



Black Female Principals' Wellness and Survival While Leading Anti-Black Public Schools

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Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

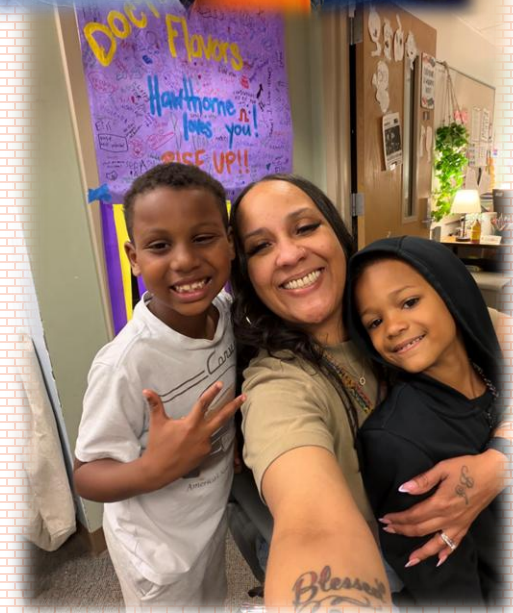
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Committee:

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Roadmap

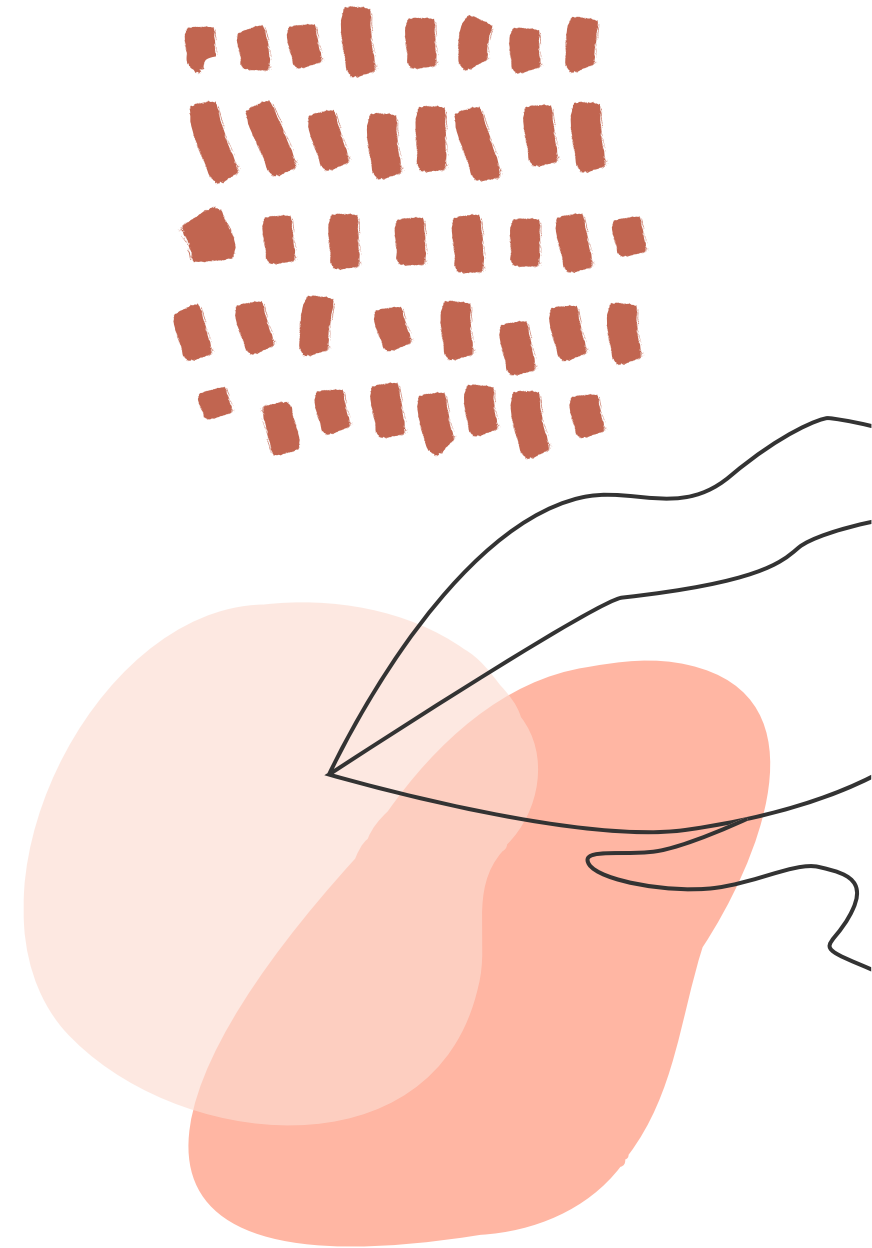


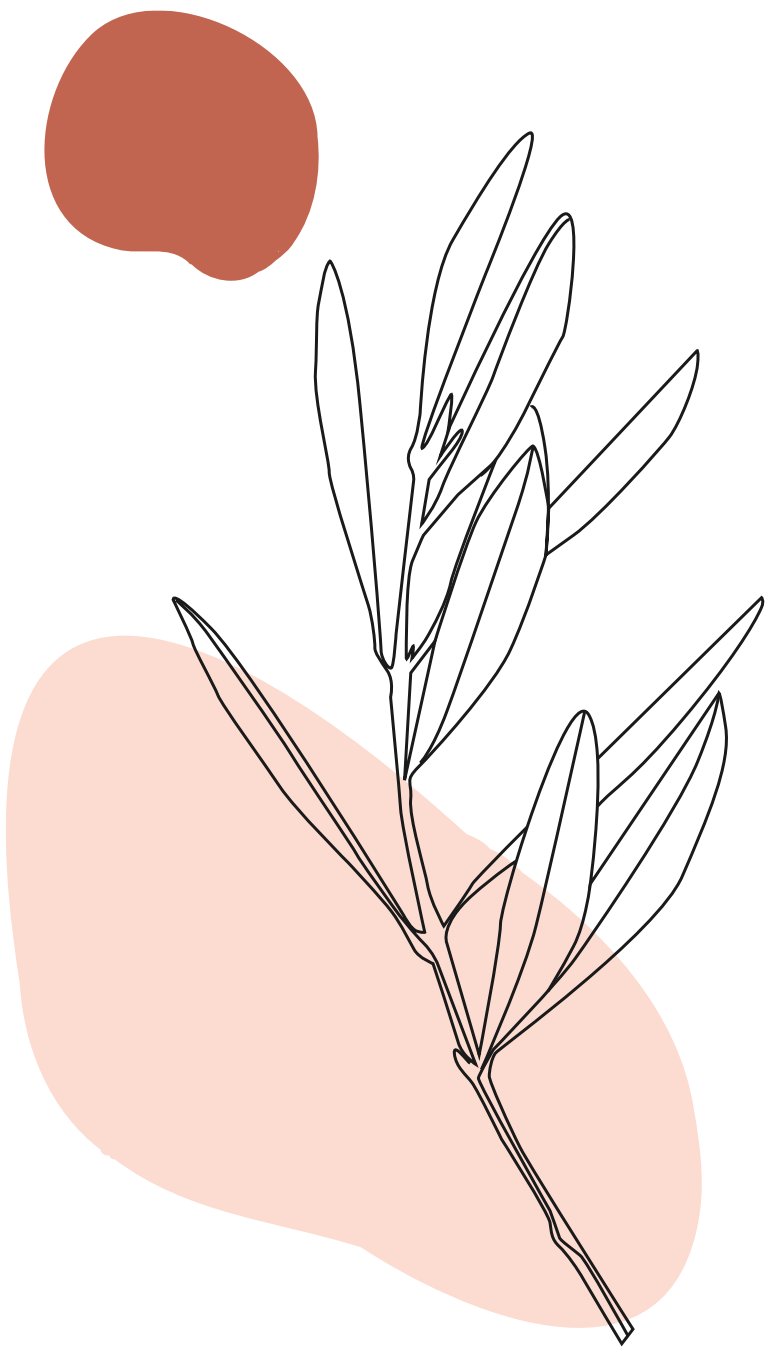
Presentation Overview:

- Why this study matters
- Problem & Purpose
- Theoretical Framework
- Methodology
- Findings
- Discussion & Contributions
- Implications
- Questions

Why This Study Matters

Black women principals lead schools while navigating systems shaped by racism, sexism, and anti-Blackness. Despite their critical role in public education, little research has examined how they sustain their health, wellness, and survival through a Black feminist lens.





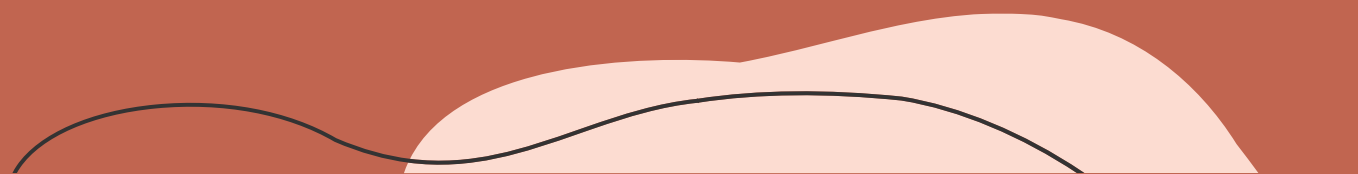
Problem Statement

- **Anti-Blackness shapes educational leadership.**
- **Black women principals experience unique racialized and gendered challenges.**
- **Existing research emphasizes resilience over systemic conditions.**
- **Limited scholarship centers Black women's lived experiences of health, wellness, and survival.**



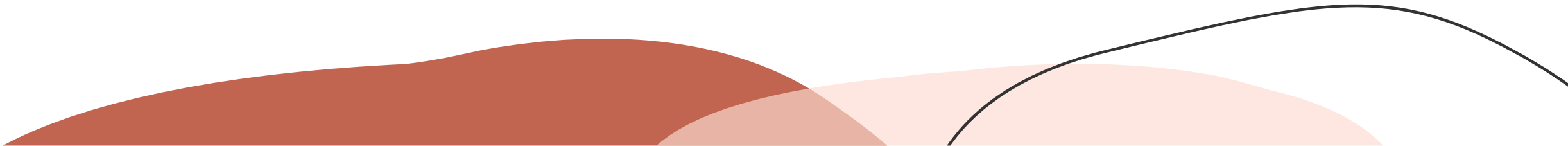
Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative narrative inquiry was to explore how Black female principals understand and sustain their health, wellness, and survival while leading within anti-Black public school systems.



Research Question

How do Black female principals navigate and sustain their health and well-being while leading in K-12 public schools characterized by anti-Blackness?



Theoretical Framework

Black Feminist Thought

Collins, P. H. (1990). Black feminist thought. *Routledge*.

Intersectionality

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989(1), 139–168.

Understanding Black Women's Lived Experiences

Health Wellness Survival

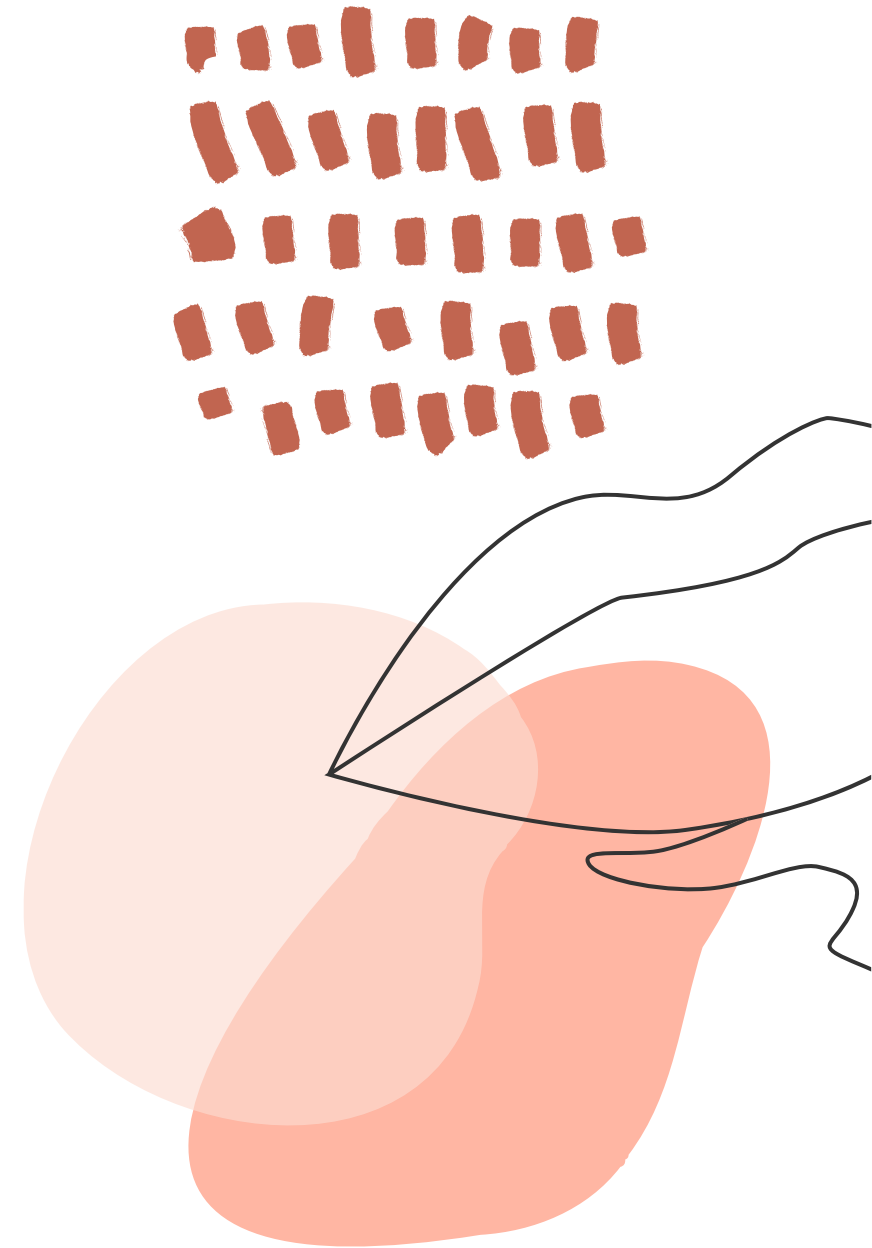
Literature Review

Anti-Blackness

- Structural racism
- Leadership surveillance
- Controlling images
- Emotional labor

Health, Wellness & Survival

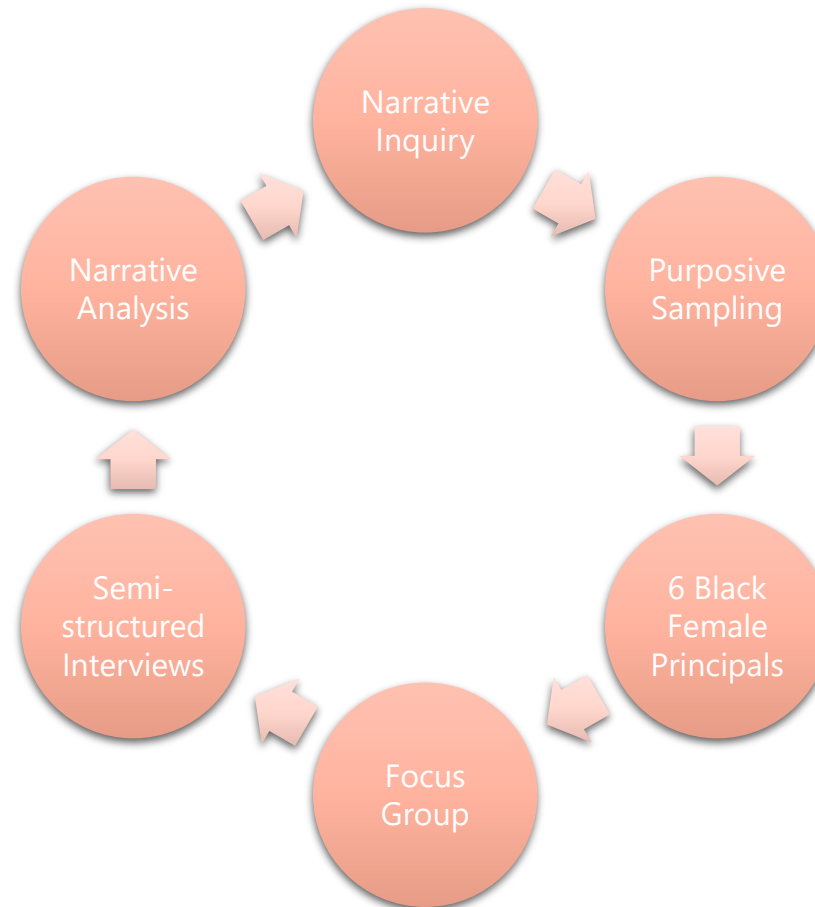
- Health impacts
- Wellness as resistance
- Collective care
- Survival strategies



Health, Survival, and Wellness of Black Women Educational Leaders



Methodology

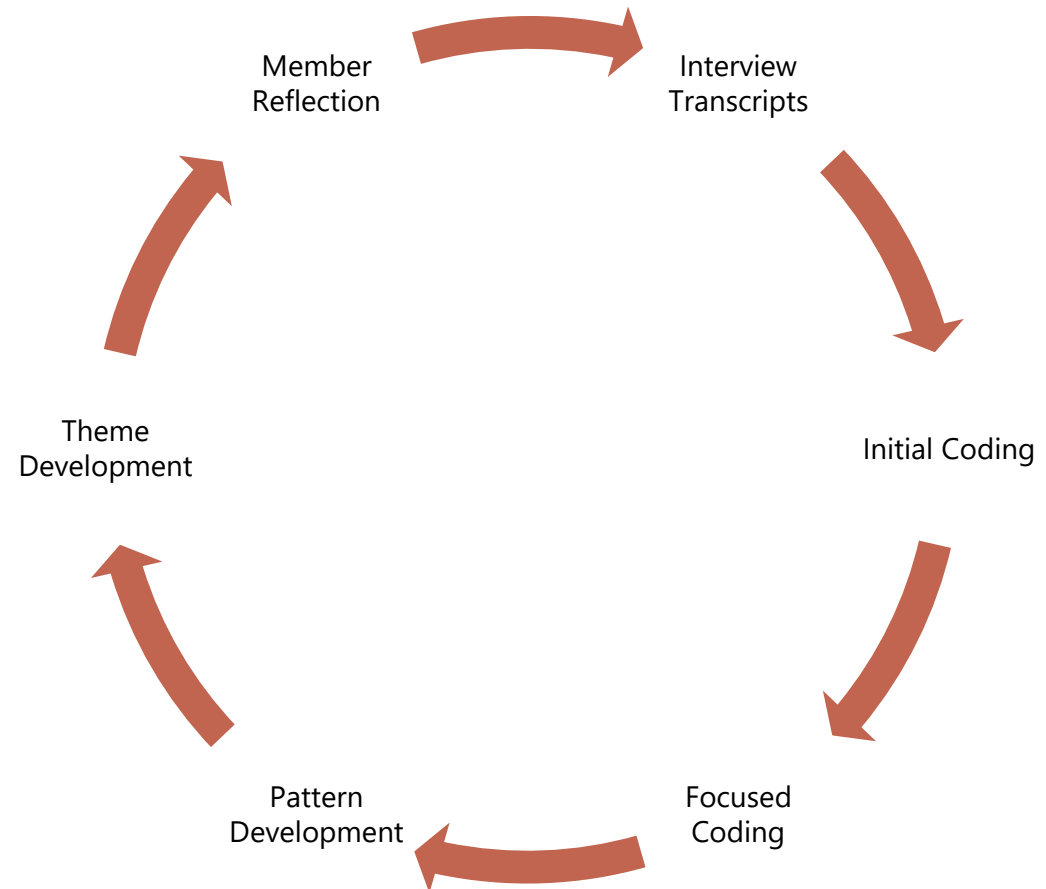


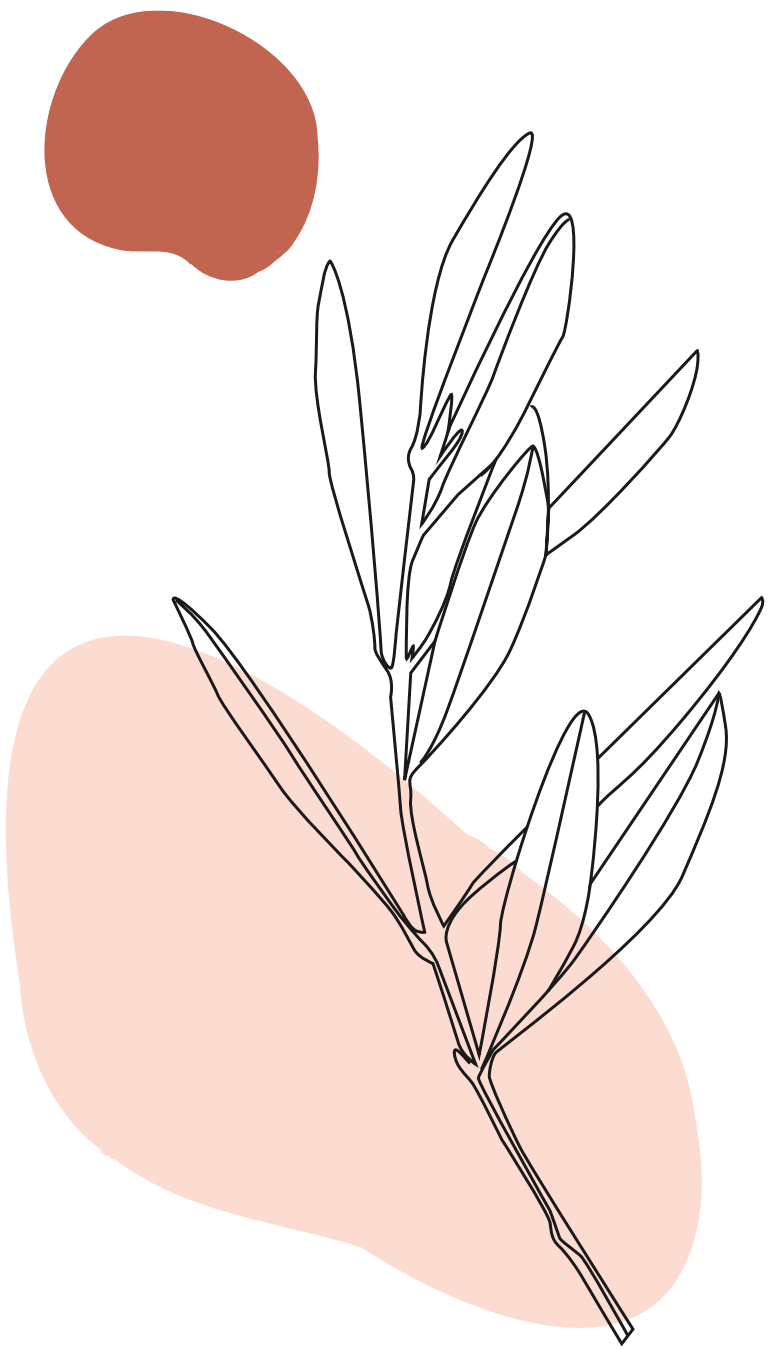
Participants

Participant	Level	Years Leading
Sunday	Elementary	5
Sunny	Elementary	21
Angel	Elementary	16
Blaze	Middle	8
Sorella	Elementary	14
Esperanza	Highschool	4



Data Analysis





Findings Overview

Theme 1

Leading with Purpose: Identity, Calling, and Service

Theme 2

Leading Under Scrutiny: Navigating Anti-Blackness, Racism, and Sexism

Theme 3

The Hidden Costs of Leadership: Emotional Labor, Isolation, and the Fight for Wellness

Theme 4

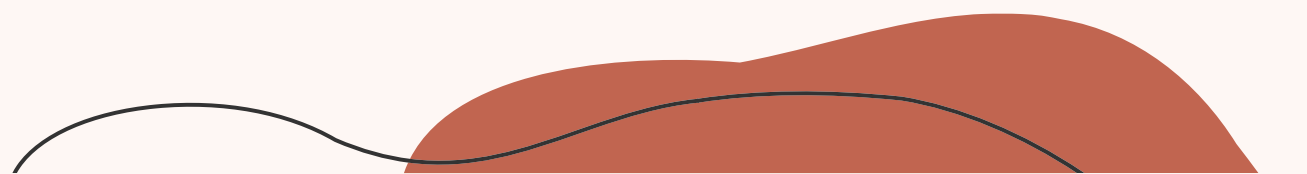
Collective Care as Resistance: Faith, Sisterhood, and Healing



Theme 1: Leading with Purpose

- Leadership as calling
 - Service before self
- Advocacy for students

"...a calling grounded in service, advocacy, community responsibility, and personal sacrifice." ~collective statement of participants



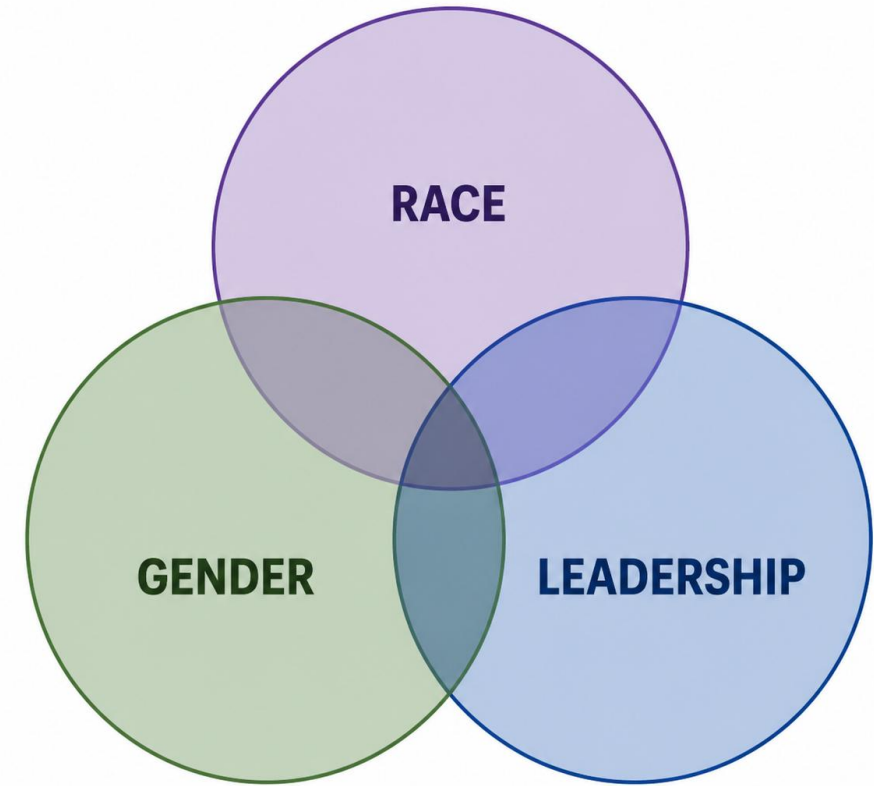
Theme 2: Leading Under Scrutiny

- Racism
- Sexism
- Hypervisibility

"Sexism and racism happen frequently."

~Esperanza

Explaining that decisions she makes as a principal are always questioned; second-guessing her decisions and leadership abilities.



Theme 3: The Hidden Costs of Leadership

- Burnout
- Emotional labor
- Isolation

Visible- Leadership

Hidden- Stress, Health, Mental Load, and Emotional Labor

"There's that sense of having to prove..." ~Sunday

Collective statement: "Everyone comes to me for strength, but there's no one asking me if I'm okay."





Theme 4: Collective Care as Resistance

- Faith
- Sisterhood
- Healing

“We speak a secret language of understanding our struggles. It’s hard to explain the dynamic, but it is therapeutic.” ~Esperanza

Findings Synthesis



Anti-Black Systems



Health Challenges



Survival Strategies



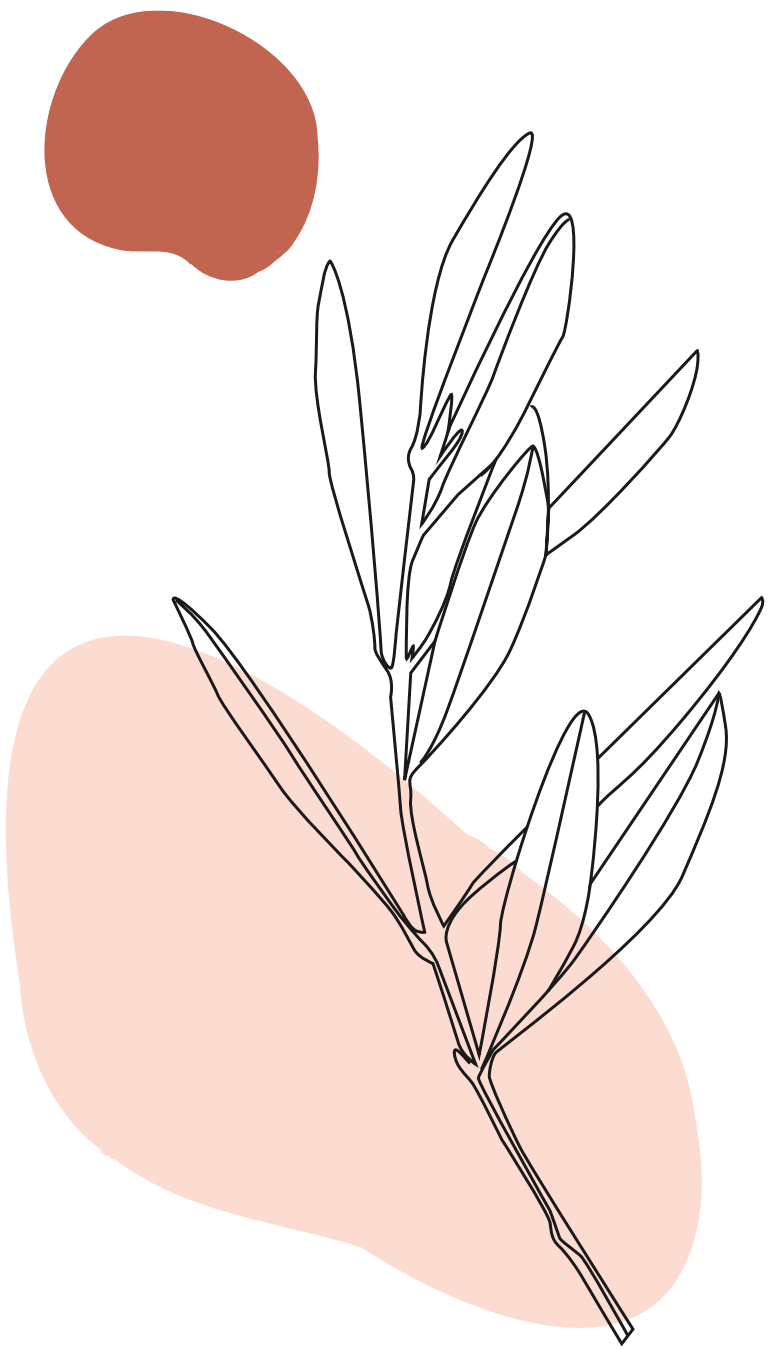
Collective Care



Sustainable Leadership



Transformative Leadership



Discussion

Participants affirmed prior scholarship by demonstrating:

- ✓ **Anti-Blackness shapes leadership**
- ✓ **Emotional labor is racialized**
- ✓ **Wellness is collective**
- ✓ **Black Feminist Thought explains these experiences**

Contributions

This study contributes by:

- ★ Centering Black women's voices
- ★ Extending Black Feminist Thought into educational leadership
- ★ Reframing wellness as resistance
- ★ Expanding scholarship on Black women principals



Implications

Personal

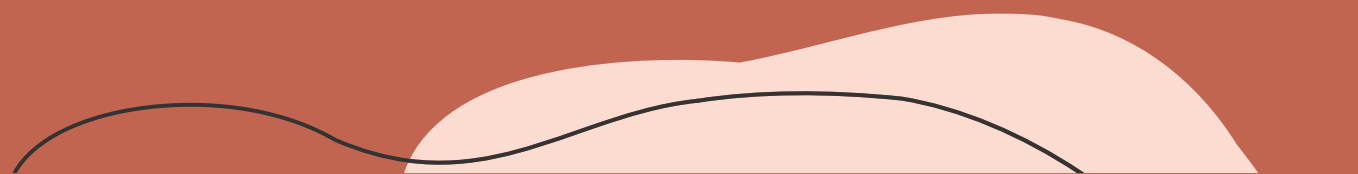
Define wellness on your own terms.

Professional

Cultivate mentorship, sisterhood, and collective care.

Research

Continue centering Black women leaders across educational contexts.

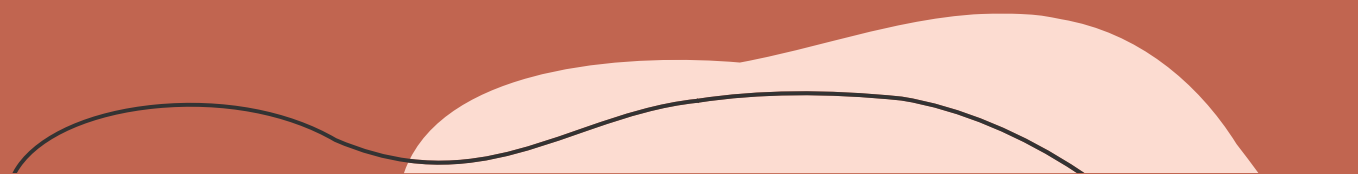


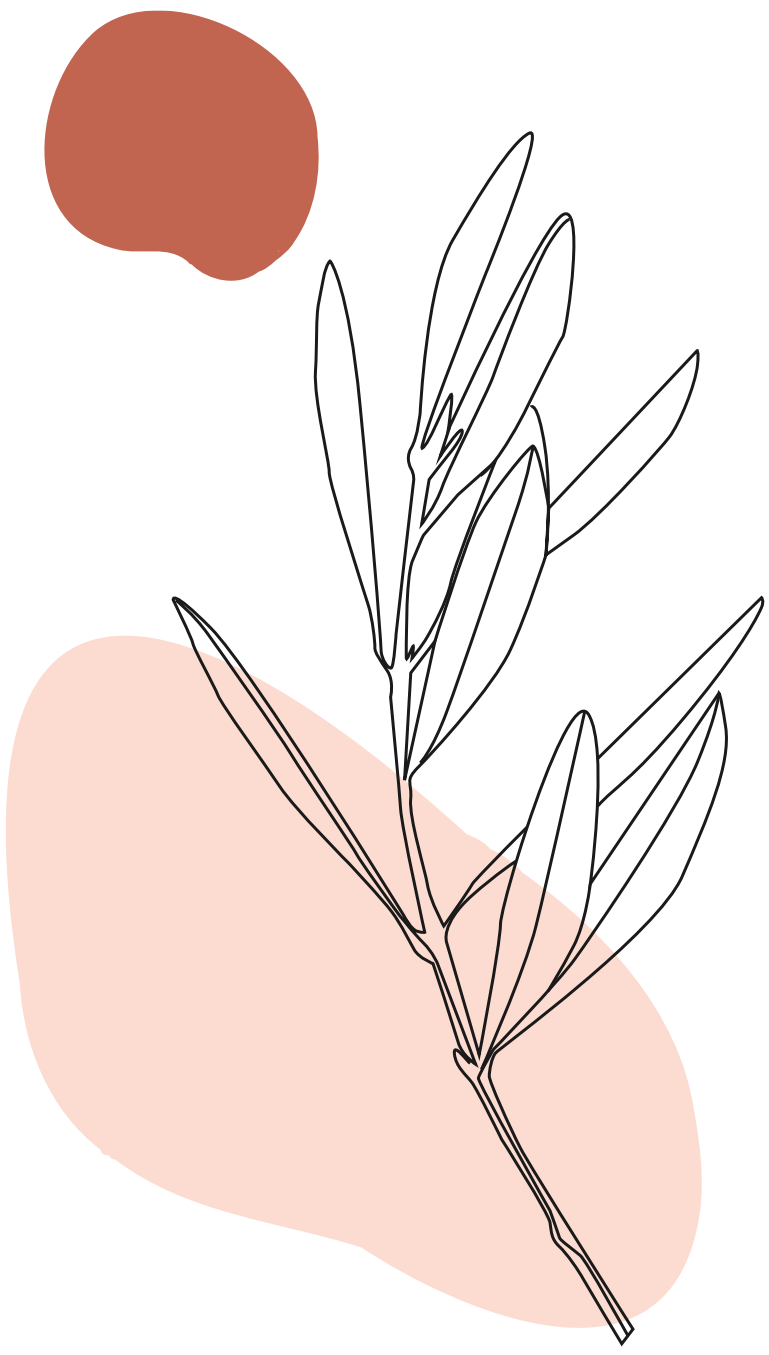


Final Reflection

Black women principals are not simply surviving leadership- we are redefining leadership.

Our stories challenge educational leaders to recognize wellness as a political, relational, and resistant practice rooted in care, community, and the pursuit of justice.





Resources

Collins, P. H. (1990). Black feminist thought. *Routledge*.

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989(1), 139–168.

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THANK YOU!

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