Black Mosaic: Expanding Contours of Black Identity and Black Politics

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Political Science in the Graduate School of Duke University

2011
ABSTRACT

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Abstract

The increasing ethnic diversity among Black people in the United States is growing at a near exponential rate due to the migration of Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latino, and African immigrants to the United States. This study is an endeavor to understand how this increasing diversity in ethnicity among Blacks in the U.S. will influence the boundaries of Black identity and Black politics. I ultimately aim to gain a sense of the processes by which Black immigrants come to embrace or reject a racial identity, the mechanisms by which African-Americans become more accepting of “cross-cutting” political issues, and the extent to which an intraracial coalition and a broader, more inclusive racial consciousness—a diasporic consciousness—might develop among Black immigrants and African Americans. This study utilizes survey data, in-depth interviews with African Americans and Black immigrants, and controlled experiments to examine the questions presented here. This study finds that African Americans and Black immigrants are accepting of a Black identity that is inclusive of ethnic diversity, largely due to shared racialized experiences. Moreover, this study concludes that while group consciousness influences the behaviors and attitudes of Black immigrants and African Americans in very similar ways, there are important differences between the groups that will need to be considered in future Black politics studies. Finally, this study finds that there are obstacles to raising a more inclusive racial consciousness because African Americans and Black immigrants do not see eye-to-eye on what issues should be prioritized on a unified Black political agenda.
To Mom, Dad, and Mr. Smith.
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Chapter 1. Introduction: Identity to Politics

The primary focus of this study is to understand how the increasing ethnic diversity among Blacks in the United States influences the boundaries of Black identity and, consequently, the contours of Black politics. Ultimately, the answer to this larger question concerning the nature of the boundaries of Black identity and Black politics will rest on answers to a subset of secondary questions raised in this dissertation: Considering the fact that ethnicity continues to be a salient identity within a racialized context, how do African Americans and Black immigrants conceptualize who is Black? Do Black immigrants embrace or reject a Black racial identity that is inclusive of Blacks native to the U.S.? Similarly, do African Americans embrace an identity that is inclusive of Black immigrants? Do Black immigrants share a sense of group consciousness similar to what has long been documented for African Americans? To what extent are the political and policy attitudes of Black immigrants and African Americans similar or different? Finally, under what circumstances might African Americans advocate for or support issues that primarily affect their Black immigrant counterparts, such as bilingual education and immigration?

These are the questions that will be addressed in this study. The answers to these questions are relevant to both the study of Black politics as well as American politics and democratic theory, in general. First, political scientists have largely ignored the ethnic diversity among Blacks in the United States, as well as the ways in which ethnic identity among Black people in the United States might influence their political behavior. Consequently, we have a significant void in our knowledge about how the political attitudes and behaviors of Black people in the U.S. might differ due to variations in ethnicity and birthplace.
Second, what we understand about racial politics in the United States is primarily based on a Black-White dichotomy, but waves of non-white immigration has inspired (or even forced) political scientists to reevaluate and retest what we think we know about Americans’ political attitudes and behaviors (Valentino and Hutchings 2004). Furthermore, what we understand about African American politics is based largely on the historical experiences and relationships that Blacks have had with formal and informal American institutions, including slavery, Jim Crow laws, residential segregation, and continued discriminatory experiences in the justice and educational systems as well as disparities in health and wealth, especially in comparison to their native born white counterparts (Dawson 1994a; Katzenelson 2005; Massey and Denton 1993; Oliver and Shapiro 1995).

Immigrants of African descent from the Caribbean, Latin America, and Africa, on the other hand, may have had similar historical experiences (i.e. colonialism, apartheid, U.S. military invasion, "racial democracy") as U.S. born African Americans, but it is unknown whether these similar experiences lead them to experience and relate to political and social life in a similar way. How much they identify with and feel connected to the U.S.’ racial history and its institutions may have a major effect on the way their racial identity will be linked to politics in the U.S. Based on extant research, it is unclear whether their racial identity can be politically mobilized in the same way that African Americans’ racial identity has been mobilized (Junn 2006; Rogers 2001, 2006). In turn, the theories and frameworks that have proven to be useful in explaining and predicting African Americans’ political attitudes and behavior may not be useful for explaining the attitudes and behavior of all people who are categorized racially as Black. The relationship and link between racial identity and politics needs to be carefully examined when considering Black people from various ethnic origins and backgrounds.
Finally, newcomers to the United States are in a way a miner’s canary. Black immigrants tend to believe that America is the land of opportunity, and that in contemporary America hard work and perseverance will help them overcome any boundary or constraint they may face (Waters 1999a). If we see that immigrants are able to quickly recognize how on-going racism and discrimination influences their life chances and opportunity structure, then in some way, we have an additional marker of racial progress or the lack thereof. Evidence for racial progress would be shown if Black immigrants do not feel that they are constrained by their race, if they feel that they can make claim to their ethnic identity rather than a ubiquitous Black racial identity, and if their political attitudes are not primarily focused on issues surrounding race, as African Americans historically have. On the other hand, evidence that racial progress has been stymied will be provided not only if we see that Black immigrants political attitudes and behaviors mirror African Americans but also if this imitation in behavior arises because Black immigrants begin feel that their life chances are inextricably linked to their racial identity as African Americans tend to feel.

**Increasing Black Ethnic Diversity**

Five decades in the making, the nexus of Civil Rights policies and broad immigration reform has served to transform the way we see and understand identity and identity politics in the United States. At the intersection of dismantled legal racial oppression and the influx of post-1965 immigrants lies a broader identity space for people, especially people of color, to make claim to less traditional racial and ethnic identities, to challenge the
racial status quo, and blur a historically rigid color line (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Reed 1992; Waters 2000).

The enactment 1965 Hart-Cellar Act immigration reform expanded the racial and ethnic diversity make-up of the American population. This Act also known as the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 removed the national-origin quotas that were set in place by the Immigration Act 1924, which favored the admission of northern European immigrants (Berlin 2010). Berlin (2010) notes, “by 1965, the United States was no longer a nation of immigrants,” as the foreign-born proportion of the American population fell to rates lower than before then 1830s, about five percent of the population. Looking retrospectively, the 1965 Act has changed the racial make up of immigrant waves to the United States ever since. Prior to the 1965 Act, most immigrants to the United States hailed from Europe, but after 1965, a larger proportion of immigrants came from non-European countries. In fact, by the 1980s approximately 85% of documented immigrants to the United States originated from Asian, Latin America or the Caribbean whereas only 12% came from Europe or Canada (Lee and Bean 2004).

The ethnic make-up of Blacks1 in the United States was also influenced by these immigration policies. For example, prior to 1924 there were no limits on West Indian immigration. In 1924 approximately 12,000 Black immigrants came to the U.S, but in 1925 only 791 Black immigrants entered the U.S. (Hellwig 1978). The Hart-Cellar Act increased the diversity of the American population in general, but the Act also increased the ethnic

1 A note on nomenclature: I use the term “Black” to describe all people who are categorized as racially Black despite their ethnicity. I use the terms “African American,” “Black Americans” and “native-born Blacks” interchangeably to describe Black people whose ancestors have been in the U.S. for several generations. Finally, I use “foreign-born Blacks” and “Black immigrants” to describe people who are categorized as Black in the U.S. but are first, 1.5 or second generation immigrants to the U.S.; this group includes Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latinos, and Black Africans.
diversity among Black people in the United States. In 1965, there were only 125,000 foreign-born Blacks in this country. This number increased to 816,000 in 1980, and a total of 2.8 million foreign-born Blacks resided in the U.S. in 2005 (Kent 2007). Table 1-1 provides U.S. Census Bureau data of foreign-born Black immigration into the country over the past five decades.

**Table 1-1: Year of Entry of the Black Foreign-Born Population**

Foreign-born Blacks only comprise about eight percent of the larger Black population in the U.S, but Black immigrants have contributed 20 percent of the increase in the Black population between 2000 and 2006. As we see in Figure 1-1, in some states, Black immigrants are disproportionately represented among the Black population. Here we see that the states with the highest concentrations of Black immigrants are New York (28.4% of the Black population is foreign-born), Massachusetts (28.4%), Minnesota (25.5%), Florida (19.3%), Connecticut (17.2%), Washington (17.2%), and New Jersey (14.4%).
Figure 1-2 (U.S. Census 2007) also provides descriptive statistics of the foreign-born Black population in the United States. As shown, most Black immigrants are of West Indian or
Latin American descent while about one-third are from continental Africa.

**World Region of Birth of Foreign-Born Household Population: 2004**

(Percent distribution. Data based on sample limited to the household population and exclude the population living in institutions, college dormitories, and other group quarters. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see http://factfinder.census.gov/home/en/datanotes/xp_acs2004.html)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Europe</th>
<th>Asia</th>
<th>Oceania</th>
<th>Latin America</th>
<th>Northern America</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White alone, not Hispanic</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>63.6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>52.4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black alone</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>66.3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black alone, not Hispanic</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>64.1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black alone or in combination</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black alone or in combination, not Hispanic</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>63.8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black and White</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Rounds to zero.

Note: Some percentages do not sum to 100.0 due to rounding.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2004 American Community Survey, Selected Population Profiles, 50201.

**Figure 1-2: World Region of Birth of Foreign-Born Population, 2004**

Increased diversity among Blacks in the United States along with the dismantling of formal racial segregation in the post-Civil Rights era has sparked a debate among Black people in the United States around notions of Black identity and Black politics (Berliin 2010; Swarns 2004). Black immigrants, on the one hand, bring with them alternative frameworks of racial identity, thereby expanding the ways that people who are categorized as Black understand their racial and ethnic identities. Many of these immigrants do not necessarily see themselves as Black (or white) or at least do not feel that their racial identity will influence their life chances, as African Americans historically have (Bobb 2001). The Civil Rights era has also loosened the rigid Black-White dichotomy. Historically,
Black immigrants’ racial identity was more psychologically and politically salient to first and second generation Black immigrants because formal and informal laws of segregation devolved on racial identity rather than ethnic identity (Greenbaum 2002; Hellwig 1978). In some ways, Black ethnic identity was irrelevant in public spaces prior to the 1960s, but over the past five decades both Black and non-Black Americans have increasingly taken ethnic diversity among Black people in the United States more seriously. White employers, for example, are reported to prefer foreign-born Blacks to native-born African Americans (Waters 1999b). Further, in a poll, 37 percent of Blacks suggest that Black Americans and Black immigrants are not actually members of the same racial group, with this feeling being the most salient among younger Blacks, between the ages of 18 and 29 (Williams 2007).

At this juncture, one might consider, more specifically, the ways in which Black identity and Black politics have been transformed. There is an incredible amount of diversity among Black people in the United States. By not taking careful account of this diversity, we risk implying that the identities, experiences and attitudes of Black immigrants are not any different than African Americans. Scholars of Asian and Latino politics have provided examples of how differentiations due to ethnicity, country of origin, generational status, levels of acculturation—just to name a few factors—complicate what we “know” about Latinos and Asians in the US (see Haynie and Junn 2008). This study will show that Black is not only a racial category but it is also a pan-ethnic identity; as such, a more nuanced analysis of the group’s members is required.
African Americans: Identity to Politics

One of the primary reasons African American politics has been of interest to political scientists is due to the homogeneity of political attitudes and behaviors among African Americans in the United States. African Americans have a sense of linked-fate, and Dawson (1994a) explains that because Black Americans have been treated as group members rather than individuals, they use the well-being of their racial group as a proxy for the well-being of the individual when making political decisions. Consequently, historically, African Americans have overwhelmingly supported the political party and political policies that they feel best represents the interests of Blacks in America. For example, for the past five decades at least 60 percent of African Americans have supported the Democratic party (Haynie and Watts 2010).

But there also exists a diversity of ideologies, policy attitudes and levels of conservatism and liberalism among African Americans (Dawson 2001; Harris-Lacewell 2004). Dawson (2001) outlines several political ideologies that African Americans tend to embrace, including Black liberalism, Black conservatism, and Black Feminism. What is common among most African Americans, despite these differences, is the feeling that one’s political behavior must be beneficial for the group. That is to say, despite ideological differences among African Americans, there has been widespread agreement on political and social goals and objectives—largely centered on promoting the interests of African Americans and to improving the status of the group—even though there are disagreements on how exactly to accomplish these goals (Dawson 2001). Racial identity, group consciousness and political behavior are inextricably linked in African-American politics and the formation of Black political agendas.
Race, Group Consciousness, and Political Behavior

There are several steps between being categorized as a racial group member and mobilizing that identity into political action. First, group membership is “defined as ‘objectively’ belonging to a particular social group;” people are, for the most part, grouped involuntarily (Conover 1988: 52). Identity, however, is a psychological consequence of membership and can be defined as the development of an attachment to one’s group (Conover 1988). While this psychological attachment is a necessary condition toward political action in the name of one’s racial group, it is not a sufficient one. It is only when this identity is politicized—when one’s sense of group consciousness is raised—will we see an identity-to-politics link (Chong and Rogers 2005; Lee 2008).

The scholarship on African American’s political and racial solidarity began in the 1960s and the 1970s in reaction to the Civil Rights and Black Power Movement as well as a “New Black Politics that fused protest and electoral forms and had a strong base in organizations;” African American political behavior caught the attention of scholars because “New Black Politics were putting blacks in office and mobilizing blacks to register to vote in numbers unimaginable since the days of Reconstruction” (Gurin, Hatchett and Jackson 1989:vii). After the 1965 Voting Rights Acts, Black Americans were able to participate in electoral politics in ways and rates that they had not be able to since the 1890s, and they moved from the Republican Party to the Democratic Party (Gurin, Hatchett and Jackson 1989; Haynie and Watts 2010; Tate 1994).

2 The concepts of group identity, racial identity, and group consciousness will be further elaborated in subsequent chapters. Here, I simply want to highlight the prominent literature that explains the identity-to-politics link in African American politics.
This resurgence of Black political participation was marked by group solidarity, and it became clear that African Americans’ racial identity and sense of group consciousness played a role in the ways in which they participated in American politics. Scholarship around the notion of racial solidarity and racial group consciousness shows that African Americans’ racial identity can be mobilized into political action. For example, Verba and Nie (1972) found that African Americans who viewed the world through racial lenses were more likely to be participatory than those who did not believe that race was at the center of many issues. They suggested that a sense of racial group consciousness was a political resource for African Americans. Shingles (1981) expounded on Verba and Nie’s (1972) notion of black consciousness, showing that this consciousness has such a dramatic effect on African Americans’ political behavior because it “contributes to the combination of a sense of political efficacy and political mistrust which in turn induces political involvement” (77). Black consciousness appears to be the link between identity and political action for African Americans.

While the scholarship on the role of racial identity and group consciousness began to surge in the 1970s, the idea that Black racial identity is linked to Black political behavior is deeply rooted in history. The most well known example of how racial identity influences political behavior for American Americans is partisanship. For the past five decades, African Americans have supported the Democratic Party, but this was not always the case. Prior to the 1950s, African Americans were supporters of the Republican Party. This partisan switch was made because prior to the New Deal, the Republican Party—the Party of Lincoln—endorsed laws that were beneficial to African. When it became clear that the Republican Party was no longer a good fit for the group, African Americans choose to support the Democratic Party. A shift in national partisan politics resulted in a steady movement of
African Americans from a party that no longer advocated for them to a partisan organization that would (Haynie and Watts 2010).

Dawson (1994a) in his seminal text, *Behind the Mule*, argued that it is a combination of African Americans’ history and current status in the United States that helps us to better understand how African Americans’ racial identity is connected to political behavior. History shows that when African Americans are able to participate politically, they tend to support the political parties and candidates that best represent their racial group rather than their individual social or economic interests. Dawson argues that such is the case because African Americans have been treated as group members rather than as individuals, despite their class status or level of prestige. Further, since African Americans’ life chances are significantly influenced by their racial group membership, African Americans tend to behave politically as a group. Dawson (1994a) characterizes this feeling as a sense of linked-fate, a sense that the well being of the group will have very much to do with the well being of the individual.

While there is some dissent about the extent to which group consciousness is a helpful explanation of African American political behavior (Leighly and Vedilitz 1999; Wilcox and Gomez 1990), many political scientists value the use of group consciousness as an explanation for the overall homogeneity in political behavior among African Americans as well as for the participation rates among this group (Chong and Rogers 2005; Dawson 1994; Junn and Masuoka 2008; Tate 1994). The evidence showing that racial identity and consciousness are excellent predictors of African American political behavior is quite strong. Tate (1994) finds that racial identity serves as a unifying factor among African Africans, transcending variations in socioeconomic status, ideology and region. Chong and Rogers (2005) build on Tate's work and find that racial identity alone accounts for some of
the effect in African American political participation but an account for racial group consciousness bolsters the propensity to participate among African Americans. Chong and Rogers (2005) find that racial identification and consciousness, indeed, have positive effects on voting turnout as well as other campaign activities, including petitioning government officials and participating in boycotts and protests.

**Black Immigrants: Identity to Politics**

Mary Waters (2000) suggests that the successes of the Civil Rights Movement and Civil Rights legislation have allowed immigrants of color, including Black immigrants, to have a broader array of identity choices. That is, they may choose to identify racially as Black or even as African American, but they may also embrace their ethnic identities such as Caribbean, Nigerian, or Cuban, for instance. But Reuel Rogers (2001) reminds us that ethnicity, on the one hand, is generally a matter of cultural nostalgia while race, on the other hand, has real political, social and economic implications, especially for Black people. Black immigrants must negotiate their racial and ethnic identities while living in the United States, but very little is known how these identities influence their political behavior.

**Racial Identity versus Ethnic Identities**

One emerging consensus in the literature is that first generation Black immigrants’ ethnic or distinct cultural identity is often more salient and central than their racial identity (Nteta 2006; Portes 2004; Rogers 2006; Waters 1999). Most scholars have focused on Afro-Caribbeans’ tendency to make known their ethnic identity. A consistent finding in these
studies is Black immigrants often make an effort to differentiate themselves from African Americans. Scholars offer three general explanations for this finding. One explanation is that Black immigrants use their ethnic identity to distance oneself from Black Americans as a consequence of negative stereotypes held about African Americans. This tends to be especially true among first generation Black immigrants (Nteta 2006; Waters 1991, 1999). The second explanation is ethnic identity might be primed or strengthened as a psychological coping mechanism in response to racial discrimination Black immigrants experience in the US (Tormala and Deaux 2006; Vickerman 1999, 2001; Waters 1991, 1999). The third explanation is that making ethnic identity salient may be a political strategy to gain benefits that are restricted to one’s ethnic group rather than a larger racial or pan-ethnic group (Kasnitz 1992; Nteta 2006).

The research on the children of first generation Black immigrants provides more nuanced theories about the development of racial identity. Waters (1999), for example, in her seminal text on Black immigrants, proposes three identity trajectories or paths for second generation West Indians: identifying as African-American, identifying as ethnic or hyphenated Americans, or maintaining their parents’ ethnic identification. These “choices” are influenced by class and by gender, where poorer respondents and male respondents are likely to identify as African-American while well-to-do and female respondents are more likely to identify with their ethnicity (Waters 1999, 2001). Portes and his colleagues have also developed models suggesting that second generation immigrants have more and more complicated identity choices, but these choices are dictated by “direction” of assimilation paths (Portes 2004; Portes and Rumbaut 1996; Portes and Zhou, 1993). More specifically, these scholars maintain that second generation Black immigrants may take a “straight-line” path into the white middle-class majority, face “downward assimilation” into an
undifferentiated Black, inner-city “underclass” or may experience a combination of upward mobility and heightened ethnic awareness.

According to these theories, these paths have consequences for the identities of members of this group, where those who experience “downward” assimilate will identify racially—as African American or Black—while those who take “upward” assimilation paths will identify with an ethnic or pan-ethnic identity. Some scholars point out, however, that second generation Black immigrants are more likely to feel connected to and identify with members from their parents’ country of origin (or ethnic identity) as well as African-Americans (racial identity), showing that these identities are not mutually exclusive (Butterfield 2004a, 2004b; Hall and Carter 2006; Waters 1999).

Scholars specifically concerned with identity development among immigrants remind us that acculturation processes are “not a matter of one’s individual strategy where one has the free choice to unproblematically integrate the values of the host culture and one’s own immigrant group,” but instead immigrants to the United States are always negotiating their identities in the face of structural inequalities as a result of their nationality, race, gender and class (Bhatia and Ram 2001:13). That is to say, one must consider both structure as well as individual agency when analyzing how people develop identities. This dissertation adds to this body of literature by examining how Black immigrants’ racial and ethnic identities influence their political attitudes by addressing a series of questions. Among the questions that I address are: How do Black immigrants feel about issues of racial injustice and descriptive representation? To what extent do these feelings mirror that of African Americans? What are Black immigrants’ pressing political concerns, and are these concerns overlapping or mutually exclusive from those of native-born Blacks?
**Diasporic Consciousness**

While we have theories concerning how African American’s identity influences political behavior and attitudes as well as theories concerning the identity formation of Black immigrants, there have been relatively few scholars who done comparative studies that examine the ethnic diversity among Black people in the United States and how this diversity affects *intraracial* (i.e. Black immigrant-native born Black) political relations. This dissertation intervenes at the nexus of these literatures in effort to bridge the gap by offering a theory of *diasporic consciousness*, which suggests that native- and foreign-born Blacks are likely to coalesce around issues that affect the racial group because, despite ethnic differences, they recognize that their racial group membership is a major constraint on their life chances. This work considers how increasing ethnic diversity might complicate what we know about Black politics, and further it takes into consideration the notion that while Black immigrants do not have the same historical experience with racism in the US, African Americans and Black immigrants will tend to view each other as compatriots and work together because they face the same constraints and challenges in contemporary American society. Diasporic consciousness is a two-way street. On the one hand, (negative) racialized social interactions are likely to influence the way Black immigrants think about race and what their race means for their life chances, leading them to identify with African Americans, racially and politically. African Americans, who already tend to recognize the role that race plays on the lives of Black people, in general, have to grapple with whether the boundaries of Blackness and the boundaries of a Black political agenda should expand to include political issues that are of import to first and second generation Black immigrants.

Some assert that there are several factors that hinder both intraracial coalitions and a rise of *diasporic consciousness* among racially Black people in the United States. First, there
are African Americans—elites and members of the masses—who believe that they not only need to protect the gains made from the Civil Rights Movement but also to maintain narrow membership of those who can benefit from these gains (Cohen 1999; Sawyer 2005). As such, one might expect that African Americans will distance themselves from Black immigrants, or perhaps African Americans will attempt to gain Black immigrants support but marginalize their policy priorities.

Second, there are Black immigrants who aim to distance themselves from African Americans by communicating ethnic differentiation between the two groups. Studies have found that Afro-Caribbeans hold some of the worst stereotypes about African Americans (Foner 1998; Nteta 2006; Waters 1999). For example, both Foner’s (1998) and Waters’ (1999a) West Indian respondents tend to see themselves as more ambitious, hard working and greater achievers than their lazy, welfare-dependent Black American counterparts. Additionally, Afro-Latinos, often do not embrace their African heritage (Darity, Hamilton and Dietrich 2002; Sawyer 2006). African immigrants often feel superior to Black Americans (Taiwo 2003). There is plenty of potential for Black immigrants to avoid being identified as Black, thereby preventing the development of Black pan-ethnic coalitions.

Third, there is a larger racially stratified social system, maintained by racially coded language (among many other things) to valorize immigrant groups over Black Americans (Kim 2000, 2001), as well as use pathological and behavioral theories as primary explanations for African Americans’ position in the US’s social system (Pierre 2004; Bonilla-

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3 African Americans also espouse negative stereotypes about Black immigrants. Ira Reid (1939) lists several stereotypes about Black immigrants. Waters (1999) also notes that some African Americans harbor negative feelings towards Black immigrants as well.

4 Afro-Latinos may also serve as a bridge between Latinos, in general, and African Americans (Sawyer 2005; Lao-Montes 2007).
Silva 2006). This ideology is alluring to immigrants, and there is incentive to adopt this ideology in a country where Black people are at the bottom of societal hierarchies. Research has shown, immigrant groups have sometimes attempted to avoid Black identity in order to be more easily incorporated into mainstream society (Dariey, Hamilton and Dietrich 2002; Ignatiev 1995; Roediger 2005, 2007). Groups come into contact with one another within a specific (racial) context, and the present racial context may provide an incentive for Black immigrants to distance themselves from Black identity and American politics.

These challenges notwithstanding, I argue that there exist multiple openings for a diasporic consciousness and a new Black Politics, marked by a broader agenda that includes issues relevant to both African American and first and second Black immigrants. First, while there is a multiplicity of Black identities and Black experiences, there are also multiple points of overlapping experiences with race and racism in the US and abroad. Secondly, because on the one hand, racial identity is fluid and contextual on other the other, one’s racial identity has tangible (and psychological) consequences, Black immigrants’ racial identity will become more salient and pertinent to their political behavior as they acculturate into the U.S.’s racialized social system.

Moreover, while political scientists point to issues like immigration and bilingual education as “cross-cutting” issues that serve to highlight intraracial differences, these issues are often both racialized and serve to the detriment of native and immigrant group members (Johnson 2000). Consider, for example, how several immigration laws essentially legalize racial profiling, a problem that Black Americans have faced for quite some time. Similarly, there are a number of “consensus issues” (i.e. racial discrimination, education, and social welfare policies) that compose the traditional African American political agenda but also clearly affect Black immigrants. As such, I argue that perhaps these may serve as
the building blocks of a foundation for intraracial coalitions. What is more, I argue that African Americans are likely to embrace “cross-cutting” issues if they view these issues as racialized—that is, if the policy implications are framed as advantaging one racial group over another.

**Methodology**

To address the questions I raised above about the changing contours of Black identity and Black politics, I pursue a multi-method design, including survey analysis, semi-structured interviews and controlled experiments to test a theory of diasporic consciousness. The survey analysis uses data from the *National Survey of American Life*, 2001-2003 (NSAL). The NSAL was developed by the University of Michigan Research Center and supported by the National Institute for Mental Health. The survey was conducted between 2001 and 2003, and respondents include over 3,000 African Americans and 1,600 Black immigrants of Caribbean, Latin American and African descent. The survey is concerned with cross-cultural differences among African Americans, Afro-Caribbeans and White Americans across the United States.

I also incorporate semi-structured face-to-face interviews. Interviews are an excellent way to understand how people make meaning around issues that affect them. I interviewed a total of 30 college-age African Americans and first and second generation Black immigrants. The Black immigrants include students from the Caribbean, Latin America and Africa. Twenty of the students attend a private university in the South while 10 of them were from various schools in other regions of the country.
I chose college students for two reasons. First, this generation may be the most likely to come into contact with various types of Black people; they have quite a few experiences with communities that are ethnically homogenous as well as ones that are ethnically diverse. Second, there is quite a bit of talk on college campuses about the ethnic diversity of Black people in the United States (Rimer and Arenson 2004), so it is likely they have thought seriously about what it means to be Black, who they feel constitute members of “the Black community,” and what the implications are for aggregating African Americans and Black immigrants into one racial group.

Finally, I use controlled experiments to test how framing policy issues concerned with immigrants and immigration in various ways influences African Americans’ attitudes. I seek to gain an understanding of how Blacks choose what issues are important to them as well as how issues get included onto or relegated to the bottom of “the” Black political agenda.

**Chapter Outline**

In chapter 2, I more thoroughly examine the concept of diasporic consciousness, which is the central theoretical framework I use throughout this dissertation. Although Black immigrants do not share the same racial history as African Americans, the context of the contemporary U.S. racial hierarchy may still serve to shape their identities and political attitudes as well as inspire similar ideas and feelings among Black immigrants and African Americans about what needs to be done to ameliorate racial disparities.

Each subsequent chapter of this study aims to examine each of the steps from identity to politics so that we can gain a better understanding of the ways in which the
influx of Black immigrants and the increasing ethnic diversity among Blacks in the U.S. influences the boundaries of Black identity and, in turn, Black politics. In Chapter 3, I begin with group membership. Here, I use data from 30 semi-structured interviews. These respondents help us to better understand how Black Americans and Black immigrants define who is Black as well as the extent to which Blacks embrace or reject an identity that is inclusive of ethnic diversity. I take this first step because while group membership is not sufficient to develop a psychological attachment to the group, group identity is a possible consequence of group membership. The respondents’ answers illuminate how group membership is translated into group identity.

Chapter 4 takes us to the next step in the identity-to-politics link: racial identity. I expound on the findings of the previous chapter by exploring the determinants of racial identity with the use of data from National Survey of American Life, 2001-2003. Here, I explore the extent to which Black immigrants are likely to identify with African Americans, and I examine what factors lead or dissuade Black immigrants to feel a sense of closeness with African Americans. Extant literature suggests that Black immigrants, especially first generation, tend not to feel a sense of closeness with African Americans and they tend to ignore the role of racial discrimination (Nteta 2006; Vickerman 2001a, 2001b). I test the extent to which racial discrimination and generational status influences Black immigrants’ racial identity in this chapter.

Chapter 5 moves us to group consciousness. Racial group consciousness is a critical step in the identity-to-politics link for African Americans, but it is unknown whether a sense of group consciousness influences the political attitudes and behavior of Black immigrants nonetheless what the determinants of group consciousness among Black immigrants are. This chapter provides three analyses of racial group consciousness. The first examines the
determinants of racial group consciousness among native- and foreign-born Blacks; the second analysis explores the role of group consciousness on political attitudes among Blacks; and the third analysis investigates whether group consciousness bolsters political participation among African Americans and Black immigrants.

Chapters 3 through 5 do quite a bit of illumination on the extent to which Black immigrants embrace an identity that is inclusive of African Americans and share policy stances that mirror African Americans. In Chapter 6, I test the extent to African Americans are likely to embrace policy issues that are of import to Black immigrants through a controlled experiment. Here, we gain a sense of whether diasporic consciousness is a concept that is relevant to native-born Blacks. Finally, in the concluding chapter 7, I will summarize my findings, draw some conclusions, and identify areas for further research.
Chapter 2. Diasporic Consciousness: Theorizing Black Intraracial Politics

African American and Black immigrant relations have generally been characterized as antagonistic with elements of hostility, distancing, and competition. While I agree that the extant literature provides an abundant amount of evidence suggesting that Black immigrants tend to distance themselves from African Americans, history shows that there are also times when African Americans and Black immigrants embrace an identity that is mutually inclusive, and there are instances when African Americans and first and second generation Black immigrants mobilize that identity toward common political goals. I argue for the need to broaden this discussion of intraracial relations that is centered on racial distancing by including a more nuanced analysis of the circumstances under which African Americans and Black immigrants might see themselves as cohorts in America’s racial hierarchy and politicize their shared identity. I propose a theory diasporic consciousness as an important addition to the scholarship on Black intraracial relations.

My central thesis is that while African Americans and Black immigrants may at times see differences marked by ethnic boundaries, they will generally see each other as members of the same group and as compatriots in a struggle against racial injustice and inequality. Likewise, as a result of contemporary racism and racial inequality, Black first and second generation immigrants are likely to believe that their potential status as first class citizens is imperiled just as a many African Americans do, and consequently, their racial identities are likely to be mobilized just as African Americans’ racial identity is politically mobilized. A theory of diasporic consciousness accounts for the fact that while Black immigrants and African Americans have not shared the exact same legacy of racial
torment, on-going racism and racial discrimination will be major factors in shaping their racial identities, enhancing racial group consciousness, and influencing both groups’ political attitudes. In brief, diasporic consciousness argues that while groups continue to maintain some degree of ethnic distinctiveness within a racialized context, sharing the same racialized identity within the U.S.’s social system will lead Black immigrants and African Americans to recognize shared political goals of equal opportunity, first-class citizenship, and ultimately living in an America where their racial identity and life chances are not inextricably linked.

While scholars have proposed many explanations as to why racial distancing occurs between African Americans and Black immigrants, they have made few efforts to understand why simultaneously there exists a shared sense of racial identity which often leads to intraracial political coalitions. In order to gain a better understanding of the circumstances under which a diasporic consciousness might be raised among native- and foreign-born Blacks, I identify the strengths and shortcomings of three bodies of literature which serve as building blocks to a theory of diasporic consciousness: racialization of immigrants; pan-ethnic identity; and inter-minority coalition and conflict. I then propose a theory to explain under why and under what contexts a sense of diasporic consciousness would develop among African Americans and Black immigrants.

**Racializing Immigrants**

Immigrants to the United States come with their own ideas about their identity, but often very quickly recognize the notion that their racial identity within the U.S. context may be a benefit or a hindrance to their success. Omi and Winant’s (1994) theory of racial
formation via racial projects explains that racial categories as well as the way we racialize individuals and groups is an on-going sociohistoric process, meaning that both macro-level, social structural processes as well as everyday, micro-level processes influence the development and maintenance of racialized social systems.

The notions that racial boundaries expand and contract, sometimes become more inclusive while at other times are more exclusive, and are influenced from the top-down as well as the bottom-up contribute to my theory of diasporic consciousness. Both African Americans and Black immigrants at times are differentiated—or differentiate themselves—from each other while at other times they are grouped together—or through their own agency, embrace an identity that is inclusive of ethnic diversity. We see several instances of each on a day-to-day basis. As examples, the Census may categorize native- and foreign-born Blacks within the same racial label or police officers may see all low-income, Black men as potential criminals despite their ethnic backgrounds; consider the case of Amadou Diallo. Similarly, employers may seek Black immigrants they stereotype as model minorities rather than African Americans, and Black immigrants may embrace this stereotype and, in turn, distance themselves from African Americans in efforts to gain some economic benefit. And at the same time, Black immigrants may bond with Black Americans in a struggle against on-going, anti-Black discrimination in their city. Racialization processes happen on several levels of analysis.

Looking historically at the ways in which white and non-white immigrants to the United States have been racialized will serve to help us to better understand and predict the mechanisms that may lead first and second generation Black immigrants and African Americans to, on the one hand, be categorized similarly by mainstream society and, on the other hand, how they decide to embrace or reject an overarching or pan-ethnic identity.
To Be(come) or Not to Be(come) White

Whiteness and ethnic studies scholars through the exposition of how European immigrants over several generations assimilated into a white American mainstream, illuminate the fact that immigrants to this country arrive with an ethnic or country-based identity but over time, society—via formal and informal institutions—incorporates them into America’s racial hierarchy (Alba 1990; Ignatiev 1995; Oris 1992; Pugliese 2002; Roedigger 2005, 2007). For example, upon arrival to the United States, many European immigrants, including the Irish, Italians, Poles as well as Jews, were not identified as white; some of these immigrants, in fact, were identified as, grouped with, and treated the same as African Americans (Berthoff 1955; Parker 1948; Ignatiev 1995; Oris 1992; Pugliese 2002; Roedigger 2005, 2007). In many ways, they were racialized as Black. Southern Italian immigrants, for example, were identified as “swarthy” and “kinky-haired.” Southern legislators predicted that these Italian immigrants were an “unassimilable race” and fought to keep Italian children out of white schools and were hanged for crimes not committed (Berthoff 1951; Orsi 1992; Pugliese 2002). Similarly, Irish immigrants were subject to racial epithets such as “white negroes” and “smoked Irish” (Ignatiev 1995).

These immigrants were situated outside the privileged domain of whiteness (Pugliese 2002), but they were, over time, able to work their way into whiteness. In addition to developing political prowess and adopting “American ways,” one of the major ways that European immigrants assimilated into a white mainstream was by distancing themselves from African Americans (Hattam 2007; Ignatiev 1995; Orsi 1992; Roedigger 2005, 2007). While these immigrants were not originally considered as white, the doors of whiteness were opened to them relatively quickly. For example, white immigrants including Polish, Slovak and Czech immigrants were able to settle in the South, and within forty years,
native whites were “fully reconciled to their presence” (Berthoff 1951). Steinberg (2001) suggests while white immigrants’ entry point into the United States was at the bottom of American hierarchies, this still was not the same bottom that African Americans were on. White immigrants were in some ways told “You will become like us whether you want to or not,” while the implied message to African Americans was ”No matter how much like us you are, you will remain apart” (Steinberg 2001:42). The histories of how European immigrants became white is telling of how racial boundaries can be permeable, selectively inclusive or exclusive, and are constantly evolving as a result of top-down institutional changes such as immigration policies as well as through the agency of individuals and excluded groups.

It is also well known that not all immigrants are welcomed into whiteness (Blaumer 1972; Steinberg 2001). The Mississippi Chinese provide an excellent example of how one Asian group was both racialized as an “in-between” racial group. The Mississippi Chinese like their white ethnic predecessors found themselves grouped with African Americans. Through distancing themselves from African Americans as well as making concerted efforts to be accepted into white American society, this group was able to remove themselves from an all-encompassing Black identity but at the same time they were not accepted into the white mainstream (Loewen 1971). Claire Jean Kim’s (2000, 2001) theory of racial triangulation provides an helpful explanation of how Asian immigrants, in particular, are racialized as both valorized in comparison to African Americans and not yet privileged into a white identity because they civically ostracized. That is to say, dominant white society views them as unassimilable, perpetual foreigners.

Some might argue that some Latinos have gained their way into whiteness, citing for example, the brief period of time when Mexicans were categorized as white in the U.S. census or the fact that many “white” Cubans have assimilated into a white identity. While it
has been shown that Hispanic whites as well as other white ethnic immigrants do tend to be able to integrate themselves into dominate white society (Denton and Massey 1989; Kim and White 2010), Bailey (2001) suggests that mere designation of “Latino” or “Hispanic” in addition to “white” reflects and reproduces exclusion from white racial categorization and identity. Whether the boundaries of whiteness are still flexible and permeable remains an unanswered empirical question (Bonilla-Silva 2006), but the doors of whiteness seem to be closed for immigrants of color.

It is generally taken as a given that immigrants of African descent will be racialized as “Black” because racialization processes are taken for granted (Omi and Winant 1994). Unlike whites, and to some extent Asians and Latinos, people with darker phenotypes and certain facial features, are generally categorized as Black because “the power of race as a socially defining status in the U.S. makes...internal differences rather unimportant in interracial setting in comparison to the fundamental black/white color boundary” (Nagel 1994). But it should be duly noted that Black immigrants do have ethnic identities and must also navigate a racialized social system. They, like other immigrants historically have done, may either attempt to distance themselves from, or they may embrace a Black racial identity.

Forging Pan-Ethnic Identities among Racial Minorities

Identities, including pan-ethnicities, are in some ways a result of both structure and individual agency. Further, the boundaries of identities are negotiated among current group insiders as well between insiders and outsiders. This study takes seriously the idea that Blackness as a category has the potential to be stretched and conceived of as a pan-ethnic
identity. The scholarship on the development of pan-ethnic identities among and the racialization of Asian Americans and Latinos serve as a building block for this dissertation for several reasons. First, the pan-ethnic identity literature acknowledges that we must be careful in moving directly from using pan-ethnic labels descriptively to assuming that group members share experiences, attitudes and beliefs (Jones-Correa and Leal 1996). Second, the notion of pan-ethnicity is useful to this study because it communicates the notion that pan-ethnic groups are "characterized by the simultaneous coexistence of externally perceived homogeneity and internally lived heterogeneity" (Lee 2005:6). That is, the concept of pan-ethnicity includes both the notion that groups are lumped together and racialized by outsiders, but at the same time, in-group members are aware of and negotiate internal, ethnic boundaries. Third, pan-ethnicity, as a process, focuses on the ways in which ethnic and racial identities change (Lopez and Espiritu 1990; Nagel 1994). The concept of pan-ethnicity is also important because it suggests that identity is not merely a matter of descent but it may also be a political identity that may be chosen or rejected by individuals. Pan-ethnic identities are layered—they are one of many possible identities held simultaneously with others; they are fluid and contextual. Diasporic consciousness is built on these ideas, asserting that racial identity is a fluid process, and further that racial group members recognize ethnic differences but also share a common sense of identity, which in turn can be mobilized toward political action.

As mentioned, European immigrants are now understood to have linearly adapted and have been adopted into whiteness, but the identity paths for immigrants of color have been quite different. Where accounts of identity shifts for European immigrants suggest that these immigrants shed ethnic markers of language and traditions as they climbed economic and political ladders and intermarried across ethnic lines, the extent to which
today's immigrants of color will be “collectively channeled into enduring racially marked subordinate statuses” remains an open question (Portes and Rumbaut 2001: 150).

Some of the extant research on pan-ethnic boundary formation processes has focused on the social and historical processes that led to the creation of pan-ethnic boundaries; this literature has highlighted the role of formal institutions. One major example of this is the role of state-developed racial categories, and this is best illustrated by the U.S. Census Bureau’s role in reifying group labels and group boundaries (Kim and White 2010; Nobles 2000; Williams 2006). Kim and White (2010) emphasize that formal institutions’ racial categorizations contribute to essentializing groups and promotes the perception of natural demarcations, which in turn, become legitimized within institutions and among individuals. More specifically, some suggest that there is a feedback loop between the government’s construction and defining of groups and the way that individuals might respond; that is, they suggest that political policies and mainstream institutions, including the media, influence group boundaries by “increasing the symbolic and material value of racial and ethnic identities” (Okamoto 2006:2, also Nagel 1994).

Some scholars argue that the nature of pan-ethnic identities is best described as instrumental, suggesting that these identities only rise when an incentive or threat is presented. Indeed, pan-ethnic sub-groups might have an incentive to forge coalitions and mobilize politically and a pan-ethnic identity may become salient if they are designated as a “single administrative unit,” if resources are allocated to those designated groups or when sub-groups members’ rights are externally threatened (i.e. by a change in state policies). Padilla (1985), for example, finds that in 1980s Chicago, Mexicans and Puerto Ricans organized in a struggle against language discrimination. Latinos’ of various ethnic groups sense of group identity also increased in the face of Proposition 187 (Portes and Rumbaut
Nagel (1995) shows that Federal Indian policies that threatened Native Americans created an atmosphere that increased pan-ethnic consciousness, mobilization and pride among Native Americans. Espirtu (1992) shows that when a Chinese man was beaten to death with a baseball bat because two white men believed that he was Japanese, Asian Americans’ sense of pan-ethnic identity was raised, as they recognized that the internal sub-group boundaries were unrecognized by a larger American society. We also see this sense of group threat as a means of raising a sense of pan-ethnic identity in the case of the Red Apple Boycott in New York City. When a Korean storeowner mistreated a Haitian customer, Haitians, West Indians and African Americans recognized that the customer was mistreated because of her race rather than her ethnicity. In turn, Black immigrants and African Americans mutually recognized their shared racial identity and mobilized politically (Kim 2000).

Structural conditions also serve as mechanisms that influence the development of pan-ethnic identities. Okamoto (2003) emphasizes the role of market segregation; she finds that when sub-ethnic groups are concentrated together in the same, low-paying occupations, often due to discrimination, they are likely to develop a pan-ethnic identity that can be politically mobilized. This mechanism has potential to develop a sense of shared identity among Blacks because first and second generation Black immigrants, especially men, tend to be concentrated in the public and not-for-profit sectors and are similarly funneled into the same low-paying, second-tier jobs as African Americans (Kasinitz and Vickerman 2001).

Residential segregation is yet another structural conditions that serves to raise a sense of shared identity among sub-ethnic groups. Ricourt and Danta (2003) find that in Queens the constant interaction among various members of various Latin American
national groups has lead to the development of an overarching identity. DeSipio (1996) also suggests that increased contact among sub-groups facilitates pan-ethnic identities. Lopez and Espirtu (1990) in their efforts to weigh the relative effect of cultural similarities versus structural conditions find that structural processes of racialization have a greater influence in developing a sense of pan-ethnic identities; more specifically, they find that geographic overlap and residential concentration are likely to encourage pan-ethnic identities. Research residential patterns of Black immigrants show that despite attaining higher average socioeconomic statuses than African Americans, Black immigrants have difficulty avoiding discrimination and segregation in the housing market; they are generally denied access to predominately white residential areas and are instead confined to areas of large Black concentrations (Crowder 1999; Kim and White 2010; Massey and Denton 1989, 1993).

In addition to understanding the ways in which out-group members and external forces, such as state or federal governments, influence the development of pan-ethnicity, it is also important to understand how in-group members play a role in developing, maintaining, or restructuring an overarching identity as well. Okamoto (2006) suggests that “mobilizing structures” also play a role in pan-ethnic identity development as well. These structures, which are often lead by group members themselves, aim to mobilize a constituency toward a political goal and make people aware that political and economic desires are shared cross-ethnically. Ricourt and Danta (2003) make a similar argument suggesting that when leaders espouse a pan-ethnic identity or when organizations, such as churches and neighborhood centers, attempt to attract and serve members of various national groups, pan-ethnic identities are likely to be forged among audience members.
Participation in these pan-ethnically aimed mobilizing structures also serves to bolster a psychological attachment to a pan-ethnic identity (Espiritu 1992; Okamoto 2006).

The power of structural conditions, such as spatial and market segregation, the U.S. Census, and everyday exposure to racism and discrimination do not always lead to sub-ethnic groups uniting under their imposed racial label, however (Lien, Conway and Wong 2003; McClain et al. 2009; McClain and Stewart 2010; Okamoto 2003, 2006). Lien, Conway, and Wong (2003) point out several potential hindrances in the development of pan-ethnic identification and cooperation among racial group members: “divide and conquer” by white labor management; “ethnic disidentification” by some group members to avoid “being misidentified as belonging to other politically or social ostracized” sub-group members; political and military conflicts between sub-group members’ homelands; and “further diversification of the polyethnic population along class, ethnic origin, race, ideology, religion, and other lines of cleavage” due to on-going immigration (463). All of these potential hindrances can be found when analyzing the relationships between African Americans and Black immigrants. Scholars find that employers in New York prefer to employ Black immigrants rather than African Americans (Mason 2010; Waters 1999b). Many find that Black immigrants see themselves as superior to African Americans and often distance themselves from native-born Blacks (Foner 1998; Nteta 2006; Taiwo 2003; Waters 1999a). On-going conflicts in Africa, for example, might influence the ways in which Blacks from that continent feel the desire to unite under a pan-ethnic identity. There exists potential as well as hindrances in the development of an overarching racial or pan-ethnic identity among Black immigrants and African Americans in the United States.
Inter- and Intraracial Minority Politics

The US Census Bureau projects that by 2042 minority group members will make up a majority of the total U.S. population. These changing demographics make it necessary for social scientists to think more carefully about the ways in which minority groups will behave toward one another. One might expect racial minorities to form political coalitions because they have suffered from social, political and economic inequalities by the same racialized social system—though in different ways. Looking retrospectively, however, we see that while there have at times been temporary coalitions, competition among minority groups across the country has also been quite common.

The notion that minorities would, could or should work together is based in the idea that they have shared interests. That is to say, they share many of the same problems, setbacks and goals, but there are other factors that should be accounted for when predicting under what circumstances interminority coalitions might or might not form. Carmicheal and Hamilton (1967) argued that four conditions must be met for a successful coalition: (1) Parties have to recognize their own self-interests; (2) Each party must feel that they will benefit from working with the other groups; (3) Each party must have its own base of power and must have control over its own decision-making processes; and (4) Each party must be cognizant that a coalition is formed with a specific goal in mind. It seems that minorities have enough common ground that would incentivize inter- and intra-minority group coalitions, but often there are differences between racial groups and within pan-ethnic groups such that they do not share similar interests. In fact, at times these interests are competing—or at least members perceive their interests as competing. Bilingual education,

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1 See for example, Junn and Haynie (2008) and McClain and Stewart (2010).
housing, jobs, and other social resources are often viewed as zero-sum issues between minority groups (McClain and Stewart 2010; Vaca 2004).

Nevertheless, there have been times when multiracial coalitions have been fruitful. On the local level, the elections of New York’s first African American mayor David Dinkins as well as Los Angeles mayors Tom Bradley and Antonio Villaraigosa all depended on multiracial coalitions (Kim 2000; McClain and Stewart 2010; Sonenshein 1993). On a national level, the election of President Barack Obama was made possible due to the high turnout of Black voters (Haynie and Watts 2010) as well as Latinos, Asians and white youth (Lopez 2008; Lopez and Taylor 2009) voters.

But we must also go beyond calculated interests and ideology to understand why minority groups may at times mutually recognize each other as allies while at other times they may attempt to distance themselves from one another. By thinking critically about and accounting for the system in which minority groups encounter one another, scholars of systemic or structural racism theories help us consider the circumstances under which minority groups interact from a broader viewpoint (Bonilla-Silva 1997; Feagin 2000, Kim 2000). Theories of structural racism suggest that racism and racial power “operates not only by reproducing racial categories and meanings per se but by reproducing them in the form of a distinct racial order” (Kim 2000: 10). No one individual is responsible for such a phenomenon, but individuals do play a part. Minority groups encounter one another within a larger structure marked by white racial dominance and racial power, and they must negotiate this structure, which may lead them to perpetuate and maintain the hierarchy of a racialized social system.

An excellent example of this negotiation is best illustrated by the tension that exists between some Black immigrants and African Americans. More specifically, much of the
animosity that exists between the groups’ members has a lot to do with the adaptation and perpetuation of negative stereotypes by Black immigrants about African Americans. Mary Waters’ (1999a) Afro-Caribbean respondents, for example, tended to espouse some of the most denigrating stereotypes about African Americans. Other scholars show that Black immigrants tend to believe African Americans are lazy, are likely to be discourteous, use drugs, be criminals, and many Black immigrants blame African Americans for the groups’ lack of success relative to other racial groups (Foner 1998; Nteta 2006; Waters 1991, 1999). Because of these existing racial stereotypes, Black immigrants have an incentive to distance themselves from African Americans as well as rely on “white racial frames” (Feagin and Cobas 2008) to explain African Americans’ position in society’s racial hierarchy. McClain et al. (2006) also find that Latinos hold negative stereotypes about African Americans, thereby threatening coalitions that have worked in the past. Similarly, the stereotype of Asians as the model minority tends to lead other minority groups to feel that Asians are not likely to be discriminated against, and therefore do not recognize that, indeed, minority groups are pitted against one another to maintain white hegemony (Kim 2001). All of these examples show how minority groups interact within a specific racial context and at times (unintentionally) perpetuate white racial power in their effort to improve or maintain their status within the larger racial hierarchy.

Group interests, political elites, decision-making strategies, and the perception of a zero-sum game all come into play when predicting or explaining interminority relations, but these groups do not come into contact in a vacuum. The context in which they interact must be accounted for when considering the possibilities and pitfalls of political interactions among minority groups. This is especially important when considering the ways in which Black immigrants and African Americans interact because, while they have different
historical experiences with racism in the U.S., they have to negotiate the same racial structure from the same rung in America’s racial hierarchy.

**Black Meets Black: Intraracial Interactions between Native and Foreign-born Blacks**

The presence of Black immigrants in the United States is by no means new, so we may be able to gain a sense of the circumstances under which a pan-ethnic identity and diasporic consciousness can be developed and mobilized by analyzing historical Black intraracial interactions. In 1850 there were 4,067 foreign-born blacks in the U.S.; two decades later in 1870, this number reached 9,494, of which 28 percent were from Canada, 21 percent from Africa, 16 percent were from the West Indies and other Atlantic islands, and the remainder were from Portugal, Spain and Mexico. In 1939, Ira de Augustine Reid took note of the fact that “between 1899 and 1937 approximately 150,000 Negro aliens were legally admitted to the United States,” and in turn asked, “How does a group theoretically regarded as biologically unassimilable in the United States’ melting pot accommodate?” (Reid 1939: 24). In some ways, the question still remains. Historically, Black immigrants melted into a larger Black racial category (Greenbaum 2002; Hellwig 1978; Kasinitz 19992), but some argue that the significance of race is declining thereby allowing immigrants of color to forge new, non-traditional identities (Kasinitz 1992; Waters 2000). The fact of constant change in America’s racial politics in some ways makes Reid’s question still pertinent. The continuing relevance and significance of this question notwithstanding, political scientists have for the most part ignored Black immigrants in terms of the distinctive influence they might have on forging Black identity and Black politics.
Black immigrants have historically played a role in Black politics, but societal conditions under which pre-1965 immigrants were incorporated constrained the latitude that Black immigrants had in making public claim to an ethnic identity (Greenbaum 2002; Kasinitz 1992). Because Black immigrants were subsumed into a ubiquitous Black category, Roy Simon Bryce-Laporte (1972, 1993) described Black immigrants as a doubly invisible in both the study of Black politics as well as in the practice of Black politics:

One the one hand, as blacks, their demands and protests as a constituent group have been responded to with the same disregard shown by the larger society and its leaders toward efforts of native American blacks to reshape the society to meet their particular needs and cultural orientation. On the other hand, while black foreigners (and their progenies) have held a disproportionately high number of leadership and successful positions and have exercised significant influence in black life in this country, their cultural impact as foreigners has generally been ignored or has merely been given lip service in the larger spheres of American life. On the national level, they suffer double invisibility, in fact—as blacks and as black foreigners (Bryce-Laporte 1972:31, emphasis in original text).

Bryce-Laporte’s observations are still valid today. Colin Powell, Eric Holder and Barack Obama, as examples, are all prominent Black politicians who are of foreign-born Black stock. They are generally known for being the first “Black” person to be in their positions, but it is likely that relatively few people know that they are second generation Black immigrants. Even Obama, of Kenyan heritage, identifies as a “Black” man because he recognizes that he is not treated any differently than other Blacks because of his Kenyan ethnic (or white) ancestry. In general, little is known about the political attitudes or behaviors of Black immigrants because they have generally been subsumed within the larger Black category.
The fact that social scientists have overlooked ethnicity among Black people in the United States, of course, has much to do with the history of race in the United States. The “one drop” rule—or the notion that any trace of Black or African blood makes one Black—did not only apply to native born Blacks. African Americans as well as Black immigrants were seen as the same for the most part. Early Black immigrants were well aware of America’s racial system and formed political coalitions with African Americans in order to fight for equal rights and first class citizenship (Candelario 2007; Greenbaum 2002; Hellwig 1978; Kasinitz 1992). For example, in D.C. during the 1960s and 1970s Dominican immigrants found it beneficial to work with and identify with African Americans because African Americans were politically and economically empowered. Black people experienced social mobility in D.C. due to the political activities of African Americans, and the potential of economic and social success served as an incentive for Black immigrants to assimilate into a Black racial identity (Candelario 2007). Of course, such assimilation, coalitions, and intraracial harmony did not and do not exist equally across time and space. Candelario (2007) points out that during the same two decades in New York, where African Americans were not as empowered, in contrast to those in D.C., Black immigrants tended to distance themselves from African Americans. This disempowerment sought to “[reinforce] the prevailing Dominican association of blackness with low socioeconomic standing” (Candelario 2007:164).

Additionally, Susan Greenbaum (2002) in her detailed history of African-American and Afro-Cuban relations in Tampa, Florida show that native and foreign-born Black

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2 There are some exceptions to this. For example, in the 1960s President John F. Kennedy sent letters to states were diplomats frequently traveled, asking them to ensure that local businesses, government officials and residents made an effort to distinguish between U.S.-born African Americans and foreign blacks, who may have indeed been foreign dignitaries or officials (Candelario 2007:159).
relations have been heavily influenced international and domestic politics. Greenbaum (2002) shows that prior to the defeat of the Spanish in Cuba, Afro-Cubans distanced themselves from African Americans because they had access to networks with white Cubans that provided opportunities that were restricted to Cubans, in general. When Cubans first came to Tampa in the late nineteenth century, “they were locked together in a revolutionary nation-building project” that emphasized racial solidarity among Cubans. Greenbaum then explains that as time passed, and particularly after the defeat of the Spanish in Cuba (1898)—which also happened to be two years after the Plessy v. Ferguson case “officially launched Jim Crow”—white Cubans had incentives to disaffiliate from their Black counterparts. She further shows how African American and Afro-Cuban relations improved over time, especially as Afro-Cubans began to embrace a racial consciousness and recognition that while their ethnic identity provided benefits at times, they were still placed on a hierarchy that was largely based on the color of their skin. When the boundaries between Black and white Cubans crystallized, the ethnic wedge between Blacks dissipated, and by the 1940s young Afro-Cubans and African Americans began to work together on local issues of voting rights and desegregation.

We continue to see ebbs and flows in the political relationship between African Americans and Black immigrants. Claire Jean Kim’s Bitter Fruit (2000) is primarily about a drawn-out conflict between Blacks and Korean merchants in New York, but the Red Apple Boycott began when a Haitian woman, Ghiselaine Felissaint, was allegedly beaten by a Korean store owner in a Caribbean and Haitian neighborhood. Kim documents the 16-month coalition of Haitians, Caribbean and African American activists who recognized that Felissaints’ treatment derived from the anti-Black affect that Korean merchants directed at Black people in general—not just Haitians. African Americans, Haitians and Caribbeans
were aware that they all had been similarly racialized as Black despite their ethnic, cultural, and linguistic differences and acted together to demand better treatment.

Reuel Rogers (2004, 2006) provides evidence for the other extreme. He suggests that race will not be a site for coalition building among non-white minority groups. In his study on Afro-Caribbean political elites in New York, he finds that relations between African-American and Afro-Caribbean leaders tend to weaken when confronted with issues of descriptive representation. That is, Afro-Caribbeans are interested in being represented by one of their ethnic cohort just as African Americans have also sought to be represented by someone who shares common experiences with them. Furthermore, Rogers (2006) suggests that while many Afro-Caribbeans feel connected to African Americans and have a sense of linked-fate, we should not expect their racial identity to be mobilized in the same way that African Americans have, especially around issues of racial inequality.

Kasinitz (1992) describes a sinuous relationship between Black Americans and Black immigrants in New York, placing ethnic entrepreneurs at the center of gravity. He suggests that in the 1920s and 1930s race determined place of residence, jobs, school placement and day-to-day treatment, thereby lumping West Indians and African Americans together. Kasinitz claims, however, “the role of race in American culture since the ate 1960s have made West Indian political distinctiveness possible, “ such that “race is not the monolithic force it was when the first cohort of West Indian migrants came to political consciousness” (1992:9). Kasinitz (1992) and Foner (1998) suggest that due to a loosening of the role of race, both Caribbean and white politicians began to court West Indians as West Indians rather than as members of a larger Black community and further created “ethnic constituencies,” all of which served to make salient ethnic identities rather than
racial identities. A shift occurred back toward racial identities, however, in the later 1980s as New York City’s racial climate worsened.

In summary, the literature reflects multiple possibilities for Black intraracial relations. Greenbaum (2002), Kim (2000), and Candelario (2007) show that there is quite a bit of overlap in the ways in which Black immigrants and African Americans experience race in the U.S., but others also show that there is room for potential political conflict (Kasinitz 1992; Rogers 2006). From these works, we see that coalition and cohesion tends to happen when there is an incentive for African Americans and Black immigrants to work together. Pan-ethnic identities appear to become more salient when Black immigrants gain a sense of racial consciousness and recognize that they are disenfranchised and discriminated against primarily because of their race. On the other hand, distancing and “disindentification” tends to occur when ethnic entrepreneurs present incentives based on ethnic identification rather than an overarching racial or pan-ethnic identity (Kasinitz 1992), when Black immigrants feel that there is not a need to mobilize against racial disparities (Rogers 2006), or when African Americans feel that their political gains through the Civil Rights era are threatened by expanding the boundaries of Blackness (Fears 2007; Sawyer 2005; Swarns 2004). The works on native and foreign-born Black relations, however, are generally descriptive rather than theoretical, lacking a general explanation of why at times race is a unifier and while at other times ethnicity is a divider among Blacks in the United States. A theory of diasporic consciousness aims to fill this gap.
Diasporic Consciousness: The Crucible of Black Intraracial and Pan-ethnic Politics

As previously mentioned, current literature on Black intraracial relations emphasizes that Black immigrants tend to distance themselves from African Americans and Black politics (Foner 1998; Kasnitz 1992; Nteta 2006; Waters 1999a, 1999b). But this is a very static look at an ever-changing political landscape. A growing literature suggests that Black immigrants are likely to recognize the power of American racism after living in the U.S. for an extended period of time, and consequently are more likely to feel more closely to African Americans and to feel that they share similar political and social struggles (Bashi Bobb and Clarke, 2001; Vickerman 1999, 2001a). That is to say, Black immigrants’ sense of their own racial identity has the potential to change over time, and these changes may influence their political attitudes. Furthermore, second generation Black immigrants, due to socialization in the U.S., are well aware of how one’s race and opportunity structure are inextricably linked; this awareness pushes second generation immigrants to identify with African Americans (Butterfield 2004a, 2004b; Hall and Carter 2006). Black Americans, on the other hand, in the face of increasing ethnic diversity, are also challenged to reconsider the boundaries of Black identity, since blackness as a category seems pointed to become stretched—“inclusively bearing within it the histories and experiences of Blacks throughout the greater diaspora” (Vaughn and Vinson 2007:240). Racial distancing is not the only possible relationship that exists between native- and foreign-born Blacks, especially as Black people of various ethnicities recognize that their fates are intertwined.

Diasporic consciousness is in part based on the idea that racial identity is a process rather than a static product. Everyday and major racialized experiences will have an influence not only on the way people see themselves but also in the way they see others.
First generation Black immigrants tend to become more sympathetic with the racial anxieties of African Americans, and in turn, their own identities are re-shaped. Second generation immigrants do not share the same racial history with Blacks whose ancestry in America extend for several generations, but America’s current racial environment tends to make salient their racial identities. And finally, African Americans recognize both the fact that there exists ethnic diversity among Black people in the United States as well as the notion that shared experiences, particularly with racism and discrimination, constitute a major determinant of how to understand the racial identities of themselves and others.

**From Ascribed Group Membership to Adopting Group Identity**

For great proportion of American history, the notion of hypodescent or the “one-drop” rule provided a framework for determining who was Black (Davis 1991). As such, Black identity was ubiquitous, capturing Black immigrants and native-born Black Americans and categorizing them similarly even though there were significant cultural differences. Black immigrants, especially prior to 1965, tended to blend in with African Americans, recognizing that their ethnic identity was generally a matter of private relationships and cultural nostalgia while their racial identities had political and material consequences (Greenbaum 2002; Kasinitz 1992). In consideration of the gains brought by the Civil Rights movement and also due to a large influx of immigrants of color, some argue that the space for making claim to less traditional and ethnic identities is larger (Kasinitz 1992; Waters 2001). I would argue, however, that while the “one-drop” rule is no longer legally codified, it remains a salient heuristic strategy among Americans to determine who
is Black. Black immigrants and African Americans are from the outside looking in are viewed as virtually the same.

The literature on Black immigrants tend to suggests that Black immigrants tend to ignore the role of race in their lives or if they do recognize it, they refer to an “exit option,” as a coping mechanism; that is, under the threat of being discriminated due to their race, they imagine that they would and could simply go back to their country of origin (Bobb 2001; Rogers 2006; Vickerman 1999). But in some ways, this “exit option” is an illusion, as many Black immigrants do not return to their homelands. Others show that while it may take time for some Black immigrants living in the United States to recognize the fact that their race is a major impetus for negative personal interactions, first generation Black immigrants do tend over time to realize the role of race on their lives, consequently reshaping their identity (Vickerman 1999, 2001b; Woldemikeal 1989).

Second generation Black immigrants, in particular, are socialized in the United States, so, unlike their parents, they grow up “under the psychological influence of what it means to be Black in America,” and therefore do not have an alternate frame of reference for their identity or what their identity might mean in another type of racial system (Bobb 2001:232). Scholars like Portes and Zhou (1993) and Waters (1994, 1999a, 2001) suggest that second generation Black immigrants have multiple identity options including a hyphenated identity (e.g. Haitian-American), an ethnic identity (e.g. Nigerian) or a racial identity (e.g. Black), and argue that these identity choices are influenced largely by class and gender, whereby low income and male second generation immigrants tend to “downwardly” assimilate into a Black American “underclass.” But there are other scholars who provide a broader perspective, instead arguing that many second generation Black immigrants describe themselves with both a racial (Black) and ethnic identity (Butterfield
While these identities may not be competing, second generation immigrants are more likely to identify as Black than with an ethnic identity because they realize that in efforts to more efficiently navigate American racialized social system they have to be aware of the role their racial identity will have on the day-to-day interactions and their life chances, more generally (Bashi Bobb and Clarke 2001; Butterfield 2004a, 2004b).

We know a great deal about Black immigrants’ identity and feelings about African Americans because much of the literature on Black intraracial relations relies on the perspective of Black immigrants (Foner 1987, 1998; Kasinitz 1992; Rogers 2006; Watters 1999a; Vickerman 1999, 2001a, 2001b), thereby leaving a void in our understanding of how African Americans feel about their Black immigrant counterparts. From the small body of literature that does exists, we know that many African Americans believe that it is important to more carefully consider increasing ethnic diversity among racially Black individuals in the U.S. than we traditionally have been (Williams 2007). But a debate exists among African Americans concerning whether Black immigrants should be included within their group’s boundaries since they have different relationships with the American government and with America’s legacy of racism and discrimination (Swarns 2004; Williams 2007).

Concerning one side of this debate, there is evidence that African Americans seek to constrict the boundaries of Blackness. Waters (1999b) finds that in New York City, African Americans did not possess a sense of shared identity with their Black immigrant counterparts, especially in a tense working situation where African Americans and Black immigrants espouse mutually destructive stereotypes. Further recent news articles suggests that African Americans’ major contention with the notion of expanding the
boundaries of Black identity to include Black immigrants has much to do with the extent to which they believe Black immigrants will take hard-won opportunities from native-born Black Americans (Fears 2007; Hsieh 2009; Rimer and Arenson 2004; Swarns 2004). This feeling rises especially when African Americans think about the possibility that (a) Black immigrants will unfairly benefit from affirmative action policies and race conscious admissions policies in higher education and (b) white Americans will recruit, admit, and hire Black immigrants instead of Black Americans and use undifferentiated racial statistics to show that their schools and companies are “racially” diverse.

There also exists some evidence suggesting that Black Americans feel that the boundaries of Blackness already are more inclusive. In a 2007 poll, 53 percent of Black Americans said that they believe that “Blacks” constitute one, undifferentiated group because both native-born and foreign-born Blacks in the U.S. have similar experiences (Williams 2007). The large majority of Black Americans see that racialized experiences are important determinants in developing one’s racial identity.

**Linked Fate: A Two-Way Street**

African Americans have developed a sense of group consciousness and “linked fate” in part because they were treated harshly as members of an undifferentiated group. The existing literature concerning Black immigrants, however, largely argues that the chances of intraracial coalitions between Black immigrants and native Black Americans are unlikely because there is little potential for rise of a racial consciousness among Black immigrants (Rogers 2004, 2006; Woldemikeal 1989). Nevertheless, I argue that while Afro-Caribbeans, Afro-Latinos and African immigrants who come to the United States have not shared the
specific history that helped shape American Americans’ feelings of linked-fate, “the racial system of stratification which helped provide the material basis for the historical counterpublic still exists” (Dawson 1994a: 212). That is to say, America’s racialize social system is still geared toward providing those deemed Black less economic, social and political resources relative to white Americans. The system that produced the need for Blacks in the U.S. to politically coalesce still exists and is persistent.

Dawson (1994a) explains that even though there is a growing Black middle class, one should not expect these Black Americans’ political attitudes to become more conservative as they climb the socioeconomic ladder because African Americans of various economic backgrounds still recognize that their racial identity constrains their opportunity structure. Even though more Blacks are entering the middle class, they are still confined to live in or near predominately Black and poor neighborhoods, they are funneled into the public and not-for-profit sector employment rather than the more lucrative private sector, and their lack of wealth makes them vulnerable to small instabilities in the American economy (Dawson 1994a; Oliver and Shapiro 1995). Black Americans, particularly in the middle class, recognize that they are treated in a certain way because of race (Cose 1995; Hochschild 1995). That is to say, even though there is growing gap between low-income and middle class Blacks, all of them recognize that their race is a major determinant of their life chances. In addition to the historical treatment of Blacks in the United States, the contemporary disadvantages also lead African Americans to develop a sense of “linked-fate” or the idea that what happens to other Black people will influence them personally (Dawson 1994a). Linked-fate among African Americans “potentially heightens awareness and interest in politics, bolsters group pride and political efficacy, alters interpretation of group problems, and promotes support for collective action” (Chong and Rogers 2005: 350).
The extent to which a linked-fate exists among Black immigrants remains a question that this study aims to answer. The development of racial identity is only one step towards gaining a sense of racial group consciousness. Much of the literature suggests that Black immigrants’ racial identity is not likely to be politicized in the same way as African Americans (Rogers 2004, 2006; Woldemikeal 1989). This idea that a sense of linked-fate may not arise among Black immigrants is predicated on the notions that Black immigrants do not embrace a racial identity in the same way as African Americans, and perhaps, this notion is also based on the idea that Black immigrants tend to do better economically than African Americans, thereby protecting them from one of the major factors that influence group consciousness among African Americans. Nevertheless, identity is a process, and Black immigrants’ sense of their own identity is apt to change as they experience constraints due to their race. Additionally, while Black immigrants tend to have higher socioeconomic statuses and white Americans tend to have a penchant for Black immigrants over African Americans, there is a plethora of evidence suggesting that the weight of Black immigrants’ racial identity outweighs that of the opportunities provided to them due to their ethnicity. First, Black immigrants tend to be concentrated in public-sector and not-for-profit sector jobs just as African Americans are (Kasinitz and Vickerman 2001). Secondly, Black immigrants, despite attaining higher socioeconomic statuses than African Americans, are similarly concentrated in Black residential areas (Crowder 1999; Denton and Massey 1989). Kim and White (2010) show that even though Black immigrants tend to live in ethnic enclaves when they first arrive to the U.S., upon leaving these enclaves they are essentially forced to live in segregated Black neighborhoods. Third, the effects racial discrimination negatively influence the health outcomes of Black immigrants. Research shows that when Black immigrants are placed in dominate white societies, their health is negatively affected.
(Read and Emerson 2005; Ryan, Gee and Laflamme 2006). Read and Emerson (2005) point out that Black immigrants tend to have better health than African Americans, but negative interpersonal interactions with whites tend to erode health disparities between foreign-born and native-born Blacks. Overall, the factors that have helped maintain a sense of linked-fate among African Americans are also a reality for Black immigrants, and thus may serve to politicize and mobilize Black immigrants’ racial identities.

**Diasporic Consciousness: When and Why?**

Both African Americans and Black immigrants at times distance themselves from each other as well as the political goals of the other group, but a sense of diasporic consciousness is likely to arise among Black people of various ethnicities when they recognize that their fates are linked. African Americans and Black immigrants realize that even in today’s “colorblind” and “post-racial” world, ethnic differences that they may see among Blacks are not necessarily taken into account by non-Blacks in the United States. Diasporic consciousness accounts for the ways in which Black individuals tend to embrace an identity that is inclusive of various types of Black people, and consequently recognize that while there are important ethnic distinctions, they also are likely to act in concert to improve the status of their shared racial group.

Time and again, we see that Black Americans and first and second generation Black immigrants tend to come together especially under the duress of an external threat. Kasinitz (1992) shows that in 1980s New York, ethnic political entrepreneurs called attention to ethnic differences among Blacks the city, and they were successful not only in developing an ethnic voting bloc but also in making salient ethnic rather than racial identities. But Kasinitz
(1992) also illustrates that later in the decade when race became a more pressing national and local issue, racial identities among Blacks in New York played a more influential role in developing political attitudes and behaviors among African Americans and West Indians.

Over time and space, we see that at times both African Americans and Black immigrants’ ethnic identities are made more salient, but in times when it becomes very clear that their racial identities are inextricably linked to their life chances, Blacks downplay ethnic differences and focus on racial linked fate. As such, I expect that diasporic consciousness is not something that develops on a linear path. Instead there may be fits and starts as well as waxes and wanes in the extent to which a sense of diasporic consciousness might influence foreign- and native-born Blacks in the U.S. The history of Black intraracial relations leads me to predict that feelings of diasporic consciousness may be influenced by external, macro factors such as domestic and international politics (Greenbaum 2002;), the proportion of an ethnic group’s population (Hellwig 1978), or whether there are major political figures emphasize distinct ethnic identities or over-arching racial identities (Foner 1998; Kasinitz 1992; Rogers 2004). But there are also individual level factors that may influence a sense of diasporic consciousness, including but not limited to interpersonal interactions with racial out-group members, the aggregation of micro-aggressors (or day-to-day, negative racialized experiences), realization of racial constraints on one’s opportunity structure, and interactions with various types of Black people. This study focuses on these micro-level processes.

While Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latino and Black African immigrants do not come to the United States with the same history and experiences with race as African Americans, their experiences in this society are likely to influence their understanding of how race “works” in the United States and the implications of those processes for their personal life chances.
In turn, we should expect Black immigrants’ racial identity to become more salient due to acculturation in the United States, particularly those who perceive discrimination in their interpersonal interactions. The centrality of racial identity should be more evident among second generation Black immigrants due to their socialization within the U.S.’s racialized social system. On-going discriminatory interactions within a racialized social system will inspire a sense of linked-fate with African Americans among Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latino, and African immigrants.

How do we know when “see” diasporic consciousness? For Black immigrants, diasporic consciousness will be manifested not only through the development of an overarching identity that includes Blacks of various ethnicities but also a sense of linked-fate and the call for political action with African Americans. African Americans, however, generally feel linked with other members of their racial group, but still there is question of whether Black Americans will embrace Black immigrants as racial in-group members. As such, a first step toward diasporic consciousness for African Americans will be marked by a broadening definition of Black identity. An important test of diasporic consciousness among African Americans is in the extent to which they are willing to expand the “traditional” and “universal” Black agenda. Issues of bilingual education, immigration, and certain areas of US foreign policy are often more salient to Black immigrants than African Americans. As such, it is within these issues that a severe test of diasporic consciousness and intraracial coalition is presented.

In short, diasporic consciousness recognizes that Black intraracial political relationships are neither totally marked by distancing nor constant harmony, but instead are sinuous at best. Individual African Americans’ and Black immigrants’ feelings about their personal identities as well as their understanding of their group’s boundaries
constantly change, thereby producing a change in their ideas about what should be done to improve their own well-being and their group's well-being. What is more, although African Americans’ sense of linked-fate is based on a historical legacy of racism within the U.S., I argue that the contemporary racial climate in the United States will not only continue to affect the way African Americans see their position in society but it will also influence the ways in which first and second generation Black immigrants see themselves as racialized beings and will, in turn, shape their attitudes about how they might improve their standing in American society. In essence, I argue that America's racialized social system will have a similar affect on the identities and political attitudes of African Americans and Black immigrants.

Conclusion

Diasporic consciousness is an attempt to capture the complexity of Black identities and explain how these identities influence political attitudes. One of the major ways this study is able to broaden our understanding of the Black identity-to-politics link is by "layering" ethnicity onto the larger Black racial group. I aim to expand what we know about Black politics by exploring how ethnicity and ethnic variation among Blacks may lead to differences in political attitudes and behaviors. I attempt to demonstrate how African Americans and Black immigrants come to develop not only a shared identity but also a broader sense of linked-fate and, perhaps, a broader political agenda.

Ultimately, I hope to show Black identities as well as Black political attitudes and agendas are dynamic and are constantly changing due to interracial interactions between Blacks and non-Blacks as well as due to intraracial interactions between Blacks of various
ethnic backgrounds. The next chapter helps to illuminate the extent to which African Americans and Black immigrants are taking the first step toward a diasporic consciousness. Through a series of face-to-face interviews, 30 African American and Black immigrants explain whom they believe should be allowed within the boundaries of Blackness.

Racial labels like Latino, Asian, Black, and African American are “rooted in historical eras and the prevailing self-deﬁnitions and self-images of groups. But they also arise out of definitions conferred by the broader society” (Thornton, Taylor and Brown 1999). Which racial or ethnic label(s) a person chooses reﬂecls how that person thinks of himself or herself and reﬂects a sense of group awareness and belonging, but social identities do not exist without public aﬃrmation (Gosin 2009: 214). How one identiﬁes is both a matter of how one sees himself or herself as well as what identity society ascribes to them, but both self-identiﬁcation and societal ascriptions are subject to change over time. For example, at various points, those who are categorized as racially Black in the United States have been called—and called themselves—colored, negro, Negro, Black, African, Afro-American, and African-American.

Not only do racial labels change but racial group boundaries change as well. They may become more permeable or more rigid, and the groups may become more inclusive or exclusive. The notion that white ethnic immigrants became white—or were eventually included within the boundaries of whiteness and called white—is well documented (Ignatiev 1995; Roediger 2005, 2007). But the boundaries of Blackness in the United States have also contracted and expanded. For example, Smith (1992) explains:

“Colored” was the dominant term in the mid- to late nineteenth century. It appears to have gained the upper hand because it was accepted by Whites as well as Blacks and was seen as more inclusive, covering mulattoes and others of mixed racial ancestry as well as those with complete Black ancestry. Others saw it as too inclusive, however, covering not only Blacks but Asians and other non-White races.
Here we see that both white and Black Americans adopted the term “colored” because it was more inclusive of non-white people, but a debate concurrently arose as to how broad the boundaries of “colored” should be. “Mulattoes” and other people of mixed raced ancestry (that is, those with at least one Black ancestor) would eventually be grouped along with African Americans due to the prevalence of the “one drop rule” (Nobles 2000) while Asians and Latinos would (and continue to) face their own challenges with racial labels as prescribed by American institutions such as the courts and the Census (Nordlund 2010).

Today, the debate concerning appropriate racial labels for African Americans and other Black people in the U.S. continues. Due to the influx of African and Caribbean immigrants to the United States, the definitions of “African American” and “Black” are being challenged both by native-born Black people as well as foreign-born people of African descent and their children. Many African immigrants feel that they too are “African American,” and some challenge native-born Black Americans because many of them have “never been to Africa.” Similarly, many African Americans refuse to recognize the increasing ethnic diversity among Black people in the United States (Berlin 2010; Swarns 2004). On another front, Afro-Caribbeans see themselves as Black but often argue that “Black” and “African American” should not been seen as synonymous (Nevaer 2003). Thus, shifting demographics have made the meanings of Black and African American more ambiguous (Swarns 2004). The discord over who is and is not Black as well as who should be able to adopt (or reject) various racial labels is by no means new, but it certainly has become more intense.

In this chapter I attempt to shed light on how racial labels and group boundaries are understood and constructed among people of African descent. How do African Americans
and Black immigrants determine who is Black? Do Black immigrants embrace or reject a racial identity that is inclusive of Black natives? And vice versa, do African Americans embrace or reject the inclusion of Black immigrants within their understood racial group boundaries? Under what circumstances might one scenario be more likely than another? I address these questions by analyzing the content and substance of in-depth face-to-face interviews with 30 African Americans and first and second generation Black immigrants.

**Diasporic Consciousness and Racial Group Boundaries**

Recall that diasporic consciousness suggests that the American color line is still rigid enough to constrain Black immigrants’ identity choices, and this constraint will, in turn, encourage Black immigrants and continue to encourage African Americans to mobilize their shared racial identity into political action. This theory is one that emphasizes the effects of racialized experiences on racial identity rather than expressing notions of racial essentialism. Thus diasporic theory predicts that Black immigrants and African Americans would see that while perhaps they do not share the same historical legacy of racism, they would recognize that within a racialized social system like the U.S., their life chances will be similarly influenced by their racial identity rather than their ethnic identity. This mutual recognition has the potential of fostering a sense of connectedness among Black people of various ethnicities, consequently broadening both African Americans’ and Black immigrants’ conceptualization of who belongs within their in-group's boundaries.

I argue that African Americans and Black immigrants have a very inclusive understanding of who is Black. The findings in this chapter make clear that racial identities and group boundaries are always in flux. Black immigrants’ and African Americans’
responses suggest that they recognize ethnic differences among people of African descent, but consider “Black” as an umbrella term, encompassing Black people whose families have lived in the U.S. for generations as well as those who are relatively new to the country. The respondents communicate that interactions with different types of Black people have influenced them to think more critically about their own racial identity as well as broaden their perceptive of who is Black. Further, while both African Americans and Black immigrants have experienced distancing—that is, one group attempting to differentiate themselves from another group—the respondents express that the similarities, especially due to negative racialized interactions, makes them a community.

Their responses contribute to our understanding of how both African Americans and Black immigrants view each other and how these perceptions influence how individuals make judgments not only about who should and could be allowed in their group but also where they place themselves within a broad spectrum of Black identities. Their responses also illuminate the ways in which newcomers and native-born Blacks alike contribute to new understandings and new definitions of Black identity.

**Data and Methods**

The respondents include 17 African-Americans and 13 Black immigrants. Among the Black immigrants, three of them are first generation Black immigrants, three of them were born in another country but moved to the U.S. as a child (1.5 generation), and the remaining seven of them are second generation—that is, at least one of their parents is an immigrant but they were born and raised in the United States. Nineteen of the interviewees are women. Three of the self-identified African American students are bi-racial. Twenty of
the respondents are students at a small private university in the South (henceforth, Private Southern University, PSU), but 10 of them are from other schools across the country. The respondents’ age ranges from 19 to 22, typical college students’ age. There are of various socioeconomic statuses and come from very homogenous neighborhoods to diverse ones. Five of the seven states whose Black population is composed of at least 14% foreign-born Blacks are represented here. Also in 2000, foreign-born blacks constituted 30 percent of Blacks in New York City, 28 percent of those in Boston, and about 25 percent in Montgomery County, Maryland; seven the respondents here live in or near these cities. More information about each of the respondents, including their self-identification, place of residence, and their parents’ racial/ethnic identities and occupations can be found in Appendix B.

The initial respondents were recruited via an email that I sent to various Black cultural groups and a summer educational program. I then used a snow-ball technique to gather more respondents. As such, the 30 respondents are not a representative or random sample, and given that the sample is comprised of college students, it is also limited by age and level of education. Nonetheless, the interviews are intended to capture the views and opinions of Black people living in the U.S. Further, this group is particularly helpful because most of them (especially those who attend PSU and schools in the Northeast) live and attend school in environments where there is constant contact and interaction between native- and foreign-born Blacks.

The interviews were semi-structured and included questions about how the respondents identify racially, define “Black” and “African American,” perceive differences

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1 These seven states are New York, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Florida, Connecticut, Washington, and New Jersey. The respondents represent all but Minnesota and Connecticut.
and similarities between various groups of Black people, assess their intraracial interactions, and about how they conceive of the notion of "Black community." I audio-recorded and transcribed all 30 interviews, and the quotations are verbatim (See Appendix B for the interview guide).

**Self Identification and Racial Labeling**

**African American Respondents**

The ways in which African Americans have labeled themselves has changed over time, but generally, a consensus arises at various historical moments (Smith 1992). Today, most African Americans prefer to be called Black or African American (McClain and Stewart 2010). A Gallup poll found that sixty-seven percent of African Americans said they did not have a preference for either “African American” or “Black” as a racial label, and among those who did have a preference, most expressed that they were not offended or made uncomfortable by being called the term that they did not prefer (Jones 2001). Generally, African American respondents identified as Black or African American. My African American respondents mirrored these national data, communicating that while they tend to see Black and African American as interchangeable, they, at times, struggle with which label is most appropriate.

The first questions in the interviews for this study asked respondents to describe how they identify racially and ethnically. One challenge that respondents had in choosing whether to racially label themselves as Black or African American was negotiating the particular surroundings or context in which they sometimes found themselves, noting that while most of the time they identified as Black, they sometimes felt that white Americans
tended used “Black” for derogatory jokes or references while “African American” was saved for more politically correct, academic and polite usage. For example, Laura², a twenty-one year old woman from Maryland, mentioned that how she identifies racially does not change depending on with whom she speaking or where she is, but “The only the thing that changes though is if I call myself Black or African American (laughing).” I ask her why this matters, and she explains:

Because if I’m around white people, I say African American because I want them to call me African American because I don't (pause). Sometimes I hear other people use Black in derogatory terms, so when I’m around white people I’ll say African American, you know. But when I’m around Black people, I'll just say Black like it's, you know, that’s who I am.

Similarly, Carmen pointed out that she also struggles with various terms. Carmen is a college sophomore from Texas, and when I asked her with which racial groups she identifies, she answered:

I check the African American slash Black box. (Laughing) Because that's what I feel like, that’s what I’ve always said I am. And like, I’m not um, I’m discovering this year that Black is okay with me. I know my grandfather does not like the term Black, like I guess cause back in their time, Negro was the one that they would go with that wasn’t derogatory or anything, so he would probably identify with the word Negro more.

Although most African-American respondents identified as and called themselves “Black,” respondents who felt that “Black” had a negative connotation or felt that the racial label had a negative connotation were more inclined to avoid using that term in public or in white spaces, opting instead for a more “politically correct” term such as African American. Again, these responses mirror that of the national African American population. Jones (2001) found that when African Americans were asked what they preferred to be called on

² All names have been changed. All but seven of the respondents chose their own pseudonyms.
a personal level, they showed a slight preference for “Black” over “African American,” but when they were asked what they preferred the group to be called, they had a preference for “African American” over “Black.”

Deciding whether to use “African American” or “Black” is not the only challenge respondents faced when choosing racial labels, however. African American respondents also struggled with the “African” portion of African American. Carmen decided to embrace the term Black, which she previously thought of as offensive, after she reassessed what “African American” might imply to others:

[I]t's not offensive to me to be called Black, um, and I think it’s kind of like, kind of like....not politically incorrect but somewhat incorrect to call me African American cause like I don't know my ancestry back to Africa whereas my friend who is from Nigeria, like he’s actually African American cause he is, like his parents, who gave birth to him are from Nigeria. Not just like someone down the line. Cause I know some, I know my roots trace back to Africa somehow. We could ask my aunt who’s very Afrocentric, and she'll probably tell you something. But um, I’m just okay with Black. It doesn't offend me. It’s just, I like, I like Black.

The notion that African American is not the most appropriate label for Black people whose family's are several generations American came up for 10 of the 17 African Americans respondents, and especially among those who had either traveled to Africa or met people who were from an African country. Jason grew up in a military town, and briefly mentioned that this was something he and his younger 14 year-old brother, who came along for the interview, had been thinking about. Jason explains: “[W]hen I first got [to PSU], I considered myself African American, and so I said it and someone was like, ‘Oh, what country are you from?’ and I was like, ‘Uh...’ (laughing).” Jason, in turn, was prompted to rethink about his ancestry and which racial label was most appropriate for him:

My ancestry. Uh, I would say Black. Uh, I don’t like saying African American because I don’t really know my ties to Africa besides the fact that I’m Black.
So, I prefer to just say Black and, as far back, I know as far back as my great-great grandfather who lived in Maryland. And so it’s like to me my ancestry is traced back to Maryland (chuckle).

African American respondents were very attuned to the debate around the use of African American for people who did not have any recent ancestors from an African country. Some people simply did not care whether they were called Black or African American, but did understand why such a term would exist. Amir explained that because he attended a predominately white institution, he prepared a small statement to use when people asked him why Black people from the U.S. might want to be called African American:

It’s because of the connection that we have with our ancestry and the struggle of African slaves in the Americas, and that’s why people still like to be connected with that part of their history. And while I understand that people, you know, nowadays like to say, "Oh, I’ve never been to Africa. Africa’s such a distance place," it connects you to the struggle, it connects you to your people, and that’s why some people like to be called African American. And I believe that folks should just respect what people want to be called. There’s some people who can’t stand being called African American, and so you call them Black if they make that known to you. I mean I don’t think it’s all that big a deal.

Amir explained, “I identify as Black, African American. The terms don’t matter all that much to me.” Like Amir most of the respondents had thought about what the terms African American and Black entail but tended to used the terms interchangeably or chose which term to use based on what situation they were in.

The African American respondents were well aware of their race, no matter what they decided to call themselves, and quite a few of them articulated the power of the “one drop” rule as part of their decision making calculation on which racial label was most appropriate for them. Most of the African American respondents knew at least one ancestor who was not Black, but were still very firm about their identity as Black or African American.
American. Nicole is a light-skinned woman, and she is an excellent example of how a mixed ancestry boiled down to one racial identity. I asked, “Why is it that even you have all of these different types of people in your family do you just identify as Black?” She responded as if I should have already known:

Because I don’t really identify with any of those other cultures. Like I’ve never been exposed to them. My grandfather is Austrian, but he died before I was born, so, um, you know, we don’t… He quote unquote hated whities. So, you know, it was never anything. And then, um, my grandma is Native American, and she’s—well half Native American—and she’s very proud of that but if she’s half, then what am I? And she’s probably not even just half, you know. So, it’s just not something. I mean now that I do have a Native American friend here, I look more into it, and she always laughs at me cause she’s like, “You could tell there’s Native American in your family.” But I also feel like Natives are kind of exclusive. So if you’re not, if you didn’t grow up that way, you know, they kind of still keep you on the outside.

The notion of the one-drop rule is still prevalent among those with parents of African descent. Nicole, like many others, describes an array of races and ethnicities in her family, but feels like group boundaries are closed off to her despite her ancestry. This was especially prominent among biracial respondents. Naomi, whose mother is Black and father is white, explains that sometimes she identifies as biracial or mixed-race, but explained: “But usually, I’m Black. Sometimes I forget that I’m mixed depending on like, who I’m around, the conversations that I’m having. Like if I see a mixed person, I’m usually like ‘Oh yeah!’” Similarly, Peter, whose mother is white and father is African American identifies as Black. Peter is light-skinned man with long dreadlocks. Peter mentions, “Um, I identify as Black even though I live with my mom.” He further explains that his mother emphasized that he should be proud of his Black identity. I asked him, “Do you change how you identify depending on the situation,
maybe who you’re talking to or where you are?” Peter replied emphatically, “Um, no. It's never changed for me. It’s always been Black. It's always. If it’s an application for school, no matter who I’m around, it’s always, I’m Black.”

Michael, a 21 year-old, dark-skinned man with straight hair, also explained that although he is biracial, he has had no other choice than to identify as Black; I asked him if being African American is an important part of his self-image. He answers:

I think it is. I mean it's sad, but it's always been my defining image, I guess. Not by choice. I've been thinking about it, taking all these classes. I think it's just cause everyone else has always labeled me as that, I never had an option to be anything else. Like, I actually had a conversation with my brother before I went to college, and I was trying to explain to him cause he's like, "Well, I'm African American. Like we have the same parents," and I'm like, "No, you're not. You're white. You've...We don't look the same, and you can turn it off and on. You can tell people that you have a Black father and get away with it, but you don't have to. So, you have the option to, and I don't."

For all of the biracial respondents, and especially Michael, “African American” and “Black” are not just a racial terms but also experiences. Michael identifies as Black because others see them that way, but he also polices his brother who has not been treated negatively because of his race. Michael further explains:

I mean growing up in a 95 per cent white community if you weren't white, you're basically black. I mean there were some Hispanics and some Asians, but um, I was always the Black kid. So it never crossed my mind that I was anything different until I came to Boston.

In Spokane, Washington, where the population is mostly white, Michael’s identity choices were almost non-existent, but the Black population in Boston, as previously mentioned, is quite diverse. Twenty-eight percent of Blacks in Boston are foreign-born; when Michael first came to Boston, he explains that he learned that there existed a greater
variety of Black people, and this served to bolster his positive feelings about being Black, particularly since he had a greater range of choices of Black identities with which he might associate. The power of the one-drop rule was still very much in play, but the constraint around his identity was looser in Boston than in Washington.

Many of the African American respondents, including the three bi-racial students, explained that they were of mixed ancestry, but despite the variation in races and ethnicities among their ancestors, they identified as Black or African American. Here we see that racial labels are chosen due to people's experiences as well as a due to a recognition of how others see you. Michael is from Spokane, Washington where he was one of very few minorities, felt like an outsider and, in turn, identified as Black. Naomi and Peter explained they grew up in predominately African American neighborhoods, which also influenced their identities. Largely, the respondents felt that others saw them as Black and treated them that way, showing that social identities are influenced both by the way you see yourself as well as the way you believe others to perceive you. All of the African American respondents felt that their racial identity was central to their self-image. Whether they called themselves African American or Black, they felt that their racial identity was a prominent factor in the way others saw them, the way they saw themselves, the way they interacted with others, and how they viewed the world.

**Black Immigrants**

Waters (1991) explains that for African Americans, their race and their ethnicity are one in same, but for Black immigrants these two identities may be different. A theory of

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3 According to the American Community Survey, 2005-2009, the racial makeup of the city was 88.6% white, 2.1% African American, 1.5% American Indian, 2.4% Asian, and .3% Pacific Islander.
 Diasporic consciousness would lead me to expect Black immigrants to embrace both their racial and their ethnic identities, but their racial identity should become more salient as Black immigrants recognize the role that this identity plays in shaping their opportunity structure, day-to-day interactions, and out-group members’ expectations and stereotypes of them; that is to say, we should expect Black immigrants’ identities to wax and wane depending on the situation.

Through an analysis of these interviews, I found that in contrast to the African American respondents who tended to consistently identify as Black or African American, the first and second generation Black immigrants were more likely to feel that their racial and ethnic identities fluctuated in salience, and in turn, the labels which they chose to describe their identities changed situationally and strategically, too. All but one of the Black immigrant respondents grew up surrounded by co-ethnics—people who share their culture and ethnic identity—but in times where there were only a few people who shared their ethnic identity, the respondents reported that their racial identity became more salient than their ethnic identity. Ten of the thirteen Black immigrant respondents suggested that they made decisions about which label to choose based on the context. Ann is a second generation Ghanaian woman who plans to study Shakespeare in graduate school. She explains:

I mean I know I’m Ashanti, but in general I just refer to myself as Black because I think that, um, there’s just more commonality, especially like even though I grew up around a lot of Ghanaian people—that’s because like my parents had Ghanaian people back home that they knew where here. So like that was kind of like not artificial, but they already had the contexts. But especially at [PSU] and like in high school, so like I didn’t, my own friends, you know, it was very rare to find Ghanaian friends, so I would just identify with Black people in general, like anyone who was Black. So that’s how I identify myself, but I know specifically I’m Ghanaian.
For Ann, she chose an identity that was familiar to other people who shared her racial identity when her ethnicity made her feel like a minority within a minority. Identifying as Black was also a means to unify her with other racially Black people rather than distance herself through her ethnic identity. Chinwe, a 20 year-old woman, also reported that she chose different racial and ethnic labels depending on whether there was a critical mass of co-ethnics:

I feel like certain aspects of my identity are heightened based on who I’m with. So, if, for example, I know like here there’s a lot of African people, and a lot of them are Nigerian, so I tend to be like, you know, "Oh, Nigeria" repping Nigeria, and you know, even though I’m half Sierra Leonean and even though I grew up in a household with uh with a mother and step father who are both Sierra Leonean, so that’s what I actually know more of, I’ve been there, I know the language a lot more than Nigeria. Yet I find myself claiming Nigeria more because if I claim Sierra Leone, I’d be alone because there’s like maybe a couple others here (chuckle). And I think, um, around Black Americans, you know, there’s a tendency to, you know, want to just identify as Black because we’re all Black, and so I’ll relate on that level and heighten that identity or that aspect of my identity.

Similarly, Claire finds that when she is around people who share her ethnic identity, she has an opportunity to identify as Nigerian-American. Claire comes from Rock Hill, South Carolina; her mother is African American and her father is Nigerian. Claire identified as African American, but explains that she also sees her ethnicity as an important to her self-image. She felt that she was more likely and able to embrace this identity in college when there were more people around who shared her ethnic identity:

Um, you know, in coming to [PSU] where, you know, it seems like not having African ancestry is, you know (pause)...Well, having African in your family is more prevalent. You know there are more people that identify with being Nigerian-American here. You know, I see it as, you know, people are like, "Oh, you’re a halfsie," and come up with these new ways to identify people in ways I’ve never heard of before. And I realize, you know, coming to [PSU], I don’t really know much about my Nigerian, the Nigerian side of my family but I still identify as Nigerian-American.
Several respondents noted that being around co-ethnics allowed them to feel like they could and should identify with their ethnicity, but when they were around native-born African Americans, they tended to choose a racial label in solidarity with those around them. Most of the previous respondents were second generation Black immigrants who have learned to “code-switch” between one situation and another; for example, they may use a different accent or use a different set of vocabulary words that are specific to the group that they are with in order to blend in. Nym, a first generation Nigerian describes a more complicated reality as he navigates the US’s racial terrain:

I think that’s my personal dilemma as a Nigerian immigrant in the United States. Um, presumed most of the time just be Black, um, this lumped Black category. Um, but then there’s this like ambivalence because I feel like a part of me is an immigrant, and that’s a particular identity. A part of me is Black, which is an identity in the US as well. And a part of me is American, you know, which is a larger lumped category. So there are multiple things and, I guess, I identify based on the context and situation with those three different things.

Nym is very much aware of his multiple identities, no one identity being more central to his personal self-image, but he is strategic in what he calls himself and bases his decision on where he is or with whom he is speaking.

Another factor that influenced first and second generation Black immigrants’ choice of a racial or ethnic label is how others viewed them. Ahmad provides an excellent example. Ahmad moved from place to place, growing up in Long Beach, California then moving to San Jose then, finally, Bellview, Washington. Each city had a different racial make-up, and this seems to have played a major part in how people viewed Ahmad’s identity:

Um, so it’s really, really interesting in that I was born in Southern California. And over there, in a predominately Black community, I was not considered Black. I was considered African. And it’s something I could never understand. And then when we went to San Jose, California, where the neighborhood that we lived in was predominately Hispanic and Chinese or Asian, I don’t know exactly which one, and it’s actually really funny. At that
point, I became Black to them. But at the same time, there were other Black families around. It wasn’t as densely populated. Um, but they actually...Uh, I was considered part of the group, but I was distinguished from African American, um, in that I’m not, obviously, I don’t have, I guess you can say, the physical characteristics that would, you know, that somebody would in that area, would consider me African American, to a certain extent.

Ahmad then explains when he moved to a majority white neighborhood in Washington, the way others perceived him and how he perceived himself changed again:

And Bellview, this is a very funny story. The first week we moved, I was taking out the garbage, and the next thing I know, somebody’s driving by like, ”Oh, we have Black people here now.” And at that point is when I realized, ”Ok, I guess I’m Black now.”

Although Ahmad tends to identify as “African American, an African American Muslim to be exact,” he was well aware of how others see him, and this shapes his identity as well as influences which racial label he chooses in any given environment. At times he was accepted into certain racial and ethnic boundaries while at other times he was differentiated and excluded. What is more, at times his race was made more salient while in other environments his ethnicity as Eritrean or African was a determinant of how people understood his identity. He, personally, embraces both his racial and ethnic identities, but chooses various labels depending on his surroundings. All of the first and second generation Black immigrants imbibed this sentiment. That is, their racial identity and their ethnic identity were not in struggle with one another, but each identity would become more salient than another depending of the situation.

Most of the respondents felt that others viewed them as not being different from African Americans, but they noted that sometimes people would look more carefully at their physical features (e.g. hair texture, skin tone, facial features) or would hear them speaking another language, prompting observers to ask more questions about their identities. Daise,
a first generation Panamanian, explains how she navigates these situations:

Um, in the United States, you always have to explain [your racial identity]. Like, most times people just said, “Oh, you’re Black.” And I never corrected them, and I still don’t. I’m like, “Ok.” And only when I randomly talk Spanish on the phone with my mom like a semester or a year after they even know me, do they realize, “You’re not just Black.” You know like, “No, I’m not, but I didn’t tell you because I didn’t think it mattered.” Um, so like, I’m Black therefore (pause)...I look Black. I am Black. If you call me Black, I’m Black. But if you need me to qualify or tell you why, I’m like “Well, I’m from Panama,” and I will state that.

Daise explained that growing up she would vacillate between identifying as Black and as Hispanic but, she says, “I think Hispanic took over” and uses Hispanic as a racial label because it makes it easier to explain why she is culturally different from other types of Black people. Daise goes on to say:

I’m Black, I’m just not African American in the sense that you think, I guess. So like, I just chose Hispanic cause it’s easier to explain why I was so, I guess, FOBy. Sometimes I can’t understand like some US popular cultural terms, and like I grew up with this, so it was easier for me I guess.

Similarly, Vanessa is a Dominican woman with dark skin, curly hair, and small facial features; as such, from time to time people ask her more questions about her identity. She describes a typical situation:

They ask me, "Are you Black?" And my immediate reaction just because I, I feel that that question is so ignorant my immediate reaction is like, "Well, my skin is black, obviously I'm Black." And they're like, "No, but are you Black Black?" So, then I'm like, "What does that mean?" And they're like, "Well, are you African American?" And then that's when I'm like, "Ok, no. I'm not African American. I was born in the Dominican Republic. I'm Hispanic."

The ways in which Black immigrants might choose their racial identity may at times be a form of racial distancing but it may also be the case that using a different racial or ethnic label is also a way to communicate that while they understand their racial identity,
there are also ethnically and culturally differences within a larger racial group. Among first and second generation Black immigrants, choosing a racial label is complex, is situational, and in some ways, is political. All of these respondents made clear that their racial identities as Black people were central to their self-image, but the ways in which they communicated their identity through racial and ethnic labeling changed. First and second generation immigrants embraced both their racial identity and ethnic identity, but also found that one identity may become more salient than the other at times. Only two of the Black immigrant respondents identifies solely with their ethnicity. Rose describes herself as “Ethiopian-American,” and Vanessa tends to identify as “Hispanic.” John, a South African immigrant, identifies primarily as “Black,” and the remaining ten respondents use both racial and ethnic labels to describe their identities.

Overall, this section illuminates several important aspects of identity. First, the respondents show that identity is contextual, fluid and situational. While the extent to which a person feels their identity is central to their self-image may be stable, how they describe themselves may change especially when one identity is made more salient than another (Sellers et al. 1998). Second, the respondents’ conversations about proper nomenclature for racial labeling show how racial labels and also racial boundaries are constantly changing. The term African American is debated because, on the one hand, African Americans have come to accept the term as an appropriate descriptor for themselves, but on the other hand, the influx African immigrants to the United States has prompted a challenge on who should be able to make claim to this term. Both African Americans and Black immigrants are cognizant of the increasing ambiguity around the term “African American.” Finally, we see how people negotiate, choose to adopt or displace racial labels for themselves over the course of the day or over the course of their lifespan.
Debated Terms: Black versus African American

Proper nomenclature for African Americans has been debated over decades, but with a growing influx of African and Caribbean immigrants to the United States the term “African American” has become a focus of debate both among native-born Black people and foreign-born Blacks as well. When querying respondents about how they identified, they often paused, especially when they wanted to use the term “African American.” For African Americans, many of them thought carefully about whether that term was an appropriate descriptor of themselves in the face of the challenge made by foreign-born Africans and their children who now live in the United States. And for Black immigrants, many of them had to think twice in the face of native-born Blacks who have already made claim over the term.

In 1988, Jesse Jackson argued that the term “puts us in our proper historical context;” Jackson further asserted, “Every ethnic group in this country has a reference to some land base, some historical cultural base. African Americans have hit that level of cultural maturity” (Swarns 2004). The term “African American” became popular for native-born Blacks. As such, some African Americans understand the term “African American” to mean those who whose families were descendents of African slaves in the United States. For example, Elle, a dark-skinned African-American woman with curly hair, states:

But, I would say, I guess the definition for African American is basically you were born in the United States, your parents were born in the United States, everybody was born in the United States. But I mean, we all start somewhere, so it gets muddy.

Elle makes an argument that even though native-born Blacks have been in the United States for generations, “we all start somewhere,” meaning Africa. “It gets muddy” because most African Americans do not know exactly from which countries their first
American ancestors came, but, for Elle, African American describes someone like her—someone who is several generations removed from Africa. Michael, an African-American man, also recognizes that there are people who do know exactly where their ancestors are from, but still he prefers to use the term “African American” to describe native-born Blacks:

Um, I think there is a difference [between the terms Black and African American] because you get Africans who come from Africa who come to American, and they’re like, “Well, we’re technically African Americans because we’re from Africa, and now we’re in American, so we’re African American.” Um, it’s just weird because you get people from the Caribbean who aren’t from Africa, but they’re Black, and then they come here and they’re like, “Well, I’m not African American. I’m Caribbean American” or “I’m Haitian American,” and they throw a nationality in front of it. Um, for me, I don’t really like using the word Black just because like when you look at people no one’s black. I mean Black is really… I mean this [points to his notebook] is black. It’s a really dark color, so I mean most people are brown. I mean I’ll use Black, but most of the time I’ll just use African American, but I do understand that there’s a difference depending on where you’re from. I think that’s a large part. I mean I’ve always lived in America, um, and so I’ve just been African American.

Michael prefers the term African American to Black because for him, like several others, Black has a negative connotation, but Michael also communicates that he, too, is a person with African heritage who currently lives in America; he makes a claim for “African American” as an appropriate racial label for himself despite the fact that others might make a fighting claim for the term.

Some African Americans wanted to relinquish the term, and instead opt for “Black” as the most appropriate label for themselves. This was especially true among the African American respondents who had come into contact with someone who was from an African country; they were more likely to think critically about the extent to which “African American” was an appropriate racial label for racially Black people from the United States. Candace, an African-American college senior, explains that her view about using the term
African American was challenged after visiting various African countries:

I’d say yes they [Black and African American] are different. But it depends on...In popular societal like political correct usage, they're interchangeable, but I would say having been to Africa and interacting with students who are of Caribbean descent and who are of African descent and who still have family in other countries, I would say the term African American is like the term Asian American. You have a closer knowledge of your immigrant past. Whereas I don't have that knowledge, and so I feel more connected, I would say, to the term Black. Um, because while I understand that my family connected at whatever point in our history to Africa or to the Caribbean, I don't identify with those places, so I prefer the term Black to African American for myself.

Some are like Candace in that they are very clear about what type of person the term African American should be attributed to, but others, like Joshua, vacillate when they begin to take into account history, personal interactions, and everyday nomenclature to figure out what seems most appropriate. Joshua is an African-American male from Texas, and he attends college in the Northeast region of the U.S.

My views change on this like every second because while the way I understand African-American to be is what I would call the politically correct term for Black people. It’s kind of what we, well not we, but the name that’s been assigned to us as opposed to... so we’re not a color, per se. Um, but then I get really conflicted because we’re one of the few if not the only race where what we...Like the African part of our title doesn't mean that we are--we’re descended from Africa but we aren’t African, which is different from other countries where if you’re Chinese-American like you are from China. Like that is the way that it is. And so I’ve kind of gotten into...I use the term Black more because of that, because I just feel like African American it has a different connotation.

Similarly, Kimberly, whose family has lived in Chicago for several generations, mentions that the connotation as well as the boundaries around the term “African American” changed for her after a conversation; previously, she believed people like her, native-born Blacks, were African Americans, but when she learned that African American might be used by others, perhaps even whites, she began to associate the term with a
different group of people:

And I would say before I went to college, I just considered myself, you know, African American. And one time when I was working back at home, I was talking to one of my supervisors, and we had this whole discussion about what being Black is and what is African American. And he told me anybody can be African American. There are some whites that come from Africa, and they could be considered African American. And I was like, oh really? So that's when I started to say I'm just Black.

When Kimberly learned that the term African American might include someone that she did not consider part of her in-group, “whites that come from Africa,” she moved to adopt a term that had more exclusive boundaries. “Black” or “Black American” was a more appropriate racial label for people like them. In fact, there are terms among Black students at various universities that signal that a racially Black person is from the United States. Kimberly makes reference to this in the previous quotation. She identifies as “just Black.” Facebook groups such as “I'm a Regular Black” and “Sorry, We're just Regular Black” are popular among native-born African Americans. Similarly, at Harvard, Blacks with American ancestors have given themselves the nickname “Legacies.” One of my respondents identified African Americans as “JB’s” or “Just Black.”

Several of the respondents felt that although “African American” had been the term they used to describe themselves through childhood and adolescence, the term’s connotation has evolved. That is, previously, they embraced the term “African American,” believing that it signified pride in their heritage and connection to Africa, but in their interactions with more people from the continent, “African American,” from their point of view, became a term that was not only too broad but was not an accurate descriptor of their lineage which is several generations removed from direct African ancestry.

This conversation is not exclusive to African Americans. Black immigrant
respondents tend to see themselves as racially Black and suggest that Black encompassed an array of ethnic groups. Whether the term “African American” was an appropriate racial or ethnic label for Black immigrants was also discussed among them, especially, but not limited to, first and second-generation African students. On one end of the spectrum of attitudes, some respondents applied the term “African American” in its most literal sense to describe themselves. Chinwe and Ahmad, both second generation Black immigrants, explain in separate interviews why they use African-American as an appropriate label for themselves using the same rationale:

**Chinwe:** I consider myself African American. Um, I think that is the best describing word for me because I, I am an American, I was born in America and raised here, and this is what I feel is, you know, home for me, and I would never, you know, move somewhere else to live. Um, but at the same time, I feel that I am also African in that it’s my heritage. I’m closely connected to it. You know, my parents are immigrants and so, I consider myself African American.

**Ahmad:** I identify as African American, and African American Muslim to be exact. Let me explain it you. I’ve always thought about it that way, that I am African. You know, I accept that and I respect that and I admire that, but at the same time, you know, I am an American, kind of thing.

Yet another respondent attempts to expand the definition of African American to include both people like himself as well as Blacks from the United States. Antwon, who lived in Nigeria until he was six years old, takes a position at the middle of the spectrum of this debate:

When you say African American, you automatically think of like slavery and people whose family originated, they came from Africa to the United States, but then they had kids here. I consider that African American. But then you have another types of African American, as in you’re legitimately African, like your parents or your grandparents’ grandparents weren’t born or didn’t live in the United States. My parents or anybody from like in my family tree is all based in Nigeria. To me that’s African American too.
For him, the term could be used in multiple ways. Claire, whose mother is a native-born Black American and whose father is Nigerian, identified as sometimes as African American “not meaning anything different than a Black [American] person” while other times she would stress African-American and that her father was from Nigeria in situations where she thought having a “foreign” identity would seem “cool” to her peers at school. She also used the term to mean different things.

On the other end of the spectrum, some respondents recognized that while the term “African American” could be a descriptor for them, they also realized that in the U.S. “African American” evolved to mean something very specific and has become associated with Black people whose families lived in the United States over several generations. John, a first generation South African immigrant explains why he identifies as Black:

Um, Black. Yeah. Cause to be honest, like um, people say like, "Oh yeah, African American," but I don’t really feel like an African America because I feel like there’s a difference between African Americans and Africans. Because of upbringing, because it’s like different cultures, you know. And, yeah, so I just consider myself to be Black.

Similarly, Daise, a first generation Panamanian woman who identifies as Black and Hispanic does not identify as African American because, “I feel like African American carries so much more weight (chuckle) in the term. Like there is more of a history behind it in the United States.” Her sentiments mirror those of Nym, a first generation Nigerian, who explained:

African American, for me, um implies a not just a reference but an identification with a past history of subjugation within the United States...So Black could incorporate like an immigrant who just literally moved like a week ago into the U.S. from, I guess, African or Caribbean or you know, darker skin roots. And then African American, as I said, references a particular history of subjugation within the US, which I guess we would think of slavery times, or just an identification with that, you know.
“African American” was introduced as a means to appropriately describe the cultural roots of Black people in the United States, and has gained popularity over the past two decades, eventually appearing on the Census for the first time in 2000. But just as most American born Blacks have adopted this term, it has also become contested due to the increased ethnic diversity within the racial group. All of these remarks illustrate how racial labels change in meaning and connotation; racial labels are constantly contested as are the boundaries that these labels serve to define. This is yet another illustration of how immigrants to the United States challenge what becomes everyday and commonsense among Americans. African Americans also play a role in shaping racial boundaries, in part by accepting or rejecting racial labels that may include a broader group of people.

**Black Community?**

Racial labeling is important because it communicates who belongs in our in-group. These boundaries are politically important because different racial and ethnic groups may be entitled to certain social, political and economic resources; scholarships or preferential treatment may be provided to certain people depending on their identity or communities may be provided government funds depending on their demographics. The extent to which people feel that they share an identity with others may influence their opinions about who is deserving of any societal good.

The previous section illustrates that most African Americans describe themselves as Black or African American while first and second generation Black immigrants tend to describe themselves in various ways, often changing from a racial label to an ethnic one and back depending on the situation. After asking respondents how they characterize their own
racial and ethnic identity, I asked respondents how they conceptualized who is Black, and what kind of people constitute “The Black Community.” I also queried about similarities and differences between African American and Black immigrants from various places of origin. From this, I aimed to gain a sense how African Americans and Black immigrants determine who is Black, and more importantly, the extent to which African Americans embrace an identity that is inclusive of Black immigrants as well as the extent to which Black immigrants do the same. One major theme that is revealed is that while African Americans and first and second generation Black immigrants see each other as culturally different, they recognize that in the U.S.’s racialized social system they share a rung of America’s racial hierarchy, thereby melding them into a community whether they find that problematic or not.

**Who’s Black?**

Whether they have a preference to be called either Black or African American or some other racial or ethnic label, what all of the respondents have in common is idea that people of African descent are all Black. For them, Black is an inclusive term. Butterfield (2004a, 2004b) found that her second generation Afro-Caribbean respondents felt that while they were not African Americans, per se, they most certainly identified as Black. Not only do I find that second generation immigrants have this sentiment, but first generation Black immigrants as well as native-born African Americans also felt that they shared a racial identity.

Peter, an African American student at PSU, manages to communicate several

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4 I am aware that there are multiple Black communities. The question wording was, “When you say or hear the phrase “Black community,” who are you thinking of? Who is included?”
feelings that many of the respondents had. I asked him who he considered “Black,” and he begins his answer by describing an interaction that he had with a woman in the cafeteria who told him that he was not Black because his mother was white, but later after learning that he was from a low-income, predominately Black neighborhood, she recants, suggesting that maybe he is, in fact, “Blacker” than she thought he was. In reflecting on this situation he answers:

To me, in my opinion, if you’re Black, you’re Black. That's just what it is. If whether you choose to hang around Black people or hang around white people or Hispanic people or any type of people, you are who you are. And um, so as far as labeling people, “Oh, you’re Black or you're a regular Black person, or you're an immigrant or you're a this or you're an African American or you're mixed with this,” I really think you can’t do that because it's just so many different mixes in America. I mean it's good if people want to say, I identify with, “Yeah, I'm Black,” but people are also from this place or that place. I think that's a good thing, but at the same time I don’t think its’ a huge difference to where people can say, "Oh, you can’t say you're Black," or you can’t say this. Like if you’re Black, you're Black.

Peter brings up several ideas that other respondents shared. The first is that your day-to-day interactions do not dictate your racial identity. That is, “whether you hang around Black people or hang around white people,” is not an important determinant of your racial status in the United States. Secondly, he argues that no one person can police who is and who is not Black. Finally, he points out that there are multiple types of Black people; African Americans, immigrants, and racially mixed people may all be considered Black by others and consider themselves Black. These three themes run through both African American and Black immigrant responses to my question, “Who is Black?”

Most of the African American respondents broadened their notion of who they imaged to be within a Black community when they got to college; here they learned more about the racial histories of various countries but also met Black people of a range of
ethnicities. For example, Jason attended an event where Rosa Clemente spoke about her own identity as “Puerto Rican Black woman;” Jason summarizes:

Like, she was talking about how she’s not Hispanic because she doesn’t trace her origins to Spain more or less to Africans who were brought to Puerto Rico. And so I was like, Well, yeah. The more she started talking, I was like yeah, Puerto Ricans are Black to me if you define it that way.

In addition to this talk, Jason mentions that when his girlfriend went to Ecuador, she spent her semester with an Afro-Latino family. He explained that this was a learning experience for him as well since he did not know that Afro-Latinos existed in the first place. These new experiences helped him to reshape his considerations about Black identities. He answers my question concerning who he thought of as Black:

Uh, who’s Black? That’s a really complex question, cause recently I started thinking of Black as a more global thing. As far as Africans go, I would consider Black just as well as like Afro-Latinos or yeah. I would say Afro-Latinos...Or it’s like Black is a more inclusive term. And so when I think of myself as Black, just Black globally, but Black American would be more like in America.

Respondents recognized that there were various types of Black people all over the world, and while they might have thought of themselves personally as Black American or African American, they thought that Black was a more inclusive identity that encompassed Black people from just about anywhere. Laura, and African American woman, who attends school in Boston responded:

Um, and so I just think that we’re all Black or African American. And um, the only thing that I have noticed a difference with though is with immigrants who identify themselves by their nationality, you know? So I do think at the same time even though we’re all Black and all African American in the US, at the same time, too, I do recognize, you know, people...You can be Nigerian or you could be Cape Virdian and stuff like that so, I think we’re all the same, but at the same time there are differences based on where you come from.
Extant literature suggests that Black immigrants might think differently about race and racial identities than African Americans, not only because they have their own sensibilities about who is of what race and what race is, but also because they might want to distance themselves from an identity that is “peculiarly totalizing;” or in other words, they want to remove themselves from an “identity that has been applied to anyone of African descent, even when it fails to capture the social heritage of individuals whose cultures and identities were not formed in the particularly American context of slavery, discrimination, and segregation” (Bailey 2001). While that sentiment may exist, the majority of my first and second generation Black respondents agreed with their African American counterparts: there are many types of people of African descent, but all are Black. Antwon succinctly puts it: “I think that’s the one thing that connects both is the fact that like yes, I’m from Nigeria or you’re from Mississippi, but at the same time, we’re Black.”

Black immigrants do have the luxury of identifying as something other than their racial identity when they have the chance, but many of them have made the decision to identify as Black as an effort to communicate solidarity with various types of people of African descent. Stacy, a second-generation Haitian, asserts:

Like I said before, I consider myself Black because I know that there are people who are actually, you know...Like I know that my ancestry, our ancestry originated in Africa. I’m aware of that; that’s how I got my dark skin. Um, but um, I think because of the fact that I think that Caribbeans are different from people from Africa, you know, people from Haiti, people from Nigeria, people from Zimbabwe, Kenya, all those kind of things. Like there’s a certain pride that comes with that, and I would never want to take away from that pride by just restricting myself to being African American. So I identify as Black to kind of encompass all of that, you know.

In the same spirit, Evelyn, a second generation Dominican woman, explains:

I think to call yourself Black is an affirmation, is a political affirmation, too, especially given the Civil Rights Era and Black Power and things like that. So
I think that they can be one in the same. However, um, a Dominican isn’t African American, right. Someone from Trinidad is not African American in the sense that our ancestors didn’t necessarily come to the United States. Like we all came from descendants of slaves and have a similar history depending on the politics of different countries or whatever, so I understand the response when someone says, “I’m not Black, I’m this.” I mean it has negative and positive. Like I understand that you're saying that you're different from an African American culture, but you're also saying that you don’t want to be--I don’t know. It gets complicated in that sense. But I do think that the words can be different cause I think that Black is more something that people call themselves, like people choose to call themselves. And African American, I guess, is something you kind of just are. I don’t know, like Dominican American, Trinidadian American, I don’t know. I just think it depends on the person speaking.

Evelyn communicates very clearly that people of various ethnicities have the choice to opt out of identifying as Black, and some do. Some people do not want to be associated with a certain historical legacy and contemporary stereotypes, in general, and perhaps want to distance themselves from African Americans, more specifically. But Evelyn sees identifying as Black or not identifying as Black as a political choice, as a choice to distance yourself from or join with other racially Black people. Stacy and Evelyn, both Black immigrants, as well as other respondents, express that they are well aware that Blacks are not a homogenous group, but instead agree that “there are a lot of things that fall under the umbrella of Black,” as Rosa, second generation Ethiopian, puts in plain words.

**Black Community formed by Shared Experiences**

African American respondents expressed a feeling of shared identity with Black immigrants to the United States, and first and second generation Black immigrants mirrored that feeling. But race on its surface is primarily a marker of phenotype and other physical features. It is the characteristics and stereotypes that are attached to these features
that make race meaningful. A few respondents felt that they share a racial identity with various ethnic groups of African descent simply because they share the same physical features, but the overwhelming majority of respondents provided insight into what they thought it meant to be Black beyond phenotype. Two major themes arise in their explanation of who belongs to a larger (abstract) Black community of African Americans and Black immigrants. The first is that although each ethnic group had different experiences with racism and discrimination, they all shared a historical legacy of marginalization. Black identity is global because Blacks have been constructed as marginalized people all over the world. The second theme that arose was that Black people in America, despite their ethnicity, are still affected negatively by racism. These are all expressions of diasporic consciousness.

Both African Americans and Black immigrants were well aware of the various but shared histories of Black people around the world. Several of them mentioned these similar histories tied those in the Diaspora together. John, an immigrant from South Africa, explains, “I feel like Black is like an all-encompassing idea.” Again, like many other respondents, John has a very broad idea about who he believes is Black. I ask what, in his opinion, is the meaning of a shared Black identity, and he responds:

Well, I think, um, I think it means we have a shared history, a shared experience. In a sense that like obviously racism happens everywhere—in Africa, in Europe, and America. And all of us have been affected in one way or another by it. And I think in some ways it continues today, so I think it’s like that shared sense of like being treated like second class citizens of sorts. I think that’s what makes us, you know, Black.

Michael, an African American from Washington, provides a similar explanation concerning why he considers both African Americans and Black immigrants as pan-ethnic or racial group members:
I think so mainly just because like racism isn’t just in America. It’s not just an American concept. It’s different in all parts of the world, but like for example, like I was thinking of too many categories, people from Africa and people from the Caribbean. And so, you know, Haiti was the first nation to be like a free Black state, and that’s a very large part of Haitian culture, so there’s this understanding of, you know, "At one point we had to go through this struggle," and in Africa, I mean, colonization still plays a huge role in people’s lives. So there’s the understanding too, of white people coming in, and so it’s different each part of the country, but I think there’s the same understanding that, you know, racism affects us because we look different.

Both John and Michael suggest that while racism in Europe, Africa, the Caribbean and the United States all look different, they have the same result of othering and marginalizing people, especially those of African descent. Their opinions mirror the commentary of Black diaspora scholars, who center notions of Black diaspora and identity around ideas of a global nature of anti-blackness (Bashi 2004; Brock 1996; Kelley 1999; Paterson and Kelley 2000). W.E.B. DuBois suggested that the colorline belts the world, so “the Negro problem in America is but a local phase of a world problem” (quoted by Kelley 1999). My respondents seemed to recognize that idea, and in turn have developed a broader conceptualization of Black identity by looking beyond the frame of the nation-state to find ties that bind Black people around the world.

While some respondents stressed that a shared history of subjugation was important in determining who is Black and who is a member of a larger Black community, others emphasized on-going effects of racism in determining who should be a group member. Respondents saw racism as a contemporary, consistent and on-going factor shaping Black identity. Alexis, an African American woman from Trenton, New Jersey, provides an example of this way of thinking:

I feel like [the Black community is] everyone whether it’s, even people don’t always identify. So I think that it’s Black Americans, I think that’s immigrant African Americans, I think that it’s Black Latinos, I think that it’s everyone
that’s in that group that has to ties to Africa at some point in time. As far, yeah...when I use it I think of it as more inclusive even though people don’t always identify as that. I still think that society reacts to them in a certain way, even though I know there’s like grey areas and people that you can’t always tell and things like that. But I still think that if society treats you a certain way based on what you look like, that’s what makes you Black.

Two things stand out here. One is that Alexis argues that being Black or belonging to a Black community is in some ways involuntary; that is, for Alexis race is ascribed to you thereby making you a member of the group. This is not unlike Michael who identifies as Black because he felt like he had no other choice. Laura articulated a similar idea, when she argues that all of people African descent in the U.S. are Black, “Just because that’s how society has kind of, you know, constructed race.” There is a sense that people’s ability to move from one racial group to another is severely constrained because racial boundaries are so rigid in the United States.

This sentiment was not lost on first and second generation Black immigrants. Evelyn makes a point that illuminates that being Black is not an essentialized identity, but rather it is one that arises from experiences of being a racial group member. Dawson (1994b) argues that the reasons why a Black counterpublic came into existence today—constrained opportunity structures, racial discrimination in housing and employment markets, health and wealth disparities—remain the same reasons why a Black counterpublic exists now. Evelyn, a second generation Dominican, articulates Dawson’s argument through an explanation of who is included within a Black community and why:

When I think of Black, I don’t necessarily think of only African American. I think of Black descendents, African descendents, um, and I guess that’s the [diversity] I find in that. So, but in general I think it’s a community that no matter what has been significantly, not oppressed, but like significantly marginalized and disadvantaged. And through that there needs to be some community...If there weren’t a system of oppression, the community would be unnecessary is how I think of it.
Evelyn discussed how she felt that for the most part African Americans and Black immigrants were treated similarly because of their shared position in America’s racial hierarchy. Most of the respondents, at some point in their interview, discussed the notion that light is faster than sound; or in other words, people tend to judge others based on their looks first and generally do not take the time to learn about a person’s background; it is only later, through verbal communication, might a person analyze a person’s identity more carefully and critically, but many respondents argued that even after learning the ethnicity of a person of African descent, chances are that they will not be treated any differently than an African American would be.

**Ethnic Differences and Intraracial Tension**

Extant literature on first generation Black immigrants emphasizes the attempts of this group to distance themselves from African Americans (Nteta 2006). African Americans know and espouse negative stereotypes about Black immigrants as well. The picture that I have painted so far has been one of mutual recognition and feelings of a shared sense of community. While most respondents tended to view Blacks of various ethnicities as encompassing one racial group and, therefore, one racial community, they also pointed out instances of conflict and distancing on the part of African Americans and Black immigrants, alike. These conflicts and how people respond to them are important because while respondents recognize that they are lumped together by a dominant white American society, group members still have agency to determine whether they will embrace the identity placed onto them or make an effort to distance themselves from their ascribed racial group.
African Americans’ Attitudes about Black Immigrants

When prompted, all of the respondents were able to discuss times when they noticed African Americans and Black immigrants making an effort to communicate that they are different from the ethnic out-group members. Laura attends a school in Boston where, according to her, intraracial tensions are high; she is the president of the Black Student Union but finds that student groups for Caribbeans and Africans avoid working with her organization. She describes a situation that she contends is representative of the intraracial atmosphere at her college:

And [African Americans and Black immigrants] seem to get along pretty well, but there were times when it was different. So, for example, the other Black American boy and a Haitian boy got into an argument, and the Haitian boy said...Well, the Black boy said to him, "Oh, nigga this blah blah blah." And the Haitian boy said, "What? Nigger. I’m not no nigger. You’re a nigger," like that to him. So that just kind of like, whew! That stirred it up. And them also, too, sometimes the Haitian students, you know, um they say that Black Americans don’t treat them the same. They say that Black Americans look down on them, make fun of their culture, their music, they foods they eat, you know.

Laura shows both African Americans and Black immigrants participate in distancing. While the extant literature suggests that Black immigrants tend to distance or differentiate themselves from African American, Laura provides an example of how both African Americans and Black immigrants use negative stereotypes and derogatory terms to denigrate the other group. Naomi further elaborates on this point. She points to the fact that these acts of distancing are by no means new, in fact, attempts to differentiate oneself from another ethnic group are well-documented throughout history.

When I was younger, in elementary school we would have a few Africans, and they would call the Africans names like African-booty-scratchers or whatever, and I feel like a lot of that has to do with...I remember actually in a class I took
called The Anthropology of Race. Fredrick Douglass said something like, "Well, we should be happy with the progress we've made because now we're not in Africa living in huts," and I think that's kind of the perception maybe that people...or...Americans, all Americans have of Africans—that they're primitive and uncivilized.

What is particularly interesting about Naomi’s observation is that the stereotypes about ethnic out-groups are so deeply engrained that they change very little over time. Of course, stereotypes are constantly espoused and therefore perpetuated in popular culture. Bruce and Laura, as examples, make mention of incredibly popular Black films, including Eddie Murphy in Coming to America and Ice Cube’s Barbershop where the Black immigrant characters are caricatures and personify negative stereotypes about Africans.

Another thing that stands out from these interviews is the notion that while many of the African American respondents noticed that Black immigrants might make attempts to distance themselves, they seem to understand why someone might try to differentiate themselves. Again, Laura:

Yeah. I think that what happens is that when Black people are out of the US, in their own countries, the image that they see of Black people is a stereotype. And so when they get here they don’t want to associate with that at all. So, it’s like disassociate yourself from it that way you can be considered better.

Peter also points to the fact that negative stereotypes are prevalent and may be a reasonable explanation for why Black immigrants might choose to distance themselves from African Americans:

I mean a lot of times I have heard of, I’ve read books, and I’ve heard actual Africans say that they don’t trust Black people in America cause of what they've seen in the media or what they’ve heard and how negatively portrayed black people can be, and how lazy people can be portrayed and

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5 Waldo E. Martin in The Mind of Frederick Douglass explains that Frederick Douglas made an “assertion that the Negro was better off as a slave in a civilized society like the United States than a free person in an uncivilized setting like Africa” (1985: 215).
African Americans can understand why Black immigrants who learned negative stereotypes about African Americans might want to distance themselves, but they were not necessarily sympathetic. Instead, they communicated a “they know not what they do” sentiment about Black immigrants who will eventually learn not only that these stereotypes are incorrect, but more importantly they will learn how easily stereotypes can be attached to any Black person. Nicole expresses a sentiment similar African American respondents and Black immigrants, too:

I would say yes [Black immigrants and African Americans recognize the effects of racism] because when you, you might not come here thinking a certain way or you might think, or you might place more blame on the Black community because of things that they’ve done, things that they haven’t done. You know, cause it’s definitely a two sided issue. But then on the other hand, I think so, I think they’re more critical, like more Black immigrants are critical with the things that the Black community does to perpetuate these things or not to change these things. But on the other hand, I think that once they’re here for a while, you know, when a cop or whoever looks at you, they don’t know if you’re first or second generation, if your family’s been here for forever, whatever. So, you sort of get treated the same way. So they may be more successful or more whatever and think that these issues don’t affect me, but if you happen to be in a situation where something like that might affect you, then you get treated the same way. So I think over time, they’re views and their experiences may change.

Many of the respondents felt that there was a learning curve that Black immigrants encounter upon arriving the U.S. For them, this learning curve is climbed not only by gaining a better understanding of structural racism and the U.S.’s racial hierarchy but also by personally experiencing negative personal interactions due to your race, which they implied are almost inevitable. My African American respondents tended to be considerate of the fact that Black immigrants might not initially understand how race works in America. They also expressed that they could understand that Black immigrants made an effort to
express their ethnic or national identity because they are proud of that identity. African Americans, however, were intolerable of Black immigrants who felt that they could somehow transcend race or who used their racial identity to gain material benefit but distanced themselves from African Americans when their shared racial identity was perceived as inconvenient. Joshua, for example, talks about one of his classmates from college:

I had this one girl in a class, and she liked worked very hard to separate herself. Like make it known, "I am not African-American. I am African American." Like Triple-A. That's what she's like, "Y'all are a double-A, and I'm a triple-A." And, it was crazy because I'm like “Okay.” And it was this whole thing. And I had never experienced it before where she made it clear not only were her parents like from Africa but that like she was better than anybody else, any other Black person in the class because of and that like, you know, white people treated her differently and that like the way-- the plight of Black people, you know, that are African Americans, you know, is completely separate from her, from her experience and how she is in no way, you know, similar to us. And uhh! In my mind, I'm like, yeah, but when they see your skin, you look like me.

I asked Joshua if he thought that the way his classmate acted, distancing through making her nationality known, was problematic. He responded:

Uh, no. I can understand national pride. I can understand it. I think that it's different when you are using your national pride to make me feel less than. And I feel like [that classmate] does that, but the other Black immigrants that I've come in contact with don't say like, "I'm this. And you're that. And I'm better than you because I'm from a different country than you are." And I think that that concept is what makes it different.

Joshua communicated a sentiment that other African Americans have. They could understand that Black immigrants want to make known their ethnicity because they are proud of their culture and their country, but they were not tolerable of those who distanced themselves solely because they felt that they were superior to African Americans. On the other side of this coin, some African Americans communicated that while they understood
that Black immigrants might feel a connection to both their racial and ethnic identity, that it was unacceptable to situationally choose which identity you want to associate with for material benefits.

Peter tells a story about a time when some of his Black teammates were joking around about how Blacks in America were treated during slavery or Jim Crow, and his Rwandan teammate said, "Man, I'm from Africa. I didn't have to go through that like y'all. Like they brought y'all on the boats over here or whatever not me." Peter mentions that everyone laughed about it, but when he looked back at the situation he did not think that it was a joking matter:

And so, I kind of just realized that, you know, in some situations, um, people identify with certain groups or feel part of a group when it's convenient to and when it's easy to, but then when something bad happens or something goes wrong and they can step out and distance themselves from it or anything like that. Like, "Oh, I'm not a lazy Black person. I'm a hardworking" or whatever or "I'm not, you know, violent or anything like that." When it's convenient to, um, they'll identify, but easily step out like, "That's not me," and act like it has nothing to do with them at all or anything like that.

He goes on to say:

Even though it was only a joke, and we all thought it was funny, it was just like thinking back on it, it was like...I'm pretty sure if it could happen like that, it happens with bigger situations, with different things that people identify with or choose to pick and choose what Blackness or what Black qualities or whatever you would call it to attribute to themselves and what not to.

African American respondents were understanding if Black immigrants wanted differentiate themselves because of pride in their culture, heritage or country of origin. African Americans' tolerance ran low, however, when Black immigrants perpetuated negative Black stereotypes, ultimately serving to perpetuate the U.S. racialized hierarchy through adoption of “white racial frames” (Feagin 2008). This attitude was most prevalent
when African American respondents observed Black immigrants expressing that racism was not “their” problem or that they were model minorities.

Black Immigrants’ Attitudes about African Americans

Black immigrants also expressed that they felt that African Americans might attempt to distance themselves from Black immigrants, and many pointed to their co-ethnics, particularly their parents, as culprits in perpetuating negative stereotypes about African Americans. I asked Ann if she believed that Black immigrants and African Americans got along; she answered, “Yes and no,” and elaborated on sources of conflict:

I think that they [African Americans and Black immigrants] don’t get along because my mom has told me stories about how like Black Americans have made fun of her accent or say like she’s smelly. I’ve heard some of these stories about that. And vice versa. Like, Oh, they’re lazy or they’re ghetto or they’re going to commit a crime or something.

One of the major sources of conflict between Black immigrants and African Americans are the negative perceptions they have about one another. African Americans are reported to depend on stereotypes concerning foreignness and Black immigrants being primitive. Similarly, almost all of the Black immigrants responded that they had grown up hearing their parents and other co-ethnics espouse negative stereotypes about Black Americans. My interview respondents, however, generally did not adopt these sentiments for three major reasons. First, they understood or came to understand the structural nature of racism in the United States. Second, many experienced racist personal interactions or knew somebody who had, and third, they recognized that when people were talking badly about Black people, they were implicated because they were also seen as Black.

While Black immigrants were well aware of the negative stereotypes about African
Americans, they were not necessarily adherents to these ideas because they had a better understanding about the structural nature of race and racism in the United States; that is, potential negative attitudes on the part of the respondents were attenuated by a keen sense that stereotypes were a means by which America's racial hierarchy was maintained. Nym was raised in Nigeria until he moved to the United States when he was about eleven years of age. He explains that immigrants tend to buy into racial stereotypes because they do not understand the nature American racism:

I do believe there’s tension in some situations and there’s perceptions on both sides that are wrong. Yeah, but I think that there is and in some cases a superiority complex on the immigrants part because they tend to look at the African American--or the racial situation in the US, um, without, without you know, actually, without a good knowledge, you know, an in dept knowledge of exactly like what the situation is and the historical implications of like things today and the actual reasons for injustices and inequalities in the US. They presume that it’s because of these very stereotypical or currently, or proverbial answers to like the problem like Black people are lazy or African Americans are lazy or blah blah blah blah. You know like they buy into a lot, to the, to these normative ideas that are fueled in American society and so they tend to, I guess, spew them out and imbibe them in the same way that like, I guess, a white American would because they don’t have any idea of exactly what caused these, you know, what perpetuate and propagate them.

Nym expresses a sentiment shared among the Black immigrant respondents. When Black immigrants arrive to the U.S. they have preconceived notions about African Americans largely gained through the media. They tend to use these stereotypes as explanations for racial disparities rather than recognizing that racial injustices and inequalities in the United States are institutionalized when they first arrive to the United States.

Similarly, Ahmad observes, "But definitely, when you're on the outside looking in, you don't see it as well. When you get here, you don't see it as a problem cause you see the situation you're coming from is so much worse that you see this place as, you know. All you
see are the opportunities, but once you, you're here long enough, you do.” Ahmad also brings to the discussion the notion that Black immigrants see the United States as the land of opportunity, leading people to believe that the reason why African Americans are in their position in society is because they are lazy and rely on race as an excuse. However, Ahmad as well as others suggest that once “you're here long enough, you do” recognize that racism and discrimination towards Black people of various ethnicities is widespread and constraining.

What is more, the respondents also reported that they have either been on the other side of these stereotypes or know somebody who has been victim of these negative stereotypes. Black immigrant respondents repeatedly mentioned that they believed white Americans really do not make a distinction between native-born and foreign-born Blacks. Some did point to the notion that perhaps a person with a distinct accent or way of dress may be treated differently from African Americans. Daise, for example, suggests: “There is a struggle with like, I guess, racism in general. I mean it doesn’t matter if you’re not from the United States. If you look black, you’re probably going to be treated the same way unless you have an accent then they’ll treat you, uh, a little bit worse, I think.” Like Daise, others mentioned that the fact of being an immigrant was a potential cause for being discriminated against, but beyond that, the Black immigrant respondents recognized the prospect of being discriminated against because of their race rather than their ethnicity, thereby reducing their chances of adopting negative stereotypes about African Americans.

The first and second generation Black immigrant respondents recognized that they were racialized as Black. However, because they felt a connection to other Black people, my respondents were intolerant of negative talk about African Americans, sometimes even confronting their loved-ones about it. Stacy, a Haitian-American woman, and Ahmad, a
second generation Eritrean, illustrate this. First, Stacy:

Like even like in my own family, like sometimes like, you know, we'll be watching like BET and, like, you know my grandmother, like my older, old school aunts, "Oh, look at those Black Americans just shaking their butt," and I'm just like, "We all Black!"

Stacy points out that her grandmother and her aunts assume that the people in the music videos are African Americans because the actors are doing something that they do not approve of. Stacy, however, suggests that this distinction cannot be made so easily. What is more, she also makes the point that her grandmother, aunt and herself share a racial identity with those on the television. For Stacy, speaking harshly about African American and other Blacks was an affront to her personal identity. Ahmad provides another example:

I know African people, like African immigrants, who are racist against Black people. I hear that from people all the time. My mom's like, 'Why you saggin' your pants,' you know. There's a saying like, "the hoodlums," it's in our language. It's like, "Why you being like the hoodlum?" I'm like "Mom, you're considered Black too."

Through these responses we are able to see racial formation at work. That is, we see how Black immigrants become racialized. The respondents suggest that even though some immigrants want to distance themselves from African Americans, society has grouped Black immigrants and African Americans and respond to them in the same ways. My respondents resist adopting and perpetuating stereotypes because while there are variations in ethnicity among Black people in the United States, it is their racial identity that affects the way people perceive them and the way people treat them, and ultimately it is their racial identity more so than their ethnic identity that will affect their life chances.
Discussion and Conclusion

The responses above show that African Americans and Black immigrants do embrace racial identities that are inclusive of ethnically and culturally different Black people, but there are limits, especially for African Americans. On the one hand, African Americans recognize that Black immigrants might come to the United States with a false sense of the racial landscape and allow for immigrants to learn what race and racism mean in this society. On the other hand, African Americans have little tolerance for Black immigrants who only identify with their race when it is convenient. African Americans tend to embrace those who want to identify as Black as a political identity, but those who believe that Black immigrants might benefit from and take away hard-won opportunities made possible by the Civil Rights movement may be more wary of extending racial boundaries to include them (Swarns 2004).

The responses by Black immigrants show that their racial and ethnic identities are not in competition, but rather each identity becomes more or less salient depending on the situation. When they are near their co-ethnics, they tend to identify with the ethnic identity, but when they are around other racial group members, their racial identity becomes more central to their self-image. Nevertheless, they tend to embrace an identity that is inclusive of African Americans, especially those who recognize that both historical legacies and contemporary racism within the borders of the U.S. tie them together.

I have shown in this chapter that both native-born and foreign-born Blacks shape boundaries of Black identity. Both Black immigrants and African Americans are also constantly contesting definitions and labels of Black and “African American” and other hyphenated identities as well. This is important because racial labels have a major influence on the way that people understand their identity. I believe these respondents’ conversations
provide scholars with significant reasons and rationales for recognizing that a new understanding of Blackness must be developed in order to better understand Black politics.

While this set of responses about Black group membership, identity and community help us better understand the ways in which Black people are always influencing the boundaries of Blackness, it is only a gateway into the larger concerns of this study.

Recognizing that one is a group member does not necessarily lead to group identity, or a psychological attachment to that group. As such, still unanswered are the questions of whether group membership does evolve into a group identity for Black immigrants as it has for African Americans, and further whether racial identity among Black immigrants can be politically mobilized. The data presented here provides hints that Black immigrants’ and African Americans’ identities influence their outlook on life and politics, but these respondents are in some ways very exceptional; the are college-age students who are currently engaged in learning about race, politics and society and further, they are at an age when they are most likely to be thoughtful about their identities. What are the mechanisms that serve to develop a sense of racial identity among the masses of Black immigrants and African Americans? Is a sense of racial group consciousness likely to arise among Black immigrants as it has for African Americans? While African Americans share a sense of identity with Black immigrants, are they also likely to embrace the political issues that are specific to immigrants (e.g. bilingual education, immigration reform)? The experimental and nationally representative survey data presented in the next three chapters bring evidence to bear on these questions.
Chapter 4. Broadening Black Identity: Evidence in National Data

The boundaries of ethnic and racial groups are always in flux (Barth 1969). Racial and ethnic identities are flexible and contextual, and they constantly change due to influences from institutions as well as individuals. From a top-down perspective, American institutions like the Census Bureau and the Supreme Court have dictated who is of what race, thereby shaping boundaries of exclusion (Davis 1991; Nobles 2000). On the other hand, from a bottom-up perspective, individuals play a role in shaping group boundaries as well—policing them, resisting them, and introducing new ones. Consider how Irish, Italian and Polish immigrants worked their way into whiteness by eschewing a subordinate Black identity (Ignatiev 2008; Roediger 2005, 2007). Another, more contemporary example can be seen not only in the way Latinos refuse to identify as either black or white in their day-to-day interactions but also in the way they challenge larger institutions like the Census by identifying as “other” (Norlund 2010; Rodriguez 2000).

What it means to be Black is also changing. Dawson (1994b) asserts, “the meaning of being Black, who is ‘allowed’ to be Black, and the content of a Black agenda(s) is now more fiercely contested...than before” (195). The migration of Black immigrants to the United States is just one of the factors that may play a role in reshaping the contours of Black identity. Traditionally, “African American” has been viewed and understood as both a racial identity and an ethnic identity (Waters 1991), but the influx of African and Caribbean immigrants to the United States illuminates the fact that there is (and has always been) ethnic variation among Black people in the United States (Bailey 2000, 2001).

Black immigrants, especially first generation, tend to identify with their ethnicity—with a country-based identity rather than a racial identity (Butterfield 2004a, 2004b;
Rogers 2006; Waters 1999a). One might expect that these immigrants should not be constrained or forced to identify as “just” Black because, as some argue, the once rigid Black-White racial dichotomy has become more flexible thereby expanding the space to make claim to non-traditional identities (Kasinitz 1992; Waters 2000). The United States, however, remains a racialized social system that places Blacks—despite one’s country of origin—on the bottom of the country’s social, political, and economic hierarchies. So while it seems that Black immigrants have the option to identify themselves with either their race or their ethnicity, or both, in the US “ethnic identification is often a matter of cultural symbolism or nostalgic fantasy” while racial identification, on the other hand, is a significant determinant on one’s life chances (Rogers 2001).

Black immigrants come to the U.S. with their own sensibilities about what race and ethnicity mean. Moreover, they tend to describe their racial and ethnic identity in ways that are foreign to the average American¹, but upon arrival, immigrants are generally (and involuntarily) ascribed a racial identity. Bryce-Laporte (1972) and Milton Vickerman (2001a, 2001b) suggest that Black immigrants are “cross-pressured” when choosing an identity. They must balance their understandings of race in their country of origin and the reality of race in the United States as well as negotiate their identity within that balance.

The questions that underlie this chapter are concerned with the outcomes of such a negotiation. What are the underlying determinants of Black immigrants’ racial identification? How do these determinants compare to those of native-born African Americans? Under what conditions are Black immigrants likely to identify with a racial identity or an ethnic identity? A theory of diasporic consciousness predicts that while there

¹ The differences between race in the U.S., Latin America and the Caribbean as well as in Africa are discussed in section entitled “Race and Place” in this chapter.
may be differences in the extent to which African Americans and Black immigrants feel close to other group members, perceive out-group members’ perceptions of Blacks, and view their racial identity as central to their self-image, racialized experiences within the American context will shape foreign- and native-born Blacks’ racial identities similarly. The results in this chapter provide evidence supporting this theory.

**Race, Racial Identity and Ethnicity**

Group identification is defined as the psychological attachment one has to her or his primordial group (Conover 1988; Gurin et al. 1980; Miller et al. 1981). Group identification is an important consequence of group membership. Racial identity is the significance and meaning that one places on their racial group membership (Sellers et al.1998). Racial identity affects how one sees the world—be it how they process interpersonal interactions or perceive acts of discrimination—and, consequently, how they behave (Jefferson and Caldwell 2002; Sellers and Shelton 2003; Shelton and Sellers 2000).

Scholars disagree over the degree about whether race and ethnicity are essentially the same concept (Denton and Massey 1989; Phinney 1996; Wade 1997). Phinney (1996), for example, suggests that the concept of race should be avoided because “biologists find more differences within so-called racial groups than between them” (918). That is, we should discard the use of race because it has no biological basis. While Phinney is correct that race is not a biological reality, but this does not mean race and ethnicity are conceptually the same (Cornell and Hartmann 2007; Spencer and Markstrom-Adams 1990; Wade 1997). Cornell and Hartmann explain that “race has been the most powerful and persistent group boundary in American history, distinguishing, to varying degrees, the
experiences of those classified as non-White from those classified as White” (2007:26). Race is the value-laden characteristics ascribed to otherwise neutral physical attributes. Racial classification, therefore, has been a symbol of social status and a boundary of exclusion.

A racialized social system is a society that doles out social goods based on racial group membership, where some are rewarded while others are penalized (Bonilla-Silva 1997). Racial categories represent systems of power and hierarchy, and “racial classification has implications for a person's life chances because racial stratification is a social hierarchy” (Bashi and McDaniel 1997). In the U.S., whiteness has been ascribed in positive ways and positive social and psychological “wages” are provided to those who were classified as white (Roediger 2007). Those who were categorized as Black were once relegated to slavery, were not afforded the rights of citizenship, and throughout much of American history, were treated as second-class human beings. Much has changed since slavery and Jim Crow; today, Blacks and other racial minorities legally have the benefits of citizenship due to changes in the constitution and there have successful attempts to ameliorate racial disparities through legislation, such as the Voting Rights Acts. These important and noticeable changes notwithstanding, still today, racial group membership is a significant determinant of one’s opportunity structure.

Though the conceptualization and usage of the term “ethnicity” has changed over time, ethnicity can best be understood in terms of culture, language, and region (Itzigsohn and Dore-Cabral 2000; Omi and Winant 1994; Oppenhiemer, 2001; Wade 1997). “Ethnic group membership accords the individual a cultural identity, a sense of belonging and group pride, a set of prescribed norms, values and social behaviors” (Spencer and Markstrom-Adams 1990). At the foundation of ethnic group identity is an imagined belief in common
descent whether such “blood relations” actually exist; that is, “ethnic groups are self-conscious populations” (Cornell and Hartmann 1997).

Ethnicity is not as salient an identity as race in the United States. In the United States, ethnic identity generally does not affect one’s life chances, to the same degree that race does. Waters (1990) argues that for white Americans, ethnicity only affects whites if they want it to; white Americans can make their ethnicity salient or invisible. Further, people are not generally treated one way or another because of their ethnicity. Race and ethnicity should be understood as separate concepts largely because of the history and connotation around them. Any attempt to combine the concepts or to ignore the types of implications each has on an individual or society is the “blur the particular history by which these identifications come to have the force they do” (Wade 1997:20, emphasis in original text). Race has very much to do with power, subordination, and hierarchy while ethnicity is a matter of cultural nostalgia and, perhaps, invokes a particular history or culture. Ethnicity in some societies is hierarchical (Horowitz 2000), but in the United States one’s ethnicity often has very little to do with a person’s life chances (Denton and Massey 1989; Helms and Talleyrand 1997).

Since there exists quite a bit of racial diversity among Latinos, they provide an excellent case to study the relative influences of race and ethnicity. Denton and Massey (1989) find that Latinos who are phenotypically white are more likely to be integrated into white residential neighborhoods while Afro-Latinos were highly segregated into low-

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2 I would argue that ethnicity is not as important as race is in the United States since it is race is grounded in notions of hierarchy. “Latino” and “Asian” are defined as pan-ethnicities but I would argue that these identities have been racialized. Mainstream society generally does not make distinctions based on nativity, generation, or national origin within these groups, thereby treating them as a racial group. Whiteness scholars also suggest that whiteness is not homogenous, and not all whites are “equally” white (Hattam 2007; Pugliese 2002). Anti-Semitism is an excellent example in the way that ethnicity negatively influences the lives of a sub-group of whites, namely Jewish Americans.
income, Black neighborhoods. They conclude, “race remains a salient dimension of cleavage within the United States, and that it is more important than ethnicity in explaining patterns of residential segregation” (Denton and Massey 1989:806). Darity, Guilkey, and Winfrey (1996) find that Black Hispanics are paid less than white Hispanics, and the difference in returns for education and other social capital is due to racial discrimination. They also find that while Black West Indians are likely to make more money than African Americans because of superior education backgrounds, Black West Indians are also not only like to make 60 percent less than white Americans but also the return on their education is also less than whites because of racial discrimination. These studies show that while ethnicity influences economic and residential outcomes, racial discrimination is the predominant influence in disparities between groups.

This idea can be extended to Blacks in the United States. Despite their ethnic variation, race is a major influence of the lives of Black people. Some have argued that Black immigrants tend to do better than African Americans socioeconomically because of their culture, and they go on to suggest as evidence that race is not a determining factor of Blacks’ life chances, the facts that Black immigrants tend to have higher levels of education, income, home ownership and entrepreneurship than African Americans (Economist 1996; Sowell 1978). This is tautological. These comparisons are between group members, thereby ignoring the variable—race—which is a major determinant of socioeconomic variation among groups (Bashi and McDaniel 1997). Black immigrants in comparison to Black Americans are doing quite well, but in comparison to white Americans, they are doing relatively poorly, similar to their racial counterparts (Darity, Guilkey and Winfrey 1996; Model 1991). Sowell’s (1978) argument also fails to recognize that immigrants are a self-selected group who tend to be motivated to improve their status and generally are middle-
class in their country of origin (Steinberg 2005: Vickerman 2001b). Butcher (1994) finds that African American men who migrate from one state to find better opportunities mirror the employment rates and wages of Black immigrants to the United States. Pierre (2004), who also takes issue with a culture-based argument, suggests “the current discourse of ‘ethnic distinctiveness’ perpetuates a form of racism under a theory that denies the relevance of race while it continually recodes the biological notions of race as ‘culture.’”

It should be noted, however, that while in the U.S. ethnicity as a marker of difference tends to disappear for Black immigrants. Black immigrants are discriminated against just as native born African Americans are in job opportunities, in the justice system, in gaining loans for homes and business, and everyday personal interactions (Butcher 1994; Read and Emerson 2005). Such treatment should generally be attributed to race rather than ethnicity in the United States.

**Race and Place**

Definitions of race as a concept as well as racial categories change over time and from place to place. “Racial identity, as an organizing mechanism, is situationally emergent. It is shaped by cumulative social experience and is enacted in reaction to context-specific social interaction” (Davis and Gandy 1999:367). Race is a social construct. The best way to understand what socially constructed means is to look comparatively at how race is structured and understood in different societies. Black immigrants do not come to the U.S. as blank slates, but rather they have been socialized in a racial context quite different from

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3 The racial histories of the United States, Latin America and Africa are complex. My aim is to present the most dominant features of these societies’ construction of racial identity in efforts to illuminate the differences and similarities among them.
that of the U.S. Racial socialization—or the process by which people learn the meaning of their race and racial status in a particular society—shapes the way we understand our identity as well as how race might affect social status, culture, and group history (Nunnally 2010). I compare and contrast how race is constructed in the U.S., Latin America and the Caribbean, and Africa in an effort to better predict the extent to which a diasporic consciousness might be raised among Blacks from these areas of the world since their identities of are heavily influenced by what they understand from their country of origin.

**Race in the United States**

The introduction of race to the U.S. began with slavery as well as the expropriation of Indian lands by white colonists (Feagin 2000; Oppenheimer 2001; Smedley 2001). Blacks and American Indians were racialized in order to legitimize the enslavement of Africans and the expulsion and genocide of American Indians at a time when whites needed to justify America’s looming contradiction; the American creed was predicated on egalitarianism, but the discrimination and inequality was deeply embedded in the foundation for America’s political, economic and social spheres (McClain and Stewart 2010).

Race was initially founded in “science,” and later American institutions, including the courts, state and federal legislatures, and bureaucratic institutions, would continue the legacy with different language and justification. Starting at the end of the 18th century, white scientists deemed Blacks as inferior to whites. What we understand today as the notion of hypodescent comes from the idea that having one black ancestor makes one Black since “black blood” was, at the time, deemed as inferior and contaminating. Such an idea leaked from “scientific” communities to broader American institutions. Even through the 20th
century, these notions around the contamination of “black blood” and “miscegenation” contributed to shaping the boundaries of white and black racial group despite the fact that race as a biological reality was denounced.

In the United States “blackness” and being racialized as Black is a ubiquitous phenomenon. While some Americans and new immigrants to the United States have challenged the notion of the “one-drop” or the idea that one Black ancestor requires one to identify as Black, this notion of hypodescent still affects those with identifiable African attributes (Collins 2001). Black racial identity in the United States has historically been “a particularly and peculiarly totalizing identity that has been applied to anyone of African descent, even when it fails to capture the social heritage of individuals whose cultures and identities were not formed in the particularly American context of slavery, discrimination, and segregation” (Bailey 2001: 686).

Race in Latin America and the Caribbean

Many argue that because race in Latin American and the Caribbean is not constructed the same as it is in the United States, that race does not really exist or if it does it is not as important of a determinant for life chances as it is in the United States (Freye 1946; Kinsbruner 1996). Scholars who ascribe to such a notion argue that the strict dichotomy of “black-white” in the United States (where interracial marriage and sex was made illegal and racial identification is based on the notion of hypodescent—or the “one drop” rule) as well as Practices like Jim Crow laws and segregation, have made the United States a particularly vicious place for non-white people. It is argued that Spanish and Portuguese colonialists were much more apt to racial mixing, so slavery in Latin American was not nearly as brutal as it was in the US, and today while there might be some discrimination, it is “benign” and largely color and class-based (Freye 1946; Kinsbruner 1996).
In both the Caribbean and Latin America, people are categorized by their skin color thereby creating a racial spectrum denoting various degrees of racial mixture (Itzigsohn and Dore-Cabral 2000; Foner 1998). In both Latin America and the Caribbean, race is not simply a matter of physical features, however; ancestry, social class, education, wealth and occupation also serve to determine one’s racial identity (Foner 1998; Vickerman 2001b). While race relations in Latin America and the Caribbean, for the most part, have never devolved on strict racial categories, racial discrimination and hierarchy did and does exist (Itzigsohn and Dore-Cabral 2000; Nobles 2000; Marx 1998; Wade 1997).

Foner (1998) explains that in the West Indies income, occupation, living standards and associates are important rather than just skin color in determining people’s life chances. Most people in the Caribbean are Black, and Blacks tend to fill the most prestigious, lucrative and professional positions in Caribbean societies, but whiteness is still associated with wealth, privilege and power. Foner (1998) asserts that while people are aware of shade differences, “blackness is not in itself...a barrier to upward social mobility or to social acceptance at the top” (175). Vickerman (2001b) explains that in addition to the fact that Blacks are the supermajority of the population in the Caribbean, Caribbean political leaders and representatives tend to propagate the notion that their societies are diverse places where different races peacefully coexist.

In many Latin American countries a similar ideology is also promulgated through notions of *mestizaje*—the idea that a prevalence of mixed-ancestry in a society means that all of the people are racially the same—and racial democracy. Historically, many Latin American countries had large black populations as well as high rates of miscegenation. In turn, many of the elites were negatively implicated by dominant science at the time. They too could have “black” relatives and children—should they have adopted the U.S.’s one-drop rule. Instead, elites
reshaped their history and interpreted science to their benefit. They would argue that racial mixing would *improve* the racial stock of their countries though “whitening.” Racially mixed people would be whiter than their black parent (Andrews 2004; Sawyer 2006). Over time this legacy has evolved into *mestizaje* and racial democracy ideologies.

The basic tenants of these ideologies are (1) race does not exist, only color; (2) physical appearance and not origin (or race) determines a person’s color; (3) there is no discrimination because there have not been laws that allow portions of the population to be second-class citizens; (4) educated mixed-race people and lighter skinned blacks will be economically, culturally, socially and politically assimilated into the white establishment—this is called the “mulatto escape hatch,” and (5) the continued existence of the social hierarchy by color is simply a leftover from slavery rather than current day discriminatory behaviors and ideology (Freye 1946; Guimaraes 2001; Wade1997).

Both people in Latin America and the Caribbean suggest that they have a “shade” problem rather than a race problem (Dulitzy 2005; Dzidzienyo and Oboler 2005), but the distinction between race and color cannot be so easily made. The primary reason is because race and racism undergird notions of color and prejudice. There are many non-whites who occupy higher economic and social strata in Latin America and the Caribbean, but for the most part, an overwhelming proportion of poor and politically powerless people are darker skinned and/or Black (or non-white) (Dulitzky 2005.). It is here that we can more clearly see that there is a racial basis for what Sawyer (2006) calls a system of pigmentocracy—or social hierarchy based on skin-color.

This system stems from the fact that most people also seek to avoid identifying with the color that is most associated with African “origin;” most people prefer to be called anything but Black, but such rejection is in and of itself racist. Darity et al. (2008) also argue that the denial of
Black ancestry is one of the most blatant manifestations of Latin American racism. Further it should be noted, “skin color stratification requires both racism and colorism” (Hunter 2000). The notions of “whitening” and mestizaje were and are predicated on the perceived necessity to eliminate any signs of African “origin.” That is to say, the real target of color discrimination is, in fact, race (Nascimento 1980).

Whether one views race in Latin America and the Caribbean through lenses of mestizaje or through lenses of pigmentocracy, it is important to keep these ideas in mind when we consider how Black immigrants understand and develop their own racial identity while in the United States.

**Race in Africa**

Research concerning identity, difference and hierarchy in Africa predominately centers around notions of ethnicity, ethno-political, tribal or national identities (e.g. Gourevitch 1998; Nedgwa 1997; Okolie 2003), but there is a small body of literature that discusses race as an important identity in African societies. This smaller body of literature primarily focuses on the development of racial identities due to white colonization of African countries (Kornegay 2006; MacGaffey 1966; Marx 1998; Posel 2001).

A major theme that connects this body of literature is the notion of how European colonists fused notions of race and nation. More specifically, when white colonists in countries such as South Africa, Zimbabwe, Sudan and Tanzania made claim to African territories to create “formal” states, they also dictated who would be citizens within that space (MacGaffey 1966, Marx 1998; Posel 2001). Just as we saw in the United States, the boundaries of citizenship in many African countries were exclusive to those deemed white.
As such, a race-conscious colonial hierarchy served as a major force in racializing Africans as well as Indians and other Asians in various African countries.

Brennan (2006) paints a more complex picture, as he also finds racialization processes prior to European colonization; he asserts that while European concepts of race and civilization were brought over and broadly disseminated through schools, press, and colonial propaganda, “it would be a mistake to overlook earlier discourses that elaborate ideas of race” (408). Brennan (2006), whose work focuses on East African countries, shows that there existed racial hierarchies in these countries, whereby an Arab identity was viewed as dominant and mainstream, and it was the identity that was most associated with high status. Brennan (2006) explains that the Kiswahili term *ustaarabu* means “to become Arab,” and in order to assimilate into pre-colonial Swahili society, one had to distance oneself from slave origins, claims deep roots in Islam, and become “culturally” Arab.

While race, as we understand it in the U.S. context, is not easily translated into the contexts of various African countries, one can see important similarities. First, we see that even in countries were ethnic or tribal identities are emphasized, there still is possibility for hierarchy among ethnic groups. Rwanda provides an excellent example. Gourevitch (1998) shows that even though there were few differences in phenotype and other physical features between most Hutu and Tutsi Rwandans, issues of power and hierarchy were at the foundation of the 1994 conflict in Rwanda. What is more, while there may not have been physical differences, both of these tribes had stereotypes associated with them; the association of stereotypes to value-neutral group labels is a racialization process. Further, we see that in many African countries, European colonization processes lumped together various African ethnic groups, blurring distinctions between them, and then excluded these groups from enjoying equal rights. The racialization processes and the racial hierarchy that
we see today in post-colonial African countries very much mirror the United States’ racial history.

**Assimilation and Acculturation**

The “traditional,” “straight-line” path of assimilation into American mainstream has not been an option to post-1965 immigrants of color. Previously, white ethnic immigrant groups such as Italians, Irish and Jews melded into a larger white racial group through social mobility and intermarriage. Moreover, “race was an achieved rather than ascribed status” for white immigrants, perhaps because at the time a rigid black-white dichotomy ruled social relations; white ethnic immigrants were view as non-white rather than Black (Lee and Bean 2004:225). The transition of white ethnic immigrants into the white mainstream illustrates that racial boundaries are permeable and fluid, but they are also exclusionary. The boundaries of whiteness have not opened up to Asian, Latino and Black immigrants.

Since the classic straight-line assimilation model has not been helpful in explaining the experience of post-1965 immigrants of color, scholars have made an effort to develop new, more appropriate models of assimilation and explanations of acculturation rates for Asian, Latino and Black immigrants to the United States (see for examples Lee and Bean 2004; Portes and Rumbaut 1993, 1996; Portes and Zhou 1993; Rumbaut 1996; Waters 1999). In their critique of Myrdal’s *American Dilemma* (1962), Bashi and McDaniel (1997) succinctly explain how the color line has limited African Americans’ ability to assimilate but also why it will be difficult, if not impossible, for immigrants of color to do so; they argue “[Myrdal] confounds the problem of race with that of ethnicity—all person arrive on this
land with an ethnic identity but acquire (and often involuntarily so) a racial tag. It is the racial label that delimits the extent of one’s assimilability in American society” (669).

Other scholars suggest that it is the current economic structure of the U.S. that has led to a “decline” rather than upward movement of immigrant outcomes. Gans (1992) suggests that the theories of European immigrant assimilation were developed during a time in which the American economy was expanding, calling for an increased supply of physical labor, but today’s economy has changed. Gans (1992) argue that the need for physical labor has declined, thereby reducing the chances of new immigrants and their children from gaining economically. Portes and Zhou (1993) similarly argue that not only will the path of new immigrants be different than European immigrants, but further that immigrants of color will be more vulnerable to “downward assimilation” because of three reasons: “the first is color, the second is location, and the third is the absence of mobility ladder” (83). The extent to which the assimilation paths of new immigrants should be characterized as “downward” is an issue of contention among researchers, but what is clear is that the ways in which post-1965 immigrants and their offspring have integrated into the U.S. has been different from white ethnic immigrant groups of the past (and present, too).

The extent to which immigrants are able to become socially and economically mobile as well as their ability to be incorporated—or incorporate themselves—into America’s political sphere will also have much to do with their level of acculturation. Acculturation is the process of adapting to the surrounding culture (Bhatia and Ram 2001; Gibson 2001). But again, acculturation processes are “not a matter of one’s individual strategy where one has the free choice to unproblematically integrate the values of the host culture and one’s own immigrant group” (Bhatia and Ram 2001:13). Acculturation processes are shaped by where immigrants settle, whether co-ethnics surround new
immigrants or if they are isolated, and these processes are also shaped the receiving
country's response to their nationality, race, gender and class (Bhatia and Ram 2001;
Gibson 2001).

Assimilation and Acculturation of First Generation Black Immigrants

One emerging consensus in the literature on Black immigrants is that first
generation Black immigrants’ ethnic (or distinct cultural) identity is often more salient and
central than their racial identity. Many scholars have focused on Afro-Caribbeans’ tendency
to make known their ethnic identity. That is, they find that Black immigrants often make an
effort to differentiate themselves or distance from African Americans (Butterfield 2004a,
2004b; Foner 1987, 1998; Nteta 2006; Portes 2004; Rogers 2006; Waters 1999).

There are four explanations for why Afro-Caribbeans may want to distance
themselves from African Americans or Black racial identity. First, is the notion that one's
ethnic identity may be used as a means to distance one's self from Black Americans because
many first generation Black immigrants hold negative stereotypes about African Americans
Afro-Caribbean respondents tend to think of themselves as being more ambitious, harder
workers and greater achievers than African Americans. Similarly, Waters (1999) illustrates
that her respondents express the same stereotypes about African Americans as many white
Americans have historically spouted. For example, they believe that Black Americans are
lazy and have wasted the opportunities presented to them by merely being American
citizens.
A second explanation for Black immigrants distancing themselves from a racial identity is that the use of one's ethnic identity during residence in the United States can be viewed as a psychological coping mechanism in the face of (overt) racial discrimination (Tormala and Deaux 2006; Vickerman 1999, 2001a; Waters 1994). Black immigrants may use their ethnic identity as a buffer against some of the negative effects of their racial identity (Tormal and Deaux 2006). Rogers (2006) finds that when Black immigrants have been treated badly because of their race, they retreat to a “myth of return” to their country of origin, an option—real or imaged-- that African Americans do not have.

Yet another reason for racial distancing on the part of Black immigrants may be strategic. It is well documented that employers prefer Black immigrants to African Americans (Mason 2010; Newman 1999; Waldinger 1996). Distancing may have real economic benefits. Nteta (2006) also suggests that some Black immigrants differentiate themselves from African Americans in efforts to achieve sociopolitical incorporation in a similar fashion as Irish, Italian, Polish and Jewish immigrants did in their efforts to become white. Kasnitz (1992), Foner (1998), and Rogers (2004) illustrate that while at times Black immigrants embrace a racial identity, ethnic identity can become a wedge in politics; that is, at times Black immigrant political leaders distance themselves from African American in order to garner votes from their ethnic counterparts.

The three reasons above dominate the literature as explanations for distancing from African Americans, but I want to suggest a fourth explanation. Foreign-born Black immigrants have their own sensibilities about their racial and ethnic identity (Foner 1998; Vickerman 2001) They are different from African Americans in culture and, for some groups, in language too. First generation immigrants tend to remain focused on their home country ties, some continue to read the home country newspapers and vote in home
elections as well (Rogers 2006). Therefore, the communication of an ethnic identity by Black immigrants may be a means to explain a fact (e.g. “I am Nigerian.”) rather than a means to racially distance (e.g. “I am not a Black.”).

It is also the case that the racial identity—the feelings of connectedness with other racial group members—is flexible, contextual and changes over time. Black immigrants to the Untied States come to a society where their racial identity places them on the bottom of social hierarchy because of their phenotype. Over time, many Black immigrants come to identify with African Americans. Scholars show that the longer Black immigrants are in the U.S. the more likely they are to experience racial discrimination; each experience pushes them to realize that race trumps ethnicity in the U.S. (Bashi-Bobb and Clarke 2001; Phinney and Onwughalu 1996; Vickerman 1999, 2001). First generation Black immigrants are apt to change many of the negative opinions they hold about African-Americans as well as feel closer to African Americans over time because they come to gain a broader perspective on the structural constraints that Blacks—from all country of origins—face in the United States.

**Assimilation and Acculturation of Second Generation Black Immigrants**

The research on the children of these Black immigrants provides more nuanced theories about the development of racial identity. Unlike their parents who come to the U.S. with a clearer and more defined identity, second generation immigrants straddle at least two different cultural worlds (Song 2010). Those of the second generation have to reconcile their parents’ understanding of race and ethnicity as well as their own realities in America.
Portes and Rumbaut’s (1993, 1996) oft-cited works propose that second generation immigrants of color, generally, and Black immigrants from the Caribbean, specifically, are likely to experience segmented assimilation. The theory of segmented assimilation is rooted in the idea that post-1965 immigrants will acculturate and assimilate differently than their European immigrant predecessors. Portes and his colleagues found that second generation immigrants have more complicated identity choices, and they explain that these choices are dictated by “direction” of assimilation paths (Portes 2004; Portes and Rumbaut 1993, 1996, 2001; Portes and Zhou, 1993). More specifically, these scholars maintain that second generation Black immigrants may take a “straight-line” path into the white middle-class majority, face “downward assimilation” into an undifferentiated Black, inner-city “underclass” or may experience a combination of upward mobility and heightened ethnic awareness. These paths have consequences on the identities of members of this group, where those who experience “downward” assimilate will identify racially—as African American or Black—while those who take “upward” assimilation paths will identify with an ethnic or an hyphenated American identity.

Waters (1999) also develops an alternative theory of assimilation for second generation Afro-Caribbean immigrants in her seminal text Black Identities. Here, Waters similarly proposes three identity trajectories or paths for second generation West Indians: identifying as African-American, identifying as ethnic or hyphenated Americans, or maintaining their parents’ ethnic identification. Waters finds that these ‘choices’ are influenced by class and by gender (Waters 1999, 2001).

Quite a number of scholars have critiqued Portes and Waters. Steinberg (2005) argues that the theory of segmented assimilation implies that “immigrants who live in close proximity to African Americans adopt their ‘adversarial stance’ toward white society,
including a devaluation on education ‘as a vehicle of advancement.’ Stated another way, the children of West Indian immigrants run the risk of assimilating ‘the wrong way,’ forsaking the rich and positive cultures of their parents for the aberrant culture of African Americans” (50). Bashi Bobb and Clarke (2001) show that it is not that those who identify as Black tend to do less well than those who maintain an ethnic identity, but rather those who identify with African Americans have a stronger belief that race mediates the effects of education as a tool of social mobility. Successful blacks also hold such an attitude. Alford Young (2010) provides evidence that among African American males, those who recognize the constraints of race tend to be more successful than those who do not realize that they have to navigate a racialized social system.

Portes’ and Waters’ work also deserve criticism because they have a “culture of poverty” tinge to them, erroneously suggesting that African Americans are in the position that they are in primarily because they do not behave well. What is more, these theories tend to highlight the benefits of culture rather than the constraints of structure. Kasnitz et al. (2008), for example, point out that Black immigrants who live in racially segregated, low-income neighborhoods are just as likely as white Americans to engage in rebellious behaviors that may get them arrested; what is different between the two groups is the way society reacts to them, as second generation immigrants are more likely to face harsher penalties and have less resources to deal with the repercussions. Finally, segmented assimilation theories imply that identifying as Black or African American is a “reactive” or “adversarial” identity instead of considering the possibility that Black immigrants might come to adopt such an identity because they feel that they share similar experiences with African American or because they feel a sense of pride in this identity; embracing a racial identity may also help them to navigate negative personal interactions.
Many scholars point out that there is not necessarily a struggle between second generation Black immigrants’ ethnic and racial identities. Second generation Black immigrants tend to feel connected to and identify with members from their parents’ country of origin (or ethnic identity) as well as African-Americans (racial identity), showing that these identities are not mutually exclusive (Butterfield 2004a, 2004b; Hall and Carter 2006). Butterfield entitles one of her articles “We’re Just Black,” because she finds that her second generation Black immigrant respondents identify as Black and see “Black” as identity that encompasses all people of African descent, despite their ethnicity.

Those who study the identity development, assimilation patterns, and acculturation strategies of second generation Black immigrants find that gender and class play a major part in these processes (Butterfield 2004a, 2004b; Waters 1999a, 2001). Waters explains that poor and male Afro-Caribbeans are more likely to identify as African-American, while the well-to-do and female respondents are more likely to identify with their ethnicity. Butterfield (2004b) find that middle class second generation Afro-Caribbean tend to distance themselves from lower-class Blacks in general, including co-ethnics. Several scholars also find that male second generation Black immigrants are more likely to identify with their racial identity because they recognize that they are often followed in stores, harassed by the police and otherwise discriminated against because they are Black men (Song 2010).

**African American Racial Identity**

Psychologists and sociologists have grappled with the meaning of racial identity, its significance to African-Americans, and its effects on group members’ behaviors for quite
some time. One might consider DuBois’s (1903) notion of double-consciousness one of the pioneering ideas in this area of study (Sellers et al. 1998). Cross (1971) and Thomas (1970) developed very early models of Black racial identity, both of which describe stages of embracing Blackness as a positive identity. Cross (1971), more specifically, is based on the notion of “Nigrescence” or the “process of becoming Black” through a series of stages: pre-encounter (thinking and behaving in a manner that degrades Blackness); encounter (an event that leads a person to realize the flaw of his pre-counter way of thinking); immersion-emersion (shunning the old way of thinking and an intense concern for internalizing a new positive identity); internalization (becoming self-confident about one’s Blackness as well as shifting negative feelings away from individual Whites and toward racist institutions); and finally internationalization-commitment (becoming socially active towards dismantling unfair practices and institutions). For Cross, Black identity is conceived as not only feeling good about one self but also feeling positive toward the group and more importantly, working toward the betterment of that group.

The Thomas Model, which was developed at about the same time as the Cross model, begins with the notion of “negromachy,” whereby African-Americans are conceived of as feeling antagonistic about their racial identity. Thomas and Thomas (1971) think of this antagonism as a mental illness, which can be overcome by seeking a racial identity. For the Thomas model, one must first withdraw from society; the second step, upon arrival from the initial solitary condition, one must need to criticize Whites’ involvement in maintaining a racialized social system; third one must share with others about their struggle toward developing a positive racial identity; the fourth step involves joining a social activist group whereby the person can realize their racial identity through action. Both the Cross (1971) and Thomas (1970) models suggest that racial identity changes over
time as well as the notion that Black identity, in particular, includes a sense of group consciousness—or the idea that one must not only recognize their membership in a group but also to feel that their must act to improve the status of the group.

Other early studies primarily focused on how African Americans feel about being Black and the social status determinants of these feelings (Broman, Neighbors and Jackson, 1988). Scholars have over time more specifically outlined some of these determinants. For example, Broman, Neighbors and Jackson (1988) found that where one resides (i.e. Rural versus urban or which region one lives in the US), one’s income, and age are just a few factors that affects Black racial identity. Allen, Dawson and Brown (1989) also find that one’s socioeconomic status as well as the frequency of church attendance also affects the ways in which African Americans come to understand and develop a sense of racial identity and group consciousness. Later studies added to these findings, further suggesting that childhood socialization, feelings about in-group members (Demo and Hughes 1990) and feelings about out-group members (Harris 1995) are also important determinants of racial identity development among African Americans.

Sellers et al. (1998: 24) have more recently developed the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) measure, which in some ways serves to combine these early studies’ findings but also “focuses on the significance and the nature of an individuals’ racial identity at a given point in time.” The "MMRI assumes that identities are both situationally influenced as well as being stable properties of the person” (Sellers et al. 1998: 23). There are four dimensions of the MMRI. The first dimension, racial salience is “the extent to which one’s race is a relevant part of one’s self-concept at particular moment or in a particular situation.” The second dimension is racial centrality, which "refers the extent to which a person normatively defines himself or herself with regard to race" (Sellers et al. 23-25).
These first two dimensions reflect to the significance that individuals attach to race in defining themselves.

The third and fourth dimensions are racial regard and ideology. Racial regard “refers to a person’s affective and evaluative judgment of his race in terms of positive-negative valence”; this is broken down into “public” (perception of how others think of blacks) and “private” regard. Private regard is known among student of Black politics as “closeness.” Finally, ideology is the dimension that corresponds to “individuals’ beliefs, opinions, and attitudes with respect to the way she or he feels that members should act” (27). This dimension is broken into nationalist, oppressed minority, assimilation and humanist philosophies. Sellers and his colleagues allow for “the fact that the significance and the meaning that individuals place on race are likely to change across their life span” (Shelton and Sellers 2005:24).

In summary, the scholarship on racial identity shares several basic themes. Racial identity is multidimensional, one that is socialized, develops over time, and may change depending on the context or situation. What we know about African American racial identity and development is well documented, but there is not much known about intraracial differences in identity development.

**Diasporic Consciousness and Racial Identity: Expectations and Hypotheses**

African Americans and first and second generation Black immigrants all have different relationships to America’s racial history and racial politics. What is more, they each have their own ideas about what race means to their self-identity and to their life chances. Nevertheless, the theory of diasporic consciousness suggests that African
Americans and first and second generation Black immigrants are all influenced by the U.S.’s racial hierarchy. As such, I am not making an essentialist argument, but rather I am suggesting that because African Americans and Black immigrants share a similar position in the U.S.’s racialized social system, they are likely to have similar experiences, which will shape their identity.

Racialized experiences are likely to influence the extent to which Black people of various ethnicities will view their race as important to their life and to their self-image, but we should also expect some differences between African American and first and second generation Black immigrants. First, the levels of racial centrality show differ by nativity and generational status. We should expect that while first generation Black immigrants tend to feel that their race is important, they will not see their racial identity as central to their self-image as African Americans do. However, we should expect second generation Black immigrants’ racial identity to be as central to their self-image as African Americans do, as suggested by scholars like Butterfield (2004a, 2004b) who show that second generation Black immigrants recognize the role of their race on their life chances. We should also expect differences in levels of public regard by nativity and generational status. Since first generation Black immigrants tend to feel that race is not an important influence on their lives, I expect that they would have higher levels of public regard than African Americans; that is, first generation Black immigrants will feel that outsiders think more positively about them than African Americans do. Again, because second generation Black immigrants have been socialized within the U.S. context, I expect there to be no difference in levels of public regard between African Americans and second generation Black immigrants.

Further, we should expect differences in private regard by nativity and generational status. Private regard concern they way that people feel about their racial group members. I
expect that since many first generation Black immigrants hold negative stereotypes about Black Americans, they will have lower levels of private racial regard. I expect that second generation Black immigrants will be similar to African Americans; the previous chapter showed that many second generation Black immigrants tend to defend African Americans because they feel closely tied with them.

Diasporic consciousness centers people's experiences as major influences on their identity and their political attitudes. I expect that experiences with racial discrimination will lead African Americans and Black immigrants to enhance their feelings of racial centrality (increase racial centrality) and to dampen public regard. I also expect that experiences with discrimination might highlight structural barriers rather than individual failures as a major influence on the social position of Blacks in the U.S.; in turn, I expect those who report experiences with discrimination to have a higher sense of private regard.

**Data and Methods**

While the factors that determine the ways in which one chooses to identify are infinite, I focus on a few that are most relevant to my theory: generational status and experiences with discrimination. Additionally gender, socioeconomic status, region, and racial socialization processes arise as some of the most salient determining variables for racial identity among African Americans and Black immigrants (Broman, Neighbors and Jackson1988; Demo and Hughes 1990; Harris 1995; Lewis 1995; Nunnally 2010; Song 2010).

To examine predictors of racial identity among Black immigrants and African Americans I use data from the *National Survey of American Life* (NSAL), conducted by the
University of Michigan Research Center and supported by the National Institute for Mental Health. The survey was conducted between 2001 and 2003, and respondents include over 3,000 African Americans and 1,600 Afro-Caribbeans. The survey is concerned with cross-cultural differences among African Americans, Afro-Caribbeans and White Americans across the United States.

**Measures**

*Racial Identity.* Racial identity is a multidimensional construct, which entails not only the extent to which you feel your racial identity is central to your self-image but also includes the way you feel about people in your group as well as how you think non-group members perceive your group. The NSAL provides three of MIBI scale’s dimensions: Centrality, Public Regard and Private Regard. Centrality is measured with statements like “Being a Black person is a large part of how I think of myself” and “What happens in my life is largely the result of what happens to other Black people in this country.” This second statement is close to questions or statements used by political scientists to measure the “linked fate” or “common fate” concept (Dawson 1994a). Private regard is the extent to which a person feels positive or negative about their in-group. The private regard measure is the average response to questions like “I feel good about other Black people” and “I am proud to be Black.” Public regard measures how a person perceives out-group members’ feelings about the in-group. Public regard is measured using a battery of questions like “Other racial and ethnic groups in this country think of Blacks as intelligent and competent”

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4 The Black immigrants in the NSAL primarily come the West Indies. Additionally, 44 of the respondents are from African countries and 238 are of Haitian descent. Further, there are 10 Dominicans who also identified as racially Black.

5 See Appendix for the exact question wording for all measures and scale reliability coefficients.
and “While people in this country do not think of Black people as important contributors to this country.”

Immigrant Status and Ethnicity. The model accounts for whether respondents are of first or second-generation immigrant. The comparison group is African American in the models that include all Blacks. There are four ethnic groups: African American, West Indian, Haitian, and African. In models that include all Blacks, African Americans are the reference group. Meanwhile, in models that only examine Black immigrants, first generation immigrants and West Indians are the reference groups.

Discrimination. I measured two types of discrimination: major and everyday. Major experiences with discrimination included items probing whether respondents believed they were unfairly fired from their job, unfairly stopped, searched or abused by the police, and if a realtor or landlord refused to sell or rent them a home. Everyday discrimination was measured by questions concerning how frequently respondents were treated with less courtesy than other people, if people acted as if they were dishonest, if they were followed in stores, and the like.

Demographic Variables. As mentioned, racial identity is heavily influenced by one's gender, (family) income, level of education, and where one lives. The values of the income measure are formed by a ten-point income scale from $0 to $20,000 to $180,000-$200,000+, in twenty thousand dollar increments. Education level was coded into four categories: (1) 0-11 years of school; (2) earned a high school diploma; (3) some college; (4) college degree or more. Finally, I account for region. I create dummy variables for whether one lives in the South (a region special to African Americans), in the Northeast (where a large proportion of Black immigrants reside), or elsewhere.
Racial Socialization. Racial socialization is a process by which people learn about their race and what it means to the larger society (Nunnally 2010). I use the measures that best approximate racial socialization provided by the NSAL. First, I measure how often respondents’ parents talked about race and racism. Second, I measure the extent to which other Black people surrounded the respondent. Respondents were asked to think about if mostly whites (1) or mostly Blacks (5) occupied spaces they commonly frequented, including grammar school, junior high school, high school, the neighborhood where they grew up, and their present neighborhood. I averaged the responses to create a variable called “proximity” (Demo and Hughes 1990). Finally, I measure whether respondents participate in some sort of Black organization. It is in these counter-publics where Blacks are likely to continue to learn about their racial identity (Dawson 2004b; Harris-Lacewell 2004).

Results

Descriptive Results

The descriptive results in Table 4-1 shows the distribution for each of the three dimensions of racial identity examined in this study: racial centrality, public regard and private regard. Table 4-1 provides the means and standard deviations. In general, there is little difference between the extent to which African Americans and Black immigrants feel that their race is central to their identity, the way they believe whites feel about Blacks, or their feelings about their racial group members. Interestingly, differences surface when the Black immigrant group is disaggregated into more specific ethnic categories and by generational status. First, the results show that Haitians tend to view their race as less central to their self-image than African Americans. We see another difference between
African Americans and Haitians in the last column, as well. Not only do Haitians have lower levels of racial centrality, but they also feel less positive about other Blacks.

Table 4-1: Summary Statistics of Centrality, Public Regard and Private Regard by Ethnicity and Nativity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Centrality</th>
<th>Public Regard</th>
<th>Private Regard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean  SD</td>
<td>Mean  SD</td>
<td>Mean  SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>African American</strong></td>
<td>2.74 (.69)</td>
<td>2.17 (.78)</td>
<td>3.81 (.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Black Immigrant</strong></td>
<td>2.74 (.68)</td>
<td>2.21 (.77)</td>
<td>3.79 (.44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(composite)</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Indian</td>
<td>2.77 (.69)</td>
<td>2.17 (.74)</td>
<td>3.8 (.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haitian</td>
<td>2.58* (.65)</td>
<td>2.33 (.84)</td>
<td>3.69* (.49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African First Generation</td>
<td>2.67 (.68)</td>
<td>2.26* (.81)</td>
<td>3.8 (.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Generation</td>
<td>2.89** (.67)</td>
<td>2.11* (.65)</td>
<td>3.75 (.47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>183</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significantly different from African American; #Significantly different from First Generation. Tested at 95% Confidence level.

Interestingly, Table 4-1 shows that second generation Black immigrants tend to have higher levels of racial centrality than African Americans. There is also a difference here between first and second generation Black immigrants, whereby first generation Black immigrants tend to have lower levels of racial centrality than second generation Black immigrants. This is a result that is expected since the literature shows that second generation Black immigrants are more aware of the role that their race plays on their lives than their first generation counterparts.

The results also show that first generation immigrants and African immigrants have higher levels of public regard than African American. That is to say, in comparison to African Americans, African immigrants and first generation immigrants tend to feel that out-group members (whites and non-Blacks) have a more positive view of Blacks. Again, we
see a generational difference; second generation Black immigrants tend to feel that out-group members have less positive view of Blacks than first generation Black immigrants.

**Quantitative Results**

The results shown above in Table 4-1 allow us to get general sense of difference in levels of racial identity between African Americans and Black immigrants as well as differences among Black immigrants. But in order to gain a better sense of more specific and informative predictors of these feelings as well as test the presented hypotheses and expectations, multivariate analysis is needed. Tables 4-2, 4-3, and 4-4 provide more thorough analyses of racial centrality, private regard and public regard, respectively.

**Racial Centrality**

I hypothesized that nativity and generational status as well as experiences with discrimination will influence the extent to which a person defines himself or herself with regard to their racial identity. The results of this hypothesis test are shown in Table 4-2.
Table 4-2: OLS Regression Analysis: Predictors of Racial Centrality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model A: All Black Respondents</th>
<th>Model B: African Americans vs. Black Immigrants</th>
<th>Model C: Black Immigrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived Discrimination</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyday Discrimination</td>
<td>.006*** (.001)</td>
<td>.006*** (.002)</td>
<td>.010** (.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Discrimination</td>
<td>.017* (.009)</td>
<td>.016* (.009)</td>
<td>-.014 (.022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Immigration Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Generation</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.521 (.601)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Generation</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.651 (.601)</td>
<td>.139** (.068)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Indian</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-.626 (.600)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haitian</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-.610 (.608)</td>
<td>.034 (.098)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-.997 (.628)</td>
<td>-.328* (.189)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demographics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (male=1)</td>
<td>.094*** (.029)</td>
<td>.100*** (.029)</td>
<td>-.001 (.065)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.004*** (.001)</td>
<td>-.047*** (.001)</td>
<td>-.002 (.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Socioeconomic Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.073*** (.015)</td>
<td>.078*** (.015)</td>
<td>.079*** (.031)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-.003 (.009)</td>
<td>-.002 (.009)</td>
<td>-.002 (.018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Region</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>.061* (.035)</td>
<td>.061* (.035)</td>
<td>.120 (.178)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>.043 (.042)</td>
<td>.076 (.048)</td>
<td>.167 (.174)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Racial Socialization</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity</td>
<td>.007 (.018)</td>
<td>.016 (.018)</td>
<td>.029 (.041)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Organization</td>
<td>.117** (.044)</td>
<td>.115** (.045)</td>
<td>.167 (.105)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents Talk</td>
<td>.068*** (.016)</td>
<td>.065*** (.016)</td>
<td>.110*** (.040)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2.28*** (.099)</td>
<td>2.26*** (.016)</td>
<td>1.87 (.299)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.072</td>
<td>.072</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01
Model A, in the first column, shows that among all Black respondents, everyday and major experiences with discrimination are important influences on the extent to which Black people feel their race is important to their self-image. This baseline model also shows that Black men tend to have higher levels of racial centrality than Black women, but older Blacks have lower levels of racial centrality than younger Blacks. Further, the results show that as education levels increase, racial centrality does as well. Model A shows that Blacks in the South have higher levels of racial centrality than those in other parts of the country. Finally, racial socialization plays a significant role in racial centrality. Those who belong to an organization with missions to improve the status of Blacks in this country have higher levels of racial centrality than those who do not belong to a Black organization. Parental talk about one’s race also increases the extent to which Blacks feel close to Blacks and view their race as central to their identity.

Model B allows us to gain a sense of the differences in racial centrality between African Americans and Black immigrants of various ethnicities. First, the results show that first and second generation immigrants do not tend to view their racial identity as less central than African Americans do. Contrary to the expectation, although first generation Black immigrants have a different relationship with the U.S.’s racial politics, they still feel connected to other Blacks. The extant literature suggests that because Black immigrants generally come from countries where their racial identity is not perceived to be central to their day-to-day lives or opportunity structure, their racial identity is not central to the way they think of themselves (Foner 1998; Vickerman 2001a). The results here, however, suggest something different. Here, we see that Black immigrants of various generations and
ethnicities tend to feel similarly to African Americans about the extent to which they consider being Black as a large part of how they think of themselves.

The results on second generation immigrants were expected. Second generation immigrants' levels of racial centrality are not significantly different from African Americans. Second generation Black immigrants' tend to identify as Black in addition to identifying with an ethnic identity (Butterfield 2004b; Denton and Massey 1989). The results here support the literature that suggests that second generation tend to see their racial identity in the same way that many African Americans do.

Model B also shows that discrimination is an important factor in racial centrality, as expected. Both forms of discrimination seem to prioritize race as a prominent identity among Black people in the United States. Social identity theory suggests that the identity that is viewed negatively by mainstream society or affects one’s life negatively is also likely to be more salient to an individual (Nagel 1994). In addition discrimination, several of the control variables also influence racial centrality. The results show that men tend to think about themselves in terms of their race more than women do.6 What is more, it seems that as one gets older, one thinks about their racial identity less. The results also indicate that socioeconomic status and region of residence play a role in racial centrality. As one’s level of education increases, one is more likely to define themselves with regard to their racial identity. Those who live in the South have higher levels of centrality than those who live in other parts of the country. Finally, the results suggest that racial socialization via belonging

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6 Several scholars suggest that second generation Black immigrant men tend to think of their racial identity more than their female counterparts due to persistent racist personal interactions, especially with the police (Butterfield 2004b; Waters 1999). However, in an additional analysis shown at the end of this chapter, an interaction between generation and gender, I find that the interaction between second generation and male actually results in a negative coefficient. This interaction was not significant on other dimensions of racial identity.
to a Black organization and from participating in conversations with one's parents also increased racial centrality for African Americans and Black immigrants.

The third model, Model C, allows us to examine Black immigrants alone, to do comparisons within the group, and to gain a sense of whether African Americans are driving the previous results. Model C shows that everyday experiences with discrimination are a major influential factor in determining levels of racial centrality among Black immigrants. It is also shown that second generation immigrants have higher levels of racial centrality than their first generation counterparts. This is expected; literature shows that second generation Black immigrants tend to identity with their racial identity more than their first generation counterparts (Butterfield 2004a, 2004b).

There are also differences between ethnic groups. West Indians are the reference group in Model C. African immigrants have lower levels of racial centrality than West Indians. This is important finding because it shows that there is variation not only between foreign- and native-born Blacks but also among foreign-born Blacks. Finally, the results in Models C show that parental racial socialization bolsters levels of racial centrality among Black immigrants, as well.

Private Regard

Private regard is the extent to which you feel close to and positive about your racial group members. I predicted that African Americans should have a higher private regard than first generation Black immigrants, but the levels of private regard should be similar between African Americans and second generation Black immigrants. The hypotheses also asserted that experiences with discrimination should increase racial private regard. The hypothesis tests for private regard are shown in Table 4-3.
Table 4-3: OLS Regression Analysis: Predictors of Private Regard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Discrimination</th>
<th>Model A: All Black Respondents</th>
<th>Model B: African Americans vs. Black Immigrants</th>
<th>Model C: Black Immigrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everyday Discrimination</td>
<td>-.02 (.01)</td>
<td>-.001 (.01)</td>
<td>.002 (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Discrimination</td>
<td>-.013** (.006)</td>
<td>-.012** (.006)</td>
<td>-.032** (.014)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Immigration Status       |                                  |                                               |                          |
| First Generation         | ---                             | .699* (.365)                                  | ---                      |
| Second Generation        | ---                             | .580 (.365)                                   | -.074* (.042)            |

| Ethnicity                |                                  |                                               |                          |
| West Indian              | ---                             | -.682* (.365)                                 | ---                      |
| Haitian                  | ---                             | -.730** (.370)                                | -.033 (.059)             |
| African                  | ---                             | .988*** (.383)                                | -.288** (.117)           |

| Demographics             |                                  |                                               |                          |
| Gender (male=1)          | .007 (.18)                      | .010 (.18)                                    | -.036 (.40)             |
| Age                      | .001 (.01)                      | .001 (.01)                                    | .003** (.01)            |

| Socioeconomic Status     |                                  |                                               |                          |
| Education                | .018** (.09)                    | .021** (.09)                                  | -.002 (.19)             |
| Income                   | .007                            | .006                                          | .038*** (.11)           |

| Region                   |                                  |                                               |                          |
| South                    | .039* (.21)                     | .039* (.21)                                   | .027 (.11)              |
| Northeast                | .022 (.26)                      | .040 (.29)                                    | .055 (.18)              |

| Racial Socialization     |                                  |                                               |                          |
| Proximity                | -.004 (.11)                     | -.005 (.11)                                   | .055** (.26)            |
| Black Organization       | .071*** (.27)                   | .072*** (.27)                                 | .111* (.067)            |
| Parents Talk             | -.017* (.09)                    | -.017* (.09)                                  | -.020 (.25)             |

| Constant                 | 3.66*** (.061)                  | 3.67*** (.061)                                 | 3.31*** (.187)          |

| N                        | 1964                            | 1964                                          | 403                      |
| R²                       | .019                            | .028                                          | .099                     |

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01
Interestingly, the hypothesis concerning the role of discrimination on private regard is not supported. Experiences with discrimination actually served to hinder Black people from feeling positively about their group members and their group membership. The results show that more experiences with major, overt forms of discrimination serve to dampen racial private regard, as shown in all three models. This is counterintuitive. I suggested that experiencing discrimination should increase levels of private regard because these experiences might bring to mind the idea that the position of Blacks is primarily due to structural conditions rather than individual fault. Nevertheless, Blacks in the U.S. also use white racial frames and semantic mechanisms of colorblind racism to explain the position of their group in society (Bonilla-Silva 2006). This finding may be a reflection of colorblind ideology among Blacks. Further, scholars show that both African Americans and Black immigrants tend to distance themselves from poor Blacks, in general (Butterfield 2004a). Anecdotally, one theme I found among my interview respondents was the tendency to associate poor and Black when I asked them questions like “What issues do you think are important to Black people?” Perhaps, this finding suggests that when Blacks think about “Black people” they have a narrow conceptualization of that group and may not include themselves within that conceptualization.

Model B in Table 4-3 is a comparative model. The results are mixed and interesting. On the one hand, the results show that first generation Black immigrants actually have higher levels of private regard than African Americans do while second generation immigrants have similar levels of racial regard as African Americans. But, when we look at
differences between ethnic groups, the results show that West Indian, African and Haitians have lower levels of private regard than African Americans.7

The results also indicate that those who live in the South tend to have a higher regard for their racial group members than those who live in other parts of the country. This might have been expected given the prominent Civil Rights history and the sheer number of Blacks that live in the South might bolster the feelings of closeness and racial pride among Black southerners. Belonging to a Black organization boosts racial private regard, but previous conversations with parents seems to lower levels of racial regard. Those who have higher levels of education also tend to feel closer to their group members, which is consistent with findings in much of the Black politics literature (Cose 1995; Dawson 1994a; Hochschild 1995).

Finally, Model C allows us to examine Black immigrants in isolation. Here, we see that second generation Black immigrants have lower levels of private regard than their first generation counterparts. The results also show that African immigrants have lower levels of private regard than West Indians. Again, we see that Blacks are not monolithic; there are differences between nativity, generational status and ethnicity.

Public Regard

Public regard measures how one perceives out-group members’ evaluations of their racial group. I made three predictions about this dimension of racial identity: first generation Black immigrants would have a higher sense of public regard than African Americans; African Americans and second generation Black immigrants would have similar

7 I also ran models that included interactions between ethnicity and generational status, but these interaction variables did not provide any additional helpful information or enhance the predictive strength of the model.
levels of public regard; and discrimination will dampen public regard among Black respondents. The results for public regard are presented in Table 4-4.
Table 4-4: OLS Regression Analysis: Predictors of Public Regard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model A All Black Respondents</th>
<th>Model B: African Americans vs. Black Immigrants</th>
<th>Model C: Black Immigrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived Discrimination</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyday Discrimination</td>
<td>-.009*** (.002)</td>
<td>-.009*** (.002)</td>
<td>-.008* (.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Discrimination</td>
<td>-.065*** (.009)</td>
<td>-.064** (.009)</td>
<td>-.068*** (.023)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Immigration Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Generation</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.049 (.584)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Generation</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-.038 (.585)</td>
<td>-.092 (.071)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Indian</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.028 (.584)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haitian</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.116 (.591)</td>
<td>.104 (.099)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.131 (.611)</td>
<td>.093 (.196)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demographics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (male=1)</td>
<td>.097*** (.029)</td>
<td>.094*** (.029)</td>
<td>.122* (.067)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.004*** (.001)</td>
<td>-.004*** (.001)</td>
<td>-.003 (.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Socioeconomic Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.017 (.15)</td>
<td>-.020 (.015)</td>
<td>-.013 (.033)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-.001 (.009)</td>
<td>-.003 (.009)</td>
<td>.021 (.019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Region</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>.027 (.034)</td>
<td>.025 (.035)</td>
<td>-.144 (.184)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>-.030 (.041)</td>
<td>-.060 (.048)</td>
<td>-.168 (.180)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Racial Socialization</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity</td>
<td>-.039** (.017)</td>
<td>-.045*** (.018)</td>
<td>-.057 (.043)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Organization</td>
<td>.001 (.044)</td>
<td>.006 (.043)</td>
<td>.069 (.109)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents Talk</td>
<td>-.029* (.015)</td>
<td>-.027* (.015)</td>
<td>-.033 (.041)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2.78*** (.098)</td>
<td>2.80*** (.098)</td>
<td>2.92*** (.309)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.078</td>
<td>.079</td>
<td>.093</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01
All three models in Table 4-4 show that discrimination dampens Blacks’ sense of public regard, as expected. As Blacks experience major and everyday forms of discrimination, they are more likely to express that non-Blacks do not value Blacks or view Blacks positively.

Model B allows us to compare levels of racial public regard between African Americans and Black immigrants. This model shows there are no significant differences in public regard between African Americans and Black immigrants. In fact, adding ethnicity and immigration status did not add much predictive ability to the baseline Model A.

Interestingly, across the three models, men had higher levels of racial regard than women. Socioeconomic and region did not play a role in levels of public regard, but Models A and B, which include all Blacks in the survey, show that those who live and work in predominately Black environments have lower levels of public regard than those who spend their lives in mixed-race or predominately white environments. The results in Models A and B also show that Black people whose parents discuss the role of race when they were growing up tend to have lower levels of public regard than those whose parents did not discuss race with them.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

Overall, the results here corroborate some of the extant literature concerning the role of ethnic differences and racialized experiences among Blacks in the United States while other results complicate the existing literature. One of the major surprises among the results is that Black immigrants do not necessarily view their racial identity as less central to their identity than African Americans. Extant literature emphasizes the idea that first
generation Black immigrants tend to make salient their ethnic identity rather than their racial identity, but the results in this study suggest that these identities are not mutually exclusive or competing. There were few differences in racial centrality or public regard between African Americans and Black immigrants.

The results also show that there are significant differences among Blacks due to variations in generational status and ethnicity. These differences are most apparent in the racial private regard analysis. West Indian, African and Haitian tend to have lower levels of private regard than African Americans, and what is more, there were also differences among Black immigrant groups. More research will have to be done to better understand how one’s country of origin might influence the way Black immigrants feel about other Black people. For example, African immigrants had lower levels of racial centrality than other Black immigrant groups, and African immigrants also had the lowest levels of private regard.

Finally, the results show that experiences with discrimination affect each of the three dimensions of racial identity, and these results provide evidence for diasporic consciousness. The results concerning experiences with discrimination are telling because they show that these racialized experiences play a significant role in shaping racial identity among African Americans and Black immigrants. Some extant literature suggests that Black immigrants should, in a time of declining discrimination, be able to claim an ethnic identity. While the results here do not speak to ethnic identities, per se, they do suggest that everyday and major experiences with discrimination influence various dimensions of racial identity. Discrimination serves to bolster the saliency of racial identity, but these negative experiences also undermine the positive feelings about one’s in-group. As one might expect, experiences with discrimination also served to highlight the negative feelings that out-
group members have about Black people; consequently, Blacks who have these negative interpersonal experiences have lower levels of public regard.

Overall, the findings in this chapter show that while Black immigrants and African Americans have very different legacies of racism in their countries of origin, contemporary experiences of racial discrimination within the borders of the United States influence the ways in which Black people of various ethnicities identify. Black immigrants, in a sense, are a helpful marker of racial progress in the United States, and here we see that those who are relatively new to the United States are similarly influenced by on-going racism in the same ways that African Americans are affected.

The previous chapter shows that African Americans and Black immigrants feel that the boundaries of Black identity include various ethnic groups, and this chapter shows that Black Americans’ and Black immigrants’ racial identities are similarly influenced by discriminatory experiences. These chapters provide evidence that a sense of diasporic consciousness might exist among native- and foreign-born Blacks. Nonetheless, it is still unclear whether Black immigrants’ racial identity can be politicized in the way that African Americans’ racial identity has been politicized historically. It is also unclear if Black immigrants’ racial identity and sense of racial group consciousness play a role in political decision making. The next chapter will delve into these concerns.
# Additional Analysis

Table 4-5: OLS Regression Analysis: Examining Interaction Variable on Racial Centrality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Perceived Discrimination</strong></th>
<th>All Black Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everyday Discrimination</td>
<td>.006*** (.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Discrimination</td>
<td>.016* (.009)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Immigration Status</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Generation</td>
<td>.532 (.60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Generation</td>
<td>.742 (.60)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Ethnicity</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West Indian</td>
<td>-.638 (.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haitian</td>
<td>-.624 (.61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African</td>
<td>-1.01* (.63)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Demographics</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender (male=1)</td>
<td>.118*** (.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.005*** (.001)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Socioeconomic Status</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.077*** (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-.002 (.01)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Region</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>.061* (.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>.078* (.04)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Racial Socialization</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proximity</td>
<td>.017 (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Organization</td>
<td>.115*** (.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents Talk</td>
<td>.066*** (.02)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Second Gen x Male</td>
<td>-.244** (.11)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Constant                | 2.25*** (.10)            |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>1967</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.073</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01
Chapter 5. Linking Identity to Politics: Black Group Consciousness

Group consciousness is a critical explanatory variable of African American political attitudes and behavior (Chong and Rogers 2005; Dawson 1994a; Tate 1994). Sanchez (2006) asserts, “group consciousness is a resource that generates political activity through an individual’s attachment to a group” (436). Chong and Rogers (2005) further explain racial group consciousness “potentially heightens awareness and interest in politics, bolsters group pride and political efficacy, alters interpretation of group problems, and promotes support for collective action” (350). Dawson (1994a) describes a psychological process that triggers these behaviors through what he calls the “black utility heuristic.” The black utility heuristic leads African Americans to use the well-being of their racial group as a proxy for their own well-being when making political decisions. Black Americans have developed this heuristic—or mental rule of thumb—and employ it when making political decisions because of past and present racialized experiences in the United States.

Historically, African Americans have been treated as group members rather than as individuals, and this has contributed to a tendency for African Americans to act politically in solidarity and behave as group members. Dawson (1994a) further predicts as long as the U.S. continues to be a society where one’s race is inextricably linked to their life chances, we should continue to see Black Americans act as group members.

The extant literature yields an interesting puzzle. We know that Black immigrants are subject to the discrimination and some of the same race-related behaviors and attitudes that have contributed to high levels of linked fate among African Americans (Crowder 1999; Kim and White 2010; Denton and Massey 1989). But we also know that the reality of racial discrimination is not sufficient to develop a sense of group consciousness (Brown 1931;
Marx 1998; McClain et al. 2009), and furthermore, we know that there are times when Black immigrants distance themselves from Blacks Americans and ignore the role of racism (Foner 1998; Nteta 2006; Portes 2004; Waters 1999a). Nonetheless, historical instances do show that Black immigrants’ racial identity has been mobilized, especially when they are threatened due to their racial group membership, as shown in the examples in chapter 2 concerning Black immigrant and African American relations in New York, D.C., and Tampa. Those examples as well as the findings in chapter 3 suggest that Black immigrants’ racial identity is made salient at some point in times while in other times, their ethnic identity is more salient. In turn, we might also expect racial group consciousness to also be contextual and situational for Black immigrants; Black immigrants’ identities may at times be translated into political action on behalf of their specific ethnic group while at other times, their racial identities may be mobilized toward Black pan-ethnic issues.¹

In this chapter I explore whether and to what extent Black immigrants’ racial identity is activated to influence their political attitudes. Does Dawson’s (1994a) black utility heuristic extend to Black immigrants? That is, does racial group consciousness influence the political attitudes of Black immigrants? We know that, in general, racial identification tends to be activated in times of racial strife. Is this the case with Black immigrants? In other words, should we expect to see group consciousness influence Black immigrants primarily in policy areas that have a disparate impact on Blacks? How does this compare with the role of politicized racial identity for African Americans?

Using data from National Survey of American Life, which is large-n, nationally representative dataset, I explore the role of group consciousness for Black immigrants and

¹ These issues may be mutually exclusive or they may overlap. This will be explored more in Chapter 6.
African Americans in three separate analyses. In the first analysis, I examine the determinants of group consciousness for Black immigrants. This analysis will help us to better understand if Black immigrants’ processes of group consciousness development are similar to or different from African Americans. Second, I investigate how group consciousness affects Black immigrants’ and African American’s political attitudes. In the third analysis I examine the ways in which racial group consciousness influences Black immigrants’ and African Americans’ political behavior.

**What We Do Know about Racial Group Consciousness**

The difference between racial identity and racial group consciousness often gets blurred in the political science literature. Gurin et al. (1980) explains the difference between group identity and group consciousness: “Identification refers to the awareness of having ideas, feelings, and interests similar to others who share the same stratum characteristics.” Consciousness refers to “a set of political beliefs and action orientations arising out of this awareness of similarity” (30). Extant research suggests that we should not expect a “simple direct relationship between group identification and political participation” (Miller et al. 1981; Chong and Rogers 2005). Instead, we should understand group consciousness as the link between identification and political participation. Racial group consciousness is “in-group identification *politiciized* by a set of ideological beliefs about one’s group’s social standing as well as a view that collective action is the best means by which the group can improve its status and realize its interests” (McClain et al. 2009). Group consciousness is both a matter of feeling a sense of attachment to one’s group as well
as a matter of feeling that it is important to maintain or improve one’s group position through collective action.

There are several steps between being ascribed as a group member and mobilizing that identity toward political action. For low strata group members—those who are at the bottom of various social hierarchies—group consciousness starts with a shared identity or sense of closeness with group members, but the transformation of group identification into group consciousness involves the acceptance and recognition of group inequalities followed by a sense that something should be done to improve the status of one’s lower strata group. Group consciousness may be triggered by the perception of discrimination against one’s group as well a sense of relative deprivation (Gurin et al. 1980; McClain and Stewart 2010).

Both dominate group members and subordinate group members may have a sense of group consciousness. Feelings of group consciousness among dominant group members tend to lead them to rationalize the legitimacy of their group’s position as well as lead them to want to maintain their group’s status. Group consciousness for subordinate groups, however, tends to inspire a sense that their group is unfairly treated and encourages the idea that collective action is the best means by which to raise their group’s position (Miller et al. 1981).

*Identity, Consciousness, and African American Political Behavior*

It is through group consciousness that racial identity plays a role in African Americans’ political behavior. For example, Pitts (1974:667) asserts that “much, if not all, of black behavior explicitly related to race involves something called race consciousness.” While scholars have recognized the value of group consciousness since the 1930s (Brown
1931, 1935), the concept of group consciousness did not become very central to the study of Black political behavior until the 1960s and 1970s. One important discovery from this era is the finding that African Americans participate in politics at higher rates than white Americans, when controlling for socioeconomic status (Olsen 1970, Verba and Nie 1972). Group consciousness is the key for understanding this paradox. Group consciousness helps to mobilize Black Americans to participate in politics. A sense of group consciousness among African Americans increases both traditional modes of participation such as voting, as well as other forms of participation like working in campaigns, contacting government officials and participating in boycotts and protests.

Group consciousness not only bolsters participation rates among African Americans, it also leads them to participate with a goal of improving their group's status (Chong and Rogers 2005). As mentioned above, African Americans historically have been treated as group members rather than individuals, and consequently, members of this group use the well being of the group as a proxy for the well being of the individual (Allen, Dawson and Brown 1989; Dawson 1994a). While African Americans adopt various political ideologies (i.e. Black Conservatism, Black Liberalism, Black Feminism) and strategies, the primary goal of political participation is to improve the status of the group (Dawson 2001). Furthermore, group consciousness is the principal explanation for the overall homogeneity in Black political behavior. African Americans tend to vote for the Democratic Party and tend to vote for liberal policies (even though many have socially conservative attitudes) since they believe these actions will help their racial group (Haynie and Watts 2010).
What We Do Not Know

Black Immigrants’ Identity-to-Politics Link

What political scientists know about the role group consciousness on political attitudes and behaviors derives primarily from the study of African Americans. Black Americans have a very specific relationship and history with American politics and political institutions, and over time, their behavior has evolved in a very unique way. Recently, however, scholars have attempted to determine if group consciousness exists among non-Black minority groups and, if so, what effects might group consciousness have on members’ political behavior (Lien 2001; Masuoka 2006; Sanchez 2006; Stokes 2003). Junn and Masuoka (2008) suggest that the existence of group consciousness among Latinos and Asians should be “treated as a hypothesis rather than an assumption,” because students of race and politics are still unsure how identity and political behavior are linked for non-Black minority groups, particularly those whose population growth is attributed to new immigration” (729, emphasis in original text). The same may be true for Blacks as well. Foreign-born Black immigrants contributed 20 percent of the growth among Blacks in the United States between 2000 and 2006 (Kent 2007). The extant research on Black immigrants has yet to produce strong conclusions on levels of group consciousness among members of this group and the role of group consciousness on Black immigrants’ attitudes is essentially unknown.

The existing literature does provide some hints. As mentioned, racial group consciousness is predicated on a sense of closeness with group members, perceptions of group discrimination, as well as the idea that collective action could be and should be employed to improve the status of the group. Concerning closeness, Rogers’ (2001) study on the political incorporation of Black immigrants finds that a solid majority of his first
generation West Indian informants do feel close to Black Americans. On the second dimension, which is feeling a sense of discrimination, Butterfield (2004a, 2004b) as well as Tormala and Deaux (2006) provide mixed evidence for perceptions of discrimination among Afro-Caribbeans. These scholars find that second generation immigrants are likely to perceive racial discrimination in their day-to-day experiences while their first generation counterparts are likely to ignore the role of race in interpersonal interactions, often blaming African Americans themselves for their status within American society. These are signs that a fully developed racial group consciousness among this group might be hindered by the fact while Afro-Caribbeans attribute institutional barriers to explain the status of African Americans, first generation Black immigrants also point to individual characteristics and negative stereotypes of African-Americans to explain the groups’ position in society. Miller et al. (1981) suggest that “system-blame” or attributing a group’s condition to systemic or institutional factors is important for developing group consciousness. Interestingly, scholars who study Black immigrants show that Black immigrants may be more prone to blame individuals’ behaviors for the groups’ well being rather than structural factors, thereby weakening feelings of group consciousness (Foner 1998; Waters 1999a).

Overall, the existing literature’s findings suggest that we should not expect racial identity to be politicized in the same way for Black immigrants as it is for native Black Americans, but there have been times when racial identity is clearly politicized among Black immigrants (See Chapter 2). For example, Candelario (2007) explains that in D.C. during the 1960s and 1970s Dominican immigrants found it beneficial to work with and identify with African Americans because African Americans were politically and economically empowered. Black people experienced social mobility in D.C. due to the political activities of
African Americans, and the potential of economic and social success served as an incentive for Black immigrants to assimilate into a Black racial identity (Candelario 2007).

Additionally, Susan Greenbaum (2002) in her detailed history of African-American and Afro-Cuban relations in Tampa, Florida shows that native and foreign-born Black relations become amicable in times when a racial threat exists. Greenbaum (2002) shows that prior to the defeat of the Spanish in Cuba, Afro-Cubans distanced themselves from African Americans because they had access to networks that provided opportunities restricted to Cubans, regardless of race, but after the defeat of the Spanish in Cuba which closely coincided with the official implementation of Jim Crow laws, white Cubans disaffiliated from their Black counterparts. Subsequently, African American and Afro-Cuban relations improved over time, especially as Afro-Cubans began to embrace a racial identity as well as an attitude that the status of their racial group, which included African Americans, needed to be improved. Another example is the 1990 Red Apple Boycott in New York, which was enacted by coalition of Haitians, West Indians and African Americans in response to racial discrimination (Kim 2000). The pattern that arises from this history is a sinuous relationship between African Americans and Black immigrants, where the chances for coalition tends to peak when Black immigrants feel that their racial identity will heavily influence their life chances.

Perhaps then, the question concerning Black immigrants’ group consciousness is not really a “yes or no” issue but rather it seems to be a matter of “when and under what circumstances.” Sometimes Black immigrants rely more on their ethnicity while at other times their racial identity is made salient. Consequently, we should expect the translation of racial identity into political action to be contextual as well. This chapter aims to provide
insight into whether and under what circumstances racial group consciousness influences political attitudes and behaviors among Black immigrants.

**Group Consciousness: Three Analyses**

What are the determinants of group consciousness for Black immigrants? Under what circumstances is group consciousness triggered for Black immigrants and how does that compare to African Americans? Finally, does group consciousness affect rates of participation among Black immigrants? What we know about racial group consciousness is primarily based on what we know about African Americans, but the increasing diversity among Black people in the United States motivates a need to better understand the role that ethnicity may play in Black peoples’ political attitudes and behaviors. It could be that the role of group consciousness will play a different role for Black immigrants than it does for African Americans.

Throughout the three analyses in this chapter, group consciousness is measured by the linked fate survey item: “Do you think what generally happens to Black people in this country will have something to do with what happens in your life?” If the respondent answers in the affirmative, they are asked, “How much? A lot? Some? A Little?” While various scholars have measured group consciousness with a plethora of items, I use the linked fate measure because it addresses the cognitive component of group consciousness; in other words, linked fate captures whether respondents use the utility of the group as a proxy for the well being of the individual (Chong and Rogers 2005; Lee 2008; McClain et al. 2009). Further, for each of the three analyses I utilize the *National Survey of American*. 
Figure 5-1 shows the distribution of levels of group consciousness among African Americans and Black immigrants. We see that for the most part, African Americans and Black immigrants tend to share a similar sense of group consciousness. About 38 percent of African American and 37 percent Black immigrant respondents report that they do not feel a sense of linked fate with other Black people in the United States. Among the roughly 60 percent who do feel a sense of linked fate, 10 percent of African Americans feel that their fate is linked to other Blacks but only “a little”; this feeling is shared by about 11 percent of Black immigrants. Approximately 34 percent of African Americans and 31 percent of Black immigrants report that what happens to other group members will have “some” effect on their own lives. Finally, 17 percent of African Americans feel that their fate is very much linked to the lives of other Blacks meanwhile 20 percent of Black immigrants reported this feeling.
When Black immigrants are disaggregated by ethnicity and by nativity we see subtle differences. African immigrants tended to respond in the affirmative to the linked-fate
question. Only 23.4 percent of African immigrants reported that they do not feel a sense of linked fate with other Blacks in America, leaving the great majority of Africans to respond in the affirmative. Among Black immigrants, Haitians were the most likely to report that they do not feel a sense of linked fate with other Black people in the United States. Finally, Figure 5-1 shows that second generation Black immigrants have the highest levels of group consciousness, even higher than African Americans.\(^2\) About 73 percent answered in the affirmative in comparison to approximately 62 percent of African Americans, which is significantly different at a 95 percent confidence level.

Overall, the data in Figure 5-1 shows a fair amount of similarities between African Americans’ and Black immigrants’ sense of group consciousness on average, but what is unknown is whether these feelings are triggered by the same stimuli, and further if these feelings will influence the political attitudes and behaviors of African Americans and Black immigrants in the same way. Using the *National Survey of American Life*, I analyze the determinants of group consciousness for African Americans and Black immigrants, the role group consciousness plays in determining both groups’ political attitudes, and the influence of group consciousness on their political behaviors.

**Determinants of Group Consciousness**

Dawson (1994a) explains that African Americans have developed a very specific sense of group consciousness due to their group’s history with American racism. As a result of not being differentiated based on individual achievements and being discriminated

\(^2\) There is no statistical difference between the proportion of African respondents and second generation respondents who responded that they did not feel a sense of linked fate, but there are significantly more African respondents who responded “Not very much” than second generation respondents.
against, African Americans have developed a politicized racial identity. We tend to see a sense of group consciousness among members who closely identify with other African Americans as well as those who feel that their group is discriminated against (McClain and Stewart 2010).

In addition to experiences with discrimination, research shows socioeconomic status also influences the extent to which African Americans feel a sense of group consciousness. Some studies have found that African Americans with higher socioeconomic statuses are likely to feel less of a sense of group consciousness than those with lower incomes and education levels (Allen et al. 1989; Broman et al. 1988; Demo and Hughes 1990) while others have found that middle and upper class Blacks are likely to have a more acute sense of racial identity and group consciousness (Cose 1995; Dawson 1994; Durham and Sparrow 1997; Hochschild 1995).

Contextual factors like place of residence and racial socialization also play a role in developing a sense of group consciousness among African Americans. For example, Demo and Hughes (1990) finds that various aspects of group consciousness are influence by the racial makeup of those surrounding you, and they suggest that Blacks who experience more interracial contact are likely to have a lower sense of group consciousness than people in with more homogenous networks. Gay (2004) also asserts that African Americans who live in “well-tended neighborhoods with safe streets and ample services” have a lower sense of group consciousness than Blacks who live in worse neighborhoods, but she also finds that African Americans who live among highly educated Blacks are more likely to feel that discrimination is a problem. Overall, scholars show environmental context has an effect on linked fated among African Americans. What is more, socialization, or the extent to which one’s parents discuss issues of race is also shown to influence the development of racial
identity and racial group consciousness among African Americans (Demo and Hughes 1990; Nunnally 2010).

**Hypotheses and Expectations**

Extant literature suggest that African Americans’ sense of group consciousness is influenced by a plethora of factors including closeness with one’s in-group, experiences and perception of discrimination, socioeconomic status, socialization and interracial interactions. This literature, however, is specific to African Americans. The literature concerning Black immigrants implies that many of these factors are also likely to influence Black immigrants’ sense of racial group consciousness. For example, Vickerman's (1999a) work on Jamaican men show that as they continue to live in the United States and as they experience discrimination, they are more likely to feel connected to African Americans. Literature shows that generational status may also matter. Butterfield (2004a, 2004b) shows that second generation Black immigrants are more likely to identify with African Americans. Second generation Black immigrants are also more likely to recognize discrimination and acknowledge the role of race on their life chances because they have been socialized in the American context. Portes (2001) and Waters (1999a, 2001) also show that in addition to generational status, both socioeconomic status and gender may influence racial identity among Black immigrants, which in turn may influence racial group consciousness.

A theory of diasporic consciousness suggests that while Black immigrants do not have a shared historical legacy with race and discrimination in the United States, the factors that initially led African Americans’ racial identities to be politicized still exist today. That
is to say, while there may be additional factors like generational status and gender that may influence Black immigrants in ways that do not affect African Americans, the basic determinants of discrimination and a sense of shared identity will influence Black immigrants’ sense of group consciousness in the same way as it does for African Americans.

First and second generation Black immigrants do recognize that their racial identity influences their life chances, and scholars show that Black immigrants feel that their fate is linked to that of African Americans (Rogers 2006). Further, I find in Chapter 3 of this study that first and second generation Black immigrants think about their racial identity similar to how African Americans think about theirs. Moreover, Black immigrants also mirror African Americans’ attitudes about what their racial identity means for their life chances.

What may be different between African Americans and Black immigrants are the circumstances under which group consciousness is triggered and what policy attitudes are affected by group consciousness.

Again, the first step to a developing racial group consciousness is a having a psychological attachment to those who feel close to other racial group members will be more likely to feel a sense of linked fate. The previous chapter showed that Black immigrants and African Americans share similar levels of racial centrality (which includes measures of “closeness), but this analysis will show if racial identity will translate to a sense of group consciousness for Black immigrants in the way that it does for African Americans. In light of the findings in the previous chapter as well as the extant literature on racial group consciousness, I expect Black immigrants who identify with African Americans will have higher levels of group consciousness.

Furthermore, the literature on African Americans strongly suggests that their memory of historical experiences with group discrimination plays a major role in the
development of group consciousness, but what is particularly important to consider is that the literature shows that everyday, contemporary experiences with discrimination tend to politicize racial identities as well. While some Black immigrants ignore the role of race in their lives, first generation immigrants who are more acculturated to U.S. society as well as second generation Black immigrants tend to recognize the role that race and racial discrimination have on their lives. We should expect the identities of Black immigrants who perceive discriminatory behavior to be mobilized politically.

Finally, the previous chapter as well as existing literature shows that the role of socialization is important in the development of Black immigrants racial identities. Thus we should similarly expect those who have been socialized within America’s racialized social system to develop a greater level of group consciousness than those who were not raised in the United States. It is expected that those second generation immigrants are more likely than their first generation counterparts to recognize the role that race plays in their lives and, consequently, may be more likely to feel a sense of linked fate with African Americans.

In consideration of these expectations, I examine four specific hypotheses concerning the determinants of racial group consciousness among African Americans and Black immigrants:

\( H_1: \) Black immigrants of various ethnicities will have similar levels of group consciousness as African Americans.

\( H_2: \) Black immigrants who identify with other Blacks will have a higher sense of linked fate than those who do not feel as close to racial group members.

\( H_3: \) Experiences with racial discrimination will increase the extent to which Black immigrants feel a sense of group consciousness as it does for African Americans.

\( H_4: \) Black immigrants who are more acculturated to the United States, especially second generation Black immigrants, will have a higher sense of group consciousness than their those who are foreign-born.
Measures and Methods

The first study aims to understand the determinants of group consciousness; as such, group consciousness is the dependent variable in this analysis. Group consciousness is measured by respondents’ answer to the question: “Do you think what generally happens to Black people in this country will have something to do with what happens in your life?” If the respondent answers in the affirmative, they are asked, “How much? A lot? Some? A Little?” In turn, the variable is constructed on four-point Likert scale ranging from “none” to “a lot.”

There are four independent variables of primary concern. The first is racial identity. I measure racial identity with respondents’ answer to the survey item, “How close do you feel in your ideas and feelings about things to Black people in this country?” While racial identity is a multidimensional concept, the notion of closeness “emphasize[s] the facet of black identity that most closely resembles classic definitions of group identity” (Harris 1995).

Ethnicity is the second independent variable of concern. In order to test the first hypothesis, or the difference in levels between African Americans and Black immigrants, I created dummy variables for West Indian respondents, Haitian respondents, and African respondents. I run models that allow for comparative analysis of African Americans and

3 I do not use Robert Seller’s Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) as I did in previous chapter for a number of reasons. First, there are four dimensions of the MIBI scale, but only three are sufficiently measured in the National Survey of American Life. Secondly, there would be issues of multicollinearity because traditional measures of group consciousness via “linked-fate” are included in various aspects of the MIBI scale. That is to say, both Sellers and I agree that linked-fate is an aspect of racial identity. In this chapter, I am concerned specifically with the politicized dimension of racial identity, so I single it out here.
various groups of Black immigrants. Additionally, I run a model for Black immigrants exclusively in order to see if there are any differences among groups of Black immigrants.

The third independent variable concerns experiences with discrimination. Experiences with discrimination are measured in the same way that they are in Chapter 4. Both major and everyday experiences with discrimination are included in the analysis. In order to test the fourth hypothesis concerning acculturation, I include a measure for generational status as well as English language ability. I include a dummy variable for “second generation.” I also utilized a survey item asking if English is the language respondents grew up speaking as a proxy for English language ability.

Finally, I include a number of control variables. Since the literature shows that socialization influences group consciousness, I include measures of racial socialization via the proximity measure as well as the extent to respondents’ parents discussed issues of race with them. I also include socioeconomic (income and education) variables as well as demographic variables (age and gender).

Results

Table 5-1 includes five models, each of which tests at least one hypothesis. Model A is an ordinary least squares model predicting linked fate among all Blacks in the sample. Here we see that racial identity is a statistically significant variable in determining a sense of group consciousness among all Black people. That is, those who feel close to other Blacks also have a sense that their fate is linked to other Black people in the United States. Additionally, Model A shows that both everyday and major experiences with discrimination are significant determinants of racial group consciousness.
Table 5-1: OLS Models Predicting Linked-Fate Among African Americans and Black Immigrants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model A</th>
<th>Model B African Americans vs. Black Immigrants</th>
<th>Model C African Americans</th>
<th>Model D Black Immigrants</th>
<th>Model E Black Immigrants Full</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Blacks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness</td>
<td>.278*** (.036)</td>
<td>.276** (.036)</td>
<td>.258*** (.041)</td>
<td>.353*** (.075)</td>
<td>.335*** (.075)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES/Demographics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.002 (.018)</td>
<td>.002 (.018)</td>
<td>.017 (.021)</td>
<td>-.04 (.035)</td>
<td>-.032 (.035)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.103*** (.027)</td>
<td>.100*** (.027)</td>
<td>.108*** (.031)</td>
<td>.069 (.059)</td>
<td>.058 (.059)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.001 (.002)</td>
<td>.001 (.002)</td>
<td>.002 (.002)</td>
<td>-.001 (.004)</td>
<td>-.0003 (.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (male=1)</td>
<td>.092* (.054)</td>
<td>.094* (.055)</td>
<td>.098 (.061)</td>
<td>.081 (.122)</td>
<td>.089 (.123)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Experiences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyday Discrimination</td>
<td>.014*** (.003)</td>
<td>.014*** (.003)</td>
<td>.013*** (.004)</td>
<td>.02*** (.007)</td>
<td>.017** (.008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Discrimination</td>
<td>.093*** (.017)</td>
<td>.093*** (.016)</td>
<td>.102*** (.018)</td>
<td>.043 (.042)</td>
<td>.033 (.042)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity</td>
<td>-.083*** (.032)</td>
<td>-.082*** (.032)</td>
<td>-.073*** (.036)</td>
<td>-.146* (.075)</td>
<td>-.070 (.079)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents Talk</td>
<td>.019 (.028)</td>
<td>.020 (.028)</td>
<td>.019 (.031)</td>
<td>.023 (.074)</td>
<td>.017 (.073)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Indian</td>
<td>--- ---</td>
<td>.043 (.067)</td>
<td>--- ---</td>
<td>--- ---</td>
<td>--- ---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haitian</td>
<td>--- ---</td>
<td>-.164 (.165)</td>
<td>--- ---</td>
<td>--- ---</td>
<td>.006 (.213)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African</td>
<td>--- ---</td>
<td>.067 (.352)</td>
<td>--- ---</td>
<td>--- ---</td>
<td>.286 (.381)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acculturation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Generation</td>
<td>--- ---</td>
<td>--- ---</td>
<td>--- ---</td>
<td>--- ---</td>
<td>.399*** (.128)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Speaking</td>
<td>--- ---</td>
<td>--- ---</td>
<td>--- ---</td>
<td>--- ---</td>
<td>.078 (.149)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.02*** .202</td>
<td>1.02*** .203</td>
<td>.983*** .227</td>
<td>1.33*** .461</td>
<td>.924*. .486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>2027</td>
<td>2027</td>
<td>1613</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-square</td>
<td>.097</td>
<td>.098</td>
<td>.092</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.1    **p<.05    ***p<.01
The control variables also provide interesting information. First, the results reveal that those with higher levels of education and Black men of various ethnicities tend to feel a higher sense of group consciousness. Additionally, those who were socialized around more Blacks feel a lower sense of group consciousness than those who were more likely to interact with whites. Both the education and the “proximity” variables provide evidence that more education and more exposure to differences in racial group privilege tend to develop a higher sense of group consciousness (Cose 1995; Dawson 1994a; Durant and Sparrow 1997; Hochschild 1995).

Model B is an effort to test the first hypothesis concerning ethnic differences. Here, I include dummy variables for West Indians, Haitians and Africans, thereby making African Americans the comparison group. The results corroborate Hypothesis 1, which asserts that there will be no major differences in levels of group consciousness among various groups of Black immigrants and African Americans.

Model B shows that there are not major differences in levels of group consciousness among various groups of Black people, but Models C, D, and E help us to better understand if the determinants of group consciousness are different among these groups. I included Model C on African American as a comparative model, and this model also helps us to gain a sense of whether African Americans were the primary drivers of any of the determinants in Models A or B. Model C shows that African Americans’ sense of closeness to other Blacks, their level of education and experiences with both major and everyday discrimination play a role in developing group consciousness. Interestingly, proximity to other Blacks tends to decrease a politicized identity.

What is important about Model C is that is not very different from Model D, which is exclusive to Black immigrants. That is to say, it does not appear that African Americans are
skewing the results of models that include both African Americans and Black immigrants. The major difference shown by these two mirror models is that levels of education influences group consciousness for African Americans but not for Black immigrants. Nevertheless, there are other similarities. First, closeness with racial group members increases levels of group consciousness for African Americans and Black immigrants, as predicted by Hypothesis 2. Further, experiences with everyday discrimination influence African Americans and Black immigrants similarly; this finding was expected, as asserted by H3. Finally, concerning similarities, both Model D and Model D show that proximity to other Blacks tend to dampen a sense of linked fate for African Americans as well as for Black immigrants.

Discussion

Taken together, these models show that what we know about African American group consciousness can be extended to Black immigrants. That is to say, feelings of closeness to racial group members, experiences with discrimination and socialization factors influence the levels of group consciousness among African Americans as well as Black immigrants. But, there are some differences among Black immigrants and African Americans too. For example, the analyses tell us that we should consider the generational status of Black immigrants when trying to understand or explain their levels of group consciousness. Generational status, and therefore, level of socialization and acculturation in American society influences levels of group consciousness. The results here show that those of the second generation tend to have a higher sense of racial consciousness than first generation immigrants. Because African Americans have been in the U.S. for several
generations, generational status has not been an important factor in the previous Black politics literature. These results show, however, that due to increased immigration of Afro-Caribbeans, Afro-Latinos and Africans, factors like generational status and acculturation are likely have an influence on levels of group consciousness among Black people as a group.

**Influence of Group Consciousness on Political Attitudes**

The analyses above show that the determinants of group consciousness African Americans and Black immigrants are for the most part quite similar. Reuel Rogers (2006) has argued that although many Black immigrants report feeling a sense of linked fate with African Americans, we should not expect this sense of group consciousness to necessarily translate politically in the same way it does African Americans.

I have shown in this chapter as well as in chapter 2 that Black immigrants’ racial identities tend to be politicized when their life chances are threatened due to their racial group membership. Moreover, historical accounts show that Black immigrants can be mobilized to act politically and in act in coalition with African Americans. What is not known is when and under what circumstances racial group consciousness influences the political attitudes of Black immigrants. How, if at all, does racial group consciousness influence Black immigrant political attitudes? I address this question in this analysis.

**Hypotheses and Expectations**

Previous research shows that Black immigrants’ racial identity tends to be mobilized in instances when there is a sense of racial threat (Greenbaum 2002; Hellwig 1978; Kasinitz 1992; Kim 2000). Thus the underlying theory that drives this analysis is that
if group consciousness is relevant for Black immigrants’ political attitudes, it is likely to
influence attitudes in policy areas that affect Black immigrants because of their racial group
membership. We should expect Black immigrants’ racial identity to be politicized in racially
salient policy areas.

\[ H_1: \text{Group consciousness will influence Black immigrants’ political attitudes but only in}
\text{racially salient policy areas.} \]

Even though I am primarily concerned with the role racial group consciousness
plays for Black immigrants, it is important to compare this group with African Americans in
efforts to gain a sense of the extent to which the contours of Black politics is influenced by
ethnic differences. Literature concerning Black Americans implies that this group tends to
use their racial identity in a broad array of policy areas, including areas that have little or no
noticeable racial content. Based on these findings I propose the following hypothesis:

\[ H_2: \text{Black immigrants’ racial group consciousness will influence policy areas that are}
\text{clearly racialized while African Americans’ sense of group consciousness will influence}
\text{attitudes in policy areas that directly influence Blacks as well as those that have no}
\text{noticeable racial content.} \]

**Measures and Methods**

I investigate the role of racial group consciousness on five policy areas, which serve
as dependent variables. Three of them are racially salient issue areas: the government’s role
in improving the status of Blacks, the development of minority voting districts, and a
proposal to provide reparations to Blacks. Two of the policy areas are general issue areas,
abortion and allowing lesbian or gay people to adopt children. This array of dependent
variables allows me to gain a sense of whether racial group consciousness has a greater
influence on some policy areas than others.
The first general issue is abortion, and the dependent variable is based on the survey item “A woman should always be able to obtain an abortion.” The other general issue dependent variable is based on the question, “Homosexual, gay or lesbian, couples should be legally permitted to adopt children.” The respondents may choose among four options on a Likert scale from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (4) for these questions.

The three racially salient issues were chosen because they clearly affect Blacks in the United States at both the local level and the national level. One of the racially salient questions concerns the extent to which respondents believe the government has a role in improving the status of Blacks; the survey item is worded, “The government should make every effort to improve the social and economic position of Blacks living in the United States.” Second, since the ability of Blacks to be placed in districts where they can have a substantial influence in choosing a representative has long been important to Blacks in the U.S. (McClain and Stewart 2010), I utilized a survey item that refers to this constant struggle: “Political districts need to be formed so that more racial minority candidates can be elected.” Finally, I utilized a question concerning reparations, which is clearly racialized as Black: “The government should give reparations (compensation, payback) to African Americans for historical injustices and slavery.” Again, the respondents may choose among four options including “strongly disagree” (1), “somewhat disagree,” “somewhat agree” or “strongly agree” (4).

While there has not been a great deal of literature concerning the political attitudes of Black immigrants, I use the general political science literature in addition to the traditional Black politics literature to build a well specified model that includes not only the primary independent variable of concern, group consciousness, but also variables that have been well documented as explanatory variables for political attitudes. I have grouped these
into four groups of variables: group consciousness, socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, political orientation, and political activities and experiences.  

Group consciousness is the primary variable of concern, which is measured by the linked fate survey item. In addition to group consciousness, I include variables measuring socioeconomic status and demographic characteristics; I measure family household income, level of education, age and gender. Additionally, I include variables concerning political orientation. Here, I measure partisanship, which is represented by a dummy variable for Democrat (1); independents and Republicans are combined and compared against Democrats in this model. Further, I measure ideology on a seven-point scale from “extremely liberal” (1) to “extremely conservative” (7); the model maintains this direction from liberal to conservative as the values increase.

Finally, I included variables concerning the extent to which respondents have had political and racialized experiences. I include a variable that measures whether a respondent belongs to a group that works toward improving the well being of Blacks in America. I utilize this because scholars show that participation in these racially aimed mobilizing structures serves to bolster a psychological attachment to a racial identity (Espiritu 1992; Okamoto 2006). I also include experiences with discrimination. Scholars who focus on Black immigrants show that experiences with major and everyday forms of discrimination tend to feel closer to Black Americans, tend to recognize that the U.S. is a racialized social system, and tend to realize that their race is linked to their opportunity structure (Butterfield 2004a, 2004b; Vickerman 2001a, 2001b).

---

4 For the models on Black immigrants, I also tested a fifth cluster that included national origin (West Indian, Haitian, and African) as well as generational status (with a dummy for second generation Black immigrants), but these variables provided no additional information. I provide the baseline model since it is exactly the same as the model used for African Americans.
I explore the hypotheses in two steps. First, I analyze the role of group consciousness on the issue areas for Black immigrants. Then, I repeat the analysis for Black Americans so that I can compare the role of group consciousness between the two groups.

**Results**

The first stage of the analysis is to assess the role of racial group consciousness on the general and racially salient policy areas for Black immigrants. The first model utilizes an OLS regression on each of the policy areas.\(^5\) The first hypothesis asserted that racial group consciousness should play a role in racialized policy areas for Black immigrants but not necessarily for general issue areas. The results in Table 5-2 provide mixed results.

---

\(^5\) I also ran each model as an ordered probit, but there was no additional helpful information. The results were essentially the same.
Table 5-2: OLS Models on Racial-Salient and General Policy Attitudes for Black Immigrants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Racialized Policies</th>
<th>General Policies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improve Position of</td>
<td>Reparations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minority Districts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Consciousness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linked Fate</td>
<td>.017 (.029)</td>
<td>.048 (.047)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.042 .036</td>
<td>.040 (.050)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES &amp; Demographics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-.029 (.021)</td>
<td>.088*** (.034)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-.011 (.025)</td>
<td>.026 (.034)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-.022 (.029)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.005 (.035)</td>
<td>.097* (.056)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-.041 (.043)</td>
<td>.040 (.060)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-.038 (.048)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (male=1)</td>
<td>-.088 (.072)</td>
<td>-.227** (.115)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.025 (.087)</td>
<td>.328*** (.116)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-.137 (.098)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.001 (.002)</td>
<td>.010*** (.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.002 .003</td>
<td>.011*** (.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-.004 (.003)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partisanship (Democrat=1)</td>
<td>.25*** (.077)</td>
<td>.29*** (.123)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.177* (.036)</td>
<td>.164 (.126)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.171 (.107)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>-.019 (.022)</td>
<td>.088*** (.035)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-.037 (.027)</td>
<td>-.037 (.035)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-.008 (.030)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Activities/ Experiences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Organization</td>
<td>-.139 (.114)</td>
<td>.125 (.181)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Discrimination</td>
<td>-.138 (.136)</td>
<td>-.132 (.181)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.294* (.153)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>.029 (.025)</td>
<td>.008 (.040)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor Discrimination</td>
<td>.000 (.030)</td>
<td>.004 (.040)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>-.005 (.006)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.064* (.033)</td>
<td>.006 (.007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.002 (.006)</td>
<td>.010 (.007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3.33*** (.182)</td>
<td>2.56*** (.289)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.94*** (.222)</td>
<td>2.35*** (.293)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.08*** .248</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-square</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.1    **p<.05   ***p<.01

First, racial group consciousness did not influence either abortion policy attitudes or policy attitudes concerning LGBT adoption. Instead, abortion attitudes were primarily
influenced by socioeconomic and demographic characteristics and also political orientation. In many ways, these results are the expected direction. Those with higher incomes and education levels as well as Democrats have more liberal attitudes than those with lower income and education levels and those who did not identify as Democrat. Older Black immigrants and males are more likely than their younger counterparts and women to be against abortion. Finally, the results show that those who are more conservative are also less supportive of abortion. Similarly, for policy area concerning the ability of lesbian or gay people to adopt was primarily influence by demographic characteristics rather than linked-fate. Males and older Black immigrants had more conservative attitudes in this policy area.

Concerning the racialized policies, linked fate affected the reparations policy attitudes but not the attitudes concerning the government’s role to improve the status of Blacks or creating districts where minorities might be able to be more easily elected. For reparations, those with a higher sense of linked fate expressed more support for reparations for African Americans. One interesting thing about this finding is that the reparations policy question is the only on that explicitly references African Americans. The other two policy areas talk about “Blacks” and “minorities.” Rogers (2006) shows that Black immigrants share feelings of respect for African Americans’ struggles in the United States. Perhaps the results here corroborate those feelings, which might best be illustrated in the finding that as Black immigrants experienced more discrimination, they were more supportive of reparations for African Americans. What is more, those who participated in organizations that aimed to improve the well being of Blacks were more supportive of compensation to Blacks for previous injustices.

The issue of minority districts was primarily influenced by partisanship; Democrats provided more support for this issue than Republican and Independent Black immigrants.
The issue of minority districts was primarily influenced by partisanship; Democrats provided more support for this issue than Republican and Independent Black immigrants. Similarly, feelings concerning the role of the government in improving the status of Blacks were only influenced by partisanship. Again, Democrats were more supportive of such ideas. Black immigrants’ sense of linked fate influenced a restricted set of racial policies but not any general issue areas.

The second stage of this analysis is to compare the role of group consciousness between African Americans and Black immigrants. The second hypothesis asserted that if group consciousness is relevant for Black immigrants, the domain of policy areas that are influenced by a politicized identity would be smaller than the domain of policy areas that are influenced by African Americans’ sense of group consciousness. Table 5-3 provides the results of the second hypothesis’s test. Here, we see racial group consciousness influences both racialized policy attitudes as well as general issue policy attitudes for African Americans. This supports the second hypothesis; African Americans’ sense of group consciousness influences more policy domains than that of Black immigrants’ sense of group consciousness.
### Table 5-3: OLS Models on Racial-Salient and General Policy Attitudes for African Americans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Improve Position</th>
<th>Reparations</th>
<th>Minority Districts</th>
<th>General Policies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Consciousness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linked Fate</td>
<td>.038**</td>
<td>(.017)</td>
<td>.07***</td>
<td>(.022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SES/Demographics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.037***</td>
<td>(.015)</td>
<td>-.034*</td>
<td>(.019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.016</td>
<td>(.022)</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>(.029)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (male=1)</td>
<td>-.053</td>
<td>(.042)</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>(.055)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>(.001)</td>
<td>.006***</td>
<td>(.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Orientation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partisanship (Democrat=1)</td>
<td>.198***</td>
<td>(.046)</td>
<td>.168***</td>
<td>(.059)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ideology</td>
<td>-.023*</td>
<td>(.013)</td>
<td>-.006</td>
<td>(.017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Activities/Experiences</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Organization</td>
<td>.121**</td>
<td>(.060)</td>
<td>.064</td>
<td>(.077)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Discrimination Experience</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>(.013)</td>
<td>.051***</td>
<td>(.163)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor Discrimination Experience</td>
<td>.005**</td>
<td>(.002)</td>
<td>.01***</td>
<td>(.003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3.16***</td>
<td>(.112)</td>
<td>2.46***</td>
<td>(.144)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1484</td>
<td></td>
<td>1470</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-square</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*\(p<.1\)  **\(p<.05\)  ***\(p<.01\)

The results show that in addition to linked fate, African Americans’ income and political orientation influences attitudes concerning the role of the government to improve
the status of Blacks in this country. African American Democrats and more liberal African Americans are more supportive of the government improving the status of Blacks. However, those with higher levels of income are less supportive of the government improving the status of Blacks. Actually, this pattern shows up across each of the racially-salient policies; as one’s income increases, there is less support for the government improving the position of Blacks, providing reparations or creating districts where minority candidates have a greater chance of getting elected. Table 5-3 also shows that African American Democrats are more supportive of reparations to their group and are feel that the government should make minority-influence voting districts.

As mentioned, African Americans sense of linked fate also played a role in non-racial policy areas, including their attitudes about abortion and lesbian and gay adoption.\(^6\) One finding that is counterintuitive, however, is the result that African American men are more supportive of lesbian and gay people adopting children than African American women. Along with linked fate, the results show that as African Americans’ level of education increase, their attitudes about abortion rights become more liberal. Further, those who are Democrats and are liberal in their political ideology are more supportive of a woman’s right to choose abortion. What is more, older African Americans are less supportive of abortion and lesbian and gay adoption, as expected from what we see in the American population as a whole.

---

\(^6\) I also ran analysis on abortion and LBGT attitudes that included religiosity. Religion played an important role for African Americans and Black immigrants, but linked-fate remained an important determinant of these attitudes for African Americans. The additional analysis can be found at the end of this chapter.
Discussion

Many of these findings are supported by the previous Black politics literature, but this comparative analysis shows that we may see different determinants of political attitudes when we pay attention to ethnic differences among Blacks in the United States. This analysis largely supports the literature that asserts the very important role of racial group consciousness as a major influence in the political attitudes and behaviors of African Americans. But, more importantly, this analysis shows that Blacks are not a homogenous group, and further that racial group consciousness does not influence all Black people in the same way. Furthermore, while the policy areas used in this analysis are not exhaustive, they do help to answer the questions I presented at the opening of this chapter. I presented the questions of whether linked-fate will play a role among Black immigrants’ political attitudes, and if so, when should we expect this group’s racial identity to be mobilized? I proposed that because of on-going discrimination, Black immigrants are likely to develop and employ a sense of group consciousness as African Americans historically have. However, I also suggested that if group consciousness is a determinant of Black immigrants’ political attitudes, we should expect it in racially salient policy domains.

The results show that Black immigrants’ sense of group consciousness plays a role in their political attitudes in some racially salient policy areas, and the number of policy domains that are affected by Black immigrants’ sense of linked-fate is much smaller than we see for African Americans. Black immigrants sense of group consciousness was a significant influence in their attitudes of reparations to African Americans, but not in other racialized areas such as shaping voting districts that would allow minorities to be more easily elected or calling for the government to improve the status of Blacks in the United States. African
Americans’ sense of group consciousness, in comparison, influenced all of the tested racial policy domains as well as the non-racial policy areas of abortion and lesbian and gay adoption rights.

**Influence of Group Consciousness on Political Behavior**

The general political participation literature shows that those with more resources, such as higher income, levels of education, or occupational status, have a greater ability to and are more likely to participate in politics (e.g. Verba and Nie 1972; Verba, Scholzman and Brady 1995). But literature concerning minority groups, particularly African Americans, shows that those who have a sense of group consciousness are likely to vote at greater levels than majority group members when socioeconomic indicators are controlled (Olsen 1970; Verba and Nie 1972). Group consciousness is a motivating factor to participate in addition to socioeconomic resources among African Americans.

To be clear, simply identifying with a group does not affect one’s political actions; instead, one’s identity must be politicized in order to influence political behavior (Miller et al. 1981; Simon and Klandermans 2001). For example, just because a person identifies as Black, does not mean that they will act with their racial group in mind. Rather, it is those who identify as Black and believe that their well-being is linked to other group members who are more likely to participate in politics.

The extent to which group consciousness still affects Black Americans’ political behavior is a matter of disagreement among scholars (Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Chong and Rogers 2005; Leighley and Vedlitz 1999). Bobo and Gilliam (1990) suggest that the findings concerning the role of group consciousness for African Americans were uncovered in the
1950s and 1960s, but over time group consciousness has been supplanted by the role of Black empowerment; they suggest that those who are represented by Black representatives are more likely to participate. In contrast, Leighley and Vedlitz (1999) argue that the socioeconomic model of participation is the most helpful to explain African Americans’ political behavior.

Others find group consciousness to be an important factor explaining political behavior (Chong and Rogers 2005; Dawson 1994; Tate 1994). Chong and Rogers, however, find that we have to differentiate among various types of participation. In their analysis of the 1984 National Black Election Study, Chong and Rogers (2005) find that group consciousness has only a modest effect on voter turnout among African Americans, but a politicized racial identity has significant effects on African American participation in campaign activities, petitioning government officials, and participation in boycotts and protests.

Nevertheless, the extent to which group consciousness will affect Black immigrants in the way that it has for African Americans is unknown. In Rogers’ (2006) qualitative study of West Indians in New York, he concludes that Black immigrants’ racial identity is not likely to be mobilized in the same way as we have seen it among African Americans. Rogers (2006) further explains that we should certainly not expect Black immigrants to demand things from the government through extrapolitical participation because these behaviors are not customary in their home countries. That is to say, Black immigrants’ frame of reference concerning what a good government looks like as well as their relationship to those institutions is different from African Americans’. The attitudes of Black immigrants’ about the appropriate forms of interaction between citizens and governments translate to a hands-off approach on the part Black immigrant constituents in politics.
Hypotheses and Expectations

Rogers (2006) provides arguably the most helpful reference concerning the political behavior and attitudes of Black immigrants. Rogers (2006) finds that Black immigrants tend to naturalize at very low rates as well as tend to focus on the politics of their homelands because they imagine that they will return some day. Taking into consideration his findings, one would expect naturalized Black immigrants to participate at lower rates than African Americans. Rogers’ (2006) work also suggests that we should not expect group consciousness to be the motivational resource among Black immigrants that it is for African Americans, especially in non-traditional political participation such as contacting a political official, participating in a political campaign or the like.

The previous chapters of this dissertation have shown that Black immigrants’ sense of racial identity and group consciousness are very similar to that of African Americans. Black immigrants face very similar racial constraints as African Americans, and I have shown that levels of group consciousness—a combined awareness of difference in group, a feelings of relative deprivation, and a need to act collectively—are mirrored among various groups of Black people. In turn, I contend that we should see group consciousness enhance Black immigrants’ political behavior as we see it among African Americans.

To address the question of whether group consciousness influences Black immigrants’ political behavior, I start with these two hypotheses:

\[ H_1: \text{Participation rates among Black immigrants will be lower than they are for African Americans.} \]

\[ H_2: \text{Group consciousness will play an influential role in participation rates for Black immigrants and African Americans, especially in non-traditional areas of participation such as contacting a representative or participating in a political campaign.} \]
Measures and Methods

I analyze three modes of participation using the data from the *National Survey of American Life*. First, I analyze vote turnout. Respondents are asked: “Did you vote in any state or local elections during the last year?” For the second dependent variable, I used the survey item, “Have you ever worked for a political party or campaigned for a political candidate?” Finally, I incorporate the survey item, “Have you ever called or written a public official about a concern or problem?”

In addition to including the linked fate measure as the main independent variable of concern, I also included measures of socioeconomic resources—education level and income—in addition to gender, age and political orientation as control variables.

Descriptive Results

Difference in proportions tests between African Americans’ and Black immigrants’ participation rates reveal some differences between groups. Each Black immigrant group was compared to African Americans to test the first hypothesis, which asserted that Black immigrants tend to participate at lower levels than African Americans.
Table 5-4: Rates of Participation among African Americans and Black Immigrants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>African Americans</th>
<th>All Black Immigrants</th>
<th>West Indian</th>
<th>Haitian</th>
<th>African First Generation</th>
<th>African Second Generation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voted in Previous Election (%)</td>
<td>62.9 (n=2064)</td>
<td>50.3* (n=603)</td>
<td>51.1* (n=511)</td>
<td>52.1* (n=73)</td>
<td>25.0* (n=20)</td>
<td>43.8* (n=418)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaigned for a Political Party (%)</td>
<td>16.2 (n=2065)</td>
<td>11.6* (n=602)</td>
<td>12.6* (n=509)</td>
<td>5.4* (n=74)</td>
<td>10.0 (n=20)</td>
<td>9.6* (n=418)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacted a Representative (%)</td>
<td>26.2 (n=2069)</td>
<td>25.3 (n=604)</td>
<td>26.0 (n=511)</td>
<td>23.0 (n=74)</td>
<td>15.0 (n=20)</td>
<td>21.0* (n=419)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significantly different from African American sample, 95% confidence level, one-tail


Table 5-4 reveals African Americans tend to vote at higher rates than immigrants of West Indian, Haitian and African descent. The results, however, show that second generation Black immigrants tend to vote at higher levels than their first generation counterparts but at the same levels of African Americans.

The second and third rows illustrate rates of participation with political campaigns and contacting a representative, respectively. In comparison to voting, there is a major drop off in these two less traditional forms of participation. African Americans and second generation Black immigrants tended to work with political parties and campaigns at the same rate. When looking at differences between ethnic groups, the results show that African Americans tend to work with political parties more often than Black immigrants, generally, and more often than West Indians and Haitians, specifically.

The third row reveals that African Americans and Black immigrants of various ethnicities tend to contact their representatives at about the same rates. The major differences surfaced when Black immigrants are disaggregated by generational status. The last two columns show that first generation Black immigrants contact their representatives
at lower rates than African Americans, but interestingly, second generation Black immigrants tended to contact a representatives more often than African Americans.

Perhaps, we can better understand the results concerning the fact that second generation Black immigrants tend to participate on par with or exceeding African Americans by using the Asian and Latino politics literature. Within this literature we see that second generation immigrants tend to participate at higher levels than first generation naturalized immigrants (Arvizu and Garcia 1996; Stokes 2003). The results presented here show that second generation immigrants mirror African Americans’ political behaviors. Perhaps the differences between first and second generation immigrants reveal the difference in socialized attitudes concerning the role of the government and the relationship between constituents and political representatives.

**Multivariate Results**

Tables 5-5, 5-6 and 5-7 present logistic regression estimates for the effect of linked fate on voting, contacting a representative, and campaigning for a political party or representative, respectively. Each table includes a baseline model that includes all Blacks in the sample. The three tables also include models that disaggregate African Americans from Black immigrants so that comparative analyses can be provided. Overall, these models show, on the one hand, group consciousness does have a significant effect on the political behaviors of Black immigrants and African Americans, but, on the other hand, the results also reveal that linked fate influences African Americans and Black immigrants in different ways.
Table 5-5 shows the effects of linked fate on voting behavior. The first column shows that when we look at all Blacks, socioeconomic and demographic variables as well as partisanship are the most important variables in determining whether a person voted in a previous election rather than linked fate. The second and third column allows me to compare the determinants of participation between African Americans and Black immigrants. The model that exclusively concerns African Americans corroborates Chong and Rogers’ (2005) conclusion that group consciousness is not an influential determinant of vote turnout among African Americans. The third column in Table 5-5 shows that linked-fate is a not significant determinant of vote turnout for Black immigrants either.

Table 5-5: Logistic Model on Political Participation: Voting in Previous Election

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Blacks</th>
<th>African Americans</th>
<th>Black Immigrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group Consciousness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linked Fate</td>
<td>.031 (.043)</td>
<td>.013 (.050)</td>
<td>.066 (.087)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES/Demographics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.142*** (.039)</td>
<td>.126** (.050)</td>
<td>.261*** (.069)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.249*** (.054)</td>
<td>.396*** (.067)</td>
<td>.107 (.106)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (male=1)</td>
<td>-.352*** (.105)</td>
<td>-.395*** (.122)</td>
<td>-.229 (.214)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.036*** (.003)</td>
<td>.034*** (.004)</td>
<td>.042*** (.007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partisanship (Dem.=1)</td>
<td>.832*** (.108)</td>
<td>.838*** (.126)</td>
<td>.811*** (.229)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>.033 (.034)</td>
<td>.004 (.039)</td>
<td>.090 (.067)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-.249*** (.269)</td>
<td>-.32*** (.313)</td>
<td>-3.58*** (.576)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>2136</td>
<td>1646</td>
<td>490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo-R²</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.1   **p<.05   ***p<.01
Next, Table 5-6 summarizes the effects of the independent variables on whether respondents have ever called or written a public official about a concern or a problem. Here, we see that linked fate is a significant determinant on both African Americans’ and Black immigrants’ interactive behavior with their political representatives. In addition to group consciousness, African Americans with higher levels of education and those who are older are more likely to contact a public official. What’s more, those African Americans who are more liberal in their political ideology are more likely to contact a representative. Among Black immigrants, both socioeconomic indicators—income and education—as well as age are important determinants of this aspect of participation in addition to linked fate.

Table 5-6: Logistic Model on Political Participation: Contacting a Representative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Blacks</th>
<th></th>
<th>African Americans</th>
<th></th>
<th>Black Immigrants</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Consciousness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linked Fate</td>
<td>.201***</td>
<td>(.046)</td>
<td>.169***</td>
<td>(.053)</td>
<td>.295***</td>
<td>(.096)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES/Demographics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.076**</td>
<td>(.036)</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>(.043)</td>
<td>.205***</td>
<td>(.065)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.513***</td>
<td>(.057)</td>
<td>.621***</td>
<td>(.067)</td>
<td>.262**</td>
<td>(.117)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (male=1)</td>
<td>-.055</td>
<td>(.111)</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>(.127)</td>
<td>-.233</td>
<td>(.233)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.035***</td>
<td>(.003)</td>
<td>.040***</td>
<td>(.004)</td>
<td>.019***</td>
<td>(.007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partisanship (Dem.=1)</td>
<td>.124</td>
<td>(.128)</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>(.147)</td>
<td>.300</td>
<td>(.267)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>-.063*</td>
<td>(.036)</td>
<td>-.078*</td>
<td>(.042)</td>
<td>-.003</td>
<td>(.073)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-4.36***</td>
<td>(.309)</td>
<td>-4.49***</td>
<td>(.358)</td>
<td>-4.03***</td>
<td>(.640)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>2137</td>
<td></td>
<td>1646</td>
<td></td>
<td>491</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo-R²</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td></td>
<td>.12</td>
<td></td>
<td>.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.1  **p<.05  ***p<.01, two-tailed test
Finally, Table 5-7 provides insight into the determinants of the third form of participation: campaigning for a political candidate or working for a political party. Here, there are some differences between African Americans and Black immigrants. Linked fate does not play a significant role in African Americans’ participation with political parties, but Black immigrants are motivated by a sense of group consciousness in this area of participation. Among African Americans, levels of education, age, partisanship and ideology influence this mode of participation. Among Black immigrants, the influence of linked fate is joined by education and age as determinants of this form of behavior.

### Table 5-7: Logistic Model on Political Participation: Campaigning for a Political Party

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Blacks</th>
<th>African Americans</th>
<th>Black Immigrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Consciousness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linked Fate</td>
<td>.139***</td>
<td>(.054)</td>
<td>.091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SES/Demographics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-.031</td>
<td>(.042)</td>
<td>-.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.460***</td>
<td>(.066)</td>
<td>.522***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (male=1)</td>
<td>.132</td>
<td>(.129)</td>
<td>.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.025***</td>
<td>(.004)</td>
<td>.023***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Orientation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partisanship (Dem.=1)</td>
<td>.435***</td>
<td>(.162)</td>
<td>.530***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>-.099**</td>
<td>(.042)</td>
<td>-.132***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-4.24***</td>
<td>(.360)</td>
<td>-4.02***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| N       | 2134 | 1645 | 489 |
| Pseudo-R² | .069 | .079 | .068 |

*p<.1    **p<.05    ***p<.01, two-tailed test
Discussion

The debate on whether group consciousness is a major determinant in African American political behavior is one that is incredibly important since Black politics scholars tend to rely on this concept to explain that behavior. These three areas of participation are not exhaustive, but they do provide a good representation of various types of participation. Here, I show that group consciousness does have an influence on the behaviors of African Americans, and further the results show that there are some differences in the way that linked fate influences African Americans’ and Black immigrants’ political behaviors. Linked fate is an important determinant for African Americans’ interactive political behavior. Interestingly, linked fate seems to have broader influence on Black immigrants’ political behavior than it does on African Americans.

Conclusion

Building on the largely qualitative body of research on Black immigrants political attitudes and behaviors, this chapter explores the link between racial identity and political behavior among African American and Black immigrants. The three analyses served to build on one another in efforts to gain a better understanding of how racial identity is politicized and then how a mobilized racial identity influences political attitudes and behavior. Each of the studies also provides a comparative analysis of the identity-to-politics link between African Americans and Black immigrants.

One major theme that runs through the three studies presented in this chapter is that there just as many similarities between African Americans and Black immigrants as
there are differences. On the one hand, the distributions of levels of group consciousness are very similar between African American and Black immigrants. On the other hand, the triggers of group consciousness as well as the role that group consciousness plays in African Americans and Black immigrants political attitudes and behavior are different. That is to say, even though there are similar levels of linked fate between these two groups, the ways that group consciousness influences attitudes and behaviors are quite different. Group consciousness affects a broad array of policy areas for Black Americans while only affecting a very small domain of policy areas for Black immigrants.

Another point of interest lies in the finding that Black immigrants’ political participation seems to be influenced by linked fate more so than African Americans. Black immigrants’ participation with political campaigns and contacting officials were bolstered by a sense of group consciousness, but the role of group consciousness was restricted to contacting a representative for African Americans. Group consciousness did not increase the chances that African Americans would vote or participate in a political campaign.

One major issue to point out is that generational status and nativity plays a role in the development of group consciousness for Black immigrants. This is important because the traditional Black politics literature does not take into account generational status because African Americans have lived in the U.S. for so long. In this era of increasing Black immigration, however, factors like generational status and acculturation will have to be accounted for when examining Black political behavior. We know that generational status and nativity play a role among other groups whose populations have significant proportions of immigrants, including Latinos and Asians, and the analyses in this chapter provide evidence that generational status and levels of acculturation influences not only identity development but also the ways in which identity is mobilized politically. It is clear that
group consciousness is an important influence in Blacks’ political attitudes, but political scientists will have to communicate which Blacks they are talking about when they discuss the role of group consciousness on Black political behavior.

Overall, this chapter shows that Black immigrants do have a shared sense of linked fate with African Americans, but what is not clear is the extent to which African Americans’ sense of linked fate with Black immigrants is deep enough to expand the traditional Black political agenda to include the issues that are of concern to Black immigrants. We know that racial group consciousness leads Blacks to be more concerned with issues facing their group and to act politically in their group’s interest, but as the group becomes more ethnically diverse, the needs of the group may also become more diverse. The next chapter explores the extent to which racial group consciousness influences attitudes on policy domains that may only influence a minority within the group.
## Additional Analysis

### Table 5-8: Role of Religiosity and Group Consciousness on Political Attitudes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>African Americans</th>
<th></th>
<th>Black Immigrants</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Abortion</td>
<td>LBGT Adoption</td>
<td>Abortion</td>
<td>LGBT Adoption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Consciousness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linked Fate</td>
<td>.083*** (.03)</td>
<td>.058** (.03)</td>
<td>.032 (.05)</td>
<td>.009 (.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SES/Demographics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.027 (.02)</td>
<td>-.019 (.02)</td>
<td>.071** (.03)</td>
<td>.001 (.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.092** (.03)</td>
<td>.035 (.03)</td>
<td>.136** (.06)</td>
<td>.059 (.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (male=1)</td>
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<td>-.187*** (.06)</td>
<td>-.326*** (.12)</td>
<td>-.356*** (.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.004* (.002)</td>
<td>-.01*** (.002)</td>
<td>-.008** (.003)</td>
<td>-.008** (.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Orientation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partisanship (Democrat=1)</td>
<td>.182*** (.07)</td>
<td>-.042 (.06)</td>
<td>.289** (.13)</td>
<td>.227* (.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>-.069*** (.02)</td>
<td>-.061*** (.02)</td>
<td>-.09** (.04)</td>
<td>-.029 (.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Activities/ Experiences</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Organization</td>
<td>.253** (.093)</td>
<td>.213** (.09)</td>
<td>.129 (.19)</td>
<td>-.096 (.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Discrimination Experience</td>
<td>-.003 (.02)</td>
<td>-.021 (.02)</td>
<td>.009 (.04)</td>
<td>.009 (.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor Discrimination Experience</td>
<td>-.003 (.004)</td>
<td>.001 (.004)</td>
<td>.005 (.007)</td>
<td>.011 (.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religiosity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.172*** (.035)</td>
<td>.226*** (.03)</td>
<td>.291*** (.06)</td>
<td>.282*** (.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constant</strong></td>
<td>2.82*** (.18)</td>
<td>3.23*** (.18)</td>
<td>3.08*** (.32)</td>
<td>2.82*** (.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1371</td>
<td>1367</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-square</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.1  **p<.05  ***p<.01
Chapter 6. Black Political Agenda(s)

The colorline mandates racial solidarity under all circumstances.
-Tunde Adeleke

[I]t is...clear that the time for undiscriminating racial unity has passed.
-Toni Morrison

The two statements above provide a glimpse into a debate that exists among Blacks in the United States, and the increasing ethnic diversity among Blacks in this country serves to further irritate this debate. The first statement suggests that due to the racial hierarchy that exists in the U.S., all Blacks—despite the country of origin—should work together. The second statement argues that there have been so many cleavages among Blacks in the United States, racial unity is unlikely and, perhaps, undesired.

One of the primary reasons Black politics has been of interest to political scientists is due to the general homogeneity of political attitudes and behaviors among African Americans in the United States, despite vast economic class differences that exist among them. As Michael Dawson points out, “The relative homogeneity of black public opinion has been generally considered one of the few certainties of modern American politics” (2001:44). African Americans are not monolithic, however. There are some major divisions among African Americans‘ political attitudes related to economic, ideological, and gender-based divisions. These divisions may make a unified black agenda difficult to achieve. A unified Black political agenda may be further complicated by the fact that the ethnic diversity among Black people is also increasing.

Reed (1999) challenges scholars to first construct a more appropriate conceptualization of Black identity before delving into attempting to decide what issues are or should be on any Black political agenda. As previously mentioned, who exactly is Black
and who is considered to be members of Black communities is debated among African Americans and Black immigrants, but it is seems clear that Black Americans and Black immigrants have a very broad conceptualization of who is Black (see Chapter 3). This broader definition of Black identity could also have a major influence on what issues African Americans and Black immigrants consider important.

The questions for this chapter, then, are as follows: Black immigrants are seen by native-born African Americans and see themselves as racial compatriots, but do native-born African Americans deem the political issues of Black immigrants important? Have the contours of the Black political agenda expanded to include issues that may be of particular import to Black immigrants? That is, has the Black agenda expanded in a manner that is consistent with the increase in ethnic diversity among Blacks in the United States has? Scholars have shown that Black Americans are, at best, ambivalent about immigration and policies related to immigrants (Carter 2007; Diamond 1998; Hellwig 1981), but these attitudes may be influenced largely by the ways elites and media frame issues of immigration. Do African Americans’ opinions about immigration change or become more sympathetic to Black immigrants when these issues are framed in a way that implicates African Americans?

This chapter attempts to answer these questions using two methodological approaches. First, I analyze data from the semi-structured interviews I conducted with 30 African American and Black immigrants to show that there is at least one additional cleavage in what is popularly known as “the” Black political agenda. Then, in an effort to show how issue framing influences African Americans’ opinions about immigration—a “cross-cutting” issue—I employ a randomized, controlled experiment.
“The” African-American Agenda

Among African Americans, there is widespread agreement on political and social goals and objectives for the group (Dawson 2001). While it is believed the identity-to-politics link – or the influence of group identity on political attitudes—among African Americans is strong (Chong and Rogers 20005; Lee 2008; Junn and Masuoka 2008), the extent to which a “universal” Black political agenda exists is contested. William Raspberry, for example, argues that “there is no black agenda,” and if there ever was one, it is shrinking, and now only includes affirmative action, incarceration rates of African Americans, and the sentencing disparities between crack and cocaine charges (Raspberry 1988, 2001).

There are others who very much disagree. Platt (2008), for example, argues that “black agenda setting in the post-[Vietnam] war era is fundamentally a story about change;” that is, in the 1950s, the primary item on the Black agenda was voting rights, but after voting rights were attained and segregation was legally dismantled, there still exists a set of core demands that affect Black people disproportionately that have not been met, including “full employment, guaranteed income, national health insurance, federal funding of education, and affirmative action” (Platt 2008:1). Hamilton and Hamilton (1997) argue that the Black agenda includes issues of civil rights but also social welfare issues. Similarly, Walton and Smith (2010) suggest that the Black agenda is a “broad-based policy agenda encompassing both rights and material based issues” (115). For these scholars, the fact of a Black political agenda is taken as a given, but “the contention surrounding how to define the Black Agenda is often related to changes that have occurred in the Black community and society over time” (Laird 2010).

African Americans’ racial identity and sense of group consciousness influences group members to look toward bettering the position of African Americans, in general, but
linked fate does not explain differences among group members (Price 2009). That is to say, even though many Blacks have a high sense of linked-fate, there still exists an incredible amount of diversity among Black Americans’ political attitudes and ideologies. Behavioral homogeneity belies the diversity within African American politics, and the notion that Black people in the United States have been in political lockstep with one another is a myth. There have always been some differences in the political choices, opinions, and claims of Blacks in this society, and with diversity, comes dissent. As such, “the” Black agenda has always had some fractures (Cohen 1999; Dawson 2001; Harris-Lacewell 2004). Ideological diversity and class bifurcation are two of the more traditional sources of diversity, but also a broadening set of Black identities currently serve to increase the array of Black political agendas that may exist.

**Ideological Diversity**

One major source of disagreement on what issues and demands should be taken on by African Americans is ideological diversity. Harris-Lacewell (2004) explains that there are four Black ideologies: Black Nationalism, Feminism, Conservatism, and Liberal Integrationism. Each of the major Black ideologies helps African Americans to make sense of their social and political world (Price 2009). Lacewell-Harris (1994) explains that these ideologies help Black American to “understand the persistent social and economic inequality, to identify the significance of race in that inequality, and to devise strategies for overcoming that inequality.” Dawson (2001) and Harris-Lacewell (2004) show that even today there exists a wide array of Black ideologies, including Black Nationalism, Black Liberalism, Black Conservatism, and Black Feminism. Some of these ideologies are at odds
with one another, and even among those who adopt any particular ideology, there are some disagreements. All of them, however, share the same goal of improving the status of African Americans. Consider the famous debates between W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington or between Martin Luther King, Jr and Malcolm X. Each of the four men recognized the role of race on the lives of African Americans, but they disagreed how racial uplift might occur. It should also be noted that some of these iconic figures moved from one ideology to another over the course of their lives.

Each of the ideologies is “an internally consistent set of propositions that makes prescriptive and prescriptive demands on human behavior,” and all ideologies have implications for (a) what is ethical and what is not; (b) how society’s resources should be distributed; and (c) where power should reside (Hinich and Munger 1994). Black nationalism is based on four principles: “support for black self-determination through control of homogeneous black institutions, support for black economic independence in the form of self-help programs, psychological and social disentanglement from whites and white supremacist notions of black inferiority, and support for a global or Pan-African view of the black community” (Price 2009:3). Black feminists, at times in conflict with Black nationalism, argue that “it is the intersection of gender with race and class which requires African-American women to battle against multiple forms of oppression” (Dawson 2001:20). These are just two examples of Black ideologies that represent the ways in which various ideologies proscribe different paths toward improving the well-being of African Americans.

The differences among these ideologies are important because while the end goal is improvement of the group, the prescribed means by which to reach that goal are different. Since there exist multiple ideologies among African Americans, there also exist differences
in policy attitudes. Black conservatives, for example, are more likely to feel that the market will provide incentives for anti-discriminatory behaviors and outcomes while Black liberals are more likely to support a "strong central state which promotes equality combined with respect for individual liberty and self-reliance" (Dawson 2001: 17). Black feminists, for instance, are more likely than Black nationalists to view policies dealing with gender inequality as important additions to the Black political agenda.

**Class Divergence**

Another challenge to a unified agenda is class bifurcation. Whether race or class affects Blacks' life chances more is a point of contention among both sociologists and political scientists (Wilson 1980; Dawson 1994a). One reason scholars are interested in the relative weight of race and class among Blacks, is because traditional models of political incorporation and assimilation predict that as African Americans gain more socioeconomic resources, they may begin to vote with their economic interests in mind rather than their racial group members’ interests. For example, Wilson (1980) suggests that as middle class African Americans move to the suburbs, away from low-income, segregated Black urban neighborhoods, race will have a smaller effect of their life chances, implying that middle class Blacks’ political attitudes should also change.

Scholars have shown that upwardly mobile African Americans are more likely to feel a sense of group consciousness or sense of linked-fate (Dawson 1994). Hochschild (1995) finds that middle class Blacks are often more pessimistic about the ways in which race affects their lives. Similarly Cose (1995) shows that because middle class Blacks have more interactions with white Americans, they tend to perceive a great deal of discrimination and
racism in society. Nevertheless, other studies suggest that as African Americans move into high quality neighborhoods—where city services are dependable and neighborhood amenities are available—they tend to feel less of a sense of linked-fate (Gay 2004). What is more, a 2007 Pew Report finds that more educated Blacks are more likely than Blacks with lower levels of education to say that they feel that there is a growing gap between middle class and lower class blacks’ values. The extent to which this gap between upwardly mobile African Americans and those in poverty stricken continues to grow will have major implications for a future unified Black political agenda since one’s experiences are likely to influence what issues they believe are important.

Some have suggested that what is popularly known as “the” Black political agenda has always been controlled by middle-class Blacks (Platt 2008; Reed 1999). Platt (2008), for example, suggests that over time, the Black middle class has become increasingly in control of setting the agenda among Blacks in the U.S., and in turn, the Black political agenda has become more race neutral. Tate (2003) shows that Black politicians tend to come from elite backgrounds, and also they tend to have different opinions concerning what is best for African American communities. Although African Americans of various class statuses tend to feel a shared sense of linked-fate, one socioeconomic class of Blacks tend to dominate what goes on the Black political agenda in the first place.

**Diversity in Identity**

The broadening of identities has also caused dissent among African Americans. The rise of the multiracial “Mark One or More” movement, for example, has sparked debates concerning “the” Black agenda (Williams 2006; Vickerman 2001b). The Mark One or More
Movement was an effort to create a multiracial category in the U.S. Census. Some individuals desired the opportunity to communicate that being multiracial shaped their reality, but Black Civil Rights leaders opposed the movement because they felt that it would impede on efforts to gauge progress in the fight against disparities between traditional racial groups. This debate around “who is Black” is important because it has as much to do with individual Americans’ self-identification as it does with allocating financial resources, civil rights, and political representation to African American communities across the country.

In addition to the ways in which the multicultural movement broadens Black identities, we might also consider the ways in which the increasing ethnic diversity of Blacks may influence Black political agenda setting. Black immigrants, on the one hand, share similar experiences with discrimination and racism in the housing and employment markets as well as in day-to-day interactions, but Black immigrants, especially first generation, not only bring a different set of issues to the table—immigration rights and policies as well as homeland politics, to name a few—but may also see these issues differently than African Americans. For example, Haitian immigrants may feel that the United States should provide more foreign aid to Haiti while African Americans may feel that resources devoted to foreign aid should be used to improve American inner-city schools. Similarly, the issues of immigration rights and policies may also be important for both African Americans and Black immigrants but in different ways. Black immigrants may feel that being able to immigrate into the United States should be made easier while African Americans may feel that rates of immigration should decline.

The expanding diversity among Blacks may also lead African Americans to see Black immigrants as political and economic threats, which may lead African Americans to eschew the issues that Black immigrants face. For instance, Lani Guinier suggested that Black
immigrants represent a threat to African American educational interests, stating “I don’t think, in the name of affirmative action, we should be admitting people because they look like us, but then they don’t identify with us” (quoted by Bombardieri 2003). Massey et al. (2006) found that while of all Black people aged 18 or 19 in the US, about 13 percent are first or second generation immigrants, these Blacks make up 23.1 percent of Blacks in public colleges and up to 40.6 percent of Blacks in Ivy League institutions. African Americans may see this as unfair. There are also feelings of competition for jobs, as well, in some cities (Waters 1999b). While African Americans tend feel a shared identity with Black immigrants, immigrant issues may be pushed aside either because African Americans tend to shy away from issues of immigration or because of perceptions of threat and competition.

**Immigration on the Black Political Agenda**

Although Black immigrants share a racial group status with African Americans, it is unclear whether and to what extent Black American elites and African American masses will look ostentively at the interests of Black immigrants, include their particular issues on a larger Black political agenda, or oppose immigration and immigration rights at the detriment of Black immigrants. Historically, Black immigrants have tended to blend into African American communities, but today, the space to make claims to alternate identities has grown, thereby allowing more room for African Americans and Black immigrants to distance from each other in the political realm. In turn, it is difficult to predict the ways that African Americans may react to Afro-Latinos, Afro-Caribbeans, and African immigrants in today’s racial, political and economic climate. Nevertheless, Blacks have had a long history
with immigrants of other racial groups, and this history helps to shed light on the various possibilities of intraracial coalition or competition.

The issue of immigration as it relates to Black political agendas, attitudes and behaviors is one that has changed over time. African Americans’ attitudes have largely been influenced, on the one hand, by feelings of competition and threat, and, on the other hand, by the desire not to participate in white supremacy through racist anti-immigration movements since Blacks, too, have been persecuted by white hegemony. For example, Hellwig (1981) explains that after World War I, African Americans, especially, in the North and the West felt that the conflict would lead to improvements in their treatment by society at large, but African Americans also felt that white immigrants had contributed to worsening the condition of Blacks prior to the war. White immigrants workers had displaced Blacks. Hellwig (1981) asserts, “Despite their treatment in America, blacks were committed to the ideas of the nation and were uneasy about breaking a heritage of welcoming the oppressed of the world.” African Americans, elites and common citizens, wanted to curtail immigration during this time, but they had difficulty in devising a policy that did not clash with their principles.

Diamond (1998) explains this dilemma rose again for African Americans after the enactment of the Hart-Cellar Act in 1965 and again after the U.S.’s “unsuccessful entanglement in Southeast Asia.” During the 1970s, Southeast Asian refugees were seeking asylum in the United States, and almost every major Black leader endorsed a statement urging the U.S. to admit these refugees. These leaders felt that even though Blacks continued to face political and economic constraints, they also felt that the struggle of the refugees was linked to their own struggle for power and freedom. Ironically, many African Americans began to resent Southeast Asians because they perceived these immigrants as getting
preferential treatment over African Americans, but Black leaders continued to defend a liberal asylum policy (Diamond 1998).

Diamond (1998) further explains, however, that Black leaders and organizations are not monolithic on the issue of immigration. During the late 1990's the Congressional Black Caucus was considered to be the most liberal block in Congress with respect to immigration policy, even more so than the Hispanic Caucus (Diamond 1998). But there have been some Black leaders like Frank Morris and Barbara Jordan who called for decreasing the numbers of immigrants to the United States.

African American citizens are also conflicted on the issue of immigration. Survey research shows that while African Americans tend to feel that immigration should be decreased rather than increased or maintained at current levels, they do so less than whites. When the issue of immigration is framed to raise fears of economic costs to African Americans, however, they are more likely to be espouse restrictionist attitudes in comparison to white Americans (Diamond 1998). This shows that how issues of immigration are framed—either as matters of freedom and liberty to immigrants or as costly to Blacks—influences African Americans’ attitudes. Due to their position in society African Americans’ feelings on immigration have always been ambivalent toward immigration policies and immigrants themselves (Carter 2007; Diamond 1998).

Both Carter’s (2007) theory of racial mediation and Cohen’s (1999) theory of secondary marginalization also help to better predict whether and how African American citizens are likely to think about immigration policies. Carter (2007), who is primarily concerned with African Americans in the South, explains that African Americans tend to feel uncertain about immigration because of their own sense of “racial insecurity;” that is to say, African Americans have learned over time that their “their status as American citizens is not
a guarantor of equal status in American society.” The arrival of immigrants of color revives the traumatic feelings they experienced when white European immigrants leapfrogged them in Americans social, political and economic hierarchies.

While Carter (2007) is also concerned with African Americans’ feelings about Latino immigration, this theory may help us to understand African Americans’ feelings about Black immigrants and immigration, as well. Black scholars like Lani Guinier and Henry Louis Gates Jr. suggest that Black immigrants may receive preference over American-born Blacks. Many ordinary African American citizens and elites are struggling to protect the label of “African American” in efforts to also protect the Civil Rights gains as well as “want to hold on to Black status as the most important minority” (Sawyer 2005). These examples suggest that African Americans may advocate to ignore the issues of Black immigrants or they may even support anti-immigrant stances.

Further, Cohen’s (1999) theory of “secondary marginalization” asserts that there are a number of so-called “consensus” issues among African Americans but there are quite a few issues that are not prioritized by African American political leaders or community members. Consensus issues are the “political issues understood or defined in ways that tap into a racial group framework, initiating feelings of linked fate and the perception of advancing interests of the entire black community” (Cohen 1999:11). Cohen (1999) critiques the Black agenda because it does not include “cross-cutting” issues that affect smaller, marginal portions of the population. She presents the notion of “secondary marginalization”—or the notion that within Black communities, some sub-populations are “denied access to dominant decision-making processes and institutions; stigmatized by their identification; isolated or segregated; and generally excluded from the control over the resources that shape the quality of their lives” (Cohen 1999:24). Cohen (1999) brings to
light that not all members of Black communities are allowed to participate in the
development of any one Black agenda.

While Cohen (1999) is primarily concerned about the issue of HIV/AIDS, this theory
may be extended to issues of immigration as well. Although Black immigrants have a
multiplicity of identities, many African Americans assert that Black immigrants must choose
their racial identity over their ethnic identity, if they want to be formal participants Black
communities (Cohen 1999; Sawyer 2005). This process of secondary marginalization may
lead African Americans to relegate the issues that are more relevant to Black immigrants to
the bottom of or completely off the list of policy priorities among African Americans masses
and elites.

Determining Black Agenda(s)

A theory of diasporic consciousness suggests that African Americans and Black
immigrants have more similarities concerning their identity and political attitudes than
differences because members of both groups face similar circumstances within the U.S.’s
racialized social system. The previous chapters show that both Black Americans’ and Black
immigrants’ sense of their racial identity is central to their self-image and that a sense of
group consciousness affects both groups, although at times differently. Three specific
hypotheses about the ways in which African Americans and Black immigrants develop
individual political agendas emerge from these findings and the theory of diasporic
consciousness. First, I expect that Black immigrants and African Americans will take into
account their racial identity when deciding what issues are important to them. Specifically:

\[ H_1: \text{Black immigrants’ and African Americans’ racial identity influences the issues they deem as important to them.} \]
Secondly, although Black people, in general, may pay attention to a broad array of political matters, African Americans’ and Black immigrants’ will focus more on issues that disproportionately affect Black communities.

\[H_2: \text{The issues that will gain the most attention of African Americans and Black immigrants will be issues that clearly affect Blacks in different ways than other racial groups.}\]

Finally, there may be limits to diasporic consciousness. African Americans may be ambivalent about certain “Black” issues, such as immigration. Both Cohen’s (1999) theory of secondary marginalization as well as Carter’s (2007) theory of racial mediation, suggest that while African Americans care about issues affecting sub-populations of Blacks, these issues are not at the forefront of their minds.

\[H_3: \text{African Americans will not consider issues of immigration as important to them.}\]

**Data and Methods**

While Black political elites play a major role in developing and framing Black political agenda (Harris-Lacewell 2004), I am interested in how ordinary African American and Black immigrants develop their own political agendas. I use the responses from semi-structured interviews that were also used in Chapter 3. There were 17 African American and 13 Black immigrant respondents (see Appendix for more detailed information about each of the respondents). I ask respondents two questions about what issues constitute a Black political agenda. The first was the open-ended question, “What political issues or policy matters are important to you?” The respondents were able to provide as many or as
few policy matters as they desired. The second question was, “How, if at all, does your racial identity influence your political attitudes.” The responses presented in the “Results” section are verbatim responses. I believe the answers to this question may show that the issues proposed by my respondents are not just issues that Black people think are important but, more importantly, these responses show how Black people perceive these issues as being linked to the racial group, thereby constituting Black Political agenda items.

Results

Linking Race and Political Attitudes

To test the first hypothesis, which asserts that both African Americans and Black immigrants take into consideration their racial group membership when making political decisions, I asked sixteen (or about half) of my respondents how their racial identity influences their attitudes. I was able to ask nine out of the 17 African American respondents if and how their racial identity influences their political attitudes, and 77.8% (or seven) of them responded that their racial identity was a very important factor in the way they viewed politics.

Among the nine African American respondents, two of them mentioned that their racial identity did not influence their political attitudes. One of respondents claimed that his racial identity did not affect his political attitudes. He explained his position this way: “I've always been very liberal not because I was Black but because I was poor, really.” For

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1 I tallied the responses. I grouped issues of homelessness, policies helping the poor and economically disadvantaged under the “social welfare/justice” label. The other category labels are recorded verbatim.
2 Respondents responded in the affirmative or negative concerning whether their racial identity influenced their political answers, allowing me to group respondents into two general categories.
3 I only asked about half of my respondents this question because I was able to develop more pointed, useful questions as I interviewed more respondents; I utilized the methods of grounded theory.
Michael, his economic position was a more important factor than his race in shaping his political decisions and attitudes. The other person who answered that their race did not affect their political behavior, Elle, mentioned that she was a Democrat not because of her race, but because her parents, who are also Black, were Democrats.

Nevertheless, a great majority of the respondents were more like Peter, an African American from Rochester, New York, who explained:

I think my racial identity is very important in just how I look at politics and different views in politics. And just to go back to the whole underprivileged thing and life for Black people and stuff like that, I’m more big on stuff like that, that’s going to affect underprivileged Black people to making things better for them.

Peter grew up in a poor, predominately Black neighborhood, and explained that he felt a connection to poor, Black people in particular; in turn, when he makes political decisions he considers how underprivileged Black people will be affected. Amir, an African American college student from South Carolina, provides a more emphatic response to the question concerning the extent to which his racial identity influences political attitudes.

I think that I’m more conscious of how people who look like me, Black people, have struggled in this country. And so, I can’t support, I can’t support a party or an individual who doesn’t support those issues that will positively affect change in the Black community.

Amir’s response, like several others, shows how one’s racial group identity influences not only which issues one believes are important but also it influences one’s partisan affiliation and candidate vote choice.
African Americans were not the only ones who felt that the issues that were important to them were central because of their racial identity. Among the seven Black immigrant students that I asked the same question, “How, if at all, does your racial identity influence your political attitudes?” six responded that their racial identity influences their political attitudes. Claire, a second generation Nigerian woman, explained that her partisanship affiliation as a Democrat came about because she felt that the party, “is more in tuned with some of the issues that are of value and importance to the Black community.” Similarly, Ashley, a woman of Ethiopian descent, answered:

I think it, it um, it affects it [my race] a lot. Because I know that if there are uh, because I am Black and if there are policies or decisions or things like that, that will directly impact Black people in general, that is going to um, affect, that is going to affect like my political radar. Like I’m not that involved in politics that much. I know the big names. I know, and I try to get involved with like local politics and who are the people in that, but to be quite honest, I’m just not that involved compared to some students here. But again, like that definitely, issues that do involve Black people, and especially those who are disenfranchised, which sometimes is Black people, um, I pay attention.

Ashley’s response raises two important issues. The first is that her racial identity influences what issues she thinks are important. The second is that she is more likely to pay attention to the issues that influence her racial group members. Overall, the respondents who answered in the affirmative, explained that their racial identity influenced what issues they thought were important, and they explained that they could only support political candidates, parties, and platforms that worked toward the well-being of the racial group.

While there were members of both groups who claimed that their racial identity did not influence their political attitudes, the majority (about 81 percent) of them did feel their race mattered, thereby providing support for the first hypothesis. These results suggests
both African Americans’ and Black immigrants’ racial identity is an important influence on how they view politics as well as how they determine what issues are important to them.

Political Agenda Items

In efforts to test the second and third hypotheses I use my thirty respondents’ answers to the question: “What political issues or policy matters are important to you?” Table 6-1 provides the distribution of responses to this question.

Table 6-1: Political Issues of Importance to African Americans and Black Immigrants

Among African Americans, issues of education and social welfare were by far the most named issues of importance. These are issues that disparately affect Blacks. For example, African Americans have lower chances of graduating from high school in comparison to whites, and Black Americans generally have restricted access to better
technology in their schools, just to name a couple inequalities (Kozel 1992; Restituto and Miller 2005). Furthermore, approximately 42 percent of homeless people are African American (Kozol 1992; National Coalition for the Homeless 2009; Restituto and Miller 2005).

The issue of education came up quite a number of times during the interviews. Fifty-three percent of my African American respondents named education, specifically. This issue was clearly racialized as Black in the minds of some of my respondents. For example, when I asked Naomi what issues were important to her, she answered:

I would say educational-political issues. I feel like the No Child Left Behind Act was retro-productive (laugh)... Because what I noticed is, they would take the schools that didn’t make the annual progress report, and they would let the kids go to another school, but the only thing that would happen is that they would go to a different school, a different building with the same teachers. So they were getting the same education, and it seemed like the schools were overcrowding which was also a bad thing, I think because the classroom sizes were bigger. I think that was not beneficial for, more so for Blacks...So I feel that the African American students, most of them were left behind because of No Child Left Behind.

Nicole also said she did not feel affected by this policy—" I didn’t feel the effects of No Child Left Behind because I was taking the higher level classes"—so this was not a personal issue. Instead Nicole, like others, felt that education and education policies were important because of the special effects that they have on the lives of Blacks in the United States. In addition to education, healthcare and social welfare, African Americans also responded that issues around race relations and integration as well as prisoners’ rights were important to them. Again, each of these issues has a disparate effect on Blacks in comparison to white Americans.
Among Black immigrants, healthcare and education were also at the top of their agenda. About 54 percent (7 out of 13) of Black immigrant respondents mentioned that healthcare was an important issue to them. This issue was followed by education and immigration, both being named by 38.5 percent of the respondents as important issues.

Even though my group of respondents is not representative of the national Black population, they do respond much like larger, nationally representative survey respondents. Laird's (2010) analysis of the American National Election Study between 1960 and 2000 shows that out of the twenty times the survey was distributed, African Americans reported “social welfare” as “the most important problem facing this country” ten times. Moreover, Laird (2010) also analyzed the National Black Election Studies, and found discrimination, education, and unemployment were the top three most important issues identified by African Americans. The African-American and Black immigrants' responses in my study mirror the sentiments of Blacks nationally.

Both African Americans and Black immigrant respondents also felt that issues like abortion and lesbian and gay rights (LGBT issues) were important to them. What is interesting about these issues is that even though they are not obviously racialized—that is, associated with any particular racial group—the respondents at times noted how these issues were related to Blacks. For example, Candace had very strong, liberal attitudes towards abortion and women's reproductive rights. She also felt that these issues were racialized, which was why they were so important to her:

But like abortion, like, it is racialized, and people are like, "Oh, Planned Parenthood is racist." Well, no. Like there are a lot of Planned Parenthoods in Black neighborhoods because they provide reduced health services to pregnant women who are trying to keep their children, that like Black people who don’t have health insurance can't afford. That, you know, you
need to have healthy babies. And to have, you know, healthy toddlers, so I think that’s also part of the health disparity problem.

Similarly, LGBT issues are seen as in some way connected to issues that Blacks face. Amir, for example, explains why gay and lesbian issues are on his radar:

Giving equality to people who are gay or lesbian is important to me just because I feel a connection with that community based on the struggle that Black folks have gone through.

Most of the issues that both African Americans and Black immigrants reported as important were issues they felt affected Black people in general. The second hypothesis, which asserts that the issues that are most important to African Americans and Black immigrants are issues that clearly affect Blacks in a disparate ways, such as poverty, education, and healthcare, is supported. The respondents communicated that these issues were most important to them, and they also explained that their racial identity influenced the way they structured these political attitudes. It is particularly interesting that even non-racialized policies that affect other groups that are often the object of discrimination were seen as connected to the issues of that Blacks face, such as inequality and injustice.

The data also reveal some differences between African Americans and Black immigrants. Only African Americans considered criminal justice and race-relations as issues important to them. Just six percent of African American but 38.5 percent of Black immigrants indicated that immigration was important to them. Laura, the one African American who explicitly named immigration rights as an important issue, explained:

I really think we need social justice for everyone, you know. I believe in gay rights, immigrant rights, everything. Um, so anything that will promote the full and equal and equitable participation of all people in society.
Although Laura felt that immigration rights were important, her answer was qualitatively different than the Black immigrants who felt this issue was important. Laura described immigration rights as an issue grouped with many other issues, while Black immigrant respondents tended to name issues of immigration as a distinct issue. For example, Nym, a Nigerian student, named only one pressing issue:

Immigration reform is a big one. That’s, yeah. That’s my, why I kind of want to get into immigrant policy reform. That’s like the political issue.

I asked him what kind of reforms he would like to see. Nym then goes into detailing what kinds of reforms he is passionate about and named issues of family reunification, making the Federal government solely responsible for immigrant deportation,—rather than allowing states and cities to assist—and inhumane deportation policies, as just some of the policy matters that are of concern for him.

Similarly, Vanessa’s, a Dominican woman, only issue of concern was immigration. She mentioned that she did not read or watch the news and did not know much about politics, but explained that she changed her major from pre-med to pre-law because she felt that it was a personal obligation to reform immigration laws and to help other immigrants learn what their rights are and what opportunities were available to them up arrival to the United States. Black immigrant respondents were overwhelmingly more likely than African Americans to identify issues of immigration, citizenship and bilingual education as important issues for them, providing evidence for the third hypothesis. African Americans generally did not mention immigration policies as important to them.
Discussion

In general, Black immigrants and African Americans tend to have similar opinions about what policies are important to their personal political agendas, and these policies tended to be those that affected Blacks more severely than other racial groups in the United States. There were a few notable differences between the two groups, however. In addition to the shared policies—healthcare, social welfare, education, reproductive rights, LGBT issues, the economy and the environment—African Americans were more likely to also consider criminal justice issues as well as race relations as important political matters to consider. Black immigrants tended to suggest that immigration issues were a point of focus for them while African Americans rarely mentioned anything about it.

This difference in views between Black Americans and Black immigrants could be due a number of factors. One possibility is that African Americans tend to be unsure how to respond to issues of immigration; perhaps, African Americans have shied away from naming issues of immigration as important because they see two equally important sides to the debate. On the one hand, African Americans may see Black immigrants as a threat; on the other hand, they see that the struggles of people of color around the world are connected to their own struggles of equality. Another possibility is that (Black) elites have not framed the issues of immigration to show how African Americans may be positively or negatively affected. The Black immigrants who mentioned that immigration was important to them talked about the ways in which members from their personal networks were influenced by American immigration policies.
Diasporic consciousness is built upon both a shared sense of identity and a two-way sense of linked fate. The results up until now show that African Americans and Black immigrants recognize that they are group members and they feel attached to one another, thereby showing that a shared racial group identity does exist among members of these groups. Further, it is clear that Black immigrants, for the most part, feel that many of the issues that have traditionally affected African Americans also affect them. What is not clear (but is also very important for a sense of diasporic consciousness to be realized) is whether African Americans feel that the issues that affect Black immigrants are important. Perhaps, African Americans may not see how their fate is linked to the fate of Black immigrants because the link has not been made clear either through personal or familial experiences or through elite framing. In the next section of this chapter, I test whether framing issues in a way that shows African Americans how they might be influenced by immigration policies will influence their attitudes to become more sympathetic to Black immigrants.

**Expanding the African American Political Agenda**

African American respondents tended to show a sense of solidarity with Black immigrants in terms of identity and experiences but this did not translate into sharing feelings about immigration, which was the most important policy issue identified by most Black immigrants. This is not terribly surprising given that immigration has not been an item traditionally on the Black political agenda. And as previous research has shown, African Americans tend to have ambivalent feelings about immigration.

The literature shows that elites have generally dominated the debate around African Americans’ interests, including stances on immigration policies. Furthermore, it has been
shown that framing can change African Americans’ attitudes on immigration (Diamond 1998). African Americans tend to oppose anti-immigration policies when they feel that the particular policy proposals are racist and discriminatory. They tend to be anti-immigration when information about immigrants is framed in such a way that suggests that immigrants will be an economic threat to them. What happens when African Americans feel that Blacks, in general, are negatively influenced by immigration policies? That is, are we likely to see a change in African Americans’ attitudes toward immigration policies depending on the way the issues are framed?

Based on the analysis of the interview data, presented above, we might depict African Americans’ and Black immigrants’ political agendas with the Venn diagram shown in Figure 6-1. Here we see, that Black Americans and Black immigrants share a great deal of political issues, but there are some issues that are of primary interest to one group but not the other.
Figure 6-1: Issues of Importance to African Americans and Black Immigrants

I have suggested that signs of diasporic consciousness might be manifested when we see not only a shared identity and a sense of racial group consciousness among Black immigrants, but also when African Americans show that the issues of Black immigrants are also important issues for them. That is, a diasporic consciousness might best be shown among African Americans when they embrace political issues that are important to Black immigrants. I consider these issues to be especially important because while Black immigrants are racialized similarly as African Americans they also face an additional dimension of stratification due to their immigrant status; furthermore, this issue is of particular import to Black immigrants. A unified, broader Black agenda would include the issues of various types of Black people, including Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latino, and African immigrants.
Framing plays an important role in shaping the way people understand and feel about issues (Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Kinder and Sanders 1996; Zaller 1992). Entman explains, “To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem, definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treat recommendation for the item described” (1993: 52). Black elites have tended to disregard the specific needs of Black immigrants, often leaving the needs of Black immigrants off of a larger Black political agenda (Cohen 1999; Sawyer 2005). Nevertheless, the way that issues of immigration are framed can influence African Americans to be more or less sympathetic about issues of immigration. Thus, one hypothesis is:

\[ H1: \text{When immigration policies are framed in a way that suggests African Americans will be negatively affected—or affected in the same way as immigrants—African Americans will shift opinions about that particular issue. More specifically, these frames will lead African Americans' attitudes to be more sympathetic to immigrants and pro-immigrant.} \]

**Data and Methods**

In order to test this hypothesis, I employ a survey experiment that I conducted between October 2010 and December 2010 at three universities—one private university, one historically Black college, and one public university, all in North Carolina. Students as well as community members took part in the survey. Respondents received an email inviting them to participate. Participants who took the survey at the private university received $6 for their participation. Those from the other two universities received course credit for their participation.

Fifty-seven African Americans took the survey. The ages ranged from 18 to 60 years old. The average age was 21.3 years old; 44 of the respondents were college age, between
18 and 22 years old. Eighteen men and 39 women took the survey. Seven participants had a high school diploma, 41 had at least some college education, 8 had a Bachelor’s degree or higher.\footnote{One respondent did not answer the question concerning level of education.} The average household income among the 57 respondents was about $50,000. Thirty-two of the respondents described themselves as liberal, 17 as “middle of the road,” and 7 as conservative. Finally, among the 57 African American respondents, 35 identified as Democrats, 3 as Republican, 6 as Independent, and 13 had no party preference.
**Table 6-2: Control and Treatment Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Racialized Treatment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you favor or oppose the death penalty?</td>
<td>Some people feel that the death penalty is problematic because Blacks and Latinos are more likely to receive the death penalty, especially when the victim is white. All in all, do you favor or oppose the death penalty?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you favor or oppose doing away with bilingual education and requiring that all public schools be taught in English only?</td>
<td>Scholars suggest that students, especially Black and Latinos, are likely to benefit from bilingual education programs and ESL instruction. Do you favor or oppose doing away with bilingual education and requiring that all public schools be taught in English only?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some people feel that policing borders as well as finding and deporting undocumented immigrants could be accomplished more efficiently if state and local governments helped the Federal government. Do you agree or disagree that state and local government should take a more active role in immigration control?</td>
<td>It has been shown that when state and local governments police borders and attempt to find and deport undocumented immigrants, Blacks and Latinos are more likely to be victims of racial profiling. Do you agree or disagree that state and local government should take a more active role in immigration control?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birthright citizenship allows those born in the United States to become citizens even if their parents are not citizens. Do you favor or oppose a policy that would eliminate birthright citizenship?</td>
<td>Birthright citizenship allows those born in the United States to become citizens even if their parents are not citizens. This policy became law through the 14th Amendment, which granted Blacks citizenship after slavery. Do you favor or oppose a policy that would eliminate birthright citizenship?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants were exposed to four out of eight potential questions. The survey asked respondents about their attitudes about the death penalty, bilingual education, immigration control and birthright citizenship. The respondents were exposed to either a control or a racialized treatment for each of the four questions. That is, a participant may have received
no treatments or up to four treatments. They were randomly assigned at each question. They were provided a Likert scale to show their level of agreement or favorability: strongly favor/agree, favor/agree, somewhat favor/agree, somewhat oppose/disagree, oppose/disagree, and strongly favor/disagree. The exact question wording is presented in Table 6-2.

**Results**

I expected that when African Americans were exposed to the racialized treatment, they would be more sympathetic to immigrants. I expected African Americans in the treatment group to be more supportive of bilingual education, less supportive of local immigration enforcement, and more supportive of birthright citizenship than those in the control group. Contrary to expectations, there were no significant differences between any of the control and treatment groups. This means that even when African Americans are provided additional information showing that African Americans will be negatively influenced, the additional information does not significantly change opinions in the expected direction. The distribution of responses is provided in Table 6-2. Since many of the individual cells included 5 or fewer respondents, I collapsed the responses into general agree/favor or disagree/oppose categories. A small sample size did not afford me the ability to reject my null that there would be a difference in responses due to the framing. Nonetheless, the results do provide some helpful information.
African Americans tend to be opposed to the death penalty. When simply asked if they agreed or disagreed with the death penalty, 53.3 percent of African American respondents reported that they did not agree with capital punishment. While the difference between the control and the racialized treatment was not statistically significant, there is a 13 percent increase among those who disagree with death penalty when additional information is provided concerning racial biases in capital punishment cases. While the difference between the two groups was not statistically significant, the difference in attitudes between the control and treatment groups was in the hypothesized direction.
Interestingly, when it comes to issues that focus on immigrants—bilingual education, immigration control, and birthright citizenship—African Americans tend to have very clear opinions with or without the additional information on the ways that African Americans might be influenced by these policies. For example, about 81 percent of African Americans feel that bilingual education should be provided to students who need it. This increases to 86 percent for the racialized treatment group, but there is not much room to increase in the first place. Similarly, over two-thirds of African Americans feel that birthright citizenship should not be repealed. Again, although the difference between the two the two groups is not significant, when additional information is provided concerning the way that this policy is connected to African Americans, there is an increase in support for this policy.

These results also provide evidence for African American ambivalence towards immigration and immigrants. On one hand, African Americans have sympathetic attitudes towards immigrants as shown by strong attitudes supporting birthright citizenship and bilingual education. On the other hand, there are strong attitudes concerning immigration control and deportation that are not in favor of immigrants. About two-thirds of control respondents and treatment respondents feel that local and state governments should help the Federal government control borders and deport undocumented immigrants, even at expense of African Americans being exposed to racial profiling.

**Discussion**

The responses here show that African Americans tend to have clearly defined opinions about policies concerning immigrant rights and immigration but these attitudes
are also seem to conflict. African Americans support bilingual education and birthright citizenship but also support more stringent deportation policies. Of course, respondents could be reacting to the “undocumented” portion of the question; that is, they are against illegal behaviors. But the responses to the treatment are also telling; African Americans’ attitudes still did not change significantly even with the added information showing that African Americans would be racially profiled.

This study shows that framing issues of immigration in a way that reflects how some of these policies may negatively affect African Americans did not change the way African Americans felt about these policies. A possible explanation for these findings is that African Americans may feel quite distanced from these policies and feel that issues of immigration really do not influence them despite the frame. Another possible explanation is that these issues may conjure up notions of Latinos more specifically rather than Black immigrants; perhaps if the treatment more clearly identified Black immigrants, with whom African Americans may feel closer to than Latinos, I may have uncovered more clear results.

**Conclusion**

The results in this chapter show signs of racial mediation and secondary marginalization rather than diasporic consciousness. At the time the interviews were recorded (March 2010-July 2010) the healthcare debate was prominent in the news as well as issues of immigration, especially discussion around the DREAM Act. Most of my African American and Black immigrant respondents seemed to be well aware, for the most part, of what was going on in the news, but only Black immigrants tended to describe immigration issues as important to them while both African Americans and Black immigrants mentioned
healthcare as important to them. That is to say, even though both of these issues were prominent in the news, each group picked up on the issues that seemed relevant to them. Even though my African American respondents reported earlier (Chapter 4) that they felt a shared sense of identity with Black immigrants, they still tended to focus on issues that are on the “traditional” Black agenda. Among all of the African American respondents, only one of them identified immigration rights and policies as important to them.

Further, in the experiment, African Americans’ attitudes concerning immigration did not adjust even when these policies were framed to show that African Americans would also be negatively influenced. Again, the results provided evidence of ambivalence about African Americans’ sensibilities concerning immigrants and immigration. They supported bilingual education and birthright citizenship, but they also supported more expansive immigration control.

These results show that while African Americans and Black immigrants do share similar ideas and feelings about what political issues are important to them, the major difference between the groups is one that could potentially cause a major division between the two groups, thereby adding yet another cleavage in Black political behavior and attitudes. Black immigrants tend to recognize the importance of race as they make political decisions, which, in turn, support the traditional Black agenda. But it seems as though African Americans are not yet willing to expand the Black political agenda to include issues of a smaller portion of the Black population.

Rogers (2006) explains that in New York, Black immigrant politicians have been successful because they address issues that African American politicians tend to ignore. In turn, there is competition between Black immigrants and African Americans where one might expect intraracial coalition. In cities like New York as well as other cities where Black
immigrants make up a significant portion of the Black population, this cleavage could have a potentially large effect on Black politics. Traditionally, political candidates who aimed to gain the Black vote had to show that they knew the issues that were important to their constituents, but these studies show that in some cases there may be multiple Black voting blocs within a locality or state. In all, these results show that when we talk about Black political agenda, we should probably talk more about agendas, in the plural, as Black immigrants place an emphasis on issues that African Americans have not yet developed strong feelings or ideas.
Chapter 7. Conclusion

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 is known to have increased the ethnic diversity of the American population. There has been special and necessary scholarly emphasis on the ways in which the Latino and Asian immigrants who migrated to the U.S. over the past four and a half decades have transformed U.S. demographics, intergroup relations, and the way we now understand racial and ethnic identities. But this legislation also changed the way Black America looked, *intraracial* relations and the contours of Black identity as well. Although Black immigrants comprise less than 10 percent of the U.S.’s Black population, they have contributed 20 percent of the growth of the Black population, and furthermore, it is said that there are more Black immigrants coming to this country now from Africa and the Caribbean, than at any point during the Atlantic slave trade (Kent 2007). This increase in ethnic diversity among Blacks provoked the questions presented in this study about the changes and fluidity of Black identity in the United States as well as how this diversity might influence Black politics. In fact, the purpose of the study has been to illuminate the ways in which native- and foreign-born Blacks in the United States take part in shaping and re-shaping the boundaries of Black identity and, consequently, the contours of Black politics.

The Black politics literature is vast and rich, and there is a growing body of literature that examines the identity and identity-politics of Black immigrants. The extant literature primarily focuses on the ways in which Black immigrants and African Americans are different from one another and tend to distance themselves from one another (Nteta 2006; Portes and Zhou 1993; Waters 1999a). Further, existing literature tends to suggest that the only type of Black immigrants who would relate to African Americans tend to be
poor, male, live in racially segregated neighborhoods, or have oppositional identities (Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Waters 1999a). History shows, however, while intraracial competition has existed, there have also been instances when a sense of shared identity has risen in communities of Black immigrants and African Americans. This study also shows that on-going systemic racism does not discriminate by ethnicity, gender or socioeconomic status, and consequently, Black immigrants’ identities are similarly influenced by the constraints of the U.S.’s racialized social system just as African Americans’ racial identities are.

As this project developed, it became clear that there was not a theory that captured the complex, intraracial relationship between African Americans and Black immigrants. In turn, an additional goal for this project was to develop a theory that helped to better understand the circumstances under which a unified Black identity and Black political agenda might arise even under the duress of on-going intraracial tension. In order to do that, however, it was necessary, first, to pin down a contemporary and more appropriate understanding of Black identity, and then, to examine how contested claims of Black identity might influence Black politics. I develop a theory of diasporic consciousness, which asserts that Black immigrants and African Americans mutually recognize each other as compatriots in a struggle against inequalities due to the constrained nature of racial groupings. However, just as class and ideology have, at times, served to split Black opinion about what is best for the group, ethnicity may serve to do this as well. That is to say, Black Americans and Black immigrants see each other as group members and want to work toward improving the group, but they might also have some difference in opinions about what issues should be prioritized on the Black agenda. Diasporic consciousness can be
raised among African Americans and Black immigrants, but there are some limits in the extent to which this consciousness can help form a unified Black political agenda.

**Major Findings**

In order to achieve my overarching goal, I parceled the task into four sections. I provided a comparative analysis of each step that connects identity to politics so that we can have a better understanding of the circumstance under which a diasporic consciousness might arise among African Americans and Black immigrants. The first step was group membership; then group identity was followed by group consciousness, and finally, political attitudes, behaviors, and Black political agendas were examined through in-depth interviews, survey data and experimental data. Overall, this study showed that both African Americans’ and Black immigrants’ identities were similarly influenced by racialized experiences, and their racial identities could be mobilized toward political action.

The face-to-face interviews in Chapter 3 showed that African Americans and Black immigrants recognized that dominant, white society and U.S. institutions grouped them together, and this shared group membership was transformed into a sense of racial identity, or psychological attachment to the group. I would argue that the findings in this chapter show that “Black” might be properly conceived of as a racial group as well as a pan-ethnic identity. The group’s members recognize ethnic difference but are also cognizant of the ways in which others similarly racialize them, and the group members have embraced this shared identity. What is important to note, however, is that respondents still communicated that they viewed their ethnic identities as important to their self-image. Racial and ethnic identities were not mutually exclusive but rather, one identity may become more or less
salient than another depending on the context. Overall, this chapter showed African Americans and Black immigrants take part in shaping the boundaries of Black identity.

The interviewees in Chapter 3 provided evidence that their racial identities were largely influenced by the way others viewed them as well as by experiences with racism and discrimination. Chapter 4 allowed me to expand what I found in the previous chapter by examining a national, large sample survey data set, the National Survey of American Life. Across each of the analyses in this chapter—on racial centrality, private regard, and public regard—I showed that experiences with discrimination served as significant influences in the development of both African Americans’ and Black immigrants’ racial identities. These findings provide support for diasporic consciousness, which suggests that even though Black immigrants and African Americans may have very different relationships with the U.S.’s racial history, experiencing on-going racism and discrimination within the borders of the U.S. will similarly shape their identities.

Among the similarities between African Americans and Black immigrants, there also exist important differences. Levels of various dimensions of racial identity differed between African Americans and Black immigrants as well as among Black immigrants. These differences illuminated the notion that as scholars continue to research Blacks and Black politics, they may need to be increasingly cognizant of the role that country of origin, levels of acculturation and generational status might play in predicting and explaining Blacks’ political behaviors and attitudes.

Just as differences surfaced concerning racial identity, there were also differences in the role that group consciousness plays for African Americans and Black immigrants. Both native- and foreign-born Blacks have similar levels of linked fate, but there were important differences concerning the role that group consciousness played in the groups’ political
attitudes and behaviors. The results showed that linked fate influenced a smaller domain of policy attitudes for Black immigrants than African Americans in this study. Nonetheless, Black immigrants’ racial identity was mobilized around policies that directly influenced Black people, providing evidence for diasporic consciousness. African Americans’ sense of linked fate influenced policies that affected Blacks directly as well as policy areas that had no clear racial content.

Each of the previous substantive chapters showed that Black immigrants and African Americans have a shared sense of identity and further that this identity could be mobilized around issues that affect Blacks in the United States. Chapter 6 further elucidated that African Americans’ and Black immigrants’ political concerns centered on issues that influenced Blacks, but the results also showed that African Americans were not necessarily concerned with issues Black immigrants prioritized. In a sense, Chapter 6 showed that there were limits to diasporic consciousness.

**Implications**

Taken together, these findings suggest that on-going racialized experiences have a major influence on the identities, attitudes and behaviors of African Americans and Black immigrants. But these results also show that there are just as many similarities in the development processes of identity, group consciousness, and political behaviors and attitudes as there are differences. These similarities and differences have major implications on Blacks politics as well as how we understand the role of race in American politics, more generally.
The study of Blacks in the U.S. has primarily focused on those who have been affected by the legacies of slavery, Jim Crow and racial segregation (directly or indirectly), but as Black immigrants continue to come to the U.S., it will also be important to understand how country of origin and experiences within the borders of the U.S. interact to influence the identities and behaviors of foreign-born Blacks as they continue to immigrate into the United States. Further, Blacks in the U.S. have a broad sense of who is Black—as these boundaries include foreign- and native-born Blacks—so it will be important to take ethnicity, generational status and levels of acculturation into account as we continue to study Black politics. At the very least, we will have to be more specific about which Black people we are discussing (e.g. Americans, foreign-born, second generation immigrant) when making claims about Black identity and Black politics.

The results of this study also have implications for Black agendas and intraracial political relations. Black immigrants face similar problems as African Americans, but there are several issues that seem to be more important to foreign-born Blacks and their children than for African Americans. This study shows that although there is quite a bit of overlap in the political concerns of African Americans and Black immigrants, Black immigrant issues may be marginalized. This marginalization, especially at the local or state levels where the proportion of Black immigrants may be large, could lead to intraracial competition for resources and descriptive representation (Rogers 2004). This study focused on a national sample of Blacks, but in the future, it will be necessary to garner more information on the local level since, as it is said, “all politics is local.” Relations in Miami between Haitians and African Americans may look very different from Africans immigrants and Black Americans in Washington, D.C.; a multi-city study would be an excellent way to examine the dynamics of intraracial relations and agenda setting at the local level.
Taking seriously the ways in which Black people, especially Black immigrants, are influenced by America’s racialized social system raises an additional issue of importance that has implications for American politics and society. In a way, Black immigrants are an excellent test on the notion of a color-blind society. Some scholars argue that foreign-born Blacks’ upward mobility is evidence that race does not play a key role in the lives of African Americans (Sowell 1978), but we see in this study that Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latino and African immigrants’ identity and behavior are influenced by negative racialized interactions, thereby providing evidence to the contrary. This study shows that racial disparities are clear and prevalent enough such that even newcomers to this country realize differential treatment due to race and, consequently, re-evaluate their personal identities. Sometimes, this re-evaluation leads to a politically mobilized identity aimed to ameliorate racial disparities. In all, this study shows that immigrants are still quickly racialized into traditional racial categories and treated with respect to their place in America’s racialized social system, thereby elucidating the prevalence and power of race in the United States.
Appendix A: Presentation of Survey Items and Variable Measures

The survey used throughout this dissertation is the *National Survey of American Life*, which was conducted between 2001-2003. This appendix includes questions for the measures developed for this dissertation.

**Socioeconomic Status and Demographics**
- *Household income—What is your total household income?* The values of the income measure are a ten-point income scale from $0 to $20,000 to $180,000-$200,000+, in twenty thousand dollar increments.
- *Education—What is your highest level of education?* This variable was coded in four categories: (1) 0-11 years of school; (2) earned a high school diploma; (3) some college; (4) college degree or more.
- *Gender—What is your gender?* The values of this variable are coded 0 for female, 1 for male.
- *Age—What is your age?*

**Racial Identity Dimensions**
“For the following questions, please indicate how much you agree with each statement about being Black.” Respondents may choose, “Strongly Agree,” “Somewhat Agree,” “Somewhat Disagree,” or “Strongly Disagree.”

**Racial Centrality** (Scale reliability coefficient: .34)
- Being a Black person is a large part of how I think of myself.
- What happens in my life is largely the result of what happens to other Black people in this country.
- I do not feel strongly tied to other Black people.
- Being Black is not an important part of who I am as a person.

**Racial Private Regard** (Scale reliability coefficient: .42)
- I feel good about other Black people.
- I am not happy that I am Black.
- I am proud to be Black.
- Black people have made important contributions to the development of this country.

**Racial Public Regard** (Scale reliability coefficient: .64)
- White people in this country do not respect Black people.
- White people in this country do not think of Black people as important contributors to this country.
• Other racial and ethnic groups in this country do not think of Blacks as intelligent and competent.
• Other racial and ethnic groups in this country are positive about Black people.

**Discrimination Indices**

*Major Discrimination:* “In the following questions, we are interested in the way people have treated you or your beliefs about how other people treated you. Can you tell me if any of the following has ever happened to you?” The respondents may choose “Yes” or “No.”

• At any time in your life, have you ever been unfairly fired?
• For unfair reasons, have you ever not been hired for a job?
• Have you ever been unfairly denied a promotion?
• Have you ever been unfairly stopped, search, questioned, physically threatened or abused by the police?
• Have you ever been unfairly discouraged by a teacher or advisor from continuing your education?
• Have you ever been unfairly prevented from moving into a neighborhood because the landlord or realtor refused to sell or rent you a house or apartment?
• Have you ever moved into a neighborhood where neighbors made life difficult for your or your family?
• Have you ever been unfairly denied a bank loan?
• Have you ever received service from someone such as a plumber or car mechanic that was worse than what other people get?

*Everyday Discrimination:* “In your day-to-day life how often have any of the following things happened to you? Would you say almost everyday, at least once a week, a few times a month, a few times a year or less than once a year?”

• You are treated with less courtesy than other people.
• You are treated with less respect than other people.
• You receive poorer service than other people at restaurants or stores.
• People act as if they are afraid of you.
• People act as if they think you are dishonest.
• People act as if they are better than you are.
• You are called names or insulted
• You are threatened or harassed.
• You are followed in stores.

**Racial Socialization**
*Parents: When you were growing up, how often did your parents, or the people who raised you, talk about race or racism? Respondents may choose: “Very often,” “fairly often,” “sometimes,” “rarely,” or “never.”*

*Proximity: When you think about the places where you have lived, gone to school, worked or received services—was it mostly Blacks or Whites there? Respondents may choose among seven options ranging between “All Blacks” to “Almost all whites.”*

- ...the grammar school you went to?
- ...the junior high school you went to?
- ...the high school you went to?
- ...the neighborhood(s) where you grew up?
- ...your present neighborhood?

*Black organization: Do you belong to a national group or organization that aims to improve the well-being of Black people in the United States? This variable is coded 1 for “Yes”, and 0 for “No.”*

**Political Orientation**

- *Partisanship—Which one of the following political groups best describes your political orientation? 1)Strong Democrat; 2)Moderate Democrat; 3)Strong Republican; 4)Moderate Republican; 5) No preference; 6)Independent, please describe; 7) Other. The partisanship variable combined strong and moderate Democrats, coded as 1. Republicans, no preference, Independents and other were combined, coded as 0.*
- *Ideology—We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. Here is a 7-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are from extremely liberal to extremely positive. Where would you place yourself on this scale? The ideology variable maintains this direction, from extremely liberal (1) to extremely conservative (7).*

**Religiosity**

- How much guidance does your religion provide in your day-to-day living?
  None (1), Some (2), Quite a bit (3), A great deal (4)
## Appendix B: Interview Respondent Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Self Identity</th>
<th>Country of Origin/Generational Status</th>
<th>Place of Residence</th>
<th>Description of current neighborhood</th>
<th>Mother's Racial/Ethnic Identity</th>
<th>Father's Racial/Ethnic Identity</th>
<th>Mother's Occupation</th>
<th>Father's Occupation</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<td>Predominately Black; low-income</td>
<td>St. Vincent</td>
<td>Nigerian</td>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nym</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Nigerian/Black/Amariican</td>
<td>Nigeria/1st Generation</td>
<td>Katy, TX</td>
<td>Predominately White; middle class</td>
<td>Nigerian</td>
<td>Nigerian</td>
<td>Nurse (US)/Microbiologist (Nigeria)</td>
<td>Attorney (in Nigeria)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ahmad</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>African/Eritrean/Black</td>
<td>USA/2nd Generation</td>
<td>Seattle, WA</td>
<td>Predominately Black; middle-income</td>
<td>Eritrean</td>
<td>Eritrean</td>
<td>Stay at home mom</td>
<td>Software Engineer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>South Africa/1st Generation</td>
<td>Powell, OH</td>
<td>Predominately White, upper class</td>
<td>South African</td>
<td>South African</td>
<td>Stay at home mom</td>
<td>Self-employed (Information Technology)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Students who did not attend PSU*
Appendix C: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

The interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. The respondents signed an informed consent form before we began, and provided a pseudonym to use in place of their real names. The questions below guided our conversations. The questions in brackets were only presented to first and second generation Black immigrant respondents:

Introduction and Identity

• Tell me about yourself and your family. Where are you all from? Where do you all live? What’s the ethnic/racial composition of your neighborhood? What do your parents do for a living? [Do they maintain ties with their home country? How?] [Does your family ever think about going back to their home country? What do you think about that? Would you want to live in your parents’ home country?]
• Do you belong to any students groups? Which ones?
• How would you describe your ancestry?
• There are multiple ways that Black people in the U.S. describe their identity. How do you identify? Does this change depending on situation?
• Who is Black? Who is African American? Is there a difference?
• Is being Black an important part of your self-image? Ethnic group?
• What does it mean to be Black?

Group Feelings, Values and Beliefs

• Do you feel that African Americans and black immigrants share the same values and outlook on life?
• Some people say that African Americans and black immigrants do not get along. What is your opinion on this issue? Do you think there is competition and tension between groups of Blacks in the United States? Have you experienced this tension? If so, what is the source of this conflict?
• What stereotypes did you grow up hearing or learning about African Americans? Afro-Caribbeans? Africans? Afro-Latinos?
• Do you think racism and discrimination are important issues in the United States?
• Have you personally been affected by racism or discrimination?
• What if anything should be done about it?
• Most African Americans think pretty similarly about the effects of race in the United States. Do you think that it’s important for all people of African descent to see eye-to-eye on racial matters and problems?
• How can the increasing achievement gap between blacks and whites be explained? Why, given all the progress that blacks as a racial group have made, do they continue to lag behind whites and other groups along various social and economic indicators?
• Do you think that black immigrants and their children get treated any differently than African Americans, generally? Police? Employers?

Race Conscious Admissions Policies and Affirmative Action

• What is your interpretation of the goal of race-conscious admissions policies and affirmative action?
• Are these policies necessary?
• Should all students of African descent benefit from these policies?
• Should Black Americans and Black immigrants benefit from race-conscious admissions policies and affirmative action or should they be treated differently?
• 1st and 2nd generation black immigrants have large presence at prestigious schools like Harvard. How would you explain that?

Political Attitudes and Behaviors
• What political issues are important to you?
• How, if at all, does your racial identity influence your political attitudes and behavior?
• Is there one party that you tend to support? Does one party represent your views better than others? Which one?
• Is it important to support black politicians and black political leaders?
• Thought experiment: There are two candidates who have similar platforms and qualifications. The only difference between the candidates is that one is Black and one is white. Who do you think would you be more likely to support?
• Do Black political leaders have a responsibility to communicate issues of black communities?
• What political issues or policy matters do you think are important to African Americans? What about for black immigrants, like Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latino, or African immigrants?
• Is anyone capable of representing black political interests or are black representatives more suited for this task?
• Are there any political issues that you think all people of African descent should be concerned about in the US?
• Do you think that it’s important for people of African decent to share a political agenda? Should they work together in politics? What issues might they differ on?
• Is the political system an efficient way to solve Blacks’ social, economic, and political issues?

Barack Obama
• A lot of people thought it was important for Barack Obama to be elected, as the first black president. What did you think about his election?
• How do you think he is doing as president?
• Do you think it’s important for—or even a responsibility for—Obama to talk about racial disparities? Do you think Obama has a responsibility to Black people?

Additional Questions
• What is the American Dream? Who can accomplish it? Is it easier for some than others?
• Does your racial identity affect your life chances?
• Who are you friends? What is the racial make up of your friends? (If you could think of a proportion or percentage?)
• What does “Black Community” mean to you? To what extent do you think about people of African descent constituting a broader national (or even global) community?
• Has your racial or ethnic identity changed over time, either in the way you describe yourself or in the strength of your identity?
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Biography

Candis Watts was born to Sheila and Anthony Watts in Chicago, IL on January 3, 1984. She attended Duke University, where she received her undergraduate and graduate degrees. As an undergraduate, she majored in Political Science and International Comparative studies, and she minored in Asian and African Languages and Literature. Candis received a B.A. from Duke’s Trinity College in 2005 with honors. Candis returned to Duke to receive her Masters degree in Political Science in 2008 and her Ph.D. in Political Science in 2011.

During graduate school, she published three papers with her advisors and colleagues. The first publication was “Group Membership, Group Identity, and Group Consciousness: Measures of Racial Identity in American Politics?” with Paula D. McClain, Jessica Johnson Carew, and Eugene Walton Jr. in the Annual Review of Political Science. Then along with Kerry L. Haynie, was “Blacks and the Democratic Party: A Resilient Coalition” in New Directions in American Politics. The most recent publication is “Intergroup Relations in Three Southern Cities: Black and White Americans’ and Latino Immigrants’ Attitudes” in Black-Brown Relations with Paula D. McClain, Gerald F. Lackey, Efren O. Perez, Niambi M. Carter, Jessica Johnson Carew, Eugene Walton, Jr., Monique L. Lyle and Shayla C. Nunnally.

Candis has received the American Political Science Association Minority Fellowship (2006), the Duke University Endowment Fellowship (2006), the National Science Foundation Graduate Fellowship (2008), and the Ted Robinson Memorial Award (2010).