From Cultural Wealth to Systems Change:

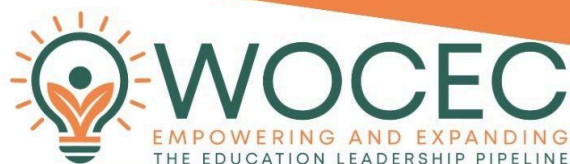Assessing the Impact of WOCEC's Leadership Development Program

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WOCEC
EMPOWERING AND EXPANDING
THE EDUCATION LEADERSHIP PIPELINE

Women of Color Education Collaborative

Executive Summary

This study evaluates the Women of Color Education Collaborative (WOCEC), a leadership development initiative designed to support, empower, and elevate women of color in educational leadership. Using a mixed-methods design, the research explores how WOCEC's programming shapes participants' professional growth, leadership identity, and capacity to navigate systemic barriers related to race and gender. Key findings show significant improvement in confidence, leadership practices, self-care, and strategic career planning. Participants consistently credited executive coaching and identity-affirming networks as transformative components of the program.

Partner Organization

The Women of Color Education Collaborative (WOCEC) is a nonprofit organization that strives to improve diversity in educational leadership and eventually have the broader impact of better supporting the needs of diverse student bodies. Through well-crafted leadership development training, coaching, mentoring, and well-being support programming, women educators of various backgrounds and career levels can gain valuable knowledge and skills that enhance the likelihood of career advancement.

Research Question

How effective is WOCEC's leadership development program in enhancing the leadership skills and professional growth of participants?

Background

The Women of Color Education Collaborative (WOCEC) was established to address:

- The underrepresentation of women of color in educational leadership roles through comprehensive leadership development programs.
- The unique challenges faced by women of color
- How to maintain a focus on cultivating leadership skills and fostering professional growth
- The lack of a supportive network

1

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Methodology

Findings

This study used a mixed-methods design to examine how WOCEC leadership development programs influence participants' leadership skills and professional growth. This study adopts a balanced perspective, intentionally emphasizing qualitative and quantitative methods, thereby avoiding the favoritism of one approach. Employing a mixed-methods approach improves the study's validity through methodological triangulation. It allows for a more profound and more comprehensive interpretation of the data by leveraging the complementary strengths of both qualitative and quantitative inquiry (Creswell, 2014). This integration provides a richer picture of the research problem, highlighting trends in leadership development outcomes and capturing the voices and lived experiences of WOCEC participants, adding depth and meaning to the quantitative results.

Common Themes

Identity Affirmtion and Validation

Executive Coaching Impact

Self-Care and Well-Being Integration

Leadership Style Evolution

Community & Sisterhood

Navigating Barriers Related to Race & Gender

Community & Sisterhood and Leadership Style Evolution emerged as the two lowest-rated dimensions, signaling specific gaps where intentional enhancements are needed.

Recommendations

1. **Integrate Peer-Led Learning Circles**
   - Add strategies to foster trust, shared vulnerability, and a sense of belonging.
2. **Embed Leadership Mapping and Coaching Modules**
   - Including DISC, StrengthsFinder, or Leadership Circle allows for targeted coaching.
3. **Cross-Cohort Mentorship and Alumni Engagement**
   - Monthly mentor check-ins, joint leadership challenges/case studies, and alumni panels strengthen community and reinforce long-term growth.

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About the Authors & Dedication

Tracey Alcendor Robinson is the founder and Chief Learning Officer of Veritas Talent Lab, a boutique consultancy specializing in fractional leadership, strategic learning architecture, adaptive learning systems, and organizational transformation.

Tracey holds a Bachelor's degree in Political Science, a Master of Business Administration, and a Master's in Education in Instructional Design and Technology. She has spent much of her career designing and delivering educational experiences to over 90,000 learners across nonprofit, healthcare, IT, financial, and the federal government sectors.

Tracey's passion for learning was influenced by her West Indian roots, her upbringing in Germany, her travel throughout Europe, and her move to the United States. These formative experiences fueled her passion for the many challenges women of color face in the U.S. around leadership inclusion.

Tracey is a military spouse residing in Atlanta, Georgia, with her husband and three daughters.

Dedication

My sincere appreciation goes to Dr. Sherard Robbins for such exceptional guidance. Thank you, Annette and Chez, for your authenticity, sisterhood, and pure excellence. To my parents and husband, your encouragement and support have meant the world to me. Lastly, to my three daughters: never forget that you are naturally born leaders with great cultural wealth, and as God's creation, you do belong.

Annette Ortiz is an X-ray and CT Scan Technologist and serves as Associate Professor and Chairperson of the Department of Nursing & Allied Health Sciences at Bronx Community College. She earned her Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from Mercy University and a Master's Degree in Health Education and Promotion from Lehman College. Her journey in healthcare began with an Associate's Degree in Radiologic Technology from Hostos Community College, a milestone that inspired her to merge clinical expertise with teaching and mentorship in the Allied Health Sciences.

Annette has served as Chairperson for five years and has been a dedicated educator in the Radiologic Technology Program for fifteen years. She is also the first Latina woman to hold the position of Chairperson in her department. Born and raised in the Bronx, Annette views her leadership as a way to give back to underrepresented communities, helping to transform lives and open pathways for career advancement.

She currently resides in Rockland County with her son and their dog.

Dedication

This paper is dedicated to my mother, who has always believed in me and reminded me of my worth and intelligence. She instilled in me the belief that there is nothing I cannot accomplish and supported me in every way possible to pave my path. As a first-generation doctoral student, I carry with me her unwavering confidence that I deserve a seat at every table.

To my son, who continues to inspire me to reach higher and dream bigger. You watched me earn my master's degree, and soon you will see me walk across the stage in my doctoral

regalia. You are my greatest accomplishment and constant motivation. Always remember, you can achieve anything you set your mind and heart to.

Lastly, this paper is dedicated to two remarkable women, **Tracey Alcendor-Robinson** and **Chezdis Sanchez-Bors**, with whom I had the honor of collaborating on this work. You are the embodiment of women's empowerment and sisterhood.

I would also like to thank Dr. Sherard Robbins, who believed in us and always encouraged us to go for greatness. And to the many women of color in my field whose stories of perseverance and achievement continue to inspire me, *my journey, shaped by shared experiences and sisterhood, reminds me that when one woman of color rises, we all rise.*

Chezdis Sanchez Bors is a dedicated science teacher and Academic Learning Specialist at Port Chester Middle School. She earned her Bachelor's degree and Master's degree at Manhattanville University, where she double majored in Biology and Management, and then later in Secondary Adolescent Education with a concentration in Biology. She earned a post-graduate certificate in Educational Leadership from Stony Brook University and her Bilingual Extension certificate from SUNY Oneonta.

Chezdis is the sole bilingual science teacher in her school, a role that reflects both her expertise and her commitment to serving diverse student populations. Throughout her career, she has dedicated herself to teaching multilingual learners, ensuring that language is viewed not as a barrier but as an asset. Beyond the classroom, she has been a consistent advocate for equity, working to create inclusive learning environments and to promote systemic changes that recognize and support the needs of all students. Her work exemplifies the belief that every learner deserves access to rigorous, culturally responsive education.

She currently resides in Dutchess County, New York, with her husband, three children and dog.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my family, whose love and patience carried me through this journey. To my husband, thank you for tolerating my mood swings and supporting me through the challenges of this process. To my mother; congratulations, you finally have a doctor in the family. To my sisters, thank you for humoring my excitement as I described concepts that may not have always captured your interest, but always captured my heart. And to my children, may this be a reminder that you can be anything you want to be; your potential is limitless, and I will always believe in you. "*Raiz amarga es la del estudio; pero muy dulce su fruta (The root of learning is bitter, but its fruit is very sweet)."*

I extend my deepest gratitude to my capstone partners, **Annette Ortiz** and **Tracey Alcendor Robinson.** Their encouragement, wisdom, and collaboration sustained me throughout this process, and I am truly grateful to have shared this journey with them.

I would also like to thank my faculty advisors and professors at Vanderbilt University, especially **Dr. Sherard Robbins**, whose guidance, high expectations, and thoughtful feedback challenged me to think more critically and grow as both a scholar and a leader. Their mentorship shaped not only this capstone project but also the way I approach my work as an educator and advocate.

Table of Contents

Part I: Organizational Context

Background

The Women of Color Education Collaborative (WOCEC) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing leadership development opportunities for women of color in education. Founded on the belief that representation in educational leadership is essential to achieving equity in schools, WOCEC provides culturally responsive programming that includes formal leadership training, executive coaching, mentorship, wellness support, and peer networking.

WOCEC primarily serves leaders who identify as women of color who work within K–12, higher education, or educational policy and leadership spaces. The organization aims to build an achievable pipeline of equity-centered educational leaders who are equipped to navigate and dismantle systemic barriers, thereby transforming institutions to serve diverse student populations better. Since its inception, WOCEC has impacted over 607,000 teachers and reached more than 5.7 million students. Notably, 75% are racial/ethnic minorities and 56% are economically disadvantaged (Women of Color Education Collaborative, n.d.). WOCEC's commitment to social justice and cultivating inclusive leadership ecosystems is a strategic approach.

As WOCEC's work is grounded in relational leadership and community engagement, understanding the individuals and partners who sustain its mission provides essential context for this study.

Project Stakeholders

The organization's program is uniquely informed and facilitated by veteran women of color leaders who have experienced the same structural and institutional barriers that many program participants face. The presence of these veteran women provides representation and

credibility. Their leadership's essential components are evident in their representation, which reinforces the organization's mission to center lived experience and cultural knowledge.

To further contextualize WOCEC's role, it is essential to identify the key stakeholders. Their perspectives, experiences, and engagement contribute to the organization's ongoing development and impact on their students. Key stakeholders for this capstone are alum students whose experiences demonstrate that the organization's program design is effective. Our points of contact are Dr. Stephanie Wood-Garnett, Founder and CEO of WOCEC, and Abner Oakes, who leads Oakes Educational Consulting.

Dr. Stephanie Wood-Garnett is a nationally recognized education leader with nearly 30 years of experience advancing equity and excellence across K–12 and higher education. She has held senior roles in state and national organizations, including serving as president of the Institute for Student Achievement and as assistant commissioner of higher education for the State of New York. She continues to shape educator preparation and policy through her service on multiple national boards.

Abner Oakes is an experienced education consultant and founder of Oakes Educational Consulting, bringing over 35 years of expertise in K–12 education. With a background spanning 15 years of classroom teaching and decades of leadership in school improvement at the local, state, and national levels, he has partnered with organizations such as Modern Red Schoolhouse, Learning Point Associates, and the Alliance for Excellent Education.

WOCEC is a change agent that creates systematic opportunities for women of color to thrive in educational leadership roles. As its mission, structure, and strategic practices align with this research effort, WOCEC is an ideal partner for this capstone study. The purpose of this capstone project was to evaluate the effectiveness of WOCEC's leadership development program

in enhancing the leadership skills and professional growth of women of color in the education sector. Findings from this evaluation may inform WOCEC's strategic decisions on program design, leadership-coaching models, and long-term scaling across educational systems.

The following section provides a brief history of WOCEC, tracing its evolution from inception to its current role as an equity-centered leadership development organization.

History

The founders of WOCEC are experienced educators and advocates who identified that while diversity efforts were growing in rhetoric, programs were lacking in practice, and these structural changes needed support. WOCEC was founded to address the persistent racial and gender disparities in educational leadership. WOCEC emerged to offer services and disrupt longstanding institutional patterns that have excluded women of color from decision-making positions and undervalued their leadership regarding finances and contract negotiations. The organization was founded to build a sustainable support infrastructure that honors cultural knowledge, validates lived experience, and prepares women to lead with purpose and strategy.

Figure 1: *WOCEC provides an umbrella of support where each rib represents a key pillar of leadership development.*

WOCEC refuses to accept underrepresentation as inevitable, creating a leadership vision centered on social justice and transformation. This is reflected in their practice, where WOCEC positions participants to become leaders who shape educational policy, practice, and culture in ways that reflect the richness and realities of the communities they serve.

Building on this foundation, the following section introduces the problem of practice that grounds this capstone study. This capstone study examined the persistent underrepresentation of women of color in educational leadership and the need to evaluate the effectiveness of WOCEC's response to this issue.

Part II. Problem of Practice

On par with the growing national emphasis on anti-equity and diversity initiatives, women of color remain critically underrepresented in educational leadership positions. This lack of representation influences the availability of diverse perspectives necessary to meet the needs of increasingly multicultural student populations (Halim & Biswas, 2024). Women of color are noticeably absent from decision-making roles, reinforcing structural inequities, weakening inclusive school environments, and delaying progress toward educational justice. If this underrepresentation of women of color is left unaddressed in educational leadership, it will restrict innovation and prevent educational systems from fully serving diverse student populations.

Nationally, women of color comprise only 11% of school principals and a mere 4% of superintendents, statistics that signal a systemic barrier to equitable leadership representation (ILO Group, 2024). WOCEC was established to address this inequality by focusing on the leadership gap and advancing equity-focused development strategies. This organization was

founded on the principle that school leadership should reflect the racial, cultural, and experiential diversity of its communities.

WOCEC addresses this problem through targeted programming that cultivates leadership capacity through tailored mentoring, executive coaching, formal leadership training, and wellness-based development initiatives. Women who enroll in WOCEC navigate institutions that have historically marginalized them by creating barriers. This organization cultivates leadership capacity and challenges systemic norms while supporting the women who face these challenges.

Despite these well-meaning efforts, a central question remains: How effective is WOCEC's leadership development program in enhancing participants' leadership skills and professional growth? This study will research the potential gaps between programming and outcomes, reflecting on its commitment to accountability and continued improvement.

As Young (2025) argues, although programs supporting women of color in leadership have gained visibility in recent years, many lack the evaluative infrastructure to measure long-term career mobility, influence in decision-making spaces, and lasting institutional change.

The narratives of participants suggest that WOCEC provides a supportive and empowering environment that fosters self-confidence, community, and professional identity. Nonetheless, a more systematic and evidence-based evaluation is needed to determine whether these benefits translate into tangible, long-term advancement. As Carver-Thomas (2018) emphasizes, leadership development alone cannot fully address the racialized barriers in school systems without institutional commitment to career pathways and structural reform.

This study will examine whether WOCEC's culturally responsive programming is achieving its intended goals, especially in expanding leadership capacity and improving

professional outcomes. The aim is to determine whether WOCEC's culturally responsive programming is achieving its intended goals, particularly in developing leadership capacity and enhancing professional outcomes. In doing so, it addresses the problem within the organization's mission. It recognizes the need for data-driven insights to inform the design, sustainability, and equity impact of its leadership model.

To establish this investigation within the broader field, it is essential to review existing research on leadership development and culturally responsive frameworks that inform this study's design. The following section examines relevant literature to contextualize WOCEC's model and identify the theoretical foundations that guide this analysis.

Part III. Review of Literature

This study uses a comprehensive review of existing scholarship on leadership development, cultural responsiveness, and identity-centered practice as a basis for the examination of the effectiveness of WOCEC's leadership development program in terms of enhancing leadership skills and professional growth among participants.

The collection of literature provides a framework developed with theories that guide this inquiry. Following the literature review, the study introduces a conceptual framework that integrates Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005), Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), and Path-Goal Theory (House, 1971). The literature helps construct a framework that applies an equity-grounded lens to analyze how culturally affirming, contextually responsive leadership programs contribute to participant development and advancement.

Defining Leadership Development and Leadership Development Capacity

First, it is imperative to clearly articulate what constitutes leadership development and what conditions are necessary for it to work. Scholars consistently differentiate between leader development (focused on individual capabilities) and leadership development (centered on relational and organizational dynamics) (Day, 2000). Day (2000) makes an argument that leadership development pertains to "the expansion of a person's capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes," emphasizing collective social capital and context-based learning (p. 585). Riggio (2008) expands the leadership development definition by proposing that some additional considerations, like ethical commitments, inclusive design, and evaluation mechanisms, are important in contemporary leadership development programming. Riggio opposes "generic programming," and calls for program design that is more tailored and theory-informed in order to cultivate both individual identity and systemic effectiveness.

Van Velsor et al. (2010) deepen the conversation by introducing leadership development capacity, the infrastructure, organizational culture, and interpersonal processes that sustain leadership growth. WOCEC's programming is multi-layered and includes valuable feedback-rich experiences, including coaching and identity work. Such experiences add to one's ability to navigate complex professional ecosystems. The use of strategies such as skills acquisition, identity affirmation, agency, and strategic vision within equity-challenged contexts shapes the program's success. When viewed from this lens, these sources suggest that effective leadership development is less about training and more about building ecosystems that encourage participants to grow, reflect, and lead authentically.

Culturally Responsive Leadership Development

Leadership development is not monolithic as it must adapt to cultural contexts, identity dynamics, and systemic conditions. The inclusion of culturally responsive approaches in programming for women of color leaders encourages personal values and a collective experience. Yosso's (2005) theory of community cultural wealth corroborates this perspective by redefining traditional capital ideas and leveraging assets rooted in marginalized communities. Yosso (2005) proposes six forms of cultural wealth that are important to leadership formation, as well as challenge deficit-based narratives: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant capital. These resources also affirm the importance of knowledge, resilience, and community orientation that participants bring into developmental spaces.

Culturally responsive design for leadership programs like WOCEC includes processes for recognizing and cultivating these assets rather than replacing them with dominant norms. This process affirms aspirational capital by leading women of color through complex systems by celebrating their long-term goals, leveraging their linguistic capital through storytelling and expression, and promoting navigational capital. t As Yosso (2005) notes, "community cultural wealth recognizes students of color as holders and creators of knowledge," and it is a paradigm that aligns with WOCEC's emphasis on affirming the lived experiences of women of color.

Williams's (2021) qualitative study of equity-focused principals highlights that leadership grounded in cultural consciousness is effectively transformative. Williams' study found a correlation between principals who led with authenticity, moral conviction, and relationship-centered practice with higher achievement levels among marginalized students. The overall findings revealed that leadership capacity is shaped by early experiences of inequity,

reflective practice, and emotional intelligence(all elements that culturally responsive programs must actively cultivate).

Yosso (2005) and Williams (2021) both emphasize leadership development for women of color that incorporates their identities, histories, and community ties as essential components of growth. Programs that do so foster skills, power, purpose, and pathways to systemic change.

Intersectionality and the Lived Experience of Women of Color Leaders

Many leadership development frameworks prioritize competencies and strategies; however, they still omit the important role that intersecting identities play in shaping access to leadership or the experience of becoming a leader. Crenshaw (1989) coined the term Intersectionality to analyze the overlapping social categories of race, gender, and class. These social categories create unique conditions of advantage and marginalization, and we now have a lens for analysis of how women of color navigate structures, interpret developmental feedback, and assert authority in contested spaces.

Additionally, Williams (2021) highlighted the importance of intersectionality in leadership development, based on an empirical study of equity-focused principals leading academically successful schools. Qualitative interviews and case studies suggested that those academic leaders drew on their personal histories of marginalization. The study suggested that deeply relational, justice-oriented leadership practices were used regardless of whether the leaders had racialized schooling experiences, family dynamics, or professional exclusion. Upon reflection, the leaders' understanding of how power, privilege, and identity intersect in their roles and decisions was closely tied to their real-life experiences. The principals in Williams' (2021) study grew in their leadership as genuine and caring leaders by drawing on their identities. They

evolved as leaders because of challenges such as navigating pushback, enduring emotional pressures, and cultural differences. This approach reflects Crenshaw's (1989) theory of Intersectionality, specifically regarding the overlapping systems of oppression that shape the lived realities of women of color. Race and gender should not be viewed separately, because identities are interwoven, often shaping one another.

Such experiences fall within WOCEC's mission to create developmental spaces that center participants' experiences rather than bypass them. WOCEC embraces participant realities by validating identity, affirming leadership potential, and creating developmental spaces rooted in lived experiences. This perspective is further supported through the voices of WOCEC participants. Through them, participants demonstrate that the lived experiences of women of color matter to what they do and to the intersectionality of their identity:

Identity Affirmation and Validation

- "The CONFIDENCE that my skillset is valuable, necessary and impactful."
- "I have identified my Imposter Syndrome gaps. This awareness has enabled me to find my voice and speak up or advocate for myself as a leader."
- "Helped me build my confidence and networking capacity."
- "Owning my self care and consistently implementing habits that serve it well."

Navigating Race and Gender-Based Disparities

- "Financial literacy was added to the program and should remain as it is another stressor for WOC leaders."

- "As a first-generation college grad who grew in poverty, I'm still trying to learn about how to be financially secure."

- "Continued emphasis on the importance of our role and political reality."

Community and Sisterhood

- "Staying connected to my network of support while I travel the journey of systems leadership."

- "Integrating dedicated peer circles… to connect, reflect, and support one another in processing shared experiences."

- "Each member brings a wealth of knowledge that other members may need in their work."

Additionally, these quotes indicate that WOCEC participants have implemented certain leadership practices grounded in their lived realities and shaped by WOCEC's coaching and curriculum:

Strategic Leadership

- "Strategic planning and having crucial conversations."

- "I've learned more skills from my coach to think strategically and consider the political aspects of the superintendency."

- "Redefine both short- and long-term goals."

Effective Communication

- "Coaching helped me communicate effectively both up the chain of command and to my team members."

- "Understanding the nuances of different communication styles."

- "Navigating a difficult team restructuring… resulting in a more cohesive and efficient plan."

Self-Care and Wellness Integration

- "Work-life balance is now a cornerstone of my leadership practice."

- "I now intentionally unplug after work hours, schedule regular wellness appointments, and encourage others to do the same."

- "Boundary setting, both personally and professionally, are a practice I have adopted."

Modeling and Empowerment

- "Modeling leadership practices for others."

- "Empathetic leadership while holding others accountable."

- "Encourage and model for my team these leadership practices which have impacted productivity and overall morale."
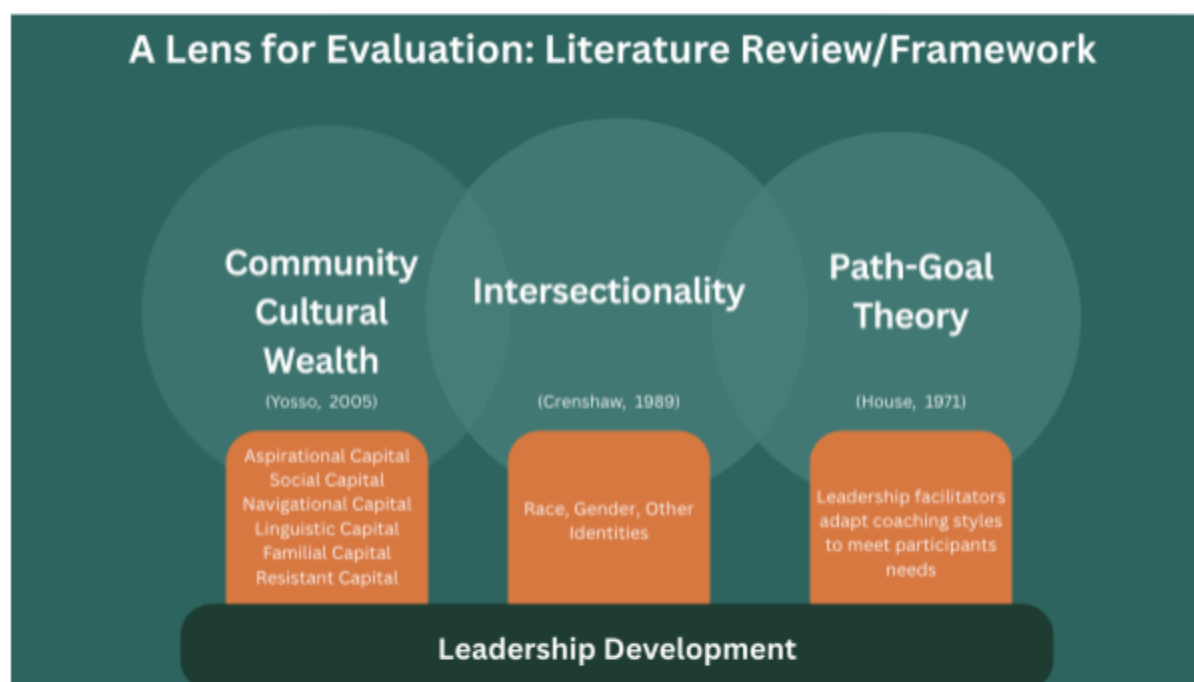
Intersectionality becomes a developmental resource, inviting leaders to interrogate systems, build coalitions, and articulate visions that resonate across communities.

This study leverages intersectionality as a diagnostic tool for understanding the challenges of women of color educational leaders and as a transformative framework for reshaping effective leadership in an equity-centered practice.

Motivation and Facilitation in Leadership Development Programs

Leadership development literature emphasizes curriculum and outcomes, often neglecting the role of facilitators on program effectiveness. This is an underexplored dimension of program effectiveness as facilitators guide, coach, and motivate participants.

House (1971) first introduced the Path-Goal Theory as a framework for understanding leadership behavior and its effects on follower motivation and satisfaction. According to the theory, effective leaders adapt their directive, supportive, participative, or achievement-oriented

Figure 2: *Conceptual Framework Integrating Community Cultural Wealth, Intersectionality, and Path-Goal Theory*

style to subordinate needs and task conditions, removing obstacles and clarifying pathways to

success. In order to be effective, organizations like the WOCEC must have leadership development facilitators who create environments that challenge and support their participants. House (1971) noted that directive styles are helpful when participants face ambiguous tasks, while supportive styles foster morale in stressful settings. House (1971) also found that participative leadership empowers individuals in decision-rich environments. Achievement-focused leadership works best with skilled people tackling complex tasks—just like WOCEC participants.

Williams (2021) found that principals who lead with emotion and community ties boost engagement and growth. In addition to the transfer of knowledge, the principals acted as facilitators, fostering relational trust and cultivating environments where aspirational and resistant cultural wealth could flourish. These principals guided their colleagues through complex systems and affirmed their sense of agency. Their actions mirror the supportive and participative dimensions of Path-Goal theory. Furthermore, the results of that study reinforce the notion that effective facilitation is less neutral and more strategic, adaptable, and equity-focused. WOCEC facilitators guide their participants through ambiguity, cultural negotiations, and institutional complexities in this very manner. When leaders combine structure with empathy, they embody the developmental styles described by House (1971). For women of color, motivation and facilitation serve as core drivers of effective leadership.

Trends, Practices, and Assessment in Leadership Development

As leadership development programs evolve, more questions are being raised about their effectiveness. Inclusivity and strategic alignment have become central to program design and evaluation. Riggio (2008) provides insights into the state and future of leadership development

by suggesting several essential design considerations for impactful programming. Theory-informed design, customized learning pathways, ethical grounding, and robust assessment mechanisms are essential when serving marginalized populations in leadership spaces.

Riggio (2008) critiques the generic program development approach. He advocates greater contextual specificity and attention to participants' complex realities, arguing that developmental models that build leadership skills, shape identity, foster critical consciousness, and cultivate systemic understanding are preferable. These recommendations resonate strongly with WOCEC's approach, which focuses on cultural affirmation, personal agency, and community-rooted leadership narratives.

Evaluation also plays a key role in Riggio's framework. He highlights the importance of pre- and post-program assessments, 360-degree feedback, and tracking long-term outcomes to understand immediate skill improvements and lasting professional impacts. In WOCEC's context, such assessment methods could reveal how leadership development results in promotions, influence, and systemic change, metrics that are very important for advancing equity-aligned leadership.

Riggio (2008) identifies emerging trends that mirror WOCEC's ethos, including the increased use of coaching, the rise of purpose-driven leadership, and generational shifts that demand greater authenticity in leadership models. The executive coaches at WOCEC provide support through leadership skills and competencies, career advancement strategies, managing stress and maintaining work-life balance, and job search and application strategies. The coaches then report where they spent the preponderance of their time during each coaching session.

These trends position WOCEC as relevant and ahead of the curve, offering programming that is not one-size-fits-all and speaks to the present and future of leadership development.

In sum, contemporary scholarship underscores that leadership development is most effective when customized, evaluated, and ethically driven. WOCEC embodies these principles through its design and delivery, affirming that equity-centered leadership is possible but also measurable, scalable, and transformational.

Building Leadership Development Capacity Through Identity Work and Experiential Learning

Leadership development that focuses on the transmission of skills into identity construction, relational growth, and experiential challenge is most effective. The Center for Creative Leadership's handbook (Van Velsor et al., 2010) defines leadership development capacity as the organizational structures and psychological conditions that allow individuals to develop over time, in what they do and in whom they become. This framework emphasizes three pillars of WOCEC's design: feedback-intensive experiences, coaching and mentoring relationships, and identity-based development.

WOCEC's emphasis on narrative sharing, cohort solidarity, and culturally affirming feedback mirrors Van Velsor et al. 's (2010) experiential learning model. Participants gain and test those strategies within a lived context, reflect upon their outcomes, and refine their leadership identity through interaction with peers and mentors. Their transformation occurs as a result of an iterative and reflective approach, taking their leadership development from an academic exercise into a leadership practice rooted in self-awareness and community engagement.

According to Williams (2021), equity-focused principals advanced their leadership style by practicing emotional authenticity, community accountability, relational trust, and critical dialogue. They reshaped their leadership approaches, adding to the evidence that reaffirms WOCEC's emphasis on storytelling, peer-led inquiry, and praxis-based learning, as well as on identity as a foundation of leadership power.

Leadership development involves both competencies and supportive spaces for meaning-making, vision, and influence. WOCEC's identity-centered approach aligns with best practices that frame leadership as social and personal. Studies emphasize that for women of color, effective development requires context-sensitive, culturally affirming, and identity-based strategies (Day, 2000; Riggio, 2008; Yosso, 2005; Williams, 2021). Moreover, these studies consistently emphasize recognizing diverse forms of capital, addressing systemic inequities, and aligning developmental practices with participants' lived experiences. This framework integrates Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth, Crenshaw's Intersectionality, and House's Path-Goal Theory, offering a triadic lens to analyze WOCEC's role in fostering effective leadership development. This framework guides the analysis of program effectiveness by linking cultural strengths, identity dynamics, and facilitation methods to participant outcomes.

Part IV. Conceptual Framing

Conceptual Framework

To evaluate the effectiveness of WOCEC's leadership development program, this study adopts a triadic conceptual framework that captures the complexity of leadership growth among women of color. Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005), Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), and Path-Goal Theory (House, 1971) are integrated to highlight what WOCEC participants bring, what they navigate, and how facilitators respond. More importantly, the theories are

operationalized through six thematic interventions that directly enhance leadership skills and professional growth: Identity Affirmation, Executive Coaching, Self-Care Integration, Leadership Evolution, Community and Sisterhood, and Navigating Barriers. This framework is a concrete guide for evaluating the program design and provides an analytical framework for determining WOCEC's effectiveness in enhancing leadership skills and professional growth.

Theoretical Foundations

- **Community Cultural Wealth: What WOCEC Participants Bring**

  According to Yosso (2005), there are six forms of capital commonly found in communities of color. They challenge deficit-based narratives and are evident within WOCEC's programming: aspirational, social, navigational, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital assets. Moreover, WOCEC reframes such assets as rich, experience-based knowledge that participants with intersectional traits bring into their professional spaces.

- **Intersectionality: What Participants Navigate**

  WOCEC participants are leaders with overlapping identities, such as race, gender, and class. According to Crenshaw's (1989) theory of intersectionality, these are identities that shape the lived experiences and leadership challenges of women of color. WOCEC effectively addresses this consideration by offering tailored leadership development programming that navigates these complexities and equips participants with the tools to transform the systems they lead.

- **Path-Goal Theory: How Facilitators Respond**

House's (1971) theory emphasizes beneficial adaptive leadership styles that clarify goals, remove obstacles, and align support with individual aspirations. WOCEC facilitators use directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented strategies to empower participants in culturally responsive ways.

Thematic Integration: Theory in Action

This conceptual framework is organized around six core themes that help to assess program effectiveness. Each theme represents a strategic intervention point where theory meets practice, producing measurable organizational outcomes (see Figure 3: *Thematic Integration with Conceptual Framework*). Having such a structure allows WOCEC to assess its leadership model and guide future development, beginning with Identity Affirmation.

WOCEC effectively strengthens participants through supportive coaching that draws on Yosso's (2005) aspirational and resistant capital, Crenshaw's (1989) concepts of identity shaped by race and gender, and House's (1971) supportive coaching. WOCEC effectively strengthens participants' leadership identity. Evidenced by consistent participant reports of increased confidence and a strengthened sense of belonging in leadership spaces, we see alignment with cultural wealth and the validation of lived experiences. These are positive contributors to leadership readiness, professional growth, and self-care.

According to Yosso's (2005) resistant capital through self-preservation, Crenshaw's (1989) wellness as essential amid intersecting pressures, and House's (1971) holistic development, self-care is important to leadership. So much so that WOCEC reframes self-care as a foundational component of leadership effectiveness. WOCEC participants report new sustainable practices, including boundary-setting, emotional regulation, and workload

management. All of these are practices that led to enhanced well-being and more sustainable leadership trajectories. Moreover, this integration of wellness into leadership identity is culturally responsive and developmentally impactful by fostering leadership evolution.

Cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005), cultural wealth expression (Crenshaw, 1989), and intentional career strategy (House, 1971) drive change that mirrors WOCEC participants' reports of becoming more strategic, authentic, and decisive leaders. They developed a more profound sense of their leadership self-awareness and their capacity to lead teams, influence others, and advocate for equity. This demonstration of leadership evolution is clear and simultaneously supported by the community and sisterhood.

This next theme highlights the importance of Yosso's (2005) familial and social capital, Crenshaw's (1989) notion of deepened relational bonds, and House's (1971) collective efficacy. It is relevant to WOCEC because it offers a space for women of color leaders to experience belonging, solidarity, and peer mentorship. Such a relational ecosystem has the potential to strengthen resilience, enhance professional networking, and sustain leadership development long after program completion. Participants can also lean on this theme when faced with navigational barriers.

WOCEC participants' reports align with Yosso's (2005) resistant and navigational capital, as well as with Crenshaw's (1989) tools for strategic navigation, all of which signal leadership effectiveness. Participants indicated that they received concrete strategies to navigate racialized and gendered barriers, advocate for themselves, and negotiate organizational power structures. They report being able to do so with an equity-centered purpose, demonstrating measurable gains in agency, influence, and career mobility. When using the integrated framework, program

effectiveness is visible across all data sources (interviews, surveys, open responses). Through data analysis, researchers noticed that each component of this framework reveals clear patterns of growth, which demonstrates the program's effectiveness. In fact, the reports are as follows:

- 100% of participants reported growth in leadership skills, consistent with indicators of effective coaching and guidance in House's (1971) Path-Goal Theory.

- Over 90% of participants reported a positive career influence, demonstrating increased navigational and social capital as defined by Yosso (2005).

- There were consistent reports of identity affirmation, cultural validation, and recognition of intersectional experience, all of which were reminders of Crenshaw's (1989) framework.

- Leadership confidence, strategic skill-building, and agency increased, pointing to the successful transfer of theory into practice.

Hence, this conceptual model demonstrates that WOCEC is highly effective because its program strengthens cultural wealth, addresses intersectional barriers, and provides adaptive, equity-centered leadership coaching that leads to measurable professional advancement. Each one of the six themes serves as much more than just a theoretical concept. The themes are also programmatic steps that WOCEC implements, assesses, and refines within its leadership programming. The framework provides a clear structure for evaluating outcomes and guiding future program iterations.

Conclusion

This triadic conceptual framework is an actionable model for understanding and enhancing the leadership development of women of color in education. It is both a diagnostic tool and a

prescriptive tool for equity-driven leadership. By integrating cultural theory, intersectional analysis, and adaptive leadership strategies, we can see how WOCEC is delivering programming that drives growth. This programming goes beyond teaching leadership competencies. It activates cultural wealth, affirms identity, builds community, and equips women of color with the strategic capacity to thrive in systems that have historically excluded them. This integrated, theory-driven model provides this study with strong evidence of the effectiveness of leadership development programming. It specifically points to leadership skill enhancement and professional growth that are culturally sustaining, identity-affirming, and structurally responsive.

Hence, this conceptual model demonstrates that WOCEC is highly effective because it strengthens cultural wealth, addresses intersectional barriers, and provides adaptive, equity-centered leadership coaching that leads to measurable professional advancement. Each theme is not just a theoretical concept but a programmatic step that WOCEC can implement, assess, and refine. The framework provides a clear structure for evaluating outcomes and guiding future program iterations.
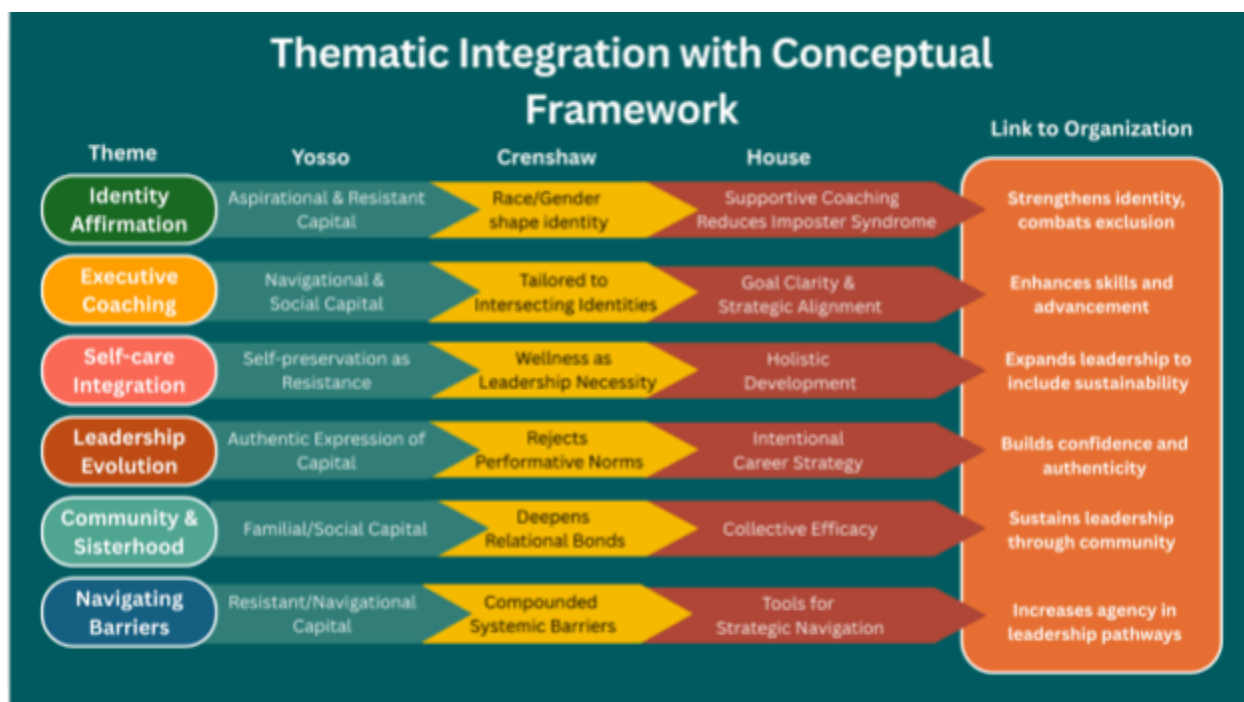

Figure 3: *Thematic Integration with Conceptual Framework*

V. Project Question

Guided by this framework, the study investigates the following question:

How effective is WOCEC's leadership development program in enhancing the leadership skills and professional growth of participants?

This question serves as the anchor for examining how equity-centered, contextually responsive leadership models impact outcomes for women of color in the education sector. This study examines three interconnected dimensions, which are: the development of culture and leadership among participants, the impact of intersectional identities on leadership experiences, and the role of facilitator engagement in shaping participant outcomes.

As illustrated in Figure 2, Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) is the connective tissue in the conceptual framework. It mediates how participants experience their leadership identity and the developmental environment in which they operate. WOCEC's participants live intersectionality daily by navigating their diverse identities, including race, gender, professional roles, and cultural backgrounds. This complexity shapes how cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005), such as aspirational and resistant capital, is activated and affirmed. It also influences which facilitator styles (House, 1971) resonate most. For example, a WOCEC participant facing both racialized and gendered exclusion may benefit more from a supportive or participative facilitator than a directive one. WOCEC centers intersectionality in its triarchic framework to show that leadership development is not linear or neutral. This perspective supports the idea that leadership growth means navigating systems and cultivating self through overlapping structures of identity, power, and potential.

The next section details the methods used to study WOCEC's program. All of the methods are aligned with the central question and framework, ensuring an analysis which considers both quantitative and qualitative aspects of leadership growth through an equitable and culturally aware lens.

Part VI. Project Design

Methodology

This study will use a mixed-methods design to examine how WOCEC leadership development programs influence participants' leadership skills and professional growth. A key principle of the mixed methods approach, as Creswell (2014) explains, is that combining statistical trends (quantitative data) with personal stories and lived experiences (qualitative data) offers a more complete understanding of a research problem than using either method alone (p. 2). This study adopts a balanced perspective with intentional emphasis on qualitative and quantitative methods in an attempt to avoid the favoritism of one approach. Employing a mixed methods approach improves the study's validity through methodological triangulation. It allows for a more profound and more comprehensive interpretation of the data by leveraging the complementary strengths of both qualitative and quantitative inquiry (Creswell, 2014). This integration provides a richer picture of the research problem, highlighting trends in leadership development outcomes and capturing the voices and lived experiences of WOCEC participants, adding depth and meaning to the quantitative results.

Participants

The sample for this study will consist of alumni from the past three cohorts of the WOCEC Leadership Development Program. The research team will select participants using

purposive sampling. Creswell (2014) defines purposive sampling as a non-probability sampling method that intentionally selects participants based on specific characteristics relevant to the research question. This study will emphasize variation across career sectors (K-12, higher education, and education-adjacent fields) and leadership roles to ensure a rich and diverse cross-section of alum experiences. This approach aims to uncover common themes and nuanced perspectives in how WOCEC's leadership programs influence leadership trajectories. The anticipated sample will consist of:

- ~5-10 interview participants
- ~25-50 survey respondents

Data Collection

Data collection will follow a concurrent mixed methods approach, with surveys and interviews conducted during the same time frame to support integrated analysis. The data collection occurred over four weeks during the summer of 2025, following IRB approval and participant consent.

a. **Qualitative Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews will explore how participants interpret their leadership development journey. The conceptual framework will guide the questions and probe areas such as:

- Application of cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005)
- Experiences with facilitation and motivation (House, 1971)
- Reflections on intersecting identities (Crenshaw, 1989)
- Perceived impact on professional growth and leadership capacity

Each interview lasts approximately 10–15 minutes, is conducted via Zoom, and is recorded for transcription and analysis. The researchers will code results for emerging themes, patterns, or recurring phrases. Codes will be categorized by:

- Program Experience

- Impact on Leadership

- Aspirations & Opportunities

- Reflections & Suggestions

b. **Quantitative Survey**

The survey, created using Qualtrics, will include both Likert-scale items and open-ended questions and will be distributed to participants via email. Where applicable, descriptive and inferential statistics will be used to analyze frequencies, group differences by role, and cross-tabulations or correlations. Open-ended responses will be coded and categorized according to the preliminary themes of *Leadership Growth and Confidence, Access to Opportunities, Navigating Barriers and Systems, and Identity, Representation, and Empowerment.* Consistent with Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach to thematic analysis, the coding process will remain iterative, allowing for refinement and the addition of new categories should unanticipated themes emerge from the data.

The survey and interview instruments were reviewed by WOCEC's leadership team to ensure clarity, cultural responsiveness, and alignment with the program's mission and goals. Feedback from the review informed revisions to language, item order, and tone to enhance

participant comfort and comprehension. Survey items were adapted from validated leadership development instruments (Riggio, 2008; Day, 2000) and reviewed for reliability and cultural appropriateness prior to distribution.

Interview Questions (Qualitative)

1. In what ways did the WOCEC program affirm or challenge your identity as a leader? Connects to Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) and Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989).

2. Can you describe a moment during the program when an executive coach's approach significantly impacted your motivation or growth? Tied to Path-Goal Theory (House, 1971) and participant experience.

3. How has your leadership style evolved since completing the WOCEC program? What program elements contributed most to that shift? It aligns with leadership development capacity and identity work (Van Velsor et al., 2010).

4. What barriers or opportunities related to race, gender, or cultural background did you encounter in your professional leadership journey before and after WOCEC? Draws from Intersectionality and equity-focused leadership practice.

5. How do you define leadership effectiveness now, and does that definition align with how your WOCEC coach framed it during the program? Synthesis of conceptual definitions (Day, 2000; Riggio, 2008).

   Open-Ended Wrap-Up

6. Is there anything else we need to understand about the program's impact on you or your career as a Woman of Color in education?

Survey Questions (Quantitative + Open-Ended Mix)

Likert Scale: 1- Strongly Disagree | 2- Disagree | 3- Neutral | 4- Agree | 5- Strongly Agree

1. WOCEC helped me develop leadership skills applicable to my current professional context.

2. Program facilitators adapted their guidance to my personal needs and learning style.

3. The program content reflected my cultural identity and experiences.

4. I feel more confident leading within systems that have historically excluded people who look like me.

5. The WOCEC experience has positively influenced my career trajectory.

   Open-Ended Questions

1. What specific leadership practices or insights have you applied since completing WOCEC?

2. What aspects of the program would you recommend improving to support future cohorts of women of color better?

Data Analysis

Qualitative

We conducted a thematic analysis of the interview transcripts, using a hybrid coding approach that incorporates deductive codes from the conceptual framework and inductive codes from participants' lived experiences. This combined method ensures the analysis is rooted in

theory while staying open to unexpected insights. Coding will be supported and organized with NVivo qualitative analysis software.

Quantitative

Survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (means, medians, standard deviations, and 95% confidence intervals) and cross-tabulations to identify and summarize patterns and relationships among key variables. Where appropriate, we examined comparative analyses such as mean differences (t-tests or ANOVAs) with Excel to examine trends across subgroups, like sector or years of experience. Associations among items were assessed with Spearman correlations given the ordinal (Likert) scale; Spearman's ρ was selected over Pearson's *r* because Likert responses exhibited non-normality and ceiling effects and the sample set was small ($n = 19$), making a rank-based, monotonic measure more appropriate (ties handled via average ranks). Internal consistency of the five items was evaluated with Cronbach's alpha. This approach helps to find meaningful differences in participant responses.

To strengthen the overall validity of the findings, we analyzed the qualitative (interview) and quantitative (survey) data separately and then combined them using a convergent mixed methods approach. This approach will align results from both strands to identify areas of convergence (agreement) and divergence (disagreement), as well as expansion (complementary insights) (Creswell, 2022, p. 52). By integrating both types of evidence, this analysis ensures that interpretations are based on measurable outcomes and authentic participant voices.

A probable concern in the analysis process is the risk of interpretive bias when integrating qualitative and quantitative findings. To lessen the risk of interpretive bias, the research team applied triangulation by analyzing interview and survey results before merging the

findings. The sequence followed was survey and interview analysis, interview coding, and finally synthesis. This helped to ensure the qualitative insights were contextualized rather than skewed statistical patterns. This also allowed the research team to debrief to enhance reliability and analytic transparency.

Ethical Considerations

Researchers will inform participants of their rights and obtain informed consent before collecting data. All data will be anonymized, stored securely, and used solely for research purposes. To ensure compliance with ethical standards, the research team will seek Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval through Vanderbilt University. In addition, the research team signed a formal data privacy agreement with WOCEC, outlining protocols, confidentiality, and restricted access, safeguarding participant information throughout the study.

Limitations

A potential concern is participant response bias in self-reported survey data. The research team plans to mitigate this risk by ensuring anonymity and emphasizing the voluntary nature of participation.

VII. Data Collection and Analysis Status Report

A mixed-methods design captured both the breadth and depth of participants' experiences with the program. Semi-structured interviews (n = 7) were conducted to elicit participants' lived experiences and reflections on the program's impact. To complement these narratives, surveys (n = 19) were administered, consisting of both Likert-scale items and two open-ended questions. The survey data provided quantitative measures of program effectiveness while also generating

qualitative insights that could be triangulated with interview findings. Responses to the two open-ended survey questions were analyzed thematically using the same coding framework applied to interview transcripts. This ensured consistency across qualitative data sources and allowed for comparison of themes across instruments. Together, these methods ensured a more comprehensive understanding of the program's outcomes and enhanced the validity of the emerging themes.

The study achieved a 70% response rate for interviews (7/10 participants contacted) and a 43% response rate for surveys (19/44 participants). Although the survey response rate was modest, the data nonetheless revealed consistent patterns that aligned closely with interview findings, thereby strengthening the reliability of the results. Across both data sources, outcomes were overwhelmingly positive. All participants (100%) reported improvements in their leadership skills, underscoring the program's effectiveness in fostering leadership development. Moreover, over 90% of participants credited WOCEC with having a direct influence on their career trajectory, demonstrating its role in shaping professional advancement. Specific program components also emerged as particularly impactful: 84% of respondents identified executive coaching as a transformative element of their experience, and 68% affirmed that the program validated their identity and lived experience. These findings collectively highlight WOCEC's ability to promote professional growth, affirm participant identity, and provide targeted leadership support through its coaching model.

Quantitative Results:

Descriptive statistics for the five Likert items are summarized in Table 1. These include:
  i.   Mean, median, mode, and standard deviation for each question

      ii.   A bar chart or a box plot will be used to visualize distributions

These descriptive statistics provided a prerequisite quantitative contextualization of participant

satisfaction, with findings subsequently triangulated against the rich interview narratives.
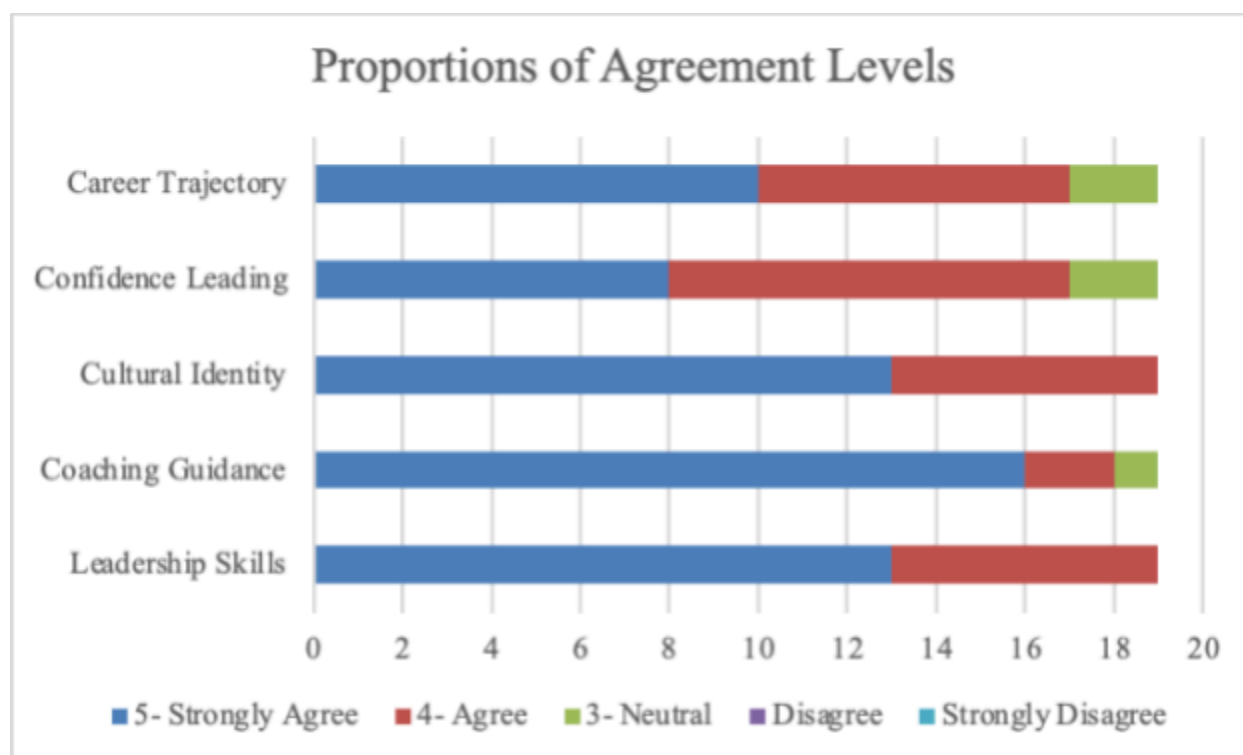
Furthermore, to determine the robustness of high-frequency thematic references, a structured

content analysis framework was applied to the open-ended survey responses, enabling the

convergence of quantitative and qualitative data streams.

      Table 1 presents descriptive statistics from survey responses (n = 19) assessing

participants' perceptions of WOCEC's impact. Across all five items, mean scores were very high

(ranging from 4.32 to 4.79 on a 5-point scale), with medians of 4 or 5, indicating strong

agreement. The highest-rated item was the adaptability of executive coaching to participants'

needs (M = 4.79; 95% CI [4.53, 5.00]), while the lowest-rated, though still positive, was

increased confidence in leading within historically exclusionary systems (M = 4.32; 95% CI

[3.97, 4.64]). These results suggest that participants consistently experienced WOCEC as a

transformative program, particularly in leadership skill development, cultural affirmation, and

career influence.

Q1_num		Q2_num		Q3_num		Q4_num		Q5_num	
Mean	4.68	Mean	4.79	Mean	4.68	Mean	4.32	Mean	4.42
Standard Error	0.11	Standard Error	0.12	Standard Error	0.11	Standard Error	0.15	Standard Error	0.16
Median	5.00	Median	5.00	Median	5.00	Median	4.00	Median	5.00
Mode	5.00	Mode	5.00	Mode	5.00	Mode	4.00	Mode	5.00
Standard Deviation	0.48	Standard Deviation	0.54	Standard Deviation	0.48	Standard Deviation	0.67	Standard Deviation	0.69
Sample Variance	0.23	Sample Variance	0.29	Sample Variance	0.23	Sample Variance	0.45	Sample Variance	0.48
Kurtosis	-1.42	Kurtosis	6.88	Kurtosis	-1.42	Kurtosis	-0.57	Kurtosis	-0.37
Skewness	-0.86	Skewness	-2.66	Skewness	-0.86	Skewness	-0.47	Skewness	-0.81
Range	1.00	Range	2.00	Range	1.00	Range	2.00	Range	2.00
Minimum	4.00	Minimum	3.00	Minimum	4.00	Minimum	3.00	Minimum	3.00
Maximum	5.00	Maximum	5.00	Maximum	5.00	Maximum	5.00	Maximum	5.00
Sum	89.00	Sum	91.00	Sum	89.00	Sum	82.00	Sum	84.00
Count	19.00	Count	19.00	Count	19.00	Count	19.00	Count	19.00
Confidence Level(95.0%)	0.23	Confidence Level(95.0%)	0.26	Confidence Level(95.0%)	0.23	Confidence Level(95.0%)	0.32	Confidence Level(95.0%)	0.33

Table 1: *Descriptive Statistics from the Five-Question Survey*

In Spearman's correlation analysis, we can see that the components of the WOCEC program are well-related. The ***Cultural Identity*** work is fully correlated with Leadership ***development***, and ***Confidence building*** is strongly correlated with ***Career advancement***. Most items showed results indicating highly significant to significant correlations (ρ values ranging from .46 to 1.0, suggesting that participants who rated one area of program impact highly, such as executive coaching, also tended to report greater gains in leadership confidence, cultural affirmation, and career advancement. These findings reinforce the internal consistency and construct validity of the survey data, underscoring the interconnectedness of WOCEC's key program outcomes (see Appendix D for full results).

Figure 4, *presented as a horizontal bar chart, visually represents the frequency distribution of participant responses (N = 19) to the five Likert-scale items. This graphic immediately illustrates the highly positive central tendency of ratings for WOCEC's impact across key domains, including leadership development, executive coaching, cultural affirmation, confidence within exclusionary systems, and career trajectory.*

Qualitative Analysis Method

To understand the nuanced impact of the Women of Color Education Collaborative (WOCEC) leadership development programs, we employed a rigorous qualitative analysis grounded in thematic coding and aligned with our theoretical frameworks.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven participants who had completed WOCEC programming. Participants were selected using purposeful sampling to ensure variation in role, geography, and cohort experience. Interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and anonymized to protect confidentiality.

We used an inductive-deductive thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Initial codes were generated inductively based on participants' narratives. These open codes were then refined and categorized through a deductive lens guided by the study's conceptual framework, including Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth, Crenshaw's (1989) Intersectionality Theory, and House's (1971) Path-Goal Theory.

The analysis has produced six core themes that align closely with the study's conceptual frameworks. These preliminary findings suggest clear patterns that will inform the next phase of analysis and reporting. The six themes are: ***Identity Affirmation and Validation, Executive Coaching Impact, Self-Care and Well-Being Integration, Leadership Style Evolution, Community and Sisterhood and Navigating Race and Gender-Based Barriers.***

Data Coding and Quantification Process

To systematically analyze our interview data, we applied a structured coding process that quantified how often participants referenced each of the six core themes, ensuring consistency across transcripts and enabling comparison within and across interviews.

Definition of a "Mention"

A mention was counted each time a participant's transcript included an explicit reference, a clear paraphrase, or a substantive discussion related to one of the identified themes. Mentions included both direct references using keywords (e.g., "identity," "coaching," "self-care") and broader thematic statements that captured the essence of a theme (e.g., describing feelings of belonging under Community and Sisterhood, or recounting experiences of discrimination under Navigating Race and Gender Barriers).

Metrics and Data Points

For each core theme, a set of keywords, phrases, and contextual cues was established. These served as markers during transcript review. The coding process followed these principles:

1. Theme Identification: Each time a participant addressed a theme, whether by using a keyword or describing a relevant experience, it was recorded as a single mention.

2. Explicit and Implicit References: Transcripts were reviewed for both direct references and implicit narratives tied to the themes. This allowed us to capture not only overt statements but also underlying meanings in participants' stories.

3. Tallying Mentions: Each relevant statement or story was logged under the appropriate theme. Mentions were counted individually to ensure that recurring patterns were visible in the final dataset.

4. Multi-Theme Responses: In cases where a single response reflected multiple themes (e.g., a coaching story that also reinforced identity affirmation), the response was tallied under each relevant category. This approach preserved the multidimensional nature of participants' lived experiences.

Purpose of Quantification

By quantifying mentions, we were able to transform rich qualitative data into measurable patterns. This mixed-methods approach ensured that participants' narratives were honored in depth while also providing comparative data that could highlight the prevalence and intensity of themes across the sample. To clarify how mentions were identified, consider the following excerpt from an interview transcript:

I think the coaching aspect of the program is what was the most impactful and influential on how I viewed myself as a leader, the one on one conversations with a woman of color who had been in a leadership position as a superintendent of schools... affirmed things that I thought I was doing well, gave me some things that I needed to work on as gaps and helped me become a better leader. Interviewee 1

This single response was coded under three themes: Executive Coaching Impact ("the coaching aspect of the program was the most impactful…"), Identity Affirmation and Validation ("…how I viewed myself as a leader..."), and Community and Sisterhood ("…the one on one conversations with a woman of color who had been in a leadership position as a superintendent of schools."). Each of these thematic connections was tallied as one mention under the corresponding category. This approach ensured that the full complexity of participants' experiences was captured, rather than reducing responses to a single theme.

Interviewee	Identity Affirmation & Validation	Executive Coaching Impact	Self-Care & Well-Being	Leadership Style Evolution	Community & Sisterhood	Navigating Barriers (Race & Gender)
Interviewee 1	3	3	3	2	2	3
Interviewee 2	3	3	3	2	2	2
Interviewee 3	2	3	2	2	1	2
Interviewee 4	2	2	2	2	2	2
Interviewee 5	2	2	2	2	1	2
Interviewee 6	2	2	2	2	2	2
Interviewee 7	2	2	2	2	1	2

Table 2 *above displays the frequency of thematic references (mentions) across interviews. Conditional formatting was used in the table to display the number of times each theme was mentioned in each interview. The conditional formatting provides a heat map-like visualization. The shading varies from light green for the highest number of mentions to light red for the lower number of responses. This visualization immediately draws attention to the* **highest-frequency themes (Identity Affirmation & Validation, Executive Coaching, Self-Care & Well-Being and Navigating Barriers)** *and the themes needing further programmatic focus* **(Community & Sisterhood and Leadership Style Evolution)**.

Key Findings & Thematic Insights

The data collected from interviews and surveys revealed several important insights into the impact of WOCEC on participants' leadership development. Analysis of both quantitative measures and qualitative narratives highlighted consistent patterns that signal the program's effectiveness, while also identifying areas for continued growth. Six core themes emerged across the data; Identity Affirmation and Validation, Executive Coaching Impact, Self-Care and Well-Being Integration, Leadership Style Evolution, Community and Sisterhood, and Navigating Race and Gender-Based Barriers. Together, these themes illustrate how WOCEC supports women of color leaders in strengthening confidence, developing adaptive strategies, and building networks of support. At the same time, variation in the frequency and depth of these themes suggests opportunities for program refinement, particularly in fostering stronger peer connections and sustaining leadership practices across cohorts.

Identity Affirmation and Validation

A recurring theme was the program's role in affirming participants' leadership identities and addressing imposter syndrome. Several participants described gaining confidence in their skills and legitimacy as leaders. One noted, "The confidence that my skillset is valuable, necessary, and impactful" (Survey Response), while another explained, "I have identified my imposter syndrome gaps. This awareness has enabled me to find my voice and speak up or advocate for myself as a leader." These same sentiments were recorded in the interviews, where Interviewee 6 stated, "It built my confidence and helped me trust my magic… that I absolutely have a right to be in the room." Collectively, these reflections underscore WOCEC's effectiveness in validating identity and fostering self-assurance among women of color leaders.

Executive Coaching Impact

Executive coaching was consistently described as the most influential program component. Participants emphasized how coaching enhanced their ability to strategize and navigate political dynamics. As one participant stated, "The executive coaching piece has been the most powerful to help me strategize" (Interviewee 2). Another reflected, "Through coaching, I've been able to apply all these leadership practices since completing WOCEC" (Survey Response). These narratives highlight the centrality of coaching in equipping participants with transferable, high-leverage leadership practices.

Self-Care and Well-Being Integration

Participants reported a significant mindset shift, placing self-care and boundary-setting at the center of their leadership practice. What was once viewed as secondary has now become a deliberate and essential component of effective leadership. As Interviewee 3 reflected, "Before, I thought if I didn't do the job, no one would. Now I know if I don't take care of myself, the job still gets done." This perspective was echoed in survey responses, with one participant noting, "Since completing WOCEC, I've made work-life balance a cornerstone of my leadership practice."

Leadership Style Evolution

WOCEC catalyzed a shift toward intentional, authentic, and unapologetic leadership. Participants described becoming more selective in career moves, more strategic in their communication, and more aware of how their leadership presence influenced others. As one participant explained,

Having a better awareness... how impactful my own behavior is and how others receive

and perceive me, and how my own behavior can also influence how others receive and

perceive me and engage with me, and that came from talking to other women leaders in

the group and just some of the leadership conversations that we had" (Interviewee 1).

Community and Sisterhood

Community and Sisterhood fostered a sense of belonging and connection that countered

the isolation many women of color reported experiencing in leadership roles. This theme

emerged in both interviews and survey responses, with participants emphasizing the value of

shared identity and peer support. As one interviewee explained, "Going to the second

convening... and seeing there must have been 45 or 50 women of color there, wow... just

powerful to let me know that I truly was not alone" (Interviewee 1). A survey response

emphasized the importance of building community and urged the organization to create more

opportunities for collaboration: "It would be great to establish opportunities for women across

cohorts to interact and become resources for each other directly. Each member brings a wealth of

knowledge that other members may need in their work" (Survey Response).

Navigating Barriers of Race and Gender

While barriers remained, WOCEC equipped participants with tools to confront and

overcome them. Leaders learned to advocate for themselves, set boundaries, and reframe

oppressive experiences as sites of strategic resistance. This was reflected in participants'

narratives, which highlighted how coaching enhanced their confidence and provided concrete

strategies for navigating discriminatory encounters. As one participant explained, "I did

experience biases and prejudices of being the strong Black woman… they'll send her to the

schools that nobody else wants to go to…but then don't provide me the support that I would need to get it done without it being taxing" (Interviewee 6).

Identity Affirmation & Validation	Leadership Style Evolution
"Self-care practices and how to show up as my authentic self."	"I have learned more skills from my coach to think strategically and consider the political aspects of the superintendency."
"The CONFIDENCE that I have the skills to pursue advanced career goals."	"The program emphasizes practical application of leadership principles, with a particular focus on areas like strategic communication, navigating district challenges, school budgeting and resource allocation, and team conflict management."
Executive Coaching Impact	**Community & Sisterhood**
"The executive coaching piece has been the most powerful to help me strategize."	"Staying connected to my network of support while I travel the journey of systems leadership."
"Effective communication is one practice I've applied since completing WOCEC. Coaching helped me communicate effectively both up the chain of command and to my team members..."	"Help me build my confidence and networking capacity."
Self-Care & Well-Being	**Navigating Barriers (Race & Gender)**
"Health and wellness practice; reflective listening."	"My coach taught me to think strategically and consider the political aspects of the superintendency."
"I now intentionally unplug after work hours, schedule regular wellness appointments, and encourage others to do the same."	"I have identified my imposter syndrome gaps. This awareness has enabled me to find my voice and speak up or advocate for myself as a leader."

Table 3 *presents participants' short-response survey reflections, which further illustrate and operationalize the leadership practices and insights applied since completing WOCEC. These qualitative excerpts were systematically coded and are presented here to demonstrate triangulation (convergence) with the six core themes identified through in-depth interview analysis (full results in Appendix A).*

Findings

Participants consistently referenced four of the six core themes: Identity Affirmation and Validation, Executive Coaching Impact, Self-Care and Well-Being Integration, and Navigating Barriers, indicating that the program is effectively addressing its central areas of focus. These findings suggest that participants not only recognize but also value these components as integral to their professional growth and leadership development.

By contrast, Community and Sisterhood and Leadership Style Evolution emerged less frequently in the data. This signals an opportunity to strengthen connection-building activities and deepen peer networks within the program, as well as find ways to intentionally cultivate leadership practice through peer collaboration and shared learning experiences. The theme of Navigating Barriers related to race and gender was particularly prominent, with every participant mentioning it at least once and Interviewee 1 offering especially robust reflections. This underscores WOCEC's critical role in equipping participants to process systemic inequities and develop strategies for resilience and advocacy.

Taken together, these results demonstrate that the program is highly effective in enhancing leadership capacity and affirming participants' identities, with executive coaching standing out as a key strength due to its individualized and adaptable nature. Moreover, survey data reveal that more than 90% of participants reported a positive influence on their career trajectory, highlighting the program's significant contributions to both personal development and measurable professional advancement.

Combining the quantitative and qualitative data from this study reinforce WOCEC's transformative impact. The survey metrics revealed high levels of satisfaction and perceived

growth from the participants as 100% of participants reporting improved leadership skills. Participant interviews provide rich narratives that add depth by illustrating how these outcomes were shaped by culturally sustaining coaching and identity-affirming experiences. For example, participants described feeling 'seen' and 'validated,' sentiments which align with the 68% of survey respondents who affirmed the program's role in affirming their lived experience.

This alignment across data sources strengthens the overall credibility of the findings and points to the relevance of WOCEC's conceptual framework. By centering intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), the framework helps explain how participants' leadership development is shaped by the interplay of race, gender, professional role, and cultural background. The emergence of resistant and aspirational capital (Yosso, 2005) in participant narratives, especially in moments of strategic defiance or visionary leadership, demonstrates how equity-centered design translates into measurable outcomes. The data not only validate WOCEC's approach but also affirm that leadership growth is most powerful when it honors complexity, cultivates belonging, and activates cultural wealth.

WOCEC is not simply a leadership program but a transformative equity-driven space. By centering identity, affirming experience, and integrating culturally sustaining coaching, WOCEC equips women of color to lead boldly, strategically, and resiliently. These findings highlight the program's role in redefining leadership development through an equity lens, where voice, wellness, and belonging are recognized as leadership imperatives.

VIII. Timeline

Evaluating the Women of Color Education Collaborative (WOCEC) Leadership Development Program will begin with finalizing data collection instruments, securing

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, and initiating participant recruitment. The research team will then launch the survey, and data from past cohorts, provided by WOCEC, will be reviewed. Concurrently, the team will schedule interviews with selected participants.

Next, interviews will be conducted, followed by a mid-point check-in with the program coaches. Surveys from the past cohort will be collected, and the team will analyze results. The qualitative coding phase will follow, during which data will be synthesized with quantitative trends to provide a comprehensive evaluation.

The process will conclude with drafting findings and recommendations, and a presentation to the WOCEC leadership team. This structured approach ensures that the evaluation is methodical and aligned with the program's goals, while leveraging existing data and stakeholder input to strengthen the final recommendations.

Program Impact Overview

Based on the findings, WOCEC's leadership development program is successful. There are markers such as a strong alignment with its mission and participant outcomes. Curriculum is grounded in equity-centered leadership, and interaction fosters professional growth, self-awareness, and strategic skill-building. Participants have reported increased confidence in navigating complex organizational dynamics and having a deeper understanding of their leadership potential. These outcomes affirm WOCEC's role as a transformative force for women of color in executive and emerging leadership roles.

Identified Areas for Enhancement

While the program excels in many domains, our analysis identified two areas, Community & Sisterhood and Leadership Style Evolution, that scored lower in participant feedback. These areas are not indicative of program failure but rather opportunities for refinement. The research team recommends strengthening these dimensions to elevate the program's impact further and ensure participants experience personal growth and collective connection with this balance. Experiences can be further enhanced using specific, targeted interactive strategies.

Recommendation #1: Peer-Led Learning Circles

Sisterhood and deeper community provide additional opportunities to build confidence and trust and reinforce methods. We suggest integrating peer-led learning circles throughout the program. These structured groups offer space for shared storytelling, collaborative problem-solving, and rotating facilitation. Peer-led learning circles benefit those involved because they foster vulnerability and trust. They also cultivate a sense of belonging beyond the program's duration.

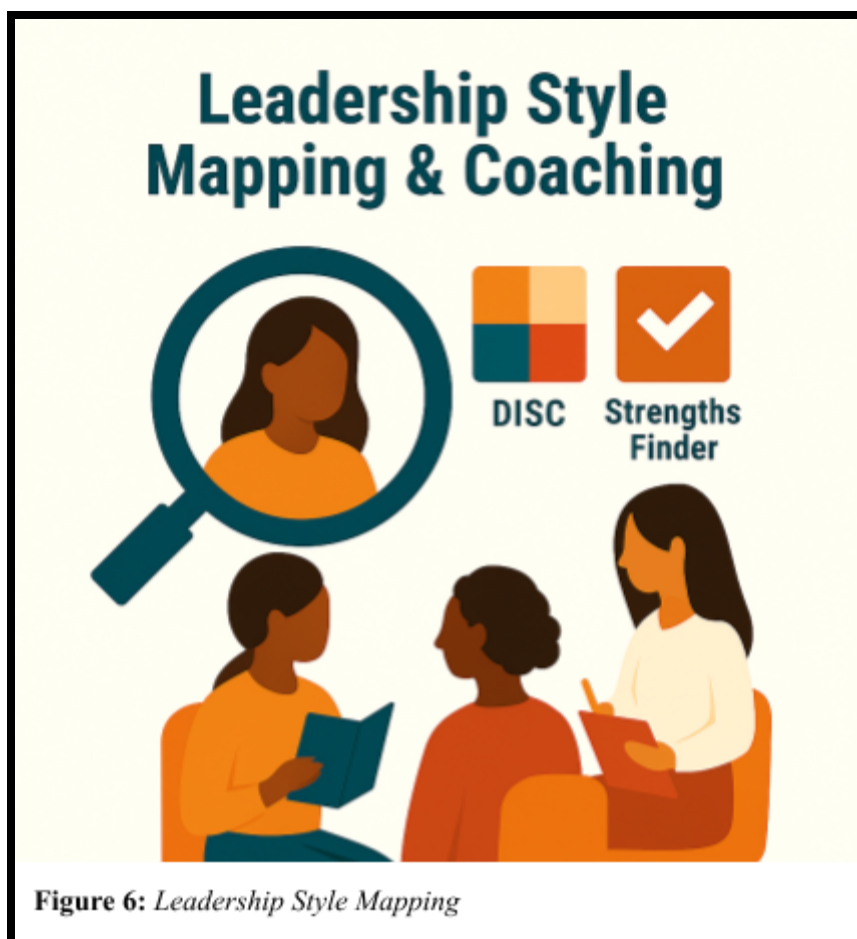**Figure 5:** *Peer-Led Learning Circles*

The research team suggests the integration of peer-led circles because it is grounded in WOCEC's conceptual framework, which centers intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) as the connection between one's leadership identity and developmental context. Participants can navigate and affirm their lived experiences around the intersection of race, gender, professional role, and cultural background. WOCEC participants will have the ability to share their narratives, leading to the formal activation of forms of cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005).

Resistant and aspirational capital wealth can emerge as the women challenge dominant norms and envision new possibilities. The best part is that the rotation of facilitation by the women within peer-led circles aligns with House's (1971) leadership styles, giving WOCEC participants real opportunities to experiment with supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented approaches. The research team chose peer-led learning circles because it is experiential learning that honors the non-linear nature of leadership development, and it affirms that growth emerges by collective reflection and identity negotiation. The second recommendation aims to provide participants with more insight into their leadership styles.

Recommendation #2: Leadership Style Mapping and Coaching

Participants expressed a desire for more clarity and growth in their leadership styles, which can be introduced with assessment tools. Embedding a module focused on leadership style Identification, using tools like DISC, StrengthsFinder, or similar assessments, can provide a framework for structured reflection and adaptation. WOCEC participants can recognize their default tendencies, individual strengths, and areas for personal growth. When paired with targeted coaching, this approach makes leadership development tangible and personalized, deeply aligned with WOCEC's equity-centered mission.

The researchers selected this recommendation as it is rooted in the conceptual framework's emphasis on intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) as a lens through which leadership identity is shaped. WOCEC participants navigate leadership on a daily basis through the complex interplay of race, gender, professional role, and cultural background. Leadership style mapping allows them to explore how these intersecting identities influence their approach to leading, being led, and responding to organizational dynamics. Being able to explore these identities and couple them with real practice can be a game-changer.

Figure 6: *Leadership Style Mapping*

Furthermore, WOCEC's coaches are outstanding. Coaching grounded in House's (1971) leadership styles, supportive, participative, directive, and achievement-oriented, can help participants experiment with styles that resonate with what the women are facing in today's challenging and sometimes toxic workplace. For example, a participant whose leadership has been shaped by resistant capital (Yosso, 2005) may find empowerment in participative or achievement-oriented coaching that validates their strategic defiance and long-term vision.

Offering this type of module will affirm that leadership is not one-size-fits-all but rather a dynamic process of self-discovery as well as adaptation within systems of power and possibility. Having a full understanding of this will also prepare WOCEC Alumni to mentor others and remain engaged with WOCEC, strengthening lasting relationships.
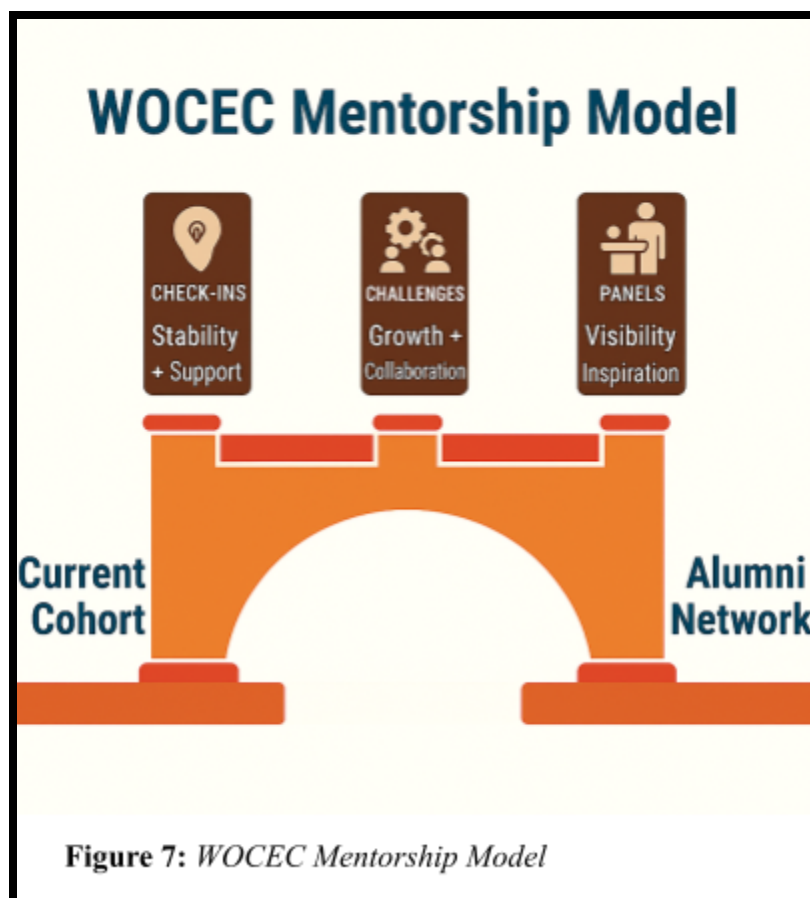
Recommendation #3: Cross-Cohort Mentorship Model

Research findings indicate that *Community and Sisterhood* and *Leadership Style Evolution* emerged less frequently in participant responses, suggesting an opportunity to strengthen these dimensions through sustained relational support. The organization is doing an incredible job of encouraging real, impactful dialogue through coaching. We want to provide a pathway for the dialogue to continue and for relationships to become stronger. To address this, we recommend the development of a cross-cohort mentorship model that connects current participants with WOCEC alumni. This structure would extend the program's impact beyond the immediate cohort while fostering intergenerational learning, accountability, and ongoing peer support.

WOCEC's Cross-Cohort Mentorship Model (See Figure 6) includes:

- **Monthly mentor check-ins** to cultivate personalized guidance and relational accountability. This extra support can go far, especially during such a difficult job market and socio-political challenges.

- **Collaborative leadership challenges or case study discussions** that encourage participants and alumni to co-create solutions and reflect on leadership dilemmas. Collective reflection and problem-solving help to strengthen leadership.

- **Alumni panels** that showcase evolving leadership practices and offer strategies for sustaining sisterhood beyond program completion. Panels are incredible for maintaining momentum, encouraging engagement, building relationships, and networking.

Figure 7: *WOCEC Mentorship Model*

This recommendation deeply aligns with WOCEC's conceptual framework, which places intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) at the center of leadership development. Participants' leadership journeys are shaped by overlapping structures of race, gender, professional role, and cultural background. A cross-cohort mentorship model acknowledges these complexities and creates space for shared storytelling and mutual affirmation across generational lines.

This recommendation links alumni experiences with current participant development. The WOCEC cross-cohort mentorship model activates cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005), particularly navigational and social capital. Alumni mentors can be of tremendous value because they can assist newer participants in traversing institutional landscapes. They also help to build enduring networks. Mentorship models reinforce House's (1971) leadership styles by modeling

adaptive facilitation and relational leadership in real time. Ultimately, this approach affirms that leadership growth is not a solitary endeavor but a communal process rooted in trust, visibility, and sustained connection.

Peer-led learning circles, leadership style mapping and coaching, along with a cross-cohort mentorship model, are recommendations that form a cohesive strategy that deepens WOCEC's equity-centered leadership development efforts. Each recommendation reinforces the program's strong commitment to cultivating sisterhood, affirming intersectional identity, and activating cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005). This is enhanced through the use of relational and reflective practice. WOCEC would strengthen leadership capacity and build intergenerational connection by embedding opportunities for shared storytelling, personalized growth, and intergenerational connection. Moreover, this effort creates an even stronger and more resilient community of practice equipped to navigate complex professional and socio-political landscapes. Lastly, these strategies honor the framework's assertion that leadership is not a linear process but a dynamic one shaped by identity, power, and collective potential.

Limitations of this Research

The study on WOCEC provides valuable insights into the impact of women of color in leadership within the development program. However, several limitations must be acknowledged and frame the scope of interpretation to inform recommendations for future research. It is imperative that researchers acknowledge and disclose several limitations to the WOCEC study as a means of framing the scope of interpretation to inform recommendations for future research. It provides valuable insights into the impact of women of color in leadership, with limitations starting with Social Desirability Bias.

Social Desirability Bias

There is a possibility that participants may have responded in ways they believed were favorable to the organization or its mission, as both survey and interview data were self-reported. Given WOCEC's strong reputation and the sense of loyalty among participants, responses may reflect aspirational perceptions of impact rather than entirely objective assessments. The potential bias remains a consideration when interpreting results related to satisfaction and self-reported growth, despite the emphasis on anonymity provided to the participants. While anonymity was emphasized, this potential bias should be considered when interpreting self-reported growth and satisfaction. This dynamic is especially relevant within the framework of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), where participants may feel pressure to present empowered narratives in response to systemic marginalization.

Limited Longitudinal Data Context

The findings primarily represent short-term outcomes captured immediately following program participation. Participants reported increases in leadership confidence, professional growth, and identity affirmation. This study did not include longitudinal tracking to determine whether the outcomes persisted over time or translated into tangible career advancements. Future research should examine whether WOCEC's reported benefits are sustained and whether they contribute to systemic transformation within participants' organizations and institutions. Consider adding: Future research should examine how cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005)—particularly aspirational and resistant capital—evolves over time and whether WOCEC's impact contributes to systemic transformation within organizations and institutions.

Confidence Gains

The lower confidence scores among participants navigating exclusionary systems express that structural inequities continue to challenge women of color in leadership roles. Whereas the results indicate that WOCEC effectively fosters personal and professional growth, barriers to this growth persist, including the enduring barriers of race, gender, and institutional power dynamics. The conceptual framework emphasizes that leadership development is neither linear nor neutral. It is mediated by overlapping systems of identity and oppression that shape access, opportunity, and self-efficacy. Continued efforts are needed to align individual development with organizational and systemic reforms that dismantle inequitable structures.

Lack of a Comparative or Control Group

The study's focus on WOCEC participants limits the ability to isolate the program's unique impact. Without a comparison or control group, it is challenging to determine whether observed outcomes are directly attributable to WOCEC participation or broader leadership experiences. In future research, including comparative cohorts could strengthen validity and allow for a more nuanced understanding of the program's extraordinary influence.

Women of Color Often Wear Various Hats

Many participants in this study balance multiple responsibilities as leaders, caregivers, educators, and community advocates. These overlapping roles may have influenced the time, focus, and energy participants could devote to program engagement, potentially leading to significant role strain (Bell & Nkomo, 2003, p.135). Grounded in the study's conceptual framework, the emphasis on intersectionality highlights how these overlapping identities mediate

access to leadership growth and the activation of cultural wealth. Understanding how these intersecting responsibilities shape participants' developmental experiences would further clarify how external factors mediate program outcomes. Future research should investigate how role strain impacts program outcomes and how WOCEC can be adapted to support participants navigating complex life demands.

Limited Generalizability

The findings should be exploratory rather than generalizable due to the modest survey response pool and the limited number of seven interviews. Although the results offer early indicators of WOCEC's success, future studies should be conducted that include a larger and more diverse sample, encompassing multiple cohorts, to validate and extend the conclusions. This broader representation would enhance the study's external validity and strengthen claims about program scalability and long-term effectiveness.

Conclusion

In summary, this study provides meaningful early evidence of WOCEC's positive impact on leadership development for women of color. These limitations underscore the need for continued, longitudinal inquiry to measure the lastingness of outcomes and the extent to which individual growth translates into systemic change. Future research should incorporate mixed-methods, comparative designs, and multi-year tracking to capture the whole trajectory of leadership capacity, confidence, and advancement fostered by the WOCEC model.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Raw Survey Results- Open-ended Questions

What specific leadership practices or insights have you applied since completing WOCEC?
Health and wellness practice: reflective listening
The executive coaching piece has been the most powerful to help me strategize.
I have learned more skills from them. My coach helped me to think strategically and consider the political aspects of the superintendency.
The program emphasizes practical application of leadership principles, with a particular focus on areas like strategic communication, navigating district challenges, school budgeting and resource allocation, and team conflict management. Through coaching, I've been able to apply all these leadership practices since completing WOCEC.
The confidence that I have the skills to pursue advanced career goals.
Effective communication is one practice I've applied since completing WOCEC. Coaching helped me communicate effectively both up the chain of command and to my team members, understanding the nuances of different communication styles. This program also helped me navigate a difficult team restructuring by learning to communicate clearly with all our supervisors and team members, resulting in a more cohesive and efficient plan.
Ongoing reflection and self-care practices
The quality and experience of the coaches.
Strategic planning and having crucial conversations
Self-care practices and how to show up as my authentic self.
Many of the skills and lessons learned I have applied.
1. The confidence that my skillset is valuable, necessary, and impactful. 2. Owning my self-care and consistently implementing habits that serve it well. 3. Staying connected to my network of support while I travel the journey of systems leadership.
Since completing WOCEC, I've made work-life balance a cornerstone of my leadership practice. One key insight I gained was the importance of modeling leadership practices for others. Prior to WOCEC, I often worked nonstop, neglecting personal well-being, which led to burnout. Through the program, I recognized that effective leaders prioritize their health and set boundaries—not only for themselves but to empower their teams to do the same. I now intentionally unplug after work hours, schedule regular wellness appointments, and encourage others to do the same. This shift has improved both my performance and my overall well-being.

Self-care and advocacy
Empathetic leadership while holding others accountable
I have specifically worked on my work-life balance.
Taking care of me first. Boundaries and wellness.
I have identified my Imposter Syndrome gaps. This awareness has enabled me to find my voice and speak up or advocate for myself as a leader. The self-care support has helped me identify areas to focus on, specifically sleep and eating, to maintain a more balanced lifestyle. Lastly, boundary setting both personally and professionally are practices I have adopted. I now encourage and model for my teams these leadership practices, which have impacted productivity and overall morale.
Help me build my confidence and networking capacity

What aspects of the program would you recommend improving to better support future cohorts of women of color?
Continued support and mentorship
Spending more time. I feel the 2 days are too short.
I think participants who are not superintendents should be required to receive written permission from the superintendent to participate.
No concerns at this time
Monthly sessions for consistency.
Nothing at the time
More interview practice and resume review
Monthly sessions
The number of in-person conferences should increase.
More support for financial literacy. As a first-generation college grad who grew up in poverty, I'm still trying to learn about how to be financially secure.
Ensuring that the sessions are applicable to leaders at all levels.
All of the activities and resources are so powerful. It would be helpful to engage our virtual workshops with guest speakers or strategy sessions after work hours.
The overall design of the program provides a solid foundation for leadership development. To further enhance its impact, I recommend integrating dedicated peer circles. This would offer participants a structured opportunity to connect, reflect, and support one another in processing shared experiences.

Continued emphasis on the importance of our role and political reality
Rotating the texts for WOCEC ALUMNI
The Leadership coaching has been the most beneficial part of this program. I also enjoy collaborating with my peers as well as those who hold positions I aspire to. I have been able to redefine both short and long-term goals.
None
Financial literacy was added to the program and should remain as it is, another stressor for WOCEC leaders. It would be great to establish opportunities for women across cohorts to interact and become resources for each other directly. Each member brings a wealth of knowledge that other members may need in their work.
If we could find a way to lower the price or find a funding source to offer this awesome program.

Appendix B: Interviews: Mentions Data

Interviewee	Identity Affirmation & Validation	Executive Coaching Impact	Self-Care & Well-Being	Leadership Style Evolution	Community & Sisterhood	Navigating Barriers (Race & Gender)
Interviewee 1	3	3	3	2	2	3
Interviewee 2	3	3	3	2	2	2
Interviewee 3	2	3	2	2	1	2
Interviewee 4	2	2	2	2	2	2
Interviewee 5	2	2	2	2	1	2
Interviewee 6	2	2	2	2	2	2
Interviewee 7	2	2	2	2	1	2

Appendix C: Survey Short Response organized by theme

1. **Identity Affirmation and Validation**

"The CONFIDENCE that my skillset is valuable, necessary and impactful."

"I have identified my Imposter Syndrome gaps. This awareness has enabled me to find my voice and speak up or advocate for myself as a leader."

"Helped me build my confidence and networking capacity."

"Owning my self care and consistently implementing habits that serve it well."

2. **Executive Coaching Impact**

"The executive coaching piece has been the most powerful to help me strategize. I have learned more skills from my coach to think strategically and consider the political aspects of the superintendency."

"Through coaching, I've been able to apply all these leadership practices since completing WOCEC."

"The quality and experience of the coaches."

"The Leadership coaching has been the most beneficial part of this program."

3. **Self-Care and Well-Being Integration**

"Health and wellness practice; reflective listening."

"Ongoing reflection and self-care practices."

"Self-care practices and how to show up as my authentic self."

"Since completing WOCEC, I've made work-life balance a cornerstone of my leadership practice."

"Taking care of me first. Boundaries and wellness."

"The self-care support has helped me identify areas to focus, specifically sleep and eating, to maintain a more balanced lifestyle."

"I now intentionally unplug after work hours, schedule regular wellness appointments, and encourage others to do the same."

4. Leadership Style Evolution

"The program emphasizes practical application of leadership principles, with a particular focus on areas like strategic communication, navigating district challenges, school budgeting and resource allocation, and team conflict management."

"Effective communication is one practice I've applied since completing WOCEC. Coaching helped me communicate effectively both up the chain of command and to my team members, understanding the nuances of different communication styles."

"Strategic Planning and having crucial conversations."

"Modeling leadership practices for others."

"I have been able to redefine both short and long-term goals."

5. Community and Sisterhood

"Staying connected to my network of support while I travel the journey of systems leadership."

"It would be helpful to engage in our virtual workshops with guest speakers or strategy sessions after work hours."

"If we could find a way to lower the price or find a funding source to offer this Awesome program."

"It would be great to establish opportunities for women across cohorts to interact and become resources for each other directly. Each member brings a wealth of knowledge that other members may need in their work."

"The overall design of the program provides a solid foundation for leadership development. To further enhance its impact, I recommend integrating dedicated peer circles. This would offer participants a structured opportunity to connect, reflect, and support one another in processing shared experiences."

6. Navigating Race- and Gender-Based Barriers

"Ensuring that the sessions are applicable to leaders at all levels."

"Financial literacy was added to the program and should remain as it is another stressor for WOC leaders."

"Continued emphasis on the importance of our role and political reality."

"As a first-generation college grad who grew in poverty, I'm still trying to learn about how to be financially secure."

Appendix D: Spearman's Correlation

Spearman Rank Correlation	Rank_LS	Rank_CG	Rank_CI	Rank_CL	Rank_CT
Rank_LS	1				
Rank_CG	0.64	1.00			
Rank_CI	1.00	0.64	1.00		
Rank_CL	0.58	0.37	0.58	1.00	
Rank_CT	0.72	0.46	0.72	0.81	1

Correlation Matrix	Leadership Skills	Coaching Guidance	Cultural Identity	Confidence Leading	Career Trajectory
Leadership Skills	1.00				
Coaching Guidance	0.64	1.00			
Cultural Identity	1.00	0.64	1.00		
Confidence Leading	0.58	0.37	0.58	1.00	
Career Trajectory	0.72	0.46	0.72	0.81	1.00

Calculate Critical Value for Significance

n	19
α	0.05
degree of freedom (df)	17
Critical Value (p<0.05)	0.455530506

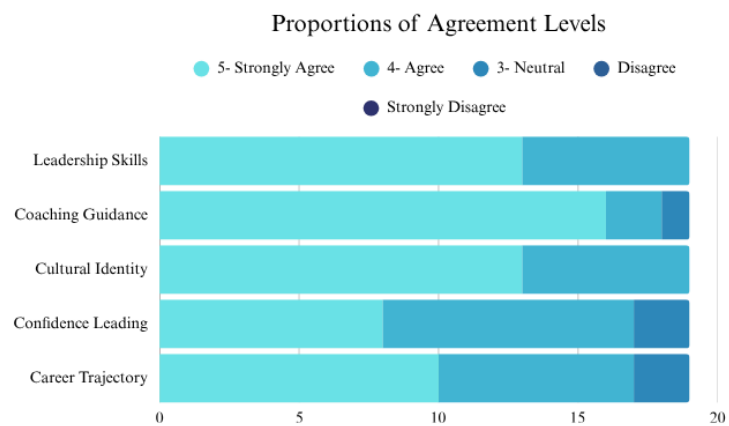| Legend	
	Significant
	Not significant

Significance Levels:
p < 0.001 (*)**: Highly significant
p < 0.01 ()**: Very significant
p < 0.05 (*): Significant
p ≥ 0.05: Not significant

Appendix E: Proportions of Agreement Levels visualization

Appendix F: Complete Literature Review

Appendix G: Descriptive Statistics

Field	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Variance	Responses	Sum
WOCEC helped me develop leadership skills applicable to my current professional context	4.68	5.00	0.46	0.22	19	89
Executive coaches adapted their guidance to my personal needs and learning style.	4.79	5.00	0.52	0.27	19	91
The program content reflected my cultural identity and experiences	4.68	5.00	0.46	0.22	19	89
I feel more confident leading within systems that have historically excluded people who look like me	4.32	4.00	0.65	0.43	19	82
The WOCEC experience has positively influenced my career trajectory	4.42	5.00	0.67	0.45	19	84

Appendix H: A visual representation of Survey question 4.