



PALGRAVE STUDIES IN RACE, INEQUALITY AND  
SOCIAL JUSTICE IN EDUCATION



# Race, Class, Gender, and Immigrant Identities in Education

Perspectives from First and Second  
Generation Ethiopian Students

Adrienne Wynn · Greg Wiggan ·  
Marcia J. Watson-Vandiver · Annette Teasdell

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# Palgrave Studies in Race, Inequality and Social Justice in Education

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Marcia J. Watson-Vandiver · Annette Teasdell

# Race, Class, Gender, and Immigrant Identities in Education

Perspectives from First and Second Generation  
Ethiopian Students

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Adrienne Wynn  
College of Education  
University of North Carolina  
at Charlotte  
Charlotte, NC, USA

Greg Wiggan  
College of Education  
University of North Carolina  
at Charlotte  
Charlotte, NC, USA

Marcia J. Watson-Vandiver  
Elementary Education Department  
Towson University  
Towson, MD, USA

Annette Teasdell  
Department of Curriculum  
and Instruction  
Clark Atlanta University  
Atlanta, GA, USA

ISSN 2524-633X ISSN 2524-6348 (electronic)  
Palgrave Studies in Race, Inequality and Social Justice in Education  
ISBN 978-3-030-75551-5 ISBN 978-3-030-75552-2 (eBook)  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-75552-2>

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Switzerland AG

The registered company address is: Gewerbstrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

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# Introduction: Background and History of Ethiopia and Cultural Context

Education is rapidly changing in the U.S. (Maxwell, 2014; U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). At the end of 2020, Maxwell (2014) notes minority student enrollment will become the majority in public schools. The U.S. Department of Education projects that by 2027 the percentage of White students will decrease to 45%, and minority students will total 55% of the nation's schools (NCES, 2019a). Recent census data predicts that in 2060, U.S. student demographics will reach 64% racial minority, with biracial and multiracial students increasing at rates of 226% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Table 1.1 provides a visual illustration of these changing population trends.

As the data reflect, U.S. classrooms are rapidly diversifying. Yet, teacher population trends have remained relatively constant for the last five decades. According to the *National Center for Education Statistics* (NCES), public schools are typically comprised of a teacher workforce which is 80.1% White (NCES, 2017). Thus, this book addresses a need to equip teachers with rich multicultural materials to effectively educate diverse students.

The 2020 Supreme Court Decision ensured continued protection of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients in the U.S. (Immigrant Legal Resource Center, 2020). DACA is an immigration policy that allows immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children

**Table 1.1** Total percentage of public school students by race/ethnicity: 2017 projected trends

|       | <i>White</i> | <i>Black</i> | <i>Hispanic</i> | <i>Asian</i> | <i>Pacific<br/>Islander</i> | <i>American<br/>Indian/Alaska<br/>Native</i> | <i>Two or More<br/>Races</i> |
|-------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 2009  | 54.1         | 16.7         | 22.3            | 4.9          | 0.1                         | 1.2                                          | 0.7                          |
| 2010  | 52.4         | 16.0         | 23.1            | 4.6          | 0.3                         | 1.1                                          | 2.4                          |
| 2011  | 51.7         | 15.8         | 23.7            | 4.7          | 0.4                         | 1.1                                          | 2.6                          |
| 2012  | 51.0         | 15.7         | 24.3            | 4.8          | 0.4                         | 1.1                                          | 2.8                          |
| 2013  | 50.3         | 15.6         | 24.9            | 4.8          | 0.4                         | 1.0                                          | 3.0                          |
| 2014  | 49.5         | 15.5         | 25.4            | 4.9          | 0.3                         | 1.0                                          | 3.2                          |
| 2015  | 48.9         | 15.4         | 25.9            | 5.0          | 0.4                         | 1.0                                          | 3.4                          |
| 2016  | 48.2         | 15.3         | 26.3            | 5.1          | 0.4                         | 1.0                                          | 3.6                          |
| 2017  | 47.6         | 15.2         | 26.8            | 5.2          | 0.4                         | 1.0                                          | 3.9                          |
| 2018* | 47.1         | 15.3         | 27.1            | 5.3          | 0.4                         | 1.0                                          | 4.1                          |
| 2019* | 46.5         | 15.1         | 27.3            | 5.4          | 0.4                         | 1.0                                          | 4.3                          |
| 2020* | 46.1         | 15.0         | 27.5            | 5.5          | 0.4                         | 0.9                                          | 4.5                          |

\*Projected trends at the time of the study

Source NCES (2019b)

to receive protection from deportation (ibid.). The renewed protection for immigrant students and families adds an additional layer of student diversity in today's classrooms. While immigration is an expansive issue in the U.S., there is limited research on African-descent immigrant student experiences (Anderson, 2017; Bodovsky & Avni, 1989; Chacko, 2003; Mana et al., 2009). Currently, the majority of foreign students studying in the U.S. come from Asia and Europe (Open Doors Report, 2019). As such, research on international education typically focuses on Asian and European students' perspectives (Altbach, 2004; Lee, 2019; Lee & Rice, 2007). While the focus on international education is laudable, a systemic inquiry on Black immigrant student experiences is lacking. The projected increase in immigrant students in the U.S. will undoubtedly impact national school demographics, as well as English as a Second Language (ESL) and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) classrooms.

In addition to changing school demographics, U.S. immigration trends will also impact the sociopolitical landscape. In today's divisive political climate, many researchers are fearful of increasing cases of discrimination and xenophobia that could potentially target immigrants of color

(Lee, 2019). This was most recently seen in the COVID-19 pandemic (*Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2*) where Asian and Pacific Islanders were often targets of discrimination, xenophobia, and intolerance (Huerta, 2020; Human Rights Watch, 2020). In this sense, a more comprehensive understanding of international education is needed for teacher preparation, and multicultural and anti-racism education (Kendi, 2019; Kishimoto, 2018; May, 1999; Ohito, 2016; Sleeter & Grant, 1987, 2005). Since student experiences and outcomes vary depending on variables such as country of origin, race, class, gender, and religion, it is important to capture diverse perspectives within this critical topic (Altbach, 2004; Lee, 2010; Lee & Rice, 2007; Wilton & Constantine, 2003). Diversity, in this case, begins with further exploring minority perspectives in education. As such, this book explores critical race perspectives regarding immigration in schools and society. Additionally, this book raises questions about the role of immigrant status in U.S. classrooms, as well as the potential impact this could have on promoting greater diversity in schools.

## AFRICAN IMMIGRATION

There is a persistent need to explore international student experiences within the U.S. Immigrants of African descent are particularly overlooked in current research (Anderson, 2017; Bodovsky & Avni, 1989; Carroll & Ryan, 2007; Chacko, 2003). Historical movement across the African Diaspora includes various patterns of migration, immigration, and displacement (Gomez, 2005; Harris, 1993). Whereas the transatlantic slave trade displaced the most African-born people, the Refugee Act of 1980 is one of the primary contributors to contemporary immigration patterns (Anderson, 2017). It is estimated that 2.1 million foreign-born Africans live in the U.S. today (ibid.). African immigration has increased over 500% between 1980 and 2016 (Anderson & López, 2018). Since the year 2000, the number of Black immigrants living in the U.S. has risen 71% (Anderson & Lopez, 2018). In 2018, native Africans constituted 39% of the international Black population in the U.S. (ibid.).

Relatedly, over the last four decades, the number of African-born immigrants has nearly doubled each decade (Gambino et al., 2012). While West Africa is home to the largest influx of African-descent immigrants in the U.S., East Africans constitute over one-fourth of African immigrants (ibid.). Demographic details of the region demonstrate that 36%

of African-born immigrants are from West Africa, 29% are from East Africa, 17% are from North Africa, 5% are from Central Africa, 5% are from South Africa, and about 8% are from other outlying regions. As displayed in Fig. 1.1, Ethiopia is home to the second largest demographic group of African immigrants in the U.S., with 222,000 people respectively. The year 2015 marked some of the largest increases in East and Central African-born immigrants in the U.S. This is due in large part to economic and political destabilization in their home countries.

Many African immigrants attain greater educational outcomes than native-born U.S. citizens (Gambino et al., 2012). Additionally, immigrants from Africa typically have higher educational attainment than other foreign-born groups. As displayed in Fig. 1.2, currently, 16.1% of the African-born population has a graduate degree, 24.2% has a bachelor's

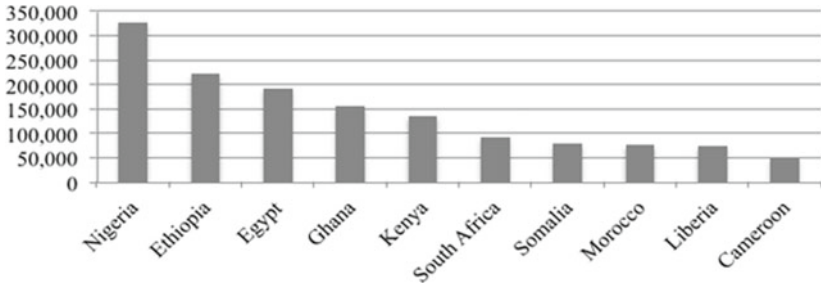


Fig. 1.1 Leading countries of birth for foreign-born African populations (Source Gambino et al. [2012])

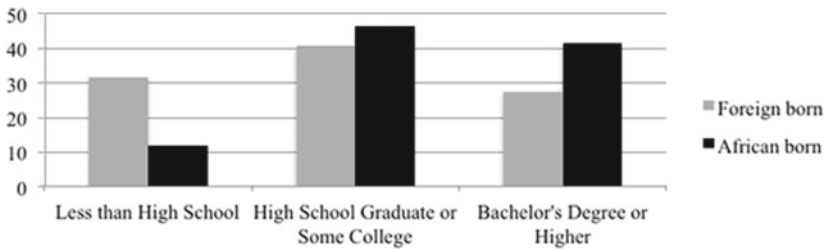


Fig. 1.2 Educational attainment of foreign-born populations from Africa (Source African Immigration Council [2012])

degree, 27.6% has some college, 20.0% has a high school diploma, and 12.1% has no high school diploma (African Immigration Council, 2012). Today, many African-born immigrants work in management, business, and science fields. This directly impacts the economy, as many African-born immigrants bring college and advanced-level educational skills to the U.S (Watson-Vandiver, 2018).

Despite these high levels of educational attainment, Hanassab (2006) finds that African and Middle Eastern students experience more discrimination than international students from other regions. Within the U.S., many African-born immigrant students are inaccurately categorized as African American or Afro-Caribbean (Loo, 2019). While multiple intersecting historical and cultural themes connect the African Diaspora, there are also ethnic differences that are distinctive to each geographic region and cultural group. Showers (2014) notes that race and ethnicity are equally important in Black immigrant identities. Notwithstanding, the U.S. often groups international Africans with African Americans, since they generally have similar phenotypical features particularly skin color (Romanucci-Ross et al., 2006; Waters, 1990). In this regard, overt racism is often a new experience for many African immigrants (Getahun, 2007). Considering that Ethiopia was never colonized, this proves to be a complicated milieu for many Ethiopians who have generally lived outside of White supremacy ideology and institutionalized racism (Getahun, 2007). The added complexities of being an immigrant student, in addition to xenophobia and discrimination, are compounding issues that require further research. Since Ethiopians comprise one of the largest immigrant groups in the U.S., it is important to address their unique learning needs, which could help inform diversity in multicultural education. To better understand these unique learning needs, it is important to first explore the relationship between Ethiopia and the U.S.

### *Ethiopian Immigration*

Ethiopia and the U.S. have generally maintained a convenient partnership (BBC News, 2019), yet the political relationship between the two countries has fluctuated. In 1896, in the Battle of Adwa, under the leadership of Emperor Menelik II, Ethiopia was successful in defeating the Italian army, thus remaining the only uncolonized country on the continent of Africa (Budge, 2001; Jonas, 2011; Milkias & Metaferia, 2005). Figure 1.3 shows an image of Menelik II below.



**Fig. 1.3** Emperor Menelik II Addis Ababa (*Source* Author)

At the time of the Battle of Adwa [1896], this victory served as a paradox to the U.S.' historically racialized landscape where enslaved Africans and African Americans built the country, supplied free labor, were bought and sold, and lynched for centuries (Kendi, 2017; Wilder, 2014; Wood, 1996). In regard to Ethiopia, of interest to some, is an ancient version of Judaism told in the *Kebrä Nagast* (Budge, 2001) which connects a King named Solomon in the tenth century B.C.E. to the Ethiopian Queen Makeda. She is often referred to by outsiders of her region as Queen of Sheba, rather than by her name Makeda. An off-spring between the two royalties became the first king in the line of Ethiopia's ancient monarchy, Menelik I (900 B.C.E.). A very unique version of

ancient Judaism in Aksum, Ethiopia has been the site of much discussion, archeological research, documentaries, and even popular movies surrounding the search for a secret relic or ark with covenants. Budge (2001) recounts:

And I swear by Myself and by Zion, the Tabernacle of My covenant, which I have created for a mercy seat and for the salvation of men, and in the latter days I will make it to come down to thy seed, that I will have pleasure in the offerings of thy children upon earth, and the Tabernacle of My covenant shall be with them for ever. (pp. 6–7)

In this sense, Ethiopia is a very religious country, as it also has one of the oldest versions of Christianity, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) that emerged from the Coptic Church in Egypt, which is recognized by some as the oldest church in the world (Chaillot, 2012). The EOC synthesizes aspects of Ethiopia's Judaism within its Christianity, to which each church has a veil of the temple and a replica of a secret ark of covenants in it. In this sense, the country is full of ancient temples, churches, mosques, and other relics where people of various ethnic groups and faiths have coexisted, generally peacefully, for millennia.

Nevertheless, due to the global and expansiveness of slavery and colonialism, Black and minority people around the globe were captivated by the continuous freedom of Ethiopia, which inspired them in their own liberation struggle. Since 1903, the U.S. and Ethiopia have served as military allies in both World War II and the Korean War (BBC News, 2019). After the Ethiopian national leadership changed from the ancient monarchy of kings in 1974, the country briefly pivoted to an alliance with the Soviet Union (Russia), which caused a rift in U.S. political relations. Notwithstanding, Ethiopia reestablished a positive relationship with the U.S. after the September 11th, 2001, attacks, as it was considered a vital partner against terrorism in Africa (ibid.).

The recent influx of racism and xenophobia has disrupted the relationship between the U.S. and many African nations. Researchers believe the politicized rhetoric of the 2016 election, for example, polarized American beliefs about diversity and human differences (Hooghe & Dassonneville, 2018). The subsequent 2017 travel ban greatly impacted international students from African and Muslim-majority countries (Redden, 2018). Although Ethiopia was not directly affected, neighboring people from Sudan, Tanzania, and Eritrea were banned from entering the U.S. Since

immigration and migratory patterns are intrinsically linked to school enrollment and student demographics, this undeniably impacts education. As immigrants enter the U.S., they quickly become central figures in American race relations, as they must navigate racism and their Black identity. The deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, along with many other Black people who died too soon because of the color of their skin, include: Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, Sandra Bland, Trayvon Martin, Jonathan Ferrell, Botham Jean, Korryn Gaines, Atatiana Jefferson, and countless others (Crenshaw, 2016). The police killings of Black people in America have generated national attention and protest and reinforce the notion that Blacks, in general, are disposable in U.S. society (Edwards & Harris, 2017).

In this light, on Monday, May 25th, 2020, the world watched George Floyd crying out that he could not breathe while a White police officer knelt on his neck in Minneapolis, Minnesota. As George Floyd took his last breath, three other officers were standing by watching without offering any assistance (Henderson et al., 2020; Hill et al., 2020; Oppel & Barker, 2020). The reverberating reactions throughout the nation and around the world questioned these senseless police killings to understand why Blacks, in general, appear to be disposable outsiders in U.S. society. This is a reality that Black immigrants, like those from Ethiopia in our study, are forced to wrestle with. In many U.S. classrooms, teachers and students grapple with these difficult topics.

In 2020–2021, the U.S. witnessed several notable events that are relevant to our study of assimilation and acculturation among first- and second-generation Ethiopian immigrant women. The COVID-19 pandemic (novel Coronavirus caused by SARS-COV-2) resulted in astronomical death rates in the U.S. and around the world. This prompted the U.S. and other countries to shut down or halt immigration to avoid the spread of the virus. This health crisis directly affected provision of educational services in the U.S. as school children received instruction remotely and sometimes without parental supervision. In addition, many families experienced economic hardship due to business closures and lack of work. The World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control as well as other groups provided resources to help stop the spread of COVID-19. Additionally, many countries introduced plans for mass vaccinations in hopes of decreasing the spread of the virus.

While COVID-19 took an economic toll, the U.S. also experienced increasing levels of social discontent. In the midst of the pandemic, in



the summer of 2020, the world watched a televised account of the tragic murder of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police (Henderson et al., 2020; Hill et al., 2020; Oppel & Barker, 2020). As we have noted, this was not an isolated incident as an increasing number of deaths of Black and Brown people due to state violence filled media headlines. The #BlackLivesMatter Movement (Garza, 2014; Taylor, 2016) and the #SayHerName Movement (Crenshaw et al., 2015) actively protested police brutality against Black and Brown people as the stories of Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor and countless others were being discussed. This growing sense of activism also led to a strong showing during the 2020 Presidential Elections, where Black and Brown minorities came out to the polls in record numbers.

From a political standpoint, voters expressed their dissatisfaction by exercising their voice at the polls. This resulted in the election of the 46th President of the U.S., Joseph R. Biden and the first Black woman Vice President, Kamala D. Harris. This historic election has great implications for Black women in the U.S. and worldwide. Since Vice President Harris is also of South Asian and Jamaican descent, her story may be inspirational for the Ethiopian immigrant women in our study. With overwhelming support for the Biden-Harris team, the nation witnessed history. However, former President Donald Trump would attempt to challenge and disrupt the election results. On January 6th, 2021, members of White supremacist groups stormed the U.S. Capital in Washington, DC, which resulted in the deaths of five people. It also led to the second impeachment of President Donald Trump due to his alleged involvement in the insurgence. The economic, social, and political toll of these events raised great concerns. These developments were on open display for the world to see. They might also prove to be shocking for immigrants like the ones we studied.

In light of the current racial injustices and the subsequent #BlackLivesMatter movement (a global non-violent civil disobedience organization committed to building local power to intervene in violence against Black communities), African-descent individuals navigate society within race and immigrant identity status (Camara, 2020; Edwards & Harris, 2017). Considering the history of race relations in the U.S., many African-descent immigrant students are forced to traverse an unfamiliar landscape where skin color is a mode of systemic oppression (Romanucci-Ross et al., 2006). Given that Ethiopia is a majority Black country, and its uniqueness as both the birthplace of humanity (National Science Foundation, 2001;

Relethford, 2008) and the fact that Europeans have never colonized it (Ani, 1994; Asante, 1990; Jackson, 1970; Karenga, 2002; Williams, 1987), many Ethiopian students are shocked at the systemic racism they see in the U.S. Ethiopia is known for its historical role as the birthplace of humanity, and it is the only place in the world where Black people were never enslaved by Europeans (Adogamhe, 2008). While this does not preclude Ethiopia from political conflict and outside interference, as we discuss in the next chapter, it does help to distinguish its history from the realm of Whiteness and colonial rule. As such, this is an important distinction that helps to recast East Africa and its descendants in a more positive light.

### *Pre-colonial and De-colonial Ethiopian History*

Anthropologists and archaeologists alike have verified Ethiopia as the birthplace of humanity, dating back to 4.2 million years ago (National Science Foundation, 2001; Relethford, 2008). The word Ethiopia, which means “burnt skin” or “Black people,” is home to the region where the oldest human fossil remains are found (Hilliard, 1998; Jackson, 1970; Williams, 1987). This is the marker for the earliest human civilization. Along the Nile River, Egypt (originally known as Kemet, meaning “land of the Blacks”) was first located in the northeastern region of the ancient Ethiopian empire (Ani, 1994; Asante, 1990; Jackson, 1970; Karenga, 2002; Williams, 1987).

In addition to its anthropological importance, Ethiopia is also historically significant for its influence on the Greco-Roman world. This can also be confirmed through primary interactions with the Greeks, as indicated in Aristotle’s *Physiognomonica* (Aristotle, 350 B.C.E./1966) and Herodotus’ *Histories* (Herodotus, 440 B.C.E./2014). Herodotus describes:

For the people of Colchis are evidently Egyptian, and this I perceived for myself before I heard it from others. So, when I had come to consider the matter, I asked them both; and the Colchians had remembrance of the Egyptians more than the Egyptians of the Colchians; but the Egyptians said they believed that the Colchians were a portion of the army of Sesostris. That this was so I conjectured myself not only because they are dark-skinned and have curly hair (this of itself amounts to nothing, for there are other races which are so), but also still more because the Colchians,

Egyptians, and Ethiopians alone of all the races of men have [practiced] circumcision from the first. (Herodotus, 440 B.C.E./2014, p. 104)

Interactions between ancient Greeks, Romans, and East Africans are well documented. In fact, this region is explicitly mentioned in primary source texts such as Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* (75 C.E./2012), Herodotus' *Histories* (440 B.C.E./2014), Plato's *Laws* (348 B.C.E./1968), and Aristotle's *Metaphysics Volume I* (350 B.C.E./1966). The influence of Egypt and Ethiopia is important to consider when distinguishing the region's undeniable contribution to humanity.

In addition to pre-colonial history, some modern distinctions are notable. Ethiopia, the birthplace of humanity, an uncolonized African or Black country speaks to a tremendous story regarding the human family tree, as well as liberation and emancipation narratives in the Black experience (Younis, 2018). Ethiopia's freedom helped to inspire other liberation movements like the Haitian Revolution and slave revolts throughout the Caribbean and in the U.S. As a result, Ethiopia's independence also influenced global Black struggle movements and in 1963, resulted in the formation of the *Organization of African Unity* (OAU). During the height of African decolonization efforts, Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie I's aim was to unify individual nation states across Africa. Fifty-three (53) out of the then fifty-four (54) African countries joined the organization, with the exception of Morocco (Adejumobi & Olukoshi, 2008). This was a substantial accomplishment during the 1960s, since South Africa, in 1994, was the last African nation to obtain its independence (Adogamhe, 2008). This marked 300 years of European colonization in Africa. Emperor Selassie's organization was eventually transformed into the *African Union* in 2002, which includes all 55 countries in Africa (Akokpari et al., 2008; Eloundou, 2019). Contemporary plans of the *African Union* are to establish a common continental currency by 2023 and execute other unifying initiatives, such as conflict resolution and peacekeeping missions (BBC News, 2012). Considering East Africa's powerful role in ancient and contemporary history, research on immigrant education should consider Ethiopian immigrant students' experiences when living in Western countries.

### *Black Women Immigrants*

Race is a nuanced dynamic for many immigrants. Additionally, gender and class often provide further complexities for African-descent women (Waters, 1990). Yet, there is limited research that explores gender and class intersections within immigration discourse and public schools (Beoku-Betts, 2004; Bodovsky & Avni, 1989). Similar to African Americans in the U.S., international women often experience varying intersections of oppression, meaning the interconnectedness of race, class, gender, and sexuality on women's lived experiences (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1991, 2016). As Collins (2000) notes, the demographic separations from Whiteness are described as the “matrix of domination” which is the interrelated domains of structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal power and how they shape human action. This positions Black immigrant women on the margins of society where power and privilege derive from White cultural ethos.

As mentioned, many African immigrants have greater educational attainment than the average U.S. citizen. In relation to income, foreign-born African women typically earn more than both their male immigrant counterparts and native Black women in the U.S. (Nawyn & Park, 2017). Between 1990 and 2010, the earnings of African-descent immigrants increased by 130% (ibid.). While African immigrant women are the highest-paid group of immigrants today, “they still earn less than all groups of men in the U.S.—except for black, U.S.-born men” (Reese, 2017, p. 14). These trends in salary are noteworthy; however, many researchers suggest that African-born immigrants face economic disparities and underemployment due to work-related issues, school visas, and institutional racism. This is most observable in the healthcare and business professions (Obot, 2020; Nawyn & Park, 2017).

In relation to education, foreign-born Black women are often encouraged to pursue their education in countries such as the U.S. and U.K., particularly in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, where these countries are viewed as global leaders. Yet, they often receive less funding and institutional support than their White counterparts (Beoku-Butts, 2004). In classroom discussions, the discriminatory pitfalls of being a racial minority in the U.S. are often uncharted territory for Black immigrant students (Waters, 1990). Classroom dynamics like cultural mismatches, which describe racial and cultural incongruences between teachers and students, often compound these issues. Studies

demonstrate that many Black women international students are often questioned about the authenticity of their written or oral communications by White professors and lecturers (Beoku-Butts, 2004; Waters, 1990). Constantine et al. (2005) found that international Black women students are often resistant to accept and adapt to the culture of the dominant group. In relation to international Black professors, studies show that their authority and academic expertise are often questioned by other faculty. Beoku-Betts and Njambi (2005) argue that Native African and Afro-Caribbean faculty appointments help to increase institutional diversity, yet they are generally hired in place of African Americans. It is clear that the history of race relations in the U.S. is nuanced. As such, proper theoretical grounding and analysis are needed.

### CRITICAL RACE FEMINISM: A FOUNDATIONAL FRAMEWORK

Critical theory serves as a foundation for two related theoretical frameworks: critical race theory and feminism. Critical theory is a theoretical framework developed by German neo-Marxists such as Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Jürgen Habermas among others, and can be traced back to social theorists George Hegel and Karl Marx (Lemert, 2004/2016; Morrison, 2006). The aim of critical theory is to expose and dismantle sources of oppression in society, in pursuit of greater liberation and human freedom (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999). Relatedly, critical race theory [CRT] critically analyzes issues of race for the enfranchisement of those who have been oppressed based on race relations. CRT is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3. Posited by constitutional law scholar, Derrick Bell, CRT was developed to examine society and culture as it relates to race, power, and the legal system (Bell, 1980; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Yosso (2005) notes that CRT is “a framework that can be used to theorize, examine, and challenge the ways race and racism implicitly and explicitly impact on school structures, practices, and discourse” (p. 70). CRT emerged as a theoretical response to address race and racism in American society. A major tenet of CRT is that racism is embedded into society (Bell, 1987, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Therefore, “it [racism] looks ordinary and natural to persons in the culture,” as a result of society constructing norms based on the self-interest of the status quo (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p.

xvi). Given this notion, racism has been perpetuated through legal, educational, and social systems, which, in turn, structurally promote the interest of the dominant group. Therefore, CRT is the paradigmatic response for racial equity in American society.

On the other hand, feminist theory originated in response to the need to analyze and address gender equity in society (Cooper, 1892; Collins & Bilge, 2016; Ferree & Tripp, 2006; Guy-Sheftall, 1995; hooks, 1981). Feminism critically explores how gender differences are constructed under patriarchal systems (Collins, 2000). Additionally, feminist theory analyzes gender equality and questions the patriarchal systems used to oppress women. Barak et al. (2007) note:

Feminism comprises both a basic doctrine of equal rights for women and an ideology for women's liberation from patriarchy. Feminism's basic task is consciousness-raising about oppression and encouraging actions that undo the exclusions of women's opinions, experiences, and accomplishments. (p. 71)

Here, feminism challenges the status quo of male privilege, calling into question misogynistic policies and practices favoring men. The marginalization and oppression of women are important when considering their social, political, and economic experiences. The primary tenet is to combat societal exclusionary practices and ensure greater gender equity. Therefore, the scope of this book is viewed through the blended lens of critical race theory and feminist theory, called *critical race feminism* (CRF). CRF is used to examine the discourse of race and gender for the purpose of deconstructing systemic power structures that marginalize women of color. The emergence of CRF surfaced in response to exclusive practices in mainstream, White feminist perspectives. According to Barak et al. (2007), critical race feminists:

... have objected both to feminist approaches that presume White middle-class women's experiences are representative of all women's experiences and to critical race scholarship that presumes minority women are not only all the same, but that they are all the same as those of their minority male counterparts. (p. 113)

The framework of CRF examines race and racism's impact on systemic structures in society, as well as challenges the underrepresentation and suppression of women in schools and society (Yosso, 2005). In relation

to this book, CRF allows for the investigation and analysis of Ethiopian women's matriculation in America.

As Childers-McKee and Hytten (2015) note, there are a number of theoretical similarities between CRF and CRT:

CRF shares a number of assumptions with CRT, including belief in the following ideas: the permanence of racism in our society; the importance of narratives, storytelling, and counternarratives to disrupting taken-for-granted and normative views about the world; the social construction of race; the need to critique liberalism for its individualistic and context-independent perspective on the world; the reality of interest convergence, meaning that marginalized cultures have gotten ahead only when those from the dominant culture also benefit; and the importance of critical race praxis, or action to challenge the status quo. (p. 395)

However, CRF helps examine the experiences of women and girls of color in the U.S. In essence, CRF “negotiates boundaries and borders...” (Pratt-Clark, 2010, p. 27), which questions the normative gender roles and practices perpetuated by systemic structures. In doing so, CRF navigates the discourse of gender and identity toward personal and group emancipation and equity. Evans-Winters and Esposito (2010) add:

Today, from a critical race feminist perspective we have to raise the following question: If a young Black woman's worth is measured through her aptitude for reproducing the next generation's labor (i.e. capital), what would be the interest of the privileged class in assisting in the development of her educational well-being through self-empowerment or social and financial support? Once more, where does the interest of the White middle class converge with the interest of young women of African descent? (p. 18)

To that end, gender considerations must address the intersection of race and ethnicity. This is important to explore, as research indicates that ethnic considerations are of equal importance to international students (Showers, 2014). In the U.S., discussions about gender are also interconnected with race relations (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Therefore, CRF becomes crucial when unpacking the dynamics of Ethiopian women's experiences in American society. In Chapter 3, CRF is discussed further. CRF is beneficial when investigating and theorizing educational issues that impact diverse immigrant women. This theory illustrates that the