

ARE BLACK IMMIGRANTS A MODEL MINORITY?

Race, Ethnicity and Social Mobility in the United States

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“West Indians in the United States are significant not only because of their overrepresentation among prominent or successful blacks, but also because their very different background makes them a test case of the explanatory importance of color, as such, in analyzing socioeconomic progress in the American economy and society, as compared to the importance of the cultural traditions of the American Negro.” 1978, Thomas Sowell, *Three Black Histories*, p. 42

The study of social inequality in general and racial inequality in particular has been a staple question for American sociology since its founding at the close of the nineteenth century (Du Bois 1899: 130-131, Du Bois 1903). However, after a century of debate, there is still very little if any consensus on the reasons for social, political and economic inequality between blacks and whites in the United States. That is, despite the political and judicial gains of the modern civil rights period, ‘black folk’¹ continue to struggle for parity with their white peers and there is still much debate concerning the reasons for such persistent inequality. Broadly speaking, there are two primary explanations for this relatively asymmetric social positioning: the somewhat changed, but nonetheless unforgiving presence of an *anti-black racial animus* that is endemic to social thought and public policy in American society (Bonilla-Silva 2001, Feagin 2000) or the presence of a deeply ingrained and seemingly cancerous *cultural pathology* coursing through the ‘veins’ of black social networks (Cosby and Poussaint 2007, Lewis 1965, McWhorter 2001, Moynihan 1965, Thernstrom and Thernstrom 1997).

According to Thomas Sowell the comparative study of African Americans and black Immigrants from the British West Indies (i.e., Afro Caribbeans) is representative of a naturally occurring scientific experiment whereby the investigator can isolate the degree to which anti-black animus and/or cultural pathology are responsible for racial inequality (Sowell 1978: 42). Indeed, Sowell has argued that since both ethnic groups are black, the greater success of black immigrants implicates African American culture as the key factor in the production of black-white racial

inequality.² While there is much to learn about the relative roles of color and culture in the production of black-white racial inequality vis-à-vis such a black ethnic comparative, there are systematic limitations associated with presenting such a comparative as a ‘naturally occurring scientific experiment’ whereby levels of anti-black animus are controlled. That is, we might ask: does perceived nativity alter the ways in which black people experience anti-black racial animus in the United States? Posed another way, “Are Black Immigrants a Model Minority?”

The chief contribution of this project will be to revise and push forward thinking on the role that race plays in the production and maintenance of *black ethnic inequality*³ in the United States. In short, my thinking on black ethnic inequality is different from the existent explanations because it is deeply informed by those who have worked to theorize the ways in which race structures or organizes societies (Bobo et al. 1997, Bonilla-Silva 1997, Feagin 2000, Goldberg 2002, Kim 1999, Mills 1997, Omi and Winant 1994) as opposed to queries that are more immediately inspired by the literature on immigration and migration (Portes and Zhou 1993), identity politics (Kasinitz 1992, Rogers 2006, Vickerman 1998, Waters 1999) or labor economics (Butcher 1994, Chiswick 1978, Model 1991, Model 1995, Sowell 1978).

Given this entry point, my theoretical background begins with recent scholarship that has noted the racial character of mainstream colorblind explanations for racial inequality where discussions of innate cultural predispositions are often invoked – i.e., the “biologization of culture” (Bobo et al. 1997, Bonilla-Silva 2003a). This discursive shift from use of a biologically deterministic racial logic toward the idea that different human population groups are essentially bound to particular cultural norms has been paralleled by arguments that racial meanings can be – and always have been – assigned to non-phenotypic social characteristics (Blaut 1992, Bonilla-Silva 2004, Gold 2004, Goldberg 1993, Hesse 2001, Omi and Winant

² Several scholars have used a different comparative to tease out the degree to which phenotypical blackness is responsible for racial inequality by comparing the labor market outcomes of white and black Hispanics – i.e., holding culture or ‘Hispanianness’ constant (Cotton 1993, Darity et al. 1996, Darity et al. 2002, Darity et al. 1994, Woodbury 1993).

³ When I refer to the literature on ‘black ethnic inequality’ I am referring to literature that documents and/or attempts to explain differences in socioeconomic mobility between African Americans and black immigrants (from any country).

¹ Using the parlance of W.E.B DuBois (DuBois 1903).

1994). According to the most recent theorization on race, national origin and perceived foreignness are two social characteristics that are used to assign racial meaning (Kim 1999, Ngai 2004, Tuan 1998).⁴

With these advances in mind, I introduce the concept of *differential racialization* in order to argue that different racial meanings are assigned to the black body as a result of *perceived nativity* and *national origin*. More specifically, I assert that when the black body is known to be of West Indian birth it is accorded racial meanings that are most often associated with the model minority myth and the Asian American body politic (Suzuki 1977, Suzuki 1989, Wu 2001).⁵ This racial trope then informs debates concerning black ethnic inequality in that black immigrants from the West Indies are thought to do better than African Americans because they *work harder* and are *less racially paranoid* (Jackson 2008, Pierre 2004, Prashad 2000, Suzuki 1977). Given this discursive context, labor market actors are led to discount the poor work performance and race consciousness that is present among Afro Caribbeans while remaining hypersensitive and vigilant when these same attitudes and behaviors are observed among African Americans (Waters 1999). Afro Caribbeans are also known to identify with the racial meanings associated with their ascribed model minority status (Vickerman 1998, Waters 1999). It is the interplay between discounting, hypersensitivity and self-identification that is responsible for the sense of comfort that has been reported by white employers and black immigrant workers (Waters 1999). In the end the creation of comfort remains complicit with racial inequality in that the ultimate function of differential racialization is the maintenance of the more general position of *most* blacks toward the bottom of the U.S. racial hierarchy, despite relatively small differentials in socioeconomic mobility between these black ethnic groups (Bonilla-

⁴ Although in discussions regarding immigrants in general and black immigrants in particular, national origin and foreignness are often conflated. I maintain that these two concepts are interrelated but distinct. For example, being a black immigrant from Jamaica is different than being a black immigrant from Guyana; and being a black immigrant from the West Indies is different from being a black immigrant from Africa.

⁵ In recent history model minority status has been assigned to Asian Americans. However, the basic concepts associated with the model minority trope have been used to explain the success of European immigrants.

Silva 2004, Kim 1999, Pierre 2004, Rogers 2001, Waters 1999).⁶

In addition to offering a theorization that privileges the role of race in the production of black ethnic inequality, I will also be contributing to the current debate with new data and advances in the use of multivariate statistical modeling. In terms of data, many scholars have been unable to fully address challenges ranging from a heavy reliance on the U.S. Census⁷ to an overwhelming focus on blacks living in the north and southeast. Although the U.S. Census is one of the few datasets with a large enough sample of black immigrants from the West Indies to conduct an analysis using multivariate statistical models, it does not include adequate measures of various racial and cultural factors (e.g., Sowell 1978). To the extent that these factors have been considered, it has largely been in ethnographic studies that have been conducted in the northeast (e.g., Kasinitz 1992, Waters 1999). Therefore, in this study I will conduct a secondary analysis of survey data, using a national multi-stage area probability survey that includes whites, and oversamples of both African Americans and black immigrants from the British West Indies.⁸ In order to better understand the ways in which the racial and ethnic composition of the metropolitan context might be at play, this survey will be supplemented with data from the U.S. Census (i.e., tokenism and queuing theory, Blalock 1956, Blalock 1957, Kanter 1977 [1993]).

Findings from this study will contribute to debates being held at the intersection of race and public policy. The case of the “Negro immigrant” does indeed offer the potential to bring sobering evidence to the ongoing dispute concerning explanations for an enduring racial inequality. However, if we continue to celebrate Afro-Caribbeans as a ‘model minority’ vis-à-vis their African American peers without inserting a more robust conceptualization of race and racism, we will continue to incite intra-racial jealousy and infighting (e.g., Raphael 1964) to the exclusion of a more forthright conversation intended to lead to policy formation that has as its goal the amelioration of racial

⁶ A more detailed discussion of the contours of differential racialization theory occurs later in the proposal.

⁷ Although the U.S. Census has decent indicators of human capital it has poor indicators on cultural characteristics and no indicators that allow for an assessment of racial attitudes.

⁸ I use the restricted version of the National Survey of American Life (NSAL).

inequality in the United States (Pierre 2004). As such, I will ultimately be using findings from this study to comment on the on black-white racial inequality in the United States.

EXPLANATIONS FOR BLACK ETHNIC INEQUALITY

Generally speaking the finding that black immigrants from the British West Indies “do better” than African Americans has been explained in three different ways.⁹ First, those who have argued for different *cultural predispositions* have asserted that black people from the West Indies possess cultural characteristics that are more in line with the Protestant work ethic than are descendents of American slavery (e.g., Ogbu and Simons 1998, Sowell 1978, Weber 1930). This argument has been most vigorously countered by the *immigrant self-selection thesis* which argues that to compare native-born blacks to foreign-born black immigrants¹⁰ is not to compare ‘African American culture’ to ‘Afro-Caribbean culture’, but to compare the human capital differences of ‘movers’ and ‘non-movers’ (e.g., Butcher 1994, Model 2008, Winston 2002). Lastly, some have offered that because Afro-Caribbeans work harder and are less concerned with racial politics¹¹, white employers hire and promote them at higher rates than they do African Americans (e.g., Kasinitz 1992, Waters 1999).

CULTURE AND HUMAN CAPITAL

While there is much debate between those who argue for culture (i.e., sociocultural difference) and those who argue for differences in human capital (i.e., migrant selectivity) what will be made clear is that although the mechanisms may be different (i.e., nativity verses migration, respectively) the working explanation that undergirds much, if not all of this thinking, is that Afro-Caribbeans do better because they are more deeply invested in human capital and simply work harder than African Americans. After reviewing the two main streams of thought in this

⁹ Although the literature has been framed in this way (Model 2008), I argue later that sociocultural and selectivity arguments are actually part of the same orientation to explaining black ethnic inequality.

¹⁰ Unless otherwise stated, when I use the term ‘black immigrant’ I am referring to black people that have immigrated to the United States from the British West Indies.

¹¹ This point will be elaborated below where I argue that being caste as a ‘model minority’ is to be caste as working hard and not complaining about racial discrimination and inequality.

tradition I will offer an alternative explanation for black ethnic inequality that implicates the concept and politic of race as a key factor in the production of black ethnic inequality.

Nativity and Cultural Behaviors

Although Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan foreshadow him by at least a decade (Glazer and Moynihan 1963),¹² Thomas Sowell is heralded as chief among those who have made the argument that Afro-Caribbeans ‘do better’ than African Americans because of differences in sociocultural predisposition (Sowell 1975, Sowell 1978, Sowell 1981a, Sowell 1981b, Sowell 1983, Sowell 1984). Sowell begins his contribution in 1975 in his widely cited monograph, *Race and Economics*. Early in the book he states the position of much of his research in the decade to come,

“Black immigrants to the United States have succeeded economically, educationally and in other ways much more than native black Americans, under the existing level of racial discrimination, which is largely the same for both. It is not merely that Black Americans are denied some current opportunities but that they were denied the more basic opportunities to more fully develop their abilities themselves” (Sowell 1975: 33).

That is, the fact that Afro-Caribbeans are doing better than African Americans points to differences in cultural practice and human capital investment that exist between the two groups. In his words,

“... West Indian Negroes emphasized such traits as work, thrift and education – more generally achievements involving planning and working for the future, implying the emotional control for self-denial in the present and emphasizing the logical and mundane over the emotional, the imaginative, and the heroic. The opposite characteristics can be scene among the ... Negroes, where advancement can be achieved in emotional and imaginative areas, such as oratory, lyric literature, and music, and which have produced many dramatic ‘leaders’ and heroes” (Sowell 1975: 130-131).

¹² In their widely cited book *Beyond the Melting Pot* Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan (1963) observe that, “The West Indians’ most striking difference from the Southern Negroes was their greater applicability to business, education, buying homes and in general advancing themselves... The ethos of the West Indian, in contrast to that of the Southern Negro, emphasized saving, hard work, investment, education” (p. 35).

Focusing on the role of education in general and public education in particular, he states

“Minority children from ethnic groups which greatly stress the value of education – Jews, Orientals, West Indians – survive and develop despite the inadequacies of the school or its personnel. Those groups without such a tradition – American Negroes, Italian Americans, Puerto Ricans or Mexican Americans – do not tend to develop in a hostile setting” (Sowell 1975: 192).

When taken together, Sowell is asserting that the differences in mobility that exist between African Americans and black immigrants from the West Indies are due to cultural practices, not biological factors. He supports this claim with the ‘observation’ that Afro-Caribbeans exercise more forethought and exhibit a greater ability to delay gratification. In order to drive his point home, he ‘observes’ that West Indians make better use of the same resources accorded many African Americans.

Sowell would not provide systematic data for these claims until the publication of his essay “Three Black Histories” in 1978. In this book chapter he analyzed data from the 1970 U.S. Census, in order to document earnings gaps between Afro-Caribbean immigrant populations and African Americans. He found that, “West Indian families earn substantially higher incomes than [African American] families, and only slightly less than the national average” (Sowell 1978: 43). He shows that Afro-Caribbean immigrants made approximately 52 percent more than African Americans, nationally in 1969. In order to control for regional differences in population distribution he shows that in New York City Afro-Caribbeans made 28 percent more than African Americans. He then compares Afro-Caribbeans and African Americans with comparable levels of education and shows that Afro-Caribbeans with four years of college make 17 percent more than African Americans with the same level of education and that those with two years of postgraduate study make 27 percent more than their African American peers.

Sowell attributes these sociocultural differences between Afro-Caribbeans and African Americans to the fact that racial slavery took different forms in the West Indies and North America and to the fact that blacks have always outnumbered whites in the West Indies. With respect to the former, Sowell states, “Thus, even under slavery, West Indian Negroes had

direct personal responsibility for an important part of their own well being, and also acquired experience in economic activity on their own, since they cultivated their individual plots without supervision and were usually allowed to sell any surplus in the market” (Sowell 1975: 98). As such, blacks in the West Indies were more likely to be independent because the slave masters were more likely to allow them to grow their own crops and even trade surpluses among slaves. This is then contrasted with the higher levels of slave master dependence among black slaves in North America. Inasmuch as multigenerational experience with proprietorship can prepare a people, Sowell argues, black West Indians were better prepared for participation in a capitalist economy.¹³ Higher levels of dependence are then speculated to be associated with less thrift and hard work among African Americans. Sowell also argues that since blacks were in the racial majority in the West Indies they were more likely to revolt and escape. He states, “The chance that an escaped slave would encounter even isolated white men... was very small, as compared to the chance that an escaped plantation slave would run into white patrols, white workmen, or white rural settlements in the South” (Sowell 1975: 99).

Sowell also highlights how being in the racial majority has implications for how black West Indians think about race today. He states, “The absence of a white working class meant that ‘free persons of color,’ and later the whole free black population could not be restricted to the most menial occupations or the more skilled and more responsible positions would have gone unfilled” (Foner 1985, Sowell 1978: 46, Vickerman 1998). In effect, Sowell draws a line through history – from slave revolts and escapes to more blacks in high-ranking positions in the contemporary West Indies – in order to connect racial demographics in the West Indies to the notion that blacks in the West Indies are less concerned with the role of race in their social mobility.

In sum, Sowell argues that the reason why Afro-Caribbeans do better than African Americans is

¹³ Scholars have argued that the concept of race is at least partially about the relationship between a human population group and modernity (Hesse 2001, Goldberg 2002). In this portion of Sowell it is clear that this conception of race is operant in his explanation. He is arguing that Afro-Caribbeans are doing better than African Americans because they have a longer history of engaging with elements of modernity than African Americans and are therefore more ‘European’ and better able to succeed. More on this point below.

because they work harder and suffer from lower levels of “racial paranoia” (Jackson 2008). Sowell attributes differences in work ethic and racial attitudes to differences in the nature of slavery and racial demographics that existed between the British West Indies and the United States.

Immigrant Selectivity and Human Capital

Barry Chiswick is the most widely noted for introducing the *immigrant self-selection thesis* (Chiswick 1978). However, his thoughts were largely inspired by Marcus Lee Hanson, in the book *The Immigrant in American History*, when he observed that, “Countries of origin were dismayed by their loss when they saw their ports thronged with the sturdiest of their peasantry. Efforts to stem the movement were attempted” (Hanson 1940: 212). As a result, Chiswick would offer:

“Economic theory suggests that migration in response to economic incentives is generally more profitable for the more able and more highly motivated. This self-selection in migration implies that for the same schooling, age, and other demographic characteristics immigrants to the United States have more innate ability or motivation relevant to the labor market than native-born persons.” (Chiswick 1978: 901).

The evidence for this claim was that although immigrants did not make as much as their native peers on arrival, after a certain amount of years they would overtake the earnings of the native-born. The implication is that although immigrants would have to adjust to the new society, after they were adjusted their higher levels of (largely unobservable) ‘innate ability’ allowed them to outpace their native-born peers. That is, although immigrants had more human capital there would be a lag effect in their returns to human capital that are the result of adjustment. Susan Model presents the most current and comprehensive estimates of this catch-up time or lag effect (Model 2008: 75). She finds that in 1980 the catch-up time was about 12 years, about 9 years in 1990 and approximately 15 years in 2000.

While keeping with the argument that immigrants have more human capital than African Americans, some came to disagree with this particular conception of immigrant self-selection. George Borjas has argued that immigrant human capital should vary by immigrant cohort and the changing nature of immigration policy (Borjas 1985). Moreover, immigrants from countries – like those in the West

Indies – with higher levels of income inequality than the United States would provide for a relatively low quality of immigrant stock. When taken together, Borjas showed that during periods of relatively open immigration policies, immigrants from the Caribbean did not have the same levels of ‘innate ability’ as their predecessors. Again, Susan Model presents the most recent and comprehensive findings concerning immigrant cohort (Model 2008: 78-9). She concludes, “of the eight comparisons that test this expectation, only four display the expected decline” (Model 2008: 76). Although Model finds modest support at best, it is worth mentioning that this could be associated with her operationalization of immigrant cohort and that a different definition of cohorts might yield different findings.

The best evidence for the role of self-selection in the literature on black ethnicity and racial inequality comes in the work of Kristin Butcher in her 1994 paper “Black Immigrants in the United States.” In this paper Butcher not only compares African Americans to black immigrants from the West Indies but she also compares both of these two groups to “black movers.” That is, Butcher created a category of African Americans that had moved from one state to another by comparing their current state of residence to their state of birth (i.e., black migrants). The theory was that if immigrant – or migrant in this case – self-selection was at play, black movers would show similar levels of socioeconomic attainment as those black immigrants who were from the West Indies.¹⁴ Her findings show that, at least in the year 1979,

“Native movers earn 35 percent higher wages than native non-movers, lending some credence to the self-selection argument. Even black immigrants in the highest earnings group earn less than the native black movers” (Butcher 1994: 267).

Moreover, both native- and foreign-born whites made approximately 40 to 50 percent more than native-born black movers and black immigrants from the West Indies (Butcher 1994: 269). From these findings and findings like these, several scholars have concluded that the immigrant self-selection is an important part of explaining black ethnic inequality (e.g., Model 2008).

¹⁴ I use the term *black migrant* to refer to African Americans that move from state to state and the term *black immigrant* to refer to foreign-born blacks that have immigrated to the United States. In this particular project, all black immigrants are from the British West Indies.

While those arguing for the role of immigrant selectivity in the production of human capital differences have presented compelling evidence (e.g., Butcher 1994, Model 2008: 84-88) for the idea that movers are special, it is important to consider one of the more constant findings associated with those arguing for the immigrant self-selection thesis, “the declining advantage of those more recently arrived” (Model 2008: 81). Indeed as Model reports, “some scholars might anticipate a diminution in white favoritism on the grounds that the larger a minority group, the more discrimination against it” (Blalock 1957, Model 2008: 81). That is, racial dynamics – variously considered – may be present within the immigrant self-selection thesis such that it is not that race matters less than culture, but that race matters differently and that culture is in effect, racialized.

Summarizing Cultural and Human Capital Arguments

In short, while Thomas Sowell has argued that the reason why Afro-Caribbeans do better than African Americans is because of widespread, concrete and stable cultural differences between those who descend from slavery in the British West Indies and those whose ancestors hail from slavery in America, Kristin Butcher and Susan Model (most notably) have argued that any differences that exist between Afro-Caribbeans and African Americans are due to human capital differences that are associated with the selectivity of migrant populations. Although these two schools of thought often present themselves as very different from one another, they both provide evidence for the same working assumption: Afro-Caribbeans do better because they work harder (i.e., sociocultural differences, Sowell 1978) and have more human capital (i.e., positively selected, Butcher 1994, Model 2008) than African Americans. That is, all are deeply inspired by the basic assumptions present in the literature on labor economics and neither approach gives serious attention to the idea that observed socioeconomic differences might be the result of racial factors. In order to consider the potential role of the concept and politic of race in the production of black ethnic inequality I first show the ways in which Afro-Caribbeans have been framed as a model minority.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR DIFFERENTIAL RACIALIZATION

As noted at the outset, differential racialization is a social process with politico-economic implications. That is, it involves the imagining of differences in work ethic and racial skepticism where they do not exist and the differential treatment of the same or very similar behaviors and attitudes. This differential treatment for the same characteristics then results in the assignment of Afro-Caribbeans and African Americans to slightly different locations at the bottom of the American racial hierarchy.

First, I start with the assumption that race is an *independent social force* that is endemic to the American project – i.e., the expansion of the West from Europe to the Americans starting in the middle of the sixteenth century and continuing to the present (Bonilla-Silva 1997, Feagin 2000, Goldberg 2002, Mills 1997, Omi and Winant 1994). As Omi and Winant assert, “race [is] an autonomous field of social conflict, political organization and cultural/ideological meaning” (Omi and Winant 1994: 48). Accordingly I understand race to be neither an essential human characteristic nor a product of false consciousness. Instead race is a product of the human imagination; a social construct that not only shapes the social structures of everyday life but also invites our imagination to see things that may in fact not be there (Berger and Luckmann 1967, Fields 1990, Hall 1986). That is, race occupies the liminal space between the real and the imagined in such a way that – *despite its imagined nature* – it continues to have real consequences. The phenotypical differences we often associate with different races are then understood as markers of political conflict over social and economic resources (Bonilla-Silva 1997, Omi and Winant 1994).¹⁵ That is, since race often determines who gets what, various efforts are made in order to intervene in order to redistribute resources along particular racial lines (Bonilla-Silva 1997, Omi and Winant 1994). Given this theorization, my argument for differential racialization considers the various ways in which similar phenotypes might be assigned different racial meanings.

Second, the social determinants of race have been known to change over time. Therefore, I agree with others who contend that the most recent shift has

¹⁵ I am not making the claim that race is about different phenotypes. Phenotype however is one of the more widely used characteristics in the racialization process. I am simply using one prominent example of a racialized feature to make the point assigned meanings.

been a *shift away from the biogenic determination of Jim Crow toward discussions of innate cultural predispositions in the post civil rights period* – i.e., approx. 1965 to 2008 (Bobo et al. 1997, Bonilla-Silva 2003b: 39-43, Lewis 1965). In the current historical period, racism is much less overt and “involves persistent negative stereotyping of African Americans, a tendency to blame blacks themselves for the black-white gap in socioeconomic standing, and resistance to meaningful policy efforts to ameliorate U.S. racist social conditions and institutions” (Bobo et al. 1997: 16). This new trend in “blaming the victim” is undergirded by the working presupposition that the cultural practices of blacks are not only the reason for their condition but that certain cultural characteristics are somehow “fixed” to the black body politic – i.e., the “biologization of culture” (Bonilla-Silva 2003b: 40). Therefore, instead of defining racial groups in terms of religion or biogenetic disposition, cultural predispositions are increasingly being attached to variation in the human phenotype in ways that are both preset and permanent. This is very different from the anthropological notion of culture as both socially constructed and fluid.

Third, the shift from biology to culture has been paralleled by a more general *increase in the number of ‘social characteristics’ employed in the process of assigning racial meaning* (Blaut 1992, Bonilla-Silva 2004, Gold 2004, Hesse 2001). Two such social characteristics are often factored into the process of racialization are *national origin* and *perceived foreignness* (Kim 1999, Ngai 2004, Tuan 1998). In the book *Impossible Subjects*, Mai Ngai argues that “the national origins quota system [of U.S. immigration law] created categories of difference that turned on both national origins and race, reclassifying Americans as racialized subjects simultaneously along both lines” (Ngai 2004: 36). That is, the position of people within the racial hierarchy of the United States is at least partly determined by perceived national origin. In addition to national origin, Mia Tuan argues that although Asian Americans have been a central part of the American project for generations they continue to be perceived as foreigners and therefore excluded from the social and political imagination of the United States (Tuan 1998).

Claire Kim attempts to capture much of this thinking in her theorization on “racial triangulation” (Kim 1999). In doing so she offers a conception of racial inequality that has more than one axis. That is, in addition to the classic axis of inferior-superior, Kim adds the axis foreign-insider to help us better

understand the roles of national origin and foreignness in the production of racial inequality in the United States. In short she argues that racialization is a process of triangulating folks between whites and blacks via relative valorization and civic ostracism. She contends that while Asian Americans are seen as a more capable stock of people than African Americans (i.e., higher on the superior-inferior axis) they are civically ostracized because they are perceived as foreign relative to African Americans (i.e., they do not do as well along the foreigner-insider axis). The implication is that, a certain type of perpetual – even multigenerational – “cultural predisposition” is then affixed to the body vis-à-vis an interaction between national origin and phenotype.

I argue that the perception of foreignness is indeed associated with the imagining of fixed characteristics in such a way that Afro-Caribbeans are seen as “forever foreign” and therefore forever better than African Americans (e.g., Ngai 2004, Tuan 1998). A key point of evidence for the imagined fixidity of cultural traits among Afro-Caribbeans is the conception of the children and grandchildren of Afro-Caribbeans as a certain type of immigrant as opposed to “full blooded” native-born citizens. That said, it is important to note that while for some groups being thought of as “forever foreign” is associated with a negative social bias (e.g., Asian Americans; Tuan 1998), the literature on black ethnic inequality confers stable positive bias to Afro-Caribbeans (e.g., Sowell 1978). So, despite having the same phenotype as African Americans, Afro-Caribbeans are racialized differently (especially among whites, but also among Afro-Caribbeans and to some extent African Americans; Vickerman 1998, Waters 1999). Therefore, at different levels of perceived foreignness, blackness means something different (Kim 1999, Mamdani 2001, Ngai 2004).

The fourth theoretical foundation concerns the implication of assigning different racial meanings to Afro-Caribbeans and African Americans. Differential racialization therefore includes a social process whereby Afro-Caribbean behavior attains a different value and meaning in the eyes of whites, even when the behaviors are very similar or even identical to that of African Americans (Kasinitz 1992, Waters 1999). As noted above, Mary Waters reports that white employers hold more favorable thoughts about Afro-Caribbeans than they do African Americans (Waters 1999). Her notion of *white esteem* proposes that whites

feel less threatened by Afro-Caribbeans because they are less likely to bring up issues related to American slavery and less likely to complain about working conditions. In addition, Afro-Caribbeans are thought to be harder workers on the job and therefore white employers use Afro-Caribbean social networks for hiring. That is, whites use language and social networks to identify Afro-Caribbeans and then treat them differently than African Americans. The key limitation of this perspective is that it accepts the perception that white employers have of Afro-Caribbeans and African Americans as real, objective or factual. Contrary to this perspective, the only multi-city survey that considers ethnic differences in black racial attitudes suggests that any differences in racial attitudes are either very small or nonexistent (Benson 2006). Using the differential racialization theoretical framework I contend that in many ways these perceptions are more imagined than real and therefore similar characteristics and behaviors are treated differently across black ethnicity.

By assigning different meanings to similar attitudes and behaviors, differential racialization ultimately functions to maintain the position of blacks at the bottom of the U.S. racial hierarchy. Scholars have argued that the model minority myth functions to not only maintain the position of Asian Americans, but that it also works to maintain the position of other racial groups (Prashad 2000). The logic goes: if one minority group can do well, others can do just as well or better; and to the extent that other groups do not succeed, this shows that their lack of mobility is not due to discrimination but instead that it is the result of a lack of effort. Ultimately this logic works to forestall changes in public policy that would benefit all racial minority groups, including Asians. My thinking on differential racialization borrows aspects of state-of-the-art thinking on the model minority concept but reconceives it in terms of what might be termed, ‘model ethnicity’ (e.g., Pierre 2004). That is, the process I am referring to assigns ‘model status’ to ethnic groups *within* racial groups in order to preserve the position of said racial group within the larger racial hierarchy. Said more forthrightly, the discourse on Afro-Caribbeans as a model minority celebrates the modest economic ‘success’ of Afro-Caribbeans in order to keep the vast majority of blacks in position – immigrant and native.

This line of reasoning is supported by two basic findings. First, despite the supposed hard work and

color blindness of Afro-Caribbeans, their socioeconomic status remains far behind whites (Butcher 1994: 269). And second, while whites often claim that Afro-Caribbeans have more appreciation for America and the basic American values, Afro-Caribbeans face a form of “civic ostracism” in modern democratic politics (Kim 1999, Kim 2004, Rogers 2006). Indeed Reuel Rodgers shows that Afro-Caribbeans in New York are very often not incorporated into local democratic politics (Rogers 2006). This finding goes against research that shows a correlation between increases in socioeconomic mobility and higher levels of political participation. Why is it that Afro-Caribbeans don’t follow this pattern? In some ways the relatively high levels of socioeconomic status are interacting with the relatively low levels of political participation in ways that suggest the case of the Afro-Caribbean might benefit from the theoretical insight of the racial triangulation thesis (Kim 1999, Rogers 2006: 92).¹⁶

UNDERMINING NOTIONS OF THE BLACK IMMIGRANT AS MODEL MINORITY

In stark contrast to those who argue that Afro-Caribbeans do better than African Americans because they work harder and have/acquire more human capital than African Americans, I assert that much of the black ethnic inequality that has been documented is the result of a social process whereby the same attitudes and behaviors receive substantially divergent socioeconomic and political consequence based on the perceived nativity of the black body in question. In order to build this argument I will first show the ways in which Afro-Caribbeans have been framed as having very different attitudes and behaviors despite having attitudes and behaviors that are very similar to – if not the same as – African Americans. That is, the ways in which Afro-Caribbeans have been caste as a model minority (Economist 1996, Ogbu 1987, Pierre 2004, Sowell 1975).

Starting just after the civil rights movement and immigration reforms of the late 1960s, Afro-Caribbeans have been systematically framed as a model minority. As I will show, the notion that Afro-Caribbeans are indeed a model minority is largely a

¹⁶ That is, the function of black immigrant patriotism must also be implicated in the in a theory of differential racialization. Indeed, thinking on the concept of racialization has always been concerned with the connections between race and patriotism (i.e., from Keith 1931 to Kim 2004).

myth. I define a *model minority* as a specific group of color who is understood to have achieved more success than African Americans (or the decedents of American slavery) because of their Protestant work ethic and lack of concern with race and racism (Lee 1996, Prashad 2000, Suzuki 1977, Weber 1930). I define the *model minority myth* as a lay theory and social discourse that assigns model minority status to particular racialized minorities so as to maintain white supremacy – e.g., whites at the top of the social structure. In short, this racial trope argues that if one minority group can do well, others can do just as well or better; and to the extent that other groups do not succeed, this shows that their lack of mobility is not do to discrimination but instead do to a lack of effort and too much time spent worrying about race – i.e., other racialized minority groups are not sufficiently “model” (Prashad 2000). Therefore the model minority trope employs notions of hard work and acquiesces to the racial status quo as key factors in the social mobility of ‘colored folk.’¹⁷

Although Sowell is often interpreted as offering a fairly straightforward cultural argument, a careful reading of his work implicates Sowell as the primary source for thinking of Afro-Caribbeans as a model minority. That is, Sowell speaks to both the protestant work ethic and ‘racial acquiescence’ in the production of black ethnic and black-white racial inequality. He begins with framing the problem, “West Indians in the United States are significant not only because of their overrepresentation among prominent or successful blacks, but also because their very different background makes them a test case of the explanatory importance of color, as such, in analyzing socioeconomic progress in the American economy and society, as compared to the importance of the cultural traditions of the American Negro” (Sowell 1978: 42). The implication in this particular passage is that if Afro-Caribbeans are doing better than African Americans it must be because African Americans practice a culture that inhibits them from experiencing greater social mobility (i.e., no Protestant work ethic: Weber 1930).

Later in the same paragraph, he tells us why this finding is so important. He states that because Afro-Caribbeans do better than African Americans, we know that “...racism alone, is clearly not a sufficient

explanation of income disparities within the black population or between the black and white populations” (Sowell 1978: 43). As such, claims that racial discrimination plays a major or primary role in black-white racial inequality are must be inaccurate. Sowell also has moments where he discusses work ethic and racial factors simultaneously. He states,

“West Indian Negroes emphasized such traits as work, thrift and education – more generally achievements involving planning and working for the future, implying the emotional control for self-denial in the present and emphasizing the logical and mundane over the emotional, the imaginative, and the heroic. The opposite characteristics can be scene among the ... Negroes, where advancement can be achieved in emotional and imaginative areas, such as oratory, lyric literature, and music, and which have produced many dramatic ‘leaders’ and heroes” (Sowell 1975: 130-1).

Here, Sowell talks about “work, thrift and education’ in reference to the cultural dimension of the model minority concept while more tacitly implicating the racial dimension when he refers to African American civil rights leaders as ‘emotional and imaginative’ leaders and heroes. The inference is that African American leaders are unduly concerned with race, using less logical and more emotive strategies in the pursuit of social mobility. The framing of Afro-Caribbeans as model minorities would persist and can be found in various academic disciplines, including anthropology where John Ogbu has focused on the ways in which immigrant selectivity results in model behavior among voluntary immigrant minority groups (Ogbu 1987). He sums up two decades of ethnographic research with the following statement,

“Voluntary [minority immigrants] have cultural models that lead them to accept uncritically mainstream folk theory uncritically mainstream folk theory and strategies of getting ahead in the United States and to interpret their economic hardships as temporary problems they can and will overcome through education and hard work. Additionally they tend to acquiesce in their relationship with school personnel and White authorities controlling other social institutions” (Ogbu 1987: 291).

The thoughts of Thomas Sowell and John Ogbu found many sympathetic ears and would eventually find there way into the mainstream discourse concerning explanations for racial inequality in general and Afro-Caribbean success in particular. For instance, in 1996 the conservative *Economist* news magazine published a short piece entitled, “Race in America:

¹⁷ I use the term ‘colored folk’ to refer to ‘people of color’ – i.e., Blacks, Latinos, Asians and Native Americans.

Black Like Me” (Economist 1996). The article began by asking, “Why do black immigrants do so much better than blacks who are born in America?” The answer. “Attitude makes part of the difference . . . black immigrants are more entrepreneurial than native-born blacks.” The article continues to highlight cultural factors like, “high motivation . . . and a strong will to succeed.” After referencing differences in household incomes, the *Economist* suggests that, “figures like these suggest that racism does not account for all, or even most, of the difficulties encountered by native-born blacks” (Economist 1996: 27). Again emphasizing both hard work and a disinterest in race and racism as best practices for doing away with racial inequality. Stories like these not only found their way into conservative publications but also into more liberal papers like the *Boston Globe*, *Baltimore Sun* and *Tampa Tribune* (Pierre 2004).

The point of this brief exercise has been to show that indeed Afro-Caribbeans have been framed as a model minority. Next I will show how more recent research has lent credence to this logic, despite somewhat contradictory findings. That is, I will show that both white employers and Afro-Caribbeans believe that Afro-Caribbeans work harder and complain less about race and that these are some of the primary reasons for their greater success. I will also show that, despite these perceptions and claims, there is evidence to the contrary (i.e., the notion that Afro-Caribbeans are a model minority is more myth than reality).

Protestant Work Ethic

I first focus on the Protestant work ethic dimension of the model minority myth as applied to the Afro-Caribbean. In doing so I conduct an analyses of findings presented in the book *Black Identities* by Mary Waters because she conducts interviews with white employers, black immigrants and African Americans and reports findings concerning some of the contradictions at play around the perception of Afro-Caribbean Protestant work ethic (Waters 1999). That is, I use her text *Black Identities* as a means by which to make my argument that, not only are Afro-Caribbeans caste as model “on the ground”, but that this characterization is largely a *myth*. There are three important highlights to consider here: First, white employers considered Afro-Caribbeans to be model. Second, Afro-Caribbeans have adopted this view. And third, whites, Afro-Caribbeans and Waters present countervailing evidence to the notion that Afro-

Caribbeans are a model minority and yet this narrative remains in tact throughout interviewee testimony and analysis. Waters starts with white managers that she interviewed,

- A: If I had one position open and if it was a West Indian versus an American black, I'd go with the West Indian.
 Q: And that's because of your experience working with people?
 A: Yes. Their reliability, their willingness to do the job or what has to be done.
 Q: Are there concrete statistics on this?
 A: I don't have them. I just – it's just experience that they have a different drive than American blacks.

(White male manager, age 42; Waters 1999: 116)

Clearly this manager believes that Afro-Caribbeans are harder workers than African Americans. This view was based on his own personal experiences, which are often less than objective – especially considering the readily available discourse concerning Afro-Caribbeans. Afro-Caribbeans were also aware of the ways in which they benefited from their model minority status and adopted a particular narrative about the African American work ethic,

- A: My ex-boss he was white and he would rather have a staff like this with a lot of West Indians because of the problems [he had] when he would hire Americans. He would say, ‘it's a waste.’ On a Monday morning when he looking for his job to be done, they're not here. And he always say he liked West Indian people. And I think I benefit from that. I think this is why I'm in this position right now through him, you know? And probably because I'm black, maybe wouldn't appreciate me that much. If you're working for a place and there's openings for a job, them big firms, they like to take West Indians faster than a black American.
 Q: Why do you think that is?
 A: Because as I was saying, most people know most Americans is lazy. Black Americans.

(Trinidadian female manager, age 38, in United States twenty-two years; Waters 1999: 124)

Although Waters presents several quotes of this nature, what is somewhat unique about this quote is that in addition to the respondent appearing cognoscenti of the fact that she is seen as a hard worker vis-à-vis African Americans, she is also aware that there may be a larger set of racial politic at play (i.e., when she eludes, “And probably because I'm black, maybe wouldn't appreciate me that much”).

Despite this “slip” she felt comfortable saying, “...most Americans is lazy.” Indeed several Afro-Caribbeans reported their view that African Americans were lazy,

“The majority of the black Americans – what I say, is either that they’re lazy or they don’t like to work. I might be wrong, but by judging from places where you work along with them, if they need something, they work for it. When they get it, that’s it. They don’t – the majority of them, like, they don’t have a plan about what they need with their life. I think this welfare system encourages it. ‘Cause in my country, there is no such thing. You gotta work for a living. There is no special security and welfare, nothing like that” (Guyanese male worker, age 39, in the United States six years; Waters 1999: 127).

This quote shows that some of the Afro-Caribbean respondents tried to base their analysis on their personal experiences with African Americans and were willing to admit that African Americans do indeed work hard when they need something. But despite these qualifications, the conclusion remained in tact, that African Americans “are lazy or don’t work hard” and that the “welfare system encourages it.” In explaining the reason why Afro-Caribbeans employed this narrative – despite the presence of contradictions in their own experiences – Waters concludes,

“To explain these behaviors and attitudes, most of the immigrants use their own limited experiences with inner-city black Americans and the ready made cultural stereotypes that are prevalent in the mass media and that role off the tongues of white managers. Thus the immigrants compared their own hard-working, planning, friendly, upwardly-striving selves with the lazy, welfare-dependent, unfriendly, bitter black Americans.” (Waters 1999: 138).

That is, Afro-Caribbeans were aware of their own framing as model and the framing of African Americans as lazy and undeserving and employed these narratives even when their experiences did not support them. White employers also made mention of contradictions. In particular a few described the ways in which their conception of Afro-Caribbeans as model did not always support their experiences. Interestingly, these behaviors were not explained in terms of sociocultural pathology, but in terms of a benign ignorance. Waters observes,

“... where American blacks are blamed for their lack of a work ethic and for not showing up to work on Mondays, the immigrants are often

granted cultural or ethnic explanations for why they behave in a particular way. One manager explained that when new immigrants were late ‘on island time’ or did not show up for work when it rained, he understood that they just did not understand the ‘American way of work,’ and then cut them some slack.” (Waters 1999: 121).

Despite making this observation, Waters does not discuss how such an inconsistency might be implicated in the maintenance of racial inequality. That is, she does not stop to question the ways in which a less accurate construction of Afro-Caribbeans as consistently hard working might work to support the argument that African American pathology is the main reason for black-white racial inequality.

Racial Paranoia and Protest

The model minority myth is also about a certain divestment in the notion that race and racism are important factors in social mobility. That is, part of the rationale for Afro-Caribbean success has been that Afro-Caribbeans are less concerned with race and racial discrimination than are African Americans – i.e., African Americans are ‘racially paranoid’ (Jackson 2008). John Jackson offers the notion of *racial paranoia* as “distrustful conjecture about purposeful race-based maliciousness and the ‘benign neglect’ of racial indifference” (Jackson 2008: 3). He continues, “racial paranoia is constituted by extremist thinking, general social distrust, the nonfalsifiable embrace of intuition and the unflinching commitment to contradictory thinking” (Jackson 2008: 7). Later in the same chapter, Jackson sets the intellectual agenda of his book, “*Racial Paranoia* takes a broad look at African Americans in the twenty-first century as they attempt to see something that can’t always be seen, to touch something that may not be there, and to make sense of a small voice inside their heads that whispers and whispers and whispers” (Jackson 2008: 10).

Waters talks about the lack of “racial paranoia” among Afro-Caribbeans as an important part of the reason why whites favor Afro-Caribbeans (Waters 1999). She argues that lower levels of racial paranoia among Afro-Caribbeans produce a comfort factor that results in immigrant favorability. According to Waters the comfort factor exists, at least in part, because,

“West Indian blacks provide a black face for whites to look into without seeing the sorry history of American race relations mirrored back. This puts whites at ease and a cycle of expectations is created.

West Indians do not expect strained expectations with whites, and whites don't expect strained relations with West Indians." (Waters 1999: 171).

Waters then provides an example of white employer favorability. According to one of the white female managers she interviewed,

"Sometimes I feel that people who come from the islands are more appreciative of their jobs. They consider themselves fortunate. And sometimes I feel that the assistants that come from the South feel that you owe it to them to keep them on when you have some problems. The island people are a little more open to white people than the southern blacks who question authority more. And I don't know how to say it – the West Indians kind of accept the fact that even though you are white, it is not *because* you are white that you are dictating to them, but because you are the person in authority" (White female manager, age 32; Waters 1999: 171).

So here we see some support for the notion that whites are more comfortable with the racial politics of Afro-Caribbeans than they are with those of African Americans. According to Waters, Afro-Caribbeans echo the perception that African Americans are too concerned with race and therefore do not move forward as quickly as they do,

"I can't help them [African Americans] because they're so wrapped up in racism, and they act it out so often, they interpret it as such so often that sometimes they are not even approachable... Sometimes I feel sorry for them, but you find out that you just can't change their attitude because they just tell you that you don't understand. You weren't there to feel the way they felt" (Jamaican female teacher, age 41, in United States seven years; Waters 1999: 171).

Moreover, according to the Afro-Caribbeans, it was this type of racial paranoia that is also responsible for a lack of African American mobility,

"We're not saying that there is not racism, we're not saying that there's not prejudice. We're not saying that there are not certain jobs where they put a token black man. We're not saying that. But you don't have to be negative all the time. I just cannot understand because I came here, I didn't have a high school diploma from this country. You understand? But – I mean, I love my job, I'm doing what I like to do... my next step after this will be to have my own catering business. And that is what I'm working towards now. You know? So, don't tell me I can't do it. [I say to African Americans] why you can't do it and you're right here?"

(Trinidadian female supervisor, age 36, in the United States nineteen years; Waters 1999: 171).

In some ways Waters herself can also be read as tacitly implicating Afro-Caribbean racial attitudes as part of their reason for success in the United States. She states,

"Thus the cultural beliefs and practices West Indian immigrants bring to the United States reflect... hard work and ambition to conquer discrimination... which lead them to expect racial discrimination but to see it as a relatively contained part of life, not one that suffuses every encounter between black and white." (Waters 1999: 153).

Her working assumption here is that African Americans do suffuse race into every encounter and therefore pay the penalty associated with racial paranoia. However, despite the conception that whites and Afro-Caribbeans have of Afro-Caribbeans as holding a more neutral set of racial politics, Waters eludes to the fact that this may not be the empirical reality but, I would argue, because of the power of the model minority myth, Afro-Caribbeans are allowed to pass. She states,

"At the same time, a significant number of the white managers describe the foreign-born as being very outspoken, very aware of race, and very likely to be blunt about what they want. Yet this did not seem to dampen relations between whites and West Indians in the same way that it dampened relations between African Americans and whites" (Waters 1999: 175).

Summary

In sum, the model minority frame has been applied to the Afro-Caribbean in the academy, the press and in labor market settings. However, a close read of this depiction results in contradictory evidence. This evidence suggests that the notion of the black immigrant as model minority may be more imagined than real. Next, I review the theoretical foundations and race-related implications underlying this inconsistency.

HYPOTHESES

As with any large project, there are hosts of hypotheses. This project has two primary hypotheses. First, that while black immigrants may do better than African Americans in terms of socioeconomic status, they do less well when it comes to political

participation. Second, that much of the difference in socioeconomic status is due to black immigrants receiving different rewards for same or similar types of cultural practice, human capital investment and racial attitudes.

DATA AND METHODS

One of the key limitations of research in this area is the nature of the data being analyzed. That is, the vast majority of the data under study has been from either the U.S. Census or from ethnographic studies with non-random samples that are mostly from the Northeast and Southeast of the United States.¹⁸ The chief limitation of the U.S. Census is that it is known to systematically undercount immigrants and people of color (Butcher 1994: 283, Papademetriou and DiMario 1986, Warren and Peck 1980). To the extent that black immigrants are undercounted, their numbers are biased slightly upward. The second major limitation of using the U.S. Census to evaluate the degree to which race or culture are responsible for inequality is that the census has very few measures of racial attitudes. That is, a study of unexplained residuals is not the same as a study of racial dynamics (Bonilla-Silva and Zuberi 2008). As for studies that are more ethnographic, even though these studies tend to talk about race more, their findings often do not account for the ways in which immigrant life can be different in different cities and regions, nor are the processes they document able to be generalized to all black immigrants in the United States.

In order to address some of these limitations, data for this study will come from two sources: a secondary analysis of survey data and data from the U.S. Census. Survey data will come from the National Survey of American Life (Jackson et al. 2004a, Jackson et al. 2004b). The NSAL is uniquely suited for this study because it seeks to collect information on the “racial, ethnic and cultural influences on mental health” (Jackson et al. 2004a: 289) and provides the first nationally representative study of both African Americans (Jackson and Gurin 1980) and black immigrants from the West Indies, living in the United States; an oversample that also includes second-

¹⁸ This is especially true for the literature in black ethnicity that is chiefly concerned with racial and/or ethnic differences in socioeconomic attainment. While other studies that might be classified as studies of black ethnicity do “take place” in other regions, they are more often interested in intergroup relations, ethnic heritage, ethnic identity and/or immigrant incorporation.

generation black immigrants.¹⁹ That is, not only does it attempt to include measures of cultural practice, but it also includes measures of racial attitudes.

Supplementing this data with data from the U.S. Census will allow for an assessment of the degree to which various “city level” factors (.e.g., racial and ethnic composition) are implicated in shaping social mobility, cultural practice, racial attitude formation and the process of differential racialization.

MEASUREMENT OF THE CORE CONCEPTS UNDER STUDY

The core concepts that will be operationalized in this study are: socioeconomic status, political participation, cultural characteristics and behaviors, human capital, immigrant selectivity and, racial attitudes and perceived discrimination. From the start, my claim is that although these measures are only imperfect indicators of the true concepts under study, they are either equal to or better than what has been available previously and will therefore advance our understanding of the mechanisms that undergird black ethnic inequality.²⁰

Socioeconomic Status and Political Participation

Socioeconomic status and political participation will be the “two” key dependent variables.²¹ Socioeconomic status will be assessed with objective and subjective indicators. In terms of *objective indicators*, I will operationalize socioeconomic status in terms of labor force participation, unemployment, occupational prestige and the log of hourly earnings (i.e., following Model 2008). Two indicators will serve as measures of *labor force participation*. Respondents are asked whether or not they are currently working for pay and whether or not they have ever worked for pay. A worker is considered *unemployed* if they are not currently employed and are currently seeking a job. *Occupational prestige* will be assessed using responses to the question, “What is your main occupation?” These open-ended answers will then be categorized according to the

¹⁹ It will address limitations associated with findings from the U.S. Census in the assessment of the second generation “native-born West Indians” (Model 2008: 82).

²⁰ For actual questions, see Appendix.

²¹ Although these are two different constructs, I will be considering them both separately and together.

Treiman prestige score (Model 2008, Treiman 1977).²² I will use the *natural log of hourly wages* in order to assess personal earnings.²³ Political participation will be measured in terms of involvement in: *neighborhood block clubs, civil rights groups* and participation in *electoral politics*.²⁴

Cultural Behaviors, Human Capital and Selectivity

There are several ways to evaluate such a complex and nuanced construct as “sociocultural practice.” In this study I measure three different aspects of this construct: cultural behaviors, human capital investment and immigrant selectivity. *Cultural behaviors* include indicators of: marital status, number of children, age at birth of the first child, involvement in help groups, whether or not a woman is the head of household, willingness to work and an index of familial support. *Human capital* will be assessed by: level of education (Mincer 1974), years of work experience (Mincer 1974), years of experience squared (to account for diminishing returns) and a subjective assessment of skills. There are three main strategies for assessing *immigrant selectivity*: year of migration, cohort of migration and comparing migrants to immigrants (Borjas 1985, Butcher 1994, Chiswick 1978). I will include all these measures of the immigrant selectivity and will also include: reason for immigrating to the U.S., the type of visa the respondent might have acquired to come to the U.S. and the current citizenship status of the respondent.

Racial Attitudes and Perceived Discrimination

There are a host of measures that will be used to not only assess the ways in which African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans think differently about race, but also the various ways in which they experience the racial structure of the United States. *Racial attitudes* will include measures of perceived discrimination (both major life and everyday discrimination), group solidarity, closeness to other groups (to include blacks, whites, West Indians and Africans), linked fate, adoption of various racial stereotypes, explanations for racial inequality and an assessment of the degree to

²² I will also explore categorizing them according to the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Classification System Manual (<http://www.bls.gov/ocs/ocsm/commain.htm>).

²³ Data for this variable will need to be requested from ICPSR.

²⁴ The three questions for electoral political will need to be requested from ICPSR.

which the respondent thinks racial discrimination has served as a block to their social mobility. Measures of the *racial structure* will include racial and ethnic composition of the neighborhood, racial composition of the work group and the race the employer.

ANALYSIS PLAN

My dissertation will include three analytic chapters. In addition to these chapters, there will be an introduction, a theory chapter and a concluding chapter. The first chapter will review the literature that documents black immigration from the West Indies, the interactions between Afro-Caribbeans, African Americans and whites and the changing nature of black ethnic inequality over the past century. In the theory chapter I will conduct a critical review of the primary explanations for black ethnic inequality. In chapter three I will investigate the role of sociocultural difference in the production of black ethnic inequality. Chapter four will test for the role of the immigration self-selection thesis. Chapter five will test the viability of my thinking on differential racialization in the production of black ethnic inequality. Finally chapter six – the conclusion – will reflect on the general findings of the study and comment on the implications such findings have for our understanding of black ethnic and racial inequality. I will review the analysis plan for the three middle analytic chapters separately.

Nativity and Cultural Behaviors

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, to document the extent to which Afro-Caribbeans and African Americans differ on various cultural behaviors and second, to investigate the degree to which differences in these cultural behaviors are responsible for black ethnic inequality. In order to document the extent to which Afro-Caribbeans and African Americans differ on various cultural behaviors, I will use a series of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). In order to parcel out general differences between the two black ethnic groups and more subtle differences that may exist among Afro-Caribbeans, I will run a series of ANOVAs with different operationalizations of the independent variable (i.e., immigrations status). First, immigration status will simply be to show differences between African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans. Second, immigration status will be split into three groups: African Americans, second-generation Afro-Caribbeans and foreign-born Afro-Caribbeans. Finally, I will separate the independent

variable into several categories: African American, second-generation Afro-Caribbeans and then three separate categories of foreign-born Afro-Caribbeans by years since immigration.

In order to observe the extent to which any differences in cultural practice are responsible for differences in socioeconomic status and political participation I will conduct a series of multivariate regressions.²⁵ In formulaic terms,

$$Y = \alpha + \beta\delta_j + \beta x_c + \varepsilon \quad (1)$$

where Y is equal to the two different operationalizations of the dependent variable (i.e., socioeconomic status and political participation), δ_j refers to a dummy variable for immigration status and x_c refers to a vector of variables that measure the cultural attributes mentioned in the previous subsection. The focus will be on the ability of the cultural practice measures x_c to explain differences across immigration status δ_j in socioeconomic status and political participation Y .

Immigrant Selectivity and Human Capital

The primary analytic goal of this chapter is to assess the role of immigrant selectivity and human capital in black ethnic inequality. First, using ANOVA I will investigate the degree to which black migrants and immigrants²⁶ are comparable in terms of socioeconomic status and political participation. In order to investigate the degree to which movement is associated with differences in racial inequality I will also run a second set of ANOVAs that includes ‘white movers’ and ‘white non-movers.’ Second, I will use ANOVAs to assess the degree to which movers and non-movers have different levels of human capital.

There are two different multivariate modeling techniques to be conducted in this chapter. That is, although the literature that tests for the role of immigrant self-selection has essentially rested on socioeconomic differences between movers and non-movers (Butcher 1994), there is much to gain by incorporating previous analytic strategies that

investigate the time it may take for immigrants to catch their native born peers and the potential for cohort and ‘reason-for-immigrating’ effects (Chiswick 1979, Borjas 1987). The first full model is then,

$$Y = \alpha + \beta\delta_j + \beta x_c + \beta x_{yom} + \beta x_{cohort} + \beta x_{h-cap} + \varepsilon \quad (4)$$

where x_{yom} is an indicator for year of migration with the baseline being those born in the United States, x_{cohort} is an indicator for immigrating before or after 1965 immigration reform and x_{h-cap} is a vector of indicators for human capital.

The second multivariate model will be very similar to the one just shown except that the dummy variable δ_j is recoded such that African American movers and non-movers will be separated out, as will second generation Afro-Caribbean movers and non-movers, μ_j .

$$Y = \alpha + \beta\mu_j + \beta x_c + \beta x_{yom} + \beta x_{cohort} + \beta x_{h-cap} + \varepsilon \quad (5)$$

Differential Racialization

The analytic goal of this chapter is to assess the degree to which African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans think differently about race and to what degree these two black ethnic groups experience differential rewards for their cultural behaviors and racial attitudes in terms of various indicators of socioeconomic status and political participation. There are two major steps to the analysis plan for differential racialization. First an assessment of the degree to which African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans differ in their racial attitudes and in their relationship to the racial structure (e.g., racial segregation in housing and racial segmentation in the workplace). Second, I will employ multivariate decomposition modeling to assess the degree to which African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans are valued differently with respect to their cultural behaviors and racial ‘dispositions’ (see Jeon and Simmons 1998 and Butcher 1994 for examples of decompositions for human capital across nativity). To assess black ethnic differences in racial attitudes I will conduct a series of ANOVAs that compare African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans (in terms of immigration status, years in the U.S. and cohort of arrival) in terms of their racial attitudinal and position in the racial structure.

²⁵ Using OLS and Ordinal models when appropriate.

²⁶ Again, I use the term migrant to refer to African Americans that have moved from state to state. I use the term immigrant to refer to black people that have moved from one country to another.

The second step of the analysis plan will be to conduct multivariate decompositions in order to understand the degree to which differences in the outcome variables are a result of different group level characteristics or differential treatment for the same characteristics (Blinder 1973, Oaxaca 1973, Jann 2008). The basic linear model,

$$Y_{\ell} = X'_{\ell}\beta_{\ell} + \varepsilon, \quad E(\varepsilon_{\ell}) = 0 \quad (6)$$

where Y is a measure of socioeconomic status or political participation, X' is a vector of all predictors in the model (i.e., indicators of cultural behavior, racial attitudes and perceived discrimination) and the constant and β represents the slope coefficient for the vector of all predictors and the intercept (i.e., effect of the constant on the dependent variable). The subscript ℓ denotes group differences,

$$Y_{\ell} = Y_A - Y_B, \quad \ell \in \{A, B\} \quad (7)$$

where A and B represent any two comparison groups.²⁷

The “three-fold” multivariate decompositions are composed of three parts: endowment effects, differences in the coefficients and the interaction between different endowments and coefficients in the production of group level differences in the outcome (Jann 2008). In short, the “endowment” effect is the percentage of group level difference in the outcome variable that results from group level differences in the independent variable. The “differences in the coefficient” effect is the percent of group level differences in the dependent variable that stems from the two groups getting different returns when having the same level of the independent variable. The interaction term then allows the investigator to observe what percentage of the difference in the dependent variable is a result of an interaction between the endowment and coefficient effects. That is,

$$Y_{\ell} = E + C + I \quad (8)$$

where E is the “endowment effect,”

²⁷ Because these modeling techniques can only be run with two groups at a time, various models will be run that allow for the observance of differences between African Americans, second generation black immigrants, first generation black immigrants and whites. For simplicity these models only refer to differences between African Americans and black immigrants.

$$E = (X_A - X_B)' \beta_B \quad (9)$$

which is the portion of group level differences in the outcome that are the result of group level differences in the predictors and the constant and,

$$C = X'_B(\beta_A - \beta_B) \quad (10)$$

where C is the portion of group level differences in the outcome that are the result of group level differences in the coefficients or the degree to which differential treatment for the same characteristics contribute to inequality in the outcome and,

$$I = (X_A - X_B)'(\beta_A - \beta_B) \quad (11)$$

denotes the degree to which group level differences in the outcome are the result of an interaction between group level differences in the predators and coefficients.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

In this section I present some preliminary findings from the larger project in order to document baseline differences in socioeconomic status and political participation and to foreshadow the potential explanatory power of differential racialization. I first present findings from a One-Way ANOVA that compares African Americans, Afro-Caribbeans and whites on several measures of socioeconomic status and political participation. I then present findings from a simple multivariate decomposition in order to show preliminary support for differential racialization.

Table 1 presents results from a bivariate analysis of socioeconomic status and political participation by race, ethnicity and nativity.²⁸ In general the group differences shown warrant the present study. Afro-Caribbeans do better than African Americans on all four measures of socioeconomic status, but not as well as whites. Also, African Americans have higher levels of political participation than do Afro-Caribbeans.

In Table 2 I present findings from a three-fold multivariate decomposition. The table begins by showing the mean differences between African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans. These numbers are

²⁸ Nativity refers to whether or not the respondent was born in the United States.

essentially the same as the numbers presented in the previous table for the poverty-to-needs index.²⁹ This part of the table shows the total difference to be explained (i.e., .72). As noted above, three different types of effects explain group level differences in the poverty-to-needs index. First group level differences in education and black solidarity explain about half of the overall difference (i.e., the endowment effect is .35). Almost all of the endowment effect is attributable to group level differences in education. Slightly more than half of the difference is explained by the coefficient effect (i.e., .38). Nearly all of the coefficient effect is due to different rewards for similar levels of black solidarity. Whereas African Americans get little to no reward, for Afro-Caribbeans, higher levels of black solidarity are associated with lower poverty levels. These results provide compelling preliminary evidence for the idea that African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans get different rewards for having the same racial attitudes.

²⁹ Whatever small differences exist between the two tables are due to listwise case deletion in the latter.

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