

Justice-Centered Leadership Through Ubuntu and Radical Hospitality: A Conceptual Model for Higher Education

Camellia Moses Okpodu^{1*}, Christi Ahna Carter², and Bernadette J. Holmes³

¹ Department of Botany, University of Wyoming, United States

² Department of Human Resources, University of Wisconsin-Madison, United States

³ Department of Sociology, Norfolk State University, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Leadership,
Institutional Identity,
Radical Hospitality,
Ubuntu

ABSTRACT

Deans are academic leaders who have academic, programmatic, managerial, and fiscal responsibilities. Deans verify the adequacy of instruction, monitor academic integrity, confer degrees, and are responsible for student recruitment, admission, and academic progress. As Universities re-imagine and reshape their offering for the future, Deans play a critical role in talent acquisition of faculty, students, and staff. In this paper, we examine how we applied an African principle of leadership that is foundational to our humanity and central to our mission at both a private institution and a public land-grant institution. In the College of Arts and Sciences at both Xavier University of Louisiana (an HBCU) and the University of Wyoming (an R1 Carnegie designated university) we implemented Radical Hospitality and Ubuntu, which pays honor and influences how we see ourselves, scholarship, and service. We used this approach to attract and retain the College workforce. This study contributes to the scholarship on higher education leadership by demonstrating how Ubuntu and Radical Hospitality function as transformative frameworks for cultivating institutional culture, inclusive leadership, and organizational resilience.

1. Introduction

Higher education institutions are facing increasing pressure to attract, retain, and support diverse talent in a context marked by social fragmentation, workforce instability, and growing demands for inclusive excellence. These pressures are further shaped by evolving student expectations, declining public trust, and broader institutional transformation. Leadership approaches that center relationality, belonging, and justice is therefore critical. This paper advances a conceptual framework that integrates Ubuntu, Radical Hospitality, mindfulness, and womanist epistemology to inform justice-centered leadership in higher education.

Using two contrasting institutional contexts—Xavier University of Louisiana (HBCU) and the University of Wyoming (R1, land-grant)—this paper illustrates how culturally grounded leadership frameworks can shape institutional identity and talent outcomes.

* Corresponding author's E-mail address: cokpodu@uwyo.edu, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3744-0183>

Cite this article as:

Okpodu, C. M., Carter, C. A., & Holmes, B. J. (2026). Justice-Centered Leadership Through Ubuntu and Radical Hospitality: A Conceptual Model for Higher Education. *Journal of Advanced Research in Leadership*, 5(1): 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.33422/jarlv5i1.1362>

© The Author(s). 2026 **Open Access.** This article is distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and redistribution in any medium, provided that the original author(s) and source are credited.



In this context, leadership is often defined by formal authority and positional power; however, effective leadership frequently extends beyond organizational titles. Contemporary leadership scholarship emphasizes the distinction between formal and informal authority as essential for navigating complex institutional environments. Leadership grounded in relational engagement, trust-building, and shared purpose enables influence that persists beyond formal roles.

Ubuntu, an African philosophical tradition commonly expressed as “I am because we are,” provides a compelling framework for understanding leadership as fundamentally relational (Tutu, 1999). Thus, providing a deeper ontological understanding. This perspective reframes leadership from an exercise of control to a practice of connection, emphasizing empathy, interdependence, and collective accountability. Leadership rooted in Ubuntu prioritizes the communal good and recognizes that individual success is inseparable from the well-being of the broader community.

Emerging scholarships highlight the value of culturally grounded and justice-oriented approaches to leadership. Thus, Ubuntu offers a relational ontology that emphasizes shared humanity and collective flourishing, while radical hospitality extends an ethical commitment to unconditional inclusion and engagement with differences. When paired with mindfulness as a behavioral mechanism and womanist epistemology as a critical lens addressing power and marginalization, these frameworks together create a robust foundation for justice-centered leadership in higher education.

Drawing on this integrative conceptual model, the paper demonstrates how these principles can be enacted across diverse settings—specifically Xavier University of Louisiana and the University of Wyoming—to strengthen institutional culture, enhance inclusive leadership practices, and improve talent attraction and retention.

2. Purpose and Contributions

The purpose of this conceptual paper is to develop and articulate a justice-centered leadership framework that integrates Ubuntu, radical hospitality, mindfulness, and womanist epistemology, and to examine its implications for talent attraction, retention, and institutional culture in higher education.

This conceptual paper is guided by the following research questions:

1. How can Ubuntu and radical hospitality be integrated into a coherent framework for justice-centered leadership in higher education?
2. What mechanisms link this framework to outcomes such as inclusion, belonging, and talent attraction and retention?
3. How can leaders operationalize these principles across diverse institutional contexts?

This conceptual paper makes three primary contributions to the literature:

- **Theoretical Contribution:** It advances an integrative leadership framework that connects African philosophy, ethical theory, mindfulness, and womanist epistemology into a unified model of justice-centered leadership.
- **Conceptual Contribution:** It develops propositions and explanatory mechanisms that clarify how relational leadership practices influence institutional culture and talent outcomes.

- **Practical Contribution:** It offers actionable strategies for higher education leaders seeking to cultivate inclusive environments that attract, support, and retain diverse faculty, staff, and students.

To illustrate the applicability of this framework, the paper draws on two distinct institutional contexts that reflect different missions, histories, and organizational cultures.

3. Institutional Contexts and Identity

Institutional identity plays a central role in shaping leadership practices, organizational culture, and the experience of belonging. Xavier University of Louisiana and the University of Wyoming represent two distinct institutional types, yet both demonstrate a commitment to fostering inclusive and supportive academic environments.

Xavier University of Louisiana's identity as a historically Black and Catholic institution is deeply connected to its mission of radical hospitality. Its motto, "just and humane," reflects an enduring commitment to welcoming individuals from diverse backgrounds with dignity and respect (Xavier, n.d.-a). This ethos aligns with philosophical perspectives on hospitality, including Derrida's notion that hospitality requires an "interruption of the self," prompting institutions to challenge their own norms in order to fully embrace others.

In contrast, the University of Wyoming, as a public land-grant institution, expresses hospitality through civic responsibility, rural outreach, and broad access to education (University of Wyoming, n.d.-a). Its model of inclusion is grounded in service to geographically and socially diverse populations, emphasizing outreach, access, and community engagement. Despite their differences, both institutions share a commitment to creating environments in which individuals are not marginalized but recognized as integral members of the institutional community.

3.1. Xavier University of Louisiana (XULA)

Xavier University of Louisiana's identity as a historically Black and Catholic institution is inseparable from its mission of radical hospitality. Its motto, "just and humane," reflects a commitment to welcoming individuals from all backgrounds with dignity and respect. At the University of Wyoming, a secular land-grant institution, hospitality takes a different form—one grounded in civic responsibility, rural outreach, and inclusive access to education. Although culturally distinct, both institutions share a moral imperative to create environments in which students are not "othered," but fully embraced. Derrida's (2000) notion that hospitality "interrupts the self" suggests that institutions must be willing to challenge their own norms in order to authentically welcome others.

National data further illustrate Xavier University of Louisiana's distinctive impact. Analyses based on the National Science Foundation's Science and Engineering Indicators indicate that Xavier has consistently ranked first nationally over the past decade in the number of African American students earning undergraduate degrees in biology, chemistry, physics, and the physical sciences (WDSU, 2019; National Science Foundation [NSF], 2023). The university is also a national leader in preparing graduates who go on to earn doctoral degrees in the life sciences and related disciplines, ranking first in the number of Black graduates who pursue doctorates and fifth in producing African American Ph.D. recipients in science and engineering (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

Xavier attracts a diverse student population, including high-achieving students drawn by its reputation for excellence in the sciences, as well as students from under-resourced educational backgrounds who benefit from the institution's demonstrated ability to support academic

success, particularly during the first year of college. This dual capacity reflects a distinctive institutional strength. As noted in The New York Times Selective Guide to Colleges, Xavier is “a school where achievement has been the rule and beating the odds against success a routine occurrence” (Fiske, 1982; Hannah-Jones, 2015).

Institutional assessments, including SWOT analyses conducted within the College of Arts and Sciences, suggest that the “Xavier way” extends beyond STEM success to encompass a broader commitment to intellectual development, ethical formation, and community engagement, which are the foundation of a liberal arts education. The university’s contributions to the state of Louisiana’s workforce and its role in transforming the representation of African Americans in medicine further underscore its national significance (Danial, 2019). More recently, authorization to establish a medical school represents a historic expansion of this mission, positioning Xavier as a continued leader in advancing health equity and diversifying the medical profession (Xavier University of Louisiana, 2023).

3.2. University of Wyoming (UW)

According to a 2024 report from the University of Wyoming’s Center for Business and Economic Analysis, UW contributes over \$1.36 billion annually to the state’s economy, supporting nearly 14,700 jobs and accounting for 2.3 percent of Wyoming’s gross state product (Alexander et al., 2024; University of Wyoming, 2024). Prior to the author’s leadership role, the University of Wyoming had established itself as a hub for interdisciplinary research and innovation, with over \$150 million in research expenditures in the 2022–23 fiscal year—the highest in its history (University of Wyoming, 2024). The University is home to nationally recognized programs in energy resources, molecular biology, and environmental economics, with faculty whose work has shaped policy and advanced scientific discovery.

Students are drawn to UW’s reputation for hands-on learning, access to world-class facilities like the Michael B. Enzi STEM Facility, and its commitment to serving rural and underserved communities across the state. At the same time, students from nontraditional and disadvantaged backgrounds find opportunities through UW’s outreach programs and inclusive academic initiatives. The University’s strategic plan, *Forward for Wyoming 2023+*, emphasizes student success, institutional excellence, and community engagement, preparing graduates to thrive in a rapidly changing world. In surveying the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) for the College of Arts and Sciences, it was concluded that the “Wyoming Cowboy way” reflects a deep commitment to cultivating leadership, innovation, and service across disciplines. A 2024 economic impact study highlights UW’s role in transforming Wyoming’s workforce through research-driven startups, technology transfer, and alumni contributions that span education, agriculture, law, and healthcare (Alexander et al., 2024; University of Wyoming, 2024). The University continues to expand its influence through strategic partnerships and a growing portfolio of academic and research excellence.

This paper argues that Ubuntu and Radical Hospitality offer a transformative leadership framework that strengthens institutional culture, enhances inclusive leadership practice, and cultivates resilience across different institutional types—illustrated through case studies of Xavier University of Louisiana and the University of Wyoming.

4. Methodological Positioning

This discussion is a conceptual and theory-building paper that integrates interdisciplinary scholarship with reflective, practice-based insights from two institutional contexts. Rather than

employing empirical data collection, the analysis draws on published literature, leadership theory, African and womanist philosophical traditions, and the authors' professional experiences as academic leaders at Xavier University of Louisiana and the University of Wyoming. These institutional cases serve as illustrative examples that ground the conceptual model in lived practice. This methodological approach aligns with conceptual scholarship aimed at advancing justice-centered, culturally informed leadership theory.

5. Literature Review

The literature highlights increasing recognition of relational leadership models that prioritize inclusion, ethical engagement, and community. Ubuntu has been widely discussed as a framework emphasizing interdependence and shared humanity (Tutu, 1999). Radical hospitality extends this relational perspective by emphasizing unconditional inclusion. Mindfulness research demonstrates its effectiveness in enhancing leadership awareness, emotional regulation, and decision-making. Womanist epistemology introduces a critical perspective that centers marginalized voices and addresses systemic inequities. Together, these bodies of scholarship provide theoretical foundation for justice-centered leadership. This paper is grounded in an integrative conceptual framework that brings together Ubuntu, Radical Hospitality, mindfulness, and womanist epistemology to articulate a relational, justice-centered model of leadership in higher education. Each component contributes a distinct layer—ontological, ethical, epistemological and practical—that collectively shapes a transformative approach to institutional culture and leadership.

6. Conceptual Framework

6.1. Ubuntu

Ubuntu, an African philosophy commonly summarized as *"I am because we are,"* provides the ontological foundation of this framework (Tutu, 1999). As articulated in contemporary scholarship, Ubuntu emphasizes interdependence, shared dignity, and the communal nature of human flourishing (Ngunjiri, 2016; Robinson, 2018). Within higher education leadership, Ubuntu reframes authority from an individual attribute to a relational practice rooted in mutual accountability and collective well-being. This worldview positions community—not hierarchy—as the center of institutional life, establishing the relational basis through which leaders understand identity, belonging, and responsibility.

6.2. Radical Hospitality as Ethical Expression

While Ubuntu provides the worldview, Radical Hospitality offers the ethical enactment of that worldview. Building on Derrida's assertion that hospitality "interrupts the self" and Ahn's work on hospitality as forgiveness and moral excess, Radical Hospitality extends unconditional welcome to the "other" (Derrida, 2000). It demands acts of generosity that exceed reciprocity or transactional exchange. Drawing on Derrida's philosophy, Chahal (2024) argues that academic language itself can either invite or exclude, positioning communication as a critical site where hospitality is enacted or denied. Within an institutional context, Radical Hospitality becomes a moral imperative urging leaders to cultivate environments in which all individuals—students, faculty, and staff—are seen, valued, and embraced without precondition. When paired with Ubuntu, Radical Hospitality becomes the ethical expression of an Ubuntu-centered ontology, demonstrating how relational identity translates into inclusive institutional practice.

6.3. Mindfulness as the Operational Mechanism

Mindfulness functions as the practice-based mechanism that makes Ubuntu and Radical Hospitality actionable in day-to-day leadership. Mindfulness enhances self-awareness, emotional regulation, presence, and deep listening—skills that enable leaders to respond thoughtfully rather than reactively in moments of tension, ambiguity, or conflict (Cook & Beffel, 2016). Research shows that mindfulness strengthens inclusive leadership practices by reducing bias, improving decision-making, and facilitating empathetic engagement. In this framework, mindfulness operationalizes Ubuntu relationality and Radical Hospitality's ethic of welcome, giving leaders the behavioral tools needed to sustain cultures of belonging.

6.4. Womanist Epistemology as the Knowledge Framework

Womanist epistemology provides the philosophical foundation for this leadership model. Emerging from Black feminist thought, womanism centers lived experience, marginalized voices, and emphasizes wholeness, healing, and community care (Hill Collins, 1991). It interrogates systems of power and advocates for leadership rooted in justice, empathy, and the well-being of the collective (Holmes et al., 2014). Womanist epistemology deepens this conceptual model by grounding Ubuntu and Radical Hospitality in a critical awareness of intersectionality, power dynamics, and structural inequality—ensuring that the application of hospitality and interconnectedness does not obscure the realities of marginalization within higher education.

7. Conceptual Model of Justice-Centered Leadership

This paper proposes a conceptual model of justice-centered leadership that integrates four core constructs: Ubuntu, radical hospitality, mindfulness, and womanist epistemology (see Figure 1). Collectively, these constructs offer a multi-dimensional framework that reframes leadership as relational, ethical, intentional, and critically grounded.

Within this model, Ubuntu establishes a relational ontology in which identity is defined through interdependence and shared humanity (Ngunjiri, 2016; Ikpeh & Awi, 2025). Radical hospitality functions as the ethical expression of this ontology by extending an unconditional commitment to inclusion and engagement with others (Kearney & Fitzpatrick, 2021). Mindfulness operates as a behavioral mechanism that enables leaders to enact these relational and ethical commitments through intentional awareness and reflective practice. Womanist epistemology provides a critical lens that ensures leadership practices attend to power, marginalization, and systemic inequities (Banks-Wallace, 2000).

Together, these constructs position justice-centered leadership as a dynamic framework that promotes belonging, ethical relationality, and institutional transformation. The model specifies relationships among constructs through propositions, underlying mechanisms, and boundary conditions.

7.1. Mechanisms of Influence

The integrative framework operates through a set of reinforcing mechanisms that shape institutional culture, leadership behavior, and organizational outcomes.

7.1.1. Trust-Building

Trust is cultivated through sustained relational engagement, transparency, and alignment between stated values and enacted practices. Ubuntu foregrounds interdependence and shared accountability, encouraging leaders to center mutual respect and collective responsibility

(Ikpeh & Awi, 2025). Radical hospitality extends this orientation by fostering openness toward difference (Kearney & Fitzpatrick, 2021), while mindfulness supports attentive listening and intentional responsiveness. Over time, these practices reduce relational distance between leaders and stakeholders, strengthening credibility and institutional cohesion. Trust-building is particularly critical in environments shaped by historical exclusion, where skepticism toward leadership may be deeply rooted (Edmondson, 1999).

7.1.2. Reduced “Othering”

This framework reduces “othering” by actively disrupting exclusionary norms and recentring shared humanity. Ubuntu reframes identity as interconnected rather than oppositional (Ngunjiri, 2016), and radical hospitality calls for engagement across difference without preconditions (Kearney & Fitzpatrick, 2021). Womanist epistemology deepens this work by critically examining systems of marginalization and centering historically excluded voices (Banks-Wallace, 2000). Together, these approaches challenge deficit-oriented narratives and reposition difference as a source of institutional strength. As a result, organizational culture shifts from separation and hierarchy toward relational inclusion and mutual recognition.

7.1.3. Psychological Safety

Psychological safety is fostered when individuals feel secure to express ideas, take risks, and engage authentically without fear of marginalization or reprisal. This construct is foundationally defined as a shared belief that a group is safe for interpersonal risk-taking (Edmondson, 1999). This framework cultivates such conditions through the integration of relational ethics (Ubuntu), inclusive practice (radical hospitality), and reflective awareness (mindfulness). Leaders who model vulnerability, engage in active listening, and respond non-defensively signal that diverse perspectives are valued, which has been shown to support learning and performance outcomes (Edmondson, 1999). Womanist epistemology reinforces this environment by validating lived experience as legitimate knowledge (Banks-Wallace, 2000).

7.1.4. Identity Validation

Identity validation occurs when institutional practices affirm individuals’ cultural, social, and intellectual identities rather than requiring assimilation into dominant norms. Ubuntu acknowledges the collective dimensions of identity and shared humanity (Ikpeh & Awi, 2025), while womanist epistemology explicitly centers marginalized perspectives and lived experiences (Banks-Wallace, 2000). Radical hospitality reinforces this orientation by welcoming individuals as they are and challenging institutional norms that exclude difference (Kearney & Fitzpatrick, 2021). Through leadership behaviors, institutional policies, and symbolic practices—such as representation, recognition, and inclusive narratives—organizations communicate that belonging does not require conformity.

7.1.5. Ethical Decision-Making

Ethical decision-making within this framework is guided by collective responsibility, critical awareness of power, and reflective deliberation. Ubuntu emphasizes decisions that prioritize communal well-being (Ngunjiri, 2016), while womanist epistemology interrogates whose interests are represented and whose voices remain absent (Banks-Wallace, 2000). Mindfulness introduces a necessary pause for reflection, enabling leaders to consider broader consequences and unintended impacts. Radical hospitality further extends ethical responsibility by emphasizing openness to the “other” and moral accountability toward those

at the margins (Kearney & Fitzpatrick, 2021). Together, these elements shift decision-making beyond procedural compliance toward justice-oriented, contextually responsive action.

7.2. Boundary Conditions for Institutional Settings

The implementation and effectiveness of justice-centered leadership are shaped by contextual factors that influence how this framework is enacted across institutional settings.

7.2.1. Institutional Type (HBCU vs. R1)

Institutional history, mission, and culture significantly shape leadership enactment. HBCUs often reflect deeply embedded traditions of relationality, cultural affirmation, and communal care aligned with Ubuntu, enabling more organic integration of these principles (Ikpeh & Awi, 2025). In contrast, R1 and land-grant institutions may operate within more bureaucratic and decentralized structures, requiring more intentional strategies to embed relational and justice-centered practices.

7.2.2. Political Climate

Broader sociopolitical contexts shape institutional capacity to prioritize justice-centered leadership. In environments where inclusion efforts are contested or politicized, leaders may encounter constraints in explicitly advancing these frameworks. Ethical frameworks such as radical hospitality highlight the tensions inherent in engaging difference within contested social environments (Kearney & Fitzpatrick, 2021).

7.2.3. Resource Availability

Institutional resources, including financial, human, and infrastructural capacity, influence implementation. Research on higher education inclusion initiatives shows that institutional support structures, such as programming and faculty engagement, are critical for sustaining inclusive environments (Kritsch et al., 2024). Conversely, limited resources may require greater reliance on relational practices such as trust-building and community engagement.

7.2.4. Leadership Authority Level

The positional authority of individuals influences both the reach and durability of justice-centered leadership practices. While senior leaders shape policy and strategy, relational influence at all levels contributes to building psychological safety and trust (Edmondson, 1999). This framework recognizes leadership as distributed; however, access to formal authority shapes the scale of institutional impact.

7.3. Effectiveness of Justice-Centered Leadership

The effectiveness of justice-centered leadership is contingent upon the interaction between leadership practices and institutional context. Organizational and higher education research suggests that leadership outcomes are shaped by internal structures, resource capacity, and external sociopolitical pressures. Institutions grounded in relational cultures—such as HBCUs—may more readily align with frameworks rooted in Ubuntu and communal care, whereas more decentralized or bureaucratic institutions require intentional structural alignment to operationalize these principles. At the same time, political climates that contest diversity and inclusion efforts can constrain the explicit adoption of justice-centered practices, while resource availability determines the scale and sustainability of implementation efforts. Importantly, these boundary conditions do not diminish the relevance of the framework; rather, they underscore its adaptive nature, requiring leaders to

strategically navigate context while maintaining commitments to relationality, inclusion, and justice (Ikpeh & Awi, 2025; Kritsch et al., 2024; Kearney & Fitzpatrick, 2021).

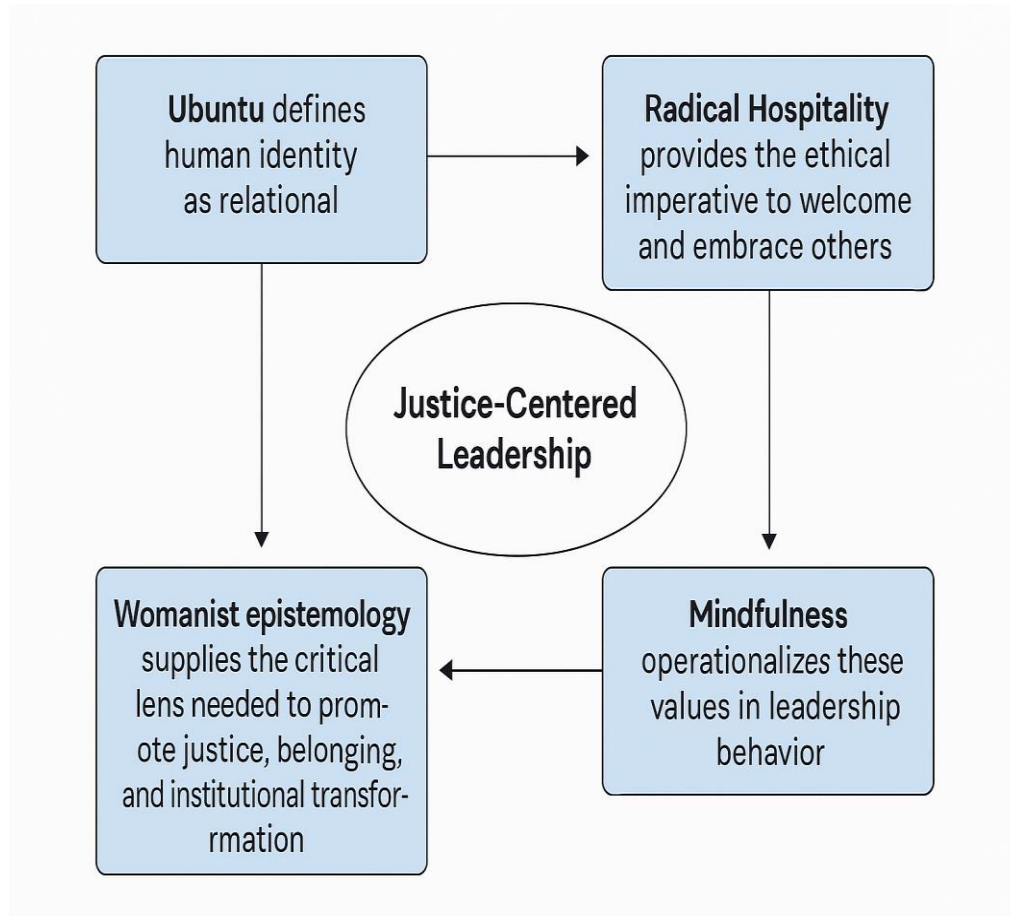


Figure 1. A conceptual framework for Justice Center Leadership

Note. This framework integrates Ubuntu, Radical Hospitality, Mindfulness, and Womanist Epistemology to illustrate how relational identity, ethical welcome, intentional leadership practice, and a justice-oriented critical lens collectively support transformative, equity-driven leadership.

8. Leadership in Practice: Institutionalizing Hospitality and Ubuntu

In an era marked by social fragmentation, political polarization, and institutional reckoning, the integration of Ubuntu, radical hospitality, and mindfulness offers a powerful framework for reimagining how universities cultivate belonging, accountability, and ethical leadership. Drawing from the African philosophy of Ubuntu—“I am because we are”—which emphasizes collective dignity and interdependence (Ikpeh & Awi, 2025; Radebe, 2025), alongside radical hospitality as articulated through Derrida’s notion of an “undecidable” responsibility to the other (Crawford, 2009; Derrida, 2000) and Ahn’s concept of “invisible debt” and ethical excess of responsibility (Ahn, 2010), this framework provides a foundation for building inclusive and relational institutional cultures.

In this context, radical hospitality is not merely a moral imperative but a strategic pathway to equity, excellence, and institutional resilience. By centering the communal good, embracing difference without condition, and fostering leadership rooted in empathy and intentional awareness, institutions such as Xavier University of Louisiana and the University of Wyoming demonstrate how hospitality can function as a transformative force in higher education.

The post–COVID-19 landscape has intensified institutional challenges, including student disengagement, workforce instability, and heightened ideological polarization. Ubuntu and radical hospitality offer timely, human-centered leadership responses that address these conditions by foregrounding belonging, shared humanity, and ethical responsibility to institutional communities.

8.1. Radical Hospitality and Ubuntu in Institutional Contexts

The principles of Ubuntu and radical hospitality are operationalized differently across institutional contexts, yet yield similar outcomes related to belonging and cultural cohesion.

At Xavier University of Louisiana, institutional culture reflects a deeply embedded commitment to hospitality grounded in its Catholic mission and the founding vision of Saint Katharine Drexel (Xavier University of Louisiana, n.d.-a). While the university's origins are tied to Drexel's philanthropy, its sustained success is not attributable to inherited wealth but to mission-driven leadership and a longstanding commitment to equity and community-centered education (Xavier University of Louisiana, n.d.-b). Its guiding principle, *Deo Adjuvante Non Timendum* ("With God Assisting, Nothing is to be Feared"), reflects a legacy of resilience and purpose that continues to shape institutional identity (Xavier University of Louisiana, n.d.-c).

At the University of Wyoming, a secular land-grant institution, hospitality is expressed through civic engagement, outreach, and inclusive access to education. The institution's cultural ethos is captured in the statement "The World Needs More Cowboys", which reflects values of resilience, curiosity, and inclusivity (University of Wyoming, n.d.-a). Leadership approaches informed by Ubuntu emphasize belonging, empathy, and shared responsibility, contributing to a campus culture that supports collaboration and engagement across diverse populations (Ikpeh & Awi, 2025; Radebe, 2025).

Across both institutions, repeated acts of mentorship, engagement, and community-building illustrate how hospitality is embedded in institutional culture. These practices contribute to environments in which students, faculty, and staff are not only supported academically but are also recognized as integral members of a shared community.

8.2. Ethical Foundations of Hospitality

Philosophical understandings of hospitality provide insight into how these practices function at the institutional level. Derrida's question—"Is not hospitality an interruption of the self?"—highlights the ethical demand placed on institutions to move beyond familiar norms in order to authentically welcome others (Derrida, 2000; Westmoreland, 2008). This perspective suggests that true hospitality requires transformation, not accommodation.

Similarly, Ahn (2010) distinguishes between transactional hospitality and radical hospitality, the latter requiring an "excessiveness" that transcends reciprocity or equality. This form of hospitality is grounded in generosity, forgiveness, and an ethical obligation that extends beyond measurable exchange.

At Xavier University, these principles are reflected in admissions and employment practices that emphasize openness to individuals from diverse social and cultural backgrounds (Xavier University of Louisiana, n.d.-a). Individuals are welcomed without expectations of equivalence or return, reflecting a commitment to community uplift and service.

At the University of Wyoming, comparable principles are enacted through inclusive programming and initiatives such as the WORTH (Wyoming Outdoor Recreation, Tourism, and Hospitality) program, which fosters engagement across diverse communities and

promotes ethical responsibility in service interactions (University of Wyoming, n.d.-b). Although differing in origin—religious versus secular—both institutions demonstrate how hospitality can be operationalized as a transformative institutional value.

8.3. Reframing Students Beyond the Consumer Model

Justice-centered leadership also requires a reconceptualization of students' roles within higher education. Increasingly, students are positioned as consumers within market-driven institutional models. However, this framing fails to fully capture their role as contributors to the intellectual and innovation ecosystems of the university.

A more comprehensive understanding recognizes students as both learners and producers of knowledge. While financial considerations remain important to institutional sustainability, reducing students to inputs and outputs undermines the mission of higher education. Instead, students should be viewed as active participants in the co-creation of knowledge and innovation.

This perspective aligns with the concept of the “Eureka moment” (Figure 2), which represents a transformational learning experience in which students engage deeply with ideas, develop critical thinking skills, and emerge as contributors to broader societal progress. Such outcomes are made possible by leadership that prioritizes mentorship, inclusivity, and intellectual engagement within a supportive community context.

8.4. Leadership Approaches Through an Ubuntu Lens

The application of Ubuntu within leadership practice aligns with established leadership frameworks, including servant, transformative, and inclusive leadership.

Servant leadership emphasizes the well-being and development of others, supporting growth, ethical behavior, and community contribution (Liden et al., 2014; Northouse, 2021). This approach aligns closely with Ubuntu's emphasis on collective flourishing and relational accountability.

Transformative leadership highlights the interconnectedness between leaders and followers, promoting shared vision and organizational growth (Bakker et al., 2023; Northouse, 2021). Ubuntu reinforces this perspective by emphasizing that individual success is dependent upon collective advancement. Inclusive leadership focuses on shared decision-making, active engagement, and the intentional inclusion of diverse perspectives (Northouse, 2021; Roberson & Perry, 2022).

Ubuntu strengthens inclusive leadership by emphasizing belonging as a core organizational value, fostering environments in which individuals feel recognized and valued.

Together, these leadership approaches illustrate how Ubuntu operates not as a replacement for existing leadership theories, but as a foundational philosophy that enhances their effectiveness by embedding relational, ethical, and community-centered principles.



Figure 2. Eureka Moment in Institutional Culture

Note. How the interaction of Higher Education with knowledge of Culture should provide the Eureka moment that helps us examine our Institutional culture.

8.5. Inclusive Leadership Outcomes

Organizations that incorporate inclusive leadership models and approaches find many advantages over those that implement more traditional top-down leadership methods. Researchers found that inclusive leadership traits influence employees' sense of belonging, inspiration, and psychological safety, which, in turn, impact innovation, deliverables, and workforce retention (Li et al., 2025; Randel et al., 2018). In a similar study in healthcare, scholars argue that inclusive leadership approaches promote employees' ability to share concerns with their direct reports, which in turn leads to higher job satisfaction, reduced turnover, and improved overall patient care (Baek et al., 2025; Bradley, 2020). Therefore, institutional commitment to inclusive leadership in its mission can differentiate organizations from those that struggle with employee engagement, climate, retention, and efficiency.

9. Actionable Practices for Talent Attraction and Retention

9.1. Mindfulness in Leadership: Creating Space for the “Other”

Mindfulness functions as a foundational leadership practice that enables the operationalization of justice-centered leadership. Beyond personal discipline, mindfulness supports leaders in pausing, reflecting, and responding with intentionality in complex organizational environments (Okpodu, 2024). Research demonstrates that mindfulness enhances self-awareness and emotional regulation—capacities essential for effective leadership (Mancoba, 2024; Doornich & Lynch, 2024). It also reduces reactivity and implicit bias, thereby strengthening inclusive leadership practices (Clark et al., 2019; Peng, 2024).

Within this framework, mindfulness enables leaders to cultivate environments in which marginalized voices are recognized, affirmed, and valued. By creating intentional space for reflection and dialogue, leaders can disrupt exclusionary dynamics and promote equity in everyday interactions. When paired with Ubuntu, mindfulness reinforces the principle that individual and collective well-being are fundamentally interconnected (Singha, 2024; Erasmus, 2025). Leadership grounded in these principles fosters inclusive environments by actively creating space for those who have historically been marginalized or excluded.

9.2. Addressing “Othering” in Institutional Culture

In contemporary higher education environments characterized by political polarization and social fragmentation, institutions must address the persistent challenge of “othering,” whereby individuals or groups are positioned as fundamentally different, excluded, or marginalized. This process operates through both structural inequities and everyday interactions that shape campus climate and institutional culture. Ahmed (2012) argues that diversity initiatives often fail to transform institutions when they do not disrupt the underlying systems that produce exclusion, instead reproducing norms that maintain inequity.

These dynamics have significant consequences. Experiences of exclusion—whether through systemic barriers, bias, or microaggressions—undermine student well-being, diminish academic success, and weaken institutional effectiveness (Taff & Clifton, 2022; Begaye-Tewa et al., 2023). A growing body of research demonstrates that belonging is a critical determinant of student success. Strayhorn (2019) conceptualizes belonging as a fundamental human need and a condition necessary for persistence, particularly among historically marginalized students. When students perceive that they matter and are valued, they are more likely to engage and succeed; conversely, exclusion contributes to stress, disengagement, and attrition (Strayhorn, 2008; Baffour et al., 2026).

Museus’s (2014) Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) model further underscores that institutional cultures, practices, and environments must actively affirm diverse identities to produce equitable outcomes. Together, these insights highlight the necessity of systemic transformation rather than symbolic or incremental approaches to inclusion.

Justice-centered leadership provides a framework for addressing “othering” by emphasizing critical consciousness, institutional accountability, and transformative action (Freire, 1970). Leaders play a central role in shaping institutional culture through policies, practices, and symbolic actions that reinforce inclusion and belonging (Alves et al., 2025; Capito, 2025).

9.2.1. Evidence-Based Strategies to Counter “Othering”

Effective justice-centered leadership involves the implementation of sustained, measurable strategies:

- **Facilitating structured dialogues on equity and inclusion**
Intergroup dialogue models, grounded in Freirean pedagogy, engage participants in sustained conversations across differences. These approaches reduce prejudice, increase empathy, and foster critical consciousness (Brar et al., 2025), while also strengthening collaboration and collective action (Kanemoto et al., 2024).
- **Supporting interdisciplinary research on social justice**
Addressing systemic inequities requires cross-disciplinary approaches that integrate multiple perspectives. Intersectional scholarship highlights how inequities operate across interconnected systems and calls for integrated institutional and scholarly responses (Nichols & Stahl, 2019; Lukkien et al., 2025).
- **Embedding diversity and inclusion goals into institutional planning**
Institutional policies, leadership practices, and resource allocation significantly influence campus climate and belonging. Integrating equity into strategic planning ensures that inclusion is central to organizational effectiveness rather than peripheral (Museus, 2014; Golubeva et al., 2025).

- Prioritizing equity in hiring, promotion, and retention processes
Structural change in faculty recruitment and advancement is essential. Equity-minded hiring practices—such as structured evaluation criteria and bias mitigation—enhance diversity and support inclusive learning environments (Arevalo et al., 2025; Wood & Harris, 2023). Inclusive climates are also critical for retaining diverse faculty (Doles et al., 2025).

9.3. Leadership Responsibilities and Institutional Change

Leadership is central to the institutionalization of radical hospitality and inclusive excellence. Deans and senior administrators play a critical role in establishing organizational norms that promote belonging, equity, and meaningful participation. Justice-centered leadership requires a multifaceted approach grounded in intentional practice. This includes ongoing self-reflection and bias awareness, whereby leaders engage in continuous critical self-assessment to identify and address implicit biases and inequitable practices. It also involves commitment to inclusive decision-making processes, ensuring that diverse perspectives are meaningfully incorporated into institutional governance and strategic direction. In addition, leaders must invest in programs that support underrepresented groups, as targeted initiatives enhance access, retention, and success for historically marginalized populations. Finally, justice-centered leadership requires alignment of institutional policies with equity and inclusion goals, ensuring that strategic plans, policies, and accountability mechanisms reflect and reinforce institutional commitments to justice and belonging. Collectively, these practices shift institutional culture from passive inclusion to active engagement with diversity as a source of strength, innovation, and organizational effectiveness.

9.4. Womanist Perspectives and Inclusive Leadership

Womanist epistemology provides a critical framework for centering marginalized voices within leadership practice. Rooted in Black feminist thought, womanism emphasizes wholeness, healing, and the interconnectedness of individual and community well-being (Walker, 1983; Hill Collins, 1991). This perspective challenges dominant leadership paradigms by prioritizing lived experience, relational accountability, and collective empowerment. Womanist-informed leadership advances inclusive institutional cultures by ensuring that the voices, needs, and contributions of historically marginalized groups are not only acknowledged but placed at the center of decision-making processes (Duncan et al., 2011; Ikpeh & Awi, 2025; Radebe, 2025). By integrating womanist principles into leadership practice, institutions move beyond performative inclusion toward transformative engagement that affirms dignity, fosters belonging, and promotes equity at all levels.

9.5. Metrics and Evaluation for Talent Outcomes

To ensure that justice-centered leadership translates into measurable outcomes, institutions should adopt clear metrics for assessing talent attraction and retention. Faculty and staff retention rates across demographic groups provide concrete indicators that institutions can use to evaluate and strengthen policies designed to support marginalized communities, including both students and faculty.

It is important to recognize that data does not exist in a vacuum; rather, they are embedded within broader social contexts and shaped by individual lived experiences. As such, both quantitative and qualitative methods are necessary to provide a comprehensive understanding of institutional outcomes and equity efforts.

Key metrics include:

- Climate survey data on belonging and inclusion
- Recruitment diversity metrics
- Promotion and tenure equity outcomes
- Participation in mentorship and leadership programs

Together, these measures provide a framework for evaluating leadership effectiveness and ensuring accountability in advancing institutional equity goals.

10. Discussion

The institutional examples of Xavier University of Louisiana and the University of Wyoming illustrate how justice-centered leadership can be operationalized across distinct higher education contexts. Despite differences in mission, history, and institutional identity, both universities demonstrate the effectiveness of leadership approaches grounded in relationality, belonging, and ethical engagement.

Xavier University of Louisiana exemplifies how a strong institutional mission aligned with radical hospitality and Ubuntu can produce sustained outcomes in student success and professional advancement. Its longstanding success in producing African American graduates in medicine and STEM fields reflects not only academic rigor but also a deeply embedded culture of support, belonging, and collective responsibility (Danial, 2019; Lane, 2015; PBS NewsHour, 2018). This success is not incidental but the result of intentional leadership, holistic education, and a commitment to developing the whole student (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2015).

Similarly, the University of Wyoming demonstrates how principles aligned with Ubuntu and radical hospitality can be adapted within a secular land-grant context. Through initiatives such as the Science Initiative Roadshow and the Learning Actively Mentoring Program (LAMP), the university extends access to STEM education while fostering engagement and community connection (University of Wyoming, n.d.-c; University of Wyoming, n.d.-d). These programs illustrate how inclusive practices and relational leadership can support institutional goals related to both access and excellence (Alexander et al., 2024).

The findings of this conceptual paper reinforce the broader significance of Ubuntu as a philosophical foundation for leadership in higher education. Ubuntu emphasizes interconnectedness, mutual accountability, and the prioritization of collective good (Nussbaum, 2003). These principles align closely with contemporary calls for leadership models that move beyond individualism toward more collaborative and inclusive approaches. As noted by Robinson Morris (2018), institutions—particularly those serving marginalized populations—benefit from recreating communal frameworks that prepare students to lead within a social justice context.

Institutional climate emerges as a critical factor influencing student success. Consistent with prior research, leadership practices that foster belonging, support, and engagement contribute to positive educational outcomes (Rothschild & White, 1995). When students are recognized as integral members of a shared academic community, rather than as passive recipients or consumers, they are more likely to thrive academically and socially.

Across both institutions, the integration of Ubuntu and radical hospitality demonstrates that leadership grounded in relational and ethical principles is not confined to a particular cultural or institutional context. Instead, these frameworks offer universal insights into how higher education institutions can cultivate inclusive, resilient, and transformative environments.

11. Conclusion

Justice-centered leadership grounded in Ubuntu, radical hospitality, mindfulness, and womanist epistemology offers a powerful and integrative framework for reimagining leadership in higher education. By centering relationality, ethical engagement, and critical awareness of power, this model moves beyond performative approaches to inclusion and provides institutions with actionable pathways to enhance belonging, strengthen organizational culture, and improve talent attraction and retention.

Importantly, this framework advances the conversation by bridging theory and practice, demonstrating how leadership philosophies rooted in care, interdependence, and social justice can be operationalized through concrete institutional strategies. In doing so, it challenges traditional leadership paradigms that prioritize hierarchy and efficiency over human connection and equity.

As higher education institutions continue to navigate complex social, political, and economic challenges, leadership approaches that emphasize shared humanity, collective responsibility, and structural transformation will be essential. The sustainability of institutions will increasingly depend on their ability to cultivate environments where diverse talent is not only recruited, but supported, valued, and empowered to thrive. Justice-centered leadership, therefore, is not merely aspirational. It is a strategic imperative for building more just, inclusive, and resilient futures in higher education.

References

- Ahmed, S. (2012). *On being included: Racism and diversity in institutional life*. Duke University Press.
- Ahn, I. (2010). ECONOMY OF “INVISIBLE DEBT” AND ETHICS OF “RADICAL HOSPITALITY”: Toward a Paradigm Change of Hospitality from “Gift” to “Forgiveness”: Invisible Debt and Radical Hospitality. *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 38(2), 243–267. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9795.2010.00428.x>
- Alexander, A., McWhorter, D., & Wright, A. (2024). *The economic impact of the University of Wyoming* [Report]. Center for Business and Economic Analysis, University of Wyoming. https://www.uwyo.edu/cbea/_files/documents/uwimpactreport.pdf
- Alliance for Excellent Education. (2015). *Building a STEM pathway: Xavier University of Louisiana’s Summer Science Academy* (ED557923). ERIC. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED557923>
- Alves, J. M., Tintoré, M., & Serra, L. J. P. (2025). Leadership, learning, well-being, and justice in educational organizations. *Frontiers in Education*, 10. Article 1577472. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2025.1577472>
- Arevalo, E. A., Sato, B. K., Lo, S. M., & Wilton, M. (2025). Equitable faculty hiring: Development and implementation of teaching faculty hiring rubrics. *Frontiers in Education*, 10, Article 1560813. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2025.1560813>
- Baek, H., Cho, H., Han, K., & Heo, H. (2025). The mediating role of speak-up climate in the relationship between nurse managers’ inclusive leadership, patient safety, and nurse job outcomes. *International Nursing Review*, 72 (4), e70126. <https://doi.org/10.1111/inr.70126>
- Baffour, T. D., Littman, D., Neiufi, P., & Atobiloye, M. (2026). “We built this with you in mind”: Exploring university climate and the impact of diversity, equity, and inclusion

- interventions on belonging for BIPOC graduate students. *Race and Social Problems*, 18, Article 24. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12552-026-09494-0>
- Bakker, A. B., Hetland, J., Kjellevold Olsen, O., & Espevik, R. (2023). Daily transformational leadership: A source of inspiration for follower performance? *European Management Journal*, 41(5), 700–708. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emj.2022.04.004>
- Banks-Wallace, J. (2000). Womanist ways of knowing: Theoretical considerations for research with African American women. *Advances in Nursing Science*, 22(3), 33–45. <https://doi.org/10.1097/00012272-200003000-00004>
- Begaye Tewa, R. L., Tachine, A. R., Hailu, M. F., & Lopez, J. D. (2023). A literature review of campus climate in higher education literature: Native and Black perspectives. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000478>
- Bradley, E. H. (2020). Diversity, inclusive leadership, and health outcomes. *International Journal of Health Policy and Management*, 9(7), 266–268. <https://doi.org/10.15171/ijhpm.2020.12>
- Brar, M. D., Morales Chicas, J., Morris, S., Rivera, I., & Cannara, R. (2025). Intergroup dialogue empowering action for transforming equity in higher education. *Education Sciences*, 15(1), 38. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci15010038>
- Capito, M. J. (2025). A systematic review of student-centered leadership in universities. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.903SEDU0276>
- Chahal, D. (2024). Academic language and learning in higher education: A call to Derridean hospitality. *Critical Studies in Education*, 65(2), 147–161. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2023.2239294>
- Clark, R., Gehl, M., Herron, M. C., Soliman, S., & Shahmoon Shanok, R. (2019). Mindful practices to enhance diversity informed reflective supervision and leadership. *ZERO TO THREE Journal*, 40(2), 4–12. <https://www.zerotothree.org/resource/journal/mindful-practices-to-enhance-diversity-informed-reflective-supervision-and-leadership/>
- Cook, L. P., & Beffel, A. (2016). Mindfulness at work in higher education leadership. In M. J. Bresciani Ludvik (Ed.), *The neuroscience of learning and development: Enhancing creativity, compassion, critical thinking, and peace in higher education* (pp. 23–45). Routledge.
- Crawford, N. (2009). Race and hospitality: Pursuing racial reconciliation through Derrida's understanding of hospitality. *The Other Journal*. <https://theotherjournal.com/2009/10/race-and-hospitality-pursuing-racial-reconciliation-through-derridas-understanding-of-hospitality/>
- Danial, T. (2019, August 1). The Xavier way. *Biz New Orleans*. <https://www.bizneworleans.com/the-xavier-way/>
- Derrida, J. (2000). *Of hospitality* (R. Bowlby, Trans.). Stanford University Press. (Original work published 1997 as *De l'hospitalité*)
- Doles, M. D., Cornelius, J. T., & Doles, J. D. (2025). Inclusion, belonging, and institutional climate: Overlooked factors driving diverse STEM faculty turnover. *FEBS Letters*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1002/1873-3468.70005>

- Doornich, J. B., & Lynch, H. M. (2024). The mindful leader: A review of leadership qualities derived from mindfulness meditation. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15, Article 1322507. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1322507>
- Duncan, E. A. W., Holmes, K. Y., Miller, K. O., & Holmes, B. J. (2011). The impact of the popular culture “strong Black woman” image on Black women faculty at historically Black colleges and universities: A multidisciplinary analysis. *Journal of the Mid-Atlantic Popular/American Culture Association*, 20, 155–175.
- Edmondson, A. (1999). Psychological safety and learning behavior in work teams. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44(2), 350–383. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2666999>
- Erasmus, R. (2025, February 20). The power of “Ubuntu” in transforming leadership and education. *DARPL*. <https://darpl.org/the-power-of-ubuntu-in-transforming-leadership-and-education/>
- Fisher, L., McFarland, M., Arthur, D. S., Estevez, M. L., & Kimberling, M. (2018). Radical inclusion: Broadening university communities. *The Journal of General Education*, 67(1–2), 68–85. <https://doi.org/10.5325/jgeneeduc.67.1-2.0068>
- Fiske, E. B. (1982). *The New York Times selective guide to colleges*. Times Books. https://archive.org/details/selectiveguideto0000fisk_x0z8
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Continuum.
- Golubeva, I., Di Maria, D., Holden, A., Kohler, K., & Wade, M. E. (2025). Exploring students’ perceptions of the campus climate and intergroup relations: Insights from a campus-wide survey at a minority-serving university. *Journalism and Media*, 6(3), Article 111. <https://doi.org/10.3390/journalmedia6030111>
- Hannah-Jones, N. (2015, September 9). A prescription for more Black doctors. *The New York Times Magazine*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/13/magazine/a-prescription-for-more-black-doctors.html>
- Hill Collins, P. (1991). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. Routledge.
- Holmes, K. Y., Duncan, E. A. W., Miller, K. O., & Holmes, B. J. (2014). Sistah colleague embraces womanist collaboration: Women in higher education. *Women in Higher Education*, 20 (9), 27–29. <https://doi.org/10.1002/whe.10240>
- Ikpeh, C., & Awi, I. F. (2025). “I am because we are”: Ubuntu as a framework for social capital building among Black women in the academy. *Frontiers in Sociology*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2025.1555236>
- Kanemoto, E., Craig, M. J., Gerringer, M. E., Lewis, J., Lynch, A., Michaels, A., Smith, H. M., Yang, S., Yeoh, J., & Harrigan, M. M. (2024). Reimagining student–faculty relationships: Strengthening social justice efforts through dialogue. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000602>
- Kearney, R., & Fitzpatrick, M. (2021). *Radical hospitality: From thought to action*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780823296832.001.0001>
- Kritsch, J. L., Wong, R., Corke, M., Ramos, R., & Erickson, D. (2024). Radical hospitality: Transforming adjunct care. *International Christian Community of Teacher Educators Journal*, 19(2). <https://doi.org/10.55221/1932-7846.1340>
- Laferty, D. J. R., McKenney, E. A., Hubbard, T., Trujillo, S., & Beasley, D. E. (2024). A path forward: Creating an academic culture of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion.

- Bulletin of the Ecological Society of America*, 105(1), e02117.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/bes2.2117>
- Lane, D. (2015, September 14). Xavier University: The perfect prescription for Black doctors. *BlackDoctor.org*. <https://blackdoctor.org/xavier-university-more-black-doctors>
- Li, X., Ling, C.-D., & Zhu, J. (2025). Implications of inclusive leadership for individual employee outcomes: A meta-analytic investigation of the mediating mechanisms and boundary conditions. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 42(4), 2257–2294.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10490-024-09987-9>
- Liden, R. C., Wayne, S. J., Liao, C., & Meuser, J. D. (2014). Servant Leadership and Serving Culture: Influence on Individual and Unit Performance. *Academy of Management Journal*, 57(5), 1434–1452. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2013.0034>
- Lukkien, T., Chauhan, T., & Otaye Ebede, L. (2025). Addressing the diversity principle–practice gap in Western higher education institutions: A systematic review on intersectionality. *British Educational Research Journal*, 51, 705–736.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.4096>
- Mancoba, Z. (2024). *Applying mindfulness when leading a university*. [Conference presentation]. International Business Conference, Namibia.
- Museus, S. D. (2014). The culturally engaging campus environments (CECE) model: A new theory of success among racially diverse college student populations. In M. B. Paulsen (Ed.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research* (Vol. 29, pp. 189–227). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-8005-6_5
- National Science Foundation, National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics. (2023). *Science and Engineering Indicators: Demographic attributes of S&E degree recipients*. <https://nces.nsf.gov/pubs/nsb2022>
- Ngunjiri, F. W. (2016). “I am because we are”: Exploring women’s leadership under ubuntu worldview. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 18 (2), 223–242.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422316641416>
- Nichols, S., & Stahl, G. (2019). Intersectionality in higher education research: A systematic literature review. *Higher Education Research & Development*. (Vol. 29, pp. 189-232). Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2019.1638348>
- Northouse, P. G. (2021). *Leadership theory and practice* (9th edition). Sage Publications. <https://edge.sagepub.com/northouse9e>
- Nussbaum, B. (2003). Ubuntu: Reflections of a South African on our common humanity. *Reflections*, 4, 21–26. <https://doi.org/10.1162/152417303322004175>
- Okpodu, C. M. (2024, December 5). I am not a fake. I am authentically me. ASBMB Today. <https://www.asbmb.org/asbmb-today/opinions/120524/i-am-not-a-fake-i-am-authentically-me>.
- PBS NewsHour. (2018, May 8). *The next generation of African American doctors finds success and support at this university*. PBS. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/the-next-generation-of-african-american-doctors-finds-success-and-support-at-this-university>
- Peng, M. (2024, July 22). Reshaping inclusive leadership through mindfulness. <https://www.charterworks.com/reshaping-inclusive-leadership-through-mindfulness/>

- Radebe, N. Z. (2025). Transforming university culture: A human-centred approach through Ubuntu. *Transformation in Higher Education*, 10, a545. <https://doi.org/10.4102/the.v10i0.545>
- Randel, A. E., Galvin, B. M., Shore, L. M., Ehrhart, K. H., Chung, B. G., Dean, M. A., & Kedharnath, U. (2018). Inclusive leadership: Realizing positive outcomes through belongingness and being valued for uniqueness. *Human Resource Management Review*, 28 (2), 190–203. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2017.07.002>
- Roberson, Q., & Perry, J. L. (2022). Inclusive Leadership in Thought and Action: A Thematic Analysis. *Group & Organization Management*, 47(4), 755–778. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10596011211013161>
- Robinson Morris, D. W. (2018). *Ubuntu and Buddhism in higher education: An ontological rethinking*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351067966>
- Rothschild, M., & White, L. J. (1995). The analytics of the pricing of higher education and other services in which the customers are inputs. *Journal of Political Economy*, 103(3), 573–586. <https://doi.org/10.1086/261995>
- Singha, R. (2024). Cultivating holistic learning environments in higher education: Mindfulness, compassion, and Ubuntu philosophies. In *Global Perspectives on Micro-Learning and Micro-Credentials in Higher Education* (pp. 174–194). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-0343-6.ch011>
- Strayhorn, T. L. (2008). Fittin' in: Do diverse interactions with peers affect sense of belonging for Black men at predominantly White institutions? *NASPA Journal*, 45(4), 501–527.
- Strayhorn, T. L. (2019). *College students' sense of belonging: A key to educational success for all students* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Taff, S. D., & Clifton, M. (2022). Inclusion and belonging in higher education: A scoping study of contexts, barriers, and facilitators. *Higher Education Studies*, 12(3), 122–138. <https://doi.org/10.5539/hes.v12n3p122>
- Tutu, D. (1999). *No future without forgiveness*. Doubleday.
- University of Wyoming. (2024, November 12). *New report shows growing UW economic impact on Wyoming*. UW News. <https://www.uwyo.edu/news/2024/11/new-report-shows-growing-uw-economic-impact-on-wyoming.html>
- University of Wyoming. (n.d.-a). *UW Brand Center: The World Needs More Cowboys*. UW Public Relations & Marketing. <https://www.uwyo.edu/publicrelations/marketing/uw-brand-center.html>
- University of Wyoming. (n.d.-b). *Jay Kemmerer WORTH Institute*. <https://www.uwyo.edu/worth/index.html>
- University of Wyoming. (n.d.-c). *Science Initiative Roadshow*. Wyoming Enrichment Network. <https://wyoenrichmentnetwork.org/uw-science-initiative/>
- University of Wyoming. (n.d.-d). *Learning Actively Mentoring Program (LAMP)*. <https://www.uwyo.edu/science-initiative/lamp/index.html>
- Walker, A. (1983). *In search of our mothers' gardens: Womanist prose*. Harcourt Brace. <https://archive.org/details/insearchofourmot0000walk>

- WDSU. (2019, April 1). *Former Xavier–Louisiana president honored by Notre Dame*. <https://www.wdsu.com/article/former-xavier-louisiana-president-honored-by-notre-dame/27008998>
- Westmoreland, M. W. (2008). Interruptions: Derrida and hospitality. *Kritike: An Online Journal of Philosophy*, 2(1), 1–10. http://www.kritike.org/journal/issue_3/westmoreland_june2008.pdf
- Wood, J. L., & Harris, F., III. (2023). *Equity-minded faculty hiring practices: Promoting fairness, inclusion, and faculty diversity to support student success in higher education*. [Report]. Campaign for College Opportunity. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED639588.pdf>
- Xavier University of Louisiana. (2023, January 17). *Xavier Ochsner College of Medicine*. <https://www.xula.edu/xocom/index.html>
- Xavier University of Louisiana. (n.d.-a). *The life and legacy of our foundress: Saint Katharine Drexel*. <https://www.xula.edu/news/2020/03/the-life-and-legacy-of-our-foundress-saint-katharine-drexel.html>
- Xavier University of Louisiana. (n.d.-b). *The full Story* <https://www.xula.edu/about/the-full-story.html>
- Xavier University of Louisiana. (n.d.-c). *Student handbook 2019–2020*. <https://www.xula.edu/assets/student-handbook-2019-2020-1.pdf>