ASSIMILATING TO BLACK AMERICA: HOW THE IDENTITY CHOICES OF HAITIAN IMMIGRANT AND HAITIAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS ARE IMPACTED BY RACIAL AND ECONOMIC SEGREGATION

By

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A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2006
This dissertation is dedicated to Dr. James Button who, because of his untimely death, does not appear on my committee. I think he would have approved of this epigraph: “I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves, and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education.” While these words are Thomas Jefferson’s, their spirit certainly informed much of the work of Jim Button, from whose quiet activism I was lucky enough to learn.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my mother and father, Dr. Michael and Marlene Perle, for all their unfailing support, both mental and material. My brother also deserves gratitude for coming to my rescue and allowing me to finish this work. My longtime boss, Warren T. Smith also deserves mention for providing me with a grossly overpaid job and many hours spent debating social justice issues. I also owe a debt of gratitude to Brian for his patience and surprisingly high tolerance to dissertation writing snits. My committee, Drs. Maxine Margolis, Della McMillan, Kathryn Borman and Thomas Oakland, deserves a special mention, for sticking with me throughout this overly long process and having faith that I could produce something of value. Each of them, through their words, deeds and scholarship has had a profound impact on me and I thank them. I would also like to thank all of the families who took the time to open their homes and hearts to a stranger and share some of their feelings and frustrations, but most of all, who trusted that I had their children’s best interests at heart. Without all of them, truly none of this would be possible. Finally, to all the rest of my friends and family, I want to thank them for their patience, good humor, biting wit and quick response time on email.
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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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By

Jennifer Laura Craythorne

December 2006

Chair: Maxine Margolis
Major Department: Anthropology

Through qualitative methods, my research examined the effects of living and attending school in racially segregated areas on identity choice among Haitian immigrant and Haitian-American middle and high school students. In particular, I explored the relationship between the identities chosen by students and their academic orientation and performance. Assimilating to America, in particular, Black America, affects the academic orientations and outcomes of these students. Immigrants assimilate to different cultures and subcultures, marked by differences in wealth, education and a host of other factors. By working with people assimilating to different segments of America, I explored how these differences affected the identity choices of students and in particular how each different identity chosen had an impact on how students oriented themselves towards the process of formal education.

Further, I hoped to control for these backgrounds in order to locate the factors that cause negative academic orientations among some Haitian students. By controlling for
these variables, I built on, as well as synthesized, extant literature and research that pointed out connections between segmented assimilation to Black America, academic orientation, race, school performance and neighborhood and school composition. By conducting research with Haitian students who live in neighborhoods with different racial and economic compositions, I hope to show, through my results, that creating residential and educational ghettos does a disservice to all children, Haitian, American or other. I also hope to show that school districts, even those newly out from under a 30 year old court order to desegregate, still contain unacceptably high levels of racially identifiable schools and that educational policy alone will not solve the problems of negative academic orientation that arise as a result of such segregation.
CHAPTER 1
SETTING THE STAGE

Our children aren’t learning. We send them to school, watch them do their homework at home and their marks aren’t improving. We just do not know what to do. – Ertha (mother of 2)

This quote, from a Haitian parent living in Tampa, has a number of meanings. There is an element of desperation behind it, not knowing the next step to take to help one’s children. There is a universal element about it. While this mother was referring to her own children, in this decontextualized quote, she could be talking about all children worldwide, or American children, or even Haitian immigrant children in Tampa. There also is the element of exasperation, as this parent watches her children go to school and study, they must be almost actively repelling knowledge, for how else could this be happening.

This quote and its potential for multiple meanings are especially appropriate for a study focusing on the implications of race and class on identity formation. Race and class tend to be particularly malleable concepts, depending on contexts and individual interpretations to give them meaning. What exactly does it mean to be poor in the Haitian slums? What do you imply when you call someone black in Port-au-Prince? What do Haitian immigrants and African-Americans have in common? How does being black or poor affect your school performance? Depending on where you stand and how you identify yourself, you will have different conceptions of race and class. Throughout this dissertation, I will be returning to the issues of race and class in reference to where
Haitians settle (Tampa), their role in the educational process, how they impact acculturation and even how educational outcomes are affected by these factors.

In this chapter, I discuss the background to my fieldwork, including the theories and literature that informed my research. I explain my hypothesis, that economic and racial segregation at home and at school has a deleterious effect on identity formation among Haitian immigrant students, and discuss the methods I used to conduct my fieldwork, including a brief summary of my findings. Following those sections will be a discussion of the theoretical and applied significance of my findings. Finally, I will provide a brief overview of the structure of this work.

**Hypothesis**

My hypothesis is simple. I believe two variables, segregation at home and at school, impact immigrant student identity. Some Afro-Caribbean second-generation students have done better at school than others from the same nations and similar backgrounds. Certain demographic factors, including race, poverty, and language spoken impact educational outcomes but we have not seen explicitly how this happens. I call this unknown process of variables affecting school outcomes the black box of causation (see Figure 1.1 below). I believe identity formation to be the contents of the black box. It appears that demographic factors affect the identity formation process of immigrant children and, depending on what factors are extant, children choose different identities that predispose them to certain attitudes towards education. This is a throughput process, with variables entering the black box on the left and affecting identity formation. Exiting the black box are children with identities that now constrain their attitudes towards school.
I am not exploring how identity formation affects school outcomes, the right end of the black box process. Rather, I am exploring how demographic factors such as housing and school segregation affect the left side of the black box equation, that which affects identity formation. Therefore, my hypothesis is that school and neighborhood segregation affects the identity choices of second-generation Haitian immigrant students. There are a number of other factors involved in this, and it certainly is not as simplistic as the equation of segregation equals bad identity choices. But these factors have not been shown to be explicitly related to how and why students form their identities. I attempt to do that with this research.

**Brief Summary of Findings**

For the majority of second-generation students, going to school and living in racially and economically segregated communities sometimes has a profound affect on their process of identity formation, selection, and deployment. Even students who maintained or developed non-adversarial identities towards education felt the pressure to adopt identities that asked less of them academically. In addition, students whose families came from poorer backgrounds in Haiti and who ended up in a poor and heavily minority neighborhood in the United States had the most difficult time in trying to resist identities which would almost require them to do poorly in school. Some students were able to maintain either a positive identity or to code-switch well enough to not fall into this trap. Others were less successful. In addition, students from the same family did not always adopt the same types of identities or attitudes towards school.
Overall, boys were more likely than girls to adopt identities that had oppositional attitudes towards school. They seemed less able to resist the pressures that constrained their identity choices to all but negative ones. I think of these peer groups as a continuum, with some exerting little pressure to change behavior and others exerting great force in trying to shape their members’ activities. There seemed to exist a tipping point on this continuum beyond which groups exerted great pressure in requiring adversarial identities towards school. Thus, some male peer groups exerted more pressure than others to put little effort into school and academic work. Those that exerted less pressure and influence allowed their members more breathing room and required less time and social commitment from them. This permitted those students who were so inclined to complete homework, attend classes, and pay attention while there.

The females did not have as much pressure to conform to certain identities, as did the boys. When the girls did have problems, they tended to revolve more around high school dramas than identity dramas. The majority of issues the girls faced revolved around boys, clothes, strict parents, gossip and other issues we tend to associate with being a teenage girl in America. When the girls did face pressures related to their identity choices, the pressure was exerted in a different fashion than with the boys. The girls in a peer group were more likely to ostracize the offending girl or to spread cruel gossip whereas the boys went in for chiding and a slow drop off in inclusion in group activities. Thus, the girls faced a much harsher and crueler version of the boys’ experiences.

Residential segregation and the racial composition of schools do play a large underlying role in second-generation identity formation. Living in poor minority
communities and then attending schools with large poor and minority populations provides the opportunities and constraints, particularly for the boys, to become members of these peer groups that require certain identity deployments or choices. Many of these students seem to feel that they have very few options when it comes to their identity choices. Most students do not realize that they can actively control their identity choices, or to see them as choices at all. Many do not see that these choices impact their academics.

Other factors, such as family socioeconomic status here and in Haiti (as mentioned above), also impact these choices. Those families with parents with less formal education and fewer resources have no place to go but to end up in these neighborhoods. Those families with more resources and wealth in Haiti that still ended up in poorer neighborhoods seemed to keep tighter reins on their children and more closely controlled their activities and social lives. This seems to help because it allows for fewer occasions for these students to play at these adversarial identities and entrench themselves in the peer groups that demand those identities to join.

**Methods**

I conducted participant observation and interviews that included many open-ended queries with second-generation students, their immigrant parents, and other adults in contact with the families as the majority of my fieldwork. I also conducted reviews of the literature and used U.S. Census materials to get an understanding of the demographics of this Haitian community. I prepared, pre-tested, and used as a guide for interviews an extensive questionnaire that focused on all aspects of students’ families, social lives and attitudes, and identity labeling practices of themselves and others. These questions were both closed and open ended. Some provided a range of answers to choose from (family
income for example) and others were left open (identity labels). Typically, I had spent considerable time with a student and their family before I sat down to interview them. Oftentimes, this worked out well because I had answers to a lot of the questions on my questionnaire prior to the interview.

I spent a lot of time with students after school, at their homes and with their friends. Some of my time was spent with high school students on their lunch breaks, observing interactions and social groups among these students. I purposely chose to not do extensive observations of students in classrooms, knowing this would limit my ability to see a student’s attitude toward school firsthand. I did so because of the negative reactions towards these Haitian students that seemed to arise as a result of my presence. The students were already viewed negatively because of their nationality; I did not want to cause further harm by drawing attention to them in the classroom. Instead, I chose to use their grades and how much schoolwork they did at home to give me a rough guide to their true attitudes about school, regardless of what they might have said while hanging out with their friends.

This was not a randomly chosen sample so the results cannot be generalized to the larger population of Haitians in Tampa or elsewhere. I specifically wanted data on second-generation students from certain class backgrounds living in high minority neighborhoods and attending schools with large numbers of minority students. I wanted to examine, in depth, the potential variation in identity choices for students from these schools and areas. I conducted fieldwork with students from more affluent areas and schools to provide a rough contrast to these students who formed the backbone of my study. I also spoke with other adults with whom the students or their families came into
contact in order to provide a contrast with the self-identification I elicited and observed among the students themselves.

I spoke with and had contact with many more students than I chose to interview in the end. Some students were not particularly interested in working with me on the project and others either left school, the area, or simply disappeared. I also made every effort to formally interview both parents of students from each family, where there were two. However, many times both parents could not or would not participate in the interviews due to time or other constraints. I also spoke with many more non-Haitian adults than I ended up interviewing. Some did not have much knowledge of the students or families and others did not want to participate. I chose not to formally interview other non-Haitian students because of the constraints involved due to the Institutional Review Board process as well as not wanting to in any way stigmatize the students themselves, Haitian or not.

In the end, I interviewed 19 students, 15 parents, and 7 other adults. The interviews lasted between 1 to 2 hours and sometimes occurred over two sittings. They covered individual and family backgrounds, demographics, attitudes, self-identification, socioeconomic status and other factors that could impact my study. While the numbers are not large, they do provide a good resource for a narrative exploration of the experiences of Haitian immigrant students. One other note, while this study focuses on Haitian immigrant high school students, I did choose to interview and include in this research middle school students who were siblings of the original high school students. I did so in order to show the sometimes-differential identity choices of students from the same families and backgrounds.
Background and Literature Review

In late 1998 or early 1999, as I was deeply immersed in readings on multicultural education and literature in an attempt to explain the differences in academic outcomes for K-12 students of different racial backgrounds, I came across an article that changed my focus profoundly. I stumbled onto Portes and Zhou’s article on segmented assimilation (1993). This article dealt with the process of immigrant assimilation to America and the ways in which this process impacts immigrant students’ academic orientations and outcomes. Previously, I had focused on the ways in which external identification of students’ race or class affected their school outcomes. I had been concerned with the affects of racism, classism and xenophobia shown by adults on the school and life experiences of minority and immigrant students. It never occurred to me that the ways in which students thought about and identified themselves also would have an impact. Portes and Zhou’s ideas were a revelation to me.

At about this same time, I became interested in the case of Haitian immigrants and other Afro-Caribbean students in U.S. public schools. I was interested in why some students would perform well (model minorities) while others had abysmal school outcomes. What could cause these differences in educational experiences of immigrants from the same country and similar backgrounds? Haiti, like many other Caribbean nations, has a very strong emphasis on education as the key to overcoming poverty and inequality. Parents stress that their children do well in school and make something of themselves. This was the same message I saw in the literature on other Island nations (Waters 1997, Hayes 1992). Yet some students did not succeed. My discovery of Portes and Zhou’s article on segmented assimilation dovetailed nicely with my prior research.
into native-born minority student educational differences. It is to this literature that I will
turn next.

A number of scholars have posited that a relationship exists between certain factors
of assimilation and the different academic outcomes of immigrant children of color
(Montero-Sieburth & LaCelle-Peterson 1991 and Suarez-Orozco 1991). These authors
have attempted to show that there is a connection between factors such as the racial
makeup of schools, the age at immigration, or a family’s economic status that affects
school outcomes and achievement. Yet none of these authors has explicitly shown the
causal relationship between demographic factors and educational outcomes. It is a black
box process so far filled with correlations, not causality. We see the factors and we know
the results on the other end but we have not cracked the code fully. What has been
missing is an understanding of just how these factors of segmented assimilation and
demographics affect educational achievement among immigrant children of color,
particularly Afro-Caribbean immigrants.

I believe Mary Waters and Margaret Gibson identified what appears to be the
missing processual link between demographic factors affecting assimilation and the
differing academic outcomes for immigrant students in their respective works on identity
and black immigrants (Waters 1990) and factors affecting school performance among
high school boys in St. Croix (Gibson 1982). This missing link is the identity chosen or
adopted by the child. Waters’ work (1997) points out that we have plenty of literature on
how young black immigrants respond to racism and discrimination. She attempts to
understand how that discrimination limits the possibilities that the second-generation has
available to them (Waters 1997). Gibson attacks the problem by examining cultural patterns and their effects on student academic performance (1982).

However, the black box of identity formation as individual lived experience is not the explicit focus of these earlier works. We do have plenty of literature about the effects of external labeling and grouping on children of color in the academic sector, but what of the choices in identity that these children make for themselves, voluntarily or because they have no other choices (Suarez-Orozco 1996, Gougeon 1993)? Almost regardless of the cultural and familial stress on educational achievement, anecdotal evidence suggests that identity choice has a highly predictive ability to point out educational achievement (Portes and Zhou 1993).

There are two things going on here. One is that identity choice and the factors that affect it seem to be the contents of the aforementioned black box. The second is how this factor of identity choice affects academic outcomes of immigrant students. My research examined the former and leaves the latter to other researchers to explore. We need to first confirm that these social and cultural factors do indeed impact identity choices before we can look at the second step of the black box process.

In order to examine identity choice and the deployment of that identity, we need to situate it within the context that gives these options their meaning. As such, I will be exploring the effects of racial segregation in schools and neighborhoods to see whether they affect the identity choices that Haitian immigrant students choose and deploy. While this research did not explicitly delve into whether there was a connection on the other side of the black box, between these identity choices and school achievement, I will provide some anecdotal evidence to add to that already mentioned that it in fact does.
Theoretically, I have chosen to use a rubric that groups the major theories that are applicable to my research into four main ideas. The first group consists of John Ogbu’s works, particularly those relating to his classification of minorities (1978, 1991). The theory focuses on the initial terms of incorporation for the minority group into the U.S. He designates two main categories, the voluntary immigrants who choose to come to the U.S. and the involuntary minorities, or those who were brought here against their will, such as slaves or Mexicans and Native Americans who were made into citizens through conquest of territories (Ogbu 1987, 1991).

The second group of theories consists of those ideas proposed by John Ogbu and Signithia Fordham to account for why some African-American students do poorly and put forth so little effort towards their studies (Ogbu 1974, Fordham 1991, 1996). Fordham, in particular, points out very clearly that for many African-American underachievers, doing well in school is a marker of whiteness (1988). These theories focus on how cultural conceptualizations of education and learning impact the effort and achievement of minority students.

The third group of theories belongs to Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou. In my opinion, they are responsible for what is so far the most complete and useful explanation as to where and how today’s immigrant teens, second-generation and immigrant newcomers are assimilating (1993). The authors have come up with a model that allows for assimilation into white, black or Hispanic America, or even the retention of one’s original identity. Two of these models generally allow immigrant children to be upwardly mobile, either through adoption of a generic mainstream identity (white) or through the preservation of their own ethnic or national identity as immigrants. The other
model allows for downward mobility into our nation’s underclass (certain black or Hispanic cultural identities). They point out that earlier in immigration history, assimilation to any segment of our nation’s cultures could lead to success. Presently, that no longer holds true and we witness segmented assimilation into a variety of cultural tracks that can lead to success or failure (Portes 1995).

The fourth and final group of theories consists of those relating to class and forms of capital and is best exemplified by theories developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1977) and further explored by Jay MacLeod (1995). The theories of both of these authors are built around what an immigrant or native-born minority arrives with in terms of resources. What education, money, property, social networks, special skills, languages or other resources can they bring to bear on their ability to be educated or to succeed in our society? Both recognize that all of these assets are mediated by the larger contexts of which individuals are a part. They are certainly not meant to be prescriptive equations, stating that if an individual’s parents have a certain level of education and income then the individual will succeed in school.

All of these theories are more fully discussed in Chapter 6. That discussion includes critiques of each model as well as an exploration of how useful they are in helping us understand immigrant educational outcomes. Later chapters will discuss theories that specifically deal with other topics such as those that relate to immigration (Foner, Rumbaut, Margolis), educational issues relating to all minorities (Gibson, Kozol), ethnic identity formation (Waters) and Haiti and Haitians (Stepick, Zephir). While many of these other theories have been useful in explaining specific aspects of my findings, these four models have influenced the initial framing of my research question.
Theoretical Significance

This research has significance because, while it is deeply influenced by a number of important theories and schools of thought, it does not subscribe to any one in particular. It recognizes that certain of the four groups of theories discussed above work best to explain certain events while others are more useful for other purposes. My research will hopefully add to the complexities and specificity of these theories to make them more responsive to the actual lived experiences of the individuals and groups they attempt to explain. In addition, it helps illuminate how demographic factors such as school and housing segregation affect identity formation among the second-generation. This adds an explanatory strength to the mostly anecdotal evidence that exists in the literature on attitudes towards schooling and academic outcomes.

To begin with, while Ogbu’s work has added immeasurably to our ability to properly identify and classify types of minority students with a shorthand reference to their voluntary or involuntary status, it is not uniformly applicable to all groups. Whether Haitians are refugees or immigrants tends to matter less when we are discussing their actual lived experiences than when we are discussing their status in the U.S. or their reasons for emigrating in the first place. One of the major problems with this theory is that anyone, regardless of nationality, skin color, history of immigration or other factors can adopt an identity that would allow them to be placed within any of Ogbu’s categories. This means that external labeling can be incorrect and that individuals who at one point in time were categorized as voluntary immigrants might end up displaying identities that would now have them classified as involuntary minorities. This fluidity is not well captured by the static designations of voluntary or involuntary status. This deficiency will lead to further sub-classifications to deal with issues of specificity that will
eventually render the theory burdensome and unworkable at best and meaningless at worst.

The Ogbu-Fordham theory of poor academic outcomes for African-American students does well at explaining the ways in which factors in the social and academic lives of native-born minority students affect their identities and school performances. However, in terms of explanatory power for Afro-Caribbean immigrants, we must be very careful in our applications of this theory. The theory was crafted to explain observations of African-American underachievement. Because Haitian and other Afro-Caribbean immigrants do not necessarily have to assimilate to an African-American identity, we run the risk of researchers assuming that this process is a forgone conclusion for all such immigrants, ignoring the huge array of differences in the lives of these children.

While I believe that Portes and Zhou’s theory of segmented assimilation is one of the most accurate descriptions available for what is happening to the post-1965 immigrants, it is still problematic. Its original formulation does not necessarily take into account the variety of subcultures that exist in the U.S. to which immigrants can assimilate. While it does not seem to assume a monolithic black or Hispanic culture to which immigrants assimilate, it does nothing to describe or explain these different subcultures and the affects that their variations have on the process of assimilation. To what sector of black America do Haitian immigrant students assimilate? Why do some assimilate to a subculture that denigrates schooling and education and others do not? What is missing is an operationalization of the how and why that triggers assimilation to
certain subcultures and identities, the contents of the black box, which my research
attempts to explain.

The theories of Bourdieu and MacLeod are very valuable in terms of explaining
what types of capital immigrants bring with them to their new homeland. Yet these
theories contain their own weaknesses. These theories are too flat and do not seem to
have room for the contingencies of individual life experiences and the differences that
exist between immigrants from the same or different families. For example, why do
some students end up assimilating to a minority identity that predisposes them for failure
and poverty while their families might possess all the social, cultural, financial and
educational capital in the world? In fact, their very own siblings might adopt an identity
that is very amenable to educational success. These ideas of class and capital can only go
so far in providing general predictions, and their explanatory power at the individual level
is limited.

The framework that I have used to try to make sense of my own research is a
combination of these four theory groups. These theories can be broken down into ones
that explain the where of assimilation and ones that explain the how. Where they
assimilate addresses to which American culture immigrants adapt and how refers to
issues such as which resources they use and which behaviors they adopt during
assimilation. However, all of them seem weak in allowing for the individual variation
that I and other researchers have seen in the assimilation process. This research
addresses that by turning to the factors that impact the identity choices that Haitian
immigrant children make. I believe these factors I have explored or the ones that these
four theories contain cannot be used to make specific predictions. However, without
integrating all factors into their theories and making them capable of greater levels of specificity, they are inadequate to the task for which we use them.

Portes, Zhou, Rumbaut, Ogbu, Fordham and many others have contributed parts of this puzzle. Currently, it seems that the identity that we can best explain is that of an African-American underachiever. We can even explain how Haitians come to be in neighborhoods and schools filled with poor and minority students. What we have not fully explored is how this affects their identities. Exactly why do some of these students choose one identity and others choose one that is completely different. That is the theoretical significance of this research. It helps to identify the weak spots of very valuable prior research in order to make those theories stronger and more responsive to the vagaries of immigration. But it also adds its own explanation to those theories.

**Structure of Dissertation**

The structure of this dissertation flows organically from the shores of Haiti to the poor neighborhoods of Tampa. Chapter 1 provides an overview of what theories led me to develop this research in the first place and the methods used to conduct it. Chapter 2 explores immigration history and the theories developed to explain why people move across international boundaries. Chapter 3 discusses second-generation acculturation. It explores the factors that affect immigrant assimilation as well as some of the theoretical frameworks developed to describe this process. Chapter 4 focuses on Haitian immigration to the United States. It provides a background to the influx of Haitian immigrants and helps to put into perspective just exactly who it is that is arriving on our shores and joining our communities and why.

Chapter 5 explores the setting for this research, the City of Tampa. This port of entry is described and then compared with other cities with large immigrant and Haitian
populations. It then moves on to a discussion of Haitians in Tampa. Chapter 6 discusses race, class and education in the United States and places immigrants, particularly the second-generation, within that discussion. It delves into how immigrants fit themselves into the American education system and the role of race and class in that incorporation. It also explores the strategies they use to do this as well as the different outcomes they experience from that process. Chapter 7 provides the meat of my fieldwork, the results and analysis of what I found. It does so within the larger context of a discussion on identity formation and includes the specifics of my research. It provides a grouping of factors that I have found to affect immigrant student identity.

Chapter 8 integrates the results of my research with the literature that has been discussed earlier in this dissertation. In particular, it revisits the four major theoretical frameworks in light of identity formation and its role in educational attainment. It also provides conclusions and policy implications arising from my research.
CHAPTER 2
IMMIGRATION AND TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION

Introduction

In immigration theory, 1965 is the line that demarcates the old and new immigration. The old immigration is primarily seen as white and European in origin. The new immigration is overwhelmingly non-white and hails from Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. As researchers have become more aware of the racial and national origin differences of this post-1965 immigration, and as they are reevaluating the pre-1965 immigrant experience, there has been a renewed interest in investigating the variables that cause migration and why these new immigrants choose the U.S. Older theories that conceived of immigration as a series of pushes and pulls are giving way to ones that take new variables into account and that recognize and explore the symbiotic relationships between these variables. We have also recognized that because our standard theories of immigration derived mostly from the historical experiences of white European immigrants, they tend not to have a lot of explanatory power for understanding the new, and overwhelmingly non-white, immigrant experience (Rumbaut 1994, 750).

The history of immigration to this country has typically been organized into waves or flows. Depending on the author, there can be three, four or five waves of immigrants (Faist 2000, Ibister 1996). The differences usually revolve around whether the theorist is discussing the world history of immigration or immigration to a specific nation. The most common conceptualization of immigration to the United States conceives of four waves of newcomers reaching our shores and this is the framework I will use in this
chapter. It is useful to discuss immigration using these discrete time periods because immigrants from each wave have commonalities of origin, skills and assimilation. However, we should take care not to push the generalizations too far. The most recent flow is highly diverse and its major commonalities have to do with its origins in less developed nations and the fact that a large part of this flow was impacted by the more lenient 1965 immigration law.

Just as there is diversity in conceptualizing the actual flow of people across national boundaries, so too is there diversity in our explanations for why people move. The development of immigration theories has taken place over half a century and the divergence in explanations reflects this. In fact, the wide diversity in theories used to explain immigration has lead to different classification schemes just to order all the different theories. These schemes also suffer from a lack of exclusivity and the dangers of over-generalization.

The grouping that I have chosen to use is therefore looser than some of these schemes and is based around the different eras in which these theories were developed. It also recognizes that theories from the same era suffer some of the same deficiencies. Older theories were less nuanced and more influenced by economic theories of individual rational actors. The middle era theories arose at a time when social justice and the role of the United States in Latin American economics and politics were on the rise. The theories of this group reflect the social reality of our nation at the time, focusing on larger structural, hegemonic forces such as capital and markets. The final group is the most recent and is an attempt to synthesize the useful aspects of earlier theories with a newer
focus on the lived realities of immigrants whose lives tend to span multiple nation states and social spheres. This group includes a discussion of transnational migration. I have chosen to spend so much space on this history of immigration and immigration theories because it provides a context for the immigrants who are at the center of my research. By properly placing today’s Afro-Caribbean immigrants into the larger history of all immigrants, we can then see exactly what makes them different from or similar to their forebears. Afro-Caribbean immigrants share many things with those who have come before them; however, it is their differences that dramatically shape their experiences not only in the migration process, but also in their attempts at acculturation.

This chapter will explore the historic and current trends of immigration to the United States situating the newer, non-white immigrants of the past forty years within this larger history. It will then move on to a discussion of immigration theory and the factors that are seen to cause immigration. This final section will also include a discussion of transnational migration, the theory that I use to help situate Haitian immigrant experiences in later chapters.

**Immigration to the United States – Four Waves**

Nineteen sixty-five is often used as the year that divides the old and new immigration. The Immigration Act of that year led to the changing face of immigration over the next forty years. Because of changes to immigration guidelines, immigrants from countries that were poorer and non-white were now allowed to enter the United States at unprecedented rates (Ibister 1996). These preferences in immigration law qualitatively and quantitatively changed the face of immigration to the United States. It comes as no surprise, in light of the sheer numbers of post-1965 immigrants, that researchers have spent considerable time and effort in creating theories to explain how
these newcomers have, and continue to, adapt to life in a new country. However, this focus on perceived differences can often blind us to the actual similarities that exist between the old and new immigration. We will discuss these historic and current trends in immigration in the following sections.

America is a nation built by immigrants. From the earliest settlers to our most recent newcomers, American history is one in which immigrants have played a significant role. In fact, most Americans descend from immigrants, and nearly half of us can trace our ancestry back to immigrants who arrived by 1800 (Ibister 1996:40). Our connections to our ethnic ancestry are still vivid for many and can play a part in our everyday lives. However, many Americans do not view the newer, post-1965 immigration in the same light as they do the earlier, mostly European waves of immigration. The popular media erupts into action each time a boat of refugees from Cuba or Haiti attempts to reach our shores. The pundits argue over whether we should allow these individuals into our country. The talking heads begin to pontificate on the scale of this ongoing influx, arguing that there are more immigrants entering the U.S. than during any earlier time in our history. But is this true? Are there more immigrants entering the United States than before? Because immigration is such a contentious issue, it is important to get the facts straight.

**The First Wave**

There have roughly been four waves of immigration to the United States: 1600-1820, 1840-1870, 1880-1920, and 1965-Present. Starting with English colonization of the East Coast in the early 1600’s and lasting into the early 1800’s, the first wave consisted of white Europeans from the British Isles and a few large European countries such as France and Germany. There were also large numbers of slaves imported into the
Southern United States. While not immigrants by definition, slaves and their descendants
must be taken into account because of the demographic diversity they created.

This first wave has been estimated at close to two million immigrants (Ibister
1996:40). In addition, this and the other early waves of immigration contained more
male than female immigrants. The majority of the immigrants in this wave came from
Europe (Ireland, Germany and the United Kingdom primarily) and the Americas. These
European immigrants created a population of nearly four million people by independence
and made up most of the white population (Ibister 1996:45). The year 1820 marks a
turning point for this first wave of immigrants. The last twenty years of this first wave
saw 750,000 new immigrants arrive. This addition was nearly equal to a quarter of the
U.S. population at the time and their impact was therefore greater than the slower
accumulation of the previous two hundred years (Ibister 1996:45).

During this time the national origins of European immigrants also started to shift.
The earlier immigrants were overwhelmingly English, but these newer entrants were
from Ireland and Germany. This is significant because their acculturation was
complicated due to religious and language differences. By 1840 we can already see that
assimilation is hampered by American ideas of ethnicity and values, a situation not so
dissimilar from the one we are experiencing today. Ibister points out that while the bulk
of immigration was European, immigration from Canada and the Caribbean were nearly
equal to each other in the period 1820 to 1840 and that Mexico provided a large number
of immigrants even at this early date (1996:43). While not a huge influx, it is startling to
see so many immigrants from the Caribbean. The impression most of us have about the
fourth wave, the current one, is that the influx of West Indians is a new phenomena and that it has therefore changed the face of immigration.

In this first wave immigration laws were nearly non-existent. Some colonies, prior to independence, tried to keep out the “baser elements,” the poor and people of different religions. However, there was no coordinated effort to restrict entry into the colonies. Once formed, the new national government left immigration issues to the states that only sporadically attempted to control their borders. It was not until an 1875 Supreme Court ruling that the federal government assumed its role as immigration authority (Ibister 1996:50). However negligible federal efforts at immigration control were until this time, the role of granting citizenship was assumed very early on. By 1790 there was already a naturalization law declaring that to be a citizen one must be both free and white. Therefore, our country sent mixed signals to newcomers by allowing for nearly unfettered immigration but denying citizenship to anyone who was not white. While state and federal governments were not acting on immigration, many of their citizens were alarmed by the high rates and the changing nationalities of the newcomers because of the need for labor; their concerns were not reflected in policy, a theme that occurs frequently in subsequent immigration history.

This first wave of immigrants helped lay the foundations of a new country. Immigrants were needed to help build the foundations for the future. Therefore, the government encouraged immigration despite the early nativist response from their own citizens, nearly all immigrants or children of immigrants! This situation became familiar in the years following the first wave.
The Second Wave

The second wave, from 1840 to 1880 saw continued influxes from England, Ireland, Germany and Canada. It also saw the annexation of the Southwestern United States and the incorporation of growing numbers of Mexicans. We also see for the first time a significant number of Chinese arriving on the West Coast as laborers. Immigration figures continued a slow and steady climb throughout this wave so that nearly fifteen million newcomers entered the United States during this time (Ibister 1996:32-33).

The shift from primarily English to German and Irish immigrants that began in the last two decades of the first wave continued. Scandinavians also began arriving and small numbers of Southern and Eastern Europeans. Many immigrants came from Canada, including Europeans who had arrived at Canadian ports and then crossed the border. Large numbers of Chinese laborers, mostly men, arrived to build the railroads. Unmarried males continued to be the typical immigrant of this time (Handlin 1963:13). The immigrants also continued to make up a large proportion of the overall U.S. population.

However, the reasons behind the choice to emigrate differed from the first wave. No longer were people seeking only to practice their religion or settle a new land. There were vast economic changes unfolding in Europe that were driving their citizens abroad. Industrialization destroyed the old feudal system and peasants with agricultural or artisanal skills were driven into the cities where they lived in slums and fought for factory work. Many were never able to find work or a steady income. Jews were persecuted and driven from their communities. The Irish were decimated by the potato famine. All of these circumstances drove Europeans to seek a new and better life in America.
These new arrivals did not have many skills and were often exceedingly poor. The expanding industrial cities of the Eastern seaboard needed labor. Cities were growing and so was the need for unskilled construction workers. The new immigrants took the backbreaking jobs that Americans did not want in factories and on construction sites. There was plenty of need for unskilled labor at this point in U.S. history. And while there was still disapproval over the large number of immigrants entering the country, the group that provoked the most concern was the Chinese laborers, the first non-white immigrants since the slave trade was abolished.

The legal approaches to immigration during this second wave did not change much from the first. Citizens were still making their concerns known but the government continued with its policy of nearly unfettered access to our borders. It was not until 1875 that the government passed the first immigration law that controlled who could enter the country. However, its aim was to primarily exclude, “only criminals, prostitutes and Chinese who had been coerced into entering (Ibister 1996:51).” However, this was to be the first in a series of laws that would eventually strictly curtail immigration to the United States.

The Third Wave

The third wave covers the years from 1880 through the 1920’s. This wave saw the largest immigration to the United States since the country was founded. Roughly twenty-five million immigrants arrived on our shores. The old streams from Germany, England and Ireland were supplemented with large numbers of Eastern and Southern Europeans. Jews, Austrians, Russians, Italians, Turks and Poles arrived and were met with growing hostility. Immigration from the Americas continued from Canada and Mexico as did that from Asia, only it was now Japanese arriving rather than Chinese. This third wave was
enormous compared to earlier ones and its qualitative impact on our country was just as
large. The impact on population growth in this wave was large but immigrants made up
less of the population than in either of the two previous waves (Ibister 1996:34-40).
These trends ultimately led to restrictive immigration laws in the 1920’s.

Many of the immigrants from Southern Europe were responding to the same
pressures that had driven the second wave of immigrants overseas. Industrialization took
longer to reach Southern and Eastern Europe but when it did it brought with it the same
disruptions and dislocations as it did in Northern and Western Europe. Peasants, farmers
and skilled artisans were driven off their land and out of their small family shops by the
advent of industrialized farming and mass-produced goods made in factories. Many
could not find work or adjust to the changed conditions and took advantage of the
improvements in transportation to migrate to the United States.

Once here, these immigrants settled in ethnic communities in large cities. The
large numbers of newcomers allowed for the development of ethnic churches, stores,
businesses and self-help societies. They tried to preserve what was meaningful to them
from their own cultures and pass it down to their rapidly Americanizing children. These
first generation immigrants worked in trades, factories and construction, just as their
predecessors in the second wave had. This wave of immigration was the most ethnically
diverse so far, yet it was still primarily European. However, Europeans from the Eastern
and Southern part of the continent were not viewed in the same way as the Swedes or
British. And just as earlier waves of immigrants stirred up nativist and ethnocentric
criticism, so too did this wave, only there were more of them.
Early into this wave, mostly in response to the entrance of large numbers of Chinese laborers in the second wave, the federal government enacted two laws. One was the Chinese Exclusion Act, the first effort to restrict the volume and racial or ethnic origin of immigrants. The second was the Immigration Act of 1882. This law did not affect immigration so much as it reinforced the federal government’s role in immigration enforcement. Its exclusionary focus was similar to earlier efforts to restrict access by criminals, but also to exclude those likely to need government financial help. This was the first occasion in which the government took into account the fiscal impact of immigration and set the stage for later exclusionary laws.

The next few decades saw more laws enacted that narrowed the categories of who could gain entry to the United States. The restrictions tended to be based around racial categories at the time. Thus we have Japanese and Chinese Exclusion Acts that barred immigration not only from these two nations, but also from a large part of Asia. The decades leading up to the First World War saw growing restrictions to our country’s borders but the legal efforts to keep immigrants out did little to stem the tide. Only with the war did immigration substantially decline but then rebounded again by the beginning of the fourth wave, to which we will turn shortly.

The two most restrictive immigration laws in U.S. history were passed in 1921 and 1924. The Quota Law of 1921 did just what its name implies: It legislated the number of immigrants from countries and parts of the world as well as setting a total cap on immigrants. Through its formula, which was based on a percentage of foreign born people from a given country that were resident in the U.S. by 1910, the government was able to manipulate the flow of immigrants. It severely limited Southern and Eastern
European immigration but allowed for continued migration from Northern and Western Europe. It also left untouched immigration from the Western Hemisphere.

Most Americans were unhappy with what they saw as lax immigration restrictions. The government thus enacted the stricter Immigration Act of 1924. It reduced the quota percentage and used the 1890 census instead of the 1910 tally to further restrict Eastern and Southern European immigration. The overall quota was halved and then reduced again in 1929. Thus, in one short decade, the federal government reversed itself and went from a country that welcomed immigrants to one with very harsh and restrictive immigration laws. These restrictions also created a new class of criminals: illegal immigrants.

The middle of the twentieth century, from 1930 to 1965, was a period of low overall immigration. It is therefore not neatly encapsulated in a wave of its own. The main reasons for this gap are the highly restrictive immigration laws passed at the end of the third wave. The number of immigrants to the U.S. during this period was around four million, roughly one fifth of the previous era. While the laws were very restrictive, they did not limit immigrants from the Western Hemisphere. This allowed for a greater proportion of Mexican immigrants than in any previous wave. The only important piece of immigration legislation from this time period was the McCarran Act of 1952. The law removed the racist language of earlier naturalization laws, consolidated earlier laws and retained the national quota system. It also, for the first time, gave preference to those immigrants with skills needed by the United States.

**The Fourth Wave**

The fourth and current wave of immigration starts in 1965 with amendments to the McCarran Act. This wave is as big or nearly as big as the third wave, depending on how
you do your math. Ibister puts the figure at close to 20 million immigrants in the past forty years (1996:60). However, the sending countries are radically different. Europe makes up only a small proportion of this wave compared to earlier immigrant flows. These immigrants are primarily from less developed nations (Latin America, the Caribbean, parts of Asia and Africa). However, because of our large population, this wave makes up a smaller proportion of the total population than earlier waves did. Yet it still has had a huge impact as more people feel the need to leave their homes for a better life, including for the first time, larger numbers of women.

As the immigrant flows switched from the traditional European countries to places such as the Philippines, Asia, Mexico and the Caribbean, their racial and economic backgrounds have changed as well. Nearly eighty percent of immigrants in this wave come from non-white countries, most from the developing world (Ibister 1996:43). This has in turn altered our racial make-up as well as relationships between native-born minorities and newer immigrants of color. The number of sending countries also increased, adding to the great variety of people reaching our shores (Ueda 1998:72). Thus, some of the earlier overall diversity in immigration was recaptured. There has also been an increase in skilled professionals, families reuniting with their relatives and women.

This wave also contains the brain-drain migrants from all over the world who are seeking out better opportunities for themselves and typically have more skills, education and economic resources than those they left behind. While still consisting of large numbers of unskilled workers, there have been a growing number of well-educated and skilled immigrants arriving here. Those with skills tend to come overwhelmingly from
Asia while those without have typically come from Latin America and the Caribbean, although economic and political conditions such as recessions, inflation and coups d’etat have driven a number of educated immigrants from the Western Hemisphere (Ueda 1998:74-75).

As mentioned above, some of these changes during the fourth wave of immigration came about because of changes in the immigration laws. While not causing all of the great increases, certain provisions unintentionally dovetailed with new global trends. The American public, lulled into complacency about immigration after so many decades without large numbers of people arriving in their country, had no interest in immigration. Rather, our nation was wrapped in Civil Rights issues. The Immigration Act of 1965 was meant to rid immigration laws of racism once and for all. It got rid of the national origins quotas replacing them with limits for the Western and Eastern hemispheres. The law provided for family reunification as well as favoring skilled immigrants. It allowed for immediate relatives to immigrate with no restrictions placed on them. These family provisions, not expected to lead to large numbers of immigrants, in fact, led to an explosion in the number of immigrants from Latin America and Mexico (Foner 2000:24).

Other immigration acts of the past forty years have also impacted the composition of immigrant flows. The 1980 Refugee Act for the first time dealt with refugees separately from immigrants. It broadened the definition of a refugee to bring it into line with U.N. protocols and was an effort to atone for our government’s shameful treatment of refugees during World War II. However, it also created some serious confusion over just who is a refugee and who is not. Those fleeing for economic reasons are denied asylum, while those who are political or religious refugees are allowed entry. Those
fleeing natural disasters such as volcanic eruptions are not classified as refugees. The act also ended up being used as a political weapon during the Cold War by granting Cuban and other refugees from communist and socialist countries asylum while denying asylum to many Haitians and others from nominally democratic nations (Portes and Rumbaut 1996:24). The act also had no provisions for emergency situations, such as the Mariel boatlift of 1980. In addition, in separating refugees from immigrants, the government afforded refugees rights and privileges that immigrants did not have, such as adjustment assistance and access to welfare (Ibister 1996:64). This has caused serious rifts and jealousies between different national groups.

The 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) did not change legal immigration policy in any major way, but it did tackle the issue of illegal immigrants. IRCA created amnesty provisions for all undocumented immigrants in the country continuously since 1982. It also created provisions against employment discrimination for immigrants. The Act provided more resources for Border Patrol and created sanctions for employers breaking immigration law by hiring undocumented workers. The employer sanctions were meant to create burdens for businesses but have not been well enforced.

The 1990 Immigration Act addressed issues of legal immigration. It increased overall the number of people who were eligible to immigrate, altered the categories that gave priority to certain groups, and overall increased the total number of individuals allowed to immigrate. This law was a product of its time. The United States had just undergone a huge period of economic growth and therefore had room in its economy to incorporate more immigrant workers. The act continued the family reunification and
skills based categories and added one to encourage immigration from places that previously were huge sending nations such as the United Kingdom.

In 1996, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act was passed. It made changes to asylum law, detention of immigrants and deportation of immigrants convicted of crimes. The law expanded the categories of crimes for which people could be deported and made it easier to deport people. It also increased budgets and tools for enforcement. The law was aimed primarily at illegal immigrants. In 1996, Congress passed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, under which legal and undocumented immigrants would no longer have access to federal benefits such as Medicaid, Social Security, food stamps or welfare. In 2005, the Real ID Act was passed which, despite its name, aimed to reduce the number of refugees by placing more restrictions on asylum seekers, reduced the legal rights immigrants had, increased enforcement budgets and mechanisms and imposed federal standards on states issuing identification cards and driver’s licenses to immigrants. All of these reforms have served to tighten restrictions on immigrants in one way or another and attempt to halt undocumented immigrant flows.

At the start of a new century, we can look back over the broad outlines of these waves of immigration and see the general patterns. Our nation started out as territory for colonists and over the first three waves built up its population through unfettered immigration. These immigrants literally built the nation we have inherited and without them industrialization would not have occurred so quickly or thoroughly. In response to nativist criticism, the government enacted laws nearly stopping the flow of immigrants for the better part of four decades. Unintentionally, our government turned the flow back
on through the 1965 Immigration Act. By favoring family reunification and trying to rid itself of its earlier, racist quota system, it allowed for larger numbers of immigrants from nations other than Europe to come to our country. These newer immigrants have helped our nation transition from an economy dependent upon manufacturing and industry to one that is based on high tech and services.

More recently, we have curtailed the social services we provide immigrants. In addition, we are attempting to stop illegal immigration by providing stiffer penalties and deporting more of those legal immigrants who have had brushes with the law. But it was not the 1965 law alone that caused this most recent flow and the more recent restrictive laws will not cause it to abate. Because the 1965 law occurred at a time in world history when great changes were occurring, and capital markets were drawing nations closer together, it acted as a catalyst to those forces already at work in the rest of the world. Those forces are still active and it is foolhardy to assume that restricted benefits alone will stem the flow. It is to the factors that influence immigration decisions that we turn next.

**Explaining Why People Move: Immigration Theories**

As the preceding sections have shown, migration is not a new phenomenon. Humans have been moving across the globe for hundreds of thousands of years. However, who is migrating and from where has changed over the past four decades. Almost all developed, industrialized nations experience immigration as part of their social, economic and political fabric. Yet we still have not created a fully coherent theory to explain why people migrate. Instead, we are faced with a multitude of overlapping theories from various disciplines whose explanatory powers vary. A multi-disciplinary approach is surely more beneficial than a discrete theory developed in
isolation from other research. Therefore we must make every effort to synthesize these explanations and to expose their faults if we are to develop an all-encompassing theory of the causes of immigration.

The following sections will explore various immigration theories. Individual and structural level theories will be explored, as well as those that have explanatory capacity for both these levels. I will finish with a discussion of transnational migration theory and its potential to help pull the disparate threads of earlier theories together into a working model of immigration. A note about the organization of this section is in order. There are numerous means of sorting all of the theories presented below, none of which is wholly satisfying. Creating groups based on the primary causes of migration such as economics or politics is inadequate because these factors potentially work on individual or structural level forces and tend to overlap. Likewise, creating theory groups based on the individual or structural factors that impel immigration is also inadequate because of a lack of exclusivity.

While almost all of these grouping schemes are arbitrary, I have chosen to use the one that Faist has laid out (2000:12). His scheme categorizes theories according to the order in which they appeared and posits that there have been three such generations so far. The first generation of theories consists of the classic push-pull economic explanations for immigration. The second-generation also deals with economics, but it embeds these explanations in structural arguments such as dependency and world systems theories. The third and most recent generation focuses on transnational theories that can synthesize individual/structural and micro/macro explanations as well as provide
a better understanding of the workings of all types of capital. Additionally, I am indebted to Massey et al (1993) for their work in this area as well.

**First Generation Theories**

The theories discussed in this section are micro and macro-level neoclassical economic theory and the new economics of migration theory. These theories revolve around income, employment and privation. They posit that people migrate to improve their financial position and act in economically rational ways. With the exception of the macro-economic model, these theories focus their explanations on individuals and their families; thus they are micro-level theories.

**Neoclassical macro-economic model**

One of the oldest theories of international migration is the neoclassical macro-economic model. It was created to explain not international migration, but labor migration within nations. This theory posits that migration is caused by differences in the supply and demand for labor across geographic areas. Countries with little capital and lots of labor will have lower wages and fewer jobs than those with large amounts of capital and small pools of labor. This causes a wage differential between the two nations (or two geographic regions within a nation) and results in individuals moving from a low to high-wage country. Eventually, the labor supply in the sending nation will dwindle and wages will rise to a point where they will be in equilibrium with those in the receiving nation. This is the theory that has come to be known as the push-pull theory. This oversimplification implies push factors in the sending nation propelling immigrants to a host nation and pull factors in the host nations pulling immigrants from home. This theory is appealingly simple and has formed the basis for immigration policy in Western nations.
Neoclassical micro-economic model

Later attempts to augment the push-pull theory to account for the realities of immigration saw combinations of the push and pull sides and additions of more economic propositions such as individual choice. These theories can be classified as neoclassical micro-economic models. Harris and Todaro’s work hypothesized that as long as people expected their net earnings in the receiving country to be larger than in the sending country they would migrate. The basics of the macro-economic theory are present here, augmented by a more nuanced accounting of the costs of immigration. In addition to the relative differences in wages posited in the macro theory, immigrants will also have to factor in certain costs related to migration. These include travel, living while looking for work, learning new skills and languages and adapting to a new nation (Harris and Todaro 1970:126-42).

The new economics of migration model

The most recent economic theory, the new economics of migration, challenges many of the neo-classical approaches. It shifts focus from individual choice and situates individuals within the social contexts of which they are a part. Thus, this theory expects that individuals, as part of a family or household, will work to maximize income, but also to minimize risk from crop failures, recessions and job loss. Households are better able to minimize economic risks by diversifying the economic endeavors of their members. Some household or family members can work at agricultural pursuits. Others can find local wage work. Others still will be tasked with immigrating overseas to earn income and send remittances home. The members of these units want to diversify their risks. Sending someone overseas assumes that the markets of which that migrant will be a part are unconnected to those at home. If a crop fails it is wholly unrelated to the factory
wage an immigrant is earning in Detroit. This insulates the family unit from risks in one area of their earnings (Massey 1993:436).

The new economics of migration also explores the varied uses to which remittances are put. Most people assume that remittances are used to help people live. This theory agrees that wages are used for living; however, it also recognizes that people do other things than survive with the remittances their relatives send home. Some families use the money as capital to improve their homes, farms or businesses, thus investing in their future. Others may educate their family members or even use the money to buy machinery for their farms or businesses that will increase their own revenues. Another aspect of this theory that differs greatly from neo-classical conceptions of immigration is that it does not view all income as the same. Where the money comes from does matter. Families are less likely to invest their own scarce resources into risky ventures if they have no outside source of money to aid them should the venture fail. Finally, this model accounts for the fact that families and households experience poverty not just in absolute terms, but also as deprivation relative to other households. If everyone is equally poor and one family sends a member overseas and increases their wealth through remittances, it creates relative deprivation for other members of the community and can act as a push factor in choosing to migrate.

Problems

All of these theories are economic models that focus on the individual level. The difference lies in the “units assumed to make the decision…” (Massey 1993:440).” It is true that many immigrants would cite poverty as a root cause of their sojourns. Yet it is not just simply being poor or being paid less at home than abroad that drives people to immigrate. The fact is, it is not always the poorest nations sending the most immigrants
(Ibister 1996:97). Nor is it the poorest of the poor in any given nation that migrate. In fact, it is usually those who are relatively more prosperous that choose to immigrate (Portes and Borocz 1989:607). Only when immigration chains have been sustained for long periods do we start to see those from the bottom wage levels immigrating. Prior to that, the poorest of the poor generally lack the capital and networks to do so.

Another drawback is that these theories do not explore differences among individuals to figure out why some stay while others leave. These theories cannot account for why these immigration flows persist even when the original conditions that supposedly caused them have abated (Portes and Borocz 1989:608). In addition, because these theories focus so heavily on micro-level forces, “they tend to ignore macro-structural factors that enmesh these global movements…(Margolis 1994:xv).” Macro-structural factors can help us account for why it is not usually the poorest of the poor who migrate or why some poor nations account for larger migration flows than others. These macro-structural factors also account for why equilibriums between wages in sending and receiving countries tend not to materialize. Larger structural factors such as political oppression and an over-reliance on imported foodstuffs drive down job rates and wages.

**Second Generation Theories**

The theories in this section move their explanations from a micro-level, individual approach to ones that focus on structural forces. However, most of these forces are still economic in nature. The theories in this group see immigration as a consequence of less developed nations becoming embedded in the industrial, political and economic systems of industrialized nations. This embeddedness typically places these peripheral nations at a disadvantage. The focus has shifted from the push factors of the earlier theories to an emphasis on the pull factors of developed nations.
**Segmented or dual labor market model**

The first of these theories, the segmented or dual labor market theory, shifts the focus from individual micro-level factors to structural factors in the host nations. This theory posits that migration is a result of labor demands from developed nations. Piore (1979) has argued that the economies of developed nations have a permanent need for labor that can only be filled by immigration. Thus, immigration is not caused by push factors; instead, it is pull factors in developed nations that draw immigrants from home. This theory argues that there are structural factors in industrialized economies that necessitate these flows.

Wages are one such factor. Wages do not only affect supply and demand; they also are means of gaining status or prestige. Certain jobs confer a certain status on their holders and wages are one way for this status to be seen. Because people believe that wages should confer a certain prestige, employers are not able to freely respond to supply and demand. Thus, employers trying to fill jobs at the bottom end of the job market cannot just raise wages because it would “upset socially defined relationships between status and remuneration. If wages are increased at the bottom, there will be strong pressure to raise wages by corresponding amounts at other levels of the hierarchy (Massey 1993:441).” Employers are then left with low wage jobs that no native-born worker wants. They must find laborers who are willing to take these meager wages and immigrants are the solution. The status of jobs and wages also helps to explain why most native-born workers are unwilling to take these jobs at the bottom of the labor market.

The segmented labor market theory also focuses on the dual labor markets that exist in industrialized nations. Capital heavy methods are employed to fulfill the basic demand for products and services whereas labor-intensive methods are used for seasonal
and fluctuating demand. Employers and owners do not want to invest heavily in the sector of their market that is likely to fluctuate or dissipate as trends and needs change. It is cheaper for them to use labor-intensive methods that can be disposed of when the demand later evaporates. What this means for laborers is that those in the capital intensive segment are paid better, get benefits and have more job stability while those used for labor intensive production are paid poorly and subject to firing at any time.

Because of the status workers attach to their jobs and wages, once again, native-born workers are loath to take these labor-intensive jobs. Even women and teenagers, once the laborers who filled these secondary labor market positions, are no longer available in the numbers needed. As women have moved out of the home and into the primary labor market and as birth rates declined, there is a dwindling supply of women and teens to meet the demands of these jobs. Immigrants however, are typically grateful for any work they can find and will put up with instability, low wages and hazardous working conditions.

As the fourth wave of immigration has grown, we have witnessed the growth of immigrant enclaves at rates not seen since the third wave. This adds a complicating factor to the segmented labor market theory. Portes and Bach (1985) have seen evidence of a third employment sector, the ethnic enclave, which blends the primary and secondary markets just discussed. Enclaves have plenty of low-status, low-wage jobs. However, these jobs also provide an immigrant with economic returns on their education and experience through the prospect of upward mobility, similar to the primary labor market. However, not all immigrant flows create enclaves and there is some evidence to suggest that they are difficult to create. They require early waves of wealthier immigrants
endowed with different forms of capital to create the local, ethnic-oriented businesses that will create the demand for low wage-labor from later waves of immigrants from the same nation. Thus, early waves of these self-selected, elite immigrants can create their own successive waves of immigration because of the demand for labor that their businesses create.

**Historical-structural and world systems models**

Beginning in the 1950’s, the first historical-structural approach to development appeared as a response to functional theories that posited that nations developed by progressing through a series of stages ending in industrialization and modernization. This overly determinist idea ignored the conditions that actually existed in the world. In contrast, the historical-structural model argued that because political power is not evenly distributed globally, the expansion of global capitalism creates and perpetuates inequalities and reinforces the hierarchical world order. Thus, poor nations, instead of evolving as the functionalists proposed, remained trapped by their low position in the geopolitical structure. This line of historical-structuralism hit its peak in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s and was popular with Latin American scholars. It became known as dependency theory and conceived of developing nations being forced into their dependency by the structural conditions dictated by developed nations (Massey 1998: 34).

A second line of historical-structuralism evolved a bit later, drawing on this earlier work. Wallerstein is the theorist most widely associated with this second line. His focus was on illuminating the historical means by which these inequalities in geopolitical structures were created and how they ensnared the less developed nations of the world. His ideas are called world systems theory. He classified nations into peripheral, semi-
peripheral, core and external arenas. The classification was meant to designate the level of dependency on developed nations. The periphery was the most dependent, the semi-periphery was less so and core countries were the industrialized nations and thus had no dependency. External arenas were those nations that were isolated and existed outside the global capital markets.

Neither of these lines was originally developed to explicate international immigration, though some did focus on rural to urban internal migration. In fact, it took the recession of the mid-1970’s to show theorists that migration was potentially linked to larger structural forces and changes as a nation joined the global capital system. However, there was one earlier exception to this late start, a focus on brain drain migration. Dependency theorists argued that brain drain migration undermined the prospects for development in poor nations by depriving them of the needed human capital that was being siphoned off by core nations.

When historical-structural theorists finally got around to applying their ideas to international migration, they attempted to explain it not by framing it as a response to individual or household pressures, but rather as a “structural consequence of the expansion of markets within a global political hierarchy (Massey 1998: 36).” Thus, the penetration of global capitalism into peripheral nations forms a mobile population that is more likely to migrate. Core businesses enter peripheral nations in search of greater profits, land, raw materials, cheap labor and new consumers. This is not altogether new. Colonial systems operated very similarly.

This penetration by global capitalist markets dislocates native workers who no longer have access to their land or cannot compete with plantation agriculture. It
destroys native systems of obligation and reciprocity by introducing wage-labor. Wages are so low as to not provide an adequate living and people no longer have their traditional productive resources on which to fall back. The population becomes poorer and more urban. Those with educations and skills have little prospect of finding jobs able to provide them with a comfortable living. Inflation and other economic problems mean that even basic necessities are beyond the reach of most citizens.

How these impoverished individuals end up becoming migrants to specific nations has much to do with the material and cultural links between the penetrating core nations and the peripheral nations disadvantaged by this process. The very process that creates a more mobile population in the first place creates linkages between peripheral and core nations. Transportation and communication networks are established to facilitate the movement of goods and people to the peripheral nations for the purpose of investment. However, these links operate in both directions. They reduce the costs of immigration from the periphery to the core because as globalization spreads, transportation and communication becomes less expensive.

Additionally, there tends to be growth in the military sector as core areas strive to protect their people and investments in peripheral areas. Any threats to the stability of such arrangements are met with military force. The Cold War presented just such a threat and saw an attendant growth in military forces being stationed worldwide. These military presences provide opportunities for soldiers to marry citizens of peripheral nations as well as for these citizens to work on bases or in service sector jobs that cater to the military. Links and obligations are thus created that would favor migration between these two nations.
Cultural links are also created between core and peripheral nations as globalization spreads knowledge of education, language, consumer goods and pop-culture. Here too, colonial relationships functioned in similar ways to draw immigrants from their colonies to the core nation. Core nations penetrate the popular culture of the periphery through television, radio, movies and clothes. They create desires for goods that can never possibly be filled at home because of the staggering poverty and lack of upward mobility. Citizens of peripheral nations are often very well informed about the goings on in major cities in the core nations, particularly about the fact that there are openings in the secondary job market for those wishing to immigrate.

Problems

The historical-structural theories are not so far from the segmented labor market theory that explains immigration as a result of situations existing in the core nations. Both approaches focus on pull factors in contrast to the earlier economic theories that explained migration as a rational decision made by individuals to improve their financial situations. However, this creates some deficiencies. We have moved from conceptions of immigration causes focused on an individual level with little attention paid to structural factors to explanations that focus on the structural factors without much attention given to the lived experiences of individuals. While these theories are not in conflict with older ones, they do leave untouched some very important areas. All immigrants are part of social systems that act upon them. Global and local realities are interpreted differently by individuals within specific cultural contexts and by individuals with different sets of capital. Thus, immigrants from the same country or town can have vastly different responses to these structural pressures. What is needed is a theory that can account for individual and structural factors.
Third Generation Theories

The theories in this section focus on both the individual and structural causes of immigration. They explore the assets that immigrants themselves have, the networks they build and even the self-perpetuating chains of migration. Some of these frameworks, like the second-generation theories, also focus on dependency, market penetration, underdevelopment, and consumer ideology (Basch et al 1994, 10-15). In particular, transnational migration is a brave attempt at synthesizing all of the analytic levels to produce an explanatory mechanism capable of being responsive to radical differences in situation without becoming so generalized as to lose all of its explanatory power. Transnational migration theory also takes into account other factors such as hegemonic ethnic and racial systems that were typically ignored by older theories (Appadurai 1991; Basch 1994; Charles 1992; Foner 1987b; Glick-Schiller et al 1992 and Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow 1987). Finally, as will be explored below, transnational conceptions of immigration have room for all types of immigrants and their various reasons for migrating.

Social capital model

The first model revolves around attributes that potential immigrants have or can activate. These attributes can help individuals and their families decide to immigrate and can also act to perpetuate migration once it has begun. Social capital was an idea that was developed for economics but its broader relevance was revealed by Bourdieu and Wacquant who pointed out that “social capital is the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition (1992:119).”
Social capital is convertible and can be translated into other types of capital. For example, an individual’s educational background is a type of capital that can be converted into a good job acquired on the basis of their stellar academic record. This job pays a good wage and allows this individual to lead a comfortable life. Thus, educational capital was translated into financial capital. This model works nicely with structural and economic models. A potential migrant with a given set of social capital will evaluate their prospects for earnings and jobs in their home nation. These prospects are shaped and constrained by larger geopolitical forces. Recognizing that they cannot satisfy their needs at home, that individual can choose to migrate. Where they migrate to will be shaped by the penetration of culture and capital from core states. While people themselves might not have a specific form of capital, they can access it through people they know who possess that capital. Thus, having social connections allows people to acquire the things they want or need.

**Migrant networks**

Social connections are at the heart of migrant networks. Networks are ties that connect people such as friendship, kinship or shared backgrounds. Networks among migrants connect those who do and do not migrate and stretch from the community of origin to the new host nation. Networks help increase migration because they lower the risks and costs of migrating by providing a range of help to new immigrants. Someone wishing to migrate from the home nation can contact previous migrants from his town in the host nation and make arrangements to be picked up at an airport, have a place to stay and even a lead on a job in the new city. Thus, social networks are a form of social capital. Those without such networks pay a higher price for migrating than those who have them or they do not migrate at all. The broader the network the easier it is to
migrate. These networks allow migration to become self-perpetuating because each new hub on the network increases the likelihood that someone at home wishing to migrate will now know someone who can help them, thus reducing the costs and risks.

International migration is self-perpetuating in other ways besides social networks. Each act of migration produces people with new knowledge and forms of capital, including networks, which alter the decision-making context within which a potential migrant acts. Several factors are affected by migration in ways that make additional migrations more likely. Earlier it was noted that prior to anyone from a community migrating, relative income deprivation might be low. However, the minute one family sends a member abroad and starts receiving remittances, relative deprivation increases. Other families are induced to migrate as more families send workers abroad. As this process reaches a saturation point, relative deprivation would be expected to fall. Thus, the migration of just one or two individuals can help start an immigration chain.

As these families reap the benefits of remittances, many of them will purchase land as investments and not actually farm it. As more land is taken out of production in this way, agricultural labor demand dries up. In addition, when families receiving remittances do work the land, they typically will use more machinery intensive methods, further displacing agricultural labor. This lowered demand increases the pressure to migrate (Massey 1993:452).

As migration becomes more common within a village or town, it can change the way that migration is perceived and increase the likelihood of future migrations. As global capital penetrates these communities, tastes and desires change. Migrants are exposed to new consumer goods and ideas and they too get a taste for them. They bring
new goods home to their families and help expose those who stay behind to the good things about the host country. Thus, as people migrate and their tastes and desires change, they will be more likely to migrate again. Each trip increases the odds of making future ones (Massey 1998:47). In their home communities, as migration becomes acceptable as an economic strategy, migration can become a rite of passage for young people.

Because early immigrants from a community tend to be relatively well educated, skilled and motivated, human capital is drawn out of that community and transferred abroad. This can further the poverty and deleterious living conditions in the home nation because it is losing those most likely to be able to do something about these conditions. Thus, the situation in the home nation becomes worse, further propelling the migration chain. Finally, in receiving nations, as employers become used to immigrants from certain nations, they come to rely on that labor flow and the demand for immigrants from particular nations or communities grows, pulling migrants from their homes. All of these capital and network factors work to make immigration cumulatively reinforcing. The more migrants there are, the more migrants there will be.

**Transnational migration**

There is a growing body of research on transnational migration as a new means to conceptualize international immigration (Basch et al 1994). Transnational theory envisages the experience of immigration as a process of creating webs of social relations that stretch from birth to adopted country, in essence, creating one social field (Foner 2000: 170). It does not posit that because an immigrant has left their home that they are no longer a part of it and its social reality (Basch et al 1994:7). Today’s researchers have recognized that immigration is an ongoing experience, similar to the ways in which
earlier immigrants experienced their migrations. The boundaries of nations and geographic impediments do not hinder immigrants’ views of themselves and their place at home and in their adopted nations.

Their lives and identities are “stretched across national borders (Basch et al 1994:4).” They are embedded in global market structures that shape their lives no matter where they are on the social web. They are buffeted by racial and class structures of which they often know little. These immigrants are transnational. This term exquisitely captures the tangled webs of immigrants’ lives and even helps to deal with the issues that arise as a result of trying to classify immigrants as temporary or permanent. The theory allows for whatever intentions these immigrants have but also places their experiences within the larger rubric of one large social field that encompasses their home nations and their new lives, temporary or permanent (Basch et al 1994:13).

The ability of transnationalism to be responsive to the lived experiences of immigrants and larger global structures results from its theoretical premises. These include an understanding that immigration is linked to global markets of labor and capital; that immigrants use their daily lives and their social, economic, political and personal capital to cross national boundaries and acculturate; that a person’s location does not equal their identity and finally, that immigrant experiences are deeply constrained by multiple categories such as race and class in both their home and receiving countries (Basch et al 1994:22).

Thus, transnationalism synthesizes all of the prior models. It recognizes that people migrate for specific reasons, including economic deprivation caused by larger global structures. Through networks, potential immigrants learn of pull factors in the
secondary labor market. Early immigrants, those with more skills and capital, activate networks and use their cultural knowledge of core nations to make decisions about where to go and how to do so. Once there, their identities and practices are shaped by powerful factors from home and host countries. None of the earlier theories were able to synthesize all of these factors in such a coherent fashion.

This model is radically different than older theories that viewed immigrants as economically motivated to permanently move to a new county, assimilate and become citizens of their new homes. Those older theories thought that their children and children’s children would be more American than each preceding generation. However, immigration was probably never as simple as this for any immigrant. As pointed out by Basch et. al., we have to recognize that immigration is not a dichotomy. Transnational migration theory encompasses the realities of the immigrants’ life in their home countries, including their reasons for migrating, the actual migration process, their incorporation into a new culture and the attendant changes to their identity and relationships to home. Thus, it can take what is useful from individual or structural approaches, including the historical perspective of world systems models, and weave these together into a working whole (Cordero-Guzman et al 2001: 22).

Static theories that prescribe behavior for first, second and third generations of immigrant families or that treat immigration as a dichotomous state fail to capture this nuanced experience. These earlier descriptions and theories were built to deal with what thought to be the experiences of European migration. Observers of the experience did not probe deeply enough to see the still active connections and the affects these had on immigrant acculturation. These connections were neglected and with them, so the
experience that is now more visible: transnationalism. The next chapter will deal with these issues of acculturation more fully, however, it is important to note that transnationalism is not just a perspective to better understand why people migrate. Its focus is on the whole experience of migration, including the processes of adaptation and identity formation and the ways in which ties to home nations constrain and shape these processes.

**Problems**

There are limits to these ideas. Social and cultural capital are not magic wands that will reveal all when waved. These forms of capital must be located within the specific contexts of individual use for them to be relevant. Capital of any kind is not equally allotted and thus we must be mindful of the specifics of each case to which we apply these ideas. Social networks are a great way to conceptualize the process of immigration because they can provide a visual image of the experience that is so often missing from other ideas. Such networks play a large role in transnational migration but they also suffer from the same types of problems that social capital does. We must beware of overgeneralizing these processes.

The self-perpetuation of migration also has its problems. Primarily, it can only last for so long. Networks will be saturated and the costs and risks of migration will not continue to fall. Eventually, labor shortages and the attendant rise in wages in the home community will decrease the need and desire for migration. However, all of these ideas are extremely useful in our understanding of why and how people migrate. We will now turn to a theory that attempts to pull together all of the ideas discussed in this section.

A note of caution is in order about transnational migration ideas. Transnational migration as a model is not a panacea. Because of its ability to synthesize a staggering
array of factors, it risks describing rather than explaining the complex phenomenon of international migration. Its basic premises make it almost anathema to try to predict immigration flows and their reasons. What the field needs is a working theory to help us do just that. Finally, because this model encompasses all stages of the migration process, from decisions to migrate, the actual movement of people and their acculturation once in a host country, it can be burdensome and confusing. This issue stems from the very basic conception of this model, that migration is one process that encompasses home and host into one social field. We must take care not to project post hoc conceptualizations of immigrant types and assimilation patterns onto reasons for migrating in the first place.

**Conclusion**

Our world has undergone massive changes in the past two hundred years. We have abolished slavery, begun and ended traditional colonial projects, industrialized, gone high-tech and post-modern. We have altered our footprint on the planet to such an extent that we threaten our own demise through environmental degradation. Our population is now six times as large as it was two hundred years ago. And anthropologists believe that there are no longer any people on earth who have not had contact with the outside (or Western) world. And immigration continues. The populations that continue to arrive on our doorstep come from some of the poorest places on earth. Their nations often lack the basic social amenities that we in the West take for granted. They are underdeveloped, often with predatory governments siphoning the revenues and very lifeblood of their countries into foreign bank accounts.

What this chapter has shown is that international migration is embedded in specific cultural and historical conditions and that is has changed over the past two hundred years in response to those conditions. Individuals have been responding to their social milieus
through every major wave of immigration. The factors that motivated them to migrate have changed over the decades and so too has the composition of immigrant flows to our nation. However, the major theories that were developed to explain these flows were created in the period of great industrialization in the West and reflect that period’s social, economic, political and demographic contexts. What we now need is a theory that can synthesize all the available explanations and is responsive to the different motives and experiences of immigrants arriving from all over the world and the larger social contexts that urge on these migrations.

Immigration theory has a tall task ahead of it. It must encompass different experiences and yet maintain its ability to predict and explain. This is a difficult task when there are so many different reasons for migration. Some immigration is a result of proximity, other the result of long colonial relationships between nations. Sometimes our businesses impoverish another nation’s citizens. We broadcast our television programs, advertisements, movies and dreams to countries around the world. They want what we can afford to have and since they cannot have it, they come here to find a better life and to buy into the American dream.

Others are seeking a way out from under the crushing poverty created by the spread of capitalism and which sentences them and their families to scandalously short life spans. Are they refugees or immigrants if they are fleeing this kind of poverty? Sometimes, we ask people to migrate, temporarily or permanently. Our industries need infusions of laborers willing to work for low wages subject to dismissal at the first downturn in the market. We want temporary sugar-cane cutters from the West Indies or
permanent immigrant nurses from the Philippines. Sometimes they yo-yo back and forth on their own, illegally, to improve their standard of living.

People use all of the resources at their disposals to make a living and lead a secure life. If that drives them to immigration, they active social networks and make use of the capital they are endowed with to get them to where they can make a living. What social scientists are striving to create out of these multifaceted experiences is a theory capable of accounting for all of these motivations. The most hopeful prospect for that job is transnational migration theory. This model draws from previous ones and weaves all of these strands together into one theory. If we can conceive of immigration as one single process, creating one social field in which immigrants live, irrespective of national boundaries, then maybe we are on our way to creating the theory we need.
CHAPTER 3
ACCULTURATION

Introduction

The post-1965 immigration is, in its diversity of race, class and national origins, very different from the earlier waves of immigrants discussed in Chapter 2. It has changed the face of American racial and ethnic systems and communities. In turn, these new Americans are also being changed as they insert themselves into different segments of American society. However, these segments of American society were created through historical processes that resulted in a dichotomous racial system that has a profound affect on immigrant adaptation. Immigrants are not just absorbed into a generic American culture. They are part of a process of unequal modes of incorporation that shuttle immigrants into certain segments of the American population depending on their color, ethnicity and other factors.

Over the course of nearly a century, social scientists have attempted to define and explain these processes of incorporation. Early theorizing was focused on immigrants, their children and grandchildren from the third great wave of immigration. As with immigration theory, theories about immigrant adaptation are historically contingent and lack some of the explanatory power necessary to deal with the diversity of the new immigration. The past decades have seen recognition of this inadequacy and the growth of other theories to account for the patterns of adaptation that researchers have observed. These newer theories have built on the work done by the early pioneers in assimilation studies and added their own understandings. Recent work has focused not only on the
processes and outcomes of adaptation, but also on the factors that impact that process, their interaction, and the affects of different types of adaptation on markers of success among immigrants such as economic mobility and educational achievement.

Acculturation is an important aspect of the immigration process and particularly so for immigrants of color. In order to fully understand the entire context in which Haitian immigrant and second-generation students make their identity choices, it is necessary to have an understanding of how they negotiate the process of adapting to life in America. In particular, the two factors I have posited as having the most affect on identity choices among the students in my study, educational and residential segregation, are intimately related to acculturation and adaptation.

This chapter will begin with an exploration of the literature that discusses the means by which immigrants adapt themselves to life in a new land. Different conceptions of immigrant adaptation, especially for the second-generation, have been proposed to account for the lived experiences of immigrant life. The chapter will then move on to a discussion of the factors that researchers have found to affect immigrant adaptation. These include demographic factors in the home and host countries, race, class, and whether or not immigrants are first or second-generation.

Most of the theories developed to account for immigrant adaptation have of necessity focused on the second or “1.5 generation,” those who were born outside the United States but moved here at a young age. The reason for this has been a recognition that many poor, first-generation immigrants do not seem to fully assimilate to American society, rather they accommodate, making what changes are necessary to get along and do the best they can. Thus, they still tend to have a foot in two countries, with their
memories and cultural practices acting as a filter on their new experiences (Alba and Nee 1997:849). The 1.5 or second-generation are the ones who will first encounter the opportunity to fully adapt. Therefore, the discussion in this chapter will be about the process of adaptation for these two generations. A note about terminology is in order. I have chosen to use the terms adapt or adaptation to refer to the generic ways in which immigrants become part of American culture and society. In the next section, I will introduce the terms assimilation and acculturation and their definitions. They are highly politicized words and carry a lot of theoretical weight. I will therefore continue to use adapt and adaptation when a generic term is needed.

**Modes of Adaptation**

The processes by which immigrants adapt themselves to our culture and society are not new. There are many similarities between the early and later waves of immigrants and this has affected the development and use of theories to account for adaptation. However, these similarities lead us to sometimes overlook the very ways in which these newcomers differ. Even the terminology we use is weighed down with assumptions, ideologies and meanings from its use in earlier attempts to understand a complicated process. Terms such as assimilation, Americanization, pluralism, amalgamation and acculturation carry implicit meanings of the times in which they were developed. As byproducts of the third, huge wave of immigration, they are meant to imply that immigrants should and will adapt in a process that is almost pre-ordained. It was a national goal to incorporate immigrants into our culture so that they would become more like us. Assimilation meant upward mobility, and a relatively straight line of adaptation over a set number of generations. Recent work has focused on resurrecting some of these terms for use in non-ideologically freighted ways. What is important for our purposes
here is that we not use these terms in a loose manner. We must be mindful of what we mean to imply by their use because we are using them to describe potentially new and different phenomena from what they were originally intended.

This wave of immigrants is therefore not only the subject of newly developed theories as to their origins, but their adaptation as well. It is therefore important to restate some of their salient characteristics before moving on to the theories. First and second-generation immigrants tend to live in urban areas and tend to be poorer than other Americans. The first-generation of this wave usually has lower educational and occupational levels. While this wave has a higher percentage of immigrants who are young, female and middle class than earlier waves, it also has a very large proportion that are desperately poor when evaluated using the American class system. While the poorest of the poor tend not to migrate at all, or not until later in the migration stream, those who do migrate are very impoverished, often arriving with little more than the labor they can perform. Upon arrival, they are faced with a variety of factors, both individual and structural, that affect their ability to adapt. While these factors will be discussed in the next section, it is important to note that most theories view these factors as central to the process of adaptation.

**Assimilation**

The classic view of immigrant adaptation is the assimilationist model. In this model, most associated with Park (1928; 1950) and later Gordon (1964), adaptation to the host culture is usually a linear, one-way process that inevitably leads to the loss of distinctive cultural markers and a growing similarity between immigrant and mainstream American culture. The assumption, which was ideologically driven by the social and political situation during the first half of the 20th century, was that immigrants should rid
themselves of their old customs and melt into mainstream culture. This process was seen as occurring over succeeding generations of integration in the occupational and social realms. All aspects of this process were seen as naturally ordained. In order for immigrants and their children to reap the benefits of American society, they must undergo this process. Any distinctively ethnic traits that remained would hinder the subject’s progress through this process. Thus, each successive generation would become more American in culture and habit.

This model has dominated the research into immigrant adaptation and colored nearly a century of thinking. Numerous theorists have deployed this theory without critically examining its original meanings. Recent reexaminations of this model have complicated the standard image of this model. As Kivisto points out, Park did not just buy into the mainstream idea that immigrants needed to adapt or else they would not succeed (Kivisto 2005:8). He saw changes in the labor market as altering the structural factors into which immigrants incorporate. As heterogeneity increased, individuality and skills became important factors in the job market. Thus, he saw the process of divorcing oneself from ethnic communities as beneficial to immigrants because of changing structural factors in the United States.

Park also discussed the issue of race and the difficulty for black Americans in assimilating into mainstream culture (1950). He felt that they could adopt cultural patterns but that structurally, they were shut out and therefore developed their own communities and cultures to afford them membership in social institutions and even economies. Alba and Nee rightfully point out that Park eventually problematized assimilation, coming to see it as a process of interpenetration between immigrant and
native cultures (1997:828). This is surprising given how much of the later literature wielded assimilation as a one way process by which immigrants gave up something in order to become more American with no mention of American culture accommodating these newcomers through a process of change on its own part.

While Park focused on the process of assimilation leading to less ethnic distinctiveness, Warner and Srole (1945) examined the influence of institutional factors such as class, race and ethnicity. They too believed that for non-phenotypically distinct immigrants, differences in social and economic mobility would diminish as successive generations assimilated (Warner and Srole 1945). However, they felt that racially distinct individuals were likely to be confined within racial boundaries and suffer from lack of access to economic and social mobility. Thus, Warner and Srole began the process of problematizing Park’s conception of assimilation. Their work is an early example of the ways in which group or individual factors interact with external structural factors such as racism.

The next large reworking of the assimilation model occurred with Gordon (1964) who presented a typology of assimilation in an attempt to show the complex nature of the process. His seven types include cultural and structural assimilation, the two most important to our discussion. Gordon felt that immigrants start adapting through cultural assimilation, or acculturation. This is the area most easily influenced by new ideas, foods, music and superficial inputs. However, acculturation does not necessarily lead to assimilation. In contrast, structural assimilation will lead to other stages of assimilating. He defined structural assimilation as incorporation into institutions and structures of the host society such as insertion into the job market or participation in political parties.
We can view Gordon’s model as a departure from the linear line of assimilation that preceded it. He complicated this line by allowing that immigrants can adapt to varying degrees along any of the seven paths and that this process can proceed unevenly. Gordon also seemed to be the first to recognize that immigrants can have different outcomes and affects on the host society through his melting pot and Anglo-conformity models. The former implies that immigrants will assimilate to mainstream culture and in doing so, mainstream culture will change in some way to accommodate them and thus create a new cultural and social form in the process. The latter implies that immigrants will shed their distinctive qualities and be absorbed wholesale into mainstream culture which will experience no changes as a result (Alba and Nee 1997:831)

These models of assimilation have been successful to varying degrees in explaining and predicting immigrant adaptation processes across the last century. They describe the third wave’s adaptation quite well. However, there are some problems with their explanatory power for both newer and older waves of immigration. Gans (1997) has pointed out that the earlier research into immigration and acculturation did not really pick up steam until nearly forty years after the beginning of massive inflow. This meant that those researchers were not studying first-generation immigrants; they were working with the second and third generations. This will skew any research that purports to find assimilation as the main mode of immigrant adaptation because first-generation immigrants tend not to do much assimilating. First-generation processes of adaptation revolve around accommodating the new cultural and social forms with which they must deal. So these earlier researchers were studying later generations that would tend to have
adopted many more mainstream characteristics than the first-generation (Gans 1997:884).

Even when the work was with first-generation immigrants, few researchers spoke the languages necessary for first hand accounts of immigrant adaptation. Thus, their children, the second-generation who had complicated feelings about their parents “greenhorn” ways, interpreted and possibly polished their parents responses. Another demographic factor also causes concern for the validity of the findings of broad assimilation. There was a halt to the widespread immigration that expanded these ethnic communities that were being studied. Thus, the extant ethnic communities were not being replenished by new immigrants from their home countries which could lead to a lessening of ethnic trait retention and the perception of large-scale assimilation.

While assimilation may still be the main process which explains immigrant adaptation, there are many contingencies that make it questionable if this theory is to be applied to today’s immigrants and their children. The assimilationist model is built around the idea that the longer immigrants and their descendants are in this country, the more American they will become. However, recent research has shown that for many poor immigrants, the longer they have been in the United States, the more they tend to assimilate downward. It seems that the disadvantages brought with the poor, first-generation are reproduced in their children rather than diminished (Zhou 1997:978). Another complicating factor for this theory is what Gans called the second-generation decline. Those second-generation individuals with less capital and poorer backgrounds have a hard time adapting and succeeding. Thus, instead of the second and third generations becoming more American and more successful, the second-generation of
many poor immigrant families is regressing and finding themselves in distress. A final complicating factor is that there are widely varying outcomes, across all immigrant groups, in the adaptation process. Assimilation does not seem able to explain this phenomenon.

These anomalies have made immigration researchers reevaluate assimilation as a useful model for understanding immigrant adaptation. However, assimilation does have its defenders. Gans, taking up where Gordon left off, sees these anomalies as bumps on the road to assimilation, much like the varying degrees of adaptation predicted in Gordon’s model (Zhou 1997:980). This has led to the “bumpy-line” model of assimilation, altering the old straight-line model that Gans helped make famous. Alba and Nee are also ardent defenders of assimilation. They defend its past successes and pass the anomalies off as adverse affects of structural changes which affect the speed of assimilation, not its direction or ultimate success (Alba and Nee 1997:981).

Another issue that has been taken up by more recent researchers is that these old models of assimilation assume that there is some core culture or society to which immigrants will assimilate. This static presentation of a generic culture at the heart of America is woefully inadequate to deal with the old or new realities of immigrant adaptation. In addition, these theories tend to ignore immigrant culture variability and its impact on adaptation. America is a complicated and diverse nation with subcultures of varying degrees of cohesiveness. The immigrants who arrive here are from a huge variety of nations and ethnic groups, each with their own identity. Is it not possible to create a model of immigrant adaptation that can account for this diversity? It is to one such attempt that we next turn.
Pluralism

By the 1960s and 1970s, a new spirit of social justice and ethnic revitalization was at the forefront of national discussions about race and ethnicity. In this context, the hegemonic aspects of assimilation put its use into disrepute. New attempts to account for the multi-cultural nature of American society arose to counter the static, linear and inevitable aspects of the assimilationist models. These approaches rejected the premise of a core culture and viewed America as a collection of ethnic and racial groups. As active agents in the process of acculturation, immigrants were viewed as helping to shape their own acculturation into various ethnic and racial groups. Their ethnic traits interact with those of all other groups and alter both themselves and others.

Pluralistic models attempted to account for the “unmeltable” and the persistence of ethnic traits and communities. Assimilation had no explanation for these occurrences. New researchers such as Glazer and Moynihan (1970) stepped into the breach. Their approach saw the persistence of ethnic groups as a valuable asset. If ethnic groups could be conceived of as interest groups that function to advance the interests of their members, then their persistence was obviously a sign that they were still needed and would continue to exist for as long as that was so (Kivisto 2005:16). Others attempting to explain the persistence of ethnicity viewed it as a primordial, deeply rooted phenomenon that would not give up the ghost easily. This approach borders on racist thinking that would ascribe characteristics such as intelligence to people based on the random fact that they are a certain skin color. Still others embraced an optionalist model which sought out the social, cultural and structural factors that created the context in which people either maintained or rid themselves of ethnic traits and attachments (Kivisto 2005:17).
Another conception of ethnic pluralism focuses on the factors that distinguish immigrant from native-born such as economic, political and cultural factors that separate these two broad groups. One concept envisions four stages through which immigrants seek upward mobility. The four stages are economic integration, reacting to host country discrimination by searching for an ethnic past, differentiating themselves from the host and other cultures, and finally achieving pluralism. Ethnic enclaves epitomize this group pluralism. This concept focuses on an ethnic group reaching parity with the host culture, not on individual equality (Faist 2000:255).

While the plural, multicultural models addressed the problems of static, core cultures groups, they did little more than provide a new ground-up perspective to the same questions and problems. These pluralist models lack an explanatory framework for explicitly showing how immigrants enter American cultures and why there should be such diverse results from this process of adaptation. The issue of the second-generation decline is not answered nor do these theories fully explore how people construct their own assimilation or acculturation processes. Ironically, another problem suffered by these theories is that they tend to treat ethnicity as a static concept when in reality it not only changes across generations, but for individuals over the course of a lifetime (Zhou 1997:987). Additionally, pluralist models have a hard time explaining the presence of ethnic traits in acculturated individuals. Nor do they explain the presence of assimilated individuals. Finally, scant mention is made of the fact that not all ethnic groups are equal in these conceptions of American society. Distinctive traits of ethnic retention can help or hinder depending on one’s location within a hierarchy of such groups. Yet there is
little focus on these hierarchies. The next model we turn to attempts to address these structural inequalities.

**Structural Models**

Structural models refute the assimilationist idea of a core society, much like the pluralists did. However, what they propose in its place is much more nuanced. Structural theories view American society as a stratified system of inequalities in which different categories of people have unequal access to mobility and resources. Immigrants are constrained in this system because the benefits are not evenly divided among all strata, thus, to which stratum they assimilate has a profound affect. Becoming American is therefore not a straightforward process of adaptation; rather, success depends on location within the hierarchy. In addition to making assimilation seem unlikely, structural models diminish the explanatory power of pluralist models. In this framework of inequality, there is likely to be interethnic conflict among immigrants themselves and with native-born minorities and working class whites because of limited access to resources.

This model does a good job of showing how becoming American can lead to different positions on the hierarchy. It factors in structural constraints such as the economy, systems of racial and ethnic meaning, and political constraints. It also takes into account that America is not one single, core culture, that it not only has multiple ethnic and racial groups, but that they are arrayed unequally across the resource spectrum as well. However, this model lacks explanatory power at the micro level. It is unable to account for the various outcomes of adaptation processes that are observed in the real world. We have gone through three models of varying explanatory power and levels of focus. The next model attempts to bridge all of the gaps in these models.
Segmented assimilation

The three models just discussed all approach the issue of immigrant adaptation from different angles. While each of these schools of thought contribute to an understanding of the research question, none do justice to the anomaly of different paths and outcomes to adaptation. Segmented assimilation arose as a means to fill that gap. It is a mesostructural approach, meaning it focuses on the level of analysis between broad structural and individual factors. This theory focuses on why these different patterns of adaptation occur and how they lead to the startlingly different outcomes we witness. It places the process of adaptation in the context of a structurally segregated and unequal society. Thus it problematizes the context into which immigrants adapt and provides for more than just a core American culture that the assimilationists provided. Its goal is to illuminate what determines into which segment of American society an immigrant assimilates. Furthermore, its similarity to Barth’s model of ethnic group incorporation gives it theoretical weight, for why should individual modes of incorporation vary greatly from the modes through which groups become incorporated (1998: 33).

Segmented assimilation, as a model of differential incorporation, posits three paths that immigrants can take to adaptation. The first is upward mobility into the generic middle class American culture, thus accounting for assimilationist observations of this pattern. The second path leads to downward mobility through assimilation into the underclass, thus accounting for the structural approach. The third path leads to acculturation into the American middle class but with strong retention of ethnic culture and values and connections to that community, thus accounting for the pluralists. This last path has also been termed selective assimilation or selective acculturation to better
highlight its distinctive aspect of immigrant choice and agency in directing how and to what degree immigrants will adapt.

What determines the path second-generation immigrants follow are individual and structural factors that are seen as acting in concert with one another. Factors such as class, race, age on arrival and a host of other traits all interact to produce a variety of options for immigrants. Thus, segmented assimilation recognizes the various contingencies that affect acculturation and has increased explanatory power over the earlier models. In particular, one of the most intransigent issues, the negative outcomes of some second-generation immigrants, is explained by segmented assimilation.

Structural changes in the economy and welfare law revisions have enabled poverty to become entrenched in many American cities. As a result, many American minority youth have given up on trying to succeed, shunning school, middle class jobs and legal forms of making a living and adopting adversarial attitudes towards mainstream America and its institutions. Poor immigrants and their families settle in neighborhoods and send their children to schools where these adversarial subcultures are common. Thus, immigrant children are exposed to these subcultures with some frequency. These subcultural identities become part of the cultural landscape of immigrant children’s lives and are seen as attractive identities once immigrant children recognize the structural barriers to their success. The poor immigrant is faced with a choice between maintaining an ethnic identity and being ostracized and physically harmed at school or adopting this subculture’s identity and losing hope of future success. Even when immigrant children maintain their immigrant identity, they have less chance at success because of the low levels of all forms of capital in their family. These identity choices that second-
generation children make are thus rooted in the larger structural contexts of which they find themselves a part (Foner 2001:15). The focus on identity is one of the strongest aspects of this model.

Segmented assimilation is still quite new and so its criticisms stem from not having a lot of empirical tests of the theory. DeWind and Kasinitz (1997) question whether the preservation of home country cultures actually improves the second-generation’s chances of success or whether it is just that parents think it does. Are there as yet unseen costs of encouraging immigrant children to maintain their native cultures and discouraging them from fully assimilating to some form of American culture? Will ethnic communities outlive their usefulness as protective and resource rich sites in which to raise the next generation? Will ethnic retention as a strategy be a one-generation phenomenon?

What about those children who take the downward path to assimilate into an adversarial subculture? DeWind and Kasinitz again present questions about whether this pessimistic projection will hold true. The discrimination second-generation and native-born minorities encounter is not insurmountable, they argue. Since race shifts, it is possible that black immigrants will one-day benefit from the tendency of white America to claim as its own any group works hard to succeed (DeWind and Kasinitz 1997:1099-1101). While there are some problems with this theory, we should not lose focus of its benefits. By incorporating the affects of internal and external variables into the process of adaptation, in essence merging the older theories, it presents the best model so far. One of these factors, transnational ties and resources, is also a new model which attempts to explain adaptation patterns.
Transnationalism

Transnational migration, as discussed in Chapter 2, is a newer theory and not only attempts to explain why people immigrate, but also presents a broad model of their lives and adaptive processes once in the host country. The transnational model of immigrant adaptation is takes into account that both host and immigrant factors influence the adaptation process. It recognizes that immigrants who create and maintain transnational social ties do not necessarily live with a foot in two worlds so much as creating one larger social space from home and host cultures. Thus, immigrants continue to be embedded in their home cultures and networks while adapting to varying degrees to their host countries.

The extent to which this process of transnationalism is possible for the second-generation depends on how embedded they, the first-generation and their ethnic communities are in transnational spheres. Since segmented assimilation theory predicts that in certain circumstances, maintenance of ethnic identity can lead to positive adaptation outcomes, these transnational practices should help second-generation immigrants (Kivisto 2005:23). These transnational communities are also responsive to the structural barriers that can be present in a host country by providing avenues of upward mobility and means of coping that might be foreclosed in mainstream society. This model not only builds on structural and segmented ideas of adaptation, it also greatly complicates the assimilationist idea of immigrants leaving their home country and ridding themselves of ethnic traits in order to become successful Americans. Instead, it allows for immigrants to be assimilated to institutions in the host nation while still maintaining their ethnic identities and relationships to home. Immigrants can be assimilated in both places, voting at home and in the host nation, being economically
active in both and acculturating in the United States while never relinquishing their ethnic identity or practices from home (Faist 2000:257-258).

Faist has predicted three paths for immigrants to take once in the host nation based on their level of transnational ties. He posits that they can melt into the core nation shortly after arrival when the need for transnational resources and ties is no longer strongly felt. This is the path most like earlier assimilationist models. His second path leads to pluralism. This path envisions strong social ties and networks among immigrants in the host nation from the same country. This theory does not preclude transnational ties, but it does minimize their importance. The third path leads to transnational circuits as webs of connection develop and help circulate goods, people and ideas. From this path, people at any point on the web could choose to assimilate, become part of a plural group or maintain their embeddedness in the transnational circuit (Faist 2000:258).

Regardless of the specific operationalization of transnationalism, it is an important model in helping us understand and examine adaptation. Because transnationalism posits that immigrants are embedded in one large social sphere encompassing old and new nations, it posits that factors from both ends individually and interaction with one another, impact the adaptation process (Charles 1992:101). In addition, transnationalism is cumulative. The more these transnational practices become embedded, the more they become the normative path of adaptation. Finally, its ability, like the segmented model, to focus on the role of identity adds a new path to understanding immigrant adaptation.

Identity

The last two models of immigrant adaptation have incorporated a focus on the identity choices of second-generation youth and the affects these choices have on adaptation outcomes. Identities are fluid and adaptive to circumstances so it is important
to understand that we are not dealing with static self-conceptions but rather tools that second-generation youth can utilize to affect their adaptation. Earlier research by Ogbu (1991) posited that immigrants had better academic orientations than native-born minorities, but more recent work, particularly that of Portes and Zhou (1993) has shown that this in fact depends on race and place of residence. Thus, identity is highly responsive to situational constraints and factors. This section will deal with identity in the process of assimilation. A more detailed discussion of identity and identity formation is provided in chapter 8.

Research into Afro-Caribbean immigrants has given us a better understanding of how first-generation adults utilize identity to their benefit (Foner 1987b, Waters 1994 & 1990, Woldemikael 1989, and Zephir 1996). Once in the host country long enough to recognize the barriers and constraints of having dark skin, these immigrants develop mechanisms to minimize the negative aspects of being associated with African-Americans. They grow to understand the limited opportunities for upward mobility afforded to African-Americans and find a way to reconcile this with their own aspirations. They use what has been variously termed selective, instrumental or optional identity to mitigate the affects of racial discrimination.

They attempt to distinguish themselves in whatever ways are possible from African-Americans, particularly in situations with whites. They play up their accents or talk about their home nations in order to indicate to those listening that they are not just African-Americans; they are Trinidadians, Barbadians, Bahamians or any other ethnic identity. The extent to which they identify themselves as such in their private lives is of
little consequence to them when the reality they face is that being something other than a black American helps them achieve their goals.

Another identity-based line of inquiry into adaptation has focused on the outcomes of second-generation immigrants achieved by selectively interacting with identity choices. Additive and subtractive acculturation has been used fruitfully to explain a contradiction that emerged in the field of second-generational educational processes and outcomes. Researchers, notably Gibson (1995), observed that second-generation students who retained strong ethnic identities were doing well in school. The old assimilationist models of adaptation would have predicted that students with strong ethnic identities and ties would have had problems achieving positive academic outcomes. What was fueling this contradiction?

The answer lay with the parents of these second-generation children. They wanted their children to “acquire competence in the dominant culture but not at the expense of their [native] identity (Gibson 1995:10). Gibson termed this parental strategy accommodation and acculturation without assimilation, with the parents accommodating the necessary American cultural traits and their children acculturating them. Many successful second-generation students do well because they do not give up their ethnic identity and cultures, rather, they selectively acquire the knowledge of their host nation in order to be successful, thus supplementing or adding to their own native cultures. This is called additive acculturation. This additive process enlarges the skill sets and cultural repertoires of the children who practice it.

The process is not often as easy as it seems because school practices often tend toward the subtractive, requiring students to replace their foreign practices and
knowledge with American ones. This stems from the role of schools early in the last century as socializing agents for millions of children of immigrants. It was believed that in order for our culture to incorporate and not be over-run with all of these immigrant children, they had to be made American. We still do not challenge this subtext of immigrant public school education. This can cause problems for immigrant students. As Gibson notes, those who feel pressured to choose between immigrant and American cultures, from peers or teachers, have more difficulty in school and are more likely to drop out than those who use an additive process (1995:10-12). There are obvious implications for students of color as well. Those forced to listen to overt or covert denigrations of their home cultures will be put in a situation where they feel they have to abandon those cultures in order to succeed. This can fuel resentment and even create some of the adversarial attitudes towards school mentioned earlier.

This process of additively acculturating certain aspects of the host culture leads to one final process of identity utilization that is similar to the situational identity discussed above. Code-switching is a term taken from linguistics where its meaning refers to alternating between two or more dialects or languages in conversation. It is a fairly common practice among second and third generation immigrants, particularly when talking to their parents or other first-generation members of their ethnic communities. It crept into use in cultural realms through its ability to help ethnic communities maintain their identity by allowing younger generations the ability to retain some ethnic linguistic traits while additively acculturating American ones.

The usage to which I am putting it is even less linked to language. Cultural code-switching implies not just competence in two or more languages, but in two or more
cultures. Second-generation immigrants who additively acculturate retain old cultural traits while adopting new ones which will allow them to function successfully in their host’s culture. The deployment of these alternate identities at propitious times is in essence instrumentally using one’s identity. But it goes beyond instrumental identity because it specifically posits a competency in two or more cultures whereas instrumental identity use does not require that the immigrant have more than the positive ethnic identity they are deploying.

When and where these identity uses and strategies are deployed is highly variable. It depends on what identities native citizens associate with success or positive attributes. It also depends on the structures of inequality that exist in the host society. Their deployment is also dependent on where they live, school and work. As Gans points out, ethnic identification tends to be stronger when immigrants live among non-immigrants or with immigrants from other cultures (1997:883). For those immigrants living among their own ethnic cohorts, they need never think of their ethnicity because it suffuses all actions and interactions and its meaning and import are shared by all. Thus, identity choices, like all other aspects of immigrant adaptation are responsive to a host of factors which constrain their uses and meanings.

**Factors that Affect Acculturation**

Not all second-generation immigrants adapt to American culture and life in such a way that they are educational and economic successes. Why this outcome, which contradicts assimilation theory, should be so is a complicated process. Immigrants are impacted by a number of factors. It has been shown that not only do the cultures that immigrants bring with them limit their choices and affect adaptation outcomes, so too do factors in the receiving country. However, one of the most fruitful areas of research has
been on the interaction between structural factors in the host nation and individual factors stemming from the immigrants themselves. This section will explore these factors and examine how they work alone and together to impact adaptation and its outcomes. Since the focus of this research is on second-generation, we will focus primarily on the variables that impact their adaptation. However, what the first-generation does and what capital and resources it has at its command profoundly affects the adaptation process for the second-generation and will be discussed as well (Portes and Rumbaut 1996:40).

Immigrating to and growing up in America is a difficult process whose outcome depends on the resources and knowledge that immigrants and their families bring from home. This process can vary from smooth assimilation to turbulent adversarial adaptations. As noted above, this wave of immigrants and their children is more economically diverse than prior waves. In addition, it contains larger numbers and proportions of educated and middle class individuals and more woman than ever before. These individual attributes are involved in the adaptation process and work in concert with host nation variables.

The immigration process, of necessity, starts before anyone ever leaves his or her homeland. As noted in Chapter 2, potential immigrants are bombarded with knowledge of their potential new home. This prior knowledge can be invaluable to immigrants once they arrive in the United States. Depending on the age of the migration stream from the home country, these potential immigrants might also have broad social and familial networks in the host country which can provide them with a temporary place to stay, leads on potential jobs and even help with the process of adapting to a new life.
Once here, immigrants must decide where to settle. This decision is often constrained by financial factors and the presence or absence of other immigrants from the same community or nation. Because so many of this wave’s immigrants are quite poor, they tend to end up geographically concentrated in inner-city and urban areas that exhibit high rates of poverty, crime and large minority populations. Immigration today is still primarily an urban phenomenon because so many entry-level, labor intensive jobs are found in urban areas, as well as the presence of ethnic enclaves and immigrant networks found in cities (Portes and Rumbaut 1996:42). While many immigrant parents might not want to live in these areas, circumstances all but force them to find housing and schooling for their children in these neighborhoods.

Finding employment for first-generation immigrants who lack skills and education usually means working in the unskilled or low skill sector of the economy. Service jobs are more plentiful than manufacturing jobs once were. Since many immigrants settle in regions with growing populations, many are able to find work in home and business construction, a similarity with earlier waves of immigrants. These jobs have low wages, minimal benefits, if any at all, and little job security. They often are not enough to support a family and therefore two adult wage earners are needed in a household.

The knowledge that first-generation immigrants have about America, prior to immigration, is supplemented by what they can glean from their experiences in the world of work and consumerism. They must buy groceries, clothes, school supplies and other items for their families. They are often confronted by bewildering processes and regulations for immigration, education, driver’s licenses and other required forms. Many are not fluent in English and have great difficulty whenever they leave home or
community. The presence of a large ethnic community can have negative affects on the acquisition of English. Living the majority of their non-work hours surrounded by ethnic compatriots, they have little opportunity to acquire a new language.

Thus, many first-generation immigrants are struggling to make sense of a new culture and make a living to support themselves and their families. The social and cultural difference between their homeland and the host culture can present a bewildering and often insurmountable impediment to their adaptation. Those whose cultures are very different from the host society culture will experience the most difficulty in this transition. Into this context we add children who were either born in the home nation or in the United States. The backgrounds of their parents and their parent’s social capital and skill sets profoundly affect the second-generation’s options for adaptation. Their parent’s poverty and low educational levels mean that they often lack the social, financial and educational capital to understand the opportunity structure here in the United States. Unfamiliar with American education, parents are often bewildered by their children’s schooling. Lacking English, they are unable to help with homework or advocate for their children with teachers and administrators.

Children, for their part, are thrust into an educational system without their parents being able to make sense of the system. Growing up in a home where the culture dictates that you do not question elders or authority figures often predisposes second-generation children to docile behaviors in American classrooms. Teachers misinterpret the different cultural patterns of immigrant children as inattention or disabilities. Second-generation students not yet competent in English are often pressured to relinquish their native tongues in favor of English with no clear benefit evident to them or their families. A
poor understanding of the language and insufficient resources frequently hamper English language learner (ELL) students. These issues can lead to immigrant children having negative attitudes towards schooling.

Children also interact with an array of peers and social groups that exert pressures of their own on children’s choices, particularly on the identities they are trying to forge for themselves. Children often spend nearly as much time at school and school activities as they do at home and with their families. Thus, the cultures and situations they encounter there can profoundly affect their behaviors and identities. Their immigrant parents, confronted with these situations, try to exert their own pressures to conform to native culture and behavior, insisting on education and family first. However, children are often subjected to ridicule and even physical intimidation from their peers for maintaining their immigrant identities. They are faced with hard choices about identity and actions and may bend to these pressures, negatively affecting their futures.

Earlier immigrants in a migration stream tend to be better off educationally and economically. They often times are leaving their nations because of a lack of opportunity to use the skills they have acquired through education. Sometimes they leave because of unfavorable political regimes. These immigrants are typically better received than the later, poorer ones by virtue of their needed skills and a perception that they can better take care of themselves, in effect, not becoming a burden on social services. Thus, immigrants from earlier waves are more likely to have the resources to help their children adapt. The age at which a child immigrated and their length of stay in the United States can also affect their adaptation process. In general, it was believed that the younger the child was at immigration and the longer they were in the country the more likely they
would be to grow up learning American culture. This belief has come under fire from recent research that shows the negative linguistic, social and health outcomes of second-generation children of poor families, particularly those living in neighborhoods that are segregated by race and class (Rumbaut 1994:155-191).

In addition, individuals and families arriving after large waves of immigration, when the host nation and its citizens are suffering immigration exhaustion, can have a negative impact. The later immigrants tend to be poorer and more in need of help and their arrival at a time when the nation feels it is being overrun by immigrants will turn opinion against them. Moreover, their lower skill levels and social capital and networks make it unlikely that they will be able to muster a counter-message to that nativism or to positively impact their children’s identity choices.

Those immigrants who migrated earlier or who have a higher class and educational status can live in wealthier neighborhoods in the host country and are able to use their rich endowments of capital to participate more fully in their children’s educational and social lives. Gibson (1991) noted that Sikh parents who had better educational backgrounds and a greater ability to choose where to live and school their children were able to use a strategy of additive acculturation to counter some of the negative issues that arose from schooling their immigrant children (Gibson 1995:10-12). Many wealthier immigrants are rich in forms of capital that allow them to diminish the disconnect between home and school cultures. Furthermore, families with more resources are less likely to end up in inner cities where their children will be exposed to adversarial attitudes to school and mainstream American institutions. Their endowments of all forms of capital expand the circles within which they and their children move and thus provide
more identities from which their children can choose. For wealthier immigrants, the presence or absence of co-ethnic communities is of less consequence since their forms of capital, built in their home nations, are more easily transferable to the new nation and to their own children.

Another set of recently recognized factors deals with transnational practices among the first-generation. These transnational ties and resource networks, often activated through ethnic communities, can complicate the adaptation of the second-generation through the continuing pull of ethnic ties and obligations (Portes and Rumbaut 1996:42). Other types of social networks and community capital are invaluable to poorer immigrants. The ability to network and activate resources that can inform and advocate for immigrants and their children is important to poor families. Ethnic enclaves are just one form of this community capital and networking and can provide jobs and information to their members. Some of the advantages of enclaves are their economic and political connections, their preservation of cultures and lifestyles, their ability to help regulate the pace of acculturation, their built in social controls, their access to a larger community for economic and moral support, and their access to capital, markets and labor (Portes and Rumbaut 1996:54).

While it might appear that these advantages would only be useful to poorer immigrants and that those with more resources would not need or want to live in enclaves, that is not always the case. Some wealthier immigrants are associated with enclaves because they are from earlier immigration streams and helped to create the enclaves in the first place. Others are associated with enclaves because the services or goods they provide are of an ethnic nature. Still others seek to utilize the labor networks
of ethnic enclaves to staff their companies. These resource rich immigrants often have patron-client relationships with poorer immigrants, helping them acquire a car, a job or even a slot at a prestigious school. Thus, it is a two way street in which poorer, first-generation immigrants trade their low status, low wage jobs for resources that will ultimately pay off for their children and grand children.

Arrayed against all of the resources that immigrants can make use of from their own backgrounds and those of their ethnic peers, is the context into which immigrants arrive. Politics plays a large role not only in allowing immigration but also in creating the context into which new immigrants arrive and adapt. Government policy shapes not only who gets in, but also the stance that Americans take towards those immigrants. When the political attitude towards immigration is negative, immigrants will find the average American’s response to their presence will also be negative. Furthermore, they might find that resources such as welfare or unemployment benefits are no longer available to them because of political choices made to slow the flow of immigration and counter the perception that immigrants are using American resources unfairly. This negative context of reception can sometimes make it much more difficult for new immigrants to find work and also for their children to find some space within which to try to learn a new language and become American students.

Furthermore, the economic opportunities available to immigrants have a large impact on their adaptation. Large-scale changes in the economy that have occurred in the last half of the twentieth century, namely, that many low-skill, labor-intensive jobs in manufacturing have been eliminated or outsourced impact first-generation immigrants. The jobs that are left are even less stable and provide less opportunities for upward social
and economic mobility. This impacts their ability to find work or for their children to work their way up the economic ladder to successful jobs in the middle class. Good manufacturing jobs, once a path up and out of poverty for immigrants through good wages have largely vanished.

Another factor that plays a role in immigrant adaptation and outcomes is the presence and quality of co-ethnic communities. Where an immigrant settles will impact whether or not they have an ethnic community to join and help them. Each of these communities, small or large, has different levels of social networks and capital available to their members. How integrated an immigrant is within that community can also make a difference for them. Factors external to these ethnic communities can impact its size and quality. Negative social attitudes about immigrants in general or about one group of immigrants in particular can create tight knit ethnic communities. However, these negative attitudes can also force these communities to be circumspect in their existence and aid of their members out of fear of provoking nativist responses. Thus, interactions between internal factors such as the presence of an ethnic community and external factors such as negative attitudes towards immigrants impact their reception.

Race and class are two other factors that frequently act in concert with one another to shape immigrant adaptation. Race and class are complex systems of meaning and opportunity that change over time and are culturally contingent. Thus, not only are they temporally dynamic, they are socially dynamic as well. As immigrants from different racial backgrounds and class systems enter our society, they also alter it. The growing numbers of immigrants of African descent increase the population of those deemed black.
Their behaviors and attitudes affect the way they are integrated into our economy and social system.

Much has been made in recent research over the fact that earlier immigrant waves, while white in our present racial system, were not in fact seen as such when they arrived. Irish immigrants were often compared to black Americans and immigrants from southern Europe were seen as descending from different racial stock (Alba and Nee 1997:845). Jews were also treated as a separate race from whites. All of these “non-white” groups were treated in discriminatory ways that locked them out of many of the benefits and resources available to those seen as white. This would seem to negate the present argument that this newest wave of immigrants faces race-based challenges not encountered by earlier waves of immigrants. While appearing logical on its surface, this line of thinking ignores much of the literature on race, which delves deeper into racial boundaries and conceptions than most immigration research. The primary racial divide in this country since slavery has been between black and white. All other racial boundary drawing must be seen within this prism.

Old white ethnic immigrants achieved “whiteness” by their successes and by purposely distinguishing themselves from African-Americans. This applies to many of today’s lighter skinned immigrants. There is ample evidence in the literature on immigrant assimilation to show that white mainstream America has been willing to claim as their own or at least recognize as not black, any supposed racial group that is light skinned and successful. Asian students, Jews, Persians and light skinned North Africans have been whitened to a degree that those with noticeable African ancestry have not. Even to a lesser degree, Afro-Caribbean immigrants are able to achieve this whitening
through their achievements and a purposeful deployment of their ethnic identity. Thus, they are repeating the steps earlier white ethnics used to become white: distinguishing themselves from African-Americans and being successful (Perlmann and Waldinger 1997:903). Maybe the best way to describe these groups is not as white, but rather, as not black. So the crucial binary racial system will still be black versus something else, but instead of that something else being simply “white,” it will include all other groups that are not black. Thus, the binary equation shifts from black or white to black or not black.

What is relevant to our understanding of second-generation immigrant adaptation is that different conceptions of race inform their choice of identity and that these conceptions are rooted in the meanings of racial classification in the home and host society (Zhou 1997:102). In the United States, our racial constructs and their meanings help to organize people and the relationships between individuals and groups. These constructs allot social privileges and are part of our system of stratification. However, immigrants bring with them their native understandings of race that can conflict with racial classification in the United States.

Immigrants exhibit diverse racial phenotypes. Their home nation’s demographics, economy and history all work to shape the meaning of specific colors. Immigrants from majority-black nations will have wildly different conceptions of what their color means than American racial constructs dictate. Afro-Caribbean immigrants, in particular, come from systems where there is shadism (social distinctions made on the basis of color shades and physical attributes), but they typically do not experience the kind of pervasive racial discrimination exhibited in the United States. Furthermore, these nations also exhibit very fluid conceptions of race so that they have racial mobility. In effect, money
whitens. Coming to the United States from such a nation is a jarring experience for people used to being in the majority and to seeing people who resemble themselves in positions of great power and responsibility.

These home notions of race also impact relations between Afro-Caribbean immigrants and native-born blacks. Immigrants coming from countries with colonial and slave histories take great pride in self-governance and determination. Lacking a full understanding of the dynamics of race and race history in this country, they make assumptions as to the abilities and attitudes of native-born blacks. They assume that African-Americans are lazy or lack aspirations since so many of them are populating the inner cities where immigrants typically find themselves upon arrival. But for many immigrants, these inner cities are short stops on their journey to middle class success. When they see other black immigrants or themselves moving up and out of this debilitating poverty, they assume that it is possible to improve your lot in the United States, regardless of your color. What they overlook is a nuanced understanding of the cultural adaptations and self-preservation strategies that have been adopted over centuries of servitude and discrimination. They also tend to overlook the fact that there is one major difference between themselves and native-born blacks. That difference is their status as an immigrant or ethnic. Those who have successfully achieved mobility have probably deployed that immigrant identity to their benefit, thus utilizing the very system of bias that they claim is fungible!

In terms of the affect of race on immigrant adaptation, particularly the second-generation, it must be noted that the system and meaning of racial categories in this country must be learned in order to be overcome. Thus, for immigrants of different racial
backgrounds to be assimilated, they must redefine and adjust their understanding of the meanings of color to be in line with the meanings attached to color in their host nation. They do not have to take on the negative perceptions associated with blackness in the United States, but they must understand them enough to manipulate them to their benefit. This is a highly advanced skill for immigrants to learn and unfortunately, for many of the second-generation, it is never acquired.

Children, who are not yet mature enough to fully understand or play with identity in the way that older or more sophisticated immigrants can, are at a disadvantage. Because many second-generation children are living in poor neighborhoods with parents who lack the social capital to move them elsewhere, they spend large amounts of time with native-born minorities. As stated above, they are subject to great pressure to alter their identities to better fit in with their peers. The identities available to them are their own ethnic identity and those of their poor, minority peers. For many second-generation immigrants, mainstream white culture is something seen on television sitcoms and commercials, not something that is operationalized by actual live people in their environments.

The pressure to adopt negative identities at early ages all but rules out their ability to acquire other identity choices and thus prevents them from, later on, deploying more positively valued identities to manipulate the racial system to their benefit. This does not altogether rule out later identity changes or successful adaptation processes, but it does make it more difficult. It also shows that Gordon’s (1964) distinction between acculturation and assimilation is a useful one. He posited that black Americans have acculturated enough to be conversant with mainstream ideas and values while still
maintaining their own cultural identities that allows them to code-switch. But, in his conception of the problem, native-born minorities are not assimilated to mainstream cultures and institutions. Black immigrants, particularly the second-generation, might repeat this process of acculturation without assimilation.

The affects of living in poor neighborhoods and attending poor schools points out the relevance of class in coming to terms with the differential adaptation of second-generation minority immigrants. In fact, class and economic capital can be seen as a determining factor in the problems associated with race. It is the socioeconomic status of immigrant families that helps to determine where they live and where their children attend school. It is there that color and the cultural responses to color discrimination in particular, come into play. Class also impacts all children’s academic performance. Children do better at school when their classmates are better off. Class also directly impacts other aspects of their lives. Children from middle class families benefit from financial security, good schools, safe living conditions, good health and the organizations and institutions at their disposal. Poor children grow up in poor neighborhoods, go to under-funded schools, are subjected to more violence than their better off peers, encounter drugs and gangs and overall lack the social support and networks of their wealthier peers.

In addition, job prospects and other factors associated with the changing economic conditions in this country do not affect all immigrants evenly because immigrants and their families are endowed with different amounts of social capital. The old economy, with all of its jobs, allowed for full economic assimilation to occur over three to four generations as the children and grandchildren of immigrants took better and better jobs
based on their new educational success. Today’s immigrant children have a much bleaker economic outlook. Because of limited job opportunities and the segmented paths to downward mobility that some second-generation immigrants take, they have one or two generations to try to move up the mobility ladder. And to make it worse, that ladder is missing some rungs in the middle (Perlmann and Waldinger 1997:910). Thus, immigrant families with more capital and access to resources will have a better shot at economic integration in a shorter time span than others with meager resources.

The interaction of class and racial systems from home and host is a highly variable process that can result in diverse outcomes for second-generation immigrants. Color will affect immigrant children no matter where they live, but when they have the added benefits of being middle class, that mitigates some of the impact of discriminatory behavior by others. But with poor immigrants, it just adds another layer of difficulty in their quest to succeed. Thus they are hit doubly hard. They are not only poor, but they are black. And depending on whom they are talking to, they are also disadvantaged by being foreign. Those who lack the social capital to turn their foreignness into a positive by distancing themselves from African-Americans will suffer more. Middle class immigrants have an advantage; while they are black and foreign, their foreignness helps to erase some of their blackness because they know how to use it to their advantage.

**Conclusion**

The pathway to immigrant adaptation is not easily described or predicted. The various theories developed to explain this process have attempted to fill in gaps in earlier conceptualizations. Assimilationist, pluralist and structuralist theories all suffered some inability to explain the lived experiences of today’s immigrants and the second-generation. The most recent theoretical model, segmented assimilation, is a mixture of
old and new ideas. It does not abandon assimilation; rather it understands that for
immigrants, the pathway to possible assimilation is fraught with wrong turns and dead
ends. What this theory does is complicate the process. It recognizes that both immigrant
and host communities are diverse, culturally plural entities. Immigrants bring with them
capital and skill sets that can, in conjunction with factors in the host society, help or
hinder immigrant adaptation. Social class and race in both communities are driving
structural factors that not only divide these groups, but also constrain the adaptation
choices available for the immigrant second-generation. While retaining assimilation as
the larger theoretical model for adaptation, segmented assimilation accounts for the
staggering array of contingencies that act upon that process to produce the various
outcomes researchers observe in real life.
CHAPTER 4
IMMIGRATION: THE HAITIAN CASE

Introduction

There are 420,000 foreign–born Haitians in the United States (United States Census Bureau 2006). However, ascertaining the true number of all Haitians, including the second, third or fourth generation is more difficult. There were 548,199 people who claimed Haitian ancestry in the country in 2000 (United States Census Bureau 2006). Unfortunately, it is not as simple as just subtracting the foreign–born from those who claim ancestry to derive a number for the second-generation. Therefore, we must rely on estimates from other organizations. The Haiti Program at Trinity College placed the number of people of Haitian descent, including the foreign–born, at 2,023,000 (2003). They number the American-born of Haitian descent as 1,225,023. The other 800,000 are here as residents or naturalized citizens and were born in Haiti.

Some of those 800,000 immigrants are undoubtedly here without legal paperwork and the Haiti Program places that population in the range of 200,000–400,000. If this undocumented population estimate is subtracted, you end up with a range that is inclusive of the census estimate for foreign–born Haitians. These numbers are astounding; they nearly quadruple the census estimate of all individuals who claim Haitian ancestry, foreign and American born! To put these numbers into some perspective, Haiti ranked fourth in the number of foreign–born from the Caribbean living in the United States (behind Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Jamaica) but was second only to Jamaica.
when comparing the ancestry of citizens from the Caribbean (United States Census Bureau 2006).

In comparison with other countries in the Caribbean, Haiti is the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere, has the most rural population, and is the most densely populated. On average, its citizens live on less than five dollars a day (CIA 2006). It also happens to be the only country in the region that was created by a successful slave rebellion; it was the first black republic in the Western Hemisphere. Although the country is still overwhelmingly rural, urbanization has increased as the impact of environmental degradation on agricultural productivity has forced peasants to migrate to Port–au–Prince and even overseas. Haiti's peasants have traditionally relied on their extended families and cooperative labor to take care of each other, but by the late 1980s, this pattern was disappearing after decades of political violence and economic downturns. Worsening economic conditions forced poor peasants to find new ways to make a living from the land, or to migrate to urban slums. A small and shifting, but politically significant, black middle class had emerged wedged between the traditional, mostly mulatto, elite and the poorer and darker peasantry.

By the late 1980s, moderate migration and cultural penetration into the rural and remote regions of Haiti had created new kinds of knowledge of and relationships with foreign cultures. While still horribly degraded, the transportation and communication infrastructure had been somewhat improved and radio and even the Internet created new knowledge bases. As more people migrated, transnational networks of ideas, people and goods traveled a two–way path between Haiti and host nations. Transnational social
spheres were built encompassing home and host nations, allowing for further cultural exchange.

The social relationships of present day Haiti are heavily steeped in the past. A legacy of slavery, colonization and isolation has created deep social divisions that have been hard to bridge. The mulatto elite have typically identified with French culture, cherishing the language and manners that set them apart from the darker, poorer masses who they wished to rule. Former slaves created a peasant culture that took pride in their distinctive Haitian culture, their African roots, and ties to the land. The rural, mostly darker skinned peasantry wished to have a say in governance and finance. This divide has created deep animosities on both sides and helped in part to create an ungovernable nation. The recent rise of a Haitian middle class has done little to reduce these tensions and only seems to have added a layer to the complex arguments over which group was the real bearer of true Haitian identity.

All of these factors contribute to the migration of Haitians to the United States. Our country provides an irresistible lure to many poor and not so poor potential migrants who know of our nation and often have family and friends already living here. How they came to be here is the focus of this chapter that explores Haiti’s past and present in order to present the factors that drive Haitians to migrate, including a brief history of Haiti. This chapter will also place the experience of Haitian migration within the larger context of the immigration theories discussed in Chapter 2. This discussion will set the stage for Chapter 5, where we will discuss the ways in which Haitians adapt to America.

**Haiti Past and Present**

Haitian history is tragic. This tiny portion of an island has survived slavery, colonization, multiple rebellions, and natural and political disasters in the more than 500
years since Columbus first laid eyes upon it. In 1492, when Columbus landed upon the island of Hispaniola, it was occupied by Arawak Amerindians. Within 25 years, the Arawak were nearly obliterated by Spanish settlers. Through overwork, disease and cruelty, the Amerindians either perished or fled.

French explorers settled on the western third of the island and eventually Spain ceded that part to them in 1697. The French settled the colony, christened it Saint–Domingue, and focused on coffee and sugar production. This proved to be a very lucrative choice. Less than 100 years after gaining control from the Spanish, the tiny colony was producing nearly half of the sugar that was imported into Britain and France and 60 percent of the world’s coffee. Its wealth at the time was estimated to be greater than that of the United States and greater than all of the other West Indian colonies combined (Haggerty 1989).

To staff the plantations, the colonists turned to African slaves, as the Spanish had decimated the indigenous population in the first half–century after its discovery. Nearly 800,000 slaves were imported between 1783 and 1791, accounting for nearly a third of the Atlantic slave trade in those years. Conservative estimates of the slave trade place the total number of slaves transported to the Americas at roughly ten to fifteen million. Saint–Domingue, a tiny island the size of Belgium, imported roughly eight percent of all slaves brought to the Americas! The majority of slaves died quickly and there was a complete turnover in the slave population every 20 years. A majority of slaves in Saint Domingue were African born at all times during slavery, attesting to the disease and brutal working conditions on the plantations. Even with the appallingly high death rates
among slaves, by 1789, they outnumbered whites by four to one. This was to be a distinct advantage in their bid for freedom (Haggerty 1989).

By the 1780s maroons and roaming bands of runaway slaves had become common-place. Try as they might, the colonists could not wipe out these maroon groups. In 1791, an organized and widespread slave rebellion began with Toussaint L’Ouverture as its leader. The revolt began in the Northern part of Saint–Domingue and fanned out across the island. Despite his death at the hands of the French, the revolt, lasting over a decade continued. Fortuitously, the French were dragged into war in Europe and finally surrendered to the slaves in November of 1803. The following January they declared their independence. Three hundred years after colonial rule began, Haiti became the first successful slave revolt in the Western Hemisphere and the first free, black republic. While this heralded a new era of self–governance, it soon became apparent that it would also entail a new period of struggle. Haitian history, post–independence, has been rife with political and social repression, poverty and instability. Repeated and continued violence and instability have caused massive political turmoil and multiple coups d’etat. They have also caused massive migration.

The new nation was confronted with severe economic challenges. Many slaves had fled the plantations to which they had been attached and asserted their freedom. Others carved up the former plantations for their own free–holding subsistence pursuits. This left the plantation system, the center of colonial Saint–Domingue’s economic prosperity, in ruins. Its first major ruler post–emancipation was assassinated, foreshadowing the instability of Haiti throughout the next two centuries. The old social divisions that had been fostered by the slave owners, between mulattos and blacks, continued to create rifts.
The nation was actually divided in two at one point, with the black peasantry ruling the north and mulattos in charge of the south. This geographic manifestation of social difference would last into present times. The approaches to wealth generation of the two regimes were diametrically opposed. Either Haiti could return to the plantation sugar economy and rejoin international trade or they could establish land reform and create a nation of small family farms. In 1820, the nation was finally reunited. However, the class and racial divisions that had begun under slavery now hardened into political and social differences.

These differences and the poor economic situation Haiti found itself in lead to massive political instability. Between 1843 and 1915 Haiti had 22 different leaders and only a few of those took or left office peacefully. Haiti was operating not only in international isolation, as no major western nation would recognize it for fear of slave revolts spreading, but it also owed France an enormous indemnity that it had agreed to in order for France to finally give up all claims to the island. It was not until 1862 that the United States finally recognized Haiti. Through this isolation, foreign nations helped to contribute to the economic impoverishment and political instability that would mark Haiti for two centuries. Additionally, the experience of colonization had left most Haitians unprepared for the challenges of self-government. Thus, Haiti was struggling with economic stagnation, massive external debt and a lack of political stability. Primarily, it was mulatto elites, strong black military men who came from the north to seize power or the black puppets of the mulatto elite who held the presidency during this period. Coups, assassinations and violence were common.
In 1915 the United States sent Marines into Haiti to protect its own financial interests and citizens. American companies controlled most of the major commercial institutions prior to the invasion, including most of Haiti’s banks. They frequently used force to compel payment of Haitian debts. Yet, instead of a quick blow to force payment as they had done previously, this time they decided to try to do something to change the conditions in Haiti that kept creating the same situations. Marines disbanded the Haitian military, installed an elite mulatto puppet president, amended the constitution, helped to stabilize the economy and improved the administration and infrastructure of the country.

However, the treatment of Haitians by United States Marines, many of who came from Southern states accustomed to slavery and black obedience, created great tensions and a deep resentment that still lingers in the Haitian collective memory. Additionally, the occupation did little to fix the economic structure of the country (Stepick 1982:15). One positive benefit of the occupation was that it forced Haitians to search for their own identity, something separate from the elite’s rabid francophilia. For centuries, anything culturally associated with the peasantry and African roots was disparaged and rejected from the national discourse and culture. Out of this continued denigration of Haitianness under the occupation came an intellectual resistance to the Americans which ultimately gave rise to a reexamination of African roots in Haitian culture and led, indirectly, to Duvalier’s presidency.

In 1930, the United States allowed Haiti to resume its own destiny by permitting free elections. The new president, like all the others, resorted to using his post to enrich himself. While reestablishing independence, he also added to the legacy of dictatorial leaders and mulatto rule in Haiti. In mid-century a new leader, Lescot, filled almost
every post in the government with mulattoes. This drove black voters to turn out in huge numbers to elect their leaders to the National Assembly. By 1946, black Haitians were fed up with mulatto and military rule and three black candidates turned out as contestants in that year’s elections. The emerging black middle class helped put two black candidates into office back to back and offered some political stability for the first time in many years. Unfortunately, black presidents were no less immune to becoming dictators than mulatto ones.

In 1957, Francois Duvalier won a very large victory. With a modest background, his presidential platform was based on pro–black nationalism, strong military support and national recognition of Voodoo as a religion. This last bit was an attempt to cash in on the emerging Haitian ethnic identity among the black peasantry and intellectual class. Even by Haitian standards, Duvalier turned out to be a monster. Declaring himself president for life, he concentrated power in himself and few others. Fearing a military coup, as so many earlier coups had come from this sector, he repeatedly shuffled young black soldiers in and out of leadership positions. He also tried to balance the power of the national military by creating a Presidential Guard and his Volunteers for National Security that came to be known as the Tonton Macoutes. The Macoutes terrorized the population of Haiti into docility and compliance; they were his secret police. When he died in office in 1971, his son, Jean Claude Duvalier, assumed the presidency. He soon fell into his father’s brutal tactics. He also grossly enriched himself and his family at the expense of the Haitian nation. Finally, in February of 1986, Jean Claude Duvalier was ousted after a massive revolt.
The interim government, after dismantling some of the worst vestiges of the Duvalier regime’s dictatorship, slipped back into repression. Chaos was the natural result. The military was active in leadership of the country throughout the four years following Duvalier’s overthrow. Massive violence, panic, protest and assassinations arose as the economy worsened and the power vacuum continued. The presidential election of 1990 was one of the first legitimate elections Haiti had since independence. Jean-Bertrand Aristide assumed the presidency in 1990 with 75 percent of the vote. Aristide, a former Roman Catholic priest who practiced liberation theology, made it his goal to rid Haiti of its racial and economic discrimination. He cut corruption in the government and military, reduced drug trafficking and human rights abuses and balanced the federal budget.

The military and mulatto elite, accustomed to controlling the purse strings and having unfettered power, did not welcome Aristide’s reforms. Less than a year into office, Aristide was removed by the military and replaced with a military leadership council, or junta. Many civilians opposed this military action but were powerless in the face of the army and its control. Foreign powers criticized the coup and refused to recognize the new junta leaders. The United Nations eventually imposed a fuel and weapons embargo on Haiti in 1993 with the United States stopping all commercial air traffic to the island. Further, many Westerners resident on the island fled. Only in the face of a proposed multinational military invasion did the junta leaders step aside and allow the United States to send in troops to peacefully reinstall Aristide.

In 1995, Aristide completed his elected term and handed power to the newly elected René Préval, the first peaceful transition between democratically elected leaders.
However, political partisanship, often around old racial and economic fault–lines, left Préval with little ability to rule. In the 2000 election, Aristide was returned to power. Unfortunately, the long–term consequences of Haitian economic stagnation and political rancor could not be reversed in a few short years. Haitians continued to live in poverty. Political differences turned into violence.

There have been widespread claims of human rights abuses against Aristide and his supporters. Gangs who aligned themselves with rival political factions inflicted violence and attacked leaders of opposing parties. In early 2004, those opposing faction’s gangs, operating as rebels, took control of most of the major towns and regions and were within a day or two march of the capital. At the end of February 2004, Aristide either resigned or was threatened with violence to force his resignation and fled the country. The president of the Supreme Court, in accordance with the constitution, took power. United Nation’s forces are present on the island to protect Haiti’s citizens from gangs perpetrating violence despite a new presidential election in February of 2006 that returned Préval to power.

**Haiti’s Population and Demographics**

The CIA World Factbook placed Haiti’s population at 8,308,504 in 2005. Nearly half of its population is under fourteen years of age, an extremely high proportion compared to Western states where the under–fourteen population is usually closer to 15 percent. Life expectancy at birth is 53 years. This low rate is in part caused by the impact of HIV/AIDS as well as the horrible living conditions that cause 72 babies out of every 1000 to die despite having a high birth rate of 36 births per 1000 people. This also pushes the median age of the population to 18.2 years compared to ranges in the thirties for most Western nations. Despite the poverty and disease, the population of Haiti is
growing by 2.3 percent a year, a higher rate than the United States, England and many Western European nations. Haiti is also losing its citizens with a net migration rate of negative 1.31 migrants per every 1000 individuals as of 2006 (CIA 2006).

Haiti is the second most densely populated nation in the Western Hemisphere (after Barbados). Nearly 1.5 million people live in the capital of Port–au–Prince and the surrounding areas. But the majority of the population still lives in small towns and villages. All of its 2.3 percent population growth is due to reproduction since it is losing many of its citizens to migration. Its official languages are French and Kreyol and 80 percent of Haitians are Roman Catholic. However, many practice a syncretic mix of Catholicism and Voodoo.

While great strides have been made to increase the literacy of its population, the literacy rate still hovers around 53 percent of individuals 15 and over (CIA 2006). The educational standards in Haiti are very low. School attendance rates have risen from 20 percent in 1994 to 64 percent in 2000. Yet the country still confronts many difficulties due to shortages in school supplies and qualified teachers. In addition, while these school attendance rates seem promising, the rural population is grossly underrepresented in classrooms. Because most Haitian schools are privately funded they require tuition payments from parents for their children to attend.

Haitian health standards are abysmal. There are massive deficiencies in the sanitation systems, poor nutrition and not enough health services for most of the population. Over 80 percent of Haitians live below the poverty line. Only half of Haitians have access to clean water and a little over half suffer food insecurity. Economic stagnation has led to minimal spending in social service areas, often as a result
of foreign imposed loan conditions. Because of the stagnant economy and the long tradition of brain drain, there are too few doctors and nurses. Treatable diseases such as typhoid fever, tuberculosis and skin conditions are often fatal because of a lack of access to adequate health care. In addition, Haiti suffers from the highest incidence of HIV/AIDS outside of the African continent. The transmission of HIV/AIDS is primarily through heterosexual encounters and mother to fetus transmission.

The international community has heavily contributed to the development of Haiti. Governmental, non–profit and multilateral aid has flowed into the country for development and social services. However, this aid, because of past government corruption, has done little to alter the downward economic and social spiral of Haiti. In fact, aid in the form of loans has contributed to the nearly one billion in external debts that Haiti owes. Additionally, in attempts to increase foreign investment and create jobs, Haiti has made sweetheart deals with overseas manufacturers to place assembly plants in the capital area. Often, these deals include tax holidays, cooperation in repressing labor organizing and waivers of export and import fees; measures not always in Haiti’s best interest.

**Haiti’s Social Structure**

The population of French Saint–Domingue in the early 17th century was established through the slave trade which the colonial powers instituted in order to provide needed labor for the plantation economy they were creating. The society was ordered for rapid wealth production from the agricultural sector. There was a three tier social structure with whites at the top, black slaves at the bottom and the freedmen, most of whom were mulattos, in between. Some of these freedmen were able to inherit land, acquire wealth and even own slaves. This middle group, while much better off than the African slaves,
was still forbidden from socializing with and was seen as inferior to the whites. Also in this middle group were poor whites that felt themselves superior to the mulattoes, regardless of their economic status. In 1791, Haiti had a population of 519,000 with 87 percent consisting of slaves, eight percent white and five percent mulatto (Haggerty 1989). The statistics for the slave population are deceptive since the exceedingly harsh conditions which slaves were forced to endure created high mortality rates. Thus, new slaves were frequently imported so that by the time of the slave rebellion in 1791, most slaves were still African born.

The Haitian Revolution rid the country of most of the colonial, white upper class and the plantation system was nearly decimated as slaves walked off the farms or divided them into their own subsistence plots. The earliest post–Revolution leaders realized that Haiti’s economic future depended on her land and tried to restore some type of free labor plantation system. These attempts were futile though and the newly emerged Haitian upper class, the mulattoes, lost control of the means and capital of production. Thus, their basis of social control was gone. This upper class turned to government and economic rule in order to cement their hold on power.

Almost from the time of independence, two groups vied for control of Haiti: The urban, mulatto elite and the military. The civilian elite was a closed social group of relatively wealthy, educated and French-speaking light skinned Haitians. Their social position was determined by birth into the right families, shared values and intermarriage. The military however, provided a way to advance in society for black Haitians. Thus, the mulatto elite had to placate the military to maintain its social positions. This alliance has been tense, shifting and often times non–existent. In this way, the two groups were able
to keep the majority of poor black peasants from active civic and economic participation. They were isolated and kept uneducated. From this early date then, manners, money, skin color and language were important determinants of one’s position within Haitian society.

The rise to power of Duvalier, an educated black man, was thus a crack in the traditional mulatto elite’s hold on power. His rise was accompanied by the rise of a small black middle class around mid–century. This allowed for some social mobility of middle class blacks but the peasantry was still isolated from the mechanisms of government. Duvalier’s rise to power also heralded the early waves of Haitian immigration to the United States as the educated elite fled persecution. Post–Duvalier, a number of military leaders have taken or assumed office, including the junta that was created after the first ouster of Aristide. The traditional rivalries still exist and are now augmented by a small middle class that seeks to attain power as well.

**Haiti’s Economy**

Haiti is the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere with nearly 80 percent of its population living in dire poverty. It ranks 194 out of 232 nations worldwide in terms of per capita income (CIA 2006). Two-thirds of Haitians work in the agricultural sector, most on small-scale subsistence plots that are exceedingly vulnerable to crop–failures and flooding because deforestation for fuel has left the land without any vegetation to act as an anchor in heavy rain. Haiti suffers a severe trade deficit, high inflation and an inability to attract investment dollars because of its political and economic instability. Haiti must rely on international aid and remittances to be fiscally solvent (Haggerty 1989). Development dollars and foreign loans are the only consistent source of capital.
Because of earlier brain drain migration, Haiti suffers from a shortage of skilled labor, while unskilled labor is abundant. The brain drain from Haiti is estimated at nearly 66 percent of all highly skilled and educated individuals (Sriskandarajah 2004). There is widespread unemployment with more than two thirds of the labor force not having formal jobs. The main agricultural products of Haiti are mangoes, coffee, sugarcane, rice, corn and wood. Its industries refine the sugar, mill the flour, manufacture textiles and assemble products imported mostly from North America.

Haiti’s balance of trade in 2005 was one billion dollars. Its main exports are food items going primarily to the United States (81 percent), the Dominican Republic (7 percent) and Canada (4 percent) (CIA 2006). However, the country is highly dependant upon imported food–stuffs and goods required to run industries (CIA 2006). This places Haiti is heavy in debt to the United States and its other trading partners. In addition, they receive nearly $150 million in economic aid to help them balance their budget every year (Haggerty 1989). Furthermore, remittances sent by Haitians in the diaspora equal nearly one quarter of the gross domestic product (O’Neil 2003). The economic and political situation in Haiti is grim. Haiti continues to teeter on the brink of political and economic disaster. Is it any wonder, with the suffering these stark demographic, social and economic figures paint, that its citizens desire a better life somewhere else? It is to migration that we now turn.

**Haitian Immigration**

Haitian immigration is not a new phenomenon. It is embedded in the larger history of Caribbean migration. Voluntary labor migration has been characteristic of the Caribbean and Haiti for over a century and a half as people traveled to find work, better lives and more freedom (Bryce Laporte 1983b:2–4). Inter–territorial migration among
islands of the same colonial power started the trend in labor migration in the middle of the 19th century. This was followed by a period characterized by pan–Caribbean migrations. Panama attracted large numbers of migrants for work on the canal and railroads, Cuba needed sugar plantation labor and Central America required laborers for its large fruit plantations. Eventually, the United States began to need low–wage, temporary and seasonal laborers. Southern agricultural concerns in the United States have historically attracted temporary migrants like Jamaican cane-cutters. What is most salient is that Caribbean migration has historically been responsive to the labor and economic markets of the world (Marshall 1982:98). Boom and bust cycles in labor migration closely mirror the rise and fall of commodity prices and large infrastructure investments in the Caribbean basin. Political crises have always pushed people out of their homelands (Bryce–Laporte 1983b:96).

Like other Caribbean nations, Haiti has always had a special relationship to their former colonial rulers. The strong ties that the Haitian elite had with France (sending their children there for school, working and traveling there) led to a predisposition for their former colonial ruler as a host nation. Every time power changed hands in Haiti, elite opponents of the new government migrated, some to France and others to free Caribbean nations, Africa, the United States or Canada. However, until the middle of the 20th century, the majority of this migration had been to places other than the United States. To be sure, there were wealthy merchants and elites who found a kindred spirit in New Orleans, but France, Montreal and Francophone Africa were the usual destinations when Haitians left the Caribbean basin (Stepick 1998:4). “Up until the late 1950’s only
about 500 Haitians permanently migrated to the United States each year, while another three thousand came temporarily as tourists, students or on business (Stepick 1998:4).

However, over the past century, the ties that bind the United States and Haiti have grown stronger. These political and economic ties stem in part from the Monroe Doctrine of 1823. The Monroe Doctrine has helped to shape nearly two centuries of United States policy in the Western Hemisphere (Bryce–Laporte 1983b:2–3). While ostensibly helping to diminish or end European colonial rule in the region, in reality, it led to colonial-like relationships between the United States and its regional neighbors. This doctrine let America act as the Western Hemisphere’s watchdog. It underlay the 1915 invasion of Haiti and American policy towards that country. During the Cold War it was revived as a justification for American interference in democratic nations and aid for some very unsavory characters in Latin America. This policy has drawn Haiti and America closer together as the United States found it in its best interest to keep democratic nations close to help prevent the spread of communist influence in the Western Hemisphere. In fact, successive Haitian governments played up communist threats on the Island to manipulate American aid and foreign policy.

Thus, early on, the Caribbean acquired importance to the United States for military, political and strategic purposes. While this interest was one sided, it did occasionally have unintended benefits to the nations of the Caribbean. Often times, aid was targeted for the creation of infrastructure that would be useful to American business interests but that nonetheless also was a benefit to the island itself. These interests helped to forge a tight bond between the United States and the islands. While former colonial nations like
England, Spain and France still receive their former colonial subjects, America has become a prime destination for Caribbean migrants.

**Waves of Haitian Immigration**

The earliest discernable group of Haitian immigrants to the United States arrived in the 1920s. Many fled the American occupation of their island and the atrocious treatment they received at the hands of the American soldiers. There were only 500 of them and they settled primarily in New York City where they assimilated and integrated into American culture (Laguerre 1984:33). Small in number, this group is still important because it marks the first definable group to flee the island for reasons related to larger geo–political forces; earlier immigrants had sought economic opportunities. This group fled repression at the hands of Americans in their own land.

The next major wave of migration from Haiti to the United States began in the late 1950s and lasted into the early 1960s. These migrants were fleeing the rise to power of Francois Duvalier (1951–1971). Many of this group opposed Duvalier, were afraid of retribution and felt they could no longer make a living in Haiti. They were members of the educated upper and middle classes and included lawyers, teachers, doctors and technicians. The brain drain continued as opportunities and freedoms further diminished and political repression grew as Duvalier consolidated his power. According to Morisseau–Leroy, an indication of the level of brain drain at the time is that only “3 of 264 graduates of Haiti’s medical school between 1957 and 1963 remained in the country (1999:180).” These immigrants tended to settle in New York, Boston and Chicago, well–developed urban areas with plenty of employment opportunities and far from the racism and Jim Crow laws of the American South.
Therefore, the origin of this wave of immigration can be directly traced to President Francois Duvalier’s assumption of power. His rise, a dark portent of a possible revolt by the black middle classes, caused the traditional mulatto elites to worry for their social positions and eventually their safety. Furthermore, the United States become more closely involved in Haitian affairs and thus immigrants began to view the United States as a new migration destination. President Kennedy detested Duvalier and his repression of his own citizens and the United States actively encouraged Haitians to immigrate. The first to immigrate were those who could be seen as direct threats to Duvalier’s regime, the upper classes. This group received expedited non–immigrant visas and arrived legally via airplane. Even though many of this early wave overstayed their visas, they were not pursued and eventually became legal residents.

During the 1960s, immigrants from Haiti began to come from the middle and lower urban classes. These semi–skilled immigrants headed for America and Canada, particularly Montreal. This flow of middle and lower class Haitians continued through the 1970s and 1980s. In addition, throughout the 1970s, increasing numbers of Haitians from rural areas and the lower classes joined the migration stream. Many of these immigrants were fleeing not only poverty, but also the political violence and instability that continued when Jean–Claude Duvalier assumed office after his father’s death in 1971.

In the United States President Johnson was focused on fighting communism. Since Duvalier had stood with us against Cuba, the United States began their modern policy of ignoring the abuse and repression of Haitians. Prior to the 1965 Immigration Act, the middle classes felt threatened and began migrating. With the passage of the Act in 1965
it became easier for these immigrants to bring their remaining family members over. The 1965 Immigration Act, with its emphasis on family reunification, unintentionally opened the floodgates. Almost seven thousand Haitians a year legally immigrated to the United States compared to the 500 just a few years earlier (AAME 2006).

Beginning in 1972, a new phase of Haitian immigration had begun and Boat People started arriving in South Florida. These Haitians were typically much poorer and could not afford exit visas or plane fare. Most of them came from small rural towns and villages rather than Port-au-Prince. The boat people, while poorer than the earlier elite immigrants, were often semi-literate, skilled in some fashion and had families able to afford the price of a boat ride to the United States. Many of them stayed close to their point of entry, establishing Haitian communities in South Florida towns such as Miami.

As poverty in Haiti deepened and repression grew under Baby Doc Duvalier, the Boat People arrivals increased. Between 50,000 and 80,000 such undocumented immigrants arrived during the 1970s and 1980s. In 1981 alone, nearly 1,000 people were arriving in south Florida by sea each month (Morisseau-Leroy 1999:182). Many of these arrivals came to the United States indirectly, often by way of the Bahamas. Nearly 50,000 Haitians immigrated to the Bahamas by boat in the 1980s. In the 1950s and early 1960s, the Bahamas had welcomed Haitian immigrants however, by the late 1960s, they began turning them away and enforcing stricter immigration laws. This closure of one destination redirected the Haitian migrant stream to the United States.

What is salient about the boat people is their desperation in the face of economic deprivation and politically based violence at home. These dramatic arrivals placed Haitian immigrants in the center of news reports and impacted American immigration
policy. Haitians and their advocates argued for asylum while the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service refused to allow them to be labeled refugees since they were citizens of an allied nation. In 1986, Jean-Claude Duvalier was ousted and the Haitians rejoiced. The flow of refugees diminished but the economic and political situation in Haiti continued to be poor. The nation, suffering immense political instability, was still terrorized. After the post-Duvalier decrease in immigration, the flow increased again as Haitians realized that they had exchanged one form of brutality for another.

By the 1980s, nearly 500,000 Haitians were living in the United States; New York, Miami, Boston, Chicago and Philadelphia all had large Haitian immigrant populations. There were also large concentrations of Haitian migrants in Montreal, the Bahamas and even the Dominican Republic. The election of Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1990 temporarily staunched the flow of boat people from Haiti. His campaigning and sermons created the expectation of greater economic opportunities and a decrease in political violence. However, following the 1991 coup d’etat, increasing numbers of Boat People began turning up in south Florida again. The 1991–1994 period of military dictatorship in Haiti forced thousands of its citizens to flee. The American response to this flow was haphazard, according some immigrants refugee status and aid and deporting others. In 1994, the military dictatorship was ousted and Haiti has not produced waves of boat people at the levels we saw in the 1970s and 1980s. However, the Haitian Diaspora has continued to grow, partly through new immigration but also through the growth of its second and third generation.

**Theories Used to Explain Haitian Immigration**

Like all other immigrant groups, researchers have attempted to explain why Haitians migrate. As laid out in Chapter 2, most immigration theories come up short
when trying to explain the complex lives of immigrants from a variety of backgrounds. Here is a chance to apply those theories to the lived experiences and history of one particular group and see how they measure up in accounting for immigration choices. To recap, there were three generations of theories laid out earlier. The first focuses on economic models of immigration. The second-generation explores structural determinants of migration. The final generation focuses on both individual and structural factors while also accounting for social capital, networks and transnationalism.

Generation one theories posit that people migrate in order to improve their economic positions. They act in rational ways to evaluate both home and host possibilities and then decide on the most economically beneficial course of action. All of these theories are focused on the micro–level, on individuals, families and households. The neo–classical macro–economic model proposes that individuals find differences in supply and demand for labor across wide geographic areas. Those nations who have little capital and excess labor will have low wages and thus their citizens will be looking for better opportunities for themselves elsewhere. The wage differentials between nations are enough to cause people to migrate, operating under the assumption that jobs and higher wages pull people while few jobs and paltry remuneration push them out of their homes.

While this model is applicable in a broad sense to economic migrants from Haiti, it is an oversimplification of the decision–making processes of potential migrants. It assumes a fair amount of knowledge about the host nation that many potential Haitian immigrants might not have, particularly those from poor, rural and illiterate backgrounds where migration might not be very common. It also fails to account for many other
contextual variables in the sending nation. Taking recent migrations from Haiti, this model completely obscures political turmoil, resource shortages, disease and transnational ties that help push immigrants into deciding to migrate. To this basic model of push and pull we can add Harris and Todaro’s (1970) idea that it is not just wage differentials that account for migration, but a more complicated calculus that provides a nuanced understanding of the costs of migration. While not directly addressing the transnational ties, networks and social capital of later models, this is a beginning to a broader framework that includes more factors in the decision making processes of potential migrants. Many Haitian communities now have established migration chains that reduce the cost for each new migration that takes place. Communities in the host nation are now well enough established to provide temporary lodging and job prospects for newly arrived Haitians. Even small communities are likely to have one relative or family friend willing to aid a new immigrant until he or she gets on their feet.

The most recent of the economic models, the new economic model of migration, places individuals within the context of their family, household and community. While not explicitly addressing larger contexts such as towns, cities and nations, it allows us to include political and social factors to our explanation. By explaining migration as a type of economic insurance that is wholly unrelated to economic pursuits at home, it allows us to begin seeing immigration as an instrument utilized by families and households. In focusing on the maximization of income and economic well–being, we can factor in larger changes in economic markets for goods such as coffee, the impact of natural disasters like recent hurricanes on farm output and even political unrest which forces the closure or ruination of industries.
Thus, while it is true that many Haitian immigrants would cite poverty as a root cause of their sojourns, it is not just simply being poor that drives them to immigrate. These models fail to account for the upper and middle classes that migrated after the rise of Francois Duvalier and the well educated individuals who were stripped of future jobs and satisfying lives because of repeated political upheavals. Their migrations were motivated out of a fear of losing their status, livelihoods and ability to work. These models tend to naturalize the forces that propel individuals to migrate, as if they were just part of the everyday landscape. By ignoring the structural factors, they become just part of the natural order of things and not prime factors which motivate choices (Stepick 1986:339).

Generation two theories move their explanations from individuals and families to structural forces. These theories place less developed sending nations into a larger framework of political and economic systems of a global nature where they will often be at a disadvantage. The segmented labor market theory views immigration as a result of pull factors from core nations. These nations have a permanent need for low–wage and low–skilled labor that can only be filled by immigration. This theory provides an explanation for the demand for lower end labor but does nothing to account for why highly–skilled and highly–educated Haitians came to the United States. It also presumes knowledge of these openings on the part of lower–class Haitians that might not exist. It also fails to provide a mechanism for how lower–class Haitians might know of these jobs, if they do. Furthermore, it neglects the networks and ties between immigrants and sending nations and thus cannot fully explain how the model would work in real life.
The world systems and dependency models also do a fair job of explaining the relationships between developed and less developed nations without fully recognizing the actual mechanisms by which people acquire information on which to base migration decisions. By positing that peripheral nations are unequally placed within a hierarchical world order, they are stating the obvious. Any Haitian will tell you that Haiti has very little power compared to the United States. Ask them about the 1978 pig eradication program and the economic hardship it caused. Real or imagined, most Haitian peasants recognize the power of American in relation to themselves and their government. However, the focus on structural factors such as economic and industrial penetration in less developed nations, the transmission of cultural products and values to the developing world and the political upheaval unleashed by the interference of industrialized nations are important factors that shape the context in which potential migrants make their choices.

Haitians who have moved to the capital from rural areas and are seeking work have few options. The international assembly plants often pay low wages and aid the government in preventing strong unions from developing. These rural to urban migrants are exposed to more knowledge about the United States from living in the capital, listening to radio and observing consumer markers such as the cars and clothes of wealthier Haitians. Haitians throughout the country have suffered under multiple repressive regimes, most with the backing of Washington. Thus, these structural factors make a difference. However, the clearest case for structural factors directly affecting Haitians is with the brain-drain.
As Duvalier and other leaders of Haiti repressed their citizens and took to murder and torture to silence real or imagined opposition, better educated Haitians who had traveled and were more worldly in their outlook saw the United States as a place of refuge and opportunity. Whether their knowledge of the United States arose from attending college here, traveling for business deals or academic conferences or from mingling with overseas visitors to Haiti, they had more social capital in the form of networks, education, money and links to the United States with which to make a decision to migrate. The deficiency in this second-generation of theories, its lack of focus on individual decisions and contexts, is reconciled with the first generation deficiency about structural factors in the third generation of theories to which we now turn.

The theories in this generation attempt to reconcile the individual and structural focuses of the earlier models by integrating a meso–level approach that focuses on the capital, networks and transnational social spheres of immigrants. Haitian immigrants all have varying degrees of these resources and connections and thus neat, straight–line theories cannot account for why some choose to migrate and others do not. By focusing on these differential levels of resources these theories try to explain the widely varying outcomes we see in Haitian immigration.

Depending on the residential location of many Haitians, they will be exposed to different levels of economic know–how, knowledge of the wider world and even political interference. Within towns and villages there are widely varying abilities to pay school fees, purchase books or newspapers or own radios. The presence of foreign aid workers, Peace Corps volunteers or NGO employees can provide vital information about overseas job markets, literacy training, micro–savings schemes and a host of other resources. All
of these factors create a context in which potential migrants make decisions. Thus, a focus on social capital is appropriate for any immigration theory. The more social capital a potential migrant can deploy the better off they will be, whether they choose to remain at home or migrate.

Urban immigrants and the middle and upper classes are thus more likely to migrate because of their increased social capital. This helps explain the age-old issue of why it is not the poorest of the poor who migrate. They are just too capital and network poor to effectuate such a large undertaking. Once an immigration chain has been opened, in rural or urban Haiti, it is much easier for later migrants to utilize that chain for their own benefit. That chain is endowed with the capital of all of its previous migrants. Their knowledge, connections, homes and money are at the disposal of the more capital poor Haitians left behind. These chains are the embodiment of social networks, or connections that bind individuals to one another. These networks increase migration by lowering the overall cost of doing so and are therefore a type of social capital in themselves.

Transnational migration models link together all of the disparate threads of the immigration process from an individuals endowment of social capital and networks at home, the migration chain and process and the adaptation of that immigrant once in a new country. Thus, transnationalism is more responsive to the larger and smaller factors that impact the decision to migrate. For example, under this model, well-educated Haitians would be recognized as having a large endowment of various types of capital and thus would be more likely to move if need be. If political violence threatens this group they would be the earliest to leave, as in past migrations, and would help establish the larger social sphere that spans those left behind and those in the host nation. This
group might not actively help the poorest Haitian immigrants to migrate but the intermediary migrants who came after them would. Thus, these early immigrants set in motion a chain of events that creates one large social phenomenon that encompasses all potential migrants in Haiti and all of those plugged into the transnational social sphere in the Haitian Diaspora.

These third generation models, by focusing on the immigrants instead of the factors that precipitate immigration and by incorporating social capital and network theories help to flip immigration theory on its head. Instead of asking what factors propel migration, they use inductive reasoning to explore why an individual immigrated. While not the best way to create theories, by working backwards with immigrants already here they explore the various factors that impact these decisions and that can be useful in creating theories to be tested by the new immigrants yet to come.

Factors in Haiti and the United States Favoring Immigration

While immigration from and within the Caribbean has been a feature for nearly two centuries, Haitian immigration stands out. The flow of labor migrants within the Caribbean, which characterized so many other islands, did not begin until nearly fifty years after Haitian independence. Even then, it was mainly focused on the Dominican Republic and later Cuba. Additionally, Haitians did not choose the United States as a migration destination until the Duvalier regime rose to power in the late 1950s (Stepick 1986:331). However, once they did, they built sizable communities in New York City and later South Florida.

Haiti has one of the world’s worst income distributions with less than one percent of the population controlling nearly fifty percent of the country’s wealth (Stepick 1986:331). Its history created a context of staggering poverty and gross abuses of
political power. These two factors are related as large chunks of the national budget and foreign aid have disappeared in successive dictator’s private bank accounts. The political instability caused by dictatorial rule, lack of independent judicial and legal structures and political violence have negatively affected productivity, decreased investment (both foreign and domestic), and caused hundreds of thousands of its citizens to flee poverty, disease and physical abuse.

Haiti was isolated internationally for decades after her independence and when it was reincorporated into larger political and economic structures, it was disadvantaged by its poverty and peripheral status. Successive waves of aid and loan money have required cutbacks in social sector spending and development of the island in ways that often seem beneficial only to foreign powers and businesses. The demand for Western style goods and services has arisen in many areas but has little hope of ever being met. HIV/AIDS has been spreading rampantly through heterosexual transmission and tuberculosis and other treatable or curable diseases are often life threatening to rural peasants and the urban poor. There is only a small middle class and very little hope of social mobility for the majority of poor, rural Haitians. The unmet expectations of the middle and upper classes have created a massive brain–drain flowing from Haiti outward to Canada, the United States, Cuba, France and Francophone West Africa. There also has been a small but influential flow of people to communist or former communist nations for education and jobs coming from those of the Haitian elite who are Marxists.

Thus, poverty, underdevelopment, political violence and the cultural and economic penetration of industrialized nations have created unbearable situations for many Haitians. However, they also create the very ties that allow Haitians to select America as
a migration destination. As Haitians flee massive poverty or violence, they have settled in the United States and created communities, enclaves and networks for themselves. The 1965 Immigration Act made it easier to reunite families and the general ease of immigration, legal or not, to the United States makes our nation an attractive target. Additionally, Haitian immigrants have created transnational links and social webs that encompass home and host nations. These ties, renewed by contact, visits, remittances, sponsoring new immigrants and care packages to home have allowed Western ideas of democracy, freedom, good wages and a new life to penetrate the sending communities, further enlarging the migration chain with new migrants and refugees. Continuous political instability also creates massive outflows of refugees who will activate their own links of the transnational web and pull more immigrants to the United States as more and more people become enmeshed in a shared cultural sphere of the Haitian Diaspora.

Conclusion

The history of Haitian migrations is one where straight-line, push-pull theories of immigration will not work. Haiti is rooted in the larger Caribbean history of colonial control and peripheral status to the world’s super-powers. The history of Caribbean migrations shows that citizens of these islands respond not only to the local, micro-level forces acting upon them, but also to larger geo-political expansions and contractions. Haiti is no different in its broad brush strokes of immigration. However, Haiti is unique in its own history and the legacy of overwhelming poverty and political avarice that have been bequeathed to present day Haitians. The island has constantly been on the verge of collapse since independence more than 200 years ago. This instability and poverty does not act evenly on all Haitians and those from different class backgrounds are endowed with different sets of skills and types of capital. These individual differences help us to
account for the varying paths of Haitian immigration. What these immigrants do and how they respond once in the United States is also heavily influenced by these individual endowments. It is to these issues of acculturation and immigrant reception that we turn next, in Chapter 5.
CHAPTER 5
ACCULTURATION: HAITIANS IN CONTEXT

Introduction

Previous chapters have explored theories that attempt to explain immigration and acculturation as well as the specific history of Haitian immigration to the United States. This chapter is concerned with what happens once Haitian immigrants arrive here. Haitians, like all immigrants, are not a monolithic entity who share the same backgrounds and attributes or make the same decisions. As chapter 2 has shown, immigration theories that try to ascribe a singular motive or explanation for migration fall short. Chapter 3 pointed out that immigrants vary widely in the personal and capital attributes with which they are endowed. It also illustrated that it is worthwhile to explore the varying contexts of reception that greet immigrants when they arrive. Moving to Tampa will be a different experience than moving to New York or Miami for newly arrived Haitians. Each of these cities has its own feel, social structure and economy that will predispose it towards different receptions for immigrant newcomers.

In this chapter, I will discuss the Haitian Diaspora in the United States. From there, we will move on to the specific case of Tampa, starting with a description of Tampa as a port of entry and it is own unique history of immigration. This section will also discuss Tampa in numbers, using census material to help illustrate the key characteristics of Tampa in order to describe the context within which Haitian immigrants and the second-generation live. The chapter will then move into the specifics of Haitian acculturation in the United States and specifically in Tampa. This chapter will thus set the stage for a
discussion of educational experiences of immigrant and minority students (Chapter 6) and for the discussion of the results of my research (Chapter 7).

**The Haitian Diaspora in the United States**

Anywhere from 400,000 (United States Census Bureau 2006) to 2,000,000 (Haiti Program 2003) people of Haitian descent currently live in the United States. Haitians, like other immigrants, tend to settle in large cities with low-end labor market openings. Florida and New York, with Haitian populations of 228,949 and 156,209 respectively, account for over half of all people of Haitian descent living in America (United States Census Bureau 2006). Other states with large Haitian populations include Massachusetts, New Jersey, Connecticut, Maryland, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Illinois and California, in order of most to least populous (United States Census Bureau 2006). Foreign-born Haitians accounted for only 1.3 percent of the total foreign-born population of 31 million in 2000, making them a very small group compared to Mexicans or other Latin Americans. They account for less than 0.1 percent of the total population of the United States. Even in the state with the largest number of people of Haitian ancestry, they are still statistically small in terms of overall immigration, making up only 7 percent of the foreign-born in Florida (Newland and Grieco 2004). Only 3,000 people of Haitian ancestry live in Hillsborough County, of which Tampa is the county seat (United States Census Bureau 2006).

The Haitian population is relatively young when compared to other ethnic groups. Only about one-third of all foreign-born Haitians in the United States are over 21 with the median age just under 40 years (United States Census Bureau 2006). However, the median age of those who claim Haitian ancestry on the 2000 Census is 30 years, reflecting the youthfulness of the second-generation who were born in the United States.
These median ages are in striking contrast to the median age of 18 for those who remain behind in Haiti (CIA 2006). The sex ratio of Haitians residing in the United States is nearly even (United States Census Bureau 2006). The sex ratio in Haiti is 96, meaning there are slightly more females than males (CIA 2006). This implies that slightly more males than females emigrate from Haiti. Roughly half of all adults of Haitian ancestry in the United States are married. Most foreign-born Haitians in America live in households with family members and very few, less than 8 percent, live in non-family households (United States Census Bureau 2006). This reflects the continuing importance of family as central to Haitian social and cultural systems.

Two-thirds of Haitian-born adults have a high school diploma or higher and are in the labor force. This contrasts with the earlier data that Stepick (1986) found which showed low levels of education and labor participation among refugees and immigrants during the 1970s. As the flow has matured, a wider range of socioeconomic backgrounds are present among recent immigrants. Haitians can be found in a wide range of jobs including services, sales, management, professions, transportation and all types of industry. In fact, the one area employing few foreign-born Haitians is agriculture. The degree to which Haitians have penetrated a given labor market depends on the size of the geographic area they have settled in as well as the presence of other immigrant groups.

The median household income for foreign-born Haitians was $35,162, still considerably lower than the national median household income for 2002 which was $42,409 and nearly identical to those claiming Haitian ancestry (United States Census Bureau 2006). Nearly 19 percent of foreign-born Haitian families live below the poverty line. As would be expected, the largest groups of families living in poverty are those
with only a female head of household, at 31.4 percent and those with children under 18 (United States Census Bureau 2006). Among families of Haitian ancestry, only 10 percent live below the poverty line, half the rate of the foreign-born, indicating some economic success for the second-generation. This statistic closely mirrors the 10 percent of Americans living below the poverty level in 1999 (United States Census Bureau 2006).

As the Haitian Diaspora in North America has grown, many immigrants have created transnational ties. Roughly 90 percent of Haitians remit money home (Haiti Program 2003). For many in Haiti, the remittances their relatives send are their main source of income.

For those Haitians who make the journey to America, they confront unique political impediments to claiming asylum or acquiring citizenship. Those Haitians intercepted at sea must proclaim their desire for asylum, as Coast Guard employees do not screen them independent of such claims. Those Haitians who make it to the United States are often put into “fast-track” removal proceedings where they are unable to bond out of the detention centers in which they are held. In Florida, only Haitians are heavily subject to these measures. Because of our friendly relations with Haiti, our government is unwilling to apply refugee status to those foreigners who make it to our shores, instead, designating them as economic migrants.

The United States government has used immigration policy as a political tool, labeling migrants as “refugees” when we have poor relations with a nation, a holdover from the Cold War. Furthermore, politicians view these harsh and discriminatory measures as a deterrent to mass migrations as well as a way to placate powerful Hispanic and Cuban populations in South Florida, a state with the power to decide presidential
elections. Haitians, who have historically migrated within the Caribbean as well as to North American, also have been squeezed by restrictive measures in the Dominican Republic, Jamaica and the Bahamas. However, they still attempt to migrate to these nations, viewing them as potentially easier targets for migration than the United States. Frequently, Haitians who do make it to the United States have come by way of one of these other island nations.

**Tampa**

In this section, I will provide a brief history of Tampa and explore some of the salient statistical data about Tampa and Haitians living in the city today. Unfortunately, there are very few sources for city or countywide data on Haitians in any area except Miami, Florida. Therefore, the majority of these statistics will have to be taken as a starting point rather than a full statistical picture of Haitians in any given locality. One of the things that I noticed most about working with Haitians in Tampa was that there were two very distinct groups of Haitian immigrants: those who were well educated and economically prosperous and those who had lower levels of education and were quite poor. The statistics from Tampa and even Hillsborough County do not reflect such a distinction and therefore must be treated with caution. This section will try to provide a sketch of Tampa in numbers and contrast Tampa, where appropriate, with larger geographic areas such as Hillsborough County, the county in which Tampa is located, and the state of Florida. I will conclude the section with some data on Haitians and where they live and work in Tampa as well as what their quality of life is like.

**A Port of Entry**

Tampa, a port city in west central Florida, is located within Hillsborough County. Its population was just over 300,000 according to the 2000 U.S. Census. It is the largest
city in Hillsborough County and the county seat of governance. The county’s population has grown by 35 percent since 1990, a rate commensurate with other Florida cities and one that reflects the economic growth of most of the southern United States (Indiana Business and Research Center 2004). Most of the county is rural, with lower levels of minority and foreign-born populations in the unincorporated, suburban and non-urban areas. The bulk of industry and manufacturing as well as high tech jobs are located within the city of Tampa.

Table 5-1. Population Characteristics of Tampa, Hillsborough County, Florida and the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Median Age</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Hispanic or Latino of Any Race</th>
<th>Foreign-born</th>
<th>Individuals Below Poverty Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tampa</td>
<td>303,447</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>194,871 (64.2)</td>
<td>79,118 (26.1)</td>
<td>6,527 (2.2)</td>
<td>294,529 (19.3)</td>
<td>37,027 (12.2)</td>
<td>53,425 (18.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillsborough County</td>
<td>998,948</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>750,903 (75.2)</td>
<td>149,423 (15.0)</td>
<td>21,947 (2.2)</td>
<td>179,692 (18.0)</td>
<td>115,151 (11.5)</td>
<td>122,872 (12.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>15,982,378</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>12,465,029 (78.0)</td>
<td>2,335,505 (14.6)</td>
<td>266,256 (1.7)</td>
<td>2,682,715 (16.8)</td>
<td>2,670,828 (16.7)</td>
<td>1,952,629 (12.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>281,421,906</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>211,460,626 (75.1)</td>
<td>34,658,190 (12.3)</td>
<td>10,242,998 (3.6)</td>
<td>35,305,818 (12.5)</td>
<td>31,107,889 (11.1)</td>
<td>33,889 (12.4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2006)

Tampa started life as a farming and fishing village. In 1880, the Tampa population was only 720 persons. But over the next 10 years, its population grew close to 800 percent to about 5,500 in 1890 (Tampa Bay History Center 2006). By 1905 there were nearly 30,000 people living in Tampa and a third of these were foreign-born (Mormino and Pozzetta 1998:9). Tampa is unusual, though not singular, in the South because of its reception of large numbers of immigrants in the late 1800s. Typically, immigrants headed for the northeastern cities of the United States and some of the larger, industrial inland cities such as Chicago or Pittsburgh.
Thus, Tampa has had a long acquaintance with immigrants from diverse backgrounds. Cubans, Italians and Spanish-speakers from the Americas all migrated to Tampa in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many working in Ybor City’s famed cigar factories. Large numbers of these workers and others, including a small number of West Indians and Romanian Jews, arrived in the 1880s. These immigrants created very vibrant but isolated communities and cultures with mutual aid societies, associations and institutions. Most of these immigrant communities grew up around Ybor City and West Tampa, the two areas where cigar manufacturing was most intense. Therefore, Tampa has an extensive history of industrial immigration. Tampa also has a long history of upward mobility for many of its Hispanic immigrants. However, many of today’s immigrants do not find pre-existing communities or the same economic structure as earlier immigrants and thus face more challenges to upward mobility than their predecessors.

Today, about 12 percent of Tampa’s population is foreign-born with Haitians numbering just over 1,300 or less than 1 percent of the total foreign-born population. An additional 274 people claim Haitian ancestry in Tampa bringing the total number of people of Haitian descent to 1,574. Immigrants from the Americas make up 71 percent of Tampa’s foreign-born population and roughly half of these immigrants come from the Caribbean. The Caribbean island responsible for most of this influx is Cuba, accounting for 66 percent of all Caribbean immigrants. The Dominican Republic, Haiti and Jamaica contribute 8 percent, 9 percent and 7.5 percent respectively, of all Caribbean immigrants to Tampa. It should be no surprise then that 21 percent of Tampa’s residents speak a language other than English at home (United States Census Bureau 2006).
Statistics are unavailable for poverty by immigrant group at the county or city level. The best that can be done is to provide data on poverty by place of birth. Fifteen percent of all Tampanians living below the poverty line were foreign-born, a figure slightly higher than the native-born population of the city. Hillsborough County, with 16 percent of all foreign-born living in poverty, has a rate similar to other counties with large foreign-born populations. Orange County, the home of Orlando, also has a rate of 16 percent of all foreign-born living in poverty. The denser concentrations of poverty in urban areas are a reflection of economic changes over the past three decades and higher loads of immigrants, the elderly and the unemployed.

Tampa has had a large African-American population dating from the late 1800s. This was not unusual for that era; Florida’s population was 47 percent native-born African-American in the 1860s (Greenbaum 2002:51). Out of a population of nearly 6000 by the 1890s, 1600 were African-American or about 27 percent of the population (Greenbaum 2002:60). That figure is nearly the same for the most recent census data, with about 26 percent of Tampa’s 303,000 residents being African-American (United States Census Bureau 2006). However, even one hundred years ago there were distinctions drawn between black immigrant populations and native-born blacks. The sharpest distinction in Tampa was drawn between Afro-Cubans and African-Americans. These distinctions have not disappeared and have become more complicated as groups of Afro-Caribbean immigrants have arrived from an array of island nations.

Tampa’s economy relies on tourism and services dollars from wealthy “snow-birds” and other vacationers. Numerous large companies in the banking and telecommunications industries have regional offices in Tampa and it is home to many call
centers. Additionally, Tampa now has the nation’s seventh largest and Florida’s largest port. The port is host to a thriving cruise industry, offshore casino boats and commercial shipping (City Data 2006). While the economy of the region diversified after World War II to heavy industry, and later finance, biotechnology and healthcare, it still has a large agricultural sector (City Data 2006). Currently, manufacturing only accounts for 5 percent of jobs in the county but one hundred years ago, its industrial workforce consisted overwhelmingly of immigrants (Mormino and Pozzetta 1998:43).

Educationally, the School District of Hillsborough County is ranked ninth in size in the nation based on 2006 census figures. It has over 160,000 students enrolled and nearly 10,000 full time teachers (Florida Department of Education 2005b). However, the school district reflects the high levels of poverty among those 18 and under with twenty of the county’s twenty-three high schools having a higher proportion of their students on free or reduced lunch than the county’s 12.5 percent poverty rate (Florida Department of Education 2005a). While Hillsborough County’s white population is just over 75 percent, nearly half of its schools have minority rates of over 50 percent (Florida Department of Education 2005a). Half of the county’s residents have a high school diploma or higher and 16 percent have at least a bachelor’s degree. These statistics point to larger populations of minority and poor individuals of school age than the general population. Some of this reflects the growing immigrant population of Tampa. It is to one such population that we next turn.

**Haitians in Tampa**

In Hillsborough County there were just over 3,000 people who claimed Haitian ancestry on the 2000 Census. Of that number, 2,370 were foreign-born. As I mentioned in my introduction to this chapter, the statistics do not provide us with much more
information on Haitians in Tampa or Hillsborough County. However, by breaking down exactly where these 3,000 individuals live and then exploring the characteristics of those areas, we can begin to get a picture of the environment in which Haitian immigrants live. These general statements about the areas where Haitians live are supplemented by my own fieldwork observations and experiences. I have chosen to use Zip Codes to break the County down into manageable parts rather than plats or census districts. This was done mostly out of ease, since I never asked a respondent what census plat they lived in but did ascertain their zip codes.

Tampa has 27 zip codes used for residential addresses, of which nine have heavy concentrations of Haitians. All nine have at least 100 individuals who claim Haitian ancestry or foreign-born status (United States Census Bureau 2006). Haitians do not make up a large proportion of the foreign-born population in any of these nine areas. Additionally, West Indians, with one exception, do not comprise anywhere near a majority of the foreign-born. As mentioned above, Cubans and Central Americans comprise the largest block of foreign-born in the entire Tampa area and thus account for the majority of the foreign-born in these nine zip codes.

All but two of these nine areas are in urban areas. Of the other two, one is suburban and the other is rural. The suburban zip code encompasses an affluent area of town and has become popular with Haitian immigrants and the second-generation who come from more privileged backgrounds and often have professional degrees. The fact that only one of these nine zip codes is in a rural area supports the evidence of the low incidence of Haitians engaged in farm or agricultural labor. Compared to county, state and national levels, these nine areas have much higher rates of poverty. Overall then,
Haitian immigrant and second-generation individuals live in areas with higher poverty rates than the city average. Furthermore, Haitians overwhelmingly live in neighborhoods that are minority majority. Haitians live in areas that are heavily populated by those who claim an African-American racial identity.

Haitians in Tampa are not homogenous. What I found upon starting my fieldwork was that there was a very well off and active group of Haitians and Haitian-Americans who organized Haitian group activities and also participated in the wider Tampa community. These individuals were professionals and many had lived in the wealthy suburbs of Port-au-Prince. A number of them had been educated overseas, spoke English upon their arrival and quite a few came to the United States to take advantage of specific job offers. Most owned at least one home, and some owned several investment properties. The majority were engaged in professional occupations or were entrepreneurs. They were more assimilated to American life than their poorer counterparts. However, they still maintained values that were prized by Haitians. Many of them felt that they had achieved the American dream. Their children and grandchildren were attending college or starting their first jobs post-college. Some were going to private high schools and others were working their first part-time jobs. Their ordinariness was what struck me.

Contrasting sharply with this group were the Haitians and Haitian-Americans I met living in neighborhoods characterized by high poverty, high crime rates, low home ownership and large numbers of immigrant and native-born minorities. Many of these individuals did unskilled or manual labor. A few were auto mechanics, a few women worked as secretaries, a sizeable group worked for a large venue doing their cleaning, and
many women worked as part-time, off the books nannies and housekeepers. Very few were able to speak English on arrival. Many of this second group had some education. And while the parents in this group stressed the importance of education just as much as the first group, they seemed unable to get their children to produce the academic outcomes they desired. Part of this difficulty lies with the over-crowded and resource-poor schools that the children of poor immigrants attend. This group also stressed the importance of traditional Haitian values but seemed to lack the robust and complex social networks that the first group maintained. While my research focused primarily on this second group of individuals, I did include a handful of students from wealthier families in my sample to provide some contrast and balance.

**Acculturation**

Acculturation, as discussed in Chapter 3, is not a monolithic process that proceeds evenly or similarly for all immigrants. Factors that affect this process fall into two broad categories: internal and external. Chapter 3 discussed these issues in general, as they apply to all immigrants. This section will now explore how they specifically relate to Haitian immigrants.

**Internal Factors**

Internal factors that affect acculturation are family and cultural values that foster robust social networks, education, occupation, knowledge of English, literacy, cultural knowledge of the United States, and whether a Haitian is first or second-generation. All characteristics that affect acculturation do not necessarily fall easily within external or internal categories. For instance, the color of a person’s skin is an internal factor yet it only becomes salient because it is exposed to another system of racial classification.
Equally indistinct is the way that a Haitian’s class background at home interacts with the American system of class stratification.

Family in Haiti is the root of all social life and, along with Voudou, the basis of most social organization. In a society so poor, a large, extended family is valued for its closeness, comfort and aid. The family is the root of all opportunities and supports its members through social networks. It is also the first place that sanctions are meted out for bad behavior and praise for good. However, it is not alone in this role. The Voudou churches and secret societies that exist throughout Haiti provide another level of social organization and help to enforce the rules of culture. Additionally, these societies help to broaden and expand a family’s social networks. Through relationships based on kinship or obligation, members of these secret societies have access to large stores of social capital. Another avenue of social networking for rural inhabitants of Haiti are the social ties to people who either migrate or travel to Port-au-Prince or overseas, putting them in touch with larger spheres of knowledge, information and resources. These migrants weave the dense social webs that create transnational social spaces. Their knowledge and resources impact those at home and enable these social spaces to continually change and grow.

Understanding these basic relationships and obligations helps to explain what types of resources and networks Haitians are familiar with and will seek out or seek to recreate once they have migrated. Because individuals are so heavily embedded in family relationships and obligations, you will very rarely see a wealthy Haitian whose family is still suffering. What happens to one happens to all. The migration process strains these family ties. Individuals frequently migrate alone and must try to embed themselves
within networks quickly upon arrival in order to be able to bring over more family members or remit money home for survival. When families are reunited in America, each individual must adjust and frequently help others to do so as well. Our society does not value strong, large extended families and networks of obligations as Haiti does. Rather, we almost require individuality and isolation if we are to succeed in attaining an upwardly mobile lifestyle. These pressures can corrode strong family ties if there is not a community of likeminded people in which to embed.

Stepick (1986) found that individual capital variables were strongly linked to finding work. Thus, even though kin and community networks can help in the search, it was individuals who spoke English and who had large social networks who were more likely to find employment. This complicates the impact of community capital and networks on new immigrants. What it suggests is that it is not merely the presence of these assets, but the depth and quality of them. The likelihood that some relatives and members of social networks will possess needed resources increases with the more people you add to these networks.

The particular traits individuals and family members bring with them also interact with American society. Our economy values educational and professional credentials. With 80 percent of their population below the poverty line, most Haitians will lack these credentials. Those Haitians who have degrees, and especially those with degrees from North America or Europe, will have an easier time finding employment than their less credentialed peers. Additionally, Haitians who arrive in the United States with a useful skill that the labor market will reward also will find work more quickly. The ability to speak English is another highly valued skill that the recently arrived can exploit to their
advantage. With Haiti’s illiteracy rate still hovering around 50 percent and most of its schools requiring tuition payments, a large number of Haitian immigrants will lack these skills. Furthermore, as Mintz points out (1974:278), Haiti’s lack of industry and its dysfunctional civil service ill prepares its citizens for work at home or abroad. The skills that other Caribbean migrants have acquired in their industrial and bureaucratic labors make them more marketable on the American job market.

Knowledge of American culture and job opportunities is a very valuable resource that can smooth the acculturation process. As Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow (1987:16) point out, immigrants often have knowledge of the culture to which they are migrating before they ever leave home because of transnational ties and the penetration of Western cultures and markets. Movies, music, books, newspaper and radio all provide avenues through which individuals can acquire knowledge about their intended migration target. However, most Haitians are so poor, particularly in the isolated rural areas of the country, that these avenues of information acquisition are not readily available to them.

Whether someone of Haitian ancestry is a first or second-generation immigrant also plays a large role in acculturating. Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow note that many first generation immigrants maintain a “dual place orientation (1987:22).” This orientation to both home, and host cultures helps to create the transnational social spheres that can benefit themselves and their children. Social ties and kinship are very important to first generation immigrants yet these ties begin to diminish with many in the second-generation. The 1.5-generation often has very little memory of home and finds their parent’s nostalgia annoying and difficult to understand. One and a half and second-generation children who were raised in America are often culturally American. They see
very little need for the social and familial relationships and obligations that their parents so heavily depended upon for solace and survival. In fact, many second-generation Haitians are quite hostile toward Haiti and their own Haitian identity. They know enough to understand how dysfunctional the country is and they have faced taunting and prejudice based on their nationality. They also resent the limited choices that are available to them because of their parent’s poor background and limited social capital.

However, the acculturation process of second-generation Haitians is only partially related to their parent’s circumstances and attributes. If their parents are thrust into the wider American culture of grocery stores, government offices and jobs, the second-generation must often face the challenges of our educational system with very little assistance from their parents. Those Haitian immigrants who are not middle class, fluent in English and worldly know little of public schools and American bureaucracy. While many immigrants from less developed nations are familiar with bureaucracy, Haiti has had little in the way of a functioning civil service for nearly two centuries, thus allowing for little exposure to officialdom. Poor second-generation Haitians are left to negotiate the educational system on their own.

Poor second-generation Haitians also must negotiate the treacherous social life of American school children. Most poor Haitians end up settling in poor neighborhoods. In Tampa, that means being surrounded by poverty and by people who view Haiti and Haitians in discriminatory ways. Because Tampa’s Haitian population is so small, there is no Haitian enclave in which poor Haitian immigrants can seek refuge and familiarity. Wealthier Haitians in Tampa, the ones least likely to need it, have been the ones to create a vibrant social and cultural network of fellow middle and upper class Haitians. Those
who live in poverty in Tampa must work to create their own networks. While many families know of a relative or friend who has settled into Tampa, because of the community’s size, many will not. However, because many Haitian immigrants in Tampa first immigrated to Miami, a number of them had the opportunity to visit Tampa, learn about its lower cost of living and scout around for a job before moving here.

Unfortunately, this still leaves them very isolated and their children find few second-generation Haitians with whom to socialize. Additionally, many second-generation Haitians end up acting as translators for their families. They are often pressed into service to accompany parents and younger siblings to doctor’s visits and other tasks that require a proficient English speaker. This often requires the child to be absent from school or to have erratic attendance. Furthermore, when their families are very poor, teenagers old enough to work often leave school to find employment to help support their families.

Stepick (1986) in finding that education levels, English language ability and knowledge of American labor markets all directly correlate with upward mobility points to the significance of individual variables in successfully adapting to American culture. He also points out that while those Haitian immigrants who possess these positive qualities do better in the job market, there are still significant numbers of unemployed yet well educated English speaking immigrants. This is due to the reception that Haitians are given upon their arrival. It is to these external factors that we turn next.

**External Factors**

The influence of the transnational perspective has allowed researchers to conceptualize immigration as a continuum, with people exhibiting varying degrees of social embeddedness and acculturation. The large social spheres created by transnational
migration have a strong influence on many first generation immigrants. For many of them, “so long as Haiti is their primary reference point, there is no need to be assimilated as Americans and less as black Americans for they already have a country of socio-cultural identity (Charles 1992:114).” Charles goes on to argue that class and the Haitian conceptualization of blackness have been the main factors that have shaped Haitian identity in the United States (1992:117). While I might disagree as to whether these issues are in fact the main factors to shape Haitian-American identity, I do believe that they are the main external factors to do so.

Race and class change over time and are contingent on a variety of external factors. Home country understandings of race and class often vary from those of the host country. Racial systems in the Caribbean and Latin America tend to be more fluid than the American system, with shade and other forms of status designating a racial identity. In the United States, it is color alone that determines race. Outside of African-American and immigrant communities, there is very little consciousness of the subtle differences in shade or the implications these differences carry. Racial systems that use differences in shade make social distinctions based on skin hue and on physical attributes such as facial features, hair types, wealth and education. In these systems, money can “whiten” a dark hued individual. Coming to the United States from Haiti, the lack of fluidity and mobility in the American racial system is quite a shock.

Once here, Haitians and other Afro-Caribbean immigrants quickly realize that their nationality and ethnicity count for very little if they are not made known to whites. White Americans do not expect to encounter black skinned people who are trying to differentiate themselves from African-Americans. Haitians also are wholly unprepared
for their invisibility as immigrants and being lumped together with black Americans (Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow 1987:104). Thus, Afro-Caribbean immigrants are seen simply as black. Because of the low status of black Americans, most black immigrants would rather avoid assimilating to and being identified as African-American. They learn that they can benefit from distinguishing themselves from African-Americans while taking advantage of gains made from past struggles for racial equality. Furthermore, many first-generation immigrants want to retain their ethnic identity. Because of its utility, many Haitians find that they emphasize their ethnicity or nationality more than they ever have at home. According to Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow, this is only natural. It is only when surrounded by different ethnicities that you would activate and articulate your own ethnicity, particularly if it affords some benefit (1987:98).

Haitians often are baffled by the distinction that Americans make between race and class. While Haitians have some class-consciousness, it revolves primarily around distinctions made between groups of similarly hued people. Until fairly recently, there was no middle class in Haiti. Haiti historically was divided between the elite and the peasantry. The distinctions that Haitians make between these two classes tend to revolve around how each earns their living. The elite do not do physical labor; instead they are merchants, professionals or civil servants. They typically are urban; their children attend private schools and often attend college abroad. They speak French, are overwhelmingly Catholic and have Western forms of marriage and kinship relations. Peasants are rural, overwhelmingly illiterate, speak Kreyol, work the land or manual labor jobs, practice Voudou, have common law marriages and are isolated from the outside world. One further distinction is that the elite, often described as mulatto, are typically much lighter
skinned than the peasantry. Thus, class cannot be divorced from race in Haiti (Mintz 1974:271).

The American systems of race and class are more distinct. In the United States, race and class are separated. This distinction served a particular historic purpose for Southern elite whites. In order to maintain the allegiance of poor whites, wealthy whites in the South played up racial differences. Our belief in class mobility hinges on the distinction between wealth and individual physical attributes; anyone can become president if they work hard. When Haitians confront this system they try to negotiate it using their own systems of meaning. This can lead to feelings of frustration. Ultimately, what many black immigrants realize is that they have to actively manipulate their racial and ethnic identities to succeed. By using the appropriate identity in the right circumstance, they can differentiate themselves from African-Americans and reap the benefits of an unjust social system.

Aside from race and class, other external factors affect Haitian acculturation. The length of time a city has been host to immigrant communities influences individual and institutional attitudes as well as the local labor market. As cities become known for a steady supply of low wage labor, businesses will take advantage of those low wages and abundant labor. Furthermore, as certain immigrant groups become known to local employers, social networks are activated to recruit more immigrants from the same home country. In Tampa, one large employer had hired one or two Haitians. When there were more job openings those Haitians encouraged their friends and relatives to apply for the positions. Soon the manager realized he had a whole crew of cleaners and maintenance employees who were all Haitian and was pleased with their performance. When new
openings arose, he went to his employees and asked them to spread the word around that they were hiring and would like more Haitians.

Where individual immigrants are in the migration flow (early or late) affects job prospects and the reception they will receive. For example, other immigrant groups arriving in South Florida at the same time as Haitians found jobs while most Haitians did not. These groups were part of well-established migration flows that channeled new immigrants into markets where there was demand for their skills and labor. Haitians, on the other hand, arrived at a time when there was no demand for their labor and where they were seen as taking jobs from other, older immigrant groups.

Haitian immigrants have frequently been on the receiving end of negative reactions. Older immigrant groups perceive them as a threat to their hard won political and economic gains and native-born minorities, already accustomed to the way that earlier Afro-Caribbean immigrants attempted to differentiate themselves, have no great affection for them either. For example, Cuban immigrants in Miami have a dominant position in the economy and see other, more recent immigrants as threats to their own hard won gains. They treat political and economic influence as if it were a zero-sum game. The influence that Cubans in particular have been able to exert on the federal government assures that other immigrants and refugees are not treated as favorably as they are. Furthermore, many of these other immigrant groups are shut out of large parts of the local labor market because of the earlier and larger presence and greater influence of the Cuban enclave (Stepick 1986:334). Immigrant groups that lack a large and vibrant ethnic enclave are thus very vulnerable in the presence of other enclaves and will have added difficulty in assimilating.
Segmented Assimilation

As discussed in Chapter 4, segmented assimilation is a way of understanding the widely differing outcomes of second-generation assimilation. It posits that America is a structurally segregated and stratified society. There are multiple cultures to which immigrants can acculturate and different paths lead them to either upward or downward mobility. Immigrants can assimilate to the generic, middle class American culture, to the minority underclass or can retain strong ethnic identities while also learning just enough American culture to be successful. This last path utilizes additive acculturation which will be discussed shortly.

As discussed earlier, the factors that determine which path a second-generation immigrant will take depend on internal and external factors such as race, class, and where their family first settles. Second-generation Haitians in particular, are susceptible to the negative, downward mobility outcome described by this theory. Haitians are triply discriminated against based on their immigrant identity, their Haitianness and their blackness. Because of external factors such as negative stereotypes and prejudices, many second-generation immigrants grow to be ashamed of their identity or to want to hide it from Americans, particularly their black American peers. Additionally, their status as immigrants opens them to ridicule from classmates and peers. Finally, their race, combined with issues of class, creates a self-defeating attitude.

Second-generation Haitians who are living in poor neighborhoods and attending school with black Americans are exposed to racism and different responses to it by native-born blacks. Looking around them they see no way out of poverty. Confronted with discriminatory behavior by their peers based on their Haitian and immigrant identity, and subjected to racism by white Americans and Latin American immigrants,
one option some choose is to assimilate to black street culture. However, this is a trap because this identity itself predisposes them to greater risk of failure due to the attendant adversarial behaviors that will be expected of them by their peers. Unfortunately, many Haitian youth never recognize the bind they are creating for themselves.

Segmented assimilation for Haitian immigrants is heavily impacted by the choices they have available to them. These choices are in turn constrained by their own and their parent’s attributes as well as those of the community and neighborhood to which they emigrated. The options available for a poor, second-generation Haitian are thus narrowed to two, ethnic maintenance with a possibility for additive acculturation or adoption of a downwardly mobile identity. Their wealthier Haitian peers have the added benefit of living in mixed race or majority white areas and attending schools with similar racial mixtures. They therefore have the opportunity to learn about and potentially adopt a mainstream, middle-class, seemingly white identity which affords them greater opportunities for upward mobility.

**Situational Identity for Haitians**

Haitians in the United States are discriminated against because of their color as well as their nationality. Some of this prejudice arose because of early attempts at AIDS education. Early shorthand for at risk populations was the four H’s: hemophiliacs, heroin users (IV drug users), homosexuals and Haitians. Because of the quick growth in HIV/AIDS cases in Haiti, mostly as a result of prostitution and sex tourism, they were labeled a high-risk group. This shorthand caused massive protest and demonstrations in New York City as Haitian and Haitian-American organizations objected to the fact that they were the only nationality designated as high risk. Cries of racism were common.
Other West Indian immigrants in New York undoubtedly took notice of these protests and the original incitement, the four H shorthand. While it is impossible to trace the spread of the idea that Haitians were dirty, infectious and diseased, it seems likely that some of these stereotypes and prejudices traveled along well-established transnational information highways back to home nations and to other American cities as well. What seems to not have traveled along those same routes is the correction of this grievous error and the knowledge that Haitians are no more likely to get HIV/AIDS because they are Haitian than are Protestants or Italians.

While some of the prejudicial stereotypes about Haitians do not involve dirtiness or disease, most have something to do with this issue. Unfortunately, second-generation Haitians, in Tampa and elsewhere, confront these attitudes and taunts regularly as they wait at their bus stops, walk the school corridors and eat in the lunchroom. As I mentioned above, many students will purposefully adopt other identities for themselves attempting to lose their Haitianness and thus the cause of their ridicule. In the process, many of them end up taking on identities which affect their educational outcomes. However, not all Haitians, first or second-generation, choose this path. Many attempt to strengthen or maintain their ethnic identity in the face of negative attitudes from non-Haitians. So, while many of the cultural characteristics that are maintained by Haitians are attempts at keeping their social ties to home, some of them serve the added purpose of being responses to the discrimination they face here.

For the first generation, that discrimination is more likely to be racial than disease related. Most Afro-Caribbean immigrants have run head on into a racial system in the United States unlike those they left behind. These island nations are frequently black
majority and have been unaccustomed to being a small minority with little political, social or economic power since independence. While these nations have long had experience with slavery and colonization, most have claimed their independence and created black ruled nation states. Additionally, their status as externally colonized people differs from African-Americans who had to live with their former enslavers and colonizers in a system created by them to maintain black inferiority (Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow 1987:106).

Haitians and other West Indians find the American system of racial classification bewildering, as it offers no opportunities for whitening and very few for upward mobility. They often become hostile to American born blacks because of their perceived “laziness” and unwillingness to not only challenge the system but to work it for their own benefit. Haitians in particular cannot or choose not to understand the extent and dynamics of American race history. They know about slavery and white brutality yet they still blame black Americans for not getting over it, rising above it and not taking the initiative to exploit every opportunity available to them (Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow 1987:100).

Immigrants are obviously self-selected to be achievers. Most want to fulfill their dreams badly enough that they have left home and endured poverty in order to make a better life for themselves. They do not understand or wish not to see the salient differences between their societies and America and how those differences have affected the responses of native-born blacks to discrimination and lack of opportunity. They believe that if they can succeed as immigrants then why cannot African-Americans succeed as well. This attitude seriously detracts from any hope of a pan-racial coalition to fight the discrimination that Haitians admit they also suffer. Haitians and other Afro-
Caribbean immigrants ignore their role in perpetuating the perception that African-Americans are lazy and poor by differentiating themselves from them. Part of this attitude has to do with images white America exports as a land of economic opportunity for all while the subtext is that if blacks are poor it is not for a lack of opportunity on the part of white America.

However, Haitians, like other Afro-Caribbean immigrants, have figured out how to work the system to their advantage. They discovered that if they deploy the correct identities and behaviors, those viewed as superior to native-born minorities, they often reap tangible benefits from white Americans. In order to distinguish themselves from black Americans, Haitians will strategically emphasize their ethnicity when they feel it will bring them benefits. In other situations, where it is expedient for them to do so, they will emphasize a shared skin color with black Americans. This strategy is often used as a way to shelter themselves from the racism and discrimination they experience. Haitians also have the opportunity, usually for the first time, to create connections with the larger West Indian population and they can try on that identity as well. All of this identity play can lead to a larger field of identity choices for Haitian immigrants, something that is potentially beneficial for the second-generation who risks losing their chance at upward mobility from selecting the wrong identity (Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow 1987:104-5).

While this situational identity is useful to Haitian immigrants, it also provokes resentment from black Americans. Markers of Haitian identity such as the French language (or Kreyol which sounds so similar to French that most Americans do not realize there is a difference), Haitian flags, dress and food all elicit positive reactions from white Americans as they serve to distinguish them from black Americans.
(Buchanan Stafford 1987:212). Unfortunately, they do little to repair the often-rocky relationships between Haitians or other West Indians and black Americans.

**Subtractive/Additive Acculturation for Haitians**

Immigrant children and the second-generation born in America will face external pressures to acculturate as well as pressure from their families to maintain their ethnic identity and values. These pressures often pull the second-generation in different directions and the tensions can seem irreconcilable. However, there is some evidence to suggest that there is a way to both adapt and maintain one’s ethnic identity. Gibson (1991) found that among Sikh immigrants with high home country educational and class backgrounds, parents were able to come to an uneasy truce with school culture that was pressuring their children to assimilate. What these parents feared was a loss of their children’s distinct cultural identities. The schools were operating under the assumption that to do well in America you had to become American. They implicitly encouraged a process of subtractive assimilation where the home culture was written over by the host culture.

Parents pragmatically encouraged their children to maintain their home culture but to also learn elements of the host culture that would be beneficial to them. Through this process of additive acculturation, children would now be bicultural and better able to meet the demands of the American job market. Their parents, in the hope that adding American culture to their repertoire would make them successful in school and later in life would now abide other activities such as liking American food, learning English and having American friends. Implicitly, this practice works because all human beings code-switch based on the context in which they find themselves.
This process requires efforts from both home and school and thus might not be practical in all educational settings. The parents in Gibson’s (1991) study were better educated and of a higher class than many of the poor Haitians in Tampa. The students in the study were not attending inner city schools where homogenization of teaching and student cultures is prevalent because of small budgets and staffing issues. However, the tensions between home and host culture seem universal and many parents, whether they approve of it or not, will eventually have to cope with their second-generation children adapting in some ways to American culture. Thus, despite the pressures that schools exert, parental accommodation might inadvertently lead to additive acculturation on a large scale. But we need to inform educational professionals about these issues and teach them how to encourage additive acculturation in their classrooms.

Conclusions

This chapter has attempted to explore Haitian life and acculturation in the United States. An earlier chapter laid out the theories of acculturation; this chapter explored the specific case of Haitian acculturation. Haitians in the United States number in the millions yet they have settled in a handful of states and cities. As communities and enclaves have been built, more immigrants settled in these areas and created vibrant communities of first, second and even third-generation Haitians. Tampa, as the place of settlement for immigrants and their children in this study, was of particular interest.

Tampa has an interesting history full of immigration, most of it from Latin America and the Spanish Caribbean. As Tampa diversified from cigars into heavier manufacturing and grew into a modern city the face of her immigrant population changed as well. The neighborhoods and areas of Tampa that were once home to Latin American and Cuban cigar factory employees are now multiracial and multi-class as well. Along
with Tampa’s growth has come poverty. As the city became a true urban entity, distressed pockets of the poor and working poor have embedded themselves into the social fabric of the community. As America’s most recent arrivals, many immigrants end up in these very neighborhoods with little help and a steep road to success ahead of them. However, because Tampa is still growing and has such a diverse economy, there are low-end jobs available even to those with few skills. Our newest Americans can often be found in these sectors of the market. There will always be jobs that Americans will not want and Haitians and other recent immigrants will be more than happy to take.

The second half of this chapter has explored the various attributes of individuals and communities that affect the acculturation process for Haitians in the United States and in Tampa. Individual factors will always account for the largest variation in acculturation outcomes. Individuals from the same families frequently undergo different levels of adaptation to their host nation primarily because of their social and personal attributes. However, external factors, while potentially more predictable, are no less important. It is these factors that contribute to the processes of segmented assimilation, situational identity and code-switching, and additive acculturation.

Haitians in Tampa are similar in many ways to Afro-Caribbean immigrants in any urban area. Yet their own cultural values and beliefs can work to create opportunities or impediments to their successful acculturation. Many applied lessons arise from these explorations of race, class and identity interactions. Those lessons will be explored in Chapter 8. Chapter 7 will explore the education system and the impact of race and class on educating today’s immigrant youth.
CHAPTER 6
RACE, CLASS AND EDUCATION – THE SECOND-GENERATION

Introduction

Poor immigrant and minority students face different challenges in obtaining an education than white, middle class students. The way a person approaches schooling, or any other situation, is in part determined by their previous experiences with and knowledge of that institution, whether at home or abroad. It is also influenced by their own cultural perspective, embedded in their daily lives, of the role, function, utility and expectations of these institutions. Orientations towards schooling are also impacted by the specific factors and characteristics of individuals such as age, language, race, class, and immigration status. Furthermore, student approaches to schooling are profoundly influenced by the larger structural factors which shape and constrain the choices and opportunities that individuals have available to them. What this means for educating immigrant students in America is that we can not assume that these students come to us as tabula rasa. We must take into account the previous experiences and exposure each individual has had with education and the way that education fits into their culture and the views they have of such institutions. Additionally, we must understand the ways in which society and educational institutions themselves shape the process and experience of schooling for immigrant students.

Schools are places of socialization for our children, native-born or immigrant. Schools are also places that sort and funnel children into different life paths. We cannot escape the simple fact that schools help reproduce the system of which they are a part.
As such, they spend a lot of their time testing and ranking their students and attempting to socialize their charges with the values that are part of mainstream society. However, lacking even an agreed upon meaning for intelligence, besides what is culturally deemed intelligent, educational researchers have spent a lot of time focusing on educational outcomes rather than achievement because achievement is such a culturally contingent issue. Similarly, many social scientists that examine immigrant and minority education choose to examine academic orientations rather than achievement and many times forgo examinations of specific outcomes. We focus on academic orientation rather than outcomes because orientation reflects aspirations, attitudes and effort rather than actual intelligence or ability. Thus, we can compare students with varying degrees of aptitude on a single scale. However, we cannot forget that those with lower abilities to perform well in school might develop adversarial orientations because of this lower ability rather than any other factor.

The first part of this chapter will focus on the affects that the intersections of race, immigrant status, ethnicity, language and poverty have on Afro-Caribbean immigrants and their school orientations. This section will explore how individual factors and circumstances can impact school orientations and outcomes. The second part of this chapter will focus on four sets of theories (briefly discussed in Chapter 1) which have been put forth to explain, interpret and predict the educational experiences of minorities, immigrants and refugees. I will explain their inadequacies and then present a synthesis of all four that helps get around those inadequacies and provides explanatory power for the experiences of the students in my research. I will then briefly discuss the case of Haitians
in Tampa schools, providing a general overview of the types and characteristics of the schools that Haitian immigrant and second-generation students are attending.

**Minority and Immigrant Education – A Start**

Our current political climate dealing with educational issues is quite conservative. However, this conservatism is masked as progressive educational change. Nationally and state-wide in Florida we have seen moves towards choice, vouchers, mainstreaming English language learners (ELL) students and the dismantling of affirmative action. Those responsible for these moves espouse progressive clichés about how having greater choice and flexibility under voucher programs will allow all parents the option to shop for and purchase the best education for their children while ignoring the fact that those most in need of good schools, poor and minority students, will be left behind. Proponents of mainstreaming ELL students cite studies that support their claims that putting students with little or no English skills in mainstream classes will only help them to learn English faster. Those who support the dismantling of affirmative action in higher education are hurting future generations of poor and minority students by creating systems of higher education that will work in an equitable fashion only if our K-12 systems are rid of their present inequalities.

All of these trends in education policy have negative effects not only for native-born poor and minority students, but black immigrants as well. Caribbean immigrants, who are often both poor and minorities are additionally hurt by their foreign backgrounds, lack of English proficiency of some, and their specific ethnic identities. Afro-Caribbean immigrants are often additionally endangered because of their relative invisibility to policy makers and educators alike. However, it is often difficult to attack many of the programs that endanger the education of these students because it is not
always immediately apparent that they are bad for our children. Oftentimes, it is only when you delve deeper and explore the consequences of their implementation that you begin to see the true negative costs.

Given the current climate, where the meager supports that would traditionally have helped poor and minority students are being removed and where new initiatives are unlikely to succeed, these students are suffering. Afro-Caribbean immigrants will not only be hindered by current trends in education policy, but are at risk of being completely forgotten or ignored. Many policy makers and educators are unaware of the vast cultural differences that exist between African-Americans and Afro-Caribbean immigrants. When people look at a Haitian they see a black person.

Yet poverty is not just one more problem to be dealt with for Haitian immigrant and second-generation students. Many students endure poverty, stigmatization as black in a society still suffering from racism, and condemnation as foreign and seemingly illiterate without the ability to view these negative attitudes with a dual frame of reference (Suarez-Orozco 1991:105-110). Because the second-generation has no first hand memory of their parent’s country and culture as home, all they know is the their current lives. Furthermore, their seeming invisibility hurts these students because they lack the programs and support in their education that other more visible groups receive. They are expected to achieve with little or no help beyond ELL classes, many of which are being cut or are taught by someone who does not speak Kreyol.

Haitians and other Afro-Caribbean immigrants also suffer from explicit forms of racism. Having people follow them in stores or treat them differently because of their skin color are potentially new and puzzling behaviors of which young Haitians will have
to make sense. They will not necessarily understand the educational tracking systems and lowered expectations that are often the direct result of educator’s racism, classism or xenophobia. Because of differences in the race systems between the United States and Caribbean nations, Afro-Caribbean teens will have to realign or create their sense of themselves within a larger, often hostile, society. In Haiti, as in other Caribbean nations, the race system is mutable and color can be erased or at least tempered by wealth. While money whitens in many West Indian and South American societies, in the United States, you cannot move out of blackness (Zephir 1996). In fact, if you have money, you actually are more useful to the American race system if you remain classified as black because you become a token example of the supposed equality our nation has to offer. Afro-Caribbean immigrants and second-generation students must learn this system, their place within it and how to cope with competing sets of cultural values and meanings. Some manage to do this while retaining their sense of ethnicity while others do not.

These encounters with the American racial system often are confusing and difficult to contextualize for newer Afro-Caribbean immigrant students and even the second-generation that has grown up with it. Some of these students will be unlikely to get sympathy or counseling from their parents in dealing with racial discrimination or even xenophobia because their parents will view these encounters with discrimination as something that must be overcome, a cost of immigration that all newcomers must endure (Gibson 1995). However, these children will be much more likely to view these experiences as permanent, as a condition of being black and American because they spend their time with Black Americans. Ironically, these children might be more like their parents and view these problems as temporary if they spent most of their time with
other co-ethnics or white Americans, yet mainstream America’s xenophobia and racism often force new immigrant children and the second-generation into neighborhoods and schools that are often minority majority. This very ghettoization of immigration can lead to immigrant children adopting the attitudes and orientations towards America and its institutions that are likely to cause them to fail (Suarez-Orozco 1991:110-112).

Combining with racism to cause educational problems for Afro-Caribbean immigrants is the continuing high level of anti-immigrant xenophobia which makes it likely that today’s post-1965 immigrants of color will run into someone who views them as taking their jobs and stealing from our country. This anti-immigrant stance can be just as virulent and destructive as racial discrimination. Children of immigrants will come into contact with a system that was built for American children and has only grudgingly made room for them. Even in states with large immigrant populations students still have problems getting a teacher who speaks their home language. According to my own research, Haitian children in Hillsborough County have two Haitian paraprofessionals for 200 or more schools. These men go to two different schools each, every day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. That means that combined, they manage to visit 20 schools a week. While not all schools have Haitian ELL students, this number seems inadequate.

Being undocumented adds another layer to the already difficult experiences these children are likely to face. Undocumented immigrant parents are nervous about sending their children to school or taking them to a doctor’s office for fear of coming into contact with institutions that could report their illegal status (Suarez-Orozco 1996:154). Poor health can be a major deterrent to academic achievement. If a child is hungry, has a
toothache, is sick or cannot see properly they are unlikely to do well in school. Additionally, many undocumented families move frequently to avoid detection or to follow migrant agricultural work. This movement makes it difficult to enroll a child in school and have them continuously attend one school for more than a short time. Children are also affected by their parent’s undocumented status even if they themselves are legal. Many students also miss school because they must care for younger siblings or work to help their family survive (Montero-Sieburth 1991:315).

One byproduct of missing many days of school will be that new immigrants will have difficulty learning English and therefore will damn themselves to the same low wage jobs that lack security and benefits in which their parents labor. The ability to speak English can be emancipating for immigrants. Lack of English proficiency can impede parents from communicating with schools, helping their children with homework, attending parent-teacher conferences and a variety of other practices which would help support their children in their educational endeavors (Gougeon 1993:252). However, acquiring English proficiency can be fraught with familial problems. Children who learn English more quickly than their parents are often used as translators for the family and this can affect their ability to attend school as they are kept at home to accompany relatives to doctor’s visits, driver’s license offices or in other situations where English is needed. Gougeon has found that some children who assimilate more quickly than their parents become highly independent and rebel against the authority their parents try to exert (1993:269).

These issues of race, immigrant status and language obviously play out differently for different immigrant groups, depending not only on when and where they arrived, but
also on their ethnicity and nationality. Haitian immigrants might experience more racism than lighter-skinned Cubans in Miami, but Puerto Ricans might be more despised than Haitians in New York. One thing seems clear though, Haitians are disparaged just about anywhere you go. As mentioned earlier, because of government and media malfeasance throughout the 1980’s, Haitians came to be known as dirty, riddled with AIDS, poverty stricken émigrés who came to America for a handout (Farmer 1992, Wilentz 1989). Haitian children in Miami and New York suffer from other children using the word Haitian as synonymous with dirty or diseased (Stepick 1998, Fernandez-Kelly 1994, and Waters 1994). Furthermore, never having officially recognized Haitians as refugees has further aided the negative media representations that stigmatize them.

The effects of this negative valuation of Haitianness are important to understand for Haitian immigrant and second-generation school children. Some Haitian children feel pressured to give up their identity as Haitians and adopt some other identity to escape the persecution of their peers. The obvious identity choice for most Haitians residing in poor neighborhoods would be African-American (Stepick 1998 and Portes and Zhou 1993). Some children manage to retain their Haitian identity and others fashion a West Indian identity that is highly valued in some schools and neighborhoods (Waters 1994). By adopting an African-American identity as a replacement, Haitian children open themselves up to the possibility of adopting a subset of that identity that has a negative orientation towards education and schooling. While children do not always pick up entire identities, they do tend to pick up the outward markers and manifestations of identities. These are just the type of manifestations, the highly visible ones, that mark a negative orientation towards school (Fordham 1996).
The last factor that seems to disproportionately harm Afro-Caribbean immigrant’s chances of school success is poverty. Many immigrants are poor when they arrive in our country and many continue to be poor for a number of years after their arrival. Because of this poverty, they tend to settle in poor neighborhoods and attend poor schools with fewer resources that have high rates of native-born minorities. Being poor hampers Afro-Caribbean immigrant educational prospects in many ways. Many immigrant parents work long hours and multiple jobs to make ends meet and to save money (Montero-Sieburth 1991:315). This can lead to fewer hours available to spend helping their children with schoolwork or even being able to ensure their child’s school attendance.

Parents and children alike might be unfamiliar with the way American schools operate (Gougeon 1993:255). Many immigrant parents also believe that by providing their children with the opportunity to attend school in the United States that they have completed their parental responsibilities in terms of education. These parents feel that it is the role of the school or teachers to help their children with their homework. Furthermore, the schools that many immigrants attend often lack the ability to properly educate them and feel that these newcomers strain their already meager resources.

These factors I have discussed above are just some of the reasons for the varying academic outcomes immigration and education researchers witness. Native-born minorities share many of these factors and as such, many education researchers have developed theories that can account for the poor academic results that both immigrants and American minorities experience. It is to these theories we now turn.

Voluntary/Involuntary Minorities (Ogbu)

As mentioned briefly in the literature review in Chapter 1, I have chosen to use a model that groups the major theories that are applicable to my research into four main
ideas. The first theory was developed by John Ogbu and deals with the classification of minorities (1987, 1991). It can be quite useful in its generalizations in trying to provide for these different groups through government and social service agencies. The theory focuses on the initial terms of incorporation for the minority group into the United States. He designates two main categories, the voluntary immigrants who choose to come to the United States and the involuntary minorities, or those who were brought here against their will, such as slaves or Mexicans and Native Americans who were made into citizens through conquest of territories (Ogbu 1987, 1991).

By differentiating between immigrant and native minority students, his caste-like (involuntary) and immigrant (voluntary) designations have been a great boon to immigration theorists. Being able to distinguish between the different lived experiences of these two groups is helpful in developing a shorthand for discussing the complex factors that influence responses to schooling. There are certain experiences that an involuntary minority such as African-Americans will have had that are foreign to voluntary minorities. For example, African-Americans have had to live among the descendents of the people who enslaved and oppressed them for hundreds of years. The ensuing race relations that are the direct result of this dynamic often are confusing and illogical to Afro-Caribbean immigrants who come here either for economic purposes or as refugees.

However, while Ogbu is correct in noting that the ways in which his two groups respond to their environments and in particular, discriminatory treatment, the initial classification is inadequate. To begin with, while Ogbu’s work has added immeasurably to our ability to properly identify and classify types of minority students with a shorthand
reference to their voluntary or involuntary status, it is not uniformly applicable to all
groups. Whether Haitians are refugees or immigrants tends to matter less when we are
discussing their actual lived experiences than when we are discussing their status in the
United States or their reasons for emigrating in the first place. One of the major
problems with this theory is that anyone, regardless of nationality, skin color, history of
immigration or other factors, can adopt an identity that would allow them to be placed
within either of Ogbu’s categories. Individuals who at one time were categorized as
voluntary minorities might end up displaying identities that would have them classified as
involuntary minorities but Ogbu’s system does account for such shifts. This fluidity is
not well captured by the static designations of voluntary or involuntary status. This
deficiency will lead to further sub-classifications to deal with issues of specificity that
will eventually render the theory burdensome and unworkable at best and meaningless at
worst.

As Rothstein (2000) points out, there is another complicating factor to Ogbu’s
typology. West Indian students, on the whole, do better than native-born Black
Americans in American schools but they do poorly in England. West Indians in the
United States are here voluntarily and one could also argue that they have immigrated to
the United Kingdom voluntarily. However, there is the complicating factor of former or
even current colonial relationships between the West Indies and Great Britain. So even
though immigrants from the West Indies might have voluntarily emigrated, should their
relationship to the host society be deemed as voluntary? And what about the second-
generation in the United States and the United Kingdom? Are they voluntary minorities?
They did not choose to emigrate, their parents did.
Furthermore, Ogbu’s theory does not account for the generational differences that immigration researchers witness in their studies. A child could be raised as a Haitian and taught Haitian identity and culture all of his life but by the age of 15 he could choose to adopt an adversarial African-American identity. This illustrates that Ogbu’s theory needs to be amended to account for the fact that immigrant parents might be considered voluntary minorities while their children are involuntary minorities. Additionally, poor second-generation and immigrant children might be more likely to experience more discrimination because of their greater contact with American culture and institutions. Ogbu notes that they are likely to respond to this discrimination by developing an oppositional stance but does not provide any framework for predicting or explaining why some students will react like involuntary minorities while others do not. He also neglects to note that these responses will be different from parental reactions to discrimination because they often lack a dual frame of reference, particularly the ability to identify themselves within a home culture’s frame of reference.

**Oppositional Identities/Acting White (Ogbu & Fordham)**

The second group of ideas consists of those proposed by John Ogbu and Signithia Fordham (Ogbu 1987; Fordham 1991, 1996) and attempts to explain why some African-American students do poorly and put forth so little effort towards their studies. Fordham (1988), in particular, points out very clearly that, for many African-American underachievers, doing well in school is a marker of whiteness. Because of white racism and stereotypes, being black typically has been equated with lacking an education and being white has been a trope for being educated (Ogbu and Fordham 1986). Certain African-American students, astutely sizing up the racial and class system arrayed against them, choose to lower their expectations and adopt oppositional identities to an institution
that they perceive to be against them. While newer research indicates that not all poor African-American students seem to think that being smart is somehow reserved for whites, this newer research does not invalidate the findings of Ogbu and Fordham, it just adds more nuance to its explanatory power (Fernandez et al 1998).

The Ogbu-Fordham theory of poor academic outcomes for African-American students helps explain the ways in which factors in the social and academic lives of native-born minority students affect their identities and school performances. However, in terms of explanatory power for Afro-Caribbean immigrants, I think we must be very careful in our applications of this theory. The theory was crafted to explain observations of African-American underachievement. Because Haitian and other Afro-Caribbean immigrants do not necessarily assimilate to an African-American identity, we run the risk of assuming that this process is a forgone conclusion for all such immigrants, ignoring the huge array of differences in the lives of these children. To make these ideas more applicable to Afro-Caribbean immigrants we need to add an identity choice dimension. Fordham’s explanations of differential orientations and outcomes are not explicitly tied to identity choice. Rather, they are framed as possible adaptations to a particular situation and student perceptions of that situation as filtered and framed by their cultural and folk models.

However, I am making explicit the link between segmented assimilation, which is set in motion by segregated living and schooling, and identity choice. This link between segregated living and schooling and identity choice circumscribes the available identity options that black immigrant children can choose from in their process of acculturation. Thus, living and schooling among black Americans curtails the identities to which black
immigrant children are exposed and increases the likelihood that they will choose a black American identity rather than something else. Thus, it is not just exposure to a given American cultural identity that influences immigrant students, it is the fact that often there is only one American identity or that there is a dominant identity which influences all others and leaves little room for immigrant students to safely make other identity choices. It is the setting and the individuals who predominantly populate that setting that constrain the choices. That setting itself is a result of American race and class systems.

Furthermore, these identity choices and any associated changes in academic orientation probably will not be visible until middle or high school, something that Fordham tangentially touches upon (Fordham 1991:26). As she points out, her underachieving male students all received above average grades in elementary school and started to decline only in middle or high school (Fordham 1996:285-6). Annie Ngana Mundeke (1999), in her dissertation research on the influences of social networks on Haitian immigrant elementary students, did not report the complex negotiations and outcomes of identity choice and change because she was examining students who were too young to be capable of developing discrete identities that were wholly separate from family considerations or wishes.

**Generational Differences (Portes-Zhou)**

The third group of theories belongs to Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou (1993). In my opinion, they are responsible for what is so far the most complete and useful explanation as to where and how today’s second-generation and immigrant newcomers are assimilating. The authors have developed a model that allows for assimilation into any segment of America, or even maintenance of one’s original identity. Two of these paths generally allow immigrant children to be upwardly mobile, either through adoption
of a generic mainstream identity (white) or through the preservation of their own ethnic or national identity as immigrants. The other model allows for downward mobility into our nation’s underclass (certain black or Hispanic cultural identities). They point out that earlier in immigration history, assimilation to any segment of our nation’s cultures usually led to success. Presently, that no longer holds true and we witness segmented assimilation into a variety of cultural tracks that can lead to success or failure (Portes 1995).

Portes and Zhou’s (1993) segmented assimilation theory takes into account the changed economic structure and the racial system of the host country to map three paths through which the second-generation, and in some cases first generation immigrant children, acculturate. Their theory also recognizes the racial complexions of the overwhelming majority of the second-generation of the post 1965 immigrants and takes into account that many second-generation children settle into areas already inhabited by native minorities. Supporting Portes and Zhou’s theory, Mary Waters (1994) found that students adopting an intermediate identity of ethnic West Indian did better than those who identified as purely African-American or purely immigrant ethnic such as Haitian or Jamaican.

Adding further evidence to Portes and Zhou’s theory, Gibson (1997) found during her Sikh study that those students who maintained an ethnic identity did well in school and were able to handle the discrimination that was meted out to them on a daily basis. Because an ethnic identity helped her students maintain a dual frame of reference, one that viewed the discrimination as a temporary thing that must be endured so that they could become upwardly mobile, it was a very good success strategy. Because the
children viewed going to college and being successful as important, they were willing to circumscribe their social groups in school and spend most of their time with their family and co-ethnic peers (Gibson 1997). They learned what American culture was all about but they did not assimilate to it. I found that Haitian children who retained a Haitian identity, even those who attended school with mostly African-American peers, had academic outcomes that were better than those who adopted a black identity.

These authors are describing a process of adapting to American cultural values. Depending on certain factors such as place of birth, age at migration, racial composition of neighborhoods and schools, family socioeconomic status, economic and job prospects upon graduation and the identity of peers, these second-generation children will be more likely to either retain their ethnic identity, adopt some intermediate form or assimilate completely to some American cultural identity. These authors’ syntheses of segmented assimilation are generation specific. They recognize the pitfalls of lumping all generations of immigrants together, thus improving on Ogbu and Fordham’s work. Immigrants and their descendents are not the same and experience their host society differently from one another and as such should be examined separately.

While I believe that Portes and Zhou’s theory of segmented assimilation is one of the most accurate descriptions available for what is happening to the post-1965 immigrants, it is still problematic. Its original formulation does not necessarily take into account the variety of subcultures that exist in the United States to which immigrants can assimilate. While it does not assume a monolithic black or Hispanic culture to which immigrants assimilate, it does nothing to describe or explain these different subcultures and the affects that their variations have on the process of assimilation. To what sector of
Haitian immigrant students assimilate? Why do some of them assimilate to a subculture that denigrates schooling and education and others do not? What is missing is an operationalization of the how and why that triggers assimilation to certain subcultures and identities, the contents of the black box, which my research attempts to explain.

**Social Class/Social Capital (Bourdieu/MacLeod)**

The fourth and final group of theories consists of those relating to class and forms of capital and is best exemplified by theories developed by Pierre Bourdieu and further explored by Jay MacLeod (1977 and 1995). Both of these author’s theories are built around what an immigrant or native-born minority brings with them in terms of resources such as social or cultural capital. What education, money, property, social networks, special skills, languages or other resources can they bring to bear on their ability to be educated or to succeed in our society? Both recognize that all of these assets are mediated by the larger contexts of which individuals are a part. They are certainly not meant to be prescriptive equations stating that if an individual’s parents have a certain level of education and income than the individual will succeed in school.

The theories of Bourdieu and MacLeod are valuable in terms of explaining what types of capital immigrants bring with them to their new homeland. Yet these theories contain their own weaknesses. These theories are too flat and do not seem to have room for the contingencies of individual life experiences and the differences that exist between immigrants from the same or different families. For example, why do some students end up assimilating to a minority identity that predisposes them for failure and poverty while their families might possess all the social, cultural, financial and educational capital in the world? In fact, their very own siblings might adopt an identity that is very amenable to
educational success. These ideas of class and capital can only go so far in providing general predications, and their explanatory power at the individual level is limited.

**Synthesizing the Big Four**

All of the previous theoretical models have identified a link in the chain of acculturation and educational experiences. All have their weaknesses. None of them can explain the ways in which children interact with schools, peers and family in totality. However, each can contribute towards an understanding of the identity choices immigrant and second-generation children make. It is these identity choices which more directly affect immigrant children’s school experiences rather than the assimilation process as a whole. Therefore, a framework for explaining Haitian immigrant school experiences will have to encompass all of these explanations because there is no one way that Haitian children interact with and assimilate to the American educational and social system. What is needed is a framework that allows variation because every immigrant fashions his or her own response to the migration experience.

The framework that I have used to try to make sense of my own research is a combination of these four theory groups. These theories can be divided into ones that explain to which American culture immigrants assimilate and ones that explain which resources they use and which behaviors they adopt during assimilation. However, all of these theories suffer from an inability to explain all of the processes that occur in downward assimilation. This research addresses that by turning to the factors that impact the identity choices that Haitian immigrant children make. I believe that these factors I have explored or the ones that these four theories contain can not be used to make specific predictions; but without integrating all of these factors into their theories and
increasing their explanatory power, they are inadequate to the task for which we use
them.

Portes and Zhou’s theory (1993) is the most comprehensive theory and allows for
the most variability and that is why I chose to use it as the primary means of framing my
research. Unfortunately, it is weak on explaining how or why immigrant children end up
with one identity instead of another. Ogbu and Fordham’s work (1987 and
1986) can provide some of that explanation. Both the structural explanations provided in
Ogbu’s early work and the cultural definitions of education and whiteness of Ogbu and
Fordham’s piece provide mid-level theories that can give us some of the where and how
that Portes and Zhou are missing.

Ogbu’s castelike and immigrant identities (involuntary and voluntary) can be used
in classifying to which identities children are likely to assimilate. They also can provide
a clue as to how they have done this. Many Afro-Caribbean immigrants assimilate to a
low achiever African-American identity because of their prolonged contact with these
native-born children due to school and residence patterns. By applying Ogbu’s theory,
we are better able to understand the structural forces and relationships that brought
specific children to their schools and neighborhoods. Ogbu and Fordham also help us
classify students according to where they assimilate. They discuss acting white as a
strategy for African-American children, and we know that some Haitian children might
assimilate this identity.

Bourdieu and MacLeod (1977 and 1995) provide us with an explanation of how
and with what resources immigrant and native-born minority children approach school.
By explicitly recognizing the social and cultural capital immigrants possess, we can
better flesh out the actual experiences of immigrant adaptation and better explain the
diversity of academic outcomes witnessed by educators and researchers. MacLeod in
particular echoes Ogbu’s early work (1974) in his recognition that minority children
rationally assess their post-school economic opportunity structures and respond
accordingly. MacLeod explicitly shows how individuals use the experiences of friends
and relatives with similar class and capital endowments to help them make an accurate
assessment of the opportunities. Rating those opportunities as poor, they find little
purpose in academic excellence. Thus, social class and capital are very important
determinants of an individuals actions and identity formation. Will they choose to be an
achiever or a dropout?

Portes, Zhou, Rumbaut, Ogbu, Fordham and many others have contributed parts of
this puzzle. Currently, it seems that the identity that we can best explain is that of an
African-American underachiever. We can even explain how it is that Haitians come to
be in neighborhoods and schools filled with poor and minority students. What we have
not fully explored is how this affects their identities. Exactly why do some students
choose one identity and others choose one that is completely different. That is the
theoretical significance of this research. It helps to identify the weak spots of very
valuable prior research in order to make those theories stronger and more responsive to
the vagaries of immigration. But it also adds its own explanation to those theories.

**A Possible Solution to Downward Assimilation: Additive Acculturation and Code-
switching in Educational Settings**

Haitians in the United States are discriminated against because of their color as
well as their nationality. Some of this prejudice arose because of early links between
AIDS and Haitians. However, often it is not prejudice but ignorance which can harm
Haitian immigrant and second-generation students. I for one assumed that Haitians spoke French when I first began to explore Haitian history. I came across many educators and administrators with similar misunderstandings about Haitians. Additionally, many of the teachers and administrators that Afro-Caribbean immigrants come into contact with are African-American. This can cause unforeseen problems and conflicts as these adults respond to the use of situational identity on the part of their immigrant students and parents. Situationally deploying identities that distinguish them from African-Americans is helpful to Afro-Caribbean immigrants but can obviously be seen as bigoted and hurtful by African-Americans who witness or are dragged into these pragmatic displays.

As discussed in an earlier chapter, many students will purposefully adopt other identities for themselves, attempting to lose their Haitianness and thus the cause of their ridicule. In the process, many end up taking on identities which affect their educational outcomes. However, not all first or second-generation Haitians choose this path. Many attempt to strengthen or maintain their ethnic identity in the face of negative attitudes from non-Haitians. So, while many of the cultural characteristics that are maintained by Haitians are attempts at maintaining their social ties to home, some of them serve the added purpose of being responses to the discrimination they face here. All of this identity play can lead to a larger field of identity choices for Haitian immigrants, something that is potentially beneficial for the second-generation who risks losing their chance at upward mobility from selecting the wrong identity (Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow 1987:104-5).

Immigrant children and the second-generation born in America will face both these external pressures to acculturate as well as pressure from their families to maintain their ethnic identity and values. These pressures often pull the second-generation in different
directions and the tensions can seem irreconcilable. Much has been written about the cultural difference model that attempts to explore and explain how home and school culture conflict leads to low academic outcomes. Unfortunately, we are drowning and these theories are describing the water. They lack explanatory power, and confuse description with explanation.

However, Gibson (1997) has given us a model that moves past description and into actionable areas. It is possible for students to selectively adapt while also maintaining aspects of their home identities. Gibson found that, among Sikh immigrants with high home country educational and class backgrounds, parents were able to find a way to deal with the school culture which was pressuring their children to assimilate. Parents did not want their children to abandon their home cultures and fully adapt to the cultures being pushed on them at school. The schools were attempting to socialize their children to enable them to be successful. Schools implicitly encouraged a process of subtractive assimilation where the home culture was written over by the host culture.

Parents pragmatically encouraged their children to maintain their home culture and to learn elements of the host culture that would be beneficial to them. Through this process of additive acculturation, children would now be bicultural and better able to meet the demands of the American job market. Their parents, in the hope that adding American culture to their repertoire would make them successful in school and later in life would now abide other activities such as liking American food, learning English and having American friends. Implicitly, this practice works because all human beings code-switch based on the context in which they find themselves. Children who are fluently
bilingual outperform monolingual students in school and test scores (Portes and Rumbaut 1996:220).

There are other positive affects of allowing or encouraging immigrant children to retain their native cultures. By providing them with a means to deal with competing pressures we reduce stress, decrease the likelihood of developing adversarial attitudes towards school and improve mental health. We also implicitly set the stage for more civic and political involvement by encouraging the maintenance of cultural allegiance to home cultures. This political activity can lead to better services and more awareness of these ethnic groups in the minds of policy makers. Additive acculturation also enables students to code-switch, ultimately preparing them for better employment prospects and upward mobility. Students also do better in school once they learn or understand that no one is requiring them to give up their home culture. Furthermore, by teaching them how to pragmatically deal with their identity, they can better navigate the thorny path of adolescent and teenage social life by deploying other identities.

In other words, additive acculturation can help prevent second-generation children from failure (Gibson 1997:440). Gibson’s major finding is that immigrant students do better when they are strongly anchored in their identities as part of a family, community and co-ethnic peer group and when they feel supported in a strategy of selective, additive acculturation. The threatening nature of home and school cultural differences that is grounded in unequal power relations diminishes when they have another set of cultural standards by which to evaluate themselves. So while Ogbu’s theory about identities being heavily influenced by an individual’s status as a voluntary or involuntary minority is not borne out by most research, it is still important because this status is politically
mediated by centuries of race and class negotiation (Gibson 1997:446). The differing patterns of school success we witness can be explained partly by the differences in the nature of racism and discrimination directed at each group of minorities based on their voluntary or involuntary status, and how these actions are experienced by individual students and their responses to them (Gibson 1997:436).

The process of additive acculturation obviously requires efforts from both home and school and thus might not be practical in all educational settings. The parents in Gibson’s study were better educated and of a higher class than many of the poor Haitians in Tampa I worked with. The students in the study were not attending inner city schools where homogenization of teaching and student cultures is nearly a prerequisite to educating any students because of small budgets and staffing issues. However, the tensions between home and host culture seem universal and many parents, whether they approve of it or not, eventually will have to cope with their second-generation children adapting in some ways to American culture. Thus, despite the pressures that schools exert, parental accommodation might inadvertently lead to additive acculturation on a large scale. But we need to inform educational professionals about these issues and teach them how to encourage additive acculturation in their classrooms. However, it is often poor schools and children who most need to be taught to code-switch and encouraged to additively acculturate yet they are least likely to get this type of response because of the poverty of their school and home life. We will discuss the policy implications of these issues in more detail in Chapter 8.

**The Haitian Case**

Unfortunately, there is scant data on Haitians in educational institutions nationally and locally. Most data available are self-reported by Haitian immigrants or their
children. Thus, rather than repeat endless anecdotes, I will briefly discuss the overall impressions of Haitian immigrant education and then will move on to some of the characteristics of schools that Haitian immigrant and second-generation students attend in the Tampa area. As with chapter 5, it is important to understand the milieu in which Haitians find themselves because these are the factors being investigated as probable causes in the process of identity formation among Haitian immigrant children.

Many scholars who research Haitian immigration have commented on the school performance of second-generation and newly arrived Haitian immigrant school children. Most of these comments have dealt with the strategies for adaptation that these children have adopted. Stepick, among many others, has noted that Haitians, along with other Caribbean immigrant students, can do very well in school with the right orientation. Haitians who maintain their ethnic identity or adopt a West Indian or mainstream American identity outperform American born minorities and have higher graduation rates. This is supported by research into Haitians in the Bahamas.

Haitian children in Bahamian schools have done quite well. Haitian parents are protective, escort their children to and from school to enforce attendance and check that homework is completed. Haitian parents highly value education and its instrumental purposes. Similar to their experiences elsewhere, Haitians in the Bahamas endure great prejudice. But some Haitians are adapting by assimilating to Bahamian culture, particularly the second and third generations (Treco 2002:2-4). Thus, Haitians in the Bahamas are strategically utilizing identity choices to insulate themselves from discrimination in much the same way they do in the United States.
Those Haitians who run into problems seem to do so when they have great conflict between home and school cultures or when they have adopted an identity that devalues education. These identity issues are further complicated by parental problems. According to Ngana Mundeke (1999:108-140), Haitian parents perceive class differences as a source of problems for students in school. They transfer the class prejudices of Haiti to the United States and often times misread the situation. She also found that many teachers feel that Haitians do poorly. It is unclear from her work whether this is because of prejudices on the part of teachers or the fact that those well performing Haitians who adopt a West Indian or mainstream American identity are no longer visibly Haitian to their teachers. Compared to educator’s perceptions, many Haitian parents think their children are doing well in school despite receiving low grades and notes from teachers. When they do acknowledge difficulties, they are often quick to blame their children’s black peers for these educational and behavioral problems.

Furthermore, age at immigration or being born in the United States affects academic performance. Students who immigrated more recently tend to have higher grades and graduation rates than those born in America or than those who have been here since a very young age. Those who were born in the United States or emigrated at an early age and have lived here most of their lives have an increased likelihood of developing an adversarial orientation towards school because of the longer length of time to which they have been exposed to the American racial and class system and thus are more likely to have adopted an American identity. These general characterizations about Haitians in American schools are also supported by my own observations and research in Tampa.
In 2001, an appeals court declared Hillsborough County desegregated and ended 30 years of court-decreed busing, thus closing a case nearly half a century old (Hegarty 2001). While school district officials felt they have been unified for years, many felt the court’s ruling was incorrect. Those critics feel that, while de jure segregation has been eliminated, de facto segregation still exists. Many point to the large numbers of minority students at certain schools. In order to encourage more white students to attend formerly all black schools, some schools have magnet or other programs for high performing students located within the main school.

However, while the school district counts all students at those schools for their statistics on race and attendance, magnet schools often have been treated as separate administrative units, receiving separate funding and increasing the overall performance records of these schools, in effect masking the low performance of the main school. In the wake of the unitary ruling, the school district has put into place choice plans that designate area or neighborhood schools based on residence and that also allow parents to choose to send their children to other schools, magnet or otherwise. However, that does not mean there are no longer any racially identifiable schools. It merely means that the courts have decided that the current racial composition of the schools is the result of neighborhood and population changes, and not school district policy.

Florida schools reached the minority majority threshold in the 2003-2004 academic year with just over fifty percent of students being non-white (Florida Department of Education 2004). In 2005, the school district was 44 percent white, a drop of six percent, accounted for by massive internal migration, much of it from large cities and continuing immigration. In West Central Florida, Hillsborough County is the only
school district that has a minority majority. With a K-12 population of roughly 192,720
students, more than 100,000 students in this district are something other than white,
including Hispanic (Florida Department of Education 2006a).

As pointed out in chapter 5, Haitian immigrants overwhelmingly live in
neighborhoods that are minority majority and that experience much higher rates of
poverty than the county as a whole does. Because of the methods of school assignment
(address based), unless Haitian parents opt for school choice or magnet schools for their
children, they will be assigned to their local school and their children will attend school
with the same youths from their neighborhood. Thus, Haitian immigrant and second-
generation students generally attend schools that are minority majority and whose
students are poorer than the local poverty rates.

In fact, the nine high schools that I identified with the largest Haitian student
populations have some of the highest minority rates in the district. Tampa and
Hillsborough County have minority rates of roughly 36 and 25 percent respectively.
Every school that has significant Haitian attendance is above these rates, and the average
minority student rate for all of these schools is 60 percent. The rates for Tampa and
Hillsborough County individuals living below the poverty line are 18 and 12.5 each.
Once again, every school has higher rates of students in poverty, based on those students
who receive free or reduced lunch, than the city or county. In fact, the average poverty
rate for these schools is 44 percent (Florida Department of Education 2005a).

The grades that the state of Florida assigns to all state schools also present a
worrisome picture. While the validity and basis for assigning these grades is
questionable, comparing all high schools in Hillsborough County against themselves
gives us a basis for evaluating how well schools that absorb the most Haitian immigrant children do in relation to the other local schools. Out of 23 high schools in the County, only three have grades of A, eight have B grades, nine have C grades and three have grades of D. There are no F schools for the 2005-2006 academic year. The nine schools that most Haitians attend had three D grades, four C grades and two B grades. Five of the nine schools that Haitians attend have not had a grade above a C since 1999. Seven of the nine have stayed the same for the past seven years or dropped a letter grade. These nine schools account for all three D grades in the high schools. Only one of these nine schools has had an A at any point in the last seven years and since that time has dropped to a D and then rebounded to a B (Florida Department of Education 2005a).

Among 21,663 full time staff members, 35 percent are minorities, which is nearly equal to the rate of minorities in the city and significantly higher than the rate for the County (School District of Hillsborough County 2006). Among 1,289 students who dropped out, roughly 60 percent are white (Florida Department of Education 2006a). There were nearly 19,000 limited English proficiency students in the County’s schools. Nearly 87 percent of those were of Hispanic origin. White and black ELL students accounted for 4.0 and 4.5 percent respectively of this total (Florida Department of Education 2005a). This makes sense when you consider the large Hispanic immigrant population of the area and the fact that many of the Afro-Caribbean immigrants who settle in Florida are likely to speak some English or be considered part of the Hispanic figures.

Overall then, what these figures show us is that Haitian immigrant and second-generation students attend schools with higher than average poverty and minority rates
and account for some of the 4 percent of black students for whom English is a second language. At six of the nine high schools they attend, minorities are a majority of the student population. So, at home and at school, the Haitian second-generation come into regular contact with native-born minorities and are thus more exposed to the identities of these students and neighbors than to any other, except for their home culture. The effects of this extensive exposure on their identity choices are what I predicted them to be at the outset of my research. Living in neighborhoods that were quite segregated and attending schools with large populations of native-born minorities has constrained the available identity options of Haitian immigrant students. Chapter 7 provides a full discussion of these results and their implications.

**Conclusion**

Afro-Caribbean immigrants face many obstacles on the path to acquiring a good education and preparing themselves for tomorrow’s job market. Many other immigrant groups share some of these obstacles while others, such as race and a long familiarity with slavery and colonization, are specific to these newcomers. Other obstacles are created by the host society to which they emigrate. Our long history of slavery, immigration, institutionalized racism, classism and xenophobia has shaped our educational institutions and people’s expectations of them. How these obstacles interact with the individual characteristics of immigrants and the external factors they face in American schools and neighborhoods help to determine their academic orientations and outcomes.

This chapter has attempted to show the major schools of thought that have been developed to explain the different types of school orientations and outcomes observed by researchers conducting work with immigrant and native-born minority students. All of
these models have greatly influenced the way I framed my research question and fieldwork. I chose to research the impacts of two variables, segregation at home and at school, to explore their impact on the identity formation and choices of Haitian immigrant and second-generation students in Tampa. These theories have been useful in helping me more clearly see the differences between native-born and immigrant minorities, allowing me to make sense of all the disparate academic orientations that I confronted and helping me to make sense of the multitude of variables that impact the identity formation I have witnessed. What I have discovered and the impact of the two variables I explored are presented in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 7
TWO YEARS IN TAMPA: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

Prior chapters have discussed how Haitians have come to our shores and some theories that attempt to explain what they do when they arrive. They have also provided an identity-based framework for understanding why some students have positive educational outcomes while others do not. It is evident that our social and cultural circumstances impact and shape our identities. They provide the raw materials from which we fashion ourselves. Whether it be a cockney accent, working class allegiance, or clinging to an immigrant heritage or American patriotism, these factors affect how we view ourselves and what identities we project to the world. They also impact our actions. Strong patriotism or nationalism might cause someone to vote for an English only amendment. Dislike at standing out might cause people to work at changing their working class accent. Immigrants might not bother to learn the language of their new homeland because of their desire to remain identified with their native one, thus impacting their ability to find work, complete education and interact with others in their new home.

Thus, identity formation is an important aspect of all human growth and development, but for immigrants, it can be particularly salient. Immigrants, coming from different social and cultural backgrounds than mainstream American culture, must decide if they want to acculturate and to what degree. These choices are colored by the goals that surrounded their emigration in the first place. However, these choices potentially
hold the key to their future life’s success. What an immigrant chooses to identify as and how strongly they are willing to stand by that choice can alter their attitudes and the treatment they receive from others. This chapter will discuss identity formation and the identity choices of my respondents and integrate the results of my fieldwork into this discussion. I will explore the patterns in my data and provide a summary of their salient points. I will then set out the factors that I have found to have an affect on identity formation and orientation towards school and learning and explore their potency.

**Identity Formation**

Identity is a fluid, malleable concept. As Hall so succinctly put it, “identity is a matter of becoming as well as being (1993 pg. 394).” Identity involves individual and social components. Not only do people strive to attain a unique sense of self but also a social identity derived from their membership in groups such as a family, vocation, or ethnicity. These group-derived identities help people create a definition of self in their own eyes as well as in others’. Identity is influenced by cultural factors such as norms, values and pressures to assimilate. It results from the interplay of individual, social and environmental factors that shape and define the choices that adolescents have (Gale 2001). Identity is highly contingent on both internal and external variables and thus difficult to define.

Even Erik Erikson had difficulty in trying to pin down a definition of identity, recognizing that, like other social science terms, it is subject to the vagaries of historical definition and the subjective uses of its theorists. Like culture, there seem to be as many definitions of identity as there are people investigating it (Erikson 1968: 15). The most basic definition of identity is “a person’s mental representation of who he or she is (Gale 2001).” Identity also must be made distinct from identity formation, which is a process.
As Erikson put it, “identity formation employs a process of simultaneous reflection and observation, a process taking place on all levels of mental functioning, by which the individual judges himself in the light of what he perceives to be the way in which others judge him in comparison to themselves and to a typology significant to them (1968: 22).” More succinctly, identity formation, “arises from the selective repudiation and mutual assimilation of childhood identifications,” and from the ways in which new identity groups play upon certain aspects of an individual’s earlier identity (1968: 159).

While identity formation starts in childhood, a crucial period occurs during adolescence when teens must face physical changes, a growing awareness of their own sexuality and the larger life and vocational choices that all young adults must make. During adolescence, individuals attempt to create stable identities for themselves. For some, this task entails great instability and confusion as adolescents face a bewildering array of identities from which to choose. Once a child hits puberty, its evaluation of itself begins to change. Earlier in life, the child was concerned with what it thought of itself and how to properly fulfill the roles and tasks that were set before it. At this stage, the youth now becomes concerned with how others see it. Thus, this stage requires youths to integrate all identifications of themselves in order to create a total and coherent identity (Erikson 1963: 261).

The threat to their identities at this stage is role confusion. Faced with newly maturing bodies and the need to settle on careers and future life paths, youths may become confused. In order to create some semblance of normalcy and continuity they may over-identify with certain identities or social groups, sometimes completely losing a sense of their own prior identity in the process. Neophyte members of social groups will
tend to over-perform the outwardly apparent roles associated with this identity, whether it is the use of slang, brazen prejudice or the development of a hostile attitude towards school (Erikson 1963: 262). With an array of identity choices, it is unsurprising that not all individuals successfully resolve these issues. Identity choice and formation tend to become more problematic the wider the range of possible identity choices that exist (Erikson 1968: 245).

Identity formation is difficult for all adolescents but it is more so for teens who are members of ethnic or racial groups that differ from mainstream culture. These teens face the added problem of sorting out an ethnic identity for themselves on top of the personal identity that they must define or acquire. They can feel caught between their parent’s and home country’s ideas of ethnicity and those of their host nation, which might expect very different identity choices. Therefore it is necessary to also have an understanding of what ethnic identity and its formation are and how they affect racial and ethnic minority teenagers. At its most basic, ethnic identity is the, “integration of ethnicity or race into one’s self-concept or self-image. It is the full recognition of one’s ethnicity [or race], and the subsequent self-identity that flows from the values, ways and styles of that ethnic background [...] (Guanipa-Ho and Guanipa 1998).” While this identity flows from within, we must also recognize that the stereotypes and discriminatory behaviors of society can create identity conflicts for ethnic and racial minority teens that make it difficult for them to create a positive self or ethnic identity.

The process of identity formation is crucial for immigrant and minority teens because the correct identity choices may help integrate them into mainstream society or may predispose them to social and economic failure. Many teens, both native and
foreign-born, experiment with identities, trying them on like outfits. However, many foreign-born teens find their identity swapping to be more pragmatic an activity than their native-born peers, one that rises to the level of situational identity and code-switching (Guanipa-Ho and Guanipa 1998). Minority youth, in taking on oppositional identities, do so for personal reasons but also do so in part to project certain attitudes and statements about the majority culture to the majority culture. Therefore, identities are not only instrumental in terms of deployment for self-advancement, but also in terms of making political and personal statements.

Identity choice occurs within specific contexts which act upon the individual and create or constrain opportunities for healthy identity formation. Immigrant and racial minority teens may have to contend with contexts of prejudice, discrimination, poverty, acculturation and institutional barriers to their success. Contexts for identity formation overlap and act upon one another. One important context for adolescent identity formation is the school. This institution is a place where hundreds of individuals come together daily, bringing with them their own values and beliefs. In this context, identities interact or clash, and create a buffet of choices for immigrant and minority students to choose from. Because of the interaction between so many different identities in a school, new identity forms constantly are being created and discarded.

Thus, identity formation is a process of social construction. Adolescents are not clean slates onto which identities are written. Teens have formative identities that have been shaped by all those with whom they have had contact and all the situations in which they have found themselves. Teens actively work at identity construction and learn the rules and boundaries of all the identities they adopt. Schools are an excellent place for
adolescents to learn how to deploy situational identities. Because children in schools find themselves in different classrooms, playgrounds and social groups, learning how to code-switch is a necessity. Furthermore, the de facto nature of schools as socializing agents helps aid the process of identity formation and in fact inculcates mainstream ideas about privilege and rights into students. One needs look no further than the reproduction of gender roles through school culture to understand the ways in which schools can impact identity formation (Dawson 1998).

The process of identity formation is highly contingent on individual and social variables. One such variable, the ethnic and racial composition of schools and neighborhoods, is at the heart of this dissertation. In the following section I will discuss the results of my research. In it, I will present which teenagers chose Haitian, West Indian, American and African-American identities. Following that is an explanation of which factors influenced these choices.

**What I Found**

After spending nearly two years doing fieldwork among Haitian immigrant teens in Tampa, my original hypothesis has been validated. The demographic factors that I thought impacted identity choices among these teens, segregation in housing and schooling, do affect the identity choices that Haitian immigrants have available to them. They do so by constraining the available options for learning about and being exposed to various identities. Additionally, this segregation creates situations in which these teens feel forced into adopting certain identities in order to become members of social groups. For the majority of second-generation students, going to school and living in racially and economically segregated communities has a sometimes-profound affect on their process of identity formation, selection and deployment. Even for individuals who maintained or
developed non-adversarial identities towards schooling, they still felt pressured to adopt identities that required lowered academic efforts.

**Patterns in the Data**

For this research, I initially met and started preliminary research with 30 students and their parents. However, I only followed 19 through to completion. Many students moved or disappeared, some had parents who were not interested in participating and others did not have the time to complete the project. What I ended up with were 19 students and their 16 parents. This sample of 35 individuals is a little over one percent of the population claiming Haitian ancestry in Hillsborough County (3000) and a little over two percent of the same for the city of Tampa (1590). Of the 19 students there were 10 girls and 9 boys in 12 households. Of the 16 parents, there were 5 fathers and 11 mothers. The five fathers comprised four who were in a two-parent household and one single father who was a part of his brother’s family. As would be expected, there were many more single mothers, seven, compared to the fathers and four mothers who were married to the above four fathers. Of those seven single-mothers, two lived in extended family households comprised of their sibling’s families.

There were nine children who lived in four separate two-parent households, six who resided in five separate single parent households and four who lived in three separate single parent extended family households comprised of that parent’s sibling’s family. While the larger number of single mothers did not surprise me, I was surprised by the number of children who lived in two-parent homes. This is attributable not only to the strong emphasis on family that most Haitians exhibit, but also to the fact that for many of these very poor immigrant families, single-parenthood is just not economically feasible.
Three of the nineteen children were born here. The average age at immigration for the remaining sixteen was eight. The average for their length of time in the United States was seven years and their average age was 15.7 years. Eight children attended private or parochial schools, five of them on scholarships. All of the students and parents spoke English. Thirteen of the children spoke Haitian Kreyol and three spoke French. Notably, only children from families who had some wealth in Haiti were able to speak French. Additionally, those children who immigrated at a young age seemed to have lost the ability to speak Kreyol. Fourteen children lived in poor or lower-working class neighborhoods with large numbers of native-born minorities. All of the 11 children who attended public school did so at schools with majority or near majority rates for minorities and with above average poverty rates. Even the five scholarship students who attended parochial schools did so with larger than average minority and poverty rates.

A later section will discuss the class, race, poverty and other factors of these informants. For now, we will turn to the three identities that second-generation teens have chosen. The three identities are Haitian, West Indian, and Oppositional (a subset of African-American). Upon starting this research, I had posited a fourth identity, mainstream American (white). However, my research did not turn up any student who identified solely as American. There were six who identified as a hyphenated American and all of those chose Haitian as their other identity. While it is necessary for the sake of clarity to divide these identities up, please keep in mind that many students had mixtures of identities.

These identities were discerned from a variety of methods. I observed all of the students extensively with their families and peers and some with their teachers and
classmates (circumstances permitting). I was able to notice shifts in language, dress, attitude and values. I used these differences as a means to probe identity issues with each student. My interviews with students also involved numerous questions about identity. I asked what languages they used and with whom if they spoke more than one. I asked about the nationality of their friends and family. I asked them what they considered their nationality or ethnicity. I asked them how they think their friends, family, teachers and strangers would identify them. I also gave them a list of identity choices after asking the above questions to see if they changed their self-identification choices.

Furthermore, I asked different identity questions in different settings such as among their peers, family or when alone on multiple occasions. I also asked about their affiliations and group membership. An interesting avenue of identity disclosure came up when I asked respondents about their experiences with discrimination. When asked why people discriminated against them many responded with answers that contradicted their own self-identification, yet here they were perceiving discrimination based on such identification! I never gave the questionnaire to respondents or allowed them to see it in detail. The questionnaire was actually a means for me to remember what questions to ask as well as a basis for starting open-ended interviews. I was frequently able to complete answers on the questionnaires from my participant-observation that I then checked the next time I interviewed students.

**Haitian Identity**

Seven of the nineteen students I worked with have identities that were Haitian, Haitian-American or Haitian and African-American. Five of those seven are girls. Three of those seven, Dominique, Luc and Rene, are siblings from a wealthy two-parent family who live in a mostly white, upper class neighborhood and attend private school paid for
by their parents. This school has a very small minority population and a handful of other immigrant children from successful families. These siblings identify as Haitian-American. All three siblings do well in school, have strong parental involvement in their lives and socialize with either Haitian or mainstream American friends when with their family or at school respectively. All three speak English and the eldest, Dominique, also speaks Haitian Kreyol and some French.

Two other students, Amelie and Marie, from different families, also identify as Haitian-American. Both girl’s families were middle class in Haiti and Amelie’s family was able to send her to private school until she emigrated with them at age 13. Marie was born here. However, both girls live with their single-mothers who have found it hard to be as economically successful here as they were in Haiti. Both families now live in poorer neighborhoods with large minority populations. While Amelie’s mother sends her and her brother to a private school on scholarship and Marie attends a public school, both schools have high minority rates. Both girls are doing well in school. Amelie, who was thirteen on arrival, speaks English, French and Kreyol while Marie speaks only English. Amelie socializes with West Indians at home and mainstream Americans at school. Marie socializes with Haitians and mainstream Americans at home and at school.

Eva also identifies herself as Haitian-American. Unlike the five students above, Eva’s family in Haiti was poor and unable to send her to a private school. When she arrived here at age 11, she and her mother settled in a poor neighborhood with many Hispanic immigrants and native-born minorities. Eva’s mother was able to secure a scholarship for her to a parochial school where she does well. Her school has many such scholarship students from poor backgrounds and many Hispanic and African-American
students. Eva speaks English very well and also retains her Kreyol. She socializes with other Haitians when at home but her friends at school are mainly white Americans.

The last student in this category identifies herself as Haitian and African-American. Seraphine lives with her two parents and two brothers in a poor neighborhood with a large number of minorities and immigrants. All three siblings attend a public school with a large population of poor and minority students. Seraphine was 11 when her family immigrated to the United States and speaks Kreyol and English. Her school performance is spotty. When interested in a subject she does well, otherwise she does poorly. Some of this is attributable to adolescence. When younger, Seraphine did better in school. Now, according to her parents, all she can think about are boys! All three siblings do mediocre to poor in school and her brothers spend most of their time with poor, African-American students who dislike school and care very little for the opportunities doing well in school can afford them. Seraphine, while socializing mainly with African-Americans, also spends time with Haitian cousins and friends.

All but one of these seven students does well in school, and Seraphine, while having room for improvement, has not given up on school. Five of these students also come from middle or upper class backgrounds in Haiti out of a total of eight for the sample. Additionally, five of the students in this group attend private or parochial school out of a total of eight students in the entire sample. While class backgrounds and identity choices will be explored in a later section, it is important to understand that their better access to resources and forms of capital have allowed these students to have larger arrays of identities from which to choose.
West Indian Identity

Seven of the nineteen students I worked with have identities that are West Indian or West Indian and African-American. Four of those seven are boys. One set of siblings, Terese and Jacques, both claim a West Indian identity. They live in a two-parent home and attend a parochial school on scholarship. The school has a large number of Hispanic immigrant children and a large number of students receiving financial aid. The family was working poor in Haiti and continues to be so here in the United States. They live in a working class neighborhood with many other West Indian immigrant families. Both children socialize with other West Indians and mainstream Americans at school although their parents try to constrain the socializing with immigrant and minority children while at home. Their parents are also quite strict, looking over their homework and trying to maintain regular contact with the children’s teachers. Terese speaks both English and Kreyol despite being four when she moved here, largely as a result of her parent’s efforts.

Another student who identifies as West Indian is Beatrice. Beatrice was born in Tampa and lives with her single mother in a mixed race and mixed class neighborhood with many working class families. Her mother is a nurse and comes from a middle class family in Haiti. Beatrice attends a public school with many poor children and minorities. She spends most of her time with African-American or West Indian friends. Despite her mother’s efforts, Beatrice is having problems in school. Her grades fluctuate from term to term and her mother blames her friends for this. Beatrice shows little interest in school except to socialize but her strong respect for adults requires her to pay at least minimal attention during class. However, her grades are mediocre because, outside of the classroom, she puts forth little effort.
Clarisse also identifies as West Indian. Clarisse lives with her brother, mother and her mother’s brother’s family in a neighborhood characterized by high crime, poverty and minority rates. Clarisse attends public school and socializes with West Indians, white Americans and Haitian relatives and friends. She speaks Kreyol and English fluently and does well in school, particularly enjoying math and science courses. Her family, working poor in Haiti, is still so in the United States. While her own mother is not always able to provide the supervision and attention that she needs, one adult always is home with her, her brother and her two cousins. Her uncle and aunt are very traditional and place more restrictions on her and her female cousin than on the boys in the family. This constrains Clarisse’s ability to socialize in her neighborhood and requires her to do well in school.

The families of the next two students, Paul and Pierre, were middle or upper class in Haiti. However, Paul’s family has had continued financial success in the United States while Pierre’s has ended up working poor. Yet both boys identify themselves as West Indian and African-American. Pierre, who is Amelie’s brother, lives with her and his mother in a minority majority, poor neighborhood. His family was middle class before their move and now his mother must work long hours to support him and his sister. Pierre attends private school on scholarship like his sister but unlike her, his performance is only mediocre. Like his sister he also speaks English, French and Kreyol. Pierre spends most of his time at school and in his neighborhood socializing with African-Americans.

Paul’s family, upper class in Haiti, has continued to do well and they live in a mostly white, upper-middle class neighborhood. Paul was born in Tampa and lives with both his parents. Paul attends public school and, despite his family’s means, his school
has a high poverty rate and nearly half the students are from minority backgrounds. While at school, Paul socializes mainly with African-Americans and a few Hispanic students. However, at home his family keeps closer watch on him and structures his social life so that he spends his time with other Caribbean immigrants and Haitians. Part of this close supervision is a reaction to his mediocre grades. Paul did much better while in middle school and his parents are frustrated at his slow downward slide. Both his parents feel that his socializing with black students who do not take school seriously is the cause of his bad grades.

The final student, Henri, identified himself as West Indian and African-American. Henri is Seraphine’s brother and lives with her, his younger brother, Jean, and his parents in a poor neighborhood that is minority majority. Like his siblings, he attends public school and like Seraphine, does mediocre in his academic pursuits. The school they attend is minority majority and has double the poverty rate of the county. Henri spends most of his time with the poor, minority and immigrant children he knows from school or the neighborhood. Interestingly, while his parents are quick to attribute Seraphine’s mediocre school performance to hormones, they are equally quick to assume the boys’ poor grades are because of the friends they have. Both parents had choice words about the laziness and lack of imagination the boys’ peers had.

Three students in this group come from families that were middle or upper class in Haiti, two of whom maintained their class standings in the United States while the other slipped from middle-class to working poor. Three children in this group attend private or parochial schools on scholarship. This group also contains more mediocre students (four) than good ones (three) and three of those were boys. Compared to the Haitian identity
group, this group’s students are struggling more with school. They also have fewer
students from affluent backgrounds and less students attending private school. The
pattern that is emerging is from ethnic identity retention, some affluence and good school
performance to one that is being muddied by the possible identity choices of class
constrained children and families. I will further explore this pattern in the analysis
section below.

**Oppositional Identity**

Five of the nineteen students in this study have adopted African-American
identities, none of who were born here. Three of these students are boys, and all of the
five are doing poorly in school. Three of them live in extended family households, one in
a two-parent home and one with a single mother. All of them speak English and Kreyol
and all are in public school.

Phillipe, Clarisse’s brother, lives with his sister, mother and his mother’s brother’s
family in a poor, crime-ridden neighborhood with a large native-born minority
population. Their family, poor in Haiti, has not managed to climb out of working-class
poverty here. Both children attend public school with many of the same minority
students from their neighborhood. Unlike his sister, Phillipe socializes mostly with
African-Americans and only grudgingly spends time with his Haitian cousins and family.
While fluently bilingual in English and Kreyol, Phillipe seems to actively despise school.
He has fully taken on the adversarial attitude towards the possibilities of education from
his native-born black friends. The primary reason he seems to not have dropped or
flunked out of school is the stern influence of his uncle, who spends considerable time
with Phillipe trying to explain his homework and assignments and make sure they are
completed. Unfortunately, Phillipe works against these efforts, oftentimes not turning in
assignments that he and his uncle completed because he would have to do so in front of his friends.

Jean, another student with siblings in school, also identifies as African-American. Jean’s sister and brother, Seraphine and Henri, attend public school with him and are only mediocre in their studies while Jean is doing poorly. The children live with both their parents in a poor neighborhood with many recent immigrants and minorities. Their school is composed of the same students from their neighborhood. Jean and his brother Henri are both in middle school together and their friends overlap, including a large group of African-American students who dislike school and feel that it can do nothing for them. However, Jean’s older brother Henri identifies himself as West Indian and African-American. Henri’s participation in a West Indian social group seems to allow him more room to perform in school and his grades are only mediocre, whereas Jean’s mono-cultural group of those identifying as African-American is quite strict at enforcing what it believes is acceptable behavior. As I mentioned above, the children’s parents feel very strongly about the friends the boys have and try to control their access to these peer groups, often unsuccessfully because of work commitments.

Camille also identifies herself as African-American. Camille emigrated with her mother when she was 10 and can speak English and Kreyol fluently. Her family always has been working poor and she lives with her single mother in a very poor neighborhood with a mixture of Hispanic, African-American and recent immigrants from India, Latin America and the West Indies. Camille attends a public school with high rates of both poverty and minority students. She socializes primarily with African-Americans and a few West Indians in her apartment complex. Because of her job, her mother spends very
little time at home and thus Camille is largely unsupervised. Her mother believes as a result of this that Camille is doing poorly in school, failing some of her subjects and running around with a bad crowd. Camille however, seems to feel that her friends are not the reason for her poor academic performance. She says that she spends too much time with her boyfriend, of whom her mother is unaware.

The last two students who identify as African-American both come from extended family households. Sylvie lives with her single mom and her mother’s sister’s family. Francois lives with his single father and his father’s brother and wife. Sylvie’s family was quite poor in Haiti and her father still lives there. Upon arriving seven years ago at the age of 12, she and her mother moved in with her aunt, uncle and their three children. What was supposed to be temporary has become a large annoyance for a teenager who wants her own room, cell-phone and car. Sylvie attends a large public high school with the same poor and minority students she lives among. All of her friends are African-American and she disavows her Haitian identity completely as a result of taking on the prejudices of her peer group. Sylvie does poorly in school and has a D average in her classes. It is debatable whether she will graduate with her class. Sylvie has very little to do with her family when she is at home and tries to spend as much time outside of her cramped home.

Francois lives with his single father and his aunt and uncle. All of the adults in the household work days and his aunt works nights. Thus, the household, during normal waking hours, is full of men. Francois thrives off of the licentious nature of the household during these times, swearing, walking around in his boxers and eating food straight from the fridge. Francois’s father, Thomas, is more a friend than a father to his
This has weakened Thomas’s ability to discipline and make demands of Francois and it shows in his son’s schoolwork. Francois stayed back a year and is retaking the 10th grade. His public school is filled with poor students who are failing. His neighborhood is no better. The family, even with three breadwinners, remits so much money back to Haiti that they cannot afford to move to a better area with better schools. Francois spends most of his time with a group of African-Americans who are slightly older than him and already graduated or out of school. They exert a very strong influence over Francois, who wishes he could just drop out and hang out with them all the time. He grudgingly goes to school because his father and uncle have threatened to kick him out of the house if he drops or fails out of school.

What is common to all of these students who have adopted an African-American identity is that they are all doing poorly in school. They are all attending public school and all are poor or working class. All of these students hang out with African-Americans almost exclusively but none hang out with white Americans. While not all poor students claim an African-American identity or do poorly in school, all students who claim an African-American identity are poor and do badly in school. This was expected based on the segmented assimilation theory.

My hypothesis was supported by the data that I collected during this research. Residential segregation and school racial make-up do play a large contextual role in second-generation identity formation. Living in poor minority communities and then attending schools with large poor and minority populations provides the opportunities and constraints, particularly for boys, to become members of peer groups that require certain identity deployments or choices. Many of these students feel that they have very
few options when it comes to their identity choices. Most students do not realize that they can actively control their identity choices, or to see them as choices at all. Many do not see or admit that these choices impact their academics.

What I found was that, for second-generation Haitian immigrant students, going to school and living in racially and economically segregated communities created opportunities for these conditions to have an affect on their identity formation, selection and deployment. Even those students who had positively oriented identities still felt occasional pressure to adopt identities that would harm them academically. There is good news though. Out of the 14 students who chose any variation of Haitian or West Indian identity, none of them did poorly in school; nine did well and five did so-so. The only group that did poorly was the African-American identity group. All five students did poorly in school. These were the students most likely to do poorly based on my hypothesis and that prediction was born out by my data. While cursory, this summary will serve as an introduction to a deeper analysis of factors that affect identity choice. It is to these factors that we now turn.

**What Factors Affect Identity and Orientation**

There is only one large factor that seems to regularly predispose second-generation Haitian immigrant students towards adopting identities which negatively impact their academic orientations: Racial segregation. However, there are other factors that work in concert with segregation to impact identity choices and formation. Class works as an overwhelming constraint on segregation and funnels individuals and families into these segregated situations. Gender also plays a part in identity choice. More girls than boys chose identities that had positive academic orientations. Additionally, as expected, girls did better at school on average than their male counterparts, even those from the same
families. Age at immigration seems to be correlated loosely with positive identity choices and good academic performance. All of these factors will be discussed below.

**Segregation**

Of the five students who lived in mostly white neighborhoods and attended mostly white schools, three identified as some type of Haitian identity and the other two identified as some type of West Indian identity. None of the students who identified as African-American or who did poorly in school lived in majority white neighborhoods or attended majority white schools. While not all individuals with a positive Haitian or West Indian identity lived in desegregated or white majority neighborhoods or attended similar schools, it is striking that none of those doing the worst in school and claiming an oppositional identity did so. All of the in-between students, those living in and attending racially segregated neighborhoods and schools but not having an adversarial identity or failing grades all professed West Indian or Haitian identities.

We can conceptualize identity choices as a continuum from positive identities on one end to negative on the other. What we see from the above student vignettes is that as we move down the identity continuum, students take on more negative attitudes and more friends from identity groups that are associated with adversarial attitudes towards school as they head towards a fully African-American identity. As we move away from this end of the continuum and head towards a hyphenated identity for Haitians, student performance improves and range of identities in their peer groups shifts towards ones in which school and learning are valued.

As discussed above, segregation acts in concert with other variables. For individuals to end up in these segregated contexts, they typically are suffering from poverty. This poverty prevents them from living in more mixed or integrated
neighborhoods or even white majority ones where their children would have a greater range of identities from which to choose. It is to poverty and the effects of class that we now turn.

Class

The socioeconomic status of immigrant children’s families at home and in the host country impacts identity choice. What I found was that those families with parents with less formal education and less economic resources have no place else to go but to poor neighborhoods. They lacked the social, cultural and educational capital to have wider residential choices. Students whose families came from poorer backgrounds in Haiti and who ended up in a poor and heavily minority neighborhood here in the U.S. had the most difficult time in trying to resist identities which would expect them to do poorly in school. Some students were able to either maintain a positive identity or code-switch well enough to not fall into this trap. Others were less successful. Students from poor families were more likely to live in poor neighborhoods with high rates of minorities, attend schools with higher than average concentrations of poverty and minority students and to do poorly in school compared to their better off peers. Furthermore, poor students account for all respondents who claimed an African-American identity.

Those families with more resources and wealth in Haiti that still ended up in poor neighborhoods and schools with large minority populations kept closer watch over their children and more closely controlled their activities and social lives. This helped because it allowed for less occasions for these students to play at adversarial identities and entrench themselves in the peer groups that demand those identities to join. Those students whose families were better off financially in Haiti and maintained that wealth in the United States were more likely to adopt Haitian or West Indian based identities. They
were also more likely to attend private schools with white majorities where they performed well academically. Naturally, this group was also more likely to live in middle or upper class white majority neighborhoods and to live in homes with one or two parents rather than with extended families. Children of these families saw relative ease and prosperity and therefore had no reason to doubt the efficacy of a good education at achieving future goals.

Class acts as a force that funnels families into situations of varying segregation. Those with more capital have more choices in where to live and school their children. Those with little in the way of any form of capital are essentially forced into poor, segregated schools and neighborhoods. Apart from the normal problems inherent in poor schools and neighborhoods, there is one that disproportionately affects immigrant teens: Living and schooling in segregated contexts severely constrains the identity choices to which these children are exposed. Wealthier families can essentially present an array of identity choices for their children while poor families cannot.

One other factor related to class has to do with the presence and effect of extended family households. While it is not unusual for native-born poor or immigrant families to have extended households, most of the immigration literature posits a positive correlation between these households, academic achievement and ethnic identity retention. One quarter of the 12 households in my study were extended families and all consisted of a single parent with their child(ren) embedded in that unit. Out of the four children who lived in extended family households, only one, Clarisse, had an identity that would predispose her to a positive academic orientation and she was the only student not doing poorly in school. In fact, Clarisse’s brother, Phillip, also lived in the same household and
he adopted an oppositional identity and was doing poorly in school. Thus, extended families offer no insurance in preventing bad identity choices or doing poorly in school. Interestingly, of the five multi-sibling households, extended, single and two-parent, three had children who all chose different identities and who had different school performances pointing out the individual nature of the experience of segregation and poverty.

**Race**

The impact of race on identity choice is subtle compared to the effects of class. All of the respondents in my sample were noticeably not white and most Americans would probably classify all but three as African-American before they spoke. The fact that they shared the same phenotype as African-Americans and most West Indians allowed them the freedom to choose which identity they desired. Many African-American teen boys are smitten with Caribbean cultures, particularly Jamaican culture, or rather their perception of Jamaican culture. Some of the young Haitian immigrants in my study smoked marijuana as did their African-American friends and many incorporated this drug use into an idea of Jamaican culture that was notable for its adulation of reggae and dancehall music, pot and patois.

With few exceptions, the discrimination that my respondents experienced revolved around their skin color. This discriminatory treatment helped propel some of the second-generation Haitian boys in my study to adopt an adversarial identity. They found a ready-made system of explanations of this discrimination and of responses to it. These folk understandings were very attractive to these young men because they already felt out of place speaking with an accent and being ethnically different from other students. The understandings were accompanied by entrée into a peer group that helped shield them
from discrimination based on factors other than race and allowed them to feel as if they belonged.

More important than these individual experiences of race and discrimination is the underlying racial hierarchy of the United States. This system makes it expected and acceptable that those suffering disproportionately from poverty and lack of educational opportunities are those who are racial minorities. The system of racial hierarchy normalizes black and brown inequality and helps to perpetuate it through social institutions such as schools. Generalizations and stereotypes of dangerous or lazy black men are the status quo and many on the receiving end of these negative ideas see no way around them. Finding that they can do nothing to combat this pervasive system, many young men, including some in my study, find it easier to live up to these stereotypes and discard any hope that education will save them from this system.

**Gender**

My data show that there were clear gender differences, with 8 out of 10 girls adopting positive identities and six of those girls doing well in school. Boys had six out of nine who claimed a positively oriented identity, and only three of that six did well in school. All of the students whose academic performances were designated as good had positive identity orientations. Overall, boys were more likely than girls to adopt identities that entailed adversarial attitudes toward school. Young men seemed less able to resist the pressures that constrained their identity choices to all but a negative one. Like identity choices, we can think of these peer groups as existing on a continuum, with some exerting little pressure to change behavior and others exerting great force in trying to shape their members’ activities. There seemed to be an invisible tipping point on this continuum beyond which groups exerted great pressure in requiring adversarial identities.
towards school. Thus, some male peer groups exerted more pressure than others to not put much effort into academic work. Those that exerted less pressure and influence allowed their members more breathing room and required less time and social commitment from their members. This permitted those students who were so inclined to actually complete homework, attend classes and pay attention while there.

Female peer groups did not exert as much pressure on their members to conform, as did the boys. Furthermore, when the girls had problems, they tended to revolve more around high school dramas than identity dramas. The majority of issues the girls faced revolved around boys, clothes, strict parents, gossip and other issues we tend to associate with being a teenage girl in America. When the girls did face pressures related to their identity choices, the pressure was exerted in a different fashion than with the boys. The girls in a peer group were more likely to ostracize the offending girl or to spread cruel gossip whereas the boys went in for chiding and a slow dropping off of inclusion in group activities. Thus, the girls faced a much harsher and crueler version of the boys’ experiences.

**Age at Immigration/Length of Time in the United States**

Three of the 19 children were born here. The average age at immigration for the others was eight. The average length of time in the United States was seven years and their average age was 15.7 years. Thus, the average student in my sample has spent nearly as much time in the United States as they did in Haiti. When divided into identity groups, the Haitian and West Indian identifying students averaged 8.2 and 8.6 years respectively in the United States compared to 6.4 years for those identifying as African-American. Ironically, this is the opposite of what the literature would predict.
Immigration researchers have assumed that the longer an individual was in the country the more assimilated they would become.

When we divide the students by their academic performance, we see more predictable results. Those students whose academic performance was good, those earning a 3.0 or above, have an average length of time in this country of just over nine years. Those whose performance was labeled as mediocre, having a 2.0 to 3.0 GPA, have nearly the same average length of time in the country as those doing poorly, having less than a 2.0, with 6.3 and 6.4 years respectively.

Age

My research did not identify any discernable link between age and identity choice. However, there was one interesting factor that deserves more investigation in the literature. A number of parents of students who were labeled as mediocre or poor described much better grades, performance and attitudes towards school from their children when they were in elementary and middle school. My suspicion is that this shift in work ethic and attitude has something to do with the identity crisis of adolescence. Middle schoolers typically do less identity work than high school age students and are still under the wing of their family’s identity. In high school, children begin to establish their own identities. The adoption of these identities may be in opposition to those held earlier.

Language

Because the average age at immigration for my sample was eight, it is not surprising that 13 of the 19 students still spoke Kreyol and three also retained their knowledge of French. Of the three who were trilingual, two were good students and one was mediocre. Recent research has suggested that bilingual qualities generally increase
cognitive capacity, creativity and awareness and decrease the likelihood of outside
distraction (King and Fogle 2006). Thus, being bilingual is positively associated with
school performance. However, all five of the students who had an oppositional identity
and who did poorly in school were English/Kreyol bilingual and four of the six
monolingual students had good academic performances while the other two monolinguals
did so-so, thus undercutting the above positive association. For the most part, many of
the Kreyol speaking students used their native-tongue only with family members and
tried to avoid using it in public, particularly if their friends were near.

Language also was an issue in terms of discrimination. Many students recounted
experiences of prejudice and cruel teasing from African-American students. Once those
doing the teasing found that the students were Haitian, the disparaging remarks led to
hateful speech based around their Haitian identity. Furthermore, most of my respondents
did not use English as their first language. This was problematic because the content of
most ELL classes in the district did not address the needs of Haitian Kreyol speakers.
The few who spoke French found it easier to learn English because of the large number
of French teachers willing to assist them in acquiring a third language.

Conclusions

Some Afro-Caribbean second-generation students have performed better at school
than others from the same nations and similar backgrounds. Certain demographic factors
including race, poverty, and class impact educational outcomes. However, their impact
has not been explicitly established. Some scholars (Portes and Zhou 1993) have
hypothesized that identity choice affects academic orientation. Assuming this is true,
then what affects identity choice and formation? Demographic factors affect the identity
formation process of immigrant children. Depending on what factors are extant, children
choose different identities that predispose them to certain attitudes towards education. My hypothesis, that school and neighborhood segregation affects the identity choices of second-generation Haitian immigrant students has been validated by my research. Students who have more resources and capital have more identities from which to choose, including identities that positively orient them toward school. These resources, such as money and knowledge, are translated into better living and schooling conditions for immigrant children.

A number of other factors also are involved in this and it certainly is not as simplistic as the equation of segregation equals bad, integration equals good. However, these other factors are not the primary drivers of identity choice. Rather, they operate as filters that help to amplify or dampen the effects of living and schooling among children from certain backgrounds. Class obviously is an important determinant of whether children live in poor or wealthy neighborhoods, but that does not preclude poor students from adopting positive attitudes towards schooling. In fact, the only factor besides living and schooling in segregated conditions that predisposes outcomes is the availability of a given identity. Thus, race, class, language, age at immigration, length of time in the country, family background, and gender are important to understanding the idiosyncratic ways in which identity formation play out for each individual, but the most descriptive factors in understanding identity choice are the levels of segregation at home and at school.
CHAPTER 8
APPLYING WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNED: POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

The current conservative political climate colors education policy, cloaking high-stakes testing in a veneer of caring and concern. The educational trend of accountability, in part through the use of standardized testing, is destructive to the very students who are the purported concern of such policies. This approach to improved educational outcomes has similar negative effects on native poor and minority students as it does for Afro-Caribbean immigrants. Immigrant newcomers also are often negatively affected by their skin color, foreign background, lack of English proficiency, poverty and the identities that they carry with them from their homes or adopt here in the U.S. in an effort to be accepted. The Haitian immigrants with whom I worked are hurt by current educational practices, but often are invisible to policy makers and educators alike. This invisibility hurts them more than other well-established groups in a city like Tampa because they lack the programs and support in their education that other larger and more visible groups either create or receive. Their foreignness also hurts them because they do not understand the American racial system and have little idea about the implications stemming from acculturation to one subculture or another. Thus, it is time that policy-makers focus on these forgotten students.

The first section below will briefly revisit the four theories I used in Chapter 6 to describe the varying educational outcomes of immigrant and minority children. This section will describe which of these theories works best to classify the students in my
study and lays the foundation for potential policy considerations and community intervention strategies that will be discussed in the next section. Most Haitian immigrants end up in poor urban neighborhoods and schools. These schools lack the resources to handle the native-born minority and poor students they currently serve and now another strain is put on them: to serve foreign-born students. Therefore, to help Haitian immigrants, we need to help their schools and neighborhoods. We need to better meet their needs. My research is meant to help solve part of the problem by trying to explain just how Haitian immigrant students adopt identities that seem to predispose them to having positive or negative orientations towards school. From there, positive interventions can be designed to try to break the cycle and alter the choices these students make.

**A Brief Revisitation of the Theories**

Earlier, in Chapter 6, I laid out four theories that have been developed to explain, interpret and predict the experiences of minorities and immigrants. In this section, I will reexamine these theories in light of identity formation and the results of my fieldwork. I will discuss the ways in which these theories can account for what I found in my research. Overall, my research used the work of Portes and Zhou (1993) to frame my initial questions and to specify which factors I believed influenced identity choice. This reliance on Portes and Zhou does not mean that the other three theories were of no use to me, but merely that their conceptualizations were incomplete or inapplicable to my specific research.

None of these theories, by itself, can thoroughly explain the ways in which children interact with schools, peers and family. However, each can contribute toward an understanding of the identity choices immigrant and second-generation children make.
Their identity choices more directly affect immigrant children’s school experiences rather than the assimilation process as a whole. Therefore, a framework for explaining Haitian immigrant school experiences will have to encompass all of these theories.

I used a combination of these four theories to explore how and why children choose identities. All of these theories seem weak in allowing for the individual variation that I and other researchers have seen in the assimilation process. This research addresses that by turning to two specific factors that impact the identity choices that Haitian immigrant children make. Without integrating specific factors and the ways in which they work on identity choice into their theories, researchers will miss the actual process by which immigrant and minority students end up on the path to poor academic outcomes.

Portes, Zhou, Rumbaut, Ogbu, Fordham and many others have contributed parts to this puzzle. We can explain how Haitians come to be in neighborhoods and schools filled with poor and minority students. What we have not fully explored is how this affects their identities. Exactly why do some of these students choose one identity and others choose one that is completely different. That is the theoretical significance of this research. This research has found that many of the factors that Portes and Zhou (1993) discussed actually mediate the impact of educational and residential segregation. The influence of peers and family members, age at immigration, knowledge of the American social system and ethnic groups and many other factors constrain the available identity options open to Haitian immigrant and second-generation students.

**Does Ogbu Apply to Tampa Haitians?**

The first group of ideas I presented related to John Ogbu’s (1987) classification of minorities into voluntary and involuntary groups. This system depends on the initial terms of incorporation for the minority group to sort individuals. Its utility as a shorthand
generalization for social scientists and policy-makers is not in doubt. However, its relatively rigid categories fail to capture the true experiences of the individuals it hopes to classify, having no room for factors besides the initial mode of incorporation. For example, this rubric is woefully inadequate at explaining the life experiences of different generations of immigrants or different classes of native-born minorities. Its deficiencies in regard to generational differences are troubling because research indicates that second-generation students are more likely to swap their Haitian identities for American ones, particularly ones that would place them squarely into the involuntary minority column in Ogbu’s typology.

My own research found that whether Haitians are refugees or immigrants tends to matter less than their status in the American race and class system when we are discussing the experiences of school children. Anyone, regardless of nationality, skin color, or history of immigration can adopt an identity that would allow them to be placed within any of Ogbu’s categories because identity choice typically is voluntary. This leads to incorrect labeling or confusion because individuals who at one time were categorized as voluntary minorities might end up displaying identities that now would have them classified as involuntary minorities. The Haitian families with whom I worked would be considered voluntary minorities. However, their children, through the process of identity formation, oftentimes adopt identities that would be more closely identified as involuntary minorities. This fluidity and complexity are not well captured by the static designations of voluntary or involuntary status. However, while the classification system was not useful in my research in terms of classifying families and students, it did help me categorize the identities that students chose.
Does Ogbu/Fordham Apply to Tampa Haitians?

The second theory I presented, proposed by John Ogbu and Signithia Fordham (1986), attempts to explain why some African-American students do poorly and put forth so little effort toward their studies. Fordham and Ogbu started with the fact that there were different educational outcomes among African-American students and concluded that the cultural understandings of black Americans in regard to the educational, racial and class systems were constraining student options. The theory incorporates student knowledge of larger social structures and defines students as active participants in their educations, choosing how to respond to these structural constraints. While useful because it problematizes earlier research, one problem is that the theory does not take incomplete information into account. Not all black students will have equal knowledge of American race and class systems, nor will all have the same emotional and attitudinal responses to the information they do have.

Furthermore, this explanation of differential orientations and outcomes is not explicitly tied to identity choice. This is problematic for my own research. Because Haitian and other Afro-Caribbean immigrants do not necessarily have to assimilate to an African-American identity, or any identity, researchers run the risk of assuming that this process is a forgone conclusion for all such immigrants. The issue of incomplete information is also more pronounced for immigrants than for African-Americans. Depending on how long they have been in the country and their level of familiarity with our social system, immigrant students could potentially have much less information with which to make identity choices than their native-born minority peers.

However, in relation to my own research, this theory helped me to better conceptualize students as active decision-makers. Although they may not be able to be
erudite about their understanding of structural barriers to success, that does not mean they are unable to feel or understand those barriers. As a result of this theory, I was better able to see my respondents as actively choosing identities. Additionally, the focus on incomplete information led me to focus first on such factors as segregated living and schooling conditions. Because these conditions circumscribe the available information that students have, they are extremely important in any theory attempting to explain why students choose certain identities. My own research has shown that where a student lives and goes to school affects their knowledge of identity choices and the decisions they make. Students actively negotiate their social landscapes, picking a path through the available rubble to create a sense of themselves that is useful to them in some fashion.

**Does Portes-Zhou Apply to Tampa Haitians?**

The third theory, segmented assimilation, was developed by Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou (1993) and attempts to explain why immigrants adapt to certain segments of American culture. They primarily discuss three such paths: mainstream identity, retention of an ethnic identity or adoption of an adversarial identity. My own research leads me to see these paths leading to a larger field of possible identities, yet the theory’s import is not diminished by this narrow focus. Furthermore, while not explicitly stating all variables that contribute to identity adoption, the theory nonetheless incorporates the structural issues that Fordham and Ogbu focused on, provides room to include varying levels of situational awareness and allows for the individual factors that Ogbu’s work (1991) missed. Thus, this theory has all the useful aspects of earlier theories while remedying some of their problems. The one area that is problematic in this theory had to do with a lack of specificity about what triggered adoption of any given identity. Portes and Zhou (1993) identified a large number of factors believed to influence this adoption
but were unable to describe the process. That is exactly what my own research has sought to remedy: presenting two factors that directly influence identity choice and explicitly showing how they do so.

This theory, more than any other, influenced my initial framing of the research problem and helped me identify the variables, segregated schooling and housing, on which I focused. It also helped me to frame the identity choice outcomes I witnessed. While the theory focuses on three paths, I was able to see the gray in between these paths through the compound identities that my respondents adopted. The theory also helped me conceptualize the ways in which larger structural factors such as the economy and the drift of politics constrained the information to which my students were exposed.

Furthermore, I found some evidence that generational differences do have an impact on identity adoption. Some of my respondents who were older than average at the time they immigrated and had been in the United States less than five years were less likely to adopt an identity which was negatively oriented towards education. I also found that Haitian children who retained a Haitian identity, even those who attended school with mostly African-American peers, had academic outcomes that were better than those who adopted a black identity. This corresponds with the research that Portes and Zhou and Waters have done (1993, 1994).

**Does Bourdieu/MacLeod Apply to Tampa Haitians?**

The fourth and final theory relates to forms of capital and is best exemplified by the work of Pierre Bourdieu and further explored by Jay MacLeod (1977; 1995). The social capital framework recognizes that all immigrants and native-born minorities have varying levels of resources that are used to mediate and frame their relationships with the larger society. These forms of capital, while not necessarily determining outcomes, do
influence the identity choices of individuals. This focus on capital led me to create a very detailed instrument in order to try to capture the influence of other variables aside from segregated schooling and housing. I incorporated capital variables into the segmented assimilation framework to better flesh out the process by which individuals choose identities.

While social capital theories are useful, they do contain their own weaknesses. They tend to be flat, closer to making lists of which resources individuals and families have rather than to exploring the dynamic ways in which these resources interact and influence actions. They also do not have room for the contingencies of individual life experiences and the differences that exist between immigrants from the same or different families. For example, why do some students end up assimilating to a minority identity that predisposes them for failure and poverty while their families might possess all the social, cultural, financial and educational capital in the world? In fact, their own siblings might adopt an identity that is very amenable to educational success. These ideas of class and capital only can go so far in providing general predications, and their explanatory power at the individual level is limited.

**Limitations to this Research**

This research was undertaken in order to help elucidate a specific part of segmented assimilation. While it has been shown in my sample that residential and educational segregation impacts the identity choices of these Haitian immigrant students, we should not assume this to be true for all such students. The sample size of this research, 19 students, limits its application to a larger population. Furthermore, because of this small sample size, statistical analysis was not a viable option. Thus, there is no direct statistical correlation between the two variables and the identity choices of individual students.
Furthermore, since this research is a snapshot of two years in these students’ lives, there is no longitudinal data to suggest that the identity choices these students made will be the ones they stick with throughout adulthood. Additionally, because of the developmental aspects of identity formation, we are essentially coming in mid-stream to this process. Students began long ago to develop their identity and continued to do so after this research was completed.

This work has illuminated a number of avenues for further research. One area of future inquiry revolves around the entire process of identity acquisition. Human behavior is shaped by biology, environment and personal choice and these factors act on us from a very early age and continue throughout our lives. Thus, a longitudinal study of children would give us much needed perspective on whether what has been observed in this research is the result of longer processes or of acute crises in the teen years. Another area for further inquiry would involve micro-sampling at a number of different schools in a given city. In this research I followed the students, not the schools. A richer picture of the factors that affect identity formation and acquisition could be discerned if the focus is changed and the school environment and its members are studied. One other potential study arises from the deficiencies in this work: a large-scale, multi-city, quantitative analysis. We need statistical analysis of the factors that impact immigrant identity acquisition if any of the suggestions for interventions below are to be taken seriously and followed through. Thus, the section that follows is predicated upon my research being validated by further investigation.

**Potential Interventions: What Can Policy and Community Action Achieve?**

The purpose of my research, beyond the theoretical goals, has been to try to better understand identity choice in order to suggest interventions that will ameliorate the
negative aspects of downward assimilation. Some suggestions for potential policy and community action derive from my research. Two areas of policy and practice are germane: schools and communities. While proposals for interventions are not always well contained within and often overlap these boundaries, dividing these suggestions into these specific categories allows us to better view what actions can feasibly be undertaken and at which level of action.

Attempts to correct social problems through policy often can be tediously slow and frequently involve litigation, particularly when dealing with topics such as race or discrimination. However, once policy is changed, it can become law. Getting it implemented is not always simple, but the subsequent recourse in the courts is often successful because of the policy’s status as law. Alongside policy change is practical change. Communities often can be sites of changes in behavior and attitude that improve the lives of their members. Furthermore, they often work in conjunction with or bring pressure to bear on policy proposals. While community action is often hard to achieve, when it works it often is a very empowering event for its members, frequently leading to more civic engagement and community action. The following two sections discuss potential policy and community interventions as they relate to this research.

**Potential Policy Considerations**

There are some very fruitful areas for potential policy change. One such area has to do with how we fund our schools. Community groups and parents could lobby state governments to spend equally across schools and districts within their states. In some states, those seeking funding changes also could put these issues to a ballot referendum for citizens of the state on which to vote. These groups ultimately could resort to litigation to try to force states to equalize school and per-pupil funding as well as
providing catch-up money for poor schools and districts. These funding issues for schools do not just refer to buying books and maintaining the physical plant. They also refer to teacher salaries, hiring more teachers and creating specialized programs to handle immigrant students.

In states with large immigrant populations like Texas, California and Florida, school districts often do not have ELL teachers who speak the language of their students. If we expect students to learn English and pass standardized tests, the least we can do for them is to actually have people who speak their language teach them English. Nativist English-only campaigns further exacerbate these problems. If we are serious about teaching students English then we also should be just as serious about helping them to maintain their native tongues. One way to help immigrants learn English is to create newcomer schools, which serve new immigrant students until they are competent in the language. These could be schools within schools or separate entities. By mainstreaming immigrant children too soon, we set them on the path to troubled academic careers, particularly those for whom English is a second language. Innumerable studies have shown the benefits of bilingualism in all areas of a student’s education. I would even go so far as to suggest mandating second-language learning for all of our students starting in elementary school and continuing through graduation. Pundits and politicians alike worry about our ability to compete worldwide in jobs and culture and this would be a prime opportunity for them to show that they are truly serious about this issue.

For small groups of immigrants, like Haitians in Tampa, the already meager budget does not stretch far enough to have enough ELL professionals to meet the needs of all of their Kreyol speaking students. At the time of my research in Tampa, Haitian children
had two Haitian paraprofessionals for over 200 schools to work with ELL students. These men went to a different school each for a half-day. They visited 20 schools, combined, each week. While not all schools have Haitian children and not all Haitian immigrant students need ELL instruction in Kreyol, that seems like a small number for an immigrant group that makes up one percent of the county’s population and two percent of the city’s population. Unfortunately, Haitians are still a small part of the states native-born and immigrant populations and will have difficulty enacting policy changes in this area on their own. Their best bet for success would be to partner with other groups seeking similar changes.

Teachers do one of the most important jobs in any democracy: they prepare future citizens to lead our nation, develop new technologies and maintain our freedom. Yet, teachers are horribly underpaid when compared to equally important vocations like politicians, medical doctors and CEOs. Many states have shortages of teachers. Typically, in a market economy, when there are shortages of employees, pay and benefits go up until equilibrium is reached. With teaching this does not happen. While school districts try to offer competitive pay and incentive packages to lure new teachers, they are ultimately constrained by government budgets and rules. Where businesses can pay whatever the market will support, publicly funded jobs cannot. I am not advocating privatization of schooling. What I am advocating is a realignment of government spending priorities. Again, Haitian immigrants would have a hard time getting the attention of policy makers on their own. There are plenty of groups advocating and lobbying for higher pay for teachers and a partnership with one or more of them would benefit Haitians concerned about this topic. Furthermore, this issue of teacher pay would
also be a good topic for inclusion on a ballot referendum because it concerns all citizens of a given state.

Better funding for schools, teachers and resources are important on their face. However, there is a more subtle reason why we should choose to invest in these areas. By not doing so we imply to poor immigrant and minority children that they are less important than their wealthier, whiter counterparts. We desegregated our schools only to let them rot from the inside out. We told poor blacks and Latinos that they deserved equal education and then gave them the oldest schools, the most outdated materials and the youngest, most inexperienced teachers (Kozol 1992). And we have thrown immigrant children into the middle of this mess. What my research has taught me is that children are neither stupid nor oblivious. They get the hint that our educational systems send, that they are not worth the effort to teach. If we equalized funding, made our schools castles and paid our teachers what they were worth, we would send the message to all students that they are our most precious resource as a nation.

Another fruitful area for policy intervention is accountability through testing. We need to stop focusing on high stakes testing and demand more from our students as individual learners. While I feel that high stakes, standardized testing negatively impact most students, they are only likely to make a bad situation worse for poor immigrant and minority students. For these students, who are already contemplating adopting an adversarial identity or who have already chosen one, doing poorly on these tests is likely to further their belief that school offers them nothing and that structural discrimination will prevent them from academic achievement even if they did make the effort. This is further compounded by the shamefully inadequate education and assistance provided to
immigrant students. I worked with a student who told me that when she first arrived and spoke no English she was made to take the FCATs. Exactly what purpose does this serve? It made her feel academically worthless and she questioned whether or not it was worth the effort to even try to do well.

Social scientists have been debating the merits of standardized testing since the SATs became common barometers for student aptitude. Definitive research must be done with immigrant and minority students to fully show the effects of these tests on these particular populations. In the meantime, what research exists must be brought to bear by immigrants, community groups, academics and teachers themselves. Classroom teachers have bemoaned the fact that standardized accountability tests are requiring them to take up valuable classroom time teaching to the test. Abstract testing of discrete skills is of little value to students. What is needed is more individual attention and instructional methods that teach children knowledge and skills in contexts with which they are familiar. A large coalition of interested stakeholders could potentially use social science research to either convince policymakers of the futility of these tests or to litigate these requirements. Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka partially turned on social science research refuting conservative, racist claims that segregated education was in the best interest of minority children. Why could our research not be used for such good ends again?

Another area where concerned citizens could impact policy is immigration. Our nation cycles through xenophobic periods where nativist calls for closing the borders are responded to with tougher immigration laws. We are currently witnessing one of those periods again. What few people outside of immigrants and academics realize is that we
do immeasurable harm to immigrant students through these policies as well as the public atmosphere they create. Putting aside the issues that tightening immigration reform creates for those here illegally, immigration making the front pages of newspapers creates an atmosphere in which all immigrants are worried about their reception by peers and strangers alike. Immigrant students who are hassled because of their foreign backgrounds are more likely to seek out alternative identities than if they were accepted for whom they are. This pressure to change identities combined with the already limited identity choices that many poor, black immigrants have could result in more students choosing oppositional identities. For policymakers concerned with leaving no child behind, this argument could be persuasive if backed up by empirical data and research.

We also might want to consider vocational education as an acceptable alternative to higher education. While this goes against my own beliefs and those of many others who feel that every child can go to college and achieve middle class success, we must face up to the fact that as it stands right now, we are losing children by the hundreds of thousands to crime, unemployment and despair. This belief must be remedied if we are to help those most in need of our aid. If immigrant or native-born minority children do not wish to succeed through what mainstream America deems the normal paths, then we should provide alternatives. By providing solid vocational education, we can help these youths to develop skills that will allow them to provide for themselves and their families. We are providing alternatives if we do this, rather than insisting on one path to success. For this expanded focus on vocational education to occur, educational budgets must be increased. This requires lobbying by concerned parties. One of those parties might very well be blue-collar businesses and service-oriented companies. These institutions would
be well served by skilled, capable graduates of vocational programs and would be more likely to pay a premium for those who have such skills.

One final area of policy concern has to do with integration. Unfortunately, one of the first conclusions that people often jump to when I describe my research is reminiscent of Jim Crow era policies. Because poor Haitian immigrant and second-generation students are negatively affected by close contact with certain subcultures of African-Americans, the obvious solution would appear to be to stop or limit that contact. However, based on my research, I would argue that we need not revert back to such an odious practice to achieve beneficial results for black immigrants. My research showed that even among some students who lived and schooled primarily with poor black Americans, many students still retained their Haitian identity or forged a West Indian one. Thus, even in the absence of true integration, students managed to adopt identities that would not preclude academic success.

One of the idealistic goals of American policy is for a multicultural society to rise up where people of all different backgrounds live, work and school together. If we could find policy solutions to encourage class and race integration where these newcomers live and school, we could achieve the same goal as stopping or limiting contact with adversarial subcultural identities. Instead of trying to diminish contact between certain groups of students, we should be trying to expand their field of contact. For this reason, voucher programs and charter schools run the risk of creating more constrained identity choices for black immigrants and should be opposed by community groups concerned with the education of immigrant and minority students. By drawing away those self-selected positive role models, we are removing examples of identity choices that can
result in positive academic orientations. Remember too that putting minority students into a school with a majority of white students does not necessarily mean that they will all adopt mainstream identities. Because of structural and individual discrimination, many of these students might find themselves seeking refuge with other students of color.

**Suggestions for Community-Based Action**

The areas of community-based action discussed in this section should be of concern to immigrant and non-immigrant alike. By ensuring the success of our most vulnerable citizens we can safeguard all of our freedoms and possibilities. To achieve these goals though, small, community based groups of immigrants and racial and ethnic minorities must find common ground and work together. While education for even the largest immigrant groups is still inadequate, that for the smallest and least visible is worse. Haitians in Tampa are but one example of an immigrant group who, even if working together with a unity of purpose, would not be able to make much of a dent with policy or community-based action because of their small size. I will first talk about the applications of this research in community contexts and then finish up with a focus on what can be done within schools to improve the chances of immigrant children adopting positively oriented identities.

As I mentioned above, there is a need to form strong coalitions between immigrants of color and American blacks. To do so would increase the chances of attaining a fairer society when the pressures brought to bear by these new coalitions encouraged and demanded more equitable treatment in education, housing and economics. Unfortunately, at present, such coalitions are a long way off. Tensions between native-born blacks and Afro-Caribbean immigrants, particularly Haitians, continue to exist. These tensions also exert pressure on immigrant students to disavow their ethnic identity.
and adopt new ones that could be potentially deleterious to their school achievement.

There is a role here for academics and mixed-identity individuals to mediate these issues. If we can enable their communities to be more visible, they will have a better chance of being taken seriously by policy makers. The more attention they accrue, the more likely the changes they seek will be enacted.

We should also be encouraging more members of immigrant communities to volunteer at and participate in the public school system. This would allow teacher’s aides who speak Kreyol or Patois to help immigrant students with their studies and also provide positive role models for immigrant and native-born minorities. They also could act as a bit of a buffer between negative ethnic attitudes and immigrant children. Further, it would provide added personnel resources without damaging already tight school budgets.

We also need to encourage parents to retain their knowledge of their home cultures so that they can be a source of information and alternative identity choices for their children. They also can actively encourage their children’s participation in immigrant-oriented events and activities to help resist the pull of negative identity options. In situations like my study where immigrant children are funneled into schools and neighborhoods that offer some very negative identity alternatives, the existence of and strong encouragement from positive sources of identity alternatives could help keep some of these students from choosing an identity which is deleterious to their future success.

Immigrant community members who already are assimilated could become powerful cultural brokers, managing communications between home and school, social service providers and other third parties. Cultural middlemen can inform parents of available services and encourage them to use them. Those brokers could help local
immigrant communities to educate social and community service providers about the different cultural groups within their areas and provide training in cultural knowledge that will benefit these groups. Community centers, as locations where students from many different backgrounds come together, can make special efforts to incorporate diverse cultures in their programming and activities and can reach out to these immigrant groups through churches, schools and social service agencies. These service providers need to know what issues and problems their constituents have and whether or not their services are improving or worsening those issues. An example of particular resonance with this research is where refugee resettlement agencies resettle their clients. If they resettle them into segregated areas they could be informed of the complications this is causing and might work to alter their practices.

While educating and encouraging community members and social service providers is extremely important, we also need to work on public schools, colleges of education and teachers to make changes that will be of particular benefit to immigrant and minority children. If community groups and cultural brokers can inform education professionals about identity issues among black immigrants, they could be persuaded to use additive acculturation methods and teach code-switching in their classes. Many of these changes cannot occur through lobbying of politicians; instead, they can only occur by bringing community concerns to those responsible for teacher training and public school administrators. We must make schooling more flexible to meet the needs of these students. If we can give teachers the tools and space to use them, we could help prevent so many negative educational outcomes.
I think one fruitful strategy would involve the use of multimedia and high tech teaching to bring ethnic diversity into classrooms. One factor in Haitian immigrant and second-generation students choosing adversarial identities is that they do not feel comfortable choosing their own because of the negative stereotypes and attitudes that people have about Haiti in general and about its citizens in particular. If we incorporate teaching modules in social science classes that focus on the homelands of the immigrant students in their midst, that would potentially reduce some of the negative pressures that Haitian immigrant high-schoolers feel about maintaining or even having pride in their own nationality.

I also think that teachers have more of a role to play in actively discouraging negative and xenophobic remarks in their classrooms and in educating the children who make them. However, the reality is that many of our teachers labor under the same misperceptions and negative attitudes, as do our students. This illustrates the importance of having community groups and brokers educate local teachers and administrators on their cultures. Many times, discrimination is fueled by generalizations and if those individuals who are prejudiced out of ignorance instead of ideology could be exposed to the many ways of being Haitian, Armenian or black, they might alter their attitudes and behaviors towards these students. However, this will require a frank and open dialogue on identity alternatives and the reasons for student failure, something that many are loathe to discuss.

If we can start such a dialogue and encourage teacher training colleges to include instruction on additive acculturation and code-switching, more immigrant students might be saved the painful path of downward assimilation. By instructing teachers in training
about the positive benefits of additive acculturation and code-switching, they can incorporate the appropriate attitudes and behaviors into their classroom repertoires before they even enter a classroom. For those already credentialed, in-service training should be given on additive acculturation and code-switching. Administrators should require their teachers to use these teaching methods and implement penalties for those who do not do so. Parents could be actively involved in this effort as well through outreach programs by the schools in the form of symposia and informal lectures.

Code-switching in particular has enormous potential to divert students away from adopting negatively oriented identities or mitigating the effects of such identities once adopted. If teachers frankly discuss the benefits of becoming bicultural with their students, emphasizing that they do not need to reject their own identity in order to become successful, students will likely respond. My own research allowed me to see that students actively shape their lives and that they positively respond to you when you treat them as active participants. If teachers and parents dealt with students in this way, they could be encouraged to take the pragmatic steps that will improve their lives.

Another tactic that teachers can deploy is recognizing, understanding and validating their students’ understanding of structural impediments to their success. If we want students who are slipping to take school seriously, we have to let them know that we understand why they are doing poorly in the first place and then give them a reason that is valid in their own identity framework as to why they should make the effort to succeed. If teachers accepted head on and validated, in the classroom, the negative assessments that poor performing students had about their chances in the American social structure, a barrier between teacher and student would be removed. A teacher need only stipulate
that racial and class barriers stand between that student and success to be able to then show that student how code-switching can help them overcome or maneuver around those barriers.

As I mentioned above, many educators, trained to believe the only way to success for immigrant and minority children is through assimilation into mainstream American culture, are unwilling to contemplate or discuss the fungibility of identity. However, children must feel as if it is acceptable and even be encouraged to have more than one identity or to play with the mutability of identities. Thus, children get to see that identity choice does not have to be a zero-sum game. It also is beneficial because it allows them to take the best that each culture has to offer.

**Conclusion**

The goal of this dissertation has always been to discern whether segregated housing and education impacts the identity choices of Haitian immigrant and second-generation students and if so, how it does. However, its secondary purpose was to use this information to suggest potential changes that will improve the academic and life outcomes of these students. While this research has focused on a topic that is already well known, it has also shed light on the actual processes of a phenomenon that no one has yet explained. By assembling in one place all the theories and research that focus on the problem of differential academic outcomes in immigrant and minority students, it has shown how they all link together to create a richly textured framework for understanding some of the most invisible students in America’s schools.

Haitian immigrant and second-generation students make decisions about their identity based on incomplete and often emotionally laden information. The identities they choose come from a constrained market of options, diminished by the structural
barriers of racism and classism. If we want to help them we have to show them that there are more options out there. We also must show them that we respect their decisions.

While pragmatic teenager seems like an oxymoronic phrase, many of the students in my study made identity choices that constrained their futures because those choices were the safest bet for them in the foreseeable future. Part of the problem is thus getting them to see a better future for themselves.

However, seeing that better future is hard to do when structural barriers are standing in their way. Barring massive government, industry and societal changes that would ensure good, fair and fulfilling work to all those who want it, there is only so much that school can do for these students. However, that does not negate the fact that we must work to make the changes discussed in the above section. We must improve schools, teach our children frankly about social discrimination and treat them as young adults who actively make their own choices about behavior and identity. Furthermore, creating equal schools can create hope. Since so much of a student's decision to adopt adversarial identities rests on their perception that other identities will not pay off, adding a bit of hope and optimism is likely to have a disproportionately large affect. But we have a long way to go to improve the lives of these students.

Immigrants have been making themselves at home in our country since it was founded. They have all managed to find means of acculturating. Haitians and other immigrants will continue to make homes for themselves within our borders for the foreseeable future. If we accept that reality, we can move on to the inevitable implication, which is that we need to do more for them and their children. Immigrants founded this nation and very few of us can claim an indigenous ancestry to our country.
If we stop demonizing immigrants we can start helping them. Today’s immigrants might not be the future of our country, but their children certainly are.
APPENDIX A
STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Section A - Basic Information

A1. Code:
A2. Name:
A3. Date:
A4. Time:
A5. Location of Interview:

Section B - Biographical Information

B1. Sex:
B2. Age:
B3. Date of Birth:
B4. Country of Birth:
B5. Place of Birth:
B6. Number of people in current household:
B7. Who are the people in B6?

Section C – Pre-Migration Background

C1. Was place of birth rural or urban?
C2. Native language?
C3. Ability to read in native language?
C4. Ability to write in native language?
C5. Ability to speak in native language?
C6. Schooling completed in place of birth?
C7. Were any degrees or certificates earned?
C8. Have any other family members attended school and who are they?
C9. If yes to C8, have they earned degrees and certificates? If yes, who and what?
C10. What was the family’s class prior to migration?
C11. Did the family own a vehicle?
C12. Did the family own or rent a house?
C13. Were any family members active in public life?
C14. Did the family own a business?
C15. Did the student work prior to migration?
C16. If yes to C15, what types of work did they student do?

**Section D – Migration Background**

D1. Where did the student live just prior to coming to the United States?
D2. If somewhere other than Haiti, how did they arrive there from Haiti?
D3. The date and age on arrival if they lived somewhere else besides Haiti:
D4. Date of entry to United States?
D5. Age upon entry to United States?
D6. Number of years in the United States?
D7. Place of entry to the United States?
D8. Method of migration?
D9. Did the student migrate alone?
D10. If no to D9, then with whom did the student arrive?
D11. Did you or your family know anyone else in the U.S. prior to arriving?
D12. If yes to D11, whom and where did they live?
D13. Did the student or their family try to migrate unsuccessfully more than once?

D14. If yes, how many times?

D15. Did the student or their family ever visit the U.S. prior to migration?

D16. If yes to D15, how many times?

D17. Did the student or their family live anywhere else in the U.S. prior to Tampa?

D18. If yes to D17, where?

D19. If yes to D17, how old was student upon arriving in Tampa?

D20. How many years have the student and their family lived in Tampa?

D21. What were the reasons they and/or their family left Haiti?

D22. What were the reasons they and/or their family came to the U.S.

D23. What were the reasons they and/or their family came to Tampa?

Section E – Background in the United States

E1. Are they attending or have they completed any schooling in the U.S.?

E2. Where is/was the schooling?

E3. What are their grades/GPA or what certificates/diplomas do they have?

E4. Have any of their family members completed any schooling in the U.S.?

E5. If yes to E4, have those members gotten degrees or certificates and what where they?

E6. How well does the student speak English?

E7. How well does the student read English?

E8. How well does the student write English?

E9. Does the student work?

E10. If yes to E9, where and what type of job?

E11. Have they had any other jobs in the United States?

E12. Has their work ever interfered with their ability to go to school or do homework?
E13. Who in their household works and what do they do?

E14. Does anyone else in their household make money from irregular work?

E15. Does their family own a business in the United States and what is it?

E16. What is their family’s class status?

E17. Does the family own a vehicle?

E18. Does the family own or rent?

E19. Who lives in their home?

E20. Do they rent any space out to anyone, family or non-family?

E21. Where do they live (including zip and neighborhood name)?

E22. How long have they lived there?

E23. Does anyone in their household participate in public life and how?

E24. Does the student participate in any non-academic activities?

E25. Do they or other students in the home participate in academic/tutoring activities?

E26. What do they find is the most difficult thing about living in the United States?

E27. What do they feel is the most beneficial thing about living in the U.S.?

Section F – Transnational Ties

F1. Do they have any relatives living in Haiti or any other country besides the U.S.?

F2. If yes to F1, where and who are they?

F3. Do they have any relatives living in Tampa? Who are they?

F4. Do they have any relatives living in the U.S.? Where and who are they?

F5. How frequently do they communicate with any of the relatives above and how?

F6. Have they returned to Haiti or wherever they lived before coming here? How often?

F7. What were the reasons for these visits?

F8. What was the length of stay for each of those visits in F7?
F9. For the relatives above, what are the educational, class and vocational backgrounds?

F10. Does anyone in their household remit money home?

F11. If yes to F10, how much, how often, to whom and why?

F12. Are there other Haitians that they know who live in Tampa?

F13. If yes to F12, who and where are they, how do they know them?


F15. Do they or their families participate in any group with other Haitians? What?

F16. How many Haitians do they think are in Tampa?

F17. Do they think the number is growing or decreasing?

F18. Do they know any Haitians in Tampa of their own age group? How?

F19. Do any Haitians live near them?

F20. Do they think there is a Haitian Community in Tampa?

F21. Are there many Haitian groups or organizations? What are they?

F22. Are there any Haitian markets or businesses?

F23. Are there any Haitian restaurants?

Section G – Identity Factors

G1. What language do they use at school, in class?

G2. What language or languages do they use at school when not in class? Why?

G3. What language(s) do they use in public? When and why?

G4. What language(s) do they use with friends? When and why?

G5. What language(s) do they use at home? When and why?

G6. What is their preferred language(s)?

G7. What are the nationalities of their friends?

G8. What are the races of their friends?
G9. What are the ethnicities of their friends? (Culture)

G10. What is their identity?

G11. What is their race?

G12. What is their ethnicity?

G13. What is the skin tone of the respondent?

G14. What are the nationalities of their mother, father and siblings?

G15. How do they identify the people in G14?

G16. Do they have a boy/girlfriend? What is their identity, race, nationality, ethnicity?

G17. Who do they spend most of their time with?

G18. Would they date or marry someone other than a Haitian?

G19. How do they think other people identify them?

G20. How do they think their parents would identify themselves?

G21. Are they happy with the identity they have?

G22. Why are they the identity they are?

G23. What are the races of their family members and their skin tones?

G24. Who are their parents friends with? Identities?

G25. If they are a member of any group besides school, who else are members?

G26. What are the identities of other members of their groups?

Section H – Discrimination Experiences

H1. If the student works, have they ever been discriminated against there? Describe.


H3. Has the student ever experienced discrimination at school? Describe.


H5. Why does the student feel they are discriminated against? Does it vary?
H6. What do they do when they feel they are being discriminated against?

H7. How do they feel people treat Haitians?

H8. How do they feel people treat African-Americans?

H9. How do they feel people treat immigrants?

H10. Do they think the media treat Haitians, immigrants, blacks in a certain way? How?

H11. Do they think the government treats these groups a certain way? How?

H12. Do they ever get mistaken for something other than Haitian? If so, what?

H13. If yes to H12, how do they react, respond?

H14. Do their friends ever say anything derogatory about Haitians? If so, what?

H15. If yes to H14, how do they respond?

**Section I – Neighborhood**

I1. Where do they live? What neighborhood?

I2. Who lives in their neighborhood? Nationality, race, class, ethnicity?

I3. Do they speak, hang out or interact with any neighbors? If so, whom?

I4. Do any members of their families speak, hang out or interact with neighbors? Who?

I5. If they had an emergency and no one was at home, who would they call? Why?

I6. Who is the person in I5? Nationality, race, ethnicity, relative?

I7. If they needed a ride to school, who would they ask? Why? Who is that person?

I8. What do their parents say about the neighborhood and its residents?

I9. Do they or members of their household participate in any neighborhood groups?

I10. If yes to I9, what are they and who else is in those groups?

I11. What do they think of their neighborhood?

I12. Are they ever afraid in their neighborhood? If so, when and why?
Section J – School

J1. Where do they attend school?

J2. Is this in or near their neighborhood? How far from home?

J3. What grade are they in?

J4. How do they feel they do in school?

J5. What are their grades? GPA? Conduct?

J6. Who are their teachers at school? Identity?

J7. Who are the administrators at school? Identity?

J8. Who are their fellow students? Identity?

J9. What classes do they take at school?

J10. Who do they interact with at school? Teachers, staff, students, administrators?

J11. What are the identities of the people in J10?

J12. Are there any other Haitians at their school?

J13. Are there any Kreyol speakers at their school?

J14. When the school sends home announcements, are they in English, Kreyol?

J15. What is the most frequent identity of their teachers, friends, students at school?

J16. Do they feel they are treated differently from other students at school and why?

J17. Do they think they are succeeding or failing in school and why?

J18. How often do you miss school and why?

J19. Do they have any post school plans and what are they?

J20. What do they want to do for a job after school and why?

J21. Will they need college for this career choice?

J22. How do they feel about school?

J23. Do they belong to any clubs or sports at school?
J24. How much time do they spend studying and doing homework?

J25. Do they feel they put forth enough effort at school?

J26. Do they plan on attending college?

J27. If they attended school in Haiti how did they do there and what did they study?

J28. If they need help with schoolwork who do they ask? Is it good enough?

J29. Do they have any problems with grades or discipline at school? What and why?

J30. If they attended school in Haiti or elsewhere, is it different and how from here?

J31. If they have a problem at school who do they turn to for help?

J32. What do their parents think about their grades and schooling?

J33. How many school have they gone to since leaving Haiti?

J34. Are they in any special classes and what are they and why?

J35. Are they or were they in ELL classes? For how long? Were they effective?

J36. Do their parents ever meet with their teachers and why?

J37. Do their parents ever help them with homework? Is it effective?

J38. Do their parents inquire about their school work and performance?

J39. Do their parents review their report cards?

J40. Do they get punished for poor grades or conduct?

J41. Do their parents encourage them to succeed at school and in what ways?

J42. Do their parents stress how important education is?

J43. What do they think the role of parents is in relation to their education?
APPENDIX B
SUMMARY OF STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS
Table B-1. Summary of Neighborhood and School Types, Identities and Academic Performances from the Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Neighborhood Type</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Identity Chosen</th>
<th>Academics</th>
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<td></td>
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Key: Neighborhood Types: WW – Wealthy, mostly White; MR/MC – Mixed Race, Mixed Class; P/AA – Poor, mostly African American.
Academic Performance: G – Good (3.0 and above); M – Mediocre (2.0-3.0); P – Poor (2.0 and below).
Private 1 - Paid for by parents. Private 2 - Paid for by scholarship for financially needy students.
Horizontal lines dividing students indicate groups of siblings or separate families.
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Zhou, Min
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jennifer L. Craythorne (Jenn) was born in Willingboro, New Jersey, and was raised first in Southern New Jersey and then later in Central Pennsylvania. Her early academic career was generally stellar (7th in her high school graduating class), and early on she found her path in Pittsburgh. In the summer of 1989 she left Hershey, Pennsylvania, for Carnegie Mellon’s Advanced Placement Early Admissions Summer Program. Too young to move directly from that summer to college, she returned to Hershey temporarily for her junior year before leaving again for Carnegie Mellon University where she enrolled in the fall of 1990, Early Admissions, skipping her senior year of high school. Upon completing that first year of studies, she was awarded her high school diploma. She continued her enrollment at Carnegie Mellon for four years and was awarded a double BA in French and interdisciplinary history with a focus on anthropology. This unwieldy title was the result of Carnegie Mellon having no separate anthropology or sociology department.

Having attended school non-stop since her sophomore year in high school, Jenn decided to try out the sunnier climes of Santa Barbara and kick around a bit before enrolling in graduate school. Finally, tired of the working world, she enrolled at the University of Florida in August of 1996 to study immigration and policy. Jenn also discovered other areas of interest dealing with education, race, and inequality. During her first year of master’s studies there she was awarded a teaching assistantship, a rarity for a graduate program with close to 175 students. From 1996 to 2000, when she left for
Tampa to complete her fieldwork, another teaching assistantship, a graduate assistantship, a short-term contract to provide Web services to the department, and a position as Editorial Assistant with Transforming Anthropology supported Jennifer in her academic pursuits.

While in Gainesville, Jenn conducted fieldwork early on with the local Job Corps program, which grew out of a volunteer opportunity. She also worked as a tutor helping at risk minority students after school with the CROP program. Jennifer earned her MA with a thesis that focused on creating a rapid assessment tool for poor, urban, minority neighborhoods. That thesis was titled “Minority Empowerment and Change: Rapid Urban Assessment.” Throughout these four years in Gainesville, Jennifer read and researched a variety of topics intensively and they provided the background for the next stage of her academic career, her Ph.D. fieldwork.

Jenn moved to Tampa where she worked multiple jobs and conducted her research, which examines the effects of racial and economic segregation on the identity choices of Haitian immigrant students. She then spent the next four years trying to complete her dissertation while tutoring and teaching at the local community college. In that time she also conducted research for the chair of the University of South Florida’s Department of Anthropology into computer literacy and poor youths and developed new classes for Hillsborough Community College. Finally, in response to threats and desperate pleadings, the former by credentialed intercessors, the latter by her family, Jenn was able to complete her dissertation and proudly turn it in to her now jubilant committee members.