

# Journal of Educational Leadership in Action

---

Volume 7  
Issue 1 *Journal of Educational Leadership in  
Action*

Article 3

---

9-2020

## The Leadership of the Marginalized: A Literature Review

Bertrand Tchoumi  
*Baltimore International Academy West*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/ela>



Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), [Educational Administration and Supervision Commons](#), and the [Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Tchoumi, Bertrand (2020) "The Leadership of the Marginalized: A Literature Review," *Journal of Educational Leadership in Action*: Vol. 7 : Iss. 1 , Article 3.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/ela/vol7/iss1/3>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Digital Commons@Lindenwood University. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Journal of Educational Leadership in Action* by an authorized editor of Digital Commons@Lindenwood University. For more information, please contact [phuffman@lindenwood.edu](mailto:phuffman@lindenwood.edu).

# THE LEADERSHIP OF THE MARGINALIZED: A LITERATURE REVIEW

Article by Bertrand Tchoumi

## Abstract

This article presents a comprehensive literature review of relevant literature examining the position of minority school leaders on the educational landscape. The point of departure is the underrepresentation and invisibility of Black immigrants in school leadership. The review examines the advocacy discourse addressing the minority leadership gap and advocating for their equitable representation in school leadership. The literature that discusses how minority leaders interpret their roles and purposes as well as the meaning they assign to them was also reviewed. The review then moves into the written discourse about the professional boundaries that minority educators cross to become school leaders and the changes they undergo to become successful. The final two sections survey the literature addressing the topic related to their mental frame orientations and leadership style attractions and explore their lives and experiences with leadership at various school contexts. The literature reviewed demonstrates the urgency for and the relevance of an investigation on the experiences and narratives of Black African immigrants in school leadership.

**Keywords:** Black African Immigrants, Minority Leadership, Marginalized Groups, African-born Administrators, Black African Immigrant school leaders

## Introduction

Black African immigrants in school leadership is the topic common to the literature reviewed in this article. These immigrants live and operate at the intersection of diverse influences: the color of their skin associates them with both African Americans and the Black African diaspora community (Alfred, 2010; Blyden & Akiwumi, 2010; Edmonson, 2006; Reed & Andrzejewski, 2010; Vickerman, 1999; Waters, 1999). Their immigration status affiliates them with other immigrant constituencies. Both their blackness and their immigration status make them an integral part of the ethnic minority group in the United States (Morris, 2003; Ruddell & Urbina, 2004). Their school leadership affiliation ties them to the multicultural and multiracial group of U.S. school leaders.

The following review examines five major literature orientations related to the leadership of the marginalized: the advocacy literature; the literature on the meaning of leadership for the marginalized; the literature on the journey to successful minority leadership; the literature on leadership lenses and personal attributes; and the literature on experiences with leadership for minority leaders.

The search for related literature used different approaches and multiple sources to locate information relevant to Black African immigrants and minorities in school leadership. Those sources included numerous scholarly journals, books, and articles on related topics. They also included the search of multiple electronic databases such as Eric, EBSCO, Google and Google scholars and, college and university online libraries and portals, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global, and relevant academic and public websites using the key words or descriptors such as “Black African immigrant school leaders” and other synonyms including, “African-born principals, school administrators and educational leaders,” all in isolation or in combination with one another.

## Making the Case for Minority and Diversity Leadership

The literature that promotes minority leadership is very thin. Related literature tends to be centered on the underrepresentation of minority leadership, the construction of counter-narratives, the relevance of leaders from diverse backgrounds, and strategies to increase their visibility in school leadership. However, no literature yet exists offering a specific inscription of Black African immigrant school leaders beneficial to the larger discourse on this topic.

### ***Contextualizing the Advocacy Discourse***

Women and minorities in educational leadership are noticeably underrepresented despite their training, qualifications, and professional experience (Lovelady-Dawson, 1980). Their voices are still missing in traditional leadership arenas, and the meanings of leadership developed in less privileged and more diverse contexts are still not considered (Chin, 2007) prompting Magee (2016) to wonder about the extreme whiteness in the ranks of educational leaders.

Data and statistics from various research studies back this apparent underrepresentation of minority leaders in school leadership. There is a statistical disparity between the percentage of Latina/o school district superintendents and administrators and the percentage of Latina/o students attending California schools (Magdaleno, 2006). Sanchez, Thornton, and Usinger (2009) came to similar conclusions. They found that the demographics of school principals do not match the changing population of the U.S. public schools which are becoming more diverse and multicultural. In 2006, the ethnic minority groups reached 43% of the U.S. population, but only 17% of principals were from minority backgrounds. In rural areas and small towns, they accounted for 9.3% and 6.2% respectively. These findings are consistent

with the 2010 Equal Opportunity Employment Commission conclusion indicating that minorities make up about 16% of school level leaders.

### ***Agentive Resistance and Counter-narratives***

Asian American and Latina women speak out and seek more visibility in response to social stereotypes portraying them “as being passive, submissive, and preferring the private domain of home to public leadership role” (Chin, 2007, p. 217). Mendez-Morse (2000) has challenged this kind of disparaging narrative and advanced an alternative discourse about Latina leaders. She found that they are “not dominated by men” (p. 587), instead they benefit from spousal support; they are “not only . . . wife[s] and . . . mother[s]” (p. 587), instead there is minimal role conflict within their community; they are “not only at home” (p. 589), they are also community activists; they are not “without role model” (p. 591), instead they elicit innovative responses, and they are “not the stereotype” (p. 593) but they have developed “neostereotypic identities” (p. 593) exhibiting their power and strength. On their end, African American women principals respond to racist and sexist stereotypes through the (re)constructions of their self-image. They create a new identity with the support of their community, and familial and spiritual experiences, and believe in their wholeness despite their race and their gender (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003).

Gooden (2012) has analyzed how pop culture depicts Black principals “as ineffective and uncaring,” and unable to lead non-Black majority school. He used the examples of *Lean on Me* and *Heart of Stone* to disrupt that social narrative and then construct a counter-narrative about effective African American leaders grounded in a triple ethic of critique, justice, and care. Unlike Black principals, Latino educational leaders, in order to change their narrative, show passion and determination to provide the best educational opportunities, which have been historically denied, to all children irrespective of their race and ethnicity (Martinez, 2016).

Kumaran (2012) work has also helped dispel similar negative myths about immigrant leaders. She found that they can switch between their native and adoptive cultures. That is why it is important to invest in understanding cultural influence. The burden of that understanding and learning lies both on the newcomers and the “welcomers.”

### ***Establishing the Relevance of Diversity Leadership***

The United States is becoming a “majority minority” public school nation (Haynes, 2015). Increasing the ranks of minority school leadership seems to be an urgency of our time. Sanchez et al. (2009) believe that school leadership should reflect the demographic of students. There are both symbolic and practical reasons why the presence of minorities in school leadership is important (Williams & Loeb, 2012). They can connect with students, increase the involvement of other school stakeholders such as teachers and parents, and position themselves as role models and cultural translators for minority students. They can also

Empathize with certain students' experiences in a way that positively influences those students' academic expectations and aspirations. We can't afford to lose that potential positive influence. (Sanchez et al., 2009, p. 2)

The leadership of minority leaders also matter because they can positively influence student achievement and improve the climate and the culture of the school community (Haynes, 2015).

### ***Increasing the Visibility of Minority Leaders***

The diversification of educational leadership becomes a moral imperative. This approach is a way to disrupt the White male hegemony and provide multiple leadership perspectives because "institutions and their leaders will reinforce the status quo until someone disrupts it" (Magee, 2016, 21). For that purpose, states and districts have to be creative in their efforts to hire and retain diverse leaders. Sanchez et al. (2008, 2009) suggest tapping into the pool of National Board-Certified teachers because they are teacher leaders with the potential to stay longer in education; harnessing the leadership potential of para-educators and attracting high schoolers to careers in education to develop an early potential pipeline of future minority school leaders. Haynes (2015) proposes a more comprehensive approach including principal preparation and alternative pathways to administrative certification, culturally proficient interviewing and hiring practices, retention practices, and mentorship programs to develop a principal pipeline that is both diverse and effective.

The existing literature has focused more on women and has continued the research propensity to associate women and minorities in the same category. Data is not segregated based on ethnic or minority subgroups. This homogenization of minority groups is not unusual (Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Ifedi, 2008; Morris, 2003; Ruddell & Urbina, 2004); but it makes it challenging to highlight the voices, the experiences, and the leadership status and positions of Black African immigrants. Therefore, there is no clear indication of the types of stereotypes associated with Black African immigrant school leaders, nor can one clearly identify the kind of cultural identity struggle they may experience because of their multicultural identity. In addition, it is not evident whether Black African immigrant school leaders have benefited from strategies to increase the pool of minority school leaders, nor it is unknown how they have responded to stereotypes associated with their minority and immigrant status. Only an exploration of their lived experiences and narratives could address these wonderings.

## **The Meaning of Leadership for the Marginalized**

Minority school leaders assign multiple meanings to their leadership experiences: a moral imperative, a sense of community service, an affirmation of professional excellence and achievement, and role modeling for minority students and educators.

### ***A Moral Imperative for all Students***

The contention with various forms of discrimination has been a historical purpose of African American leadership. They perceive themselves as change agents. They have a sense of urgency and a passion to disrupt and right inequities and social injustices plaguing the education system (Loebe, 2004; Murakami et al., 2015; Martinez et al., 2016). Dantley (2009) refers to this kind of leadership as “purposive leadership,” grounded in critical spirituality as the inner source of the skills and the will that allow minority leader to fight for the end of racial discrimination in the school and the community despite school districts inadequate mandates. This level of consciousness demands more than credentials, experience, and rites of succession. It requires a “sense of calling [,] . . . a deeply felt belief that this is a part of their life’s work” (Dantley, 2009, p. 42). There is more to leadership than being task oriented.

Minority leaders seem to be on a lifetime mission to make a difference in the lives of their students and to uplift the social groups embodied in their identities (Coleman & Campbell-Stephens, 2010; Liang, 2014). They achieve this “altruistic impulse” in different ways. For example, female African American high school principals build a sense of community and connect with students by serving them in the cafeteria (Smith, 2008); Latina leaders develop race consciousness through professional and racial identity within the urban school context (Hernandez & Murakami, 2016); Latino/a principals advocate for the deprived, fight for their rights, and build a positive environment by shifting the “paradigms from deficit pedagogical models to more opportunities to achieve higher levels of academic success” (Murakami et al., 2015, p. 294). The literature did not examine the moral imperative that drives Black African immigrant educators to embrace the challenges of educational leadership. This sense of purpose is expanded to the community and organizational welfare.

### ***At the Service of the Community***

Minority leadership change agency also focuses on the organization and the community. Romo (1998) studied the narratives for change of Latino school leaders and found that they include organizational transformation. For them, it means “[b]ringing sensitivity to action in various ways: being a role model, conscientious staffing, mentoring and advocating and showing commitment to the Latino community” (p. 141). This vocation to one’s community is also present among Black school leaders (McKenley & Gordon, 2002). They all shared the same understanding of economic disadvantages, a feeling of shared aspirations, and the privilege of being a role model. To be successful in their community building mission, Latinx leaders harnessed their cultural capital to make connections with students and serve the Latinx community (Martinez et al., 2016).

African American urban school principals, on the other hand, position themselves as “cultural brokers” (Murakami et al., 2015) or as cultural translators and creators of an adaptive organizational structure. Dealing with community conflict in a manner that empowers school and community participants is one of the three anchors of their leadership practices (Davis & Madsen, 2009).

## ***An Affirmation of Minority Leadership Abilities***

The ascension of minority educators to leadership positions is perceived as a pathfinding or groundbreaking event. They interpret their leadership position as an affirmation of the pioneering achievement of becoming a school leader from Black and ethnic minority backgrounds (McKenley & Gordon, 2002). Nwabah (2006) also found this affirmation of leadership skills and abilities as well as achievement validation among Nigerian women in the United States. The emergence and development of leaders in various minority communities provide educators, scholars, and communities with diverse images of leadership. Through their leadership attainment, minority leaders provide an achievement template for future generations.

## ***A Model of Leadership for Minority Group***

Role modeling seems to be a natural inclination for minority educational leaders. For Mexican American and Black principals, role modeling seems to be non-negotiable (Campbell, 1989; Tillman, 2004). They provide “images that would inspire and motivate Black students” (Tillman, 2004, p. 110) to perform well academically and develop their identity. The shared race and cultural affiliations establish a congruence of purpose and identities.

Role modeling transcends race and ethnicity. Brown (2012) explained African American principals’ role modeling across three contexts: (a) for African American students in African American dominated schools, (b) for Whites in White dominated schools, and (c) for African Americans in White dominated schools. This universality of impact bring legitimacy to minority leadership: “Successful minority principals demonstrate to all students that leadership positions are fulfilled by representatives from all ethnicities” (Sanchez et al., 2008, para. 2). However. The pathway from leadership aspirations to securing a leadership position is not a straight line for most minority leaders.

## ***The Journey to Successful Minority Leadership***

The leadership journey of the marginalized begins with the development of a leadership identity. Once a leadership identity is formed, minority leaders take steps towards the actualization of their leadership aspirations. The process goes through different pathways. The experience of minority leaders with school leadership closes this uncommon journey.

## ***Stages of Minority Leadership Identity Development***

Leadership identity development is an interactive process between self and group influences. It involves six stages that go from a hierarchical and leader-centric view of leadership to a more collaborative and relational perspective on leadership (Komives et al., 2005). There is no indication whether these six stages vary based on context and cultural background, nor whether Black African immigrant leaders have gone through any those stages and how they have experienced them.

In addition, Ande (2009) has developed a four-stage leadership development model for foreign-born African academic leaders at the University level. It includes: transition, adjustment, leadership, and commitment and contentment. Each of these four stages represents a scene in the life and leadership experiences of foreign-born African academic leaders. The duration of each scene depends on the intensity of the cultural disparities and the individual level of adaptation to the new culture.

Latina women go through five progressive stages to become school leaders. Those stages include (1) early family and cultural influences; (2) diverse career background; (3) high achieving teachers; (4) professional leadership initiatives; and (5) professional upward mobility (Palacio, 2013). The analysis of these different approaches to leadership development shows that the ascension to a leadership role is not the result of chance. It requires some will, preparation, and opportunities.

### ***Pathways to School Leadership for Minority Educators***

School leadership starts with teachers. In order to understand the principal labor market, it is important to understand the path from teacher to principal (Williams & Loeb, 2012). Forty-one states require prospective principals to have some teaching experience, and 99% of public school principals have some teaching experience averaging 14 years. However, the movement from teacher to principal takes a variety of pathways (Mendez-Morse et al., 2015; Morales, 2014). The National Center for Education Statistics (2008) found that 68% of public school principals were assistant principals and 32% were not. More than half of principals reported that they had served in various capacities such as club advisors or sponsors, and 36% had been head of an academic department prior to ascending to the principalship.

A typical Hispanic female staff administrator begins her career as a bilingual teacher, moves to a bilingual resource teacher position, then proceeds to a district-level position. A typical Hispanic female line administrator begins her career as a bilingual teacher, moves to a bilingual resource teacher position, then proceeds to district administration before becoming an assistant principal. Eventually, she becomes a site administrator, then returns to the district level as a director before ultimately advancing to assistant superintendent or superintendent (Regules, 1998). For other minority administrators, the path to becoming a principal began with classroom teaching and assistant principalships or as paraprofessionals, media specialists, librarians, teachers, or coaches (Mendez-Morse et al., 2015). The literature reviewed did not address the relationship between race and specific leadership pathway models. There has also been no indication about the pathways Black African immigrants follow to become school leaders.

### ***Professional Socialization of Minority Leaders***

School administrators may go through three hierarchical boundaries from assistant principal to principal, from teacher to assistant principal, or from teacher to principal (Ortiz, 1982). The passage through these boundaries requires a socialization process.



The socialization is a process of adaptation and acclimatization (Bengtson, 2014) or acculturation (Aghamirza, 2015) to a new role or new organizational culture.

Public school administrators go through the anticipatory socialization and on-the-job socialization. Researchers (Crow, 2006; Hart, 1991; Houle, 1980; Wanous, 1992) have identified organizational socialization as the third prong of the socialization process. Other researchers have focused on the sites of leadership socialization (Auva'a, 2010). Those sites include teaching and leadership experience, peer affirmation, leadership development, internship, higher education and lifelong learning, leadership pathways and succession planning, mentoring program, and decision making.

First generation immigrant educational leaders are acculturated toward both cultures (language competency and cultural competency) and self-identified identity dimensions (Aghamirza, 2015). This acculturation is mediated through *the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISSLC) Standards* which represent a set of competencies "[a]ligned with knowledge, skills, and dispositions, and more recently with performance expectations and indicators of the profession" (Aghamirza, 2015, p. 87). The mastery of those standards of practice can help Black immigrant school leaders to operate the change necessary to perform his/her new role effectively.

Socialization is not only the responsibility of the aspiring or new leader. It should be a collaborative and a collective process shared by the individual, the leadership preparation program, and the school system (Bengtson, 2014). Interestingly, even when it comes to professional socialization, not all ethnicities are equal. There are inequitable opportunities to learn and ascend to leadership. Organizations have failed to socialize women and minorities so that they have equal opportunity to attain the top positions in school leadership (Auva'a, 2010).

## **Leadership Frames and Personal Attributes**

Minority leaders who ascend to a school leadership position have to cross cultural and professional leadership boundaries. In their leadership border crossing journey, they bring with them their leadership lenses and personal attributes. These personal attributes can be summarized in three categories: (1) minority leadership mental models' orientations, (2) minority leadership multiple abilities constructs, and (3) leadership dimension attractions and style of influence.

### ***Mental Models and Habits of Mind***

Mental frameworks reflect the sum of experience and how one perceives and assigns meaning to the knowledge acquired (Campbell, 1989). Black African immigrant school leaders have different life experiences based on their countries of origin and their native cultures. Does that mean that they may have a specific and a different mental framework? This question cannot be answered yet, since no research found identified the schemata of interpretation of Black African immigrants.

Suzuki (1994) highlighted four significant differences among Asian-American principals. Asian-American female principals use the human resource orientation more often than their male counterparts, and foreign-born principals use the structural frame more often than U.S.-born principals. In addition, there were significant differences in the smaller number of Asian-Americans who used a primary leadership orientation, and a larger number of Asian-American principals who used multiple leadership orientations. Bolman and Deal (2008) established a correlation between the use of multiple leadership lenses and leadership effectiveness. Suzuki (1994) has speculated that Asian-Americans' wide spread use of multiple leadership frames may be related to their bi-culturalism. If this assumption is true, it means that Black African immigrant leaders, because they speak at least two languages and have lived under multiple cultural influences, may display mental orientations that are consistent with Asian-American principals.

African American perspectives on leadership in schools illustrate this need for frame synchronization or congruence. Foster's (2009) investigation on rethinking a new mental model for school achievement posits that there is a disconnection between the culture of schools and the culture of African American students, their families, and communities. This cultural mismatch leads students to academic disengagement and oppositional behavior. As a result, students perform poorly and the achievement gap between them and their peers from the dominant culture widens. To respond to this achievement inequity, Foster (2009) proposes to reframe the mental model of leadership to meet the demands of the present and the future. The new mental frame should consider the importance of race and cultural competence in the development of effective leadership and instructional models that impact the achievement of African American students.

To create a mental map for African American academic achievement and empowerment, Heggins and Pitre (2009) suggest relying on culture as a living system that permeates every aspect of the organization and unites people around shared values and beliefs. Taking the Bolman and Deal (2008) four-frame model into consideration, Heggins and Pitre (2009) propose an African-centered education model grounded in the symbolic frame to foster students' achievement. Research reviewed did not indicate that Black African immigrant school leaders are more inclined to adopt the symbolic leadership lens or any other leadership frame for that matter.

### ***Emotional Abilities Frameworks***

Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize and understand one's behavior and others, and to use this awareness to manage one's behavior and relationships. It impacts "how we manage behavior, navigate social complexities, and make personal decisions that achieve results." (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009, p.17)

Findings related to minority emotional abilities were not always explicit in the literature reviewed. For instance, Montes-Ramos (1996) found that Puerto-Rican principals working at U.S. schools are aware of the cultural differences between themselves and their staff and how those dissimilarities affect their leadership style. Shullman (2009)

commented on the minority advantage when learning the skills of leadership and negotiating “multiple realities.” Both Montes-Ramos (1996) and Shullman (2009) are describing “self-awareness” in action.

Marginalized people also seek insights into other people. Ande (2009) explored the interpersonal relationship involving foreign-born African immigrants occupying mid to senior level positions of leadership at American colleges and universities. He described the interactions between foreign-born African academic leaders with their peers or subordinates within the American academic environment. Participants stressed the importance of mutual respect in maintaining good interpersonal relations and described their relationship with their peers and subordinates as pleasant.

For visible minorities living in a majority White culture, cultural intelligence is the key to professional effectiveness. This cultural ability demonstrates the adaptability of the leader to the new cultural setting. Kumaran (2012) also recognized the relevance of the other components of the emotional intelligence in the effectiveness of a minority leader. The descriptions of these multiple abilities are generic and do not address specifically the habit of mind of people from diverse backgrounds. It is not possible to indicate where Black African immigrants fall within the spectrum of the four-frame model or their emotional intelligence orientations.

### ***Dimensions of Leadership and style of Influence***

Leadership is about influencing people and empowering them to contribute effectively toward the success of an organization they belong to. The norms and belief system prevalent in the society and the organization inform the leader’s style (House et al., 2004). House et al. (2004) found that most Black African immigrant school leaders fall within the humane orientation framework because of their origin. The humane style of leadership emphasizes compassion and generosity; This style is concerned with the well-being of others (House et al., 2004). Northouse (2016) agrees with the conclusions of the GLOBE study (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) about people of sub-Saharan Africa. He argued that Black African leadership behaviors is grounded in an ethic of care, compassion, and sensitivity. Black African leaders are charismatic and inspirational, team-oriented, participative, collaborative, and self-oriented.

The elements of the humane orientation leadership seem to have always been the building block of minority and immigrant leadership. In a study that explored Mexican American female principals’ perceptions of leadership, power, and caring, Carr (1995) found that Mexican American female principal utilized collaboration, teamwork, shared decision making, and tolerance for diversity. Even the Filipino leadership philosophy is grounded in the ethic of care (Mendoza, 1997). Hispanic principals have the same humanistic preoccupations. They are “[p]oised to create a culturally accessible and compassionate society that values people and community before material wealth and individual advancement” (Magdaleno, 2006, p. 13). Several researchers (Auva’a, 2010;

Magdaleno, 2006) have referred to this form of leadership as “cultural leadership” because there is a congruence of identity and purpose between students and leaders.

Furthermore, minority leaders appeared to be more prone to transformational leadership. They are committed to improving the learning environments and have a strong desire to bring change. That is why they choose urban school contexts—because it helps them fulfill their commitment to change (Crow & Glascock, 1995). In addition, a survey of Latino/a school leaders shows their propensity for democratic leadership style (Murakami et al., 2015). The democratic leadership indicators seem to be strongly aligned with the leaders’ experiences with race and inequities when they were young.

Feminist women, however, are more interested in transforming the existing leadership models to incorporate gender and to draw on the voices of diverse women leaders to transform the visions of effective leadership styles. Feminist women have developed a transformational, multicultural, and feminist model of leadership that is unique and grounded in three major principles: inclusiveness, suppression of hierarchies of oppression, and “positive marginality,” that is, the ability to use one’s marginal status to analyze feminism, to be creative about problem solving, and to find ways to support and empower one another (Porter & Daniel, 2007).

With this latest finding, the literature on minority leadership frames and personal attributes seems conclusive about the influence of cultural and contextual factors on the actions of leaders from minority backgrounds. It implies that people do not have fixed or innate traits and qualities (Niesche & Gowlett, 2015). How that impacts Black African immigrant school leaders is yet to be fully explored. However, Black African immigrant school leaders are the products of multiple cultural identities. Therefore, their leadership behavior should be consistent with standard of leadership practices as well as culturally-oriented leadership behaviors. That is probably what will make them unique, apt, and adept at negotiating and navigating this culturally pluralistic and racially-oriented territory.

## Experiences with Leadership for Minority Leaders

Most of the research exploring the lives and experiences of minorities and diverse school leaders has described their school leadership experiences through a dualist paradigm: on the one hand, the literature has examined the challenges and barriers facing minority leaders, and, on the other hand, it has emphasized the strategies they have used to overcome those impediments to become successful.

### ***Minority Leadership Challenges***

The literature reviewed on minority school leadership indicates that minority leaders face multiple roadblocks and hurdles based on race, gender, and immigration status (Haven et al., 1980). There are both personal and external factors. Personal factors include a low career aspiration as a result of conflicting values and a negative self-

perception of one's abilities and one's personal leadership styles (Holtkamp, 2002). The level of language proficiency constitutes another key impeding factor (Pacis, 2004). English is not the first language of some Black African immigrant school leaders. And even for those of them originating from English Speaking countries, the accent they speak may pose interpersonal communicative challenges.

The most significant factors are out of the control of school leaders. Racism and discrimination are the major ones. They constrain minority school leaders into outgroup status and occupational segregation (Bush et al., 2006; Coleman & Campbell-Stephens, 2010; Horak, 2012; Morales, 2014; Peterson & Vergara, 2016; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). As a result, they face a glass ceiling phenomenon (Hymowitz & Schellhardt, 1986; Martinez, 2016) on their quest to leadership opportunities. And when they are hired, they are more likely to lead from the cliff (Hewlett et al., 2008), that is, schools with majority minority and economically disadvantaged students (Mendez-Morse et al., 2015; Peterson & Vergara, 2016) or challenging and high-risk schools (Coleman & Campbell-Stephens, 2010).

Unlike men, minority women may carry the burden of their gender. Sexism is considered the most powerful agent of discrimination (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003). Diverse women leaders are torn between acting competently which means acting masculine and acting feminine which is perceived negatively (Chin, 2007). Jamieson (1995) has referred to this leadership dilemma as the "feminine double bind" or "marginality." Being Black and a woman may add another layer to the "double jeopardy" (Sheppard, 1995; Smith, 2008). Sanchez-Hucles and Davis (2007) referred to the condition of female immigrant women as "triple jeopardy" because of the multiple stereotypes associated with gender, race, and ethnicity. These overt and covert racial practices exemplified the deficit thinking theory and microaggression practices characteristic of the dominant group (Horak, 2012). They can condition people's attitudes towards minorities and foreigners and impact interpersonal relations within an educational organization.

Organizational barriers to minority school leadership take on many forms. McKenley and Gordon (2002) found that Black and minority ethnic school leaders in England lack recognition of their success by officers and colleagues, and they work under intense pressure through constant scrutiny and professional attack. In the United States, African American administrators are always "sized up" or "put under microscope" because of their race (Brown, 2012, p. 38). The negative attitudes of colleagues and supervisors constitute significant barriers for Black and ethnic minority school leaders in England (Bush et al., 2006). As a result, minority leaders have to work harder, longer hours, and always better (Peterson & Vergara, 2016). This urge to "prove" their abilities in academic and professional endeavors, constitutes an undue burden for minority school leaders (Loebe, 2004).

### ***Facilitators of Success***

The literature that focuses on the strategies to overcome these barriers is mostly found in the same literature that identifies impediments to success. Similar to the barriers to success, there are internal (personal) and external enablers of success.

Personal agency and self-efficacy are the key to success (Coleman & Campbell-Stephens, 2010). It is a matter of growth mindset. For minority school leaders, exercising agency cannot be disconnected from a set of positive mental habits. Researchers have identified different mental dispositions that have helped them overcome their professional challenges. For African immigrant women, confidence in their leadership skills is a key determining factor for their success (Nwabah, 2006). Hispanic female principals have no preconceived limitations for becoming principals and hold themselves to high expectations (Morales, 2014; Santiago, 2009). They harbor an intrinsic determination to reach their higher goals and succeed (Falk, 2011).

Meanwhile, Bush et al. (2006) found resilience, determination, courage, and ambition to be the enabling factors that allow Black and minority ethnic leaders in England to overcome barriers. In the U.S., African Americans rely on religious faith to survive (Brown, 2012). Beyond their personal mindset and mental attitudes, minority school leaders may harness their cultural capital to negotiate their leadership challenges. Pride in one's cultural identity is an effective survival tool (Romo, 1998). They also tap into their cultural capital. For instance, male Latino educational leaders leveraged their ethnicity, culture, and language to connect effectively with students and parents (Martinez, 2016, p. 98).

Besides relying on their native culture, minority educational leaders also count on their assimilation into the new culture and their leadership training to succeed (Pacis, 2004). Training and professional development equipped minority leaders with the toolbox, skills, and competencies to become highly qualified school administrators and to perform their leadership responsibilities competently and effectively (Brown, 2012; Pacis, 2004).

Family, relatives and friends play a crucial role. African-born immigrants, Hispanics, and Asians all recognize that their success depends on strong family and community support (Bush et al., 2006; Falk, 2011; Morales, 2014; Nwabah, 2006; Pacis, 2004; Santiago, 2009). The school community also play a significant role in the success of minority leaders. The contribution of the school community comes in the form of encouragement from colleagues, managers, and various educators. Additionally, Santiago (2009) found that Hispanic school administrators were very influential in motivating aspiring minority leaders to become school leaders. Role modeling and support did not only come from leaders of the same ethnic or racial group. For instance, experienced leaders or other seasoned professionals also provided support through mentoring (Mendez-Morse, 2004; Murakami et al., 2015; Peterson & Vergara, 2016).

## Conclusion

### **Seizing the Opportunity**

Five strands of literature were identified in this study, including the advocacy literature, the literature on the meaning of leadership for the marginalized, the journey to successful minority leadership, the literature on leadership lenses and personal attributes, and the literature on experiences and agency. These five strands came out of the exploration of a variety of studies that focused on various aspects of the life and leadership experiences of minorities and immigrant educational leaders in the U.S. and around the world. Each of the strands has shown that the body of knowledge about Black African immigrant school leaders is either missing or inexistent and needs to be developed; is nascent and needs to be expanded; or is lost into the homogenization of minority groups and needs to be segregated. In any case, this literature review provides an opportunity for and shows the relevance of an investigation on the experiences and narratives of Black African immigrant school leaders. Such a study will bring their voices and narratives to life and contribute to the development and/or expansion of a body of literature about Black African immigrant school leaders in the U.S.

## References

- Aghamirza, N. (2015). *An examination of acculturation levels and evaluation of leadership knowledge and experiences of first-generation immigrant leaders at the district offices and school sites in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Howard University.
- Alfred, M. V. (2010). Transnational migration, social capital and lifelong learning in the USA. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 29, 219-235.
- Ande, T. A. (2009). *Academic leadership experiences of foreign-born African immigrants in American institutions of higher education* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Indiana State University.
- Auva'a, U. E. (2010). *Leaders for a diverse society: Minority aspiration*. [Online report, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for recipient of the Fulbright-Cognition Education Research Scholarship Award]. Cognition Education Trust.  
[https://www.cognitioneducationtrust.org/site\\_files/18689/upload\\_files/report\\_fulbright-cognition\\_enosa\\_auvaa.pdf?dl=1](https://www.cognitioneducationtrust.org/site_files/18689/upload_files/report_fulbright-cognition_enosa_auvaa.pdf?dl=1)
- Bengtson, E. (2014). Principals' socialization: Whose responsibility is it? *Journal of School Leadership*, 24, 725-752.
- Bloom, C. M., & Erlandson, D. A. (2003). African American women principals in urban schools: Realities, (re)constructions, and resolutions. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 39, 339-369.
- Blyden, N., & Akiwumi, F. A. (2010). A perspective of the African Diaspora in the United States. In J. Frazier, J. Darden & N. Henry (Eds.), *The African Diaspora in the U.S. and Canada at the Dawn of the 21st Century* (pp. 93-105). State University of New York Press.

- Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (2008). *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and leadership* (4th ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Bradberry, T., & Greaves, J. (2009). *Emotional intelligence 2.0*. San Diego, CA: TalentSmart.
- Brown, D. B. (2012). *African-American principals in the Midwest: Voices of the sojourner principal* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Iowa.
- Bush, T., Glover, D., & Sood, K. (2006). Black and minority ethnic leaders in England: A portrait. *School Leadership & Management*, 26(3), 289-305.
- Campbell, T. A. (1989). *An ethnographic analysis of the mental frameworks of elementary principals: Mexican-American and Anglo perspectives*. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/303707522>
- Carr, C. S. (1995). *Mexican American female principals: In pursuit of democratic praxis and a legacy of caring* [Paper presentation]. University Council for Educational Administration Annual Meeting. University Council for Educational Administration, Annual Meeting, Salt Lake City, UT.
- Chin, J. L. (2007). *Women and leadership: Transforming visions and diverse voices*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Coleman, M., & Campbell-Stephens, R. (2010). Perceptions of career progress: The experience of Black and minority ethnic school leaders. *School Leadership & Management*, 30(1), 35-49.
- Crow, G. M. (2006). Complexity and the beginning principal in the United States: Perspectives on socialization. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 44(4), 310-325. <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/abs/10.1108/09578230610674930?mobileUi=0&journalCode=je>
- Crow, G. M., & Glascock, C. H. (1995). Transformational leadership: Attractions of women and minority recruits to the principalship. *Journal of School Leadership*, 5(4), 356-378.
- Dantley, M. F. (2009). African American educational leadership: Critical, purposive, and spiritual. In L. Foster & L.C. Tillman (Eds.), *African American perspective on leadership in schools: Building a Culture of Empowerment* (pp. 39-55). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- Davis, J. E., & Madsen, J. (2009). African American leadership in urban schools: Implications for organizational structure and improved educational outcomes. In L. Foster & L. C. Tillman (Eds.), *African American perspective on leadership in schools: Building a culture of empowerment* (pp. 115-139). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.



- Edmonson, B. (2006). The myth of Black immigrant privilege. *Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal*, 4, 1-4.
- Falk, T. C. (2011). *Hispanic women leaders in K-12 public education: Overcoming barriers to success* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of North Texas.
- Foster, L. (2009). Leadership in K-12 schools for promoting educational aspirations: A mental model for school achievement. In L. Foster & L. C. Tillman (Eds.), *African American Perspective on Leadership in Schools: Building a Culture of Empowerment* (pp. 157-193). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- Gooden, M. A. (2012). What does racism have to do with leadership? Countering the idea of color-blind leadership: A Reflection on race and the growing pressures of the urban principalship. *Educational Foundations*, 26(1-2), 67-84.
- Hart, A. (1991). Leader succession and socialization: A synthesis. *Review of Educational Research*, 61(4), 451-474. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1170573>
- Haynes, A. M. (2015). Recruitment and retention of African American and Latino school administrators [Paper Presentation]. *Symposium on School Leadership*, University of Nebraska.
- Haven, E. W., Adkinson, P. D., & Bagley, M. (1980). *Minorities in educational administration: The principalship. A literature review*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Education.
- Heggins, W., & Pitre, P. (2009). Leading change in the educational environment: Creating a culture of academic excellence. In L. Foster & L. C. Tillman (Eds.), *African American perspectives on leadership in schools*, (pp. 173-193). Lanham, MD: Rowman Littlefield.
- Hernandez, F., & Murakami, E. (2016). Counterstories about leadership: A Latina school principal's experience from a less documented view in an urban school context. *Education Sciences*, 6(6), 1-16.
- Hewlett, S. A., Luce, C. B., Servon, L. J., Sherbin, L., Shiller, P., Sosnovich, E., &
- Sumberg, K. (2008). *The Athena factor: Reversing the brain drain in science, engineering, and technology*. Harvard Business Press.
- Holtkamp, L. A. (2002). Crossing borders: An analysis of the characteristics and attributes of female public school principals. *Advancing Women in Leadership Journal*, 10(1), 1-20.
- Horak, J. L. (2012). *A content analysis of the career paths and cultural capital of Mexican-American male principals: A critical race discourse on the journey toward the principalship* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation], Texas Tech University.

- Houle, C. O. (1980). *Continuing learning in the professions*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- House, R. J., Hanges, P. J., Javidan, M., Dorfman, P. W., & Gupta, V. (2004). *Culture, leadership, and organizations: The GLOBE study of 62 societies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Howard-Hamilton, M. F. (2003). Introduction. In M.F. Howard-Hamilton (Ed.), *Meeting the needs of African American Women: New directions for student services* (p. 104). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Hymowitz, C., & Schellhardt, T. D. (1986, March 24). The glass ceiling. *The Wall Street Journal*, Section 4, 1.
- Ifedi, R. I. (2008). *African-born women faculty in the United States: Lives in contradiction*. Lewinston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press.
- Jamieson, K. H. (1995). *Beyond the double bind: Women and leadership*. Oxford University Press.
- Komives, S. R., Owen, J. E., Longerbeam, S., Mainella, F. C., & Osteen, L. (2005). Developing a leadership identity: A grounded theory. *Journal of College Student Development*, 46, 593-611.  
[http://panther2.indstate.edu:2136/journals/journal\\_of\\_college\\_student\\_development/v046/46.6komives.pdf](http://panther2.indstate.edu:2136/journals/journal_of_college_student_development/v046/46.6komives.pdf)
- Kumaran, M. (2012). *Leadership in libraries: A focus on ethnic-minority libraries*. Oxford: Chandos.
- Liang, J. (2014). *Understanding leadership experience of Asian American women in public school administration* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Georgia.
- Loebe, A. Y. (2004). *Educational leadership for change-Stories by six Latina elementary school principals* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Arizona.
- Lovelady-Dawson, F. (1980). Women and minorities in the principalship: Career opportunities and problems. *NASSP Bulletin*, 18-28.
- Magdaleno, K. R. (2006). Mentoring Latino school leaders. *Leadership*, 36(1), 12-14.
- Magee, M. (2016, March 9). The Diversity crisis for education's leading roles. *Education Week*, 35(23), 21. <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2016/03/09/why-is-education-leadership-so-white.html>
- Martinez, J. M. (2016). *The glass ceiling for Latinos in K-12 educational leadership* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Colorado State University.

- Martinez, M. A., Marquez, J., Cantú, Y., & Rocha, P. A. (2016). Ternura y tenacidad: Testimonios of Latina school leaders. In T. Sanchez & A. J. Camacho. (Eds.), *Association of Mexican American Educators Journal: Latina/o Educational Leadership: Testimonios from the field* 10(3), 11-29.
- McKenley, J., & Gordon, G. (2002). *Challenge plus: The experience of Black and minority ethnic school leaders*. UK:Nottingham.
- Mendez-Morse, S. (2000). Claiming forgotten leadership. *Urban Education*, 35(5), 584-596.
- Mendez-Morse, S., Murakami, E. T., Byrne-Jimenez, M., & Hernandez, F. (2015). Mujeres in the principal's office: Latina school leaders. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 14, 171-187.
- Mendoza, P. J. (1997). *Leadership from the perspectives of Filipino-Americans* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of San Diego.
- Montes-Ramos, W. (1996). *Puerto Rican school principals' perceptions of how their cultural background impacts their leadership style*. The Pennsylvania State University.
- Morales, T. M. (2014). *Latina principals' leadership experiences: A phenomenological narrative study* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Phoenix]. Proquest: <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1651196129>
- Morris, J. E. (2003). What does Africa have to do with being African American? A microethnographic analysis of a middle school inquiry unit on Africa. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 34(3), 255-276.
- Murakami, E., Hernandez, F., Mendez-Morse, S., & Byrne-Jimenez, M. (2015). Latina/o school principals: Identity, leadership, and advocacy. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2015.1025854>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2008). *U. S. Department of Education, Digest of Education Statistics*. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009020.pdf>
- Niesche, R., & Gowlett, C. (2015) Advocating a Post-structuralist Politics for Educational Leadership, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 47(4), 372-386. DOI: 10.1080/00131857.2014.976930.
- Northouse, P. G. (2016). *Leadership: theory and practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Nwabah, G. I. (2006). *Women of courage: Phenomenological study of leadership experiences of immigrant women in the United States* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Phoenix.

- Ortiz, F. I. (1982). *Career patterns in education: Women, men and minorities in public school administration*. New York: Praeger.
- Pacis, D. C. (2004). *Asian American female educational leadership in K-12 public schools* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. San Diego State University and the University of San Diego.
- Palacio, C. A. (2013). *The career development of Latina women achieving the position of public high school principal* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.
- Peterson, D. S., & Vergara, V. (2016). Thriving in school leadership: Latina/o leaders speak out. *National Forum of Educational Administration and Supervision Journal*, 34(4), 2-15.
- Porter, N., & Daniel, J. H. (2007). Developing transformational leaders: Theory to practice. In J. Lau Chin, B. Lott, J. Rice & J. Sanchez-Hucles (Eds.), *Women and Leadership. Transforming Visions and Diverse Voices*. Oxford: Blackwell, 245–263.
- Reed, H. E., & Andrzejewski, C. S (2010). The New Wave of African Immigrants in the United States. [Paper Presentation]. 2010 Population Association of America Annual Meeting, Dallas, TX.
- Regules, R. (1998). *Case study: Career paths, barriers and strategies of Hispanic line and staff female school administrators in Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz counties in California* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. LaVerne University.
- Romo, J. J. (1998). *Voices against discrimination and exclusion: Latino school leaders' narratives for change* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of San Diego.
- Ruddell, R., & Urbina, M. (2004). Minority threat and punishment: A cross national analysis. *Justice Quarterly*, 21(4), 903-931.
- Sanchez, J., Thornton, B., & Usinger, J. (2008). Promoting diversity in public education leadership. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 3(3). <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1067212>
- Sanchez, J., Thornton, B., & Usinger, J. (2009). Increasing the ranks of minority principals. *Educational Leadership*, 67(2). <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/oct09/vol67/num02/Increasing-the-Ranks-of-Minority-Principals.aspx>
- Sanchez-Hucles, J. V., & Davis, D. D. (2010). Women and women of color in leadership: Complexity, identity, and intersectionality. *American Psychological Association*, 65(3), 171-181.

- Santiago, M. (2009). *A case study in public K-12 education: Hispanic female (Latinas) school administrators' perceptions of their role and experiences as principals within Central Florida* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of South Florida.
- Sheppard, G. L. (1995). *Leadership roles and perspectives among Ghanaian women* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. The Union Institute.
- Shullman, S. L. (2009). Diversity leadership. *Communique: Ethnic Minority Leadership*, pp. X-XI.
- Smith, A. M. (2008). *Race and gender in the leadership experiences of three female African American high school principals: A multiple case study* [Doctoral Dissertation, University Southern Georgia]. Electronic Theses and Dissertation: <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/etd/310>
- Suzuki, Y. C. (1994). *A comparative study of leadership orientations of California Asian-American and other public school principals* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of La Verne.
- Tillman, L. C. (2004). African American principals and the legacy of Brown. *Review of Research in Education*, 28(1), 101-146.
- Vickerman, M. (1999). *Crosscurrents: West Indian immigrants and race*. Oxford University.
- Wanous, J. P. (1992). *Organizational entry: Recruitment, selection, orientation, and socialization of newcomers*. Addison-Wesley.
- Waters, M. C. (1999). *Black identities: West Indian immigrant dreams and American realities*. Harvard University Press.
- Williams, I., & Loeb, S. (2012). Race and the principal pipeline: The prevalence of minority principals in light of a largely White teacher workforce. *Center for Education Policy Analysis*. <https://cepa.stanford.edu/content/race-and-principal-pipeline-prevalence-minority-principals-light-largely-white-teacher-workforce>