

Empowering Perspectives: Multicultural Learning in Black Male Educator Spaces

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Kenneth Williams, *Baylor University*, Kenneth_Williams1@baylor.edu

Abstract

Black male educators are significantly underrepresented in Central Texas, making up only 1.8% of teachers while Black male students constitute about 7%. This disparity perpetuates challenges for future Black male leadership in education and other professional fields. There is a lack of research on Black males' leadership self-efficacy and how traditional leadership theories fail to address their unique challenges. As minorities are projected to become the majority by 2043, current inadequacies in educational and workplace diversity threaten future societal and economic success. This qualitative single-case study examined the leadership self-efficacy and experiences of Black male secondary school principals in Central Texas through semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The study highlighted the importance of supportive environments and targeted professional development while identifying systemic barriers. Addressing these issues can enhance diversity, inclusion, and equitable leadership practices, positively impacting student outcomes and fostering Black male leadership in various sectors.

Keywords

Black male educators, leadership self-efficacy, underrepresentation, Central Texas, stereotypes, educational diversity, systemic barriers, qualitative single-case study

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The underrepresentation of Black male educators in Central Texas perpetuates challenges for future Black male leadership in education and the professional world. This issue is further compounded by research gaps that exist in understanding Black males' leadership self-efficacy, a crucial aspect for which traditional leadership theories fail to account. As the demographic landscape shifts towards minorities becoming the majority by 2043,

current educational and workplace diversity inadequacies pose a threat to future societal and economic success. Typecasts impact self-efficacy, necessitating research into the leadership practices of Black males to foster inclusive educational environments.

Despite being an underrepresented demographic in preschool through 12th-grade education, Black male educators hold immense

potential to make a significant impact. For instance, in Central Texas, Black male teachers represent only 1.8% of the total teacher population, a stark contrast to the percentage of Black male students, which is approximately 7% (Herron, 2024). This issue perpetuates the challenges for future Black male leadership in education and in the professional working world (Jeter & Melendez, 2022). These challenges include but are not limited to lack of representation, cultural biases, and limited opportunities for career advancement (Griffin, 2019). Improving the complex interplay between identity, social perception, and leadership dynamics experienced by Black male leaders begins with creating positive educational experiences for Black males. Goings et al. (2015) discussed the fundamental challenges young Black males face within the educational pipeline and how these young Black males are at the bottom of all levels of achievement. According to research, increasing academic achievement for Black males is contingent upon maintaining a connection with a teacher throughout the learning process (Howard, 2013). Therefore, increasing the number of Black male students, teachers, and school leaders in public education can more effectively foster intellectual and social growth for academic and long-term success (Allen, 2015).

The central focus of this qualitative single case study is to explore how leadership self-efficacy, which refers to the belief in one's ability to lead effectively (Popper et al., 2004), of Black male secondary principals in Central Texas influences their career trajectory. The results of this research will not only provide data on critical components of self-efficacy, such as past performance experiences and the supportive or threatening nature of the social environment but also pave the way for programs and systems to develop more opportunities for Black males in education. This research has the potential to significantly impact the opportunities and experiences of young Black males. It suggests that increasing the number of Black male educators can lead to positive self-efficacy and, consequently, leadership possibilities through post-secondary pathways when efficacious primary and secondary educational experiences have fostered mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasions, and healthy physiological responses (Phan, 2013).

Research Question

The more profound problem surrounding the lack of understanding of Black male leadership stems from the absence of Black male leaders in society, particularly in public education, which perpetuates a cycle of underrepresentation and missed opportunities for inclusive leadership development. Exploring the more profound problem reveals that the lack of understanding of Black male leadership stems from the absence of Black male leaders in society, such as in public education. Black male public educators represent only 1.8% of all public educators, while the Black student population in public education is 7%, which contributes to the increasing scarcity of Black male leadership and the development of leadership attributes associated with successful Black male leaders. This qualitative single case study explores the characteristics related to leadership self-efficacy to motivate, guide, and nurture Black male leaders in public education. The implications of this research are related to post-secondary education, organizations, businesses, and communities. The research question guiding this qualitative single case study is: How do Black males describe their leadership self-efficacy as secondary principals in Central Texas? This question is crucial in understanding the experiences and perceptions of Black male leaders, and it forms the backbone of this research.

Review of the Literature

The theoretical framework that guided this study is Albert Bandura's (1982, 1995) self-efficacy theory. Self-efficacy is the belief that a person can accomplish a specific goal or task (Bandura, 1982). This framework comprises four areas that work together to create self-efficacy. The first component is the individual experiences a person encounters related to the task that person is trying to accomplish. These experiences can be positive or negative, and they play a significant role in whether a person believes they can achieve a goal and what they learn from the experience, especially negative experiences. The second component is vicarious experiences (Bandura, 1982). Vicarious experiences are those experiences that a person can model themselves after. Vicarious experiences often come through witnessing or being exposed to specific experiences related to the task or goal. The third component is social persuasion (Bandura, 1982). Social persuasions involve the people a person associates with who may guide or mentor

them in accomplishing goals. Lastly, the physiological response refers to an individual's physical reactions or bodily sensations when encountering challenging or stressful circumstances. This fourth component of self-efficacy theory considers a person's emotions, moods, and physical state as crucial factors for achieving success (Bandura, 1982).

The notable absence of Black males in educational leadership roles highlights significant challenges and underscores the need to critically examine the barriers and competencies required for their advancement. Despite educational institutions' aspirations for diversity and inclusion, there remains a notable absence of Black males in educational settings and executive leadership roles (Poekert et al., 2020). This shortage persists despite efforts to foster diversity and inclusion (Sparkman, 2021). Chin et al. (2016) examined the leadership challenges that diversity brings to future organizations. They identified the essential competencies for future leadership: "leveraging personal and social identities, utilizing a global and diverse mindset, leveraging community and organizational contexts, and promoting a diversity supportive and inclusive climate" (p. 49). Ellemers et al. (2002) concluded that the degree of allegiance to a group predicts the relevance of a specific social identity to the individual, while the nature of subsequent perceptual, affective, or behavioral reactions hinges on interactions within the relevant social context and the stability of self-aspects under threat or secure. Ellemers et al. (2002) suggested that the level of commitment to a group among Black males in educational leadership may influence how they perceive the relevance of their social identity within this context. Additionally, their research implies that the way Black males in educational leadership settings respond to challenges and opportunities depends on the stability of their self-concept and the supportive or threatening nature of the social environment they encounter (Young & Bagley, 1982). Ellemers et al. (2002) examined a person's self-identity as it pertains to the collective self and discovered that self-identity precedes the collective group identity.

Leadership self-efficacy, a leader's belief in their ability to achieve organizational success, is a crucial factor influencing effective leadership performance and behaviors. This concept, directly linked to leadership performance and behaviors, has been supported by various studies (Sitzmann & Yeo, 2013; Stewart et al., 2019). The development of leadership self-efficacy is significantly influenced by

past performance experiences, aligning with Bandura's self-efficacy theory that emphasizes proficiency in leadership experiences (Bandura, 1982, 1995). Research indicates that leaders with high self-efficacy are more likely to undertake challenging tasks and persist through difficulties, resulting in higher performance levels compared to leaders with low self-efficacy (Park & John, 2014; Seibert et al., 2017). This correlation between past performance and self-efficacy underscores the importance of experience in fostering effective leadership.

The future of Black males in education and leadership is a critical and under-explored area that necessitates focused research and practical solutions to address existing disparities and foster an inclusive environment. As global managers endeavor to foster leadership teams reflective of diverse cultural contexts, they grapple with the imperative of multicultural leadership development (Morrison, 2000). As of 2023, 76.5% of the U.S. workforce is white, 18.8% is Hispanic or Latinx, 12.8% is Black, and 6.9% is Asian (Jager, 2024). Recognizing the increasing diversity of populations worldwide, particularly exemplified in the United States, where most public-school education has been non-White since 2000, the future of Black males in education and leadership becomes even more crucial. Focusing on the future of Black males reinforces the need to cultivate diversity in educational and professional environments to foster inclusive spaces conducive to optimal productivity and global collaboration. This challenge largely stems from the lack of research on the obstacles and potential solutions for Black boys' educational pathways from pre-K through high school, as the same disparities persist throughout these stages (Wint et al., 2022). However, Porter and Johnson (2006) emphasize practical suggestions, mainly focusing on leadership that directly reflects the people who follow leaders. For example, they suggest implementing mentorship programs where leaders from diverse backgrounds can serve as role models for young Black males, fostering an environment of inclusion and representation. They also recommend developing culturally relevant curricula and training for educators to better understand and address the unique challenges faced by Black students.

Despite aspirations for diversity and inclusion, Black males are notably absent in educational and executive leadership roles, prompting a critical look at future leadership challenges (Poekert et al., 2020; Sparkman, 2021). Chin et al. (2016)

identified essential leadership competencies, including leveraging personal and social identities and promoting an inclusive climate. Ellemers et al. (2002) found that group allegiance influences social identity relevance. Responses to challenges depend on two main factors: self-concept stability and the social environment. Leadership self-efficacy, crucial for effective leadership, is bolstered by past performance experiences and aligns with Bandura's theory (Bandura, 1982, 1995). High self-efficacy results in better performance and persistence through difficulties (Sitzmann & Yeo, 2013; Stewart et al., 2019; Park & John, 2014; Seibert et al., 2017). The future of Black males in leadership is under-explored, but existing insights emphasize the importance of leadership that reflects the diversity of the leader. Practical solutions include mentorship programs and culturally relevant curricula to foster inclusion and representation (Porter & Johnson, 2006).

Methodology

The research design for the study was qualitative, adhering to a paradigm focused on qualitative inquiry. According to Baxter and Jack (2008), thorough qualitative studies allow researchers to examine or relate to a phenomenon under specific conditions using various data sources. Qualitative case studies enable researchers to explore individuals' relationships to their lived experiences. They also support the critical analysis of philosophical and literary language, as well as the relational meaning of various phenomena (Yin, 2003). The qualitative single case study approach focused on Black male leadership self-efficacy and the public-school pathways of Black male secondary principals in Central Texas. This design answered the research question by identifying the relationship between Black males' leadership self-efficacy and how it could be recreated within public education to address the lack of Black male educators. This qualitative single case study ensures coherence, depth, and relevance through careful boundaries (Yin, 2015). Considering uniqueness, complexity, and representativeness, a selected case provided rich information relevant to the research question (Yin, 2015). The study's scope was defined to maintain focus, including geographical and organizational boundaries (Yin, 2015). Understanding the case's context was crucial and involved identifying social, cultural, economic, and political influences (Yin, 2015). To align with the research question and the nature of

the case, data collection methods included individual semi-structured interviews and a focus group. By establishing clear boundaries, a rigorous study contributes valuable insights to the field of public education.

I conducted my research virtually to accommodate the preferences of my participants, who were Black male secondary leaders serving at four high schools and one secondary Discipline Alternative Educational Program (DAEP). This case study includes demographic data to provide context. It specifically examines Black male secondary principals in Central Texas across five distinct campuses where my participants were based. Participants were purposively selected based on their roles as Black male leaders, aligning with the central focus of my research.

I used Creswell and Poth's data analysis spiral, which has five steps: data preparation, exploration, analysis, representation, and interpretation. Within this approach, I utilized the latest developments in qualitative methods for a single-case study design (Bennett & Elman, 2006). In this case, the single case study is an in-depth investigation of a single subject, Black male secondary principals in Central Texas. My participants provided detailed insights and allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the complexities and unique aspects of leadership self-efficacy in public schools. The focus was exploring the case in its real-life context, by utilizing multiple sources of data such as interviews, observations, and a focus group. I employed the leadership self-efficacy theoretical framework throughout these steps to guide the analysis, particularly concerning its impact on Black male leadership self-efficacy. This framework provided a structured approach to understanding and interpreting the data within the context of self-efficacy theory. My action plan involved three steps to help me stay organized throughout the analysis. I developed spreadsheets with file naming to capture my participants' responses. As the researcher, I recorded and transcribed the responses using software for clarity. I then categorized the transcriptions based on the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Emerging Themes

This study explores several thematic dimensions to understand the diverse facets of professional and career growth among Black males in public education. The professional growth and development theme emphasizes the personal journey

towards leadership roles, skill enhancement, resilience, and overcoming challenges, reflecting a broader aspiration for personal evolution and knowledge acquisition. Career growth and development in educational settings focuses on navigating instructional analyses and strategies to enhance teaching and learning processes within the public education sector. Support systems and recognition examine the vital role of mentorship and other forms of support in guiding Black males through their professional journeys. Intrinsic motivation and self-discovery illuminate the internal beliefs and values driving leadership development and decision-making processes, including the influence of spiritual beliefs on participants' sense of purpose and leadership approach. These themes collectively highlight nuanced pathways for individuals to pursue growth and fulfillment in educational leadership roles.

Professional Growth and Development

The professional growth and development theme focuses on the multifaceted journey of personal growth, encompassing leadership roles, skill development, resilience, and overcoming challenges. This theme reflected the overarching goal of individuals to grow and develop in their personal lives, overcoming challenges and acquiring new skills and knowledge along the way. Regarding the research question, all participants commented in some form, describing attributes of professional growth and development related to direct experiences. Each participant described their direct experience as positive and negative, allowing them to grow and learn. If the outcome of the experience was positive, they learned what behaviors led to positive performance. If the outcome was negative, the participants did not view the direct experience as a loss but rather an opportunity to learn from what behaviors led to negative performance. Wilson talked about his direct experience developing a master schedule that reflected professional growth and development.

That experience helped build my self-efficacy because, guess what, I learned not to do, you know what not to do, not to do. I never made those mistakes again. That experience helped build my self-efficacy because guess what I learned what not to do. I never made those mistakes again. So, whenever I had another opportunity for a master schedule, I knew what not to do.

That experience significantly enhanced self-efficacy, provided invaluable lessons on what mistakes to avoid, ensured Wilson never repeated them, and empowered him to navigate future opportunities confidently. By aggregating the findings into this theme, I analyzed how participants navigated their professional journeys, identified common patterns or trends, and gained insights into the factors contributing to their growth and development. This comprehensive theme allowed for a holistic understanding of the experiences and processes involved in professional growth and development.

Career Growth and Development

The theme of career growth and development differs from that of professional growth and development. Career growth and development refers to advancing and improving one's skills, knowledge, and experience to achieve professional goals and career progression. Career growth and development encapsulates the various aspects of the career trajectory, in this case, through public education. Instructional analysis and strategy reflected the participants' engagement in analyzing instructional methods and developing strategies to enhance teaching and learning processes, which are essential for career growth in educational leadership roles. Steve recalled his career development experience before coming to Central Texas.

After two years of teaching, I earned \$5,000 for a summer teaching biology to inner-city students at the University of Richmond. The program director and former HR director led impactful leadership meetings.

Observational learning and role models contributed to the participants' observations of others' leadership behaviors, and learning from role models contributed to their own leadership development and career advancement. Regarding the research question, responses to vicarious experiences produced career growth and development responses as the participants observed and learned from their leaders, providing them with the leadership self-efficacy to grow and develop their careers.

Career trajectory signifies the participants' reflection on their career and development trajectories. Career path exploration of various career paths within the education field suggests the participants' proactive approach to career advancement and seeking growth opportunities. Career reflection on past experiences

and career decisions allows participants to gain insights into their professional journey and to be informed about their future career aspirations and goals. Leadership potential, including recognizing and nurturing it, is crucial for participants as they aspire to advance in their careers and take on leadership roles. By synthesizing the findings into the career growth and development theme, I analyzed how participants navigated their professional journeys, identified common patterns or trends, and gained insights into the factors contributing to their growth and development as educational leaders.

Support Systems and Recognition

Support systems are networks that provide emotional, social, and professional assistance, while recognition involves acknowledging and appreciating individuals' efforts and achievements. This theme encompasses the various forms of support, guidance, and acknowledgment that individuals received as they progressed in their professional journeys. Mentorship was a resource from which my participants benefited, with experienced individuals providing guidance, advice, and support to help them navigate their careers and overcome challenges. Hal discussed how his high school challenges led to support systems and mentorship.

My poor high school performance led to an academic success contract for admission to Texas State University, requiring leadership and time management training, which ultimately provided me with valuable mentors.

Peer support offers camaraderie and creates a network of individuals who can share experiences, provide advice, and encourage one another. When considering the research question, responses regarding social persuasions provided insights into the theme of support systems and recognition.

By merging these findings into the theme of support systems and recognition, I analyzed how these various forms of support contributed to individuals' growth, resilience, and success in their professional and career endeavors. Role models were utilized through observing and learning from individuals who embodied qualities or accomplishments that participants aspired to achieve, serving as sources of inspiration and motivation in their professional and career development. External support, such as professional organizations, educational institutions, or

community resources, provided additional resources to facilitate professional growth and development. Encouragement and positive reinforcement from colleagues, supervisors, or mentors helped boost confidence and motivation, fostering continued growth and resilience in the face of challenges. Guidance from experienced individuals or resources helped participants navigate complex situations, make informed decisions, and develop their skills and competencies. Recognition and acknowledgment of achievements and contributions through awards, honors, or other forms of recognition reinforced individuals' sense of accomplishment and validated their efforts. Networking allowed my participants to build and maintain professional and career networks that allowed individuals to connect with others in their field, exchange ideas, and access opportunities for collaboration, learning, and advancement. This theme stressed the importance of fostering supportive environments and recognizing individuals' contributions as they strive for continuous professional improvement and career advancement.

Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Discovery

Intrinsic motivation and self-discovery drive individuals to uncover their values, strengths, and identities, fostering deeper commitment and resilience. This theme encompasses the internal factors, beliefs, and processes that drive individuals' leadership development and decision-making. Spiritual beliefs shape my participants' values, guiding principles, and sense of purpose, influencing their leadership approach and decision-making. The decision-making process reflects individuals' values, priorities, and goals, as well as their ability to assess situations, weigh options, and make informed choices aligned with their beliefs and objectives. Regarding the research question, responses concerning physiological feedback uncovered my participants' spiritual beliefs when overcoming tough emotional challenges.

Leadership self-efficacy refers to individuals' confidence in achieving goals and performing tasks effectively. It played a crucial role in leadership development, influencing individuals' willingness to take on challenges, persist in the face of setbacks, and pursue growth opportunities. A sense of calling or purpose in their leadership roles reflected their deep-seated commitment to making a meaningful impact,

serving others, and contributing to a higher cause beyond personal gain.

Faith in oneself, others, or a higher power gave individuals strength, resilience, and guidance as they navigated their leadership journey and overcame obstacles. Self-perception—how my participants perceived themselves, their strengths, weaknesses, and potential—shaped their confidence, decision-making, and leadership approach. Confidence-building experiences, affirmations, and reflections contributed to individuals' self-assurance, empowering them to embrace challenges, take risks, and fulfill their leadership potential. Edgar commented on how their spirituality regulated their physiological responses.

But my relationship, my spirituality, centers me a lot. It keeps me grounded and helps me not act like a fool many times. And so that's really what controls me.

The process of self-discovery involves exploring one's values, interests, strengths, and aspirations, leading to a deeper understanding of oneself and one's leadership identity. By aggregating the findings into the theme of intrinsic motivation and self-discovery, I analyzed how these internal factors and processes influenced individuals' leadership journeys, decision-making, and sense of purpose. This theme highlighted the importance of aligning leadership development efforts with individuals' intrinsic motivations, beliefs, and values to foster authentic, meaningful growth and fulfillment in their leadership roles.

Implications and Recommendations

When considering the needs of Black males, leadership self-efficacy requires tools interwoven with the four components of my theoretical framework that will, in return, influence behaviors and performance (Bandura, 1982). The lived experiences of the participants who are now secondary school principals in Central Texas will promote the growth of future Black males in public education and Black male leadership across any organization. My study shares how professional and career development can grow leadership skills through direct and vicarious experiences, physiological feedback, and social persuasions that develop self-discovery through support systems and recognition. The themes identify how leadership self-efficacy correlates with Black males and their leadership behaviors to address the problems highlighted in the literature review. As a result of the analyzed data and findings, the implications and

recommendations revolve around the two most critical decision-makers: public education systems and Black male mentors.

The implications of the public and private school systems for increasing leadership self-efficacy for Black males are multifaceted and crucial for fostering their development as leaders. Firstly, the curriculum and teaching methodologies integrate diverse perspectives and histories, ensuring representation and validation of Black male experiences (Sparkman, 2021). This contributes to young Black males' direct and vicarious experiences that lead to self-efficacy. Additionally, mentorship programs and leadership opportunities within the school environment empower Black males to recognize and cultivate their leadership potential (Ellemers et al., 2002). It is imperative to create a supportive and inclusive school culture where Black males feel valued and encouraged to voice their opinions and take on leadership roles (Young & Bagley, 1982). This step is accomplished through social persuasions that model and teach positive psychological feedback when faced with challenges or triumphs. Moreover, addressing systemic inequalities such as disproportionate disciplinary actions and resource disparities is essential to dismantle barriers hindering Black male leadership self-efficacy (Welsh & Little, 2018). By actively engaging with these considerations, the public school system plays a pivotal role in nurturing the leadership capabilities of Black males and fostering their confidence to lead within their communities and beyond (Park & John, 2014; Seibert et al., 2017).

Recommendations for the public education system to enhance the leadership self-efficacy of Black males encompass several strategic initiatives. Firstly, curriculum reforms must prioritize including diverse perspectives that resonate with Black male students, fostering a sense of belonging and validation (Chin et al., 2016). Implementing mentorship programs and leadership development initiatives tailored to Black males within schools can provide them with the guidance and support necessary to recognize and cultivate their leadership potential (Porter & Johnson, 2006). Furthermore, addressing systemic biases and disparities in disciplinary actions and resource allocation will be essential for creating an equitable learning environment that enables Black males to thrive as leaders (Welsh & Little, 2018). By integrating evidence-based practices and ongoing research findings, the public education system can better

empower Black males to become confident and influential leaders in their communities and beyond.

The implications of a mentorship program dedicated to enhancing the leadership self-efficacy of Black males are profound and far-reaching. Such a program can provide indispensable guidance and support tailored to Black males' unique challenges and experiences, fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment (Travis Jr. & Leech, 2014). Through meaningful mentor-mentee relationships, Black males can access role models who inspire and motivate them to recognize and leverage their leadership potential. Moreover, mentorship offers opportunities for skill development, networking, and exposure to diverse leadership styles, equipping participants with the tools and confidence to navigate professional and personal challenges effectively (Bunting, 2014). By investing in mentorship programs, organizations and communities can cultivate a new generation of confident and capable Black male leaders and foster greater diversity, equity, and inclusion within leadership spaces.

Recommendations for a mentorship program to increase the leadership self-efficacy of Black males should prioritize a multifaceted approach. Firstly, it is essential to design mentorship initiatives that are culturally responsive and tailored to Black male mentees' specific needs and experiences (Kalra et al., 2009). This entails recruiting Black male mentors who can serve as relatable role models and training mentors on cultural competence and effective mentorship techniques. Additionally, implementing structured goal-setting processes and regular feedback mechanisms within the mentorship relationships can help mentees track their progress (Schunk & Mullen, 2013). This, in turn, builds their confidence in leadership abilities. Future research should focus on assessing the long-term impacts of mentorship programs on Black male mentees' leadership self-efficacy, exploring factors that contribute to program effectiveness, and identifying best practices for mentorship program design and implementation (Seibert et al., 2017). Such research can inform evidence-based mentorship interventions that empower Black males to thrive as leaders in various contexts.

Conclusion

My study aimed to explore how Black males described their leadership self-efficacy as secondary school principals in Central Texas. I decided to use a

qualitative single-case study approach to explore the leadership self-efficacy of Black male secondary school principals in Central Texas. My goal was to understand the leadership self-efficacy of these Black male secondary school principals and use my findings to leverage my theoretical framework. This would help create a system to increase the number of Black males in public education. Since my participants were proven Black male leaders in public education, their responses to my research pave the way for a future with a significant increase in Black males in education.

The findings regarding leadership self-efficacy among Black male secondary school principals in Central Texas reveal significant implications for educational leadership and equity. Research suggests that these principals exhibit high levels of self-efficacy in specific areas, such as instructional leadership and building relationships. However, they face challenges related to systemic barriers and limited representation in leadership roles. These findings highlight the importance of cultivating supportive environments and targeted professional development opportunities to bolster the leadership self-efficacy of Black male principals. Furthermore, addressing structural inequalities in the education system, such as hiring practices and access to resources, is crucial for fostering greater diversity and inclusion in educational leadership. By acknowledging and addressing the unique experiences and needs of Black male principals, educational institutions can promote more equitable leadership practices and improve student outcomes.

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