the daunting task of remaining a "rooted African," trying to preserve his associations with relatives back home while making a life in America (p. 151). Hutchison likens the process of identity development that IPs experience to that of an adolescent's process of psychosocial development, mentioned earlier in the chapter.

In this author's own experience of adjusting to living in the United States after migrating from Jamaica as a preteen, the challenges I encountered because of differences in spelling words in "British English" versus "American English" and the constant ridicule from peers because of my distinctive Jamaican accent resulted in feelings of humiliation and isolation that became unbearable (Brooks, 2016). Hutchison, Quach, and Wiggan (2006) note that there is frequently a devaluing of an immigrant's communication and experience if there are differences in spelling, meaning of words, expression, or accents, regardless of how well one communicates in English. As I struggled to develop my own sense of self within this new culture, I decided to "become American" and adopted an "American accent" at school while retaining my Jamaican identity at home. Another Jamaican immigrant describes utilizing the strategy of creating a "corporate accent" at work after finding himself having to repeat what he said constantly to his colleagues. He recognized he needed to present himself in a particular way, and "I somehow developed a 'professional accent', closer to what I call a mainstream corporate American accent…I had to then learn how to switch how I spoke between buying food at the Jamaican store down the street, to saying excuse me to the (American) lady right next to me at the cashier in the same store. I got tongue tied a couple of times" (O. Thompson, personal communication, August, 9, 2015). Scholars suggest that second-generation Black Caribbean immigrants undergo a similar process of defining, forming, and reshaping their racial and ethnic identities and that they struggle with how to define place, identity, and citizenship just as much as their immigrant predecessors (Lorick-Wilmont, 2014). They create fluid racial and ethnic identities that reflect an "'in-between-ness' of experience of being both 'black in America' and 'a child of a black immigrant in America'" (Lorick-Wilmont, 2014, p. 93). They also try to "bridge the gap" while navigating multiple identities that include race, nationality, sexual orientation, gender, and religion. A second-generation immigrant from the author's study describes her primary national identity as Jamaican-American, her most salient identity as American, and attends a church constituted mainly of Caribbean-born individuals (P. Williams, personal communication, August, 2, 2015).

As poignantly expressed in the quote at the beginning of the chapter, I have found myself bridging the gap between my home and adopted homelands, creating a more fluid, adaptable identity in order to navigate the multiple cultural environments I encounter personally and professionally. Another respondent who was born in New York, lived in the Caribbean country of Suriname from ages 4 to 14, and then migrated back to Florida identifies as Caribbean-American and finds this identity as most salient. Although in professional settings her identity as a Black woman becomes more significant. Black immigrants, like many other migrants, are continuously negotiating their identities in multiple cultural contexts, and it appears that the ability to be flexible in one's perceptions and interactions is advantageous, whether it is bicultural or transnational in emphasis (Fuligni & Tsai, 2015). Like many of my immigrant peers, my own identity has evolved and reflects a more complex, multifaceted, and global frame.

Recent studies suggest that racial categories within the United States are becoming less immobile (Bean & Lee, 2009), as reflected in gradual changes in the race question on the US Census to include the opportunity to report more than one race or other races (particularly among Hispanic/Latino categories) and the growing possibility of recognizing varied racial and ethnic diversity within the Black racial category. How this emergent recognition of diversity among Black immigrants translates into how they are treated and their opportunities for full acceptance, success, and upward mobility within a majority White culture is still an open question. What is certain is that Black immigrants will continue to bridge the gap, utilizing various strategies, unique strengths, and resilience in order to thrive in their new homelands while remaining connected to their native countries. A Jamaican respondent in this author's ongoing study of Caribbean immigrant experiences said it best: "My national identity has not and will not change. However, my assimilation and adoption of North American cultural norms has impacted my life, and I have adapted to some of these norms as a Jamaican/American…The Caribbean and its people (at home and abroad) constitute an important and productive part of the world…generations of our people have made great contributions to mankind and we will continue to do so…to know us is to love us. Get to know our heritage, our cultural norms, our rich history…with no love lost for my homeland, I love being in the US" (K. Haughton, personal communication, September, 2015).

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