Glass Cliffs No More: Black Women Amplifying Leadership Self-Efficacy Through an

Arts-Based Sister Circle Model

by

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ABSTRACT

When Black women step into leadership roles, they confront well-documented organizational obstacles that hinder their progress. Existing research indicates that they experience differential treatment due to their intersectional identity as Black females, and these hindrances significantly impede their path to success. To increase the success of Black women in leadership roles, they need to be supported by professional development dedicated to strengthening their leadership self-efficacy. Through the theoretical lenses of intersectionality and the glass cliff phenomenon, this study investigates how an arts-based sister circle model impacts the leadership self-efficacy of Black women in leadership positions within the arts and culture sector in predominantly white organizations.

Using an arts-based Experiential Learning Theory paradigm, this mixed-methods participatory action research design incorporated three virtual sister circle meetings, a participant interview, and a pre- and post-Leadership Self-Efficacy survey. Qualitative data also included digital journals, artistic reflections, and word clouds. I invited participants to join based on the following criteria: (a) Black woman, (b) manager or administrator, (c) working in a predominately white arts and culture organization such as a community arts school, art gallery, or music organization, and (d) commitment to engage in online and workplace learning experiences. Five participants throughout the United States began the study, though only two completed the innovation due to attrition connected to their work.

Assertions deduced from the results were: (1) Black women face many challenges when promoted into leadership positions in predominantly white organizations, driving them to seek opportunities to network and create community with other Black women leaders; (2) Sister Circle meetings serve as community spaces providing opportunities for

deep conversation and problem-solving without fear of retribution about the social, cultural, and emotional challenges they face as Black women leaders in their organizations; and (3) Participation in Sister Circle meetings may enhance leadership self-efficacy and career development and positively impact work-life balance. Survey results reinforce the sister circle model's positive influence on Black women. The findings collectively suggest that sister circles, as a coaching model, fulfill a crucial role in addressing the nuanced needs of Black women in leadership positions.

DEDICATION

To my amazing son, Arren, you are the miracle that continues healing my heart and soul. You push me to greater heights and teach me patience. I am so proud of you and feel so lucky to be your Mom.

To my mother, LaVera, you have always been my rock and my first best friend. Thank you for caring for me and instilling the audacity to dream and strive for a better today and tomorrow.

To my late father, John, there aren't enough words to describe how much I miss you. Thank you for continuing to watch over me and visiting me when I need some encouragement or hugs.

To my baby girl, Constance, though we only had a short time together on this mortal plane, I still feel your presence watching over me.

To all of the Black women impacted by toxic workplace culture,
"Sometimes people try to destroy you, precisely because they recognize your power - not because they don't see it, but because they see it and they don't want it to exist." - bell hooks

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of my academic and professional endeavors, I carry with me the invaluable lessons, memories, and friendships forged along the way.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Leadership positions. For this study, leadership positions include those at a manager level or higher, owing to the sometimes small size of arts and culture organizations in some communities.

Predominantly white organization (PWO). A predominantly white organization is an organization where 50% or more of its decision makers are white, either in senior leadership or the board of directors. These organizations also may service a majority white constituency whose perceived needs may be different from the organization's Black, Indigenous, and other people of color constituency.

Women. It is important to note that much of the background research for this study included forced binaries around gender, male and female. For this study, the term women is used to denote the inclusion of all persons who identify as female.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

You wanna fly, you got to give up the shit that weighs you down.

— Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon*

I Am Not Alone

Imagine being the only Black woman in a meeting, striving to articulate your thoughts among colleagues and peers, only to have your boss abruptly cut you off with a dismissive "Stop it!"—as if your voice held no weight, no value. Picture the shock of realizing that your hiring was primarily driven by your race and gender rather than your undeniable competence, followed by the relentless scrutiny and micromanagement of your work. Envision the exhausting daily struggle of code-switching, suppressing your true self and linguistic identity, fearing that your African American Vernacular English would be met with disdain. Consider the constant pressure to restrain your emotions, lest you be unfairly branded as aggressive or, worse, an angry Black woman. These descriptions strike a poignant chord with me, for they are not mere hypotheticals but rather vivid echoes of my lived experiences.

I have worked in arts performance and management for more than 25 years, and from the start of my career, I found myself in predominantly white spaces. Very rarely, I worked with no more than a few other people of color, and most often, the organization's programs served a majority white constituency. And I am not alone. A report authored by LeanIn.org (2020) indicated that 54% of Black women find themselves in situations where they are the only Black person or one of few Black individuals in their workplace. The intersectionality of their identities leaves these Black

women in such positions, commonly called "Onlys," to encounter unique and complex challenges. As "Onlys," they are conspicuous, tokenized, and thus subjected to greater scrutiny. Their achievements and mistakes are frequently subject to close examination, and they are more likely to encounter microaggressions, such as remarks and conduct that make them feel marginalized, excluded, and reduced to unfavorable stereotypes. Women of color frequently find themselves in the position of being "Onlys" on two fronts - as the lone female and the sole person of their race in the room. These "Double Onlys" face even greater prejudice, discrimination, and performance expectations, which significantly increase their likelihood of experiencing burnout (LeanIn.org & McKinsey & Company, 2022).

As I reflect on my entry into leadership roles within various organizations, I am struck by the stark realities of the onboarding process—or lack thereof. Too often, I found myself navigating uncharted territory, left to decipher complex systems and organizational structures with minimal guidance or support. The inadequacy of training became painfully apparent when I stepped into my assigned office space on my first day, only to discover it was a repurposed janitorial closet in a customer access area devoid of basic necessities like a working phone or computer. In another instance, the disheartening experience of arriving punctually for orientation, only to be met with an empty office and a sense of abandonment until later in the day, further underscored the systemic shortcomings in organizational support.

I also have dealt with painful microaggressions in every position I have held at every organization. While leading my team in an interview process for their new teammate, I recall stepping out of the room so my team could speak candidly about my leadership style with the candidate. I was told afterward that one of my white staff members told the candidate that I was a "Bad Mama Jama," a reference to song lyrics by

Black musician Carl Carlton. Despite our apparent physical size and attire differences, I have been mistaken for the only other Black employee in the room. Comments about my hair, clothing choices, and song selections have been made when teaching dance classes and workshops. In a particularly jarring instance shortly after a promotion, I found myself confronted by a subordinate—a white woman and former peer—who brazenly sought to undermine my authority by loudly trying to discredit my decision-making amidst a bustling shared workspace, in full view of numerous colleagues. These anecdotes represent just a fraction of my countless frustrations throughout my career.

These power dynamics and the lack of support systems contributed to my attrition from these organizations. Though more than 80% of white women and men feel they are allies to people of color at work, less than half of Black women feel they have strong allies at work (LeanIn.org, 2021). In many positions I worked, I believed at the time that I had an ally or two, only to be disappointed when their support was needed to confront a challenge I was encountering. In most cases, I felt compelled to leave the organization within one and a half to 2 years.

All my past career experiences have been based in predominantly white organizations, unsurprising given the gatekeeping within the field of arts and culture. The intersectionality of my identities often created multiple layers of oppression and unequal power relations beyond my control (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Tatli & Ozbilgin, 2012). Often, I found it challenging to find others to connect with on a deeper level while also finding myself code-switching, an impression management strategy whereby Black employees engage in adjusting their self-presentation by mirroring norms, behaviors, and attributes of the dominant group (McCluney et al., 2021) in order to be taken seriously. Because I was most often an "Only," I felt that I was under scrutiny and that I had to represent all Black women in my work.

Amidst the prevailing discourse of allyship, many Black women, myself included, grapple with a profound sense of isolation and disillusionment, finding scant genuine advocacy and support. It is from this profoundly personal vantage point that my research emerges, rooted in an unwavering dedication to amplifying the voices and stories of Black women in the arts and culture realm. Through this research, I aim to illuminate the systemic barriers and entrenched power dynamics that persistently impede the progress and representation of Black women in organizational spaces. My goal is not merely to document these injustices but to catalyze tangible change and foster equity within the arts and culture sector. Through this study, I aspire to make a meaningful contribution to existing research by championing the creation of culturally specific communal spaces. These spaces will serve as vital hubs for nurturing supportive networks, fostering meaningful dialogue, and collectively addressing challenges through the sister circle model (Johnson, 2015). At the heart of my study lies an innovative approach—a fusion of arts-based coaching praxis with the transformative sister circle methodology. By integrating experiential learning principles, my research endeavors to empower Black women leaders with the tools and insights needed to navigate and thrive in the face of systemic adversity.

Situated Context

The arts and culture sector comprises various creative and cultural activities, including visual arts, performing arts, literature, music, film, heritage preservation, museums, galleries, cultural festivals, and more. Various individuals and organizations contribute to the education, creation, production, promotion, and dissemination of artistic and cultural works within the arts and culture sector. A recent analysis of the 2015-2019 U.S. Census data by the National Endowment for the Arts (2022) found that while approximately 50% of managers in the performing

arts identified as women, nearly 75% of managers in performing arts companies and almost 80% in management positions in museums were white. Adding to the concern, a review of the same data revealed that Blacks accounted for only 8% of managers of performing arts companies and approximately 9% of managers in museums (National Endowment for the Arts, 2022).

The arts and culture sector has long held an overwhelming feeling that Eurocentricity and white males have had the role of gatekeeping, controlling and limiting access, and reinforcing the exclusion of marginalized groups. Tatli and Ozbilgin (2009) noted that the arts sector in Britain needed to have institutionalized forms of diversity management. However, when diversity managers were present, there was a difference in diversity management. A 2018 survey (Westermann et al., 2019) focusing on staff demographics in art museums found that of the 332 art museums responding to the survey, though museum leadership positions (executive, other high-ranking executives, and conservators) are majority female, only 4% identify as Black or African American (Figure 1). The report also noted that with the intersection of gender and race/ethnicity, people of color women increased to seven percent. However, this data point was not disaggregated by race or ethnicity. The report remains unclear about Black women specifically.

Figure 1

Intellectual Leadership Positions, New Hiring Since 2014, by Race/Ethnicity

■ Curators & Educators

■ Museum Leadership (Excluding executive positions) & Conservators

<1% - American Indian or Alaskan Native
<1% - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
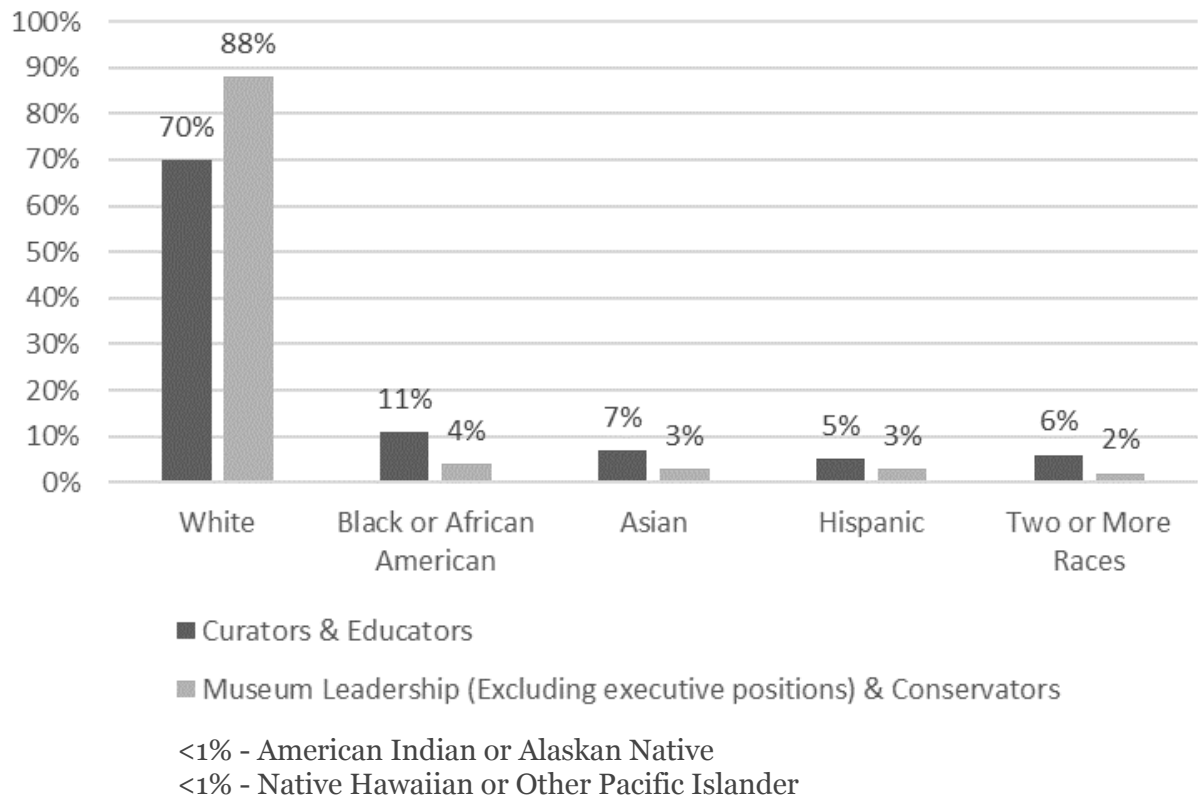
During the past several years, a variety of national arts and culture organizations (e.g., the National Art Education Association and the National Guild for Community Arts Education) have elevated equity, diversity, and inclusion in their strategic visions, highlighting the importance of this subject matter throughout the United States arts sector (National Art Education Association, 2021; National Guild for Community Art Education, 2019). While some organizations only chose to craft and release statements supporting equity, diversity, and inclusion, others went further by revising their mission, vision, and values statements or redesigning their leadership teams (Murawski, 2020; Regional Arts & Culture Council, 2021). Some

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organizations further entrenched these beliefs by contracting consultants to lead equity and anti-racism work and earmarking specific budget lines to fund the work. The depth of the response to the systemic issue of inequities within the arts and culture sector shows the weight of value of this subject matter.

The National Art Education Association was founded in 1947 and is the leading professional membership organization for visual arts, design, and media arts education professionals. The current mission states: "The National Art Education Association (NAEA) champions creative growth and innovation by equitably advancing the tools and resources for a high-quality visual arts, design, and media arts education throughout diverse populations and communities of practice" (National Art Education Association [NAEA], 2021). To investigate the history of NAEA and develop recommendations to advance equity, diversity, and inclusion, a specially appointed Equity Diversity & Inclusion Task Force met from January 2018 through March 2019 (NAEA, 2019). The result of the meetings was a set of 16 recommendations that the organization included in its strategic plan. Examples of the recommendations include:

- Offer leadership development and mentoring opportunities that are specific to marginalized and underrepresented groups
- create a series of programs to recruit underrepresented art education professionals into the field of art education
- create a new senior leadership position, Chief Diversity Officer, with the holder of this position reporting directly to the Executive Director. (NAEA, 2019)

Since the release of the recommendations, NAEA has established a standing Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Commission, designed a Cultural Competency in Teaching

and Leadership Development Certification, and continues to work with state and national leaders to advance this work.

Another national organization shifting its focus towards equity, diversity, and inclusion is the National Guild for Community Arts Education (the Guild). The Guild was founded in 1937 and is the only national member organization for community arts education providers (National Guild for Community Arts Education [NGCAE], 2019). The mission of the Guild is "to ensure all people have opportunities to maximize their creative potential by developing leaders, strengthening organizations, and advocating for community arts education" (2019). Additionally, one of their values statements reads as the following: "Equity: We are committed to the ongoing effort to dismantle oppressive structures including racism, gender-based oppression, ageism, ableism, and more because our mission cannot be achieved until all people can live freely and in their full dignity" (2019). During the past two years, the Guild has recommitted its efforts towards becoming an anti-racist organization. The organization designed a workshop series and discussion sessions focused on anti-racism within community arts education. It also investigated its employee structure, hierarchy, and policies. The result was the acknowledgment that white males had long led the organization, and the hierarchy structure continued to feed into inequitable power dynamics. The Guild's Chief Executive Officer stepped down to allow someone else to lead (NGCAE, 2020). The Guild also restructured its employee ranks to disrupt power dynamics in the organization while removing the word "chief," an appropriation of Native American culture, from their job titles. The Guild continues to develop its new strategic plan and deepen its work across the organization. In December 2021, they welcomed a new Black female-identifying Executive Director to helm the organization.

In recent years, the list of organizations changing leadership or seeking to add Diversity Officers in the arts and culture sector has grown. In May 2020, the Association of Performing Arts Professionals hired a Black woman as their new President and CEO (2020). In October 2020, the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago announced its first woman and Black American to lead the museum (2020). In 2021, The Broadway League hired a Black woman in its first newly created role of Director of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (2021). Hubbard Street Dance Company of Chicago hired its first-ever Black female-identifying Artistic Director in its 40+ year history (MacMillan, 2021).

While the longstanding impact of some of these changes remains to be seen, there are signs that some organizations need to prepare adequately for these transitions. In recent years, there has been a spate of public departures of Black leaders whose tenures at their respective organizations were short-lived. The Hideout in Chicago, a small music performance venue, shuttered its doors for several months while it worked through the concerns of a toxic work environment brought forth by its recently departed employee, the venue's first-ever Black Program Director (Myers, 2022). The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston announced a new Black Deputy Director in July 2020, and she vacated her position at the organization within six months without any public statement explaining the departure (Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, 2020). Gugulethu Moyo, the first Black Jewish woman appointed executive director of the Jewish History Museum of Tucson, Arizona, resigned within six months, citing a culture of racism (Alford, 2021). These are but a few examples of changes in leadership affecting Black arts and culture leaders in the field.

Black Women in the Workplace

People of the global majority in the United States have been fighting for access to leadership even as the numbers of those categorized as minorities in the U.S. have grown. In 1920, the U.S. census data indicated a population of 105,710,620, of which 89.7% were White, and the remaining individuals were Black, 9.9%, American Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut, 0.2%, and Asian and Pacific Islander, 0.2% (Gibson & Jung, 2002). By 2020, the U.S. population had grown to more than three times that size. The population included additional categories of races and ethnicities along with dramatic shifts in the percentage of reported racial and ethnic identities. According to the 2020 Census (Jones et al., 2021), the U.S. population is broken down into the following categories: White, 61.6%, Black or African American, 12.4%, American Indian and Alaska Native, 1.1%, Asian, 6%, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, 0.2%, Some Other Race, 15.1%, Multiracial, 10.2%.

Although this census data shows growth in the percentage of those categorized as minorities, the overwhelming majority of leadership positions in most business sectors continue to be occupied by white men (LeanIn.org & McKinsey & Company, 2021). A 2021 Women in the Workplace study authored by LeanIn.org and McKinsey & Company (2021) noted that of 423 participating companies and over 65,000 employee surveys, 50% of those at the Senior Manager and Director level were occupied by white men while just 9% were women of color. The same 2021 study noted that the percentage of women of color declined even further to 4% at the executive level, while white men occupy a staggering 62% in those same positions. Furthermore, according to McKinsey's and LeanIn.org's 2022 Women in the Workplace Report, of the more than 40,000 employees surveyed and compared to female leaders from different racial and ethnic backgrounds,

Black women are more prone to receiving signals that their advancement to higher positions will be more difficult (LeanIn.org & McKinsey & Company, 2022) such as colleagues questioning their competence or subjecting them to demeaning behaviors. Additionally, 33% of Black women leaders reported being denied opportunities or overlooked due to personal characteristics, including gender and race.

The marginalization of Black women in the workplace continues to leave them overlooked as leaders and innovators and leaves them, in most cases, without access to advancement and growth in their careers. A 2019 report (LeanIn.org & McKinsey & Company) noted that only 58 Black women are promoted to manager for every 100 men:

> By almost any measure, Black women are facing disproportionately high barriers in the workplace. They are heavily impacted by bias in hiring and promotions; Black women are promoted at a lower rate than white women at the first step up to manager, and more than a quarter of Black women say their race has led to them missing out on an opportunity to advance. (LeanIn.org & McKinsey & Company, 2021, Black Women section)

Additionally, the 2019 report noted that at least 49% of Black women feel that their chances at raises, promotions, or getting ahead are affected by their race or ethnicity, while only 3% of white women and 11% of women overall feel the same.

Black women feel their career growth is negatively impacted by the intersectionality of their race and gender. Within the arts sector, organizations have struggled to create workplaces free of inequalities, mainly due to the lack of shared understanding of equality, and there continue to be imbalances of power within the arts and culture sector. In a recent study by Enrich Chicago (2020), leadership within Chicago's arts and culture community was overwhelmingly white. The study found that 74% of board and decision-making staff at arts and culture organizations were white

compared to the racial demographics of Chicago, where only 32.3% of the population was white. Furthermore, the study revealed that organizations with moderate diversity, specifically those where over 25% of leadership positions are held by individuals from ALAANA backgrounds (African, Latinx, Asian, Arab, and Native American), demonstrate a greater likelihood of collaborating with ALAANA artists and engaging with ALAANA audiences (Enrich Chicago, 2020). Woods et al. (2021) noted that organizations have been hesitant to embrace intersectionality as a framework for addressing workplace inequalities, and researchers in organizational studies have yet to fully explore and enrich their analyses of power dynamics within organizations through the lens of intersectionality.

An alternative approach to investigating the power dynamics and inequalities within organizations is intersectional equality. "*Intersectional equality* is an organizational goal and framework for equality, which helps guide and direct decisions to promote equality in organizations" (Woods et al., 2021, p. 98). Through an intersectional equality approach, organizations engage in critical self-reflection and actively address the perpetuation of social inequalities that arise from everyday social processes, as highlighted by the concept of intersectionality. Organizations continuously assess and implement modifications across four dimensions (procedural, discursive, material, and affective) to ensure that specific employees are not disproportionately burdened in any of these dimensions (Woods et al., 2021). Woods et al. noted that by using an intersectional equality approach, organizations can shift the power dynamics and inequalities and grow a collective understanding of the communities they wish to serve.

Moreover, the intersectionality of gender and race exacerbates the challenges faced by Black women, who not only have to navigate systemic barriers to leadership but

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also contend with the heightened risk of being pushed toward glass cliff situations. Research by Ryan and Haslam (2007) indicated that a "glass cliff" existed for women and racial and ethnic minorities whereby they were more likely than men to be promoted in underperforming organizations, those possibly at risk for failing or in crisis. Further, the continued decline of these organizations also reinforces gender and racial stereotypes, leading to doubts about the suitability of women and ethnic minorities in leadership positions. Additionally, when allowed to lead, we find that many Black women, especially in recent years, have been tokenized or discovered a lack of adequate support in their organizations. Tokenism refers to adding members of underrepresented groups to a team or organization in a symbolic manner, often only to create the appearance of diversity and inclusivity rather than genuinely embracing diversity and inclusiveness (Hirschfield, 2015).

Black workers frequently experience being tokenized, with white colleagues stereotyping them as incompetent, poorly trained, and unintelligent (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Feagin, 2006; Higginbotham & Weber, 1999; Jackson et al., 1995; Wingfield, 2010). Black professionals also report discrimination in promotion and hiring (Feagin, 2006; Feagin & Sikes, 1994; Wingfield, 2010). As tokens, they face social isolation from colleagues, making it challenging to establish the necessary social networks for career advancement and occupational mobility (Pierce, 1996; Wingfield, 2010). Entering predominantly white, male-dominated organizations may heighten the expectation for Black women to conform to the corporate culture, leading to the concealment of their racial and gender identities. However, as Black women progress into managerial and executive positions, their identities can abruptly become highly visible, marking them as "tokens" (McCluney & Rabelo, 2019, p. 150). Tokenism is also exacerbated when entering predominantly white spaces where institutions and high-status individuals use

cultural signals to exclude specific groups and maintain their exclusivity (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). This cultural capital in arts and culture spaces is typically extended to the white middle class, leaving all other forms and expressions of culture to be judged compared to that norm (Yosso, 2005). Furthermore, this biased distribution of cultural capital in arts and culture spaces intersects with the disproportionate impact of racism and trauma on Black women.

A study by LeanIn.org and McKinsey & Company (2021) found that Black women are disproportionately affected by racism and racial trauma and are much more likely than other employees to experience their negative impact. Over 60% of Black women have personally experienced racial trauma within the past year (2021). Black women also experience higher rates of microaggressions compared to other groups of women. Microaggressions have been defined as "brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to People of Color because they belong to a racial minority" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273) and "subtle snubs or dismissive looks, gestures, and tones" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273). Some examples of microaggressions include telling a Black woman that she "is so well spoken and articulate" or that she "doesn't look like most African American women" (DeCuir-Gunby & Gunby, 2016, p. 393). These microaggressions insinuate that a woman may be a good speaker despite being Black or that her racialized experience might be different because of the way she looks. These microaggressions signal disrespect, and when they are experienced day after day, as is most often the case, the accumulated impact affects the employee. Black women who encounter microaggressions are three times more likely to consider leaving their jobs, including leadership positions, than those who do not experience microaggressions (LeanIn.org & McKinsey & Company, 2021).

Statement of the Need

Professionals called to a leadership role will require time and support to live up to the expectations of that calling. However, when Black women are called to lead, they also must grapple with known organizational barriers to their success as leaders. Many Black women called upon to lead in these positions have indicated that they felt alone and were not given adequate support. Research suggests that they are treated inappropriately related to being Black and female and that these barriers inhibit their success. Though various leadership programs provide coaching on aspects of leadership, most of these programs take a formalized business approach. To increase the success of Black women in leadership roles, they need to be supported by professional development incorporating culturally relevant information (Johnson, 2015) and dedicated to strengthening their leadership self-efficacy.

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to investigate using an arts-based sister circle model to improve the leadership self-efficacy of Black women in leadership positions within the arts and culture sector in predominantly white organizations. This research connects my experiences with other Black women arts leaders who have experienced similar career situations. I investigated how using an arts-based sister circle to work through leadership challenges affects a person's leadership self-efficacy. Therefore, I ask the following research questions.

Research Questions

1. What motivations do participants express for participating in a sister circle innovation?

2. What social, cultural, and emotional factors regarding Black women's leadership emerged within the arts-based sister circle innovation?

3. How does a sister circle experience affect participants' leadership self-efficacy?

4. How does the innovation impact participants' workplace leadership?

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH GUIDING THE PROJECT

I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things I cannot accept.

— Angela Davis

The first chapter provided an overview of the larger context for the problem of practice related to the lack of support for Black women in predominantly white organizations in the arts and culture sector. This chapter will begin with a review of the literature on intersectionality and the glass cliff phenomenon, along with a discussion about the ramifications of the social justice reckoning of 2020 in the arts and culture sector after the murder of George Floyd. The third section of the chapter provides background literature on leadership self-efficacy and narrows further in on Black women's leadership self-efficacy. The fourth, fifth, and sixth sections provide supporting literature on the selection of experiential learning theory for this research study and arts-based approaches to experiential learning theory, along with literature about the sister circle methodology. The chapter concludes with a summary of the needs for and the implications of the current study.

Intersectionality

In her seminal work on intersectionality theory, Crenshaw (1989) discussed the precursors to her research. Within cases of race and or sex discrimination, the focus tended towards discrimination based upon one lens of a person's identity, race, class, or gender, and more often than not, was limited to the experiences of otherwise privileged members of those groups. "This focus on the most privileged group members

marginalizes those who are multiply-burdened and obscures claims that cannot be understood as resulting from discrete sources of discrimination" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140). Crenshaw further stated that "the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism" (p. 140). For example, feminist theory is viewed through a white lens, as it often overlooks the role of race (Crenshaw, 1989). Crenshaw (1991) posited that Black women's lives cannot be understood wholly without considering how their identities intersect. Anderson (1996, p. 738) stated, "Subordination experienced by a given individual cannot be merely reducible to each of that person's subordinate statuses combined." To fully understand how marginalized people are treated, we must shift focus from their identities of oppression towards the interplay of these identities combined and their ensuing unequal power relations (Tatli & Ozbilgin, 2012). Collins (1990, 2000) argued that the identities of gender, class, and race are intertwined systems of power that co-construct each other. By integrating history into the analysis of this co-construction, one can better understand the disadvantages Black women experience in the United States, particularly within arts and culture organizations.

Acker's (2006) research on organizations further illuminates the interconnectedness of capitalism, patriarchy, racial dynamics, and other historical systems of oppression, underscoring their collective influence on perpetuating workplace inequalities. With her introduction of inequality regimes, "loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender and racial inequalities within particular organizations," researchers can identify and study Black women's workplace disadvantages (Acker, 2006, p. 443). Tatli and Ozbilgin (2012) argued that the arts and culture sector has an inherent white, middle-class bias and that many gatekeepers disagree that the sector excludes people from particular backgrounds. This argument is aligned with Acker's (2006) argument that "the advantaged often think

their advantage is richly deserved. They see visible inequalities as perfectly legitimate"
(p. 454). Acker noted that the advantaged also find it challenging to give up their
advantage, and gatekeepers normalize these behaviors. The process of this legitimization
may result in an overabundance of favorable advantages for white men and fewer
opportunities for leadership in arts and culture organizations for Black women.

Glass Cliff Phenomenon

The glass ceiling has been used as a metaphor to describe the organizational
barriers women face when seeking to elevate to higher levels of leadership within their
field (Caceres-Rodriguez, 2013; Groeneveld et al., 2020). Existing research shows that
stereotypical leadership characteristics and societal norms negatively affect the
advancement of women in management (Groeneveld et al., 2020; Heilman, 2012).
Additionally, Heilman (2012) notes that men are often evaluated as more qualified for
management than women based on prevailing implicit theories of what it means to be a
woman and a leader. However, some researchers (Eagly et al., 2003) have claimed that
as more contemporary organizations have changed, so have the necessary leadership
qualities that organizations seek, such as mentoring and collaboration, which are more
often viewed as feminine. Bruckmüller et al. (2014) found that people associate women
with crises and problems and prefer male leaders for successful organizations.
Leadership skills needed during times of crisis, such as the ability to smooth things over,
are soft skills that have been stereotyped as typically held by women, thus leading
organizations to perceive that women are also more competent in times of crisis
(Bruckmüller & Branscombe, 2010; Bruckmüller et al., 2014; Groeneveld et al., 2020).
Additionally, the appointment of women into leadership positions is sometimes driven
by a need for actual change or used as virtue signaling to stakeholders that change is
being embraced (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Bruckmüller et al., 2014; Groeneveld et al., 2020).

Studies have shown that organizational crises may facilitate risk-taking or questioning the status quo (Ryan et al., 2016), thus allowing organizations to try new approaches such as appointing nontraditional leaders, which include women, racial, and ethnic minorities. Glass Cliff Phenomenon, introduced by Ryan and Haslam (2005), suggests that struggling organizations, or those in crisis, are more likely to promote nontraditional leaders than white men into leadership positions (Ashby et al., 2007; Cook & Glass, 2013; Haslam & Ryan, 2008; Ryan & Haslam, 2005). These glass cliff leadership appointments are more precarious and exceedingly dangerous for women who hold them (Ryan & Haslam, 2005). Organizations whose underperformance has drawn public attention also attract public scrutiny of their leadership, whereby blame for poor performance may be cast on the organization's leader instead of situational factors. In the case of the female leader, this public scrutiny could damage her future career (Ryan & Haslam, 2005). Additional studies of the Glass Cliff Phenomenon found that women were more likely to be appointed to leadership positions in politics during times of crisis (Eagly & Carli, 2003) and in athletics in universities with weaker sports programs (Cook & Glass, 2013). Due to these circumstances, there is a high rate of failure for women in these glass cliff situations, and their failure is often attributed to them as leaders (Ihmels et al., 2022). Ryan and Haslam (2007) note that leaders in these types of appointments may be exposed to high psychological stress, criticism, and failure risk.

While empirical evidence supports the Glass Cliff Phenomenon, some scholars have criticized the theory. Eagly and Koenig (2014) argued that the theory overlooked the role of structural factors, such as gender discrimination and stereotypes, in preventing women from obtaining leadership positions. They also suggested that the Glass Cliff Phenomenon may manifest gender bias rather than its unique phenomenon. Bruckmüller et al. (2013) found that organizations were more likely to choose a female

leader for a company in crisis when the company had a feminine culture, suggesting that confounding factors may have played a role.

The Glass Cliff Phenomenon also suggests that minority leaders, including Black women, face a host of additional challenges when promoted, such as less organizational support, less information sharing, and less assistance from others in the organization. They also may face hostility, resistance, and challenges to their authority (Cook & Glass, 2013; Heilman et al., 2004; Kanter, 1977; Taylor, 2010). Additionally, Cook and Glass contend that the limited autonomy granted to minority leaders in guiding their organizations facing a crisis and the heightened scrutiny of these leaders increases the chances of their removal and replacement by a majority leader (Cook & Glass, 2013). Cook and Glass (2013) theorized that these more significant challenges and potential failure to shift the organization's struggles toward the positive may reinforce existing stereotypes about the effectiveness of Black women leaders and may lead to career trauma and diminished leadership self-efficacy, thus pushing them off the glass cliff.

Social Justice Reckoning and the Glass Cliff

The professional arts and culture sector has long showcased Eurocentricity, and white males have had and continue to hold the role of gatekeeper while reinforcing the exclusion of marginalized groups (Tatli & Ozbilgin, 2009). Tatli and Ozbilgin (2009) noted that the arts sector in Britain needed to have institutionalized forms of diversity management. However, when diversity managers were present, there was a difference in diversity management. Organizations, however, need to provide those serving as diversity managers with the resources and power to monitor the organization's functions and hold them accountable. Furthermore, diversity management should extend beyond human resource management activities and encompass a broader scope of responsibilities across all organizational policies, procedures, and operations (Tatli &

Ozbilgin, 2009). A new glass cliff situation permeated organizations in the arts and culture sector as they struggled to reckon with their lack of action in equity, diversity, inclusion, and access (Heidelberg, 2022).

In the wake of the murder of George Floyd and the subsequent social justice uprisings, some arts and culture organizations released statements of support of Black Lives Matter along with promises to evaluate and make changes to their organizational mission, policies and procedures, and hiring practices. Moreover, while some organizations are making progress, the data (Boardsource, 2021) showing a need for more change in diversity in the nonprofit sector demonstrates that more change is happening too slowly (LeRoux & Medina, 2022). This data suggests that nonprofit organizations should focus on narrowing the diversity gap. Given the persistent nature of this issue and the misalignment between the sector's professed dedication to social equity and its actual intentions and efforts (LeRoux & Medina, 2022), it is essential to explore further the challenges that Black women encounter when assuming leadership roles, primarily in organizations that are already in precarious situations upon their entry.

In a cross-sectional study (LeRoux & Medina, 2022) compiling 606 responses and investigating racial representation in nonprofit leadership, two responses from women of color spoke to their board's assertion that it was up to them to turn around the organization's impending financial collapse. One of the women resigned in short order, noting, "It was a no-win situation. The board was big on ideas, little on action, and I was supposed to do it all" (LeRoux & Medina, 2022, p. 112). Still, another response in the survey given by a Black woman executive director spoke of receiving constant pushback from her board, an apparent change from her observations of her white male

predecessor. One more survey respondent stated, "Because I was younger and brown, they felt entitled to push back, to micromanage me" (LeRoux & Medina, 2022, p. 113).

A recently released report (Hines & Ward, 2022) studying Black women thriving at work (n=1431) details further the impacts on Black women at work, noting that Black women have been adversely affected by numerous Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives, as these efforts often fail to fulfill their bold promises. These EDI initiatives merely focus on superficial changes or disproportionately burden Black women with the majority of EDI responsibilities without providing them with additional compensation or reducing their workload. Hines and Ward also noted that Black women face unequal access to opportunities, power, and organizational resources and encounter significant obstacles in finding mentorship and sponsorship. Organizations tend to underutilize and inadequately develop the skills of Black women.

This underutilization and inadequate development of skills of Black women are further exacerbated by the glass cliff phenomenon, which is evident in arts and culture organizations that appointed their first Black female leaders conspicuously after the social unrest of 2020 (Heidelberg, 2022). Heidelberg noted these new leaders were tasked, under intense scrutiny and hypervisibility, with correcting organizational challenges or crises without adequate support from their colleagues or institutional board members. These leaders were also tasked with leading change efforts around equity, diversity, inclusion, and access, sometimes in the face of unwillingness by stakeholders to engage in the work. These combined challenges forced many Black female leaders off the glass cliff.

Overall, the lack of realized promise to do better for Black women by those in positions of power, especially in arts and culture organizations, must change. Black women continue to have a difficult time in the workplace, and their experiences are

worse than all other identity groups (LeanIn.org, 2020). Their negative experiences lead

to decreased workplace satisfaction, decreased belonging, and increased burnout (Hines

& Ward, 2022) and, in some instances, diminished leadership self-efficacy (Cook &

Glass, 2013).

Leadership Self-Efficacy

Bandura's (1986) concept of self-efficacy, defined as "people's judgments of their

capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types

of performance" (p. 391), has continued to evolve as a variety of efficacy concepts are

studied. One such concept is leadership self-efficacy (LSE), which encompasses a set of

beliefs related to one's judgment on their ability to successfully direct groups, build

relationships with followers to overcome obstacles together, and accomplish goals

(Bobbio & Manganelli, 2009; Paglis & Green, 2002). Hannah et al. (2008a) noted that

LSE also includes the belief in the skills, knowledge, and abilities to navigate challenges

and bring about meaningful systemic changes. More specifically, LSE is defined as:

> A person's judgment that he or she can successfully exert leadership by setting a
>
> direction for the work group, building a relationship with followers in order to
>
> gain their commitment to change goals, and working with them to overcome
>
> obstacles to change. (Paglis & Green, 2002, p. 217)

Paglis and Green's (2002) research established a connection between leadership and

self-efficacy, suggesting that managers with high self-efficacy are perceived by their

direct collaborators as actively engaging in leadership endeavors, demonstrating

resilience in the face of challenges, and prioritizing a mindset focused on change (Bobbio

& Manganelli, 2009). Other studies have shown that solid leadership self-efficacy

impacts leadership effectiveness (Anderson et al., 2008; Hannah et al., 2008a) and

work-related performance (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998; McCormick, 2001).

Kodama and Dugan (2013) noted the importance of distinguishing between leadership development, such as knowledge, attitudes, and skills, and one's beliefs in leadership success. A study by Komives et al. (2005) found that LSE is one of the central variables of leadership identity. Efficacy beliefs have an impact on various aspects of individuals' lives, including their thought patterns (self-enhancing or self-debilitating), self-motivation, ability to persevere through challenges, overall well-being, susceptibility to stress and depression, and decision-making during significant milestones (Bandura & Locke, 2003), all of which are relevant to today's leadership challenges. Furthermore, studies have shown that the influence needed to pursue challenging tasks and opportunities successfully is provided by higher levels of self-efficacy (Carver & Scheier, 1998; Cropanzano et al., 1993; Hannah et al., 2008a; Lord & Brown, 2004; Mischel & Shoda, 1998; Shamir et al., 1993). Understanding how self-efficacy can impact a person's leadership identity provides valuable insights for practical implications such as leaders' selection and training processes within organization settings (Bobbio & Manganelli, 2009).

Bandura (1997) noted that a person's self-efficacy beliefs depend on the task and content while also generalizable across tasks and situations. Bandura noted that experiences of successfully mastering challenges can serve as robust evidence of one's ability to bring about personal changes. These transformative experiences impact one's belief in their efficacy and extend to various areas of functioning. Such personal triumphs foster a generalized belief in one's capability to exert the necessary effort to succeed in different endeavors. In developing a new multidimensional instrument to measure Leadership Self-Efficacy, Bobbio and Manganelli (2009) studied self-confidence as a critical indicator of leadership self-efficacy. In prior literature reviews (House & Aditya, 1997; Locke, 1991; Yukl & Van Fleet, 1992), case studies (Bennis &

Nanus, 1985; Kaplan, 1991), and leadership literature (George, 2003; Kouzes & Posner, 1993) the term self-confidence was included as a critical leader attribute with Howell and Shamir (2005) noting that self-confidence is consistently and crucially linked to effective leadership (Hannah et al., 2008b). Further studies have also tied self-confidence as a central component in positive organizational behavior (Hannah et al., 2008b; Luthans, 2002; Luthans & Youssef, 2007; Luthans et al., 2007).

Bobbio and Manganelli (2009) developed a multidimensional Leadership Self-Efficacy Scale validated through factorial analysis and supporting reliability coefficients. The scale's dimensions are starting and leading change processes, choosing effective followers and delegating responsibilities, building and managing interpersonal relationships within the group, showing self-awareness and self-confidence, motivating people, and gaining consensus among group members. The innovation addressed one dimension, showing self-awareness and self-confidence, with each module dedicated to the components for this dimension: identifying personal strengths and weaknesses as a leader, building confidence in the ability to get things done, always knowing how to get the best out of situations, helping group members to reach the group's targets, and ability to affirm personal beliefs and values. The current study investigates whether amplifying the dimension of self-awareness and self-confidence positively affects the remaining dimensions of LSE.

Black Women's Leadership Self-Efficacy

There appears to be a gap in the literature regarding the leadership development of Black women and its effects on their leadership self-efficacy in the arts and culture sector. Several studies have noted that Black women are viewed as the least ideal leaders when evaluated among their gender and racial counterparts (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Blake, 1999; Rosette & Livingston, 2012; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Tran, 2015).

Moreover, due to the rarity of Black women leaders, they face hypervisibility, leading to heightened scrutiny during risky times of the organization's history (Rosette & Livingston, 2012). Hines and Ward (2022) note that while Black women participate in the workforce at higher rates compared to other women (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019), they face significantly higher rates of denial of training, promotion, and advancement compared to white women across all industries (Combs, 2003). Women of color are also more likely than white men and women to experience organizational barriers, tokenism, microaggressions, racism, sexism, and a perceived lack of credibility (Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Tran, 2015). Additionally, Black women are rated lower than white men and Black men on leadership evaluations (Rosette & Livingston, 2012; Scott & Brown, 2006). This information suggests that researchers should consider how race affects perceptions of leadership (Ospina & Foldy, 2009).

Scholars identify leadership self-efficacy (LSE) as an internal psychological construct that influences an individual's decision-making process regarding their willingness to pursue leadership roles, and it is influenced by one's position within larger social systems that exhibit systematic patterns of privilege and oppression (Dugan, 2011; Hannah et al., 2008a; Kodama & Dugan, 2013). Given the varied social signals that either empower or restrict individuals' perceived probability of succeeding as leaders, Kodama and Dugan (2013) note the importance of examining LSE within a racial context. Leadership self-efficacy has also been beneficial in amplifying career and education goals and dismissing stereotype threat (Boatwright & Egidio, 2003; Burnett et al., 2010; Kodama & Dugan, 2013).

Bandura (1997) noted that ethnic group affiliation can influence various forms of self-efficacy, including LSE, while a study by Arminio et al. (2000) found that students of color noted varying perceptions of what it meant to be a leader along with degrees of

belief in themselves as leaders (Kodama & Dugan, 2013). In their study, Kodama and Dugan found that leadership education should take advantage of every formal or informal opportunity to incorporate sociocultural discussions into various leadership programs. Such conversations play a significant role in fostering LSE and overall leadership capacity development.

The current action research study aims to investigate an innovation explicitly designed for Black women seeking to amplify their leadership self-efficacy. The study structure incorporates writings, podcasts, videos discussing the Black female leadership experience, and prompts to elicit discourse. Using an experiential learning approach, the innovation pursues a design that links personal experience in the workforce with personal development.

Experiential Learning Theory

Experiential learning theory (ELT) offers a foundational approach to lifelong education and learning whose roots are based on social psychology, philosophy, and cognitive psychology (Kolb, 2014). As shown in Figure 2, Kolb describes ELT as substantial and enduring and proposes a framework that explores and enhances the critical linkages between education, employment, and personal growth. ELT envisions the workplace as a setting that promotes personal growth through meaningful work and career advancement prospects while also recognizing the significance of formal education in lifelong learning and the holistic development of individuals as active citizens, family members, and human beings (Kolb, 2014). Kolb (2014) notes that pursuing growth and development is essential for survival, both individually and as a global community.
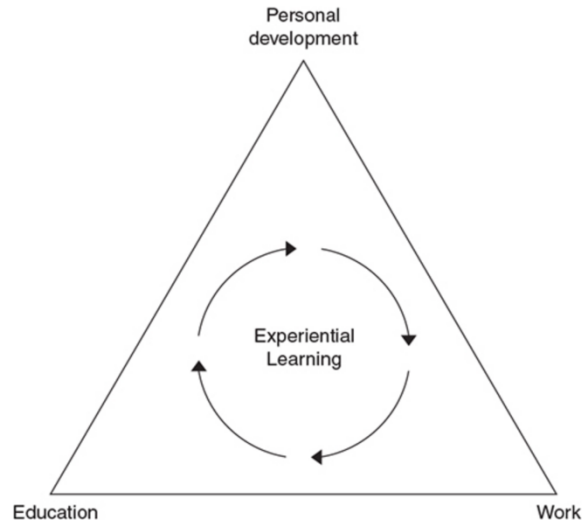
Figure 2. Experiential Learning as the Process that Links Education, Work, and Personal Development (Kolb, 2014, p. 4)

John Dewey's educational philosophy was rooted in the belief that learning should be an active and interactive process grounded in everyday experiences. Dewey (1938) believed that learning is best achieved through the individual's connection of interests and experiences to the engagement in meaningful activities and that knowledge is only helpful if applied to real-world situations. Dewey's "learning by doing" concept, whereby experimentation and risk-taking should be encouraged to learn and grow, is a well-known contribution to experiential learning theory.

Widely recognized as the founder of Social Psychology, Kurt Lewin's research provided long-lasting contributions to the study of experiential learning through group dynamics (Kolb, 2014). Lewin believed that learning occurs through experiential learning, where individuals engage in hands-on experiences that allow them to reflect on their actions and make meaning from their experiences. Lewin's work emphasized the importance of the individual's participation in the learning process and the role of social interactions and group dynamics in shaping individual behavior. Additionally, through

his research, Lewin developed the Action Research Model, which involves a cyclical process of planning, action, observation, and reflection (Kolb, 2014). The importance of action and reflection within the model promotes learning and change. The cyclical process of action research leads to increased understanding and improved practice.

Another researcher whose work has influenced experiential learning theory is Jean Piaget. Piaget's research in developmental psychology gave rise to his interest in children's processes for reasoning when arriving at their answers. Piaget was much less concerned with whether or not children had the correct answers (Kolb, 2014). His research into these reasoning processes uncovered qualitatively different ways of thinking depending on age, meaning that experience plays a significant role in shaping intelligence (Kolb, 2014). Intelligence is not an inherent trait of an individual but instead emerges through the dynamic interaction between the person and their environment. Piaget emphasized active engagement and exploration, and his theory of cognitive development has been influential in developing experiential learning approaches, such as hands-on exploration and problem-solving.

The intersections between the work of Lewin, Dewey, and Piaget form the crux of contemporary applications of ELT (Kolb, 2014), as depicted in Figure 3. Drawing on theories of human development postulated by the likes of Lewin, Dewey, Piaget, Paulo Freire, and others, experiential learning theory is a holistic process that defines learning as a human adaptation process that involves the whole person. Kolb (1984) defines ELT as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience" (p. 41). Umapathy's (1985) study on the application of experiential learning in an accounting course showed the effectiveness of experiential exercises on increased capacity for knowledge retention for students. Further examples of this transformation are ingrained

in the creative arts, with artists drawing upon their own experiences to produce concrete

or abstract representations of those experiences.
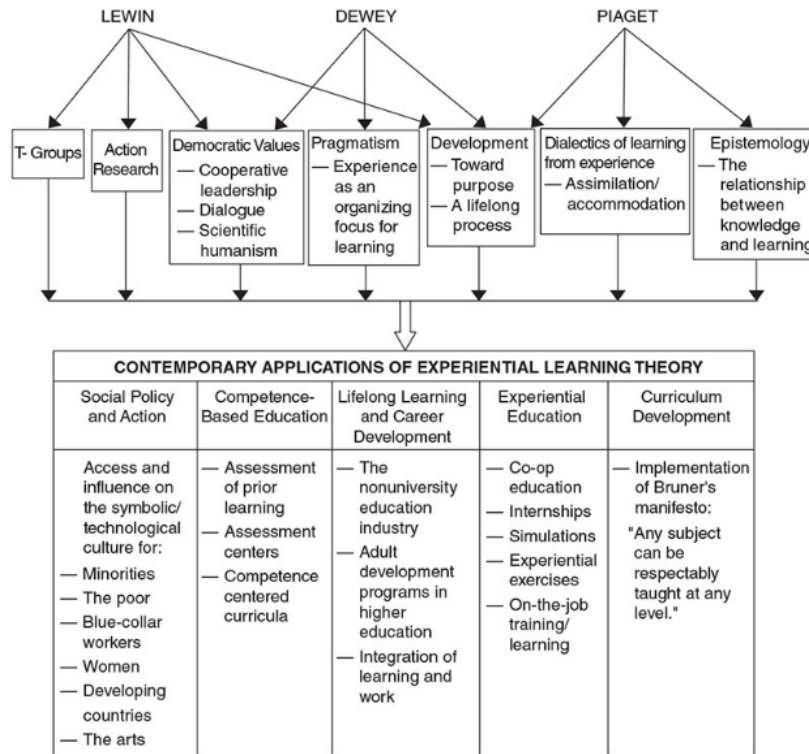
Figure 3. Three Traditions of Experiential Learning (Kolb, 2014, p. 18)

The ELT theory is based on a learning cycle comprising dual dialectics of active

experimentation and reflective observation and concrete experience and abstract

conceptualization, shown in Figure 4. It is suitable for individuals, groups, and

organizations (Kolb & Kolb, 2009). Kolb (2014) defines the dual dialectics as the

following: concrete experience refers to the process of learning through personal

experiences and observation; abstract conceptualization refers to the process of

developing theories and concepts based on observation and reflection; reflective

observation refers to the process of reflecting on experiences and observing others; and

active experimentation refers to applying theories and concepts in real-life situations and testing them out.
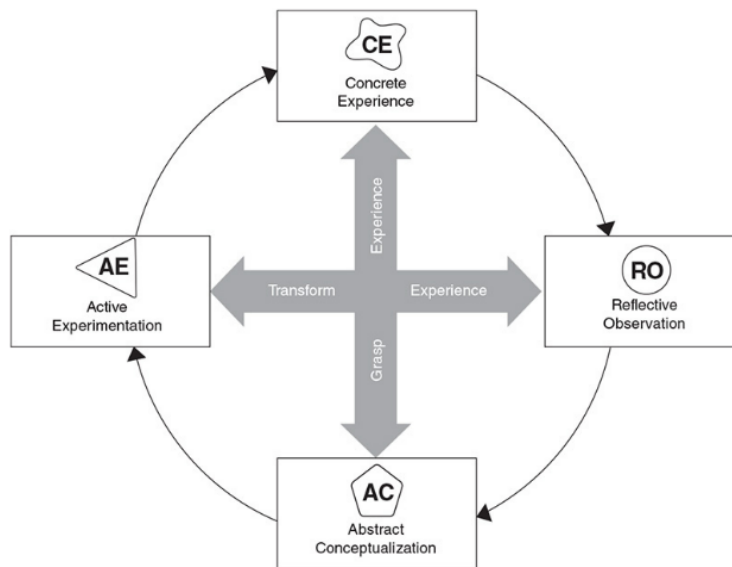
Figure 4. The Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 2014, Chapter 2, Understanding the Learning Cycle section)

Based upon previous research, Kolb and Kolb (2005, 2006) created a set of principles to promote experiential learning, including the following: respect for learners and their experience, making space for conversational learning, making spaces for acting and reflecting, making spaces for feeling and thinking, making space for inside-out learning, and making space for development of expertise. These concepts allow learners to immerse themselves in the learning process and provide space for the dual dialectics to be integrated. Learners can express themselves and relate their reason and emotion to learning and memory while organizing facts and ideas into a conceptual framework that allows retrieval of knowledge and application to various contexts (Kolb & Kolb, 2009).

Arts-Based Approaches to Experiential Learning Theory

In recent years, scholars have discussed the need for new methods of teaching management and leadership that incorporate the current reality of environments needing to be more critical, ethical, responsible, and adaptable (Adler, 2006; Atkinson, 2007; Clarke & Butcher, 2009; French & Grey, 1996; Gabriel, 2005; Giacalone & Thompson, 2006; Gosling & Mintzberg, 2004; Grey & Mitev, 1995; Henisz, 2011; Mitroff, 2004; Reynolds, 1998; Sutherland, 2013; Weick, 2007). Springborg (2010) suggests that artists engage with and interpret the world through an embodied approach, immersing themselves in the perceptions received through their senses rather than relying on data collection and cognitive analysis (Ladkin & Taylor, 2010). Ladkin and Taylor (2010) argued that our world is complex, and the arts and arts-based practices allow for alternative ways of describing and relating to that complexity than scientific forms of logic and sense-making alone. Ladkin and Taylor note that art and leadership are not only defined by their end products but also experienced through their creation processes, and the artifacts they produce can be used for reflection.

In his conceptualization of using the staging of a theatrical play as a first step to bring about change, Taylor (2008) identified several advantages of arts-based learning approaches:

(a) they represent tacit/embodied forms of knowing or direct sensory experience; (b) such experiences may be interpreted holistically rather than through logical, systematic processes; (c) they encourage meaning-making related directly to personal experiences; and (d) arts-based experiences may have lasting impacts because they are enjoyable and shareable. (as cited in Sutherland, 2013, p. 27)

Taylor and Ladkin (2009) posited that arts engagement in development activities involves four interrelated processes: "(a) skills transfer (artistic skills useful in

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organisational settings), (b) projective technique (revealing inner thoughts and feelings), (c) illustration of essence (revealing tacit knowledge and connections) and (d) making (catharsis through creating artistic products)" (as cited in Sutherland, 2013, p. 27). Thus, engaging in arts-based practices can be beneficial to improving the learning process in leadership contexts.

Arts-based research (ABR) has evolved out of the need to bridge art with science and research and understand communities and how they relate. ABR approaches knowledge building in research contexts from a transdisciplinary perspective while combining the principles of the creative arts (Leavy, 2009, 2015, 2018; McNiff, 2014). Gerber et al. (2012) suggest that ABR is based on a philosophical standpoint that acknowledges the ability of art to communicate truths and foster awareness, encompassing knowledge of the self and others. ABR recognizes the significance of employing arts in acquiring knowledge about oneself and others, appreciates non-verbal modes of understanding, and embraces diverse forms of knowledge, including sensory, kinesthetic, and imaginative ways of knowing.

ABR researchers' inquiry process involves engaging in art-making as a way of knowing (Leavy, 2018; McNiff, 2014). ABR allows researchers to address research questions holistically by combining creative arts practices in the research approach to knowledge building (Leavy, 2018). ABR methods include a variety of forms, including:

> Literary forms (essays, short stories, novellas, novels, experimental writing, scripts, screenplays, poetry, parables); performative forms (music, songs, dance, creative movement, theatre); visual art (photography, drawing, painting, collage, installation art, three-dimensional (3-D) art, sculpture, comics, quilts, needlework); audiovisual forms (film, video); multimedia forms (graphic novels), and multimethod forms (combining two or more art forms). (Leavy, 2018, p. 4)

Through these methods, ABR provides several advantages first developed by Leavy (2009), which are essential to this study. ABR offers new insights and learnings by tapping into connections and interconnections that are otherwise out of reach, answering new research questions, and presenting them in alternative ways to increase understanding by a wider audience. Because of its emotionally charged and evocative manner, the arts can effectively convey the emotional elements of social experiences (Leavy, 2018). Additionally, the arts can effectively cultivate empathy, allowing those from privileged groups to more clearly understand power dynamics and work to build coalitions across groups. Lastly, ABR is helpful in research that seeks to disrupt stereotypes, question prevailing ideologies, and incorporate the viewpoints and perspectives of marginalized individuals and groups.

ABR can provide a methodology that engages in experiential learning praxis in various ways. In a study of limited access to information on climate change for urban youths in underserved communities, Sitas and colleagues (2022) engaged the participants in weaving plastic into a rug using the Hydro-rug process. This activity catalyzed conversation about the participants' cultural experiences with water, blending folklore, superstition, and visions of exploring new aquatic realms to conquer fears and gain insights into unfamiliar watery worlds. By engaging in the artistic activity, participants and research facilitators could connect as a group while creating an atmosphere that allowed all involved to focus and reflect on their thoughts and experiences. The activities also allowed participants to engage as they felt comfortable instead of being put on the spot as they would in a focus-group situation.

Liberati and Agbisit (2017) discuss using arts-based strategies in their study of a counselor supervision program. Liberati and Agbisit posit that art-based supervision draws on the principles of experiential learning, where physically engaging with artistic

materials to create an artwork is interconnected with the subsequent process of interpreting and making sense of the artwork. Art-making and critical reflection reinforce one another, which is essential to meaning-making. Incorporating art-based interventions in group supervision enhances the learning experience by introducing additional elements of creating, experiencing, and processing new insights and allowing participants to learn from one another during the process (Liberati & Agbisit, 2017). Homayoun and Henriksen (2018) discuss the importance of incorporating creativity into business education, stating the rationale for supporting the promotion of creative thinking in business contexts and training and drawing on existing literature showing that creativity can aid in resolving issues and stimulating economic growth, promoting human wellness and self-expression, and boosting productive confidence.

An arts-based research framework may counter diminished leadership self-efficacy by providing mentorship and professional development opportunities for Black women leaders. The intersectionality of Black women's identities can affect their elevation to leadership roles across all sectors, including the arts and culture field, particularly in predominantly white organizations. Additionally, when chosen to lead, Black women are often given opportunities in organizations facing challenges or crises without the necessary support from colleagues, staff, and board members. Furthermore, Black women in leadership positions face heightened scrutiny and intense pressure to outperform their counterparts of other gender and ethnic identities, often leading to decreased job satisfaction, belonging, and diminished leadership self-efficacy. This study investigates the use of an arts-based experiential learning program in a group sister circle coaching format and its effects on the leadership self-efficacy of Black women leaders in predominantly white arts and culture organizations.

Sister Circles

Sister circles, as a nontraditional coaching model, have gained increasing attention in recent decades to address the unique challenges women face in professional settings (Koopman et al., 2021; Richardson, 2022). Sister circles have been described as mainly informal (Carver, 2017; Cropps, 2018; Gilmer, 2016; Robinson, 2013) "support groups that build upon existing friendships, fictive kin networks, and the sense of community found among Black women" (Neal-Barnett et al., 2011, p. 266) and "a group of women who are not blood-related, who support one another and form a sense of community among each other" (Neal-Barnett et al., 2011, p. 267). Sister circles are crucial in providing African American women a platform to exchange their narratives, fostering a more robust sense of identity and self (West, 2019). Richardson (2022) notes that individuals transition from being strangers to becoming sisters upon joining a sister circle. The circle establishes a connection, and shared experiences contribute to feelings of inclusion, security, normalization, empowerment, and self-actualization.

Sister circles bring together individuals who share common experiences, creating a sense of belonging, safety, empowerment, and self-actualization (Richardson, 2022). This approach is deeply rooted in forming close-knit connections, often called sisterhood, which fosters a supportive and cherished environment (Roby & Cook, 2019). In research, sister circles can be organized to explore designated subjects or experiences, with the primary objective being to comprehend particular issues, topics, or phenomena affecting Black women from their viewpoint. In contrast to traditional focus groups, sister circles go beyond merely collecting participant narratives; instead, they serve as a method to both understand and empower the participants (Johnson, 2015, p. 57). Sister circles often incorporate culturally-infused curricula unique to Black women's lives (Neal-Barnett et al., 2011).

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The roots of sister circles, both formal and informal, trace back to Black women's long-standing traditions of building supportive communities (Neal-Barnett et al., 2011). Though their history in Black society is long, there is limited empirical research on them. Initially emerging from gatherings around kitchen tables and front porches, formal sister circles were established with the creation of the National Association of Colored Women in 1896 (Richardson, 2022). Sister circles, rooted in the Black club movement, aimed to address societal, political, personal, and community concerns and have been a vital part of Black women's lives for more than 150 years (Giddings, 1984; Myers, 1997; Neal-Barnett et al., 2011; Williams, 2019). Various forms of Black sisterhood can be seen inside and outside academia, including Black women's clubs, church groups (McDonald, 2006), and historically Black sororities (Allison, 2016).

> Given the particular encounters that African American women face, Black feminist scholars... argue that many Black women need 'safe spaces' where they can express their concerns, construct a self-defined perception of Black womanhood, and acquire tactics to cope with their present realities (Collins, 2009; Dillard, 2012; Guy- Sheftall, 1995; hooks, 2005; Hull et al., 1982; Lorde, 1984). (Johnson, 2015, p. 12)

hooks (2005), describing a group she organized to support Black college women participating in her literature course, explained her motivation for mentoring the women:

> Our collective hope for the group was that it would be a space where Black women could name their pain and find ways of healing... I want to share those strategies for self-recovery that I and other Black women have used to heal our lives. (pp. 6-7)

The sister circle model, demonstrated through the Birmingham Black Sisters' political group formed in 1982 to unite Black women and address anti-racism, reflects its adaptability across diverse situations and groups (Guru et al., 2020; Richardson, 2022). Researchers have explored its efficacy in interventions for anxiety and various risk factors, including cardiovascular disease (Neal-Barnett et al., 2011; Thomas et al., 2016).

Despite the prevalence of Black sister circles, empirical research examining their viability and efficacy is scarce (Gaston et al., 2007; Gilbert et al., 2007). Current research and anecdotal evidence suggest that sister circles can effectively address issues related to healthy eating, exercise, HIV and substance abuse prevention, and the enhancement of self-esteem (Black Women's Health Imperative, 2010; Boyd, 1993; Gaston et al., 2007; Gilbert et al., 2007). Sister circles emerge as a natural platform for implementing psychoeducational interventions for anxiety, as pre-existing relationships and trust appear to be inherent within this context (Neal-Barnett et al., 2011). In higher education, sister circles offer a platform to explore the day-to-day encounters of Black women within the campus environment, serving simultaneously as a source of empowerment and connection (Cupid, 2020; Allen & Joseph, 2018; Croom et al., 2017; Grecco, 2016). Croom et al.'s (2017) study on the motivations of Black undergraduate womyn (author's spelling) participating in sister circle organizations revealed three significant findings: Black women became members and actively participated in search of role models; Black women expressed a curiosity about the interactions among Black women in the community; and Black women desired a space where they could authentically be themselves (Cupid, 2020).

The literature I reviewed indicated that a sister circle model is a practical approach to fostering positive change within group dynamics, offering a secure environment for transformation (Gaston et al., 2007; Ibe et al., 2021; Neal-Barnett et al.,

2011; Richardson, 2022; Thomas et al., 2016). Research also suggests that the sister circle model allows for more holistic approaches and offers a safe environment for Black women to reveal, embrace, and respect their authentic selves (Richardson, 2022). Within a supportive and healing environment, Black women can openly express their perspectives from their unique standpoint as part of a trustworthy ecosystem (Richardson, 2022).

Johnson (2015) introduced the sista circle methodology, a culturally relevant and gender-specific research approach that simultaneously studies and supports Black women. This methodology incorporates unique communication dynamics, the centrality of empowerment, and active researcher participation to ensure a holistic understanding of Black women's experiences (Johnson, 2015). The malleability of the sister circle model allows for customization to different settings, groups, and purposes (Richardson, 2022).

The sista circle methodology features three distinctive elements: (1) communication dynamics, (2) centrality of empowerment, and (3) the researcher as a participant (Johnson, 2015). Communication dynamics highlight the use of Black English Vernacular and Mainstream American English, along with nonverbal communication, fostering shared understanding within small groups of Black women (Dorsey, 2000; Johnson, 2015). The centrality of empowerment emphasizes that sista circles are intentionally designed as supportive contexts that cultivate group empowerment among Black women (Johnson, 2015, p. 47). Here, Black women's experiences and knowledge are viewed as power sources, and participants empower each other by sharing wisdom. The third distinctive feature, the researcher as participant, enables the researcher to engage in dialogue, as sharing experiences becomes a source of empowerment. Consequently, the sista circle methodology emphasizes reciprocal engagement among all participants, including the researcher as a participant. This

theory envisions more than a one-time conversation; participants are encouraged to build new networks and leave with valuable takeaways. As generative spaces, sister circles may yield collaborative ideas, advice, and resource sharing (Cupid, 2020, p. 63).

While sister circles have demonstrated success in various interventions, including anxiety reduction and hypertension disparities (Neal-Barnett et al., 2011; Ibe et al., 2021), research on this coaching model remains limited (Richardson, 2022). Scholars emphasize the need to further explore sister circles as a nontraditional coaching option, especially in diverse settings and disciplines (Richardson, 2022). Kets de Vries (2014) contends that for executive coaching to be truly effective, it should delve beyond the surface of the client and incorporate the emotional dimension into the coaching interaction (Richardson, 2022).

Needs for the Study

How professional development within a sister circle context using an arts-based experiential learning praxis affects the leadership self-efficacy of Black women in the arts and culture sector forms the basis for this research. While studies use arts-based activities to teach leadership development, those surveyed in this literature review use researcher-selected artistic choices in each study (Katz-Buonincontro, 2005). I have not found a study that incorporates the use of the participant's own artistic choice as a piece of the methodology. Additionally, I can find no study designed to target culturally specific participants. Therefore, this study should lay the groundwork for future research into culturally specific arts-based praxis for leadership self-efficacy professional development in a sister circle context.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Deal with yourself as an individual worthy of respect, and make everyone else deal with you the same way.

— Nikki Giovanni

The previous chapter provided a literature review of the theoretical frameworks underpinning this research study. In this chapter, I will give an overview of the innovation design, a description of the study participants, and my role as the researcher. I introduce the data collection resources and strategies for data analysis.

Action Research

This research was conducted as an action research study, which was defined as a "systematic procedure done by practitioners to gather quantitative and/or qualitative data to improve the ways their professional setting operates, their practice, and their impact on others" (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2015, p. 487). Kolb noted that action research was a significant research approach, and planned-change interventions could be implemented in small groups, large, intricate organizations, and community systems (Kolb, 2014). Plano Clark and Creswell identified several key features of action research, including studies that focused on fundamental problems in natural settings, inclusion of practitioners as researchers, and cyclical research processes.

More specifically, my study incorporated a participatory action research (PAR) approach in that my goal was to improve the quality of individuals' lives within their work settings. My problem of practice investigated how arts-based sister circles impacted

the leadership self-efficacy of Black women in leadership positions within the arts and culture sector in predominantly white institutions to improve upon the current situation (Schmuck, 1997). These individuals face challenges rooted in systemic social injustices (Stringer, 1999). The participatory action research study took a helix model approach through three steps: 1) looking, 2) thinking, and 3) acting (Stringer, 2008). Plano Clark and Creswell (2014) described the phases of the helix model: the looking phase involves PAR researchers collaborating with stakeholders and participants, gathering data, scrutinizing and interpreting the information, and communicating their findings to stakeholders regarding the matter at hand. The data was typically qualitative, though quantitative data might have also been collected. In the thinking phase, the researcher worked with stakeholders and participants to analyze the issues more comprehensively, determining the most critical issues and prioritizing them for action. The acting phase involved collaborating with participants to develop solutions to the problem.

This action research study combined both a critical perspective and a practical approach. The critical perspective of the study aimed to develop a new critical analysis of the use of arts-based research to amplify leadership self-efficacy. The practical approach of the study aimed to find solutions to a problem within the arts and culture sector: the need for more professional development programs targeted at leadership self-efficacy and designed for underrepresented leaders. The research could be repeated using the same progressive problem-solving approach in future iterations, continuously evolving as more was learned.

Setting and Participants

According to the 2016 National Arts Index report (Kusher & Cohen, 2016), there are more than 113,000 arts organizations in the United States. The arts have an ever-expanding level of importance in people's lives as technology continues to

evolve and people become more invested in diversifying their artistic experiences. Though artistic choices may differ from community to community, the organizational structures remain comparatively the same depending upon the size and budget of the organization. Within organizations, departments with various hierarchies delegate administrative roles and leadership. Owing to my interest in gathering data from a wide range of Black women leaders from across the United States and various artistic disciplines, the intervention took place through the virtual formats of Zoom Video Communications and Google Workspace.

The participants of this study were recruited through purposeful sampling based on the sampling strategy, participant criteria, and the size of the intended sample (Creswell, 2014). The sampling focused on generating "in-depth information and understanding of individual experiences" (Ivankova, 2015, p. 184). The sampling strategy was criterion-based, convenience sampling. All participants in the sample had to meet selection criteria to focus, simplify, and facilitate group interviewing (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The criteria for participation in the sister circle experience were: (a) Black woman, (b) manager or administrator, (c) working in a predominantly white arts and culture organization such as a community arts school, art gallery, or music organization, and (d) commitment to engage in online and workplace learning experiences. For this study, a predominantly white organization was an organization where 50% or more of its decision-makers were white in senior leadership and the board of directors. These organizations also may have serviced a majority white constituency whose perceived needs may have been different from the organization's Black, Indigenous, and other people of color constituency.

While convenience sampling saved time, money, and effort, it may have come at the expense of generalizability. Ivankova (2015) noted, however, that convenience sampling also allowed practitioner-researchers "to quickly select the study participants affected by the problem that requires immediate action" (p. 189). This prompts attention to the problem in mixed methods action research, which also necessitates using a small sample size within a specified intact group.

Using the social media platform Facebook, professional networks, and personal contacts, I recruited 11 potential participants to complete the participation survey. This survey was used to gather demographic and workplace experience data and to confirm that participants met the study criteria. Six more people either started the participant survey or needed to meet the study criteria. The 11 people who met the criteria were invited into the study, and five completed the orientation materials. Due to the highly personal nature of the innovation topics and discussions, participants were asked to select pseudonyms for study reporting purposes. The self-reported details of the five participants are as follows:

- Madieth, an Executive Director of approximately two years, reports that her organization is moderately stable but that she is unlikely to remain at the organization. She has 6-10 years of leadership experience and has held several other leadership positions in arts and culture before her current role. She holds a bachelor's degree, and though she has not participated in formal professional development over the last five years, she has participated in various informal professional development opportunities. She reports that she is in the 55 and older age group.

- Esther, a manager of more than one year, reports that her organization is moderately stable and is neutral about remaining with the organization. She has 1-2 years of leadership experience and has held several other leadership positions in arts and culture before her current role. She holds a master's degree and has participated in formal and informal professional development opportunities over the last five years. She reports that she is in the 25-34 age group.

- Michelle, an Executive Director of less than one year, reports that her organization is somewhat stable and is extremely likely to remain with the organization. She has yet to gain leadership experience prior to this role, though she held several other positions in arts and culture before her current role. She holds a master's degree and has participated in formal and informal professional development opportunities over the last five years. She reports that she is in the 18-24 age group.

- Carla, an assistant director of less than one year, reports that her organization is moderately stable and is neutral about remaining with the organization. She has 1-2 years of leadership experience and has held several other leadership positions in arts and culture before her current role. She holds a master's degree and has participated in formal and informal professional development opportunities over the last five years. She reports that she is in the 25-34 age group.

- Parris, a C-suite level executive of 1-2 years, reports that her organization is moderately stable and is most likely to remain with the organization. She has 6-10 years of leadership experience in arts

and culture and has held several other leadership positions outside of arts and culture. She holds a master's degree and has participated in formal and informal professional development opportunities over the last five years. She reports that she is in the 45-54 age group.

Role of the Researcher

By engaging in action research, practitioners can enhance their professional growth and practices by actively participating in research and improving their work (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2015). Participatory action research aligns with a philosophical foundation of a postmodern tradition that welcomes a dialectic of evolving perspectives, acknowledging the impossibility of objectivity and recognizing the existence of "multiple or shared realities" (Kelly, 2005, p. 66; MacDonald, 2012). In this study, I served as both the researcher and the facilitator-participant by developing the innovation design, facilitating virtual sister circle meetings, participating in discussions, and creating innovation agendas. I also observed and interviewed participants and implemented necessary revisions to the meeting agendas and preparatory materials. I collected and analyzed all qualitative data. Throughout the innovation, I kept a researcher journal of observations and notes about the sessions, which aided in revisions to the meeting agendas and analysis of data collected.

As a seasoned arts practitioner, I drew on my over 25 years of experience as a performing artist, teaching artist, mentor, and arts administrator and the various leadership positions I have held as a Black woman within predominantly white arts and culture organizations. I have also witnessed several of my Black female colleagues encounter glass cliff situations and mistreatment from their coworkers, staff, and board members. My ability to relate to the experiences the participants in

the study faced created an open environment for dialogue and connection among the participants. However, the experiences in these leadership roles and across my career may have caused affinity bias in my interactions with the participants and confirmation bias in my qualitative analysis of the innovation.

Innovation

The innovation for this study involved an arts-based sister circle experience. Participants in a prior research study reported positive changes in their beliefs about self-image and leadership after participating in an arts-based learning program (Brenner, 2010). Taylor and Ladkin (2009) suggest that arts-based methods be underpinned by four processes: skills transfer, projective technique, illustration of essence, and making. Skills transfer involves cultivating artistic abilities that can be practically utilized in organizational environments. Artistic projects enable participants to express personal emotions and ideas that may not be readily accessible through traditional developmental methods. By using arts-based techniques, participants can gain a unique understanding of the essence of a concept, situation, or tacit knowledge, revealing profound insights and connections that cannot be attained through conventional and straightforward developmental approaches. Lastly, creating art can provide a more profound sense of personal presence and connection. It can be a therapeutic process for managers and leaders who frequently perceive their lives as fragmented and disjointed.

The sister circle experience was designed to incorporate both Taylor and Ladkin's (2009) four distinctive processes and Johnson's (2015) three distinguishing features of sister circles throughout the innovation. The innovation was held from August through October. It involved three phases, with participants making an artistic artifact in an iterative process and using artistic practices to

prompt deep reflection and discussion and aid in action planning of these new

fundamentals in their work environment. Table 1 gives an overview of the timeline,

topics covered, and data collected.

Table 1

Timeline of the Study

Timeline	Sister Circle Topics	Data Collected, Location & Length of Time, if applicable
Pre-Innovation August 2023	Orientation materials	● Personal Introduction videos - LMS ● Participant digital journal - LMS
Week 1 September 2023	Meeting 1: Identify your personal strengths and weaknesses as a leader and strengthen your ability to affirm your beliefs and values.	● Zoom recording of group coaching session - 90 minutes ● Participant digital journal - LMS ● Word cloud ● Participant module 1 reflection video - LMS
Week 2 September 2023	Meeting 2: Confidence in the ability to get things done and always knowing how to get the best out of the situations you find yourself in.	● Zoom recording of group coaching session - 90 minutes ● Participant digital journal - LMS ● Word cloud ● Participant creative writing - LMS ● Participant module 2 reflection video - LMS
Week 3 September 2023	Meeting 3: Helping group members to reach the group's targets	● Zoom recording of group coaching session - 90 minutes ● Participant digital journal - LMS ● Word cloud ● Participant haikus ● Participant module 3 reflection video - LMS
Post-Innovation October 2023	Innovation Wrap-up	● Participant iterative artistic artifact ● Participant innovation reflection video - LMS ● 1:1 interviews - 30-45 minutes

Phase 1: Participant Preparation

Before the beginning of the innovation, I attained commitment from the selected participants through the completion of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) agreements. After completing the IRB agreements, participants were given access to the learning management system (LMS) designed for the innovation. For the innovation, the LMS consisted of a password-protected Google site that was created and held all the asynchronous information necessary for each sister circle meeting. In order to keep the participants moving along the innovation at the same pace, preparatory information for future meetings was uploaded after the prior meeting.

Participants recorded a personal introductory video on their devices and uploaded it to a shared folder in the private Google Workspace. Participants were provided with the following prompt: Please state your name, pronouns, current organization and position, a description of your personal artistic practice, your thoughts on your leadership journey, and what you hope to learn during this innovation.

Before each meeting, participants were provided with background information in the form of readings, videos, and podcasts (Read/Watch/Listen) associated with the topic of the week's meeting. I chose each set of background information for the sister circle meetings based on its thematic relevance to the meeting topic and its capacity to foster personal reflections and group discussion. Participants were asked to complete their Read/Watch/Listen (R/W/L) and then free-write for five minutes about what resonated for them in their digital journal in the innovation LMS. Participants were asked to write without stopping, editing, or self-censoring during the free-write sessions.

Phase 2: Arts-Based Sister Circle Meetings (weeks 1-3)

The participants engaged in synchronous and asynchronous activities during three sister circle meetings. Participants were responsible for completing assigned preparation activities for each meeting before a 90-minute virtual synchronous meeting held weekly for three weeks via the Zoom conference interface. Participants were also responsible for completing follow-up activities assigned after each synchronous meeting. Each meeting addressed components of the leadership self-efficacy dimension, showing self-awareness and self-confidence (Bobbio & Manganelli, 2009). The meetings addressed identifying personal strengths and weaknesses as a leader, increasing confidence in getting things done, always knowing how to get the best out of situations, helping group members reach the group's targets, and amplifying the ability to affirm personal beliefs and values through the lens of the Black women's experience. The participants created an iterative artistic reflection throughout the innovation during their asynchronous time. The artifact was an artistic representation of themselves as leaders and answered the question: What would you like others to know about you as a leader? Participants could use their artistic practice, such as poetry, dance and movement, musical compositions, and visual art, to create the artifact.

Meeting 1: Identifying Personal Strengths and Weaknesses as a Leader and Strengthening Ability to Affirm Beliefs and Values

For the first sister circle meeting, participants were asked to complete the following R/W/L preparatory work:

- Read: Chapter 1 of the following text:
    - Jones, L. A. (2021). *Professional troublemaker: The fear-fighter manual.* Viking: New York.

- Watch: Burey, J. (2020, November). The myth of bringing your full, authentic self to work [Video]. TED Conferences. https://www.ted.com/talks/jodi_ann_burey_the_myth_of_bringing_your_full _authentic_self_to_work

- Listen: Knights, L. (Host). (2022, August 12). Restoring your confidence (S3E5) [Audio podcast episode]. In *Black Women Leading: The Podcast.* https://blackwomanleading.com/s3e5-restoring-your-confidence/

- Optional Listen: Knights, L. (Host). (2023, June 22). Taking up space with Elizabeth Leiba (S4E8) [Audio podcast episode]. In *Black Women Leading: The Podcast.* https://blackwomanleading.com/s4e8-taking-up-space-with-elizabeth-leiba-2/

Jones (2021, Chapter 1) discusses recognizing who you are and your core values and learning to continually "gas" yourself up and own your brilliance. Burey (2020) discusses bringing your whole self to work, and the myth employers create that causes us to question who we are as Black women. Knights (2022) discusses restoring your confidence as a Black woman, acknowledging and healing from past workplace traumas, and clarifying your core values and beliefs and the language you use in your leadership brand. Trusting and reminding yourself of who you are and demanding others to "put respect on your name."

After completing the preparation activities, participants gathered via the Zoom conference interface for a 90-minute sister circle meeting. Each meeting was recorded to the cloud for later transcription and extraction of qualitative data. Zoom videos were encrypted and password-protected. The meeting began with an orientation to the group, where I introduced myself, followed by all the participants introducing themselves. I

then introduced the meeting's theme and gave a brief overview of the agenda for the meeting.

The next activity was a group discussion of the R/W/L materials, with participants sharing some thoughts that had emerged during their preparatory freewriting session. Using the virtual Mentimeter application, we created two word clouds based on the following prompts, followed by a discussion of the word clouds:

1. What do you feel are your strengths as a leader?

2. What do you feel are your weaknesses as a leader?

Participants then participated in a robust discussion of the following prompts:

● Name one weakness that you perceive about yourself.

● How can you shift that weakness into a strength?

● Name at least one strength you perceive about yourself and describe how you use it during your work with your team(s).

After the discussion, participants engaged in a freewriting and self-reflection activity for ten minutes. They wrote without stopping, editing, or self-censoring in their digital journal, available on the LMS. Participants were asked to find a comfortable, seated position, close their eyes, take a few deep breaths, and recall one belief or value that was important to them. The prompt for the freewriting portion was: What does this belief mean to me, how does it influence my actions and decisions, and what challenges have I faced in upholding this belief or value? At the end of the ten minutes, participants reflected on what came up during the writing session and jotted down any insights or revelations. Participants jotted down any patterns or recurring themes they saw and any considerations on strategies they could use to affirm this belief or value.

After the freewriting session, participants engaged in a discussion about what emerged during their writing. The discussion centered on the following prompts:

- What beliefs or values and their meanings were top of mind for you?

- Were there any patterns or recurring themes in your writing?

- What challenges have you faced in upholding these beliefs or values?

- What strategies can you use to affirm these beliefs or values?

After the discussion, the group debriefed about what they learned during the meeting and discussed how they would incorporate these learnings into their work with their teams. I instructed the participants on the innovation's iterative artistic reflection they would create throughout the meetings. In closing the meeting, I briefed the participants on the assignments to complete before the next synchronous meeting.

Meeting 2: Confidence in the Ability to Get Things Done and Always Knowing How to Get the Best Out of the Situations You Find Yourself In

For the second sister circle meeting, participants were asked to complete the following R/W/L preparatory work:

- Read Chapter 3 of the following text:

    o Leiba, E. (2022). *I'm not yelling: A Black woman's guide to navigating the workplace*. Mango Publishing Group: Florida.

- Watch: Williams, S. (2021, February). The rigged test of leadership [Video]. TED Conferences.

    https://www.ted.com/talks/sophie_williams_the_rigged_test_of_leadership

- Listen: Knights, L. (Host). (2022, October 20). Restoring imposter syndrome with Jodi-Ann Burey (S3E10) [Audio podcast episode]. In *Black Women Leading: The Podcast*. https://blackwomanleading.com/s3e10-reframing-imposter-syndrome/

- Optional: Knights, L. (Host). (2023, June 22). Taking up space with Elizabeth Leiba (S4E8) [Audio podcast episode]. In *Black Women Leading: The Podcast*. https://blackwomanleading.com/s4e8-taking-up-space-with-elizabeth-leiba-2/

Leiba (2022, Chapter 3) reframes the narrative of imposter syndrome to imposter treatment. Black women are treated like imposters in some of our experiences, which can lead to self-doubt in these predominantly white spaces. Leiba writes, you are not an imposter, and you never have been, and advises you to lean into your confidence instead of self-doubt. You deserve to be in any space that you choose. Williams (2021) discusses the glass cliff and how this impacts Black women in all leadership positions. Burey (2022), in her podcast discussion with Laura Knights, discusses how imposter syndrome was not meant to describe the Black person's experience. Burey advises you to think about it less as something you are bringing to your professional life, but this is happening to you. It is the output of racist, sexist, and discriminatory work environments.

The module 2 virtual synchronous meeting began with an orientation to the meeting, including the session's topic. Before starting the first discussion, participants were asked to enter their responses into Mentimeter to create a word cloud for the prompt: How are you feeling at this moment? Participants then discussed the word cloud and R/W/L materials, sharing some thoughts that had emerged during their preparatory freewriting session. After the discussion, participants engaged in a freewriting and self-reflection activity for seven minutes. They wrote without stopping, editing, or self-censoring in their digital journal, available on the LMS. The prompt for the freewriting portion was: What are some of your goals and aspirations? Also, are there any obstacles or challenges to achieving them? If yes, what are some of those obstacles? At the end of the seven minutes, participants reflected on what came up during the writing session and

jotted down any insights or revelations. Participants jotted down any patterns or recurring themes they saw and any considerations on what actions they could take to overcome any obstacles or challenges they may face. A discussion about what emerged in the writing session followed. Participants then engaged in a discussion centered on the following prompts:

- Recall a challenging situation you had at work.

- When ready, explain the details of the situation to the group.

- What strategies did you use to get the best out of the situation, and what could you have used to improve the situation?

The next activity was a creative writing session. Participants were asked to choose one goal or aspiration to focus on and write a short story, poem, or essay that imagines achieving that goal using vivid imagery and sensory details to bring the experience to life. After the creative writing activity, participants shared their writing and provided constructive feedback and support to each other. Participants could ask questions during the discussion and share their insights and experiences. Participants were then instructed to begin an action planning activity where they created a plan based on their writing and reflections with specific actions they could take to achieve their goals, possibly breaking them down into smaller, achievable steps.

After the discussion, the group debriefed about what they learned during the meeting and discussed how they would incorporate these learnings into their work with their teams. I reminded the participants about the innovation's iterative artistic reflection they would create throughout the meetings. In closing the meeting, I briefed the participants on the assignments to complete before the next synchronous meeting.

Module 3: Helping Group Members Reach Group's Targets

For the third and final sister circle meeting, participants were asked to complete the following R/W/L preparatory work:

- Read: Suarez, C. (2023, May 15). The perils of black leadership. *Nonprofit Quarterly.* https://nonprofitquarterly.org/the-perils-of-black-leadership/

- Watch: Ralph, S. L. (2023, April). A 3-step guide to believing in yourself [Video]. TED Conferences. https://www.ted.com/talks/sheryl_lee_ralph_a_3_step_guide_to_believing_in_yourself

Suarez (2023) discusses the following key characteristics of the Black leadership experience: (1) the fact that Black leaders tend to get appointed in times of crisis, known as the glass cliff; (2) that Black leaders tend to be prepared for these opportunities, (3) that their authority is overwhelmingly contested, and (4) that a core part of their work is managing the adverse effect to which they are subject. Ralph (2023) speaks of her experiences struggling with self-confidence. Ralph says there are three things we need to do to believe in ourselves: "(1) we need to see ourselves for who and what we are, (2) we've got to think about ourselves, and (3) we've got to act like we believe in ourselves."

The module 3 virtual synchronous session began with an orientation to the meeting, including the session's topic. Before starting the first discussion, participants were asked to enter their responses into Mentimeter to create a word cloud for the prompt: How are you feeling at this moment? Participants then discussed the word cloud and R/W/L materials, sharing some thoughts that had emerged during their preparatory freewriting session. Participants engaged in a five-minute freewriting and self-reflection activity, writing without stopping, editing, or self-censoring in their digital journals available on the LMS. The prompt for the freewriting portion was: How do you approach

goal setting, and what are some things you think about when setting goals and activating your team towards achieving them? At the end of the five minutes, participants reflected on what came up during the writing session and jotted down any insights or revelations. Participants jotted down any patterns or recurring themes and considerations on goal setting and activating their teams towards achieving their goals.

For the next activity, participants were asked to create haiku poetry. I then gave a short overview of haikus and their construction, sharing some examples for clarity. Participants were asked to refer to the completed freewriting session and take approximately 10 minutes to create their haikus. Participants shared their haikus, explaining what they meant to them and how they were developed, followed by a group discussion about other ideas that emerged during the poetry writing session. Additionally, the group discussed at length topics that emerged during the innovation that resonated with them.

Then, the participants began an action planning activity where they created a plan based upon their activities and reflections of the meeting with specific actions they could take to help their teams reach goals, possibly breaking actions down into smaller, achievable steps. After the activity, the group debriefed about what they learned during the meeting and discussed how they would incorporate these learnings into their work with their teams. I then reminded the participants of the innovation's overarching artistic reflection they would complete after the final meeting. In closing the meeting, I briefed the participants on the assignments to complete before our participant interviews.

Phase 3: Post-Innovation Wrap-up

The participants completed the final iteration of their artistic reflection. They participated in the final asynchronous journal reflection about personal changes they

experienced during the innovation and any associated impacts on their leadership at work. Participants were asked to record a final video on their device showing their completed artistic artifact and explaining what it meant to them. They shared this reflection in their participant folders in the Google Workspace. After the final sister circle meeting, I conducted individual interviews with the participants to inquire about (a) how they related to the group experience, (b) their ideas for improvements to the innovation, and (c) the impact of the innovation on their workplace leadership.

Data Collection Resources

Owing to this study's participatory action research design, various qualitative data were collected throughout the innovation process. Examples of the collected data types include demographic information, word clouds, participant digital journals, and artistic artifacts.

Quantitative Data

Participants were asked to complete a pre-selection questionnaire to qualify for the innovation. The questions confirmed that participants met all the requisite criteria for participation in the innovation. The criteria for participation in the coaching experience were: (a) Black woman, (b) manager or administrator, (c) working in a predominantly white arts and culture organization such as a community arts school, art gallery, or music organization, and (d) commitment to engage in online and workplace learning experiences. The questionnaire also included items used to collect demographic data, information on the participants' leadership history and current employment status, and information about the participants' past experiences with professional leadership development. The complete questionnaire is provided in Appendix A.

Because the crux of my innovation was determining how an arts-based innovation impacts one's leadership self-efficacy, I collected data using a pre- and post-innovation structure for quantitative data collection. I measured the impact of arts-based group coaching on leadership self-efficacy using a pre- and post-Leadership Self-Efficacy (LSE) Scale survey (Bobbio & Manganelli, 2009). The multidimensional LSE scale's authors validated the scale through factorial analysis and supporting reliability coefficients. Slight modifications to terminology were made so the survey was appropriate for this field. Participants completed the LSE survey using the virtual Qualtrics server after their selection as participants for the study but before beginning any preparatory work for the innovation. Participants completed the same survey after they completed the innovation activities.

The LSE survey comprises 21 items grouped along six dimensions and rated on a 5-point Likert scale of 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*. The survey measured four dimensions of leadership self-efficacy: (a) starting and leading change processes, (b) choosing effective followers and delegating responsibilities, (c) building and managing interpersonal relationships with the group, (d) showing self-awareness and self-confidence, (e) motivating people, and (f) gaining consensus of group members (Bobbio & Manganelli, 2009). An example of an item from the "starting and leading change processes" is "I am able to set a new direction for a group if the one currently taken doesn't seem correct to me." Another example from the survey is "I am confident in my ability to choose group members in order to build up an effective and efficient team" from the "choosing effective followers and delegating responsibilities dimension. The complete survey is provided in Appendix B.

Qualitative Data

Five types of qualitative data were collected during the innovation: (a) participant word cloud, digital journal, and video entries; (b) field notes and observations; (c) participant interviews; (d) participant artistic artifacts; and (e) transcriptions of virtual synchronous meeting recordings. Some data were collected through submissions on the LMS designed for the innovation and are noted in the following descriptions.

Participant Word Cloud, Digital Journal, and Video Entries. Throughout the innovation, participants were asked to complete digital journal entries based on prompts given for each meeting. Participants typed their entries on a Google document located on the LMS. An example of a digital journal entry prompt was: What are some of your goals and aspirations; are there any obstacles or challenges to achieving them; if yes, what are some of those obstacles or challenges? Participants were also asked to record video journal entries on their devices based on prompts provided during the duration of the innovation and then upload the videos into their participant folders located on the LMS. An example of a video entry prompt was: record a personal introduction that includes your name, your pronouns, your current organization and position, a description of your personal artistic practice, thoughts about your leadership journey, and what you are hoping to learn through this innovation.

Participants were also prompted to enter responses into the Mentimeter presentation app to build word clouds during each synchronous session. Word clouds are graphical representations that display the frequency of words submitted, with the size of each word in the image determined by how frequently it appears in the submissions (Atenstaedt, 2021). An example of a prompt for the word cloud was:

How are you feeling at this moment? The formation of word clouds was used to initiate discussion during the sessions.

Field Notes and Observations. Throughout the innovation, I observed and took notes in the synchronous meetings from my capacity as a facilitator of the sister circle. Notes and observations were taken digitally on a Google document to aid analysis. During the synchronous meetings, I observed both individual engagement and group interactions.

Participant Interviews. After the participants completed the three synchronous sessions and final innovation assignments, they were interviewed individually to discuss their experiences in the innovation process and how they were impacted. The interviews had eight semi-structured questions, the purpose of which was to elicit deeper insight into their reflections about the experience and to triangulate their answers to data collected during the innovation. A few examples of interview questions were: "Reflecting back to before starting the workshops, how would you describe your confidence in your leadership then versus now," and "What types of changes, if any, have you made in the way you lead your teams?" Interviews were recorded, and transcripts were analyzed. The complete list of interview questions is provided in Appendix C.

Participant Artistic Artifacts. Throughout the innovation, participants created a variety of artistic artifacts that were used in the study analysis. During the synchronous sessions, participants engaged in different artistic processes, such as poetry and creative writing, as focal points. Participants were asked to share their artistic artifacts with the group and explain what each meant. Details of the artistic artifacts and explanations became part of my field notes and observations for analysis.

The participants were also tasked with creating an iterative artistic piece in their artistic discipline of choice, adding to or revising it after each meeting. After completing the last synchronous meeting, participants completed their pieces. They uploaded a written or video reflection about their final product to their participant folders in the LMS, explaining what it meant to them.

Transcriptions of Zoom Session Recordings. All synchronous sessions and participant interviews were held via the Zoom conference interface. Each session was recorded to the cloud for qualitative data transcription and extraction. Zoom recordings were encrypted and password-protected.

Data Analysis

The data from this study was analyzed using a triangulation approach. Various types of quantitative and qualitative data were collected at approximately the same time and analyzed separately, and then, the results were compared to confirm or disconfirm each other (Creswell, 2014; Ivankova, 2015). To enhance the validity of a study, researchers should triangulate various data sources by scrutinizing the evidence and constructing a consistent rationale for the themes. If the themes are identified by combining information from multiple sources of information or viewpoints from participants, this methodology can strengthen the credibility of the research (Creswell, 2014). Equally, combining qualitative and quantitative data provides a more robust and comprehensive understanding of the problem of practice than either set of data would provide on its own (Mertler, 2020).

Quantitative Analysis

The pre- and post-innovation LSE survey results were compiled and analyzed using the SPSS Statistics v. 29 software package. As stated, the LSE survey consisted of 21 items grouped along six dimensions and rated on a 5-point Likert

scale of 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*. Participant responses to the survey were grouped by timeframe, pre- or post-innovation and then further delineated by LSE scale dimensions. Descriptive statistics were computed to determine response averages for the entire dataset by pre- and post-innovation for comparison. Further quantitative data analysis was rendered insignificant due to the small sample size.

Qualitative Analysis

I prepared all qualitative data for use in the ATLAS.ti 23 for MAC computer-assisted qualitative data analysis system (CAQDAS). I first transcribed all collected data using Otter.ai software in the initial phase of the analysis. The Otter.ai transcriptions were then meticulously compared with the recordings to edit for correctness and attribution of speakers. Qualitative data were coded and analyzed through a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2014) and aided by the ATLAS.ti CAQDAS. Grounded theory is a thorough research methodology that involves constructing theoretical frameworks or models based on inductive data analyses and verifying those theoretical interpretations. Through this iterative process of analyzing data, researchers aim to develop a robust understanding of the phenomenon being studied, with the theories being grounded in the data rather than preconceived notions (Charmaz, 2014). This approach entails the researcher collecting and analyzing data simultaneously. Hallberg (2006) stated that the constant comparative method of grounded theory is "strict enough to be helpful to the researcher in exploring the content and meaning in the data, but not saddled with so many strict rules to be too rigid for a grounded theory researcher" (p. 141).

The ATLAS.ti software's diverse capabilities facilitated an examination of the data and streamlined the coding process. I initiated an open AI coding procedure on

the data after importing qualitative data documents. This preliminary coding revealed 752 distinct codes distributed across 46 separate groups. I undertook a systematic review of each document to comprehend the outcomes of the AI coding.

The ensuing examination uncovered a surprising array of codes, some exhibiting duplicative characteristics. Additionally, the software manifested tendencies to code in aggregates, generating simultaneous codes for identical passages. Recognizing the need for a more coherent organization of codes, I opted for a code mapping strategy, an iterative process allowing for categorizing initial codes into groupings to transition towards more meaningful groupings (Saldaña, 2021). "Code mapping also serves as a part of the auditing process for a research study. It documents how a list of codes gets categorized, recategorized, and conceptualized throughout the analytic journey" (Saldaña, 2021, p. 285). During this mapping process, I systematically recategorized the data into fewer comprehensive codes, excluding passages irrelevant to the study's research questions, such as instructional content and off-topic discourse.

Upon completing this coding iteration, the refined set of codes amounted to 137, grouped into eleven distinct categories. I adopted a theoretical coding approach in the final phase of analysis (Saldaña, 2021). Theoretical coding, a second cycle approach, "progresses toward discovering the central/core category that identifies the primary theme of the research" (Saldaña, 2021, p. 301). A theoretical code operates as an overarching concept that encompasses and explains all other codes and categories developed during the grounded theory analysis (Saldaña, 2021, p. 314). The theoretical coding approach yielded a more centralized understanding of the data forming categories and themes on Black women seeking opportunities to network and build community, safe spaces for deep discussion and problem-solving, and enhancing leadership self-efficacy and career development.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is characterized as a collection of criteria showcasing the competent and ethical execution of a research study (Rallis & Rossman, 2009). This study addressed competent and ethical practice through credibility, rigor, usefulness, and respect. Credibility was addressed through data triangulation by collecting and elaborating on multiple data sources and theoretical perspectives. Various types of qualitative data were collected, such as sister circle meeting recordings, participant interviews, and artistic activities. Rigor and usefulness were addressed through the fully explicated conceptual framework to guide the study, as well as a research approach and process that fit the study and provide sufficient data relevant to the research.

Respect was addressed through privacy and confidentiality, protecting participants' identities, and obtaining informed consent. Throughout the innovation, I created a space of trust and openness so that participants could find comfort and feel ready to share their lived experiences. Due to the sensitive nature of the study, participants were advised and reminded on every occasion that participation was voluntary, that they were not obligated to answer any of the questions posed, and that their identity would be masked from outside readers of the dissertation. Participants were also allowed to ask additional questions to myself and others to facilitate clarity and emergent discussion. Before beginning the study, I obtained institutional review board permission.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

To bring about change, you must not be afraid to take the first step. We will fail when we
fail to try.

— Rosa Parks

This chapter comprehensively examines the study's findings, drawing on a
multifaceted approach to analyze and interpret the data collected. The following four
research questions aim to reveal participants' motivations, investigate social and cultural
factors, evaluate the influence on leadership self-efficacy, and comprehend the broader
effects of the innovation on workplace leadership: What motivations do participants
express for participating in a sister circle innovation? What social, cultural, and
emotional factors regarding Black women's leadership emerged within the arts-based
sister circle innovation? How does a sister circle experience affect participants'
leadership self-efficacy? How does the innovation impact participants' workplace
leadership?

The chapter unfolds systematically, beginning with a brief overview of the
participants, offering a reminder of the women who participated in the research. Next,
quantitative and qualitative data are presented, providing a comparative analysis of the
data to triangulate the results and exploring the nuanced and intricate insights gleaned
through the rich dataset. The overview of data sources sheds light on the robust methods
employed for data collection. The ensuing sections delve into the discussion of themes
and assertions, providing a deeper contextual understanding of emerging patterns and
themes. Additionally, discussing artistic artifacts contributes to exploring visual and
creative components, adding depth to the analysis. Finally, the chapter concludes with a

summary of the findings, synthesizing the fundamental discoveries and insights from the study.

Overview of Participants

As discussed in Chapter 3, five participants participated in the Leadership Self-Efficacy innovation. However, though all five participants completed the orientation protocols and attended the first Sister Circle Meeting, two participants did not participate in the second and third meetings and, therefore, did not complete the study. Further, a third participant attended the second sister circle meeting but left the third sister circle meeting early and did not complete the final activities of the study. Although all three participants remarked that though they wished to complete the study, an abundance of work responsibilities interfered with either the timeslot of the sister circle meeting or work/life balance, causing an inability to complete the activities. However, because their participation in earlier study activities revealed essential connections to the research, their contributions are included in the analysis. As a reminder of the participants in the study, Table 2 gives an overview of their demographics.

Table 2

Participant Demographics

Participant	Current Role	Leadership Experience	Education Level	Age Group	Meetings Attended
Madieth	Executive Director	6-10 yrs	Bachelor's degree	55 & Older	3
Esther	Manager	1-2 yrs	Master's degree	25-34	3
Michelle*	Executive Director	None	Master's degree	18-24	2.5
Carla*	Assistant Director	1-2 yrs	Master's degree	25-34	1
Parris*	C-Level Officer	6-10 yrs	Master's degree	45-54	1

*Note. The * by participants' names denotes those who did not complete the innovation.*

Quantitative and Qualitative Data Results

Participants completed the Leadership Self-Efficacy Scale (LSES) survey as part of the orientation to the innovation activities and again upon program completion. The following four research questions were developed for the study: What motivations do participants express for participating in a sister circle innovation? What social, cultural, and emotional factors regarding Black women's leadership emerged within the arts-based sister circle innovation? How does a sister circle experience affect participants' leadership self-efficacy? How does the innovation impact participants' workplace leadership? Though five participants completed the pre-innovation survey, only two participants completed the post-innovation survey. The following quantitative analysis only includes the data from the two participants who completed the pre- and post-innovation surveys. The data collected were analyzed using the SPSS Statistics v. 29 software package.

The survey items of the LSES were grouped by the survey's dimensions to aid in the analysis according to the following. The dimension "starting and leading change processes" was labeled "Leading Change" had three items: (1) I am able to set a new direction for a group if the one currently taken doesn't seem correct to me; (2) I can usually change the attitudes and behaviors of group members if they don't meet group objectives; and (3) I am able to change things in a group even if they are not completely under my control. The dimension "choosing effective followers and delegating responsibilities" dimension was labeled "Delegation" and had four items: (1) I am confident in my ability to choose group members in order to build up an effective and efficient team; (2) I am able to optimally share out the work between the members of a group to the best results; (3) I would be able to delegate the task of accomplishing specific goals to other group members; and (4) I am usually able to understand to whom, within a group, it is better to delegate specific tasks. The "building and managing interpersonal relationships within the group" dimension was labeled "Interpersonal Relationships" and had three items: (1) Usually, I can establish very good relationships with the people I work with; (2) I am sure I can communicate with others, going straight to the heart of the matter; and (3) I can successfully manage relationships with all the members of a group. The "showing self-awareness and self-confidence" dimension was labeled "Confidence" and had five items: (1) I can identify my strengths and weaknesses; (2) I am confident in my ability to get things done; (3) I always know how to get the best out of the situations I find myself in; (4) With my experience and competence I can help group members to reach the group's targets; and (5) As a leader, I am usually able to affirm my beliefs and values. The "Motivating People" dimension retained this name as its label and had three items: (1) With my example, I am sure I can motivate the members of a group; (2) I can usually motivate group members and arouse their

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enthusiasm when I start a new project; and (3) I am able to motivate and give opportunities to any group member in the exercise of their tasks or functions. The "gaining consensus of group members" dimension was labeled "Consensus Building" and had three items: (1) I can usually make the people I work with appreciate me; (2) I am sure I can gain the consensus of group members; and (3) I can usually lead a group with the consensus of all members.

Participant responses to the survey were grouped by timeframe, pre- or post-innovation. After preparing the data, descriptive statistics were computed to determine the response averages for the entire dataset by pre and post-innovation for comparison. The small sample size rendered further quantitative data analysis insignificant. As shown in Table 3, the averages for post-innovation either stayed the same (Interpersonal Relationships and Confidence) or increased (Leading Change & Consensus Building - Δ = +0.33 and Motivating People - Δ = +0.84) for all dimensions except Delegation (Δ = -0.12).

Table 3.

Descriptive Statistics for the Leadership Self-Efficacy Scale for Pre- and Post-Innovation by Dimension

Dimension	Pre-Innovation			Post-Innovation			
	M	*SD*	Range	*M*	*SD*	Range	*MΔ*
Leading Change	3.50	0.71	3.00–4.00	3.83	0.24	3.67–4.00	0.33
Delegation	4.50	0.35	4.25–4.75	4.38	0.53	4.00–4.75	-0.12
Interpersonal Relationships	3.67	0.47	3.33–4.00	3.67	0.47	3.33–4.00	0.00
Confidence	4.40	0.57	4.00–4.80	4.40	0.28	4.20–4.60	0.00
Motivating People	3.33	0.94	2.67–4.00	4.17	0.24	4.00–4.33	0.84
Consensus Building	3.17	0.71	2.67–3.67	3.50	0.71	3.00–4.00	0.33

Note. N = 2 for each timeframe.

The quantitative data indicated that even given the relatively short timeframe of the study, participants self-reported increases in their leadership self-efficacy in the dimensions of leading change, motivating people, and consensus building—furthermore, their self-reported levels of interpersonal relationships and confidence held firm. While the average for the dimension of delegation decreased slightly ($Δ$ = -0.12), this decrease may be related to the engagement and capabilities of their staff. Dwyer (2019) notes that "specific to LSE, it seems obvious that resource availability, the leader's role discretion, followers' abilities, and an organization's culture, to name just a few context factors, may have an impact on leaders' efficacy perceptions" (p. 639). If given a longer duration of participation within the arts-based sister circle, participants may see a continued increase in their self-reported leadership self-efficacy across all dimensions.

I collected seven types of qualitative data, including participant word clouds, digital journals, video reflections, participant interviews, participant artistic reflections,

and transcriptions of virtual Sister Circle Meeting recordings. Table 4 demonstrates the richness of the qualitative data collected while providing insight into the rigor and comprehensiveness of the data collection resources. This table also "contributes to the credibility of the data" (Buss & Zambo, 2014, p. 59). Qualitative data were coded and analyzed through a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2014) and aided by the ATLAS.ti computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software.

Table 4
Description of Qualitative Data Sources

Data Source	Word Count
Word clouds	Four word clouds
Haikus	Two haiku poems
Participant Introduction Videos	1,127
Sister Circle Meeting Recordings	36,650
Participant Digital Journals	2,520
Artistic Reflections	1,026
Participant Interview Recordings	8,745
Total Word Count	50,068

The grounded theory approach afforded the creation of central findings within the data, each aligning with the pertinent research question. Each research question was associated with significant quantitative and qualitative findings, as shown in Table 5. For example, the question, "What motivations do participants express for participating in a group coaching experience?" yields three themes: (1) participants seek connection with other Black women leaders; (2) participants seek information from other Black women leaders; and (3) participants used the activities and discussion of the innovation to reflect on their leadership skills and develop their leadership skills further.

Table 5

Results by Research Question

Research Question	Related Findings
RQ1: What motivations do participants express for participating in a sister circle innovation?	1. Participants seek connection with other Black women leaders.
	2. Participants seek information from other Black women leaders.
	3. Participants used the activities and discussion of the innovation to reflect on their leadership skills and develop their leadership skills further.
RQ2: What social, cultural, and emotional factors regarding Black women's leadership emerged within the arts-based sister circle innovation?	1. Participants desire to discuss how the intersectionality of their race and gender affects their work.
	2. Participants seek to understand imposter treatment/syndrome, self-doubt, and career uncertainty.
	3. Participants express frustration about issues and people they encounter in their careers.
	4. Participants feel burnout, overwhelmed, and overworked and seek advice on overcoming these feelings.
RQ3: How does a sister circle experience affect participants' leadership self-efficacy?	1. Participants used the activities and discussion of the innovation to reflect on their leadership skills and develop their leadership skills further.
	2. Participants sought advice from cohort members about their careers.
	3. Participation in Sister Circles can increase participants' reported leadership self-efficacy.
RQ4: How does the innovation impact participants' workplace leadership?	1. Participants used the activities and discussion of the innovation to reflect on their leadership skills and develop their leadership skills further.
	2. Participants sought advice on time management from cohort members.
	3. Participants sought support from other cohort members on their work/life balance.

Themes and Assertions

        After grouping the codes by research question, codes were then further grouped into three themes and theme-related findings. Assertions were deduced from the themes and their related findings, as shown in Table 6. The assertions were: (1) Black women face many challenges when promoted into leadership positions in predominantly white organizations, driving them to seek opportunities to network and create community with other Black women leaders; (2) Sister Circle meetings serve as community spaces providing opportunities for deep conversation and problem-solving without fear of retribution about the social, cultural and emotional challenges they face as Black women leaders in their organizations; and (3) Participation in Sister Circle meetings may enhance leadership self-efficacy and career development and positively impact work-life balance.

Table 6

Themes, Theme-Related Findings, and Assertions

*Themes** and Theme-related Findings	Assertions
Black women seeking opportunities to network and build community 1. Participants seek connection with other Black women leaders. 2. Participants seek information from other Black women leaders.	Black women face many challenges when promoted into leadership positions in predominantly white organizations, driving them to seek opportunities to network and create community with other Black women leaders.
Safe spaces for deep discussion and problem-solving 1. Participants desire to discuss how the intersectionality of their race and gender affects their work. 2. Participants seek to understand imposter treatment/syndrome, self-doubt, and career uncertainty. 3. Participants express frustration about issues and people they encounter in their careers. 4. Participants feel burnout, overwhelmed, and overworked and seek advice on overcoming these feelings.	Sister Circle meetings serve as community spaces providing opportunities for deep conversation and problem-solving without fear of retribution about the social, cultural, and emotional challenges they face as Black women leaders in their organizations.
Enhancing leadership self-efficacy and career development 1. Participation in Sister Circles can increase participants' reported leadership self-efficacy. 2. Participants used the activities and discussion of the innovation to reflect on their leadership skills and develop their leadership skills further. 3. Participants sought advice from cohort members about their careers. 4. Participants sought advice on time management from cohort members. 5. Participants sought support from other cohort members on their work/life balance.	Participation in Sister Circle meetings may enhance leadership self-efficacy and career development and positively impact work-life balance.

*Note: *Themes are in italic print.*

Moving from identifying assertions, I will explore Assertion (1) in depth. This assertion sheds light on the obstacles encountered by Black women upon assuming leadership roles in predominantly white organizations, prompting them to actively pursue networking opportunities and establish a supportive community with other Black women leaders.

Black Women Seek Opportunities to Network and Build Community

Assertion 1 - *Black women face many challenges when promoted into leadership positions in predominantly white organizations, driving them to seek opportunities to network and create community with other Black women leaders.* This assertion and its themes emerged from qualitative data collected from participant word clouds, digital journals, video reflections, participant interviews, participant artistic reflections, and virtual Sister Circle Meeting recordings transcriptions. The following theme-related findings substantiated the theme leading to the assertion: (a) participants seek connection with other Black women leaders, and (b) participants seek information from other Black women leaders. *The * by participants' names denotes those who did not complete the innovation.*

Participants voiced in their introduction videos and during the first Sister Circle Meeting that their motivations for participating in the innovation included seeking connection and support from other Black women in the field. In several instances, newer leaders were interested in some semblance of support from more seasoned Black women leaders and the opportunity to learn more about their experiences in the field. For example:

Michelle*: I'm stepping into my first ever like real leadership position. And I would love any support, especially to hear from other Black women in the field,

who are, who have already gone through the same things. I just, I wanted an opportunity to learn more. (Sister Circle Meeting 1)

Michelle's* desire to hear from other Black women who have navigated similar challenges underscores the recognition that Black women face unique hurdles in leadership positions within predominantly white organizations. Michelle acknowledges the value of learning from shared experiences and perspectives within her community by seeking support and insights from more seasoned Black women leaders. This aligns with the assertion that Black women often encounter various challenges, including isolation, lack of representation, and microaggressions, when promoted into leadership roles in predominantly white organizations. The quote underscores the importance of creating spaces, such as sister circle meetings, where Black women can find solidarity, exchange valuable insights, and build a supportive network to navigate these challenges effectively.

Other participants stated that connecting with other Black women helped them feel less lonely in their work and that hearing others' stories provided some validation that their experiences were not isolated events. One participant expressed that she finds mutual learning and solidarity with fellow participants, and the sense of community and shared experiences diminishes her feelings of isolation. She appreciated the collective struggle.

Esther: I am hoping to, of course, connect with other Black women like myself who are in this field. I know a lot of the folks that are participating in this study, which is really awesome. And I always feel like I learn so much from participants and even in the validation of my own experiences that I'm having. For me, it makes me feel a lot less lonely when I know that folks are struggling with similar things. (Participant Introduction Video)

Parris* (*the * by participants' names denotes those who did not complete the innovation*) reflected on her tenure in the arts and culture field and remarked on the rarity of finding other Black women in the field to connect with. She understands the need for representation in leadership, and connecting with others who look like her allows her to navigate and thrive in an environment where her identity has sometimes set her apart from others.

> Parris*: I've been in the arts and culture field for about 12 years now. And, you know, sometimes it's good to be able to connect with others within the field that look like me. Because, you know, for the longest, I was the only, the only person that looked like me in the executive leadership team. (Sister Circle Meeting 1)

Parris' reflection underscores the rarity of finding other Black women in leadership positions within her field, highlighting the pervasive lack of diversity and representation at the executive level. Her acknowledgment of being the only person who looks like her in the executive leadership team speaks volumes about the isolation and alienation that Black women often experience in predominantly white organizations. Parris' recognition of the importance of connecting with others who share her identity reflects the broader reality Black women leaders face, who often find themselves navigating environments where their identities set them apart. The quote underscores the critical role of representation in leadership and the value of creating spaces where Black women can connect, share experiences, and find support to navigate and thrive in environments where they are often marginalized.

Carla* expressed her desire to meet and connect with others through the meeting, with her primary goal to enhance her leadership skills and effectiveness.

> Carla*: I just would love to meet everyone here and just figure out how to be a more effective leader and make sure that just to see what your advice would be or

just, in general, your opinions and trying to just build and develop in my career.

(Sister Circle Meeting 1)

Carla's emphasis on seeking advice, opinions, and insights from the group highlights the importance of mentorship, guidance, and shared experiences in informing her career development. This aligns with the assertion that Black women leaders often confront unique challenges and uncertainties in their professional journeys, including the need for mentorship and peer support to navigate complex organizational dynamics and overcome systemic barriers. Moreover, Carla's expressed goal to "build and develop" in her career underscores the proactive approach that Black women leaders often adopt in response to the challenges they encounter. Despite facing various obstacles, including bias, microaggressions, and limited opportunities for advancement, Black women demonstrate resilience and determination in their pursuit of personal and professional growth. In this context, the sister circle meeting serves as a vital platform for Carla and other participants to exchange ideas, share strategies, and collectively empower each other to overcome obstacles and thrive in their leadership roles.

Participants also voiced a need to amplify their leadership skills and confidence. They felt that finding a group of Black women to learn from would enhance those skills. One participant acknowledged her challenge in believing in herself more and emphasized that building a supportive network is essential. She noted that this network would help keep her grounded while validating her feelings.

Madieth: I need to believe in myself more (easier said than done) but also surround myself with a supportive team outside of the workplace/industry that keeps me grounded and validated in my feelings. (Participant Journal)

Michelle* emphasized her desire for increased confidence and understanding in leadership. As a Black woman executive director in a predominantly white organization, she recognizes the unique challenges in her position. She seeks to learn from other perspectives and experiences and seeks advice and insights to help her in her new role.

> Michelle*: I'm hoping from this workshop to just, you know, be able to leave with a little bit more confidence and understanding in terms of leadership, especially being a Black woman executive director in a very majority white organization. So, I'd love to hear more about other perspectives and experiences. I'm very new in this area, especially this position. So, any and all advice would be wonderful. (Participant Introduction Video)

These quotes vividly illustrate the profound desire among Black women leaders to enhance their leadership skills, confidence, and sense of belonging in predominantly white organizational settings. Madieth's candid reflection on her need to believe in herself more and build a supportive network outside of the workplace underscores Black women's internal and external challenges in navigating leadership roles. Her acknowledgment of the difficulty in cultivating self-belief highlights the pervasive impact of imposter treatment and the importance of external validation and support in bolstering confidence. Similarly, Michelle's expressed desire for increased confidence and understanding in leadership reflects the complex dynamics that Black women executive directors encounter in predominantly white organizations. As she navigates her role, Michelle recognizes the unique challenges and barriers that stem from the intersectionality of her race and gender. Her aspiration to learn from other perspectives and experiences underscores the value of diversity and inclusion in leadership development, as well as the importance of seeking advice and insights from peers to navigate unfamiliar territory.

These quotes not only highlight the individual struggles and aspirations of Black women leaders but also underscore the broader systemic challenges and inequities that persist in predominantly white organizational cultures. The need for supportive networks, validation, and mentorship reflects the resilience and determination of Black women leaders to overcome barriers, develop their leadership competencies, and thrive in their professional journeys. In this context, the sister circle serves as a vital platform for Black women to exchange knowledge, support each other, and collectively navigate the complexities of leadership in predominantly white spaces.

Expanding on the significant influence of connection and validation within the Sister Circle framework, I will now move to an in-depth exploration of Assertion (2). This assertion emphasizes the crucial function of Sister Circle meetings as communal spaces that enable profound discussions and collaborative problem-solving. These meetings provide a safe space where Black women leaders can openly address the social, cultural, and emotional challenges they encounter in their predominantly white organizational environments without the fear of retribution.

Safe Spaces For Deep Discussion And Problem-Solving

Assertion 2 - *Sister Circle meetings serve as community spaces providing opportunities for deep conversation and problem-solving without fear of retribution about the social, cultural, and emotional challenges they face as Black women leaders in their organizations.* This assertion and its themes emerged from qualitative data collected from participant word clouds, digital journals, video reflections, participant interviews, participant artistic reflections, and transcriptions of virtual Sister Circle Meeting recordings. The following theme-related findings substantiated the theme leading to the assertion: (a) participants desire to discuss how the intersectionality of their race and gender affects their work; (b) participants seek to understand imposter

treatment/syndrome, self-doubt, and uncertainty in their careers; (c) participants express frustration about issues and people they encounter in their careers; and (d) participants feel burnout, overwhelmed, and overworked and seek advice on overcoming these feelings. *The * by participants' names denotes those who did not complete the innovation.*

Throughout the course of the Sister Circle Meetings, I observed that participants' levels of discussing more sensitive topics increased. One such subject, the intersectionality of their race and gender, was discussed during each meeting, in artistic reflections, and in the participants' interviews with me. Participants discussed microaggressions, power dynamics, and discrimination in the workplace, among other topics. One participant recounted an experience of feeling tokenized rather than being recognized for her leadership capabilities. These experiences have left her feeling reluctant to participate in programs that are not specifically BIPOC-focused.

> Esther: I felt like I was only there as like a token and just there because they kind of needed that for grants or whatever. And not because they actually believed in my capabilities to like be a leader in the field, which is what it was intended for women administrators. And I find like that I stray away, especially as like an early career professional, from things that are not BIPOC-specific because when I have done a lot of programs, professional development, things that are more geared towards women or just like arts administrators in general, there is always an underlying like am I here because I'm like I check a box like because you needed, you know a certain number or am I here because my skills are equal to other people's? (Sister Circle Meeting 2)

Esther's recounting of feeling tokenized rather than valued for her leadership capabilities sheds light on the pervasive issue of tokenism and the challenges Black women face in

being recognized and respected in predominantly white organizational settings. Her reluctance to participate in programs that are not specifically BIPOC-focused highlights the importance of creating inclusive spaces where Black women can feel affirmed and valued for their contributions without questioning their worth.

Michelle* shared her experiences as a performer, particularly in environments where she is the only person of color. She discussed the heightened pressure she feels as a Black individual to perform at a higher standard than her non-Black peers because of the magnification of any mistake made. She recounted the challenges of constantly trying to prove herself in predominantly white spaces. This resonates with many Black women leaders who navigate similar experiences of being held to higher standards and facing harsher consequences for errors. Esther agreed with Michelle* during this discussion and added examples from her experiences as a Black performer.

Michelle*: I mean, as a performer, especially being if you're usually generally, especially if you go to a PWI or conservatory, you're very much usually the only specifically black but maybe even the only person of color within your ensembles, classes, etcetera. And it was, I found myself, especially in undergrad, really, I don't know any mistake I made, I felt like it was 100 times worse than what my, like any mistake my colleagues made, and I really I was hard on myself really hard on myself whenever I made mistakes because I didn't think like I could make mistakes, you know because I'm every day trying to prove that I'm supposed to be here in this space with these other people. (Sister Circle Meeting 2)

Esther: You don't have space to make mistakes... the treatment of Black singers is wild. Like, I've seen Black singers get fired over being three minutes late to

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rehearsal like white people or not, that's not happening with them…Because, like

with rehearsal, I would always be the first one there like 15, 20 minutes early

because if you're Black and you're walking in two minutes before downbeat, it

looks a lot different than like a white person walking in two minutes before

downbeat because they are going to see you regardless. (Sister Circle Meeting 2)

Esther's agreement with Michelle* underscores the shared experiences and

challenges faced by Black women in performing arts spaces, where the treatment of

Black performers is often scrutinized, and disparities in expectations and consequences

based on race are glaringly evident. Esther's observation about the lack of space for

mistakes and the disparities in treatment between Black and white performers highlights

the systemic inequities and biases that persist in arts organizations. Her assertion that

Black singers face harsher consequences for minor infractions further underscores the

need for systemic change and the creation of more equitable and inclusive environments

where Black women can thrive without fear of discrimination or unfair treatment.

Parris* raises a thought-provoking question about the possibility of bringing

one's authentic self to work as a Black woman or person of color, writing, "Interesting

notion of bringing your authentic self to work… is that really possible as a black

women[*sic*] or person of color… are org[anizations] really ready for that???" (Parris*,

Participant Journal). Parris* highlights the ongoing struggle for authenticity and

belonging in predominantly white organizational cultures. Her inquiry underscores the

need for organizations to actively address issues of diversity, equity, inclusion, and

access and create environments where Black women and people of color feel valued,

respected, and authentically express themselves without fear of retribution or

marginalization.

Participants also discussed issues of colorism in the industry and the lack of support from other leaders of color. Participants voiced that leaders of color should use their power to assist other people of color, especially Black women who are underrepresented in leadership spaces. The absence of support from other leaders of color was particularly salient and disappointing to participants with the discussion linked to White Supremacy Culture (Okun & Jones, 2000).

> Esther: Not all skinfolk are kinfolk. That resonates a lot just in seeing the placement of a lot of Black leaders. And I guess something like I went through it, I would say, in the last three years is learning that not everyone who holds those positions is there to help you or wants to help you specifically with Black women, which has been really disappointing. (Sister Circle Meeting 3)

For the second Sister Circle Meeting, participants read a chapter discussing the conversion of the term imposter syndrome and the author's reframing it as imposter treatment (Leiba, 2022). This reading and associated preparatory materials led to a deep discussion about how imposter treatment affects the participants. Participants sought to understand imposter treatment/syndrome, self-doubt, and uncertainty in their careers, all of which affect how they function daily and their confidence levels in their work. Michelle* writes about imposter treatment, "Usually in those moments where I felt like an imposter, I felt a pressure of being at a certain standard in comparison to others" (Participant Journal). Esther discussed further during the meeting:

> Esther: White people question that because all of a sudden there's more Black leadership in the arts than there has been, and so they're people, right, think that you're just there because you're Black, that you're just getting opportunities because you're Black. And so a lot of that causes imposter syndrome for me, because then I start second guessing whether I'm deserving of actually being

there, or even like, for reasons why I was selected to do things. (Sister Circle

Meeting 2)

Michelle's* reflection on feeling pressure to meet a certain standard compared to others when experiencing imposter treatment underscores the additional scrutiny and expectations Black women leaders often face in predominantly white organizational settings. Her experience highlights the pervasive nature of imposter treatment and its detrimental effects on confidence and self-perception. Esther's elaboration on how imposter syndrome is exacerbated by perceptions of tokenism and doubts about her deservingness further illustrates the intersectionality of race and gender in shaping experiences of self-doubt and uncertainty in leadership roles. Her discussion exposes the harmful stereotypes and biases Black women leaders confront, which can undermine their confidence and sense of belonging in their professional environments. The deep conversation prompted by the reading on imposter treatment during the Sister Circle Meeting demonstrates the value of these community spaces in fostering open dialogue and mutual support among participants. By providing a platform for discussing shared experiences and grappling with complex issues like imposter treatment, Sister Circle meetings offer Black women leaders an opportunity to validate their feelings, gain insights and support from others to confront and overcome imposter treatment, and foster a sense of empowerment and resilience in their professional journeys.

Participants also expressed frustration about issues and people they encountered in their careers, burnout, being overwhelmed and overworked, and seeking advice on overcoming these feelings. Carla* highlighted the challenges in her work environment, where she feels overworked and underpaid, recognizing an imbalance between the

amount of work she does and her pay. Carla* also mentioned that she feels awkward asking for a raise writing:

> Carla*: Work has to get done either way. I still verbalize my issues, but sometimes it's hard. I'm overworked and underpaid, and it feels awkward to ask for a raise. Even though I'm doing great work, I am reluctant to ask for help, which is only to my detriment. (Participant Journal)

Michelle* expressed frustration with additional work because teammates did not plan accordingly. She recognizes that as the only Black woman in the organization, there is an emotional toll of feeling burdened with more work, possibly due to a lack of equitable distribution or recognition. The added layer of being a minority in her organization compounds these challenges, making her question the fairness of her workload compared to her colleagues.

> Michelle*: So it feels like whenever I have to take on more things because other people basically just didn't plan accordingly, I really fight hard with it. And then also like being like, the only Black woman in my space also doesn't help me mentally with thinking about how much work I'm taking on in comparison with others. (Sister Circle Meeting 2)

Overall, these quotes provide compelling evidence of the profound impact of the Sister Circle Meetings in fostering dialogue, validation, and solidarity among Black women leaders, offering a vital space for addressing the social, cultural, and emotional challenges they face in their organizations. Through open and honest conversations, participants can confront systemic inequities, share their experiences, and collectively work towards creating more inclusive and equitable workplaces.

With an understanding of the intricate challenges Black women leaders face, particularly the nuanced experiences of tokenization, navigating predominantly white

spaces, and grappling with imposter treatment, I transition into a discussion of Assertion (3). This assertion delves into how participation in Sister Circle meetings may enhance leadership self-efficacy and career development and play a vital role in positively impacting work-life balance.

Enhancing Leadership Self-Efficacy And Career Development

Assertion 3 - *Participation in Sister Circle meetings may enhance leadership self-efficacy and career development and impact work-life balance positively*. This assertion and its themes emerged from quantitative data collected from the Leadership Self-Efficacy Scale survey and from qualitative data collected from participant word clouds, digital journals, video reflections, participant interviews, participant artistic reflections, and transcriptions of virtual Sister Circle Meeting recordings. The following theme-related findings substantiated the theme leading to the assertion: (a) participation in Sister Circles can increase participants' reported leadership self-efficacy; (b) participants used the activities of the innovation to reflect on their leadership skills and develop their leadership skills further; (c) participants sought advice from cohort members about their careers; (d) participants sought advice on time management from cohort members; and (e) participants sought support from other cohort members on their work/life balance. *The * by participants' names denotes those who did not complete the innovation.*

One of the first discussions in the first sister circle meeting centered on participants' perceptions of their strengths and weaknesses, and we used a virtual word cloud generator so that participants could visualize how their perceptions compared to others in real time. Word clouds are graphical representations that display the frequency of words submitted, with the size of each word in the image determined by how frequently it appears in the submissions (Atenstaedt, 2021). Words that appear larger

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than others have a higher frequency of responses within the Sister Circle. Figures 5 and 6 show the results of the two reflections. Participants noted they were collaborative, creative, and empathetic, but colleagues who did not fully respect their leadership challenged those traits. Participants expressed their intention to set boundaries by which their colleagues must abide. The experiences described in the text resonate with the research findings on the challenges faced by Black women in leadership positions due to the intersectionality of their race and gender (Acker, 2006; Crenshaw, 1991; Tatli & Ozbilgin, 2012). The participants' perceived strengths were met with microaggressions, resistance, and lack of recognition from colleagues who did not fully respect their leadership authority and capabilities (Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Tran, 2015).
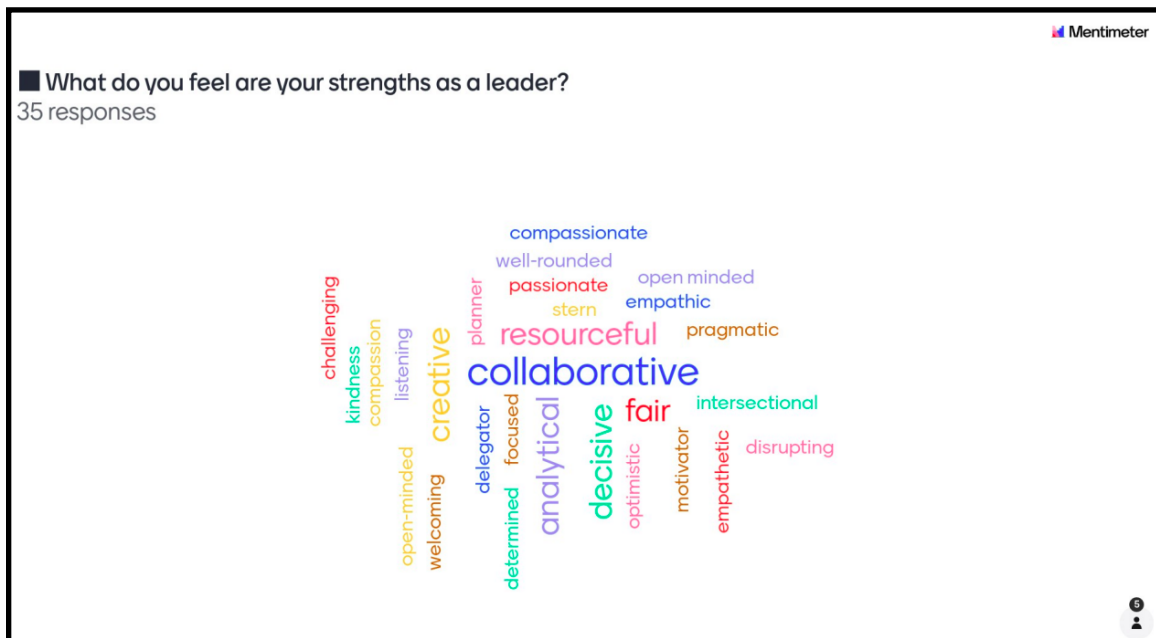

Figure 5. Participants' Perceptions of Their Strengths.

When asked to reflect on their weaknesses, participants struggled to name more than two or three traits. It is noted that all of the words in Figure 6 are the same size,

indicating that none of the participants used duplicative phrases. However, several phrases shared common themes or characteristics. For example, "headstrong" and "ambitious" both suggest a strong determination or drive. "Inconsistent" and "procrastinate" both imply a lack of consistency in behavior or action. The phrases "taking on too much", "spread thin", and "overworked" suggest a common theme of someone who is dealing with an excessive workload or responsibilities. Individuals using these phrases to describe their weaknesses may be taking on more tasks or commitments than they can effectively manage, resulting in a state of being spread thin and feeling overworked. Similarly, the phrases "lack of boundaries", "small ego", and "delegation" suggest that individuals using these phrases may lack the proper skills to manage tasks and capacity.

Participants discussed the changing perspectives within culture and society on what constitutes a weakness. Michelle* notes that the question of weaknesses is challenging for her because of these societal changes in perspective and that there should be a more nuanced understanding of personal attributes. What one might consider a weakness in one context could be perceived as a strength in another, reflecting the subjective nature of personal attributes and the importance of context in shaping perspectives of competency and effectiveness as a leader.

> Michelle*: It's hard to answer this question. And then it comes up on interviews, you know, for everything, scholarships, job interviews, everything. They always ask about what are your weaknesses, but I think there's been a shift within culture and society of what do we really view as weaknesses. And you know, what do we view as strengths? And I think that I know, for me, it's hard just to pinpoint and say this is a weakness of mine. So it was definitely harder for me to come up with things here. (Sister Circle Meeting 1)

This exploration of weaknesses within the sister circle setting provides participants an opportunity to reflect on their self-perceptions and challenge conventional notions of strengths and weaknesses. By engaging in such discussions, participants can better understand their personal attributes and how they contribute to their leadership self-efficacy and career development. Additionally, by recognizing the fluidity and context-dependent nature of strengths and weaknesses, participants can adopt a more flexible approach to self-assessment and ultimately enhance their confidence and resilience in professional settings.

Figure 6. Participants' Perceptions of Their Weaknesses.

Throughout the innovation, participants reflected on their confidence levels, a key component of leadership self-efficacy. Some participants felt particularly confident in their leadership skills, such as Madieth, who stated, "Fortunately, I've always been confident. It just really validated everything that I knew I should be doing. I mean that

I'm on the right path. I've been one of those overconfident people all my life probably"
(Participant Interview). Others, such as Esther, have tied their confidence levels to their
accomplishments, and when they feel they are doing less work, their confidence levels
decrease.

> Esther: So going back to your question, I was feeling good in regards of like I felt
> like I was doing good work and accomplishing right. Again, with those goals. I
> was meeting goals that were set and exceeding expectations. But I was still feeling
> slighted and insecure at this like well, what happens next? You know, I kind of hit
> this milestone and I don't have anything like immediate coming on the horizon
> and that kind of stuff makes me feel lost or insecure. Like, oh, I won't be seen as a
> good enough leader because I don't have something immediately coming up next.
> (Participant Interview)

These narratives illuminate the multifaceted nature of confidence and its
significance in shaping leadership self-efficacy and career progression. Madieth's
assertion of her innate confidence reflects a sense of self-assurance integral to her
leadership journey. Her unwavering belief in her abilities validates her approach to
leadership and serves as a source of affirmation and reassurance, affirming her path and
bolstering her self-esteem. Madieth's unwavering confidence exemplifies the
empowering potential of self-assurance in navigating professional challenges and
charting a course toward leadership success. Conversely, Esther's reflections highlight
the nuanced relationship between confidence and external validation, particularly
regarding career accomplishments. Her confidence is contingent upon tangible
achievements and the fulfillment of specific goals, suggesting a reliance on external
markers of success to validate her leadership capabilities. However, she also grapples
with feelings of insecurity and uncertainty when faced with periods of transition or

stagnation in her professional trajectory, underscoring the vulnerability inherent in pursuing career advancement.

Participants also discussed being kinder to themselves and accepting their emotions as part of who they are and how they lead. Michelle* stated, "Being kind to yourself. It feels weird. I'm learning how to do that without feeling the judgment that maybe yourself and others would give me, so yeah, it's an uphill battle for sure" (Sister Circle Meeting 2). Participants also discussed recognizing white supremacy traits[1] in their work and how to change their operating ways. Esther stated, "How that connects to my leadership is, a lot of times, I'm the one getting in my own way and striving for perfectionism, which is, you know, a trait of white supremacy" (Artistic Reflection).

During the innovation, participants sought advice from cohort members about their careers. During the second meeting, the participants discussed the stigma of leaving the arts field and the insinuation that one can not come back to the field. Esther reflected on choosing a career path outside of the arts that would allow her to gain additional skills that she could bring back to the field. Madieth and Esther reflected on their next career pivots with a possible entry into consulting or philanthropy. Participants also reflected on their volunteer pursuits in the arts, such as joining organizational boards or advisory committees and wanting to be patrons of arts organizations again.

Other discussions saw participants seeking and sharing advice and support on time management and a more positive work/life balance. Throughout the innovation, I

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[1] Okun, T., & Jones, K. (2000). White supremacy culture. *Dismantling racism: A workbook for social change groups.* Durham, NC: Change Work. Retrieved from http://www.dismantlingracism.org/Dismantling_Racism/liNKs_files/whitesupcul09.pdf.
This source delves into the concept of white supremacy culture, identifying and analyzing various traits and behaviors that perpetuate racial hierarchies and inequalities. Examples of such traits include perfectionism, individualism, sense of urgency, and defensiveness, which are explored in depth within the workbook to facilitate understanding and dismantling of racism within social change groups.

solicited participant feedback about the preparatory materials and the amount of work feasible given the workload in their leadership positions. I used this feedback to adjust future sister circle meeting agendas and types of preparatory materials offered for discussion. Throughout the meetings, participants shared their struggles with balancing their professional responsibilities with personal well-being, highlighting the pervasive nature of overwork and the perpetual sense of time scarcity that plagues many leaders. Participants stated throughout the innovation that their workload often interfered with their ability to complete tasks of the study, including the iterative artistic piece. One participant submitted a video reflection on a creative process completed during their collegiate years. The remaining three participants did not complete the iterative artistic piece. During the third meeting, Esther stated, "I very much had a, in full transparency, one of those days where it's like, I just got to brush my teeth, like two hours ago type of thing... it feels like the day is over. It's only coming up on three o'clock here" (Sister Circle Meeting 3).

During the first Sister Circle Meeting, Carla* discussed how she leads her team when her workload is full. She recounted times when her teams ask her questions whose answers can be found in the various resources available, "I say, Okay, I don't have time, but these are the resources and I have a contact sheet of direct emails, if you have a question about something" (Sister Circle Meeting 1 Transcript). Carla's* approach to delegating tasks to her team reflects a proactive effort to manage her workload efficiently, showcasing the importance of resourcefulness and strategic decision-making in navigating professional challenges.

At the beginning of the second and third Sister Circle Meetings, I asked participants about their state of mind to elicit discussion about how their current work is affecting their mental and emotional states, see Figure 7. During the second Sister Circle

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Meeting, Esther related how she felt she did not have enough time to finish tasks because the list seemed neverending. Esther's candid reflection on her workload exemplifies the relentless demands placed on leaders as she describes the perpetual cycle of task completion and the constant influx of new responsibilities. This sentiment is echoed by Michelle*, who expresses frustration over external factors beyond her control that contribute to her workload. These accounts illuminate the pervasive nature of work-related stress and its detrimental effects on participants' mental and emotional well-being.

> Esther: I was saying this to you earlier... I'm gonna have a lighter week next week and then nevermind. I keep checking things off the to do list. And then like, I added eight more things to the to do list this morning. So it very much feels like this endless cycle of, yeah, I just don't have enough time to finish things. (Sister Circle Meeting 2)

> Michelle*: it's definitely been one of those weeks where I feel usually like there's been the things just keep coming. And it's even more frustrating for me when some of those stressors are out of my control. Like if you're working on projects together doing a lot of collaborative work and you can't really help when other people aren't doing their share. (Sister Circle Meeting 2)
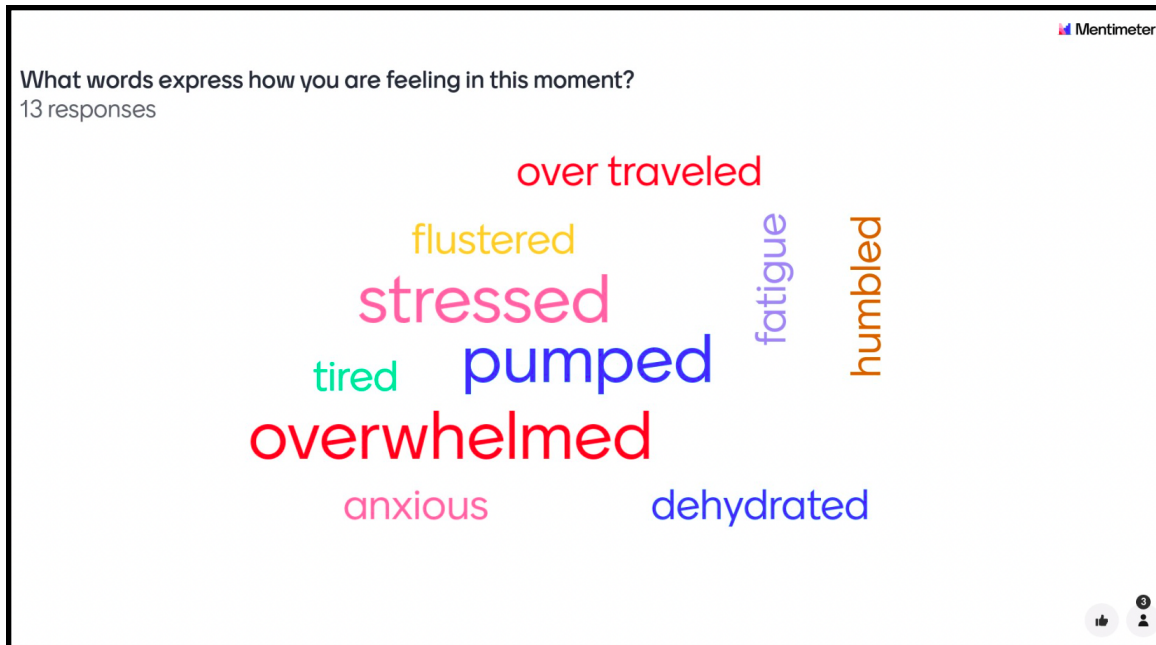
Figure 7. Sister Circle Meeting 2, Participant Responses.

Though participants recounted on several occasions that they were overworked and had work/life balance challenges, this topic needs further addressing. Some participants have tried to address this challenge in various ways, which is a work in progress. However, despite their efforts, participants continue to grapple with feelings of overwhelm and a lack of work-life balance, as evidenced by Esther's acknowledgment of the need for intentional rest and self-care. During the third Sister Circle Meeting, Esther stated, "I keep trying to remind myself that I don't have to fill every inch of time that I have and that I need time to rest to be productive and successful in the other things that I do" (Participant Interview Transcript). These narratives underscore the multifaceted nature of work-life balance and the complex interplay between professional demands and personal well-being.

Participation in Sister Circle meetings provides participants with a supportive space to address these challenges openly and collaboratively, fostering a sense of

solidarity and shared understanding. Furthermore, the iterative nature of the meetings, as evidenced by adjustments made based on participant feedback, demonstrates a commitment to meeting participants' evolving needs and optimizing the effectiveness of the Sister Circle format. As participants continue to engage in these discussions and exchange insights, they have the opportunity to enhance their leadership self-efficacy and career development and cultivate a more holistic and fulfilling approach to work and life.

I will now delve into observations and findings from the artistic components of the arts-based sister circle innovation.

Artistic Artifacts

I observed that participants could have been more enthusiastic about participating and sharing in the creative activities of the innovation. During Sister Circle Meeting one, participants were asked to bring to mind one crucial belief or value to them and free-write in their digital journals about how that belief or value impacts their actions and decisions and what challenges they may have faced due to this belief or value. I observed that most participants wrote sparsely in their journals but elaborated extensively during the discussion after the writing activity.

During the second Sister Circle Meeting, after discussing imposter treatment, participants completed a creative writing activity that imagined them achieving a goal using a short story, poetry, or essay and vivid imagery and sensory details. One participant described her creative writing process:

> Esther: Mine wasn't very creative. I just did some, kind of like what we did in the beginning, like word bubbles. But I tried to pick out skills that I have that are not arts-related, if that makes sense. Just things in general that I'm good at to remind myself that I am, you know, beyond my work, but also the things that I bring to

my work that are inherently unique to me, which is kind of an exercise I do with my therapist. I feel it's helpful. (Sister Circle Meeting 2)

Another participant elaborated on a detailed sketch of a musical and theatrical production she would like to design for her organization. However, another participant began to recite a poem she wrote but backed out of the recitation midstream, stating,

Michelle*: Actually, I don't want to read. Anyway, it was a short poem just basically about living in the moment because I think that's something I've been trying to work on a little bit more instead of focusing too much on the past and also the future, trying to find the sense of the middle and where I currently am. (Sister Circle Meeting 2)

Participants created haiku poems inspired by discussions during the third Sister Circle Meeting. Participants shared their poems aloud and in the virtual meeting chat after the poetry writing activity. Madieth wrote, "Hanging on that cliff. Nails strong enough to hold on. Never letting go." Esther wrote, "Black girl speaks her mind. Arts and culture will say no. Black girl always will anyway." After sharing, participants discussed what thoughts inspired their poetry, including frustrations about the glass cliff and resistance from others in the arts and culture field.

The observation that participants exhibited more enthusiasm during the discussion phases of creative activities compared to their initial writing phases suggests several intriguing dynamics at play within the Sister Circle meetings. Firstly, it indicates a level of comfort and engagement with verbal communication and interpersonal interaction among the participants, which increased as the meetings continued. Despite potentially feeling hesitant or reserved during the individual writing task, participants appeared to readily embrace the opportunity for dialogue and collective reflection during the subsequent discussion. This phenomenon may reflect the communal nature of the

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Sister Circle format, wherein participants derive inspiration, validation, and support from one another through shared experiences and perspectives. The discussion phase likely provided a platform for participants to articulate their thoughts more freely, draw connections between their personal beliefs and experiences, and explore common themes and challenges in a collaborative setting. This collective exploration not only fosters a sense of camaraderie but also enriches the depth and breadth of the conversation, allowing for deeper insights and mutual learning.

Moreover, this observation highlights the value of interpersonal connection and dialogue in facilitating self-expression and exploration. While the act of writing in journals may initially seem solitary and introspective, the subsequent discussion transforms it into a communal effort characterized by mutual exchange and reflection. This transition from individual reflection to group dialogue underscores the transformative power of collective engagement in fostering personal growth and insight. Overall, the observation suggests that the Sister Circle meetings serve as a dynamic forum for participants to engage in individual introspection and collective dialogue, facilitating a rich and multifaceted exploration of personal beliefs, values, and experiences.

Though participants completed artistic activities when instructed to do so within the Sister Circle Meetings they attended, only one participant, Madieth, completed an iterative artistic piece as part of their final reflection. Madieth submitted a self-portrait, seen in Photograph 1, that depicts how she would like others to view her as a leader. She writes, "Madieth wants to be viewed as a leader who is knowledgeable, hard but fair, confident, creative with a sense of humor" (Madieth, Artistic Artifact). She also stated in her interview about the portrait:

Madieth: I think the first thing I want to say about it is, especially now where I am physically located in an all-white institution, that that is the Blackness in me. That is the hood in me. And yet, I'm holding a brand new snifter, so that's a little high class, and I have on heels, a little high class. So it's like I'm street but still deep. (Participant Interview)

The photograph depicts Madieth, a Black woman, seated in an office chair, her posture assertive with legs spread wide apart, adorned in a dress and heels. The stark contrast of the monochrome tones adds a sense of timelessness and gravitas to the composition. The woman exudes confidence and authority, positioned with legs spread wide and the bottom of her dress serving as a modest cover. This composition suggests a deliberate choice to challenge traditional norms of femininity and propriety, conveying a sense of empowerment and defiance. The woman's posture, leaning forward with a brandy snifter in hand, suggests a readiness to engage, while the brandy snifter held in her hand adds a touch of sophistication and intrigue. The deliberate omission of her face from the frame adds an element of anonymity, inviting viewers to focus solely on the image's body language and symbolic elements. Overall, the photograph evokes themes of power, agency, and resistance, inviting viewers to contemplate the complexities of identity, gender, and social expectations.

Photograph 1. Madieth's Artistic Artifact.

Reflection on Findings

Reflecting on the study findings, I am deeply moved by the experiences shared by
Black women leaders in predominantly white organizations. Their narratives resonate
with me as I, too, have navigated similar challenges in my professional journey. The
strong desire expressed by participants to connect with other Black women leaders
underscores the importance of community and solidarity in facing the unique obstacles
inherent in leadership roles. These spaces, where Black women can come together to
share their experiences and insights, serve as invaluable sources of support and
validation.

The themes and assertions uncovered in the study shed light on the complex intersectionality of race and gender and the profound impact it has on the professional experiences of Black women leaders. Topics such as imposter treatment, self-doubt, and career uncertainties are all too familiar to me, and hearing them echoed in the discussions of participants reaffirms the universality of these challenges. Moreover, the feelings of burnout and overwhelm disclosed by participants strike a chord with me, reminding me of the times when I, too, have felt stretched thin and in need of support.

However, amidst the struggles and frustrations, the study also highlights the resilience and resourcefulness of Black women leaders. Engaging in community spaces provides them a platform for collaborative problem-solving, reflection, and growth. By sharing their experiences and seeking advice from one another, participants can enhance their leadership skills, manage their time effectively, and find support for achieving a healthy work-life balance. This speaks to the transformative power of community and the importance of creating spaces where Black women can thrive and excel in their professional endeavors.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

My mother did not raise me to ask for permission to lead.

— Ayanna Pressley

The interest in this study was informed by personal experience, first-hand anecdotes from Black women colleagues in the sector, and the literature. This study recognizes the need for support and culturally relevant professional development for Black women. It explores the effectiveness of an arts-based sister circle model in enhancing the leadership self-efficacy of Black women in leadership roles within the arts and culture sector in predominantly white organizations. The findings of this study illuminate the multi-faceted motivations and impacts of participating in an arts-based sister circle coaching model for Black women in leadership that is closely aligned with the Sister Circle framework and Experiential Learning Theory. The following four research questions seek to uncover participants' motivations, explore social and cultural factors, assess the impact on leadership self-efficacy, and understand the innovation's broader effects on workplace leadership: What motivations do participants express for participating in a sister circle innovation? What social, cultural, and emotional factors regarding Black women's leadership emerged within the arts-based sister circle innovation? How does a sister circle experience affect participants' leadership self-efficacy? How does the innovation impact participants' workplace leadership?

Chapter 5 discusses prior research and findings aligning with the current study and the four research questions above. Then, I discuss three significant assertions emerging from the data during analysis, aligning with the literature regarding Black women's motivations to participate in sister circles. I then discuss personal lessons

learned from the study as a facilitator, coach, and researcher, the study's limitations, and then end with implications for my practice and future studies.

Summary of the Results

The study uncovered significant themes and assertions related to the experiences of Black women in leadership positions in predominantly white organizations who seek opportunities to network and build community with other Black women. Participants' experiences illuminate a troubling aspect of Black women's leadership journeys: encounters with colleagues who question their competence and subject them to demeaning behaviors. These narratives underscore the pervasive challenges faced by Black women in professional settings. According to the 2022 Women in the Workplace Report by McKinsey and LeanIn.org, among over 40,000 surveyed employees, Black women are disproportionately affected by signals indicating greater difficulty in advancing to higher positions. This disparity is evident in the statistics: just 9% of Senior Manager and Director level positions are held by women of color, dropping to a mere 4% at the executive level. These figures starkly contrast with the staggering 62% representation of white men in executive roles. Additionally, 33% of Black women leaders reported experiencing denial of opportunities or being overlooked, with gender and race cited as contributing factors (LeanIn.org & McKinsey & Company, 2022).

The arts and culture sector reflects broader workplace disparities, with white individuals overwhelmingly holding leadership positions (Enrich Chicago, 2020). Despite efforts by some organizations to address these issues and promote diversity, there is a long-standing history of Eurocentric gatekeeping and limited access for marginalized groups within the arts sector. An intersectional equality approach is proposed as an organizational goal and framework to address workplace inequalities, fostering self-reflection and modifications across procedural, discursive, material, and

affective dimensions (Woods et al., 2021). Woods et al. emphasized that employing an intersectional equality approach allows organizations to change power dynamics and address inequalities, fostering a collective understanding of the communities they aim to serve.

Participants' experiences in the current study shed light on the enduring marginalization of Black women in the workplace, which often results in their neglect as leaders and innovators. Despite their collaborative, creative, and empathetic approaches to leadership, participants reported facing challenges where their colleagues did not fully respect their authority and exhibited microaggressive behaviors. This lack of recognition denies Black women access to career advancement and growth opportunities and imposes organizational barriers to their success. The research underscores the intersectional nature of these challenges, highlighting the compounded effects of race and gender discrimination on Black women's professional experiences (Acker, 2006; Crenshaw, 1991; Tatli & Ozbilgin, 2012). Such discrimination manifests in increased instances of tokenism, microaggressions, and racial trauma, contributing to a perceived lack of credibility among Black women leaders (Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Tran, 2015). Thus, addressing these systemic inequities is imperative for fostering inclusive work environments where Black women can thrive as leaders and contribute meaningfully to organizational success.

Participants in the current study resonated deeply with the "glass cliff" phenomenon and reflected on their own experiences in leadership roles. Madieth's heartfelt account vividly captures the sense of disempowerment that countless Black women leaders like myself have encountered in organizational environments. Her statement, "They're using me as the bad guy, using me. When it really is, it was something that was wrong before I even got there," distinctly illustrates the burden of

blame unfairly placed on Black women leaders, often for issues beyond their control. This narrative echoes the challenges faced by Black women in navigating workplace dynamics characterized by scapegoating and inadequate support structures. These sentiments underscore the pervasive nature of the glass cliff phenomenon within organizations, particularly for Black women leaders. Despite their qualifications and competence, Black women often find themselves thrust into leadership roles during times of crisis or organizational turmoil, where they must grapple with intense scrutiny and heightened expectations. The metaphorical glass cliff becomes a precarious ledge upon which Black women leaders must navigate, balancing the demands of leadership with the systemic barriers and biases they face.

Studies conducted by Ryan and Haslam (2007) highlighted the existence of the glass cliff, indicating that women, particularly those from racial and ethnic minorities, are more likely to be promoted to leadership positions in organizations facing crises or underperformance. This trend reinforces gender and racial stereotypes and often leads to insufficient support and skill development for Black women leaders. Heidelberg (2022) emphasized the prevalence of the glass cliff phenomenon in arts and culture organizations, especially evident in the appointment of Black female leaders following the social unrest of 2020. These leaders, often tasked with spearheading equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives despite stakeholder reluctance, faced intense scrutiny and pressure to address organizational issues without adequate support. The persistent workplace challenges Black women face contribute to diminished workplace satisfaction, increased burnout (Hines & Ward, 2022), and a decline in leadership self-efficacy (Cook & Glass, 2013). Despite these challenges, there is a critical need for those in positions of power, particularly in arts and culture organizations, to prioritize the advancement and support of Black women leaders.

Therefore, it is imperative to create supportive spaces and opportunities for Black women to enhance their leadership self-efficacy and foster connections with other Black women leaders. Madieth's experience serves as a poignant reminder of the complex interplay between race, gender, and leadership dynamics in organizational contexts. Her testimony highlights the need for greater awareness and accountability regarding the challenges faced by Black women leaders, as well as the imperative for organizations to cultivate inclusive and supportive environments that foster the success and well-being of all employees, regardless of their identity.

In the current study, participants highlighted the significance of sister circles as a supportive network that fosters a sense of community among individuals with shared identities. As Neal-Barnett et al. (2011) noted, sister circles serve as an informal method for building supportive networks and creating a sense of belonging. Richardson (2022) emphasize that sister circles provide a platform for empowerment and self-actualization, where participants can exchange narratives and foster a stronger sense of identity. Esther, one of the participants, expressed appreciation for the collective struggle within the sister circle, stating, "It makes me feel a lot less lonely when I know that folks are struggling with similar things." This sentiment underscores the importance of sister circles in providing a space for mutual learning and solidarity among Black women (West, 2019).

In the current study, the findings from research question one, motivations participants express for participating in a sister circle innovation, affirm prior studies. Participants echoed prior research findings, reaffirming motivations Cupid (2020) identified for Black women's engagement in sister circles. Michelle* (*the * by participants' names denotes those who did not complete the innovation)*, one of the participants, articulated a desire for connection and knowledge-sharing among Black

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women leaders, stating, "I would love any support, especially to hear from other Black women in the field, who are, who have already gone through the same things… I wanted an opportunity to learn more." This sentiment aligns with the notion that sister circles serve as "support groups" that foster a sense of community and facilitate mutual learning (Neal-Barnett et al., 2011, p. 267).

Furthermore, participants utilized the activities and discussions within the sister circle innovation to reflect on their leadership skills and seek opportunities for skill development, highlighting the practical benefits of such engagements (Cupid, 2020). These sister circles served as community spaces and safe havens for in-depth discussions and collaborative problem-solving, allowing participants to openly address the social, cultural, and emotional challenges unique to their roles. The discussions covered topics such as the intersectionality of race and gender, imposter syndrome, self-doubt, career uncertainties, and frustrations encountered in their professional journeys.

Within the arts-based sister circle innovation examined in the current study, participants delved into various social, cultural, and emotional factors about Black women's leadership experiences. The second research question of this study focused on uncovering these emergent themes. Johnson (2015) describes sister circles as forums for exploring designated subjects or experiences from the viewpoint of Black women, aligning with the study's objective to comprehend issues affecting Black women's leadership. As Neal-Barnett et al. (2011) suggested, I incorporated culturally specific curricula tailored to Black women's lives. This infusion prompted participant discourse on topics such as the intersectionality of race and gender in their work, reframing imposter syndrome as imposter treatment, and coping with feelings of burnout and overwhelm. Participants expressed the pressure to perform flawlessly in leadership roles, emphasizing that "you don't have space to make mistakes" in predominantly white

spaces. As discussions delved into more personal topics, a supportive and cherished environment emerged within the sister circle, echoing Roby & Cook's (2019) notion of sisterhood.

Participants also questioned the ability to be authentically Black at work. These and other discussions affirm Cupid's (2020) study, which found that Black women desire these spaces to be authentic. Black feminist scholars have advocated for creating safe spaces where Black women can articulate their concerns and learn strategies to navigate their current realities (Collins, 2009; Dillard, 2012; Guy-Sheftall, 1995; hooks, 2005; Hull et al., 1982; Johnson, 2015; Lorde, 1984). hooks (2005) noted the collective hope of creating a "space where Black women could name their pain and find ways of healing" (p. 6-7) in her description of organizing a sister circle of her Black literature students.

In the current study, participants' experiences shed light on the emotional and practical dimensions of the sister circle innovation, aligning with Kets de Vries's (2014) argument that effective coaching must encompass the client's emotional dimension. Richardson (2022) emphasizes integrating the emotional aspect into coaching interactions. This study's third and fourth research questions explored how the sister circle experience influences participants' leadership self-efficacy and workplace leadership. Participants utilized the activities and discussions within the sister circle to reflect on their leadership skills and sought advice from cohort members about their careers. Moreover, participants engaged in discussions about the stigma associated with leaving the arts and culture field temporarily to acquire additional leadership skills and the perceived difficulty of reentering the field afterward. Madieth expressed confidence in her career path, stating that the discussions "really validated everything that I knew I should be doing... I'm on the right path." These reflections underscore the transformative

impact of the sister circle experience on participants' self-perception and career trajectories.

Other participants discussed being kinder to themselves and the perception that concepts of White Supremacy Culture (Okun & Jones, 2000) show up in their work and negatively affect their leadership, such as "striving for perfectionism," which is a trait of White Supremacy Culture. One segment of the discussion centered on their disappointment when other leaders of color did not support them. Esther stated, "Not all skinfolk are kinfolk… in the last three years is learning that not everyone who holds those positions is there to help you or wants to help you, specifically with Black women, which has been really disappointing." Participants also discussed how colorism, "a form of prejudice or discrimination in which people are treated differently based on skin color despite being of the same race" (Hairston, 2016, p. 6) added to their disappointment and perceived mistreatment. Though Hairston's (2016) study of the effects of colorism on master's level counseling students' perceptions of wellness and mental health of African American men did not show any statistical significance regarding colorism, she argued that prior studies (Diette et al., 2015; Howard, 2011) had shown that participants reported adverse effects in various situations due to colorism, such as hiring. Further research on colorism is warranted as the close ties to racism and prejudice require a nuanced approach.

The discussions within the sessions were heartfelt and emotional as participants recounted their perceptions and stories. This notion of a safe space to be authentic and emotional affirms Allen and Joseph's (2018) study on Black faculty in predominantly white institutions (PWI). Allen and Joseph's findings indicated that Black faculty expressed the necessity of being in the company of fellow Black women to address challenges associated with working at a PWI. The study developed this sister circle

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community, which proved socially and culturally significant, providing participants with resources and tools to navigate and operate effectively within their environment (Cupid, 2020).

The quantitative data from the study revealed that participants reported increases in their leadership self-efficacy, particularly in dimensions such as leading change, motivating people, and consensus building, despite the study's relatively short duration. Additionally, their self-reported levels of interpersonal relationships and confidence remained stable. However, there was a slight decrease in the dimension of delegation, which may be attributed to factors such as the engagement and capabilities of their staff. Dwyer (2019) suggests that various contextual factors may influence leaders' efficacy perceptions, including resource availability, leader's role discretion, followers' abilities, and organizational culture. Therefore, with continued participation in the arts-based sister circle over a more extended period, participants could experience further increases in their self-reported leadership self-efficacy across all dimensions. This highlights the potential for ongoing growth and development through sustained engagement in such interventions.

The study suggests that engaging in these community spaces can positively impact leadership self-efficacy, career development, and work-life balance, as participants actively used the discussions and activities to reflect on and enhance their leadership skills, seek career advice, manage time effectively, and find support for achieving a healthy work/life balance.

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Emerging Assertions

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After reflecting on the data analysis and findings from the research questions, the research revealed three emerging themes and theme-related findings. Assertions were deduced from the themes and their related findings. The assertions were: (1) Black

women face many challenges when promoted into leadership positions in predominantly white organizations, driving them to seek opportunities to network and create community with other Black women leaders; (2) Sister Circle meetings serve as community spaces providing opportunities for deep conversation and problem-solving without fear of retribution about the social, cultural and emotional challenges they face as Black women leaders in their organizations; and (3) Participation in Sister Circle meetings may enhance leadership self-efficacy and career development and positively impact work-life balance.

Assertion (1) findings include: participants seek connection with and information from Black women leaders. Assertion (2) findings include: participants' desire to discuss how the intersectionality of their race and gender affects their work; participants seek to understand imposter treatment/syndrome, self-doubt, and career uncertainty; participants express frustration about issues and people they encounter in their careers; and participants feel burnout, overwhelmed, and overworked and seek advice on overcoming these feelings. Assertion (3) concepts include: participants used the activities and discussion of the innovation to reflect on their leadership skills and develop their leadership skills further; participants sought advice from cohort members about their careers; and participants sought advice on time management from cohort members. Transitioning from the identification of assertions, I will now delve into a detailed discussion of Assertion (1), which elucidates the challenges faced by Black women when elevated to leadership positions in predominantly white organizations, leading them to actively seek networking opportunities and form a supportive community with fellow Black women leaders.

Black Women Seek Opportunities to Network and Build Community

Assertion one states that Black women face many challenges when promoted into leadership positions in predominantly white organizations, driving them to seek opportunities to network and create community with other Black women leaders. The participants' motivation to engage in sister circles was primarily rooted in the need to establish connections and build a supportive community with other Black women leaders. This motivation echoes the assertion that Black women face unique challenges when promoted into leadership positions in predominantly white organizations, such as microaggressions, power dynamics, and racial trauma (Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Tran, 2015). The narratives of participants such as Michelle*, Esther, Parris*, and Carla* (*the * by participants' names denotes those who did not complete the innovation)* highlight the importance of building connections with peers who understand Black women's unique challenges in leadership positions and recognizing the value of learning from shared experiences.

The desire for connection extends beyond professional growth; participants felt less lonely in their work and found validation in hearing others' stories. This feeling of validation and connection aligns with the Sister Circle framework, which emphasizes the creation of a safe space for shared experiences (Johnson, 2015) and also emphasizes the role of sister circles in providing a sense of belonging and affirmation, countering feelings of isolation that Black women may experience in predominantly white spaces. As one participant expressed, the shared struggle within the community diminishes the sense of isolation and reinforces collective understanding. The feeling of validation derived from connecting with other Black women who faced similar challenges contributed to a supportive environment that helped participants navigate the complexities of their leadership roles.

Building upon the profound impact of connection and validation within the Sister

Circle framework, I will now transition to a comprehensive discussion of Assertion (2).

This assertion underscores the pivotal role of Sister Circle meetings as community spaces

that facilitate deep conversations and problem-solving, offering a refuge where Black

women leaders can address social, cultural, and emotional challenges without fear of

retribution in their predominantly white organizational settings.

Safe Spaces for Deep Discussion and Problem-Solving

Assertion two states that these community spaces provide opportunities for deep

conversation and problem-solving without fear of retribution about the social, cultural,

and emotional challenges they face as Black women leaders in their organizations. This

assertion aligns with the Sister Circle framework element of the centrality of power,

where Black women's experiences and knowledge are viewed as power sources, and

participants empower each other by sharing wisdom (Cupid, 2020; Johnson, 2015). The

literature I examined suggests that the sister circle model is a practical strategy for

instigating positive changes in group dynamics, providing a secure space for

transformation (Hughes-Gaston et al., 2007; Ibe et al., 2021; Neal-Barnett et al., 2011;

Richardson, 2022; Thomas et al., 2016). Additionally, research indicates that this model

enables more holistic approaches, creating a safe environment for Black women to

disclose, embrace, and honor their authentic selves (Richardson, 2022). Within a

supportive and healing context, Black women can openly share their perspectives,

drawing from their unique standpoint within a reliable ecosystem (Richardson, 2022).

In the current study, the sister circles provided a unique and safe space for

participants to engage in deep discussions about their experiences as Black women in the

arts and culture sector, the reframing of imposter syndrome to imposter treatment

(Leiba, 2022), career frustrations, and the emotional toll of being underrepresented in

leadership spaces. The discussions revealed instances of tokenization, colorism, and the absence of support from other Black women leaders, highlighting the need for spaces to address these issues openly, as recommended in prior research (Cupid, 2020; Johnson, 2015; Richardson, 2022). The participants' shared experiences fostered a sense of understanding and empathy, contributing to a supportive network that acknowledged the impact of White Supremacy Culture (Okun & Jones, 2000) on their professional journeys. In this manner, the sister circle becomes a forum for addressing issues related to race and gender dynamics, providing an avenue for participants to share their experiences without fear of retribution.

Esther's account of feeling tokenized, Michelle's* experiences as a performer navigating predominantly white spaces, and the collective acknowledgment of the challenges posed by imposter treatment shed light on the complex issues Black women face. These discussions transcend the professional realm, touching on deeply ingrained societal problems. Thus, the sister circle model proves instrumental in dissecting and addressing these challenges collectively, emphasizing the importance of these safe spaces for genuine, unfiltered conversations. This understanding of the importance of sister circles as safe spaces leads to assertion (3) and its connection to leadership self-efficacy and career development.

Enhancing Leadership Self-Efficacy and Career Development

The research findings align with the literature on sister circles as generative spaces yielding collaborative ideas, advice, and resource sharing (Cupid, 2020). Assertion three states that participation in these community spaces may enhance leadership self-efficacy and career development and impact work-life balance positively. The activities within the innovation, including reflections on strengths and weaknesses, discussions about confidence levels, and seeking advice on career paths, played a crucial

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role in enhancing and positively affecting leadership self-efficacy. The arts-based sister circle framework, integrated with experiential learning theory, allowed participants to evaluate their leadership skills and develop their skills critically. The participants engaged in reflective exercises that encouraged self-awareness, recognized the importance of setting boundaries, and addressed challenges associated with imposter treatment and self-doubt. Additionally, seeking advice from cohort members on career decisions, time management, and work/life balance contributed to a collective empowerment that transcended individual experiences. The narratives of participants like Madieth, Michelle*, and Esther underscore the importance of these supportive networks in navigating the internal and external challenges Black women face.

Results from the pre- and post-innovation Leadership Self-Efficacy Scale survey revealed that although participants who completed the innovation only attended three sister circle meetings, their reported perception of their abilities of three out of the six dimensions increased. Dimensions showing positive change were: starting and leading change processes, motivating people, and gaining the consensus of group members. Furthermore, their self-reported levels of interpersonal relationships and confidence held firm. These results reinforce the positive influence of the sister circle model for Black women leaders to amplify leadership self-efficacy. If given a longer duration of participation within the arts-based sister circle, participants may see a continued increase in their self-reported leadership self-efficacy across all dimensions.

The assertions collectively suggest that sister circles, as a coaching model, fulfill a crucial role in addressing the nuanced needs of Black women in leadership positions. These findings align with the sister circle's framework elements: (1) communication dynamics, (2) centrality of empowerment, and (3) the researcher as a participant (Johnson, 2015). Moreover, the experiential learning aspect is evident as participants

actively engaged in reflective activities, exchanged insights, and sought guidance for their professional development. These findings carry profound implications for organizational practices. Coaches and organizational leaders should recognize the significance of creating safe spaces for deep discussions and problem-solving for Black women, particularly regarding challenges they face in the workplace due to the intersectionality of their identities. Additionally, coaching interventions that enhance leadership self-efficacy and career development should align with the participants' motivations and contribute to a more inclusive and supportive leadership landscape for Black women. Recognizing and valuing the experiences of Black women leaders is crucial for fostering an inclusive workplace culture.

Personal Lessons Learned

When I began this research study, my interests revolved around the experiences of Black women in leadership positions and developing a coaching method to support them. However, as the journey unfolded, my exploration of this topic extended beyond the initial focus, leading me to a deeper understanding of the distinctions and similarities between group coaching and the facilitation of group processes. I discovered that group coaching encapsulates unique dynamics oriented toward individual and collective development. In contrast, group facilitation fosters collaboration, effective communication, and shared decision-making within a process-driven group context. I have come to appreciate the interplay between these two methodologies and the richness of group dynamics, further reshaping my initial perspective and expanding my scope of inquiry.

As an arts practitioner, incorporating an arts-based praxis through an experiential learning theory (ELT) lens into the research process has been transformative. Embracing ELT has shifted my understanding of effective learning from

a theoretical concept to a lived experience. Further research using arts-based ELT in practice will continue to deepen my knowledge and expertise of this dynamic and immersive learning process. In addition, witnessing participants express themselves through various artistic mediums has highlighted the significance of diverse channels for communication and self-discovery within a group setting.

During this research, I also learned about sister circles as a coaching method (Cupid, 2020; Koopman et al., 2021; Johnson, 2015; Neal-Barnett et al., 2011; Richardson, 2022) for Black women, which altered my conception of the study. Though I happen to be a member of one of the largest networks of sister circles worldwide, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, I had yet to understand these Historically Black Greek Letter Organizations as such. These supportive networks designed through a cultural experience lens provide a powerful space for group discussion of shared experiences, collaborative problem-solving, and community building among similarly identified individuals. The iterative engagement with the participants and the continuous exploration of group coaching and facilitation unearthed the depth and complexity of sister circles as support mechanisms and dynamic spaces for collaborative growth and solidarity. These spaces are adaptive and allow for fluid responses to the needs of the Black women within them. Recognizing sister circles as organic necessitated a departure from rigid methodologies and allowed for the emergence of participant-centric shaping of the research process. This shift enriched the study and honored the authenticity and agency of the Black women within the study.

Lessons Learned Through Implementation

I observed that most participants wrote sparsely in their journals during their at-home preparatory work and sister circle meetings but elaborated extensively during discussions after writing activities. Participants may have chosen to skip writing in their

journals due to their challenges in maintaining work/life balance. Their time and energy demands could have limited their capacity to engage in preparatory activities, such as journal writing, which may require dedicated and uninterrupted periods. The participants' struggle with work/life balance may have resulted in competing priorities, leaving them with insufficient time to reflect and document their thoughts in writing.

Furthermore, the shift towards elaborating on thoughts during Sister Circle meetings could be attributed to the evolving dynamics of these discussions. As the Sister Circle sessions progressed, participants may have experienced a growing sense of trust and camaraderie within the group. This increased comfort and connection could have encouraged them to open up more during the interactive discussions than in solitary journal writing. The supportive environment of the Sister Circle may have fostered a space where participants felt encouraged to share their thoughts verbally, expressing themselves more freely and candidly as the discussions continued.

I also observed that participants arrived at Sister Circle meetings focused on connecting with the other participants and were interested in discussing the information in the preparatory materials, which were not arts-based but focused on culturally-specific experiences of Black women. Participants also engaged in lengthy conversations on the topics chosen for each meeting. As a researcher, I was interested in understanding their perspectives on these topics, so instead of cutting them short to move on to the next activity, I gave space in the meeting for participants to say what emerged until natural transition points evolved. This participant-centric approach enhanced the engagement of the participants in the study. It yielded a research model that is dynamic, responsive, and aligned with the expectations and goals of the participants.

This adaptability became a cornerstone of the study, fostering a collaborative environment where participants actively contribute to shaping the research process. The

evolving research model reflects a commitment to inclusivity, responsiveness, and relevance, emphasizing the importance of co-creating knowledge with those impacted by the study. Additionally, fostering a collaborative and evolving environment within this research has proven particularly favorable for the participants, who, as Black women, often encounter the opposite (Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Tran, 2015). This dynamic setting provides a platform to hear their voices, acknowledge experiences, and value contributions, counteracting the systemic challenges they may encounter in their work environment. The collaborative and adaptive nature of the research environment empowers Black women to actively shape the narrative, contributing to a sense of agency and inclusivity often absent in their professional lives.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this participatory action research study, including the brevity of the study, the study sampling method and sample size, and the effect of participants' workload on their overall participation. A significant limitation of this participatory action research study is the short duration of the investigation. The study's original design encompassed holding five sister circle meetings, and each focused on a single item of the dimension of "showing self-awareness and self-confidence" of the Leadership Self-Efficacy Scale (Bobbio & Manganelli, 2009, p. 24). During the recruitment phase, it became evident to me that participants showing interest in the study could not commit to five meetings. At that point, I opted to contract the number of meetings to three by combining the topic areas into meaningful combinations. The compressed time may have restricted the depth and breadth of data collection, potentially limiting the comprehensiveness of the findings. A more extended study period might have provided a more nuanced understanding of the dynamic changes within the participants' experiences.

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Additional limitations of the study were related to the study sample. The study employed a criterion-based, convenience sampling strategy (Miles & Huberman, 1994), introducing potential selection bias and limiting the representation of diverse perspectives within the participant group. This methodological choice could affect the study's external validity, as the findings may not apply to a more diverse or representative population. The recruitment phase revealed a challenge related to participant compensation. Some potential participants expressed a desire for compensation, viewing the study as a form of free labor. In some social media circles, artists and arts leaders converse about equitable pay and free labor, so its emergence here was unsurprising. However, I did not have the funds to offer participants and therefore marketed the study as voluntary.

Consequently, this led to individuals opting out who might have otherwise contributed valuable insights. This self-selection bias may have influenced the composition of the participant sample, potentially impacting the study's outcomes and limiting the diversity of perspectives. The study's small sample size reduced the findings' generalizability to a broader population. It compromised the ability to conduct quantitative triangulation of the results in potential changes to participants' leadership self-efficacy. Combining qualitative and quantitative data provides a more robust and comprehensive understanding of the problem of practice than either set of data would provide on its own (Mertler, 2020).

The attrition of participants during the study further compounded the quantitative analysis limitation. The attrition of participants highlights the challenges Black women leaders face in managing their workloads and underscores the broader issue of overwhelm and time constraints within their professional lives. During the recruitment phase and the study, arts leaders mentioned their workloads having an

outsized impact on their ability to take on more tasks unrelated to their daily work. This phenomenon aligns with existing research (Acker, 2006; Cook & Glass, 2013; Heilman et al., 2004; Kanter, 1977; LeRoux & Medina, 2022; Taylor, 2010) indicating that Black women are often tasked with juggling numerous responsibilities with limited resources and support, leaving little room for additional commitments.

The participants' inability to fully engage in the study due to their demanding workloads reflects this phenomenon. Furthermore, the participants' reported overwhelm and time constraints echo findings from previous research (Hines & Ward, 2022) on Black women's experiences in the workforce. These studies have consistently highlighted the immense pressure and stress that Black women face as they strive to excel in their professional roles while also contending with systemic barriers and discrimination. The lack of complete participation among all participants in the study serves as a tangible manifestation of these broader systemic challenges, further emphasizing the need for systemic change to support Black women leaders in the workplace.

Though three original participants did not complete the study, their contributions during earlier phases of the innovation were essential to the overall analysis of Black women's experiences in the arts and culture sector and were therefore included in the study. However, it is necessary to acknowledge that the incomplete data collection may limit the depth and comprehensiveness of the study's findings. This limitation underscores the importance of addressing the systemic barriers that contribute to Black women's overwhelm and time constraints in the workplace to ensure that their voices and experiences are fully represented and understood.

One notable limitation of this study revolves around the initial structure of the meetings. Recognizing the need for flexibility and inclusivity, early on in the study's implementation, I deliberately decided to depart from a rigid agenda, prioritizing instead

the cultivation of an environment conducive to profound discussions and collective brainstorming. This flexible approach fostered a collaborative space where participants actively shaped the trajectory of the research. The fluidity of the research model underscores a commitment to inclusivity, responsiveness, and relevance, highlighting the significance of co-creating knowledge alongside those directly impacted by the study (Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Tran, 2015). Moreover, cultivating a collaborative and adaptive atmosphere in this research has proven especially advantageous for participants, who, as Black women, often confront the opposite dynamic in their professional environments. By relinquishing strict structures and embracing spontaneity, future studies could create environments where participants assume greater agency in discussions. This approach allows for deeper connections, facilitates decompression from the burdens of daily stressors, and encourages individuals to share their stories at their own pace.

Acknowledging these limitations is crucial for accurately interpreting the study's results and understanding the potential constraints that may have influenced the research outcomes. While this study has generated valuable insights, the abovementioned limitations underscore the need for caution in generalizing the findings and highlighting areas for improvement in future research studies.

Implications for Personal Practice

This study allowed me to explore a new method of coaching that focused on a culturally specific group of women. Embracing and facilitating these circles provided an opportunity to cultivate inclusive coaching techniques that acknowledge and celebrate the unique experiences, challenges, and perspectives of Black women in leadership. As a coach, these insights enabled my customization of coaching and facilitation strategies to address the requirements of Black women while ensuring that the coaching interventions are effective and resonate with their experiences as Black women navigating leadership

roles. Additionally, developing sister circles aligns with my active commitment to advocacy for equity, justice, and inclusion. Creating these sister circles provides a space where Black women can thrive and fosters a supportive network and community for their continued development.

This study also offered room for personal growth and learning opportunities in my coaching journey. Through these circles, I tapped into my adaptable response mechanisms as my approaches to the research evolved through each interaction, enhancing my ability to navigate complex leadership dynamics and stay attuned to the evolving needs of Black women in leadership positions. This process encouraged my self-reflection and fostered a deeper understanding of intersectionality and its impact on leadership journeys.

The participants also provided some recommendations that would have been helpful to them that I am interested in including in future implementations of this work. Two participants remarked that they would have appreciated a resource guide for continued use in their leadership development. That guide should include a list of the preparatory materials with any associated context they can keep and share with others, especially their colleagues, coworkers, and staff, to extend the learning circle and foster change. Two participants noted that, while they appreciated the viewpoints of those not in their generational demographic, a smaller group catered to their age group would have also been helpful. This new format might resemble smaller circles separated by age group with intermittent large circles to unite everyone.

This research also underscores the need for advocating and fostering inclusive work environments that specifically support Black women. This need emphasizes the importance of collaborating with organizations to promote policies and practices that create spaces conducive to the training, development, and participation in support

systems like sister circles. Engaging in strategic partnerships with organizations may allow for developing and implementing initiatives that give Black women the necessary time and resources to engage in preparatory work and participate in sister circles. Findings from the research also point to the significance of flexible work structures. As a researcher, I have an opportunity to advocate for and collaborate with organizations in establishing proactive organizational policies and flexible work arrangements that accommodate the needs of Black women. I also have an opportunity to contribute to the discourse on the organizational benefits of investing in these proactive policies and fostering an environment of inclusivity and professional support. This research allows me to contribute to the empowerment of Black women by disseminating research insights that inform organizational practices and shape environments that nurture their professional growth through training, development, and community engagement.

Implications for Research

The findings of this study underscore several critical implications for future research aimed at developing and refining the arts-based sister circle model for Black women in leadership positions. The following recommendations align with identified themes and insights, focusing on expanding the sample size, reframing imposter syndrome narratives, and extending the study duration to enhance participant reflection and leadership self-efficacy.

One notable limitation of the study was the sample size; its implication is the recommendation to consider conducting future research with a larger sample size. While the current study has provided rich insights, a larger sample would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of Black women's experiences in leadership across various sectors and organizational contexts. This expansion would enhance the generalizability of the arts-based sister circle model's effectiveness in addressing the unique challenges a

broader spectrum of Black women leaders faces. A larger sample size would allow for quantitative data collected to triangulate the results further. A larger sample size increases the power of statistical tests and furthers the efforts to show more statistical results (Creswell, 2014). Integrating qualitative and quantitative data offers a more resilient and thorough comprehension of the practical issue than relying solely on either dataset (Mertler, 2020).

Insights gained from the innovation's preparatory materials and sister circle discussions in this study pointed to reframing the narrative of imposter syndrome to imposter treatment (Leiba, 2022). Future research should delve deeper into the implications and nuances of the reframing of imposter syndrome, examining its resonance across diverse contexts and industries. This future research could involve investigating the specific organizational dynamics and cultural factors contributing to imposter treatment experienced by Black women. Exploring coping mechanisms, resilience strategies, and organizational interventions that address imposter treatment will further contribute to the literature and provide recommendations for organizational change.

Extending the study duration emerges as a critical implication for maximizing the impact of the arts-based sister circle model. A prolonged engagement allows participants more time for deeper self-reflection, completion of preparatory work, and iterative processes, contributing to a more profound transformation in their leadership self-efficacy. A longer study duration would also encourage building sustainable networks for participants even after completing the study (Cupid, 2020). Additionally, a more prolonged study duration facilitates exploring how sustained participation in arts-based sister circles influences participants over time, potentially leading to lasting changes in leadership practices and organizational dynamics. Implementing a long-term follow-up

component and engaging participants as alumni beyond the study duration would allow researchers to assess the sustained impact of the sister circle model on participants' leadership trajectories. Monitoring their continued professional development and trajectories post-participation would offer valuable insights into the enduring effects of the arts-based sister circle experience.

Additionally, as part of the extended study duration, researchers should explore the potential impact of organizational interventions informed by the arts-based sister circle model. Organizational interventions could involve partnering with organizations willing to implement and assess the effectiveness of the sister circle-inspired initiatives. Examining how organizational policies and practices can be adapted to create more supportive environments for Black women leaders is integral to translating research findings into actionable strategies for change.

Future research should consider incorporating additional intersectional lenses, acknowledging that the experiences of Black women in leadership are shaped not only by race and gender but also by other intersecting identities. Examining how factors such as age, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic background intersect with race and gender and influence the efficacy of the arts-based sister circle model will contribute to a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of its use.

Lastly, future research could explore its effectiveness in various cultural contexts to broaden the applicability of the arts-based sister circle model. Additional factors such as industry, organizational size, and geographical location could be considered. Comparing the experiences of Black women in leadership across different racial and ethnic identities and cultural and organizational settings could contribute to an expanded understanding of the model's adaptability and effectiveness for other populations.

Conclusion

The findings of this study underscore the profound impact of the arts-based sister circle model on Black women leaders, revealing crucial insights into their motivations and the profound effects of participation. Rooted in established frameworks such as the Sister Circle model (Johnson, 2015) and Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 2014), this exploration illuminates the critical need to nurture supportive spaces for Black women in leadership roles. The data unequivocally reveal the daunting hurdles Black women encounter in predominantly white organizational settings while emphasizing the pivotal role of the sister circle in fostering connections, catalyzing meaningful conversations, and bolstering leadership self-efficacy. Moreover, the study underscores the imperative of cultivating environments that foster belonging and empowerment for Black women leaders—a need that remains largely unaddressed in current organizational landscapes.

However, acknowledging the study's limitations, including sample size constraints and duration, is essential, urging future research to delve deeper into these insights. Nonetheless, the implications for practice are profound, offering invaluable insights into tailoring coaching strategies to the unique needs of Black women, advocating for inclusivity in organizational cultures, and championing flexible organizational policies.

As the driving force behind this research, I have delved deep into the intricate dynamics of group coaching and unlocked the profound potential of integrating arts-based praxis into transformative methodologies. This journey has not only enriched my understanding but has also highlighted the critical need for research models that adapt to the culturally rich and lived experiences of participants, placing their voices at the forefront and cultivating environments where collaboration thrives. This paradigm shift

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underscores the power of inclusive and participatory research approaches in unraveling complex societal issues and paving the way for meaningful change.

Looking ahead, the call for future research resonates with the urgency of expanding sample sizes, exploring organizational interventions, and embracing intersectional perspectives to enhance the efficacy of the arts-based sister circle model and empowering Black women leaders across diverse contexts. Ultimately, this study propels us forward on the journey towards transformative coaching practices and cultivating supportive organizational cultures, with the ultimate goal of fostering a more equitable and empowering landscape for Black women in leadership.

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APPENDIX A

LEADERSHIP SELF-EFFICACY - PARTICIPATION QUESTIONNAIRE

INTRODUCTION & CONSENT
My name is Kimberly Davis, and I am a doctoral student at Arizona State University in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College (MLFTC) working under the supervision of Dr. Amanda Boutot, a faculty member in MLFTC. My research focuses on developing leadership self-efficacy in leaders from underrepresented groups in the arts and culture field in predominantly white organizations.

This doctoral study aims to examine the extent to which Black women leaders in arts and culture organizations believe they have increased their leadership self-efficacy through an arts-based group coaching innovation program. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. You must be 18 or older to participate in the study.

This questionnaire has two sections. Each section will appear on a new page and the survey bar will display your progress throughout the survey. Sections may contain a mix of multiple choice, checkbox, and open-ended questions. Participating in this survey should take you no more than 10 minutes to complete. The results of your individual responses to this survey will be entirely confidential.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team at kddavi19@asu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788. Please let me know if you wish to be part of the study.

PARTICIPANT CRITERIA
The criteria for participation in the coaching experience is: (a) Black woman, (b) currently employed in a leadership position, (c) work in a predominantly white arts and culture organization (e.g. community arts school, art gallery, music organization, etc.), and (d) commitment to engage in online and workplace learning experiences.

DEMOGRAPHICS & OTHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Q1 What is your current Job title?
_____
_____

Q2 How long have you served in your current position?

Less than 1 year	1 - 2 years	3 -5 years	6 - 10 years	11 years or more
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

Q3 How would you rate the stability of your current organization?

Not at all stable	Slightly stable	Somewhat stable	Moderately stable	Extremely stable
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

Q4 How likely are you to stay in your current organization?

Extremely unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Extremely likely
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

Q5 Prior to your current position, how long have you served in leadership position(s) at this or any other organization?

None	Less than 1 year	1 - 2 years	3 - 5 years	6 - 10 years	11 years or more
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)

Q6 How much of that time was served in leadership outside of arts and culture?

None	Less than 1 year	1 - 2 years	3 - 5 years	6 - 10 years	11 years or more
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)

Q7 Which positions in arts and culture have you held?

_____

_____

Q8 How long have you worked in arts and culture?

Less than 1 year	1 - 2 years	3 -5 years	6 - 10 years	11 years or more
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

Q9 What is the highest degree you have earned? (Choose one)
  (1) Associate degree
  (2) Bachelor's degree (B.A., B.S., B.F.A., etc.)
  (3) Master's degree (M.A., M.A.T., M.B.A., M.F.A., M.S., etc.)
  (4) Educational specialist or professional diploma (at least one year beyond master's level)
  (5) Doctorate or other terminal degree (Ph.D., Ed.D., J.D., D.B.A., etc.)
  (6) I do not have a degree.

Q10 In the past 5 years, what types of formal professional development related to leadership have you participated in? (Mark all that apply).
  (1) None
  (2) College-level courses related to leadership
  (3) Certificate or certification program(s) related to leadership
  (4) Other: _____

Q11 In the past 5 years, what types of informal professional development related to leadership have you participated in? (Mark all that apply).
    (1) None
    (2) Visits to other arts and culture organizations designed to improve your leadership
    (3) Individual or collaborative research on a topic of interest to you professionally
    (4) Participating in an arts and cultural leaders network
    (5) Workshops, conferences, or training in which you were a presenter
    (6) Workshops, conferences, or training in which you were not a presenter
    (7) Other _____

Q12 What is your age group?
    (1) 18 - 24
    (2) 25 - 34
    (3) 35 - 44
    (4) 45 - 54
    (5) 55 & Older

APPENDIX B

LEADERSHIP SELF-EFFICACY PRE- & POST-INNOVATION SURVEY

INTRODUCTION & CONSENT
My name is Kimberly Davis, and I am a doctoral student at Arizona State University in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College (MLFTC). I am working under the supervision of Dr. Amanda Boutot, a faculty member in MLFTC. My research focuses on developing leadership self-efficacy in leaders from underrepresented groups in the arts and culture field in predominantly white organizations.

This doctoral study aims to examine the extent to which Black women leaders in arts and culture organizations believe they have increased their leadership self-efficacy through an arts-based group coaching innovation program.

This survey instrument has one section containing Likert-scale questions. Participating in this survey should take you no more than 10 minutes to complete. The results of your individual responses to this survey will be entirely confidential.

UNIQUE IDENTIFIER
To protect your confidentiality, please create a unique identifier. To create this unique code, record the first three letters of your mother's first name and the last four digits of your phone number. Thus, for example, if your mother's name was Sarah and your phone number was (602) 543-6789, your code would be Sar 6789. The unique identifier will allow us to match your pre- and post-innovation survey responses when we analyze the data.

Using these instructions, please record your confidential unique identifier.
_____
____

LEADERSHIP SELF-EFFICACY
Please use this scale for the following questions about your current leadership position.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

Regarding your current leadership position, specify your agreement to the following statements.
1. I am able to set a new direction for a group, if the one currently taken doesn't seem correct to me.
2. I can usually change the attitudes and behaviors of group members if they don't meet group objectives.
3. I am able to change things in a group even if they are not completely under my control.
4. I am confident in my ability to choose group members in order to build up an effective and efficient team.
5. I am able to optimally share out the work between the members of a group to the best results.

6. I would be able to delegate the task of accomplishing specific goals to other group members.
7. I am usually able to understand to whom, within a group, it is better to delegate specific tasks.
8. Usually, I can establish very good relationships with the people I work with.
9. I am sure I can communicate with others, going straight to the heart of the matter.
10. I can successfully manage relationships with all the members of a group.
11. I can identify my strengths and weaknesses.
12. I am confident in my ability to get things done.
13. I always know how to get the best out of the situations I find myself in.
14. With my experience and competence, I can help group members to reach the group's targets.
15. As a leader, I am usually able to affirm my beliefs and values.
16. With my example, I am sure I can motivate the members of a group.
17. I can usually motivate group members and arouse their enthusiasm when I start a new project.
18. I am able to motivate and give opportunities to any group member in the exercise of their tasks or functions.
19. I can usually make the people I work with appreciate me.
20. I am sure I can gain the consensus of group members.
21. I can usually lead a group with the consensus of all members.

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APPENDIX C

POST-INNOVATION PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL & QUESTIONS

<u>INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL</u>
Date:
Interviewer:
Interviewee (Unique Identifier):
Interviewee's Job Title:
Interviewee's Organization:

Opening the interview:

My research focuses on developing leadership self-efficacy in leaders from underrepresented groups in the arts and culture field in predominantly white organizations. This doctoral study aims to examine the extent to which Black women leaders in arts and culture organizations believe they have increased their leadership self-efficacy through an arts-based group coaching innovation program.

You have now completed the arts-based group coaching innovation, and I would like to hear your perspective on the experience and what you have learned about yourself in the process. I will be recording this interview. The recording will not be shared with anyone; after I analyze it, it will be deleted. You will have an opportunity to review the transcript and recommend any changes to the text. Do I have your consent to record this interview?

Thank you for consenting to this interview and the recording. I am now recording. For the record, can you please state your unique identifier? I have scheduled this interview for approximately 30-45 minutes.

1. How are you feeling at the moment?
2. I would like to see the artistic reflection you created throughout the innovation process. Can you show it to me and explain a little bit about it?
3. Tell me about your experience in the Arts-Based Coaching innovation program.
4. Reflecting back to before starting the coaching sessions, how would you describe your confidence in your leadership then versus now?
5. What types of changes, if any, have you made in the way you lead your teams?
6. What, if anything, could be added to the Arts-Based Coaching sessions to assist you in increasing your self-confidence?
7. Are there any activities from the coaching modules that you will continue to implement in your leadership development? If so, please elaborate.
8. Is there anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX D

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

EXEMPTION GRANTED

Amanda Boutot
Division of Educational Leadership and Innovation - Tempe
-
amandaboutot@asu.edu

Dear Amanda Boutot:

On 7/6/2023 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Glass Cliffs No More: Black Women Leaders Building Leadership Self-Efficacy Through Arts-Based Group Coaching
Investigator:	Amanda Boutot
IRB ID:	STUDY00018203
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• Davis_Module Agendas_Data Collection-28_06_2023.pdf, Category: Resource list; • Davis_Short Consent_28_06_2023-v3.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • IRB Social Behavioral Protocol-29_06_2023-Davis-v2.docx, Category: IRB Protocol; • Other Documents-07_05_2023-Davis.pdf, Category: Screening forms; • Recruitment_Methods_Questionnaire&Flyer_28_06_2023_Davis-v3.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials; • Supporting Documents-23_06_2023-Davis.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2)(ii) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation (low risk) on 7/6/2023.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

If any changes are made to the study, the IRB must be notified at research.integrity@asu.edu to determine if additional reviews/approvals are required. Changes may include but not limited to revisions to data collection, survey and/or interview questions, and vulnerable populations, etc.

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Kimberly Davis
       Kimberly Davis
       Amanda Boutot