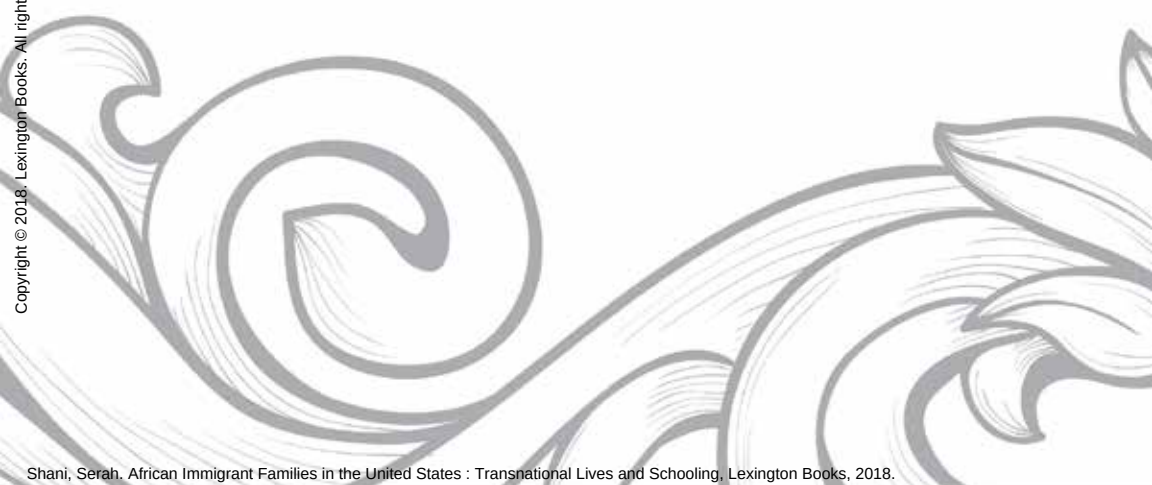# AFRICAN IMMIGRANT FAMILIES IN THE UNITED STATES

Transnational Lives and Schooling

SERAH SHANI

Acknowledgments

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The New York City Ghanaian Network Village

Sociocultural Transnational Lives and Identity Formation

The "Network Village" is a grounded theory I developed to make sense of what I was seeing and learning while conducting research among the Ghanaians living in NYC. It encompasses hometown and religious associations, networking within these associations, and transnational connections. During my research, when mapping out Ghanaian locations, I quickly realized that Ghanaians were not living in one continuous village or enclave similar to Little Italy and Chinatown, both in lower Manhattan. As I began to visit parents in congregate spaces, faces became familiar; I had seen them in multiple other spaces. I met some at the African market, then at their cultural organization meetings, and again at a church or mosque. I even saw them yet again at two of their yearly picnics, one in upstate New York and another in Queens, which attracted Ghanaians from out of state. At the picnics, I observed that parents and their children gathered in designated ethnic organization spaces. I sat down with the family that brought me to the event, and I helped to cook and serve food.

There was, at both picnics, a central stage where artists performed in the afternoon to entertain thousands of people; the president (at that time) of the NCOGA told me that there were about 10,000 people in attendance. Some of the artists, five of whom I interreacted with at the first picnic, informed me that they came all the way from Ghana, sponsored by the organizers.

Children danced, took pictures, played with each other, and ate and shared Ghanaian food; a few just stuck close to their parents. Some of these children knew each other from the madrasas in the mosque, from Sunday school at church, or from public school, and some were neighbors. Parents ate and visited together, exchanging news and sharing information. Here was the Network Village on display in one place.

Within the Network Village—formed of networks as opposed to being located in one geographic location—Ghanaian parents engaged in a web of connections and interactions, and they reaped benefits from belonging to the network. The metaphor of a "village" comes from the African concept of a community—a village—hence, a community made of networks instead of geographic locations or neighborhoods. This is a shift that Ghanaian parents experience when moving to New York; a shift from more village-like experiences and allegiances to network ones. This Network Village, like a traditional village back home, also involves obligations and rights. For instance, I observed many parents attending and participating in meetings and also contributing money and time for the betterment of the whole group. While immigrants' networks have been known to meet the needs of immigrants in the Diaspora (Abdi 2015; Feldman-Savelsberg 2016; Gaibazzi 2015), there is very little written of the extensive role that these networks play in the education and success of immigrants' children. My research focused on how these networks meet the educational needs of Ghanaian parents and their children in an urban setting.

During my interactions, I observed that the Network Village was redefining conventional ideas of schools and neighborhoods and their relationship to academic achievement. Ghanaian parents not only belonged to the physical neighborhoods in NYC but also to the Network Village that transverses many school districts; thus, they were able to access more educational resources provided by churches, mosques, and extended family relationships.

Even more interesting is that the Network Village is transnational, crossing borders and an ocean all the way to Ghana. Transnationality is facilitated by technology that has shortened distances, made travel less hazardous, and increased communication. Improved travel conditions and affordability allow Ghanaian immigrants to visit Ghana to attend weddings, funerals, and other rites of passage. At the time of this research, participants indicated that there was a direct flight once a week from Ghana to NYC. The contemporary technological explosion also allows for communication via cell phones and the internet, where a lot of discourses about schooling happen. In most NYC African markets I visited, prior to the cell-phone boom, many different brands of calling cards were sold. Parents from one of the SDA churches explained to me how they held prayers and bible study through teleconferencing; one of them told me that she prays with her "prayers partner" in Georgia every evening. She met her prayer partner in Nigeria when she migrated from Ghana as part of a step migration to the United States.

Improvements in technology have also made it possible for "scattered families" (Coe 2013, 2016) to communicate with and visit each other (Cole and Groes 2016). These families have some immediate family members living in both Ghana and the United states, and many have extended and immediate

relatives still living in Ghana. Scattered families facilitate the movement of children back and forth, creating multiple and transnational spaces for their education.

This transnational aspect of the Network Village broadens Ghanaian immigrant parents' and children's location and sense of belonging, and it makes more resources available for their academic achievement. Ghanaian immigrants identify as living in both the United States and Ghana, sometimes even acquiring dual citizenship. As will be shown in chapter 4, parents tap into the resources of the Network Village to educate their children in NYC. The transnational aspect in this village also allows parents to utilize resources in the home country to help their children succeed in the United States. For example, Ghanaian parents using the tradition of fostering, practiced in West Africa and many other African cultures (Alber Martin, and Notermans 2013; Dossa, Coe, and Deneva 2017), sent their children to their relatives back in Ghana to evade inner-city behaviors and predicaments and to learn Ghanaian values. Those living in inner-city neighborhoods who could not afford private schools sent children back to Ghana to attend "international schools," referring to prestigious private schools in Ghana. However, parents brought children back to the United States in time to get an American college education that is more valued globally than that of Ghana. Thus, the country of origin is part of the greater locations affecting children's education.

The transnational Network Village is important educationally, as I observed, because it's within this village that meanings about school are constructed and deconstructed. In most meetings, the underlying questions from parents that emerged from schooling discourses within their networks involved the following: What are schools providing for our children? How do we compare these schools with those in Ghana? What do we want for our children? How do we prepare our children for American schools?

Norms and values on how to raise and educate children are also coined within the Network Village. Attributes constructed created collective imaginings about educating children. Parents shared with me how they were dismayed by the many challenges of inner-city schooling experiences that sometimes, parents indicated, spill over to the suburbs, and about how they tapped into social and cultural capital in the Network Village to address these issues. One of the elite parents living in Westchester County, during one of my visits to his office, told me that they moved their children to the suburbs to attend better schools and to avoid inner-city behaviors. He lamented, however, that his children claim to be bored in the suburbs and always want to visit other Ghanaians in the South Bronx. The same parent told me that another parent from Ghana, living in the same neighborhood, had taken his son back to Ghana for fear of the group he was associating with; they worried

he might join a gang. Thus, both elite and non-elite had the same collective "rescue" idea for their children, facilitated by the Network Village.

GHANAIAN NETWORK VILLAGE IN NEW YORK CITY

The well-known adage "the village raises the child" is paramount to the Ghanaian immigrant group consciousness. Hence, the Ghanaian Network Village is a name I give for this form of imagined diasporic community to describe the structure and function of relationships within the Ghanaian communities of NYC. These relationships emerge from the desire of Ghanaian immigrants to meet their needs in their new environment, as will be discussed later (Arthur 2000). At the micro level, the relationships are practiced within the confines of the family and extended families, and within ethnic, religious, and political organizations. Even though Ghanaians are not living in one particular enclave in the Bronx, they are very well connected and living in a very structured way through their ethnic and religious organizations. They form networks of relationships, alliances, and groups, which involve various intra-relationships and interrelationships, interconnectedness, and communication (Abdi 2015; Coe 2016, 2017; Arthur 2008). These forms of networks enhance and maintain communal responsibilities, cultural activities, and celebrations among them. I observed that church groups organized fundraisers for events, such as weddings, and to take their deceased members back to Ghana for burial. I attended birthday and naming ceremonies, New Year celebrations, and parties to welcome newcomers.

Thus, the Network Village also provides a sense of identity, community, shelter, brotherhood, and support. One of the parents, Kwabena, said that if he made a loud cry for help in his language, Twi, along the Grand Concourse, one of the avenues with many Ghanaian shops, he was sure someone would respond to assist him and take him home. When one parent explained the reasons why she goes to a Ghanaian church, she first complained that everybody was in everyone's business, and sometimes there is gossip; but she was also quick to emphasize that she goes there as a form of social security. She said if "I die right now" the Ghanaian church would make sure her body is taken for burial in Ghana. She indicated that if she attended an American church, they would just pray for her and send her family flowers.

In the NYC Ghanaian community, as noted, connections are forged mainly through interactions within ethnic organizations, churches, mosques, businesses, and social clubs. This happens to such an extent that in some of these settings, any non-Ghanaian would actually feel like an outsider because the traditions, customs, and language in these group settings are culturally Ghanaian. For example, during ethnic organization meetings, Ghanaians speak

their own ethnic languages/dialects—even some other Ghanaians who do not come from that particular ethnic group may not understand what is being said. Thus, within these backdrops, Ghanaian immigrants and their families have formed a village of their own through networks.

Living all over the Bronx, instead of in a concentrated area, may create the illusion of isolation, even if they live in a building with a few other Ghanaian families. In reality, they are very interconnected with other Ghanaians in the Bronx community and in the other boroughs of NYC. Like a village, they interact, communicate, share information, help each other, and are aware of what other Ghanaians are doing in the United States and back in Ghana. This is facilitated by phones, the Internet, a convenient and fast transport system in NYC, and a more favorable economic status than they had in their home country. With modern, advanced technology, they aren't even isolated from family and friends in Ghana. One parent discussed with me how she invited people to her home to attend her sister's burial ceremony in Ghana via Skype. Her legal papers had not been processed, limiting her mobility. I heard many similar stories about weddings, birthday parties, graduations, and just video chats via WhatsApp and other computer and phone apps.

Ghanaians formed the Village Network as an adaptive strategy to view and interact with their new environment (Abdi 2015; Feldman-Savelsberg 2016), but mostly as a means to meet their specific needs, including the need to financially support relatives. The Ghanaians included in this study share the economic benefits of their migratory experiences with their entire extended families across borders. Though most parents complained to me about the continual stress they experience through financially assisting relatives—and the high demands placed on them by these same relatives to keep sending money—they still persist in sending remittances.

For some families in Ghana, the remittances from relatives in the United States are their main source of income. One of the parents attending the mosque I visited told me he sends $100 every month to his polygamous father to help support his family in Ghana. While seeing me off at a train station in the Bronx, he lamented how he thought age was catching up with him, and he had no children to show to his family. Though working in NYC, he had requested that his parents find him a wife through arranged marriage. However, he could not travel, as he was waiting for his papers (Green Card) to go through. Seven years later, I met him with his young wife and two boys, who he takes to mosque for madrasa in NYC and to visit family in Ghana. When I met them, the boys had just returned from Ghana and looked very excited to be united with other students in the mosque.

In addition to financially supporting extended family members, many Ghanaian immigrants also donate to community development projects in Ghana. In doing so, they become agents of societal change in their home
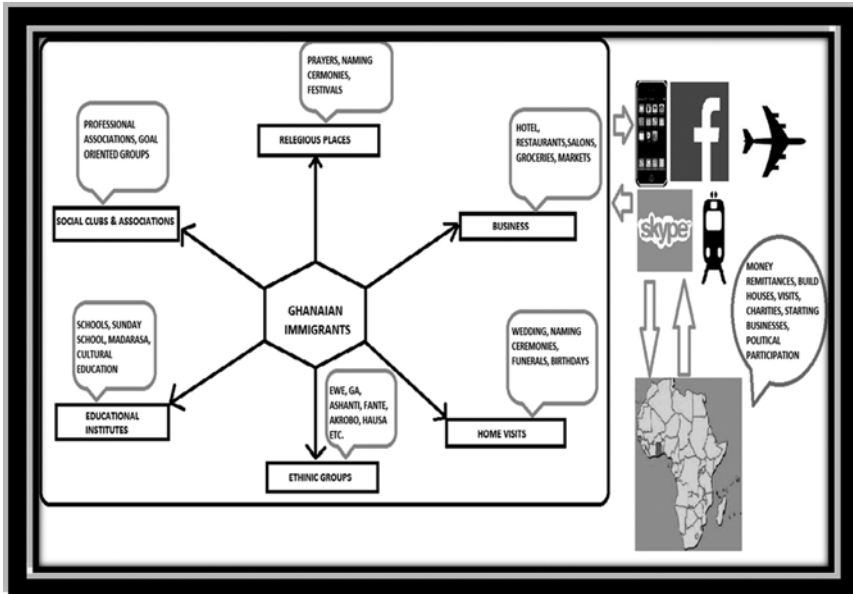
Figure 1.1 The Ghanaian Network Village. *Source*: Self-generated by author using research data.

countries, sharing NYC's way of life with people back home. According to Arthur (2000), they are both socially and economically linked to Ghana and would probably return if political and economic conditions improved. Most of them have built, or long to build, a house in Ghana (Coe 2016). According to the Migration Policy Institute (2015), in 2012, Ghanaian immigrants in the United States remitted $151 million to Ghana. Thus, a majority of Ghanaian parents, both elite and non-elite, are involved in these close-knit networks, as they get involved in their transnational lives by constantly communicating and sending remittances back home (see Figure 1.1).

Transnational and Racial Identity

Social scientists who have studied the formation of ethnic networks, such as the Ghanaian Village Network (Caarls and de Valk 2017; Dankyi, Mazzucato, and Manuh 2017; Feldman-Savelsberg 2016), have argued that they form mainly for two reasons. One is as a response to the country of destination's challenges, including discrimination and prejudice against foreigners in the new country (Arthur 2000, 2008). For example, the United States is viewed as a country with a history of racism where phenotypical attributes play a role in how one is treated (Portes and Rumbaut 2005; Waters and

Escbach 1995; Ogbu 1994). Recent immigrants could be at greater exposure to this predicament—most current post-1965 immigrant communities are themselves an amalgam of races and cultural identities that are perceived to be increasingly nonwhite (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). They are migrating from Asia, South America, Africa, and the West Indies. Arthur (2000) discussed African immigrants' identities in the United States in terms of the African immigrants' coping techniques and strategies against racial profiling—their strata is associated with low socioeconomic status, poor academic performance, and residence in inner-city neighborhoods. He emphasized that by stressing their identity as that of sojourners, they endeavor to insulate themselves against the racial discrimination and stereotypes that many "blacks" experience. This negotiation of their distinctiveness is even more prominent among first-generation parents who still have contact with and make constant references to their home countries (Arthur 2000).

According to Arthur (2000, 2008) and Gibson (1998), when it comes to identity, Ghanaian immigrants are likely to live dual lives as a result of their strong bonds with extended families. Similar to other African immigrants, they can be acculturated by incorporating some of the views, values, and beliefs of the United States, but not assimilated—that is, they do not tend to abandon their own way of life in favor of the dominant group. Arthur (2000) states that "the Africans engage the host selectively, confining their activities to carefully constructed zones, mainly educational and economic, that are vital for their survival in this country" (3). The same author argues that

> coming from countries where blacks are in the majority and control every aspect of social organization, the immigrants approach the black and white racial divide with extreme caution, sometimes disengaged, distanced, and reluctant to participate fully in the affairs of the host society. At home, the major sources of inter-group conflict are ethnic differences. In the United States, they are confronted with racial categorization and its economic and cultural results. Thus, for a large number of African immigrants, the status that they attempt to claim vis-à-vis the dominant society is that of a "foreigner." (3–4)

The second reason for the formation of ethnic networks and identities, as mentioned earlier in the chapter, emanates from the need to maintain ties with their home countries and to help new immigrants curb their nostalgic feelings (Uwakweh, Rotich, and Okpala 2014). As for the Ghanaian immigrant parents, they tend to form these networks for both of these reasons.

To that end, Ghanaian immigrants not only confront the challenging new contexts from the US government and the greater society that is as heterogeneous as that of their own, but they also embrace a well-developed set of networks and relationships made by previous immigrants from their home country. Understanding these networks aids in knowing what aspects of the

culture are persisted, maintained, or discarded. The values, standards of education, moral codes, and perceptions that emerge from their experiences are important in their contacts with the new cultures in New York (Gibson 1988; Zhou and Bankston 1998).

Transnational Lives

Transnational lives have permeated current immigration literature, since many new immigrants sustain links and networks of communication to their homeland (Abdi 2015; Coe 2015; Paolo 2015; Mazzucato and Cebotari 2016). There are those who look at it as a new phenomenon and others who view it as one that has existed since time immemorial—or is at least as old as the history of migration to the United States (Dinnerstein et al. 2010). Bernard (2000)—however, emphasizes that the most important consideration is the type and magnitude of networks at different times in history, the impact these networks have had in facilitating immigrants' adaptation to new environments, and their influence on immigrants' lifestyles. It is, however, accelerated for contemporary immigrants due to technological advancements. According to Portes and Rumbaut (2001):

> A century ago, the trip to Italy took about two weeks, and more than a month elapsed between sending a letter home and receiving a reply. Today, immigrants can hop on a plane or make a telephone call to check out how things are going at home. (42)

In discussing transnational lives among contemporary immigrants, transnational scholar Peggy Levitt (2004) argues that living a transnational life in the twenty-first century is becoming the norm for most migrants. Her emphasis is that immigrants' cultural, political, economic, and religious activities will transcend national boundaries as immigrants plant their roots in two or more countries. She claims that these loyalties to both countries are not adversative.

Levitt's (2004) arguments parallel the experiences of most Ghanaian immigrants in NYC. The transnational lives of Ghanaian immigrants have accelerated due to advances in technology that allow for efficient communication between Ghana and the United States; distances have become shorter and travel less hazardous through affordable air travel. These factors further create transnational networks, such as the Ghanaian Network Village in NYC, which facilitate flow of information, materials, and culture between the two countries.

The level and intensity of transnational activities, as well as life experiences, differ for each immigrant community. According to Orozco and Fedewa (2005), Ghanaians have a higher level of transnational activity

compared with Mexicans. The most identified indicators include sending remittances, calling, visiting, starting a business in Ghana, building homes, investing in home banks, taking out loans, providing support for community development projects, and becoming involved in the politics of the countries (Coe 2016). In 2004, for example, the Ghanaian Central Bank is said to have processed an amount equivalent to 1 billion US dollars in remittances sent from Ghanaians living outside of Ghana; this number excludes money sent through informal ways (Orozco and Fedewa 2005). Most non-elite parents, though living in apartments, some even in project houses, have built houses in Ghana using their earnings in the United States. During one of the naming ceremonies (commonly referred to as the "outdooring ceremony") I attended in the Bronx, parents showcased their housing development projects in Ghana. Thus, though rooted in the United States, they maintain very strong ties to Ghana.

In conversations with one of the study participants, with whom I have been in contact since I started work in the Bronx, she frequently expresses how much she misses going back to Ghana. She has been living in NYC in a rent-controlled apartment, worked as a nurse aid, and is now seventy years old and retired. During her time in the United States, she built two houses in Ghana, and she keeps telling me that she wants to return to Ghana. However, like most Ghanaian parents that I interacted with of the same age, she was quick to mention that she will go to Ghana only during the winter, then come back to the United States during summer. She will have all her medical check-ups in the United States because US medical care is better than that in Ghana. She will also visit with friends, her two sons, and four grandchildren in the United States.

> In a study conducted by Orozco (2005a) that compared Ghanaian transnational lives in three countries—the United States, Germany, and the United Kingdom, the author states:
>
> Ghanaian Diaspora exhibits two key traits: First, Ghanaians are deeply transnational agents in the sense that their ties and obligations occur in both Ghana and their country of residence. Second, their attachment to the homeland is overly manifested not only in remittance sending, but also through concrete material objects: investment, the purchase of homes and giving. For example, half of Ghanaians have real estate obligations in Ghana, which itself is informed by various factors such as family, community and financial ties. (1)

This statement is relevant to what was found in the NYC Ghanaian community. Ghanaian immigrants cling to an imagined future in which they return home to Ghana. This imagined future may be the reason propelling many parents to maintain ties by engaging in activities back home in Ghana.

They act as symbols of their presence in the country as well as meet their extended family obligations (Arthur 2000; Orozco 2005a). A majority of the parents, both elite and non-elite, indicated that they had houses in Ghana and immediate family members (children, parents, brothers, and sisters) there, making it inevitable that they would communicate and maintain interactions, and eventually return.

These transnational activities and their economic benefits to both host and home countries have shaped policies for immigrants. These policies make it easier to navigate both countries, and I would emphasize, via the Network Village. In Ghana, as in other countries such as Mexico and the Dominican Republic, the government has recognized the political, social, and economic forces impacting their country and its diasporas. In the year 2000, Ghana instituted a dual citizenship policy and homecoming ceremonies for its diasporic population; the Dominican Republic has also instituted a similar citizenship policy. Cordero-Guzmán, Smith, and Grosfoguel (2001) point out that even Leonel Fernandez, a former president of the Dominican Republic, is a product of NYC public schools and holds a US Green Card.

When it comes to education in the United States, the Ghanaian parents' ideas of living transnational lives involves their children as well; they are familiarized and socialized to the material and cultural flow from Ghana through the food, dress, language, visits, and communication with relatives back in Ghana. Some of the children have sisters and brothers back in Ghana, as well as their extended families (Coe 2013). Understanding the dynamics of parents' lives in NYC helps unearth what informs their experiences, attitudes, views, and behaviors in NYC. Thus, arguably, Ghanaian parents are intertwined in these transnational social matrixes.

The Ghanaian Ethnic Organizations and Associations: Structure and Function

Ethnic organizations and associations play a large role in the Ghanaian Network Village in New York. After identifying the different organizations and associations that a majority of the Ghanaians are involved in, I classified them into six types: political, sociocultural, religious, work-related, common-cause, and business-oriented. These groups and their functions are elaborated as follows.

Political Groups

The NCOGA is one of the main political bodies, acting as a representative of and mouthpiece for the entire Ghanaian community in the United States. When it comes to influence, it is second only to the consulate office.

The NCOGA is an umbrella organization encompassing all ethnic groups in the Ghanaian community in NYC and the United States in general. This umbrella organization was initially organized to bring together and unite all of the ethnic groups in NYC. The organization had the following ethnic groups registered at the time of this study: Akan, Akyem, Asanteman, Brong Ahafo, Ga- Adangbe, Kpee, Kwahuman, New Juaben, Nzema, Akuapeman, United Volta, Ghanaian Association of Westchester, Yankasa, Ada Okorbi Akpe, and the Ghana veteran associations. These ethnic groups hail from ten regions in Ghana, indicating a higher representation of immigrants from all the regions, although the majority tend to be from the west coast and the central Ashanti region.

There are many organizations that are not registered with NCOGA; they do not attend meetings because their aims and objectives are different. However, the NCOGA mobilizes and encourages as many groups as possible to register. This is a self-sustaining organization funded by mandatory member contributions. These organizations are so strong and well-structured that one of the consulate officers I interviewed indicated that they make things easier for the consulate by reducing its workload. The NCOGA meets on the last Friday of the month to discuss issues arising within the organization and issues from various ethnic groups presented by their representatives.

Sociocultural groups

This category encompasses all ethnic organizations. They are brought together through shared geographic location back in Ghana and a common language, as well as common culture, history, and traditions. As examples: the Ashanti, who speak Twi, from the Ashanti region; the Ga, who speak Ga, from the Accra region; and the Ewe who speak the Ewe language—each of these groups has their own association. At the time of my fieldwork, ethnic associations had meetings every month at a building in Harlem, where all members discussed main issues to be addressed within each ethnic group. The Asanteman Association is the largest and oldest of all ethnic groups in NYC. This association started when a group of Asante Ghanaians came together to raise funds for a bereaved family, organize a funeral, and arrange for the burial in Ghana. They later realized that it was necessary to stick together in order to meet the specific needs of people in their group.

Religious Groups

This category includes groups formed and organized based on religious affiliations and beliefs. The most represented religions of participants of this study were Christianity and Islam. The Christian group is the most dynamic and diverse, consisting of Catholics, Presbyterians, SDA, Pentecostals, and

Baptists, to name just a few. These religious organizations work as complete institutions, supporting themselves through the contributions of members through tithes, offerings, and other donations from the elite.

Religious organizations, like many ethnic groups in the NCOGA, started as a means to address the spiritual, social, and economic needs of their members. Some members, after attending American sister churches (i.e., coming from a Catholic church in Ghana and joining an American Catholic congregation), realized that they needed to stick together for more than spiritual needs. These pioneers recognized that even though their spiritual needs were met by American churches, their cultural, social, and economic needs were not being addressed. Their transnational issues and needs differed from those of the natives with whom they worshiped. In order to fill this gap, some branched out and started their own Ghanaian churches, which were geared toward addressing many aspects of Ghanaians' lives in the United States. They stepped in to conduct ceremonies and provide support during different rites of passage; they helped members with immigration issues that could not be comprehended and addressed at a level that Ghanaian parents perceived as satisfactory.

Ghanaian culture permeates these religious organizations; it is common, therefore, to see Ghanaian churches and mosques where almost everything about them *is* Ghanaian: the priests and imams, the language spoken during services, and the clothing worn by members, all Ghanaian. Children are highly involved in religious organizations, and many parents travel long distances to bring their children to these settings. During a weekend visit to a mosque, for example, I observed parents dropping their children off there around 10:00 a.m. for madrasa. I asked the teachers at the mosques where children came from, and they said that they came from all over the five boroughs of NYC. There were others that drove in from New Jersey and Westchester County. The situation was the same for those attending Christian Sunday school, and for many other cultural organization meetings that children were engaged in.

In the Bronx, Ghanaian churches have increased to the extent that they are now forming other branches to cater to the growing congregation. For example, the SDA Church has started about ten branches in NYC and many more all over the United States and Canada. Some churches are actually overseen by their headquarters back in Ghana, that is, the Ghana Presbyterian Church.

It is useful to take a closer look at some of the churches, beginning with the Catholic Church. The main Catholic church building where Ghanaian immigrants attend is located on the main street in the Bronx where most Ghanaians reside, the Grand Concourse. According to the priest of this church, 200 to 300 Ghanaian church members attend services, with an average attendance of about 100 people each week. There are currently two priests from Ghana.

Some of the people first came to this church not knowing anybody; as soon as they arrived in New York, they looked for the church. The priest said:

> We then try to help in any way that we can, i.e., settling, work permits, papers, financial assistance, and employment. They have to introduce themselves as Catholics, and once that is established, then help begins. Those interested in the Catholic school are assisted. Those who seek jobs, ask for reference letters, we write for them and indicate that they are Catholics. In the church we do not put restrictions (on them); some people may be Catholics in Ghana and others may be interested . . . 95% of those that come to us were Catholics back in Ghana, so when they come they just join. The church is seen as a support group (i.e., during death, outdooring), and the church makes sure it is there. They have started a scholarship for children of immigrants, even for those that attend public school.

He noted that the greatest need of parents when they arrive is financial. The church leaders then sit with them and decide the amount of assistance to give.

Another church with many members in the Bronx is the SDA Church. In this church, the pastor indicated that the main goals of the church for Ghanaian immigrants are (1) encouraging spiritual growth for both parents and children; (2) providing a children's program, called Pathfinders, that educates children on spiritual matters and also inculcates Ghanaian values; (3) promoting a sense of community; and (4) helping newcomers find jobs and housing, as well as introducing them to other networks.

Pastor Kofi, a Ghanaian, picked me up from my apartment at ten o'clock one morning during my fieldwork. He told me I should call to remind him of our appointment since he could easily forget due to the number of telephone calls that he received every day from his church members. Our drive to his home was enriching, as we discussed his role as a pastor in one of the SDA churches in the Bronx. He said that he was organizing the church into small, manageable groups that can be responsible for taking care of each other. This is a form of power delegation. This pastor could then focus on those with extreme conditions and needs. "The most challenging thing for parents is getting settled," said Pastor Kofi. The following quote from Pastor Kofi explains that the church's role is to identify and help build the community based on its great commission found in the Bible (Matt. 28:19-20), with the mission of evangelism to win people to the church:

> The church recognizes the difficulty in settling. We try to recognize them; if they are SDAs they come to us hoping to be assisted. . . . Since helping is one of the evangelistic tools, we feel it is our duty to make sure such people get helped. . . . It is not our responsibility, but from our Christian point of view it is our responsibility. What makes it easy is to know that the person is from

your own background. This is also imperative, especially when you have an eye on increasing your membership. Over here the [American] society is more individualistic; back home we have a sense of community, whether that person is a Christian or not. Therefore, the church tends to help mostly Ghanaians, but it also helps other people.

Talking about the value of communal responsibility, he indicated that

Ghanaians are known to be very outgoing and welcome people to their homes. As a member of the church they know that the church can help them, the church is willing to share that responsibility. Some of the church responsibilities to the immigrants are (1) helping them get a job, (2) taking them to and from churches and other places to get documents, (3) giving them access to Ghanaian shops and markets, (4) [helping with] other cultural things they may be interested in, and (5) helping them choose communities that are safe.

Within the Ghanaian Pentecostal Church, congregation members informed me that they have so many members that they hold two services every Sunday—one service from 8:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. and one service from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. They have about three branches in the NYC area; some branches have even attracted other African and Caribbean members as well as African Americans. They learn about and draw members to their church by witnessing to them about the church; sometimes people find them by asking about the church. There are also church vans that pass through the Bronx with an address posted on them; people read the van signs and then come to the church.

Social Welfare Groups

Common-cause associations are organized around the need to come together to pursue a social welfare agenda and are built on prior relationships, such as graduates from the same institution back in Ghana who would like to help those in transition. These common-cause groups can also be formed of people with special needs who would only cater to the needs of their specific group, even though they are all from Ghana. One example of such organizations is the Ghanaian Veteran Association of NYC, which consists of retirees from the army and the police force in Ghana. There are also self-help groups that come together to share their resources and advise one another; this is where women's groups and youth groups come into play.

Business-Oriented Groups

The business-oriented groups are formed to offer economic development assistance. A good example of these groups is the Ghanaian Taxi Association, association in the Bronx, exclusively composed of Ghanaian taxi drivers.

They provide advice on how to run a business, help making connections, and, at times, financial capital. Meetings are every third Sunday of the month. This group has a leader whose role as president of the organization is to organize members, register the organization with NCOGA, and register the group as a nonprofit organization with the federal government. The organization has four committees: Welfare, Discipline, Entertainment, and Audit. Members of each committee meet before every monthly meeting. The reason for starting this organization was to take care of each other in times of distress (if someone is sick or has a dead relative) and to create opportunities for social activities, such as end-of-year parties, christenings, and Eid al-Fitr gatherings. When taxi drivers join, they are required to fill out registration forms, pay a $200 registration fee, continue paying a $20 monthly fee, and complete a six-month probation period to be eligible for benefits. Anyone who is a taxi driver and holds a NYC taxi driver's license is eligible to join. The leader who invited me to one of their meetings told me that as an organization they were building a cultural center for their children, and they had already purchased the property. They planned to use the center as a place to educate their children about Ghanaian culture and rent out some of the space for functions to generate revenue to run the center. Taxi drivers were also encouraged to have a house in Ghana within seven years of coming to the United States.

Occupational Associations

The category of occupational associations includes groups formed of individuals that share the same type of job. The most influential work-related groups were the lawyers' association, the doctors' association, and the nurses' association. The Association of Ghanaian Lawyers of America is one of the elite organizations, having as their motto: "Serving Our Community with Integrity." Their website, www.ghanalawyersusa.com as of July 2018, describes the organization as follows:

> The Association of Ghanaian Lawyers of America (AGLA) is made up of Ghanaian attorneys who practice law in the United States. It is governed by a three-member board of directors and a five-member executive board. (Ghanalayersusa, n.d.)
>
> The AGLA was incorporated in December 2008. AGLA hopes to galvanize Ghanaian attorneys in the US for their own professional benefit, to become the dominant link between the US and Ghana for the mutual benefit of both countries, and to advocate for the advancement of Ghana and Ghanaians in the US. . . . More fundamentally, we look forward to helping members of our community access and navigate the complex US legal system, and we welcome your thoughts and contributions on how we can make AGLA a more formidable association. (Agyeman, n.d.)

Their mission and statement is:

> The Association of Ghana Lawyers of America (AGLA) is set up to provide a
> forum for Ghanaian Lawyers in the United States to address matters relevant
> to their profession, to advocate and support the advancement of Ghana and its
> people while serving as a dominant link between Ghana and the United States.
> We serve and we give. (Ghanalayersusa n.d.)

While talking of their legal services, they emphasize:

> It is our objective to provide legal services to people who need legal help in our
> community as well as provide resources to Ghanaian attorneys in the United States.
> Contact our referral service if you need legal advice on any issue and we will be
> glad to link you up with an experienced attorney in the field. (Ghanalayersusa, n.d.)

The description of their mission and work as an elite Ghanaian community
in the United States is similar to the religious organizations and ethnic groups
already described, in that it expresses the desire to meet the specific needs
of Ghanaians in a new land as well as across the borders—a transnational
approach that fits into the experiences of Ghanaian transnational lives. Some
of these elite organizations play a distinct role in giving back to the commu-
nity by using their knowledge and experience to help non-elite parents who
may not be exposed to their area of expertise. AGLA is one of the groups
involved in educating Ghanaian parents regarding legal issues encountered in
the United States. Such issues include obtaining Green Cards and citizenship
within the United States for themselves and their children, and sometimes
advice on how to apply for Green Cards for extended family members back
in Ghana to join them in the United States. Those with student visas were
advised on how to protect their status and on how, if they wanted to remain in
the United States, they could transition to a variety of visa and work permits
before applying for citizenship. Working closely with NCOGA, they organize
and mobilize people to educate them and give them information on where to
go for help. This group of Ghanaian lawyers is especially capable of handling
Ghanaian issues because not only are they equipped with US knowledge,
but they are also transnational, dealing with issues that affect Ghanaians in
the United States and back in Ghana. These lawyers also know a variety of
Ghanaian ethnic languages; some speak Ewe, Ga, Twi, Hausa, and many
other languages spoken in the Ghanaian community. This gives parents the
confidence to express themselves in culturally appropriate ways.

> The Association of Ghanaian Lawyers of America is incorporated in New York
> as a domestic not-for-profit organization and is established for the purposes of

facilitating and improving the administration of justice both in Ghana and in the United States of America; serving the needs of members of the Ghanaian and American communities as a whole in their understanding of and access to law and the courts; and educating and assisting member attorneys and promoting the spirit of collegiality. (GhanaWeb, n.d.)

This transnational aspect of AGLA is a selling point to Ghanaians experiencing transnational lives. Their legal needs include help with issues of property back home, immigration documentation, Green Card issues, applications for citizenship, and issues of immigrant rights. These are the specific areas of the law covered by AGLA, as listed on their website and in the advertising brochure they distribute when reaching out to the Ghanaian community: immigration, divorce/family, personal injury, real estate, wills and trust probate, bankruptcy, worker's compensation, welfare benefits, social security, taxes, Medicaid/Medicare, employment discrimination, unemployment insurance, civil rights, business incorporation, and cooperate matters. While these elite give back to the community, they also use these opportunities to create markets for their services across the border—immigration issues and buying property in Ghana.

Elite and Non-Elite Interactions

The functions, structures, and memberships of these organizations and associations indicate a well-knit Ghanaian community in NYC where members, both elite and non-elite, congregate. Even though the elite tend to have associations that are exclusively elite (such as the lawyers', doctors', and nurses' associations), they are also found mingling among the non-elite when they participate in ethnic and religious groups. They play a major role as experts in guiding the community in legal, medical, and educational matters in the United States. They are invited as guest speakers and as experts to participate in Ghanaian points of aggregate, such as religious and ethnic group meetings and activities. The non-elite, who are mainly involved in ethnic organizations, religious organizations, and self-help groups, sometimes seek expertise and information from the elite, use their familiar structures and businesses, (i.e., for assistance with filing taxes, seeking medical help, and requesting legal advice).

The elites are also seen as role models for children to emulate. The names of successful members are mentioned in meetings where children get advised. I observed many instances during children's meetings in the churches, in the mosques, and at picnics when elites, like medical doctors and lawyers, were held up as examples of success in the United States.

Portes and Rumbaut (2001) wrote about the importance of having educated people in the immigrant community networks, indicating that it does not help if they do not come together as a community to assist and support each other. These authors also indicated that immigrant social networks are particularly important because they provide a unifying bond that protects parents from the unknown outside world and teaches them to collectively confront it. According to Gibson and Ogbu (1991), the privileged members of an ethnic group should interact with the underprivileged, not only by making occasional appearances or through distanced giving back to the community, but by associating with them. This helps in the social and economic mobility of the ethnic group as a whole.

Referring to immigrant networks, Gibson (1988) indicated that it is important to understand the level at which parents participate in these settings, as they influence their adaptation patterns as well as those of their children in school, a factor that needs to be analyzed in detail. The imams in one of the Ghanaian mosques indicated that when children come to the mosques, they interact with both the elite and non-elite within the same setting of believers. He also indicated that they select the madrasa teachers carefully, and one of the qualification is their level of education and occupation. One of the teachers was a lawyer with a master's degree and some PhD classes.

For one SDA Church's yearly celebration of Education Day/Sabbath, they often invited the most educated members of the community to speak. I attended one of these celebrations, at which a Ghanaian doctor and his family were the honored guest speakers. The lady who took me to church that day told me the whole history of the doctor and his wife—how they were very highly educated, and how they set a good example as role models for the youth in church. While I listened to the long elaboration of experiences and hard work that led to their status and afforded them a house in an affluent neighborhood, my ears pricked up when she mentioned that their daughter had been accepted to several Ivy League schools. That afternoon I stayed to listen as the daughter was given time to speak to the youth about her experiences in school and how she was able to succeed and be accepted to prestigious schools.

Regardless of status, Ghanaians mostly support each other during communal activities such as funerals and weddings, with higher expectations for elites to donate more, give better presents, and respond to a community call to give back, sometimes in exchange for special recognition during community gatherings. During my fieldwork, I heard that one of the Ghanaian mosques was bought for and donated to the community by a Ghanaian medical doctor. Returning back in summer 2017, I learned that one other mosque has been purchased by a Muslim woman who works as a nurse. They invite this nurse to speak to the girls in the mosque during the madrasa. The imam in one of

the mosques said to me, "I wish you were a Muslim so that the girls can have more examples of higher education."

CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed how the Ghanaian Network Village is structured and organized. It examined the benefits enjoyed by immigrants who are part of the whole transnational system, and how the Network Village demonstrates intentional practices and the everyday reproduction of community organizing; the ways of living and behaving perpetuated from Ghana and in NYC. Understanding the Network Village is important to articulating immigrants' adaptation processes, that of their children, and for them as parents, as they are introduced to the new country. It is within these network structures and processes that immigrants produce and reproduce ideas of success or failure in socioeconomic mobility, make adjustments in the ways they construct their identity, and how they raise their children. Values and appropriate behaviors are forged for their children to survive the tides of the American culture and to prepare them for future roles in a transnational world.

The next couple of chapters will delve into how the transnational aspects of the Network Village provide a framework for comparisons and evaluations of NYC schools. Furthermore, the discussion examines the contrast between values taught to children within the Network Village and those acquired at school and how the Network Village is utilized by Ghanaian parents as a buffer and training tool. Additionally, the relationship between values taught to children within the Network Village and academic achievement will be analyzed. But first, to have a wholistic picture, let us look at the Ghanaian's histories and trajectories to NYC.

Ghanaian Transnational Migrants' Histories and Trajectories

The backgrounds of Ghanaian immigrants contribute to inform current social and economic complexities among transnational migrants (Coe and Parin 2017; Cole 2014; Paolo 2015; Karen 2015). Hence, we will look at the Ghanaian immigrants' historical, geographical, political, economic, educational, and sociocultural contexts. Also imperative are the reasons why Ghanaians migrate to NYC, the process of immigration, their reasons for staying in NYC, and Ghanaians' locations in NYC. Thus, I provide backgrounds and vantage points for understanding Ghanaian-born immigrant parents' historical trajectories, their economic status, ethnic differences, and their incorporation into NYC's neighborhoods. Similarly, immigration explanations, specifically focusing on the country of Ghana within the sub-Saharan context, its geographic location, and demographics will provide a more holistic image. Consequently, I will also, within these contexts, expose the reasons for migration, as well as the political and economic dynamics as they help explain the formation of the elite class and economic inequalities in Ghana within postcolonial debates.

IMMIGRATION EXPLANATIONS

Several factors contribute to population movements from one location to another (Abdi 2015; Feldman-Savelsberg 2016). One of the main factors discussed in immigration literature pertaining to international migrations is favorable conditions elsewhere that entice immigrants to leave unfavorable situations—those less conducive to economic, social, and political development (Gaibazzi 2015). These situations are often referred to as the "pull and push factors." With globalization of the world economy, new standards of

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living have emerged and are known worldwide via television, movies, and the internet, making it easier for people to compare their personal status to that of people in other countries. For instance, a medical doctor in one developing country compares his or her salary scale to what an equivalently trained doctor in a developed country earns and finds his or her salary wanting. The desire to get the full value of their qualifications as defined in other countries could motivate the person to migrate. Such incentives can activate individual agencies, which are further assisted by government policies that favor immigration in both the sending and receiving countries.

Once a sizable immigrant group is formed in the receiving country, and networks and communication within the two countries are set in motion, scholars (Massey 1990) argue that immigration becomes almost irresistible; people continually move between the two countries, even when conditions change for the better in the home country. This network hypothesis adds a social capital dynamic and challenges the theory that economics is the primary factor in immigrants' cost-benefit analysis for migrating. For the Ghanaian immigrants in NYC, I posit that their immigration experiences result from a confluence of many factors, ranging from political to economic, but their level of immigration has been especially impacted by their neat and highly organized social networks that transverse borders between Ghana and the United States. The Ghanaian Network Village plays a major role in the migration, settlement, and survival of Ghanaian migrants. Similar to the networks of immigrants from other countries (Abdi 2015; Gaibazzi 2015; Arthur 2000; Falicov 2007; Fine-Dare and Rubenstein 2009; Rodriguez 2009), the Ghanaian networks facilitate migration through sharing of information, funding for transportation, provision of temporary housing, and introduction to a new network of friends, relatives, and other Ghanaians in NYC.

Sub-Saharan Africa

In NYC, as well as in the rest of the United States, immigrants from all African nations tend to be lumped together as blacks, African immigrants, or Africans, giving a false perception of homogenous culture, language, and politics. The reality of course is that Africa, similar to Europe, Asia, and the Americas, is a highly diverse continent of different nationalities, languages, cultures, and political structures (Mazrui 1998; Uwakweh, Rotich, and Okpala 2014). Media outlets in the United States tend to highlight negative news stories coming out of Africa, thus portraying the entire African continent as a politically unstable, war-torn, poverty-stricken, disease-infested place (Keim and Somerville 2017). While some of these issues affect a number of countries in Africa, especially exemplified by the violence and conflict in some countries during the 1980s and 1990s (Abdi 2015; Dinnerstein, Nichols, and

Reimers 2010), including Somalia, Sudan, Liberia, Rwanda, Burundi, and Sierra Leone (Mamdani 2001, 2009; Honwana 2002; Murphy 2004), some countries have enjoyed democratic, relatively stable political systems in their postcolonial regimes. Additionally, although the gap between the poor and rich is wider than in most developed countries, there are those in Africa who benefit from a highly elite status that could be comparable to many in developed countries, as this chapter will later reveal (Keim and Somerville 2017).

Given this variability across the African continent, it is not surprising that reasons for migrating also vary, ranging from poverty, war, economic hardship, and political insecurity to just ventures into greener pastures. Therefore, they may arrive in NYC either as refugees, mourning the loss of their past lives and seeking assistance, or as immigrants motivated by economic factors and with plans to maintain ties to their countries of origin. Many African immigrants lead transnational lives spanning across the border, as in the case of Ghanaians in NYC (Caarls and de Valk 2017; Gaibazzi 2015; Mazzucato, Schans, Caarls, and Beauchemin 2015).

Africa has fifty-four countries. Each country may consist of fifty to seventy different ethnic groups, and each country has its own set of socioeconomic statuses and practices. These countries also have different histories influencing their current status and populace experiences. For example, a closer look at colonial history and political organization reveals differentiations in governance, cultural practices, and linguistic affiliations (Mazrui 1998). Politically, Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, and Uganda were under the British; Mozambique and Angola were under Portuguese rule; Mali, Togo, Guinea, and Tunisia were under French rule; and Sierra Leone experienced dominance of both the British and the French (Mazrui 1998). After independence, these countries took different economic and political development paths. Some countries' political sectors evolved into war-torn zones, such as in Somalia, Rwanda, Sudan, Sierra Leone, and Liberia, sending refugees to neighboring countries and abroad. Other countries have enjoyed significant periods of economic and political stability, exemplified by Kenya, Tanzania, and Ghana (Abdi 2015; Keim and Somerville 2017; Mamdani 2001, 2009; Honwana 2002; Murphy 2004).

Culturally, the European colonials left a legacy of their languages, religions, and educational systems in each country they governed. These factors influenced the current national languages and cultures, especially with the incorporation of new religions into traditional cultures. These almost hegemonic influences and changes, which were, to a large extent, different from pre-colonial ethnic affiliations, were a unifying force that fostered a sense of nationalism among the different ethnic groups (Cohen and Middleton 1970; Hodgkins 1956; Mazrui and Mazrui 1998). Each of these countries took their colonizer's language and made it the official national language,

perpetuated mostly through education in schools as a medium of instruction. These languages have remained instrumental to instruction in schools, business transactions, and communications between different ethnic groups. In each country, then, there emerged a national language for everybody and ethnic languages and practices for distinctive groups, forging a sense of unity in diversity.

For my research, these differing language affiliations and cultural backgrounds are important because they define immigrant parents' cultural, social, economic, and symbolic ideas. In turn, those ideas affect acculturation processes for immigrant children and inform parents' views of schooling. For example, those from English-speaking countries have an advantage in terms of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1990) in the sense that they understand and speak English, compared to those who come from French or Portuguese backgrounds. If teachers and school administrators better understood these cultural differences, it could help parents' incorporation into the school system and their children's placement in NYC public schools. Asking questions such as "Which country do you come from?" "What is the national language in your country?" or "Why did you migrate?" could give teachers better insight. This would be based on the assumption that teachers are also equipped with the knowledge that English has undergone evolutions in different parts of the world and would be conscious to guard against linguicism as children speak in their different accents, at least initially (Obiakor and Afoloyam 2007).

The Window of Ghana

Highlighting the historical, cultural, and economic differences of African immigrant parents and children could inform decisions on how to address their diverse educational needs and help to guard against stereotypes. The variations are important and require intensive inquiry. Given the enormity of that task, I have chosen to focus on the country of Ghana as a window for understanding others, including some of the sub-Saharan African countries. This focus does not in any way equate all African countries to Ghana, but it could spur more researchers to focus on sub-Saharan African immigrants and to study how they adapt to their new lives.

My concentration on Ghana and its diaspora stems from my broader interest in the study of Africa as a continent and its larger diaspora, including the issues and debates that emanate from scholars attempting to understand and explain what shaped its current political, economic, and social positionalities. Ghana is particularly interesting because it spearheaded pre-colonial trans-Saharan trade and was the first African country to gain its independence from colonial government and experienced a peaceful transfer of power.

In the year 2000, Ghana instituted dual citizenship for its diasporic community. This dual citizenship is not only for Ghanaians abroad; the Ghanaian government is also taking the first steps to allow a return to Ghana for African Americans and other blacks from the West Indies, as well as providing opportunities for them to participate in economic development and property ownership. These pioneering initiatives, outcomes, perpetuations, and replications by other African countries have been one of my interests. Through my interactions with Ghanaians, and by learning about their increasing numbers in NYC, my curiosity was piqued, especially when it came to understanding how well they incorporated into NYC's multicultural settings. While there are a number of other African immigrant groups (i.e., from Nigeria, Senegal, Zambia, Togo, and Mali), Ghanaians' past history, that of taking many first steps, motivated my choice. By looking keenly at this immigrant group, I hope to unearth their experiences and to use this study as a springboard to research other African immigrants. Understanding their historical trajectories to NYC leads to a better understanding of their experiences and structures of meanings.

Demographics and Geography

According to World Bank country facts (2018), Ghana has a population of approximately 29.6 million people. The country has more than seventy ethnic groups; among them are the Ashanti, Fante, Kwahu, Akuapem, Nzema, Bono, Ga, Adambe, Ada, Krobo, Guan, Hausa, Fulani, and Zabarera. There are three main religions: Christianity, Islam, and African traditional religion. Christianity is predominantly in the southern region, and Islam dominates in the north.

Ghana is a country in West Africa, located on the Atlantic coast. It is bordered on the west by Cote d'Ivoire, on the north by Burkina Faso, on the east by Togo, and on the south by the Atlantic Ocean. It has ten regions: Greater Accra, Central, Eastern, Western, Ashanti, Northern, Upper East, Upper West, Volta, and Brong Ahafo. These administrative regions are further grouped into two geographic regions, the northern and southern regions. This division into two regions portrays and corresponds to a disparity in economic development and educational attainment as well as differences in religious affiliation. The southern region is more economically and educationally developed. The north has fewer developed areas (Arthur 1991). This disparity was born from the history, geography, and climate of the areas.

The British in Ghana, as in other countries, occupied, settled, and concentrated in areas where there were sufficient agricultural resources, mineral deposits, and favorable climates (Arthur 1991). In Kenya, the British settled mostly in the central and Rift Valley provinces; in Uganda they settled mostly

in the south; in Tanzania they settled in rich agricultural areas. Raw materials and agricultural products required in European industries also determined where Europeans settled. Favorable conditions for colonization in Ghana existed mainly in the southern region, predominantly the Cape Coast and "the cocoa producing areas of Ashanti and Brong-Ahafo" (Arthur 1991, 71). The Ashanti region was also the site of gold mining. To facilitate transportation and communication within the country and with Britain, they built up infrastructure and communication systems: roads, schools, hospitals, and other governmental and social amenities. Northern Ghana, with ecological conditions characterized by semiarid savanna vegetation and hinterland, was of no interest to Europeans. Therefore, minimal development or modernization occurred there, and the people living there were systematically marginalized over the years.

In Ghana, missionary and government schools, such as Achimota, were established, followed by colleges and universities, most of them concentrated in the European settlement areas of the country. Students from these privileged regions were among the first to attend school, and some even went for further studies abroad, among them Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana. Although Ghanaian immigrants in NYC come from almost all parts of Ghana, the majority hail from the privileged southern regions—most belong to the Akans and Ga-speaking people.

Contemporary Reasons for Migration and Movement of People

In order to fully understand contemporary immigration of Ghanaians to NYC, the historical background of migration in the West African region is essential. In the past, there have been many movements of people across and within countries in Africa. Trade, warfare, nomadic-pastoralist subsistence patterns, and religious promotion facilitated these movements (Gaibazzi 2015; Berry 1993; Kessides 2007; Murphy 2004; Pottier1998; Richards 1998). Before the establishment of territorial boundaries by the British colonial administration, services and people moved freely without limitations (Pottier 1998; Arthur 2000, 2008). Historians have recorded the movement of people long before colonial conquest (Cooper 1979; Crowder and Adjayi 1972; Dunn 1989; Walter 1982); these movements were basically facilitated by overpopulation, wars, famine, trade, and religious commissions of expansion. Ghanaians, and Africans at large, have had a history of people moving as nomads, agricultural laborers, miners, fishermen, and other occupations. The Fulani are an example of the pastoralists who roamed West Africa in search of pasture and water. The Hausa did so for trade (Dunn 1989; Walter 1982).

The trans-Saharan trade route, which crisscrossed northwest Africa, supported constant movement of people, goods, and services, including

slaves, ivory, gold, and salt (Arthur 1991). Caravans of camels were the main mode of transportation, with intermediaries posted along the route for protection and direction (Crowder and Adjayi 1972; Dunn 1989). Trips were seasonal, took many days, and exposed travelers to hazardous conditions.

These trade movements date to prehistoric times but were predominantly noticeable between the eighth and sixteenth centuries. Trade facilitated the rise of African empires and kingdoms, such as the kingdoms of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai, each of which controlled their own trade routes. The arrival of Europeans, beginning in the fifteenth century, challenged traditional trade and introduced another facet of trade and movements: the international transatlantic slave trade.

Initiation of the slave trade is very important to this study because Gibson and Ogbu (1991) pinpoint the beginnings of involuntary immigration to this time period. The category of involuntary immigrant is later differentiated in the United States from contemporary voluntary immigrants, another category of post-independence immigrant who chose to move to the United States. From the period between the fifteenth and nineteenth century, it is estimated that around 12 million people were taken as slaves from Africa across the Atlantic Ocean to different places in the Western Hemisphere. The United States was one of those destinations with a need for agricultural and domestic workers, especially in the Southern States.

Influenced by industrialization in the West and the rise of nationalism and philanthropic movements, the transatlantic slave trade was halted by the 1850s. Europeans shifted their interests to the colonies in response to a need for raw materials to be used in industries abroad (Walter 1982; Hill 1963). In Ghana's southern region, gold mining in the Gold Coast area, cocoa farming in the Ashanti regions, emergence of the cash economy, discovery of minerals, and the introduction of cash crops all enticed many people to move to these "greener pastures." Most immigrant workers in southern Ghana came from the marginalized north.

After independence in 1957, as with most other African countries, Ghana's economy became predominantly agriculturally based. The unreliability and fluctuations of prices for cash crops in world markets that followed were frustrating to many people; white-collar jobs in the big cities of Accra and Kumasi became an attraction for the masses. Scholars writing about African countries think that the economic dilemmas facing them can be traced back to the overconcentration of political and economic development in the urban areas, which left the rural sections impoverished. The rural people were then forced not only to migrate to bigger cities but, whenever necessary, to move out of the country (Ake 1996; Bond and Gibson 2002; Schech and Alwy 2004; Vavrus 2003).

Arthur (1991) also argues that

> the introduction of Christianity and Western education created new sets of aspirations which could only be satisfied in the urban areas . . . the skills which it taught and the attitudes . . . were largely inappropriate to rural village and agricultural life. (70)

People, from a very young age, move to join their families working in the city and to go to high school boarding schools, colleges, and universities. The centralization of government social amenities, especially hospitals and schools, ensures that one has to travel from one rural area to another, from rural to urban, and urban to urban. This is particularly the case for those who migrate from the north to the south, especially students, as they seek access to services and facilities that are unavailable in their home region.

The growth of industries and discovery of oil and minerals in neighboring countries created economic opportunities and facilitated more international movement. For example, many Ghanaians in the 1970s migrated to Nigeria, where the economy was considered better due to the oil boom (Shani 2010).

Obviously, movement of Ghanaian people and other Africans is not a new phenomenon; it has simply become increasingly international (Arthur 2000; Cliffe 1978; Jack 1971) through the past century, and it has become easier and easier as technology has advanced. Colonial development of roads and motorized means of transportation shortened travel times and reduced hazardous conditions (Adepoju 2005; Arthur 1991) within Ghana and surrounding nations. The advent of safe, affordable air travel has extended opportunities for immigrants to cross oceans. Ghanaians' migration to NYC is, therefore, another act of movement in search of greener pastures—one of the dominant features in their collective history. Settling in NYC could be an end result of step migration from rural to urban, to other countries in Africa and abroad, and finally to the United States. Or, once in the United States, they may move from one city to another before finally settling in one location (Abdi 2015; Appadurai 1991; Arthur 2000; Orosco 2005; Stoller 2000, 2001). They continue to compare their circumstances to others and move between states and cities for the best economic conditions based on such factors as job availability, wages, and cost of living, or to be near people they know.

For example, Jane Araba,[1] a fifty-nine-year-old widow, moved from Ghana through Togo on her way to Nigeria during the oil boom of the 1970s. She lived and worked there for fifteen years, even becoming the owner of a transportation company. When the economy in Nigeria collapsed, she went back to Ghana, only to realize that she could not economically support her three children there. She then migrated to the United States through a Green Card Lottery. In the United States, she first lived in Minnesota then moved to

NYC for better economic prospects. As another example, a barber working in one of the hair salons I frequented during my fieldwork had lived in Greece for ten years before he came to NYC.

Moving to the United States is associated with economic stability. James Akoto, a parent I interviewed, stated that "the name itself is prestigious. There are also economic interests . . . we are all economic refugees; many people are here for money and a good education, they come in search of a good life. You get the point." When talking about the political situation back in Ghana, he said:

> The people entrusted with power have betrayed the masses; the distribution of the national cake is not equal. This has brought about polarization of the society . . . bad governance which leads to intolerable economic hardships which provided a spark for people to leave and I personally see they are justified. You cannot keep telling people to sacrifice when their leaders do not sacrifice.

During discussions with Ghanaian parents about reasons for migrating to the United States, three factors were mentioned most: (1) political, (2) economic, and (3) educational. One such discussion occurred on a Sunday morning at a Ghanaian church that I visited in Manhattan. I arrived before the services began and found a group of about ten people who came early to prepare for church services by arranging chairs and setting up the stage. They had just finished when I walked in. As usual, they asked me how my research was progressing. After explaining my progress, the discussion moved to the African economic conditions that force people to leave their countries. Although they mentioned political insecurity in other countries, such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Eritrea, Congo, and Sudan, as a main reason, they attributed Ghanaian immigration to economic instability propelled by poor leaders.

Economic and Political Factors: The Formation of Elite and Regional Inequalities

Colonialism introduced challenges in the political, cultural, and social arenas. The implementation of Western education in Ghana, similar to most African countries, challenged the preexisting sociocultural and political structures, creating new ways of regarding leadership, governing, and evaluating status. These transitions are covered by anthropology writers such as Bond (1976), Goody (1968), Foster (1974), Thomas (1974), Iddrisu (2002), Hill (1972), and Colson (1995).

One result of Western-style education was the emergence of a new group of elites based education level, mostly referred to in the literature as "intellectual elites" (Bond 1976, 1997; Foster 1974; Mamdani 1976; Mazrui 1978). The missionaries and British regime provided educational opportunities to

their allies, the local elites, the children of local elites, and other people needed to work in the British administration (Goody 1968; Foster 1974; Thomas 1974; Iddrisu 2002). In many parts of Africa, it was this first group of educated elites who mobilized the masses toward national independence (Bond 1976, 1997; Foster 1974). After independence in 1957, many of the government positions previously occupied by members of the European colonial government were taken over by the new African elites. This group of elites was made up of educated people who took advantage of schooling in the colonial era and thereafter (Bond 1976, 1997; Foster 1974; Ipensburg 1992; Schech and Alwy 2004).

The British had indirectly governed most African societies (Mamdani 1996) by using existing institutions, such as empowered traditional elites: chiefs, headmen, and guards. Though they wielded power over the masses under colonial rule, these leaders found their authority challenged in the wake of independence and nationalism (Bond 1976, 1997; Foster 1974). Over time, their positions were continually diminished, with little or no space in the new government.

The new government and institutions aped those of the Europeans, which used levels of education matched to different strata in hierarchical white-collar jobs. Traditional elites were eliminated in this way. Elite status gradually took the form of the educated under the new government and other sociocultural institutions. Education became a yardstick by which to measure economic success and social mobility as well as a mechanism for the production and reproduction of intellectual elites to fill white-collar jobs created by the British as they transferred political power (Salverda 2015).

Opportunities provided by proximity to educational resources, jobs, and networks created a clique of elites that ruled and governed the country (Salverda 2015). These structures have gone virtually unchallenged and continue to perpetuate themselves to date. The people located in areas with centralized amenities gain higher socioeconomic status, while the far-removed regions of the north and northeast continue to lag behind. This is why the majority of Ghanaians in NYC come from the southern part of Ghana.

It is argued that after independence in 1957, the new African nations, such as Ghana, overemphasized education in order to fill government posts left behind by the British, resulting in a proliferation of primary and secondary educational institutions, producing an educated mass that challenged job markets (Arthur 2000; Vavrus 2002). With time, there were not enough tertiary institutions to accommodate all the graduates from high school. Brought up to believe that education is the only viable means to social mobility, the postcolonial generation fixated on landing white-collar jobs by obtaining advanced education (Vavrus 2007; Arthur 1991). Students admitted to higher institutions and graduates from these higher institutions looked

for opportunities elsewhere; some went abroad for more education and the rest for jobs.

Other scholars augmenting this argument note that the reliance on agriculture, such as the growing of cocoa introduced in the mid- to late twentieth century as the main cash crop export, became disappointing because of price fluctuations in the world market, unreliable rainfall, and diseases, making educational investment a seemingly more reliable option. Again, this reinforced the overemphasis of education in a country lacking clear plans for job market growth (Vavrus 2007).

The first wave of emigration out of Ghana (pre-1980s) was basically composed of a very educated group that migrated to the countries of their former colonial administrators (Arthur 2000). Although the original students were sent abroad by the government for further studies, equipped with an ideology of nation building—leaving for education then going back home to build the nation—many people can now stay wherever they want and develop their nation within the Network Village from any distance. This is facilitated by the transnational lifestyles discussed in chapter 1. At this point, apart from a few people sent by the colonial government, the first wave of immigrants to the United States came after independence and consisted of a very highly educated group, the intellectual elites (Uwakweh, Rotich, and Okpala 2014).

Ghanaian Migration Waves to the United States

Before the colonial period, only a few children from merchant families were taken abroad to learn the trade expertise that Western countries possessed. Most were trained in business recordkeeping, and the majority returned home to the west coast. During the colonial period, another, larger wave of students was sent abroad, mainly to the colonial administrators' countries. The first wave of immigrants to the United States was made up of students seeking advanced education who later decided to stay. The highest level of immigration to the United States occurred in the 1980s and 1990s and has continued to increase ever since (Uwakweh, Rotich, and Okpala 2014). Dinnerstein et al. (2010) indicates that

> the increases from Africa became noticeable after 1980s . . . the first Africans to arrive were men who studied at American colleges and universities like other immigrants, the students found jobs and sent for their families in Africa or sent money home or both. (277)

In Ghana, the professionals mostly known as skilled workers were the first to leave. Their migration to the United States has continued to accelerate but increased significantly in the 1990s. The highest number of Ghanaian

immigrants came in 1980s, and by the 1990s an estimated number of two to four million people emigrated out of Ghana. This is about 20 percent of the approximated 29.6 million Ghanaians. This timeline coincides with the expulsion of many unskilled Ghanaian workers from Nigeria during a period when the Ghanaian economy, which was then almost crumbling, could not accommodate them (Arthur 1991). The option to leave the country for the United States and Europe became an attraction to many as a way to improve their economic status and that of their extended families. These movements were accelerated by four things: the networks established by a small minority who were already in the United States; family unification immigration policies; the Green Card Lottery enacted in 1990 laws (which favored African immigrants by providing more slots: 20,000 out of the 55,000 worldwide positions advertised); and space for students to migrate for advanced studies (Dinnerstein et al. 2010; Gaibazzi 2015; Uwakweh, Rotich, and Okpala 2014).

By the mid-1990s African immigrants, mostly from sub-Saharan Africa, were entering at the rate of more than 30,000 annually, and they were usually family members of those who had gone before. According the Pew Research Center, Anderson (2017) states that "there were 2.1 million African immigrants living in the United States in 2015, up from 881,000 in 2000 and a substantial increase from 1970 when the U.S. was home to only 80,000 foreign-born Africans. They accounted for 4.8% of the U.S. immigrant population in 2015, up from 0.8% in 1970."

Process of Immigration to New York City

NYC attracts the highest number of African immigrants, especially those from Ghana. In addition, Ghanaians are found in large cities such as Washington, DC, Chicago, Baltimore, Los Angeles, and Boston.

Most legal Ghanaian immigrants enter the United States through a highly selective process that requires specific levels of education and economic status. This merit-based selection system is controlled by the gate-keeping procedures of the American embassy. One of the officials in the Ghanaian consulate, commenting about a special group of professionals, indicated that

> you have other people, the highly restrictive professional group like the medical doctors and the nurses; they often come through intergovernmental agreements, between for example the Ministry of Health and Human Services [the ministry of health and human services from Ghana and the employing organizations in the United States.]. The US Government will define the area where they want nurses capable of doing . . . this kind of group [meaning nurses specialized in areas needed in the United States], their visa is organized through formal diplomatic channels.

Other Ghanaians enter using various visas. Some do so with an F1 Visa (a student visa with independent sponsorship), and others with J1 Visas (students sponsored by the government or an organization, with obligations attached to the sponsorship, such as returning to their country immediately after graduation). Visa holders' dependents (spouses and children) then enter on F2 and J2 Visas, respectively. Some enter the United States as diplomats or visitors and overstay their travel visas. Those who stay illegally are constantly in fear of being repatriated back to their countries (Arthur 2000, 2008).

El-haldg Abdi Kojo, a university professor and mosque madrasa teacher in the Bronx, and James Kofi, a pastor with the SDA Church, both elite parents mentioned in chapter 1, entered the United States as students with F1 visas. Most of the elite parents, such as those who came for schooling, came through admission to colleges in the United States. They immigrated after completing high school or sometimes even after receiving their first postsecondary degree. About 70 percent of the elites in my sample arrived with at least a high school diploma. Acquiring a student visa is easier and more formal than other means because the school may actually work with the embassy to facilitate processing (Arthur 2000; Uwakweh, Rotich, and Okpala 2014). The non-elite parents in the focus families, like Mary Adwoa, Ahmed Kobena, Jane Adzo, Peter Kwabena and Abdul Kobina, all migrated through the Green Card Lottery.

Some people who enter the United States as winners of the Green Card Lottery are allowed to live and work in the United States permanently. Most Ghanaian immigrants without a college degree enter through this method. Only one parent needs to have a high school diploma to apply for a Green Card; when they win, the whole family is allowed to move, including their spouse and dependents less than twenty-one years of age.

For the people with low education, obtaining a visa can be a big problem or even put them at risk for fraud. As the same official in the Ghanaian consulate further stated:

> But for the majority under the university degree [those without higher education] who have come as economic migrants, for a better life, their visa acquisition is a real puzzle and are the people who fall prey to all manner of visa traffickers, visa contractors and are people who have to be dodging here and there over immigration status.

The Ghanaian Network Village supports those going through the immigration process by providing education and information or through sponsorship. The networking of people from NYC and Ghana through the internet, phones, and introduction by friends and relatives informs them of opportunities offered in the United States (Coe 2016). This creates connections and

relationships that help facilitate their movements. One man told me that he came to the United States because his friend said that there were better prospects here. As we sat together, they looked at each other and laughed, recounting dreams achieved and those yet to be fulfilled. They mentioned being friends for more than thirty years.

Most of the people who come to the United States from Ghana have a family member, relative, or friend who lived here before they came. All the parents in focus were helped by the Network Village during their immigration and settlement, from receiving information on embassy issues, to having a home set up when they arrived, to being introduced to the NYC Ghanaian communities. It all makes for an easy transition from Ghana, providing security, as elaborated in chapter 1. Usually one member of the family, most often the husband, comes first; this person establishes living arrangements and a network of friends before their immediate family—and then relatives and friends in any order—joins them. This immigration "snowball effect" within the Network Village is the main way that Ghanaians make it to the United States. Hardly ever does a whole family migrate together at the same time, except for Green Card holders.

When they arrive, the majority are accommodated by friends or relatives until they are able to be on their own financially. They are also introduced to social networks and organizations as a way of acclimating to their new environment. They find jobs and gather information about schooling by word of mouth within their ethnic and religious organizations. The non-elite find jobs in established African markets and businesses as nurse's aides, hotel workers, babysitters, taxi drivers, security guards, and so on. The elite secure jobs as engineers, medical doctors, professors, accountants, teachers, and other professional occupations.

Remaining in New York City

Originally, after independence in 1957, many Ghanaians living abroad were enthusiastic about going back home. Infused with the ideology of nation building and loyalty to their new government, most of the Ghanaian students graduated and returned to Ghana. But after a time, there were no longer enough jobs to accommodate all the graduates from overseas universities as well as those from local universities, as has previously been envisioned (Vavrus 2007). Moreover, the pay for professional jobs, compared to other countries, was not enough to meet their economic demands (Vavrus 2007). Even though most professionals might have had the desire to stay (or return), they were held back by these issues. One of my informants stated that

> the medical professionals, who are the majority, want to go to Ghana or Africa, but even some of the equipment that they will need for their job . . . in Africa

they will not have them. So, they are patriotic and want to help Ghana or Africa . . . for that matter they will be bogged down by frustrations, they will stay there, you know in lack of cutting edge technology, the patients they could help by taking care of their lives, they will be looking at them and they will be dying. So, from the point of view of job satisfaction, they will not be having, so they will prefer to stay [in the United States]. Professionals like you are less likely to return immediately. They are more likely to get their status regularized to the extent of even naturalizing and going to Ghana on a regular basis [to visit] than going there because of patriotism to go and be paid 1/10 of what you should earn here.

Participants indicated that people often prefer to stay in the United States after receiving their education rather than go back and start looking for work. For example, one parent came on a student visa for higher education. She then overstayed her visa and lost her job. She knows the difficulties involved in securing a job in Ghana, so she thought that it would be better for her in NYC, in spite of her unpredictable immigration status. Another informant has all her friends in NYC and has been there for fifteen years. Though her parents are still in Ghana, all her siblings have moved abroad. She feels more connected in NYC than in Ghana.

As they continue living in the United States, some Ghanaians acquire families and children, giving them even more incentives to stay. In NYC, even children born in the United States find themselves categorized as immigrants and may embody attitudes that come with this classification (Ariza 2000; Valdes 1996; Roberts 2005; Goldberg et al. 2001; Arthur 2002).

Elite and Non-Elite Ghanaians in New York City

The contemporary flow of immigrants from Ghana is composed of both elite and non-elite populations, a characteristic of many immigrant groups from sub-Saharan Africa (Orosco 2005a). In a pilot study, my interactions with Ghanaians indicated socioeconomic categories among parents and a generally accepted definition of these distinctions. Within their communities, there are divisions between educational/intellectual elites known as the "professionals"—presumed to be highly educated with better paying jobs (such as professors, medical doctors, and nurses)—and non-elites, known as the "nonprofessionals," who have lower paying jobs, such as taxi drivers, home health aides, and personal caregivers.

These two dichotomies, as mentioned earlier, are not exclusive or inclusive. Elite and non-elite statuses are fluid, not bounded by rigid parameters. The criteria for inclusion or exclusion in either category varies by country and can evolve in diverse directions, hence not an entity in themselves. They shift from one form to another, differ in definition from one place to another,

and could have different transitory durations (Coe and Shani 2015; Ameeria 2017). Within the Ghanaian-born immigrant communities in NYC, they exhibit these status dynamics as generated from my data. Although generally viewed as elite and non-elite populations—and applying their own definition of two categories named as professionals and nonprofessionals—two other categories emerged from my data, adding up to a total of four categories. I differentiate them as elite status, transitioning status, location-specific status, and non-elite status. These categories are respectfully defined as:

(1) Elite status: These people are the highly educated with prestigious jobs (such as lawyers, doctors, professors, nurses, and accountants), most of whom are satisfied with what they have, their level of education, jobs, living standards, and neighborhoods.

(2) Transitioning status: This group includes those who are educated, highly trained professionals whose educational qualifications are not immediately recognized in the United States because they must receive American evaluation and approval before they can start working. Medical doctors who have yet to pass their American examinations and other requirements for entry into the profession are in this category. This category also includes people who decide to go back to school after arrival, given the opportunity in the United States to earn an extra degree, and then move to better paying jobs. Transitions vary in time, settlement location, types of employment taken, and level of income. Among those of this status, one could easily find a taxi driver with two master's degrees or a security guard with a doctorate. They are not choosey; it's one of the survival strategies at arrival. Though they have jobs and neighborhoods that do not match their educational level, they recognize it is only for the time being. This tends to be a very ambiguous and sometimes conflicted category, especially when status in the United States is usually defined by neighborhoods, income, job, and education.

(3) Location-specific status: This group is determined by where they live. One's status shifts as one moves from one geographic region to another, both nationally and internationally. In this case it is between Ghana and NYC. Status shifts as they move from the rural areas in Ghana to big cities, as well as international cities. For example, a primary school teacher or principal in rural areas has a respected position as a rural elite. His or her educational and professional levels are, at most, that of two to three years training, often without an undergraduate degree. When they move to Ghana's cities, such as Kumasi and Accra, they become almost invisible because their status is overshadowed by better-educated people with more prestigious jobs: university professors, lawyers, and doctors who may have more than one degree. When that former rural teacher finally arrives

in NYC, their qualifications do not match those needed in their new country, and they are considered less educated. This is the case for many people who went to teachers' training colleges in Ghana but don't qualify to teach at primary schools or work as administrators in NYC because their qualifications fall below the requirements of the US educational system. Similar to those with transitional status, this group's employment is not related to their academic achievement; only in this group does status diminish when they move from Ghana to NYC, while the transitional group's status improves. Those of location-specific status must go back to school and advance or they maintain non-elite status in NYC.

(4) Non-elite status: Those in this category are not highly educated and are not professionals. They do manual jobs and have educations ranging from primary school to high school, with rarely any college training. The only status they have is the prestige of migrating to America from Ghana and investing in Ghana, mostly by building houses and starting businesses. They are highly regarded by their peers back home for having chosen to leave the country, but in NYC they are considered non-elite, and most of them live in underprivileged inner-city neighborhoods.

The following table 2.1 provides a summary of the differences between the elite and non-elite statuses.

Speaking of the diverse types of elite, *el-hadj*, (meaning a Muslim who has visited Mecca) Miriam Adjoa, a Ghanaian community activist, when asked about the socioeconomic status of Ghanaians in the Bronx, indicated that the population includes people with engineering and journalism degrees who are taxi drivers, and people with master's degrees working in the retail chain Dollar General shops because of their immigration status**.** A Catholic priest, in the same vein, indicated that

in Ghana you could belong to an elite class; when you come here, you are not easily accepted as an engineer, medical doctor, so you start with manual jobs, i.e., cab driver and home health care. Some come to work in manual jobs and then go to school and then become doctors. . . . In Africa a good education equals a good job, but here it is the opposite. We have many people with [a] PhD, master's, doing taxi and low paying jobs.

These socioeconomic class-status conflicts put to question the traditional class differentiations of immigrants in the United States.

Neighborhoods: Ghanaians' Location in New York City

Unlike African immigrants in NYC from Francophone countries, such as Senegal and Mali, who tend to cluster together, Ghanaians who come from an

Table 2.1   Comparing Elite and Non-Elite Parents from Ghana

Elite	*Non-Elite*
They come from a generation of elites and are elites at the time of arrival to the United States or shortly after. They could be first, second, or third generation immigrants.	They could be elites back home at different levels: rural elites, such as primary school teachers whose credentials are not recognized in the United States; or non-elites with low levels of education but are well connected or have relatives who are. They have vertical networks that help them move up even with few resources.
They are predominantly highly educated intellectual elites.	They range from the lower educated to average and higher educated, such as a person with a master's degree who drives a taxi or works in a security firm. It includes the temporary non-elites transitioning through higher education and acceptance of credentials.
They move to affluent neighborhoods immediately or as soon as they obtain American credentials. The places where they live include the northeastern part of the Bronx, Riverdale, Yonkers, Westchester County, New Jersey, Poconos in Pennsylvania, and Connecticut.	They move to poor neighborhoods, unless temporarily hosted by an elite relative on arrival; otherwise, the majority end up in the South Bronx and other parts of the Bronx.
Some elite are temporarily in transition; they may live in poor neighborhoods with relatives on arrival and then move out.	Their statuses seem to be diminishing as they move from rural Ghana to urban Ghana and then to the United States, unless their migration is for educational purposes.
Some live integrated among areas where they feel connected to their people and for other reasons, such as transportation and job location. It is therefore possible to find them in the South Bronx. A majority of these are first-generation with extended family responsibilities in NYC and Ghana, sometimes they are the only elite member of the family. In this category are also religious leaders whose proximity to the population matters.	They mostly gravitate towards inner-city neighborhoods. Economics restricts their choices.
Their children's schools are located within affluent neighborhoods.	Their children's schools are located in inner-city neighborhoods.

Source: Self-generated by author using research data.

Anglophone country speak English, which is the Ghanaian national language and used for instruction in schools, even though there are a variety of languages in their country. They therefore may interact more easily when in the United States, which makes them more likely to be distributed among other populations. In NYC, Ghanaians are located in all five boroughs: the Bronx, Manhattan, Queens, Brooklyn, and Staten Island. The majority of them, however, are found in the Bronx. To emphasize this claim, one informant said "the Bronx is the stronghold of Ghanaians." A Ghanaian organization leader indicated that of the estimated 100,000 Ghanaians in NYC, 50,000 are located in the Bronx. The remaining 50,000 Ghanaians are distributed in other parts of the city. In the whole of the United States, there are 200,000–300,000 Ghanaians (Orosco 2005a). It has been hard to account for exact numbers due to the undocumented immigrants, whose population tends to be double that of the documented (Roberts 2005).

As is characteristic of many immigrant groups post-1965, where different people assimilate into different socioeconomic segments (Portes and Rumbaut 2001) of society in a process called segmented assimilation, Ghanaian-born parents' neighborhood settlement patterns differ by socioeconomic status. Similar to other immigrants and natives, the residential location of Ghanaians in NYC is determined by their social and economic/occupational status (Monkman, Ronald, and Theramene 2005; Arthur 2000, 2008). About 50 percent to 70 percent of the Ghanaians living in the South Bronx are "nonprofessionals" with some college education (no degree) or no college education.

Even though a few of the "professionals" live in the Bronx, more of them live in the North Bronx, Riverdale, New Jersey, the Poconos in Pennsylvania, Westchester County, and other economically stable neighborhoods. They own houses in these locations, rather than renting or sharing apartments in the South Bronx. When I visited one of the churches in the North Bronx, I learned that about 60 percent to 70 percent of the people own homes. During one of the fundraising events at the church, the congregation was grouped according to occupations, with each person allocated a certain amount of money to raise in relation to one's abilities in terms of occupation and level of education; more was expected from elite parents. At the fundraiser, there were medical doctors, accountants, and high school and college teachers in larger numbers, compared to the congregation of the same denomination in the South Bronx. The medical doctors lived in their own houses in Long Island, and their parents owned houses in the North Bronx. According to one of my informants, it is estimated that of the 50,000 Ghanaians living in both the Bronx and Riverdale, about 30 percent are professionals living in the North Bronx, mostly Riverdale, while the remaining

Table 2.2   Population 25 Years and Over

Population 25 Years and Over	53,245	100.0
Less than 9th grade	2,010	3.8
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	4,680	8.8
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	13,665	25.7
Some college or no degree	10,505	19.7
Associate degree	5,570	10.5
Bachelor's degree	9,000	16.9
Graduate or professional degree	7,815	14.7

Source: United States Census Bureau, Census 2000 Special Tabulations (STP-159).

70 percent are nonprofessionals living in the South Bronx. The following tables indicate the educational attainment of Ghanaians in the United States. On average, Ghanaian immigrants tend to be highly educated, regardless of whether their jobs and neighborhoods match their educational standards, as indicated in Table 2.2.

According to Migration Policy Institute (2015),

> The Ghanaian Diaspora in the United States had educational attainment largely similar to the general U.S. population. Eighteen percent of diaspora members age 25 and older had a bachelor's degree as their highest credentials, nearly the same proportion as the U.S. population overall (20 percent). Twelve percent of Ghanaian diaspora had a masters degree, PhD or an advanced professional degree, compared to 11 percent of the general U.S. population. (3)

Ghanaians also tend to obtain jobs in a wide array of occupations, as indicated in Table 2.3.

The Migration Policy Institute (2015) indicates that, "Members of the U.S.-based Ghanaian born aged 16 and older were more likely than individuals in the general U.S. population to participate in the labor force: 76 percent verses 64 percent. The employment rate of those in the labor force was the same for the Ghanaian diaspora as the U.S. population: 91 percent." (3)

Table 2.3   16 Years and Over

16 Years and Over	43,595	100.0
Occupation		
Management, professional, and related occupations	14,174	32.5
Service occupations	11,265	25.8
Sales and office occupations	9,345	21.4
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	55	0.1
Construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations	1,585	3.1
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	7,170	16.4

Source: United States Census Bureau, Census 2000 Special Tabulations (STP-159).

These two tables show only documented Ghanaian-born populations; those born in the United States to Ghanaians are considered natives (US Census 2000). Looking closely at these two tables and the information from the Migration Policy Institute, current Ghanaian-born immigrants, on average, are highly educated and have a high number of people working in better paying jobs.

Recent media stories on sub-Saharan immigrant educational attainment reflect my findings. The sources included an article in the *New American Economy* (NAE), with the title "Immigrants from Africa Boast Higher Education Levels Than Overall U.S. Population" (NAE 2018) and an article in the *Los Angeles Times* titled, "African immigrants are more educated than most—including people born in U.S." (Simmons 2018). The Pew Research Center also ascertains the high education levels of most immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa (2017). For example, according to the NAE (2018), "Sub-Saharan African immigrants have higher levels of educational attainment than the U.S. population as a whole and are more likely to have earned their degree in a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math, or STEM, field (1)." Most of the immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa specialize in STEM subjects, making them highly valuable in today's job market. Of African immigrants from sub-Saharan African, 39 percent have a bachelor's degree, compared to 31 percent of the native US population (Zong and Batalova 2017). According to Zong and Batalova (2017), some African countries are more educated than others: Ghanaian immigrants rank third among the top three most-educated sub-Saharan African countries, after Kenya and Nigeria (tied with South Africa).

The same reports indicate that many of them are employed and contribute greatly to the American economy. "African immigrant households contribute billions of dollars to the U.S. economy through their spending and tax payments. African immigrants earned $55.1 billion in 2015. Their households paid $10.1 billion in federal taxes and $4.7 billion in state and local taxes—giving African immigrants an estimated spending power of more than $40.3 billion that year" (2).

Even with that kind of spending power, the well-educated elite sometimes choose to live in the South Bronx. Their reasons for doing so include proximity to other family members, jobs, and extended family responsibilities here and back in Ghana. This is especially true if they are first-generation immigrants and the only one sending remittances back to family in Ghana. Pastor James Kofi contended that "the Ghanaians like living in cities because of public transportation and safety of children. When it comes to location, some look for social rather than economic reasons. Proximity to the society is considered. When you live in isolated places and invite people, they only come on very few occasions. . . . They love being in this community."

Ghanaians indicated that most of their people live in the Bronx, distributed all over, but with a greater population living on certain streets and in certain buildings. An officer in the consulate office indicated that the area along the Grand Concourse from Yankee Stadium to Fordham Road has the highest concentration of Ghanaians: about 10,000. Stony Avenue, Gun Hill Road, and White Plains Road also have significant Ghanaian populations. The same official indicated that there are about 100,000 Ghanaians in NYC. Some are found concentrated in one building or one housing project. According to Peter Kwabena, one of the Ghanaian parents, many Ghanaians live in his building; they occupy 50 percent of the apartments. Of the remainder, 40 percent are from West Africa, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, and Mali. He states that

> there is no way I will step out and not say "*etisen*," the Twi language way of greeting. In the area around 167 [Street] and Grand Concourse to about 161 Street at the Yankee Stadium . . . . You can live here for ten years and you will not feel like you are in the US.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has given the historicity and background information of Ghanaian-born parents. Each development and stage in these processes, from the historical development of immigration to the formation of inequalities in Ghana and the migrations to the United States and other parts of the world, have been accompanied by the social, cultural, and political underpinnings that shaped Ghanaian parents' trajectories to NYC. This confluence of issues and experiences influences how Ghanaians adapt to their new environments.

NOTE

1. All names used in this study are not real names of informants.

A Comparative Stance

Dualism, Ambivalence in Ghanaian Attitudes, Views and Values of Schooling in New York City

> In Africa, for example, when a child comes from school, they will say good afternoon. But here, being Americanized, they will come and walk straight to their rooms. Here discipline does not work due to so many restrictions, rules, even if you beat a child for wrong doing they call it harassment. Here children keep doing what they want.
>
> —Non-elite parent

> When kids arrive, within a short time they pick freedom . . . freedom which is not free. Misbehavior becomes worse; parents cannot control them.
>
> —Elite parent

The above quotes and other discourses with parents indicate that elite and non-elite parents alike use a comparative stance to evaluate their family's new environment. This framework is a theme that underlies every conversation and shapes how they view NYC public schools, always comparing. Through their discourses, participants portrayed this stance as a product shaped by previous experiences and interactions facilitated by the Network Village. In their narratives, participants provided examples of their comparisons between schools in Ghana and NYC. By comparing the two, parents evaluate their ability to raise a child who will do well in NYC schools and fit into the Ghanaian transnational network, both in the United States and abroad. While parents expressed that they liked the American school system, they were often quick to point out that they were not willing to educate their children in these institutions at the expense of their Ghanaian values. They do

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not want to lose their children to American culture—a culture they feel does not include what they need, such as appropriate expected behaviors, for their Ghanaian transnational extended community. The comparative stance and the dual view of NYC schools, discussed in terms of advantages and disadvantages, becomes central to influencing daily constructions of meaning and decision-making about schooling. Advantages are viewed as constructions of opportunity; disadvantages relate to Ghanaian parents' fears about their children becoming too Americanized, especially for parents living in inner-city neighborhoods.

GHANAIAN PARENTS' COMPARATIVE STANCE

Before discussing and elaborating on the comparative stance, it is important to look at the context of this stance as it relates to immigrant adaptation strategies. Social scientists have expressed interest in how immigrants adapt to and integrate within the United States (Addi-Raccah and Grinshtain 2017; Hong 2011; Koyama and Bakuza 2017). How they adapt becomes crucial, as their culture could either be additive, making them succeed in school, or subtractive, making them fail in school, and this would determine their levels of academic achievement. Thus, confronted by the variability of academic achievement among different immigrant groups, proponents of the cultural ecological theory indicate that it is important to examine attitudes that parents have toward the school, because this, in turn, influences their behaviors (Harklau 2013; Hong 2011). These behaviors further influence their children's academic achievement, either positively or negatively (Chao 2013; Todorova 2008).

In comparing Ghanaian elite and non-elite parents' attitudes and behaviors regarding schooling and by comparing their experiences, I found that both groups view the schooling process for their children through the same lens—the same meanings and attitudes, but at different magnitudes and intensities. For example, while both groups complain of behavior change, parents (mainly non-elite) who are incorporated into the inner city express a higher intensity of concern and have more worries because they live in an environment with higher crime rates due to gang violence and drug trafficking. Their concerns could be augmented by living and interacting with these experiences within their neighborhoods (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco 2001). These experiences, coupled with their own personal observations (accentuated by the media), make parents worry about their children assimilating into the underclass, the lower social economic status of most parents living in underprivileged neighborhoods. The non-elite parents, therefore, are at higher risk for failing to achieve social and economic

mobility, which is frustrating because social mobility and economic mobility are some of the main motivating factors to migrate (Arthur 2008). This differentiation of neighborhoods is a phenomenon that is common for new immigrants. It would, however, be naïve to assume that parents from different neighborhoods will acculturate children in the same way and provide the same resources based on their country of origin, while ignoring the various environments to which their children are exposed.

Gibson and Ogbu (1991) argue that having a home country provides space for voluntary immigrants to make comparisons; native minorities in the United States lack that perspective. For Ghanaian immigrants, this is further cemented by transnational lives within the Network Village that constantly interact with the home country. Parents' cross-border experiences, nostalgic pasts, and imagined futures, as well as their children's current experiences, position them in an evaluative state in which they are constantly comparing Ghana and NYC. Hence, the Ghanaian comparative stance is a conceptual structure and a product of the interactions that inform Ghanaian parents' actions and worldviews. In addition, this view becomes a vantage point from which to analyze their new environment as immigrants. However, the comparative stance traverses school settings and can be heard in their daily conversation and influences how they behave toward schooling. These collective ways of thinking and evaluating schools and host communities are part of the process of Ghanaian immigrant adaptation to new environments. Thus, it is important to understand the comparative stance as portrayed among Ghanaian parents—how they apply this framework in evaluating schools, and how it influences their attitudes and views about NYC public schools. It is also important to know how this stance compares between elite and non-elite parents.

Dualism and Ambivalence about Schooling

Both elite and non-elite families have a comparative stance in relation to how they view NYC schools. Within this framework, they compare NYC schools to those in Ghana in terms of what their children are gaining or losing by coming to the United States. While they hold on to and appreciate what they are gaining (e.g., a free, quality education and good facilities), they are worried about their children's behavior (e.g., lack of respect and discipline). This evaluative framework begets conflicts and contradictions between gaining and losing their children to American culture.

The comparative stance permeates Ghanaian immigrant parents' everyday discourses about their children's schooling. One can easily detect these aspects in their conversations within social and institutional networks, such as families, churches, mosques, markets, ethnic organizations, picnics, and

graduations. Parents compare their current life experiences in NYC with their past experiences in Ghana and/or what they think is happening in Ghana based on what they hear through networks. In nearly all my interviews and informal conversations, they continuously compared issues, from schools to parenting to opportunities. The main phrases of comparison I heard were "*you know in Ghana…but in NYC . . .,*" which was the most direct comparison used when they really wanted to make a very clear distinction between the two countries; "*you know, back home*" referred to what was happening in Ghana; "*back home in Africa*" referred to Ghana, but the speakers contextualized something that they believe is common to all African cultures; "*we Ghanaians do not do it that way, Ghanaians do this and that*" differentiated them from what they saw the rest of the community as doing; and "*recently when I visited Ghana*" and "*where I come from*" meant they were comparing what they saw in Ghana with what they experience in NYC. These phrases are used a great deal by both elite and non-elite parents, though in different circumstances. These comparisons are important foci for understanding Ghanaian-born parents' views, meanings, and behaviors regarding NYC public schools and their expectations for their children; they work as a framework and a backdrop to understanding and extracting meanings from NYC school experiences.

Parents' and children's relationships with school have become paramount because they are at the center of children's success in America (Addi-Raccah and Grinshtain 2017; Dryden-Peterson 2017). Most immigrants in the United States are likely in search of a "good life" and a "good education," increasing the importance of school in their daily lives and discourses (Alba and Nee 1997). According to cultural ecological theory, most immigrant parents see US schools as better, in contrast to those in their home country (Gibson and Ogbu 1991).

Immigrant parents are often thought to perceive schooling as purely advantageous. While this is true of many parents, Ghanaians have a dual perspective of schooling. They are as optimistic as other immigrant parents, but they also see school as a threat to their Ghanaian culture. This threat is termed a disadvantage, as observed in their children's changed behaviors as they acculturate within the schools and outside of their Ghanaian social networks. The contradiction arises as parents' conventional ways of raising children are challenged. Their perceptions of the disadvantages within the school cannot be equated to cultural or linguistic barriers that most immigrants encounter, but by the way children behave at home after having a schooling experience. Moreover, parents do not associate these new behaviors with high academic achievement. Even though viewed as a disadvantage by Ghanaian parents, these new behaviors are not all considered inappropriate by most ethnic groups' standards. Some are outright different from the Ghanaian culture; others differ by levels of practice; and others may be considered inappropriate

even by most American parents (Sonia, De Haene, Keatley, Shah, and Rasmussen 2015).

COMPARING NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS WITH GHANAIAN SCHOOLS

In comparison to Ghana, parents view NYC schooling in terms of advantages and disadvantages; advantages are identified as what they think their children are gaining, and disadvantages are identified by what they think their children are losing. To validate their comparative outlooks, they mainly apply two criteria: (1) lack of or unavailability of resources back in Ghana that made them see advantages in the US school system, and (2) the importance of the Ghanaian value system. Challenges to the latter, stemming from school experiences, are viewed as a disadvantage.

Elite and non-elite parents alike draw from their past and present experiences and their future imaginings to envision their children's position in the economic strata and their sociocultural place within the Ghanaian community after completing their education. School is important as the primary institution outside of the Network Village that will influence children's trajectories; thus, school is looked upon as a place of promise for a better future, a dream come true for parents (an advantage), but at the same time is also a space that poses a threat to the Ghanaian way of life (a disadvantage). These dual views are useful for further discussion.

Advantages of New York City Schools: Constructions of Opportunity

In comparison to schools in Ghana, parents told me how they are astounded at the quality and quantity of NYC school facilities, the way education is free and practical, and the expanded access to schooling for all people. Exposed to these opportunities, a great majority of Ghanaians (elite and non-elite) express that they are certain their children will perform well in school; despite the challenges, they indicated that they did not fear their children would perform poorly. In the following subsections, through Ghanaians' perceptions and narratives, I take you through the motivating factors that attract Ghanaian parents to NYC schools.

Facilities

> Even the public schools that are considered worst here are one of the best in Ghana. Education in Africa is not given the priority it needs. If the kids listen in America, they can become anything. Everybody,

therefore, is trying to bring their children here. We have thousands of reasons why we want our children to be here. People come here without education and they manage to earn degrees. They come here not because Ghana is a bad place but their economic wellbeing is unpredictable. Here they are sure the child will get a good education. If we were to have the same opportunities and facilities, Africans would rather stay in Africa.

—Pastor James Kofi

Like James Kofi, the majority of Ghanaian parents believe that American public schools provide better opportunities and facilities than those in Ghana. One year before we met in his church office for our first interview, Kofi had a two-month stay in Ghana and witnessed the stark disparity between Ghanaian and US schools. Lamenting on the lack of resources and learning facilities in Ghana, he said:

Recently when I went back to Ghana, I saw kids that were standing as they learned. They were also being transported with very poor means. Over here, they go by buses; they make sure every safety precaution is taken. I went to Ghana and my heart was dampened. But over here, when it is school time, people are put in place to make sure children are safe, meaning when the school bus is around everything stops to give way. . . . Even the bad public schools are better than we have seen and experienced back home. Here children can become what they themselves think they will become. . . . When you give birth here it is an open door for the child.

Most parents think that by bringing their children to the United States they have escaped from those poor educational situations. When I asked Peter Kwabena, a non-elite parent, whether NYC public schools were meeting his expectations and his reasons for moving to the United States, he said very confidently:

When I came, I had only one little child and my wife was pregnant. I came here in 1994. The very expectation of me coming to the United States was like going to heaven . . . by coming here I knew their education would be very good. It was going to be better than that of Africa. I had very high expectations of them. . . . And yes, my goals are being achieved. Those in Ghana—I have managed to [take] care of them in private schools—[and] those here are doing fine. . . . So yes, I am meeting my aspirations.

For the most part, I listened as parents expressed and narrated how they appreciated and were amazed by the facilities they encounter in their children's schools. A majority of the parents interviewed mentioned facilities

as a major advantage over Ghanaian primary schools, regardless of their elite or non-elite status. This is not to mean that there are not well-equipped schools in Ghana in terms of facilities, but speaking in aggregate terms, the US schools are considered better equipped. Specifically, the amenities mentioned were computer access for students, which they said made learning easier; free access to books in school libraries and the public libraries of NYC; qualified teachers; and good, safe transportation. While Americans may take these things for granted (Ogbu 1993; Gibson 1988), Ghanaian-born parents, similar to most other first-generation immigrant parents from developing countries, see a great opportunity for their children in being exposed to these types of facilities, as other studies on immigrant groups have found (Gibson and Ogbu 1991; Gibson 1988; Zhou and Bankston 1998).

One Ghanaian diplomat, who had been in office for just a year at the time of our interview, gave me a broader understanding of what the parents really mean by "facilities." While discussing NYC schools, he said:

> Most of the education institutions here, right from the basic primary, they are encouraging the use of information technology, the use of the computer. In terms of content, the difference isn't much, but the main difference comes from what you call the facilities, the technical facilities which make leaning easier for people in the United States. I mean because of the widespread use of the internet and internet connectivity, because of their technological advancement, it's very easy, it's more effective.

This diplomat did not only mention the prevalent use of computers but said that internet service providers, such as Verizon and Cable Vision, are very competitive, making it easier and more affordable for students to have internet access. He stated that in Ghana, although the number of computers is increasing and internet access is becoming more widely available, they still are not at everyone's disposal. According to Internet World Stats (IWS) 2018, among the population of Ghana, 10,110,000 people out of 29,463,643 have access to and use the internet. This is about 34.3 percent of the total population. Those numbers are up from 30,000 users in 2000 and 5, 17, 1993 in 2015 (IWS 2018). According to Internet Lives Stats (ILS), the number for internet users in Ghana in 2015 was 6,981,691 and 7,958,675 in 2016 (ILS 2016).

While computer and internet use are expanding in Ghana, there is still great disparity between rural and urban areas. Furthermore, not all schools and homes have access, even in urban settings. In the rural areas, it is even hard to imagine what a computer is because there is no electricity and students use kerosene lamps to study. For these reasons, schooling in NYC is considered superior.

Compared to those in Ghana, it is interesting to note that children in the United States become socialized to computers at a very early age. According

to US Census Bureau (2015) American Community Survey, "Among all households, 78 percent had a desktop or laptop, 75 percent had a handheld computer such as a smartphone or other handheld wireless computer, and 77 percent had a broadband Internet subscription" (2). According to the National Center of Statistics (2018),

> In 2015, about 71 percent of children ages 3 to 18 used the Internet. Among these children, 86 percent used the Internet at home; 65 percent used it at school; 31 percent used it at someone else's home; 27 percent used it at a library, community center, or other public place; and 14 percent used it at a coffee shop or other business offering internet access. In addition, 27 percent of these children used the Internet while traveling between places. (1)

American children become computer savvy very early on, sometimes even before they start their elementary schooling. This exposure to technology is well above what most Ghanaians have in their country.

The facilities, computers, and access to the internet extend from school to children's homes, giving children time to practice outside of school. When I visited some of the participants' homes, I observed children playing computer games. I asked them about their games and preferred websites. At one of the homes in the South Bronx, the children (two sisters) expressed how they like playing computer games and accessing various children's websites, including Bandai.com, Ben10.com, PBSkids.com, Nick.com, and Nickledeon.com. At other homes, I observed that children had video game systems, tablets, and mobile phones.

Assessment of School Facilities Based on Observations

I visited seven schools to observe the students in my focus group: two public schools in privileged neighborhoods in the North Bronx, where children, Joseph Yoofi and Reuben Fiifi, from elite families attended, and five schools in less privileged neighborhoods in the South Bronx and Harlem, where non-elite children, Dorcas Abla, Doris Abena, Fatuma Araba, Amina Abina, Jared Yao, and Jamal Kwaku, attended. Three of the schools attended by non-elite children were charter schools. The following three examples provide better understanding of what parents mean when they speak of the quality and quantity of educational facilities in the United States.

During my visits to schools, I noticed computers and overhead projectors in almost every classroom. Every child had his or her own seat in class, and there were plenty of books on the shelves. Children had a variety of choices to make. In some classrooms, they had a well-cushioned reading corner. In Abla's and Abena's grade five classrooms, students even had pillows to lie on or to cushion their seats with. During one reading session, when the

teacher told students to find a comfortable place to read, Abla went to the back of the class to lie down on a pillow to read her book, and a few other students did the same. Some of her classmates took the cushions and placed them on their seats, while the rest just sat in their chairs to read. The walls of the classrooms were decorated with visual aids to enhance learning. Some of them had themes of the various subjects taught, including science, reading, and math; others displayed class rules.

During one observation in Abena's school, I followed her to the school's dancing studio. The teacher invited me in and showed me where to sit—at the back of the class, where I had a clear view of the students. The studio was very well equipped with all that the children needed to dance, including enough materials for every child. The floor was covered wall to wall with special dancing material, except for narrow walking paths along the sides. On one side of the studio were floor-to-ceiling mirrors, so the children could see themselves as they performed. The studio also had CDs, DVDs, and a large television set. Quality materials and an appropriate environment were available to Doris Abena's sister in the arts class. The arts studio had five large tables with plenty of space for all the children and more room for extra students. The studio was surrounded with shelves full of art equipment and supplies.

While following a teacher to Fatuma Araba's grade four class in a different charter school, the teacher expressed that there was no need for me to sit in her classroom and observe because, for the first fifteen minutes, the children would just be using calculators on their own—nothing exciting. I told her I would be interested in observing this activity, and she let me into her class. After a brief introduction of her new topic to the class, the teacher pulled out a box full of calculators and distributed them to the whole class of about twenty-seven students; the box still had some calculators left inside. This was a math lesson, and Fatuma, like the rest of the class, became totally absorbed in her work.

In Jamal Kwaku's first-grade class, his art lesson included using crayons for an art project. When the teacher told the students to get those items from the shelves, each child had more than they needed. This was similar to most classrooms I visited.

Their observations of the quality and quantity of learning aides and materials cement Ghanaian parent's narratives and perceptions of NYC schools as having high-quality facilities in comparison to the condition of schools in Ghana.

Schooling Seen as More Practical and Free

When parents from Ghana talk of a free education, they mean all expenses paid, including books, transportation, and food, as opposed to only school

fees. Although primary schooling is supposed to be free in Ghana, there are hidden costs that many parents cannot afford. For example, parents may have to buy school uniforms, pay for transportation, support building and school development funds, provide lunch, and purchase textbooks. These expenses may seem minor, but they are a great challenge to many parents and may hinder children's ability to get an education or even lead to discontinuation of schooling. In addition, although there is free education in Ghana, most schools in poor neighborhoods often become overcrowded, creating poor sanitary conditions. School facilities are challenged by lack of personnel to meet the increasing number of students, and there are not enough high school institutions to meet the bulging enrollments in primary schools. The Ghanaian government is struggling to address these issues in order reach the United Nations' universal primary education goal.

Coming from this background, it not surprising that most parents interviewed noted the practical aspects of a free education in NYC. For example, educational field trips were said to be helpful in providing firsthand information to children and aiding their understanding of complex subjects. Limited resources in Ghana were mentioned as the reason for lack of educational trips. Parents often spoke of the significance of school trip experiences. Among the many examples provided, in relation to how the trips were important, Peter Kwabena (non-elite parent) stated,

> For instance, they have not seen Mount Everest, they do not go to trips, they don't go to any, you know there is no money for such trips and other things but here they tell you, this is [meaning use of learning aids such as pictures or through the internet] Mount Everest, they tell you this is the fridge, this is that, and they teach you just exactly as the same thing.

He indicated that children learn a lot in NYC by going on trips; they see things in reality and are able to relate to them. The economic status of many parents in Ghana denies them such opportunities. Kwabena went on to say:

> But then when you come in here, you are on the field trips you see the mountains, you see the cars, trains, where they make the cars . . . you go to the *New York Times* where they make the Times . . . and other things, and you know everything and you can write about that easily.

Anna Abena (non-elite parent), who attended primary and secondary school in Ghana, said that during her time in Ghana, one had to pay for the trips. They went on a trip to the waterfalls to see the whole water system as it operates, as they were taught in class. The parents had to pay for the school to rent a bus. They carried their own food because no one was going to give them breakfast or dinner. However, in the school where she worked

as a cook in NYC, children were fed breakfast provided by the school before they left on trips; their lunches were individually packed, and the school was even responsible for transporting them to their destination. She emphasized that not only did the children have food, there was a cooling system to keep it fresh. Her children went on school trips even in the winter. They went to movies, museums, and aquariums—all free of charge.

Expanded Access to Education: Girls and Special-Needs Populations

In the United States, the general assumption among researchers is that girls tend to do better in school than boys (Horvat and Lewis 2003; Taylor 2006). Taylor (2006) argues that "boys are more likely than girls to get involved in fights, threats, and drugs at school and to be disciplined and suspended accordingly by school authority" (36). In Ghana and most other sub-Saharan African countries, however, the education of girls, their academic achievement, and their enrollment in every level of school normally lags behind that of boys (Foster 1974; Iddrisu 2002, 2005; Stephens 2000). This is especially true in more marginalized regions, such as northern Ghana, where colonial governments set up regional divisions and educational differentiations (Schech and Awly 2004; Bond 1997a; Vavrus 2003). As mentioned in chapter 2, these regional inequalities remain a challenge, especially to women's status, roles, and marginalization in schools (Iddrisu 2002; Stephens 2000). Girls and people with special needs are underrepresented in the schooling sectors. It is no surprise that parents in this study referred to such inequalities back home in Ghana and expressed astonishment at the state of girls' education in the United States, seeing equal opportunities for both girls and boys. In NYC, they viewed girls' education as being promoted more than in Ghana. Akoto, who is among the elite parents interviewed and a father to one daughter, stated,

> If you take the case of girl-child education, there are universal protocols and conventions which all put a premium on all sorts of discrimination of the woman and by extent the girl-child, you get the point. . . . In Ghana, there are still cultural practices which impinge upon the education of the girl, but as soon as you get into a country like the United States, maybe, but it looks like women are even overprotected in this country.

Anna Abena, mother of three children, including a daughter who went to graduate school and became the principal of a high school in NYC, said that in America, girls are even going into space and doing jobs previously allocated only to men, such as driving buses. Another parent said, "Women are like gods here, but we still have backward practices in Africa undermining the emancipation of women. Thus, the access to girl-child education in Africa is still not 100%."

America is seen as a place where girls and boys are given equal opportunities and can thrive in education. Andrew Yofi, father of two boys and one girl, said that girls actually do better in school than boys. He attributes this to his observance that there are not as many distractions for the girls. For instance, he and his wife had to work very hard to keep one of his sons focused on his studies instead of on basketball and other extracurricular activities.

Not only do parents approve of equal educational opportunities for every girl, they also recognize the importance of educational access for students with disabilities, which are the words one parent used. Akoto gave an example concerning students with physical disabilities in which education is seen as profitable for everyone: "There are appropriate legal and constitutional guarantees upholding this kind of equality that are not available in Ghana." Akoto also pointed out that superior facilities are provided for those with physical disabilities on NYC trains and buses, as well as in elevators and schools, compared with Ghana (see Table 3.1 for a summary of advantages of schooling in NYC).

Disadvantages of NYC Schooling

Ghanaian immigrants confront and perceive societal and structural barriers differently, depending on their cultural models (Gibson and Ogbu 1991).

Table 3.1   Summary of Advantages of NYC Schools

Types	List of Advantages	Implications
Facilities	Computers	Access to resources that
	Free books in public schools	augment classroom
	Vast libraries in the school and the New York area	instruction
		Same as above
	Facilities for people with physical disabilities on the buses, trains, and in schools	Education that is accessible to all regardless of economic conditions or disability
	Qualified teachers with at least a college degree	Better education because of highly qualified personnel
More practical, free education	Free educational field trips	More effective because children have associations with what they are studying
	Free transportation to and from school	
	Free education (no hidden charges)	Accessible to all regardless of economic conditions
		No excuse for not attending school
Expanded education	Equal opportunities for both girls and boys	More girls are being educated
	Integration of the disabled into mainstream society	Disabilities can be accommodated in the school and society

Source: Self-generated by author using research data.

A greater understanding of these barriers and the orientations of different immigrant groups helps educators address the needs of immigrants. Ghanaian parents are especially concerned about behaviors their children adopt at school that run counter to Ghanaian values; they cited such behaviors as lack of respect and lack of discipline, which were brought about by too much freedom. During interviews, observations, and informal conversations, parents expressed fear that negative behavior could lead their children to lose their Ghanaian culture. About 70 percent of those who filled out my questionnaire indicated that they feared their children would forget their culture; only 30 percent indicated that they did not worry about it. This is a cultural discontinuation of Ghanaian values among immigrant children in the schools that creates conflicting ideas, which is a common factor among most foreign-born parents and is referred to as primary discontinuity (Foster 2004; Sonia et al. 2015). Immigrant children also tend to acculturate faster than their parents, especially as they interact in school settings with multicultural groups; this causes parents to become overwhelmed by sudden behavioral changes, resulting in what Gibson (1988, 2001) refers to as "cultural dissonance."

Schools are a contested space where elementary children and their parents formally encounter conflicting ideas and explanations (Sonia et al. 2015). These ideas may seem to complement as well as contradict the familial ways of immigrant parents. For Ghanaian-born parents, propelled by the idea of providing the best education for their children, schools are viewed as institutions where children can benefit from a good education—although this could come at the price of losing their Ghanaian values. A religious leader, emphasizing the intention to maintain Ghanaian culture, indicated that "we come here because we are poor, but our culture is intact . . . Ghanaians are not staying here because they hate their culture." Thus, they regard these two domains separately and differently: the lack of economic resources and inadequate school facilities exist in Ghana, but sound Ghanaian moralistic culture also exists.

Parents expressed the desire that their children not become "too Americanized." Being too Americanized is defined by Ghanaian parents as the tendency of children to forget their culture and their language, preferring the American way of life to their own. A Presbyterian pastor indicated that "to be Americanized means doing away with their origin, people being no longer part of the African or anything African, and thinking that everything in America is superior, thinking that everything in America is better." A Catholic priest said,

> Being Americanized means coming here, forgetting about your culture, forgetting your language where some kids do not speak the mother language. . . . You are an African with black skin but totally removed from your culture in the way you dress, eat, and talk. . . . This is what they do not want their children

to become. . . . Much as they are encouraging their children to take the good, they have to blend it to the culture, i.e. respect elders and speak mother tongue.

Parents bring their children to the United States to receive a good education, but they also have great aspirations for their children to be Ghanaians and belong to the Network Village. In other words, parents have a desire to raise a child who is educated by American standards but who can also fit into the Ghanaian community in NYC and in Ghana itself. When Gibson confronted this view among the Punjabi immigrants in California, she described this adaptation process as "selected acculturation and accommodation without assimilation" (Gibson 1988). This adaptation strategy allows immigrants to incorporate some but not all aspects of the American culture, while also maintaining some of their own—a strategy that parallels that of Ghanaian immigrants in "pick the good, leave the bad." The bad is defined as that which conflicts with their culture (e.g., disrespect and disobedience, drug use, and gang affiliation). The importance of this adaptation style will be discussed in chapters 4 and 5.

Pastor James Kofi, emphasizing the importance of children's ability to fit in with Ghanaian society, indicated that "in Africa I am raising my kids to become people of substance in the community." Parents want to be in charge of their children. They have great examples based on past experience with their parents in Ghana and their current perceived success. Their concerns about child behavior are summarized in Table 3.2.

Ghanaian Parents' Fears about Americanization

Ghanaian parents have a lot of concerns and fears about their children's integration into American schools. They are concerned that teachers might not understand their children. They worry that their children's behavior will change; that they will become disrespectful and disobedient and forget Ghanaian culture and values. They fear that their children will join gangs and commit crimes. In short, they fear that their children will become what they referred as too Americanized: the America they saw represented in their neighborhoods and in media.

One particular aspect of becoming Americanized that clearly conflicts with Ghanaian parents' childrearing practices is children's knowledge about US children's rights, including child abuse protection laws. While parents acknowledge for the need for children rights and laws, parents also indicate that, in America, children have too many rights and too much freedom under these laws, as opposed to what parents are used to: children under total control of their parents. Jane Adzo states this clearly: "In America, children have a lot of rights. Children are not supposed to have rights; children are children,

Table 3.2 Summary of Behavioral Issues (disadvantages)

Setting	Causes of Behavior	Specific Behaviors
School	Too much freedom/rights	Children call 911 to talk about their parents (usually they are trained in school to call 911 to report abuse, but abuse is relative, that is, spanking is not considered abuse)
	Bad example set by peers in school	Lack of respect
		Children talk back to teachers
		Children are in control instead of the teacher
	Children are not beaten/spanked in school when they make mistakes	Children argue with the teacher
		Children talk and eat in class
		Children are not disciplined
Home	Children want to be like other children in the neighborhood	Children question and argue with their parents
		Children talk back to their parents
		Children place demands upon parents to buy designer clothes and shoes for them
Society	Lack of respect for their elders	Children don't give their seats to the elders on the train
		Children are snobbish
		Children do not greet their elders

Source: Self-generated by author using research data.

they have to be disciplined." Here are a few ways this conflict was expressed by some participating parents:

> The first human beings in the US that have rights are the children, and children cannot be punished, you cannot beat the child. The children then realize that it is not like Africa. "I have more rights than my mom and dad, and if anything, I can call the police on my parents."

> You know this country says do not beat, so children take advantage of it; they call the police.

> When a child is going to school, you make sure that the child is smooth like an egg, otherwise you will get in trouble if there is any sign of abuse.

> Here discipline does not work due to so many restrictions, rules, even if you beat a child for wrongdoing, they call it harassment, here children keep doing what they want.

A Ghanaian lawyer said, "Another concern in school is the freedom for children to call 911." He said that Ghanaians are peaceful, private people. "Conflicts are resolved within the family, not letting relatives or friends get involved."

During my interviews, the respondents gave examples of how some of the parents had to beg their children not to call the police on them after a misunderstanding at home. One man said that one of his friend's children came home and told the father what they were taught in school about calling 911 to report on their parents if they were beaten. He said that the father listened keenly. He was worried about his child exploiting this newly acquired knowledge and freedom and the consequences that may result. He had to use some of the mechanisms Ghanaian immigrants' parents employ to curb this kind of behavior: During the holidays, he transferred the child to a school in Ghana under his relatives' care; this way, he would be raised and trained as the parents desired.

These kinds of laws, freedoms, and rights present challenges for parents who want to bring up children grounded in Ghanaian values. These values include respect, discipline, obedience, and a sense of communal responsibility. They are perceived and defined in the Ghanaian community as follows:

(1) Respect: This value includes respect for elders (by not talking back to them and by listening to and obeying their parents, other people in the community, and their teachers), property (this is more than not stealing), life (not killing), and self (mostly in the way children dress, talk, and present themselves, including not smoking cigarettes). Respect is very important in the Ghanaian community—100 percent of elite and 97 percent of non-elite parents verified its significance (averaging 98.4 percent for both categories combined).

(2) Responsibility: This value encompasses showing a high regard for the family, such as taking care of parents when they grow old, respecting culture and religion, and choosing a partner.

(3) Discipline: This value includes the ideals of no fighting, no use of profane words, and choosing good friends.

Not conforming to the above is considered bad behavior, a situation that parents want to control and fix. While adhering to these precepts would be ideal, parents report behaviors in their children that fall short of expectations; they become worried when this kind of behavior change occurs. This worry was expressed every time parents discussed about NYC schools with me. Of the parents in this study, 73.3 percent indicated that they worry about behavior changes in their children. Miriam Adjoa expressed this shared fear in these words: "Children have unruly attitudes towards parents . . . when you have children at home they do not listen; you try to reprimand and the children get berserk." Jane Adzo commented, "When in Africa, we speak and our children listen, but when they come here they want to copy dressing." Peter Kwabena said, "You are wearing a cap, that is fine. But putting it the other way . . . I would not want my kids to do that here. A lady can wear earrings but not on the nose and should not have many holes."

Other parents indicated that

Children tend to get lost in the middle, when they try to embrace, they overdo it than the Americans, and they may then end up in jail [children exaggerate the freedom they learn and end up getting in trouble]. . . . They will greet you with their left hand [its considered disrespectful to greet with the left hand, especially among Muslims]. . . . When you tell them to pick up the plates after eating, they tell you that "I am not your slave" unless you train them; it is hard.

The way children mention the names of the elders, they call them by [their first] name. Back home you just cannot say the name; at least add Mr. or Mrs. so-and-so. Back home when you meet an elderly person, you have to give the elders respect that they want. Back home they are trained to use the correct language [so as] not to offend elders. In Africa, a parent will not call the parent yo! [slang used by children in the neighborhood to address each other]. But over here they call the parents yo! Children here become disrespectful, smoke cigarettes, and do not obey their parents at home.

Here children do not have respect for their parents. They call 911 on them. They do not have respect for the elderly, they don't even say good morning.

Situated in inner-city neighborhoods of the Bronx, parents could hear and sometimes see instances of shootings, gangs, killings, and drug activities on the streets, as well as see media stories about local crime. One elite parent showed me a scar on his thumb from a stray bullet and narrated to me how it happened when he was just walking on the streets. He said that was the reason he moved his family from the South Bronx to Westchester County. Some of these problems, such as drug abuse, spill over into the affluent neighborhoods (children of elite parents may have more money to purchase forbidden things, such as drugs). This makes both elite and non-elite parents worry about their children associating with people who engage in criminal activity. Such behavior hinders academic success and causes individuals to assimilate with the underclass (Gibson 1988; Portes and Rumbaut 2005; Waters 1996; Zhou 1997a). Jeremiah Kuuku lamented that "we have seen the things that can happen in America: a 14-year-old killed their mother, Columbine [style] shootings, and children being [put] in jail." Given these stories from the broader community and the media, parents grow concerned that without Ghanaian values their children could follow suit. Jane Adzo said, "Our children are not like the old generations, there are things that we are shocked to hear about: gangs, drinking, and killings." Thus, there is constant fear of such influences. A Catholic priest, expressing parents' fears and concerns, concluded that

the problem of drugs is universal, but the rate is higher in NYC. At home, the way we talk about sex is different. In the Bronx, a boy or girl is not afraid to introduce a boy as a boyfriend; back home unless you are of a certain age

[meaning these conversations about boyfriend/boyfriend happen to early among children in the United States]. Matters of sex are open here, back home they are not. This could be more because of exposure to media; here they are not difficult to access. That is not the case back at home. They may have ideas, but there is limited access. Parents are trying to protect them from these exposures.

When children are brought to the United States, their parents indicate that their behavior changes. El-hadj Abdi Kojo explained, "When kids arrive, within a short time they pick freedom, 'freedom which is not free.' Misbehavior becomes worse, parents cannot control them."

Parents want to be free to discipline their children in their own way. In most Ghanaian homes, discipline includes corporal punishment, but according to NYC schools that I visited, they are not allowed to beat children. Ahmed Kobena related, "When you try to discipline here, it is called child abuse." He told the story of a friend who physically disciplined his child: "they almost took the kid from him," said Kobena, referring to government social workers. Peter Kwabena shared the same lamentation: "Here discipline does not work due to so many restrictions, rules, even if you beat a child, for wrongdoing they call it harassment. Here children keep doing what they want."

Maintaining Ghanaian values is very important to parents, since the ideal child, as mentioned before, is one with a good American education who also embodies good Ghanaian values; he/she is able to gain access in the American economic and labor systems as well as able to fit into the Ghanaian community, both in NYC and in Ghana. In other words, Ghanaian identity is portrayed by values and tradition, while American identity is portrayed by high academic achievement. Ghanaian-born parents reminisce about their upbringing in Ghana in terms of what they consider good Ghanaian values. Parents keenly observe their children's character development in an ongoing process of assessing their adherence to these values.

BEHAVIOR: SCHOOL, HOME, AND SOCIETY

Mark Ebo, a leader in one Ghanaian ethnic organization who has also raised and educated children in the Ghanaian public-school system, mentions that every parent is worried when things change for the worse. He said that when children go to school, they see their peers' behaviors and mimic them. "But we do not want them to pick [up] everything; they should pick [up] the best that the teachers tell them." Mark Ebo further mentions that "back home" in Ghana, children do not stand and talk back to their mothers: "they cannot do that in Africa."

"Using the 'F' word . . . when they use that in Africa, they will beat him . . . and if you cannot do this in Africa, why do it here?" a parent lamented.

A greater majority of both the elite and non-elite parents in this study raised concerns about the behavior of their children. This was true across ethnic backgrounds and between fathers and mothers. The term *behavior* was not limited to interactions at school between teachers and students, but also applied to their interactions at home, in church, on trains and buses, and generally within all the social situations children are a part of. Parents first talk about behavior in the school environment and then bring the picture back to the whole social system and networks where children are involved. These various settings have been classified as school, home, and society (see Table 3.2 for a summary).

School

Respect was raised as the main concern about behavior in school. Parents noted that their children engaged in talking back to their teachers. Both elite and non-elite parents tend to impart certain roles to school teachers. In addition to teaching the curriculum, parents expect teachers to instill good behavior in their children, including not allowing the children to talk back to them. Of the parents in this study, both elite and non-elite, 94 percent either agreed or strongly agreed that teachers should discipline children, and only 5.2 percent disagreed. Many complained that there is little or no discipline in school. Kobena, a non-elite parent, praises the charter school in Harlem he transferred his daughter, Fatuma Araba, to:

> I have expectation for the schools: discipline and standard of education. In Fatuma's school they are very disciplined—you misbehave they will send you home and out of the school. They do not tolerate arrogance in that school. One-time Fatuma went to school and forgot her belt, they did not let her in until the mother took the belt. Nobody wears sneakers with labels, everyone wears black shoes, no show-offs, no expensive sneakers; it takes a lot of pressure [off] us, not [having to] buy all that expensive stuff.

Parents also lament that corporal punishment, which is practiced in Ghanaian schools even after being outlawed, is not allowed in the United States. Jane Araba, a mother of three sons, said, "In Ghana, anybody can discipline [a child] and the parents thank you for that." She gave an example of how her father took her to school to be punished after hiding in order to skip school. She attributes her success in completing school and her success in becoming a teacher at the age of twenty-one to her parents' discipline. Another parent said, "When you did a mistake, the parents would take you to school and let the teacher punish you." Instances similar to these were mentioned every time schooling and discipline were discussed. Parents believe that tolerance of bad behavior at school sometimes transfers to the home environment. Similar

to immigrants from other countries (Sonia et al. 2015; Zhou and Bankston 1998), these parents view schooling as one of the institutions where children learn new behaviors as well as unlearn or neutralize those from their ethnic backgrounds. While comparing them with those in Ghana, one parent stated, "Children at home are passive, they will study but they will not aggressively follow [speaking and asking questions] the teacher."

Home

Children want to do what their peers in the neighborhood are doing. For example, they want to dress like them, putting pressure on parents who are not used to being questioned by children. For instance, when they go shopping for clothing, the children insist on a particular designer's clothes and shoes. "Children are too much into designer clothes," says Jane Araba. She added, "They [children] say that they do not want to be laughed at by their friends [because of what they wear]." Parents mentioned that children ask them for explanations as to why they are not allowed to do things that their neighbors do without parental interference.

Arguing with and questioning parents is considered disrespectful, especially if one is still in their care. James Kofi explained that the kind of freedom that children have in the United States is "freedom which is not freedom." When asked to talk about freedom, parents said that too much freedom while still under the parents' care is not allowed. One parent said that freedom has to come with responsibility, meaning that if their children can take good care of themselves (provide food, clothing, and housing for themselves) then they can be free. But as long as they rely on their parents, they are still under their control—having freedom is considered improper. One parent stated:

> What is here that [is] a little frightening is that . . . the discipline is not like back home—it is like children cannot be corrected when they are doing what is wrong, and they have rights so they do what they like. It does not help them because by the time they grow [up] they . . . find themselves in trouble because there was no correction, so they don't even know right from wrong.

Society

Outside of home and school, issues mainly arise when children go out alone or with their parents. For example, children are expected to stand up and offer their seats to the elderly on buses and trains. It is also considered polite to say hello to elders when they visit. They are also not allowed to address adults by their first name. During my observations in one of the churches that parents attended with their children, I witnessed a "Children's Sunday" where

the functions of the day were led by children under the instruction of their teachers. Children prepared speeches; while presenting, children addressed the congregation as "my parents, uncles, and aunts." After the service, and in other meetings in the same church, these three terms were used to refer to the adults; it was either "parents," or "uncle" for a male adult, or "auntie" for a female adult.

Proper behavior of children within these social contexts was expected by about 90 percent of the parents, regardless of their elite or non-elite status. The main difference between them was on the corrective actions taken by parents when their children misbehaved, a topic discussed as agency in chapter 4.

CONCLUSION

The Ghanaian comparative stance, the major underlying theme in this research study, is a determining factor that influences attitudes, views, and behaviors that parents exhibit toward schooling in the Ghanaian community in NYC. Three significant findings emerged in this study that shed light on how the comparative stance effects interactions between Ghanaian parents and their children and, in turn, effects their interactions with the education system.

First, rather than taking a passive position, Ghanaian immigrant parents actively evaluate the school system, a role normally relegated to policy makers, social scientists, and educators. Ghanaian parents in NYC have demonstrated this by actively evaluating their children's educational processes, including how they assimilate into the American culture through school experiences.

Second, Ghanaian parents' transnational experiences, a phenomenon among most post-1965 immigrants, creates space for a comparative stance that produces a dual, ambivalent way of viewing the schools; they compare education opportunities in Ghana with those in the United States, and they see schooling in terms of advantages and disadvantages

Third, both elite and non-elite parents share this dual view, differing only in magnitude and intensity, based on their neighborhoods.

Both elite and non-elite Ghanaian-born parents compare schools in NYC with those in Ghana. They use this comparative stance in almost every aspect of their lives, perhaps to evaluate whether or not it was worthwhile to move to NYC. One constantly hears statements such as "in Ghana . . ., but in NYC . . ." to describe the aspects of living in NYC that they like, those that they find unsatisfying, and those they find confusing. Just as they envision economic autonomy, which was their main reason for migrating to the United

States, and strive toward that goal, they look at school with an end product in mind—successful, socioeconomically mobile children—and wonder if they are getting a "good deal," as they had imagined. They wonder whether their children will fit into the Ghanaian social and cultural life after being exposed to the American lifestyle. They care a great deal about their children's ability to take on future roles as adults within the Ghanaian network, in both the United States and Ghana.

The same optimism that made them migrate makes them evaluate whether their children are headed toward reaching the desired goal of economic social mobility, especially for the non-elite (the goal for elite children is to maintain or improve their current status). However, Ghanaian parents' use of their cultural values as the standard by which to evaluate the behavior their children and the influence of their environment causes them to become savvy about their surroundings and those of their children, including understanding the threats and influences that act as barriers to educational achievement. Hence, while school is the center of hope, it is also a source of concern, because it is probably the only institution outside of Ghanaian networks where most children spend longer periods of time than they do at home. Things become even more challenging when children manifest sudden behavioral changes that are inconsistent with Ghanaian values. Such negative behaviors include lack of respect, disobedience, arrogance, and roughness—all of which, parents believe, are picked up at school. Parents attribute negative behaviors to an institutional lack of restraint and a spirit of permissiveness that they perceive as characterizing American schools (Portes and Rumbaut 2001).

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