

Supporting Black Male Students with International Backgrounds from Africa: Implications for School Counseling Practice

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Abstract

This conceptual article presents an advocacy discussion for school counselors in pK-12 schools to call for counseling practices that can effectively address issues of access and equity among Black male students with international backgrounds from Africa. The authors outline a grounded framework utilizing both the American School Counselor Association Role Statement of School Counselors and the Multicultural Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC) in guiding school counselors to serve as advocates and change agents in working with this population. The article advances to discuss the educational issues and needs of first and second-generation Black male students of African immigrant parents to the United States, including social and career developmental areas. Finally, the article outlines recommendations on how school counselors can partner with students and families to maximize college/career opportunities, academic resources, and social connections that promote positive development and success.

Keywords: Black male students, African immigrants, multicultural counseling, social justice, advocacy

Emigration to another country can often present transitional challenges and decisions for individuals and families, including the geographic locale to resettle, securing a new career, navigating new cultural norms, and school choices for school-aged children. Additionally, a challenge and stressor is dealing with marginalization and oppression in the United States. The U.S. has historical and contemporary issues with racism, structurally and interpersonally, that often serve as barriers to access opportunities and resources for marginalized people, including immigrants.

Issues of access and equity to services and resources in one's new country as an immigrant family can be elusive and demoralizing based on immigration laws and other systemic factors. Finding allies and advocates in navigating the biased system in the United States. can often be integral to achieving variations of success. Educational access for children is a shared priority among many families toward achieving success goals. Yet, access can be a source of significant stress for parents and students unfamiliar with new educational systems. School counselors are identified as advocates and change agents in academic settings to champion access and equity for all students. For the purpose of this article, the authors focus on Black male students with international backgrounds from Africa as a population of study. The foreign-born African population in the United States has more than doubled in size since 2000, which presents an imperative for school counselors to be aware of the needs of this student population and their families to facilitate collaboration from a strength-based lens.

Statement of the Problem

Bell (2014) stated that Black men face difficult educational battles across the United States, evidenced by sobering graduation statistics and other outcome measures. Given the educational statistics, Bell (2014) further advocated that school professionals, including school

counselors, must collaborate with families and community organizations to create access to educational programming and services and create resources to address systemic barriers to heighten success possibility outcomes for Black male students. Adding to these educational statistics, first and second-generation immigrant Black male students from Africa can frequently experience challenges while emigrating to the United States. They can face educational and cultural challenges from transitioning into a new school, community, and country. Most notably, these challenges include experiences with racism and stereotyping, inadequate access to resources, placement into ELL (English Language Learner) programs primarily based on knowledge of English versus past academic performance, and other forms of oppression (Matthews & Mahoney, 2005). How well these issues are addressed depends on the degree to which school leaders, including school counselors, create a welcoming and supportive school environment inclusive of practices that remove barriers towards access and equity.

Educational access and attainment are paramount to immigrant parents and families coming to the United States. Many view education as a key to success and an empowering tool to transform current life conditions. However, access and equity to pK-12 education in America can be challenging to navigate, especially for immigrant families. The creation and authentic history of the United States is fundamentally rooted in diverse collectives of American chattel slavery and voluntary immigrants who emigrated seeking aspects of an improved life experience (e.g., economic growth, educational access, and social and political opportunities). According to White (2011), the beginning of this country held an open-door policy for immigrants to fulfill their hopes and dreams. However, throughout history, we have seen some of the most controversial and hostile debates and policies on immigration, which often reflect racial and ethnic inequities, particularly when individuals arrive from certain regions of the world. Specifically, systems of

institutionalized racism often impact persons from communities of color compared to their White counterparts. School counselors can support the Black immigrant students from the African Continent to achieve academic, career, and behavioral success.

Marginalized populations face issues of equity, access, and injustice at micro and macro levels within various institutions, including pK-12 educational systems. School counseling and educational-related organizations like the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) and The Education Trust advocate the ideals that professional school counselors should be system change agents, leaders, and advocates for all students. This echoes Holcomb-McCoy's (2007) belief that "Issues of social justice are as relevant today as ever before" (p. 16).

Transitioning to a new school within the same city, a new town, or a new state presents a predictable set of challenges for U.S.-born students. These challenges include making new friends, adjusting to teachers, and acclimating to new neighborhoods and communities. For immigrant students entering the United States as first, second, or third generation from Africa, additional challenges can be acculturating to American culture, understanding new policies, bullying, making friends, transitioning to English as a primary language, being the "new student," having visible differences in language and culture, and extra-curricular involvement. Acculturation occurs when individuals from different cultural groups interact with each other consistently, resulting in changes in the original cultural expression of either or both individuals (Coleman, 2019). Coleman (2019) outlined the dynamics of acculturative stress for Black international students:

Acculturative stress is explained as stress that emanates from adjustment into a new culture. Acculturative stress is different from general life stress in that it is directly related to the immigrant's acculturative process and can result in changes in the person's

physical, psychological and social well-being. Black international students, in their acculturative process, also experience incidents of racism and discrimination, which lead to acculturative stress (p. 2).

As 21st century transformative leaders, school counselors can be integral in promoting environments where collaborative partnerships and advocacy systems can promote the academic and social-emotional success of diverse students (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007). As our country's racial and ethnic demographics rapidly change, school counseling leaders must be equipped to serve all students effectively as assertive advocates, leaders, and change agents who remove systemic barriers that have been detrimental to students of color and their families. The New School Counseling Vision under The Education Trust (2009) took a firm position on this matter in its statement:

The trained school counselor must be an assertive advocate creating opportunities for all students to pursue dreams of high aspirations. School counselors must focus attention on students for whom schools have been the least successful—low-income students and students of color. Counselors must concentrate on issues, strategies, and interventions that will help close the achievement gap between these students and their more advantaged peers.

Black male students with international backgrounds from Africa are susceptible to further marginalization because of their race and country of origin. School counselors must ensure that wider gaps between the target population and other students are lessened while also making sure that they and their families can succeed regardless of underlying circumstances.

School counselors' competency and leadership abilities to promote access and equity to quality education for African immigrant students are an educational imperative. Watkinson and Hersi (2013) noted that 13% of the American population is foreign-born, with 2 million people from countries in

Africa. Watkinson and Hersi further stated that in 2012, one in 5 children in U.S. schools were children of immigrants, and by the year 2040, the number is expected to rise to one in three children. If school counselors are to support immigrant students from Africa effectively, it is critical that they first become enlightened about the continent.

School Counselors, Cultural Diversity, and Social Justice

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2021) noted that school counselors' role include the design and delivery of counseling programs that can improve all student outcomes. School counselors work as leaders, advocates, and collaborators to promote equity and educational access for all students. ASCA empowers and clarifies the role of school counselors to be system change agents and transformers to benefit all students. The Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC) give further grounding of counselors' roles in the profession to work on behalf of students. The MSJCC offers counselors a framework to implement multicultural and social justice competencies into theories, practice, and research (Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler & McCullough, 2015). Ratts et al. (2015) noted that the MSJCCs operate in a four-quadrant model based on four developmental domains: “(1) counselor self-awareness, (2) client worldview, (3) counseling relationship, and (4) counseling and advocacy interventions” (Ratts et al., 2015, p 3).

The competencies challenge all counselors to develop self-awareness so they may then explore their attitudes and beliefs, develop knowledge, skills, and action relative to their self-awareness and worldview (Ratts et al., 2015). As professional school counselors, engaging in this process to explore self-awareness creates an environment for counselors to approach the issues and needs of students. Looking at the client's worldview, building rapport and the counselor-client relationship, and incorporating counselor and advocacy interventions can help

meet the client's needs (Ratts et al., 2015). The authors of this article will offer a case scenario for readers to analyze how the MSJCC can empower a school counselor in working with a Black male student from Africa.

Africa is Not a Country

Africa is comprised of 54 distinct countries with diverse ethnic groups, tribes, cultures, languages, and traditions. Operating under marginalizing systems of global White supremacy means encountering numerous challenges in attempts to teach diverse histories and world cultures in United States educational systems. Across the nation, concerted efforts have been made to remove teaching diverse, non-White history from pK-12 environments to focus more heavily on European and the story of the United States' White citizenry. This exclusion is problematic because as the United States becomes increasingly diverse, many students do not see themselves within the curriculum to which they are exposed. Data reported in educational reform literature has demonstrated that the lack of cultural relevance concerning the three R's (reading, writing, and arithmetic) is a significant factor in student disengagement.

Despite external challenges, most scholars agree that Africa is the origin of all civilizations embedded with rich histories. By promoting these histories in schools, students of African descent can feel a sense of pride in knowing their ancestors made astonishing accomplishments in areas such as religion and spiritual practices, languages, family and community systems, and educational values. Rather than being perceived as deficient, these accomplishments and their undergirding values, traditions, customs, and beliefs can serve as community and cultural assets for Africans immigrating to the United States (Zezeza, 2010). Instead of viewing it from a deficit perspective, learning and understanding the history of African immigrant students' home countries can engender a strengths-based counselor-student alliance rather than the deficit relationship commonly found between immigrant

students and educators in U.S. schools. A school counselor should consider the client's worldview via the MSJCC competencies: "Develop knowledge of the individual, group, and universal dimensions of human existence of their privileged and marginalized clients" (Ratts et al., 2015, p.7). Culturally competent school counselors recognize that African immigrant students' experiences will certainly differ depending on that student's country of origin, familial situation, and individual traits.

African Migration Patterns to the United States

The United States population is becoming increasingly diverse, racially and ethnically, at rapid rates. Tarlebba (2010) described the immigration of Africans to the U.S. as a phenomenon that has accelerated in the last 2-3 decades, with naturalization figures more than quadrupling since the colonization of Africa ended in the 1960s. Takougang & Tidjani (2009) cited 1.2 million African immigrants living in the U.S. in 2002 compared to only 364,000 living there in 1994. According to Afolayan (2011), African immigrants made up more than 4% of the 1.6 million Black people living in America in 2008, and there are currently approximately 2 million African immigrants across the United States. Goffe (2011) and Takyi (2002) noted that these numbers increased significantly after a severely restrictive U.S. immigration law (the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act) was abolished. The Immigration and Nationality Act used a quota system to limit the number of immigrants from Sub-Saharan African nations eligible for immigration into the United States.

According to past Census (1990) data, African immigrants most often came from the following 8 countries: (1) Nigeria (17.8%), (2) Egypt (13.8%), (3) Ethiopia (11.2%), (4) Republic of South Africa (10.4%), (5) Ghana (6%), (6) Morocco (5.2%), (7) Liberia (3.6%), and (8) Kenya (2.9%). Since the 1990 census, the number of African immigrants grew from 881,300 to 1.6 million from 2010 figures (American Immigration Council, 2012).

Takyi (2002) noted that the Census data does not investigate why these eight nations dominate African migration. Possible explanations for these trends are that these societies experienced a major social change in the last two decades, and several have strong political and cultural ties to the United States. Takyi (2002) goes on to identify the U.S. states that contain the highest percentage of African immigrants: (1) California (19.3%), (2) Texas (11.1%), (3) New York (8.3%), (4) Maryland (7%), (5) Virginia (6%), (7) Massachusetts (4.6%), and (8) Florida (4.5%). The total percentage in other states was 4% or less.

Takyi (2002) further disaggregated data of migrant choices based on non-Black Africans and Black Africans. This data is significant because the experiences, patterns of migration, and outcomes of non-Black Africans and Black Africans are different due to racial inequities in America (Thomas, 2012). According to Takyi (2002), while California is the state African immigrants overwhelmingly choose, the data separated into non-Black Africans and Black Africans reveals a difference that indicates Black Africans tend to migrate to states with significant proportions of other Black residents. For example, New York (14.7%) is the number one destination of Black African immigrants, followed closely by California (13.3%), Texas (10.2%), Maryland (10%), New Jersey (5%), Georgia (4%) and Massachusetts (4%). Tarlebba (2010) noted that while most African immigrants settled in major urban centers like New York during the 1990s, in the last couple of decades, African immigrants have increasingly moved into small towns across the U.S.

Reasons for African Migration to the U.S.

African families and individuals immigrate to the U.S. for diverse reasons. Takougang and Tidjani (2009) and Afolayan (2011) suggested that increased political freedoms, improved economic conditions, and increased educational opportunities such as higher education, are primary reasons for emigration to the United States. Like immigrants from other continents, the “push and pull” theory

explains many reasons Africans immigrate to the United States (Takyi, 2002). The “push and pull” theory states that people migrate because they are pushed from current locations due to poverty, civil unrest, and a lack of food and employment. Additionally, the prospects of improved socioeconomic, political, and educational opportunities and outcomes “pull” people to other locations across the globe. The potential of providing their children access to equitable and rigorous educational opportunities is an influential factor in African parents’ decision to immigrate to the United States.

African Immigrant Educational Experiences in the U.S.

Takyi (2002) discussed access to higher education as a significant “push factor” for African immigrants, especially during the 1970s and 1980s. Although education is of paramount importance to many developing nations, many African nations do not have free and compulsory pK-12 education like the United States. A standard exists for developing countries that require families to pay for school after primary level, but this may be challenging to some families due to significant poverty. The family’s drive to achieve education for children is a high priority because education is viewed as a significant vehicle to obtain more positive life outcomes for the individual and collective family. Free and compulsory education for all students is connected to a nation’s economic systems and a country’s level of wealth. African parents who immigrate to the United States to provide educational opportunities for their children take school very seriously. However, historical and contemporary barriers and discrimination against persons of color within a school are likely to confront African parents as they transition into the country. Therefore, school counselors must advocate removing such barriers to an equitable education that these students seek to achieve. The influx of African immigrant families means school counseling leaders across the country must be equipped to advocate for the academic development and life success of African male immigrant students.

Thomas (2012) conducted a quantitative study comparing race and enrollment in school among Black African and White African (e.g., White South African) children to address empirical gaps in the education literature. Previous studies using 2000 Census data compared educational experiences and school outcomes to Black natives to the U.S. and other Black immigrants. The study sought to explore if race still posed as a significant factor to educational outcomes as it had in the past. Comparing African immigrants to Black students native to the U.S. and other Black immigrants, African immigrant students significantly outperformed their counterparts in academic performance (grade achievement in courses, enrollment in rigorous courses, GPA rankings, etc.). According to Thomas (2012), other studies suggest that African immigrants have become the most highly educated subpopulation within the United States. However, findings from Thomas's study reveal that significant disparities exist between Black and White Africans, which parallels the gap between Black and White students in the U.S. The overall findings suggest that racist structures still impede achievement, despite the assets and strengths that African male immigrant students bring from their home countries.

Disparities in education grow even wider when data for gender is examined. According to Watkinson and Hersi (2013), data is sparse regarding school achievement among African immigrant male students; however, many achievement gaps and other related data exist for Black and Brown students, especially young men. Immigrant students struggle to succeed in American schools, often underperforming on various academic indicators, such as achievement tests, grades, graduation rates, and college enrollment (Watkinson & Hersi, 2013, p. 44). According to the American School Counselor Association's position on The School Counselor and Cultural Diversity (2021) and The Education Trust's (2009) new school counseling vision, school counselors must dismantle those structures and policies that impede the educational growth of Black immigrant male students from Africa.

Alliances between African Immigrant and Black U.S.-born Male Students

Despite their differences, Black male students native to the U.S. and African immigrant male students share similarities that require advocacy by school counselors and other leaders to foster positive school and life outcomes. These two groups can be allies who work with school counselors to establish and maintain a welcoming school environment for all students. However, the authors suggest these two groups can forge an alliance around a painful and empowering paradox: the two groups share a history and culture. Unfortunately, this history and culture are often lost to Black male students in the United States because of U.S. chattel slavery and Jim Crow, which has adversely impacted their ethnic and self-identity. Conversely, many African male immigrant students come to the United States with a more intact and prideful sense of ethnic identity rooted in language, traditions, family, and culture. Most African immigrant male students coming to the U.S. face a shocking level of racism and hostility based on identities that they primarily grew up viewing as assets. In contrast, Black male students in the United States have been forced to develop resilience to thrive and navigate systems of racial oppression and marginalization. Black men have also benefitted from historical Black organizations and elders who have created paths to success against the odds.

Watkinson and Hersi (2013) suggested that immigrant students of color exposure to racism and discrimination are significant stressors that impact their transition to U.S. schools and increases their risk for academic failure. School counselors can assist in establishing a partnership between these two groups that empower them to eradicate barriers that adversely impact them and their communities. By putting their voices in action, these students can advance as leaders in the school (Hipolito-Delgado & Lee, 2007).

School counselors may utilize data-driven methods (e.g., needs assessments, surveys, focus groups, etc.) to develop programs and counseling interventions that address the specific needs of Black

American and African male youth. The authors offer a brief case scenario to highlight how to use role standards from ASCA and the MSJCC when solving an issue for a Black male student from Africa.

Case Example

Kofi Aygei is an 11th grade student in Mrs. Brown's class filled with students at a local high school in New York. Kofi moved to the U.S. with his parents and younger sibling from Ghana two years ago. Kofi excels in his academics and has aspirations to become an engineer. Kofi and his parents see the counselor annually since moving to make sure that he continues a rigorous course schedule. Kofi comes to see Mrs. Brown regarding a racial issue that occurred in the community during the weekend. Kofi shares with Mrs. Brown that some fellow 11th graders went with him to the mall to look for outfits for the fall dance coming up next month. He recounts that almost immediately entering the store, the clerk started following them around and even asked if they had money to buy anything. The young men voiced being offended by the clerk and chose to leave the store to avoid further confrontation. Kofi shared with Mrs. Brown that his group noticed that White classmates were also in the store, and the clerk exhibited a much friendlier demeanor to them compared to Kofi and his group.

Utilizing both the ASCA personal development domain and the MSJCC framework, the counselor can move through exploration of the traumatizing and unjust issue of racial profiling by examining the student's developmental needs in this case and engaging in self-awareness. Considering the client's worldview, building the relationship, and therapeutic alliance elicits counseling and advocacy interventions.

The authors offer some examples of programs and activities that can be designed under the ASCA Personal Developmental Domain:

1. Group counseling for African immigrant and Black male students around topics including self-empowerment, resiliency, advocacy, academic skill-building, college/career goals, and navigating systems of racial injustice.
2. School counselors can use approaches like the Narrative Theory in both individual and group counseling settings to explore immigrant students' diverse experiences and what they need to achieve academic and personal success. In addition, the Narrative Theory can be an effective approach to assessing the student's assets and their community and finding new ways to address needs that may arise (Nafziger & DeKruyf, 2013).
3. Targeted classroom guidance around college/career planning, community activism, and developmental assets.
4. Instructional curriculum through collaborative consultation: Working with the school's leadership team and History Department to provide ethnic studies courses focused on African and Black American Histories.
5. Program Coordination: Student-led collaborative program coordinated to highlight cultural immersion and service-learning. Such a program might promote leadership skills and heighten levels of civic engagement in Black communities in the U.S. and Africa.

Additionally, programmatic ideas can be gleaned from a conversation the authors had with an adult African male immigrant. His comments highlighted the necessity of African immigrant male students being able to fully maximize the educational experiences and career paths they gain in the U.S.:

1. Learning the importance of staying engaged and contributing to the expansion building of their home countries.
2. Understanding where they come from and why they are here in the U.S., including giving resources back to their home country.

School counselors are trained to develop these and other activities through comprehensive school counseling programs. Perhaps these activities should include advocating for African male immigrant students while also forming alliances, networks, and coalitions with other African and Black families.

Empowering African immigrant and Black American male students to work collaboratively to dismantle racism in their communities and broader American society is a task of paramount importance for school counselors. “Black Lives Matter” and “Hands Up, Don’t Shoot” are two recent symbolic protests shared across the United States in opposition to racial profiling, mass incarceration, and deadly force used by police against Black people. School counselors have an ethical and professional duty as culturally competent professionals to work with students and other stakeholders to dismantle oppressive systems that limit educational opportunities for Black immigrant men. The importance cannot be overstated as exposure to racism can adversely affect the students’ short-term and long-term personal identities. So, working with African male immigrants to develop protective factors (e.g., resiliency) is important because the highly racialized oppression present in the United States operates differently than the forms of oppression they encountered in their home countries.

Working through the New School Counseling Vision

The Education Trust (2009) established the New School Counseling Vision for school counseling, which calls upon all school counselors to advocate for educational equity, access to rigorous college and career curriculum, and academic and life success for all students. Part of The Education Trust’s mission is to encourage school counselors to work as social justice change agents for traditionally marginalized groups (e.g., low-income students and students of color). The new vision changed from the traditional view of school counseling of what school counselors do to a data-driven approach to understand how students are impacted by having access to an integrated school counseling program. Within The Education Trust’s (2014) Scope of the Work, specific roles are associated with the

work of a transformative school counselor: leadership, advocacy, teaming and collaboration, counseling and coordination, and assessment and use of data. The following section will provide brief discussions on how school counselors can integrate these transformative roles when working with African male immigrant students.

Leadership, Assessment, and Use of Data

A comprehensive school counseling program can be the success of a school where a positive school climate and cultural and academic achievement are commonplace. School counselors have the charge to work alongside other stakeholders as visionary leaders to promote plans that assist all students in reaching high aspirations (The Education Trust, 2009). In the era of accountability, effective leadership hinges on data-driven decisions in school settings.

Data-driven leadership for school counselors requires first collecting data through needs assessments, interviews, and focus groups in collaboration with other stakeholders to design a comprehensive school counseling program that reflects the needs of students and families. Disaggregating this data becomes crucial for school counselors as they attempt to identify the needs of African male immigrant students. School counselors must also be vigilant at examining achievement, performance, and outcome data to point out gaps and inequities for preventative and intervention services.

School counselors might also consider conducting interviews with African male immigrant students, their families, and other community members to assess their need for services. Participatory action research (PAR) is a systematic process to conduct a scientific inquiry that involves gathering, analyzing, and interpreting qualitative data (e.g., interviews) regarding an issue. Within school counseling, PAR is a relatively new and innovative method (Dixon, Tucker, & Clark, 2010). PAR is empowering and powerful as it includes all stakeholders in the process of scientific inquiry to develop

and implement solutions to address the problem. For example, The Public Science Project at CUNY in New York has utilized PAR for over 20 years and significantly impacted issues ranging from the school-to-prison pipeline, stop and frisk policies, and graduation rates in New York. School counselors could utilize PAR with African male immigrant students to examine many issues, including college access, acculturative stress, the absence of diverse language policies, and access to rigorous programs like Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB). After dialoguing about these areas, school counselors could then collaborate with various allies to generate solutions to specific issues. Using PAR as a school counseling leader also teaches students about self-advocacy and provides an empowering environment where they learn to use their voices for action and change.

Multicultural and Social Justice Advocacy and Teaming and Collaboration

Evans, Zambrano, Moyer & Duffy (2011) suggest that as the United States becomes increasingly more diverse, it will be essential for school counselors to utilize their leadership roles to promote multicultural and social justice advocacy. Due to their graduate school training on cross-cultural competency and adherence to ethical codes of conduct (ASCA 2016), school counselors are expected to promote multicultural awareness and advocacy within school settings for students from diverse backgrounds and cultures.

Seeking knowledge of African immigrant children, their family narratives regarding their immigration, and expectations of the educational systems can create a robust family-community partnership that can promote students' academic and life success. School counselors can consult community leaders to learn more about African male immigrant students' assets, values, and traditions at their schools. Examining the school's demographic data can enable a school counselor to find a diverse African immigrant community that may provide faculty/staff in-service to orientate colleagues to both the needs and assets of African immigrant male students. School counselors can also find ways to

advocate for culturally inclusive schools by allowing students and families to share their cultures with students and staff. School counselors should always keep in mind that collecting data can illustrate how these activities and programs impact school climate, culture, and outcomes for African male immigrant students.

Teaming and collaboration with school and community stakeholders is also imperative to successful work with African male immigrant students. Diverse African cultures operate from a collectivist view rather than the predominant individualistic view within Western societies. Like Black male students born in the U.S., African communities also possess organizations and systems to provide social justice advocacy and support for their youth and families. Becoming knowledgeable about these organizations and engaging leaders to advocate for students is undoubtedly a primary role that school counselors can perform to promote success for African immigrant male students.

Excessive barriers coupled with basic human needs can interfere with forming partnerships between schools and African immigrant families; these barriers and needs are not unlike those experienced by immigrants from other countries. For example, depending on the home country, language may be a barrier for parents and students, necessitating a translator for parents to communicate with school officials effectively, and students may need support services for English acquisition. To reiterate, the most significant barrier to educational access is racial inequalities in U.S. society. Even though African immigrant families bring numerous cultural assets and strengths (e.g., a high value of education) with them to the U.S., racial inequalities continue to pose significant obstacles (Thomas, 2012).

Families may also experience a need for support and resources in accessing both school and community services. School counselors can seek partnerships with African social justice advocacy groups and organizations to address inequities facing African male immigrant students. Newark, NJ is

an example of an African community working collectively to access political and economic power to make a change. In June 2011, The Ghanaian community had a major street in Newark (Victoria St) renamed “Ghanaian Way.” The change was celebrated with a naming ceremony and represented the Ghanaian people’s growing economic and political influence in the city over the past 25 years. School counselors in that area certainly should be aware of advocacy groups that spearhead achievements like this as they could be future partners who engage issues that impact African male immigrant students.

By utilizing data to illustrate the need and assess impact, school counselors can design innovative counseling and coordinate services for these students. School counselors can provide group counseling services for both groups of students and design plans that explore topics including strength-based identities, resilience, navigating racism, using a collective voice for action, college and career access, and community engagement. Counseling theories like Solution Focused Brief Counseling and the Narrative Theory can be applied to group and individual counseling. These approaches can empower students by focusing on students’ assets, stories, and identities as strengths and encouraging the counselor to work with students to create new realities. School counselors may address various issues through classroom guidance and coordinate programs that invite African immigrant and Black families and communities to discuss negative experiences, such as racism, denial of economic opportunities, lack of access, and racial profiling.

School counselors working with both sets of students to advocate global connectedness between nations in Africa and Black communities in America can serve as a broader means of empowerment and coalition-building. An ambitious yet powerful undertaking is working with African immigrant and Black U.S. male students to make global connections through service-learning in their communities and abroad. Service-learning is a course-based, credit-earning educational experience that requires participation in an organized service activity. Following the activity, participants are asked to reflect on

the service activity to understand how their values and sense of civic responsibility may have been enhanced. Within the past two decades, service-learning has increased significantly.

The Corporation for National and Community Service (2008) cites over 18 empirically based studies in their article that demonstrate the impact of service-learning on pK-12 students. It was revealed that service-learning impacts: a) academic engagement and achievement, b) civic attitudes and behaviors, and c) social and personal skills. Therefore, school counselors may collaborate with other school staff and community members to design service-learning opportunities for youth to increase engagement and social power to make a change.

School counselors may also look to surrounding universities for faculty members who conduct service-learning programs on campus. On average, 14% of faculty on a university scale have service-learning opportunities for students and communities. For example, the first author of this chapter serves as Executive Director of a non-profit called 3GC Inc. The organization was founded in 2012, and its mission is to connect university students to Ghana and engage in service-learning activities by experiencing the rich cultural heritage of Ghana and Africa overall. The programming enables university students to work collaboratively with Ghanaian communities to address social justice issues common to Ghana and the United States. As the organization incorporates technology across the U.S. and Caribbean, pK-12 school counselors can form an alliance with this type of organization to expose students to study abroad opportunities in Africa and explore career interests through service-learning.

The program is student-centered; university students are responsible for collaborating, designing, and implementing the program, including program assessment to measure impact and request suggestions for improvements each year. Collaborating with 3GC Inc., as an example, exposes Black male students with international backgrounds from Africa to interact with college-level students and gives them opportunities to share their diverse histories and cultures of their country of origin with

university students. This creates a learning exchange for both populations. Data demonstrates that this service-learning opportunity impacted Black students' level of leadership and civic engagement. The program is also open to middle and high school students. Service-learning for African immigrant and Black male students in middle and high school could produce a transformative impact in areas like civic engagement and forging connections to African identities (for Black U.S.-born students). Additionally, these young men may step away from this experience feeling more empowered after seeing how their willingness to make a difference in their communities and the larger global arena produced tangible change.

The authors offer three main points to guide school counselors in working with African male immigrant students to consider the differences in value in education. The points highlight both differences and barriers of African male immigrant students as school counselors work with them:

1. Within many countries outside of the United States, schooling is not free beyond the elementary level. School counselors can forge effective partnerships with families to understand their home countries' access to education, relating to the priority placed to excel in school and the mere right that the students have in the U.S. to quality education.
2. Relationships matter for the education of students. It becomes vital for counselors to emphasize shared expertise instead. The expectation for educators to have compassion and dedication to each student is inherent.

Conclusion

Through their training and identification with the tenets of the profession, school counselors are poised to be leaders who serve as agents of systemic change and assertive advocates on behalf of African male immigrant students and their families. African male immigrant students come to their new host country with innumerable assets and strengths that should be nurtured. Unfortunately,

marginalization produced by racial oppression stands as a barrier to that overarching goal. Therefore, school counselors have an imperative to become a collaborative leader committed to dismantling the barriers that prevent African immigrant male students and their families from realizing their high aspirations and dreams.

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