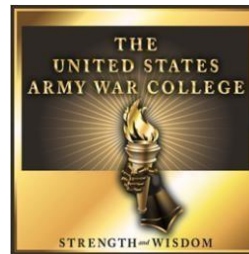# Strategic Implications of Diversity Leadership in the Department of Defense

by

Ms. Rebecca R. VanNess
Department of Defense

Under the Direction of:
Mr. Robert M. Mundell

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14. ABSTRACT

Today there exists numerous perspectives on what diversity is, as well as conflicting information about its potential advantages and disadvantages in both the private and public sector workforce. Research on this topic is complex, highlighting the need to refocus on this critical issue in order to see diversity through a much broader aperture and recognize diversity leadership as a key competency for leaders facing unique Twenty-First Century global challenges. This thesis adds to the growing body of knowledge on diversity leadership by examining current scholarship and understanding of diversity, offering arguments to support embracing new beliefs and attitudes about diversity, and providing a recommended framework for diversity education for Department of Defense senior leaders operating at the strategic level. The proposed framework is aligned with the Department of Defense Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan 2012-2017, and focuses on the key leadership competencies of Cultural Intelligence, Communication, and Building Cohesive Teams.

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Strategic Implications of Diversity Leadership in the Department of Defense

(5,059 words)

Abstract

Today there exists numerous perspectives on what diversity is, as well as conflicting information about its potential advantages and disadvantages in both the private and public sector workforce. Research on this topic is complex, highlighting the need to refocus on this critical issue in order to see diversity through a much broader aperture and recognize diversity leadership as a key competency for leaders facing unique Twenty-First Century global challenges. This thesis adds to the growing body of knowledge on diversity leadership by examining current scholarship and understanding of diversity, offering arguments to support embracing new beliefs and attitudes about diversity, and providing a recommended framework for diversity education for Department of Defense senior leaders operating at the strategic level. The proposed framework is aligned with the Department of Defense Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan 2012-2017, and focuses on the key leadership competencies of Cultural Intelligence, Communication, and Building Cohesive Teams.

Strategic Implications of Diversity Leadership in the Department of Defense

> To implement policies and practices that increase diversity of the workforce without understanding how diverse individuals can come together to form effective teams is irresponsible.

—Mannix and Neale[1]

Warning: do not let the last word in this sentence hijack your thoughts, play to your underlying assumptions, or limit your ability to expand what you know about diversity. Instead, allow the next several pages to serve as an opportunity to self-reflect, challenge your beliefs, and get mentally involved in analyzing your own understanding of and proficiency with diversity leadership. Today there exists numerous perspectives on what diversity is, as well as conflicting information about its potential advantages and disadvantages in both the private and public sector workforce. Research on this topic is complex, highlighting the need to refocus on this critical issue in order to see diversity through a much broader aperture and recognize diversity leadership as a key competency for leaders facing unique Twenty-First Century global challenges. This thesis will add to the growing body of knowledge on diversity leadership by examining current scholarship and understanding of diversity, offering arguments to support embracing new beliefs and attitudes about diversity, and providing a recommended framework for diversity education for Department of Defense (DoD) senior leaders operating at the strategic level.

As the United States (U.S.) becomes more demographically diverse, and as the DoD increasingly calls upon its senior leaders to operate and lead in a Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, and Multinational environment, the ability to understand, leverage, and maximize diversity in pursuit of positive organizational outcomes emerges as a critical competency. The Military Leadership Diversity

Commission's (MLDC) report, *From Representation to Inclusion, Diversity Leadership for the 21st Century,* clearly articulates the significance of this challenge by stating, "The Armed Forces must also acknowledge that diversity encompasses more than demographics, and they must take action to harness the range of knowledge, skills, and backgrounds needed to prevail in the rapidly changing operational environment."[2] It is evident that understanding diversity research and its implications on the DoD strategic environment is critical for leaders today.

Current Understanding of Diversity

Federal statutes, executive orders, and DoD policy directives that address the legal aspects of diversity management are indispensable. They serve as the foundation for understanding how to maximize an evolving model of diversity. The "man on the street's" idea of diversity is commonly associated with the concepts of Civil Rights, Equal Employment Opportunity, and Affirmative Action; yet, often the rich history and depth of information behind these titles are lost. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's webpage lists and defines federal laws enacted over several decades and in response to demands for equality and protection by various factions of the U.S. population. These laws include: Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Equal Pay Act of 1963; Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967; Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990; Sections 102 and 103 of the Civil Rights Act of 1991; Sections 501 and 505 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; Pregnancy Discrimination Act; and Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008.[3] In addition to these federal laws and regulations, there exist state and local laws and ordinances. Combined, these statutes work to protect individuals and prohibit discrimination, but they also serve to inform social policies, behaviors, and attitudes in relation to diversity. While protecting

individual rights is unquestionably of vital importance, leadership must also reexamine and expand behaviors and attitudes in order to address today's complex concept of diversity as a leadership opportunity with strategic implications.

The notion of "equal access and opportunity" provided by law and social policy combined with the moral certitude that "all men are created equal" became the foundation for the current, popular cognition of diversity, and from this foundation came the accompanying proliferation of demographic metrics and analytics that ostensibly measure "success." These initiatives have historically focused on "surface-level social-category differences" analyzed by Elizabeth Mannix and Margaret A. Neale in "What Differences Make a Difference?" and include race, ethnicity, gender, age, and physical disability.[4] However, managing diversity primarily through these legally protected categories has created a mindset supporting the belief that if the numbers are right and they meet demographic profile expectations, then management can claim victory in creating a diverse workforce. Thus the work here is done!

However, and fortunately, some scholars have taken a broader approach to studying diversity in order to understand better its effects on individuals, teams, job satisfaction, organizational culture, and overall performance. New scholarship promotes the idea that the key to unlocking the competitive edge of the Twenty-First Century and competing successfully in a global environment is to expand our cognition of diversity and prepare leaders to lead groups of unique individuals in complex environments. This is not an easy combination to master. Research by Mannix and Neale also stresses the existence and effect of "tension between the promise and the reality of diversity"

requiring an explication of both the "optimistic" and "pessimistic" actualities that leaders certainly face.[5]

Strategically, we must recognize and reinforce the reality that creating and productively leading a diverse workforce is simply a good business practice. Decades of research document the real value reflected in revised business models of companies seeking to capitalize on the potential innovation and problem solving outcomes that emerge from a diverse workforce. The optimistic view of diversity acknowledges that it can drive the growth of new perspectives, provide unique opportunities for knowledge sharing, and lead to greater creativity and higher quality team performance.[6] Simply stated, optimists assert that multiple perspectives and inputs are the best approach to solving difficult and complex problems. Columbia Business School Professor Katherine Phillips also highlights what diversity can bring to the conference table by pointing out important benefits that include "unfettered discoveries and breakthrough innovations" and even promoting a change in the way individuals think.[7] Global management consultants from McKinsey & Company argue that companies who commit to diversity leadership "are better able to win top talent and improve their customer orientation, employee satisfaction, and decision making."[8] Yet, along with the real value that comes with a diverse workforce, there are challenges and inherent intricacies that are perplexing. Diversity in and of itself is not a panacea, and its benefit to the organization does not occur without engaged leadership. Research led by Thomas Kochan, a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology School of Management, indicates that to maximize positive outcomes and minimize tensions, both leaders and

teammates must be competent in managing group process issues related to communication and innovation.[9]

Convening any group of people can lead to unintended consequences for leadership. The pessimistic view posits that diversity "creates social divisions that, in turn, create poor social integration and cohesion resulting in negative outcomes for the group."[10] Daan van Knippenberg, a professor of Organizational Behavior at Rotterdam School of Management, acknowledges that increased diversity can lead to increased social strain, decreased commitment to the team, and increased discrimination.[11] These negative outcomes are daunting and can be far-reaching. Findings by Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam indicate "the greater the diversity in a community, the fewer people vote and the less they volunteer, the less they give to charity and work on community projects….neighbors trust one another about half as much….and virtually all measures of civic health are lower."[12] These extreme, but very real outcomes of what diversity means in the world can be frustrating and perhaps paralyzing to strategic leaders with the greatest of intentions. Breaking the data down to better understand its message will help leaders answer the questions of how "potential benefits of diversity can be harvested and its potential harmful effects addressed."[13]

The body of data from diversity studies is complex and often times conflicting. This challenge stems from the research approach that has historically broken diversity into categories and sub-categories, and it illuminates the fact that different groupings often result in different outcomes; it is admittedly a complicated issue. However, as leaders understand the evolving model of diversity within the laws and social policies that serve to protect individuals, they can also witness the same evolution that is evident

in the maturing body of diversity research. Mannix and Neale point out that earlier research primarily focused on "the measurement of a limited set of variables, often operationalized as only one focal characteristic."[14] This categorized data has proven insightful and has provided a foundation that allows researchers to now move to a more broad and inclusive analysis of diversity.

Looking at the expansive research on diversity in its aggregate is helpful in several ways. Most importantly, the findings serve both to inform leaders of the intricate complexities found in any group environment and to emphasize the need to open the aperture currently used to analyze diversity. Mannix and Neale further this argument by offering a way to alter the practice of using limited sets of variables. They, instead, suggest viewing diversity through a "multifaceted concept" that includes "an array of attributes" and utilizes "several clusters of categories and their interactions."[15] Table 1 offers a broad list of variables that challenges leaders to reflect on their own cognition of diversity as well as their current skills and knowledge of diversity leadership.

Table 1. Categories and Types of Diversity[16]

Social-category differences	Differences in values or beliefs
• Race	• Cultural background
• Ethnicity	• Ideological beliefs
• Gender	
• Age	Personality differences
• Religion	• Cognitive style
• Sexual orientation	• Affective disposition
• Physical abilities	• Motivational factors
Differences in knowledge or skills	Organizational- or community-status differences
• Education	• Tenure or length of service
• Functional knowledge	• Title
• Information or expertise	
• Training	Differences in social and network ties
• Experience	• Work-related ties
• Abilities	• Friendship ties
	• Community ties
	• In-group memberships

Along with this table of categories and types, leaders would also benefit by having the following, powerful quote taped to their desks as a reminder of the unlimited opportunities that diversity brings to their teams: "Diversity is something that no one individual has, but all groups do."[17]

<p align="center">Embracing New Beliefs and Attitudes about Diversity</p>

Diversity is here. This single fact may be the most significant reason why DoD senior leadership must pause and reflect on their understanding of the strategic implications of diversity in today's global environment. The reality of this evolving nature of diversity in the United States affects every aspect of our lives as citizens, as well as the composition of the All-Volunteer Force charged with the defense of the nation. Educating DoD leaders and expanding existing beliefs and attitudes about diversity starts with acknowledging the impact of diversity in the world today, examining statistical data and current trends related to U.S. demographics as we posture for the future, and developing a new and common definition of diversity aligned with the DoD's mission and core values.

As a country, we can easily see the effects of diversity reflected in the ever-changing world around us. Advances in communication tools, social media, and travel have quickened the pace of change and broadened our exposure to new ideas and experiences. The impact of economic and cultural globalization has influenced both work and home environments with the integration of peoples from various backgrounds and beliefs. On a daily basis, people work and live in communities with colleagues and neighbors whose regional, educational, religious, and personal realities are quite different from those around them. These differences serve to both enhance and add tension within a team or community. These differences also influence the military

services' ability to recruit, train, retain, and promote leadership for tomorrow; and tomorrow's military leadership must be reflective of the growing "plurality nation" it serves.[18]

The U.S. Census Bureau's report, "Projections of the Size and Composition of the U.S. Population: 2014 to 2060," provides hard data addressing changes in the demographic makeup of the U.S. population that must be calculated into DoD's plan for mission success.[19] As the Department "battles for talent," it should be proactive in understanding the Census data's projections and increasing impact on the talent pool that it uses to build and lead the future force.[20] By 2044, the United States will become a "majority-minority" nation when "no group will have a majority share of the total and the United States will become a 'plurality' of racial and ethnic groups."[21] Highlights of the Census Bureau's breakdown of the U.S. population from 2014 to 2060 indicate: non-Hispanic White population is currently the majority, accounting for more than 50 percent of the U.S. population; Two or More Races is the fastest growing demographic and is expected to triple in size over the next four years; Asian is the second fastest growing group; Hispanic is the third fastest growing group; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander is projected to increase 63 percent; and the rate of growth of the foreign born population will exceed the rate of growth of the native population.[22] Most interesting is the fact that the "child population within the United States is even more diverse and is projected to experience the majority-minority crossover in 2020."[23] This growing cultural mix of U.S. citizens requires a generation of DoD leaders who are adept at effectively leading teams with an array of talents, experiences, attitudes, backgrounds, and beliefs.

In addition to U.S. Census projections, current media headlines reflect a growing business case for an emphasis on diversity leadership in the military. Defense Secretary Ash Carter has been vocal about inclusion and the promotion of diversity in the Armed Services. During his address to the Baltimore American Legion Convention in September 2015, Carter recognized recent women graduates of Army Ranger School as representative of the military's strategy to "stay relevant" and attract "the best personnel for the job from the widest possible pool of candidates."[24] In his words, this means the Department "keeps pace with change and stays open to talents and strengths of all Americans who can contribute to the excellence of today's force."[25] Carter also spoke in June 2015 at the fourth Annual Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Equality Day celebration held at the Pentagon, announcing sexual orientation would be included in Military Equal Opportunity programs.[26] These headlines, along with the 2010 repeal of the "Don't ask, don't tell" policy banning gays and lesbians from the military, emphasize the Department's push toward a more complete culture of inclusion and retention of all who serve. They also demonstrate a growing recognition and acceptance of and for the multi-faceted aspects of diversity.

It is apparent today that all eyes are on diversity as a DoD strategic priority that is first among equals in supporting the overall mission to protect the security of the United States. Over nearly a decade, the Department has taken impressive steps to address the issue and allocate needed resources to ensure the development of a comprehensive strategic plan. In 2007, the Department commissioned RAND Corporation to offer recommendations that would help it "achieve greater diversity among DoD active duty and civilian leadership."[27] The U.S. Congress also brought the

concern to the forefront in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009, prompting the MLDC to conduct exhaustive research studies and initiate efforts to improve existing diversity-related policies, as well as provide "new initiatives designed to be supportive of the missions and goals of the Department of Defense."[28] Furthermore, President Obama issued an Executive Order in 2011, "Establishing a Coordinated Government-wide Initiative to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workforce."[29]

To begin the process of creating a strategic plan, RAND's first focus was for the Department to construct and adopt a standardized definition of diversity.[30] The MLDC championed this effort in 2011 and offered leadership a version intended to "inspire a common vision" and "bring together DoD's core values and the core values of each Service" while also recognizing current and future U.S. demographic challenges.[31] In 2012, the *Department of Defense Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan 2012-2017* (the Plan) was published, introducing a unified definition of diversity as "all the different characteristics and attributes of the DoD's Total Force, which are consistent with our core values, integral to overall readiness and mission accomplishment, and reflective of the nation we serve."[32] Promoting a single, unified definition of diversity was a powerful first step in bringing the civilian and military components of the Department together. This effort affords the Department a greater strategic advantage by "leveraging the diversity of all members" in order to garner new perspectives and ideas "critical to innovation, optimization, and organization mission success."[33]

Once again, it is worth noting that diversity in the workforce is already a reality, and the Department's senior leaders are paying attention in order to make positive

strides toward leading the face of change. DoD's expanded cognition of diversity along with its commitment to our nation and its future force is evident in its creation of the strategic Plan that addresses diversity and inclusion. The timing of the release of this Plan is also significant since the Department must take advantage of the current window of opportunity to adjust its policies before it gets behind the curve of change in national demographics. Furthermore, having a Plan in place is only one step in the journey; the next critical piece is putting the Plan into action with a framework for diversity education focused on more than just embracing diversity but also on developing diverse leadership that can transform military culture and effectively lead this new mix of people in the Twenty-First Century.

A Framework for Diversity Leadership Education

A framework for diversity leadership education can build from, and should be aligned with, the *Department of Defense Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan 2012-2017*. The DoD Plan has three primary objectives for diversity and inclusion: first, to ensure leadership commitment to an accountable and sustained diversity effort; second, to employ an aligned strategic outreach effort to identify, attract, and recruit from a broad talent pool reflective of the best of the nation we serve; and third, to develop, mentor, and retain top talent from across the Total Force.[34] In addition, these goals are embedded with thirty-seven initiatives designed to "align DoD efforts in a coordinated, collaborative, and integrated manner," while taking into account the time required to develop military leaders, the projected increases in retirements, and the constraints associated with estimates in force reduction.[35]

To realize the benefits of this Plan, leader development is a critical component; the leader's role in creating the necessary climate for success should not be

underestimated. Senior DoD leaders must learn to see the unlimited complexities associated with the expanded categories and types of diversity as opportunities that can move them from managing the demographics of a diverse workforce to strategically leveraging the perspectives and talents inherent in a group. As noted by experts at the Research Center for Leadership in Action, creating capable leaders requires building competencies that translate values into "observable and measurable behavior and fostering the development, reinforcement and recognition of inclusive behavior."[36]

Developing diversity leaders will be the key to effectively creating a DoD environment of inclusion. However, an appointment to leadership is insufficient preparation to carry out the significant task of diversity leadership. To promote successfully the responsibility of leading people in the new paradigm, the DoD must sufficiently train and develop the right skills to maximize and optimize the diverse expertise, talents, and abilities of the changing workforce. Thus, the current framework for diversity leadership education would benefit from a renewed and refreshed commitment to building the key competencies of Cultural Intelligence, Communication, and Building Cohesive Teams. Each of these competencies can be defined independently of one another, yet their development is not a linear progression but rather a contextual one; these competencies are interrelated and should develop concurrently for strong and profitable leadership.

<u>Cultural Intelligence</u>

The Research Center for Leadership in Action at New York University highlights an evolving body of work that explains Cultural Intelligence (CI) as a cognitive ability, as well as a set of behaviors that provides leaders with tools to allow them to adapt to, select, and shape the cultural aspects of their environment.[37] Leaders who possess this

competency are able to optimize and leverage diversity because they are skilled at communicating across cultural boundaries.[38] However, a well-honed CI is perhaps the most difficult competency for a leader to assess and grow. It requires becoming highly proficient at operating in a very fluid and morphing environment; advanced CI helps leaders expect, accept, and become comfortable with the unpredictability that comes from leading people in a culturally boundless setting. Leaders with strong CI demonstrate a developed meta-cognition, which is a "process in which a person draws both on what he/she knows coupled with general problem solving and adaptive skills to function in a culture which he/she does not know."[39]

For leaders to grow CI, it is helpful for them to first assess and analyze their own current underlying assumptions and unconscious biases. In other words, they must endeavor to know themselves before they can begin to understand their interaction with the world and the workforce around them. Although there are many tools available to assist leaders with strengthening this competency, an invaluable approach that will speed the rate of change and provide a greater return on investment is the process of leader self-reflection in order to grow self-awareness. Self-reflection is the process of identifying and analyzing what motivates and interests you, as well as "why." Fully exploring personal strengths and abilities, and closely examining weaknesses, assumptions, habits, and biases, will provide a healthier and more open climate for leaders to mature their CI abilities.

Once leaders gain self-knowledge through introspection, they can begin the very complex trek of determining how well they understand and interact with others from varying backgrounds. Milton Bennett, author and founder of The Intercultural

Communication Institute, offers a beneficial model for leaders to study and apply as they work to comprehend and develop CI: The *Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity* (DMIS).[40] This model assesses CI by using a continuum that moves through six stages from Ethnocentrism (Denial, Defense, and Minimization), "The experience of one's own culture as 'central to reality,'" to Ethnorelativism (Acceptance, Adaptation, and Integration), the "experience of one's own beliefs and behaviors as just one organization of reality among many viable possibilities."[41] Progressing successfully through the stages of Ethnocentrism and into the realm of Ethnorelativism is the goal for effective leadership. This evolution reflects the leaders' ability to maintain "social relations across cultural boundaries," utilize cultural sensitivity in a team environment, and productively rely upon a more developed worldview for decision-making.[42]

Communication

Communication is another key competency required to drive efficient organizational change and proficiently implement the DoD Plan for diversity and inclusion. Current communication objectives found in the Plan take on a traditional communications approach, ensuring more outward focused and multi-channeled methods are effectively delivering the goals and objectives across the Department. Yet, it is incumbent upon strategic leaders to make the diversity plan real and personal to the workforce. Furthermore, DoD leaders need to be able to parley the unified and inclusive definition of diversity of the Total Force to its key stakeholders.

Making strategic messaging real to the workforce is a learned competency that the DoD must continue to grow. Not only should leaders be able to convey a strategic vision with its associated goals and objectives, but they also must be able to link the vision, goals, and objectives to what employees value, believe, feel, and witness in the

workplace. The DoD Plan for diversity and inclusion is more than a list of objectives, actions, and initiatives; it is a tool to promote dialogue about the Department's core message of purpose and value that leaders and employees must understand and share. A compelling warning from the RAND study reminds us that "communication must not be seen as a substitute for action; communication should be designed to inspire action."[43]

In addition to making the Plan real to the workforce, a strategic leader should be able to demonstrate a well-developed communication competency by making the transition to diversity and inclusion personal to each employee, as well. Competent leaders need to articulate clearly, consistently, and correctly the "why" factor in order to ensure the proper level of commitment is present at all levels. As Villanova University management Professor Quinetta Roberson stated in "Best Practices for Diversity Training," the workforce needs to have the following question answered: "What's in it for me?"[44] She stresses the need for leaders to communicate how employee buy-in will improve overall education and professional development for the employee and for the organization as a whole, leading to mission accomplishment.[45]

<u>Building Cohesive Teams</u>

Building Cohesive Teams is another key diversity leadership competency that deserves attention within a refreshed diversity education framework. This competency is most powerfully demonstrated when senior leaders grow and exercise teambuilding in conjunction with the proficiencies of CI and Communication. Getting people to work together cooperatively in order to understand and attain a specific goal that will result in a positive outcome and potential reward is not an easy challenge, especially in a world learning to leverage an infinite combination of diversities. Skilled leaders demonstrate

strength in this competency through their ability to offer a stable and safe work environment that models an expanding cognition of diversity, as well as by anticipating and bridging the gaps that begin to appear when individuals come together.

As professionals, we must recognize that people are at their best when they can operate in an environment of trust. Safe and healthy climates allow employees to function at peak levels without fear of ostracism or harsh judgements. An effective diversity leader should be able to demonstrate their proficiency at creating climates of inclusion that recognize an unlimited combination of backgrounds, skills, beliefs, and intellects found in the workforce. According to University of California, Berkeley, Psychology Professor Charlan Nemeth, this leader should also understand how to balance out the benefits of "cohesion, harmony and alignment" built by embracing and promoting an organization's vision and core values, with the "open airing of competing views" and "passionate interchange" of ideas.[46] Leaders will best serve the DoD's efforts to achieve its diversity and inclusion goals by creating climates that appeal to all the different category types of diversity found in its Total Force.[47]

Successful cohesive team building should also emphasize the leader's ability to reduce confusion and tension by designing a social network that can bring a group together for a common goal. Mannix and Neale suggest that leaders can strategically leverage diversity by fostering a sense of "being different yet feeling similar."[48] This sense of inclusion allows the uniqueness of each individual to be valued in the group setting and encourages a higher rate of innovative ideas.[49] As a leader builds a strong team community, he/she is providing space for open exchange of perspectives, leaving room for dissenting views, and enhancing opportunities for creative thinking. In the

article "Assimilation and Diversity: An Integrative Model of Subgroup Relations,"
Psychology professors Matthew Hornsey and Michael Hogg emphasize that leaders
who demonstrate competence in team building understand the value of presenting a
superordinate goal that "does not conflict with or contradict" what is valued by the
individuals or subgroups.[50] The DoD Plan for diversity and inclusion is a powerful
superordinate goal that incorporates the Department's mission and values, and directly
reflects the All-Volunteer Force it supports.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

Astute management of a diverse workforce requires a proactive leadership style,
as well as a recognition that change is a constant. Admittedly, change is not often
readily welcomed, nor is it an easy process to implement. Positive change requires
purposeful intent to transition from the comfort of the present and into the
unpredictability and uncertainty of the future. Fortunately, change is manageable and
sustainable, but according to the Harvard Business Review article "Why Change
Programs Don't Produce Change," it requires an eye on coordination and commitment,
as well as the addition of new and targeted competencies.[51] This combination ensures
that organizational change efforts do not conclude with merely shouting out the
message from the top and then hoping for the best result. Instead, the addition of
competencies anchors this approach by emphasizing the need for contextual
opportunities where the workforce can experience change through newly defined roles
and responsibilities, and realize the possibility for difference.[52] In this way, new attitudes
and behaviors emerge that will embrace and eventually sustain the desired end state.

The existence of the DoD Plan is evidence of the strong coordination and
commitment required to begin the transition to a new environment of diversity and

inclusion. The Plan is the product of important research and actions by key stakeholders with input from Think Tank experts, resulting in well-defined goals and objectives. Fundamental to achieving the sustainable end state laid out in the Plan is the top down commitment exhibited by the President, Congress, and the Secretary of Defense. These leaders are essential to the process, and their joint vision and direction help the DoD ensure it establishes the essential and clear message that a traditional, hierarchical, chain-of-command structure like the U.S. military requires.[53] Together, these leaders have ensured the development of a prescriptive approach that calls for DoD senior leaders to do things differently, develop a climate of inclusion, and strategically leverage diversity within the new and evolving paradigm.

This thesis offers the critical competencies needed to complete the cycle of change initiated by the DoD and build a framework that will enhance its diversity leadership education. Defined leadership competencies aligned with the Plan's goals and objectives serve as the glue to make the Plan achievable. The presence of Cultural Intelligence, Communication, and Building Cohesive Teams within leadership performance standards will serve to ensure the top-down directive is met through the establishment of these bottom-up capabilities. In addition, the Department should review and refresh current DoD leadership competency statements in order to ensure that formal leadership development opportunities incorporate contemporary perspectives and policy relative to diversity leadership. Combining targeted leadership competencies with demanding standards and then holding managers accountable will advance a leader's responsibility to maintain a productive working relationship with all subordinates and maximize a team's joint contributions to mission accomplishment.

Diversity leadership is a critical competency for managers who, by definition, get work done through others. The DoD Plan, combined with this proposed framework for diversity leadership education, addresses the requirement of senior leaders operating at the strategic level to understand, leverage, and maximize a new and evolved cognition of diversity. The potential benefits gained from enhanced diversity leadership education make it worth the effort to support this change effort and ensure the DoD can proudly continue the Armed Forces' long tradition of embracing all elements of our society in service together to defend our nation. As Defense Secretary Carter expressed, "To stay the best, we must keep our focus on our greatest strength, our people….If we do right by our people … America's security will be assured for generations to come."[54]

Endnotes

[1] Elizabeth Mannix and Margaret A. Neale, "What Differences Make a Difference? The Promise and Reality of Diverse Teams in Organization," *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 6, no. 2 (October 2005): 32.

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