Revisiting the Benefits of Integrating Multicultural and Workforce Diversity Frameworks and Practices in Organizational Settings: Suggestions for Advancing Contemporary Leadership Practices

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Recognized contemporary leadership practices such as Servant Leadership (Greenleaf, 2007), Transcendent Leadership (Crossan., Vera., & Nanjad, 2008) and Strategic Leadership (Beatty & Quinn, 2010),) are known for offering an understanding of the ways that leadership skills can be utilized in a variety of organizational settings. These well-known leadership practices are also known for underscoring the kinds of traits and behaviors that leaders should possess to lead and manage their employees and achieve organizational goals. However, one area that is absent from contemporary leadership practices is a focus on the kinds of multicultural and workforce diversity leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities that organizational leaders should possess to lead and manage a range of human diversities effectively in various organizational settings. The aim of this article is to: 1) share examples of existing multicultural and workforce diversity frameworks and practices that offer insights for advancing contemporary leadership practices: and 2) highlight the benefits of integrating multicultural and workforce diversity leadership frameworks and practices in present-day organizational settings.

Keywords: workforce diversity, organizational leadership, traditional leadership theories, workforce diversity leadership, multicultural leadership

INTRODUCTION

Recognized contemporary leadership practices are known for offering an understanding of how leadership skills can be utilized in various organizational settings and for underscoring the traits and behaviors that leaders should possess to lead their employees and achieve organizational goals. For example, Servant Leadership (Greenleaf, 2007) focuses on the ability of leaders to serve, and support employees while demonstrating empathy, active listening, foresight and stewardship, or more specifically, leading with care and responsibility. Transcendent Leadership (Crossan, Vera, & Nanjad 2008) focuses on leaders' responsibility to be self-aware and proactive, to lead and influence employees, and lead the organization in the areas of environment and strategy that promotes organizational success, while Strategic Leadership (Beatty & Quinn, 2010) focuses on leaders ability to create an organizational vision, act by developing an organizational strategy, motivating individual employees and employee teams, and by making decisions that can help the organization become more competitive and profitable.

However, changing demographic trends globally over the past decades, along with rising harassment and discrimination cases and complaints in society (Banks, 1989; Thomas, 1992; Cox, 1993; West, 1993; Wentling and Palma-Riva, 1997; Gilbert, 2005; Kendi, 2019; Byrd & Scott, 2024a;) continue to inform

organizational leaders of the need for welcoming, respectful, and inclusive environments for all individuals to thrive in. In responding to this concern, many educational institutions and organizations have embraced the benefits of human diversity by creating multicultural education and workforce diversity frameworks along with policy and practices to help individuals develop the competencies and skills they need for effectively educating, working with, and leading individuals from diverse backgrounds (Banks, 1989; Thomas, 1992; Cox, 1993: Howard-Hamilton, 2000; Petryk, Thompson, & Boynton, 2013; Banks, 2014; Hughes, 2016; Kendi, 2019; Byrd and Scott, 2024a).

Yet, despite these efforts, research continues to confirm that numerous problems still confront many people of color. women, the disabled and immigrants seek to fully integrate into today's society. For example, stories of discrimination, racism, sexism, harassment, discomfort, alienation, frustration, and overall lack of success in fully integrating into communities, educational intuitions, and organizations persists (Banks, 1989 Thomas, 1991; Cox, 1993, West, 1993; Heymann & Sprague, 2017; Tseis, 2017; Kendi, 2019, Byrd & Scott, 2024a and Byrd and Scott, 2024b). This article will share examples of multicultural and workforce diversity frameworks and practices that offer insights for advancing the utility of contemporary leadership practices. This article will also underscore the benefits of integrating multicultural and workforce diversity leadership frameworks and practices in organizational settings.

REVISITING MULTICULTURAL AND WORKFORCE DIVERSITY FRAMEWORKS THAT COULD BE UTILIZED IN ORGANIZATIONS TO ADVANCE CONTEMPORARY LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

In a dissertation by Scott (2003), entitled *Giving Voice to Experiences of Adults Participating in a Multicultural Immersion Program*, a literature review on multicultural and workforce diversity frameworks provided examples of their utility in organizational settings. In the focus areas of multicultural and organizational diversity practices examined by Scott in 2003, Thomas (1992), Cox, (1993), Wentling and Palma -Rivas (1997) and Maltbia, (2001) were highlighted as being recognized researchers who have studied extensively contemporary and evolving organizational diversity, multicultural leadership efforts and supporting workforce diversity practices. In Table 1 below, current and evolving organizational practices in the areas of diversity and multicultural leadership, and management are offered by Thomas (1992); Cox (1993); Wentling and Palma -Rivas (1997) and Maltbia, (2001) from distinct perspectives. A discussion of each organizational diversity practice will follow highlighting their core elements and critiques.

TABLE 1
ORGANIZATIONAL DIVERSITY PRACTICES DEFINED

Author (s)	Key Concepts	Definition/Description
Thomas (1991)	Managing Diversity	"Managing diversity [a form of leadership for diversity] in organizations] is a comprehensive managerial process for developing an environment that works for all employees" (p. 10).
Cox (1993)	Creating the Multicultural Organization and Leadership – A Focus on Diversity Leadership	"Leadership refers to the need for champions of the cause of diversity who will take strong personal stands on the need for change, and assist with the work of moving the organization forward" (p. 230).

Wentling and Palma-Rivas (1997)	Diversity in the Workforce: A Literature Review Diversity in the Workforce Series Report # 1	"The main focus of this report is to describe in detail the literature on diversity in the workforce to bring about an understanding of the complexity and breadth of workplace diversity issues. The report also intends to provide insights on the trends that have emerged in the field of diversity, and information that can be used to develop new and unique approaches that fit the needs of particular organizations" (p. v).
Maltbia (2001)	The Diversity Practitioners Study	"The researcher was interested in understanding not only the "what" and "how", "but also the "why" behind the approach that the selected sample of diversity practitioners used to help the organizations address diversity in the workplace" (p. 2).

The Role of Diversity Management

As corporations continue to become more diverse and global, and diversity remains a core business issue, as previously highlighted, effective diversity management in organizations will also be necessary. According to Roosevelt Thomas (1992), diversity management is a strategy designed to assist organizations in creating "steps for generating a mutual capability to tap the potential of all employees" (p. 10). For Thomas (1992), diversity management is a "new" organizational management strategy that "approaches diversity from three levels simultaneously: individual, interpersonal, and organizational" (p. 12), thus making diversity a core issue of concern within organizations (p. 12). Thomas (1992) views the strategy of diversity management as not only focusing on issues of "race and gender, but all other dimensions of diversity" such as social class, age, disabilities, ethnicity, and military experience (p. 12).

Thomas (1992) also believes that diversity management "is not a quick fix management program" or a group of coordinated objectives aimed to give the appearance that organizational diversity concerns are being addressed (p. 12). Instead, he maintains that diversity management is; 1) a strategy that "calls for more than changing the corporation's way of life; 2) implementing diversity management takes many years" (p. 12); and 3) the effectiveness of diversity management hinges on the ability of managers [at all levels] to empower employees (p. 10).

The Role of Diversity Leadership in the Multicultural Organization

According to Cox (1993, p. 241) a multicultural organization seeks to assist all of its workers, regardless of their varying backgrounds in reaching their personal and professional goals, while contributing to the organization's success. The exclusive characteristics of multicultural organizations offered by Cox (1993, p. 229) consist of the following:

- "a culture that fosters and values cultural differences
- pluralism as an acculturation process
- full structural integration
- full integration of the informal networks
- an absence of institutionalized cultural bias in human resource management systems and
- practices
- a minimum of intergroup conflict due to the proactive management of diversity"

In addition to the above, Cox (1993) stated that effective "leadership, is needed to convert established organizations into multicultural organizations (p. 231). Below, a summary is provided on Cox's leadership component needed to effectively guide multicultural organizations.

The Role of Leadership Practices in the Multicultural Organization

Effective leadership is critical in transforming existing organizations into multicultural organizations (1993, p. 230). For Cox (1993), leadership in this context suggests that organizational leaders must become change agents so they can "model" the passion, attitude, and professional conduct needed to transform

established organizations in multicultural organizations (p. 229). For example, Cox (1993, p. 230) noted that organizational leaders and change agents of workforce diversity must also demonstrate the following:

- [A]" commitment of resources (financial and human and resources) towards workforce diversity initiatives.
- Inclusion of managing diversity as a component of the mission and vision of the organization.
- A willingness to change (develop if necessary) corporate-wide human resource management practices, such as performance appraisal and compensation systems.
- A willingness to keep mental energy and financial support focused on managing and valuing diversity for a period of years, rather than months or weeks.
- The establishment of valuing diversity as a core objective of the organization that receives the same priority as other core values such as safety, integrity, and total quality".

Cox (1993) further highlighted that in addition to having top leadership's commitment and support for a workforce that is diverse, support and commitment for workforce diversity is also needed at the mid and lower manager levels of the organizations, to ensure that human diversity and supporting efforts are integrated throughout the organization and that human diversity is being managed effectively at all levels of the organization (p. 232).

The Role of Diversity in the Workforce: A Literature Review

In December of 1997, researchers Wentling and Palma-Rivas published a literature review entitled Diversity in the Workforce Series Report 1: Diversity in the Workforce: A Literature Review (p. 4) to highlight existing research on the practice of workforce diversity "and bring about understanding of the complexity and breath of workplace diversity issues" (p. v). Their literature review explored the following themes that relate to this paper: 1) "why organizations are valuing and managing diversity", and 2) "strategies for managing diversity" (p. 11).

Theme One Why Organizations are Valuing and Managing Diversity. The reasons why organizations are valuing and managing diversity according to Wentling and Palma Rivas findings (1997) is because it will allow them to be more competitive by: 1) appealing to diverse employee groups and drawing on their creative talents; and 2) appealing to a diverse customer base (p. 70) which is an advantage needed to succeed in the today's diverse marketplace.

Theme Two: Managing Diversity. In this section Wentling and Palma-Rivas (1997) identified that diversity in organizational settings is being managed in various ways (p. 71). Therefore, their research on this topic concluded that "no single initiative is comprehensive enough to solve all diversity issues or to successfully manage diversity in organizations" (p. 71). The also highlighted several diversity management barriers that have hindered the practice of managing diversity in organizations. These barriers include: "stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, harassment, difficulty in balancing work and family, poor career planning and development, lack of organizational political savvy, unsupportive work environments, exclusion and isolation, [having their] qualifications and performance questioned, lack of mentors and backlash" (p. 71).

Lastly, Wentling and Palma-Riva's (1997) uncovered in their research that diversity initiatives in organizations locally, nationally and globally will continue to thrive because society in general is becoming more diverse (p. 71). The authors' inquiry additionally revealed that diversity training [and education] will remain a necessary initiative in future organizations at all levels due to the complexities surrounding human diversity issues in general (p. 71).

The Role of Diversity Practitioners

Similar to Wentling and Palma-Rivas's (1997) study Maltbia's (2001) research sheds light on what is known about workplace diversity from the perspectives of twelve external and internal diversity practitioners including diversity managers, diversity leaders and chief diversity officers (p. 371) and from his review of literature on workplace diversity (p. 401). An important theme that Maltbia (2001) uncovered was that many of the diversity practitioners stated that gaining and sustaining the personal commitment for

organizational diversity efforts from senior leadership was a key factor as it relates to the overall results that diversity efforts will have within the organization (p. 396). Moreover, Maltbia's (2001) literature review on workplace diversity revealed that the factors supporting the inclusion of diversity efforts in organizations include: 1) having a clear vision and rationale for engaging in the diversity process and 2) the courage to transform the people and organizational systems needed to realize the vision" (p. 401). However, the barriers found in this review of literature that hinder the employment of diversity efforts in organizations include: 1) fear, resistance to change at the individual level and 2) organizational barriers related to systems and practices that are not aligned with the aim of diversity (p. 401).

In Maltbia's (2000) earlier research on this topic he also discovered that diversity practitioners need to engage in self-work, a concept similar to self-awareness in order to develop and maintain the ability to effectively direct others through "the personal and organizational transformation needed to productively work with diversity" (Maltbia, 2000, p.109). The process of self-work can be further understood and applied using two of the learning domains that Mezirow (1991) discussed: instrumental learning and communicative learning.

First, instrumental learning is helpful regarding self-work and managing diversity. For example, monitoring the planning and controlling processes related to learning, conducting cultural programs for adults, developing organizational readiness assessments, and training needs assessments generally are used to set the groundwork in the early phases of the diversity process in a specific context. Next, communicative learning is appropriate for understanding diversity, valuing diversity, and leveraging diversity because the emphasis is on the dynamics of learning to understand others.

Maltbia (2000) as well revealed that the concept of self-work parallels Goleman's (1995, 1998) work on emotional intelligence. Goleman explained that personal competence influences how people manage themselves; specifically, self-awareness, self-regulation, and motivation that are at the core of this idea of personal competence. Therefore, according to Maltbia (2000), diversity practitioners must have a high level of emotional awareness with respect to how various primary, secondary, and organizational dimensions of diversity affect their performance and how their collective set of values guides what they pay attention to in organizations and, as a result, the interventions they select in the process of doing diversity work. Diversity practitioners must also be able to assess their strengths and weaknesses related to general and specific diversity work (Maltbia, 2000). Lastly, Maltbia (2000) asserted that diversity practitioners must possess the knowledge, skills, self-confidence, and courage to help employees (adult learners) challenge unconstructive assumptions, which often serve as obstacles to accomplishing the goals they seek to meet.

THE BENEFITS OF INTEGRATING MULTICULTURAL AND WORKFORCE DIVERSITY LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORKS AND PRACTICES IN ORGANIZATIONAL SETTINGS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR ADVANCING CONTEMPORARY LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

The author of this article and workforce diversity researchers agrees and assert that diversity and multicultural leadership and management knowledge, skills and abilities are core competencies that *all organizational leaders* should possess (Hughes, 2016; Byrd and Scott, 2024a). It is also underscored in this article that organizational leaders need to continuously engage in self-work (Maltbia, 2001) including obtaining diversity education and training, reading workforce diversity articles, and attending workforce diversity seminars, to be informed, stay and prepared to lead an evolving diverse workforce. Moreover, it was noted that organizational leaders need to know that they have to build accountability into their policy and practices concerning addressing the lingering issues of discrimination, racism, stereotyping, sexism, sexual orientation and ageism to name a few for the propose of creating a safe diverse and inclusive work environment for employees to thrive in.

While various contemporary leadership practices have introduced us to the fundamental attributes, traits, and behaviors relevant for organizational leaders, they lack the mention of essential organizational diversity attributes that all organizational leaders should also possess. Therefore, as society and the workforce continue to become more diverse, current and emerging leadership theories must integrate diversity and multicultural leadership theories and practices into their models and frameworks. This must

be considered to introduce and equip current and emerging organizational leaders to the knowledge, skills, and abilities they will need to effectively lead and manage an increasingly diverse workforce.

CONCLUSION

Comprehending what this review of literature highlighted above makes us aware that continuing to create an "organizational cultural that fosters and values cultural differences" (Cox, 1993, p. 229) requires an unwavering commitment from key organizational leaders. This literature review also provided several perspectives on why the concept of diversity leadership and related issues and concerns should be understood and managed by organizational leaders today and beyond in our global society. Therefore, building upon recognized contemporary organizational leadership practices by integrating diversity and multicultural and workforce diversity frameworks and practices offers contemporary organizational leaders a personal and professional growth opportunity to advance their 21st century organizational leadership skills and practices and be better equipped to lead and manage a growing diverse workforce.

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