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Black Leadership and Culture in Creative Industry: Organizational Practices and Worker Satisfaction in a Charlotte, NC, Social Enterprise

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Consultancy Project & Report

Organization: Gardner-Webb University College of Education

Project Title: BLACK LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE IN CREATIVE
INDUSTRY: ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES AND WORKER
SATISFACTION IN A CHARLOTTE, NC, SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

Candidate: Alexandra Arrington, LCMHCA, NCC, BC-TMH

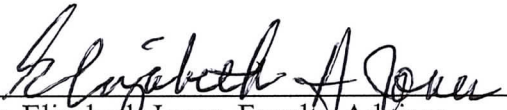
Consultancy Coach: Dr. Elizabeth Jones

Defense Date: November 2, 2022

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Approval

This consultancy project was submitted by Alexandra Arrington under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to Gardner-Webb University College of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.


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David Butler, Hue House, LLC
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11/7/2022
Date

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I am thankful to the Creator God for giving me the aptitude and fortitude to pursue this path. God has provided what was needed to complete this journey, and I am grateful for that.

I am appreciative of the legacy set by my great-grandparents, P. F. Thomas, Sr., and Helen Clark Thomas, emphasizing the importance of formal education. It is because of their standard that the foundation for this educational undertaking was established for me.

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Abstract

BLACK LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE IN CREATIVE INDUSTRY: ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES AND WORKER SATISFACTION IN A CHARLOTTE, NC, SOCIAL

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This project reviewed the leadership, organizational culture and practices, and worker satisfaction in a Charlotte, NC-based marketing and advertising agency led by Black founders. These founders are creative artists and entrepreneurs with expertise in a variety of traditional and nontraditional creative fields, collectively called creative industries. The agency, Hue House, is a community-focused creative startup formed in 2019 to “decolonize the marketing and advertising industry” (Hue House, n.d., About Us section) through consulting, creativity, and community. As an entrepreneurial startup and social enterprise, the agency’s goal is to serve a niche in the predominantly white-led advertising and marketing industry. Part of Hue House’s profits benefit local Black and Brown creatives through providing and increasing access to paid opportunities, training, and resources for their professional development. A formal inquiry was launched to explore implications of this organization’s leadership for the organizational culture created with respect to the founders’ racial identities, for the adoption or eschewing of traditional organizational practices, and for worker satisfaction. Finally, reflections of various organization workers were reviewed and analyzed using a mixed methods explanatory design. The Denison Culture survey, a worker satisfaction survey, and qualitative interviews were conducted as a part of an organizational analysis to draw insights and, in turn, develop a set of organizational documents that reflect organizational practices and philosophies in a culturally relevant and nuanced way.

Keywords: Black leadership, Black leaders, Black-led organizations, African American leadership, organizational practices, culture, marketing, advertising, creative agency, creatives, creative industry, social enterprise

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1. Introduction

1.1 Project Purpose

Hue House is a creative agency with significant potential for impact in its local market especially, considering its niche. The organization was founded in 2019 in Charlotte, NC, and serves workers of color in and around a variety of creative industries who have historically encountered many barriers to sustainable livelihoods in creative class work compared to their non-person of color counterparts. Its espoused purpose is to serve by “opening new doors and changing how brands connect” (Hue House, n.d., Landing Page). Further, the organization supports creatives of color via its marketing/advertising and consulting agency work and a community-focused effort called The Block.

The organization presents a fresh take on founders working within existing systems while attempting to forge a new status quo where traditional organizational culture, structures, and practices are challenged to enrich both the founders’ work experiences and the experiences of those with whom they work. In challenging traditions, the founders seek to create environments through culture and practices that are authentic to their experiences and rooted in their racialized identities, which are normalized.

Hue House lacked some formal organizational tenets and structures as an entrepreneurial startup and a social enterprise. On that account, this project’s purpose was to conduct an organizational analysis culminating in an organizational guide called The Block Bible (to include documented organizational mission, vision, and values statements; a diversity statement; a code of ethics; a contractor orientation guide; and an overall organizational analysis report). This compendium report, included in Appendix A, was developed in conjunction with quantitative and qualitative inquiry into organizational culture, practices, and worker satisfaction using several formal tools, analyzing the results of those tools, documenting insights, reviewing action plans, and making final recommendations.

Table 1*Key Terms and Definitions*

Term	Definition
Creative class	<p>“Richard Florida's 'creative class' theory suggests that diverse, tolerant, 'cool' cities will outperform others. Ethnic minorities, gay people and counter-culturalists attract high-skilled professionals: the presence of this 'creative class' ensures cities get the best jobs and most dynamic companies” (Wojan, 2014, p. 1330).</p> <p>“The creative class is defined as the collection of occupations that specialize in the novel combination of knowledge and ideas to solve problems or create value” (Wojan, 2014, p. 1330).</p> <p>“The creative class, includes workers in science and technology, business and management, arts, culture media and entertainment, and law and healthcare professions” (Rhule, 2017, The Concept of the Creative Class section).</p>
Creative industries (economy)	<p>“Creative economy covers the knowledge-based economic activities upon which the ‘creative industries’ are based. These industries include advertising, architecture, arts and crafts, design, fashion, film, video, photography, music, performing arts, publishing, research and development, software, computer games, electronic publishing, and TV/radio” (UNCTAD, 2021, But What is the Creative Economy? section).</p>
Creatives	<p>Individuals who do work in one or more of the creative industries, who may do so in conventional or unconventional ways, and who make most of their income in these capacities. For the purposes of this project and paper, creative entrepreneurs, creative artists, and creatives are used interchangeably (Florida, 2016).</p>
Social enterprise	<p>“Social enterprises are revenue-generating businesses with a twist. Whether operated by a non-profit organization or by a for-profit company, a social enterprise has 2 goals: to achieve social, cultural, community economic and/or environmental outcomes; and, to earn revenue” (BC Centre for Social Enterprise, 2021, The Widest Definition section).</p>
Racial/racialized identity	<p>The continuous internal and external negotiation of concepts of oneself in a variety of contexts based on the social construct of race (National Museum of African American History and Culture, 2021).</p>

1.2 Project Qualification

The factors that led to the selection of this project and a corresponding organization stemmed from personal experience as a Black woman. As an entrepreneur and a consultant/trainer for racial equity and inclusion efforts in different organizational settings, I am constantly curious about organizational conditions that limit and optimize success for individuals. My enduring interest in organizational culture and environments that are conducive to the thriving of Black people informed a search for organizations looking at new ways to contribute to that thriving. Historic undervaluing and devaluing of Black people in the U.S. and beyond, to the detriment of all people, now requires intentionally and successfully addressing and curbing the impacts of that history which has the opportunity to create a wide-reaching positive benefit for all people. Hue House was selected for the purposes of observing and assessing the processes of leadership, practices, and culture development within an entrepreneurial environment led by Black people. The project was chosen in concert with the organization leaders concerning needs they were exploring in articulating organizational identity internally and to document aspects of the organizational culture's development, including practices and worker satisfaction.

2020 was a banner year for international focus on systemic racism, inequity, and racial tensions, as well as what should be done to remedy the existence of those things. The events in the U.S., such as George Floyd's murder and subsequent discourse garnering worldwide attention, drew my focus for this project to local happenings in that vein in Charlotte, NC. These local events contributed to a paradigm shift due to younger Black individuals taking up mantles of leadership; rejecting inequity as a longstanding rule; and working among various community, government, and corporate entity convergences to push for sustainable change. This change was laser focused on advocating for the distribution of resources and on forging paths to address these issues as they saw fit. My interests were in seeing what efforts along those paths developed to address inequity in comprehensive and effective ways, and how they would approach that work.

Of the several ideas for the project, Hue House came to my attention and was interested in being subjected to academic study. We landed on doing an organizational analysis and assessment to help develop useful materials for a fledgling organization seeking to benefit traditionally marginalized people. I felt that this would create the opportunity for the work to be much more than hypothetical by having immediate and actual pragmatic use for the organization. It was an interesting nuance to work with an organization in its infancy that sought to create space and culture in ways that are traditionally atypical, i.e., with Black people at the center. On that account, a question surfaced about how much of what they were attempting would be as a function of their own identity and experience relative to race, and what might they intentionally or unintentionally carry over from environments from which they sought to diverge. As a newer organization, it was important for Hue House's leadership to be informed about what traditional practices and structures have helped to undergird the existence of traditional organizations, even while attempting to create something different from the norm for traditional organizations and culture. That way, they would be able to make more informed decisions about how those traditional practices should be interpreted, utilized, or thwarted in service to how they

wished to exist as leaders building this new entity. Hue House was an ideal organization for these purposes.

By sharing my developing expertise in study and practice of organizational leadership and in providing insight accordingly, they could decide about the utility of certain organizational practices from data collected. This project had the potential to pay dividends immediately and well into Hue House's development and was undertaken officially in the fall of 2020.

1.3 Project Complexity and Impact Assessment

Upon settling on the organizational analysis work with Hue House as a worthy undertaking and a project by the set academic standard, further assessment was used to outline the nature, intensity, and impact of the project, rigorously and specifically.

1.3.1 Project Complexity

Myriad factors contributed to the project being determined as a major project assessed in concert with the organization's founders: the project's engagement of internal and external stakeholders, the required time for producing results of the inquiry, and the fact that nothing like this had been done before in the organization's brief history. Other factors that went into this determination of the project's complexity were that major restructuring of the organization's processes could result from the recommendations of the finished project, and even though no new contracts would be required to conduct the project, new contracts could be needed to implement recommendations from the project findings. The start and end dates were determined and massaged according to the demands of a startup and scheduling needs, and the time to complete the project schedule was an estimated 12 to 18 months. It also had the potential to involve and impact the entirety of the organization. While it was small and lean at the project's onset, the applications of the project's findings would extend to the future and growth of the organization.

1.3.2 Project Impact

In consulting with the organization's founders to assess this project's intensity, we considered the impact that the nature of the project would have, which was one component of determining its complexity. Because it involved assessment and communication with every layer of the organization, including external constituents (e.g., current and potential clients), the impact would be far-reaching. The organization's strategic development initiatives of culture development, work environment cultivation, and establishment of organizational standards were directly impacted as a result of the project deliverables. The impact of this entire undertaking was determined at the onset to be seen within 1 to 2 years of the project being conducted and completed. That estimation holds true as of the project's completion in May 2022 and is starting to be incorporated into organizational practice as of the summer of 2022.

1.4 Project Charter Information

Upon finalizing the nature and intent of the project with the organization's co-founders and my academic advisor, a project charter was developed to solidify critical details

about the project as a partnership and to lay out the details of the working relationship. The charter, included in Appendix B, documented such detail as who was involved and their role, who was impacted, what the work entailed, and who was responsible for the work, as well as substantive input about how and when that work was to be done. The charter included defining deliverables, assessing the project's length of time, required resources, effect on internal and external components of the organization, and size of the undertaking. This allowed for determining how soon the organization and project team could see a return on the initial time and effort investment, what strategic themes aligned with the project, and to what degree the project had a bearing on organizational effectiveness.

For this project, I was the primary practitioner. Combinations of the Hue House co-founders at any given time were the partnering organization's responsible parties and points of contact for the various project components. In completing the charter, we explored what resources would be needed to address the defined opportunity and who would coordinate and complete tasks like assessment development and distribution, scheduling and administrative support, and polling for interview participation.

2. Project Objectives

In concert with the partnering organization's co-founders, the overarching project goal for the partnering organization was decided as gaining insight into traditional organizational practices and exploring whether those insights might reflect in or apply to Hue House's operations. That goal coalesced in several objectives throughout the course of the project. The organization sought to track and codify its own new journey into organizational culture and practice formation to find out whether intent matched impact in terms of worker satisfaction through guided assessment and reflection. My personal goals included a desire to explore Black organizational leadership and culture from an academic vantage point, continue building consulting acumen with a project management focus, and apply relevant learnings from a disciplined inquiry process with real-world implications. There were several objectives resulting from my goals as well.

2.1 Outline of Partnering Organization's Objectives

2.1.1 Objectives

The project's objectives stemming from the partnering organization's overarching goal follow:

GOAL: Gain insight into traditional organizational practices and explore how those insights might reflect in or apply to Hue House's operations

- a. Objective: Assess the need for organizational structure while documenting the unique processes, applications, and considerations of this Black-led organization as a creative industry social enterprise.

- b. Objective: Explore how the organization's practices or lack thereof and the developing organizational culture may contribute or detract from worker satisfaction.

As a fledgling organization looking to take a nuanced approach to what may be considered traditional and/or common among the Charlotte, NC, marketing and advertising industry, this project was of interest to the partnering organization as they had a strong idea of the industry-specific considerations of the organization but were open to learning more and gathering insight into building a firm organizational structure, while not sacrificing the core elements of how they wanted to approach organizational culture. This materialized in practice through surveying the traditionally used infrastructure elements, policy and procedure review, inquiring about formal systems, and documenting processes that contributed to the organization's ability to focus on sustainable growth. The project also noted nontraditional ways in which the organization incorporates and develops culture to normalize creative ways to work amid traditional organizational systems relative to leadership of the organization, who all share Black racial identities.

2.1.2 Success Criteria

For the partnering organization, the success of this project was measured by how well and timely the assessed information was able to be captured, presented, and utilized with respect to deliverables. This project sought to provide strong value in formalizing some of Hue House's founding organizational philosophies and documentation. The deliverables were consolidated into a compendium document to be readily and handily applied for the organization's purposes (e.g., new hire orientations, training sessions, etc.), which was a subsequent criterion for success.

2.2 Student's Personal Leadership Objectives

2.2.1 Objectives

My personal leadership goals for this project at the onset were manifold. I hoped, most directly, to simulate a consulting relationship by practicing a developing leadership skill set as a complex project manager, to have the partnering organization find the experience helpful for its practical needs. Also, I sought to apply academic inquiry to learning what implications the founder's racial identities might have for the organization's culture, practices, and worker satisfaction. Some details for these goals, subsequent objectives, and their expansion over the course of the project follow:

1. Goal: Simulate a consulting relationship through practicing complex project management
 - a. Objective - Build rapport, practice mutual trust with organizational representatives
 - b. Objective - Exercise critical characteristics of project managers such as strong organization, communication, and motivating capabilities

2. Goal: Explore implications of the founders' racial identities relative to the organization's practices, worker satisfaction, and the developing organizational culture.
 - a. Objective: In a disciplined manner, discuss, observe, and document ways founders create, understand, and express meaning and develop processes as a result
 - b. Objective: Exercise emotional intelligence in dealing with sensitive issues related to navigating individual identities and personal/professional experiences

2.2.2 Success Criteria

The success criteria of my personal leadership at the onset of this process included the quality of completion of this project as assessed by my own standards and those of the partnering organization. Being viewed as a thought partner in the process through application of project management expertise was a second success criterion. Finally, applying my academic learning through tools and concepts to explore the relationship between founder identity and developing and codifying culture was an additional criterion. Several aspects of accomplishing these objectives weighed more heavily, particularly exercising project management skills and attentiveness to applying and assessing emotional intelligence. My objectives and success criteria remained constant throughout the project with myriad opportunities to explore, test, and apply. I was able to respond to needed pivots in the process and timeline and adjust communications, the pace of work, and delivery expectations to the satisfaction of the partnering organization. Additionally, with a retrospective view of the project and process, moving courageously through adaptive challenges and exercising humility became other criteria for success that emerged, as experienced while navigating this process in an international pandemic and persevering with resolve despite several personal experiences that complicated the balance.

3. Project Scope and Deliverables

3.1 Definitive Scope of Work

Once the organization's goals, objectives, and success criteria were synchronized with mine, we decided on the best way to match the project work with organizational needs and opportunities for its nascent phase of existence at that time. As such, initially assessing the organization's knowledge of, application of, and adherence to organizational design, structure, ethics, and culture best practices helped to determine that there was room to benefit the organization in several specific ways. The critical elements of the project included a holistic organizational analysis and subsequent document development, inclusive of the items in Table 2.

Table 2*Overview of Scope of Work*

Scope items for partnering organization
1. Data Collection/Gathering - Quantitative Surveys and Qualitative Interviews
2. Organizational Analysis and Data Review <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Discovery conversations across and outside of the organization Technology review
3. Draft Reports and Documents <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Organizational analysis report Mission, vision, and values statements Orientation curriculum and guide for organization workers Leadership philosophy statement Code of ethics
4. Presentation of Initial Report to Hue House Group Team on Data Findings
5. Present Final Report to Hue House on Organizational Analysis and Philosophy Documents
6. Attend Hue House Team Meeting (at least every other month to report on project progress)

3.2 Deliverables to Partnering Organization

The agreed upon deliverables that were proposed and accepted by the partnering organization follow:

1. Organizational analysis report (culture, vulnerabilities, strengths, and recommendations)
2. Mission, vision, and values statements
3. Orientation curriculum and guide for contract workers
4. Leadership philosophy statement
5. Code of ethics
6. Diversity philosophy/statement

The agreed upon timeline was organized in Table 3.

Table 3*Broad Timeline for Deliverables*

Deliverable description	Estimate time of delivery
Document data gathering	Fall 2020- Spring 2021
Drafting – incremental reporting	Spring 2021-Fall 2021
Working session to develop components	February 2022
Final draft and delivery of approved product	April-May 2022

Each component that was developed and drafted was delivered to the partner organization in a final product termed “The Block Bible” in May 2022. These items connected to the organizational challenge in that it did not have articulated philosophies and statements in written form prior to this project. The opportunity for it to have culturally appropriate reflections of the co-founders’ collective thoughts, informed by their respective identities, was a substantial consideration in the development of the deliverables.

3.3 Project Benefits**1. Organizational analysis**

This component of the project provided an overarching look at the practices, principles, and procedures of the organization from the inside out to assess the degree to which the structural components of the organization in its existence indicated parity with traditional elements of organizations and what opportunities and challenges may result from those findings. This helped the organization to determine the usefulness of the findings and determine a strategic application and timeline. It also allowed the organization founders to consider elements of organizational development and culture they may not have considered before.

2. Mission, vision, and values statements

The organization has a functional guiding statement that permeates all it does, but developing these formal statements assisted in formally and uniformly communicating the “what,” “why,” and “how” of its work with its internal and external constituents.

3. Orientation curriculum and guide for organization workers

This element was to supplement what the organization had hired a human resources contractor to develop for new hires. As Hue House’s processes became established and formalized, this curriculum and guide sought to provide a quick reference that new hires receive upon joining the organization, reflective of some of the other formal foundational documents that are developed from this project.

4. Leadership philosophy statement

The founders of this organization view themselves as trendsetters, forging new paths and demonstrating new ways that leadership can exist, emphasizing collaboration, sharing power and responsibility, and grooming those coming after them well. This leadership philosophy statement helped to codify those sentiments and serve as a means of accountability and was meant to help them stay centered in the foundational elements of their leadership as they experience growth.

5. Code of ethics

The organization's foundational governance structure is still very much in development for the organization. This foundational code of ethics document was meant to be an anchor and reference for how to encourage behaviors, attitudes, and demeanors as well as how to manage issues that may arise. This was done by sharing broadly acceptable and unacceptable approaches to what the organization expects, exudes, and encourages, with a culturally reflective vernacular and tone.

6. Diversity philosophy/statement

A key component of the organization's existence is to benefit underserved, underrepresented members of the local population in the creative economy. The diversity statement formalized an expression of the importance and benefit of this focus to the community of service and the wider community at large.

3.4 SMART Goals

These SMART goals were developed early in the project to keep involved parties on track with project completion and to stay consistent over the project timeline. The importance of including SMART goals was to have detailed, measurable means of knowing exactly what and by when critical components of the project needed to be complete, to hold responsible parties accountable to these elements, and to mark progression toward finishing the project in a timely manner.

Table 4*Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely (SMART) Goals*

Goal	Deadline
Have initial 30-minute qualitative conversations with each Hue House founder concerning their ideas about each of the deliverable areas.	5/31/2021
Have follow-up 30-minute qualitative conversation with each Hue House founder concerning their ideas about whether and how each of the deliverable areas has fundamentally changed with time, etc.	10/31/2021
Complete the quantitative Denison Culture Survey with various members of the Hue House team (founders, contractors, regular staff, clients, etc.).	5/31/2021
Complete the quantitative Employee Satisfaction Survey with various members of the Hue House team (founders, contractors, regular staff, clients, etc.).	11/1/2021
Observe at least two internal meetings on organizational culture creation by Hue House founders.	10/27/2021
Observe two to three client meetings (prospective, contracted, previous, etc.) with Hue House founders.	8/31/2021
Observe two to three internal staff meetings with Hue House founders and staff.	8/31/2021
Review all data and note themes and conclusions from raw data.	11/1/2021
Write up quantitative and qualitative data highlights in an accessible format.	11/3/2021
Draw up and organize information from the meeting and Denison survey for an initial report.	11/1/2021
Develop Leadership Philosophy Statement with draft report available for each off month (October, December, February, and April).	11/30/2021
Develop Diversity Philosophy Statement with draft reports available for each off month (October, December, February, and April) from meeting months.	11/30/2021
Develop Ethics Statement with draft report available for each off month (October, December, February, and April) from meeting months.	11/30/2021

(continued)

Goal	Deadline
Develop Mission/Vision/Values Statements with draft report available for each off month (October, December, February, and April) from meeting months.	11/30/2021
Meet with Hue House Team and HR hire to decide and differentiate what they will do as distinct from what I need to complete as supplements to the final orientation packet.	11/1/2021
Gather any additional or needed feedback from Hue House team by email, as possible and as needed, during draft periods for reports.	Through 4/30/2022
Participate in monthly meetings with Hue House Founders to discuss updates and receive new information regarding the project.	Through 5/1/2022
Confirm meetings with Hue House administrative assistant 1 week prior to currently scheduled meetings each month.	Through 5/1/2022
Present final versions of reports, after receiving feedback and incorporating it from draft reports to Hue House team in late spring 2022.	5/1/2022 (actually done on 5/25/22)

3.5 Deferred Deliverables

Of the initially determined deliverables, there was one edit for the project. We decided to defer the fully developed orientation guide with human resources considerations and subsequent documented policy originally proposed so as not to engage scope creep. It was determined that the scope and expertise I provided would not fully cover the compliance considerations that a human resources professional ought to provide for this portion of the project. As such, I pared down that component into a shorter checklist based on some of the organization's preferred approaches to hiring and onboarding, as well as some limited considerations of what paperwork and procedure leadership might employ in the future for their adaptation.

4. Communications Plan

4.1 Communications Plan Development

The primary purpose of the communications plan for this project was to keep stakeholders informed about the needs and progress of the project and to create accountability for incremental progress milestones. This was accomplished through consistent contact to stave off unwanted or unintended phenomena that would hinder progress. The subsequent goals of the communications plan were to bring awareness to the co-founders of the organization's developing issues and opportunities, to create a mutually agreeable structure for gathering and receiving pertinent information for the project, and to capture the preferred methods and frequency of information sharing.

Because of the 12- to 18-month length of the project, the most frequent time frame documented for the communications plan was monthly due to spreading out the deliverables and processes needed to produce them over the bulk of that time. In practice, communication was initiated as often as needed, which was for a brief time towards the conclusion of the project every 2 weeks. The last 2 months of the project (April and May 2022) required closer intervals to collect input, implement changes, and resend deliverables for the partnering organization's benefit and mine. I also included in the plan the required program communications once per semester with my project advisor, which was a status report by email or uploaded to our educational platform, Blackboard. The communication modes used most frequently were email, Zoom meetings, and written status reports (which were shared by email). The plan is included for reference in Appendix C.

4.2 Stakeholder Engagement Plan

For this project, the stakeholders who would be directly involved with and/or benefit from this project were considered the primary stakeholders: Hue House co-founders, clients, and workers/contractors. Primary and secondary stakeholders were classified based on the intensity of their involvement or benefit. The secondary stakeholders were defined as the organization's current and future clients, current and future partners in work product development and delivery, local government officials, corporate sponsors, and creative workers in the Charlotte community and beyond seeking information and resources to develop their business. The primary and secondary stakeholders were engaged through the project by email communication and quarterly meetings where I was an observer. On occasion, I was an active participant in the meetings where I would orient others to the project. I would also attend events hosted by the organization for observation purposes. There were also one-on-one interviews in the data collection methods with primary stakeholders, who contributed significant value and fodder for the bulk of the project's aims. Identifying who had the most to gain or lose by Hue House thriving or folding gave insights into what the risks might be for the project.

5. Risks

The main risks identified for this project were tied to significant components of the organization's development as a new startup. The organization was working to determine its funding model, solidifying its core products and services, and finalizing the distribution of duty among the part-time founding members who comprised the staff at the onset. Doing this project had to stay aligned with mission-critical activity, which was a primary risk consideration.

5.1 Mitigation and Contingency

There were few risks associated with the implementation and progress of this project, but a couple of them had the potential to be damaging to the project's prospects and completion if they materialized. For the two medium risks, the contingencies were discussed at length with the founders of the organization. To plan around the low potential for founders lacking desire or time to complete this project, the primary approaches were to curate or condense the project elements to more closely match existing efforts and initiatives to add value to current organizational happenings. This is

as opposed to creating the feeling of doing tangential work that would take their attention off things they were most focused on. For the latter risk, as a contingency, I would have attempted to complete this project based on hypothetical situations instead of actual ones.

A list of the determined risks, their likelihood as well as ways to reduce their likelihood, how they would affect the project, and plans should they have come to fruition are below.

Table 5

Risk Management Plan

Risk description	Mitigation plan	Contingency plan	Impact	Likelihood of occurrence
Founders and/or organizational constituents no longer have time or desire to assist in completing this project.	Keep in close contact and keep as much heavy lifting spread out as much as possible to have work accomplished in tolerable/achievable chunks.	Find a new organization or a new project within current organization that is desired.	High (this would derail the project completely)	Medium
Organization folds/exits due to low capital	As far as potential consultative intervention, this is not a scenario over which the consultant/project manager has control. As such, there is not much in the way of mitigation, except reporting dire red flags as discovered in organizational observation processes and offering viable solutions.	Consultant finds a new organization to conduct a similar inquiry or pivots study to review circumstances around and implications of the organization's unplanned exit.	High (this would derail the project completely)	Medium
Organization grows rapidly, and project continuity becomes more difficult.	This would be a wonderful thing for the organization and could not and should not be influenced by the consultant/project manager.	The difficulty that could be encountered by less access or slower communication could be addressed by tailoring the deliverables to a manageable level.	Medium (project would still be possible to complete)	Low
Consultant personal capacity changes affecting the ability for work to be conducted as outlined in the project charter within the set time.	Consultant assesses commitments to cut back on or decline things for the project duration that would infringe upon available time to conduct project as outlined.	There were things that did impact capacity to conduct the work and the project timeline was adjusted toward the end to accommodate the change.	Low (this would require shifts on the consultant's part to meet the agreed upon outline)	Low

5.2 Constraints

There were not any significant constraints presented for this project save the defined time designated to complete the project, which was at least 3 semesters preceding the final semester of the third year of the DEOL program. Having well-defined SMART goals, distribution of duty, a responsive partnering organization, and our communication plan were instrumental in ensuring that risks and constraints that might derail the program were mitigated and avoided altogether. Also, the fact that the project would not require an upfront financial commitment from the organization was a strong incentive to stay the course and work around any difficulties that arose.

6. Budget

The budget for this project was not significant due to the nature of the project being centered around consultant/project management work that was provided at no cost to the organization. Any cost incurred by the organization would be in the form of print reproduction of the deliverable(s) and/or the discussed potential for an artistic interpretation of the documents produced in a multimedia format.

Table 6

Proposed Project Budget

Potential project cost description	Line-item cost
Project management fee	
1. Consultant/Project manager time and expertise to do needs assessment, organizational analysis, and develop reports (in-kind): 10 hours/month for 12 months	No Charge
2. Consultant/Project manager time and expertise to collect data and analyze results (in-kind): 3 hours/month for 12 months (at \$150/hour)	No Charge
3. Consultant/Project manager time and expertise to staff (in-kind): 2 hours/month for 6 months (at \$150/hour)	No Charge
Optional material costs	
1. Production of multimedia versions of deliverables/documents (optional): Flat freelance fee for videographer editor/voice talent/producer	\$7,500.00
2. Any printing/binding of physical copies of documents (optional): 20 color copies at \$0.75/page	35 pages at \$0.75/page, 25 copies = \$656.25

7. Disciplined Inquiry

7.1 Introduction and Theoretical Framework

Scholarly study on Black leadership and the creative industries or Black leadership and worker satisfaction and/or organizational practice in creative entrepreneurship is not adequately covered in academic discourse. Accordingly, this study attempted to capture and report relevant data through quantitative and qualitative means. There is much to learn from the voices and experiences of Black leaders, particularly in these areas where so few hold space. The study also attempts to view phenomena and throughlines concerning racial identity, specifically Black leadership in a creative social enterprise and entrepreneurship and its implications for culture development, which may not be as well understood, as Gibson et al. (2014) suggested.

The two theories underlying this inquiry are Social Systems Theory, specifically Ecological Systems Theory which is a subset of Social Systems Theory, and Herzberg's Two Factor Theory. Ecological Systems Theory, honed and popularized by Bronfenbrenner in 1974 (Guy-Evans, 2020), proffers that people are socialized, acculturated, and developed through their environments consisting of overlapping systems (e.g., home environment, educational institutions, cultural attitudes, environmental changes) from birth with compounding impact. Herzberg's Two Factor Theory of Motivation is a second theory informing the study, which focuses on satisfaction and dissatisfaction being caused by separate sets of factors (Alshmemri et al., 2017). An important determinant in Herzberg's theory is that reasons for satisfaction are different from reasons for dissatisfaction, and one set of considerations is not determined by the other. The two theories speak to identity and culture development phenomena, what contributes to understanding organizational practices, and gauging worker satisfaction respectively.

7.2 Hypothesis

These two theories were central to the inquiry's hypothesis. I suspected that the co-founders' identities would have a bearing on what they implemented as organizational practice and on the cultural development of the organization. I thought that the bearing of that element would contribute to a different organizational experience from that of their white counterparts, which would reflect in worker satisfaction and in assessment of organizational culture in some way.

7.3 Research Questions

The two research questions the project sought to address and test, given the hypothesis, were:

- a. Does the establishment and development of a Charlotte, NC, Black-led marketing and advertising social enterprise/creative agency affect the adoption of traditional organizational practices?
- b. Do the cultural/racial identities of the three founders of a Charlotte, NC, Black-led marketing and advertising social enterprise/creative agency affect how Hue House workers experience organizational culture and practices?

7.4 Literature Review

A review of the literature considering the research questions explored is included in full in Appendix D. Findings from this survey of literature over the past 35 years on Black/African American (BAA) leadership in business and entrepreneurship, the creative industry economy, and organizational practices were organized into the five categories represented in Table 7.

Table 7

Literature Review Categories

Organization of the literature themes
A. Landscape of Opportunity for Creative Industries
B. BAA Leadership in Small Business/Entrepreneurship (SBE)
C. Traditional Organizational Practices
D. Leadership Implications in the Creative Industries/Creative Economy
E. Limitations for BAA Leaders in SBE

The opportunity landscape for creatives and the creative industries is growing rapidly and the COVID-19 pandemic only accelerated that growth (Collins, 2020). Evident with the growth in creative industry opportunity is that the opportunity to benefit from it is not equitable across racial lines, with 73.8% of creative class jobs held by white people, compared to 8.5% by Black people (Florida, 2016). This inequity is an unfortunate pattern for outcomes across a plethora of sectors and experiences in the U.S. (Peterson & Mann, 2020) and is typically most pronounced for Black people compared to their white counterparts. That pattern also applies to the existence of Black leaders and businesses by volume explicitly shown with a simple survey of Fortune 500 CEO demographics and U.S. Census Bureau data on business demographics. Apart from these disparities, apparent distinctions across racial lines with respect to organizational practices exist such as BAA SBE's greater tendency to have an organizational procedure manual when compared to their white counterparts (Edmonson & Foard, 1998).

While BAA leadership has served as a beacon of hope in society, SBEs in particular have created pathways for economic mobility and community empowerment (Wallace, 1999). Success for BAA leaders in SBEs has looked like creating wealth for the individual, family unit, and community, as mentioned previously, but it has been fraught with barriers and gatekeeping for certain lucrative business types. A common and continuous issue with SBEs for BAA has been lack of access to capital and other material resources which contribute to a limited capacity to scale the business (Jaiswal, 2018).

In the creative industries, there is ample support for innovative approaches to leadership apart from traditional practices and cultures created in organizations and industries that

are white male dominated. The characteristics of these approaches encourage digging into creative strategies, where economic impact is not the only measure of success. One such strategy is to redefine the core function of leadership, as White et al. (2014) suggested, to “create a supportive climate of innovation” (p. 51).

While answers are not simple, due to the complex nature of these issues, a few complex approaches to lessening and resolving the impacts of racism on BAA SBEs are put forward in the literature.

1. Balance cultural innovation with cultural maintenance (Trice & Beyer, 1991)
2. Leaning into cultural experiences as a tool to contribute to personal fulfillment (Lichtenstein, 2019)
3. Data- and policy-driven approaches that center historically marginalized races at the core of a solutions orientation, i.e., racial equity (Race Forward, 2021)

Adopting a racial equity approach to distribution of economic and other resources to help Black businesses and to invest in Black leaders, especially in areas like creative industry where there is disproportionate representation, will help people in general by helping Black people specifically. While there is political controversy surrounding this method, the data are clear on what not helping Black people and businesses with this kind of specific redress has cost the nation in productivity and opportunity but also in U.S. dollars over the last 20 years reported by CitiGroup at a rate of \$16 trillion (Peterson & Mann, 2020). The global racial and cultural shifts that are driving change, making Black people a worldwide majority by, also represent a comparatively untapped consumer market opportunity to the tune of \$300 billion annually (Chui et al., 2021). More people in SBEs and other organizations that represent this growing worldwide majority should exist in leadership and ownership to accurately represent their interests and experiences, as well as foster trust for and among BAA.

More attention and research on this topic will further expand understanding of the unique and valuable experiences of BAA leaders as a too often overlooked subset of SBEs and especially in creative industries.

7.5 Methodology

I employed a mixed methods explanatory design for this inquiry. This included conducting the Denison Culture Survey, a custom short-form worker satisfaction survey, and qualitative follow-up interviews that contextually explored themes in a one-on-one format. According to Denison Consulting’s website, the Denison Culture Survey is a leading instrument for organizations seeking to benchmark and use measurements about elements of the organization to improve performance as evidenced by four key drivers: mission, adaptability, involvement, and consistency (Denison Consulting, 2021). The worker satisfaction survey is a second quantitative measure that was developed and deployed from a customized template available in Qualtrics software. The eight-question survey reflected questions that are typical of satisfaction surveys and was tailored to the organization. The tailored features included adding the organization’s name instead of generic language and referencing the term workers to include all kinds of workers’

feedback within the organization (e.g., interns and contractors) instead of the default references to employees. The surveys and interviews were conducted across the breadth of the organization with founders and contract workers and those with and without direct reports or management responsibilities.

8. Analysis and Recommendations

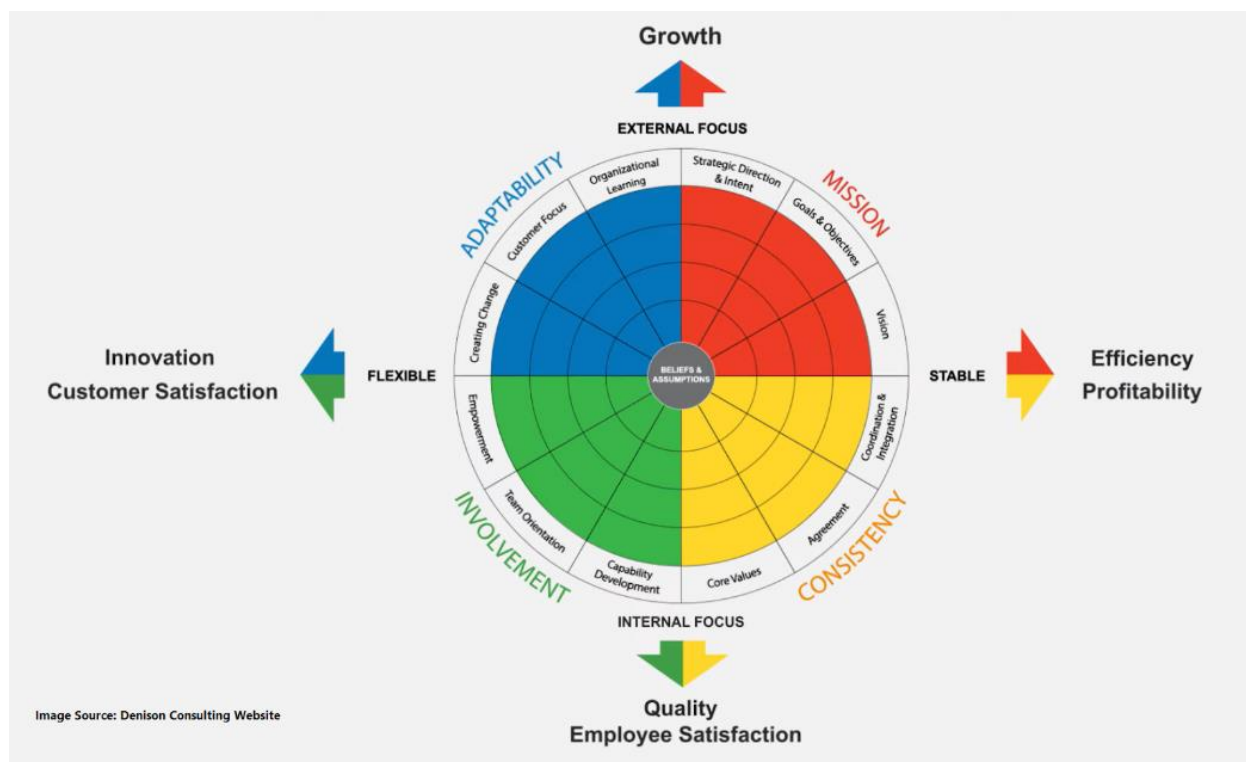
The quantitative measures of this study sought to gauge details about the organization's performance, culture, and worker satisfaction, objectively and in aggregate. The qualitative measures were employed to capture expressions that would support, refute, or explain the quantitative data collected more fully. Respondents were invited to participate anonymously to reduce potential bias or negative perceptions that can be associated with personally identifiable data. Findings from the three data collection methods and comprehensive conclusions from those findings, considering the entirety of this inquiry, are detailed in this section.

The Denison Culture Survey

The Denison Culture survey was analyzed using an adapted version of their proprietary charting called the Circumplex (Denison Consulting, 2021). The charting for the organization's results, found in Appendix A, quantified individual and mean responses out of 100 points for the three subsections within each of the four categories the survey measures, which are involvement, adaptability, consistency, and mission. The survey responses in each category have implications for the organization's growth, efficiency and profitability, innovation and customer satisfaction, and quality and employee satisfaction. The relationships between those indicators are shown in the Figure. There were five participants across the organization from the total number of workers, which was 10 at the time of the survey's administration.

Figure

Denison Circumplex Category Relationships



The Involvement category consistently had the highest scores among individual respondent scores, with a mean score for all respondents of 79%. The subsections of Empowerment and Team Orientation for this category had the highest mean of the subsections in all categories at 83% and 84% respectively. Alone, this component indicates a strong sense of ownership is invoked among its workers, which can support worker autonomy (Denison Consulting, 2021). This phenomenon may be emphasized by the organization. It is important to note that there may be an inherent sense of ownership of work related to the fact that most workers at the time of assessment were part-time or project-based contract workers. This score also suggests that workers are engaged and have alignment within and between teams (Denison Consulting, 2021).

The lowest category mean among responses was in the Adaptability category at nearly 61%. The subsection score within the Adaptability category with the lowest score was in Customer Focus at 63%. In and of itself, this component indicates the organization has an opportunity to develop its ability to read the external environment and adapt to the changes that may be required in a way that clearly understands the implications of those changes and achieves equilibrium.

Table 8 shows the mean scores for each of the four categories by respondent and the highest and lowest mean for each category.

Table 8*Denison Culture Survey Mean Scores*

Participant	Involvement	Consistency	Adaptability	Mission
Respondent 1	82.00%	68.67%	61.33%	63.33%
Respondent 2	80.00%	71.33%	60.00%	80.00%
Respondent 3	79.33%	68.67%	60.67%	75.33%
Respondent 4	80.67%	67.33%	73.33%	74.67%
Respondent 5	74.00%	56.00%	52.67%	60.00%
Category mean	79.20%+	66.40%	61.60%-	70.67%

Aside from the general observation that the mean scores in all categories are positive, all areas have space to be addressed, some more than others. One hundred percent should be an aspirational goal for which to strive. Overall, the Denison Culture survey data suggest several things about the partnering organization's performance with respect to the four category measures:

1. Increasing the Adaptability score through things like solidifying understanding of the organization's target market, honing its customer base, and narrowing its core service offerings should be an aim. Addressing that component will pair well with its current level of defined Involvement in ways that increase the organization's flexibility. That category informs its ability to innovate well and achieve better customer satisfaction.
2. The mean score in the Mission category (indicating a strong organizational connection to strategic direction and intent, goals and objectives, and vision) is the next highest scoring category across the board. Considering that, the organization's attentiveness to increasing adaptability will also better support the organization's growth potential by garnering a clearer sense of the connection between its core intent as an organization and its positioning to best accomplish that intent in the external environment.
3. The Consistency category had the next lowest mean score behind Adaptability. This indicates that organizational stability is being impacted, especially when coupled with the slightly higher mean Mission score. Increasing scores in these areas will promote stronger profit margins and the organization's ability to function more efficiently.
4. Consistency and Involvement scores speak to the organizational positioning having a slightly stronger internal focus, which has positive indications for worker satisfaction. The Consistency score being the lower of the two here may speak to the opportunity for quality of work product, interactions, and processes/procedures to be tightened for maximizing performance capability.

Worker Satisfaction Survey

Assessing worker satisfaction can create an understanding about worker motivations and whether they experience culture, environment, skill matching and responsibilities, direct reports/managerial relationships, etc. in ways that produce gratification or fulfillment. Herzberg's Two Factor Theory of Motivation, when distilled to its core components, posits that worker satisfaction can be measured by two categories of things (Alshmemri et al., 2017). The categories are those that push individuals to do the work that they do or sustain them in doing so, called motivation factors, or things that mitigate circumstances that prevent them from doing the work that they like to do, called hygiene factors (Alshmemri et al., 2017). Herzberg asserted that these categories of items are mutually exclusive. The worker satisfaction survey was administered across the organization and had a high response rate of 10 respondents out of the 10 workers within the organization at the time. This survey's analysis drew from descriptive statistics gleaned from information considering the survey's themes of culture, working relationship, work assignment/workload, and career development. The survey questions and the detailed results report can be found in Appendix A.

All eight survey questions recorded at least a 90% satisfied or slightly satisfied rate. Three questions indicated a 10% slightly dissatisfied rate with work engagement/environment and workload respectively. This indicated a remarkably high level of worker satisfaction, with the highest rates reported in the question about working relationship and role alignment.

Overall, the worker satisfaction survey indicates high satisfaction across the board for the individual respondents. Since the survey was anonymous, whether those who took the survey constituted a representative sample of the organization could not be verified.

Qualitative One-on-One Interviews

The qualitative segment of the study was conducted with three Hue House team members: one founder, one worker whose primary responsibilities were with Hue House agency clients, and one worker whose primary responsibilities were core audience facing with The Block. Five questions were asked in an oral interview to glean additional information about culture and worker satisfaction. The purpose was to capture in the participants' own words their sentiments about those topics. Thematic analysis was applied to document recurring sentiments across each participant's responses. The questions are listed below for reference, and the full survey results with analyzed themes are included in Appendix A:

1. What has your experience been with Hue House's workplace environment/culture?
2. How has your experience been with how Hue House deals with difficulty or conflict?
3. If you were the sole source, what advice would you give Hue House co-founders about imperative things to do now to be who they aspire to be as an organization?
4. What do you observe about leadership as a concept and a practice at Hue House?
5. Are there distinctions between leadership generally and Black leadership at Hue House?

The coded themes were found as follows and were organized by the number of aggregate occurrences within the interviews:

Table 9

Representation of Qualitative Themes

Qualitative interview themes	Raw count of themes	Percentage of total tracked theme occurrences
Personal/collective identity	23	17.97
Role expectations	26	20.31
Operations/practices	39	30.47
Place-making/work environment	40	31.25
TOTAL	128	100

Place-making/work-environment and operations/practices, respectively, were the categories most referenced by the interviewee comments according to the thematic analysis. All three interviews referenced some form of “space” that existed or that is being created where they can accomplish things for themselves or have things that they value (e.g., “dream and vision,” “symbiotic communal work,” “there is freedom here”). This phenomenon is consistent with White et al. (2014) holding the position on the role of leadership in the creative industries that it is to create space for innovation.

Several organizational practices were referenced both as refreshing nuances and as development needed (e.g., “an asset minded approach to Black people,” “music at meetings,” “establish standard operating procedures”). Those practices complement other assessment results in this study, such as worker satisfaction being reported highest with direct reporting relationships. To the degree that supervisors are communicating and establishing a tone concerning those practices, as Black leaders, there are indications of a relationship between those practices, the nature of their leadership, and the positive impact of environment cultivation for workers.

The environment cultivation can also extend to the expressed tenets in the theme of role expectations. For instance, the interviews suggested across the board that leading is a function of expected activity for workers within the organization and not purely existing based on one’s role. If leadership in the traditionally understood sense is not associated with their role, the view is that Hue House workers should be prepared “to lead [themselves].” While there are many ways that this kind of expectation could be interpreted, the interviews suggested that there is a welcoming, refreshing, and empowering sense that is created by this approach.

Each interviewee also spoke to a notion of being able to be themselves which would necessarily, considering the conflated existence of other identities and characteristics, include being Black. The themes as represented across the data collection methods are displayed below and grouped according to similarities identified upon final review.

Table 10

Themes Across All Administered Instruments

Denison culture survey	Worker satisfaction survey	Qualitative interviews
Adaptability	Work assignment/workload	Place-making/work environment
Mission	Relationship	Personal/collective identity
Involvement	Culture	Operations/practices
Consistency	Career development	Role expectations

Considering the research questions and hypothesis for this inquiry, there is emphatic evidence that who the Hue House co-founders are impacts the cultural development, worker satisfaction, and practices of the organization. Organizational culture is heavily influenced by founder identity, values, and beliefs (Schein, 2004). Each co-founder, and all workers within the organization to date, have Black racial identities, and this inquiry confirms cultural tenets are in place that emphasize centering Black racial identity. The degree to which the co-founders' racial identity, as distinct from other co-occurring aspects of their identity, has an impact on practices and worker satisfaction could not be objectively determined from this inquiry. However, there is strongly reported creation from, appreciation for, catering to, and support of Black identity at Hue House that includes the co-founders' cultural experiences consistent with that identity.

In view of the data across the collection methods, the clearest observations about Hue House came across as follows from this inquiry:

1. An Ethic of Care

While this concept has its origins in feminist theory, in the case of Hue House, its business practice prioritizes the individual among the collective with particular attention to internal interpersonal relationships. This materialized in the often-referenced "check-in" practice. The practice was noted in my observations between members of the organization, along the hierarchy internally, as well as between organizational representatives and Hue House clients externally.

2. Intentional Design

The co-founders of the organization have a painstaking intentionality with which they approach the creation of experiences and environments for themselves and those with whom they work. They have an expressed value and appreciation for

fundamental human elements. This line of thinking, which is reflected in each of the data collection methods, is that an organizational focus of attending to the person will support the quality work and production of the deliverable. This design choice that co-founders inculcate quite deliberately and in a variety of ways was observed often throughout this process (i.e., curating mood music to accompany client meetings, addressing tragic happenings that might have occurred, and attending to worker well-being, etc.). This notion appears to extend to the almost immaterial ways in which space/place or environment is cultivated, since Hue House does not have a physical office at this point.

3. People Capacity and Development

As a startup or entrepreneurial undertaking in its preliminary stages of development, there is a big vision that seems to require more people, resources, and support than it had at the time of this inquiry. While overall worker satisfaction is high as reported, things like consistency in processes and procedures and professional development opportunities (“I feel supported...[but I] have to figure it out”) for workers were revealed as pain points in the Denison survey and qualitative interviews respectively.

Considering the data and observations across the collection methods, emergent themes and their connectivity, the research questions, and the reported aims of the partnering organization, the following top recommendations were developed and shared with the organization (among others included in the project compendium in Appendix A).

Table 11*Recommendations Based on Inquiry Results*

Recommendation	Evidentiary/Scholarly Support
Consider conducting a formal organizational audit and/or needs assessment (technology, financial, and legal review)	More attention being paid to technological systems, software, hardware, and security will only strengthen Hue House's resolve to be a lean organization able to continuously support the challenges of growing an organization that has a strong remote/virtual work component. Being as much in the digital space as they are in physical spaces, necessitates direct and specific attention to this area as revealed in the preliminary technology interview with the then organization COO. How the organization wants to operate with respect to local regulations and ordinances and those beyond should be explored both for legal and financial ramifications, which may contribute to changes in the organization's business structure or model and have implications for hiring other types of workers. Accordingly, worker development, particularly in moving the organization to support full and part-time employees, was identified as an opportunity for tightening operations and cohesiveness, role alignment, and business development across the three assessment instruments.
Invest in career and professional development resources for workers, particularly to effectively deal with change	The lower Adaptability scores on the Denison Survey, the minute dissatisfaction expressed in work engagement and workload questions of the worker satisfaction survey, as well as qualitative interview reporting of workers feeling supported but not equipped, have indications that better support and leverage of organizational learning and bolstering individual career development is a worthy investment. This is done through more intentional opportunities to upskill in mutually desirable areas and through better communication about changes affecting the organization as well as connections between those changes and what is needed from workers as a result. Sharing learning and information across the organization for transparency and operationalizing, contributes to greater visibility and opportunity for innovation, which has implications for market advantages. Providing career resources related to workers' roles and skills that are core to Hue House's business model and values will create opportunities for workers to better connect to and serve clients.
Revisit data collection annually for the organizational culture and/or worker satisfaction surveys to chart change and progress. Utilize data to inform processes and procedures	New workers (or new worker types) may respond differently to the assessments used in this inquiry. Also, if the worker pool stays consistent, regular administration of the quantitative surveys can chart progression or regression. Informally revisiting some of the qualitative questions in regular weekly meetings is an effective way to formatively address the impact of their leadership on culture, practices, and worker satisfaction. Having a formal review of this feedback in quarterly or annual leadership gatherings to review findings can benefit organizational learning and inform organizational development. Finally, solidifying processes and procedures using data to promote agility and stability will impact the comparatively low Coordination and Integration scores reported in the Denison Survey's Consistency category.

9. Continuous Improvement Systems

9.1 Continuous Improvement Planning

As a result of this project, its findings, and the process, the organization has committed to implement several recommendations and utilize the developed deliverables for organization operations.

9.2 Continuous Improvement Actions

Steps taken based on my recommendation by the partnering organization include using the documents I have developed with them as a springboard to further design internal practices relating to initiating the hiring process, interviewing points of reference, onboarding and off-boarding workers, and during what they refer to as kicktreats (kickback, a colloquial term for an informal social infused with the word retreat, used in the traditional way as a dedicated planning and reflection period), which are the organization's version of organizational retreats. They have solidified an internal process for onboarding, communicating expectations and goals, and surveying clients and contractors through this experience and plan to solidify their frameworks in preparation for transitioning core contract employees to full-time hires in the next 9 to 12 months.

9.3 Continuous Improvement Feedback

An initial rollout of these documents and materials as foundational organization artifacts in a strategic way, namely introducing them via onboarding new workers, is a recommended starting point. Once they are in use, an assessment of both the effectiveness of the materials and whether the cultural implications of the materials for organizational practice and worker satisfaction are landing in resonant ways with the workers should be done. The organization's check-ins are both formal and informal practices that could be an ideal space for formative assessment in this way. The informal check-ins occur during weekly meetings or other regular intervals. During at least one of these meetings, it could be required for managers who have direct reports hired within 90 days to inquire conversationally about feedback they have on the documents and their use. Their responses should be recorded and considered among the co-founders and other designated parties to determine whether adjustments or additional surveying is useful or needful. Because of the transient nature of contract workers as the organization is working toward sustaining full-time employees, it could be useful to note the contrast between contract workers' and full-time employees' feedback.

If the documents are one layer of inculcating cultural expectations, the summative assessment will be critical to the continued development of these materials as living/working documents. An annual formal assessment of their impact is recommended to gauge if their intentions match outcomes relative to culture creation, worker satisfaction, and the effectiveness of fundamental organizational practices. The formal check-ins which occur for new hires, at the 45-day and 90-day marks, are one opportunity. These could be through an abbreviated version of the worker satisfaction and/or culture surveys during the 90-day check-in. Coupled with a longer assessment at the end of the year (or the end of the fiscal year) for the entirety of the organization, just before the annual co-founders' retreat, represents another seminal opportunity to review, rehash, reimagine, or

reconfirm the usefulness of these materials and consequent practices. Minimally, an annual administering of the worker satisfaction survey and a critical review by the co-founders of those results is recommended.

9.4 Continuous Improvement Implementation

In planning for better feedback collection, continuous evaluation, and evaluating or enacting changes based on findings, it will be critical for the organization to have dedicated personnel for this undertaking. Having a point person or a small group gathered from across all facets of the organization responsible for conducting these assessments, making sure the measurement tools maintain fidelity in their deployment, and addressing the regularity of data collection and review has several benefits. It is more likely to occur in these cases, and a representative faction can think through many considerations that just one faction would not. Considering what opportunities and barriers exist in keeping the surveys confidential is something to consider. There is an opportunity to disaggregate the data, particularly with the quantitative measures, to get a stronger sense of interventions that would cater to specific identities that report experiences that are not ideal. Applying interventions catered to those who are least well served is an equity approach that is valuable beyond the groups for which the interventions are designed. Having a variety of collection methods for the same information can attend to a welcoming environment for hearing and valuing constituent feedback. This could mean a feedback parking lot tool, offering incentivized focus groups, and/or employing anonymous de-identified electronic surveys.

10. Reflection

While this study adds to the body of knowledge, this type of research with the subjects of interest and with academic vigor of a disciplined inquiry process should be conducted more regularly generally. Subsequently, for this specific study, more data collected over time to compare to the baseline data collected in this study will give stronger indications of the correlative value between Black leadership with respect to their racial identity, organizational practices and culture, and worker satisfaction. An experimental study design could give insight into causation, but several organizational practices at current resonate with Hue House workers in positive ways. These practices have come about as alternatives to experiences the founders have had in other organizational settings and to be a celebration of how they identify culturally specifically informed by their racial identity. Being intentional about assessing internally what the culture is, stems from, and is developing into will help them determine the continued cultural implications for their workers and organizational practices.

Whatever limitations on my part existed in this process, the project represented one of the most layered and rewarding undertakings of my academic and professional career. I have been involved with numerous projects, many in my own consulting practice where I spearhead and manage projects. Even so, conducting and completing this project ranks among my most satisfying undertakings. I continue to experience the positive impact, both personally and professionally, of seeing its components considered, incorporated, and implemented with enthusiasm by the partnering organization. The excitement that comes with deep learning in a classroom setting (or a Zoom room, as has been the case for most of

my experience) accompanied by the “ah-ha” moments created by discovering, extending, and applying concepts and seeing theory play out in practice are coveted experiences. These experiences have been representative of my matriculation in the DEOL program and have enhanced my ability to serve the partnering organization for this project meaningfully.

10.1 Professional Learning

The rich occasions where I have incorporated knowledge and learning directly from a DEOL class discussion, lecture, or course text into this project and into professional contexts are numerous. Three examples of such applications follow:

1. Working with the partnering organization for this project, I learned about the Hedgehog Concept from Jim Collins’s (2001) book *From Good to Great* in DEOL 732 and 734 and was able immediately to apply learning about it in that same term. After I explained the concept, I challenged the partnering organization to consider what lay at the concentric circles Collins (2001) overlaid in this principle for their organization. Helping them think through the application of that recent learning to their organization was exhilarating and fulfilling.

Sinek’s (2009) *Start with Why* has been a pivotal point of consideration for my leadership discussions and practices since encountering it at an Organizational Learning Lab hosted by the department in 2021, followed by Sinek’s (2020) *The Infinite Game*. The invaluable application of helping organization leaders and other groups to consider what drives the work they know to do, and how that might be articulated, has an eye-opening effect as an often unencountered practice. Facilitating this practice of thinking through and honing the connection for organizations I work with and for has been a key insight.

2. I use Johari’s Window (Luft, 1970) as a visual, and it is an elucidating framework for the importance of using data in my diversity, equity, and inclusion work. This arena is where organizations need to get more information moved to so diversity, equity, and inclusion work is done well, and data can help that process by better determining how to address the needs the data identify.

At this stage of learning, there is a confidence I have in being able to learn and swiftly apply information. Those kinds of opportunities, however frequently they come, are exciting to be able to make the connection to experience. The moments where I can see the direct connection from book and classroom learning to skilled application and practice are valuable experiences and came about often in this program. The partnering organization also directly benefited from that enthusiasm for bringing new learning or additional perspectives to issues they had some sense of how to address related to the project.

In terms of professionally developed attitudes, I have appreciated the range of instructor personalities, approaches, and styles in this program, which I discovered have been helpful with the diverse types of clients I serve and for this project. This has been a bit of an attitude shift from past academic experiences, where I felt that I could learn best

from a certain type of teaching style. The field is an excellent place to experience the testing and negotiation of theory and where mere intellectualism is not enough. On that account, I have also appreciated the considerate dialogue and responsiveness to the challenges I often would bring to the course material because of my professional experiences, which are also personal. This typically would stem from my interest in real-time applications of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and instructors and program colleagues alike made me feel that my perspective, while one of many, was heard and respected. I was able to turn this courtesy around to the clients of the partnering organization by hearing, attending to, and affirming their respective experiences in ways that also could better inform the project. I have had the occasion to engage course material differently from how I imagine the texts' authors would, considering my experience as a Black woman. There has been engaging and substantive discussion throughout the academic experience in response to current events, as well, in the classroom setting that I found complex and engaging, which I believe had the effect of enriching and broadening the learning environment for both students and instructors. Being able to interpret the course material in useful ways, listen closely to the partnering organization's explanations of needs and desires, and find where the former meets the latter has been a valuable skill that has certainly developed over the course of this process.

10.2 Personal Development

Apart from the benefits of the synthesis of instruction, academic content, and the opportunity to practice, my development as a person has been marked by an attending to emotional intelligence and a stronger appreciation for collaboration. Starting this program, I did not have a particular sense of the great personal benefit I would derive from matriculating and learning, as well as doing this project. Since then, I have received the benefits of having camaraderie with my cohort and experiencing transparency and growth through seeing leadership in so many different forms that I would not have considered prior. My awareness has grown in how I am contextually equipped, and continuously being equipped, in different settings. That awareness has strengthened my ability to reflect and to consider more carefully the ways I show up, use influence well, and address mistakes.

I have a much heartier appreciation for the variety of complex challenges that those assuming leadership activities in any given setting encounter. The ability to empathize with individuals in authority who must make difficult choices with and on behalf of others is no small feat. I took that ability for granted having few opportunities before the program to address and lead a complex organization addressing a complex organizational challenge. I have grown to consider these opportunities with a greater respect for the factors involved. I see such opportunities in my sphere of influence with a much clearer vision and feel better equipped to develop and apply strategy, conceptual learning, and practical experience to those I choose to pursue, considering my values.

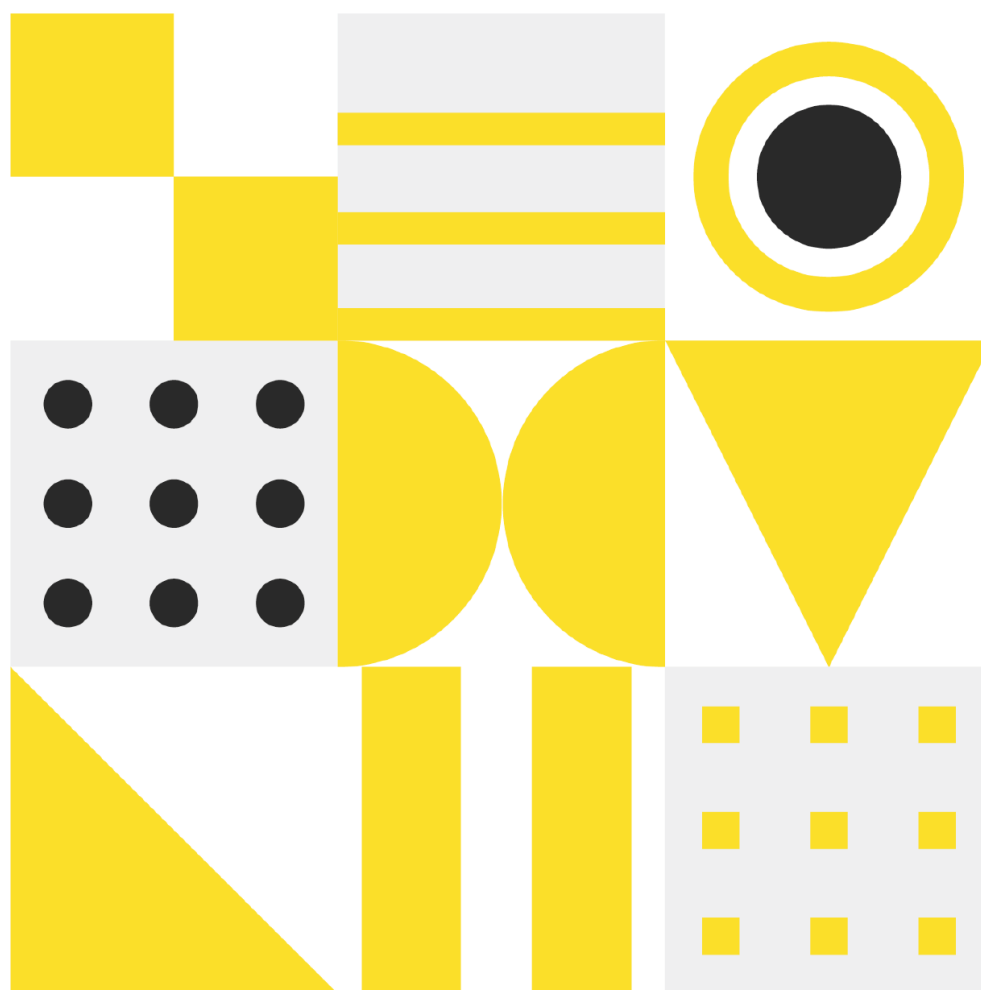
While my values of education, equity, and empowerment have not changed from entering this program until now (they were underpinned and very aligned in the context

of this project), they have had an opportunity in the past 3 years to be tested and approved. I have a much stronger resolve for what those values mean to me and how they can be drawn upon in professional and personal contexts. I look forward to the ways I can be more effective in service to my local community and beyond by providing value through my refined leadership and continued attentiveness to leaning into strengths and supplementing weaknesses as well as in facilitating others' learning. I am eternally grateful for the people I have met on this journey, particularly my cohort, who I can also rely on to be held accountable to the applications of this learning and development. I am grateful to the organization project partners for entrusting me with Hue House's strategic development. Also, I am indebted to the DEOL program instructors for providing great fodder for my consumption and to use for the many applicable purposes that I have reflected upon here.

Appendix A
The Block Bible



The Block Bible: Organizational Summary Report 2022



Document Summary

Project Scope

Alexandra Arrington conducted action research, under the auspices of the Gardner-Webb University's Department of Education Organizational Leadership (DEOL) doctoral studies program. This research culminated in a mixed methods explanatory design focused on determining and reporting key findings about Hue House's culture, worker satisfaction, organizational operation/practice baselines, and considerations for future stability and sustainable growth.

The full research executive summary for the entirety of this project will be available in November 2022. The project deliverables and data reports listed below are included as follows:

1. **Mission, Vision, and Values Statements**
2. **Leadership and Diversity Philosophy Statements**
3. **Code of Ethics a.k.a. The "G Code"**
4. **Orientation Guide Checklist**
5. **Organizational Analysis Summary and Recommendations**
 - a. Data Methods Insights
 - b. SWOT Analysis
 - c. Quantitative Data Report Summary
 - d. Qualitative Data Report Summary
 - e. Researcher Recommendations
6. **Addenda:**
 - a. Organizational Chart
 - b. Denison Culture Survey Charted Results
 - c. Worker Satisfaction Survey Results
 - d. Qualitative Survey Thematic Analysis
 - e. Technology Interview

Organizational Analysis Narrative

A summary of key findings from the researcher's data collection methods (surveys, individual interviews with the founders, and interviews with Hue House/The Block workers) are included, and the full analysis will be available in the researcher's November 2022 project executive summary.

Researcher Recommendations

A full accounting of the researcher's prioritized recommendations, summarized for brevity in this document, are detailed to assist the organization with thinking through observed things that could help address vulnerabilities and capitalize on strengths and opportunities.

The culminating recommendations come from quantitative and qualitative analysis of said research, and study of best practices related to organizational development and leadership. They also focus on considerations specific to a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens.

Raw Data Reports

- The Denison Culture Survey was administered and the indicators for culture development in the survey were referenced in developing the researcher's recommendations.
- A Worker Satisfaction Survey was deployed to gather insights about how organizational culture may or may not contribute to workers being satisfied with Hue House's work environment, leadership, duties, etc. Insights were utilized to inform the researcher's recommendations and organizational narrative.



About Hue House

Who We Are

Hue House is a creative agency connecting client goals to culturally competent stories via consulting, creativity, and community.

Mission

To create and cultivate culturally competent brands and stories that authentically engage diverse audiences.

Vision

Hue House envisions a decolonized marketing and advertising industry that deeply values, fully accepts, and invites the breadth of the global majority's humanity in storytelling.

Values

Hue House actively embodies, promotes, and perpetuates the following concepts in word, deed and product:

- Community
- Agency
- Teamwork
- Ownership
- Authenticity
- Humanity
- Black Joy/Fun
- Accountability

Organizational Statements

Leadership Philosophy

Leadership at Hue House is embodied through a “Humanity First” approach that meets people where they are, prioritizes people as paramount compared to production, and helps creative people work through the impacts of traditional American organizational culture.

Leaders at Hue House are cultivated in a collaborative space for growth which requires that team members own what they do and the individual strengths they bring to the table. A Hue House leader contributes to the fabric of the organization’s work through their expertise and recommendations, and their leadership is neither diminished nor exalted by their title.

Hue House’s positional leaders ensure, to the best of their ability, that leaders organization-wide have what they need to be successful in making decisions that align with the organization’s mission and vision.

Hue House leaders celebrate the little things, embrace excellence, exemplify and encourage honesty, and breed connectedness.

Diversity Philosophy

Hue House is invested in acknowledging and affirming the things that make us different. Differences are not to be feared, ignored, or assimilated away, but are to be explored, incorporated, and appreciated. There are things common to respective humanity and there are things unique to individual journeys, setting each apart, which help contribute to the beautiful mosaic of collective existence. We are all welcome.

Code of Conduct & Ethics

a.k.a The G-Code

Hue House believes in collaboration and the power of community. Accordingly, the hope and expectation is that the work, the environment, and the relationships experienced by individuals that work with the agency are held to and hold positional leaders to some core principles that guide the Hue House way of showing up:

- Take initiative.
 - ◆ Step up, do the things.
- Pursue effective and efficient communication.
 - ◆ Say your peace, to the point, and with intentionality.
- Be honest and dependable.
 - ◆ Interdependence is crucial to collective success. Show up, and openly share what you need to fully show up.
- Work well together with others.
 - ◆ We all we got, and everyone is needed to perform respective duties that contribute to the whole.
- Take comfort in your culture.
 - ◆ Hue House cares to affirm and invite a caring space for the influences that make each one authentically themselves.
- Bring your "A" game.
 - ◆ High skill
 - ◆ Self-management
 - ◆ Organization
- Stay hungry.
 - ◆ Closed mouths don't get fed.
 - ◆ Want growth? Hue House wants to help you get it.

Organizational Analysis Narrative

Hue House, a relatively new community-focused creative startup based in Charlotte, NC was formed in 2019. As a social enterprise, the agency's goal is to make money by serving a niche in the advertising and marketing industry and use proceeds, in part, to help Black and Brown creatives in various industries to improve their prospects within their respective markets. Hue House's services are directed at paying clients in a variety of industries and markets, looking to expand their audience reach and company appeal, as the primary income generator for the agency. Part of the profits from Hue House's business would be used, in turn, to benefit local Black and Brown creative industry entrepreneurs through community-focused efforts helping to provide and increase access to paid opportunities, training, and resources for people development.

Interviewing the co-founders about their individual observations of current and future state, some common and divergent themes in their responses emerged:

COMMON

- Preparing the organization for business across sectors
- A familial approach to work/working relationship
- Allocation of space for each other, humanity, and being

DIVERGENT

- Impact at municipal level
- Hyperlocal vs. expansive focus (clients/services)
- Backgrounds/Professional and personal contexts

A high degree of worker satisfaction is indicated in surveying 10 respondents across the organization. With each of the 8 questions, at least 90% of responses fell within satisfied or slightly satisfied range.

Building a culture that repairs harm, affirms, and creates space for thriving and uplifting identity as Hue House intends is an understudied phenomenon. Hue House's people demonstrate high alignment and are engaged with one another and the mission, but seek consistency.

As is the case with every organization, there are things that can only enhance organizational and leadership intent by strategic address. The Organizational SWOT Summary that follows details such opportunities.

SWOT

Strengths

Hue House has a lean and celebratory approach to cultural development that emphasizes creating and being a safe space for the varieties of Black creative entrepreneurs they work with and serve. The safe space Hue House works to create allows their constituents to experience belonging, to be fully seen and heard, and to be fully present. The cofounders have an array of individual experiences that are very different, but work well together and align tightly with the organization's vision and mission.

Weaknesses

Hue House's organizational capacity is a significant concern in their current phase. The founders have other responsibilities outside of the organization's work that could negatively impact their availability to give as much as they would like to Hue House's mission. They lack funds to hire for pertinent positions which could help them function at a higher level of quality, and to apply development strategies to focus on growth instead of maintaining the current level of service. Lack of formalized processes may be contributing to staff not knowing the most effective ways to navigate sharing feelings of discomfort across power dynamics as well as to break down those power dynamics.

Opportunities

Hue House is a niche organization in the marketing and advertising industry as a cultural liaison that is community-centered. It has no shortage of potential partner organizations that can benefit from their services that promote the telling of Black stories in a time where an emphasis on centering Blackness is heightened. Hue House's growth potential, among other things, could involve channeling the co-founders' individual strengths and passions into new clientele. That potential, also, can create more opportunities for talented/skilled creative entrepreneurs who may normally lack access to work to continue building their acumen and economic prospects.

Threats

More established agencies that have the capacity to do work similar to Hue House could potentially take work away from the fledgling agency, which could be due to their comparative experience levels, implicit bias, or waning emphasis on supporting Black-centered organizations and causes. If the pipeline of clientele lessens or becomes inconsistent, then being able to attract talent to fill key positions will become more difficult, which could be exacerbated by competing priorities of Hue House founders.

Quantitative Data Analysis & Summary

Denison Culture Survey

The Denison Culture Survey helps organizations baseline and adjust to become high performing organizations by assessing the following four categories: Adaptability, Mission, Involvement, and Consistency. Generally, the implications of the relationship between each segment and organizational responses follow:

1. Adaptability and Involvement scores speak to the flexibility of the organization, and matter for innovation and customer satisfaction
2. Mission and Consistency scores speak to the stability of the organization, and matter for efficiency and profitability purposes
3. Adaptability and Mission scores have implications for focus external to the organization, specifically for growth
4. Involvement and Consistency scores have implications for focus internal to the organization, specifically for quality and worker satisfaction

Overall, the collective highest scores of the four categories were Involvement (79%) and Mission (near 71%), which indicate a high sense of ownership and responsibility within the organization, a clear sense of the organization's "why," as well as how workers contribute to that "why."

Of the twelve sub-areas assessed in the four categories, those sub-areas with the highest scores across respondents were in Involvement and Consistency (Empowerment, Team Orientation, followed by Core Values). Accordingly, the sub-areas assessed in the four categories with the lowest scores across respondents were in Adaptability and Consistency (Customer Focus, followed by Coordination and Integration, and Creating Change). These scores were used to form researcher recommendations.

Worker Satisfaction Survey

Assessing worker satisfaction can create understanding about whether culture, environment, skill matching and responsibilities, direct reports/managerial relationships, etc. are experienced by workers in ways that produce gratification or fulfillment. All eight survey questions recorded at least a 90% satisfied or slightly satisfied rate. Three questions indicated a 10% slightly dissatisfied rate with work engagement/environment and workload, respectively, also informing researcher recommendations.



Qualitative Data Analysis & Summary

Worker Interviews

The quantitative surveys were followed by one-on-one interviews with three individuals across the organization with varying levels of involvement and responsibility. The purpose of these interviews were to gather additional data that might speak to what alignment existed with the quantitative data results, and to explore reasons for why people may have responded the way they did to the quantitative assessments. The following questions were asked:

1. What has your experience been with Hue House's workplace environment/culture?
2. How has your experience been with how Hue House deals with difficulty or conflict?
3. If you were the sole source, what advice would you give Hue House co-founders about imperative things to do now to be who they aspire to be as an organization?
4. What do you observe about leadership as a concept and a practice at Hue House?
5. Are there distinctions between leadership generally and leadership at Hue House?

The data were reviewed using thematic analysis, where the researcher closely reads individual responses for patterns, repeated concepts or phrases, and similar words and meanings, and groups them together under appropriate headings. The following themes were identified:

THEME	CONTENT EVIDENCE
Personal/ Collective Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "...be my authentic self" • "...contrast between 'them' and 'us'..." • "Being human and caring...being vulnerable and transparent..."
Place-Making/ Work Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I can't be totally free or gender-neutral under the auspices of white leadership..." • "There is freedom here at work with Hue House of expression. There's honest conversation. There's an asset minded approach to Black people..." • "Experiences of ours are being leveraged to create this space..."
Role Expectations/ Career Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "...support but not equipped..." • "There's lots of autonomy...it's up to you to decide how you lead..." • "...we're doing personality assessments to help people understand themselves and how they work..."
Operations/ Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check-ins: "Black," "to get in front of issues," and "to strip fears" • "Kick it and continue to have fun."



Orientation Guide

Checklist

☐ **Welcome meeting**

- A get together celebrating new arrival
- Onboarding onset
- Notify current team of new member joining the fold by email

☐ **Paperwork/Receivables and Introduction to technology**

- Issue and receive back completed hiring forms (Independent Contractor Agreement, W-9 and/or I-9 and ACH documents) to be confidentially filed
- Slack channel, email and document access arranged
- Request short biography, social handles and photo from new team member

☐ **The “G Code” and Operational preview**

- Acknowledgment and acceptance of our guiding principles
- Review of important policies
- Training and procedures overview

☐ **Layout of regular meeting schedule**

- Internal check-ins with positional leaders/direct supervisor
- Performance review process
- Expectations for meetings with clients

☐ **Team lunch**

- A gathering for current team members to meet and welcome new team member(s)

Researcher's Recommendations

→ *Intentionally Reinforce Cultural Mores*

- Establish and incorporate shared language into public/private sessions, meetings, gatherings, and oral/written communication.

→ *Document, Document, Document and Decide with Data*

- Formalize and make accessible organizational processes and procedures for consistency of expectation and accountability.
- Collect and use disaggregated data in decision-making processes, frequently.

→ *Seek Resources for Change Management and Adaptive Response*

- Re/Deprogramming from other cultural approaches to a lean, pivoting, start-up environment can require a lot...equip accordingly.

→ *Continue Intentionally Building Environment and Tailoring Engagements to Worker Strength/Skill*

- Workers are generally satisfied with the environment and nature of work engagements Hue House offers, while they were the only areas where any dissatisfaction was expressed (10%).

→ *Keep Investing in Building Relationships with Direct Reports*

- The highest satisfaction rate is reported in this category. Keep going!

→ *Take Advantage of Free Professional Resources*

- [CLIMB](#) program for legal support
- [Apparo](#), [TechSoup](#) or [Microsoft Partner Growth Program](#) for nonprofit technology discounts
- Explore benefits of [low or no cost Human Resources solutions](#)

→ *Conduct Preliminary Technology Audit*

- Assign role specifically for oversight of software/systems.
- Attend to goal-setting and action around securing software/systems.

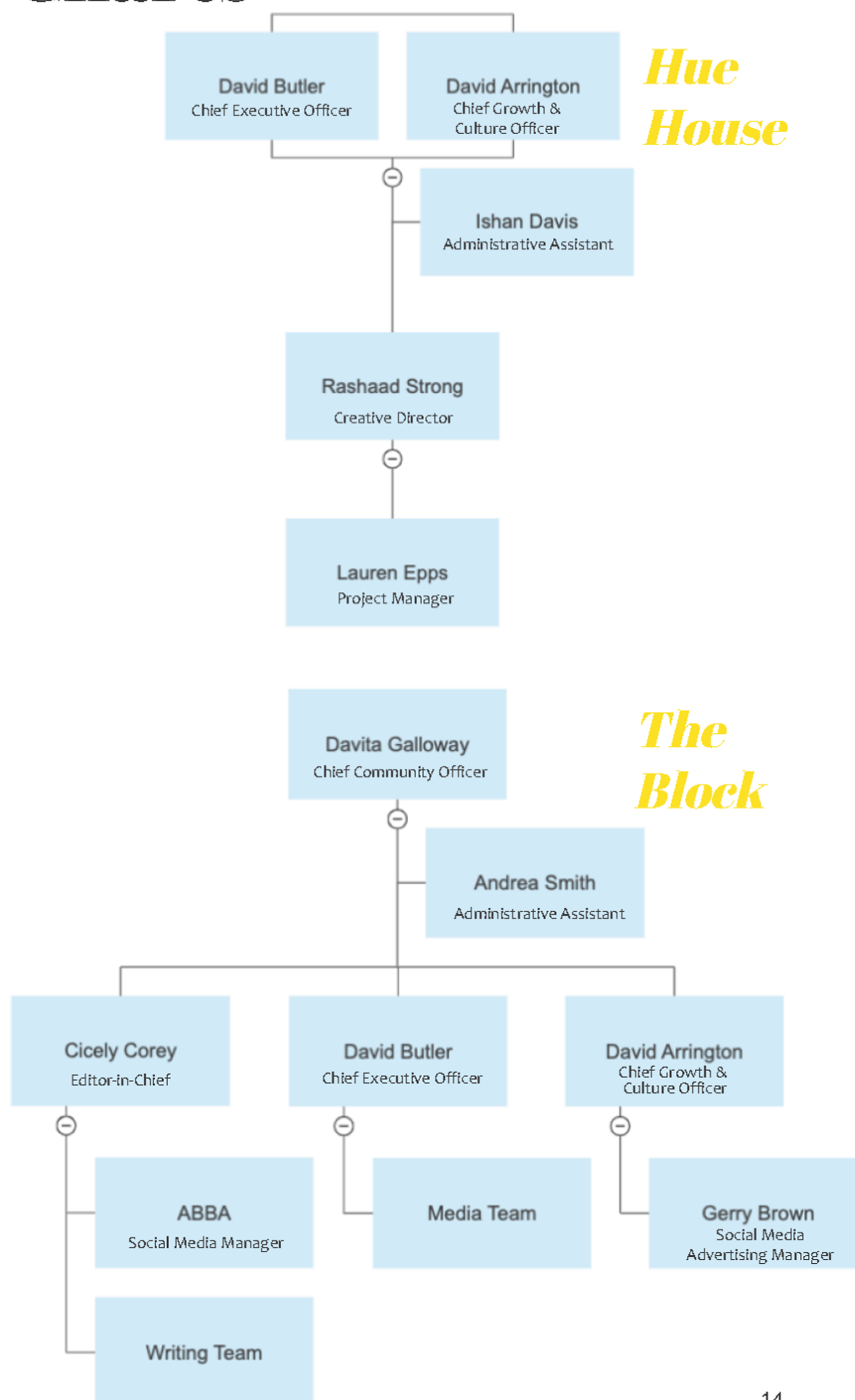


Addenda

- I. Organizational Chart**
- II. Denison Culture Survey Charted Results**
- III. Worker Satisfaction Survey Results**
- IV. Qualitative Survey Thematic Analysis**
- V. Technology Interview**

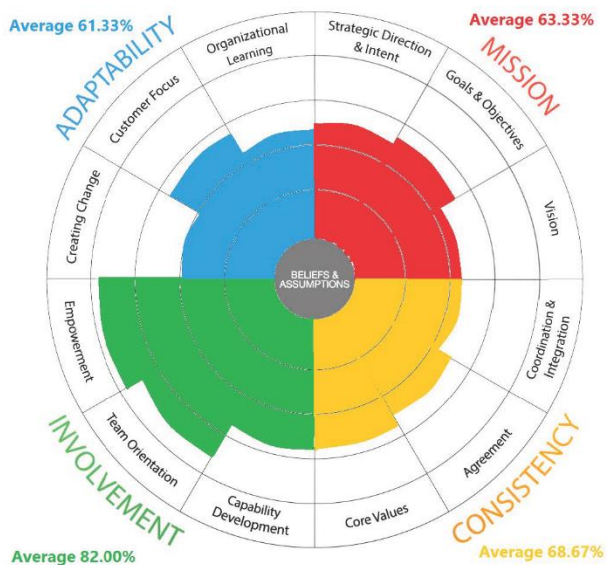
Organizational Charts

Hue House

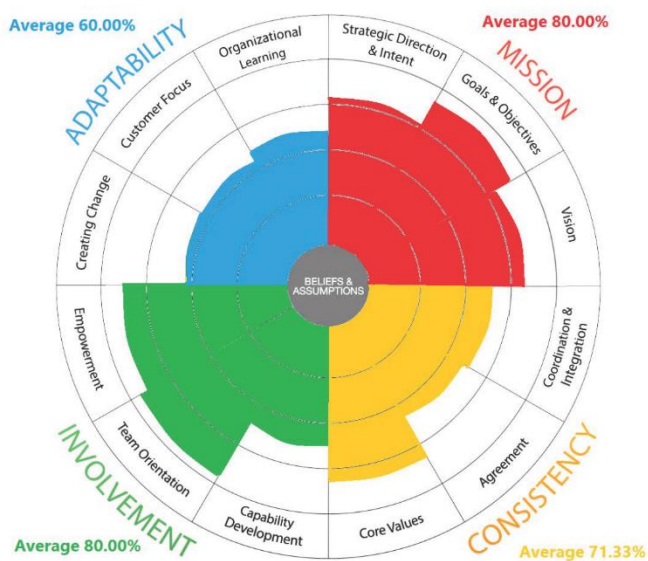


Denison Culture Survey

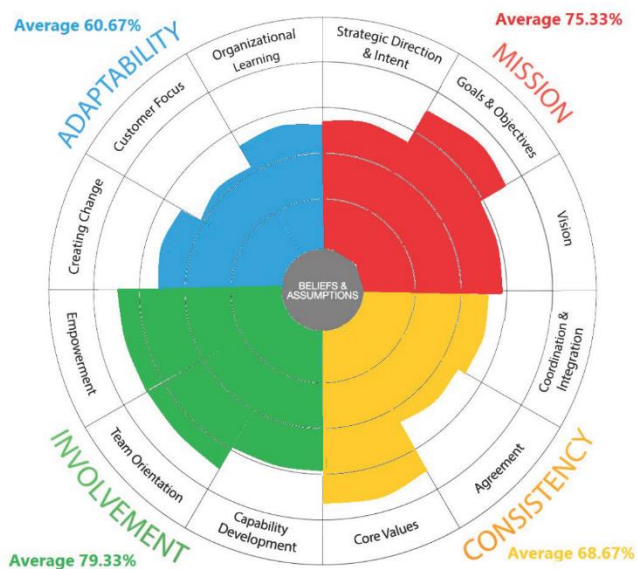
Respondent 1



Respondent 2

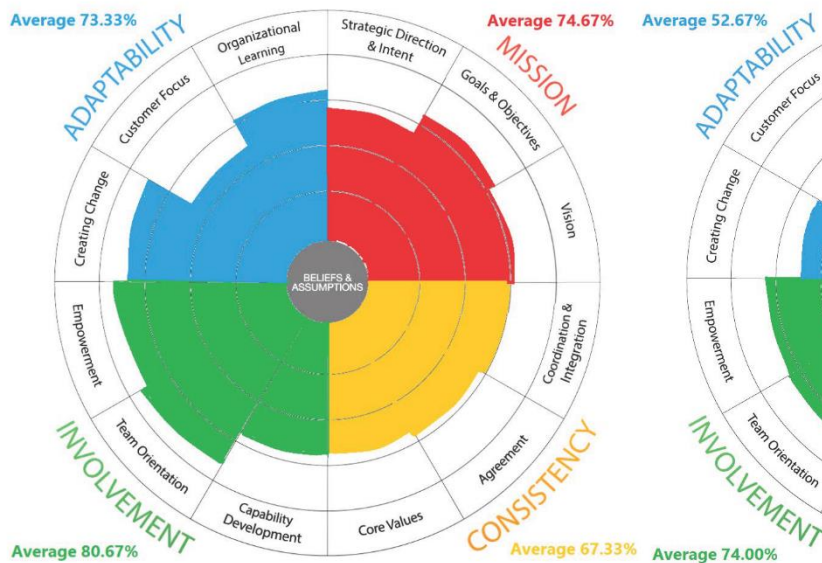


Respondent 3

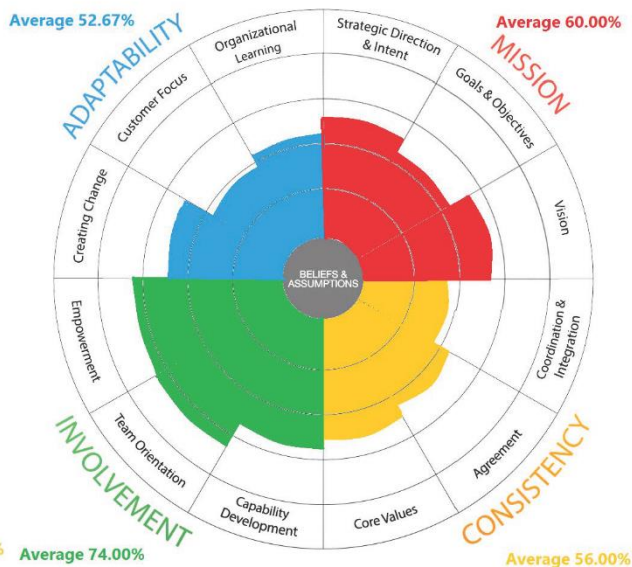


Denison Culture Survey

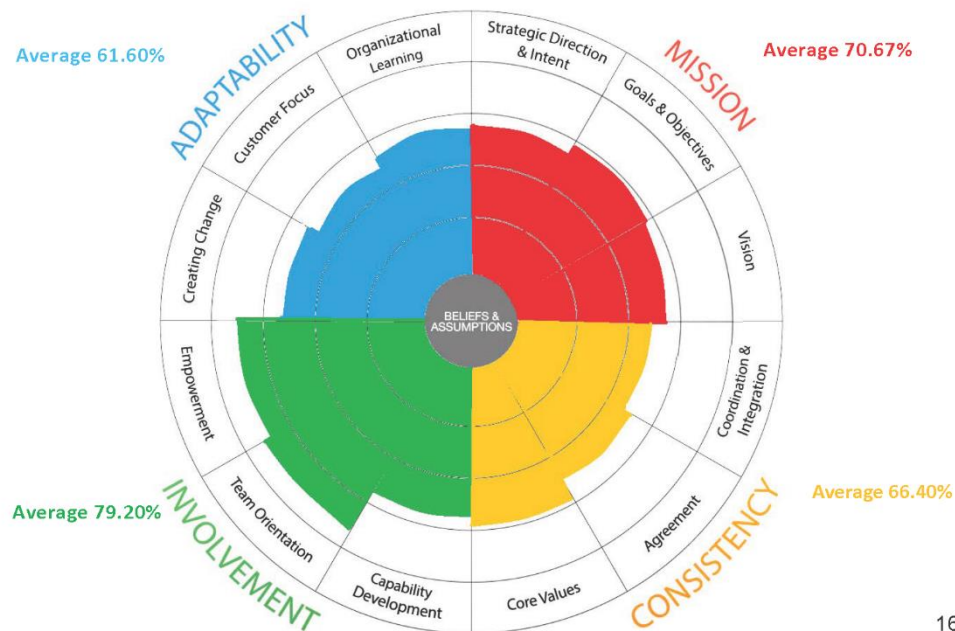
Respondent 4



Respondent 5

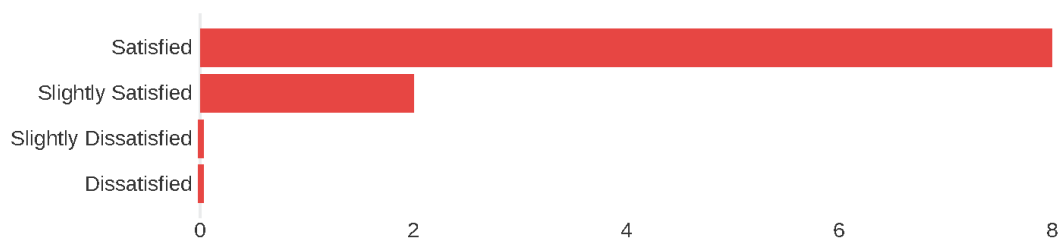


Average of All Respondents



Worker Satisfaction Survey 1

Q1 - How Satisfied or Dissatisfied are you with your ability to do interesting work in your role with Hue House?

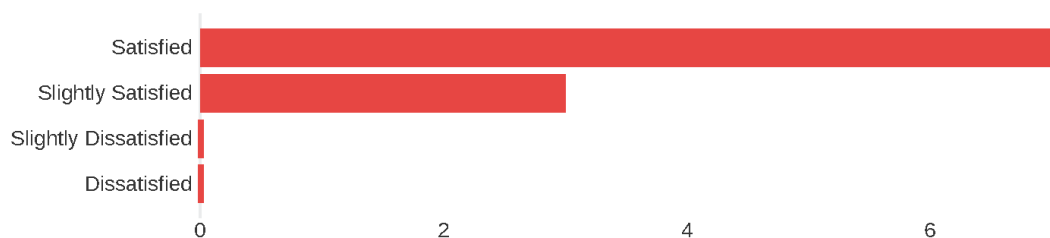


Field	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Responses
How Satisfied or Dissatisfied are you with your ability to do interesting work in your role with Hue House?	1	2	1	0	0	10

Field	Choice Count
Satisfied	8
Slightly Satisfied	2
Slightly Dissatisfied	0
Dissatisfied	0
Total	10

Worker Satisfaction Survey 2

Q2 - How Satisfied or Dissatisfied are you with your ability to apply your skills in your role with Hue House?

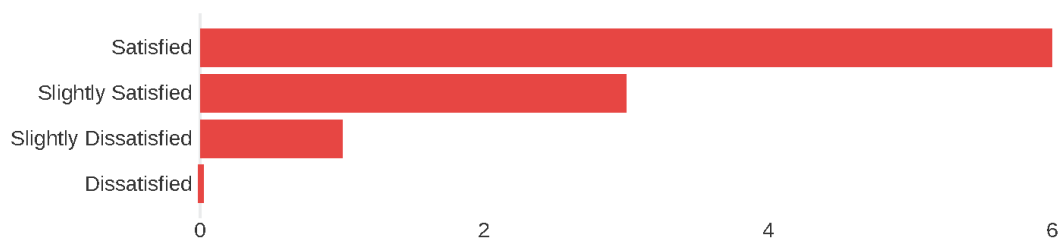


Field	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Responses
How Satisfied or Dissatisfied are you with your ability to apply your skills in your role with Hue House?	1	2	1	0	0	10

Field	Choice Count
Satisfied	7
Slightly Satisfied	3
Slightly Dissatisfied	0
Dissatisfied	0
Total	10

Worker Satisfaction Survey 3

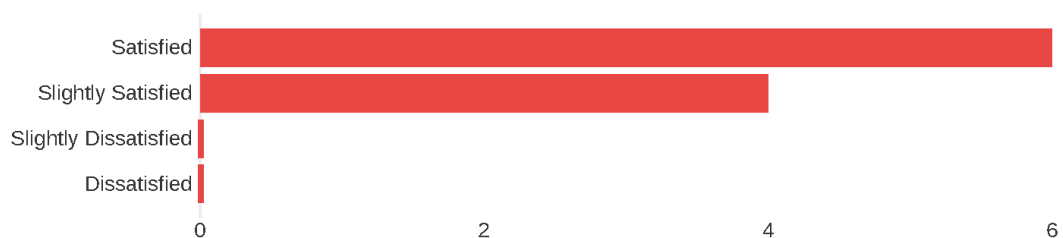
Q3 - How Satisfied or Dissatisfied are you with your current workload at Hue House?



Field	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Responses
How Satisfied or Dissatisfied are you with your current workload at Hue House?	1	3	2	1	0	10

Field	Choice Count
Satisfied	6
Slightly Satisfied	3
Slightly Dissatisfied	1
Dissatisfied	0
Total	10

Q4 - How Satisfied or Dissatisfied are you with your opportunities for career development at Hue House?

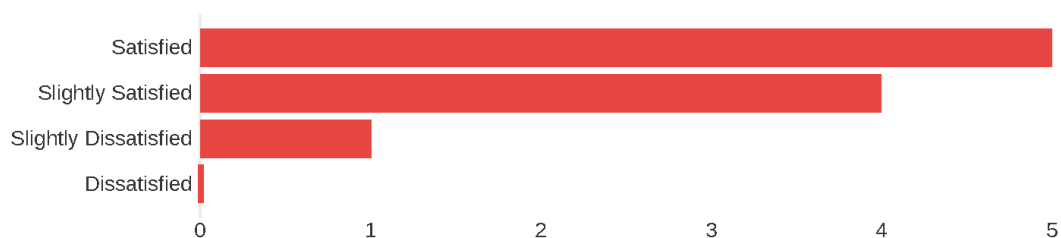


Field	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Responses
How Satisfied or Dissatisfied are you with your opportunities for career development at Hue House?	1	2	1	0	0	10

Field	Choice Count
Satisfied	6
Slightly Satisfied	4
Slightly Dissatisfied	0
Dissatisfied	0
Total	10

Worker Satisfaction Survey 5

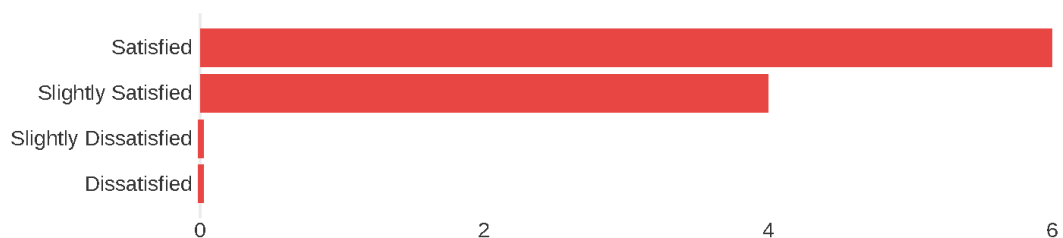
Q5 - How Satisfied or Dissatisfied are you with the work environment cultivated at Hue House?



Field	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Responses
How Satisfied or Dissatisfied are you with the work environment cultivated at Hue House?	1	3	2	1	0	10

Field	Choice Count
Satisfied	5
Slightly Satisfied	4
Slightly Dissatisfied	1
Dissatisfied	0
Total	10

Q6 - How Satisfied or Dissatisfied are you with the culture at Hue House?



Field	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Responses
How Satisfied or Dissatisfied are you with the culture at Hue House?	1	2	1	0	0	10

Field	Choice Count
Satisfied	6
Slightly Satisfied	4
Slightly Dissatisfied	0
Dissatisfied	0
Total	10

Worker Satisfaction Survey 7

Q7 - How Satisfied or Dissatisfied are you with your relationship with whom you report to at Hue House?

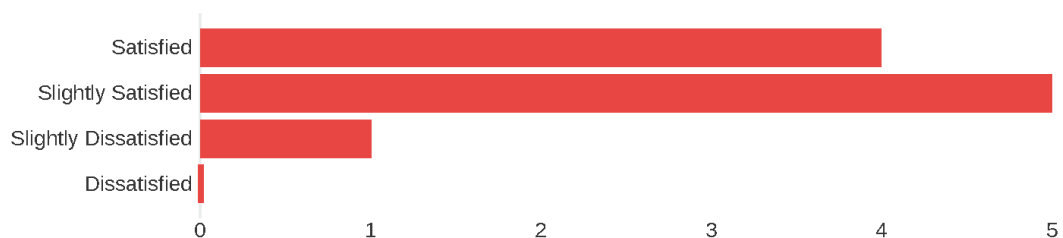


Field	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Responses
How Satisfied or Dissatisfied are you with your relationship with whom you report to at Hue House?	1	2	1	0	0	10

Field	Choice Count
Satisfied	9
Slightly Satisfied	1
Slightly Dissatisfied	0
Dissatisfied	0
Total	10

Worker Satisfaction Survey 8

Q8 - Overall, how Satisfied or Dissatisfied are you with your current work engagement with Hue House?



Field	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Responses
Overall, how Satisfied or Dissatisfied are you with your current work engagement with Hue House?	1	3	2	1	0	10

Field	Choice Count
Satisfied	4
Slightly Satisfied	5
Slightly Dissatisfied	1
Dissatisfied	0
Total	10

Qualitative Interview Data 1

Thematic Analysis from Surveys/Interviews

This document shows a dictated recount of the one-on-one interviews captured from researcher notes and partial recordings of the one-on-one interviews with Hue House constituents. While the names are not associated with the interviews, they are not completely de-identified. Direct quotes are indicated by quotation marks and all other text is paraphrased sentiment that closely reflects respondents' words. The content was edited for clarity and brevity. This information was brought back to respondents for review and input on how their words were captured and coded. The themed categories and the key are below and highlighted accordingly in the interview text as the researcher observed and interpreted them:

Qualitative Interview Themes
Personal/Collective Identity
Role Expectations
Operations/Practices
Place-Making/Work Environment

*A darker hue of the defined colors means the language/dialogue overlaps a couple of the determined themes.

Respondent 1 - April**1. What has your experience been with Hue House's workplace environment/culture?**

"It's very different to be my authentic self and to feel heard/seen...backing the mission and vision." "It's friendly whether that's good or bad...Difficult conversations can be tricky, but there's honesty/genuineness." "davita sees how you are beyond the work." Seeing culture beyond how it displays in The Block, there is some limitation for some Hue House staff. She feels supported, but not equipped and she has had to figure it out.

2. How has your experience been with how Hue House deals with difficulty or conflict?

"We work through it in an everyday people kind of way. We quickly fumble through...not in a corporate grievance way...Firing people is difficult." She's hired/fired for The Block with no real experience on the Hue House side.

3. If you were the sole source, what advice would you give Hue House co-founders about imperative things to do now to be who they aspire to be as an organization?

"Processes and paperwork is important without feeling corporate, having people and places to establish standard operating procedures and policy standards of excellence will be important.

Qualitative Interview Data 2

More preparation ahead of time before it's an issue to give the impression that it's important to the business would be good.” “The Block needs salaried people. It can feel like a full-time job when it isn't.” “...to actually pay people what they're worth and celebrate value they should do whatever they need to do to secure funding.” “They need more stable, secure consistency and not to be as fluid even as a startup, and being in new growth phases it feels like they're still trying to catch the rhythm.

4. What do you observe about leadership as a concept and a practice at Hue House?

Her experience overall is made up by working with a Black-led org that champions appreciates what she's doing. “Despite their challenges, they have a commitment to doing the right things and are getting better.” The Block is the only concept that she has otherwise within the organization. “There's a lot of autonomy, and it's up to you to decide how you lead. You decide how much input you want or need from the ‘co-owners’ and help to empower others as a practice.” The co-founders cannot describe her day today existence or vice versa. On cultural advocacy, “you represent the cause and* that can be conveyed to the team. Not overseeing others but doing the work” has been part of her experience...She's supposed to be doing people and content development instead of grunt admin. work but it's a startup, so she gets it. Not as much strategy work but she is filling in gaps.

5. Are there distinctions between leadership generally and Black leadership at Hue House?

Very different. I can't be totally free or gender-neutral under the auspices of white leadership. There is pressure to appease the majority elsewhere. There is freedom here at work with Hue House of expression. There's honest conversation*. There's an asset minded approach to black people, value-driven perspective culturally speaking.

Respondent 2 - May

1. What has your experience been with Hue House's workplace environment/culture?

“Hue House is in the process of culture creation and adamant about it. So far cultural practices include caring for people as they are, music at meetings*, not formal...It's interesting, especially in the digital space as it's mostly been. Client meetings differ and you can see a contrast between “them” and “us” even though it's virtual...” Not necessarily impacted just because of virtual (could be more pronounced in person or different - speaker wished to note here that on a screen there are obvious differences in presentation on the screen for Hue House workers contrasted with some of their clients, from chosen work spaces to comfort levels on Zoom) It does make a difference that it's virtual.

2. How has your experience been with how Hue House deals with difficulty or conflict?

“ Addressed quickly, check-ins occur to try and get in front of issue; space, openness, transparency, asking about opinions and feelings. Airing issues is positive.”

3. If you were the sole source, what advice would you give Hue House co-founders about imperative things to do now to be who they aspire to be as an organization?

“Check in with themselves (co-owner synes) for vision direction/future development” Candid conversations like they are now and thinking about how to improve.

4. What do you observe about leadership as a concept and a practice at Hue House? Mostly outside of Hue is where concepts she has experienced come. “Leadership is taking the reigns, establishing expectations. With Hue they allow you space to figure it out and lead yourself...Lots of introspection and being open to feedback/criticism. They do the same for themselves as they do for others. There’s clear leadership, but it doesn’t feel like that. Refreshing how they’ve attached leadership, culture and organizational practices.” Different than how she’s been trained to think about leadership and much appreciated. (speaker wished to note that her expectations of what leadership is has shifted due to co-founders' encouragement and openness)

5. Are there distinctions between leadership generally and Black leadership at Hue House?

Not many references for this question. They are more transparent than non-Black leaders in her experiences, invested in both personal and professional growth which boosts morale as well as by making sure people are okay. Check-ins are more Black (culturally).

Respondent 3 - May

1. What has your experience been with Hue House’s workplace environment/culture?

“...it’s great to see us be intentional about culture. We are in a space where we are all trying to design culture from a space of making an organization that we would want to work in and/or for. Experiences of ours are being leveraged” to create this space. Having core team members respond to this intent and actuality in a check-in or 45 day review to strip fears and prejudices has been good to experience. Even with icky things, we’ve found a groove around it so people don’t leave scarred or bitter and they can approach us after the fact and we’re super proud of that.”

2. How has your experience been with how Hue House deals with difficulty or conflict?

“We’re setting expectations and communicating well and/or up front about the needs and changes to allow for less contention on the back end because of the environment we’re creating. Even real time issues not letting them fester, but having an ease of approach that diffuses what could be...Not letting things be planted and grow...uncomfortable things. There is a system and process in place to get their goals in the beginning and have them be accountable to those over time, being human and caring about it as well...we started the company about being vulnerable and transparent, so there is space to voice your perspective and room to get understanding, no need for defensiveness.”

3. If you were the sole source, what advice would you give Hue House co-founders about imperative things to do now to be who they aspire to be as an organization?

“Solidify positions on core team, job descriptions, make more space to dream and vision...they are heavily focused on deliverables as it stands. Exposure for the agency side to get to the level we want to get to so it informs structure, find our ideal clientele from a brand perspective... Kick it and continue to have fun.”

4. What do you observe about leadership as a concept and a practice at Hue House?

“Very layered. Encompassing so many things. Company culture is about openness, funness, coolness and then staying on task/locking in, which translates to the team. We employ managerial applications from a co-founder from the 1-minute manager framework (not too high about the wins or too low about the losses, etc.). The personal awareness piece is important, so we’re doing personality assessments to help people understand themselves and how they work in order for them to create space themselves to say what they need and get what they want both for themselves and for the needs of the organization. Understanding and empathizing with one another helps us to execute on a day-to-day basis. Knowing if someone is conflict averse, we can create space for them to advocate for themselves and their growth and position the ask so they can receive it best.” He’s creative so he swims. If task-driven things are needed, he communicates that in his particularly preferred way. They believe it’s a communal space for opportunity, no micromanaging, we don’t get into the how as much, an intrapreneurial perspective.

“There’s more than one way to execute and skin a cat: some things may be necessary for an industry, but mostly not. Being small, we don’t have to wield a stick, let alone a big stick. We want to continue to be lean for the personalness/personable nature of the organization, allowing for symbiotic communal work...Words mean things, so intentionality and things being more communal...we can’t accomplish our goal without the work of everybody. It’s glue. Not everyone is thinking about that...but...we do. It’s a feelings thing.” Course correcting as opposed to reprimanding... he wants to strip away all the things holding them back (e.g. capitalism, system, anti-liberation, etc.). Language can create ripples, we may not be able to get liberation but getting as close as we can is the goal, and language is a part.”

5. Are there distinctions between leadership generally and Black leadership at Hue House?

“Yeah, but not too different in terms of how leadership is approached there...depending on the space, leaders can look like the space where they inhabit which may be an older model. The other end is there can be so much communalism, there’s no central vision and nothing to rally around or an entity to move people toward that vision. Hue House has found a good sweet spot between the two. They can set standards for when they need to work, but not so rigid that they have to tell people how to do what they do. Not informed by white supremacist structures, so it becomes more constructive/productive than mainstream organizations for Black people.

Qualitative Interview Data 5

Representation of Qualitative Themes

Qualitative Interview Themes	Raw Count of Themes	Percentage of Total Tracked Theme Occurrences
Personal/Collective Identity	23	17.97%
Role Expectations	26	20.31%
Operations/Practices	39	30.47%
Place-Making/Work Environment	40	31.25%
TOTAL	128	100%

Themes Aligned Across All Administered Instruments

Denison Culture Survey	Worker Satisfaction Survey	Qualitative Interviews
Adaptability	Work Assignment/Workload	Place-Making/Work Environment
Mission	Relationship	Personal/Collective Identity
Involvement	Culture	Operations/Practices
Consistency	Career Development	Role Expectations

**Interview with Hue House's co-founder and Chief Operating Officer
(COO), in charge of technology, David Arrington**

Thursday, June 24, 2021 via Zoom

I had the opportunity to speak with the COO of the organization I am working with for my Consultancy Project, Mr. David Arrington of Hue House, LLC. Hue House is a newer Charlotte-based creative agency that serves clients seeking to connect with audiences they traditionally have not. They also serve creatives involved in a variety of industries endeavoring to build knowledge, skill, and access to opportunities. This interview underscored some of the unique uses, limitations, challenges and opportunities that being a nimble, small startups can experience with respect to technology. It is paraphrased, and shortened for conciseness to capture the essence of what Mr. Arrington shared in response to the following questions:

How would you characterize your use of technology and what Hue House uses it for?

Hue House's use of technology--which for us is mainly social media, websites, online articles, photo and video galleries, short form informational videos, and tools/resources to carry those things out for the benefit of our clients and customers--is to reach new clients, display our creative work, and to clearly and compellingly communicate messaging regarding who we are and what we do.

If we had to define technology, it would typically be online platforms that allow us to reach our audience or potential clients, in addition to productivity tools like email, smartphones/texting and videoconferencing. We use financial software to do payroll and track taxes i.e. QuickBooks online. Our contractors use a wide variety of hardware and software to conduct creative work from paintings and murals on lots of different media, to videographers and DJs using laptops, turntables, cameras, and lighting. We use a lot of computerized and digital technology.

What is one piece of technology you feel you could not do without?

I use a MacBook Pro and it is my professional lifeline. I do most of my work on the laptop. My phone would be second, but I could make and receive calls from my laptop if something were to happen to my phone, so I would say without the laptop I would be in pretty bad shape.

What are the unique ways you feel that Hue House utilizes social media, and what platforms?

The primary ways that Hue House uses social media platforms are to spread our messaging and to connect with our audiences. That is not a unique use per se, but as a Black-led organization designed to benefit Black/Brown creatives, what the messaging is and how it is curated and put out is specifically directed and catered to them. While no racial/cultural group is a monolith, that looks like use of popular slang/vernacular, being used to “sound like ourselves” in the various forms, and to engage the audiences around specific needs that exist. Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter are the primary social media channels used.

Does the organization track employees’ use of social media, and are there social media policies in place?

The organization does not currently have any W-2 employees as we hire contractors to get the work of the organization done at this time. There is no tracking of contractors' social media. Contractors are encouraged to connect with and leverage social media to share the work they are doing and their engagement with Hue House, as it has mutual benefit: Sharing information with others who may be looking to work with the group, displaying their contributions to the work, and/or contributing to the awareness of our mission and vision to support Black and Brown creatives is a win-win.

There are currently no formal social media guidelines in place, which is less of an issue and less enforceable without W-2 employees, as we currently view it. This is something the organization is considering for future reference, however. The three organization co-founders, and the contractors who are given access to the organization's social media outlets, jointly plan and approve social media strategy, content, and design guidelines for content. This informally contributes to the “dos and don’ts” for the organization's social media approach. Those specific and detailed policies and guidelines have not been articulated and documented at this point.

Does the company utilize SEO (search engine optimization) on their website (tracking user clicks and searches)?

Hue House heavily utilizes SEO and web site tracking via Google Analytics and SEO in WordPress and SquareSpace, the latter of which are the platforms where our two websites are housed. Analytics are most specifically and most closely tracked and leveraged for our blog site called The Block. The SEO exists for the copy and content on Hue House's main website, so that it turns up in web searches much more easily based on identified key words that may be associated with who we are and the work that we do. Using and optimizing SEO makes it easier for clients and community members to find us, and that is the primary benefit of those items for us.

How are financial decisions made about purchases or investments in technology, equipment, infrastructure or personnel, and what is the value of leveraging technology for the business?

I (Mr. Arrington) am the primary contact and so I tend to generate much of the discussion on technology needs and/or benefits for the organization. We have an editor for The Block who is entrusted to generate and develop content or express any technology needs that might benefit the needs of The Block. I make the purchases once a technological resource is suggested and approved among the co-founders. I also actively seek technological interventions that may help us meet our demands/goals.

There is not currently a technology budget, so there is not one for maintenance/replacement, but our first line of defense is to try to use low and no-cost options as a new organization. Maintenance is absorbed as sweat equity by one of the co-founders with the skill set to be responsible for our web site as well as the cost (which is a whopping \$20 per year), and a contractor does some coding and custom design work. Between those two costs and the annual amount of money spent on any paid subscription services, as it stands, we have spent something like \$1,100. As it stands, there is an extremely high return on investment because with a good laptop and internet service we can access 90% of what we need to run the business, while incurring minimal costs. As we grow and need to ensure more internal access to our software and other technology, having more conversations about security and protocols will become more central and necessary.

Is there a dedicated support person/ technology specialist/ webmaster?

No, there is only me for now, and I help to direct contractors and delegate some of the oversight to my partners, but there is a potential need to centralize that responsibility as we grow in the future.

What assessments/supports are in place to assess employee/contractor and client technology access and readiness?

That is an interesting question, and as a startup we pretty much are often looking at what we need to do what we need to do right now. As an organization that is geared toward the needs of often historically marginalized groups, the needs of who we serve would dictate what accommodations we make. We do not have expressed needs that have been shared about accessibility, but we work with a variety of community partners and feel confident that as we continue to expand our reach and people with different needs than we currently accommodate do come in contact with us, that we could ensure they have they need to be included and have a great experience with us. Equity is important for us, so getting out in front of ways we can be prepared to meet those needs is a place where we need to take a more proactive position.

Overall, I assess that the organization has a lot of room to be more intentionally thinking about how big the role that technology plays in their operations. I do not think they are different in this way than other startups that have an intense focus on the 'what' and 'how' of now, and less on a future focus that would inform needs they may not have yet. They are clearly making great headway with the technology they are using in terms of leveraging low-cost options to secure clients and yield a high return. How well they solidify processes and protocols, as well as keep an eye toward the risks inherent with being technology-dependent would be an area for which I would suggest they beef up their attention most immediately. From hacking to compliance issues, what they fail to address comprehensively in these early stages could take a lot of attention away from other things they would prefer to put it on later.

**Prepared by Alexandra Arrington, LCMHCA, NCC, BC-TMH,
Doctoral Candidate
via Gardner-Webb's DEOL Consultancy Project
for Hue House, LLC**



Appendix B

Consultancy Project Charter



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CONSULTANCY PROJECT CHARTER

1. General Project Information				
Project Title:	BLACK LEADERSHIP & CULTURE IN CREATIVE INDUSTRY: ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES & WORKER SATISFACTION IN A CHARLOTTE, NC SOCIAL ENTERPRISE			
Project Host(s):	Hue House, LLC			
Project Sponsor (GWU):				
Project Manager:	Alexandra Arrington	Date: 10/26/2020		
Project Description	<p>Hue House is a creative agency, in its first year, with significant potential for impact in its local market considering its niche. The organization serves creative entrepreneurs of color historically encountering many barriers to sustainable livelihoods in the arts compared to their non-POC (person of color) counterparts. Its mission and purpose is to serve by "opening new doors and changing how brands connect." They carry out that purpose "to support creatives of color through" their initiatives and services via "The Block."</p> <p>The organization has a fresh take on working within existing systems while attempting to forge a new status quo where traditional organizational culture, structures and communications are challenged, and other types of authentic approaches are tested and normalized.</p> <p>Hue House is lacking some formal organizational tenets and structures that can be helpful to solidify their base as they continue growing/scaling. This project will conduct an in-depth organizational analysis, focus on opportunities for their "The Block" initiatives, and culminate in an organizational handbook called "The Block Bible" (to include documented organizational mission, vision and values statements; diversity statement, code of ethics, a contractor orientation curriculum/guide, and an overall organizational analysis report). With this project being undertaken with a creative agency, the outcomes have the potential to help document a reimagined practice and presentation of traditional organizational development and leadership.</p>			
2. Project Participants and Roles (add or delete lines as needed)				
	Name	Role	Telephone	E-mail
Project Manager:	Alexandra Arrington	Student Practitioner/Project Manager		aarrington@gardner-webb.edu
Team Members:	David Butler	Advisor		dbutler@itshuehouse.com
	Davita Galloway	Advisor		dgalloway@itshuehouse.com
	David Arrington	Advisor		darrington@itshuehouse.com
3. Stakeholders (e.g., those with a significant interest in or who will be significantly affected by this project)				



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Hue House co-founders, clients and workers/contractors primarily, followed by the Charlotte arts/entrepreneurship community who are people of color looking to engage information and resources to grow their business.

4. Project Purpose Statement

Project Purpose *Describe the need this project addresses*

This project will address the traditionally used infrastructure elements, suggested policy and procedure considerations, recommended formal systems, and documentation of processes that will contribute to the organization's ability to focus its efforts on sustainable growth and progress. It will also note the non-traditional ways in which the organization incorporates and develops culture to create and normalize creative and nuanced ways to work amid traditional organizational systems.

Resources *Describe the resources made available by the project host for this project*

Co-founders' time; access to meetings and internal/external communications; fees for any printing/production of final products, if needed.

Project Deliverables *List the high-level "products" to be created (e.g., improved xxxx process, employee manual on yyyy)*

1. Organizational analysis report (culture/ethics/systems, vulnerabilities, strengths, and recommendations)
2. Mission, vision, and values statements
3. Orientation curriculum and guide for contract workers
4. Leadership philosophy statement
5. Code of ethics
6. Diversity philosophy/statement

Each component would be included in a final product termed "The Block Bible" with the potential for a multimedia version being developed to align with the organization's future-focus, artistic nature and bent toward creativity.

Project Milestones *Project significant accomplishments anticipated over the life of the project with estimated timeline*

1. Completion of initial constituent interviews for organizational analysis beginnings (January 2021)
2. Quarterly reports of findings/recommendations for best practices (March, June, September 2021) reflective of how the organization measures and what they might do to improve their standing
3. Draft presentations to the organization's co-founders of "The Block Bible" at 3 months, 6 months and 9 months (February 2021, May 2021 and August 2021) into the engagement for overall reactions and direction assessment.
4. Final draft "The Block Bible" October 2021 (With edits, research and feedback incorporated by Spring 2022)

Project SMART Objectives *Include 3 to 5*

1. Survey the organizations operations, development and assess current approaches
2. Provide formal reports of observations, findings and recommendations quarterly (by 15th of the month) and debrief with the team to consider action plans/implementation
3. Monthly status reports on the project will be provided at one of the Hue House weekly team meetings, to gather information, ask questions and/or share information about the progress, needs and deliverables for the project.
4. Develop shared document the first month of project engagement to have co-founders actively contribute (at least twice per month(their thoughts/feedback on the development of the various document deliverables.

Major Known Risks (including significant Assumptions) *Identify obstacles that may cause the project to fail.*



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Risk	Risk Rating (High, Medium, Low)
Limited access to client/constituent meetings	Low
Hue House changing direction or losing interest in the value of the project purposes	Medium
Hue House company decline or exit in the next year	Low

Constraints List any conditions that may limit the project team's options with respect to resources, personnel, or schedule (e.g., predetermined budget or project end date, limit on number of staff that may be assigned to the project).

There are no major constraints for this project, except for any implementation of recommendations that the project may put forward could have costs associated with them should they be approved by all of the co-founders.

External Dependencies Will project success depend on coordination of efforts between the project team and one or more other individuals or groups? Has everyone involved agreed to this interaction?

There is much opportunity for internal work with the organization, but the quality and applicability of some of the recommendations would depend on the availability and my observations of external client and prospect meetings. If the need for the type of work they do changes, or they are unable to get regular meetings with clients or prospects that would be a limitation, also. I would be approved to attend these meetings as an ad hoc part of Hue House's team, so there would not need to be special permissions garnered.

5. Communication Strategy (specify how the project manager will communicate to the Host, Sponsor, Project Team members and Stakeholders, e.g., frequency of status reports, frequency of Project Team meetings, etc.)

There is a weekly team meeting that I would be involved with up to twice per month for 15-30 minutes to provide updates, request information and/or participation for any given part of the project. I would communicate by email primarily with the co-founders for the project at a regular interval.

6. Sign-off

	Name	Signature	Date (MM/DD/YYYY)
Project Host	Hue House, LLC		
Project Sponsor	Hue House, LLC		
Project Manager	Alexandra Arrington		

7. Notes

Appendix C

Communications Plan

Stakeholder	Information Needed	Why Needed	When will they get it	How will they get it
Project Host	Survey Distribution – Denison Culture Survey	Part of the data collection process for organizational analysis and report	February 2021	Introduced in a monthly check-in meeting, sent by email as a follow-up, and email reminders until results received.
Project Host	Survey Distribution – Employee Satisfaction Survey	Part of the data collection process for organizational analysis and report	December 2021	Introduced in a monthly check-in meeting, sent by email as a follow-up, and email reminders until results received.
Project Host	Project check-in and progress updates	To relay any updates, changes, progress and/or new insights for the project and/or specific deliverables from organization or consultant/project manager side.	Monthly (January 2021 – May 2022)	In person/virtual meeting with founders
Project Manager	Time with Hue House workers to collect qualitative data	To conduct interviews after conducting surveys for mixed methodology and comprehensive analysis of data	December 2021-March 2022	In person/virtual meeting with founders and constituent workers
Project Host	Draft deliverables (draft reports, initial survey findings)	To review information and offer any feedback/clarifications, to ask questions, and to indicate forward motion as expected with the project.	December 2021-March 2022	By email and reviewed in an in-person/virtual meeting with founders
Project Host	Final deliverables (final reports, organizational analysis/needs assessment findings and recommendations)	Will signal completion of project and fulfill requirements of what consultant/project manager set out to deliver.	May-August 2022	By email and reviewed in an in-person/virtual meeting with founders
Project Sponsor	Project progress	To monitor ongoing progress	Once per semester	Project Status Report submitted in Blackboard

Appendix D

Professional Literature Review

Introduction

The impact of leadership on culture creation and development, on worker satisfaction, and on organizational practices is being explored here through a review and discussion of the existing literature. Hue House is a Charlotte, NC-based marketing and advertising agency led by Black/African American (BAA) founders and serves as the partner agency and subject for implications of this review. It is a relatively new startup and creative agency formed in 2019 with the purpose of “decolonizing the marketing and advertising industry” (Hue House, n.d., About Us section) through consulting, creativity and community. As a social enterprise, the agency’s goal is twofold. First, the agency aims to make money by serving a niche in the Charlotte, NC, advertising and marketing sector and beyond. Then it seeks to use proceeds to help Black and Brown workers in a variety of industries improve their prospects within the markets in which they work. Part of the profits from the agency’s business are used to benefit Black and Brown workers through helping to provide and increase access to paid opportunities, training, and other needed people/professional development resources.

This is remarkable in that the marketing and advertising sector is historically and predominantly saturated by white-owned, white-led agencies. Additionally, there is increasing attention being paid to what is referred to as the creative economy, particularly since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The larger phenomena of leadership and culture implications in marketing, advertising, and creative industry contexts for Hue House, as a Black-led Charlotte, NC, startup and social enterprise, are ripe for study. These serve as the basis for this review.

Literature Themes

Peer reviewed journal articles, books, and other periodicals on these topics are organized into the following five themes, which represent a survey of literature over a 35-year period:

Landscape of Opportunity for Creative Industries, BAA Leadership in Small Business/Entrepreneurship (SBE), Traditional Organizational Practices, Leadership Implications in the Creative Industries/Creative Economy, and Limitations for BAA Leaders in SBE.

Landscape of Opportunity for Creative Industries

Due to necessity or simply due to a shift in focus on or discovery of what they deem more valuable uses of their time, more people are using creative industry work to entertain themselves, to address grief and stress, or to make a living (Collins, 2020). In today's marketplace, heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, earning money from creative pursuits may be the easiest it has been with some strategic insights and applied action (Collins, 2020). In Forbes's article entitled *How Creatives Can Turn Their Passions into A Profitable Career*, Collins (2020) posited, "Professional creatives deserve to get paid what they're worth, like doctors, lawyers or architects.... It's easier than ever for creatives to earn a living today if they mix business or marketing with their craft" (para. 1). According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development or UNCTAD (2021), the

creative economy covers the knowledge-based economic activities upon which the "creative industries" are based. These industries include advertising, architecture, arts and crafts, design, fashion, film, video, photography, music, performing arts, publishing, research and development, software, computer games, electronic publishing and TV/radio. (But What is the Creative Economy? section)

More recent attention has been given to the decreased barriers to entry and the significant

potential for increasing one's economic positioning and prospects in sectors collectively referred to as the creative economy. This is notable due to sources such as the Economic Policy Institute's publishing of testimony to the U.S. House of Representatives of labor economist Valerie Wilson (2020) about the growing socioeconomic inequities the COVID-19 pandemic has both highlighted and exacerbated, with particular disparities noted along racial lines. The creative industries have contributed significantly to the U.S. economy, as measured by the value of goods and services, and their alignment and overlap with traditional industries are becoming more ubiquitous. According to a Federal Emergency Management Agency's Recovery Support Function Leadership Group report on the arts and culture sector with respect to the impacts of COVID-19, Guibert and Hyde (2021) said,

arts and culture contribute 4.5% of U.S. gross domestic product (GDP), an amount larger than the share contributed by industries as diverse as construction, agriculture, and transportation. Increasingly, the arts and design are used in healthcare, manufacturing, and local community and economic development initiatives. (p. 1)

With this quantifiable contribution to the economic fabric of our society, GDP was estimated at nearly \$23 trillion for 2021, according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (2022); questions about who is not being counted in this valuation and why remain largely uninvestigated. It is reported by Florida (2016), an expert researcher on what he refers to as the creative class economy and its racial implications in the U.S., that throughout "America, almost three-quarters (73.8 percent) of all creative class jobs nationwide are held by white (non-Hispanic) workers, compared to about nine percent (8.5 percent) by African Americans" (para. 3). There are many creative agencies in the U.S. as well, close to 40,000, according to U.S. Census Bureau data processed in a Statista report (Guttmann, 2021). Among those, 85% of the

over 180,000 workers in these industries identify racially as white. These national figures show some consistency when scaled for Charlotte, NC. There are 65 advertising and creative services agencies listed, according to Axios (Williams, 2016). While there are no documented racial demographics readily available for the leadership of these 65 organizations, a quick search of the agencies' staff web pages yields very few people of color, if any. Black people in particular in the C-suite or comparable top leadership levels are noticeably absent (Wahba, 2021). With individuals and businesses having the opportunity to benefit economically and otherwise from a variety of creative pursuits and in the creative industries, it stands to reason that the opportunity for leadership, and Black leadership specifically, could increase to the benefit of those they lead. The benefits and the barriers to such cannot be discounted in understanding the current context, disparities, implications for culture, and organizational practices.

BAA Leadership in SBE

BAA SBEs make up the largest sector of small and ethnically owned businesses in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). According to Bates in research by Edmonson and Foard (1998), BAA leaders in SBEs tend to be well respected in the communities in which they exist at large and among the Black community. Black-led businesses are more likely to hire Black people than other businesses. The potential, and historical need, for collective influence and effective utilization of resources to benefit Black people--from politics to economic enfranchisement--is well documented (Wallace, 1999). Further, the potential that SBE provides for BAA in circumventing socioeconomic constraints of traditional workplaces for economic mobility is significant (Jaiswal, 2018), yet any number of statistics disaggregated by race, including BAA SBE, consistently show that Black people have worse outcomes than their white counterparts (Wilson, 2020). BAA leadership in SBEs has grown within many sectors over the

last 40 years and tends to predominate those with a lower barrier to entry as Edmonson and Foard noted in their study. Those industries include retail and service industries (like barbering, restaurants, etc.), which make up roughly 53% of BAA SBEs and tend to require fewer startup funds or have lower technical/educational requirements (Edmonson & Foard, 1998). BAA SBEs tend to struggle with accessing capital, growing and scaling, and longevity regardless of industry compared to their white counterparts (Jaiswal, 2018). If the existence of BAA SBEs correlates to creating material, economic, and other opportunities for Black people, as the literature suggests, then the disparity existing across many industries can be addressed by lowering and eliminating barriers for these businesses to enter the marketplace and to thrive in it. Further, the existence of established BAA SBEs in other sectors not traditionally occupied and saturated by Black leaders at scale, like creative industries, could also produce positive outcomes for the increasing majority of the global population.

Traditional Organizational Practices

In the context of U.S. society, “traditional” organizations and related practices therein have meant historically white and male-led representation by volume. Overwhelming legal barriers curtailed many rights and opportunities for Black people well into the 20th century. This is negatively correlated to this leadership representation outcome. In the 2012 U.S. Census Bureau data, of the over 22 million businesses reported, white-owned businesses made up nearly 55% of that figure at 12 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). The next largest racial group of businesses in the U.S. is BAA-owned businesses at just under 1 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021).

An organization’s leadership, particularly the founders, has a unique opportunity and distinct positioning in creating culture that is influenced by and embedded through organizational

practices. Some of that embedding occurs through tangible means, while some does not.

According to Schein (2004), a predominant thought leader on organizational leadership and culture,

Organizations begin to create cultures through the actions of founders who operate as strong leaders. It is important to recognize that even in mature companies one can trace many assumptions to the beliefs and values of founders and early leaders...we cannot overlook the tremendous importance of leadership at the very beginning of any group process. (p. 242)

An organization's founding leaders bring their assumptions, beliefs, and worldview to operational and organizational practices. To the degree that those assumptions, etc. may differ across demographic lines, an identity factor like race could widely influence organizational practices and their applications and outcomes within an organization. The literature points to some organizational practices that are distinctive along racial lines. For example, BAA businesses are more likely to have "established company goals, and policy and procedure manuals" (Edmonson & Foard, 1998, p.83) than their white counterparts.

Other influences explored in the literature with implications for BAA leadership include leaning into cultural experiences as a tool to contribute to personal fulfillment. Lichtenstein (2019) looked at the impact of identity on organizational practices finding that "integration of self-expressive content into traditional organizational practices...allows these practices to become vehicles for self-actualization" (p. 181). With the racialized identities of BAA leaders being an exception to the rule on the whole in U.S. businesses, the application of content reflecting their expressions could represent a break from traditional organizational practices. It could mean, also, approaching existing organizational practices in novel ways through

redefining, redeveloping, or establishing some intermediate approach to those practices.

Leadership Implications in the Creative Industries/Economy

There is documented study on leadership in relation to the creative class economy, identifying the importance of reimagining leadership that draws upon hope and creates space for innovation rather than relying on historical pragmatic patterns. Adler (2011) stated that “to begin to engage with the power of artistic processes in fostering a creative economy, one that is capable of addressing twenty-first-century challenges, we need to look more carefully at the distinctive perspectives that great artists and great leaders share” (p. 210). White et al. (2014) shared a tangential sentiment, showing the importance of leadership’s role: “In the creative economy, the core task of leadership is to create a supportive climate of innovation” (p. 51). Being able to evaluate and respond effectively to a new climate with new challenges and opportunities will be predicated upon assessing the limitations of past majority leadership outcomes and using diverse sources to produce solutions that impact a wider variety of needs.

Limitations for BAA Leaders in SBE

BAA leaders have long used social enterprise to produce and distribute community wealth (Wallace, 1999). Particularly due to the socioeconomic and other disparities that exist across racial lines that negatively impact Black people, this has been one avenue to help mitigate those effects (Jaiswal, 2018). Turner (2016) discussed the complex nature of the limitations infringing upon BAA SBEs citing that the “social and economic forces that influence opportunities for achievement are interconnected and reinforcing” (p. 23). Because of the systemic nature of issues that BAA leaders in SBEs can face within society, an approach to address and combat the complex nature of those forces is required. Trice and Beyer (1991) suggested looking at ways to balance culturally innovative leadership with cultural maintenance

through existing structures. However, certain sectors in SBEs, like creative industries, have historically been and continue to maintain a white leadership majority. This has been referred to in the literature as “occupational segregation” (Gibson et al., 2014, p. 110), which is created by the existence of greater obstacles along racial lines to entering some industries. With these systemic limitations, a systemic analysis and approach is needed to remedy those limitations. One such approach being widely discussed in business and other types of organizations is racial equity.

A racial equity approach includes intentional, data-driven, and policy-oriented redress of complex and interrelated issues to eliminate race as a factor in outcomes (Race Forward, 2021). The current societal climate reveals a wide rift in the philosophy and practice of racial equity, from the ways racial equity can be misinterpreted and manipulated for political purposes in the U.S. to the historical impact in dollars that not adopting this approach has cost. Such historical impact in the U.S. has been quantified. For example, in a study that CitiGroup did in 2020, it was determined that the cost of racial inequity in the U.S. over the last 20 years (including the disparate lack of commercial loans to BAA SBEs) was \$16 trillion (Peterson & Mann, 2020). Despite this kind of clear evidence of how disenfranchisement has materialized for BAA SBEs, there is controversy that surrounds how this historical disadvantage for BAAs should be remedied. It is promising that a racial equity approach to systems could contribute to the continued support, development, and longer-term establishment of more BAA SBEs, as well as BAA leadership development. However, its attempts to correct for and bolster prospects for racial groups that have not historically benefitted are, at best, slowly championed by those who have.

Limitations and Opportunities of Study in the Literature

According to Gibson et al. (2014), more study is needed on BAA-led businesses generally, and the same can be said for creative economy applications for BAA leaders. Even in the past couple of years when the volume of emphasis on BAA experiences in the U.S. was heightened, the academic attention paid to the area of BAA leaders in SBEs remained obscure in comparison. The literature would suggest that the trend has not changed much in as many years: “Scholarly research on the entrepreneurial experiences of African Americans today is limited.... Little research has empirically examined the entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions of African Americans, particularly young adults” (Gibson et al., 2014, p. 109). Scholarly study on Black leadership and the creative class economy or Black leadership and entrepreneurial success, opportunity, worker satisfaction, and/or organizational practices in creative class work is not well covered either. Smith’s (2001) ethnographic approach as a qualitative study is one example of an approach that could be a great resource on these phenomena. Smith’s approach has much to be expounded upon in terms of conducting similar studies more widely across geographies, gender, and socioeconomics, and with a variety of business types. There is much to be shared and learned from the voices and experiences of BAA leaders, particularly this area in which so few hold space comparatively. The nature of qualitative study in its various forms would do well to capture some little-known phenomena that may not be as recognized or that are not well understood, particularly with SBEs, according to Gibson et al. With the limited existence of models of leadership that reflect insights from Black people holding positions of power in creative industries, more BAA leaders and BAA SBEs becoming the subject of greater scientific study will contribute to the body of knowledge about nuances, impact, and cultural imprint therein. There is much opportunity for the contributions of qualitative research to capture the

voices and stories unique to BAA experiences to be added among entrepreneurial and creative sectors of the economy having not been widely studied in this way.

Summary

The cultural impact of Black leaders in the creative entrepreneurial space is a vast territory to unearth. Schein (2004) suggested that leadership truly is the most important indicator of organizational culture. If that is the case, there is much more to discover in terms of what that could mean, particularly for creative environments in which BAA leaders exist. Ultimately, this line of study has much room for continued exploration, and the untapped benefits of it are yet to be fully determined and measured. In order to round out perspectives of organizational leadership that extend beyond traditional courses of study in the field, which tend to center white men, more discourse in a wider variety of organization types, races, gender expressions, ability/disability, and industries is needed.

These issues and their impact are varied and deep concerning the disparity in racial demographics in the creative industries, particularly marketing and advertising. There are stories being told and messages being crafted about people groups, communities, and consumers that often do not include the perspectives of those the messages are about. Contrarily, there are stories and messages that remain obscured due to the lack of Black people being involved in decision-making due to a lack of vigorous hiring or retention of Black people in these agencies. This is a gravely missed opportunity for resonance with Black and Brown/Latino communities particularly. These communities represent the fastest-growing segments of U.S. society (Frey, 2020). With respect to economics, Black consumer spending accounted for \$300 billion in 2020, according to a McKinsey report (Chui et al., 2021).

For decades and decades, Black consumers have been regularly overlooked by

companies that don't see them as a priority demographic...these companies may well be missing the chance to cultivate a significant emerging market. There's a big market to be unearthed if companies meet the real needs of Black consumers. (Chui et al., 2021, para. 1)

Being able to cater well to the needs, desires, and interests of this segment of the market requires diverse staffing and leadership in the field for the sake of authenticity, resonance, and fidelity.

More to the point of this review of literature, creating cultures and environments in which Black and other people of color are recruited, retained, promoted, and reflected in leadership ranks proportionally is a worthy aim for businesses for a number of reasons. With very few of the Charlotte, NC-based creative agencies being Black-led, Hue House, with its budding leadership and culture created by these BAA founders, should be closely watched. What impact it could have on increasing the quality or volume of economic opportunity for its workers and defining or redefining its organizational practices could set important precedents generally, as well as specifically, for other Black-led organizations.

Appendix E
CITI Certification



Completion Date 24-Aug-2021
Expiration Date 23-Aug-2024
Record ID 43552286

This is to certify that:

Alexandra M Arrington

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Graduate School of Education Research Investigators
(Curriculum Group)

Graduate School of Education Research Investigators
(Course Learner Group)

1 - Basic Course
(Stage)

Not valid for renewal of certification
through CME.

Under requirements set by:

Gardner-Webb University

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wde0d3c6e-3fb3-4c95-88fd-ce8b59e1e94c-43552286

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