



MLDC Research Areas

Definition of Diversity
Legal Implications
Outreach & Recruiting
Leadership & Training
Branching & Assignments
Promotion
Retention
Implementation & Accountability
Metrics
National Guard & Reserve

This issue paper aims to aid in the deliberations of the MLDC. It does not contain the recommendations of the MLDC.

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Demographic Diversity Management Policies, Practices, and Metrics Used in Private Sector Organizations

Individual Leader Initiatives and Internal Company Initiatives

Abstract

This is the second of two issue papers (IPs) that describe the programs, policies, and practices used by private-sector organizations to manage diversity and the metrics used to gauge their effectiveness. This IP adopts an internal focus, examining corporate efforts falling within organizations, such as various initiatives adopted by individual leaders and companies. To manage diversity, managers and executives may act as diversity champions and develop strategies for selecting and retaining diverse groups. Also described are practices undertaken by organizations, such as holding leaders accountable for diversity, developing a diversity-friendly corporate culture, providing diversity training, developing the talents of all employees, promoting employee involvement, and working to retain demographically diverse talent. A variety of metrics are used to assess the effectiveness of these initiatives. These include objective measures (e.g., retention rates of minorities) and subjective measures related in rating scales (e.g., those that measure organizational commitment). Survey findings reveal that 47–59 percent of the American workforce believes these practices to be very important or extremely important.

To derive insight into how to manage diversity in the military, it helps to have a basis of comparison. Private-sector organizations may prove useful in this regard because they have been actively involved in efforts to manage diversity using a wide variety of initiatives. They also rely on many different metrics to assess the efficacy of these efforts. Although private-sector organizations

differ from the military Services in several key respects, much still can be learned from the private sector about policies, practices, and metrics that may prove to be useful to the Department of Defense and the Services.

In keeping with the perspectives on managing diversity described in an earlier issue paper (IP) (Military Leadership Diversity Commission, 2009), private-sector organizations balance two key approaches. They respect the varied perspectives that people from different backgrounds bring to work, and they recognize that these differences have the potential to add value to an organization. With this in mind, the *phrase managing diversity* refers to *forming and implementing policies and following practices designed both (1) to recruit and retain a demographically diverse workforce and (2) to leverage the differences between people to improve organizational outcomes*. In private-sector organizations, the primary focus of such efforts is demographic diversity, and, among organizations conducting business overseas, this is supplemented by attention to global diversity. The other two forms of diversity identified in Military Leadership Diversity Commission (2009), behavioral/cognitive diversity and structural diversity, are considered far less often in private-sector diversity management.

Two IPs are devoted to diversity management initiatives in the private sector.¹ The companion to this IP (Military Leadership Diversity Commission, 2010b) examines various pre-employment and externally oriented initiatives. In contrast, this IP adopts an *internal* focus, examining efforts aimed within organizations, such as various practices and approaches used by individual leaders and internal company policies and programs. Both IPs give specific examples of diversity

management and identify the metrics associated with them. The appendix presents representative items from the various questionnaires used to collect metrics referred to in this IP.

The practices and metrics described in this IP have been cited as exemplary in that they were included in one or more of the following lists: “The 40 Best Companies for Diversity” (in *Black Enterprise Magazine*, July 2009), “Top 50 Companies for Diversity” (Frankel writing for DiversityInc, March 2010), and “100 Best Companies to Work For—Top Companies: Most Diverse” (in *Fortune Magazine*, February 2010). Note that the exact criteria of effectiveness used in these lists were not always exactly specified. As a result, we can only claim that the practices reported here are illustrative of ones used by companies considered good with respect to managing diversity. We make no claims to scientific validity.

Initiatives by Executives

Organizations’ top executives can play important roles in managing diversity in their organizations. Two key ways in which they do this are by being champions for diversity and by developing diversity strategies. This section describes these practices and the metrics used to measure their effectiveness.

Being a Champion for Diversity

In many of the companies that are known for good diversity management, high-level executives are actively involved in such initiatives. For example the Merck & Co. chairman, president, and CEO, Richard T. Clark, meets personally with members of the company’s ten Global Constituency Groups (the ten groups are Asian American, African American, Hispanic, native indigenous, lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered, generational, interfaith, differently abled, men, and women) (Frankel, 2010). The benefits of these meetings are likely to derive only in part from the information shared and the ideas that result from them (i.e., direct effects). The symbolic value of the CEO rolling up his sleeves and meeting with various groups should not be downplayed. The messages it sends to constituents (both inside and outside the company) about the importance of diversity may be considerable. In other words, by getting involved in diversity-promoting activities, leaders demonstrate their commitment to these initiatives, potentially contributing to their effectiveness.

Typically, because the effects of diversity-championing activities cannot be separated from other diversity-promoting activities in an organization, no efforts are made to assess their unique impact. However, the impact of such activities may be reflected immediately in the general attitudes of minority-group members who have had contact with leaders. Subsequently, the tangible effects of these attitudes may manifest themselves behaviorally, such as by contributing to decisions to remain with the company. Turnover rates among minority-group members are the key metric used in this connection.

Developing Diversity Strategies

Another way in which executives and top management can be involved in promoting diversity is by taking charge of the development of diversity strategies and assuming ownership of them, a topic discussed in an earlier IP (Military Leadership Diversity Commission, 2010a). The benefits are twofold. First, this helps ensure that lower-ranking people in the organization take these strategies seriously. Second, it bolsters leaders’ images as people who are committed to diversity.

An illustration of these practices is provided by Capitol One Financial Corporation, whose founder, chairman, and CEO, Richard D. Fairbank, has been actively involved in the company’s efforts to become a national leader in diversity (Frankel, 2010). Among other things, Fairbank spearheaded the development of a set of company values in which diversity figures prominently. For example, the company’s “Best People” program requires employees to demonstrate their commitment to diversity (but, so as not to discourage them from considering what to do in this regard, no specific practices are identified). To ensure that the message comes across, Fairbank promotes these values by featuring them prominently in the many presentations he makes to audiences both inside and outside the company.

Leaders of one global consumer-products company have incorporated diversity management into their firm’s business plan. They specify objectives, goals, and strategies, along with metrics for assessing them. These constitute what they refer to as the “glide paths” for promoting diversity and are a fundamental part of how the company conducts business. Specifically, “the top 35 officers have developed, along with the Global Diversity Office and Human Resources, forward-looking ‘glide paths’ that will achieve full representation at all levels within the organization” (National Urban League, 2009, p. 25). These involve the following activities and metrics:

- developing five-year goals for attracting, developing, advancing, and retaining—at all organizational levels—workforce members who are demographically representative of the communities in which the company operates
- identifying and assessing annual milestones to evaluate progress toward goal attainment
- creating business plans that include assessments of the likelihood of attaining goals
- creating plans for developing employees so as to help achieve goals.

For leaders at this company, making progress along these fronts is a source of both professional pride and financial gain. Individual leaders and members of their business units can earn 10-percent increases in their stock options if they display “exemplary performance,” although precisely what this may be is unspecified.

Companywide Initiatives

Organizations are adopting a wide variety of policies and practices aimed at promoting diversity internally, including holding people accountable for increased demographic diversity, developing a diversity-friendly culture, providing diversity training, developing the talents of all employees, promoting employee involvement, and working to retain diverse talent.

Holding Leaders Accountable for Demographic Diversity

It is one thing to encourage greater demographic diversity and quite another to hold people accountable for making progress toward achieving it. It is with this in mind that many companies have come to link progress in achieving diversity with financial rewards. Although statistics regarding the prevalence of this practice are hard to come by, diversity expert Edward E. Hubbard claims that “the percentage is growing” (Babcock, 2009).

Sodexo provides a clear example of holding leaders accountable for demographic diversity. Since 2002, the company has been holding managers and executives accountable for diversity by linking results on a “diversity scorecard” (a set of metrics that assess progress in hiring, promoting, and retaining women and members of minority groups) with a sizable portion of management bonuses. These portions can be as much as 15 percent of the total bonus for managers and 25 percent for executives. According to Rohini Anand, Sodexo’s chief diversity officer and senior vice president, “What we have found is that having the metrics without the accountability is just half of the equation We want to make sure that we have the commitment and engagement of management at all levels” (Babcock, 2009).

According to the Society for Human Resource Management, using quantitative metrics can be useful, but qualitative factors, such as behavioral changes that may lead to cultural shifts, should also be rewarded (Babcock, 2009). For example, the Allstate Insurance Co. chief diversity officer, Anise Wiley-Little, explains that leaders are held accountable not only for results but also for behaviors. Noting that diversity “sits on everyone’s desk,” Wiley-Little explains that the company “embed[s] the accountability for diversity into many things and we find that it is most effective if it shows up in multiple places and in different ways throughout the corporation” (Babcock, 2009).

Allstate assesses these behaviors with its annual Quality Leadership Measurement Survey, which includes specific measures of how various individuals are performing aspects of the job. To assess behaviors of interest, questions tap such issues as the extent to which the person in question treats others with dignity and respect and whether people in a particular manager’s unit can advance through the ranks regardless of race or gender. Responses to such questions are considered during annual performance reviews, which determine pay decisions (Babcock, 2009).

Developing a Diversity-Friendly Culture

In some organizations, concerted efforts are made to create diversity-friendly corporate cultures—that is, those in which people share common beliefs and values about the appropriateness of a workforce that is inclusive of everyone. In such organizations, initiatives designed to promote diversity are embraced. Such cultures usually do not evolve without intervention from company leaders. As a general rule, this evolution requires the following steps:

- Leaders plant the seeds for developing diversity-friendly cultures by adhering to the various leader initiatives described earlier. In so doing, they are articulating the values desired in the company.
- Leaders insert these values into short-term and long-term plans for the organization so as to integrate diversity-friendly values into everyday business activities.
- The diversity-friendly values are articulated clearly in a formal diversity statement that is communicated broadly throughout the organization, such as in company handbooks, on websites, on signs, and in oral presentations by executives.
- These values are reinforced in day-to-day interaction. (This step is especially important.) This is “where the rubber meets the road,” so to speak, because unless workers hear diversity-friendly statements from their supervisors and witness their supervisors engaging in actions that embrace inclusion, formal documents will have no meaning, and a diversity-friendly culture will fail to materialize.
- Behaviors demonstrating progress toward diversity goals are incorporated into performance appraisal systems, standards for advancement, and criteria for selecting future personnel. This ensures that diversity-friendly cultures remain viable.

Aetna is a company that has been identified as having a diversity-friendly culture. According to its value statement (Aetna, 2009),

Diversity is embedded in Aetna’s values. We recognize the impact and importance of diversity in all aspects of our business—our workforce, customers, suppliers, networks of health care professionals, in our products and services and through our contributions to the communities we serve. It’s part of the Aetna way of doing business.

To inculcate these values into the corporate culture, the company (1) includes diversity goals and imperatives in its vision statements and strategic plans; (2) develops strategies to better understand and serve the needs of multicultural markets; (3) celebrates the contributions of various groups, such as African Americans and Hispanics; (4) focuses on minority groups when making philanthropic decisions; (5) monitors the percentages of women and minority-group

members in its workforce; and (6) supports 11 different employee-resource groups (e.g., the Aetna Native-American Employee Resource Group, the Asian-American Employee Resource Group) through which employees can share their experiences with one another.

The breadth of such activities is typical in companies considered to have diversity-friendly cultures because the formation and maintenance of corporate culture requires multiple, interlocking exposures to core values. Any one such activity alone is unlikely to have much effect, if any.

Because efforts to promote a diversity-friendly organizational culture cover a broad range of activities, metrics used to assess their impact need to be comprehensive in focus. And, because organizational culture is perceptual in nature, these metrics need to focus on people's attitudes. An appropriate scale to use in this connection is the Cultural Diversity Test (which incorporates the Racial Attitude Test), described in Rundquist (2005). The Cultural Diversity Test uses a variety of questions to assess people's attitudes toward members of minority groups in general. In contrast, the Racial Attitude Test assesses social acceptance of individuals from various racial and ethnic groups that are explicitly identified in the test.

Providing Diversity Training

Diversity training refers to systematic efforts to educate employees about diversity (typically, demographic and global diversity). In most cases, such efforts have three major foci:

- providing *knowledge* about diversity: providing trainees with information about the nature of diversity (e.g., providing information about differences in people from different cultures)
- promoting *attitudes* favorable to diversity: promoting both global attitudes toward diversity (e.g., its importance) and attitudes toward members of specific demographic groups (e.g., African Americans, women).
- teaching *behavior and skills* associated with promoting diversity: teaching interpersonal skills needed to work effectively with members of diverse cultural groups (e.g., communication, teamwork, and conflict-management skills).

These foci have been referred to as the head (knowledge), the heart (feelings and attitudes), and the hand (behavior and skills) (Hayles, 1996, p. 106).

Diversity training programs are used routinely in most large organizations, usually as part of broader diversity programs that use diversity staffs (including a high-level officer) and diversity committees (that oversee and monitor diversity-related activities).

Case analyses, mini-lectures, and role-playing exercises are among the most widely used pedagogical tools in diversity training programs. Sessions can range in length from only a few hours to a full week, and they are usually aimed

at employees at all organizational levels. For example, at Ernst & Young, diversity training is mandatory for the entire workforce. This training is scheduled regularly and lasts one full day (Ernst & Young, 2010).

Many companies do not formally assess the impact of their training initiatives, leaving it unclear what particular training efforts are most effective (Dobbin, Kalev, & Kelly, 2007). Sodexo is an exception. This large food-service company tracks the diversity attitudes of its employees empirically. According to Sodexo (2009), it accomplishes this in two key ways. First, the company assesses diversity-related attitudes and behavior both before and after training so as to be able to assess the impact of training. Second, it uses a 360-degree assessment, the Sodexo Diversity Index, to determine the extent to which executives embody the company's positive values toward diversity. This instrument includes both quantitative measures (i.e., rating scales) and qualitative measures (i.e., open-ended questions) and taps both people's efforts to promote diversity and their successes in that regard. Such information is used to determine a portion of these employees' compensation.

Sodexo's measurement instruments are proprietary and cannot be shared. However, various other measures have been used successfully to assess the various facets of diversity training. For example, with respect to diversity knowledge, a 60-item self-report called the Multicultural Awareness-Knowledge Skills Survey (MAKSS) has been used widely (D'Andrea, Daniels, & Heck, 1991). Currently, the scale used most widely to assess attitudes toward diversity is McConahay's (1986) Modern Racism Scale. This instrument focuses on subtle beliefs rather than overt ones. Finally, with respect to assessing diversity-related behavior and skills, a subset of items from the MAKSS is widely used.²

Developing the Talents of All Employees

Once talented people have entered an organization, it is essential to create opportunities for them that benefit the organization while also satisfying the individuals' career objectives. In other words, companies may seek to manage diversity by developing *everyone's* talent. Ignoring this aspect can lead to dissatisfied employees and underutilized talent. Few organizations can afford that.

How, then, do organizations go about assuring that they are not ignoring opportunities to develop the skills of their diverse members? In the case of one national financial-services company, a talent-review process is used (National Urban League, 2009). Early on in a person's career, efforts are made to identify whether his or her particular skills (yet unutilized) could give the employee a high potential for growth. If so, specific action plans are developed to help the individuals reach his or her potential in new areas. These plans incorporate appropriate developmental activities that prepare the individual for future positions. Frequently, the employee is sent to corporate training sessions and assigned to expert mentors

who possess the desired skills. Finally, to ensure that the plans are operating effectively, supervisors review progress semiannually and recommend adjustments and corrections as needed.

The success of such efforts may be gauged in three ways. First, organizations that follow the steps outlined here may be expected to have workforces composed of individuals who are highly committed to their organizations. Organizational commitment typically is assessed using a scale developed by Meyer and Allen (1991). Second, providing people opportunities to develop and advance their careers may be expected to elevate their levels of career satisfaction. A widely used measure of career satisfaction is the Career Satisfaction Scale developed by Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley (1990). Third, companies also may benefit from improved rates of retention, which can be measured by comparing turnover rates for various demographic groups before and after the introduction of talent-development initiatives. Also, whenever industry-wide turnover rates are available, a company can compare its own turnover rates with those rates. This is especially informative when the statistics are broken down by demographic group.

Promoting Employee Involvement

Many companies have found that they can be effective in retaining members of minority groups by encouraging employees to join affinity groups and diversity councils. In the context of diversity, an affinity group is an informal collection of individuals who share a common identity with respect to any particular quality (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, sexual preference, religion). A diversity council is a committee whose members work together to create opportunities for everyone in an organization to be valued and accepted. The composition of diversity councils varies across organizations; some comprise only top executives, and others include people from various ranks (GilDeane Group, 2005). Despite differences, both types of groups have the potential to enhance the retention of women and members of minority groups.

Over 90 percent of Fortune 500 companies have affinity groups, although these take widely varying forms. In most cases, affinity groups are composed of volunteers who are usually individuals from groups that, historically, have been underrepresented in the workplace. For example, one global consumer-products company sponsors the activities of 73 different affinity groups, connecting people in various parts of the organization. Despite having different focuses, their objectives are similar: enriching the employment experiences of members while simultaneously allowing them to contribute to the company in which they work.

By banding together, members of affinity groups have stronger voices in their companies, helping them get their concerns addressed. Members also help one another with education, mentoring, and networking. And they also

reduce the feelings of marginalization and social isolation that minority-group members may feel (Massey & Denton, 1993). Affinity groups also assist organizations, such as by supporting company recruiting offices and by providing unified feedback about key issues. Ultimately, affinity groups help organizations in two key ways: by enhancing retention rates and promoting organizational commitment. Company records make retention metrics readily available, and measurements of organizational commitment can be obtained by administering a standardized scale (Meyer & Allen, 1991). It should be noted, however, that unless a controlled experiment is conducted (which is unlikely to be possible), it will be difficult to assess the extent to which retention rates are affected exclusively by the use of affinity groups.

A study by the GilDeane Group (2005) used a convenience sample of large American organizations in different industries to identify the nature of diversity councils that are in use. These were found to have different memberships, reporting structures, visions, missions, and goals. For example, one company was described as having 16 diversity councils, each of which was composed of individuals from a particular division that reports to a vice president. These groups serve in an advisory role and implement educational programs and diversity activities. They also serve the important functions of promoting cultural awareness, implementing work-life programs, and increasing the exposure of women and minorities to senior management. The metrics used in these groups address recruitment, retention, succession planning, and training; and all are derived from internal company statistics. Additionally, employees who participate on diversity councils are given extra credit in their performance evaluations and suitable rewards and recognition for their efforts.

Working to Retain Diverse Talent

Many companies have learned that a key to promoting diversity is not simply attracting employees from diverse groups but also retaining them once they are in the organization. This is a particularly important consideration when tight labor markets exist (Kandola & Fullerton, 1998). Indeed, one of the key metrics used to assess the success of a diversity program is the percentage of women and minorities retained over previous years (Singh, 2008).

What, then, are some of the most effective practices used to retain diverse talent? According to the National Urban League (2009), officials at an international automotive company report that the key is to understand the drivers of attrition and to empower employees to do something about them. This company formed teams composed of women and minorities charged with identifying issues and problems of greatest concern to them, and especially factors that might lead them to quit. The teams discuss these factors and identify potential solutions, which they then propose to company officials. Finally, these teams confer with human resources specialists and executives to create specific programs designed to promote

retention, such as mentoring programs and alternative work schedules, which have contributed to reductions in the focal metric of companywide attrition rates.

Reactions from the American Workforce

With this in mind, the National Urban League (2009) conducted a survey of more than 5,500 members of the American workforce.³ With respect to the eight classes of initiatives in Table 1, except for “Holding leaders accountable for diversity,” the majority of respondents considered these initiatives to be very important or extremely important.⁴

Conclusions

Private-sector organizations are actively engaged in activities designed to manage demographic and global diversity, and they use a variety of metrics to assess their effectiveness. Executives do this by being champions for diversity (e.g., by getting involved in diversity-related activities) and by assuming ownership of such activities (e.g., by incorporating diversity into their business plans). Companywide initiatives also are used, including holding people accountable for increased demographic diversity, developing a diversity-friendly culture, providing diversity training, developing the talents of all employees, promoting employee involvement, and working to retain diverse talent. Metrics used include questionnaires assessing organizational culture, the effectiveness of training, and the degree to which women and minorities are retained by organizations. A recent survey reveals that Americans believe in the importance of these practices.

Notes

¹In the civilian sector, the term *management* applies to both people and programs. In the military, however, the term *management* refers only to programs, and the term *leadership* is used for people. To acknowledge this difference in terminology, the MLDC is using the term *diversity leadership* to distinguish workgroup-level leadership practices from organization-level programs and policies. More specifically, *diversity leadership* applies to the practices leaders use to shape the diversity dynamics in the units they command, including leveraging members’ differences to enhance capability.

²Because these are self-reported measures that are inherently subject to social-desirability bias, their validity is suspect (Constantine & Ladanay, 2000).

³Characteristics of the sample were not reported.

⁴These responses reflect attitudes expressed by the sample as a whole. Cross-tabulations based on demographic categories were not provided.

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Table 1. Acceptance of Various Initiatives by the American Workforce

Initiative	Percentage of Respondents Who Consider It Very Important or Extremely Important
Working to retain diverse talent	59%
Developing a diversity-friendly culture	57%
Being a champion for diversity*	57%
Developing diversity strategies*	57%
Providing diversity training	56%
Developing the talents of all employees	55%
Promoting employee involvement	52%
Holding leaders accountable for diversity	47%

SOURCE: Based on data reported by the National Urban League (2009).

*Although differentiated in this IP, these initiatives were categorized together in the survey within the category “Leadership commitment and involvement,” which received a joint approval rating of 57 percent.

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Appendix: Representative Items from Measurement Scales

Cultural Diversity Test (Rundquist, 2005)

All in all, I would say that minority workers are just as productive as other workers.

- 1 = Strongly Disagree*
- 2 = Disagree*
- 3 = Neither Disagree or Agree*
- 4 = Agree*
- 5 = Strongly Agree*

An employee pins a series of cartoons to the bulletin board in the company lunchroom that depicts your race in a negative way. You would:

- 1 = Ignore the comment*
- 2 = Respond with the same behavior*
- 3 = Confront the employee*
- 4 = Tell manager*
- 5 = File a grievance*
- 6 = File a lawsuit*

Racial Attitudes Test (Rundquist, 2005)

With respect to members of the following group - _____, I personally feel that the members of this race or culture are dirty.

- 1 = Strongly Disagree*
- 2 = Disagree*
- 3 = Neither Disagree or Agree*
- 4 = Agree*
- 5 = Strongly Agree*

With respect to members of the following group _____, I would be accepting of someone from this group as my boss.

- 1 = Strongly object*
- 2 = Moderately object*
- 3 = Neither accept nor object*
- 4 = Moderately accept*
- 5 = Strongly accept*

Multicultural Awareness-Knowledge Skills Survey (D'Andrea, Daniels, & Heck, 1991)

At the present time, how would you rate your understanding of ethnicity?

- 1 = Very limited*
- 2 = Limited*
- 3 = Good*
- 4 = Very good*

At the present time, how would you rate your ability to interact with people who are different from yourself?

- 1 = Very limited*
- 2 = Limited*
- 3 = Good*
- 4 = Very good*

Modern Racism Scale (McConahay, 1986)

Over the past few years, Blacks have gotten more economically than they deserve.

- 1 = Strongly Disagree*
- 2 = Disagree*
- 3 = Neither Disagree or Agree*
- 4 = Agree*
- 5 = Strongly Agree*

Discrimination against Blacks is no longer a problem in the United States.

- 1 = Strongly Disagree*
- 2 = Disagree*
- 3 = Neither Disagree or Agree*
- 4 = Agree*
- 5 = Strongly Agree*

Career Satisfaction Scale (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990)

I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career.

1 = *Strongly disagree*

2 = *Disagree to some extent*

3 = *Uncertain*

4 = *Agree to some extent*

5 = *Strongly agree*

I am satisfied with the progress I have made towards meeting my overall career goals.

1 = *Strongly disagree*

2 = *Disagree to some extent*

3 = *Uncertain*

4 = *Agree to some extent*

5 = *Strongly agree*

Organizational Commitment Scale (Meyer & Allen, 1991)

I would be happy to spend the rest of my career in this organization.

1 = *Strongly Disagree*

2 = *Disagree*

3 = *Neither Disagree or Agree*

4 = *Agree*

5 = *Strongly Agree*

I feel emotionally attached to this organization.

1 = *Strongly Disagree*

2 = *Disagree*

3 = *Neither Disagree or Agree*

4 = *Agree*

5 = *Strongly Agree*