## Supplementary Materials

**Table S1**

*Definitions for Themes and Codes*

| Themes and Theme Definition | Codes | Code Definition | Relevant Interview Questions | Example Quotes |
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| **Theme 1: Multidimensional and interconnected well-being** | | | | |
| Subtheme 1.1: Multidimensional well-being<br><br>*What well-being means to the ECE leaders of color* | Perception of well-being | This code captures leaders' personal definitions of well-being, including physical and psychological well-being. This can serve as the foundation for understanding their general well-being status and how to support their well-being. | First, we'd like to know more about your well-being. To start, could you tell us what well-being means to you? | "Well-being would be how I'm gonna take it as how you're feeling on a daily basis. How, what things affect you and what don't affect you. And how do you deal with it when they, you know, when things do affect you. What do you, what steps do you take to make sure that you feel okay. So that's pretty much what I think well-being is." |
| Subtheme 1.2: Maintaining physical well-being despite workplace stress<br><br>*The physical well-being and health status of the ECE leader of color* | Physical well-being/health | This code focuses on the physical health and well-being of leaders, such as any reported physical discomfort, injuries, illnesses, or general state of physical health. It also captures physical needs such as rest, sleep habits, and recovery. | How is your overall physical health? | "My overall physical health is great, actually. I know sometimes people think, well sometimes teachers can, are prone to getting sick and things of that nature being in the field. I fortunately have the experience where I don't have those experiences. And I hardly ever get sick or anything." |
| Subtheme 1.3: Navigating | Psychological well-being | This code aims to understand the overall | How is your overall mental health? Do you | "My mental health is really good also, I take a lot of, you know, I |

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| psychological well-being through relational fulfillment and coping<br><br>*The psychological well-being of ECE leaders of color, which is distinct from their work-related well-being.* | | psychological well-being of leaders, such as their depressive symptoms, anxiety, or other mental health challenges, *excluding work-related stress*. | feel stressed or depressed? Do you feel happy and energized? | take a lot of self, do a lot of self-care for myself, um, I don't have like therapy but I have like support groups that I go to that's for other daycare providers that we go to together." |
| Subtheme 1.4: Balancing professional fulfillment and high demands<br><br>*The professional well-being of ECE leader of color, including their perceived work-related well-being and stress, feeling overwhelmed, professional fulfillment, and perceived work-life balance.* | Work-related stress | This code captures leaders' perceived stress at work due to managing children's behaviors, workplace policies, heavy workloads, and other job-related challenges. | How is your overall mental health? Do you feel stressed or depressed? Do you feel happy and energized? | "This is a very stressful job, and I do think a lot of times people think, like, "oh you're just, you're just leading the pack to, you know, the promised land" and "oh kids they're vital everyone loves kids." So you know, we're dealing with staff, dealing with parents, dealing with kids, I mean it is varied." |
| | Feeling overwhelmed | This code captures leaders' feelings of being overwhelmed at work because of job demands and excessive workload. | How is your overall mental health? Do you feel stressed or depressed? Do you feel happy and energized? How does your work environment impact your health and well-being? | "It's just like certain times of the year where it gets more overwhelming because we have a transition period. Like right now, it's a little overwhelming because we had children who transitioned out for kindergarten. So now we need to fill their spots and everything like that." |
| | Loving the work/professional fulfillment | This code captures the positive aspects of leaders' jobs, such as their | What does it mean to you to be an educator of color | "We're there to 'cause we love it, it's something we love to do. It's certainly not, it's not the highest |

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| | | passion and dedication to the profession, the fulfillment they perceive from supporting young children and families, and the alignment with their career development goals. | in an early childhood education setting? | big job in the world, so it's definitely because we love doing it that we're there." |
| | Work-life balance | This code aims to understand leaders' experiences regarding managing the balance between their job and their personal responsibilities, such as whether they perceive their family responsibilities (e.g., parenting) affect their work or whether their work impacts their self-care and personal life. | How is your overall mental health? Do you feel stressed or depressed? Do you feel happy and energized? | "I believe sometimes like when I go home, I tend to think about this place. So, I know like, it's like home, you have to separate the two where you can just like leave. Once you leave work, you're off work. But there's always that time where like you're thinking, oh you know, maybe we could do this, that, and the third." |
| **Theme 2: Structural and racialized challenges in leadership roles and career pathways** | | | | |
| Subtheme 2.1: Racialized barriers in career pathways<br><br>*ECEOC leaders perceived challenges in their career trajectories.* | Barriers in career pathways | ECE directors of color perceived barriers in career advancement because of their identity. These challenges may include being overlooked for promotions, facing longer wait times for advancement, and encountering biases based on their racial or ethnic identity, such as | Have you experienced barriers or challenges in your leadership position related to being a person of color in early childhood education? | "So recently, there was a position, higher up than a principal on campus, and one of the criteria were for you to have a certain amount of experience. And instead of giving others opportunities, such as myself, somebody else was given an opportunity and did not meet all the criteria, and that person was not a person of color." |

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| | | discrimination tied to their name or background. | | |
| | Having to work harder | The code reflects that leaders felt they must make extra efforts compared to their White colleagues to be seen as competent and professional, which is often due to workplace stereotypes and biases | Have you experienced barriers or challenges in your leadership position related to being a person of color in early childhood education?<br><br>As a leader of color, do you feel that you experience prejudice, bias, or discrimination in your job because of your race or ethnic origin? If so, can you provide an example? | "...but I think that because I am a woman, because I am a Black woman, that I have to work extra hard to keep-maintain my position here." |
| | Impact of skin color | Leaders of color perceived prejudices and challenges due to their skin color and being categorized based on racial identity rather than individual merit. | As a leader of color, do you feel that you experience prejudice, bias, or discrimination in your job because of your race or ethnic origin? If so, can you provide an example? | "And so one of the fears that I did possibly have, was if me, myself, being you know a Black person, if I would be accepted, of course you know, I think I would be accepted coming to someone's home, but will they take my advice, will they take my coaching? Will they take what I have to say seriously and professionally? Or will they dismiss it because of my skin color?" |
| Subtheme 2.2: A lack of leadership preparation and | A lack of leadership preparation | ECE leaders of color felt that they were not prepared when stepping into their leadership roles | As you were transitioning or starting your role as a leader, how prepared did you feel to | "Not at all. Nothing. Not at all. I was not prepared at all for any of this. Before this I was a social worker, after that I was a nurse, |

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| learning through trial and error<br><br>*ECE leaders of color reported that they had limited preparation for their leadership roles* | | because of the lack of formal training and support. | handle administrative work and leadership responsibilities? | when I came into this field I would start out as a home daycare provider, I kinda was forced to expand, expand to a group daycare. I had no leadership training, there's nothing offered to you know, you really have to just go through the regulations and learn them on your own, but you know it's seven years now, now I know, but I was not prepared no, not even a little bit. [laughs]" |
| Subtheme 2.3: Inconsistent policies and regulations<br><br>*Inconsistent policies and regulatory demands across federal, state, city, and agency-level were emphasized as one of the major challenges for leaders.* | Inconsistent implementation of policies | This code captures the frustrations that Leaders perceived when workplace policies are inconsistently applied or not upheld, leading to stress and operational challenges. | How do you feel about the practices and policies used in the decision-making process in your program?<br><br>Do you feel the decision-making procedures, such as discussion of job responsibilities, are unbiased and consider most educators' voices? | "I don't feel like anything is followed. It's like we make up our rules as we go. The rules applies to you, it do-they don't apply to us. That's that type of thing. That's ho-that's how I feel it is. I feel if you do a mistake it's a bad thing, but if they do a mistake, well it's okay." |
| | Licensing | Leaders encountered challenges in meeting the licensing requirements and progressing through the licensing process. | Have you experienced barriers or challenges in your leadership position related to being a person of color in early childhood education? | "And being just a person of color, you know the way I speak sometimes may seem offensive to them and if they feel offended then they start digging more, so it's just like co-and I'm-I'm a person of color... I think that people don't realize that, you know we have a |

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| | | | As a leader of color, do you feel that you experience prejudice, bias, or discrimination in your job because of your race or ethnic origin? If so, can you provide an example? | bunch of – it's not that they're not nice people but you don't have many people of color licensing agents so they don't understand a lot of cultural differences and that can cause conflict, you know." |
| Subtheme 2.4: Demanding leadership responsibilities<br><br>*ECE leaders of color perceived responsibilities in their daily work, which led to challenges* | Challenges caused by bilingualism | Leaders of color perceived challenges at work due to their bilingual backgrounds. These may include being expected to act as translators, as well as communication barriers, such as having their accent misunderstood. These challenges can add to their workload and impact their professional experience. | Have you experienced barriers or challenges in your leadership position related to being a person of color in early childhood education?<br><br>As a leader of color, do you feel that you experience prejudice, bias, or discrimination in your job because of your race or ethnic origin? If so, can you provide an example? | "...my staff are mostly Spanish, and there's a language barrier sometimes so like that also causes an issue with licensing which causes stress." |
| | Shortage of teachers | This code captures how leaders perceived challenges due to understaffing in their program, which leads to the increased workload and additional responsibilities for existing staff. | How does your work environment impact your health and well-being? | "But the probably first time I was depressed last year because of the staffing. Cause you know I have to make sure I have my staffing, my staff, I had some issues with staff last year and it affected me mentally, I'm not even going to lie, it did affect me. But I'm okay now. We're fully staffed." |

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| | Challenges with parents | Leaders perceived challenges in communication and relationship-building with challenging parents. | Have you experienced barriers or challenges in your leadership position related to being a person of color in early childhood education?<br><br>As a leader of color, do you feel that you experience prejudice, bias, or discrimination in your job because of your race or ethnic origin? If so, can you provide an example? | "I've had to communicate with the parent, who wasn't really as receptive. And I'm trying to let her know that we're here for her and to offer support, but she wasn't, you know, reciprocating that." |
| | Workload | Leaders perceived a heavy workload and feel overwhelmed due to heavy work demands of their role, which might impact their work-life balance. | How does your work environment impact your health and well-being? | "Because it's a lot of work outside of the classroom when a teacher brings something in the classroom it's probably something that's been months of being thought out, months being worked on, and I've been working as a teacher, my whole life I wanna say because I started as a dance instructor. And most of the work that is done, is not done inside the classroom." (0053) |
| | Children's behaviors and needs | This code captures the Leaders' perceived challenges and stress when managing children's challenging behaviors and | How does your work environment impact your health and well-being? | "...for example, a child for example who was very agitated at the time, hit me with a water bottle. And the water bottle blew up my lip. My lip was blown up, I had blood, it was swollen. And so, |

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| | special needs in the classrooms. | | I asked administration if they could come take over my class..." |
| Financial hardships | Leaders perceived challenges due to the low compensation and benefits, which may impact their job satisfaction, financial stability, and retention. | Do you feel that your work schedule, rewards, and promotion opportunities are fair and equitable? | "And I just feel like I think people would be more passionate if the money matched what we're having to do. And it's just one of those things. I think, since forever, I've heard we're fighting for more pay for teachers." |
| Other challenges of being a leader of color | *Other than the challenges mentioned in the existing codes, or leaders of color did not specify the challenges.* | How do you feel the equity in your workplace generally impacts your well-being? | "Our, you know, all of- at least in this town with the government now passing three's and four's going into public schools for free. It's hurting the business for all of us. And not one time did any of the public school officials or the town officials have a meeting with the daycares to let us know this was happening, to prepare us from ahead of time." |
| Responsibility as directors of color | This code reflects that ECE directors of color carry additional responsibilities because they are leaders of color. They may spend extra time mentoring and supporting teachers, balancing administrative duties with supporting staff, or navigating being one of the few leaders of color in their organization. | What does it mean to you to be an educator of color in a leadership position within an early childhood education setting? | "I feel being a leader of color, I feel like it's a little more like, because, it's not typical that you have leaders of color, you know? It's- there's a majority of, you know, Caucasian descent. So, when you're in that position, I feel like, you're held a little bit higher, and you have to make sure, like you're doing everything the way it's supposed to be done. Because people are now, all eyes are on you, so the focus is on you. Cause |

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| | | | | like if you mess up, then like, it's like oh well you know, we should have never put them in that position kinda thing. But I feel like being a person of color, we do have to do everything correct and right, and we must, you know, be an example so that others know that we're able and capable to be in this position just as much as anyone else." |
| **Theme 3: Strengths Drawn from ECE Leaders of Color's Identities and Experiences** | | | | |
| Subtheme 3.1: Communicative and relational strengths as a leader<br><br>*ECE leaders of color perceived their strengths related to their communicative and interpersonal skills* | Communication | Leaders perceived one of their strengths as being able to communicate clearly and effectively with colleagues, children, families, and leadership. | What are your strengths as a leader of color in early childhood education settings? | "I feel like I am a approachable person. Like come sit down, let's talk about this. Let me marinate, let me think about this. Let- let me help you make that decision and let's look at some options and things like that." |
| | Relating to parents, families, and students of similar backgrounds | ECE leaders of color perceived one of their strengths as being able to use their shared experiences to build trust and stronger relationships with families and children from similar backgrounds. | What are your strengths as a leader of color in early childhood education settings?<br><br>What does it mean to you to be an educator of color in a leadership position within an early childhood education setting? | "I really think because I grew up in New York and I'm very diverse and I have to speak two different languages, I really feel like everyone always tells me that I'm like the person who brings everybody together so like I'm the person who like, I celebrate everything for you like whether you just graduated or whether you just moved into an apartment, I'm really, really good at communication and networking and supporting people so I feel |

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| | | | | like one of my really strong, one of my biggest strengths is really just being supportive and I'm so understanding because I get it from always around. You know, I understand everything from my experience in life or whatever so I think my biggest one is just being supportive." |
| | Strong interpersonal and communication skills | ECE leaders of color perceived one of their strengths as building positive relationships and communicating well with their staff, children, and their families, and being connected with others. | What are your strengths as a leader of color in early childhood education settings?<br><br>What does it mean to you to be an educator of color in a leadership position within an early childhood education setting? | "And I think that I'm attributing that to, to my makeup, to my personality, to my experience. Knowing how to approach individuals, knowing how to talk with individuals. We have a theme of one team, one dream. All of us, you know, I don't, as an, I'm a member of the team, but as the leader of the team, the quarterback of the team. So I do not feel that I'm a person that is superior or anything of that nature. And this is where I've always, and that's helped a whole lot, in terms of being a good administrator." |
| Subtheme 3.2: Dedicated work ethic and professional resilience<br><br>*ECE leaders of color perceived* | Resilience/overcoming/persevering | Leaders perceived one of their strengths as being resilient and persevering at work and overcoming challenges. | What does it mean to you to be an educator of color in a leadership position within an early childhood education setting?<br><br>What are your strengths as a leader of color in | "So being a person of color, you know, I've got all these things hitting me. And typically, it makes it more difficult. But do I use it as a crutch? Absolutely not. I learn and I build from it." |

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| *strengths related to their dedication, resilience, and work ethic* | | | early childhood education settings? | |
| | Strong work ethic | Leaders perceived one of their strengths as having a strong work ethic, fostering smooth relationships with colleagues and positive interactions with families. This may involve perseverance, reliability, and a deep commitment to the success of their programs and staff. | What are your strengths as a leader of color in early childhood education settings? | "I feel like just because of the family that I come from, and being a first-generation student, we have a very strong work ethic. You know, we've always tried to, you know, work hard, do our best. And even though sometimes it goes unnoticed, we don't want that to be on our shoulders that, they didn't notice it anyway, so why should I finish it? Or why should I work just as hard? Or I don't have that mindset of it's not in my paygrade, so I'm not doing it. I don't have that mindset. I feel like I have a very strong work ethic." |
| | Extensive experience in the field | ECE leaders of color perceived one of their strengths as having many years of experience working in the ECE field, which brings a wealth of practical knowledge and understanding and informs their leadership. | What are your strengths as a leader of color in early childhood education settings? | "Okay, I'm thinking my background, coming from a public school as an administrator, has enhanced that experience. I'm probably the most senior individual on the administrative staff, building-wise. There are a number of things that you bring with you." |
| Subtheme 3.3: Advocacy and support for staff | Advocacy and support for staff | ECE leaders of color perceived one of their strengths as having many years of experience working in the ECE field, | What are your strengths as a leader of color in early childhood education settings? | "The faculty is one that really can make a, make a good or bad administrator, who are out there in the trenches each and every day, and as an administrator, you need |

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| *ECE leaders of color perceived their strengths related to their advocacy and support for their staff* | | which brings a wealth of practical knowledge and understanding and informs their leadership. | What does it mean to you to be an educator of color in a leadership position within an early childhood education setting? | to do whatever you possibly can to see that their job is as pleasant and as rewarding as possible." |
| **Theme 4: Interconnections between Strengths and Burdens** | | | | |
| *Interconnected strengths and burdens that could contribute to emotional labor, pressures, and expectations for ECE leaders of color.* | n/a | ECE leaders of color perceived that their strengths were rooted in their lived experiences and cultural and racial identities, which simultaneously contributed to their heightened emotional labor, vulnerability, and expectations. | What does it mean to you to be an educator of color in a leadership position within an early childhood education setting?<br><br>What does it mean to you to be an educator of color in a leadership position within an early childhood education setting? | "I've had to disrupt – you know I've had to disrupt racial you know stereotypes and racist statements um, you know it's a privilege to be in this position and it's also um it also presents dome vulnerability because not everybody is open to feedback um on their racism." |
| **Theme 5: Suggestions for Well-being and Work Conditions Improvement** | | | | |
| Subtheme 5.1: Workload Management and Well-being Resources<br><br>*ECEOC leaders of color suggested the need to provide more support for their workload management and staffing issues.* | Resources for workload management | ECE leaders of color advocated for reduced workload | What kind of support do you want to improve your well-being? | "I really, really feel like my own self is just about time management, you know, just figuring out like not- I work thirteen hours a day maybe limiting it to nine or ten you know. So I think for me the support I need as a in- leader is just better time management, trusting more people I guess so I could step away more." |
| | Adequate staffing | ECE leaders of color suggested the need for | What kind of support do you want to improve | "Um I would love to also have, um in a perfect world, you know, a |

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| | | sufficient staffing to support workload distribution | your well-being? | staff member that is just here for the classrooms. Like, whether it's getting more milk, being a substitute, getting supplies for the teachers, because every time we take a step out that classroom, there's some delay... because the more we take away from the teachers, I think the better teaching they can do." |
| | More breaks/PTO | ECE leaders of color emphasized the need to have more breaks | What kind of support do you want to improve your well-being? | "I think just like being more, doing more self-care, you know? Just realizing to take my own time to, you know, that my time is valuable too. Like I know I'm always giving and making sure that everybody else is okay, but just always remember to make sure that I'm taking that time for myself, as I tell them, you know? Take that, if you need a moment, take that moment, and things like that." |
| | Recruiting more teachers and leaders of color | ECE leaders of color suggested the need to recruit more staff of color in the field | What kind of support do you want to improve your well-being? | "I mean the decision makers in the organization that I work with, you know there's a long way to go as far as people of diverse backgrounds being represented in the decision-making positions. So there's a long way to go on that." |
| | Support group | ECE leaders of color suggested that having a support group where | What kind of support do you want to improve your well-being? | You don't have that type of support group. You don't. Which can be hard when you start something |

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| | | leaders of color can support each other can promote their well-being | | new, you want to have like, what do they call it, an accountability partner to tell you things... So to have that accountability partner, that support system, would be beneficial to me." |
| Subtheme 5.2: Professional development and training resources<br><br>*ECEOC leaders suggested the need to provide more training opportunities* | Training support for teachers and leaders | ECE leaders of color suggest that the need for funding and support for professional training, workshops, and conferences would enhance educators' skills and leadership development. | What kind of support do you want to improve your well-being? | "I think trainings, like leadership development and things of that nature, you know helping our understanding to the navigation of the complexities of being a minority in a predominantly white setting would help, you know, develop that-that leadership for sure." |
| Subtheme 5.3: Supportive Leadership and Communication<br><br>*ECEOC leaders suggested the need to have a more supportive leadership and build more effective communication channels* | More supportive leadership | ECE leaders of color suggested the need for leaders who provide support, listen, and enforce fair policies and regulations | What kind of support do you want to improve your well-being? | "...open communication and validation. I mean, give us validation if you feel like we're doing a good job, just say it. If something is not working for you, have the consideration of sitting down with that person and let the person tell you what they're doing" (0053) |
| | Improved communication | ECE leaders of color suggested the need to build a better communication channel between colleagues and leaders. | What kind of support do you want to improve your well-being? | "I think that one thing is that leaders need to be more involved in what's going on and be supportive, and how you do that is just kinda, talking to – I think that's most important, to have a great communication base. You gotta be able to communicate |

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| | | | | across the lines ..but the communication key is the most important element I think, so they have to be able to communicate. (0089) |
| Subtheme 5.4: Inclusive and equitable workplace culture<br><br>*ECE leaders of color suggested the importance of building an inclusive culture in the organization* | Building an inclusive culture and increasing awareness | ECE leaders of color suggested the importance of building an inclusive culture in the organization | What kind of support do you want to improve your well-being? | "I think that there should be more opportunities to dive into our backgrounds. Make people of color feel welcomed. It shouldn't be-- we shouldn't celebrate things like Hispanic Heritage Month, Black History Month during those specific time periods. It should be a celebration and inclusiveness year-round. We are equally as celebrated and loved and important as non-people of color." (0105) |