

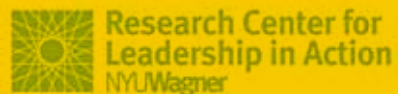


LEADERSHIP, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

insights from scholarship



By the Research Center for
Leadership in Action, NYU Wagner



Leadership for a Changing America

Leadership, Diversity and Inclusion: Insights from Scholarship reports on a 2010 project developed at the Research Center for Leadership in Action at New York University's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, in support of the National Urban Fellows Public Service Leadership Diversity Initiative.

The research team, under the direction of Professor Sonia Ospina, PhD, consisted of Waad El Hadidy and Grisel Caicedo, with support from Amanda Jones. A second report, *Advancing Diversity in Public Service: A Review of Leadership Development Programs in the US*, complements this work. Bethany Godsoe contributed to the conceptualization of the overall project.

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It is with gratitude that National Urban Fellows acknowledges the generous support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and JP Morgan Chase that made this Public Service Leadership Diversity research possible. It is our sincere expectation that the Public Service Leadership Diversity movement will enhance and empower the lives of people of color to become the leaders and change agents of our country's present and future.



ABOUT THE NATIONAL URBAN FELLOWS

National Urban Fellows seeks to inspire excellence and diversity in public service leadership.

Founded in 1969 to counter the under-representation of people of color and women in leadership, National Urban Fellows is one of the oldest leadership development organizations in the United States, and a premier voice of authority on leadership diversity for public, private and nonprofit sectors.

The organization's range of mid-career leadership development programs includes: the 40-year-old MPA Fellowship, a 14-month program linking graduate-level academic training with a critical leadership experience in a large nonprofit or government agency; an alumni program offering life-long networking, career enhancement and personal development opportunities; and America's Leaders of Change, a career acceleration program for leaders on the rise in government, nonprofit and private sectors.

Today, together with its fellows, alumni, mentors and community leaders across the country, National Urban Fellows is making an impact on social justice and equity, by identifying issues, shaping solutions and forming equitable public policies.

National Urban Fellows develops the leadership for a changing America.

Learn more at www.nuf.org.



ABOUT THE RESEARCH CENTER FOR LEADERSHIP IN ACTION AT NYU WAGNER

The Research Center for Leadership in Action (RCLA) is a research center at New York University's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, a nationally top-ranked school for public affairs. RCLA's research complies with the highest academic standards while at the same resonating with both practitioners interested in learning about leadership practice and scholars interested in developing theories of leadership. Our research is done in partnership *with* leaders rather than *on* leaders to uncover and cultivate insights that describe leadership clearly and with an authentic voice.

RCLA has a long-standing commitment to research that supports diverse leadership at all levels of organizations and across all sectors for the common good. Examples of our recent work include a study exploring the relationship between race and leadership in social change organizations. In another study, RCLA scholars catalogue how "race-ethnicity" is treated in the leadership literature and present an integrative framework for understanding the relationship between race and leadership. In a report based on an RCLA-facilitated action learning inquiry, leaders of color committed to social justice offer strategies for community-based leaders of color to maintain the integrity of their work and remain accountable to communities, develop supportive relationships, deepen their understanding of race and educate others, and nurture new leaders. This research is part of RCLA's work to support leadership that taps the resources of many voices to make systems and organizations effective, transparent, inclusive and fair.

Learn more at www.wagner.nyu.edu/leadership.



ABOUT THE NATIONAL URBAN FELLOWS PUBLIC SERVICE LEADERSHIP DIVERSITY INITIATIVE

America was founded on the principles of justice, equality and inclusion. As a nation, we continue to strive for full participation and equality for all citizens, upon whose shoulders the responsibility for upholding these principles rests. America is a multicultural society dedicated to inclusive participation in our democracy, and our laws and social policies have evolved over time to reflect this commitment.

National Urban Fellows endeavors to build upon the diversity of our citizens to embrace the fullness of our democracy, and in doing so we advance inclusion as both a moral imperative and an excellent business model. The public service sector—from government and academic think tanks to foundations and nonprofit organizations—must be inclusive if we are to develop fair and effective structures to fulfill the intention of our democracy. This can be accomplished through removing cultural and structural barriers and eliminating individual acts of discrimination or bias.

Though growing in population, people of color remain underrepresented in the leadership of the public service sector, an issue that can and must be resolved if we are to effectively change our nation's most pressing social issues—from education to health, environment and justice. Our country is now composed of one-third, or 34 percent, people of color—a population that will grow to 54 percent by 2042. However, federal government leadership is only 16 percent people of color. On the state level only 15 percent people of color hold statewide elective executive positions across the country. Moreover, only 18 percent of nonprofit leadership positions are filled by people of color, and only 17 percent of foundation executives are people of color.

When current disparities in public service leadership are addressed, the public service sector will have greater ability and appeal to people of color with the leadership skills to solve social policy dilemmas. The participation of people of color and the infusion of diverse voices and experiences into decision-making processes ensure a sense of cultural competency and effectiveness within policy-based solutions to social issues. As champions of transformational change, our goal is to not only achieve proportional representation in the public service sector by building a pipeline of talented, highly skilled candidates of color, but also to dismantle the barriers to inclusion of people of color in leadership positions and to support the notion that diversity in leadership leads to organizational excellence.

The National Urban Fellows Public Service Leadership Diversity Initiative inspires and advocates for excellence and diversity in public service leadership for America. With a dual emphasis on individuals and systems, and through research, communications, stakeholder mobilization and action, the Public Service Leadership Diversity Initiative will develop a new, inclusive paradigm of public service leadership.

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OVERVIEW

Despite many years of efforts to diversify organizations, people of color remain significantly underrepresented in public service leadership positions. This results partly from structural barriers that hinder the professional advancement of people of color and partly from organizations' varying success with diversity efforts. That people of color are not well represented in positions of power is also a reflection of a dominant leadership paradigm in which the experience of diverse leaders is largely marginalized.

The National Urban Fellows (NUF) convened a series of national and regional leadership diversity summits during its 40th anniversary year, with the goal of shifting the national leadership paradigm to include leadership models found in diverse communities, to embrace collective approaches and to define a new institutional diversity standard. Based on feedback from these summits, NUF is advancing the Public Service Leadership Diversity Initiative, a collaborative network and campaign action plan to inspire excellence and diversity in public service leadership



The goal at the Research Center for Leadership in Action (RCLA) at NYU Wagner is to develop knowledge and capacity for leadership at all levels of organizations and across diverse sectors of society. Given this close alignment in goals, RCLA and NUF are working together to further the diversity agenda.

One of the first steps in this endeavor has been a review of the latest scholarly thinking about leadership diversity in the United States, with a focus on public service. The goal of this review is to establish a broad and shared knowledge of the latest thinking about leadership diversity; establish solid theoretical grounding for the NUF initiative; and produce actionable recommendations for

public service leadership development programs, advocates concerned with diversity issues, and public and nonprofit institutions seeking to build leadership diversity within their organizations.

The review of the scholarly literature is structured as follows. First we present highlights of the main findings from the literature and a brief explanation of the methodology (for full details please see Appendix I). Then the various findings and literature categories are discussed in depth. Finally we present conclusions, key convergences and divergences, and gaps found in the literature. The full set of references, organized by category, is the last section in the document, followed by the Methodological Appendix.

HIGHLIGHTS OF FINDINGS

The following is a brief summary of the key findings. These are revisited in more depth in the conclusions section.

Mixed empirical works: There is a recognized need to do more empirical work, especially to unpack how efforts to foster diversity impact the organization and its members. The empirical data that do exist are mixed. Some studies have found positive correlations between increased diversity and bottom-line results, others have found negative correlations, and yet others have found combinations of positive and negative impacts.

There is no one-size-fits-all: What the mixed results suggest is that organizations are struggling to deal with or leverage diversity without any assurances of positive outcomes. There is no one size that fits all—doing diversity well is precisely the complex kind of work that requires leadership rather than management solutions.

Shifting landscape of terms: Scholars seem to be anxious about presenting the next silver bullet, as reflected in the shifting landscape of terms. Scholars argue that what has been tried by organizations is not enough—what is needed is a

more integrated system, more commitment from leadership, more holistic approaches—all of which are largely untested.

Equipping people AND organizations: Trends in the literature are pointing to the need to pay attention both to people of color and the organizations where they work. Despite their leadership acumen, people of color will still encounter different ceilings if their organizations and systems do not welcome their contributions.

Diversity as a testament to organizational adaptability: More recent literature is calling for a shifting of the case of diversity from a market imperative to an understanding that racial diversity is only one reflection of the increasingly complex environment in which organizations need to operate. The argument is that diversity presents an opportunity for an organization to practice the skills needed to deal with rapid change and diversity on all fronts—not just race.

Some progress in diversity, but not in leadership: There is some evidence that both public agencies and the private sector are embarking on diversity initiatives. Although anecdotal, pundits have

claimed that leadership in the nonprofit sector is more diverse than in the for-profit world. Yet more comprehensive research is needed to confirm this, and generally the research has tended to focus less on leadership and more on workforces.

Nonprofit research largely missing: It is quite a surprise that there is very little research about leaders of color in the nonprofit world or what kinds of initiatives nonprofit institutions are taking to enhance diversity. Although still limited, there is much more documentation of diversity within the public and business sectors.



METHODOLOGY

RCLA's task was to review the latest scholarly thinking on diversity, race and leadership in the United States. Rather than dwelling on the demographic changes or workforce inequities—realities that have been well documented—we focused on the organizational and management literature with the objective of lifting practical implications for the NUF campaign.

After a broad scan of potential references, having screened out those deemed irrelevant for the project, we settled for a full review of 85 references, 73 of which are academic, i.e. published in academic journals. We also included 12 non-academic references because they have contributed to heightened awareness about diversity, particularly in the nonprofit sector. Of the references that address a specific sector explicitly, there was a balanced distribution between those that examined diversity in the public sector and those that looked into the private sector. Only six of the 85 referenced address diversity in the nonprofit sector and of those, only one was an academic reference, pointing to a serious dearth in the nonprofit scholarly literature. In order to reach a critical mass of references, we decided to include work from the private sector. This is also logical given that the diversity conversation draws on the business literature.

As a review of the latest thinking in diversity and leadership, we excluded any literature that predates the year 2000, with only a couple of exceptions. It is also important to note that leadership is rarely addressed as an explicit construct in the diversity literature. We bring our understanding of leadership in order to draw out implications for leaders of color or for influential stakeholders concerned with racial justice. For more details on methodology, please see Appendix I.



DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS: INSIGHTS FROM SCHOLARSHIP

Scholarly work can be clustered around the following three broad categories. These correspond to different levels at which diversity is addressed or practiced. Each group includes research findings derived from studies addressing dimensions of a broad question, as follows:

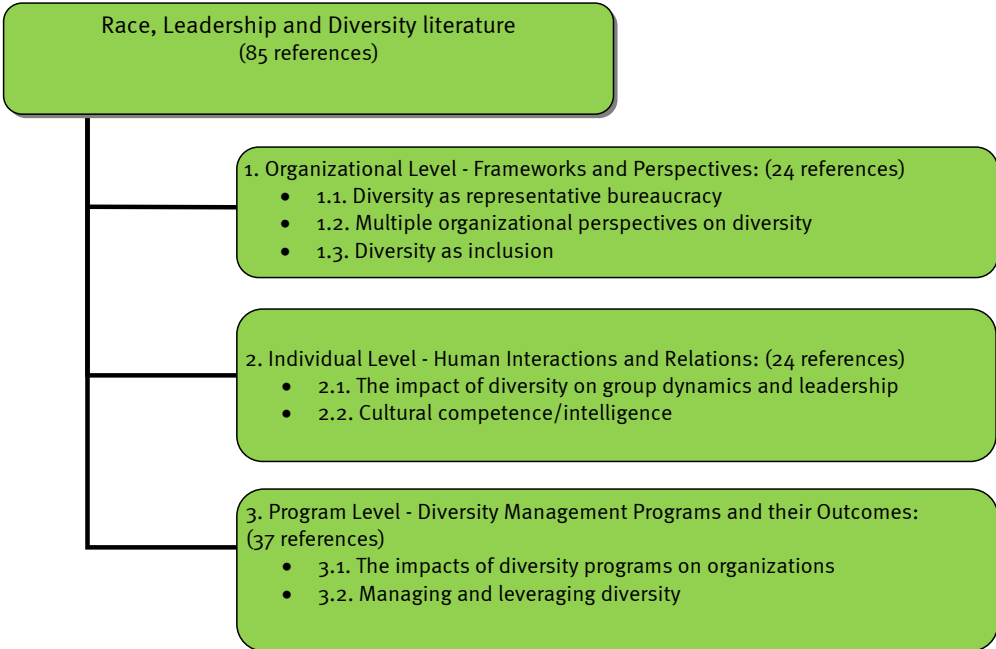
- 1. Organizational Level:** Frameworks and Perspectives on Diversity - How do organizations approach diversity?
- 2. Individual Level:** Human Interactions under Conditions of (Racial) Difference - How do individuals experience diversity and relate to each other under conditions of racial difference?
- 3. Program Level:** Diversity Management Programs - How do organizations “do” diversity management and what are their outcomes?

What follows is a discussion of the findings for each main category. A note on how to read these findings is pertinent: while the majority of literature reviewed is academic, we have extracted the most practical elements for a practitioner audience. The discussion of each category starts with an explanation of what the large category entails followed by a discussion of each respective subcategory. The italicized subheadings pull out notable concepts or insights from the literature.

We provide illustrative references within each section. While we reviewed 85 references, we only cite those that are considered seminal, are regularly cited in the literature or present an argument directly relevant to the NUF campaign. We offer implications for leadership diversity at the end of each section.

The diagram below presents each category, its subcategories and the distribution of references found. That the majority of articles fall in the “diversity management” category is not surprising, given the bias of the organization and management field toward generating practice-grounded knowledge.

**TABLE 1:
OVERVIEW OF
FINDINGS**





1

ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL: FRAMEWORKS AND PERSPECTIVES ON DIVERSITY – HOW DO ORGANIZATIONS APPROACH DIVERSITY?

The first main category of the literature documents the different ways scholars have found that organizations approach and deal with diversity. These big picture paradigms are documented here. With the exception of the “representative bureaucracy” framework that is specific to the public sector, the subcategories below review both private sector and public service contexts. Literature in this category addresses the questions: What are some of the main organizational frameworks for thinking about and addressing diversity and what are their inherent assumptions? Insights to these questions are found within bodies of work about representative bureaucracy, multiple organizational perspectives on diversity and the paradigm of inclusion.

Diversity as Representative Bureaucracy

This body of work looks at public sector agencies as “representative bureaucracies,” a notion that reflects the original intent of affirmative action in public organizations (Pitts and Wise, 2010; Lim, 2006). The rationale for a representative bureaucracy is that “passive representation”—the extent to which a bureaucracy employs people of diverse social backgrounds, will lead to “active representation”—the pursuit of policies reflecting the interests and desires of those people (Ricucci and Meyers, 2004; Pitts, 2005).

An often-cited study by Ricucci (2009) finds that despite continued calls for equity, white women and people of color remain in lower-level, lower-paying, and less prestigious jobs in non-postal federal government jobs. White women have made some progress in terms of reaching higher-level positions, but their pay continues to lag behind white as well as Asian men. Yet in looking at general levels in the workforce, a plethora of representative bureaucracy studies have illustrated that white women and people of color hold government jobs at the federal, state and local levels in equal and sometimes greater proportions than their concentration in the general population. The study asserts that a key question in assessing equity within government is the extent to which leadership positions are equally distributed among members of different groups for effective democratic governance.

Harris (2009) corroborates the findings that yes, affirmative action has been effective in improving the employment status of women and minorities, especially in the public sector, yet the benefits have been uneven. Generally, the glass ceiling has made it harder for women to reach leadership positions across the board. More specifically, nonfederal contractors and academia have seen fewer employment gains for women. Wage disparities by both race and gender still remain. These studies show that while there has been an

improvement in workforce diversity, diversity in leadership positions in the public sector is yet to be attained.

A few studies included here look at the efforts of public organizations to attract a diverse pool of applicants. These offer insights for how public organizations can address recruitment strategies, which is one of the first steps in advancing representativeness.

A study of the New York State Department of Education (NYSDE) (Rangarajan and Black, 2007) identifies several organizational barriers to advancing diversity and touches on the organization's networks for recruitment. This is interesting given that networks have traditionally been treated by scholars as belonging to the individual. Among other barriers, Rangarajan and Black find that the insular perspectives of managers and prevalence of old-boy networks perpetuate existing configurations of NYSDE employee profiles and impede diversity.

Rubaii-Barrett and Wise (2007) conduct a review of diversity messages on 50 state government Web sites and suggest the need for greater emphasis on the Internet as a recruiting tool. They find that a majority of states do not demonstrate a clear commitment to diversity on their Web sites, which may be a deterrent to applicants of color or anyone who seeks to work in a diverse environment (Ng & Burke, 2005).

Multiple Organizational Perspectives on Diversity

Apart from the literature on representative bureaucracy that is specific to the public sector, scholars have attempted to understand the institutional mindsets from which organizations approach and address diversity. Several organizational paradigms are documented here,

as well as their influences on team functioning and the experiences of team members.

The Spectrum of Organizational Perspectives on Diversity

A seminal article by Ely and Thomas (2001) identifies three perspectives based on qualitative research conducted in three culturally diverse private sector organizations: the integration-and-learning (IL) perspective, the access-and-legitimacy (AL) perspective, and the discrimination-and-fairness (DF) perspective. The perspective on diversity a work group held influenced how people expressed and managed tensions related to diversity, whether those who had been traditionally underrepresented in the organization felt respected and valued by their colleagues, and how people interpreted the meaning of their racial identity at work. We explain each in what follows because these perspectives have been the subject of much scholarly work.



In IL, cultural diversity is viewed as a potentially valuable resource that the organization can use, not only at its margins to gain entree into previously inaccessible niche markets, but at its core to rethink and reconfigure its primary tasks. Where this perspective is applied, group members are encouraged to discuss openly their different points of view because differences, including those explicitly linked to cultural experience, were valued as opportunities for learning.

While there have been strides in workforce numbers, the true test of democratic governance and an organization's ability to reap the benefits of diversity depends on the extent to which its leadership, not only its staff, is diverse.

In AL, cultural diversity is a potentially valuable resource, but only at the organization's margins and only to gain access to and legitimacy with a diverse market. Embracing this perspective in the work groups studied led to race-based staffing patterns that matched the racial make-up of the markets they served. This mindset fostered perceptions of inequity related to staff functions; racially segregated career tracks and opportunities, which fostered concerns among staff of color about the degree to which they were valued and respected; and ambivalence on the part of people of color about the meaning and significance of their racial identity at work.

In DF, cultural diversity is a mechanism for ensuring equal opportunity, fair treatment and an end to discrimination. Where this perspective is at work, there is no articulation of the link between cultural diversity and the group's work and, in fact, this perspective espouses a color-blind strategy for managing employees and employee relations. In work groups subscribing to this view, employees

negotiated the meaning of all race-related differences on moral grounds. Questions and concerns about fairness led inevitably to strained race relations characterized by competing claims of innocence, with each group assuming a defensive posture in relation to the other. Racial identity thus became a source of apprehension for white people and feelings of powerlessness for many people of color.

This work, like others we review in other categories, presents a spectrum on thinking about diversity, with one end—the IL perspective—being clearly more holistic and considerate of creating a truly diverse organization than a perspective that is based on legalistic notions.

An article by Selden & Selden (2001) uses the three perspectives found by Ely and Thomas to consider their relevance and application to public organizations. For agencies adopting the DF perspective the authors argue that the central question of interest is the extent to which the agency reflects the demographic origins of society. A primary concern, of course, is the determination of which demographic characteristics are most important to public organizations. In the public sector, this view is closest to the notion of representative bureaucracy discussed earlier. Work on AL in the public sector is concerned with the relationship between employment of minorities and women and agency outputs and outcomes affecting these groups. The authors claim that regarding IL, relatively little research has explored the impact of diversity on internal public sector operations. Yet a number of agencies have adopted diversity training in an effort to take advantage of the perceived benefits.

Selden & Selden propose a fourth paradigm: valuing-and-integrating, which seeks to create a multicultural climate by incorporating individuals' pluralistic views. Diversity is often discussed at the organizational level, as in the Ely and Thomas work. Selden & Selden's valuing-and-integrating

model proposes that one needs to understand diversity from an individualistic perspective before viewing the aggregate organization. A diversified organization is founded, by its very nature, on the fabric of cultures that each person offers and adds to the collective working environment. Thus, this paradigm suggests that an organization's culture is continually influenced by the individual cultures of its members. Employees will be more involved and committed to their employer when their worldviews are reflected in the organization's strategy to implement its mission and vision. The notion of paying attention to each individual versus the whole organization in abstract comes up in other literature below.

A Dichotomy in Perspectives Found

Another set of articles focuses on the advantages and disadvantages of two polar frameworks embraced by organizations: color blindness versus multiculturalism. Most recent work suggests that a color blind strategy undermines diversity (Foldy & Buckley, 2009; Cox, 2001; Richeson & Nussbaum, 2003). A colorblind strategy is intertwined with American cultural ideals of individualism, equality, meritocracy, assimilation and the “melting pot” and focuses on ignoring cultural group identities or realigning them with an overarching identity or organizational superordinate goal. The multicultural approach to diversity emphasizes the benefits of a diverse workforce and explicitly recognizes employee differences as a source of strength (Stevens et al, 2008). The challenges of multiculturalism are cited as the potential undermining of unity and perceived exclusion of non-minority groups. Colorblindness on the other hand has often been associated with racial bias and perceived exclusion of minorities (Markus et al, 2000).

What this work suggests to leaders of colors is to try to understand the organizational perspective on diversity before joining, while recognizing that

there is no truly ideal form for treating diversity – all approaches have been documented to yield both positive and negative outcomes (see page 18).

For organizational initiatives working to promote diversity, it is also important to diagnose where the organization falls on the spectrum presented above versus where it wants to be. For instance, if an organization is adopting a “discrimination and fairness” perspective, and the objective is to become a “valuing and integrating” organization, quite a radical shift in culture and policies would be required. Strategymakers should consider where their organization is in the development of its diversity agenda (Ospina, 1996).

Diversity as Inclusion

Many scholars frame their work around the paradigm of inclusion as an organizational phenomenon that such scholars claim has emerged as a reaction to disappointing results



The literature about inclusion and the multiple perspectives on diversity seems to agree that it is not enough to have representatives of diverse groups within organizations but to create an overall environment that celebrates and leverages multiplicity and pluralism.

with diversity efforts. This work pays more attention to the expressive and normative sides of diversity with an attention to nurturing individuals and viewing inclusion as “the right thing to do” (Stevens et al, 2008).

In an important article, Pless and Maak (2004) argue that organizations have paid a lot of attention to the strategic dimension of diversity policies, systems and processes, but have given less thought to the normative dimension, the norms and values involved. They present their recommendations for building an inclusive culture within organizations, which involves four transformational stages. The first phase focuses on raising awareness, building understanding and encouraging reflection. The second phase deals with the development of a vision of inclusion as an important step to define the change direction. In a third phase, key management concepts and principles should be re-thought. This leads to the fourth, action-oriented phase, that focuses on an integrated human relations management system that helps implement change by both translating the founding principles via competencies into observable and measurable behavior and fostering the development, reinforcement and recognition of inclusive behavior. Among those competencies is consultative and cooperative leadership.

As the notion of “inclusion” started gaining in currency, scholars state that it took on a distinct definition from the term “diversity” as used in organizations (Roberson & Stevens, 2006). Consistent with popular and scholarly diversity literature, a study by Roberson (2006) of how this language is used within organizations found that definitions of “diversity” focused primarily on heterogeneity and the demographic composition of groups or organizations, whereas definitions of “inclusion” focused on employee involvement and the integration of diversity into organizational systems and processes.

Scholars are also presenting the notion of “identity safety” as a type of environment that organizations should seek to foster. Foldy et al (2009) define identity safety as the belief that one is safe despite one’s racial identity. When identity safety is achieved, cultural identity is valued as a resource for thinking about work and differing opinions are welcomed. Identity safety means that each individual is appreciated for their contribution and for their particular racial identity; it is not just about a broad welcoming of a diverse group. This notion is similar to the shift in attention toward the individual supported by other authors reviewed here. This individual emphasis on the benefits of multiple perspectives contrasts with a broad multicultural perspective and, in turn, is more consistent with the valuing-and-integrating perspective discussed above.

The literature about inclusion and the multiple perspectives on diversity seems to agree that it is not enough to have representatives of diverse groups within organizations but to create an overall environment that celebrates and leverages multiplicity and pluralism. For leaders of color and for others advancing diversity, creating an inclusive environment that welcomes and develops the contribution of each member becomes an important leadership practice.

SUMMARY: ORGANIZATIONAL-LEVEL IMPLICATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP DIVERSITY



Literature here supports the need to have more leaders of color at the top. While there have been strides in workforce numbers, the true test of democratic governance and an organization's ability to reap the benefits of diversity depends on the extent to which its leadership, not only its staff, is diverse.

We imagine that organizations seeking to maximize diversity should be thinking of adopting a perspective of integration, learning and valuing difference, versus the legalistic approach concerned with discrimination and fairness. The trends in the literature seem to be advocating for a similar pathway as that in the NUF research report (Smith, 2010): to shift public service leaders of color from access to influence to power. This suggests a move from discrimination and fairness to integration and learning, accompanied by holistic human resource systems that don't stop at recruiting, but embed the organizational perspective toward diversity in performance evaluation, management systems and reward structures. It is important to educate organizations about the implications of having an explicit framework in place and of intentionally conducting an organizational diagnosis as a prerequisite to developing a strategy for diversity.

The approach to diversity that highlights the importance of the dynamics of inclusion and identity safety is an important one. A shift in the national paradigm can only be achieved through an emphasis on both organizations (and systems) and individuals. At the same time, the notion of inclusion calls attention to the relevance of organizational culture and of leadership for ensuring the right environment for nurturing and leveraging multiple cultural perspectives. This raises the importance of strategies that educate all leaders – not only leaders of color – on the need for and benefits of creating inclusive environments.

2

INDIVIDUAL LEVEL: HUMAN INTERACTIONS UNDER CONDITIONS OF (RACIAL) DIFFERENCE – HOW DO INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCE DIVERSITY AND RELATE TO EACH OTHER?

The academic literature in this category focuses on individual-level interactions and relational dynamics. Studies here explore what happens when diverse people work together, and what types of skills and competencies are needed by leaders to effectively operate in diverse environments. This work addresses questions such as: in what ways do leaders draw on or feel constrained by their race? What happens when diverse people work together? Answers to these questions fall within two clusters of studies: those focusing on group dynamics and those emphasizing cultural competence.

The Impacts of Diversity on Group Dynamics and Leadership

Backlash is Sometimes Found in Diverse Teams or as a Reaction to Diversity Initiatives

This research looks at the influence of diversity on leadership, group process and team performance. Similar to the mixed findings covered in Category 3, the empirical research here also yields very mixed results about the impacts of diversity on team functioning and group dynamics (Chatman & Spataro, 2005; Watson et al, 2002). The notion of “backlash” by certain dominant groups toward diversity initiatives was found in several studies (Kidder et al, 2004). Some studies found backlash in relation to how diversity initiatives are framed, rather than in relation to certain groups (Holladay et al, 2003; McKay et al, 2007). This work points to the complexity of diversity dynamics – there will always be risks associated with diverse groups, whether in the form of backlash or increased conflict.

Race and Its Impact on Leadership Dynamics

While most literature discussed so far in this review focuses on “diversity” as an explicit term, Ospina and Foldy (2009) conduct a literature review of the concepts of “race” and “leadership.” The scholarship they review is about how the racial identity of leaders influences others’ perceptions of them, how race impacts the way leaders enact their own leadership, and how leaders grapple with the social reality of race (see summary of Ospina and Foldy: “Race and Leadership: Implications for Leaders of Color and Leadership Development Programs Addressing Issues of Diversity”).

Ospina and Foldy (2009) find a group of studies of predominantly white work environments that document the constraints that leaders of color face based on how they are perceived by others. This work starts from the assumption that leaders

An insight for leaders of color is that their racial identity might be a constraint in as much as others superficially impose judgments, but it can also be usurped into a savvy, multicultural ability to lead across difference.

It would be helpful for leadership development programs to incorporate a reflective component that invites participants to reflect on when and how their race constrains or enables their leadership, to recognize if and when they use strategies that draw on and foster collective identity, and to apply a critical race lens to power dynamics.

of color are disadvantaged because, for various reasons, they are not perceived as legitimate. This work suggests that when people of color are given access to leadership positions, they may still face constraints from their colleagues and subordinates due to power inequities that privilege whiteness. Earlier important work by Kanter (1993) on tokenism in organizational contexts suggests that the fewer the leaders of color, the higher the chances that their performance will be overexposed. Constantly feeling on the hook and under the microscope may lead to burnout.

Ospina and Foldy (2009) also find a substantial literature that looks at how the race of the leader affects the ways that he/she enacts that leadership. Some of the more recent work explores how leaders of color deliberately and consciously draw on their racial identity to perform leadership. Studies that investigated the leadership style of particular racial groups show how these leaders turn mechanisms of oppression into “effective vehicles for constructive change” (Alston, 2005). An insight for leaders of color is that their racial identity might be a constraint in as much as others superficially impose judgments, but it can also be usurped into a savvy, multicultural ability to lead across difference.

Ospina and Foldy find a volume of literature that is concerned with understanding how leaders and/or followers grapple with the reality of race as it manifests in the environment. Studies in this category treat race as a social reality that colors and constructs perceptions, interactions

and relationships. Scholars here emphasize the role of collective identity as a mechanism that induces followers to transcend their personal interests and perform in the interest of the group or organization. Race here is often viewed as a tool to prime the collective identity in followers, which motivates them to act in the interest of the group or perform better.

Another subset found by Ospina and Foldy (2009) draws on critical race theory and starts with the premise that race not only shapes individuals’ psychological makeup but is also intrinsically part of their collective identities and of the larger social structures within which leadership emerges. Social structure shapes individuals’ experience of race and influences its meanings; at the same time, individuals shape how race is construed and embedded in social structures. This work places at the forefront micro and macro power dynamics and systemic inequities (Leadership Learning Community, 2010). A cooperative inquiry undertaken by social change leaders of color (Chan et al, 2009) explores the work of leaders of color in movement building and emphasizes the practice of critically reflecting about both race and racism as constructs that influence the experiences of all people, and people of color especially. The group documents certain practices that leaders of color use in movement building, including talking openly about racism to learn about the political, historical and cultural dimensions of race and building effective intergenerational relationships to pass on wisdom and mentor new leaders. This work suggests that race and leadership are not rigid

ideas that are set in stone, but rather malleable social constructs that change over time.

It would be helpful for leadership development programs to incorporate a reflective component that invites participants to reflect on when and how their race constrains or enables their leadership, to recognize if and when they use strategies that draw on and foster collective identity, and to apply a critical race lens to power dynamics.

“Fault Lines” Are Not Always Negative

A concept often studied is that of “intersectionality”—that individuals are made up of multiple parallel identities (as woman, black, etc.) that intersect to create an axis of disadvantage or advantage (Smith, 2005—see also Ospina and Foldy, 2009). The notion of “intersectionality” features in the literature as a way to complicate the otherwise naïve premise that an entire group of people will practice a

certain approach to leadership given their race or that race will always trump other identities in leadership. “Intersectionality” locates race within a broad spectrum of multiple and overlapping identities like gender, sexual orientation, etc.

A closely related concept that has emerged in the diversity conversation, and could be viewed as a way to operationalize the notion of intersectionality, is that of the “fault line.” This line of work looks at how diversity is distributed, not just whether it exists or not (Li & Hambrick, 2005; Lau & Murnighan, 2005). A fault line is defined as a hypothetical dividing line that splits a group into relatively homogeneous subgroups based on the group members’ demographic alignment along multiple attributes, which may cause a disruption in the group (Bezrukova et al, 2009).

Although fault lines were initially studied qualitatively, much quantitative work has been done attempting to measure the impact of variables like fault line “distance” (the distance between subgroups along a line of difference) and fault line “strength” (the foundation for a fault line to exist). Most research on fault lines typically conceptualizes fault lines as destructive and harmful, yet some emerging research (Bezrukova et al, 2009; Bezrukova et al, 2010) shows how they can have beneficial effects, like helping group members cope with the stress of experiencing injustice, or promoting healthy competition. Such findings are similar to paradoxical findings discussed in Category 3 below—where there appear to be positive effects because of increased disruption caused by diversity.

What this work primarily tells leaders of colors and others working to promote diversity is that how a group is composed will influence how a group functions, and in turn how leadership emerges and the kind of leadership needed. A leader of color may find that working with two groups that appear to have similar degrees of diversity will yield very different experiences depending on how

What this work primarily tells leaders of colors and others working to promote diversity is that how a group is composed will influence how a group functions, and in turn how leadership emerges and the kind of leadership needed.



many fault lines exist within a group, their strength and distance. Hence leaders of color must pay attention not only to how their multiple identities intersect but how that happens for their teams as well.

Cultural Competence/Intelligence

Another group of work presents the notion of cultural competence or intelligence as a cognitive ability and a set of behaviors needed for leaders to function well in a context of difference. Much of this work draws on literature that looks into how expatriate managers successfully adjust to foreign cultures (Elenkov & Manev, 2009; Thomas, 2006; Alon & Higgins, 2005).

The mirror image of this work is reflected in Ospina and Foldy's (2009) review of race and leadership. Some studies they found address ways in which non-white leaders are bi-culturally fluent – leading in ways that resonate with their own racial group while avoiding being seen as “exotic.” These leaders must demonstrate that they understand both how their racial group functions and also the inner workings of a white-dominated environment.

The articles in this cluster tend to address the kinds of competencies, often framed as cognitive competencies, needed for leaders of all races to be effective in diverse settings, and leaders of color to function in an environment in which they are minorities. Such competencies are referred to as cultural intelligence (Early & Ang, 2003).

Thomas et al (2008) define cultural intelligence as “a system of interacting knowledge and skills, linked by cultural metacognition that allows people to adapt to, select, and shape the cultural aspects of their environment.” To Thomas et al, intelligence and intelligent behavior are not synonymous. What constitutes intelligent behavior (behavior demonstrating appropriate knowledge and skills) may differ from one cultural environment to another.

Cultural intelligence that is produced in a specific cultural or cross-cultural context is one thing. But for one to be consistently effective irrespective of the specific context, one needs to have cultural metacognition—a process in which a person draws both on what he/she knows coupled with general problem solving and adaptive skills to function in a culture which he/she does not know. Essentially metacognition is a skill that translates an experience of a different culture into a relevant

The complex environments often imposed by systemic inequities often train leaders of color to traverse difference in very versatile ways – a skill that majority leaders may not be compelled to develop. The literature reviewed in this category gives attention to the importance for all leaders, not just leaders of color, to be culturally competent and develop the skills needed to leverage diversity.

experience for use in other cultures as well. It is the ability to go from experience to experiential learning, a popular theme in this literature.

What this work is telling us, not surprisingly, is that to be able to operate well in an environment of difference, a leader needs to have a level of cultural competence. This work, however, is not immediately useful because despite drawing on research work since the 70s about international work assignments, in its current incarnation, the cultural competence discourse is still being defined.



SUMMARY: INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL IMPLICATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP DIVERSITY



The work on bicultural fluency and race as a resource for leadership suggests that leaders of color need to be celebrated for their ability to read and direct environments in which they may be the minority. The complex environments often imposed by systemic inequities often train leaders of color to traverse difference in very versatile ways—a skill that majority leaders may not be compelled to develop. The literature reviewed in this category gives attention to the importance for all leaders, not just leaders of color, to be culturally competent and develop the skills needed to leverage diversity.

At the same time, efforts to diversify leadership need to be careful not to tokenize leaders of color as individuals who bring special skills or certain ways of leading. Such stereotypes raise the risk of further alienating leaders of color. Diversity initiatives then can be double-edged: on the one hand they can fight tokenism precisely by relieving some of the pressure on the usual suspects (existing top leaders of color) from acting as representatives or role models. There is a need for a critical mass of diverse leaders, not just isolated examples of leaders of color who both enjoy and suffer from the extra attention paid to their actions. On the other hand, such efforts can render the experiences of leaders of color idiosyncratic—irrelevant to other populations.

The literature illustrates how both leadership and race are fluid constructs—they are not solid realisms. It is equally important to shift the discourse around leadership and diversity, not just the representation of top leadership. The literature on intersectionality, fault lines and critical race theory points to a more complex conversation than that of the numbers alone.

3

PROGRAM LEVEL: DESCRIBING AND ASSESSING DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS – HOW DO ORGANIZATIONS “DO” DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT?

This is the third and final main category of the literature we reviewed. The unit of analysis here tends to be the diversity program. This large body of literature looks at how diversity is promoted and managed within both public and private institutions and in what ways diversity initiatives have worked and where they have lagged behind. Questions addressed include: what are organizations doing about diversity? What have been some of the documented outcomes? The subcategories discussed below are concerned with the impacts of diversity programs on organizations and managing and leveraging diversity.

The Impacts of Diversity Programs on Organizations

The extant literature on organizational diversity in both the public and private sectors has produced inconsistent results on the effects of diversity, with some researchers finding beneficial effects, such as increased creativity, innovation, productivity and quality (Herring, 2009; Meier et al, 2006; Slater et al, 2008), and others finding a detrimental influence on organizational outcomes—particularly through process losses, increases in conflict, decreases in social integration, and inhibition of decision-making and change processes (Kochan et al, 2003). Diversity has been dubbed a “double-edged sword.”

Inconsistent Findings about Impact

Many scholars argue that the relationship between diversity and performance is more complex than that implied by the popular rhetoric (Kochan et al, 2003; Killian et al, 2005). Some empirical literature does not support the notion that more diverse groups, teams or business units

necessarily perform better, feel more committed to their organizations or experience higher levels of satisfaction.

On the other hand, some scholars find positive business results associated with more diversity at the organizational level. Herring (2009) uses perceptual data from the 1996 to 1997 National Organizations Survey, a national sample of for-profit business organizations, and finds that diversity is associated with increased sales revenue, more customers, greater market share and greater relative profits.

[Some research] has tended to find that on the one hand, innovation, adaptability and creativity are more likely in heterogeneous groups, but the ability to implement and integrate divergent ideas is more difficult. On the other hand, cooperation and trust are more evident in homogeneous groups, but adaptability and innovation are less likely to emerge.

DiTomaso et al (2007) discuss an interesting dilemma from their review of the literature on workforce diversity and inequality. The research they reviewed tended to find that on the one hand, innovation, adaptability and creativity are more likely in heterogeneous groups, but the ability to implement and integrate divergent ideas is more difficult. On the other hand, cooperation and trust are more evident in homogeneous groups, but adaptability and innovation are less likely to emerge.

In the public sector, Pitts (2009) finds positive results from analyzing perceptual data from the 2006 Federal Human Capital Survey administered to permanent employees in most federal-level government agencies. The findings indicate that diversity management is strongly linked to both work group performance and job satisfaction, and that people of color see benefits from diversity management above and beyond those experienced by white employees. Yet Naff and Kellough (2003) find mixed results in their analysis of public agencies. Other scholars have found “backlash” toward diversity management initiatives, particularly from white staff (Von Bergen et al, 2002), as similar studies discussed in Category 2 above.

Reframing the Business Case

Given inconsistent findings and questionable links between increased diversity and better business performance, several scholars are calling for a reframing of the “business case”: success is facilitated by a perspective that considers diversity to be an opportunity for everyone in an organization. Organizations that invest their resources in taking advantage of the opportunities that diversity offers should outperform those that fail to make such investments.

Konrad (2003) discusses the limitations of the business case by linking it to what she claims is an outdated “trait model of diversity”: the business case argument often ignores the destructive impact of stereotyping, prejudice, and institutional and interpersonal discrimination because raising these sensitive issues can be threatening to power holders. Arguments that a diverse set of employees will bring market intelligence about their cultural groups threaten to ghettoize members of historically excluded groups, limiting them to positions where they represent the company to their own communities (see also Zanoni et al, 2010 for a critical review of the diversity literature).



Although much of the work contesting the “business case” takes place in the private sector, the same line of thought extends into the public sector as well. Studies in the public sector are finding that leaders are using largely untested assumptions as a basis for policies, strategies and actions (Wise and Tschirhart, 2000).

It may be that the business case rhetoric has run its course. Diversity professionals, industry leaders and researchers might do better to recognize that while there is no reason to believe diversity will naturally translate into better or worse results, diversity is both a labor market imperative and societal expectation and value.



This work seems to be telling us that there are always risks associated with diversity programs, and leaders and program managers should anticipate what those risks might be and mitigate accordingly. As a result, leaders trying to advance diversity should ask more sophisticated questions about the conditions that mitigate or exacerbate diversity's potential negative or positive effects instead of comparing groups based on attitudes, pay or promotion opportunities as traditional studies have done. Studies that question the efficacy of the "business case" also recommend the integration of group process skills to facilitate constructive conflict and effective communication in leadership training for diversity (Arai et al, 2001).

Managing and Leveraging Diversity

In addition to studying impact, another cluster of studies is concerned with the empirical study of diversity management programs within organizations, evaluating their merits and drawbacks, and in some cases, looking at what motivates the creation of diversity programs.

Managing Diversity in the Private Sector

An article by Kalev et al (2007) looks at over 700 private sector organizations and finds that there are three broad approaches for managing diversity: establishing organizational responsibility for diversity, moderating managerial bias through training and feedback, and reducing the social

isolation of women and minority workers. They find that efforts to moderate managerial bias are least effective at increasing the share of white women, black women and black men in management. Efforts to attack social isolation through mentoring and networking show modest effects. Efforts to establish responsibility for diversity lead to the broadest increases in managerial diversity. Moreover, organizations that establish responsibility see better effects from diversity training and evaluations, networking, and mentoring.

Managing Diversity in the Nonprofit Sector

The Foundation Center convened researchers, grantmakers and practitioners in 2007 to discuss the state of research on diversity in philanthropy. The proceedings report (2008) points to a general concern with diversity in foundations, owing to prohibitive qualifications such as requiring a PhD for certain foundation positions. Diversity was strongly linked to effective grantmaking although effectiveness was not defined. The report acknowledges that there has been no research that linked diversity to effectiveness in philanthropy. Grantmakers stressed the need for research to guide their programmatic funding decisions. They are also interested in political frame analysis and public education so that they can better persuade others to support their causes.

The Chronicle of Philanthropy collected data on the gender and race of current chief executives of the 400 nonprofit organizations featured in its 2009 Philanthropy 400 and compared that to similar data at the Fortune 500 companies. The findings are heartening in that nonprofits seem to have more diverse leadership than their for-profit counterparts, yet they are troubling when compared with the proportion of women and minorities in the American population.

A special 2010 *Chronicle of Philanthropy* issue on achieving diversity points to the importance

of boards in creating greater opportunity for minority candidates, yet some boards continue to exhibit ambivalence about selecting a minority to represent their organization to the wealthiest donors. According to a forthcoming Council of Foundations survey cited in the *Chronicle*, only 14 percent of board members are minorities. The same issue also stresses that there are too few minority candidates for fundraising positions at charities.

Halpern's (2006) review of nonprofit literature and research finds that the most important determining factor in the success of an organization's diversity efforts is the commitment of its leadership to creating an inclusive culture. Funder support is also critical. Work that builds organizational inclusiveness such as creating diversity committees, hiring consultants, initiating training and policies, etc. translates into costs. Research indicates that barriers to creating an inclusive workplace include insufficient time or financial resources, conflicting priorities, failed integration with the organizational mission and a flawed understanding of diversity.

Managing Diversity in the Public Sector

Pitts et al (2010) look into the factors that drive institutional diversity programs in the public sector. In studying public schools they find three main drivers:

- 1) as a response to environmental uncertainty (organizations institute programs because they have to;
- 2) as a result of environmental favorability and resource munificence (organizations institute programs because they can); and
- 3) in order to adapt to environmental norms and mimic the actions of peer organizations (organizations institute programs because everybody else is).



A critical mass of literature examines diversity management initiatives within the public sector – though it is hard to say whether these initiatives include a leadership development component or were strictly a diversity sensitizing training. Kellough and Naff (2004) state that 34 percent of agencies surveyed had a mentorship component in their diversity program, which is considered critical for leadership development. In any case, it is worth noting that several studies of public agencies found that the majority of agencies surveyed did have a diversity program in the late 90s. Kellough and Naff examine what is commonly included in diversity management programs in public agencies and identify seven core components:

- ensuring management accountability;
- examining organizational structure;
- culture and management systems;
- paying attention to representation;
- providing training;
- developing mentoring programs;
- promoting internal advocacy groups; and
- emphasizing shared values among stakeholders.

While it does not tackle the development of leaders of color per se, an article by Ingraham and Taylor (2004) reviews a number of government

leadership development programs and finds the following key components:

- capitalizing on personal initiative and having the support of the supervisor;
- ongoing monitoring and continued mentoring;
- a mix of developmental activities from classroom to team work to individual projects;
- life management skills such as dealing with stress and work/life balance;
- individual long-term career planning and organizational succession planning;
- growing leaders from within; and
- paying attention to core competencies.

Overall, each of these components need to be customized to the specific organizational context—there is no one size that fits all.

What Scholars are Calling For

A focus on representativeness merely through recruitment strategies is considered an incomplete effort by most accounts. Roosevelt (2006) distinguishes between representation and diversity—the latter he defines as “the behavioral differences, similarities and tensions that can exist among people when representation has been achieved.” He sees diversity management as a core task for leadership—a “craft” that has more to do with managing complexity than social justice, and achieving cohesiveness among difference. He argues for decoupling diversity management from the Civil Rights Movement—a very different stance from that taken by other scholars reviewed here who argue for a racial justice stance. Like Roosevelt, others have linked diversity management to organizational change—seeing it as a springboard for a more adaptable organization.

Pitts (2005) argues for a comprehensive system for managing diversity in public service organizations. These systems should include:

- 1) recruitment and outreach, including a strategic plan for recruiting from underrepresented groups;
- 2) valuing differences, which is more normative in nature and considers whether employees and managers appreciate the different cultural assumptions and biases that employees bring to their work—this includes programs aimed at bridging the cultural gap; and
- 3) pragmatic programs and policies that consist of a strategic set of management tools an organization can use to promote employee job satisfaction and performance.

Pitts’ (2007) review of policy implementation research in the area of diversity finds that the following factors are key to the success of diversity initiatives:

- 1) The more resources devoted to diversity management programs, the more likely they are to be fully implemented.
- 2) The more specific the components of the program (having a centralized point person, scheduled functions and standardized literature), the more likely it is to be fully implemented.
- 3) There should be a causal theory in place that makes an obvious link between the components of the program and the goals it seeks to achieve.
- 4) Communication related to the program should be clear, consistent, frequently repeated and articulated from credible sources.
- 5) While the program should be implemented from the top down, support should be garnered from all levels of the organization during the formulation stage.

The Impact of Networks on Diversity

Fernandez and Fernandez-Mateo (2006) look for factors that explain why minorities may be cut off

from the networks that help with employment. In their review of previous studies on the topic they find that while the original impulse was to emphasize minorities’—especially African Americans’ and Hispanics’—disconnection from the world of work, much research suggests the opposite, that minorities are more likely to have obtained their job through networks than non-minorities. Moreover, these studies have also found that jobs obtained through networks pay less than jobs obtained by other means. Rather than exclusion from white networks the emphasis in the literature has shifted to minorities’ over-reliance on ethnic networks that lead to lower-paying jobs, which have been dubbed “wrong” networks. The authors unpack the various mechanisms involved in job finding through



networks, challenging network accounts of racial inequality in the labor market and calling for more nuance. In doing empirical work at a company, they found that network factors operate at several stages of the recruitment process, but found scant evidence that these network factors serve to cut off minorities from employment at this company.

Much more empirical evidence is needed to establish with more confidence the connection between diversity initiatives, leadership development and the advancement of leaders of color to positions of power. However, this is not to say that there is no room for deep qualitative, empirical research that delves beyond the numbers into the relationship between diversity and organizational outcomes or why certain diversity efforts succeed and others fail.

It is no surprise that scholars have been calling for more integrated systems for managing diversity and have been generating lists of what they think makes for a good diversity initiative. Yet such evaluative work claiming to determine the impacts of diversity programs mostly relies on perceptual data, not hard evidence. Scholars have largely speculated about what makes diversity programs work and what doesn’t, and even then, the speculation is not about diversity at the top of organizations. Much more empirical evidence is needed to establish with more confidence the connection between diversity initiatives, leadership development and the advancement of leaders of color to positions of power. However, this is not to say that there is no room for deep qualitative, empirical research that delves beyond the numbers into the relationship between diversity and organizational outcomes or why certain diversity efforts succeed and others fail.

SUMMARY: PROGRAM-LEVEL IMPLICATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP DIVERSITY

It might be high time to reframe the term the “business case” to a more expanded concept that is based on both functional and moral grounds. One possible backlash of the term, apart from non-conclusive evidence from research, is that it might signal to organizations that they should only care about diversity when it directly benefits their bottom line. Commitment for diversity needs to be fostered on moral and justice grounds as well, not only utilitarian ones. It is worth noting that diversity as “justice” seems to be a recurring theme in the new literature (see Leadership Learning Community, 2010).

We suggest reframing the business case as follows: working across difference is a core leadership task and getting diversity right – not just as the token representation of people, but a welcoming of each person’s unique contributions—makes for a more adaptable and nimble organization in the face of today’s complex world. Ospina refers to “maximizing” diversity as opposed to “managing” diversity to acknowledge that diversity can actually push the organization’s frontier if effectively leveraged (1996).

The article which delves into the connection between networks and recruitment is informative. It shows that it’s not just about “good” or “bad” networks or that people of color are cut off from networks that can facilitate access to employment. The way a job seeker relies on his/her network and whether organizations encourage referrals will influence a person of color’s opportunities in the job market. So, the use of networks is more than an individual phenomenon. Chances that people of color will find work through contacts depend also on organizations’ openness to the use of networks. For individual connections to yield positive results, organizations also need to open up their networks.



CONCLUSIONS



Mixed Empirical Findings

There is a recognized need to do more empirical work, especially to unpack how efforts to foster diversity impact the organization and its members. The extant empirical work is rich yet very mixed. Herring (2009) summarizes this range well by noting that one perspective finds value in diversity and argues that a diverse workforce produces better bottom-line results. Another perspective is skeptical of the benefits and argues that diversity can be counterproductive due to increased conflict. A third paradoxical view suggests that greater diversity is associated with more group conflict and better performance. This is possible because diverse groups are more prone to conflict, but conflict forces them to go beyond the easy solutions common in like-minded groups.

Acknowledging that some research has found negative results from diversity initiatives does not mean abandoning the case for diversity altogether. The little empirical work that has been done is itself limited to one-off cases, to analyzing secondary data from existing surveys rather than designing original research, or to analyzing perceptual data generated from people's opinions and using those as the basis for determining success or failure. It is hard to say why diversity led to negative outcomes in those cases. It could be that the initiative was poorly executed or conceived, or the organization got diversity wrong, to name a few of the contributing factors. The point is, much more research is needed to unpack why in some instances diversity led to negative results.

There is No One-Size-Fits-All

What the mixed results suggest is that organizations are struggling to deal with or leverage diversity without any assurances of positive outcomes. There is no one size that fits all—doing diversity well is precisely the complex kind of work that requires leadership rather than management solutions. Scholars claim that organizations that “do (racial) diversity” well are better positioned to deal with the multiple forms of diversity that face organizations today.

Shifting Landscape of Terms

Scholars seem to be anxious about presenting the next silver bullet, as reflected in the shifting landscape of terms—from equal opportunity to affirmative action, from discrimination-and-fairness to integration-and-learning, from representation to diversity, and as some will argue, from diversity to inclusion. Scholars suggest that what has been tried by organizations is not enough—what is needed is a more integrated system, more commitment from leadership, more holistic approaches—all of which can benefit from testing.

...The literature has traditionally looked at networks as individual phenomena - that people of color are cut off from the professional networks that connect them to work. More recent work is acknowledging networks as organizational phenomena too. So, even if people of color have access to professional networks, organizations can still limit opportunities for people of color if they do not encourage hiring through such networks.

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The critical discourse literature reminds us that while different races bring different perspectives, it is important not to caricature or stereotype people of color. Doing so can perpetuate tokenism and stereotypical behavior as well as heighten a sense of “othering.” There is a fine balance between honoring difference and boxing people into social categories that serve as predictors of their behavior.

Diversity and Organizational Adaptability

More recent literature is calling for a shifting of the case for diversity from a market imperative to an understanding that racial diversity is only one reflection of the increasingly complex environment in which organizations need to operate. The argument is that diversity presents an opportunity for an organization to practice the skills needed



Equipping People AND Organizations

While it is important to equip leaders of color with the skills to make an impact, it is also important to equip organizations to leverage diversity. People of color may be fantastic leaders, but they may still encounter various ceilings if their organizations and systems do not create the environment to welcome their contributions. Organizations also need support to be better able to harness diversity. While the literature does not directly address the need to tackle multiple levels – individuals, organizations and systems, it is implicit that it is high time to consider these levels in tandem. For example, the literature has traditionally looked at networks as individual phenomena—that

to deal with volatility. An organization that can maximize the power of racial diversity can in turn adapt to all the different forms of diversity, increasing its responsive capacity and ability to embrace paradox – all characteristics of an adaptive and nimble organization.

Some Progress in Diversity, but Not in Leadership

There is some evidence that a broad swath of public agencies has embarked on some kind of diversity initiative and that there has been an improvement in numbers. There is also documentation that there has been an improvement in diversity in the business sector.

More recent literature is calling for a shifting of the case for diversity from a market imperative to an understanding that racial diversity is only one reflection of the increasingly complex environment in which organizations need to operate. ... An organization that can maximize the power of racial diversity can in turn adapt to all the different forms of diversity, increasing its responsive capacity and ability to embrace paradox – all characteristics of an adaptive and nimble organization.

We know anecdotally that leadership in the nonprofit sector is more diverse than in the for-profit world. Yet more comprehensive research is needed to confirm this, and generally the research has tended to focus less on leadership and more on workforces. It should be stressed that a key question in assessing equity within any sector is the extent to which leadership positions are equally distributed among members of different groups.

Nonprofit Research Largely Missing

Although the general scholarly literature on diversity is limited, that explicitly addressing the nonprofit sector is virtually non-existent. The references that do tackle diversity within the nonprofit sector are mostly non-academic. We do not have an explanation for this gap, but we can arrive at an inkling of an answer when we look at some of the reasons why there is some research in the public and business sectors. In the 90s, there was a push for equal opportunity employment in government agencies. In the business sector, it may well be that businesses were lured by the “case” for diversity, or were trying to avoid costly affirmative action litigations or both. In either case, there was a driver for public and business organizations to undertake diversity initiatives, which in turn, attracted research about the efficacy of such initiatives. Similar drivers seem to be missing in the nonprofit world.

Commentary: Convergences, Divergences and Gaps in the Literature

The literature we reviewed can be sliced a different way. There are two bodies of work, one of which lies at the intersection of race and leadership, looking at race as a social identity. This mainly characterizes our own work on the topic. The other broad category is concerned with creating and leveraging diversity (Eagly and Chin, 2010).

...Despite interesting and nuanced developments in the field of leadership, scholarly work on race remains separate from the mainstream leadership tradition, which renders western perspectives and ‘whiteness’ the default categories to measure leadership.

An interesting pattern was found on both fronts. The Ospina and Foldy (2009) work suggests that despite interesting and nuanced developments in the field of leadership, scholarly work on race remains separate from the mainstream leadership tradition, which renders western perspectives and “whiteness” the default categories to measure leadership. In fact, an article by DiTomaso and Hoojberg (1996) argues critically that the shortfall of race in the leadership literature is in part due to current models of leadership replete with implicit theories that sanction and perpetuate inequality. There is also a gap in the diversity literature. While the leadership literature does not adequately explore or acknowledge race, the diversity literature seldom explores leadership. The predominant concern is with creating a “diverse workforce” rather than diverse leadership.

What these two gaps suggest is that there is much room for progress in both academic worlds of “diversity” and “leadership.” Changing the discourse on diversity entails doing more empirical research that puts forth the voices and experiences of leaders of color, consciously exploring the

connection between diversity and leadership. If NUF rightly seeks to shift leaders of color in public service from access to influence to power, then it follows that the academic literature, which in many cases offers an authoritative voice in policymaking, should look more closely at diversity in leadership, not just in numbers.

Main Convergences:

- Scholars generally support the notion that diversity presents an opportunity for organizations to excel, as well as an imperative to adapt to changing demographic conditions. None of the references reviewed makes a counterclaim to diversity creation, even when findings do not support a positive link between diversity initiatives and performance.
- Scholars also agree that representativeness alone, marked by increases in the number of people of color in organizations, is not enough. There is a call for more integrated systems that go beyond recruitment.

Main Divergences:

- Scholars agree to disagree about the impact of diversity initiatives. Findings about the link between diversity and certain performance outcomes are extremely mixed. It is a well accepted premise among scholars that much more empirical work needs to be done to better establish causal connections.
- While scholars are pro-diversity, they differ about the case for it. The case for diversity ranges from the instrumental (it is the market imperative) to the moral (it is the right thing to do), and these arguments are not always combinable. Some think that adopting an instrumental reasoning actually detracts from the case for diversity.
- Scholars differ on the level of individual attention that organizations should give in

order to foster and leverage diversity. Some argue that organizations should pay attention to each and every individual in order to unleash their full potential. Others believe in respecting diversity without dwelling too much on the differences, and establishing a collective identity or superordinate goal that takes priority over individual identity.

Prospects for Research

The review of scholarship on race, leadership and diversity reveals explicit areas that could benefit from more research. One area clearly in need of more research is the nature of the leadership experiences of people of color. Such research needs to be done in a way to ensure that it becomes part of the mainstream leadership literature rather than pushed to the margins as research that cannot be generalized.

There is also a need for comparative research that allows users to draw insights from parallels and contrasts across programs and sectors. Although there is much research about diversity programs (in the public and business sectors), each research project looks at particular programs. Such single cases may have common features with others, but

it would be helpful to conduct more comparative research that looks at features such as factors of success, barriers, program components, triggers or drivers and main approaches and assumptions across programs. This will help identify general patterns across programs, providing a more complete picture of what organizations are doing to leverage diversity rather than trying to compare individualized research studies that may have very different questions and designs.

Given the mixed findings about the impact of diversity initiatives, more research is needed to discern the reasons behind either positive or negative results. For instance, when research reports that there is a negative relationship between diversity efforts and bottom-line results, is that because of faulty program design, poor implementation or other factors? The mixed findings need to be unpacked, preferably across different programs so that administrators and managers can better understand how to minimize negative impacts and maximize positive ones. The finding about increased conflict as related to diversity efforts and the negative impacts on organizational performance deserves further exploration. A key question is what intermediate mechanisms moderate the link between increased conflict and decreased performance. If these are found to include factors that can be controlled, such as lack of skills in conflict management, the general finding can be refined and the conflicting interpretations reframed.

An important prospect for research is about the nature and role of leadership development programs. Given the variety and plethora of leadership development offerings in public service, potential research might look into individual program impacts and preferably collective impacts. In other words, the overarching questions would be: what are all these programs adding up to? And what can be said about the state of leadership for people of color and the inclusive nature of



organizational environments? With regards to the impacts of leadership development for moving people of color from influence to power, it would be immensely helpful for research to determine more systematically what it takes for a leadership development program to catalyze that shift. The overall objective of such research would be to identify the factors that contribute the most to the trajectories of participants of color and to determine the role of leadership development in their advancement.



Finally, given the multiplicity of questions and potential levels of intervention, a worthwhile potential project might be to engage with practitioners concerned with leadership diversity in systemic action research. Action research is an approach to inquiry that enables practitioners to engage with peers in systematic reflection and in lifting lessons from their everyday practice. The research revolves around questions of burning concern for the practitioners—answers to which can help them improve their practice or better address a challenge. The systemic perspective recognizes that we all operate in complex and dynamic environments where cause and effect are far from linear, and where actions at one level of the system have consequences for the other levels of the system.

It is opportune to apply a systemic action research approach to the study of the multiple dimensions of diversity leadership because it is now recognized that real change will happen not through one-off initiatives but through interventions at multiple levels and concerted action. The goal would be to facilitate a process of systemic action and reflection among practitioners, their organizations, their

constituents and other stakeholders over a determined period of time. For those practitioners who run leadership development programs, the question would revolve around what it would take to shift leaders of color from positions of influence to power. For those practitioners striving to embed diversity and inclusion within their organizations, the question would revolve around the enablers and challenges to such work. The questions would be developed from the ground up. The design would include mechanisms to ensure that participants have information about existing research. For example, for participating funders, some of the questions raised by the First Annual Researcher/Practitioner Forum on the State of Research on Diversity in Philanthropy (Austin & McGill, 2007) can be used as triggers for co-inquirers to raise their own questions. In order for the findings of this research to be considered legitimate, the systemic action research program must be carefully designed, implemented and documented with the support of researchers who can demonstrate credibility based on their previous experience with both mainstream and action research.

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APPENDIX 1

METHODOLOGY

RCLA’s task was to review the latest scholarly thinking on diversity, race and leadership in the United States. Given existing research on the challenges facing people of color in public service, we have excluded from our literature review references that solely discuss the demographic changes or workforce inequities and the under-representation of people of color—these realities have been well documented (see DiTomaso et al, 2007 for a review on workforce diversity and inequity and Halpern, 2006 for general trends in the nonprofit workforce). Instead we focused our inquiry on exploring the latest thinking in the (racial) diversity literature with an eye toward the following practical considerations:

1. Noting language and trends that can inform NUF’s campaign for diversity in public service, grounding it in a solid theoretical base;
2. Generating key insights for people of color navigating public service careers and seeking to advance to positions of high impact; and
3. Producing actionable recommendations for stakeholders of leadership development programs in public service, social justice advocates concerned with diversity issues, and public and nonprofit institutions seeking to build leadership diversity within their organizations.

For the most part, leadership was not a topic addressed by the authors. We applied the leadership lens in order to draw out the above implications.

Initially our search was dedicated to finding literature that is located at the intersection of “leadership,” “diversity” and “public service.” Only a handful of resources actually address the three topics in tandem. We have thus decided to include references about the business sector both because the diversity conversation draws on the business literature and also, as one participant in the National Urban Fellows New York City Summit pointed out, dynamics in one sector are often felt in another – the nonprofit, business and public sectors are increasingly convergent.

The review focuses primarily on, but is not exclusive to the management and organizational literature given the assumed commitment of scholars within this tradition to doing practice-relevant work. In a few instances where combinations of our main search terms – “leadership,” “diversity” and “public service” —produced results, we included those results even when they came from outside the management and organizational literature. Other search terms included variations of: inclusion, cultural competence/ intelligence, racial justice, fault lines, racial equity, and colorblindness.

Apart from a search on the main academic search engines, we also conducted a more targeted search for the terms above in the top four public service journals: *Public Administration Review* (PAR), *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *Journal of Public Personnel Management*, and ARNOVA’s (Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action) *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*.

Since we are interested in the latest thinking on diversity, we have excluded any literature that predates the year 2000, with only a couple of exceptions.

Analysis of Literature Reviewed

After identifying a multitude of potential entries and screening out those not pertinent, we settled for a full review of 85 references. Their distribution among the categories is as follows:

Organizational frameworks for diversity	Human interactions under conditions of (racial) difference	Diversity management programs
24	24	37

That the majority of articles fall in the “diversity management” category is not surprising, given the bias of the organization and management field towards generating practice-grounded knowledge.

Most (73) are academic references, i.e. published in academic journals. A few (12) non-academic reports are included, which we believe have contributed to heightened awareness about diversity,

Of the references that address a specific sector explicitly, there is a balanced distribution between those that examined diversity in the public sector and those that looked into the private sector.

Of the 85 references reviewed, only six address diversity in the nonprofit sector and of those, only one is an academic reference. This points to a serious gap in the nonprofit scholarly literature.

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