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“We ain’t all the same!”: A quantitative approach to examine the factors associated with African
Immigrant and Black American ninth grade school success

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Abstract

“We ain’t all the same!”: A quantitative approach to examine the factors associated with African Immigrant and Black American ninth grade school success

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High school is a time of transition for youth of all ethnic groups, but it is a particularly problematic time for African American youth in the United States. While many studies have evaluated the sense of school belonging and underperformance of African American youth, less is known about the sense of school belonging and success of the adolescent Black American and African Immigrant subgroups. This proposed quantitative pilot study’s conceptual framework identifies and disaggregates the protective factors, individually and in combination, that contribute to a sense of school belonging and school success for African Immigrant and Black American ninth grade students. First, it is important to examine the relationship between generational status, maternal status, maternal involvement in school and gender on the sense of

school belonging (proximal outcome) and school success (distal outcome). Secondly, this study will determine the relationship between sense of school belonging and school success for these two subgroups. Data collection strategies include surveys, grades, and attendance from 240 Black American and African Immigrant ninth grade students residing in Washington and California. With the overall goal of increasing the number of successful Black American and African Immigrant ninth grade students, this study aims to identify factors that have positive implications for school success.

Introduction

The latter half of the 20th century has seen an upsurge in research examining the school success of African American high school students. Existing research has identified several psychological, familial, and school-related factors at play. The strongest factors that have emerged include achievement expectations and motivation, academic preparation, aspirations, socioeconomic status, peer influence, sense of belonging, interest, self-perceived ability and self-esteem (Carter, 2006; Nasir & Hand, 2006; Nasir, McLaughlin & Jones, 2009; Syed, Azmitia & Cooper, 2011). Most of the research, however, has focused on school success differences between African American and European American youths rather than attending to within-group differences. Such investigations are guided by theories such as the Cultural Differences Theory and the “Acting White” Theory. First, I will examine research that dichotomizes Black and White differences in education.

Cultural Differences Theory. The Cultural Differences Theory was first developed in the late 1950s and early 1960s to assess the achievement gap between European American and African American students. The theory argued that African American students’ upbringing was starkly different from the upbringing of their European American counterparts (Carter & Goodwin, 1994; Robinson & Biran, 2006). Carter and Goodwin (1994) argued that the difference in African American and European American students’ experiences prior to starting school, as well as their experiences while attending school, accounted for the underachievement of African Americans. This theory also suggested that African American students were underperforming because school curriculum had not adjusted to accommodating African American culture (Robinson & Biran, 2006). From this it is inferred that excluding African American culture from

the educational curriculum may have led to the disconnect between home and school culture and may have sent a message that African American students do not belong in school.

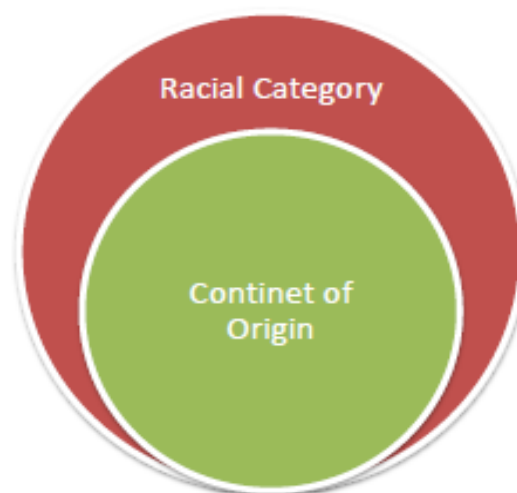
“Acting White” Theory. In the 1980s researchers did not believe that the achievement gap was solely a byproduct of differing home cultures; instead they believed it to be a socially constructed phenomenon. According to Fordham and Ogbu (1986), African American students began to doubt their intellectual ability and define academic success as a character trait of the hegemonic European American culture. African American students then began to discourage their peers from school and viewed academic success as emulating European Americans students, hence the term “acting white”. This theory suggested that African American students may have developed the idea that school was not a place for African Americans; this in turn may have affected their sense of belonging and peer group relationships.

Although these theories are cited by many researchers as explanations for the academic underperformance of African Americans (Carter, 2006; Carter & Goodwin, 1994; Harper & Tuckman, 2006; Nasir et al., 2006; Robinson & Biran, 2006; Steele, 1997; Wright, 2009), they reiterate that research on the academic success of African Americans has only evaluated the group as a whole. The examination of within-group differences of African Americans is a rarely researched topic in education. Identifying protective factors that may be unique to African Immigrant (1st, 2nd, or 3rd generation immigrants to the United States) or Black American (multigenerational roots in the United States) high school students, or common to both groups, may help researchers and educators search for mechanisms that may contribute to the academic success of these students.

More than skin color: Racial Category and Continent of Origin

The United States census provides broad racial categories that have become the most salient features for minority groups—Asian American, Hispanic, and African American. For many minority groups commonalities rest primarily upon skin color. However, these groups are comprised of a diverse array of languages, religions, and cultures. To move away from this broad racial category I propose to view group membership through two lenses: racial category and continent of origin in order to illuminate aspects of this large group that have otherwise been ignored.

Figure 1a. Racial Category and Continent of Origin

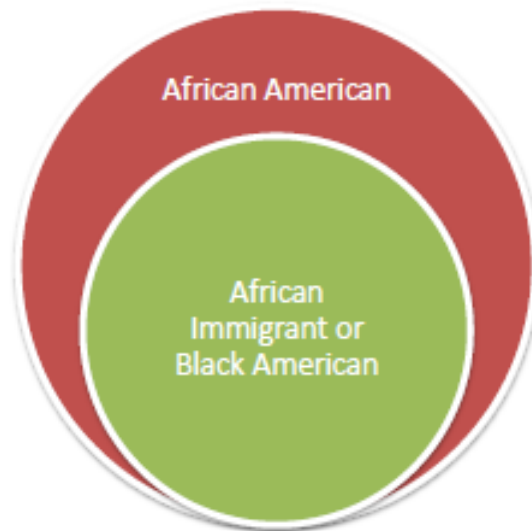


Racial Category. Racial category is the overarching, broad, and general identifier for a group of people. It is the most commonly used label in the United States and is a socially constructed label which clusters individuals based upon their observable physical traits (i.e. skin color). For the purpose of this study, racial category will be the commonly used label African American (Carter, 2006; Carter & Goodwin, 1994; Fordhamn & Ogbu, 1986; Harper &

Tuckman, 2006; Nasir & Hand, 2006; Nasir, McLaughlin & Jones, 2009; Robinson & Biran, 2006; Steele, 1997; Steele, 2010; Syed, Azmitia & Cooper, 2011; Wright, 2009).

Continent of Origin. An alternate classification that I will be employing is a narrower yet still broadly applied category: continent of origin. This assembles individuals based upon recent continent of origin. This draws from one of Rong and Brown (2001)’s racial and ethnic classification: pan-national identity. They define pan-national identity as a cluster of cultures and ethnic groups, such as Caribbean or Asian (Rong & Brown, 2001). For the purpose of this study there are two options for continent of origin: African Immigrant and Black American. African Immigrants are recent immigrants, children of immigrants, or individuals with at least one grandparent who originally came from Africa (i.e. 1st, 2nd, or 3rd generation, respectively); whereas Black Americans are individuals who have multigenerational roots within the United States dating back to slavery (i.e. 4th generation and onward).

Figure 1b. Racial Category and Continent of Origin Revisited



According to Steele (2010) we live “in an identity-diverse society and world” in which individuals divide themselves at multiple levels of abstraction (p.4). This may explain why there

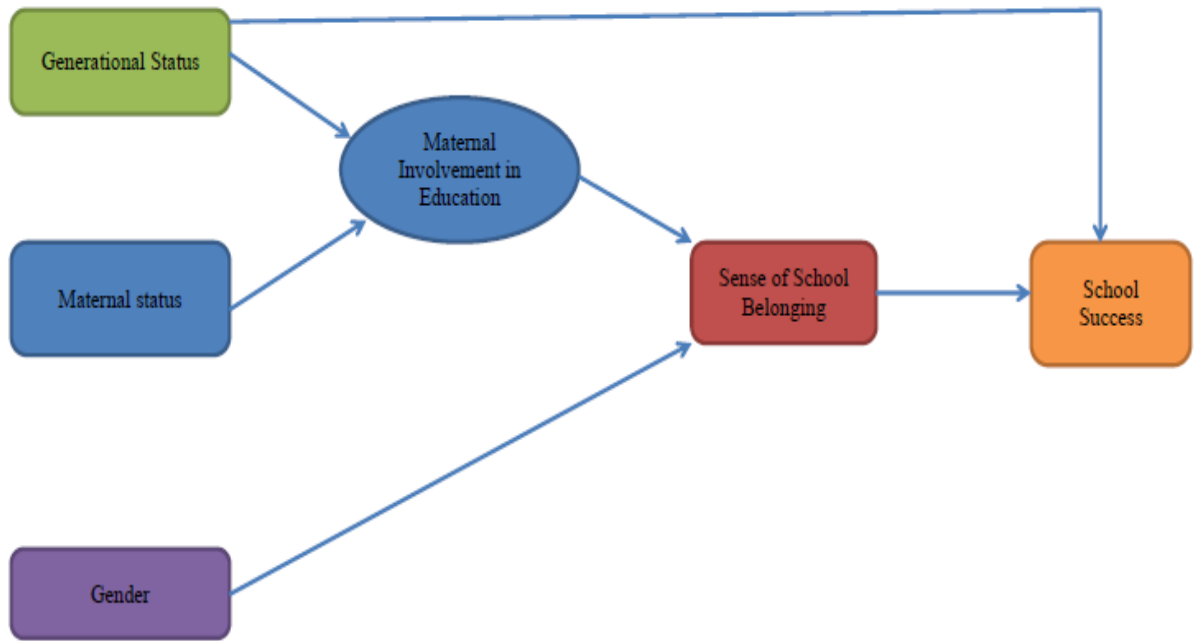
are various ways to define these socially constructed categories. It is commonly understood that racial category is the at-large, general, macro level identifier based on phenotype, or physically observable traits. Continent of origin, on the other hand, is a narrower yet still large scale category which clusters groups based upon regional place of origin. An advantage of classifying Black American and African Immigrant population separately is the possibility of identifying systematic outcomes and potential mechanisms that influence the school success of these two groups.

Conceptual Framework

African Immigrant and Black American high school students’ sense of school belonging and school success is contingent upon a variety of social and familial factors. More specifically, the relationships between generational status, maternal status, and maternal involvement in education may play a role in school success. These factors might differ for male and female students.

As pictured below, generational status, maternal status (which is comprised of maternal level of education and maternal occupation), gender, and maternal involvement in education are the independent variables. Sense of school belonging is the proximal outcome measure and school success is the distal outcome measure.

Figure 2. Conceptual Framework



Purpose

Because African Immigrants share identifiable physical characteristics, such as skin color and hair texture, they share some common experiences with multigenerational Black Americans in the United States. At the same time, they have differences in family structure and expectations, group identity, and cultures that distinguish them from one another. A limitation of past research is the failure to acknowledge the diverse cultures, linguistic backgrounds, and experiences of African Immigrants and Black Americans. Generalizing across these groups assumes that “Blackness” is defined the same way for all. Portes and Rumbaut (2006) poignantly stated that racial groups:

“...are defined as single entities in numerous official publications, lumped together in affirmative action programs, counted together by the census, and addressed jointly in official rhetoric. Academic researchers and the media have contributed heavily to this process of ethnic construction through the same expedient of addressing disparate nationalities as if they were part of the same collectivity” (p. 159).

Closer examination of African Immigrant and Black American youths may showcase the various ways in which “Blackness” is defined. In order to do this adequately, researchers need to examine one’s continent of origin as well as closely investigate its role in the school success of African Immigrant and Black American adolescents. With each passing year, the United States population is rapidly changing and becoming more diverse. The current research aims to demonstrate why disaggregating the African American group will help researchers and practitioners to understand how the diverse ethnic backgrounds among African Immigrant and Black American high school students may impact their sense of school belonging and school success. The proposed study aims to identify protective factors, individually and in combination, that contribute to a sense of school belonging and school success for African Immigrant and Black American 9th grade students.

Literature Review

The research reviewed in the sections below provides the theoretical and research background in which this study is situated. The research reviewed in the sections below provides a platform for building an understanding of why and how school success and sense of school belonging may differ among African Immigrant and Black American adolescents. Due to the dearth of research on African Immigrants I will extrapolate from research on other immigrants groups, such as the Latino and Asian immigrant populations.

How many of us are there?: Demographic Statistics

According to a 2013 report from the U.S. Census Bureau, African Americans account for 43.9 million, or 13.6%, of the total United States population (American Immigration Council, 2012; Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013; U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). This number includes African Americans that have been in the United States for several generations

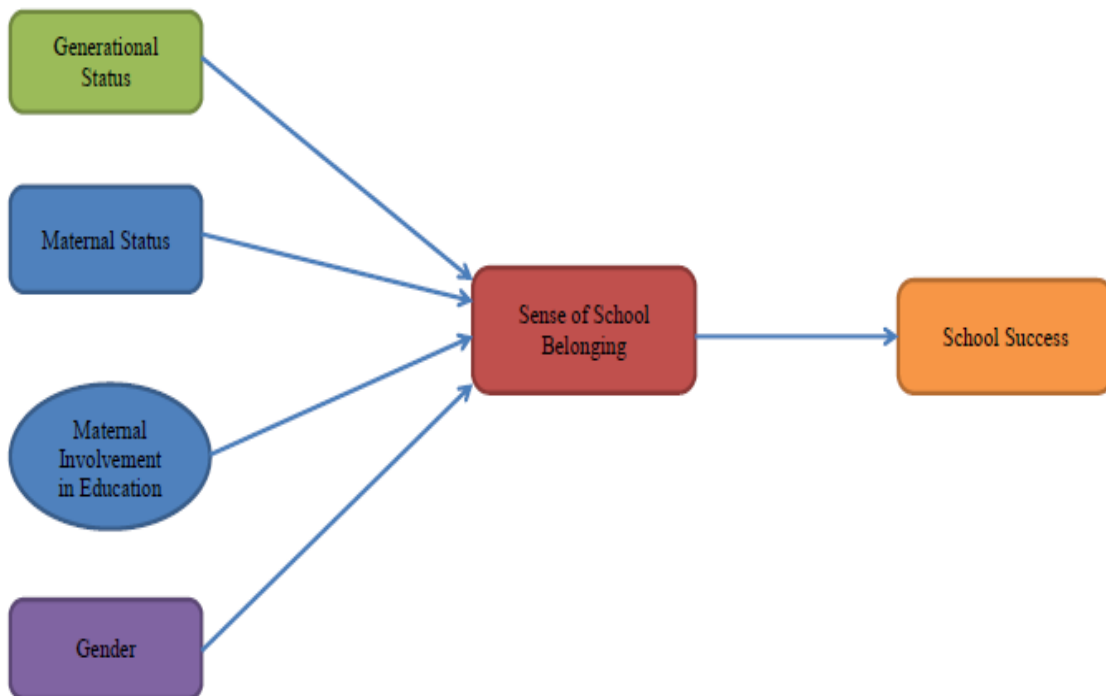
as a result of slavery as well as recent African Immigrants. Recent immigrants from Africa make up a small but steadily growing fraction of the immigrant population in the United States. Immigration statistics and trends from 2010 show that roughly 1.6 million first generation African Immigrants reside in the United States which is a significant increase from the roughly 101,000 African Immigrants in 1980 (American Immigration Council, 2012; Capps, McCabe, & Fix, 2011; Shaw-Taylor & Tuch, 2007). Large numbers of African Immigrants are from Nigeria, Ethiopia, Egypt, Ghana, and Kenya (American Immigration Council, 2012; Capps, McCabe, & Fix, 2011; Shaw-Taylor & Yuch, 2007). African Immigrants tend to reside in highly urban cities, such as New York City, Washington, D.C. and Los Angeles. Demographic statistics also found that a vast majority of African Immigrants live in five states: California, New York, Texas, Maryland, and Virginia (American Immigration Council, 2012; Capps, McCabe, & Fix, 2011; Shaw-Taylor & Tuch, 2007). On the other hand, a vast majority of Black Americans tend to live on the East Coast or the South, specifically the District of Columbia, Mississippi, Louisiana, Georgia and Maryland (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013; U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Capps, McCabe and Fix (2011) reported that approximately 90% of foreign-born Africans have at least a high school education or greater compared with 82.5% of African Americans who have achieved a high school diploma. Furthermore, data from their report found that 40% of African Immigrants have at least a bachelor’s degree compared with 18.4% of the whole African American population (Capps, McCabe, & Fix, 2011). These statistics include Africans from all ethnic backgrounds, such as East Africa, West Africa, and South Africa. Although African Immigrants account for roughly 4% of the total foreign-born population, this group is highly diverse when analyzing socioeconomic status, education level, religion, and overall experience. These statistics and trends demonstrate that there are several differences between African

Immigrants and Black Americans. As migration from Africa to the United States increases, the impact of African Immigrants in the United States education system is likely to continue.

Analytical Model

The analytical model represented below is a segment of the conceptual framework depicted on page 2. The part of the conceptual framework that I will examine in this study is the relationship between generational status, maternal status, maternal involvement in school and gender on the sense of school belonging (proximal outcome) and school success (distal outcome). A secondary goal of this study is to determine the relationship between sense of school belonging and school success.

Figure 3. Analytical Model



Am I an American?: Generational Status

Immigrants migrate to the United States for a variety of reasons, such as unemployment or poverty, to pursue better opportunities for their children, or to escape political, racial, or religious oppression in their home country. Some immigrants are illiterate and take low-wage jobs while others come to advance their professional and career aspirations (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Immigrants are the perpetual Other or outsider: “Immigrants are by definition in the margins of two cultures. Paradoxically, they can never truly belong neither ‘here’ nor ‘there’” (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001, p. 92). However, an immigrant’s ability to successfully straddle their culture of origin and culture of adoption may be contingent upon their generational status, the number of generations an individual’s family has lived in the United States (Kaufman, Chavez, & Lauen, 1998). To my knowledge no previous research has examined the generational differences between African Immigrants and Black Americans in the United States. I intend to draw information from the literature on other immigrant groups.

First Generation. Individuals who were born outside the United States (Kaufman, Chavez, & Lauen, 1998; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Language is often a barrier for 1st generation individuals. Educational level of the first generation will vary widely, from no formal schooling to professional degree.

Second generation. Persons who were born in the United States and have at least one parent that is foreign born (Kaufman, Chavez, & Lauen, 1998; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). They are more likely to be highly fluent in English. If bilingual, they may provide translations for foreign born parents.

Third generation. Individuals were born in the United States, have parents who were also born in the United States, and have at least one foreign born grandparent (Kaufman, Chavez, & Lauen, 1998; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). English is typically the first language these individuals learn. They may not have linguistic competence in the language of their foreign born grandparents.

Multigeneration. For the purpose of this study, I have created another generational group. Multigenerational individuals were born in the United States and have several generations born in the United States. This includes a majority of African Americans who were descendants of kidnapped and enslaved people from the slave trade. English is typically the first and only language these individuals know.

Examining potential academic risk and protective factors associated with generational status may provide insight into identifying protective factors associated with differential school success among Black American and African Immigrant adolescents.

Rong and Fitchett (2008) and Suárez-Orozco, Rhodes, and Milburn (2009) have found that in Latino/a and Caribbean immigrant populations, school success peaks with second generation students. Second generation children tend to have higher educational attainment, academic achievement, and motivation. Third and subsequent generations show a decline and begin to match the trajectories of their native born American peers (Nicolas, DeSilva, & Rabenstein, 2009; Rong & Brown, 2002; Rong & Fitchett, 2008; Suárez-Orozco, Pimentel, & Martin, 2009; Suárez-Orozco, Rhodes, & Milburn, 2009). The success of second generation students may be due in part to being native English speakers. First generation students’ school success may be hampered by their mastery and ability to speak and understand English (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Rong and Brown (2002) also found

that second generation Caribbean Immigrant youth had higher educational attainment than their Black American counterparts. For African Immigrant students, doing well in school may not be viewed as “Acting White”. Although generational status differences have been linked to school success, there is a lack of research examining the relationship between generational status and school success for African Immigrants.

Protective Factors

Protective and risk factors either exacerbate or buffer the school success of African Immigrants and Black American high school students. Much of the research has focused on the potential effects of factors such as maternal level of education, neighborhood context, and parental marital status.

Maternal level of education. Immigrants vary widely in level of education. Some may be illiterate in their native language while others may have advanced degrees. Studies on immigrant youth have found a direct relationship between maternal level of education and academic outcomes, such as GPA, standardized test scores, and attendance (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). For Latino/a immigrant adolescents’, maternal level of education was a vital factor in their school success and educational attainment (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). Level of education is also an indicator of the type of familial resources that can aid in school success such as “...exhibiting more sophisticated vocabularies, providing more literacy opportunities and access to computers, assisting in homework assignments and SAT preparation...” (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001, p. 154). Although research on other immigrant groups continually demonstrates that maternal level of education is a particularly powerful element of school success, there is virtually no research that has

examined African Immigrant maternal level of education and its effect on a student’s school success.

Maternal occupation. In a sample of 1,609 Mexican American 10th grade students, Altschul (2012) found that maternal occupation was positively correlated with GPA and standardized test scores. She also found a similar relationship when assessing maternal level of education (Altschul, 2012). Studies have examined only maternal occupation *or* maternal level of education as a measure of socioeconomic status (SES). However, for this study investigation of both maternal occupation *and* maternal educational level may provide a stronger, more reliable measure of SES.

Maternal involvement in education. Maternal involvement pertains to mother’s active participation in a child’s education both at school and at home. Maternal involvement at school consists of being part of the school Parent Teacher Association (PTA), volunteering in the classroom, and chaperoning fieldtrips (Altschul, 2012; Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Hill et al, 2004). Maternal involvement at home includes asking students what they learned at school, checking student’s homework, and discussions about future educational aspirations (Altschul, 2012; Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Hill et al, 2004).

Gutman, Sameroff, and Eccles (2002) found that African American middle school students whose parents were more involved with school had fewer absences than peers whose parents were less involved with school. They also found a strong association between number of absences and the number of risk factors, such as low maternal education, single marital status, and family income (Gutman, et. al, 2002). Researchers have deemed attendance to be a vital component to school success (Gottfried, 2010). Lower attendance rates have been associated with lower achievement, poor performance on exams, lower achievement and dropping out.

These elements appear especially important to students of color in middle school and high school (Gottfreid, 2010). Maternal involvement within the school and at home may communicate the importance mothers place on their student’s educational achievement.

In addition, Gutman and Midgley (2000) found that parental involvement varies by ethnicity and income level. Mothers who do not speak or understand English may be less likely to be involved in school and may feel less competent in monitoring their children’s schoolwork. Maternal level of education and occupation may also play a role in how involved a mother is at home and at school. Maternal involvement in education may be a significant protective factor that contributes to the difference of school success in African Immigrant and Black Americans. The combination of maternal level of education, maternal occupation, and maternal involvement in education may contribute to the variation in school success, as well as sense of belonging, within African Immigrant and Black American youths.

Where do I fit? Sense of School Belonging

Gutman and Midgley (2000) defined sense of belonging as the “extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported at school” (p. 228). School belonging is a multidimensional variable which is influenced by students’ perceptions of the social context of school and their place in it. A strong sense of school belonging is associated with a strong teacher-student relationship, school adjustment, attendance, and parent involvement (Anderman, 2003; Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Gutman, Sameroff, & Eccles, 2002). Many researchers have postulated that school belonging may be of vital importance for students of color (Chaveous et al., 2003; Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Steele, 1997; Steele, 2010). When examining sense of school belonging and academic achievement measures in middle school and

high school populations, researchers have found European American students have a stronger sense of school belonging than their Latino/a and African American peers (Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Gutman, Sameroff, & Eccles, 2002). In one of the first studies to investigate the relationship between school belonging and academic outcomes, Goodenow and Grady (1993) found that for low-income 7th to 9th grade African American and Latino/a students, a high sense of belonging was significantly associated with greater motivation and academic engagement. Sánchez, Colón, and Esparza (2005) found similar results in their sample of 12th grade Latino/a students. They also found that school belonging was positively correlated with attendance (Sánchez et al., 2005).

Gutman and Midgley (2000) discovered that school belonging was also important for low income African American students during the transition to middle school. Although the transition to middle school and high school traditionally results in a drop in academic achievement and school engagement, the above mentioned studies demonstrated that those who quickly develop a sense of belonging did not show the typical drop in these areas (Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Gutman, Sameroff, & Eccles, 2002; Sánchez et al., 2005). Given these findings, school belonging may be critically important to the school success of African Immigrants and Black American students because they often feel isolated and excluded in a school environment whose values and beliefs do not align with their own.

Gender and Generational Status differences in School Belonging. Typically, middle school and high school girls report a greater sense of belonging than boys (Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Sánchez et al., 2005; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

Consistent with previous analysis regarding the effects of school belonging, girls also demonstrate greater academic engagement, educational attainment, and GPA than boys.

To my knowledge there may not be any research examining the effects of generational status on sense of school belonging for any minority group. GPA, however, is also strongly associated with generational status (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Shaw-Taylor & Tuch, 2007; Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2002). More specifically second generation students tend to have higher GPAs than first and third generation students (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Rong & Brown, 2001; Rong & Brown, 2002; Rong and Fitchett, 2008; Shaw-Taylor & Tuch, 2007; Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2002). Second and third generation African Immigrants and multigenerational Black Americans may have a stronger sense of school belonging than their first generation counterparts due in part to being born in the United States and being native English speakers. For African Immigrant and Black American students, feeling as though one fits in at their school may help offset any negative associations with school and positively influence school success.

By examining the literature on generational status, protective factors, and sense of school belonging, this review sets a broad framework for the investigation of the sources of academic strength amongst African Immigrants and Black American 9th grade students. The intertwining effects of continent of origin, generational status, and familial factors may contribute to or interfere with school success.

Significance of Study

Failure to examine variation within the African American population may have obscured the diverse cultural, ethnic, generational, and gender differences exhibited by Black Americans versus African Immigrants. Examining a broad range of experiences and protective factors that

contribute to sense of school belonging and school success may shed light on protective mechanisms that may be individually unique to African Immigrants and Black Americans as well as common to both groups. Identifying such factors may facilitate the development of school-based intervention programs or policy that can counteract the negative effects of discrimination, prejudice, and stereotype threat, as well as aid in closing the achievement gap.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

First I will determine if previous research on the generational differences in school success are applicable to African Immigrant and Black American ninth grade students. I will also examine generational differences in the following protective factors: maternal status, gender, maternal involvement in education, and sense of school belonging. Sense of school belonging is a proximal variable, which means it is a dependent variable but also a predictor variable. Initially, I will be looking at the effects of these protective factors on the proximal (school belonging) and distal (school success) outcomes. Later I will be examining the relationship between the proximal and distal outcomes and ask whether the contributions of the protective factors are on the distal outcomes or mediated by the proximal outcome. While I expect to see group differences, the key goal is to identify predictable patterns of school success *within and between* the African Immigrant and Black American groups. Some of these key variables may differ between groups or affect them differently.

The present study is designed to investigate the following questions:

1. *Are there generational differences in 9th grade student’s school success and in the proposed protective factors?*
 - a. Based upon previous research that indicates high academic performance among second generation students, I postulate that second generation African

Immigrants will demonstrate higher school success than their first, third, and multigenerational peers.

- b. I also predict that second and third generation African Immigrant and multigenerational Black American students will have a stronger sense of school belonging than their first generation peers due in part to language and cultural barriers.
- c. No interactions are predicted between generational status and gender; however I will still run analyses on a generational status and gender interaction.

2. *What are the unique and cumulative contributions of generational status, maternal status, and gender to proximal and distal outcomes?*

- a. I postulate that maternal status and maternal involvement will contribute to sense of school belonging over and above the contributions of generational status and gender. Low maternal status, which is comprised of maternal occupation and maternal level of education, has been found to be detrimental to the academic performance of students of color; therefore as a result I anticipate that Black American and African Immigrant students with high maternal status will have higher school success than students with low maternal status.
- b. Similarly, maternal involvement in school and at home also has a profound influence on the educational attainment of minority youth; thus I predict that African Immigrant and Black American students with high maternal

involvement will also exhibit higher school success than students with low maternal involvement.

- c. I also propose that maternal status, maternal involvement, and sense of school belonging will contribute to school success over and above the contributions of generational status and gender.

3. *Do the contributions of maternal status, maternal involvement and sense of school belonging vary as a function of generational status or gender?*

- a. In line with previous research and predictions, I anticipate that the links between maternal involvement or maternal status on a sense of school belonging as well as maternal involvement or maternal status on school success will be stronger for girls than boys.

- b. I make no specific predictions with generational status.

4. *Will sense of school belonging mediate the contribution of maternal status and maternal involvement to school success?*

- a. There is a possibility that sense of school belonging will mediate the effects of maternal status and maternal involvement on school success.
- b. Because gender and maternal involvement may not be predicted as strongly for boys as for girls, I will perform mediation analyses for each gender and the group as a whole.

Methods

Participants

The current study will sample 240 Black American and African Immigrant 9th grade students consisting of 60 students each from first generation, second generation, and third

generation and multigenerational status. Students will be drawn from 6 high schools from the states of Washington and California. The reason that ninth graders were selected as participants for this study is to capture how transitioning to the next academic level (high school) and new school environment may affect school success of African Immigrant and Black American students. As mentioned above, transitioning to high school can be difficult for students and in turn have an effect on school success. Also in the state of Washington, students must be at least 16 years of age in order to drop out of high school and 18 years of age in California; therefore ninth grade students are too young to drop out.

Measures

Demographic survey. The demographic survey is a 7-item questionnaire designed by the experimenter to gather information regarding the student’s gender, age, continent of origin (African Immigrant or Black American), generational status (1st, 2nd, or 3rd), parental marital status, maternal level of education, and maternal employment status (see Appendix A).

Maternal Involvement in school. This survey was adapted from the Maryland Adolescent Development in Context (MADIC) study (Gutman, Sameroff, & Eccles, 2002). The MADIC, a joint study conducted by the University of Maryland and the University of Michigan, examined adolescent development, familial relationships and involvement in school. This survey measured student’s perception of how involved their mother and/or other family members were involved in their education at home and at school. The survey consisted of 10 items which probed how often parents were involved in activities ranging from helping with homework to attending school activities (See Appendix B). These items were based upon a six point scale with 1= almost never and 6=almost every day. This scale has an alpha of .75.

Sense of School Belonging. This survey measures student’s feelings of school belonging and was adapted from Anderman (2003) and Roser, Midgley, and Urdan (1996). The survey, which is comprised of 7 items, assessed the extent to which students felt accepted, respected, included and supported in school (See Appendix C). These items were scored on a four point scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 4=strongly agree. This scale has an alpha of .81.

School Success Outcomes. GPA and attendance records for each student will be obtained from school records. The overall GPA was calculated for each student by computing the average of their grades at the end of their 9th grade year in the core subjects (English, Math, History, and Science). Attendance is measured as the total number of days a student is present in a given school year.

Procedures

Parental consent forms will be distributed to each African American ninth grade student. Students were informed that participation in this study will be contingent upon the return of the parental consent form. Participation in this study will be voluntary; both parental consent and student assent will be obtained prior to administration of the survey.

Students who elect to participate in this study will complete surveys in the spring of their ninth grade year during the school day at a time when students are not involved in academic activities (e.g., free periods or lunch) or after school. The surveys will be administered on the computer via ACASI (Audio Computer-Assisted Self-Interview) software. The software will allow each student to simultaneously read and listen to a prerecording of each question from a computer through headphones as they privately answer each question individually. Students will be assured of the confidentiality of their responses.

Analysis

This study will utilize a general linear model for analyzing data. I will run analysis of variance (ANOVA) and regressions. Sense of school belonging and school success will serve as the proximal and distal outcome variables. Analyses will examine the unique and cumulative contributions of generational status, maternal level of education, maternal occupation, gender, and maternal involvement in school. Analyses will also examine the ability of sense of school belonging to mediate the effects of the protective factors on school success.

In order to do this, I intend to 1) perform a series of planned comparisons to identify generational differences in sense of school belonging and school success, 2) identify the role of maternal status and maternal involvement in school on school success, 3) identify the predictors of sense of school belonging, and 4) identify the relationship between sense of school belonging and school success.

First, I will run three planned comparisons to examine generational and gender differences as addressed in research question 1. The first comparison will contrast first, second, and third generation African Immigrants with multigenerational Black Americans using a 2(generational status) X 2(gender) ANOVA design. The second comparison will contrast first and third generation African Immigrants with second generation African Immigrants also using a 2(generational status) X 2 (gender) ANOVA design. Lastly, I will compare third generation African Immigrants and multigenerational Black Americans using a 2(generational status) X 2 (gender) ANOVA design.

Next, to identify predictors of school success, I will run regression analyses using generational status, gender, maternal status and maternal involvement in school to predict sense of school belonging and school success. Then I will examine whether sense of school belonging

mediates the following relationships: 1) generational status on school success; 2) maternal status on school success; 3) maternal level of involvement on school success; and 4) gender on school success. A final analysis will compare pathways for African Immigrant and Black American ninth grade students in order to determine which protective factors contribute most to school success.

Discussion

The present study plans to investigate the role of protective factors on sense of belonging and school success of Black American and African Immigrant 9th grade students. This study breaks ground in a very important research arena. It is the first step in examining school success *within* the African American group as a function of immigration and generational status. Compared to Latina/o and Asian immigrant children, African Immigrant children have been generally understudied. Future research should further disaggregate the African American population and account for the Caribbean Immigrant experience. It should also focus on the development of racial, ethnic, and academic identities within these groups and investigate the role these factors play in a student’s sense of belonging and overall school success. While the primary objective of this study is to identify the protective factors which contribute to the school success of African American students it also intends to demonstrate that there are within group differences in the African American community. It is important to identify these factors because it could aid in illuminating what successful students in this group are doing well and why. Revealing these factors could in turn create interventions which could provide students with the necessary skills to be successful in school. We, as researcher and practitioners, now need to continue to be more cognizant of group differences and develop programs that can adhere to individual needs, especially in terms of shrinking and ultimately closing the achievement gap.

Appendix A: Demographic Survey

1. What is your gender?:
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
2. What is your age?:
 - a. 12-13
 - b. 14-15
 - c. 16+
3. Were you born in the United States?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No, if so where were you born? _____
4. Were your parents born in the United States?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No, if so where were they born? Mother: _____ Father: _____
5. Was English your 1st language?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No, if so what was your first language? _____
6. Please list any other languages that you may speak: _____
7. What is your mother’s highest level of education?:
 - a. Less than high school
 - b. High school graduate (includes equivalency i.e. GED)
 - c. Some college, no degree
 - d. Associate’s degree (i.e. A.A./A.S.)
 - e. Bachelor’s degree (i.e. B.A./B.S.)
 - f. Master’s degree (i.e. M.A./M.S.)
 - g. Ph.D., M.D., J.D. or other advanced/professional degree
8. What is your mother’s current employment status?:
 - a. Employed full time
 - b. Employed part time
 - c. Unemployed/looking for work
 - d. Homemaker
 - e. Retired

Appendix B. Family Involvement in School Survey

There are lots of ways for family members to be involved in their child’s schooling, please tell me how often these things happen during the school year: 1= almost never; 2=less than once a month; 3=1-3 times a month; 4=about once a week; 5= a few times a week; and 6=almost everyday

1. Your mother or someone in your family works as a school program supporter such as coming to school to assist in events (i.e. chaperoning a field trip or school dance)
 - a. 1
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5
 - f. 6
2. Your mother or someone in your family works as a classroom volunteer
 - a. 1
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5
 - f. 6
3. Your mother or someone in your family checks your homework after it’s completed
 - a. 1
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5
 - f. 6
4. Your mother or someone in your family talks with you about what you are learning in school
 - a. 1
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5
 - f. 6

(Gutman, Sameroff, & Eccles, 2002).

Appendix C. Sense of School Belonging Survey

The school belonging items were drawn from previous research to assess the degree to which students’ felt a general sense of belonging at school. The items) were scored on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*).

1. “I feel like I am part of my school,”
2. “I feel close to people in my school,”
3. “I am happy to be at my school,”
4. “I feel like I matter in this school,”
5. “I feel like I belong in this school,”
6. “I do not feel like I am important in this school (R),”
7. “I feel like I am successful in this school.”

(Anderman, 2003; Roser, Midgley, & Urdan, 1996).

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