

# Diversity and Leadership Literature, Critical Intersections— *Leading as a By-Product of Diversity*

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**How to cite this paper:** Kelly, S., & Carton, T. (2020). Diversity and Leadership Literature, Critical Intersections—*Leading as a By-Product of Diversity*. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 8, 432-450.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2020.85030>

**Received:** April 16, 2020

**Accepted:** May 26, 2020

**Published:** May 29, 2020

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## Abstract

We consider recent literature addressing intersections of critical leadership and critical diversity in health and social services, engaging critically and sociologically with *how* leadership engages with diversity, *how* diversity engages with leadership. By reviewing the extant literature, we contend that leadership and diversity are not fixed entities but moveable feasts rarely amenable to easy scrutiny. We found several sources engaging the *critical* intersection of leadership and diversity in practice beginning to present a decade ago, and increasing in the past five years which consistently express growing dissatisfaction with traditional methodologies which overlook issues of power, context and ambiguity, and which espouse an urgency to access updated methodologies. We discuss this literature, proposing analytical approaches, engaging intersectional insights, and consider some of the implications of these findings. We conclude that the imagined binaries, leadership and diversity are more often in practice inverted where leadership develops unassumingly as a by-product of diversity.

## Keywords

Diversity, Leadership, Critical, Intersectionality, Methodology, Literature Review

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## 1. Introduction

With the growth in interest in both leadership and diversity as terms now deemed essential to the effective practices of the business world seeping into health and social service delivery, traditional approaches to both of these phenomena continue to focus on individual leaders, managers and teams, rather than *how* follower and diverse workforces make sense of *diversity* and *leader-*

*ship*. This is often done with a focus on psychological industrial relations, with use of HR research methodologies and methods favouring measurements of self-ascription. Thereby societal context is ignored.

Modernist approaches to leadership and diversity overlook the commonalities and intersection of critical leadership and critical diversity studies, the challenges and the opportunities provided. Critical approaches however problematize the terms *leadership* and *diversity* and supporting language, suggesting these terms are given life, reified in the discursive, a “hypothetical construct is treated as the empirical reality” (Luthans as cited in Alvesson & Svenginnson, 2003: p. 360). Both imagine leading and diversity as process and practice, not entitative essentialist categories, and implicated in these terms are historical systems of social, cultural, and economic power (Alvesson & Svenginnson, 2003; Carroll et al., 2015; Fairhurst, 2009; Sutherland, 2018). Also discounted in traditional approaches is the “dialectical approach which emphasizes the processual, relational, and contradictory nature of intercultural communication, which encompasses many different kinds of intercultural knowledge.” (Martin & Nakayama, 2013: p. 72).

Through reviewing the extant but growing body of literature which considers the critical relationship between leadership and diversity, it is observed that the literature continues to be dominated by the parlous terrain of self-ascription, the artificial, non-situated approach which leads to a third shortcoming—the general paucity of empirical research based on experimentation, or on the curious, improvisational, playful and exciting use of active participative methods that give rise to relevant implications for organizational practitioners, where informal leaders emerge who are “collaborative, accessible, and considered the ‘go to’ staff.” (Heard, 2018: Abstract). We do begin to see some sources, starting in the past decade which aim to redeem the critical intersectionality of these concepts. Therefore, we address the **how**. How does literature consider the practice intersection of leadership and diversity through actions, contextual intersecting verbs rather than sacred nouns.

### Background/Context

Critical leadership and diversity studies present emerging fields (Carroll, Ford, & Taylor, 2015; Stanley & Kelly, 2018). Yet with a substantial and growing body of research and literature in both fields, these have tended to develop as separate and standalone, while as Stanley & Kelly (2018) contend, leaders and practitioners practice worlds are “becoming more complex, diverse, more uncertain; social inequalities and mental health issues are growing among the populations we work with. Social problems are growing into ‘wicked’ problems in the context within which we look to senior leaders to help” (2018, p.7).

Since 2014, both leadership and engaging with diversity and inclusion, are identified by Deloitte in Global *Human Capital Trends*, as within the top ten trends for concern for organisations worldwide (see notes from Stephanie). In 2015, leadership and diversity were listed in the top three concerns (see notes

from Stephanie). The 2016 *Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends* publication ((see notes from Stephanie) identifies leadership as the second ranked trend in order of importance (89% behind “organizational design”) which identifies “focusing on diversity and inclusion” (p5) as a high need at 92%).

From 2017 even Deloitte begins to bring these concepts together. The 2017 Deloitte report, “Trends: Rewriting the rules for the digital age” identifies that “diversity and inclusion have become a ‘CEO-level issue” (*Deloitte, 2017: p. 107*). CEOs who cited “inclusion” as a top priority for their organizations has risen 32 percent since the 2014 *Deloitte* survey: “Fairness, equity, and inclusion are now CEO-level issues” yet the leadership capability has not improved and continues to be a source of frustration and challenge for organisations (2017, p.7).

*Grant (2005)* urges different ways of imagining leadership working proactively within neoliberal mandates, weaving these closer to traditional social justice ethics for real business solutions to wicked social problems. The issues are potent to health and social service areas given the current global neoliberal climate when health service cuts are routine procedure and health and social service practitioners are required to meet competencies of practice with diversity. Addressing the imperative of context, neoliberal reshaping of welfare discourses in recent decades has significantly affected how we understand “practice leadership” (*Learmonth & Morrell, 2017; Stanley & Kelly, 2018*). Furthermore, addressing the concept of progress in its potential superficiality, Blackmore suggested, “notions of diversity, while originating in collective demands of social movements of feminism, anti-racism and multiculturalism of the 1970s and 1980s, have in recent times privileged learning and leadership as an individual accomplishment and not a collective practice” (*Blackmore, 2006: p. 181*).

In the substantial body of leadership and diversity literature, leadership invites applause, diversity requires amending. Somewhere in the contested interface lies a gem of practice, urgently needed to be told (see **Table 1**).

We searched over five years from 07/09/2014 to 07/09/2019 confined to journals in disciplines of *business, social welfare and social work*. We included search terms such as *leadership studies, diversity studies, diversity and leadership studies, critical leadership studies, critical diversity studies*.

In order to consider the *how* we also searched *discourse analysis and diversity studies, discourse analysis and leadership studies, ethnography and leadership studies, ethnography and diversity studies, intersectionality and diversity studies, intersectionality and leadership studies*. In order to contextualise we also searched *intersectionality and neoliberalism*.

Challenges arising from the due to the abstract tenor of these ideal-types, *leadership* and *diversity*, given their slipperiness which lends themselves to easy assumptions. Othered people rarely see themselves as diverse. Conversely, practitioners often absolve themselves from pretensions of leadership. Crucial was problematizing a common-sense asymmetry.

Utilizing the search terms *leadership* and *diversity studies*, the goal was to analyse diversity and leadership as specific academic pursuits limiting our search

to business and social welfare disciplines, comprising front line practical work, accessing mundane practicalities. The search accessed academic journals over the past five years, as well as identified key literature and open journals from earlier times.

Alternative search terms were engaged, which looked at practice rather than theory such as *neoliberalism* and *ethnography* which recognised context, but importantly the *how*, often contaminating elegant theory with the brute facts of practice.

**Table 1.** Methodology.

1		Search terms	Inclusion criteria	Result	%
2	More interest in	Leadership studies	Business	3160656	
3	Leadership in business than divers	Diversity studies	Business	24283	44
4	Total			55889	100
5	More interest in diversity than leadership	Leadership studies	Social Work	6600	40
6		Diversity studies	Social Work	9596	60
7	Total			16196100	
8	Less interest in Div. and Lead in S/W	Diversity studies and leadership studies	Social Work	169517	
9	More interest in Div. and Lead in Bus	Diversity studies and leadership studies	Business	855883	
10	Total			10253	100
11	High interest in critical leadership in business	Critical leadership studies	business	19397	44
12	Minimal interest in critical leadership in S/W	Critical leadership studies	Social work	399710	
13	High interest in critical diversity in business	Critical diversity studies	business	14345	33
14	Low interest in critical diversity in S/W	Critical diversity studies	Social work	5560	13
15				43299100	
17	More interest in Critical Div. AND Critical Lead in Business	Critical diversity studies and critical leadership studies	business	590483	
18	Less interest in Critical Div. AND Critical Lead in S/W	Critical diversity studies and critical leadership studies	Social Work	1209	17
19	Total			7113	100
20	High interest in ethnography in Business in leadership	Ethnography and leadership studies	Business	50072	
21	Low interest in ethnography in S/W in leadership	Ethnography and leadership studies	Social Work	19128	

## Continued

22				691100	
23	High interest in ethnography in Business in diversity studies	Ethnography and diversity studies	Business	51760	60
24	Moderate interest in ethnography in S/W in diversity studies	Ethnography and diversity studies	Social work	33940	
25	Total			856100	
26	High interest in discourse analysis business in leadership studies	Discourse analysis and leadership studies	Business	1315482	
27	Low interest in discourse analysis in S/W leadership studies	Discourse analysis and leadership studies	Social Work	278818	
29				15942	100
30	High interest in discourse analysis Business in diversity studies	Discourse analysis and diversity studies	Business	1187774	
31	Low interest in discourse analysis social in diversity studies	Discourse analysis and diversity studies	Social Work	426426	
32				15931	100
33	Low interest business studies	Intersectionality and diversity studies	Business	15732	
34	High interest in social work studies	Intersectionality and diversity studies	Social work	34869	
35	Total			505	100
36	Equal interest in business and social work	Intersectionality and leadership studies	Business	11649	
37	Equal interest in business and social work	Intersectionality and leadership studies	Social work	11951	
38				235	100
39	Higher interest in neoliberalism and intersectionality	Intersectionality and neoliberalism	Social work	4372	
40	Lower interest in neoliberalism and intersectionality	Intersectionality and neoliberalism	business	1728	
41	More in S/w	Discourse analysis and neoliberalism	Social work	583	
42		Discourse analysis and neoliberalism	Business	538	
43	More in S/w	Ethnography and neoliberalism	Social work	97	100
44		Ethnography and neoliberalism	Business	72	100
45				60	100

## 2. Findings

### *The predictable*

Doubtless, attending to diversity is important, literature considering *leadership* extensive. Carroll et al. (2015) acknowledge how vast these sources are, yet research provides generalized diversity management or leadership prescriptions possibly irrelevant, tokenistic for practitioners, proving counterproductive while reifying *othering* categories.

Literature considers the relationship between cultural competency skills and leadership. In a quantitative study (questionnaires) to 150 social work education leaders in the United States (Rank & Hutchison, 2000), leaders identified diversity skills as: multicultural leadership, acceptance and tolerance, cultural competence, and tolerance of ambiguity.

Siantz (2008) cites the need to move from affirmative action in recruitment in a school of nursing to lead and implement strategic planning strengthening diversity and cultural competence.

Empirical studies focus on the leader as a person/role, but lacking organisational, institutional cultural, gendered, social, economic, or political contexts. These traditional approaches view leadership via attributes, qualities, and activities of individuals—mostly those *publicly* in charge (Kotter, 2008; Zaleznik, 2004). Absent or peripheral is the role of leaders *not* publicly in charge, professionals sometimes avoiding categorisation as leaders often leading diversity initiatives but eschewing the title leaders, for example, “the Reluctant” (Hayes et al., 2016: p. 2). Diversity with its associated hubris has attracted attention, notably in the area of business. Zanoni, Janssens, Benschop, and Nkomo (2010) contend “the business rationale at the core of diversity has often been used to explain the popularity of this notion within the US business world” (p.12).

Research in this field is dominated by two perspectives:

*Diversity as organisational inequality*, stopping at demographic change, expectations that minority group members assimilate dominant/majority group norms, or research providing generalized diversity management prescriptions irrelevant for practitioners, counterproductive in resolving diversity-related problems, at times providing critical, deconstructive studies failing to help practitioners or to bring the progressive change that critical researchers crave (Ahonen et al., 2014; Alvesson & Spicer, 2012; King & Learmonth, 2015; Spicer, 2009). In particular, such diversity research fails to articulate **practical** implications despite the crucial role played by practitioners designing, implementing and monitoring diversity policies and practices (for exceptions, see Ahmed, 2007; Boxenbaum, 2006; Janssens & Zanoni, 2014 cited in Holk, 2015: p. 646; Ortlieb & Sieben, 2013; Tatli, 2011).

The *Inequality analysed through discursive lens* is aimed at deconstructing diversity as utilitarian managerial rhetoric. This research focuses on minorities’ experiences with discrimination (e.g., Ahonen et al., 2014; Ariss et al., 2012; Jack, et al., 2011; Jack & Lorbiecki, 2007; Jack & Westwood, 2006; Klarsfeld et al.,

2012; Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000; Ostendorp & Steyaert, 2009; Oswick & Noon, 2014; Siebers, 2010; Van Laer & Janssens, 2011, 2014; Verbeek & Groeneveld, 2012, as cited in Holck, 2015).

#### *Positivist-inspired*

There is a whole body of positivist-inspired diversity management scholarship and leadership studies addressing the tenacity of great leaders (see Carroll et al., 2015 for an excellent overview), and organizational inequality in socio-psychological terms, often as the effect of (majority) prejudice (e.g., Ahmed, 2007; Ahonen et al., 2014; Barak, 2013; Dobbin et al., 2011; Janssens & Zanoni, 2014; Jonsen et al., 2011, 2013; Kalev, 2009; Kossek et al., 2006; Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000; Mamman et al., 2012; Oswick & Noon, 2014; Qin et al., 2014; Özbilgin & Tatli, 2011; Shore et al., 2009, 2011; Williams & Mavin, 2014; Zanoni et al., 2010 cited in Holck, 2015: p. 28). Interventions inevitably privilege generalized, de-contextualized HRM practices, objective procedures, training and mentoring, and network activities based on cognitive, individualized insights.

One author problematizes the poverty of these neoliberal narratives around insights: “according to critical diversity scholars, these widespread HRM practices of diversity management have generally proved insufficient” (Holck, 2015: p. 646).

#### *Paradigm difficulties and associated themes*

Despite, or maybe because of, interest in leadership and diversity, we found a growing dissatisfaction with the prevailing “insistent focus on cognition in a socio-psychological perspective” (Holck, 2015: p. 644) and subsequent research orthodoxies, but an urgency to engage critically with leadership and diversity.

Tatli (2011) addresses a dichotomy, “two problematic tendencies in the current diversity research: the focus on single-level explorations, and the polarization between critical and mainstream approaches.” (p.238).

Simultaneously, there is an urgency to evidence challenges and opportunities. Authors exclaim, “firms have many reasons to employ ethnic minorities or refrain from employing them. Management scholars focusing on workplace diversity have made several attempts to describe these reasons, but a theoretically grounded framework is still missing.” (Ortlieb & Sieben, 2013: Abstract).

This dissatisfaction has five themes. The first three are potent especially when working with diverse communities (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** The practice of **how**.

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*Be as unobtrusive as possible p.271*

*Person interviewed needs to have more power than interviewer, they have control over the content and flow p.271*

*Use semi structured and unstructured interviews p.271*

*Establish rapport p.272*

*Elicit information, use open ended questions p.272*

*Listen more than speak 272*

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### 1) *Supremacy of the individual*

As outlined throughout this article, leadership studies and diversity studies have been dominated by psychological and HRM approaches which privilege the supremacy of the individual. These sources are too substantial in quantity and despite their liberal tenor even in its social form, these sources default to a veneration of individual cognitions and emotions and an arcane devotion to Cartesian ideology. As Blackmore (2006) eloquently puts this, “a discourse of diversity within a liberal pluralist frame, ironically, while based on notions of tolerance and fairness, gives priority to individual over group rights.” (p.196).

### 2) *Lack of attention to power*

Most sources from psychology overlook power and asymmetry, privileging normalising ideologies with their capacities in constraining but also productive opportunities presented in subterranean resistances. A point of critique concerns the inadequate theorization of power: “The micro-lens of social psychology leads to an explanation of identity-based power inequality exclusively as the result of individual discriminatory acts originating in universal cognitive processes” (Zanoni et al., 2010).

### 3) *Lack of attention to context*

Psychological ideology demeans context as peripheral yet a small number of critical sources, “highlight how spatial practices produce people as stabilized constructions of power relations become embodied in and supported by organizational artefacts, such as rules and routines, thereby forcing employees to behave in certain ways” (Holck, 2015, p. 647). Smith et al. (2018) refer to the last of their twelve themes for inter-professional leadership as “clinical and contextual expertise” (abstract).

### 4) *Attention from Who to How*

Leadership studies progress by valorising individual traits or the mind/cognitions of great leaders to persons codified as diverse, in an easy linearity, yet there is little empirical insight into the **how** of this. The field is bereft of insight into practices engaged by both parties along with challenges and opportunities presented.

Ospina and Foldy (2009) considering race and ethnicity, are interested in the **how**. They advocate moving from a view of leadership as individual traits, styles and behaviours to focus on the relational, constitutive and collective dimensions of leadership work arguing that despite growth in these fields, insights about the leadership experience of peoples of colour remain marginal.

### 5) *Attention to those not publicly in charge*

Writing on diversity and leadership aims to connect *the leader* to *the people*—followers, yet paradoxically individuals leading diversity initiatives often eschew the title leaders. What about the followers? What these sources overlook is the value of how often leaders emerge within context, *not* publicly in charge, even professionals avoiding categorisation as leaders, informal leaders, engaging in leadership on “an ad-hoc informal basis who do not wish to reveal themselves



yet, considered as collaborative, accessible—the ‘go to’ staff” (Heard, 2018: Abstract). Fowler (2016, p: 5) contends “often professionals don’t like being seen as leaders”. Fairhurst & Grant (2010, p: 5) write “the growing dissolution with many of the mainstream theories that underpin organizational studies has encouraged researchers to look for new ways to describe, analyze and theorize”. In an assault against common sense assumptions, leadership emerges as a by-product of diversity often facilitated within subterranean conditions and stealth, a “form of action which in common discourse would be rendered unthinkable” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: p. 6). It is precisely because they are not elevated to god-like leader status that the unsung hero stays silently under the radar, subterfuge enacted to shift the balance of power from theory to practice enacting the *whatever you say nothing* dynamic (Finlay, 1999).

*Where critical leadership and critical diversity intersect.*

Key sources addressing leadership and diversity critically were identified. These sources value leadership and diversity practice skills such as: critical theory, critical reflection, critical analysis rather than personal attributes, styles, interpersonal communication, sources interested in knowledge “in situ”, contextual, organisational, valuing robust empirical research, qualitative “in situ” in organisational and practice settings—ethnography—to understand the complexity of leading work with diversity.

Blackmore (2006), contextualizing discourse, says discussions on equal opportunity and social justice are being replaced by discussions of diversity. Tracing the history of education policy in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, Blackmore argues that while diversity discourse seems appealing, “the emergence of this discourse during the 1990s has been in the context of neoliberal managerialist discourses that assume social action is fully explicable through theories of maximizing self-interest” (2006, Abstract) and this has privileged learning and leadership as individual practices, “and not a collective practice” (2006, Abstract),

In 2008, Richardson and Loubier alluded to the state of research in the field, that despite “a plethora of studies examining the sole effect of race on leadership, there has been sparse information pairing race with other surface level diversity attributes” (2008, p. 148). Few address the knowledge of practitioners leading their practice with diversity—how leaders *do* diversity, or indeed multiple diversities.

Richardson and Loubier (2008) utilized intersectionality, examining “interactions of surface level diversity attributes to dissect leader identity” (p.142). They undertook phenomenological and intersectional analyses of the perceptions of leadership style and efficacy of two university presidents, one male and one female by interviewing six education leaders who met a range of surface diversity categories. These six leaders were invited to observe a case study of these two university presidents. They were then interviewed about how they perceived the impact of categories of diversity on the leadership practice of this male and fe-

male leader. The researchers found leader differences and efficacy attributable to *interactions* between profession, context, and gender. Participants stated it was impossible to determine and understand the two leaders in terms of a single category. The findings showed perceived leadership differences attributable to interaction between multiple factors, affecting surface and deep level attributes when describing leaders. However, it was the leaders' business and education backgrounds and their approach to moving the university forward that respondents emphasized as the differences between leaders. From these findings, [Richardson and Loubier \(2008\)](#) recommended that "employing intersectionality in leadership studies opens new possibilities for leadership theory and education. Specifically, intersectionality reinforces that leadership theory must continue to be researched and evolve" (p.156). [Tariq & Sayed \(2017\)](#) describe how their "study highlights the need for policymakers and employers to consider intersectionality to enable ethnic minority women's inclusion and leadership" (Abstract).

[Ospina & Su \(2009\)](#) bring a constructionist lens analysing narratives from twenty-two social change organizations, building six in-depth cases documenting ways of understanding race, how they help to do the work of leadership, and suggesting ways to progress these. Drawing on scholarship which "emphasizes the ways in which seemingly essentialist, intractable racial categories are actually mutable, and the simultaneous emergence of academic research calling attention to the constructed and collective dimensions of leadership". They suggest that, "illuminating the relationship between race and leadership can advance our understanding of how social change leadership happens in practice" (Abstract).

[Getzlaf and Osborne \(2010\)](#) engaged graduate students in critical theory and discourse analysis. They assessed how use of critical theory and discourse analysis could be used as methods to create changes in work settings which could ultimately enable equity and social justice. They urged "healthcare leaders and professionals to develop a critical perspective to understand equity and social justice to better improve care for a diversity of clients." (Abstract).

[Holck \(2015\)](#) in a wide-ranging critique of traditional methodologies, carried out longitudinal ethnographic research of a Danish subsidiary of an international chain restaurant exploring micro-processes of organizational diversity embedded in societal discourses and structural activities that she characterises as targeting corporate diversity work, citing [Dobbin et al. \(2011\)](#), [Holvino and Kamp \(2009\)](#), [Janssens and Zanoni \(2014\)](#) (cited in [Holck, 2015: p. 646](#)).

For [Holck \(2015\)](#) this research sits in diversity scholarship critically examining "the intersection between micro-structure-oriented research dealing with the organizational setup and the organizing diversity" (p.650), made up mostly of feminist organizational scholars and sociologists. She states, "this study adds to the emerging field of critical diversity research by moving diversity debates away from their foundation in cognition and social psychology" (p.657).

[Holck \(2015\)](#) contends that "HRM diversity practices are 'premature' based

on trial-and-error processes rather than scientific knowledge.” (p.646). Favoring structure and agency rather than psychological precepts, emphasising context, she states, “embeddedness highlights the need to explore diversity processes in their localized and *situated* organizational settings, where they intersect with other everyday organizing processes.” (p.646). She also cites authors that refer to “the inadequacy that results from the targeting of cognition rather than the structural dimensions of privilege, domination, and disadvantage” (Oswick & Noon, 2014 cited in Holck, 2015: p. 646; Zanoni et al., 2010). Holck (2015) refers to work by Kaley et al. (2006) who asserts that “such practices might even backfire, resulting in stereotyping and re-marginalization” (cited in Holck, 2015: p. 646).

Sinclair and Evans (2015) examined how difference is considered in leadership, and how terms like diversity and leadership are historically constructed concepts which cannot be studied without appreciating their context. They postulate that why and how these concepts have arisen to be identified as co-implicated in contemporary organisational trends and needs is a subject worthy of further investigation. They identify that traditional approaches to these concepts readily conflate leadership and diversity, and thus “collapse difference” (p. 130). These authors argue that to consider leadership from a critical lens, we must ask how diversity as a term has come to be connected to leadership, and how leadership has acquired particular meanings of diversity, including the imperative that diversity is something for leaders and organisations to manage.

Jefferies, Goldberg, Aston, and Murphy (2018) explore “the invisibility and underrepresentation of Black nurses in formal and informal leadership roles” (Abstract). They bring a Black feminist poststructuralist framework arguing that while identified needs for diversity are great, there remains a significant underrepresentation of Black nurses in leadership in the workforce, arguing “the invisibility of Black nurse leaders is the result of generational oppression and discrimination manifested through discourses.” (Abstract).

### 3. Research Challenges/Opportunities

The themes identified in this review, when opened to scrutiny and discourse present tension but inevitably also the precursor of resolution. We suggest that when there is an appreciation of clash of paradigms indeed *time is out of joint*. As Hayes et al. (2016) write, “so the first paradox we identify explicitly is that we seek to be grounded in day-to-day action, as much as philosophical abstraction, and perhaps conflate these in our subjectivities, in a sustained tension” (p.131). The esteemed psychologised formalised research apparatuses which have dominated the fields of leadership and diversity studies, indeed, introduced these concepts, possess credibility, sacrilegious to subvert in our neoliberal times. With an appreciation of power and individualism the reflective researcher needs an awareness, not to mention a sense of irony towards the cultural and academic

baggage we are required to carry through the halls of organisational workplaces.

### ***New methodologies***

Psychology owes a genealogy back to the hard sciences involving cause and effect relationship, antipathy to paradox and the myth of the invisible value free researcher. Water boils at 100 degrees centigrade whatever the political views of the experimenter. With human subjects and observers the power issues are different, the psy-sciences are inadequate (Rose, 1999). However, intercultural communication studies acknowledge the relational, reciprocal dialectical dynamics of communication as well as attending to power and conflict (Martin & Nakayama, 2013), indeed even the minutiae of power struggles. Moreover, in the most contemporary and practical version of psychology—counselling, positivism and indeed the reverence to aetiology have become peripheral, in favour of what is termed trans-theoretical, the emphasis is on techniques that enable relational processes (Moyers & Rollnick, 2002), at the expense of critical understanding of the relationship of “personal troubles” to “public issues”, so well acknowledged by the seminal sociologist, CW Mills (1959).

To address issues posed by the insufficiencies of the psychological paradigms, we show that a growing body of theorists and researchers are opting for grounded, contextual research, opening avenues to assess insights, often paradoxical, innovative, counter-intuitive but eminently usable. They engage in qualitative methodologies such as discourse analysis, ethnography and intersectionality. However, needing to be aware of “thinking too much on the precise object” (Elam & Shakespeare, 1984), they need to take cognizance that “although discourse analyses may have deconstructed the rhetorical mechanisms through which the meaning of identity is constructed in contemporary discourses of diversity, to date, relatively little research has investigated **how** (my emphasis) such discourses are implicated in everyday social practices in work settings” (Zanoni, et al., 2010: p. 18).

## **4. Discussion**

Leadership *and* engaging with diversity have been conflated in popular organisational, HRM, and psychological knowledge, to a growing interest in leadership engaging *with diversity*. Both are identified as priority needs in human and social services following a boom in interest since the 1980s, coinciding with neoliberal psychologised understandings. Interestingly, reviews addressing the relationship between critical leadership and critical diversity identified minimal literature. We agree that literature needs to consider contemporary *diversity* and *leadership* concepts and practices, not as disparate forces, entities, or practices but mutually dependent, co-constitutive, and implicated in the history and practices of wider social, economic, and cultural structures, and with a shared origin in neoliberal economic and social practices. However, these are not devoid of attention to power and context. These terms defy shared definition and understanding. Psychological methodologies contribute to the problems.

Addressing this difficulty, Stanley and Kelly (2018) suggest that competing demands on the activities that constitute leadership are often at odds with the moral and intellectual focus required to advance health and social service practice, informed by social justice. We contend with Moyers and Rollnick (2002), that many who engage in leadership on an ad-hoc informal basis do not wish to reveal how they overcome or “roll with resistance” (p.186), to argue that, often accepted discourses of neoliberalist managerialism subjugate opportunities for alternative forms of leadership to triumph that privilege the promotion of social justice, human rights and ideas of political resistance. Ineluctably an asymmetry prevails between those who vocalise a business inspired hubris of diversity and those who silently and routinely engage in its daily mundanities.

We suggest a starting point for understanding and engaging with the complex concepts of leadership and diversity for practice could be served by an approach which acknowledges critical and poststructuralist theoretical positions and research methodologies, beginning with a position of *intersectionality*—a form of critical inquiry and praxis (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Crenshaw (1991) introduced the term, in her critical consideration of race and gender intersections. She suggested all identity intersections “only highlight the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed.” (p.1245). In keeping with this, we are interested in the intersectionality of diversity and leadership. Intersectionality moreover, attends to the seeming complexity of leadership and diversity, recognizing ways through this apparent complexity which aim to attend to material power issues; engaging *shop floor* praxis. Often these practices for many reasons are more easily *done* than *described* and often not easily amenable to quantitative research. This may be the very reason why there is little contextual and curious research out there that reveals how these two concepts actually bump up against each other.

There is some hope. Deloitte (2014) perhaps begins to consider intersectionality when thinking about leading with diversity, citing several sociological sources, a bold step for a Deloitte report (given its standard management, HRM, and psychologized approaches to leadership and diversity). However, after five years of a growing trend in interest in diversity as a leadership issue, in the 2019 Deloitte report, *Global Human Capital Trends* while leadership continues to rate as a top three priority for organisations, the term diversity is only used twice in the whole document, in favour of a new terminology, “alternative workers”, as set against “traditional workers” (ref). The whole document is infused with a theme of humanism.

We suggest a way forward, beginning with intersectionality and applying the leadership and diversity nexus in health and social services; identifying challenges and opportunities posed by traditional, modernist assumptions regarding diversity and leadership; socially, culturally, politically embedded in situ; locating practice-embedded diversity, embedded leadership combined, considered simultaneously. This would include evidence-based practices which adopt me-

thods and methodologies around micro practices and micro inequalities taking place, even in organisations formally committed to diversity practice, of which there are now many—something that is now almost a neoliberal organisational branding. Such approaches will consider how practice leadership with diversity can occur at all levels of an organisation—from CEO to frontline. This will rely always on skills of practice and process evidence, qualitative research methods interested in observing and analysing the micro in situ processes of leadership and diversity; calling for critical analysis of these concepts as practices and discourses, less so as people, and much less so as the heroic individual. An intersectional approach could ask how *diversity* as a term has come to be connected to leadership and how *leadership* has acquired particular meanings of *diversity*, including the imperative that *diversity* is something for leaders and organisations to manage; and when they come together celebrate so that, as Hirt et al. (2017) put it, “programme participants acquire many knowing-how, knowing-why and knowing-whom competencies” (p.611), rather than the competency of servant follower. Moreover, required is an insight around their own power by CEOs, presented less in the form of grandiose self-images or even research which asks leaders to self-assess their capabilities, but more as an awareness reflected back onto themselves, by critical in situ research methodologies which consider time, space, and the whole of things, as we cynically suspect, that “when wanton or mercenary lips had murmured like phrases in his ear, he had but scant belief in the sincerity of these” (Flaubert & Russel, 1950: p. 203).

## 5. Implications

As Stanley & Kelly (2018) contend, the practice worlds of leaders and practitioners are “becoming more complex, diverse, more uncertain; social inequalities and mental health issues are growing among the populations we work with. Social problems are growing into ‘wicked’ problems in the context within which we look to senior leaders to help” (2018, p.7). As Deloitte (2017) identify, diversity is now a CEO level issue. Yet, in health and social services, it is individual practitioners who are faced with finding the evidence to tick the boxes of their annual “engaging with diversity” competencies in order to lead their own practice. How they will do this is likely in the very real in situ practice they engage in. For practitioners, leadership and diversity do intersect, but when this is thrust upon them from on high, from a disconnected HRM office or manager who self ascribes status of leader, additional practice challenges emerge, and sometimes this leads to professional dissonance and burnout.

Traditional methodologies for understanding why and how leadership and diversity bump together are failing to provide solutions, even contributing to the problem when researchers and practitioners are unaware of normalising effects of these terms and how these are measured. How real practitioners are leading with diversity often stays under the radar and there is a disconnection between the discursive life of these terms and real practice. In one piece of research in

Aotearoa New Zealand with experienced social workers, when asked how they engage with diversity in their practice, they identified that for them, the term *diversity* often gets in the way of practice. Yet engagement with diversity is a competency they are required to “tick off” annually (Beaumont, 2018).

Then it often behooves education and training institutions to train practitioners to be leaders and to engage with diversity, often as separate courses or foci of learning and development.

The fiercely abstract nature of *diversity* and *leadership* as accepted terms have gained prominence with the gentle onslaught of neoliberalism, yet the practitioners and students most required to follow leadership and engage with diversity are often unaware of this history, and when asked to define these terms, definition and agreement are impossible to agree upon.

Evidence based practice, another product of neoliberal policies designed to bring health, education, and social service sectors into increasingly rationalised mandates, needs to offer researchers and practitioners a more nuanced qualitative evidence base to provide meaningful understandings of how these concepts came to be, how these happen in practice, and how their own practices can be valued as evidence of real leadership practice with diversity, or sometimes, how their practice can at times be implicated in support of oppression and the reinforcing of the great leader as person model.

## 6. Conclusion (Table 3)

The authors have reviewed the recent extant literature around leadership and diversity intersections in practice and health and social services, considered critically. There is a paucity of research and literature critically examining the relationship between these concepts and an identified urgency for increased research, spurred by a growing impatience with the commonsense utilization of psychology. Itemising these few sources under five themes we identified a small, growing collection of sources which critically engage the intersection in theory and practice, to urge further research which propels further understanding of theoretical complexities and the practical simplicities all too often implicated in thousands of sources on the topics of leadership and diversity. We urge qualitative and ethnographic discourse analysis, crucial consideration of intersectionality, privileging the **how** of practice in current contexts unafraid of attending to the implications of power differentials, indeed recognizing these are one of many of the mundane challenges. We extol the awareness of euphemistic language context where terms such as *challenges* present acceptable iterations of prior terms like difficulties, *impossibilities* afford precursors of change given current neoliberal conditions for subterranean stealth.

It is time for authors to take note of Hayes et al. (2016) who offer, “a playful and incomplete narrative approach in their critical reflection on the subjectivities being silenced or ignored in organizations and in academia” (p.127). It would be beneficial to access the skills of those informal leaders who “do not wish to reveal” (Hayes et al., 2016: p. 131). Moreover, to acknowledge and ho-

nour that “even silence is a productive topic” (Fegan, 2002: p. 1), especially when silence is implicated in the *how* of leadership. It would be nice to know the subterranean narratives and actions, that quietly inform understandings and practice of managers, practitioners, leaders and those deemed as *diverse*, and further, to celebrate these, and shift the balance of power from theory to practice. We stress the need to address the five themes identified in this article, which are indeed common sense to sociology moving away from an obsession on individualism toward attention to power, context, and thereby to new conditions of possibility to advocate for real praxis. Ironically much of the critique of traditional methodologies is written in language that is sacred, plaintiff, indeed lyrical. It would be good to get down to the profanities of the **how** in practice, considering what is easier done than said. Rather than the comfort of instrumental rationality and cause-effect ideology, we would welcome seeing more research that as

**Table 3.** Requirements of a critical researcher on leadership and diversity.

Themes	Skills (cited in literature)	Practice skills	Need
Supremacy of the individual	A sociological imagination “She criticizes the abstraction of European modernity from its colonial context” (Bhambra, 2007)	Open to paradox and contradiction co-existing attitudes and hierarchies.	Cultural supervision embedded within project
Lack of attention to power on to power Awareness of <b>power</b> issues including that of researcher and research project	“a collaborative process and one that is attentive to power inequities and diversity” (Heard, 2018: p. 8)	Explanation of researcher’s goal ideology /baggage, confidentiality discussed	Cultural supervision embedded within project
Lack of attention to context Awareness of <b>context</b> and non-verbal cues, localised boundaries and sanctions	Attention to importance of symbols, i.e. dress, diet, gender, face, humour Martin, J. N., & Nakayama, T. K. (2013).	Ability to adapt the non-expert Socratic position	Cultural supervision embedded in project
Lack of attention to <b>how</b> leadership is accomplished rather than who accomplishes it	The behaviour of emerging minority leaders, for example, can be predicted by their decisions to make their social identity salient when they are in a minority or a majority from Ospina and Su, 2009. p. 134.	Awareness of what works what doesn’t routinely on a day to day basis in rapidly changing situations.	Cultural supervision embedded in project
Attention to how awareness of those not <b>publicly</b> in charge	individuals do not possess authoritative power (Heard, 2018: p. 1)	Conflicting agendas	Cultural supervision embedded in project



Foucault advocates, seeks “a field of strategic possibilities,” rather than “the permanence of themes, images, and opinions through time” (Valdés Miyares, 2019: p. 325).

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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