

BOOK REVIEW

**BLACK IMMIGRANT LITERACIES: INTERSECTIONS OF RACE,
LANGUAGE, AND CULTURE IN THE CLASSROOM**

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"Black Immigrant Literacies: Intersections of Race, Language, and Culture in the Classroom" by Patriann Smith explores the complex dynamics affecting the education of Black immigrant youth. Drawing on her own experience as a Black Afro-Caribbean immigrant, as well as her roles as a mother, classroom teacher, scholar, and teacher educator, Smith brings a unique perspective to the topic. She introduces the Black Immigrant Literacies framework, which combines diaspora literacy, racial literacy, and transnational literacy. This framework addresses misunderstandings surrounding Black immigrant youth's literacies, which can hinder their academic progress. Smith's work is a critical resource for educators and stakeholders, offering a pathway to help Black immigrant youth reach their full potential in the classroom.

The Black Immigrant Literacies framework comprises five essential elements: claim to the struggle for justice, myth of the model minority, a transraciolinguistic approach, local-global perspectives, and holistic literacies. These elements serve as guiding principles for understanding and interpreting the authentic narratives of Black immigrant youth, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and addressing the multifaceted challenges they face. Smith's framework highlights the need to better understand how Black immigrant students can be supported in classrooms as they relate to other racial and immigrant students. The Black Immigrant Literacies framework is a guide for youth to build their skills by connecting with their local and global contexts and using diverse literacy resources.

To illustrate the operationalization of the framework, Smith skillfully weaves together the authentic narratives of two Black Caribbean immigrants, Chloe (Jamaican) and Ervin (Bahamian). Smith was intentional in her choice of Jamaican and Bahamian natives since the Caribbean is the largest origin source of Black immigrants in the United States (Haughton 2022; Tamir & Anderson, 2022, as cited in Smith, 2023). Chloe's story explores the complexities of language, race, and migration, highlighting her transnational journey and the challenges she encountered in Texas, USA. Smith uses Chloe's experiences to illustrate the Black Immigrant Literacies framework, providing educators with practical guidance to improve literacy learning for Black immigrant youth. Similarly, Ervin's

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narrative delves into the nuances of multilingualism and belonging, particularly around the idea of being "black enough." Through these stories, Smith underlines the importance of creating inclusive educational spaces that recognize and embrace the linguistic and cultural diversity of Black immigrant students.

"Black Immigrant Literacies" serves as both a scholarly work and a practical resource for educators looking to foster supportive environments for Black immigrant youth. The introduction offers a thorough overview, detailing the author's background and the central themes of the book. It helps readers quickly understand the book's context and purpose. The book is further organized with clear explanations of the Black Immigrant Literacies framework, and how the framework is applied through authentic narratives, ensuring a coherent structure that guides readers through the content.

Smith links her work to other scholarship, challenging the colonial legacy that has shaped the use of English among Black Caribbean immigrants. This comprehensive approach gives readers a deeper understanding of the Black Immigrant Literacies Framework and the arguments supporting it, enhancing the overall clarity and impact of the book. The author effectively highlights the practical implications of the text for educators in elementary, middle, and high school. Through the rich narratives and insightful analyses presented in this book, Smith invites readers to rethink and expand their understanding of literacy education, ultimately contributing to the empowerment and success of Black immigrant students in the classroom and beyond.

The book's greatest strength lies in its ability to provide an engaging overview of the historical and cultural influences on literacy, while also providing practical implementations of the framework for literacy. By advocating for a framework centered on Black immigrant literacies, Smith encourages educators and university professors to leverage students' strengths in the process of reshaping and redefining literacy and English Language Arts curricula.

Smith provides specific examples of approaches, teaching activities, instructional modules, and lesson plans. This practical application element of the book emphasizes the relevance of the Black Immigrant Literacies framework in improving the literacy learning experiences of Black immigrant youth. Each chapter ends with a list of questions to consider for teachers, teacher educators, and policy makers. This suggests that it requires the concerted efforts of teachers, teacher educators, and policy makers in this holistic approach to Black immigrant literacies.

As the reader delves into Smith's *Black Immigrant Literacies* it resonates with how Ladson-Billings (1995) advocates for culturally relevant pedagogy, incorporating students' diverse backgrounds to improve academic success. This approach emphasizes cultural competence among educators, fostering a sense of belonging and enhancing learning by connecting with students' cultural backgrounds. Ladson-Billings' framework has served as a crucial foundation for educators seeking to address cultural diversity in the classroom and promote equitable and inclusive learning experiences.

Smith's Black Immigrant Literacies framework has added another critical layer to the discussion of culturally relevant pedagogy by ensuring that Black Caribbean immigrants are viewed as a diverse group of Blacks with historical and geographical experiences that

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are different from African Americans. The attempt is not to set the groups against each other but to ensure that literacy is addressed at the intersections of race, language, and culture in the classroom.

Like Ladson-Billings' *Critical Race Theory* (1999), Smith's *Black Immigrant Literacies* is an informed approach that can help teachers recognize and challenge the systemic inequities that contribute to disparities in educational outcomes. Smith has laid the foundation for educators to develop a deeper understanding of the intersection of race, language, and culture in the classroom. Smith has extended the aim of fostering a commitment to social justice and equipping teachers to effectively teach diverse student populations. Considering these strengths, *Black Immigrant Literacies: Intersections of Race, Language and Culture in the Classroom* by Patriann Smith should be a required reading for both preservice and in-service teachers in preparation for teaching in increasingly diverse classrooms.

The potential for this scholarly work to grow lies in expanding the research and framework beyond the Caribbean context. Since the book largely focuses on Jamaican and Bahamian immigrant narratives, it would be beneficial to apply the framework to Black immigrant youth from other regions, such as Africa or Europe. This expansion would showcase the framework's broader relevance and offer deeper insights into the experiences of Black immigrant youth on a global scale.

Patriann Smith presents a compelling analysis of the intersectional experiences impacting the education of Black immigrant youth. By unveiling her extensive research through rich authentic narratives and introducing her paradigm-shifting Black Immigrant Literacies framework, Smith equips educators, researchers, and policymakers with insightful tools to acknowledge the multi-layered challenges confronted by these students while actively fostering more equitable and culturally sustaining learning environments.

While Smith's framework centers on Caribbean immigrant stories, it offers a solid base for extending this scholarship to broader contexts. This work remains a vital resource for empowering marginalized Black immigrant students. Smith calls on educational stakeholders to embrace her framework, promoting inclusive classrooms and fostering community solidarity. By applying the principles in "*Black Immigrant Literacies*" educators can significantly impact the literacy learning and achievement of students. Smith's approach, rooted in competence, compassion, and commitment, equips education systems to better serve Black immigrant youth, respect their complex identities, fight injustice, and empower them to succeed on their own terms.