



2022-2023 Women + Girls Research Alliance Commission Study

June 2023

Acknowledgements

Prepared by the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute

The UNC Charlotte Urban Institute is our region's applied research and community outreach center. We see solutions to the complex social, economic and environmental challenges facing our communities. We engage expertise across a diverse set of disciplines and life experiences to curate data, conducting actionable research and policy analysis that helps us make better decisions that benefit all of us.

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Prepared for the Women + Girls Research Alliance

Women + Girls Research Alliance (W+GRA) is a community-based research organization based at UNC Charlotte whose mission is to provide fair and unbiased data and analyses, which leaders and activists can use to improve the lives of women and girls. W+GRA has served the greater Charlotte metro area (Mecklenburg and surrounding counties) since 2006.

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Executive Summary

Women + Girls Research Alliance (W+GRA) convened a Leadership Café in October 2022 to better understand the issues faced by women and girls in the greater Charlotte metro area. Participants, who included UNC Charlotte faculty, community leaders, and Charlotte-Mecklenburg School (CMS) students, were invited to participate in small, facilitated conversations around issues impacting the lives of women and girls. This Commission Study documents the outcomes of this inaugural event.

The Café revealed that for many who live in the city and surrounding areas, wages have not kept up with the costs of living, and basic necessities such as housing, childcare, food, and transportation are becoming harder to afford. In addition to these larger Charlotte area issues of affordability, this study finds that women and girls in Charlotte (particularly those of color) experience additional challenges related to exclusion and inequity. These include discrimination in the workplace and healthcare systems, lack of social capital, and structural or organizational barriers that prevent women from obtaining and maintaining living wage jobs.

To thrive in the greater Charlotte metro area, women and girls need greater access to living wage jobs, mental health services, and social support. Girls, specifically, need to feel safer at school. Café participants were unanimous in their desire to develop safe spaces and networks where women and girls can receive social support, much like the Café itself. These spaces allow women and girls to build confidence, express vulnerability, develop relationships, and create opportunities for mentoring.

In conclusion, the research team recommends that W+GRA consider the following criteria to inform its research agenda, including the 2023-24 Seed Grant Funding RFP.

- Research that explores barriers or facilitators to economic mobility among women and girls
- Research that explores mental health and social support among women and girls, including research relating to mental health and school safety
- All research should be conducted with a racial equity lens. Racial equity should be reflected in all stages of the project, including in the study design, data analysis, and interpretation of findings.

Process Evaluation

Although not written into the formal scope of work, Charlotte Urban Institute determined that a process evaluation was needed for the inaugural W+GRA Leadership Café. The research team identified areas that worked well and areas of improvement. Areas of the Café that worked well included its:

- warm, welcoming atmosphere;
- high level of participation;
- participants' general adherence to Café instructions; and
- participants' general satisfaction and positive feedback.

The process evaluation also reveals some areas of improvement. These include:

- a need to clarify the role of table hosts;
- alternative methods to create more actionable outcomes; and
- alternative methods to capture student perspectives.



Introduction

Introduction

Women + Girls Research Alliance (W+GRA) convened a Leadership Café in October 2022 to better understand the issues faced by women and girls in the greater Charlotte metro area.^a Participants, who included UNC Charlotte faculty, community leaders, and Charlotte-Mecklenburg School (CMS) students, were invited to participate in small, facilitated conversations around issues impacting the lives of women and girls.

W+GRA partnered with the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute (the Institute) to collect and analyze data from the Leadership Café. The purpose of this Commission Study was to inform W+GRA and the broader community of the status of women and girls in the greater Charlotte metro area, specifically related to safety, health and wellbeing, and economic opportunity. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How have women and girls personally or professionally experienced issues related to safety, health and wellbeing, and economic opportunity?
2. What strategies do Leadership Café attendees pose as ways to address these issues?
3. Of the issues identified by Leadership Café attendees, which are prioritized as most important and most in need of further research?
4. How have other communities in the United States addressed these issues?

Using these research questions as a guide, the Institute research team synthesized findings from the Café and related research activities into actionable recommendations that can support W+GRA's work, including its [Seed Grant Funding program](#).

Although not written into the formal scope of work, Charlotte Urban Institute determined that a process evaluation was needed for the inaugural W+GRA Leadership Café. The results of the process evaluation can be found in the appendix.

^a The Leadership Café was adapted from the World Café model. More about World Cafés can be found at: <https://theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/world-cafe-method/>

Methods

About the Leadership Café

Taking Space without Apology: A Women + Girls Leadership Café took place on October 25, 2022 at the UNC Charlotte Barnhardt Student Activity Center. The Café hosted a total of 151 participants. Participants were primarily female, racially diverse, and diverse in age. Twenty percent of participants were Charlotte-Mecklenburg School (CMS) middle or high school students or their chaperones, while the remaining participants were adults not affiliated with CMS.

The Leadership Café followed a modified version of the World Café model, described in more detail in the appendix. The layout of the room was designed to evoke a warm and welcoming environment; coffee house music was playing in the background and refreshments and food were available in the lobby.

After words of welcome and a brief introduction to the World Café model, participants were instructed to discuss a set of questions with the 4 to 10 people at their immediate table. Each participant was assigned to a table discussion on either safety, economic security, or health and wellbeing. There was one host per table who helped to facilitate the conversation. There were 2 to 3 questions per round and three rounds total. The questions for the economic security table discussions are provided below as examples; the other two topic areas followed a similar question format:

Round 1

1. Economic security means that your family is always able to cover its basic needs. Some factors that play a role in economic security include families having a stable job that pays well, stable housing, enough food on the table, access to a good education without too much debt, and having enough savings for your goals and in case of emergencies.

Does this definition resonate with you? What makes you or your family feel economically secure? *(or feel like you have enough to meet your needs)*

2. In the greater Charlotte area, what do you think are some challenges that prevent women, girls, and their families from meeting their needs?

Round 2

3. What are we hearing/ what is missing?
4. What's been your major learning or insight so far?

Round 3

5. If our success was completely guaranteed, what bold steps might we choose to improve women' and girls' economic success in the greater Charlotte region?
6. How can we support each other in taking the next steps? What unique contribution could we make?
7. Who else needs to be involved? What resources do we need?

Table hosts were responsible for documenting the conversation or encouraging participants to do so by writing themes on large sheets of paper at the table. At the end of rounds one and two, everyone except for the table host and one volunteer were directed to move to a different table within their topic area. At the beginning of the next round, volunteers were instructed to describe the previous group's conversation before the table host opened up the conversation to the next set of prompts. At the end of round three, the Café host led a wrap-up discussion for the entire group of participants. Participants had an opportunity to share what they learned or what they will be taking away from the discussions.

Data Sources

This section outlines the data sources that the research team synthesized to learn about key issues for women and girls in the greater Charlotte metro area. The data sources included notes from attendees and a prioritization survey administered to participants following the event.

Written notes from Café attendees. Table hosts were responsible for documenting their table's conversations or encouraging participants to do so by writing themes on large sheets of paper at the table (Figure 1). There were 8 table discussions on safety, 8 table discussions on health and wellbeing, and 6 table discussions on economic security. The research team transcribed and summarized the notes to identify (a) issues impeding the wellbeing, economic security, and safety of women and girls; and (b) possible solutions and to the identified issues. Issue areas which were identified by multiple tables and which had more detailed context were considered key issues.

In order to capture distinct participant voices, stickers were intended to be passed out to each participant (gold stars for CMS students, silver circles for adults), and participants could use up to 10 stickers to mark written concepts that they agreed with or found important. Though stickers were not consistently used, the research team was able to use the data available to inform issues that were important to students.

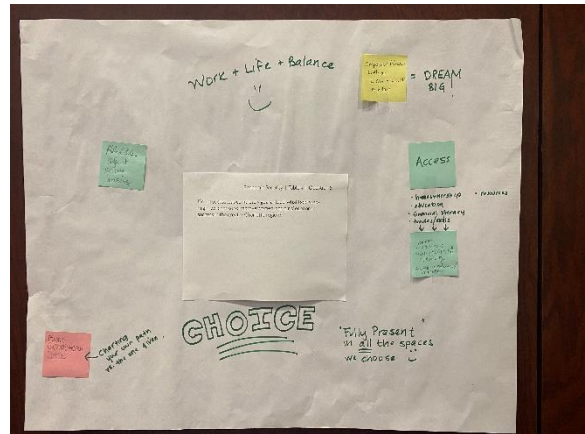


Figure 1: Notes from a Leadership Café discussion.

Prioritization survey. The research team used the findings from the Café and a literature review to identify specific and measurable issues impacting women and girls in the greater Charlotte metro area. To identify a set of priorities for W+GRA, the research team invited Café participants via email to participate in a follow-up survey after the event. Café participants were asked which of the issues identified by the Leadership Café and research literature were (a) most important to them personally and (b) needed additional investment in research. Participants could select up to three of the six options. Thirty-one of 135 Café participants with known email addresses participated in the survey, a 23% response rate. Due to small sample size, priorities could not be disaggregated by race/ethnicity or county of residence.



Findings

Issues Impacting Women and Girls

Café Findings

The Institute identified substantial overlap in the issues identified in the safety, economic security, and health and wellbeing discussions. The most prevalent issues across topics are discussed below.

Table 1. Top issue areas across discussion topics

Was issue area a theme in...	Safety discussions?	Economic security discussions?	Health and wellbeing discussions?
Mental health	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lack of social support	Yes	Yes	Yes
Access to information	No	Yes	Yes
Access to basic needs	Yes	Yes	Yes
Equity and inclusion	Yes	Yes	Yes

Mental health was one of the most salient themes of the Leadership Café. Participants discussed the need to normalize/destigmatize asking for help and the need for greater access to mental health services in schools and the broader community.

Lack of social support was discussed in relation to mental health needs. In safety and economic security discussions, some participants expressed feeling emotionally unsafe in their workplaces, due to factors such as isolation as a woman or woman of color (*"it's just me!"*). In health and wellbeing discussions, participants discussed the toll of gender roles on health (the expectation to be both caregiver and breadwinner), and the need for parental and social support *"to share and release mental tensions."* Women and girls expressed a desire to build safe spaces, founded on trust, support, mentorship, and advocacy for one another.

Access to information was identified as a barrier to obtaining economic security and optimal health and wellness. In health and wellness discussions, women and girls discussed medical illiteracy (on the part of the patient) and poor provider communication (particularly towards Black women) as barriers to health. At economic security tables, participants discussed the need for financial literacy and knowledge about resources, including career pathways and opportunities.

Access to basic needs, such as affordable childcare, healthcare, housing, food, and transportation, was identified by participants as an issue for women and girls in the greater Charlotte metro area. Economic status is closely associated with access to basic needs; participants shared how financial stability increases access to the resources needed to maintain health and safety, whereas a lack of financial stability increases stress and can *“force [women and girls] to stay in unsafe conditions.”* Economic status is often inherited across generations; as one participant noted, the *“starting point for everyone is not the same!”*

Equity and inclusion issues were an undercurrent across discussion topics. Participants, particularly women of color, reported prejudiced practices within the workplace that limit opportunities to grow their careers. These included gender and racial pay gaps, lack of female leadership in male dominated industries, lack of social capital (e.g., networking opportunities), and lack of benefits that allow women to remain in the workplace after starting a family (e.g., maternity leave, flexible work schedules, affordable child care). Participants often reported a *“double standard”* placed on women: the expectation to be both a breadwinner and caregiver. As one participant described, the modern economy has meant that *“roles [outside the home] are evolving but not responsibilities [in the home],”* Competing responsibilities and lack of work-life balance, particularly for single parents, can leave women and girls in a state of *“basic survival mode”* with limited time to focus on their own health and wellbeing.

At health and wellness tables, participants discussed the lack of cultural, racial, and gender representation in research, healthcare, and sports. Poor health provider communication, particularly towards women of color, adds to feelings of distrust and bias of the health care system which creates unnecessary obstacles to maintaining positive health and well-being. At safety tables, participants noted that racial bias is a source of stress and poor mental health for women of color (*“racial battle fatigue”*).

Issues important to students. At safety tables, student participants expressed fear at school, particularly regarding school shootings and issues on buses. At health and wellbeing tables, students discussed the effect of cyberbullying on mental health. Student participants also discussed the need for students in abusive situations to have access to a trusted adult; home was not seen as a safe place to some students. In economic security, students discussed the need for affordable basic needs (particularly food), financial education (financial literacy, salary negotiation), mentorship and supportive networks, and living-wage jobs.

Prioritized Issues

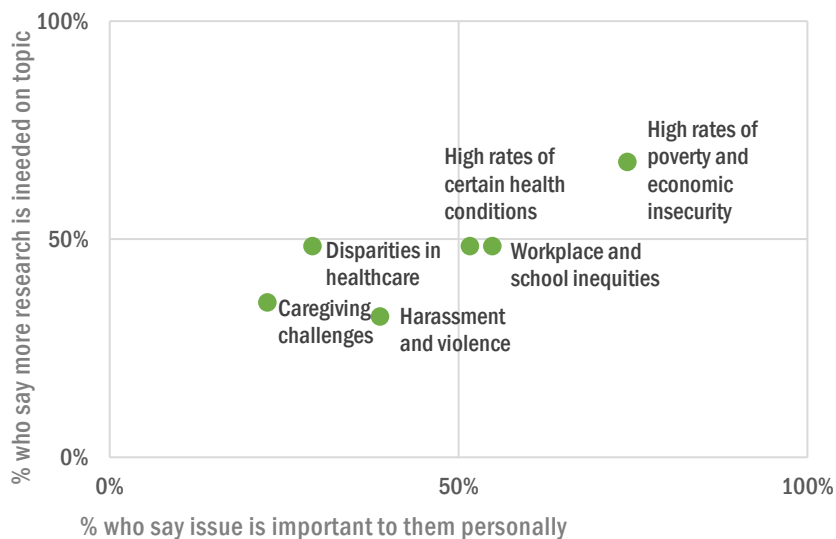
After the Café, the Institute research team used the key issues identified by Café participants as initial keywords to conduct a review of related research literature. The team identified six specific and measurable issues impacting women and girls.^{1,2,3,4,5,6} These issues are:

- **High rates of poverty and economic insecurity**, particularly among women of color and single mothers
- **High rates of certain health conditions**, such as mental health disorders and maternal mortality and morbidity
- **Caregiving challenges**, such as lack of paid parental leave and affordable childcare options
- **Harassment and violence**, including domestic violence
- **Disparities in healthcare** access, quality, and affordability
- **Workplace and school-based inequities**, including gender-based pay gaps and exposure to career paths

Café participants who responded to the Prioritization Survey (response rate =23% or 31 people) were asked to identify which of the six issues were (a) most important to them personally and (b) needed additional investment in research. **High rates of poverty and economic insecurity, particularly among women of color and single mothers, was the top issue among survey participants;** 74% indicated that

the issue was important to them personally, and 67% indicated that more research was needed on the topic. Workplace and school-based inequities and high rates of certain health conditions were considered important and in need of further research by approximately half of participants. Childcare challenges, disparities in healthcare, and harassment and violence were lower priorities for survey participants.

High rates of poverty and economic security among women was the top issue among survey participants.



Proposed Solutions

Café participants shared their ideal solutions to the issue areas that were identified during the Café. These solutions are grouped by their target audience, as identified by participants. Case studies from other communities are highlighted in the green boxes.

Government/advocacy groups can support women and girls in the following ways:

- Seek to include the voices of “*those most impacted*” in governmental committees, boards, or other types of decision-making bodies in Charlotte, particularly regarding issues that specifically impact women and girls such as school shootings, workforce development, access to healthcare, and affordable childcare.
- Increase representation in government for women and women of color.
- Support programs that address the social determinants of health, in particular: access to safe, quality, and affordable housing (including pathways to homeownership), childcare, healthcare (access for uninsured), healthy living (community gardens), and transportation.
- Support programs that provide career and education pathways to living-wage careers for women and girls, targeting people and neighborhoods with a history of governmental disinvestment. Examples of programs can be found on W+GRA’s [Charlotte Organizations webpage](#).

Case study

Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) is a family-based program designed to interrupt inter-generational poverty. Nurses provide health, education and employment counseling to at-risk pregnant women. In randomized control trials, women who participated in NFP had higher economic self-sufficiency than women who did not participate in the program.⁷

Business/healthcare industry leaders can support women and girls in the following ways:

- Invest in female leadership development and leadership opportunities in the workplace and schools. Participants noted that mentoring and/or social support in the workplace is important for women’s success, particularly for women in workplaces or professions that lack racial or gender diversity.
- Remove barriers to reentering the workforce after starting a family. For example, businesses can offer paid maternity leave, flexible work schedules, and child care assistance to female employees with families.
- Critically evaluate employee wage practices to ensure racial and gender equity among wages. If inequities exist, reexamine company practices and seek feedback from employees to identify barriers to career growth.
- Prioritize cultural awareness in client/employee interactions. Participants noted that medical/financial illiteracy, language barriers, past experiences of racism, and lack of diversity in leadership positions can impact a persons’ interaction with a provider or employer.
- Develop career mentorship opportunities for middle school, high school, and college students.

Case study

Workplace mentorship models which “specifically and intentionally” match mentees with mentors in their profession were found to be effective in improving female retention, job satisfaction, and professional success in the workplace.⁸ [ADVANCE: The Mentorship Tool for Women in STEM](#) is one example of a workplace mentorship program for women. The Tool includes key information on how to establish workplace mentorship program, including mentee and mentor responsibilities and a step-by-step matching process.

Schools can support girls in the following ways:

- Address student concerns about school safety, particularly regarding school shootings, mental health, and issues on buses. Consider gathering feedback from student leaders to identify school-specific solutions.
- Increase exposure to diverse, living-wage career paths (including trade schools)
- Increase financial literacy/education in middle school, high school, and college.
- Increase health literacy education for high school and college students. This may look like adding a course or module to existing health curriculum.

- Increase access to cross-cultural and social-capital building opportunities in middle school, high school, and college.

Women and girls can support one another in the following ways:

- Create networks and safe spaces where women can receive social support.
- Develop cross-generational mentorship opportunities.
- Practice empathy, self-belief, and kindness towards others.

Solutions identified by CMS students include:

- Increase access to supportive networks and mentorship.
- Invest in school health programs, including mental health services and trainings that support student safety (active shooter trainings, bus safety).

Discussion

Charlotte is a fast-growing city.⁹ For many who live in the city and surrounding areas, wages have not kept up with the costs of living, and basic necessities such as housing, childcare, food, and transportation are becoming harder to afford.^{10,11,12,13} These economic pressures can disproportionately impact the mental and physical wellbeing of women, who often play dual roles as caregivers and breadwinners for their families.^{14,15,16}

In addition to these larger Charlotte area issues of affordability, this study finds that women and girls in Charlotte (particularly those of color) experience additional challenges related to exclusion and inequity. These inequities can ultimately impact women and girls' ability to obtain economic security, good health, and safety. Exclusions and inequities include discrimination in the workplace and healthcare systems, lack of social capital, and structural or organizational barriers that prevent women from obtaining and maintaining living wage jobs.

To thrive in the greater Charlotte metro area, women and girls need greater access to living wage jobs, mental health services, and social support. Girls, specifically, need to feel safer at school. Café participants were unanimous in their desire to develop safe spaces and networks where women and girls can receive social support, much like the Café itself. These spaces allow women and girls to build confidence, express vulnerability, develop relationships, and create opportunities for mentoring. These safe spaces can help to close the generation gap between women and girls and can increase access to needed information and resources.

In conclusion, the research team recommends that Women + Girls Research Alliance consider the following criteria to inform its research agenda, including the 2023-24 Seed Grant Funding RFP.

- Research that explores barriers or facilitators to economic mobility among women and girls
- Research that explores mental health and social support among women and girls, including research relating to mental health and school safety
- All research should be conducted with a racial equity lens. Racial equity should be reflected in all stages of the project, including in the study design, data analysis, and interpretation of findings.



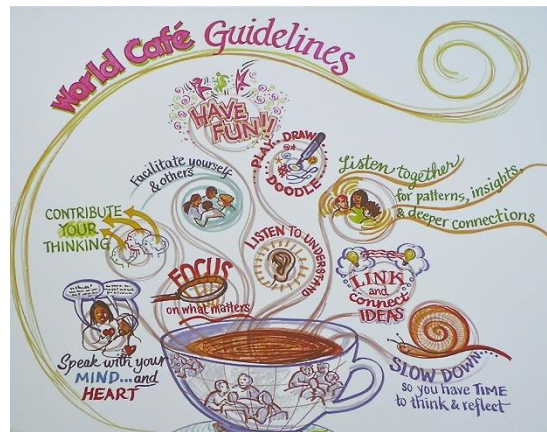
Appendix

Leadership Café Process Evaluation

Methods

Although not written into the formal scope of work, Charlotte Urban Institute determined that a process evaluation was needed for the inaugural W+GRA Leadership Café. The process evaluation assessed the fidelity of the Leadership Café model, meaning it assessed how closely the W+GRA Leadership Café implemented key elements identified in the original World Café model. In addition to the seven key elements identified by the World Café model (referred to as “design principles”), W+GRA identified an additional key element unique for its audience and purposes. These design principles are:

1. Clarify the context
2. Create hospitable space
3. Explore questions that matter
4. Encourage everyone’s contribution
5. Connect diverse perspectives
6. Listen together for patterns and insights
7. Share collective discoveries
8. Capture distinct stakeholder voices
(W+GRA only)



Source: Lester Public Library

The research team identified areas that worked well and areas of improvement for each design element. These findings can be used for planning and implementing future W+GRA Leadership Cafés.

Data Sources

The process evaluation used Charlotte Urban Institute observer notes, notes from the Café wrap up discussion, notes from the W+GRA Leadership Café Thank you/Feedback Luncheon, and the results from the Café survey to inform findings.

Charlotte Urban Institute observer notes. There was a total of 63 unique table discussions at the Leadership Café; members of the Institute research team were present for 14 discussions as observers. In total, observers were present at 22% of table discussions.

Wrap-up discussion notes. At the end of the Café, the participants came together as a full group, and several individuals shared their take-aways from participating in the event. The research team took notes during this part of the event.

Feedback from the W+GRA Leadership Café thank you/feedback luncheon. 13 individuals who assisted with the Leadership Café attended a luncheon and provided feedback about the event.

Event survey. W+GRA distributed a brief survey at the end of the Café. Twenty-eight participants (out of 151, a 19% response rate) participated in the survey.

Results

Clarify the context. World Café describes this design element as “knowing the purpose and parameters of your meeting. [This] enables you to consider and choose the most important elements needed to realize your goals: e.g. who should be part of the conversation, what themes or questions will be most pertinent, what sorts of harvest will be more useful.”^b

What worked well	Areas of Improvement
<p>The event host (Dr. Meggs) described the purpose of the event to the audience prior to discussions.</p> <p>Participants found the Café training at the beginning of the event helpful.</p> <p>The event was well organized, event leaders appreciated the structure and support from Women’s Intercultural Exchange.</p>	<p>There was some confusion and differing practices regarding the role of the table host. Table hosts may benefit from additional training methods, such as brief, written instructions included in the host packet.</p>

Create hospitable space. World Café guidance emphasizes the “power and importance of creating a hospitable space—one that feels safe and inviting. In particular, consider how your invitation and your physical set-up contribute to creating a welcoming atmosphere.”

What worked well	Areas of Improvement
<p>The physical layout of the room (balloons, markers, food, coffee) created an engaging, collaborative, electric, and welcoming atmosphere. Observers noted that some table hosts made extra efforts to make participants feel welcome. Examples include incorporating a dance move into the introduction and affirming and encouraging quieter participants, particularly students. Participants noted that the atmosphere worked well as a networking space and a space to empower students, many of whom were visiting UNC Charlotte’s campus for the first time.</p>	<p>Registration tables got backlogged at times. Consider separating check-in and nametag/swag pick-up to separate tables for future events.</p> <p>There was some confusion about approved parking locations. Future events should provide more explicit instructions about parking both in emailed communication and on day-of event parking signs.</p>

^b All design principle definitions are abbreviated verbatim from the World Café Website: <https://theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/design-principles/>

Explore questions that matter. World Café challenges Café hosts to “find questions that are relevant to the real-life concerns of the group. Powerful questions that “travel well” help attract collective energy, insight, and action as they move throughout a system.”

What worked well	Areas of Improvement
<p>Overall, the discussion questions appeared appropriate for most of the Café audience.</p> <p>Observers and Feedback Luncheon participants reported that most participants were highly engaged in discussion topics, both as contributors and active listeners.</p>	<p>Some students had difficulty understanding and responding to the prompts. Consider pilot testing discussion questions with both student and adult audiences prior to finalizing, or introducing topics to students ahead of time through school assignments.</p> <p>Approximately half of observed discussions ran out of time to discuss all questions. Consider reducing number of discussion questions to 1 question per 30-minute round.</p>

Encourage everyone’s contribution. World Café notes that “It is important to encourage everyone in your meeting to contribute their ideas and perspectives, while also allowing anyone who wants to participate by simply listening to do so.”

What worked well	Areas of Improvement
<p>There was a high level of participation. Of the tables observed, nearly every participant (96%) verbally contributed to the conversation; nearly half (47%) made a written contribution.</p> <p>Table hosts played a major role in welcoming participants and probing conversation. Adults, including facilitators, consistently encouraged and empowered students to share their experiences.</p>	<p>At approximately half of the observed tables, there was only one student. Some students openly shared, while others needed active encouragement to participate. Isolation may have contributed to discomfort for quieter students. Consider reserving 2-3 seats per table for students in order to create balanced perspectives of adults and students.</p>

Connect diverse perspectives. World Café notes that “the opportunity to move between tables, meet new people, actively contribute your thinking, and link the essence of your discoveries to ever-widening circles of thought is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Café. As participants carry key ideas or themes to new tables, they exchange perspectives, greatly enriching the possibility for surprising new insights.”

What worked well	Areas of Improvement
<p>The Leadership Café hosted a diverse audience regarding age and race/ethnicity; more than two-thirds of participants were women/girls of color and approximately one in five were middle or high school students.</p> <p>Participants rotated to different tables after each round, in accordance with the Leadership Café model.</p>	<p>Men were underrepresented at the event. Consider the role of men at this event in future years. If men are a target audience, the planning team should develop specific outreach strategies to recruit this population.</p>

Listen together for patterns and insights. World Café guidelines state that “through practicing shared listening and paying attention to themes, patterns and insights, we begin to sense a connection to the larger whole. Encourage people to listen for what is not being spoken along with what is being shared.”

What worked well	Areas of Improvement
<p>Overall, observers noted that event participants were engaged and active listeners.</p>	<p>Table hosts did not consistently report out on themes identified in prior discussions, which may have posed a barrier to identifying patterns. One possible reason for this was that prior groups’ notes were displayed on the walls and were not easy to read when seated at tables. Additional or alternative training methods may be needed to clarify table host role.</p>

Share collective discoveries. World Café guidelines advice Café hosts to “invite a few minutes of silent reflection on the patterns, themes and deeper questions experienced in the small group conversations and call them out to share with the larger group. Make sure you have a way to capture the harvest – working with a graphic recorder is recommended.”

What worked well	Areas of Improvement
<p>Overall, most participants appeared to enjoy learning from diverse perspectives and felt empowered by the Café. In the post-event survey, 93% of respondents said that the Café’s conversations were very or extremely valuable for their personal development.</p> <p>Most (93%) post-event survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they have a better understanding of what is happening with women and girls in the greater Charlotte metro area.</p>	<p>Observers noted that conversations tended towards surface level, drawing from personal experiences rather than delving into deeper patterns and insights across themes. Participant responses during the large group discussion and in the post-survey feedback centered on personal discoveries rather than specific discoveries related to the discussion topics.</p> <p>Only 1 of 19 participants shared a specific action step that she planned to take as a result of the event during the large-group discussion.</p> <p>In order to develop deeper and action-oriented conversations, consider narrowing the target audience and/or research questions, assigning pre-work to students or all participants, or exploring alternative participatory research methods.</p>

Capture distinct participant voices. In order to capture distinct stakeholder voices, stickers were intended to be passed out to each participant (gold stars for CMS students, silver circles for adults), and participants could use up to 10 stickers to mark written concepts that they agreed with or found important. This design element was unique to the W+G Leadership Café and was added in order to differentiate student and adult perspectives.

What worked well	Areas of Improvement
<p>Some students used stickers to note comments that they agreed with or found important. This gave the research team some indication of student opinions; these were reported in the study.</p>	<p>Stickers were not consistently used and when they were used, they were often not used as intended. At some tables, the host assigned stickers based on who the comment came from, at others the host added stickers to themes that there seemed to be consensus on. Consider removing this element from future events or identifying alternative methods of collecting disaggregated data.</p>

Other feedback. Participants provided the following additional recommendations for future Leadership Cafés.

- Have more UNC Charlotte students as ambassadors (e.g., Levine Scholars, Demond Martin, women’s basketball team)
- Potentially have a shirt for day-of volunteers, table leaders, etc. – or something to identify them
- Have better branding opportunity on social media – “I attended the World Café” badge, Snapchat frame
- Possibly provide a participation certificate

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