

The Multiple Worlds of Ghanaian-Born Immigrant Students and Academic Success

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Background/Context: *The multiple worlds model is defined as the ability of students to connect, manage, and negotiate to cross the borders of their two worlds to successfully transition through different everyday worlds of school, family, and peers. Prior research has linked multiple worlds such as school, teacher, family, and peers to the academic success of immigrant students. However, there is a dearth of research about how Ghanaian-born immigrant youth (African-born immigrant youth) integrate the experiences surrounding their multiple worlds of families, schools, peers, and teachers in their daily lives to affect academic achievement.*

Purpose/Objectives/ Research/Focus of Study: *This qualitative study explores the factors associated with immigrant students from Ghana to strategize how to combine their multiple worlds of families, schools, peers, and teachers to affect academic engagement within contexts of school and classroom situations. Another aim was to explore teachers' perception and understanding of the sociocultural and past educational experiences of immigrant students from Ghana. I analyzed two interviews (face-to-face and focus group) transcripts (students and teachers).*

Population/Participants/Subjects: *Forty Ghanaian-born immigrant students and 10 certified teachers in the Atlanta, Georgia, metropolitan area were recruited and interviewed. I interviewed 40 students (n = 23 male and n = 17 female) in 10th grade (8 students), 11th grade (20 students) and 12th grade (12 students) and 10 teachers including 4 Whites, 2 African Americans, 3 Latino/as, and 1 Biracial.*

Research Design: *The study used a qualitative research design by using open-ended semi-structured and focus group interviews in which the participants were comfortable in the interviews. With the assistance of the Ghanaian Immigrant Association in Atlanta and the school district, I sampled for Ghanaian-born immigrant students (students who were born in Ghana with one or two African-born parents and who migrated to the U.S.) and teachers to participate in the study. All data from semistructured and focus group interviews were transcribed and analyzed to address the research questions of the study.*

Findings/Results: *The study findings revealed seven emergent themes: desire to succeed in school, managing two worlds and relationships with teachers and peers in the classroom, crossing boundaries with educational opportunities, managing transitions in school, and the role of parents.*

Conclusions and Recommendations: *The findings suggest that Ghanaian-born immigrant students undergo several complex transitional paradigms combining two worlds of African culture, education, family values, learning new cultures, and adapting to new school settings to achieve success in American educational systems. Overall, Ghanaian-born immigrant students developed strategies to manage two worlds in school, which shaped their perspectives and helped them to cross boundaries as stipulated in the students' multiple worlds model. Therefore, it is important that teachers, educators, and school administrators understand the social, cultural, and educational backgrounds of these immigrant students as not much is written about them with regards to their transition to schools in the United States educational system.*

West African immigrant students come from diverse sociocultural and ethnolinguistic backgrounds in their respective countries. They negotiate and connect to people, school environments, and teachers with multiple worlds of sociocultural experiences, beliefs, norms, and past educational experiences. Just like other immigrant youth, they bring incredible strengths consisting of strong family values, higher education aspirations, and expectations about the future. Yet, many immigrant youth face several challenges associated with migration to a new country that include high levels of poverty (Capps, McCabe, & Fix, 2011), experiences of racism and discrimination (Awokoya, 2012; Szalacha et al., 2004), and school and community violence (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

As immigrant youth, Ghanaian-born immigrant students originate from educational systems that are traced from the British colonial educational systems where the curriculum is based on teacher-centered learning with little student participation. In contrast, United States (U.S.) educational systems are based on student-centered learning where students have to openly participate in class discussion. In school, these immigrant youth face many challenges such as cultural and language barriers, teacher and peer misunderstanding, adjusting to teaching styles and classroom procedures, and making new friends (Goodwin, 2002; Okpalaoka, 2011; Ukpokodu, 2013). They are, however, required to learn new cultures and classroom and school procedures with little or no support from teachers to help them connect and navigate through the transition and achieve success (Phelan, Davidson, & Cao, 1998; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008; Ukpokodu, 1996, 2013).

Further, Ghanaian-born immigrant students' success in managing these transitions varies widely based on their sociocultural, psychological, and educational backgrounds (Ukpokodu, 2013). The sociocultural and educational transformative changes that these immigrant learners experience as a result of the backgrounds from their two worlds have huge educational implications for their academic outcomes. The factors that help facilitate Ghanaian-born immigrant students' ability to cross the boundaries

of their multiple worlds and negotiate their cross-cultural educational experiences have largely gone unnoticed by teachers, educators, and school administrators. Past studies have explored factors that facilitate other immigrant youths' ability to cross boundaries as related to academic achievement (Chhuon, Hudley, Brenner, & Macias, 2010; Phelan et al., 1998; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

Previous research about African-born immigrant students in the U.S. has focused on racial and ethnic identity formations, cultural adaptations, sociocultural adjustments, and linguistic challenges (Awokoya, 2012; Kumi-Yeboah, & Smith, 2016; Okpalaoka, 2011; Rong & Preissle, 2009; Ukpokodu, 2013). However, there is a dearth of research about how Ghanaian immigrant youth integrate the experiences surrounding the multiple worlds of families, schools, peers, and teachers in their daily lives to affect academic achievement. With the rising population of immigrant students including African immigrant youth in large metropolitan cities of U.S., there is a need for teachers and educators to understand the factors that promote these immigrant youths' ability to cross boundaries of two worlds to negotiate and connect to adjustment and adaptation in school. I propose to utilize this study to identify the factors that enable these immigrant learners to connect and manage their two worlds to affect academic success in U.S. schools, due the fact that statistics in the U.S. educational system tend to classify Ghanaian-born immigrant students under the broader umbrella of Black students in the U.S. educational systems (De Walt, 2011). Thus, this article examines the factors that helped Ghanaian-born immigrant students to strategize how to combine their multiple worlds of families, schools, teachers, and peers to affect academic engagement within contexts of school and classroom situations. A secondary goal was to explore teachers' perception and understanding of the sociocultural and past educational experiences of immigrant students from Ghana. A related goal was to test the conceptual model of the students' multiple worlds, paying particular attention to the factors that help Ghanaian-born immigrant students' to counterbalance the two worlds with peers, teachers, families, and school environment as it relates to their academic outcomes.

The study utilizes the students' multiple worlds model developed by Phelan et al. (1998) to frame the ways in which Ghanaian-born immigrant students describe how they navigate multiple worlds between their school, teachers, family, and peers to achieve academic success. The term *world* in this study is used to refer to students' cultural knowledge and behavior within the cultural boundaries of families, peers, and schools as people's worlds are shaped by values, beliefs, expectations, actions, and emotional responses. *Boundaries* and *borders* refer to perceived lines or barriers

between worlds (Phelan et al., 1998). In keeping with this purpose, we focused on the following research questions:

1. How do Ghanaian-born immigrant students describe affordances that helped them to negotiate and manage their multiple worlds experiences as they interacted with peers, teachers, and families in their cross-cultural transition to the U.S. educational system?
2. How do Ghanaian-born immigrant students describe the barriers that affected their multiple worlds experiences as they interacted with peers, teachers, and families in their cross-cultural transition to the U.S. educational system?
3. How do teachers describe the barriers and affordances in Ghanaian-born immigrant students' multiple worlds experiences as they interacted with peers, teachers, and families in their cross-cultural transition to the U.S. educational system?
4. How do these affordances and barriers in Ghanaian-born immigrant students' multiple worlds experiences affect their academic achievement in their cross-cultural transition to the U.S. educational system?

BACKGROUND

GHANAIAN IMMIGRANT POPULATION IN THE UNITED STATES

As previously discussed, the primary purpose of this study was to examine the factors that helped Ghanaian immigrant high school students in their cross-cultural transition across the multiple worlds of school, family, and peers. To date, children of immigrants represent approximately 25% of all children in the United States, and by 2050, immigrant children are expected to represent one third of the United States' 100 million children (Tienda & Haskins, 2011; United States Census Bureau, 2014b). In the midst of this increase, the African immigrant population has been identified among the fastest growing immigrant populations in the United States. For example, between 1980 and 2009, the population of African-born immigrants grew from approximately 200,000 to 1,606,914 (McCabe, 2011; United States Census Bureau, 2014a).

Among the African immigrants in the U.S., Nigeria has the largest population at 327,000; followed by Ethiopia at 220,000; Egypt at 195,000; and Ghana at 155,000 (first generation). Western Africa was the leading region for African immigrants, with 542,032 individuals representing 36.3%, followed by Eastern Africa with 428,298 (28.4%), Northern Africa with 263,536 (17.7%), Southern Africa with 85,145 (5.7%), Central Africa with

65,457 (4.4%), and others with 122,217 (7.5%) (United States Census Bureau, 2014a). The push factors for most Ghanaian immigrants to the U.S. include socioeconomic hardships, and the pull factors are family reunification, educational opportunities, economic prosperity, and the introduction of the Diversity Visa (DV) Program (Konadu-Agyemang & Takyi, 2006, p. 3). Ghana is a country of about 25 million people located on the west coast of Africa. English is the official language, and several other native languages are spoken. The educational system in Ghana is based on the British traditional educational system, where the curriculum involves little student participation in the classroom (teacher-centered learning). Students depend on teachers for knowledge and respond in rote memorization. Currently, there are more than 240,000 Ghanaian immigrants (first and second generation) in the U.S., residing mostly in large metropolitan cities (United States Census Bureau, 2014b). The educational attainment of Ghanaians in the U.S. is largely similar to that of the general U.S. population, with more than 12% having a master's degree or PhD, or an advanced professional degree, compared to 11% of the U.S. general population (United States Census Bureau, 2014a). It must be noted that Ghanaian immigrants come from different regions of Ghana with different socioeconomic, social, religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. However, they go through the same educational experiences as one homogenous group.

According to Ogbu (1994), a major challenge facing African immigrants in school is that the cultural and school environments are different from those of their native cultures. Besides, their children have to confront preexisting racial realities and assumptions that they must successfully address in order to facilitate their integration into mainstream society. Ogbu (2003) contends that African immigrants undergo several complex transitional paradigms as they move and adapt from one social setting to another and are shaped by interrelationships with their multiple worlds (families, peers, teachers, and school), which affect the way they interact with, negotiate, and construct their academic and social realities in U.S. schools realities.

A study by Williams, Neighbors, and Jackson (2003) concluded that racism and ethnic discrimination undermine students' adjustment and diminish psychological functioning, self-esteem, and physical health. Studies by De Walt (2011) and Ukpokodu (1996) found that African immigrant students are subsumed within the "Black" category of disaggregated U.S. test data. Oblivious to their backgrounds, teachers, educators, and policy makers in U.S. educational systems tend to classify them as African Americans. This occurs despite the culturally diverse and unique educational experiences that Ghanaian-born immigrant students from Africa bring to American schools.

Chhuon et al. (2010) conducted a qualitative study about the multiple worlds of successful Cambodian American students. Results found that family obligations played an important role as a coherent factor in the schooling experiences of Cambodian American students. In another study conducted by Obiakor and Afoláyan (2007) about African-born immigrant youths, social experiences in U.S. schools concluded that foreign-born Black males faced multidimensional problems. They include xenophobia, discriminatory generalization, prejudicial perceptions, and overall adjustment in schools they attend. The study confirmed that the school environments do not prepare teachers and train them in multicultural awareness and counseling needs of African-born immigrant students, whose cultural experiences are shared by African Americans and other minorities of color.

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS OF IMMIGRANT YOUTH

Research studies (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Zhou & Bankston, 1998) revealed that successful adaptations among immigrant youths appear to be connected to the quality of relationships that they forge in their school settings. Undoubtedly, providing social support in school is essential to the academic adaptation of immigrant students (Wentzel, 1999). Social relations provide a variety of protective functions including a sense of belonging, emotional support, tangible assistance and information, cognitive guidance, and positive feedback (Sarason, Sarason, & Pierce, 1990). Research studies show that students' relationships in school play a significant role in promoting socially competent behavior in the classroom and fostering academic engagement and achievement among immigrant students (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004); relationships with peers provide emotional supports and the development of significant psychosocial competencies in youth (Selman, Levitt, & Schultz, 1997).

Relatedly, peer relationships have been linked to students' ability to establish norms of academic engagement (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Peers clearly can support academic engagement by clarifying readings, helping one another complete homework assignments, and exchanging information. However, because immigrant youth often attend highly segregated, deep-poverty schools (Orfield, 1998), they may have limited access to networks of knowledgeable peers. In addition, connections with teachers, counselors, coaches, and other supportive adults in school are important in the academic and social adaptation of students in general (Hamilton & Darling, 1996; Reddy, Rhodes, & Mulhall, 2003) and appear to be particularly important to immigrant adolescents (Roffman, Suárez-Orozco, & Rhodes, 2003). Further, a study conducted by Traoré and Lukens (2006) concluded that the media have made Africa unattractive to students and

teachers in the U.S. by denying them “access to positive information about Africa and Africans” (p. 247).

According to Rhodes (2002), immigrant students undergo profound shifts in their sense of self and struggle to negotiate and connect to the changing circumstances in relationships with their parents and peers. Research shows that the majority of voluntary immigrants believe that the host country will provide viable opportunities for their social advancement and they work hard to facilitate upward mobility for themselves and their children to achieve better academic excellence. Studies by (Garcia Coll & Marks, 2012; Portes & Rivas, 2011) showed that immigrant parents regard education to be the best pathway to upward mobility; these concepts one way or another influence immigrant parents’ socialization practices leading to their positive aspirations for their children’s academic success (Kao & Tienda, 1998; Roubeni, Haene, Keatley, Shah, & Rasmussen, 2015). Several studies (Cai, Moyer, & Wang, 1997; Pena, 2000; Roubeni et al., 2015) confirmed that immigrant parents who are involved in their children’s schooling are inclined to develop higher educational aspirations for them. Similarly, another study by Farah (2015) investigated Somali parents’ perceptions about their understanding and responsibilities in the education of their children. Results showed that Somali parents value education and provided support for their children’s education. Other studies (Alba & Nee, 2003; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001) found that parents’ educational levels and socioeconomic status as well as cultural beliefs and expectations are important predictors of immigrant students’ academic engagement (Ogbu, 2003; Trueba, 1988).

In sum, the above studies illustrate the educational experiences of immigrant youth, including those from Ghana, attending U.S. school. However, there is a noticeable dearth of knowledge in the literature about the factors that help Ghanaian-born immigrant students to cross boundaries of two worlds as they connect and negotiate with teachers, peers, and families paying particular attention to how it influences their academic success. Rong and Brown’s (2002) study concluded that “lack of research on Black immigrants denies the American public and policy makers opportunities to explore the many urgent and intriguing issues regarding them, therefore denying the public insight into the special needs of these immigrants that have been neglected” (p. 249). To address this gap in the literature, this study offers the best opportunities for Ghanaian-born immigrant students to explain their educational and social experiences as related to the factors that help them to combine multiple worlds of families, teachers, and peers in their daily lives to affect academic achievement. It also draws on teachers’ perceptions and understanding of the sociocultural and past educational experiences of these learners.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is framed using the students' multiple worlds model developed by Phelan et al. (1998). According to Phelan et al., the *world* is the "cultural knowledge and behavior found within the boundaries of students' particular families, peer groups, and school.... Each world contains values and beliefs, expectations, actions, and emotional responses familiar to insiders" (p. 53). The model is significant to this study because it shows that adjustment depends on students' successful transition through different everyday worlds of school, family, and peers. Phelan et al. explained these *worlds* as separated by borders consisting of sociocultural, socioeconomic, psychosocial, linguistic, gender, and structural characteristics. These borders overlap with one another but theoretically maintain specific characteristics. All students in one way or another will have to transition between their home, school, and peer cultures. However, ethnic minority and immigrant children, particularly those from sub-Saharan Africa, face difficult transitions between these settings. Incongruence between these groups' backgrounds and mainstream society often manifests in unequally dense borders in their pursuit of academic success; some students are more successful in crossing two boundaries than others. The multiple worlds model includes a typology that describes six distinct patterns of students' movement through their multiple contexts. Phelan et al. developed four adaptation patterns that students apply as they migrate across social settings between school, family, and peer worlds.

Type I (Congruent Worlds/Smooth Transitions) students experience smooth transitions across boundaries in which values and ways of life occur together. They experience balance between their own values and the goals and expectations of parents, peers, and teachers. They received message about success in their multiple worlds by their teachers, families, and peer groups (characterized as White American students from middle- to upper-class backgrounds). Students in Type II (Different Worlds/Border Crossings Managed) are able to adapt and adjust to mainstream patterns and return to home and community with their peers. These students who attempted such identities risk criticism from those in the disparate worlds who expect adherence to the conventions of each (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Type III, IV, and V (Different Worlds/Border Crossings Difficult), students define their family, peer, and school worlds as distinct. They occupy different worlds and find crossing borders difficult; the most vulnerable group experience themselves as occupying different worlds and find the borders between them impenetrable. In this case, parents' values and beliefs are continually in conflict with those of their children, making adaptation to their home world difficult and conflicting. Type VI describes

students whose worlds have different values but who receive support and appreciation as they transition from one social setting to another (two worlds). Notwithstanding the fact that their worlds are different, Type VI students identify teachers, family, and peers as supportive of these differences (see Phelan et al., 1998, for a description).

Not much research has been done specifically exploring how Ghanaian-born immigrant students strategize to combine their multiple worlds of families, schools, peers, and teachers to affect academic engagement within contexts of school and classroom situations. The students' multiple worlds model provides a lens through which to understand how Ghanaian immigrant youth attending school in the U.S. perceive borders differently and the varied adaptation strategies they use as they move from one cultural setting to another as related to their academic success.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

This qualitative study took place over a period of 2 years (February 2014 to February 2016). I collected data from a purposive sample of 40 Ghanaian-born immigrant students and 10 certified teachers. A diverse sample of Ghanaian-born immigrant students was recruited from the Atlanta, Georgia, metropolitan area, which has a large Ghanaian immigrant population. Students' ages ranged from 16 to 19 years at the time of the study. The average number of years students had lived and attended school in the U.S. was 3.5 years at the time of data collection. Students were originally from Ghana ($N = 40$) and attended two separate high schools. Primary demographic information of participants was collected at the completion of the interview. Students were 57.5% ($n = 23$) male and 42.5% ($n = 17$) female. Students were in 10th grade (8 students), 11th grade (20 students), and 12th grade (12 students). The first high school is an urban school that is 78% African American, 8% White, 10% Hispanic, 3% Asian, and 1% Native American or Pacific Islander. The second is a suburban high school that is 67% White, 15% Asian, 11% Hispanic, 4% African American, 2% Native American, and 1% other (Multiracial). The school districts provide workshops for teachers on teaching second language learners and opportunities for teachers and administrators to take courses on teaching English language learners with/without disabilities. Both school districts provide professional development workshops for teachers about teaching immigrant students. However, they offer little or no training about teaching immigrant students from Africa. The school districts offer few orientation programs for immigrant students to help them transition to their new

school environment. The only viable programs to help immigrant students are intensive English and reading classes to help accelerate their reading and writing in English. The school districts have few or no administrative and teacher support systems to deal with the challenges of supporting immigrant students from Africa. All teacher participants ($n = 10$) selected to participate in the study held valid subject-area credentials and had at least 5 years of teaching experience. They also had extensive experience teaching mainstream and English as a second language (ESL) students, including a large number of immigrant students. Teachers represented a range of ethnoracial backgrounds and lived experiences. Of the 10 teachers, 4 were White, 2 were African American, 3 were Latino/a, and 1 was Biracial. None of the teachers had lived and taught abroad or as residents of another country.

RECRUITMENT AND DATA COLLECTION

I recruited the 40 Ghanaian-born immigrant students and 10 certified teachers. After Institutional Review Board approval, I contacted two school districts and representatives of Ghanaian associations in the Atlanta metropolitan area about the purpose of the study and assured selected students and teachers of their confidentiality and identity (names, age, ethnicity, religion, residence, and immigration status for students). Overall, 40 parents consented to have their children participate in the study and 10 certified teachers agreed to participate in the study. I also obtained parental consent and student assent before the interviews. I chose students and teachers via stratified random sampling (36%). The two high schools also provided a list of all immigrant students stratified by country of origin, grade, age, gender, race, and number of years resident in the U.S. I used a snowball sampling method where consenting participants informed and directed me to additional participants interested in the study. I contacted students and invited them to an information session and explained the purpose and significance of the study. This snowball sample accounts for 24% of the student sample and two purposive samples account for 40%. I chose student participants who shared demographic characteristics. All students were born in Ghana and migrated to live with their parents or guardians, one or both of whom were from Ghana. They also differed across life course experiences. However, such purposeful variety enabled wide theory building about life experiences and managing two worlds (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

INTERVIEWS

I conducted two in-depth semistructured interviews with each of the 40 students to gain deeper knowledge of Ghanaian-born immigrant students' cross-cultural educational experiences and the adaptation strategies they used to cross boundaries of cultures and school environment as related to their academic achievement. I scheduled these interviews based on researchers' and participants' availability, including parents' time schedules, on the designated days for data collection. The interviews lasted 60 to 120 minutes each and were held primarily after school hours in students' homes on weekends (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Interview questions consisted of open-ended questions relating to students' educational backgrounds, explanations for academic success, and teachers' knowledge and awareness of Ghanaian-born immigrant students. Interview questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2011) allowed students to compare previous schooling experiences with those of their new schools and identify processes through which they adapted or transitioned to the new school/classroom environment. Student participants were also asked the following questions: First, to identify the role their parents, peers, and teachers play as they adjusted and negotiated across different cultural contexts; perspectives on their multiple worlds experiences. Second, their interactions with new teachers, peers, and school environments; coping strategies they used to adapt and adjust to the new school; and relations with peers and teachers in the classroom. Other questions included the following: "What kind of things help you to achieve high academic excellence in school?"; "What type of things made it difficult or barriers to achieve better academic performance in school?"; "In school what did your parents expect from you academically?"; "What is your relationship with your teachers and friends in school?"; and "In what ways will you describe the school environment as related to your academic achievement?" (Chhuon et al., 2010). The questions further describe strategies used to manage boundary crossings successfully, the challenges faced in transitioning to the new school. I also had students fill out demographic information (e.g., number of years resident in the U.S, self-identification, and parental education). In addition to these questions, I used relevant probes and follow-up questions to guide subjects identified as most significant to participants (see Appendix A for student interview questions). This helped to obtain insight into participants' interpretations of factors that help them to manage transitions as reflected in their two cultural and educational worlds.

TEACHER INTERVIEWS

I interviewed teachers about their perceptions of students' educational and sociocultural backgrounds, how they connect and negotiate with students to help them manage their multiple worlds to achieve better academic success. Further, interview questions consisted of teachers' interaction with student participants in the classroom, social and peer-group behavior, and family backgrounds. They also addressed teachers' knowledge and awareness of Ghanaian-born immigrant students' past educational experiences, challenges they face in teaching these immigrant learners, and what they do to help them succeed academically (see Appendix B for teacher interview questions). Teacher interviews lasted 60 to 90 minutes and took place on the school campus and after school hours in their classrooms. All interviews were conducted in the English language and audio-taped; participants were given pseudonyms to protect and ensure their identity and confidentiality.

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

I obtained a total of 2.5 hours of focus group interview recordings with 40 Ghanaian-born immigrant students. Focus group interviews allowed the researcher to gain insight into students' shared understandings in identifying the factors that facilitate their cross-cultural educational experiences as related to academic achievement. They also afforded the researcher the opportunity to ask students to share adaptation strategies that enable them to manage cross-cultural educational experiences successfully and the difficulties in the crossing as they relate to peers, parents, and teachers. I also interviewed teacher participants in groups (5 in each group) from two schools about their experiences teaching Ghanaian-born immigrant students, specifically, cultural and educational background knowledge of participants, challenges students faced in the classroom, and intervention programs they adopted to help student participants balance multiple worlds as related to their academic outcomes. Focus group interviews allowed the researcher to generate opportunities to collect data from the group interactions concerning the research topic and allowed for clarification, follow-up questions, and further probing (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Overall, I conducted face-to-face interviews with students and teachers, and focus groups with all participants within a period of 2 years. The purpose of the focus group interview was to validate first analyses of the interview transcripts.

AUTHOR'S POSITIONALITY

As a researcher and an immigrant, I was aware of my cultural and past educational experiences, which are similar to those of most of the students. I also considered how my individual social constructions, ethnic identities, and past educational experiences as an immigrant student and teacher in the U.S. influenced the study. To reduce bias and build on the believability and consistency of the data, I took special care in the analysis of the data and sought the assistance of two researchers whose experiences and lenses were different from mine to proofread data analysis. I took into account the associated epistemological view underlying the interpretive perspectives that understanding of the multiple worlds of these immigrant learners is influenced by the knowledge and background of the investigator, and the subjective way in which he or she perceives the world and the phenomenon being investigated (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). I recognized my positionality and worked toward representative emic and etic interpretations of students' cross-cultural educational experiences as related to their academic achievements (Milner, 2007).

DATA ANALYSIS

Considering the extensive nature of the qualitative data I collected (in-depth semistructured and focus group interviews), I needed an approach that would help capture patterns and different themes across the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I used constant comparative analysis to analyze Ghanaian-born immigrant students' and teachers' stories, to code them, and develop the themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Data analysis followed the three stages of constant comparative analysis coding: open, axial, and selective coding. I used the theoretical framework of this study, the students' multiple worlds model, to guide the coding procedure, attending to how Ghanaian-born immigrant students connect, manage, and negotiate to cross borders of their worlds to successfully transition through different everyday worlds of school, family, and peers to achieve academic success.

In the first phase of analysis, I listened to, read, and reread each interview transcript multiple times in order to develop a holistic sense of the data and avoid focusing on quotations out of context. (This process involved careful, thorough, and repeated readings of interview transcripts with attention to field notes.) In open coding, I identified themes and patterns by breaking up the data into discrete "incidents" coded into categories, where I systematically engaged in constant comparative analysis with every transcript to locate patterns for each interview (Lincoln & Guba,

2000; Strauss, 1987). Each transcript file was coded using Atlas.ti software 2014 version. Analysis of the data began with the transcribing and coding process (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), in which I searched for patterns that explore the factors associated about how immigrant students from Ghana strategize and negotiate their multiple worlds of families, schools, and peers to affect academic engagement within contexts of school and classroom situations. Through this deductive method, I identified and developed initial categories: “cross-cultural educational experiences,” “relationships with peers and teachers,” “managing transitions to cross-cultural transitions,” “smooth transitions,” “managing to transition to new classroom procedures,” “challenges in the classroom,” “educational opportunities,” “managing different worlds perspectives and school environment,” “social integration and cross-cultural challenges,” “dealing with diverse student groups,” “adapting to new teaching styles and teachers,” “manage and adapt to new school curriculum,” “academic expectations by teachers,” “parental involvement,” and “reflection of past school experiences.” As I completed the coding process, I compared newly coded data with preexisting codes, so that similar information would be consistently labeled with the accurate code (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

In the axial coding stage, I identified commonly occurring codes across transcripts and assembled them into the central categories of the factors that help participants to manage their multiple worlds of families, peers, and school: “ability to achieve better academic success,” “resilience to overcome the challenges,” “perseverance and hope,” “aspirations,” “managing two worlds in new society,” “hard work,” “cross-cultural boundaries and new opportunities,” “dealing with new classroom and school procedures,” “transition with classmates and friends in school,” “managing two worlds with parents,” “teacher expectations,” and “social integration challenges.” During this stage, I reexamined codes to identify whether they were categories or subcategories. I used the axial coding procedure to eliminate or disconfirm categories and integrate them into larger categories (Maxwell, 2013). I compared interview transcripts across students to develop concepts and iteratively compare specific units in the data. I searched for patterns, themes, and commonalities to establish core categories for each interview, as suggested by LeCompte and Schensul (1999). For example, the code of “ability to achieve better academic success” was subsumed into a larger category of “desire to succeed in school” because the willingness on the part of student participants to succeed in school was part of the multiple worlds experience. I examined identified core categories via case analyses to identify larger themes across the 50 participants (students and teachers). Finally, in selective coding, I integrated data among categories. To do this, I created definitions for codes and applied them systematically

to interview transcripts in the form of data chart (see Table 1 for a data chart excerpt). I then wrote memos to connect data that reflected the factors associated with participants' ability to strategize how to combine multiple worlds of families, schools, peers, and teachers to affect academic engagement within contexts of school and classroom situations. I refined and organized themes into categories from which larger sets of themes emerged (Boyatzis, 1998). I reexamined the data for any discrepancies to ensure trustworthiness.

Table 1. Summary of the Key Themes

Code	Representative quotations	Themes
Hope and resilience	Student Respondent	Desire to Succeed in School
	Yeah! I do encounter lots of challenges as an immigrant student. For example, I have to learn new school life and ways of understanding classroom procedures, make friends, and participate more in school activities. I had to deal with the problem of finding ways to succeed in school. I know I have to work hard to succeed in school. I learn from others [students] about what I need to do to help me succeed in school. I don't give up on the challenges, until I succeed in what I want to achieve. I work hard to overcome all the challenges. I think my background reminds me to work extra hard. I believe that education is the best way for me to achieve success in America.	
	Student Respondent	
	Despite the challenges I face in school and neighborhood I live, I have the willingness to study hard and succeed in school. I do reflect on my past and use it as a motivation to do better in school.	
	Teacher Respondent	
	They are unique group of immigrant students that no one or talking or writing about them. Most of them are highly motivated to work hard to succeed with good educational achievement in school. Based on my observation and experience teaching, most African-born immigrant kids are resilient in what they do here [school]. Interesting group of immigrant students to teach ... never give up on their effort to achieve success in school.	

Table 1. Summary of the Key Themes (continued)

Code	Representative quotations	Themes
Dealing with new teachers in school	<p style="text-align: center;">Student Respondent</p> <p>I get support from some of my teachers. For example, my science and English teachers guided me about the school and classroom procedures and expectations in the new school environment. Other teachers also provided me with information on what to do as a new student.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Student Respondent</p> <p>Since moving to the United States, I have very cordial relationships with most of my teachers in school. My relationships with teachers have given hope and encouragement because I have the opportunity to ask questions about things I have no knowledge. Some teachers also provided one-on-one teaching to help me understand topics we do in class, especially in the English language and science.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Teacher Respondent</p> <p>Yeah... at first I didn't have much knowledge about past the educational and social backgrounds of immigrant students from Africa in this case Ghana. I must say that initially, it was difficult to establish relations with them, looking at the vast differences in culture, school procedures and other stuffs. I had to learn about them to understand the educational, social, and cultural backgrounds to help me know them especially in providing advice or counseling to them. With time, I have developed cordial relations with them where I provide support with regards to information, guidance about what to expect from teachers and new school.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Teacher Respondent</p> <p>Unfortunately lots of teachers and students think they are African American students here in school unless you talk to them then you realize that they are immigrant students from Africa. A unique immigrant group of students because they have different cultural, social and educational experiences and less is talked about them in our school system. I believe, we teachers must understand the past educational and cultural experiences of immigrant youth from Africa [in this case those from Ghana] to help build trusting teacher – student relationship in school. Those I had opportunity to teach them are very determined to work hard to achieve success in school.</p>	Managing Two Worlds and Relationship with Teachers

Code	Representative quotations	Themes
Classmates and friends in school	<p style="text-align: center;">Student Respondent</p> <p>I have classmates who will make derogatory comments about Africa. Basically to make fun of me about my back-grounds. They have no knowledge about Ghana or African and ask many negative questions about where I come from and why Africans or Ghanaians are so dark and other stuffs like that. It makes it very tough for me to make friends with such students.</p>	<p>Managing Two Worlds with Peers</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Student Respondent</p> <p>I was surprised about the way most African American peers in my class treat me ... they call me names and make negative comments about Ghana and Africa. I'm very shocked because we look very much alike in terms of color or race but some of them don't want to be associated with Africa. We may look similar by race but are totally different regarding of culture. It's like you are a new student in a school and the very people who share same race are the ones who make fun of how you look, your culture, and say derogatory comments to you in school like 'monkey boy' why are Africans are so ugly and other negative comments like that makes me feel unhappy in school. Very hurtful environment to be as an immigrant student from Ghana.</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;">Student Respondent</p> <p>Interaction with my classmates is good at the moment. I have friends who support me on the way to adapt to a new school environment. They show me things such as what to expect from teachers, deal with the challenges I face, and how to manage relationships with other students. I have been successfully so far in school because of the support I get from some of my classmates.</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;">Student Respondent</p> <p>I do have few friends in school that I learn from them. Unfortunately, most of them are also immigrant students from other countries and are like me with less experience. Sometimes too, most students will not talk or engage in conversations with you probably because you look different. As an immigrant student, I have to manage ways better ways of dealing with classmates as well as understand the new culture here [U.S.].</p>	

Table 1. Summary of the Key Themes (continued)

Code	Representative quotations	Themes
Classmates and friends in school	<p style="text-align: center;">Teacher Respondent</p> <p>There are several times that I have had cordial relations with my classmates, especially with other immigrant students. We share our stories and experiences together and try to find ways to manage and overcome the challenges or problems we face in school. It has not been easy managing two worlds combining my past educational and cultural experiences with the new one [U.S] to achieve educational success. However, there are situations where some students will refuse to be in the same group with me because I speak English with an accent and from African [Ghana]. It became worse during the time when Ebola virus epidemic in West Africa. Most of my peers in school felt that if you are from West Africa, then you can have the disease. These are some of the reasons why I have few interactions with my classmates.</p>	<p>Managing Two Worlds with Peers</p>
Cross-cultural boundaries and new opportunities Educational opportunities	<p style="text-align: center;">Student Respondent</p> <p>There are more educational resources in the United States than back home [Ghana]. I have access to materials that serves as an additional tool to help me understand what we do in class and also to complete homework or individual project or assignment. I must say that reading books both in print and in online helped me to understand cultures in school and the neighborhood I live.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Student Respondent</p> <p>There are more opportunities for immigrant students here [U.S]. I receive the support from teachers, counselors, and peers to help me overcome the challenges as an immigrant student. I was used to limited resources and opportunities, so I want to take advantage of it, which has helped me to succeed in school.</p>	<p>Crossing Boundaries with Educational Opportunities</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Teacher Respondent</p> <p>Yes, just like other immigrant students, Ghanaian immigrant students take advantage of the resources available to them to learn more about the cultures in the U.S. to understand what they need to do to cross boundaries of school and cultures to succeed academically.</p>	

Code	Representative quotations	Themes
Dealing with new classroom procedures	<p style="text-align: center;">Student Respondent</p> <p>The classroom environment is different. For example, teachers teach different and procedures are different to me. The open discussion opportunities where student becomes part of the learning process has been good for me. Slowly I have learned to contribute and participate in class discussions. But, sometimes there are challenges in the classroom. For example, I feel very lonely in class because classmates do not talk to you for many reasons I believe it is because of my background or being different culturally. It does affect my confidence and feel like you people don't want you. I have to manage these situations to be successful in school. It becomes difficult at times to handle the situation.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Teacher Respondent</p> <p>Initially, immigrant students from Ghana [Africa] struggled to adjust and adapt to teaching styles and classroom procedures especially how to participate and make contributions during discussions or presentations in class. I had to guide them about classroom procedure and how to make contributions in class. It took time for them to acclimatize or adapt to the new classroom environment. I must say it was difficult for them to manage through these school experiences with their teachers, peers, and family.</p>	Managing Two Worlds in the Classroom
Adapting to new school environment	<p style="text-align: center;">Student Respondent</p> <p>I manage my new classroom experience through interacting with teachers and peers especially during class discussion on world affairs or current events ... these are topics that allow me to share my background with peers to appreciate the value of other cultures. Class discussions, class projects, and presentations helped me to learn about expectations and what to do in school here [U.S.] faster.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Teacher Respondent</p> <p>Immigrant students from Ghana [Africa] experience challenges transitioning to a new school environment. Their situation is different from other immigrant youth because most teachers see them as African American students. It's difficult to notice the challenges they go through as immigrant students. Yes, there are several occasions where native-born students make derogatory comments to them. I have made several efforts to counsel them on ways to overcome these challenges. Other difficulties are that some teachers do not understand the cultural and past educational backgrounds of these students. Another issue is that students and teachers alike see them as African American students, so their challenges or problems they face are not known much as compared to other immigrant students.</p>	Managing Transitions in School

Table 1. Summary of the Key Themes (continued)

Code	Representative quotations	Themes
Adapting to new school environment	<p style="text-align: center;">Student Respondent</p> <p>It was not easy for me transitioning to American to a new school in the U.S. I had no friends and received little help in school. My case was unique because I'm an immigrant who is a Muslim, female and black African. I say this because the media has not been friendly to me regarding the way they report news from that continent. A difficult situation for me to transition because back in Ghana, I attended an Islamic high school where Islamic religious values were part of the school. I had to learn to adapt and adjust to the cultures in my new school. Here [U.S.] we don't practice any religious activities in school. In most cases, my teachers and some students do not also understand my personality as a Ghanaian or African with a Muslim background.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Student Respondent</p> <p>The perception here [U.S.] is that African or in this case, Ghana is full of poor people with no schools, hospitals and we live on trees there. People are ignorant about the continent of Africa and always relate what they see on TV to me in schools. They even think Africa is one country and we speak one common language. There is no respect for me I guess because I'm Ghanaian [African] based on my experiences. Having to deal with all these emotional challenges makes it hard to adapt to new changes in the school.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Teacher Respondent</p> <p>There are instances where I have had several complaints from Ghanaian-born or other African immigrant students about racism, discrimination, and unfair treatment by their peers in school.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Student Respondent</p> <p>It's like every day; I have to explain myself ... cultural educational and other things to teachers and classmates. It's difficult for me always explaining myself to my teachers to get help.</p>	Managing Transitions in School

Code	Representative quotations	Themes
Parental involvement	Student Respondent I have all the support from my parents. They provide me with all the resources that I need to help me succeed in school. I received the best advice from my mother who provided me with all the information I needed that helped me to transition with fewer problems.	The Role of Parents
	Student Respondent Yeah! I get all the support I need from my parents. For example, my dad provided me with all the educational resources to help me succeed in school. He also helps me at home with my schoolwork. My father gave me information about all that I need to do as an immigrant student from Africa. For example, teacher expectations, behavior at school, how to make friends, and manage transitions and school work.	
	Student Respondent I have great parents who are very supportive, but we have differences when it comes to maintaining cultural values and other stuff. They want me to practice Ghanaian culture at home and American culture in school. This has been a difficult situation for me on how to handle two cultures and succeed in school.	
	Student Respondent I appreciate the support my parents provide for me, however, they don't understand what I have to go through to succeed. I want them to be aware of the struggles I go through in school... discrimination, racism, loneliness, and misunderstandings of what it takes to be an immigrant student from Ghana – Africa in U.S. school. My parents want me to combine two cultures and practice them separately.	

Further, data were triangulated with the use of multiple interview formats (e.g., interviews with students, teachers, and focus group with students and teachers), the use of peer coders to review each transcript, and the use of the hermeneutic approach as a tool for understanding the interview transcripts (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). These multiple and different sources were used to cross-check and corroborate evidence. I used the member check process to establish trustworthiness, presenting my findings to participants (students and teachers) to confirm or disconfirm my interpretation of the data (Merriam, 2009). I employed the services of two peer reviewers who further examined my analysis of the data and questioned the methods and interpretation, thereby providing an external check of our research process, visible in accounts of our debriefing sessions (Merriam, 2009). Following this process, I consolidated the codes and categories from reviewers with my own coding and categorization of the existing data. I then generated categories by aggregating similar

codes across subgroups of participants. When I was certain that my categorization process was final, I used interrelationships among categories to identify broader themes emerging from the data. Additionally, drawing from Seidman's (2012) suggestions, I used cross-referencing of interviews and memos to strengthen the reliability of my findings. For example, individual and focus group interviews helped to increase the reliability because students and teachers were able to reaffirm their responses or build on earlier statements and provided participants more time to reflect on their statements and to cross-check them (Seidman, 2012). Finally, I maintained a meticulous record of the process of the study with an audit trail that allowed for retracing the steps that led to the conclusions, which, in addition to the raw data, included evidence of how data were reduced, analyzed, and synthesized, and ongoing thoughts and reactions.

FINDINGS

For Ghanaian-born immigrant students in U.S. schools, adjusting and adapting to a new school is seen as harmonious and complex, even as the daily classroom and school experience changes, as they interact with peers, teachers, and a new school environment. To be able to strategize to connect and manage the two worlds, they need the support from teachers, the community, and parents to succeed in their pursuit of academic achievement. The themes that emerged from the analysis of interview transcripts have been summarized into the following distinct categories and emergent themes: desire to succeed in school, managing two worlds and relationships with teachers and peers in the classroom, crossing boundaries with educational opportunities, managing transitions in school, and the role of parents.

DESIRE TO SUCCEED IN SCHOOL

Students indicated their desire to work hard to succeed in school despite the challenges faced. Manuela, a student commented:

Yeah ... despite, the challenges of learning to adjust and adapt to new school environment. You know what, I am willing to succeed in this country. Crossing from one culture to another has not been easy for me but I'm determined to work hard and overcome the difficulties. I believe my determination will help me do it. I think having knowledge of two worlds helped me to understand the importance of working hard to achieve my goal in life, which is better education in the U.S. I see education as a means to succeed and a balance of multiple worlds helps to understand the difficulties and ways to conquer it and succeed.

Another student, called Gabriella, described that she has worked hard to meet her aspirations of getting excellent grades in school. She stated: “I manage two worlds to survive and have to work hard to get good grades at school, it is not easy but you have to be persistent in your effort to succeed in school as an immigrant from Africa.” Interviews suggest that students faced challenges in understanding the social and educational paradigms in school, making it difficult for them to cross from one culture to another. An important characteristic that binds Manuela and Gabriel’s world together is that they are determined to move across boundaries of different cultures and educational experiences through resilience to overcome numerous challenges; they are determined to work hard to overcome the difficulties in adjusting and adapting to the changes and succeed in school. The resilience to succeed in a new school environment played an important part to help foster their cross-cultural learning experiences. A teacher noted:

Students from Ghana – West Africa work so hard to overcome the challenges they face. I know they have challenges regarding transition to new school and home environment. They have the desire to succeed in school. I like their willingness to achieve better grades despite the many problems they encounter as immigrant youth.

Participants reiterated that the desire to succeed in their new world allowed them to work hard to overcome the challenges. Students also discussed that having the ability to navigate and understand multiple worlds helped them to develop resilience to overcome the challenges, which served as a factor that helped them to understand the cross-cultural educational experiences.

MANAGING TWO WORLDS AND RELATIONSHIPS WITH TEACHERS

Salifu described having positive relationships with his teachers. He explained that his teachers helped him to understand ways of navigating the social, cultural, and educational environment in school. Students disclosed that their teachers helped them to understand expectations from teachers, and participate in extracurricular activities (e.g., sports). Studies show that students’ connections with teachers, counselors, and other supportive adults in school are important in the academic and social adaptation of students in general (Reddy, Rhodes, & Mulhall, 2003) and appear to be particularly important to immigrant adolescents (Roffman, Suárez-Orozco, & Rhodes, 2003). Emmanuel spoke in detail about teachers:

Teachers provided me support on ways to balance and navigate through school to survive. My teachers helped me to balance this transitional journey on how to approach issues and guidance. They provided all the support I needed to function in new school. I like the fact that some teachers allow us to do discussions and make presentations in class—that's what made me to connect and appreciate some parts of my new schools' culture and develop confidence to ... adjust to the changes.

Students stated that positive relationships with teachers at school provided them with the necessary strategies for success such as hard work and academic achievement. Although students complained of having differences with some of their teachers, their desire to succeed was framed as a long-term goal allowing them to overlook difficult classroom experiences. Students believed that as Ghanaian-born immigrant students with unique cultural, ethnolinguistic and past educational experiences, teachers also learned from them, a perception that was supported by the teachers' statements. For example, Emily, an English teacher, commented:

It was difficult for me at first to understand these students [Ghanaian-born immigrant students] because of their unique educational and cultural backgrounds, so I had to provide extra support to guide them throughout the transitional periods such as what to expect from other teachers, peers, school procedures, classroom routines, and how to balance their cultures with new ones. They had multiple views of what they do and had to support them to balance these views. They are so different and hope all teachers learn about or become aware of past educational backgrounds. It's good to share knowledge of cultures with them.

Another teacher reiterated:

I thought African students all have same cultural and educational backgrounds but after interacting with them, I got to know that they have different social, cultural, and educational or similar backgrounds with individual social-cultural perspectives. So, with this information, I provide additional support on ways to adjust and adapt to school. I try to let them speak out in class, make contributions in class via project-based assignments and class discussions. I also use technology to help them learn more about the U.S and best ways to fit in.

Students shared that teachers' support allowed them to transition without dissonance between worlds. Teacher support also bolstered their

academic achievement in school and provided students the flexibility to adapt and acculturate to a new school environment. Students indicated classroom discussions provided them opportunities to interact with teachers and peers in class. For example, Moustapha commented: “Most of my teachers allow us to discuss issues in class by expressing our opinions in groups or through project presentations in class.” According to the multiple worlds model (Phelan et al., 1998), Type VI students perceive family, teachers, and friends as truly supportive of their differences. Students disclosed that teachers gave them chance to do presentations in class, embark on project-based learning and participate in class discussions via cooperative learning.

This helped them to understand and integrate learning principles in the American educational system. Mrs. Ashton, an English teacher, confirms the students’ position: “I used variety of teaching methods to help immigrant students in my class to open up and make contributions in class, I think class discussions, cooperativeness and project-based learning gives them the best opportunities to let them come of their inner-self.” Another teacher, Mr. Johnson, noted: “I strongly believe that class discussions allow immigrant students to open up easily to interact with other students and the teacher in class, it allows them to make connections to the concept we discuss in class.” Students discussed that teacher support provided them with detailed information about their new school and ways to navigate the transition to the new school and teacher expectations. Teacher support also helped shape students’ mindset and balance students’ multiple views in the classroom and school.

MANAGING TWO WORLDS WITH PEERS

Students had friends who crossed into their school world. At school, students had friends with different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Interview data show that many students were in the Advanced Placement and Honors classes—i.e., on the accelerated academic track—and had the same teachers. They described having huge boundaries with American students because they rarely intermingle with their peer group. Other students also had little contact or knowledge about students different from themselves. When asked about his relationship with group peers, Salim, an 11th grader who has been in the U.S. for 2 years, illuminates his view of the differences between the two worlds:

I like to be with students who understand and appreciate my cultures and who I am. Well, have few friends at school because most students here [U.S.] don’t understand where I come from, think Africans live in bushes, make mockery of me because I’m African

and use what they see on Television and news to judge me. They think like Africa is a bad place to come from—all the negative perception of the continent of Africa. This is why I chose not to be with lots of my peers. Lots of ignorant people about Ghana and Africa, who makes all sorts of negative comments this is why I don't mingle with others.

Other students in the sample describe their relationship with peers as normal despite differences in cross-cultural experiences and consider border crossing as not a problem. Amina describes her relationship with peers thus:

I try to get along very well with students here [U.S.] with diverse cultural backgrounds, although they ask me so many questions about Africa, I feel like my friends are curious to know more about Ghana and Africa. I try to make friends who are doing great at school, so I have good relationship with my peers. I will admit that cultural differences are huge but we get along quite well and try not to make it a big issue. However, most of my friends are also immigrant students from Asia—we get to discuss our cultural experiences and ways to strategize on how to survive living with multiple worlds.

For example, most students indicated that they have tense relationship with African American students in school, a situation they never expected. Students reported that some of their African American peers make derogatory comments such as “Why are Africans so dark”; “Did you play with wild animals”; or “monkey boy or monkey girl” to them in school. For example, Sam, a sophomore, noted:

Most times, people question my attitudes and behavior in class and ask me if I'm really from Ghana – Africa. There has been many times where my African American peers ask me if I'm African because I don't look very dark and other questions like Oh you speak good English, you wear expensive clothes and so forth. They don't even know that I learnt English in Ghana where we have good schools.

However, students explained that not all African American peers make such negative comments. Abdul, a sophomore described his relationship with African American peers as:

Yeah ... I don't have good relationship with African American peers in my class, though not all of them but majority of them make fun of me about my culture, country of origin [Ghana],

religion [Muslim], and my color, which I was very surprised about ... I mean Black person making fun about some being dark. I am not saying other students do not make fun of me but I was shocked to find out the way African American peers treated in school especially during after school sports training. Some of them will make reference to me as monkey from Africa and stuffs like that. It's the reason why I do not participate in any school activity and have friends who do not look like me.

Students explained that the tense relationships with African American peers are due to the lack of knowledge about the continent Africa and African immigrants, which has not been the case for other immigrant students (Asian and Hispanic immigrant students). They believe that African American peers do not want to be associated with them because of the media (electronic and print) coverage of Africa and its people—for example, stereotypical images that make the headlines in the Western media. For example, Hamid noted: “My peers must know that Africa is just like the rest of the world. It has its own set of problems and successes, unfortunately the study is one-sided.” Another student Bonsu, a senior stated: “I’m from Ghana but my peers associate me with wars in Somalia, poverty, ebola virus, and other negative stories about Africa. I think this is the reason why I don’t have friends.” Orfield (1998) states that because immigrant youth often attend highly segregated, deep-poverty schools, they may have limited access to networks of knowledgeable peers. Students’ statements above confirm the fact that Ghanaian-born immigrant students have mixed peer relationships with their peers. This can be attributed to the varying psychological, socio-cultural, family backgrounds, parental education, socioeconomic status of parents, and personal experiences of Ghanaian-born immigrant students. Students describe the boundaries between them and their peers as rigid and difficult to penetrate because of the cultural boundaries. Sally, who has been in the U.S for 3 years, noted: “I have little interaction with my peers at school, because of the way classes are scheduled. There are few minority students in Advanced Placement classes and other students do not often interact with me except during project or class discussions.” They reported wanting friends they could relate to, but such friends have been difficult to find due to the difference in the sociocultural and ethnolinguistic backgrounds; it has certainly affected their connection with other students. Habeeb, a junior stressed: “I wish I would be in a perfect situation where I will be socially accepted by all – students and teachers but will not be judged as an outsider in school because I’m from Ghana – Africa.”

Students' peer worlds, which are comprised of sociocultural, ethnolinguistic, and educational components, are fundamentally different, making it impossible for them to interact with others in school. For some students, the school world was the only venue where they had the opportunity to interact, learn, and embrace group-peer relations and value academic success. Interview data agree with the Type II typology of the multiple worlds model in which students adopt strategies to help manage and negotiate the values of their different worlds. While students acknowledge that having friends, maintaining friendships, and developing relationships with other students is important, some also admit that academic achievement is their primary focus. Others describe group-peer relation boundaries as impassable, thus impacting their academic performance in school. Ogbu and Herbert (1998) argue that peer relationships have been linked to students' ability to establish norms of academic engagement.

CROSSING BOUNDARIES WITH EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Educational resources play an important role in the teaching and learning processes as well as the educational achievement of students across schools in the U.S. Immigrant students described how access to resources in the U.S. educational system helped them to understand the concepts taught in class. When asked how educational opportunities helped to promote academic achievement, Da Costa, a senior, discussed his experiences with resources:

I will say that there are more resources here [U.S.] than where I came from. It's like there are more opportunities to succeed in school. You have access to all kinds of resources such as computer and textbooks to help you get better grades at school. If I compare the two, I will say more resources here better than back home. Access to resources in school also help me to understand the differences of things you know such as access to the Internet, books, teacher assistance, and others have been a great source to improve on my academic performance.

Most students recognized the importance of education as a way to move up the social echelon in their lives. Like their parents, the students viewed their migration to the U.S. as an opportunity to fulfill their dreams. Many spoke passionately about how they could use education to change their fortunes or lives. In portraying these views about their experiences as migrants, the students confirmed Ogbu's statement that "voluntary" immigrant students believe in taking advantage of the educational opportunities in their new environments (Ogbu & Simons, 1998).

MANAGING TWO WORLDS IN THE CLASSROOM

Students brought a plethora of diverse educational experiences and cultures to the classroom. They reported that adjusting to the fundamental changes in pedagogical delivery posed challenging moments for them in the classroom. For instance, Sarah described her classroom experience:

Everything is different here [U.S.] for me from teaching to completing assignment, homework or taking tests. Here [U.S.] teachers will you give lots of homework and assignments. I was shocked because I was told that everything is easy in the U.S. but not really true. You know, I am in shock of the way teachers teach, and how I have to answer questions, speak out in class, do project and present them and other stuffs. Learning here [U.S.] is open, free to make contributions in class and ask teachers questions too. It kind of helped me to understand certain things easily in school.

Several studies (Fredricks et al., 2004; National Research Council, 2004) show that students' relationships in school play a critical role in promoting socially competent behavior in the classroom and fostering academic engagement and achievement among immigrant students. Reinforcing this notion further, Sarah, a sophomore noted: "I do more reading and classwork in class than my previous school in Africa." Reflecting on the challenges of adjusting to the teaching and learning styles, another student, Douglas, a junior, observed: "I was not used to classroom discussions or doing class presentations, I'm used to memorizing stuff or what we learned in class and textbooks, changing from that was very hard for me." These statements confirm students' struggles with instruction as they adjusted to U.S. classroom procedures and curricula. The students also seemed unable to grapple with differences in the curriculum including the context of materials, teaching styles, and how to contribute in class. Other students (35%) also reported feeling like outsiders during class discussions, as they hardly responded to the points or issues they raised. When asked to elaborate on feeling like an outsider, Charlotte, a senior replied:

This is hard to say but some students will openly discriminate against you. ... both Black and White in class because of my status as African immigrant. I guess only few are friendly. My guess is that they don't understand the benefits of cultural diversity in school, it's like you say something and then someone will response saying ... Oh, is that what they do in Africa, have you had Malaria or this kind of disease before ... all because I'm from Ghana. I try to ignore all the statements or questions, but... It hurts sometimes for people to look down on you just because of your background as African.

When asked to explain further, students explained that having multiple worlds made them look at things differently from their peers in class. Students related experiencing two different educational systems with different teachers and students from diverse backgrounds as a result of their migration from one setting to another, while most of their peers have a monocultural experience. Students reported having difficulties working with peers in cooperative projects. The concept of multiple world perspectives, diverse cultural backgrounds, and past educational experiences are repeating themes throughout students' interviews. Students' feeling of being different (from Ghana) is noticeable. Nonetheless, they adopted varied strategies to overcome the challenges of transitions in the classroom. Finding it difficult to be accepted in most group work, in classes, they initiate discussions with peers that center on global issues. Ama, a sophomore, remarked:

I think discussing global news with my peers helped me to connect with them more, we always discuss global news and discuss it on how it affects U.S. and Ghana, my peers also asked me many questions about my home country. I will say this helped to know ourselves better.

MANAGING TRANSITIONS IN SCHOOL

The majority of students indicated that they faced challenges in transitioning from one culture to the other. They attributed transitional challenges to having to deal with crossing over from their familiar world to their new world without any help. First, they explained that disengagement and lack of involvement with school activities are due to their lack of knowledge and awareness of how to participate. Second, their unfamiliarity with classroom organization and school procedures stood in the way of connecting to their new world, hampering their ability adapt to the peer world and to acquire new friends. Students described the challenges of managing transition due to their inability to cross boundaries between school, family, and peer worlds, which are magnified by the fact that they have few connections to new school environments.

Students also attributed transitional challenges to how teachers in the U.S. responded to them as new immigrant students. Fari, a junior, stated: "Because of differences in my previous educational background, teachers did not understand at first." Rhodes (2002) contends that immigrant students undergo profound shifts in their sense of self, struggling to negotiate and connect to the changing circumstances in relationships with their parents and peers. Overall, students believed that teachers had little knowledge about their past educational experiences. A number of

students discussed social and psychological trauma underlying their transition to the U.S. schools. For instance, Kadija, a senior, described incongruent worlds as follows:

The struggles of having to learn new cultures, finding new friends at school, developing new relations with teachers and school setting, having to deal with all these affects me emotionally, especially when your teachers and peers do not understand your cultural background in class.

Williams et al. (2003) stress that racism and ethnic discrimination can undermine students' adjustment and diminish psychological functioning, self-esteem, and physical health. Most student participants expressed challenges communicating with teachers and peers. They explained how this led to poor personal relations with peers, affected their communication with teachers, and impacted their contribution to class discussions or classroom activities. As referenced in the multiple worlds model, in the Type III typology students' values, beliefs, and expectations are opposed across worlds and boundary crossing is resisted. They develop reasons and rationales to protect themselves against despair in the process of border crossing. Cultural and linguistic differences have been shown to influence the academic performance of immigrant students; language barriers, when experienced in conjunction with discrimination and cultural differences, can place insurmountable pressure on the academic performance of African-born immigrant students (Obiakor & Afoláyan, 2007).

THE ROLE OF PARENTS

Students explained that their parents played a critical role in helping them adjust and adapt to a new school environment. According to Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2001), immigrant parents have high academic expectations of their children and hold their children accountable for academic performance. Tanny, a sophomore, attributed her academic success at school to her parents, saying: "My parents provided me all the support I need to fit in here [U.S]. They supported me on school work, offered advice, directions, and financial resources to help me succeed in school." This confirms previous studies' findings that immigrant parents believe that there are better educational opportunities in the United States than in their countries of origin (Ogbu & Simons, 1998).

Students attributed their academic successes in integrating into a new society to their parents' support and guidance. It also confirms the Type II typology of the multiple worlds model in which the family provides support to immigrant students in achieving academic success. Abeiku explained:

My parents are actively involved in what I do at school and have been supportive of my school activities. I'm proud of my parents for taking active role in my school life. I owe everything to them for helping me to overcome the challenges I experienced when I moved to the U.S. My parents helped me to understand how to balance the two cultures and cross what I call the "mountain of hope" to succeed. My dad sets high expectations for me and provide financial support to achieve better grades in school.

According to students, negotiating across their school and academic achievement has been made possible with the help of their parents. Students discussed that their schooling experiences are shaped by their parents' expectation of academic excellence in school. Students agreed that their parents helped them to transition from one cross-cultural educational background to achieve academically in the United States educational system. Students reiterated that despite this support, parents disagree with them about the issues of cultures and encourage them to keep both cultures. They describe experiencing conflicts with parents and other adults of African origin, about balancing two worlds regarding cultures and language. Tamati explained: "My parents want me to speak our language at home and keep same behavior from Ghana, but things are different in school, I had to learn cultures here [U.S.] to fit in and get along with my peers." Students discussed that combining two worlds by moving from one social context to another makes it difficult to accomplish balance and achieve success in school.

DISCUSSION

This article presents the factors that facilitate Ghanaian-born immigrant students' multiple worlds as they interact and connect to cross boundaries in school settings, specifically, how Ghanaian-born immigrant students combine multiple worlds to connect and cross boundaries in the classroom and new school environment. A related goal of this study is to explore teachers' understanding and perception about Ghanaian-born immigrant students' sociocultural and educational lives regarding the strategies students employ to move from one social context to another to achieve better academic success. In sum, findings suggest that Ghanaian-born immigrant students undergo several complex transitional paradigms combining two worlds of African culture, education, family values, learning new cultures, and adapting to new school settings in American educational systems. Findings showed that students' willingness to succeed in school, their ability to manage and negotiate the two worlds of teachers

and peers, educational opportunities, successful transitions in school, and parental support helped Ghanaian-born immigrant students to balance multiple worlds toward academic success. Overall, students developed strategies to manage two worlds in school, which shaped their perspectives and helped them to cross boundaries as stipulated in the students' multiple worlds model (Phelan et al., 1998). Although students come from different cultural, social and educational experiences, interview data show no significant differences based on their experiences and factors that helped them to connect and negotiate to cross boundaries of two worlds to achieve better academic success.

Interview data suggest that students appeared to have an inner resilience that helped them to develop strategies to combine two worlds and connect with teachers and peers. Findings are consistent with Portes and Rumbaut's (2001) study, which contends that successful adaptations among immigrant youths appear to be connected to the quality of relationships that they forge in their school settings, allowing them to develop skills to adjust and adapt to the curriculum, cultural shock, changes in teaching and learning styles, discrimination, and unwelcoming attitudes from peers and ultimately leading them to achieve successes in transition and academic performance. According to Ogbu and Simmons (1998), African-born immigrants viewed school success as a major means of upward mobility.

Furthermore, students discussed that their parents advised them on what they needed to do to meet school and family expectations as they learn to transition from one setting to another. Parents also provided them with resources to help them achieve better academic performance (Chhuon et al., 2010; Phelan et al., 1998). In addition, they attended school events and participated in teacher–parent conferences. Parents played an active role as mediators for students and as counselors who encouraged students to focus on their academic goals. Students reiterated that parents' help in extracurricular activities helped to improve their positive relationships with peers at school, ultimately helping their adaptation and adjustment in school. This is consistent with other studies (Kao & Tienda, 1998; Roubeni et al., 2015) that found that immigrant parents act as mediators for their children that helped them transition to new school. Parents' support helped them to achieve better academic success despite challenges of understanding cultures, expectations, and relations with teachers and peers in their new school settings.

Results show that teachers provided students support through class discussions and project-based and cooperative learning to be able to understand procedures of learning in school, which was new and complex to them. Teachers on the other hand agreed that Ghanaian-born immigrant students exhibit behaviors consistent with the path of “hard working”

immigrant students, which teachers defined as students who are prepared to succeed academically despite the difficulties they face. In classrooms where these students show higher academic performance, teachers know the students well, are attuned to their needs, and show personal concern for their academic and social life.

Findings support other studies (Chhuon et al., 2010; Fredricks et al., 2004; Phelan et al., 1998) that assert students' relationships in school play a critical role in promoting socially competent behavior in the classroom and fosters academic engagement and achievement among immigrant students. As stated in the literature, social relations provide a variety of protective functions—a sense of belonging, emotional support, tangible assistance and information, cognitive guidance, and positive feedback (Sarason, Sarason, & Pierce, 1990). Teachers also became aware of students' uncertain academic status and incorporate various pedagogical methods to promote their involvement in class activities. Overall, parents, teachers, and students' desire to succeed helped them to move across the boundaries of their world, living up to the expectations of better academic achievement and smooth transition as described in the Type I typology of the multiple worlds model (Phelan et al., 1998). This supports Hamilton and Darling's (1996) assertion that connections with teachers, counselors, and other supportive adults in school are important in the academic and social adaptation of immigrant students and confirms that relationships with peers provide emotional supports and the facilitate development of significant psychosocial competencies in youth (Selman et al., 1997).

However, there are some students (38%) who struggled to transition in school, resulting in a negative impact on their academic progression. For example, some students had difficulty connecting with peers and teachers due to the differences in language and cultures, which prevented them from practicing or acquiring border crossing strategies. In a sense, students' views became limited and bounded by the congruency of their multiple worlds. Further, interview data indicated that although students' worlds are different, they manage to thrive across different educational and cultural boundaries as they acculturate to the U.S. educational system as indicated in the Type II typology of the students' multiple worlds model (Phelan et al., 1998). Based on students' willingness to succeed in a new school as a result of their personal ambition and goals, their problems in school were sometimes overlooked by teachers. Findings suggest that students were able to adapt and adjust to mainstream patterns and return to home and community when with their peers despite the challenges of crossing boundaries (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986).

Interview data indicate that some teachers in U.S. schools lack knowledge and understanding about the sociocultural, linguistic, and past

educational experiences of these immigrant learners, specifically, how to use instructional and pedagogical tools to help immigrant youth from Ghana to balance multiple worlds to achieve better academic outcomes. Traoré and Lukens (2006) contend that there is little or no formal instructional processes or curriculum to tap into their rich cultural backgrounds of African immigrants. Perhaps it can be argued that the media has played a role in making Africa unattractive to students and teachers in the U.S. by denying them “access to positive information about Africa and Africans” (p. 247). For example, one teacher in our study described Amina’s behavior in class saying, “She is quiet and different from other Black students I know, it’s good that I got to know she is from Ghana—I thought all African students are the same.” This resonates with the students’ multiple worlds model that boundary crossing involves friction and unease, causing some students to do well in one class and fail in another due to conflict of cultures that derails their academic and sociocultural progression. Students describe that they are sometimes alienated from peers and school due to differences in cultures, which often created stressful learning environment and social discomfort. This is exemplified by teachers’ and peers’ comments about Africa that devalue their cultural background. Kwame, a junior, noted: “Negative comments about Africa makes me feel very sad about my self, you feel like an outsider and can’t contribute in class.” Findings suggest that students felt the desire to gain skills needed to connect and negotiate the two worlds in order to achieve better academic outcomes (Obiakor & Afoláyan, 2007; Phelan et al., 1998).

Finally, this study broadens the multiple worlds model to include the cross-border experiences of African immigrant students from Ghana. The multiple worlds model has been an important lens through which the study highlighted the factors that helped Ghanaian-born immigrant students to connect and negotiate the borders of cultural differences as they interact with teachers, peers, and families. On the other hand, findings suggest that to understand the factors that facilitate Ghanaian-born immigrant students’ ability to balance multiple worlds toward academic success in U.S. schools, there is the need to recognize the role of parents and availability of educational resources that help shape the dynamics of crossing two borders and worlds in new school environment. African immigrant families may face many challenges in crossing boundaries of two worlds to support their children’s education as they adapt and adjust the U.S. environment. Thus, to be able to manage, connect, and negotiate for a successful border crossing by Ghanaian-born immigrant students, teachers and school administrators must recognize their cultural values and traditional home worlds as contributing factors that shape their educational success.

The study fills a gap in literature on the multiple worlds of sub-Saharan African immigrant students from Ghana. Most multiple worlds and cross-border studies have been conducted with Asian, Hispanic and other immigrant students in U.S. school systems (Chhuon et al., 2010; Phelan, Davidson, & Cao, 1991; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001); to the best of my knowledge, the present study is one of the few to investigate the factors that help a subgroup of African immigrant students (Ghanaian-born) to manage, connect, and negotiate their cross-cultural educational experiences. The study has demonstrated the importance of the cultural resources that Ghanaian immigrant students bring to the classroom that can be integrated into the curriculum of subjects such as English, social studies, and sciences to promote understanding of cultural diversity and critical pedagogy in the classroom. It also contributes to a better understanding of the factors that help Ghanaian-born immigrant students to cross boundaries of two worlds to connect and manage to adapt and adjust in school. The study includes voices of teachers and students, which is a valuable strength of the study.

LIMITATIONS

The limitations of the study are that due to a small sample size of 40 Ghanaian-born immigrant students and 10 teachers, the findings and conclusions of this study cannot be used to generalize the factors that help Ghanaian-born immigrant students to employ strategies to combine their worlds of school, family, and peers to connect to academic achievement. In addition, the study was limited to a small sample of 10 teachers in two schools, making it difficult to generalize about teachers' perceptions of all immigrant students from Africa. Further, the study was conducted via qualitative semistructured interviews, possibly leading to a bias in the coding and interpretation of interview data, although care has been taken to minimize this risk. This study was limited to immigrant students from Ghana attending high schools in one state. Researchers could not make any generalizations from the results in relation to other African immigrant students attending schools in other states. Ghanaian-born immigrant students also have different sociocultural, psychological, personal/psychosocial, and educational differences that might influence how they connect and negotiate the two worlds to achieve academic success. However, the challenges are similar and need to be addressed. A major quantitative study could be conducted about teacher perception and the pedagogies used in the classroom to foster immigrant students with African origin to connect their multiple worlds and educational achievement with a large sample size.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION

The students' multiple worlds model has significant educational implications for teachers, educators, and policy makers who work with immigrant students, especially those from sub-Saharan Africa, to promote student learning. First, the model provides teachers and school administrators with a better and more comprehensive understanding of immigrant students and their sociocultural and past educational experiences. Second, the model points to the need for teachers to be better prepared to respond to the intralinguistic, intraracial, intraethnic, and intracultural differences of Ghanaian students, and calls attention to the discrimination faced by students because of perceived homogeneity within the Black student population. This will create an environment conducive to reform, where teachers can hopefully work together in classrooms to devise strategies for solving problems and understanding concepts discussed. Further, this study calls for the inclusion of multicultural education in the curriculum to disrupt prevailing negative stereotypes toward Ghanaian-born immigrant students and as "a central way of teaching respect for difference and part of the continuing process for redefining the common American culture" (Hochschild & Scovronick, 2003, p. 56). Third, teachers must make efforts to provide Ghanaian-born immigrant students with learning environments that foster them to connect and negotiate with other students in class, and teachers must be aware of the border crossing Ghanaian-born immigrant students have to do daily to achieve success. More so, teachers must incorporate into the curriculum multicultural resources to promote curriculum diversity, so that Ghanaian-born immigrant students can relate and use their background knowledge to connect to the content they read in class (Nieto, 2009). This study demonstrates the need for teachers and educators to focus energy and attention on immigrant students' relationships with each other, for it is the value of these interrelationships that often allows these immigrant learners to connect with new school environments. According to Banks (1996), pedagogy has the possibility to revolutionize cultural differences into rich assets and contribute to immigrant students' smooth transitions. Lastly, this study demonstrates the partnership of teachers, students, and families in the path toward engagement. It exemplifies the benefits of scaffolding in the immigrant students' motivational zone of proximal development (Brophy, 1999), and thus, might invigorate teachers to analyze the factors necessary for Ghanaian-born immigrant students' academic achievement. Considering the increasing population of African immigrant students in the urban cities in the U.S., there is the need for teachers and educators to be aware of the multiple worlds that Ghanaian students cross in order to achieve educational success (Ogbu, 2003; Phelan et al., 1998).

In conclusion, this study has illustrated the factors that facilitate Ghanaian-born immigrant students' multiple worlds as they interact and connect to cross boundaries in school settings, specifically, how they combine multiple worlds to connect and cross boundaries in the classroom and new school environment. It also highlights the need for teachers and educators working with Ghanaian-born immigrant students to understand the pedagogical and social barriers that stand in the way of the students' ability to connect with school contexts, as well as with peers who share different cultural beliefs and norms. It is hoped that a thorough knowledge of Ghanaian-born immigrant students' multiple worlds is important in a global world where cultural barriers continue to obstruct attempts to implement pedagogical and educational policies aimed at promoting the educational success of immigrant students in U.S. schools.

NOTES

1. I define *African-born/immigrant students from Ghana* in the study as immigrant students who were originally born in Ghana to one or both African parents and migrated to the U.S. to live with their parent or parents/guardian and attending high urban school.

2. The identities of all participants are kept confidential throughout the study by the use of pseudonyms.

3. *Cross-cultural educational experiences* is used in this study to refer to the multiple folds of learning experiences participants have in their countries of origin and in the United States, including experiencing at least two forms of teaching, relating to students, adjusting to school environments, and often learning a new language and culture to be able to fit and transition.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions – Ghanaian Immigrant Students

1. What goals did you have when you came to the U.S.? How are you doing regarding to achieving those goals?
2. Knowing what you know now, would you want to come to the U.S. again? Why or why not?
3. Tell me more about your educational experiences after moving to the U.S. How did your schooling experiences in Ghana affect how you performed in the U.S. schools? If so, why not?
4. I am trying to understand what it takes for Ghanaian immigrant youth to move successfully to a new country and a new culture. What are your views on that? Tell me what helped you get adjusted to living in the United States?
 - (Probes: What factors helped you to adjust to school your environment? What factors helped you to adjust to the neighborhood you live?)
 - (Probes: Where do you get the support from since you moved to the U.S? What has been the most helpful support you have received so far?)
 - (Probes: Tell me how your personal experiences and skills helped you in adjusting to new school life and to succeed? If so, why?)
 - (Probe: Tell me what your experiences in Ghana (Africa) had on you at schooling the U.S?)
5. What are your major educational achievements since you moved to the U.S? (Probes: Academic achievements, cross-cultural learning experiences, how you negotiate through the challenges to succeed, and dealings with social and psychological journey.)
6. Tell me the role your parents play in helping you to achieve academic success? (Probes: Did your parents have different rules than American parents? If yes, in what ways? If no, why?)
7. Tell me why your parents help you to succeed in the U.S.?
8. Tell me what rules you prefer your parents to use?
 - (Probes: Do you think you have disagreements with your parents as a result of the American culture? If so, why? Tell me how you resolve disagreements with your parents at home? What brought about the disagreement? Please discuss one incident?)
9. Tell me what your parents expect from you to do to succeed in school? Please explain.

10. Tell me what has been the most challenging moment for you? How did you navigate through the challenges to succeed academically?
11. Describe your relationship with your peers/friends at school? Tell me how do your friends treat you at school? How do you collaborate with your friends in class discussions or the classroom social environment? Discuss any positive experiences with your friends in your new school; Please give me one example of your positive experience. Have you experienced any negative dealings with your friends? If so in what ways?
12. What has been your relationship with your teachers?
 - (Probes: Tell me how your teachers have helped you at school to succeed. What has been the most support you have received from teachers? Please give some examples of some of the help you receive from teachers.)
 - (Probes: Do you receive any support from other school officials such as the Principal, Assistant Principal or counselors? If so, in what ways?)
13. Describe any negative relationships you have had with your teachers in school. If so, how did you deal with these negative experiences with teachers? Please discuss one incident of how you dealt with the situation.
14. In what ways would you describe your relationship with teachers as it relates to your academic success?
15. Has anyone (teachers or peers or school staff) treated you differently because you are from Ghana (Africa)? Do you feel that you have ever been discriminated against in the U.S? Could you give me an example? Why do you think you were treated/discriminated? Could you provide me with one example? Discuss how you have been able to overcome the challenges to achieve higher academic performance. OR how did you manage the problem(s) to succeed?
16. How would you describe your educational experiences in school?
 - (Probes: Do you get help in school? Do you get any respect by teachers and peers in school? Who do you count on when you have questions about school work? Do you feel school is the place where you can talk to about your trouble/challenges? If so, why? Please give me examples.)
17. What advice could you give to other Ghanaian youth on best ways to succeed in U.S. schools?
18. What are your future goals?

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions – Teachers

1. How many students are you teaching this year? How many of them are immigrant students?
2. Among the immigrant students you teach, what have been the challenges they face in school?
 - (Probe: Could you describe the educational experiences of Ghanaian immigrant youth you have observed in school?)
3. How many years have been working with immigrant students (Ghanaian immigrant students)?
 - (Probes: Have you had any other professional experiences working/teaching with immigrant students? If yes, please describe? (e.g. teaching ESL to immigrant students). Have you have had any personal experiences that brought (or bring) you in contact with immigrant students? If yes, please describe.)
4. Tell me how have your relationships been with immigrant students and those from Ghana in school?
 - (Probes: Could you describe how much interaction do you have with other African immigrant students in class? How are they different from other immigrant students? How much are they different from non-immigrant students?)
5. How would you characterize the nature of the interactions you have with Ghanaian immigrant students and non-immigrant students?
6. Think about the Ghanaian immigrant students in your classroom. How are they doing in terms of academic work and social interaction in school? (Probe: In meeting the expectations of what a good student is?)
7. How would you describe Ghanaian immigrant students on the dimensions of attendance, completing assignments, motivation and effort? What about their behavior/conduct, relations with classmates and relations with authorities? What are their attitudes towards school, and self-confidence in learning abilities?
8. What instructional supports do you provide to immigrant students in your classes to help them succeed in school? (Probe: Please give me some examples of the instructional support or strategies. What has been the best instructional support that seems to work well with immigrant students? Do you have any support you would like to share?)

9. In what ways is the school administration supportive (or not supportive) of immigrant students in school?
10. Could you describe what has made Ghanaian immigrant students succeed in school? How do they traverse through the challenges faced as immigrant students from Ghana (Africa) to succeed in school? What do you think are the specific factors that have helped them to succeed in school?
11. Being a teacher to immigrant students can be both challenging and rewarding. What did you find challenging and what did you find rewarding?
12. Do you encounter any challenges teaching Ghanaian immigrant students? If so, in what ways? How do you address the challenges to help them succeed?
13. How often do you interact with the parents of immigrant students? What are your expectations from parents to help immigrant students to succeed in school? Do parents meet these expectations? Why or why not?
14. Tell me how do much Ghanaian immigrant students share their schooling experiences in Ghana? If so, in what ways, if any. What about their school and social experiences in U.S schools?
15. Do you have any other thoughts to share about your experiences teaching Ghanaian immigrant students?
16. Have you taken any professional training or workshops on teaching immigrant students from Africa (Ghana)? If so, please give me the source, If no, why?
17. What suggestions do you have for helping Ghanaian immigrant students to be successful in U.S schools?
18. What are your future goals for teaching immigrant students?

APPENDIX C

Focus Group Interview – Students

1. Tell me what kind of things you do to help you be successful in school.
2. Are there things that help you to be more involved in school activities?
3. What do you see yourself doing in the next three years?
4. Do you feel that you have been discriminated against in school for being from Ghana (Africa)? If yes, could you give me an example? (Probe: For what reason do you think you were discriminated against?)
5. Tell me strategy or strategies you have adopted to manage the challenges and succeed in school? How did you manage to navigate through the difficulties to succeed in school?
6. Describe your relationship with native-born students (peers) in school? How do you gain from the relationships? Could you share with me some positive and or negative relationships with them and how it affects your social adjustment and academic performance in school? How do you manage your relationships with friends and school work?
7. Tell me how your relationships with teachers and other school staff have been (Probing: Would you describe the relationship as positive or negative? If so, in what ways? Do you receive any support from your teachers in school? If so, what kind of support? Does the support in any way influence your academic performance in school?)
8. Describe how you manage your relationships with teachers in school and school work? (Probing: Do you feel like you can communicate with the teacher about your concerns? What do you think teachers can do to help immigrant students from Ghana and Africa?)
9. Is there anything that you think would improve your communications with all of your teachers?
10. Describe your relationships with your parents (Probes: Do you feel like you can communicate with your parents about your concerns? How do you communicate with your parents? Do you receive any support from your parents? If so, in what ways? What have been the challenging moments with parents? Please discuss in detail. How do you manage challenging moments or disagreements with your parents?)
11. What do you hope for your future?

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