

**Arts Management, Social Identity, and Leadership:  
Organizational Resiliency in an Arts Organization During COVID-19**

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### Abstract

Battery Dance is an international nonprofit dance company based in New York City that pivoted their performance, education, and social justice programming to a virtual environment when most arts nonprofits ceased operations during lockdown at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. This context provides a unique opportunity to examine organizational resiliency as the product of intergroup relationships where leaders and followers construct joint identities as a form of sensemaking when faced with threats and challenges. A mixed-method research design using Social Identity Theory as a framework utilized the Social Identity Analysis Scale and Identity Leadership Inventory to examine resiliency as a social construct defined by a shared understanding of the fundamental, distinguishing, and innate essence of a nonprofit arts organization. Findings showed that inspirational motivation and leader prototypicality significantly predicted organizational resiliency; creative effort significantly predicted creative performance; and that shared identity moderated creative effort and creative performance. Additionally, subjects showed a high degree of perceived outgroup homogeneity, which produced a *sensemaking attribution error* that may cause a cognitive dissonance when relational identities emphasize false interpretive structures that define the organization's distinctiveness. Findings confirmed the Social Identity Theory assertion that group identification is a driver behind an organization's potential for organizational resiliency and can be leveraged to inform the design of nonprofit artistic programming and operations.

*Keywords:* intergroup relations, leadership, nonprofit arts management, organizational culture, organizational resiliency, social identity, work teams

### Introduction

Battery Dance is a nonprofit dance company and arts education organization founded in 1976 and based in New York City. They have continued their programming and operations throughout the most challenging period that the arts industry has faced in recent times. Considering that countless organizations struggle to negotiate months of unpaid rent, and a February 2021 report by the New York State Comptroller found that two-thirds of arts, entertainment, and recreation jobs in the city were lost in 2020, it becomes clear that the COVID-19 pandemic has devastated New York's arts sector (Bishara, 2021). By contrast, Battery Dance has continued to provide services by adapting their performance and education programs to comply with limitations imposed by New York City and State health mandates and restrictions.

Battery Dance has performed in 70 countries across six continents in cooperation with U.S. embassies, consulates, and local host institutions. The annual Battery Dance Festival is NYC's longest running free public dance festival and has showcased over 350 international companies reaching over 200,000 audience members free of charge while providing a platform for emerging choreographers over the past four decades. Battery Dance has also worked to diffuse conflict and inspire youth in underserved communities throughout NYC and around the globe with their Dancing to Connect program. Fueled by their efforts to ignite a movement across geographic, social, and cultural boundaries, dancers teach the tools of choreography to

young people who have experienced war, poverty, prejudice, sexual exploitation, and severe trauma as refugees. They have worked with girls rescued from sex trafficking in India, Roma youth from one of Romania's worst slums, North Koreans who risked their lives to defect, and a gifted young dancer fighting to survive against insurmountable odds in Iraq. Whether in New York City, Germany, Afghanistan, or the Congo, students and teachers experience an abundance of creativity and surprising transformations as participants use dance as a vehicle to tell their stories and unlock emotions born from some of the world's most challenging life experiences.

In addition to executive and board leadership and administrative staff, key stakeholders of Battery Dance include dancers who take on multiple roles as performers, educators, and program facilitators. Dancers were recognized for their work when *Dancing to Connect* was featured in the prize-winning documentary *Moving Stories*, which was shown in April 2021 as part of Carnegie Hall's *Voices of Hope* series. Considering the audiences that Battery Dance reaches around the world, their mission of "artistic excellence and social relevance" is clearly making an impact on a global scale.

### **Challenges to Practice**

Prior to COVID-19, Battery Dance produced 25 company performances, 40 dance works, 217 artist collaborations, and 850 workshop hours engaging over 2,300 youth and 24,130 audience members in 13 countries across four continents during their 2018-2019 season. The pandemic put an abrupt halt to their normal operations and forced them to make choices that will ultimately define the future of their organization, its members, and thousands of participants around the world.

Battery Dance took immediate steps to modify their operations as NYC became one of the first US cities to go into lockdown. An all-hands meeting in March 2020 resulted in a decision to make a complete pivot to virtual programming for all education and performance programs. This pivot included their annual Festival, which still maintained an international presence with dance companies submitting videos of their work. In addition to retrofitting their studio space with HVAC components that comply with COVID-related health regulations, a grant allowed the organization to purchase technical gear so dancers could record and upload videos from home. Not only did this allow them to continue their work in a virtual environment, it resulted in the creation of two new programs: Battery Dance TV, which kept dancers engaged with their creative-self and provided an outlet for sharing their work with virtual audiences, and a virtual meditation and movement program for healthcare workers working on the front lines of the pandemic.

Battery Dance is making a large impact across the communities they serve, yet they are a relatively small nonprofit compared to large arts institutions in NYC. Resident performance companies at Lincoln Center were forced to cease operations, reduce salaries, and furlough many of their employees and artists (Kazakina, 2020). By contrast, Battery Dance was small enough to quickly pivot as an agile organization responding to crisis, yet large enough to complete their operational adjustments while keeping everyone on the payroll. Based on the challenges that Battery Dance faced throughout the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, this study aims to understand how their response to adversity reflects their capacity to be resilient as a nonprofit arts organization serving local and international communities.

### **Organizational Resiliency and Social Identity**

Prior research provides a range of conceptual models that measure and define organizational resiliency. If using Ilseven and Puranam's (2021) measure of organizational resiliency based on performance outcomes, it is clear that Battery Dance is resilient when measured by operational outcomes and resource management. At the very least, their adaptations to adversity maintained their capacity to engage with stakeholders throughout the first year of the pandemic. Hillmann and Guenther's (2021) meta-analysis offers an integrative model that expands the definition of organizational resilience by measuring the ability of an organization to maintain functions and quickly recover from adversity by mobilizing the necessary resources and behaviors to recover and learn from a change phenomenon. Similarly, the Organizational Resilience Capability Assessment published by the International Consortium for Organizational Resilience determines resilience using a capacity and behavioral framework that includes strategic leadership, a healthy culture with a commitment to shared beliefs, resource management, risk mitigation, and continual improvement (ICOR, n.d.).

In the context of nonprofit arts organizations, it is critical to view resilience as a process rather than an outcome after recovering from adversity, which enables the organization to provide uninterrupted services to their constituents through a shared commitment to the mission, transformational leadership, hope, and optimism (Witmer & Mellinger, 2016). This process is people driven and draws on the core principles of intergroup relations, whereby social processes among parts of organizations influence group-member responses to adversity and their capacity for organizational resilience, making organizational resiliency in large part dependent upon the product of intergroup relationships that define organizational identity (Kahn et al., 2018). For the purposes of examining Battery Dance, resiliency is a social construct defined by a shared understanding of the fundamental, distinguishing, and innate essence of the organization (Albert & Whetten, 1985), and its ability to utilize crisis-driven change for improvement (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2008). A successful crisis-driven change may also include an opportunity to anchor organizational identity or adapt organizational identity (Ishak & Williams, 2018). The potential for an organization's operational and mission-related success that results from anchoring or adapting identity will rely on the salience, stability, and consistency of the organization's culture, which constructs identity through shared values, beliefs, structures, and processes (Ashforth, 1985).

The process of anchoring and adapting identity, constructing shared identity, and strengthening intergroup relations all utilize the core elements of Social Identity Theory (SIT), which Ashforth and Mael (1989) define as the perception of oneness with a group of persons that emerges from the categorization of individuals, the distinctiveness and prestige of the group, the salience of outgroups, and the factors that are associated with group membership and the activities that are congruent with their identity. These activities form the basis for participating in organizational processes that embody an individual's identity and form the perception of self and others. As Battery Dance seeks to emerge from the pandemic as strong as possible, it will be their willingness to question how organizational values are embodied and enacted upon through a shared identity that can be "key to how an organization demonstrates resilience" (Ishak & Williams, 2018). Creative effort will be crucial in the pro-active pursuit and learning of new ideas and approaches to improve the creative performance of group members during the development of practical solutions to challenges (Hirst, van Dick, & van Knippenberg, 2009). Consistent with this rationale, we propose the following hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 1A:* Organizational resiliency can be predicted by inspirational motivation and levels of perceived leader prototypicality.

*Hypothesis 1B:* Creative performance can be predicted by creative effort.

*Hypothesis 1C:* Creative effort can be predicted by organizational self-identification.

Much of the empirical evidence presented in SIT literature focuses on two ends of an operational spectrum; one end examines paid corporate employees and the other examines identity formation among unpaid individuals or fans with shared interests, hobbies, or sports teams. Battery Dance resides in a unique place along this spectrum given that they employ full-time salaried staff members, yet their mission-driven programs rely heavily on the dedication and expertise of artists who work and receive payment on a seasonal or per-project basis. Unlike hobbyists who don't expect to be paid, and corporate employees that receive full-time compensation, dancers may consider the added value of their artistic identity as Battery Dance members despite the reality that they cannot survive in NYC if they rely on Battery Dance as their sole source of income. This is a fairly common model among small arts organizations, and a deeper understanding of how this impacts organizational identity and resiliency might provide evidence for re-evaluating how leaders of similar organizations structure and value various roles throughout their organization.

### **Origins of Social Identity**

SIT is deeply rooted in the sociology work of Durkheim (1895), who saw shared meaning as an integral component for understanding social behavior. Meaning-making as a way to interpret events or phenomena within an organization then becomes operationalized in the context of *the generalized other* as organized communities give an individual a unity of self through social activities and systems where individual members relate to one another (Mead, 1934). Symbolic interactionists influenced by Mead contend that socially shared meaning develops through interaction among social actors, and these interactions continually modify social representations and perceptions (Tindale, Meisenhelder, Dykema-Engblade, & Hogg, 2001). As evidenced by Sherif's (1936) work, there is a large degree of judgement convergence across a group of individuals in the absence of any real physical cues, showing that meaning-making develops through dynamic social interactions rather than only being limited to the physical environment.

Organizational activities can be viewed as a continuous series of opportunities for shared cognition and sensemaking as a way to make sense of shared experiences during normal operations and during times of crisis and uncertainty. Weick's (1993) work examining the Mann Gulch tragedy offers a unique lens to consider how Battery Dance leaders, staff, and dancers engaged in a sensemaking process as they retooled their operations in response to COVID-19. In one respect, Battery Dance members had to "drop their tools" much like several Mann Gulch smokejumpers were instructed to do as their leader made a split-second decision to try and save his crew as flames quickly approached. Rather than the handheld tools that the smokejumpers needed to drop in an instant attempt at sensemaking, dancers were forced to relinquish a shared space and the intimacy of touch as they attempted to maintain their connection to audiences, students, and each other. Failure to do so would have resulted in the death of the organization. Although the members of Battery Dance adapted to challenges in a very short time, these adaptations provide the situational context to study how dropping their tools impacted individual and shared identity across the organization. Meaning-making and sensemaking allow an

organization to maintain operations during a time of crisis, and because this process relies on transformative leadership endorsement to strengthen shared identity, SIT provides a framework for examining how individual role identity and collective group membership can be operationalized (Hogg et al., 2005).

### **Social Identity Theory and Organizations**

The ability of an organization to overcome unprecedented challenges will be determined by their collective efficacy (Bandura, 1997), built upon a shared belief in their joint capability to design and execute a course of action leveraging “performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological states” (Bandura, 1977). Intergroup relations will play a major role in forming these beliefs, and a social identity approach provides a perspective where effective leadership plays a critical role in a process that pivots around psychologically salient group membership (Hogg et al., 2005; Lord & Hall, 2005).

Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural learning theory offers a deeper understanding of organizational meaning-making as intergroup relations provide an opportunity to construct things for one another by collaboratively creating a culture of shared artefacts with shared meanings. Intergroup relationships and activities then create the reflexive discourse that drives cognitive development (Kozulin & Presseisen, 1995). The move to develop a model of the social group and intergroup behaviors as influenced by collective self-conceptualization and social identity was made by Tajfel (1981), who showed that relationships between groups are largely determined by the context in which they arise.

### **Categorization, Roles, and Identity**

The core of one’s identity includes self-categorization as an occupant of a role, much like a dancer is to their company. While role identity resides in the differences in perceptions and actions that define a role as it relates to counter-roles, social identity considers the uniformity of perception and action among group members (Stets & Burke, 2000). Rather than occurring in isolation, social identities embody the meanings that a person attributes to the self as an object in a social situation as understood and defined by interactions with others (Burke & Tully, 1977). This meaning-making process involves individuals categorizing themselves as part of a structured society that exists in relation to other contrasting categories and among intergroup and intragroup relationships (Abrams & Hogg, 1990).

It is through a process of self-categorization that an identity is formed (Stets & Burke, 2000), and it is critical to understand how individuals must balance the role of self-identity and social identity as they search for attributes that give value to their group membership (Sharma & Sharma, 2010). Therefore, social identity within an organization relies on the *meta-contrast principle*, where fit and identity is determined by the ingroup similarities that differentiate self-categorization based on an individual’s perception of how they compare to outgroups (Turner, Hogg, Oaks, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Role identity then becomes a defining framework component when evaluating one’s relational self, and collective selves are then defined in terms of group membership where self-value becomes dependent on the perception of how an individual’s category and group membership provides distinctiveness as compared to others (Lord, Gatti, & Chui, 2016). This may have a large impact on the way dancers at Battery Dance self-categorize as artists and educators within the organization, how they balance these roles in relation to the organization’s programmatic areas of focus, and how this may or may not compete with their need or desire to work with other dance companies or businesses outside of the arts

sector. Additionally, self-categorization reduces the perceived level of threat caused by uncertainty because it transforms and assimilates the self within a structured group prototype that allows members to negotiate attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that have been collectively sanctioned by the group (Hogg & Terry, 2000).

### ***Prototypicality and Depersonalization***

Prototypes are a cognitive representation of context-dependent features that describe and prescribe attributes of group membership where members who are no longer represented solely as unique individuals embody exemplary features of the group's ideals and values (Hogg & Terry, 2000). People categorize themselves and others in terms of relevant ingroup or outgroup prototypes by optimizing the balance between minimizing differences among people in the same group, and maximizing distinctiveness between themselves and outgroups (Tindale et al., 2001). Empirical evidence from Marques, Abrams, Paez, and Martinez-Taboada (1998) showed that subjective group dynamics form the social categorization process as group members evaluate other groups based on their desire to legitimize the value of their social identity.

The founder and artistic director of Battery Dance, whose name has become synonymous with the organization, might then be considered an embodiment of the group's ideals and an example of prototypicality that distinguishes group members from others. Social categorization cognitively distinguishes ingroup members from others through a process of depersonalization, which assimilates members to the ingroup prototype by aligning behavior and self-perception with group norms utilizing empathy, cohesion, cooperation, and mutual influence (Hogg & Terry, 2000). Assimilating with the group may or may not occur by a member who does not identify with an organization's primary area of focus, regardless of how well they are able to perform their job function in service of the organization's mission. Considering the multiple artistic, educational, and administrative roles that group members play at a nonprofit arts organization, aligning behavior with identity and programming may become critical to organizational resiliency at Battery Dance.

The categorization process suggests that group cohesion and solidarity is not only a result of positive attraction among group members, but brought about by categorization-based depersonalization and favorable self-evaluation (Tindale et al., 2001; Turner et al., 1987). At a basic level, making the distinction between "us and them" salient in group identity and discourse automatically changes the way people see each other (Tajfel & Wilkes, 1963). Once this distinction is made and operationalized within the social categorization process, group members view all outgroups with a high level of homogeneity, regardless of how disparate these external groups may be when objectively measured against criteria that defines an organization's mission, size, history, or context (Judd & Park, 1988). Thus, we propose

*Hypothesis 2:* Self categorization and depersonalization are positively related to organizational self-identification.

*Hypothesis 3:* Distinctiveness is positively related to organizational self-identification.

### ***SIT and Leadership***

Social identity theory posits that the most effective leader-member relationship will depend on how strongly members identify with the group in the wider social context of the organization (Hogg et al., 2005; Hogg, Rast, & van Knippenberg, 2012). This process is dynamic and situationally sensitive as it locates the self in the social world where leadership identities are

constructed over time by trying out provisional identities and refining them over time based on task and social feedback that links the past and present to the future (Ibarra, 1999; Lord et al., 2016). The cognitive basis for determining the extent to which group members endorse their leader relies on a leader's transformational ability to foster organizational identity as an important component of group membership where social comparisons are prioritized at the intergroup level rather than the interpersonal (Hogg et al., 2005). As group identity increases, leadership endorsement and perceptions of leadership effectiveness increasingly rely on perceptions of leader prototypicality as both a leader and a member of the group (van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005). Correspondingly, as group salience increases among members of an organization, leadership depersonalization is associated with an increase in favorable leadership evaluations governed by group prototype (Hogg et al., 2005). These perceptions reflect a group's willingness to follow a leader beyond cognitive factors, and includes critical motivational reactions that a leader elicits across all levels of an organization (Lord & Hall, 2005). Eliciting motivational reactions is a key function of leadership and is especially evident in contexts where leaders play a critical role in determining and managing their organization's identity (Voss, Cable, & Voss, 2006). This function gives leaders the ability to become "entrepreneurs of identity" when challenges demand creative responses to external threats (Steffens, Haslam, Ryan, & Kessler, 2013).

Prototypical leaders are intrinsically persuasive by virtue of the depersonalization process that assimilates members' behavior to the group member prototype, rendering the exercise of power largely unnecessary (Hogg, 2001), particularly when group membership is a central and salient aspect of members' self-identity and members identify strongly with the group. As such, leaders are influential because they embody the norms of the group by operating within an empathic bond between leader and followers, and this may shield a leader's desire to exercise overt or autocratic power because negatively perceived actions would essentially be directed at the self (Drury et al., 2019). When examining the leadership component of SIT in the context of Battery Dance, we may expect that

*Hypothesis 4: Prototypical and motivational leaders are positively related to organizational self-identification.*

## Methods

### Scales

#### *Social Identity Analysis*

In the context of an arts organization like Battery Dance, mediated relationships between components of Social Identity Theory are especially relevant because they provide valid and reliable measures of social identity concepts that enhance the creativity of individuals and teams (Zhou, 2003). Hirst, van Dick, & van Knippenberg's (2009) Social Identity Analysis (SIA) offers a distinction between one's sense of organizational identity where individuals actively pursue new ideas in a process defined as creative effort, with the outcome of these efforts defined as creative performance. Furthermore, self-categorization is positively linked to creative performance and team success while providing an incentive for overcoming threats to a group's status (Shalley, 1991; Shin & Zhou, 2007). Collectively, these independent variables measure an organization's ability to achieve **organizational resiliency**, which is this study's dependent variable defined as organizational identity that affirms and utilizes shared identity as a central, distinctive, and enduring essence of the organization or team to guide the development of

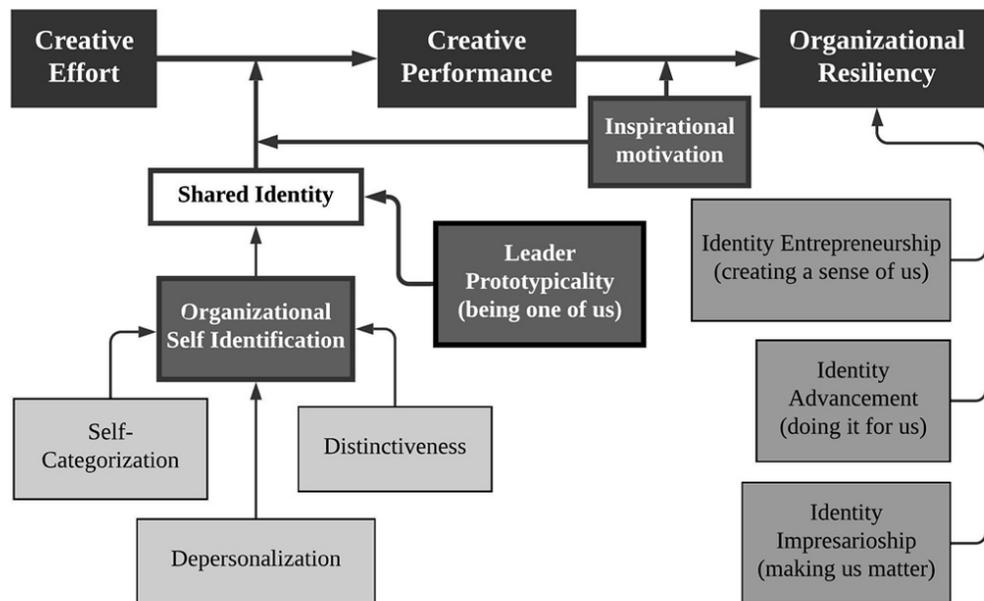
operational structures and goal achievements that give value to the group's existence (Hirst et al., 2009).

### ***Identity Leadership Inventory***

Leader prototypicality is the extent to which the leader is perceived to embody collective identity (Hogg et al., 2012), and inspirational motivation is a critical component of transformational leadership as a leader advocates the value and quality of the organization (Dionne, Yammarino, Atwater, & Spangler, 2004). The interaction between leader prototypicality and motivation strengthens the relationship between group identification and creative effort (Dionne et al., 2004). This confirms the use of the Identity Leadership Inventory (ILI) constructed by Steffens et al. (2014) as an effective tool to examine how self-identification and creative effort within Battery Dance might interact to produce the creative performance that leads to organizational resiliency. Identity entrepreneurship leads to shared identity when leaders place themselves close to the center of the group and by creating a group prototype that overlaps with their own attitudes and behaviors (van Dick & Kerschreiter, 2016). Once this is enacted, identity impresarioship creates "concrete outcomes for the group" that "make us matter" (Steffens et al., 2014).

The combined components of Social Identity Analysis and Identity Leadership Inventory used as independent variables for this study as a single measurement tool are presented in Figure 1 and are defined as:

- **Creative Performance (SIA)** - The development of new, practical solutions to problems.
- **Creative Effort (SIA)** - The pro-active pursuit of new ideas and approaches to improve creative performance.
- **Inspirational Motivation (SIA)** - Advocating the value and quality of the team; helps build followers sense of collective value, worth, and efficacy; mobilizes the influence of team identification on creative efforts and performance.
- **Leader Prototypicality (ILI, SIA)** - One of us; representing the unique qualities of the group and what it means to be a member of the group; embodies the core attributes of the group that make the group special and distinct from other groups.
- **Identity Advancement (ILI)** - Doing it for us; promoting shared interests of the group.
- **Identity Entrepreneurship (ILI)** - Crafting a sense of us; creating a shared sense of "we" and "us" in the group; making different people feel that they are part of the same group which increases cohesion and inclusiveness in the group; clarifying people's understanding of what the group stands for by clarifying standards and ideals.
- **Identity Impresarioship (ILI)** - Developing structures, events and activities that give weight to the group's existence and allow group members to live out their membership; doing things to make us matter, making the group visible not only to group members but to people outside the group.
- **Organizational Self Identification (ILI, SIA)** - Shared identity, and not simply internalization of organizational goals and values.
- **Depersonalization (SIA)** - Cognitive process whereby group-related social meanings take precedent over personal social meanings.
- **Distinctiveness (SIA)** - Perception of the organization as an ingroup versus comparable, and often external, outgroups.
- **Self-Categorization (SIA)** - Level to which members identify with the organization.

**Figure 1.** Scales used to predict organizational resiliency

## Participants

This study examined the research hypotheses utilizing a sequential mixed methods approach, beginning with a quantitative survey followed by a qualitative interview with subjects from the same sample pool. All members of the organization were invited to participate in the survey and interview process. Participant distribution rates for the survey include dancers (N=7, 100%), board members (N=17, 94%), leaders (N=3, 100%), and staff (N=4, 67%), yielding 31 total subjects and 806 data points. Participant distribution rates for the interview include dancers (N=4, 57%), leaders (N=3, 100%), and staff (N=3, 50%), yielding 10 total subjects and 325 data points.

## Materials

### Quantitative

This study used a twenty-six-question survey derived from Hirst, van Dick, and van Knippenberg's (2009) Social Identity Analysis as a valid and reliable scale. The questions used a five-point Likert-scale from disagree strongly to agree strongly and were randomly presented in blocks of 6 to 7 questions. Answers from each component were combined to create an average score.

### Qualitative

Twelve interview questions were adapted from the survey as open-ended questions supplemented by questions from the Identity Leadership Inventory - Short Form (Steffens et al., 2014). This was done to strengthen the study's ability to determine how the relationship between member identity, artistic identity, and leadership practices may impact organizational performance and resiliency during the pandemic.

Statements from interview transcripts were coded when they matched *a priori*, content-specific components found in the Social Identity Analysis-Identity Leadership Inventory scale. A

5-point Likert-scale format was used to score participant responses when statements offered evidence of aligning with independent variables, ranging from one (statements provided no support) to five (statements provided strong support). Scoring evidence of Social Identity components in the qualitative data using a quantitative scale allowed for statistical analyses of interview data, which was then used to further support survey findings.

Role identity was an additional SIT theme exposed during the coding process in all interviews. As a salient component of SIT (Sharma & Sharma, 2010; Turner et al., 1987), role identity was added to the qualitative data analysis and used for all pairwise comparisons.

### **Data Analysis**

Since Likert-scale data and a small sample size would typically violate the normality assumption and the homogeneity of variance assumption (van Hecke, 2012), the Kruskal-Wallis nonparametric measure was utilized to determine whether there were statistically significant differences between the dancers, leaders, staff and board members. This statistical test is considered the nonparametric equivalent of the One-Way ANOVA (Statology, 2019). Having 31 subjects limited survey analyses to descriptive statistics, correlations, and pairwise comparisons. The interview data was able to support and expand upon the survey findings by providing 325 data points for additional analyses.

### **Results**

Descriptive statistics of the survey showed that inspirational motivation across all organizational roles ( $M = 4.65$ ) had the highest mean score by comparison to the other variables. An analysis of the grand means from the interview showed that the largest mean score of all variables summed across roles was distinctiveness ( $M = 4.16$ ), indicating that most participants perceived Battery Dance as distinctly unique compared to other organizations in the arts sector.

#### ***Hypothesis 1A: Organizational resiliency can be predicted by inspirational motivation and levels of perceived leader prototypicality.***

A multiple linear regression analysis showed that organizational resiliency can be significantly predicted by inspirational motivation and the level of perceived leader prototypicality,  $F(5, 319) = 5.658, p < .001, R^2 = .08$ . Subjects' predicted organizational resiliency is equal to  $-2.496 + 0.672$  (inspirational motivation)  $+ 0.634$  (leader prototypicality). Organizational resiliency increased .672 points for each inspirational motivation score increase and .634 points for each leader prototypicality score increase. Both inspirational motivation and leader prototypicality significantly predict organizational resiliency.

#### ***Hypothesis 1B: Creative performance can be predicted by creative effort.***

A multiple linear regression analysis showed that creative performance can be significantly predicted by degree of creative effort,  $F(4, 320) = 10.411, p < .001, R^2 = .104$ . Subject's predicted creative performance is equal to  $2.976 + 0.255$  (creative effort). Creative performance increased 0.255 points for each point of creative effort score increase. Creative effort significantly predicts creative performance.

#### ***Hypothesis 1C: Creative effort can be predicted by organizational self-identification.***

A multiple linear regression analysis showed that creative effort can be significantly predicted by level of creative performance and organizational self-identification,  $F(4, 320) = 11.747, p < .001, R^2 = .128$ . Subjects' predicted creative effort is equal to  $1.387 + 0.451$  (creative

performance) + 0.099 (organizational self-identification). Creative effort increased 0.451 points for each point of creative performance increase and 0.099 points for each point of organizational self-identification score increase. Both creative performance and organizational self-identification significantly predict creative effort.

**Hypothesis 2: Self categorization and depersonalization are positively related to organizational self-identification.**

Pearson correlation analysis and Kruskal-Wallis nonparametric pairwise comparisons were used to examine the relationship and effect of member roles, creative effort, and organizational self-identification. Quantitative survey results found that organizational self-identification is significantly related to creative effort ( $r = .441, p = .013$ ). Interview data found that member roles had a significant effect on organizational self-identification,  $H(2) = 8.548, p = .014$ . More specifically, there was a significant difference between leaders' and staff self-identification,  $H(2) = 25.641, p = .041$ , with leaders ( $M = 180.25$ ) identifying more with the organization than staff ( $M = 154.61$ ).

Battery Dance staff scored higher in self categorization ( $M = 4.12$ ) than depersonalization ( $M = 3.83$ ). The staff strongly identified with the organization, but scores did not reflect as high a level of organizational investment, meaning that group goals may not override personal goals. While not significantly different than other groups, dancers did exhibit more variation within the self-categorization and depersonalization components. This signals that dancers show wider fluctuations in the way they identify with the shared identity of the organization.

**Hypothesis 3: Distinctiveness is positively related to organizational self-identification.**

Examination of the cohesiveness of the organization was measured by analyzing scores in distinctiveness, a key component of organizational identity that measures the degree to which subjects view the organization as being unique by comparison to other groups. Results found that distinctiveness is related to organizational self-identification ( $r = .251, p < .001$ ). The more strongly the subject identified with the organization, the more distinct they reported the organization to be when compared to others in the arts sector. However, there was a significant difference between distinctiveness scores measured in pairwise comparisons by member role,  $H(2) = 9.245, p = .01$ . Staff ( $M = 172.41$ ) showed significantly higher distinctiveness scores than leaders ( $M = 147.79$ ),  $H(2) = 24.621, p = .018$ .

Perceptions of organizational resiliency were significantly different among member roles,  $H(2) = 17.426, p < .001$ . Leaders ( $M = 190.98$ ) scored significantly higher than dancers ( $M = 143.63$ ),  $H(2) = 47.295, p < .001$ , and staff ( $M = 160.31$ ),  $H(2) = 30.679, p = .047$ . Similar to the results found in Hypothesis 2, leaders scored higher in their perceptions of resiliency than the rest of the organization.

**Hypothesis 4: Prototypical and motivational leaders are positively related to organizational self-identification.**

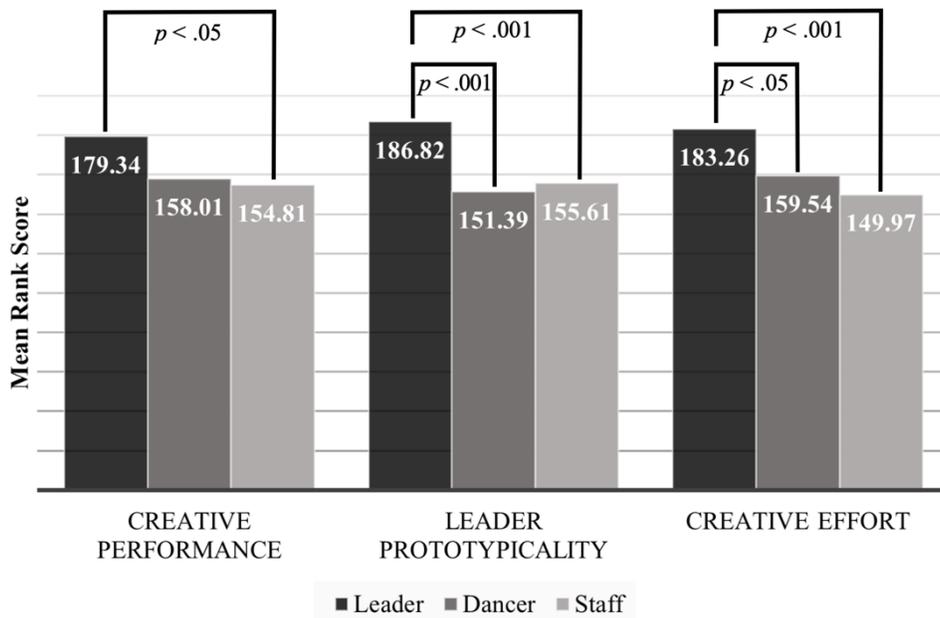
According to SIT, the most effective leader-member relationships depend on strong member identity with the organization. Survey correlation results found that organizational self-identification is strongly related to inspirational motivation ( $r = .804, p < .001$ ), leader prototypicality ( $r = .486, p = .006$ ), and creative performance ( $r = .707, p < .001$ ). Further nonparametric pairwise comparisons found statistically significant differences between different roles in the organization on leader prototypicality,  $H(3) = 9.302, p = .026$ , and creative

performance,  $H(3) = 9.096, p = .028$ . Dancers scored significantly lower for both categories. More specifically, scores on perceptions of leader prototypicality were significantly different between the dancers and board,  $H(3) = 11.442, p = .03$ , with board members ( $M = 19.71$ ) perceiving leaders as having a higher degree of group-member prototypicality as compared to the perceptions reported by dancers ( $M = 7.71$ ). The scores on creative performance were significantly different between the dancers and leaders,  $H(3) = 17.071, p = .036$ , with leaders ( $M = 26.25$ ) reporting a higher instance of creative problem solving than dancers ( $M = 9.93$ ). Since the dancers scored significantly lower than leaders on leader prototypicality and creative performance, this reflects a need for Battery Dance leadership to address shared identity and sensemaking during the pandemic.

The leadership team also plays a role in motivating members of the organization, and results indicate that inspirational motivation is strongly correlated with leader prototypicality ( $r = .534, p = .002$ ), creative effort ( $r = .462, p = .009$ ), and creative performance ( $r = .803, p < .001$ ). Similar to findings for Hypothesis 1A, inspirational motivation is part of the equation that predicts organizational resiliency and is strongly correlated with those categories.

Quantitative analyses of coded interview statements found significant differences when variables were measured in pairwise comparisons based on member roles. Creative performance,  $H(2) = 9.46, p < .009$ , leader prototypicality,  $H(2) = 27.358, p < .001$ , and creative effort  $H(2) = 14.808, p = .001$ , all showed significant differences among group-member roles within the variables that predict organizational resiliency. Figure 2 shows significant differences between group member roles, with leaders perceiving the organization’s capacity for organizational resiliency significantly higher than the rest of the organization, which may result in decreased cohesion within Battery Dance.

**Figure 2.** Pairwise Comparisons Showing Significant Differences Between Group-Member Roles



## Discussion

The most compelling finding that has emerged from this research study showed that organizational resiliency can be significantly predicted by the level of inspirational motivation and leader prototypicality. Combined with additional findings related to Hypothesis 1B and 1C that show creative effort predicting creative performance and identity predicting creative effort, we can form a distinct statement of how Battery Dance exhibited resiliency in a time of crisis: ***Effort can be transformed into performance if members strongly identify with the organization and view their leaders as prototypical of group attributes. This transformation process can then lead to organizational resiliency during times of crisis if leaders mobilize the influence of shared identity on the organization's creative performance.*** This supports previous studies that show how intergroup relations play a major role in forming beliefs and perceptions that define group attributes, as well as the critical role that effective leadership plays in transforming effort and identity into performance (Hogg et al., 2005; Lord & Hall, 2005).

In many ways, Battery Dance overcame pandemic-related challenges by successfully using the *effort-to-performance-to-resiliency* finding on a range of operational levels and with respect to their organizational culture. Utilizing donors to procure technical gear for dancers to upload videos and getting clearance from the NYC Police Department to film early morning performances in outdoor spaces are prime examples of how leaders successfully used bricolage in the face of extreme challenges.

In relation to the creative performance and resiliency finding in Hypothesis 1B, a member's perception of identity will likely depend on what mission-based performance component they relate to the most. While some dancers mentioned that "we are so focused on our international work that sometimes we forget that our home is New York City...even pre-pandemic...we have only one show a year in the city," others dancers spoke about being "ambassadors of creativity" and defined their work as "encouraging the creativity of other people."

With survey data showing a significant correlation between organizational identification and creative effort, it becomes critical to address the difference between staff and leaders' level of identification with Battery Dance during a pandemic that threatened the programs with which members most identify. Most notably, interview data showed greater variation of depersonalization and self-categorization among dancers than any other group, which then resulted in lower organizational identification scores. Overall, findings showed that ***leaders and board members identify more strongly with Battery Dance compared to the dancers' level of organizational identity.***

Abrams and Hogg (1990) showed that self-categorization emerges as group members negotiate their relationships and behavior within the larger organization. However, the most salient element of this finding occurred in the context of uncertainty caused by the challenges that COVID-19 placed on Battery Dance and similar arts organizations. Since the defining characteristics of categorization and prototypicality are not an objective reality but rather a subjective sense of group attributes that fluctuate according to context, times of uncertainty will prescribe what members perceive as appropriate attitudes and behaviors in response to a challenging situation or environment (Hornsey, 2008). Given that the challenges of COVID-19 included a decrease in financial resources for many artists across the country, it is possible that salaried leaders of Battery Dance or board members who do not depend on a salary from the

organization maintain affordances that allow them to identify more strongly with the organization. By contrast, the dancers who are also employed by other organizations may need to balance the role of self-identity and social identity in an effort to find value in their group membership.

Critical findings of this study also include the greater variance of self-categorization among dancers and the lower scores for dancers' perception of leader prototypicality. At one end of the spectrum, a dancer who was asked about leaders responded by saying "we're all leaders, no one is directing us in the room...we're in practice alone." Although this suggests a disconnect between a dancer's role as an artist-educator and how leaders facilitate program execution, it is countered by a very strong organizational culture where staff members who "think leadership, think of [their Chief Operating Officer]." A dancer at the other end of the spectrum described the executive team as "amazing; they would do anything for us and I never doubt the sense of family that our company has and the sense of unity; we all want everyone to be successful and safe and secure." This quote displays the potential for an important overlap between leadership prototypicality, identity advancement, and organizational self-identification as the sum of depersonalization and self-categorization, which confirms the utility of the adapted measurement scale used for this study.

Similarly, staff members showed a greater level of identity with their role than with the larger organization. Statements from staff members who said "we don't all have an affinity for dance" implies that staff members may identify more with the social justice mission of the organization. By contrast, data shows that dancers identify more with their personal identity as a dancer than with their depersonalized identity as a dancer with Battery Dance. Conflicts between identities will then tend to be cognitively resolved by "ordering, separating, or buffering" identities that define an individual by their most salient social identity (Stryker & Serpe, 1982).

Dancers at Battery Dance were unable to fully practice the artform that defines their artistic identity, yet the organization provided opportunities for them to continue dancing and teaching within the boundaries set by COVID-19. Although this study's survey instruments asked the same questions of all members, dancers were asked an additional question about the impact of COVID-19 on their identity as artists. This question was met with a wide range of expected and unexpected responses, from being "a blow to my ego" to being "extremely grateful and thankful for this artistic year" to looking at 2020 as a "blessing in disguise."

Many of the dancer's responses made a connection between the challenges of COVID-19 and the organization's programming. Even though it was "a difficult process" as many dancers "craved connecting" and struggled with "an identity crisis" in the absence of "feeling the energy of the audience," it gave them the chance to "express something deep like [they] never could have with any other company...almost like a dance missionary." This quote shows how the social justice mission of Battery Dance gives its members a sense of purpose, especially with respect to the relationship between creative performance and the economic challenges that NYC artists have faced during the pandemic.

Quantitative results show that dancers viewed leaders as less than prototypical, meaning that Battery Dance leaders are not all seen as sharing all of the attributes that define group membership as perceived by the dancers. This finding is intrinsically related to the qualitative results in Hypothesis 4 that show a significant difference between the way leaders view creative performance as compared to dancers and staff. This expands upon findings for Hypothesis 1B

and 1C, adding that ***shared identity is a critical component of organizational resiliency at Battery Dance because it aligns organizational members' perceptions of creative performance.*** This finding aligns with research from Reicher and Hopkins (2003), who showed that leaders and followers construct shared identities as a form of sensemaking to help construct and define future possibilities when faced with threats. A shared identity among the group then becomes a driver behind an organization's potential for effectively overcoming crisis (van Knippenberg, 2011).

Qualitative data supports these findings and shows how identity and creative performance are operationalized across the organization's programs and roles. The discrepancy in identity is reflected across constituents and results in "segmented audiences and supporters." Based on several statements from staff members, segmented identities are reflected in instances of siloed operations where staff members view themselves as "just fitting into the grand scheme of things" with little knowledge of what other roles are doing. Several dancers lamented that most New Yorkers have "no idea about us, yet anywhere you go in India, everyone knows who Battery Dance is." While dancers noted that "leaders have made [international social justice work] their focus," they followed up with suggestions that would allow Battery Dance to take on a more "prominent role in the New York and international dance scene." Dancers also reported several external factors that impact their creative performance and identity, including moments of cognitive drain when working with unruly students in NYC public schools who are "forced to be there" as opposed to the students in international programs.

***Dancers showed more variance in their connection to Battery Dance than the connection exhibited by any other role.*** This finding may prove to become an important component of building resiliency at Battery Dance in the future because a decrease in categorization-based depersonalization suggests that group cohesion and solidarity will be difficult to achieve (Tindale et al., 2001; Turner et al., 1987). There could be many reasons for this variance, and qualitative data points to several factors that may impact their depersonalization, especially when hired under a freelance status. Although their freelance status allows dancers to perform elsewhere and grow in their artistic craft, it also forces some to seek other employment that may not be dance related. Similar to many NYC-based artists, dancers report the "NY hustle; 12-hour to 16-hour days; doing a variety of things from singing and dancing, taking class, to bartending at night." Internally, dancers offered numerous responses that seemed to contain mixed messages about their perceptions of how they fit in to the collective identity of the organization, including: "I think that we are capable of being a very popular well-known company, performance wise, and you know, outreach, social work, what have you."

As noted earlier, staff members identified more strongly with their respective area of focus rather than the artistic nature of the organization's performance component. This may be a positive or negative finding, and would require further investigation in order to examine how this impacts organizational success. However, this study can conclude that dancer identity plays a unique role in the organization because dancers are required to identify with multiple roles as educators, performers, and facilitators.

Dancers report being "hungry" and wanting to "invest deeply into this company," "build momentum," "keep pushing," and "take the organization to that 'place' any way I can." Finding this degree of dedication coupled with the identity variance discussed earlier provides evidence that the wide breadth of Battery Dance programming might decrease organizational cohesion by diluting member self-categorization in any one area depending on which mission component(s) a

member identifies with the most. Furthermore, if dancers do not perceive leaders as having high levels of team prototypicality, and explicit program measures are not used by leaders or staff to design and evaluate program content and delivery, then it is possible for dancers to become burdened by a high cognitive load as they negotiate their self-concept within the broad scope of the organization. The founder of Battery Dance recognizes that no matter where they go in the world, the dancers are “Battery Dance personified,” yet this can only be operationalized at the highest level if dancers increase their sense of shared identity with the organization.

### **Sensemaking Attribution Error**

The most consistent finding that emerged from every interview was a high degree of perceived outgroup homogeneity, to the point that researchers dubbed the participants’ perception as a *sensemaking attribution error*. Perceptions of outgroup homogeneity are found in high levels of self-categorization and distinctiveness, where group members view all outgroups the same, regardless of how different they are when objectively measured against multiple criteria that would otherwise define outgroups of being fundamentally different with regard to mission, size, or history (Judd & Park, 1988). Furthermore, the context in which members voiced their perception of outgroup homogeneity was consistently framed as a sensemaking attempt when measuring their own distinctiveness. At the root of SIT, groups increase their need for self-esteem by seeking positive differences between themselves and outgroups (Tajfel, 1981), yet the desire to project a mission-driven social identity may predispose Battery Dance groups to intergroup conflict among dancers, leaders, and staff based on role attributes that are mutually compared (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

Executive leadership noted that “we have challenged that perception that you can be at the highest level artistically and at the same time, be an agent of change in society.” Although this statement can be seen as a summative expression of the organization’s societal value, he still compared Battery Dance to New York City Ballet (NYCB), Alvin Ailey, American Ballet Theater, and Mark Morris in terms of popular notoriety, funding, and projected status. While one might be tempted to make comparisons across companies that share an art form, it could be argued that dance is the only similarity across these organizations. NYCB is an institution, Alvin Ailey is driven by a strong cultural component, and the legacy of American Ballet Theater includes their designation as America’s “National Ballet Company.” Not only are these organizations different from Battery Dance, they are different from one another as well, with each having the distinction of being great at what they do, including Battery Dance.

Donors donate to nonprofits that are aligned with their philanthropic interest, whether that includes a distinctive cultural mission or the perception of being a national institution. Battery Dance receives grants from the US State Department for their work overseas. This is proof that Battery Dance is able to secure funding because of their expertise in delivering a specific program designed to reflect their mission. However, when speaking of funding for performances, members blamed external perceptions “of mediocrity” that they need to overcome even though local audiences have limited opportunities to attend performances of the company beyond their yearly Festival. Even negatively valued distinctions can be associated with organizational identification, which is then utilized as a defense mechanism that transforms a negative distinction into a positive one through verbal and nonverbal “symbolic interactionism” (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). While one leader compared Battery Dance to large institutions, another leader extolled the benefits of Battery Dance being small enough that they could quickly pivot and creatively modify their programming in response to COVID-19.

The degree to which these comparisons were repeated across every interview shows that this discourse may have become a group norm where members use their size and status as a form of meaning-making by comparing themselves to disparate organizations. The mission of Battery Dance is indeed unique, but it is unique because of who they are, not who they are not. Comparing their mission of social justice working in war-torn countries cannot be compared to a large institution like Lincoln Center. Not only is it a false comparison, it may cause a level of cognitive dissonance that prevents the organization from identifying programs and processes that can be improved.

These comparisons also provide insight into how relational identity informs self-concept on an individual level and collective identity on the group level (Lord & Hall, 2005). Interviews of Battery Dance members provide an example where relational identity may emphasize potentially false interpretive structures that define the organization's distinctiveness. This reflects back to members as individual identities that are iteratively constructed by emphasizing one's uniqueness of the self as compared to others.

Dancers operate in a world of stimuli, from the intimate touch of others to the proprioceptive experience of movement and sound. Similarly, outgroup differentiation, group norms, and discourse provide dynamic stimuli which creates emotional, motivational, and behavioral reactions that reflect sensemaking through embodied cognition (Barsalou, 1999). Therefore, members' relationship with leaders is likely bound by interpretive structures eliciting cognitive and emotional reactions that determine the perception of leader prototypicality and inspirational motivation.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

Researchers acknowledge that Battery Dance represents a small sample size. However, the aim of this study is to examine one of the few nonprofit arts organizations based in NYC that continued to serve their stakeholders around the world. Future studies may utilize the SIT framework to examine larger organizations that reopened after the availability of vaccines.

Researchers would like to extend their gratitude to Battery Dance for participating in this study. Their transparency and commitment to improving the arts sector adds to the enormous artistic, educational, and socio-emotional impact they make around the world. Arts organizations play a unique role in society since they are often the only providers of much-needed services to their communities. While this is made possible with the help of external funding, the dedication and expertise of an organization's members are the organization's most important resource because they provide the link between services and people. In many arts organizations, artists take on an additional burden of navigating their identity as an artist bound by the operational context of an organization. Findings from this study address these identity issues and can be utilized to inform the design of programming and operations that allow organizations and stakeholders to reach their individual and collective potential.

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