



Self-Care is Self-Preservation: A Black Feminist Critique and Re-imagining of Self-Care

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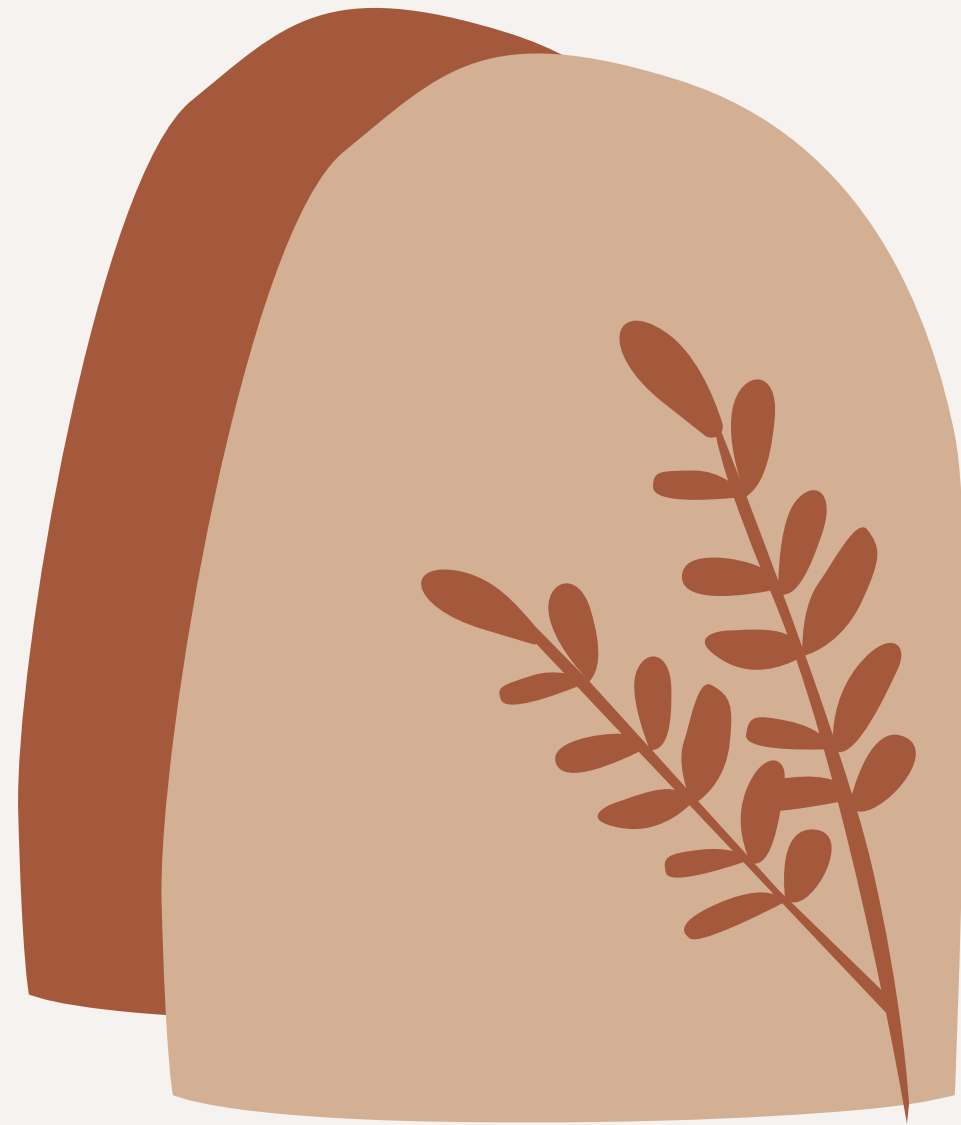


My Personal Standpoint and Introduction to the Research

The Problem

Under neoliberal models of self-care:

- wellbeing is understood as one's own responsibility
- the structures that contribute to unwellness are erased from view
- self-care becomes depoliticising - rather addressing the root causes of our unwell states, we are instead invited to “breathe, meditate, and—if we can afford it—enjoy a day at the spa” (Michaelli 2017).



Thesis Statement

I maintain that neoliberal models of self-care in and of themselves do not serve to address the self-care needs of Black women because they erase historic and contemporary social, political and economic stressors that prevent wellbeing, therefore making neoliberal self-care irrelevant to the complex lives and experiences of Black women.

If these models do not address the needs of Black women informed by their complex lives, experiences and histories, what forms of self-care do?

Theory

Black Feminism of the Combahee River Collective Statement

- Uncovering intersecting systems of domination in neoliberal self-care models
- Black women as sources of knowledge
- Black women as agents in their own liberation

Methods

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Genealogy

- “an interested, conscious thinking and rethinking of history and historicity, a rethinking which has women's autonomy and self-determination at its core” (Mohanty 1996, xv)
- An **intentional tool** to amplify Black feminist understandings of self-care



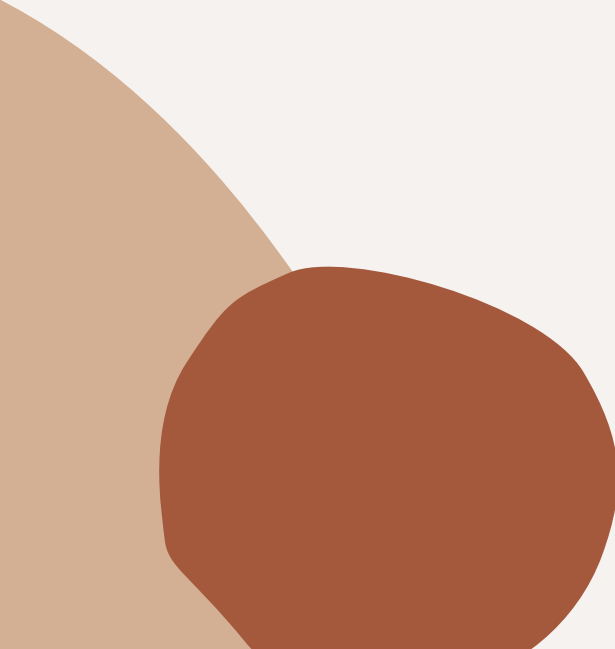
Self-Care Centers The Needs and Experiences of Black Women

- Reject 'one size fits all' treatment modalities that center on the 'norm'
- 'The Black Woman's Standpoint' - Patricia Hill Collins
- Reflection and language as a place of struggle - bell hooks
- “Reclaiming Our Time”: Women of Color Faculty and Radical Self-Care in the Academy - Donna Nicol and Jennifer Yee



Self-Care is Rooted in Self-Love

“We realize that the only people who care enough about us to work consistently for our liberation are us. Our politics emerge from a healthy love for ourselves, our sisters and our community which allows us to continue our struggle and work” (Combahee River Collective 1977).

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- The Hatred of Black Women - Audre Lorde
 - Self-love must go beyond the superficial

The Collective Self: Personal and Political

The Collective Self (Ortega-Williams 2021)

- “inescapable and intolerable” awareness of the conditions of social injustice for Black people (Ortega-Williams 2021, 10).
- Tapped into the collective harm that existed at the group level, and collective action thus produced emotional and psychological relief for those “who identified with Trayvon as part of themselves and as witnesses to the injustice” (Ortega-Williams 2021, 11).

Audre Lorde

“Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare” (Lorde 1988).

- Self-preservation for Lorde was just as much about her struggle with cancer as it was the battle of self determination and survival that Black women fight daily at the intersections of multiple oppressions (Lorde 1988).



The Collective Self: Personal and Political

'Sisters of the Yam' - bell hooks

“Healing occurs through testimony, through gathering together everything available to you and reconciling” (hooks 1993, 17).

“For Black females, and males too, that means learning about the myriad ways racism, sexism, class exploitation, homophobia, and various other structures of domination operate in our daily lives and undermine our capacity to be self-determining. Without knowing what factors have created certain problems in the first place we could not begin to develop meaningful strategies of personal and collective resistance” (hooks 1993, 14).

CONCLUSION



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