

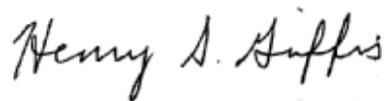
Approaches To and Tools for Successful Diversity Management: Results From 360-Degree Diversity Management Case Studies

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Henry S. Griffis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a clear, legible font.

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Summary

Background and tasking

This paper represents the third phase of research conducted by CNA and the Air Force Office of Strategic Diversity Integration (SAF/MRD) on the impact of workforce diversity on Air Force mission performance. Phase 1 established a mission case for diversity management in the Air Force. Phase 2 confirmed that diversity management does matter in Air Force work groups but showed that the Air Force is not systematically teaching it. In particular, Air Force managers lack a consistent framework for thinking about diversity management as well as a consistent language for talking about it. Both framework and language are required for effective training. Together, these three elements—framework, language, and training—could help the Air Force make more effective use of its personnel.

Consequently, for phase 3, SAF/MRD asked CNA to conduct a series of case studies designed to analyze the effect of group-level leadership and management on diversity dynamics within Air Force work groups and to collect an inventory of diversity management tools currently in use. The ultimate policy goal for this research phase is to inform diversity management training.

Approach: 360-degree case studies

The case studies have three key features. First, they examine the management practices of squadron commanders chosen for successfully managing diversity. Thus, the subjects were not intended to be representative of all managers, but rather to be managers who exemplify the phenomena under study. Second, they are “360-degree” case studies: we queried not only the subjects but also their supervisors and subordinates to verify how the subjects’ management is experienced both by those to whom they report and by those whom they manage.

Finally, the case study interviews and the analysis of the interview transcripts were informed by and structured around the Diversity-Capability Model, developed in the first research phase.

Findings

Framework and language

The case study investigation indicates that even commanders who were identified as good diversity managers lack both a framework and language for explicitly and systematically managing diversity. The results also indicate that the Diversity-Capability Model can serve as the missing framework. By looking at the squadrons through the model's diversity lens, we learned things about their dynamics that could have improved the subjects' management. Specifically, we:

- Identified unmanaged diversity problems and their triggers
- Highlighted ways to better manage already identified diversity problems
- Confirmed cases in which diversity was being well managed and identified management tools that work.

The investigation was less fruitful for development of a diversity management language. We did, however, find that language used in training curricula should take into account a key distinction between the words *management* and *leadership*. Specifically, the respondents did not associate the word *management* with the people-related issues that arise out of complex diversity dynamics. Instead, they associated management with mechanical and administrative processes. Our working definition of "diversity management" incorporates this distinction by focusing on leadership and highlighting the idea that diversity's mission relevance is through human processes.

Diversity management tools

The case studies identified many successful diversity management tools. Three simple statements sum up the learning about effective diversity management:

1. It's about people, so it requires actual contact with them.
2. It must be intentional; it doesn't happen as a side effect of managing other processes or doing your own job.
3. It's time consuming and labor intensive.

Conclusions and recommendations

This research addressed the potential benefits of diversity management and diversity management training for Air Force personnel. In combination with previous research, the case studies document a need for such training and suggest that it would have a valuable impact on mission capability: Good people management can enhance morale and teamwork and stimulate creativity and innovation in any setting, but it is especially valuable in the context of Total Force Integration and budget cuts. More specifically, the case studies yielded five important lessons for diversity management in the Air Force. Diversity management training should teach managers how to:

- Continuously assess mission capability in terms of diversity-related aspects
- Understand and assess the diversity context
- Pay attention to human processes
- Set a positive overall unit climate
- Identify and employ management practices that address diversity issues.

Recommendations

We make the following recommendations on how diversity management training should be developed and implemented:

- Adopt the Diversity-Capability Model as the framework and basis for the diversity management training curriculum.
- Increase efforts to inculcate the broad, mission-focused definition of diversity, or consider using a different word to avoid the

unrelated connotations that Air Force personnel seem to associate with the word *diversity* and with diversity-related efforts.

- Use rigorous testing to develop a supporting diversity management language that is consistent with Air Force culture and that resonates with Air Force personnel.
- To accompany the training, develop an accessible diversity management tool kit that is based on the practices and tools described in this paper.
- Add diversity management training to the leadership curricula at all levels for officers, enlisted personnel, and civilians.

Introduction

Background and tasking

This paper represents the third phase of research conducted by CNA and the Air Force Office of Strategic Diversity Integration (SAF/MRD) into the impact of workforce diversity on Air Force mission performance. Phase 1 established a mission case for diversity management in the Air Force, based on empirical literature, and developed an Air Force-specific diversity-capability model based on theoretical literature. Phase 2 conducted qualitative research with Air Force personnel and found that the model is generally applicable to Air Force work groups in both regular and deployed settings. It also found key management issues that required further study, thus motivating phase 3.

Specifically, Air Force personnel's perceptions about the way diversity is managed in the Air Force suggest the following:

- Diversity management matters for group performance and morale.
- The quality of diversity management varies substantially across leaders/managers.
- Because no specific training is given to leaders, high-quality diversity management depends on their innate abilities or professional experience.

In short, diversity management matters, but the Air Force is not systematically teaching it.

Taken as a whole, the respondents' perceptions also indicated a lack of a consistent framework for thinking about diversity management, as well as a lack of a consistent language for talking about it. Both framework and language are required for effective training, which will, in turn, instill the framework and the language. Together, these

three elements could help the Air Force make more effective use of its personnel.

Consequently, phase 3 consisted of a series of case studies designed to analyze the effect of group-level leadership and management on diversity dynamics within Air Force work groups and collect an inventory of diversity management tools currently in use. The ultimate policy goal for this research phase is to inform diversity management training that differs from and adds to existing leadership training. Specifically, the research will inform the development of a framework and language on which to base such training, as well as the development of a diversity management tool kit.

Approach: 360-degree diversity management case studies

Why case studies?

Our overall research methodology for investigating Air Force diversity is a mixed-methods approach. Specifically, we turned to case studies after reviewing the empirical literature, developing a theoretical construct and model, analyzing civilian and Air Force demographic data, and conducting focus groups and one-on-one interviews.¹

The qualitative work from the earlier phases pointed to the pivotal role of diversity management. The past work, however, only explored perceptions of diversity and whether it was managed, not the nature or quality of such management. It revealed relatively few instances of diversity management, and they were generally attributed to random, innate natural abilities and/or professional experience. Accounts of good diversity management were also self-reported, and we had no way of verifying the respondents' assessments.

Consequently, SAF/MRD decided to conduct case studies of Air Force leaders known for successfully managing diversity to see how they do it. The primary value of case studies is to get the informational depth to be able to answer questions at which surveys can only hint. Case studies are often criticized as not being representative, but that is the point: you study cases that exemplify the phenomena you

1. See [1], [2], [3], and [4].

want to study. During the 1980s, for example, case studies conducted to determine the impact of immigration on local wages went to places where such an impact had occurred. A nationwide survey would have missed this impact because instances were relatively rare at the time.

Case selection

SAF/MRD staff chose five U.S. and two overseas bases for the case studies, based on how they mapped to the four diversity types of interest—demographic, functional, structural, and global—as well as how they represented the different Air Force Major Commands (MAJCOMs). Each case study focuses on a primary subject—a squadron commander who was selected by wing leadership specifically because he or she was perceived to have demonstrated good diversity management practices.² The base visits occurred between March and September 2008, and we studied nine squadrons: one at each U.S. base and two at each overseas base.

In the interest of maintaining the promised anonymity, the case studies do not identify the squadron type or base. Although this constraint causes loss of specificity, it has the benefit of demonstrating that diversity management tools are sufficiently broad that relevant training can apply to most, if not all, Air Force occupations or Air Force Specialty Codes (AFSCs).

The 360-degree feature

We conducted 360-degree case studies, meaning that we queried not only the main subjects but also their supervisors and subordinates to verify how their management is experienced both by those to whom they report and by those whom they manage.³ We conducted four interviews for each case study. All were audio taped and transcribed

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2. Most Air Force bases consist of at least one wing, which has at least two groups. A group is composed of squadrons, and flights are sub-sections of squadrons.
 3. Typically, 360-degree assessments include peer evaluations. Given our focus on management practices, however, we did not interview subjects' peers because we thought they would not be sufficiently aware of the subjects' management styles and outcomes to give useful feedback.

for analysis, with the permission of the interviewees. In addition to a 90-minute interview of the primary subject, we conducted a 60-minute interview of the subject's supervisor, asking why the subject had been proposed as a good diversity manager, and validating the extent to which the subject's squadron meets mission goals. Then, we conducted two 90-minute focus groups of the subject's subordinates—one of middle managers and one of more junior personnel, as appropriate for the squadron. Both groups contained active-duty officers and enlisted personnel, as well as civilians and members of the Air Force Reserve (AFR) and Air National Guard (ANG) where relevant.

The 360-degree nature of these interviews enabled us to confirm whether subjects, supervisors, and subordinates had common perceptions of how the work group functions and is led/managed. It also enabled us to document how people at different levels talk about diversity management. This 360-degree approach turned out to be useful in surfacing management practices that are not successful, as well as those that are.

Document outline

The “Theoretical Framework” section offers a conceptual model for understanding how force diversity relates to mission capability in the Air Force. This Diversity-Capability Model was developed by Air Force personnel and has been adapted and used throughout this research, beginning with reference [2]. The section begins with a description of the model and its elements, then explains how the model directed this study. This section also situates the case studies in the current context for analyzing the diversity-capability relationship in the Air Force, including Total Force Integration (TFI), budgetary impacts, and the changing nature of warfare.

The study results are presented in two sections. The first “Results” section describes (a) what the case studies found regarding the presence of a diversity management framework among the case study participants, (b) the value of using the Diversity-Capability Model as such a framework, and (c) the extent to which the case studies surfaced a “language” for talking about and/or practicing such management.

The second “Results” section describes the approaches to leadership and management that the case study subjects displayed and presents the set of successful practices and tools that the case studies discovered.

The “Conclusion” section summarizes the bottom-line findings regarding framework and language, and approaches and tools. It offers five lessons for addressing diversity management in the Air Force, and gives some recommendations.

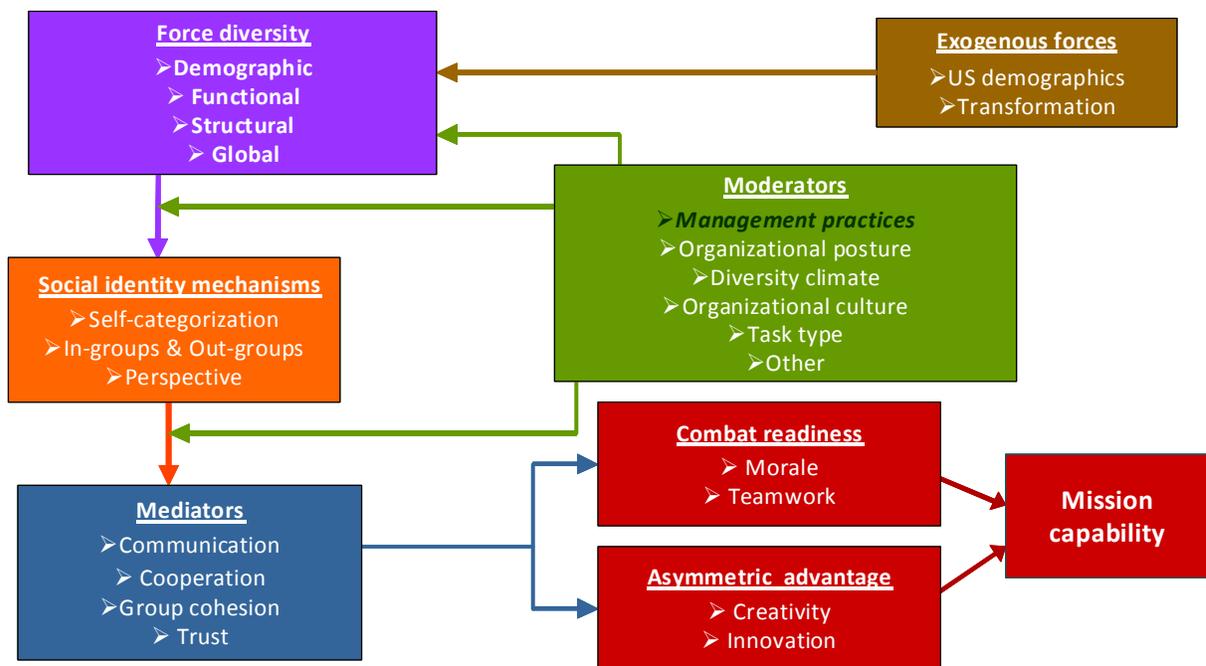
Appendix A describes the basic structure of the interviews and reproduces the basic protocol. Appendix B is in some ways the “meat” of this report because it contains the detailed writeups of each case study. It also describes the coding process that turned the raw interview transcripts into the case study writeups. Finally, in appendix C, we reproduce the Air Force Diversity Statement issued in March 2008 by Secretary of the Air Force Michael Wynne.

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Theoretical framework: The Diversity-Capability Model

The Air Force approach to workforce diversity is strategic and focused on understanding and managing the relationship between *force diversity* and *mission capability*. Within this framework, force diversity includes any characteristics that affect how people function in a work group and what they bring to the mission; mission capability is defined in terms of work groups' combat readiness and asymmetric advantage. Figure 1 is a conceptual model of the relationship between force diversity and mission capability, hereafter referred to as the Diversity-Capability Model or the model.

Figure 1. Model of the diversity-capability relationship^a



a. Adapted from the model developed by Major Joseph Sanders III, USAF, and Dr. Willie Hopkins, University of Maryland, Eastern Shore.

The Diversity-Capability Model was initially developed by Air Force staff, and was modified slightly by CNA for research purposes. It is based on a large body of theoretical research from such fields as Psychology, Sociology, Organizational Demography, and Management. A key feature of the model is that it depicts an indirect relationship between force diversity and mission capability. According to the model, the relationship occurs through mediators and is affected by moderators. This project focuses on the moderator management practices.

Elements of the model

Exogenous factors

The first element of the model is exogenous factors that affect the amount and nature of diversity in an organization or work group. First are the ongoing demographic changes in the U.S. population that are the motivating factors for diversity research and that will continue to increase racial/ethnic diversity in the U.S. labor force and, therefore, the military recruiting pool. These changes also interact with other demographic changes, such as evolving patterns of labor force participation for women, the aging of the population, and increased educational attainment, to make the picture slightly more complex. Second are transformational changes in military personnel constructs that will increase work-group diversity along dimensions that are defined in terms of organizational structure and function.

Diversity dimensions

For the purposes of this study, the model separates force diversity into four different but not necessarily unrelated types:

- Demographic—differences in personal characteristics, including not only gender and race/ethnicity but also age, religion, marital status, and socioeconomic background
- Functional—differences in work-related background characteristics, such as AFSC and educational or training history

- Structural—organizational differences, including tenure, position/rank, Service component, and Service branch
- Global—differences in citizenship and nationality that occur in work groups that include host country nationals or coalition partners.

This broad definition of diversity derives from the large body of empirical research that shows that the traditional variables of race/ethnicity and gender do not account for the major share of diversity-related impacts on production outcomes in the workplace [1]. Rather, a broad range of characteristics, covering organizational demography as well as demography per se, produce the meaningful differences in identity within the work group or organization that call for diversity management, whether to reduce the costs of diversity or to enhance its benefits.⁴

Social identity mechanisms

The fundamental mechanism through which diversity affects capability is social identity. Social identity theory provides the connection between social structures and individual identity through the meanings that people attach to their memberships in identity groups, such as demographic or occupational groups. These identity groups then shape behaviors and perceptions in different settings.⁵ Specifically, people are more likely to bond and identify with those in the workforce who are most similar to them. This fundamental and powerful human process then creates in-groups and out-groups within a given work unit or organization, which in turn affect group processes. Such self-categorization and the formation of in-groups and out-groups can occur based on any diversity dimension, even when the characteristics associated with “otherness” are trivial with respect to the tasks being performed.

4. Refer to appendix C to see how the Air Force Diversity Statement aligns with this definition.

5. For example, see [5] and [6].

Based on this theoretical construct, the model hypothesizes that the relationship between work-group diversity and work-group performance is a mediated relationship, and the primary mediators are group processes.

Mediators

A mediated relationship implies a causal chain: if variable A is demonstrated to cause variable B, which in turn causes variable C, variable B is said to mediate the relationship between variables A and C. Since we focus on groups, the Diversity-Capability Model includes four group process variables that mediate the relationship between diversity and mission capability. They are communication, cooperation, group cohesion, and trust. These variables are mediators because they are hypothesized to be directly affected by the social identity variables on one hand, and to directly affect group performance on the other hand. (Social identity is also a mediator, but it is based on individuals, rather than their performance in groups.)

The model's logic implies the following chain of events: First, diversity is proposed to directly affect social identity formation, which, in turn, has a direct influence on relational processes at work. Specifically, the more people identify with their work groups, the more likely the work group is to manifest elevated levels of communication, cohesion, and trust. Alternatively, the more group members identify with subsets of others, both within and outside the work group according to diversity-related variables, the more likely the group is to manifest low levels of communication, cohesion, and trust. Finally, improved relational processes (i.e., high levels of communication, cohesion, and trust) are hypothesized to be associated with better group performance, while impaired relational processes are expected to be associated with worse group performance. In the model, group performance is measured by combat preparedness and asymmetric advantage.

Moderators

Diversity moderators are contextual factors that influence the relationship between diversity and the outcome of interest. A moderated relationship is characterized by interaction among variables: if

variable A affects variable C depending on the level of variable B, variable B moderates the relationship between variables A and C.

The model hypothesizes that work context and organizational characteristics, such as management practices, task type, and climate, can moderate actual levels of diversity by affecting both recruiting and retention. The same variables also affect how diversity shapes group processes. Specifically, management, task type, and culture can affect both social identity formation and the way social identities determine group processes.

Group performance and mission capability

The model proposes that two particular aspects of group performance are the main links between force diversity and mission capability. The first performance factor is combat preparedness. The model hypothesizes that better group relational processes will result in improved morale and teamwork in work groups. In turn, groups with higher levels of member morale and teamwork are assumed to be better prepared for combat than units that are not as positive in these areas. The second performance factor is asymmetric advantage, which is defined in terms of creativity and innovation. The model proposes that well-managed work groups with diverse ideas and approaches to problem solving are more creative and innovative than homogeneous groups or diverse groups that aren't well managed.

Of course, both combat preparedness and asymmetric advantage encompass other factors in addition to those identified in the model. Similarly, overall mission capability is a function of many other aspects of performance. The relationships called out in the model are not intended to fully characterize either mission capability or its two identified components. Rather, these are the aspects of mission capability that were considered to be most directly related to the diversity dynamics that are captured in the Diversity Model and identified by the underlying theoretical and empirical research. At the same time, asymmetric advantage (and the creativity and innovation that are expected to enable it) is a contemporary notion of mission capability due to the types of warfare and other activities in which the nation is

currently engaged. High morale and good teamwork are, however, more universal and enduring aspects of combat readiness.

How the Diversity-Capability Model directs this study

The moderating impact of diversity management practices

The case studies focus on the moderating impact of management practices on the mediated relationships between diversity and the aspects of mission capability that diversity has been shown to affect, either positively or negatively.

For example, in several of the squadrons we studied, members' perspectives on work-related issues were defined based on their AFSCs. When circumstances called for these personnel to work across functional lines, their different perspectives inhibited their ability to effectively communicate, which in turn decreased the quality of their teamwork. Thus, in these cases, communication was negatively mediating the relationship between functional diversity and teamwork. This negative diversity dynamic called for effective diversity management to enhance teamwork and, thus, mission capability. Such management could focus on creating common perspectives for all squadron members regardless of AFSC or on facilitating communication between members with valid but functionally related differences in perspectives. The case studies explore the approaches and practices that the subjects use to address this type of diversity problem.

Application of the 360-degree case study approach

The model tells us that it is not enough to explore how diversity management practices affect a single variable at a single point in time. Rather, it is necessary to pay attention to the dynamics of several variables as well as to the evolving relationships between them. To ensure that information would surface on these multiple dimensions, we needed to use an explorative methodology: thus, in the case studies, we used open-ended interviews and focus groups to probe what our subjects do to manage diversity and how it is perceived and experienced by their supervisors and subordinates. Although the discussions were open ended, we guided them according to the logic and dynamics implied by the model.

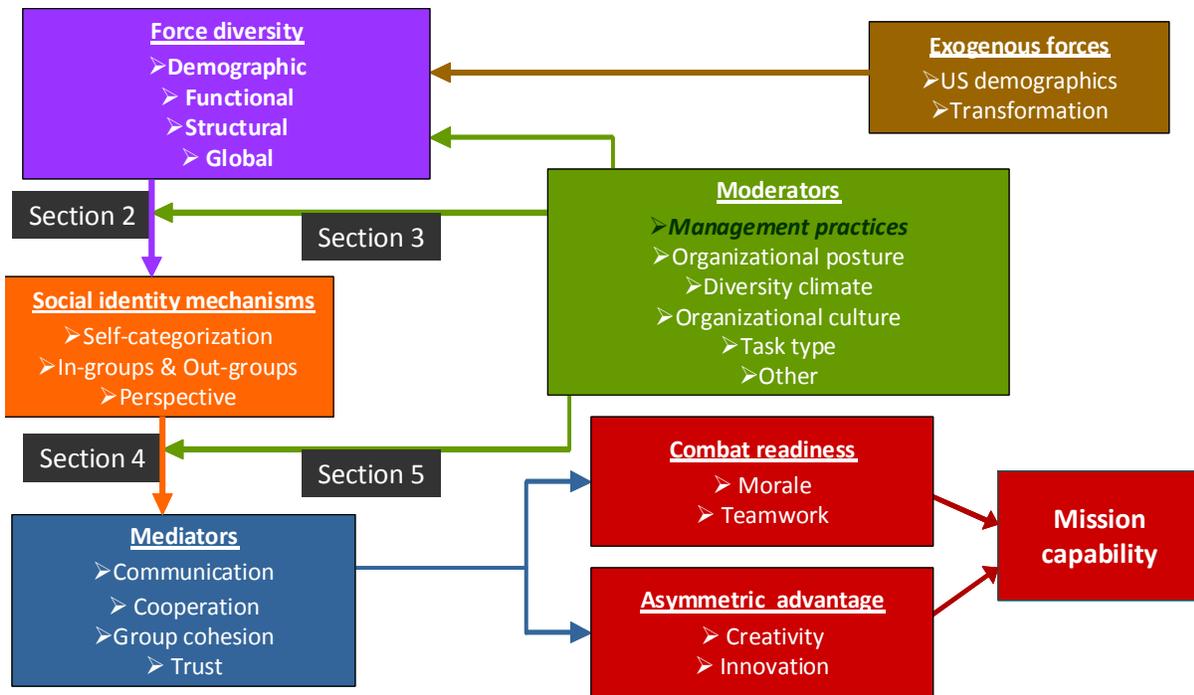
The interview protocols⁶

Figure 2 builds on figure 1 to show how the interview protocols followed the model. After introducing the project and describing the range of force diversity we were investigating, section 2 addresses the arrow between the upper left-hand box that deals with different types of force diversity and the box below it that deals with diversity mechanisms. Specifically, section 2 addresses the type of diversity and how it is salient in the formation of the social identity mechanisms, self-categorization, in-groups/out-groups, and perspective. Section 3 addresses the general moderating impact of management and leadership; section 4 addresses the role, or importance, of work-group dynamics in work-group outcomes. Section 5 explores the use of the process management tools that have been identified as effective in managing diversity, as well as the use of additional tools. In particular, based on the literature and the model, we expected to hear about communication facilitation, conflict management, and the like, so in this section, we queried our subjects on *how* they applied these tools successfully. Section 6 looks at the role of training in developing diversity management skills. The overall flexible structure of the discussions allowed other important contextual moderators to emerge throughout each interview/focus group.

The protocol uses the terms *leadership* and *management* interchangeably because much of what the civilian world calls management is known as leadership in the military world. Early in each interview, we determined how the interviewee(s) defined these terms, and adapted our language accordingly. (In general, the interviewees perceived management as related to “things,” such as paperwork or logistics, and leadership as related to people.) Our focus was on practices that the subject used to manage diversity among the individuals in his/her squadron to improve work-group processes and outcomes, whichever term might be used to describe it. Put simply, our focus was on the relations between the squadron commander and his/her people in relation to salient differences among them.

6. See appendix A for a full description of the model’s interview protocols and the sections discussed here.

Figure 2. Mapping sections of the protocol to elements of the Diversity-Capability Model



Although the model defines mission capability in two ways—combat readiness and asymmetric advantage—the cases largely illustrate the impact of diversity, managed or unmanaged, on combat readiness. When bases were asked to provide examples of good diversity management, they were asked to select such management in a day-to-day context, not a special group or task force assigned to explicitly bring about innovation or apply creativity. By probing for instances of the innovation-inspiring aspect of diversity, however, we found that, even in the mundane contexts, the impact could occasionally be on asymmetric advantage.

Coding the transcripts and interpreting the results⁷

Some social scientists use case studies to gather material for developing theory [7]. Others use case studies to apply theory and reflect on

7. See appendix B for more information about the coding process and how it informed the case studies.

its meaning [8]. Since case studies generally take place at a micro level, such as a work group, business establishment, or labor market, having a theoretical construct enables meaningful “sharing” across similar studies. We already possessed such a construct, and our purpose here was to flesh out both our understanding of it and its practical application.

Thus, in this work we are attempting to identify and understand practices, rather than develop additional theory or find new variables. To do this, we developed a coding scheme that focuses on the presence or absence of relevant indicators identified by the model, as well as the degree of salience, intensity, or frequency with which they were mentioned. Using this process, we determined that one of the squadrons constituted two separate case studies of two different diversity types. (This explains why there are ten cases, though we studied only nine squadrons.) Furthermore, in applying the coding scheme, we treated each case study as an independent investigation of practices, so our coding or interpretation related the practices to the factors identified in the model, rather than to the practices discovered in the other case studies we conducted. That is, the theoretical construct unites our summary discussion of the case study results, but we did not explicitly include cross-case comparisons in our coding or our case study writeups.

A fundamental characteristic of qualitative research is that “it is emergent rather than tightly prefigured” [9]. Normally, best practice is to develop the coding scheme from the data (in this case, interview transcripts) by identifying emergent themes and organizing them into relevant categories. Here, our coding scheme was initially developed independent of the data. It was based on the model-inspired structure of the protocol, and then revised and refined during the base visits.

Finally, a main goal of coding for this project was to identify where the raters agreed and disagreed, and to enable discussions in sufficient depth to produce a common understanding. Given the case study approach, there were few enough interviews that we were able to capture our codes and comments on relatively small Excel spreadsheets and use these comments as evidence in resolving different understandings, as well as in writing up the case studies.⁸

Prevailing context

An important finding from [1] was that the impact of diversity on mission capability is context dependent. This dependence is represented in the model by the exogenous forces that determine the amount and type of diversity in the workforce and by the moderators that not only affect the amount and type of diversity but also trigger social identity mechanisms and determine the role of mediators.

Throughout all three phases of this research, four key organizational and mission factors have defined the context for analyzing the diversity-capability relationship in the Air Force:

1. *The Long War*. Also known as the Global War on Terror (GWOT), primarily characterized by contingency operations and, at present, primarily manifesting itself in the engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan.
2. *Total Force Integration (TFI)*. The Service's strategy to create a more capable, yet smaller and more affordable, force by purposefully balancing the expertise and experience of personnel from all components.
3. *Program Budget Decision 720 (PBD 720)*. A measure intended to accelerate the retirement of legacy aircraft and cut 40,000 active-duty and Total Force members to secure the funding for systems recapitalization and modernization.
4. *Air Force Smart Operations for the 21st Century (AFSO21)*. A management strategy designed to increase efficiency through process improvements and cultural change.

To properly interpret the results of the case studies, it is helpful to have a general understanding of how these factors act both as exogenous forces affecting diversity in the squadrons we studied and as moderators affecting their diversity dynamics.

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8. For projects involving large numbers of interviews, coding is also used to quantify the results.

Exogenous factors that affect diversity types

The brown box in the upper right-hand corner of the model acknowledges that exogenous forces create and/or shape diversity among and between Air Force work groups. Reference [2] addressed the demographic changes in the U.S. population and labor force that continue to change the racial/ethnic and gender makeup of the Air Force. Despite the significance of these trends for the country and the Service, gender did not appear to be salient in any of the squadrons we studied, and race/ethnicity was salient in only three. Age diversity, however, was notably salient in four squadrons and was discussed in a few others.

The four organizational and mission factors listed above also influence diversity in the Air Force overall and in the squadrons we studied. Both TFI and the GWOT have increased structural diversity within Air Force work groups. TFI has led to greater use of personnel from the AFR and the ANG and has generated considerable effort to seamlessly integrate them with the active-duty forces. It has also led to greater use of civilian employees and contractors. Thus, component is a salient diversity dimension in five of the ten case studies. This is consistent with results from the previous qualitative research on AF work groups, which found that efforts to truly integrate members of different components are stymied by the different work rules that govern their terms of employment [3 and 4]. In addition, the current combat setting has the Services working together in new ways. In at least two of the case studies, Service branch is a relevant dimension of structural diversity because Air Force personnel are being deployed with Army units.⁹

Similarly, the drive for greater efficiency (i.e., PBD720 and AFSO21) has led to organizational changes that are affecting the nature of functional diversity within the Air Force squadrons we studied as well as other work groups. For example, across the whole Air Force, Services Squadrons and Support Squadrons are being merged to create

9. Reference [3] reported that structural diversity was the only diversity type that USAF personnel perceived as having more of a negative than a positive impact during deployment.

new Force Support Squadrons. Occurring from 2007 to 2009 and affecting more than 15 AFSCs and occupational series in the manpower, personnel, and services operations fields, the mergers are in direct response to personnel and budget cuts. Specifically, they are intended to take advantage of expected synergies between the two customer service-related organizations and to result in greater efficiency in processes and use of people.¹⁰

Along the same lines, an Air Force-wide reorganization of the personnel function will merge all squadron-level personnelists into single base-level offices that are part of each base's military personnel flight. This change is in response to an expected 40-percent decrease in the number of personnelists between 2006 and 2012. In contrast to the Services-Support merger, this change creates an additional functional stovepipe that could change how people interact and are served.¹¹

Functional diversity was salient in seven of the nine squadrons we studied. In three case studies, the salience is directly related to squadron members' need or ability to understand how another AFSC functions and what its members contribute to the mission. In five case studies, the salience is related to functional stovepiping associated with the flight structure of the squadron.¹² In these cases, the squadron commanders were challenged with managing across functionally defined flight boundaries to either keep morale high throughout their squadrons or get cross-flight synergies. The fact that "flight" diversity surfaced in five of the nine squadrons is most likely an artifact of the choice of squadron commander as the primary subject of the case studies combined with the functional organization of flights within squadrons.

Finally, in addition to increasing structural diversity, the current engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan constitute a major force in creating global diversity. However, these case studies were able to address

10. See [10].

11. See [11].

12. In one of the squadrons, functional diversity was salient in terms of both AFSC coordination and cross-flight management.

global diversity only at longstanding foreign bases, not at combat theater bases. In only one of the four overseas squadrons were U.S. and local national personnel sufficiently integrated to make global diversity salient.

Moderators that cross cases

The large green box in the middle of the model identifies the types of organizational and work characteristics that act to moderate diversity dynamics in an organization or work group. The four factors described earlier are part of the Air Force's current organizational posture and are interrelated with the Air Force culture and the management practices that are used by Air Force leaders. A theme that appears in nearly all of the case studies is the negative impact of PBD720 (i.e., downsizing) combined with either high operational tempo (opstempo), high deployment tempo (deptempo), or both—what the study participants referred to as “doing more with less.” As indicated by the goals of AFSO21, as well as the rationale for the Services-Support merger and the reorganization of personnelists, this is a time when increased creativity and innovation are needed to achieve more with less—which makes the potential for diversity-related benefits a particularly enticing promise. Both the diversity literature and our Air Force research, however, indicate that these benefits are difficult to achieve during personnel downsizing and/or when cost-cutting efficiency is a primary goal.

Downsizing and efficiency efforts tend to negatively moderate diversity dynamics for two key reasons. First, these moderators can make managing diversity more necessary. In the language of the model, they trigger the social identity mechanisms that can negatively affect work group process mediators. In particular, downsizing environments tend to be more competitive internally, due primarily to shrinking resources, and the corporate research has found that diversity is less likely to yield benefits in competitive environments [1]. Furthermore, our research in AF settings [4] found that downsizing and doing more with less can reinforce component and functional stovepipes at the expense of integration. Second, when efficiency is paramount, there is organizational pressure to avoid the additional coordination and control costs that are necessary to manage diversity well [1]. In particular, busy managers have less time to devote to

diversity management issues. We saw both dynamics at work in all the squadrons we studied, though the extent to which they mattered for diversity dynamics varied.

Downsizing aside, the GWOT and high deptime are also moderating the diversity-capability dynamic at home-base locations in other ways. Although the bonds created during a deployment can serve to overcome social identity mechanisms for people who deploy together, the case studies showed that differences in deployment experiences can be divisive in the home environment. Several of the squadrons displayed considerable strains due to the uneven experience of deployment, by rank as well as by structure. Senior personnel, both officer and enlisted, most of whom had not deployed in the current environment, seemed out of touch to junior personnel back from deployment, so credibility issues threatened leadership effectiveness. Deployment diversity also placed limits on building engagement/morale and teamwork across structural lines, placing barriers between civilians and other non-active-duty forces that do not deploy and those active-duty forces that do. To the extent that the likelihood and type of deployment also vary by AFSC or career field, differences in deployment experience also introduced strains on teamwork and morale associated with functional diversity within the squadrons.

An additional, complicating factor is a phenomenon that study participants described as a “leadership vacuum” among midlevel non-commissioned officers (NCOs) who were promoted earlier than normal due to low retention in the cohorts ahead of them.¹³ As a result of their early promotion, many supervisors and managers may not have the leadership and management skills to effectively manage diversity. More specifically, these fresh NCOs were perceived by many to be unprepared to manage junior members who may have greater depth of knowledge and experience than they have.

Finally, all these factors combined appeared to be putting pressure on the traditional Air Force culture because they are, to some extent,

13. The phenomenon of low retention and consequent early promotion was raised by case study participants; it has not been confirmed with promotion and retention data.

inverting the rank and experience order on which the traditional command-and-control hierarchy is based. The case studies offer several examples of how this adds new wrinkles to diversity and diversity management. In particular, personnel at every level are struggling with how to push back against what they perceive to be too many nonprioritized demands from above. As a result, there is very little time either to manage diversity to avoid its potential costs, or to engage in the active listening that is necessary to reap its potential benefits.

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Results: Diversity management framework and language

Based on the results from research phases 1 and 2, one of the goals for this research was to develop a meaningful conceptual framework and common language around which to develop diversity management training. In this section, we show that results from the case studies support adopting the Diversity-Capability Model as the framework, and we propose a working definition of diversity management. Development of a complete diversity management vocabulary will require further research and testing as part of formal curriculum development. Such an effort should incorporate seeing how potential students and leaders respond to the framework.

The case studies revealed no existing language or framework

Taken as a group, the case study interviews did not contradict our impression from earlier research that Air Force personnel have neither a common conceptual understanding of diversity management nor a common language for talking about it. We base this conclusion on two key observations.

First observation: There was no shared definition of diversity

The personnel involved in the study did not share an accepted definition of diversity itself. Most participants assumed that we were there to discuss workplace issues associated with gender and race/ethnicity, and it was not unusual for them to feel defensive initially. One particularly candid subject voiced the concerns of many:

Day to day, I do not look at my people with a diversity set of eyes. Diversity, to me, generally means racial or ethnic diversity. And, I don't look at my folks that way. If you, to me, diversity is, if I even think of that word, and I don't because, to me, it's almost a dirty word in my language.

We had anticipated this stance, based on our past experience with interviews and focus groups, as well as on the fact that the official diversity statement promulgated by the Secretary of the Air Force had only been released concurrent with the beginning of the study. Thus, to ensure that everyone was on the same page for the discussion, we included a definition of diversity in the introductory section of the protocol. Specifically, we described the four diversity types we had identified in the model and asked respondents to offer additional diversity types if they could think of any other differences *that mattered for how people worked together in their units or the squadron*. Interestingly, the above subject's own definition of diversity was quite close to our definition. He said, "To me, diversity is a list of strengths or weaknesses, or whatever somebody brings to the table. Wherever it came from, I don't care, it's who you are. It's what you can do as part of the mission of this unit." Another subject, however, summed up the more common response:

Well, that definitely hasn't gotten down to the execution level. I mean what you're talking about, this is actually the first time I've heard that term defined how you just shared with me. So obviously if the intent were for it to get down to the operational level, it hasn't happened.

With no common definition of diversity, there could be no foundation for a common conception of diversity management.¹⁴

Second observation: Managers did not think explicitly in terms of diversity management

In developing the case studies from the raw transcripts, we explicitly coded for two things related to how people thought about diversity management as distinct from other management, and how they described the differences: (1) how participants saw the importance of

14. Although we provided an explicit definition of diversity, we deliberately did not provide a definition of diversity management to guard against "leading" the respondents. Our basic principle was to start them on a conversation and listen to them. In this sense, we were ready to discuss the specifics of diversity management, but we worked from what they said, rather than putting words in their mouths.

creating a positive diversity climate and (2) whether participants believed that managing a diverse group vs. a homogeneous group requires different skills. In neither coding category did we get meaningful results. Specifically, the only explicit comments regarding a positive diversity climate came from those who said that they didn't distinguish between a positive *diversity* climate and a positive *overall* climate. And, the coding space for skills specific to diversity management remained empty on nearly every coding sheet.

Based on these non-results, we concluded that personnel in the squadrons we studied were not thinking systematically about diversity management. They did, however, seem open to the idea of diversity management. The following quotation from one of the supervisors fairly accurately captures our respondents' overall thinking on diversity management:

If you're looking for best practices, then maybe that's the way to couch the question: "What things do you do in your diverse organizations that amplify the synergistic effect of having that diversity?" Or, "What do you do that takes that diversity and turns it into something more positive than just having a bunch of guys wearing this?" I'd have to spend a lot of time thinking about that question before I responded.

A diversity management framework would serve to answer these questions.

The Diversity-Capability Model provides a useful diversity management framework

The case studies as evaluations of the subjects' diversity management

Each case study was essentially a guided listening activity designed to reveal what was happening in the squadron relative to diversity, squadron management, and mission capability. Thus, with the model as the guide, we were studying the squadrons strictly in its terms: the impact of diversity dynamics on morale and teamwork and/or creativity and innovation, and the role of management in shaping that dynamic. Although the purpose was not explicitly to evaluate

squadron performance, there was an evaluation component given that we were looking for *successful* management practices and tools, where success was defined in terms of how the subject's use of the tools affected the aspects of mission capability defined by the model.¹⁵

For some squadrons, application of the Diversity-Capability Model highlighted aspects of the subject's management that were contributing to productive diversity dynamics that enhanced mission capability. For other squadrons, application of the model revealed missed opportunities to use management to positively moderate diversity dynamics and, thus, optimize combat readiness or asymmetric advantage. In most squadrons, we saw a mix of both success and missed opportunity. Regardless of the result, in each investigation, the listening activity yielded valuable insights to us as researchers. Perhaps more relevant, however, we could also see that paying attention to diversity dynamics (i.e., looking at their squadrons through the model's diversity lens) could help our subjects better manage their units. This is because even the best subjects did not think explicitly in terms of diversity management. All subjects had thought about management and how it differs from leadership, and all felt that they were doing both to greater and lesser degrees. Some subjects were even managing consciously to the diversity dimensions we identified as salient, but they didn't think of it as diversity management.

The value of applying the Diversity-Capability Model

The following case study summaries show the types of information that we gained by looking at squadron management through the diversity lens and how that information could, in principle, be used by our subjects.¹⁶ These are only a few examples of what other managers could learn by applying the Diversity-Capability Model to their units, whatever the level. Note that the final example is one in which

15. Of course, this is only one of many potential ways to assess squadron performance. Traditional exercises and inspections test other aspects of readiness and capability. (Applying the diversity lens may help explain performance on an exercise or inspection.)

application of the model nearly failed to surface an important diversity problem.

Identified unmanaged diversity problems and their triggers

Foxtrot Squadron. Foxtrot Squadron is a case study of rank diversity. Rank was salient here because differences in deployment experiences for junior and senior personnel triggered the social identity mechanism, perspective: junior members who had deployed had a different perspective on the home-base mission than senior members who had not deployed. These differences in perspective were significant enough to inhibit communication and erode trust between junior and senior squadron members, which in turn decreased teamwork, especially in terms of on-the-job training of subordinates by supervisors. The subject, a strong and respected leader, was aware that junior squadron members were having difficulty reintegrating into the squadron on return from deployment; with traditional respect for the chain of command, he was primarily managing the reintegration through his midlevel subordinates. This approach was not effective, however, because it did not account for the disconnect between the junior people who had deployed and the midlevel people who hadn't. Understanding the problem as a rank diversity problem, rather than simply a deployment problem, would have guided the subject to address the junior-senior credibility gap head on.

Lima Squadron. Lima Squadron is a case study of rank and functional diversity. The salience of rank in Lima Squadron was similar to its salience in Foxtrot Squadron: depending on where they sit in the rank structure, Lima's members had different perspectives on how changes in business processes are playing out in the squadron. Rank-related differences in perspective were then inhibiting communication and trust development between subordinates and supervisors, which, in turn, decreased teamwork and morale. Managers at all points in our 360-degree structure (i.e., the midlevel managers, the

16. To protect the confidentiality of all participants, we did not share their squadrons' contributions with our subjects. To protect the confidentiality of all subjects, for this report we describe them using masculine pronouns, although some of them were female.

subject, and the supervisor) saw the junior members' frustration as the result of their inability or unwillingness to accept high standards of performance, rather than the result of differential impacts of process change. Thus, instead of trying to ease the uneven burden of process change, the subject continued pushing it down to the lowest levels. In Lima Squadron, this dynamic was complicated by functional diversity. Because they have different functions, Lima's flights can stand alone, and the subject was managing them to do so. However, the flights share common problems, including process change, and they could be more effective in their own work if they were encouraged to share experiences and learn from one another. In not promoting learning from functional diversity, the subject seemed to be missing an opportunity to take advantage of potential synergies that would help address the issues associated with differential impacts of process change.

Highlighted ways to better manage already identified diversity problems (i.e., identified potential intervention points and types)

Alpha Squadron. Alpha Squadron is a case study of functional diversity. Alpha Squadron has three flights, each of which is technically specialized but in a different way. Because the squadron commander does not have expertise in every area, this functional diversity makes it challenging for him to identify what is really mission-essential and to prioritize for maximizing mission capability. Thus, to make his job doable, the subject largely confines his interaction with his subordinates to interaction with the small leadership group of direct reports. He also uses a one-way communication style designed to convey direction and vision from higher to lower levels, rather than to identify problems related to sustaining morale for both productivity and retention. In particular, neither the subject nor his supervisor saw any need to instill a squadron-wide identity or to facilitate cross-flight cooperation. This approach to management created such a disconnect between the squadron commander and his people that the more junior members seemed to perceive him as out of touch, even irrelevant to their major concerns. The subject was aware that the functional diversity combined with his personality and management style inhibited making direct connections with all members of his squadron. He was less aware, however, of the impact that this was having on

squadron morale and teamwork, especially teamwork that might have contributed to training squadron members for down-range missions. A more comprehensive, systematic approach to understanding the functional diversity dynamics in his squadron might have led this subject to develop a more effective approach.

Delta Squadron. Delta Squadron is a case study of component diversity. Delta Squadron was created and structured to function with personnel from both the active-duty and ANG components working in a truly integrated fashion. According to its members, the squadron is the product of “a shotgun wedding” driven by TFI. The main diversity problem derives from the fact that the squadron commander and other active-duty supervisors have operational “direction,” not “control” over the ANG members of the squadron.¹⁷ At the time of the study, there was no clear, universally understood interpretation of “operational direction,” and this lack had created confusion about how to impose/follow the chain of command during the workday. Specifically, squadron members tended to self-categorize and stick with their traditional chains of command, which hampered communication because two different messages were being promulgated. This confusion and chaos decreased both teamwork and morale. Active-duty squadron members were burned out by overwork and discouraged by the chaos and lack of effective leadership. Among junior Airmen, we heard a lot about intentions to transfer to new assignments or leave the Air Force altogether.

Resolution of the operational direction issue is clearly beyond the squadron commander’s paygrade, which means that he was required to manage what was an obvious diversity problem as well as he could under very difficult circumstances. However, rather than set an inclusive climate in which all parties to the bad situation could air their concerns and offer their solutions, he tended to exacerbate the problem by not communicating across component lines. Nor was he managing his managers so that those from the Active and Guard

17. This arrangement is the result of higher-level efforts to resolve the tensions between Title 10 and Title 32 (the sections of the U.S. Code that govern work rules for the active-duty personnel and the ANG, respectively) that inhibit true integration of these two components.

components were working from the same page and giving the same message. Thus, in this case, using the Diversity-Capability Model to highlight the role of management identified some clear things that could be done to improve integration absent the policy change that's really needed but isn't expected to be made any time soon.¹⁸

Confirmed that diversity is being managed and identified management tools that work (i.e., showed how these subjects got the most out of their people)

Charlie and Echo Squadrons. Charlie and Echo Squadrons are case studies of component diversity. Both are large squadrons (about 300 and 600 people, respectively) that have large civilian components. Thus, component diversity was salient in both squadrons because the different work rules and practices for military and civilian personnel define component-specific perspectives that, in most settings, tend to create mutual resentment in the workplace. The climates set and the management practices used by these squadron commanders, however, were keeping the differences in perspective from triggering unproductive self-categorization and, therefore, from inhibiting communication and cooperation. As a result, morale in both squadrons was high and teamwork strong. What makes both of these subjects effective is their focus on people.

In Charlie Squadron, the commander prioritizes people over process or paper management. ("I would rather be with the folks or working issues with the folks than sitting behind the desk.") This priority guides the commander's time management, shifting office work to after hours or on the weekend, if necessary. His underlying premise is: "If you take care of the people, they will accomplish the mission." In terms of diversity, the squadron commander sees rules and other structural differences, not people differences, as the source of diversity-based conflict, and he sets a climate that will bridge that divide.

18. This subject was chosen because, despite the difficulties in achieving true integration, the squadron is meeting or exceeding all mission expectations. The culture that keeps problems at the lowest level seems to have left upper leadership unaware that integration was incomplete and troublesome.

In Echo Squadron, the commander's approach to management and leadership hinges on his commitment to "making a difference" both in the lives of the people he leads and in how the squadron functions. He makes an explicit distinction between implementing change and making a difference; the latter is about helping people develop and grow and improving the squadron's performance, in terms of either quality or efficiency. His approach to leadership is also very personal. At one level, it stems from his passion for the job, which makes it personal to him. At another level, it's about making personal connections so that he can understand how to motivate people.

As part of their people-centric approach to management, both subjects regularly interact with all members of their squadrons, not just their direct reports. As a result, they're aware of the climate throughout the squadron and can address problems as they emerge.

Golf, Hotel, and Kilo Squadrons. Golf, Hotel, and Kilo Squadrons are case studies of functional diversity. Although these squadrons are very different in terms of size, component mix, and mission focus, mission accomplishment requires members of all three squadrons to bridge functionally related differences in perspective to work effectively across AFSC and flight boundaries.

In Golf Squadron, previous management regimes had allowed AFSC- and flight-related differences in perspective to trigger self-categorization and in-group/out-group formation that were harmful to cooperation, communication, and trust and decreased morale and teamwork. The subject used effective and innovative management tools to de-trigger these social identity mechanisms and turn differences in perspective into benefits for the mission. First, he took "about 45 days to soak the squadron in" before readying and communicating his leadership agenda. Then, he directly attacked the AFSC diversity challenge by assigning cross-unit teams to down-range missions. Based on this "cross-pollination" strategy, "every individual in the squadron has got an important...primary task, but then their secondary task is to be available to support any of our number of operations that are going on at once." From a mission perspective, this strategy mirrors the synergistic approach of the overall group, and keeps members' skills current and relevant, whatever their unit

mission. He addresses the flight diversity problem by clearly setting squadron priorities vis-a-vis each flight according to conditions. Specifically, he communicates priorities to everyone so that those who are relegated to “the back burner” understand the underlying reasons. More generally, his “body language” deliberately makes clear that all missions and skill sets are high priority: he spends equal time with all units so that none is perceived as being a higher priority. Thus, the climate set by the subject cues squadron members to focus on the shared mission instead of AFSC and flight differences.

The commanders of Hotel and Kilo Squadrons did not inherit such pronounced functional diversity problems. Thus, their management challenge was to keep functionally related differences in perspective from triggering negative diversity dynamics, rather than to de-trigger such mechanisms.

In Hotel Squadron, the subject focuses explicitly on helping and encouraging everyone to understand how his or her function fits into and contributes to the mission. In particular, he tries to make sure that all members know something about the other functions that their flights touch:

My mandate is to develop folks in my squadron to become better enlisted and officers. To understand why they're doing these things and how it's helpful to the wing's operations, to the group's operations.

He also tries to ensure that, even though they're not the most glamorous squadron in the group, they understand that the high visibility work can't get done without them. He then sets a positive climate by empowering people to make their individual contributions within the broader mission context.

In Kilo Squadron, the commander uses communication to unite the perspectives associated with each AFSC in a positive contribution to mission planning and execution. Formally, there is constant communication through inclusive staff meetings designed to make sure that everyone is aware of everything and everyone is hearing the same message. The subject, however, goes beyond simply communicating,

to making sense of the communication and putting it all together. One subordinate described the meetings in the following way:

Our staff meetings are very, I would say “all inclusive.” Every shop head is there, and we're all given where we're going, the way ahead. He's merging all this in his mind and we're all merging it together and figuring out where everyone stands in the process.

Informally, the subject generates cross-functional discussions to draw “folks from their stovepipes” into exchanges about how their functions all contribute to the mission. The subject also breaks down stovepipes more concretely by using assignments to create a “cross-flow” of personnel. He does this in two ways. First, he assigns flight commanders and other supervisors to lead units with an AFSC different from their own. This creates a new vector of mutual understanding across functions. In addition, he is thoughtful about how he creates teams, assigning people to teams based on strengths and weaknesses.

Thus, in all five squadrons—Charlie, Echo, Golf, Hotel, and Kilo—analyzing diversity dynamics via application of the Diversity-Capability Model could help squadron commanders confirm that what they're doing is working to motivate and inspire *all* members of the squadron.

Nearly failed to reveal a key diversity problem

Hotel Squadron. In addition to the functional diversity that was salient throughout Hotel Squadron, demographic diversity was also salient for one of Hotel's flights because it had just been through a year-long investigation relating to a discrimination complaint made by its flight commander against the squadron commander (i.e., the case study subject). The investigation determined that the complaint was unfounded. Our 360-degree investigation almost failed to surface this obvious demographic diversity issue. No one mentioned it except in off-the-record comments and as an explanation for an obviously uncomfortable atmosphere in the junior subordinate focus group. This result may suggest that the issue was confined to the one flight and that others were either unaware of or unaffected by the situation. Alternatively, it could suggest that, because of their sensitive nature,

understanding demographic diversity issues may require more focused inquiries and, potentially, a different framework.

Diversity management language

Because our primary goal was to identify diversity management practices and tools, we did not code for language. Specifically, we did not develop a coding scheme that would uncover an emergent diversity management language or the lack of one. As a result, our findings about language are limited to capturing what appeared to be a universally shared distinction between leadership and management, and our language development is limited to proposing a working definition of diversity management.

Respondents' distinction between leadership and management

Nearly every respondent, regardless of rank or position, defined management as being about processes and things, and defined leadership as being about people, motivation, and vision. An example from each position in the 360-degree rank structure follows.

Supervisor

Now, and here's an issue that I always harp on for our folks. None of the people in our organization want to be managed. They want to be led. We manage programs, we herd sheep, but we lead people. And, I think they understand that, they appreciate that, and they respect that. So, are you trying to lead them towards a common objective and a mission and a goal or are you just trying to like come up with a whole bunch of policies and manage the organization?

Main subject

I've been voicing a very similar opinion on management and leadership ever since I was a lieutenant. And my feelings on this in the last 13 years really haven't changed. I think that management is the science of moving a project from point A to point B. It's that project...it's moving that project or I am building this structure. I have to get the people to do this, this and that. It's the science.

Leadership is the art. The leadership that goes in that is, how do you develop the team? How do you develop the family, so that they want to do the best they can as they move the process from point A to point B?

Midlevel subordinates

Moderator: What words would you use to describe this kind of thing we're talking about here, which is, managing all the people that work here so that they work as best as possible together to produce the most?

Participant 1: I would say leadership. Because to me, you manage processes and you lead people.

Participant 2: I was just going to say kind of the same thing. I think that's kind of ingrained in us too, you know? We deal with people a lot, everyday, in close proximity, and a lot of people, a lot of different personalities. So, you do manage the processes and the programs and the materials that you have, but I think the majority of our time is inherently leadership and dealing with the folks and getting them to do the things that we need to manage. Well, I need to manage this process, but I need you to do it.

Junior subordinate

I think at the most basic, we need our squadron commanders, we need each level of our commanders to be more leaders than managers. We need them to say, "No, this is not a priority for the warfighter. It's not a priority for my guys on the ground." We need leadership as opposed to managerial skills.

This people vs. process distinction was so consistent across respondents, we inferred that it is an explicit part of Air Force leadership training, as well as something that senior personnel pass on to their junior personnel. Given its wide use, our working definition of diversity management incorporates the ideas it embodies.

Proposed definition of diversity management

Building on the management-leadership distinction described above, as well as on the concepts defined in the model and what the case

studies told us about practices and tools, we propose the following working definition of diversity management:

Diversity management is inclusively leading all your people, and providing the tools they need, so that they are motivated and able to make their best contributions to the mission both as individuals and as team members.

Used in conjunction with a diversity management framework based on the Diversity-Capability Model, this definition differs from the traditional notion of leadership because it is about managing human *processes*, which are always complicated, but can be made more so by social identities that form around diversity dimensions and the resultant diversity dynamics. It's also different from the traditional definition of management because it's about *human* processes, not mechanistic or administrative processes.

Summary

Consistent with earlier research results, the case study investigation indicates that respondents are not thinking explicitly or systematically in terms of diversity management: they lack both a framework and language for doing so. The results of our application of the Diversity-Capability Model to understanding diversity dynamics and the role of management in these squadrons suggest that the model can serve as the missing framework. This is because, by looking at the squadrons through the model's diversity lens, we learned things about the squadron that could have improved the subjects' management. Specifically, by looking through the diversity lens, we:

- Identified unmanaged diversity problems and their triggers
- Highlighted ways to better manage already identified diversity problems
- Confirmed when diversity was being managed and identified management tools that work.

The investigation was less fruitful for development of a diversity management language. We did, however, find that language used in training curricula should take into account a seemingly widespread

distinction between the words *management* and *leadership*. Specifically, the respondents did not associate the word *management* with the people-related issues that arise out of complex diversity dynamics. Instead, they associated it with mechanical and administrative processes. Our working definition of “diversity management” tries to incorporate this distinction in two ways. First, it incorporates notions of leadership; second, if it is used in conjunction with the Diversity-Capability Model, it highlights the idea that diversity’s mission relevance is through human processes.

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Results: Successful diversity management approaches, practices, and tools

The primary results of these case studies consist of a set of practices and tools that are successful in managing diversity. However, even though ten case studies do not provide a platform for comparative analysis, it became apparent in the course of inventorying the tools and practices that those subjects who were very successful had different approaches to leadership and management than those who were less successful. Hence, we begin this section with some perceptions about the subjects' approaches—to provide context for the inventory of practices and tools and for our subsequent recommendations.

Approaches to leadership and management

We asked each subject to tell us how he or she defined leadership and management, and we used the 360-degree interviews to observe how their actions revealed their priorities and approaches. By and large, they all defined leadership as focusing on people, and management as focusing on processes or things. Most considered themselves leaders but acknowledged that circumstances forced them to manage as much as, if not more than, lead.

They differed, though, along two related dimensions. First, four of the nine subjects explicitly prioritized people over process or paperwork, and two others did this implicitly. These six subjects managed diversity well, some of them very well. All six tended to focus on people-related practices and tools, such as communication and walk-around management. The subject of Charlie Squadron summarized this approach by telling us that “the people take care of the mission” and his job was to take care of the people.

This subject described his particular approach this way: “Taking care of people is first and foremost...setting them up to succeed.” Other subjects exhibited such approaches as:

- “Making a difference” in his people's lives/development and how the squadron serves its clients (Echo Squadron)
- Communicating and inspiring (by example) (Kilo Squadron)
- Developing the team to (want to) excel at moving the project forward (Golf Squadron)
- “Develop[ing] everyone in my squadron to move into their boss's job” (Hotel Squadron).

The other three subjects took more traditional (less people-centered) approaches. One (Alpha Squadron) was more of an administrator than a leader or manager; he tended to employ top-down practices and to view his people mechanistically. He and another subject (Lima Squadron) focused on technical competency and setting direction for their squadrons. The third (Delta Squadron) had a command-and-control approach, but the context of the squadron's diversity issues left him without the control necessary to achieve his goals for the squadron. These subjects were having less success in managing diversity.

Second, the subjects who were managing diversity successfully tended to exercise leadership actively at all levels within the squadron. They were careful to observe the chain of command, but they felt a responsibility to communicate (including listening) up and down that chain, and to be accessible. According to the context, some of these subjects saw explicit mission benefits, such as broadening the readiness base of the squadron (Golf), in having squadron members work across units. Others simply perceived a broad benefit in terms of enhanced teamwork and morale. For instance, the commander of Echo Squadron was focused on how the squadron serves its clients, and how what each flight did affected that mission. As a result of this approach, and the climate set by the subject, squadron members pitched in across flight boundaries to help overburdened units.

The subjects who were having less success in managing diversity tended to manage through their direct reports. They did not tend to perceive benefits to be gained from diversity; indeed, one subject's approach (Delta Squadron) was to essentially obliterate diversity by getting the members of the other components to adopt the practices of the active-duty equivalents. They also did not perceive benefits from being aware of what was going on at the lower levels, other than hearing from their direct reports. None of these subjects "listened" to squadron members beyond their direct reports, and thus they failed to uncover real problems (such as upper leadership requesting reports that are not supposed to exist any more).

In contrast, the subjects who were very successful at managing diversity were well aware of the climate at the lower level because they prioritize people-focused practices and tools (e.g., walk-around management). Put simply, they talk with all their people, a lot, so they know what's going on. And they have learned how to do this without appearing to micromanage or second-guess the managers in between.

Because these subjects know the climate, they are able to influence it. In one form or another, depending on leadership style and squadron context and mission, these subjects set a climate characterized by having every member understand how his function fits into/contributes to the squadron's mission. Then they focus their efforts on empowering people to contribute effectively within this context.

These contrasting approaches suggest that selecting "people persons" as leaders might go a long way to ensuring good diversity management. This description certainly fits the three subjects who were managing diversity superbly. If that were true, given an ample supply of such "born leaders," the Air Force might not need to address diversity management. However, given the broad body of this research [3 and 4], it does not seem likely that such a supply exists.

In addition, these subjects exhibited other characteristics that are troubling. First, because they prioritize people, they work evenings and weekends on paperwork and other leadership responsibilities. Managing people well takes time, and it is very labor-intensive. Because they are "people persons," and good managers in the sense

of prioritizing and delegating, these subjects didn't seem to feel overburdened. They found their jobs absorbing, and all three made treating the squadron like a family a fundamental part of their approach. However it might be difficult, or unsustainable, to select only people who are willing to devote all their waking time to their jobs. Second, we did not expect/code it, but the subjects who were managing diversity superbly all had spouses (male as well as female) who seemed to put full time and effort into the squadron well beyond simply volunteering in the traditional ways. Again, it would be hard to require this of all leadership selections.

Management practices and tools

Our review of the empirically supported diversity literature [1] found a strong case for using diversity management to mitigate the negative effects of diversity and yield the benefits for organizational performance. We found evidence that:

Diversity is most likely to enhance organizational effectiveness when organizations specifically promote learning from diversity. This requires giving managers the skills to facilitate the constructive conflict and effective communication that translate diversity into value. Other successful management strategies include fostering strong collective cultures when they don't already exist and encouraging people to form positive social categories associated with common work goals. [1, p. 3]

Thus, our review of the literature found that management practices that enhance the focus on mission, develop shared identities, and promote effective communication and other people-related processes are the key elements of a positive diversity climate. Our subsequent qualitative work ([3, 4], and these case studies) suggests that, in the Air Force, a positive diversity climate also incorporates diversity into practices for motivating and resourcing diverse individuals and work groups. It also suggests that leading such individuals and work groups calls for particular attention to personal and technical credibility.

The following discussion of management practices that are helpful for managing diversity-related human dynamics is organized

according to the general lessons that the case studies produced. As a result, some practices appear in more than one category because some can serve multiple purposes. Indeed, an important lesson is that these practices reinforce one another. (Golf Squadron offers a particularly good example.)

Instill mission-related identity

The Air Force fits “the organizational profile in which managed diversity can be productive. Its collective, mission-based culture lends itself to creating the conditions in which workforce members can create work-relevant social categories that supersede non-relevant other categories” [1]. Since the Air Force is already focused on the mission, elevating this focus to bridge or blur differences between people can remove or at least lessen sources of conflict, process loss, or other drags on productivity that result from divisive social categorization.

We already know that deployment serves this purpose virtually automatically, as it develops trust and cohesion. In one case (Delta Squadron), members from structurally different components deploy together. One subordinate told us, “It was just like there was no more barriers all of a sudden. It was like we were all the same, you know, and I asked him: ‘How come we don't have that at home, you know?’” As the quotation indicates, the components maintained their separate identities at the home base, and the resultant poor morale and teamwork created a significant drain on mission capability.

As one case study subject put it, focusing people on the mission instead of the “other,” reframes their perspectives on diversity: “It's not comparing apples to oranges, but apples to the fruit basket.” This subject (Golf Squadron) set a climate that cues squadron members at all levels to “manage” their diversity in the service of the shared mission.

The case study subjects who focused on the squadron as a whole used a number of management practices to tighten the focus on the mission. Those who worked strictly with their direct reports had fewer tools with which to work.

Practice: Build team around mission

A strong squadron identity improves mission capability in terms of morale and teamwork. This occurs whether or not the squadron's mission explicitly requires working across flight boundaries, because it is inclusive: it puts everyone's focus on the mission and the way they contribute to it.

Tool: Find an overarching framework and common language that is relevant to the squadron's work and use it appropriately. What makes for an appropriate framework varies according to the mission and the squadron's functions; for example, frameworks used in these cases included customer service and commitment to safety. One squadron with a particularly broad range of technical, and technically different, functions found a common framework through the shared value of professionalism. Note the word *found*. One subject (Delta Squadron) was trying to impose a new, inclusive framework of his own but was using his own language, symbols, and the like. This conscientious attempt was doomed to failure because it eliminated differences arbitrarily and symbolically instead of building on the existing, shared language.

Tool: Encourage and facilitate understanding between structurally different groups by helping people see how each unit or function contributes to the mission. The diversity literature is very clear that working together on a shared task does this in relatively short order [1]. Depending on the context, some subjects had created a climate in which working together was a value. For instance, one subject (Echo Squadron) employed a variety of ways (recognition, thank you's, etc.) for members to see how success or failure by one flight affected the squadron's overall mission; in this squadron, members from unrelated flights pitch in to help overstretched flights. Some subjects went a step further by "cross-pollinating" in assignments, whether making teams or assigning leaders to units whose specialty was different from their own. A particularly creative subject (Golf Squadron) organized an off-site training session in which experienced instructors from one flight were the trainers for members from other flights. In short, these subjects built inclusiveness into the way their squadrons do business.

Tool: Emphasize and reward teamwork. In more than one functionally diverse squadron, for instance, rewards reinforce teamwork, shifting the culture in a mutually supportive direction. This turns out to be especially useful in squadrons that are adjusting to downsizing, process changes, or other resource-challenged situations since they are more burdened than usual. For instance, some of the squadrons studied had very uneven workloads across flights. Two otherwise similar squadrons (Charlie and Lima) differed by how much help members of overstretched flights got from the less burdened ones, and this seemed determined in large part by the extent to which the commander had instilled a mission-related identity across the squadron.

Tool: Consciously attend to how diversity affects the mission. Two subjects (Foxtrot and Lima Squadrons) seemed unaware of how an emerging type of diversity was detracting from the squadron's mission. These subjects were good and conscientious leaders who would no doubt have addressed the situations appropriately, had they been aware of them. In other cases, such circumstances were preexisting and the subjects learned of them through an initial "listening period," or were warned about them by their supervisors.

Tool: Carefully consider sponsoring and supporting inclusive events to model cross-component engagement and focus squadron members on commonalities. To use this tool, the subject must have some degree of sensitivity to both the nature and the extent of diversity in the squadron. One subject (Delta Squadron) was planning a squadron-wide activity to break down the component barriers that were inhibiting the supposedly integrated squadron's performance; however, because the event did not heed the nature of the diversity, the activity was likely to reinforce barriers instead. Specifically, the activity was planned by the active-duty component, rather than jointly, such that the subject was implicitly requiring the other component to "assimilate" to the active-duty component's practices and culture. Another subject (Kilo Squadron) was unaware that his squadron found his "mandatory fun" not only a burden that took away already-scarce time with their families, but also unnecessary given his otherwise successful diversity management. (This subject was also insensitive to differences in personal motivations or comfort levels with particular "bonding" actions.) One relatively remote subject (Lima Squadron) came up with a weekend

activity that involved all squadron members and both symbolically and substantively advanced the process change (shift from paper to electronic) that was exacerbating diversity-related challenges within the squadron.

Manage work-group processes

The empirical literature [1] finds many ways that diversity complicates normal, day-to-day processes in the workplace. In general, processes are designed to manage human interactions, so social identities that form around particular diversity types can make it harder to get a workforce to deliver its full potential. In particular, the literature finds that unmanaged diversity increases conflict and decreases communication. In the model, these process losses are represented through the impact of the mediators on mission capability.

Practice: Manage conflict

As reference [1] points out, conflict is one of the basic costs of unmanaged diversity, so conflict management skills have an obvious value. Most subjects felt that conflict was best dealt with at the level where it occurred—both for efficiency and because it was a learning experience for all concerned. However, a culture that keeps issues from rising to higher levels can keep a conflict simmering unless subordinates are empowered appropriately. Consequently, understanding the enhanced likelihood of conflicts and the need to manage them is particularly necessary in diverse settings. Put another way, it matters less how commanders manage conflict than whether they watch for it and address it before it becomes a problem.

Tool: Manage diversity-related conflicts proactively. For example, a climate assessment survey surfaced a demographic diversity conflict in Echo Squadron, and the subject addressed it by sponsoring team-building exercises and management training.

Tool: Be consistently fair in discipline and rewards. Some subjects (e.g., Golf Squadron) replaced commanders who had tended to reward members of one component and not others, thereby causing issues related to structural or functional diversity to fester.

Tool: Have hard but needed conversations in a timely fashion. One subject (Charlie Squadron) handled a complex diversity-based conflict by being open with a key subordinate about the negative feelings among the people who worked for him. This gave the subordinate a chance to improve before things got out of hand and he needed to be replaced.

Practice: Evaluate group processes

Since the studies addressed the squadron commander level, we did not hear much about group processes beyond the flight commander/direct report group. In addition, none of the subjects had substantial training in understanding group dynamics. However, one subject (Golf Squadron) had thought through how to unify and integrate his functionally diverse squadron in those terms. He specifically addressed squadron dynamics first, and only addressed unit dynamics when he was satisfied that the squadron-wide issues had been met. This subject also made sure that while he fostered healthy competition, he never risked divisiveness.

Practice: Learn from diversity

The empirical literature analysis [1] found that “learning from diversity” is the most effective way to gain a performance benefit from diversity, but this concept was not explicitly on the radar for any of the case study subjects. Nevertheless, many of them were effectively making this happen.

Tool: Model learning from each other. Virtually all subjects held regular meetings with their direct reports, and most of them used these meetings as opportunities to listen as well as speak, and for subordinates to listen to one another, too. Even though one subject (Alpha Squadron) viewed the meetings as primarily occasions to deliver messages to his direct reports, he encouraged them to learn from one another, if only to avoid reinventing the wheel.

Subjects who lead/manage across all squadron levels go further in stressing the value of learning from one another up and down the rank level. One subject (Foxtrot Squadron) gave this practice a commonsense name: “sanity checks.” One of his subordinates said, “We’re all learning from each other.” Another said,

I think everyone sanity-checks each other almost on a daily, sometimes on an hourly basis. [The squadron commander] will walk in and you do a sanity check, “This is what I'm about to do—is this the dumbest thing I'm about to do or the smartest thing I'm about to do?” And then we just kind of stare at him and we tell him.

Tool: Create opportunities for people to work across diversity lines. In one case study, the mission puts people from different AFSCs onto teams, but in others this does not happen automatically. More than one subject perceived how members' perspectives can be broadened when they work with “others” (i.e., with other jobs and other practices), and found ways to make this happen. (Golf Squadron's commander is a particularly good example.) This tool has potential benefits in terms of creativity and readiness, in addition to the evident impact of reducing friction and making it easier for problems to be addressed at lower levels. (It is somewhat akin to the parental strategy of getting the children to play well together by giving them joint responsibility.)

Tool: Create opportunities for people to hear from each other. Where individual flights are functionally different yet serve the same overall mission and clients—as, for example, in health care or engineering squadrons—the squadron leader can help his people learn from each other. One subject (Hotel Squadron) feels that people who know what others are doing will do better, and he places his primary emphasis on frequent and effective cross-communication using a variety of modes.

Practice: Facilitate brainstorming

Virtually all of the subjects respected the expertise of their senior squadron members and viewed consulting with them as a fundamental leadership activity. Of course, “brainstorming” implies that members of the group may have valuable input, and this is not something that all subjects were looking for. More than one subject's purpose was simply making sure the flight chiefs understood the “vision,” so they could instill it in their units, and their concern was making themselves understood—whether by saying the same thing in different ways or by watching faces to see who wasn't yet “on board.” Most of the subjects, however, were very concerned with two-way

communication and had different techniques for eliciting ideas or views they wanted to hear.

Tool: Ask for talking papers on key issues. One of the subjects (Echo Squadron) whose leadership style is people based (i.e., working with “people” up and down the ranks) occasionally asks his senior team to prepare talking papers for their constant discussions. In a functional diversity situation, where flights have different roles/skills in addressing the same mission, this tool is particularly useful; it also gives the subject a vehicle for substantive communication with the larger squadron, via feedback and followups.

Tool: Encourage brainstorming as a learning opportunity. One subject (Hotel Squadron), whose leadership style is based on developing his subordinates, not only brainstorms regularly with his senior leadership but also encourages them to do the same with their subordinates (i.e., to learn this skill as well as get substantive benefits from practicing it).

Tool: Generate “learning” discussions. One subject (Kilo Squadron), whose mission requires good communication across functions, explicitly models and trains his direct reports to “generate a conversation that leads to people learning from each other.”

Practice: Prioritize for yourself and for your people

These case studies built on earlier work [4] that found that an important exogenous issue is the stress imposed by a heightened operations tempo and/or the implementation of transformation initiatives. Many of the diversity issues found in these case studies were a direct result of transformation-induced integration, and most of them were exacerbated by a heightened opstempo.

Tool: Prioritize people. The commanders who were managing diversity very well prioritized spending workdays with their people, mingling and listening and responding. This enabled them to develop and use many of the tools listed elsewhere in this section—tools that other subjects could not have used even if they tried because they lacked close day-to-day knowledge of the squadron. To free themselves up to

prioritize people, these commanders tended to reserve evenings/weekends for e-mail and other paperwork.

Tool: Delegate as much as possible. This tool follows from the previous one. As we say elsewhere, the commanders who were managing diversity very well were working more than full time; without delegating as much work as possible to others, they would not have been able to accomplish so much. Of course, delegation is a form of legacy management, as well as people development.

Tool: Be clear about priorities. One subject (Golf Squadron) is very clear in communicating to particular units when/if they are on the “back burner” so that they understand that they are not being overlooked, as opposed to units in other squadrons that felt excluded. He makes it clear to them that their work is still important.

Facilitate effective communications

Strong, effective communication practices are essential in managing diversity, according to the empirical literature [1]. In many ways, diversity means that people may “hear” the same thing differently, so managing diversity often means getting people to have shared understanding even if it takes expressing it in different ways. The case studies produced several examples of effective communication practices because all of the subjects recognized the need to manage the flow of important information throughout the squadron. Even the subjects who were not particularly comfortable communicating had developed some tools. However, subjects were less likely to understand that communication involves listening as well as talking, and several knew less about their squadron diversity than they should have known. This is one of the ways that a command/control culture works against diversity management.

Practice: Facilitate communication within the squadron

All the subjects had considered their role in communication within the squadron, and they made a conscious effort to make the most of the communication vehicles they used. Making this practice effective, of course, requires a concrete knowledge of how squadron members receive communications. We heard, for instance, of e-mail communi-

cations in situations where not all squadron members could receive e-mail. Treating squadron members the same when there are key differences is a prime example of managing diversity badly.

Tool: Factor diversity into squadron-wide communications. Most subjects who used mass communication modes, such as commander's calls, tried to find the line between informing and overwhelming (e.g., by thinking of what people don't need to hear as well as what they do need to hear). This is particularly important in diverse situations and requires distinguishing what is inclusive from what is exclusive. For instance, earlier focus groups [4] reported how squadron members tune out when the meeting isn't relevant to them (i.e., when their diversity is not taken into account). For example, one subject (Hotel Squadron) makes sure his messages are "big picture," and he might use a cross-cutting theme to focus attention.

Practice: Facilitate communication within subgroups (i.e., flights, direct reports)

Meeting regularly with direct reports is a fundamental practice, and subjects had a variety of tools for turning those meetings into value. Even a quite unskilled subject could at least tell when people weren't "hearing" him so he repeated himself in varying ways until they did. (This subject was uncomfortable with communication in general, and the functional diversity in his squadron made communicating more difficult since members lacked a common "language.")

Tool: Exchange views with subordinates. Virtually all of the subjects hold frequent meetings with their direct reports, and most meetings featured thorough discussion. Some subjects lay out their thinking and ask subordinates to challenge it, being fully aware that they don't know everything. Note that no subject allows openness to other points of view to lead to confusion within the chain of command. They ask for input while making it clear that the decisions are theirs to make. Or they ask their direct reports to lay out the pros and cons of a decision, and then lead the discussion to a resolution.

Tool: Share as much information as widely as possible. This is particularly successful in a diversity situation, where people are particularly attuned to whether some might know things they don't. One subject

(Golf Squadron) made sure to never play “I’ve Got a Secret,” whether in staff meetings or commander’s calls. In his view, the basis of effective communication is sharing information and modeling listening and learning from it. In contrast, Alpha Squadron was virtually a textbook case of how to make managing diversity harder because its commander failed to broadly share important information with all squadron members.

Tool: Use targeted e-mail. One subject (Echo Squadron) shares information via targeted e-mail, setting up relevant distribution lists. “When it comes to information, or ideas, things you want done, you have to [be inclusive.] The key is that they are important enough that I’m passing information and that they get to have a say.”

Tool: Horizontal networking. One subject (Hotel Squadron) explicitly encourages informal, horizontal networking.

Tool: Turn information into meaning. One subject (Kilo Squadron) tries to go beyond simple information, and focuses on turning communication into meaning by encouraging participatory discussions and using Socratic-like interventions.

Tool: Monitor potential communication barriers. One subject (Echo Squadron) constantly monitors potential communication barriers within the squadron. For example, even in his relatively large squadron, he takes individual newcomers to meet relevant others, on the principle that people work better together if they know one another first.

Practice: Listen to all group members

Most of the subjects understood that listening is particularly important when diversity is present. Those who did not seemed to “spin their wheels” in managing diversity. In essence, by not listening, a commander shuts off any learning about the effects of diversity, as well as signaling that he or she is not really acknowledging differences.

Tool: Create opportunities for hearing. Most of the subjects who were managing diversity very successfully consciously built opportunities for hearing, not just talking, into their leadership. This generally

involved a great deal of informal mingling, whether in the course of the workday and/or (usually and) in other situations, such as offsites, missions, or social events. The 360-degree interviews tended to support the value of this tool (i.e., people who were confident that they'd been "heard" were comfortable with the ultimate decisions, whatever they were).

Tool: Let people know they've been "heard." One subject (Echo Squadron), who makes frequent informal visits throughout the squadron and thus has frequent conversations, sends followups to make it clear that he has heard his people.

Tool: Listen first. Several subjects spent the beginning of their tour of duty listening. Given the human and policy complexities of diversity situations, it is hard to ameliorate them even when their dimensions are clear. We saw more than one multifaceted diversity challenge occupy the subject's attention throughout his tour; in one case, it is hard to see how the subject (Golf Squadron) could have succeeded without the 45 days he devoted to listening when he first arrived. Another subject (Kilo Squadron), who had less pressing diversity concerns, still did a lot of listening before making small changes that subordinates perceived as making a difference.

Practice: Be accessible

Diversity management is people management, and it's hard to accomplish it without being accessible. Subjects who "lead" the squadron as a whole make themselves accessible as part of making their people a priority. They are aware that outreach efforts, in which they get to know their people and what they do, are not the same as "in-reach" efforts, in which they listen to people and exchange views.

Tool: Have an open door. Most of the subjects had open-door policies and had thought through the process to make sure it was inviting but not abused. That is, because they have to manage their time, they manage their accessibility. All of them made clear (in different ways) how they expect the chain of command to be observed in line with their open door. Many of them communicated clearly how they expected people to be prepared for their time together.

Tool: Manage body language. Several subjects had thought through how people connect with them, and managed their “body language” appropriately. For instance, several had organized their offices to signal receptivity and had thought through behavior patterns, such as not taking phone calls during a conversation. One subject (Golf Squadron, which is a very small squadron) invited squadron members and their spouses to his home for dinner. He set the event up so that all would have to pass by him while he cooked his specialty, thus forcing informal interaction at what could be a daunting event for some.

Tool: Model accessibility. One very outgoing subject (Charlie Squadron) models openness: “You know, you can talk to him about...controversial topics [and] he'll tell you the truth and you know he's telling the truth.”

Tool: Use walk-around management. Subjects who practice walk-around management are well aware of the opportunity it gives for holding informal conversations.

Tool. Make contact. Even subjects who manage strictly through their direct reports have figured out at least one creative way to make contact. One subject (Alpha Squadron) had realized that by meeting his flight chiefs in their location, he at least could be seen by other squadron members!

Motivate in accord with needs/goals

Motivating in accordance with needs and goals is a frequent theme in leadership and management training, and its practice needs to be thought through for its implications in a diversity situation. In one case (Delta Squadron), the subject did not acknowledge that the “different” squadron members had different needs and goals. For example, he did not realize that the permanent local residents would not appreciate using a day off for a “squadron bonding” activity, especially as the activity planned was not one they valued. (More than one subject learned to eschew such activities after they failed to draw participants from the “different” groups.) Some subjects also “de-motivated” the different components, functions, or ranks, by excluding them. Note that exclusion is the basic anti-tool for diversity management.

Practice: Know your people

Subjects who led beyond their direct reports did this consciously, in ways that worked for their squadron and their leadership style.

Tool: Have frequent meetings, including one-on-one meetings. For instance, the commander of Echo Squadron has frequent meetings with people at multiple levels: the focus is on the function or task, not the rank. He also has formal meetings with junior officers, for which he prepares and discusses binders filled with relevant information.

Tool: Walk-around management. Walk-around management is a very effective tool, and all the very successful diversity managers employ (and prioritize) it. They simply spend a lot of time with their people, and they do it in an informal way. For instance, the commander of Charlie Squadron got to know virtually every member of his large squadron by going into their spaces and conversing about the personal interests they revealed through photos of their pets, their families, or their activities. One junior subordinate said, "He's touched every single person in the...flight and can probably tell you something about every single person in that [flight] which most commanders cannot." Such conversations lay the groundwork for meaningful knowledge of people, especially as it increases their comfort in bringing up work-related topics. Note that Charlie Squadron's commander, like other subjects, was very clear about how people could be open with him without abusing the chain of command.

Tool: Attend important events. Another tool is to attend important events, such as newcomer orientation, deployment departures/returns, and so on. Most subjects do this, but some were particularly assiduous. For instance, deployment is a significant activity for Fox-trot Squadron, and its commander and his wife are always present when people come and go. Other subjects whose squadron members deploy connect substantively as well as symbolically with them. This might include attending a funeral, writing personal notes (one subordinate received a hand-written birthday card at his tent in Iraq from his stateside squadron commander!), or talking to returnees about the help that is available to them. Even leaders who have not deployed, at least not in the current environment, are credible if they are perceived as genuinely caring.

Tool: Be able to put a name to a face. Foxtrot Squadron's subject was not really a walk-around manager, but his subordinates said,

[He] goes out of his way, more so than I've ever seen a commander, to actually do what's right and put a name to a face, a face with a file and not just say "Oh, Article 15" or "Oh, I don't care."

In other words, it's not the tool itself that's important, but finding a tool to accomplish this practice in a way that works for the leader and in the context.

Practice: Understand/be aware of their jobs/functions (but not necessarily an expert)

The subjects who managed diversity well were credible because they understood squadron members' work—they either had done it themselves or had made an effort to learn about it. The subjects who did not manage diversity well tended to lack that credibility because they had not become sufficiently familiar with the diverse functions or components.

Tool: Use walk-around management and informal conversations to know and understand what squadron members do. For instance, the commanders of Kilo and Golf Squadrons were both unfamiliar with many of the AFSCs represented in their squadrons. The commander of Kilo Squadron spent a lot of (walk-around) time asking for and getting explanations from all the different parts of his squadron. This enabled him to lead based on real understanding of pieces he didn't know through his own experience. As a result, he had more credibility than the (few) subjects who had less knowledge of squadron tasks they hadn't experienced.

Tool: Participate. Some subjects accompanied their subordinates on missions; one subject (Golf Squadron) also spent the night at off-sites, so he could be part of the conversations and learn from them about both the attendees and the trainers.

Practice: Acknowledge/reward contributions

This practice may seem obvious, but more than one subject found that previous commanders had failed to include "different" or

“minority” squadron members fairly and consistently in the reward system, whether a formal reward package, a calling out, or a pat on the back.

Tool: Use rewards to support a mission-driven culture. Golf Squadron’s commander instituted cross-flight multifunctional teams, with a shared mission and, thus, shared rewards. As one of his subordinates said, “None of us sit here and crave praise”; instead, they wanted the praise/awards to come to the team or section.

Provide tools to do the job

These practices go beyond the obvious need to see that squadron members have the time, materials, and skills to accomplish their tasks. In a diversity context in particular, they extend to providing the practice and policy support that enables subordinates to deal with diversity as it affects their day-to-day work.

Practice: Empower subordinates/avoid micromanagement

Empowering subordinates—and its corollary, avoiding micromanagement—has been a constant theme through our research into the diversity/capability relationship [1 and 4], and it is a key part of most subjects' toolkits. Of course, context determines how they implement the tool, and this is one talk that most definitely fails if it isn't walked. For diversity purposes, the idea behind empowerment is to use the accumulated experience at hand, down to the lowest levels if possible, as well as to meet the more common goal of developing new leaders. Observing the chain of command and keeping a mission focus seem to be basic requirements for successful empowerment in a diversity situation since boundaries can be unclear. More specific tools include the following.

Tool: Supply the necessary resources. Where successful empowerment depends on having the necessary resources, the subjects make sure they supply them—including time and backup support, as well as “having their backs.” Subjects who are interested in reaping the creativity and innovation that diversity offers tend to be willing to invest more in this process. To this end, at least one subject (Hotel Squadron) makes sure that empowerment includes ownership of the

process, including setting the agenda for reaching the agreed-upon outcome.

Tool: Body language is important. Some subjects make it clear that subordinates can use their open-door policy as a “psychological safety net,” as one subject (Lima Squadron) put it. In other words, failure due to not using an available open door would be viewed as cause for revisiting empowerment. Other subjects communicate explicitly what kinds of situations need to be elevated to them, and all are aware of the fine line they need to walk between empowerment and involvement with subordinates.

Tool: Give the necessary guidance. Subjects who are managing diversity that has resulted from organizational change make sure that subordinates have the “vector” before empowering them. Otherwise, subjects have to decide what they need to know to place confidence in their subordinates, and that varies: some rely on their ability to read people, while others need proof of expertise, especially when the task/function is not something they know personally. Also, they need to figure out how they will know if something has gone off the rails. One subject (Foxtrot Squadron) calls his approach “guidance and verification”; his subordinates call him the “king of the leading question.”

Practice: Provide appropriate mentoring

Mentoring is a basic tool for Air Force officers in general; however, how commanders choose to manage diversity interacts with the way they manage mentoring.

Tool: Enlarge the mentoring framework. Several of the commanders studied are managing diversity by focusing on making the squadron into a big “family,” and they fit mentoring within this framework. In addition to formal mentoring with direct reports, these subjects tend to mingle extensively and informally with squadron members, readily sharing ideas. Indeed, these subjects had created a climate in which diversity was really not an issue, compared to other, sometimes similar, squadrons studied.

Tool: Think through the mentoring process according to leadership style and squadron mission. One subject (Hotel Squadron) viewed himself as largely a coach, and saw his job as including teaching people how to identify core processes, see the end while planning the beginning, and so on. His approach was consciously based on legacy management (i.e., teaching people to do their bosses' jobs), which was appropriate in his highly technical squadron. (Highly skilled technical experts tend to lack management/leadership training.) Another subject (Kilo Squadron) worked from the principle that mentoring goes on all the time, in everything you do. In addition to the usual one-on-one sit-downs, he tried to make mentoring a part of everyone's job. Again, this approach was consistent with the squadron's operational mission.

Practice: Advocate for people/push back

Many of the diversity issues studied here were a direct result of transformation-induced integration, and virtually all of them were exacerbated by a heightened opstempo. How well squadron commanders were seen to support their subordinates in the light of these pressures made a difference to the diversity climate, though the impact on mission capability of the degree or amount of support is probably important regardless of whether diversity is an issue.

Tool: Use other tools well (prioritize, know your people, etc.). Commanders who were managing diversity well were seen by their subordinates to be supportive. Spending workdays with their people, mingling and listening and responding, and reserving evenings/weekends for e-mail and other paperwork provides ample opportunity both to hear what resources are needed (and to advocate for them) and to see where to push back at higher levels to manage competing demands. For instance, Charlie Squadron's subordinates said their commander "has no hesitation to go to someone who outranks him and say, 'You're in the wrong, you're hurting my people.'" This practice also enables commanders to communicate effectively downward when those resources are not going to be forthcoming, even though the demands are.

Establish personal and technical credibility

These fundamental aspects of leadership take on particular importance in a diversity context, due to the important role of trust in mediating diversity mechanisms. All of the subjects were active-duty officers, but they needed to gain the confidence of other components as well as civilian employees. Even when all the squadron members were active-duty members themselves, subjects needed to gain the confidence of people who had never worked with their AFSC (and may even have had prejudices against it!).

Practice: Model strong individual engagement

The subjects who were intensely involved with their squadrons (e.g., the commanders of Charlie, Echo, and Golf Squadrons) all demonstrated strong individual engagement. However, this level of involvement is not always possible and not all commanders are such “people persons.” Still, there are tools that other types of leaders can use to model their engagement, and to avoid modeling disengagement (see, for example, Alpha and Lima Squadrons for subjects who were perceived as disengaged).

Tool: “Walk the talk.” The squadron commander chooses the “talk” he wants to model, so the “talks” varied according to the nature of the squadron and its mission, such as sharing information widely and regularly, making expectations known, admitting mistakes, a strong and caring culture (in a customer-oriented squadron), hard work and competency, and positive reinforcement. All the subjects understood the need, and consciously tried, to “walk the talk.” Not all, however, were aware of other signals they were sending. For instance, most of them modeled fairness and consistency, whether for rewards or discipline, according to their subordinates, but a few did not. And one unconsciously modeled the divisiveness he was trying to conquer, by excluding the “other” component from the inner circle of decision makers who were working on integrating two components.

Tool: Practice walk-around management. Several subjects used walk-around management to meet a variety of purposes (communication, knowing people, etc.), including gaining a real knowledge of what people are doing. This is especially important in squadrons that are

functionally diverse. The subjects who asked questions and learned about unfamiliar AFSCs also gained credibility and trust, compared to (the few) subjects who steered away from flights whose work they didn't really know.

Practice: Take ownership of what happens and admit mistakes

In general, these subjects were credible because they were seen to take responsibility for what they are supposed to take responsibility for and not, for example, to blame their subordinates. This, of course, is true of leaders in general, but it may be easier to realize the benefits of diversity (which tends to broaden the range of responsibilities) when leaders admit that they don't know everything and can make mistakes too. For instance, Foxtrot Squadron's subordinates admired both the way their commander kept on top of their task lists and the way he took ownership when something had escaped him: "When he does forget things, very rarely, he'll come back and be like, 'I forgot, we need to pick this back up, my fault, I dropped it, let's do it now, it needs to get done.'"

Tool: Have their "backs." Again, this is always important for leaders but can be particularly valuable in diversity situations, where preexisting stovepipes can cause decisions made in one unit to have an adverse effect elsewhere. Foxtrot Squadron's subordinates appreciate their commander's ability to assess how their activities might affect the big picture; they also admire how he takes ownership for the squadron as a whole: "He definitely gets thumped [at the wing and group level] a little bit more than we do and definitely protects a lot of us from getting thumped also."

Practice: Advocate for people/push back

See this practice under "Provide tools to do the job."

Practice: Demonstrate technical competence at own job

All of the subjects led squadron members whose work was unfamiliar to them. Most but not all of them understood that they could trust other people to know their jobs, and that their leadership would be judged not by what they knew about other people's jobs but by how they performed their own jobs. As one of Foxtrot Squadron's

subordinates said, “They're going to know if you can [lead and manage them] based on how you perform. It's going to sell itself, you don't have to sell it, they're going to see it in your actions daily.”

Tool: Participate in work activities. At least two subjects who shared the technical expertise of part of their squadron took advantage of opportunities to go on missions and/or offsites with their people, demonstrating their technical competence to their subordinates. For other subjects, however, this opportunity was either not available or not particularly relevant for building trust in the commander.

Tool: Synthesize understanding of what all squadron members are doing into a big picture that subordinates would not otherwise perceive. When subordinates in Foxtrot Squadron commented that their commander was “scary smart,” they meant that he saw how their activities fit into a larger military conception. “He's analytical smart, so we'll go in, leading how we lead and knowing what we know, and then he just has a whole different take on it. And it's an awesome balance.” In addition to having confidence that their commander was increasing the value of their work, his big picture “take” also helped them value the diversity within Foxtrot Squadron.

Practice: Care

All the subjects who were managing diversity very well were perceived as genuine and caring. For instance, one of Charlie Squadron's junior subordinates described his commander in the following way: “There's a genuineness about him that others, you can tell, it's the correct thing to say and as the commander they need to say it. But with him, you know it, you feel it.” For example, this subject has said at commander's calls that squadron members should feel free to call him if they've had too much to drink: “And you know that he means that, that he cares about each person's welfare and wants to see everybody...do well.” The lesson here is not the substance of the gesture but that people perceived it as genuine and caring.

Practice: Acknowledge/reward contributions

See this practice under “Motivate in accord with needs/goals.”

Summary

We undertook this research project to identify the basic tools of effective diversity management. Specifically, we identified how squadron commanders approach leading in a diversity context, and what, exactly, they do. Three simple statements sum up the learning from this effort about effective diversity management:

1. It's about people, so it requires actual contact with them.
2. It must be intentional; it doesn't happen as a side effect of managing other processes or doing your own job.
3. It's time consuming and labor intensive.

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Conclusion

Summary of findings

The primary purpose of this research was to identify practices and tools that could inform leadership training for managing diversity. Thus, a key goal was to develop a meaningful conceptual framework and common language around which to develop a training curriculum.

We found that Air Force personnel have neither a common conceptual understanding of diversity management nor a common language for talking about it. The Diversity-Capability Model previously developed by the Air Force proved to be a satisfactory conceptual framework for conducting and analyzing the case studies, and would thus be a useful guide for developing a training curriculum.

Even without a formal framework and language, squadron commanders are using some of the tools identified in the corporate literature to manage diversity in their squadrons. And several of them have adopted leadership approaches and management practices that are conducive to using such tools. For instance, people-focused approaches lend themselves to successful diversity management, while corporate-style executive or military command/control approaches do not. Similarly, practices that nurture learning from diversity are particularly successful, as are a broad range of communication tools.

But lack of both a framework and language for thinking about diversity, as well as a conception of its potential benefits, is hampering some of these subjects—even though they were hand-picked as successful diversity managers. A fundamental lack seems to be the ability to even identify diversity issues that need to be managed. Some of these case studies surfaced important instances of diversity that are having a negative impact on mission capability (and are likely to be

common across squadrons) but were unrecognized by the subjects. Three of the nine subjects followed approaches and employed practices that would probably surface such instances, but it is not clear that the other six could have/would have done so.

Lessons from the Diversity-Capability Model framework

We used the Diversity-Capability Model to develop the protocol for these case studies, and to subsequently code and analyze them. This process yielded five important lessons for addressing diversity management in the Air Force.

Lesson 1: Continuously assess mission capability in terms of diversity-related aspects

As the empirical literature foreshadowed, the case studies all found that diversity affected combat readiness via morale and teamwork. A few of them also found the promised potential of diversity to enhance asymmetric advantage through creativity and innovation. Other diversity-related elements of mission capability included training; for instance, in more than one case, unmanaged structural diversity was failing to deliver on the potential of older, civilian and/or ANG members to train young active-duty Airmen.

Lesson 2: Understand and assess the context

The empirical literature that underlies the model makes it very clear that how diversity matters depends on its context. This makes it vitally important to identify relevant exogenous factors and moderators. For example, Delta Squadron has a severe diversity problem rooted in structural integration. Without an understanding of the important exogenous role of TFI, it would be easy to attribute this problem to the parallel demographic diversity and shape attempts at diversity management accordingly. Lack of contextual understanding would also mask the important moderating role of the dual status (civilian and ANG) of one of the components.

Lesson 3: Pay attention to human processes

By understanding the context, one can more easily identify whether that context might be triggering any social identity mechanisms, and how they work through mediators. To take a simple example, Golf

Squadron was built on an existing unit, which then felt marginalized (and was, by a previous commander) when other units were added. It was not surprising that some members of Golf Squadron clung to a separate social identity, which seriously hindered cooperation and thus mission capability. Before the subject's successful diversity management in Golf Squadron, requests for even simple equipment, such as boots, were being sent up to the commander's level!

Lesson 4: Set a positive overall unit climate

Leadership approach and style set the diversity climate, which, in turn, moderates the social identity mechanisms and the mediators that connect diversity to mission capability. Charlie Squadron offers a good example of a positive diversity climate, especially given that earlier research at that base [4] found that the prevailing component diversity was quite challenging. Charlie Squadron's commander had established a quite different climate that was robustly inclusive, with a strong squadron identity. He did this by modeling strong individual engagement, actively supporting initiatives that addressed what members shared, and fostering intensive two-way communication.

Lesson 5: Identify and employ management practices that address diversity issues

Both in general and in response to special situations, management practices are a key moderator between diversity and mission capability. Golf Squadron is a good example: the subject had to combat a situation in which functional diversity, perhaps the most straightforward and common of all diversity categories, was inhibiting teamwork and dampening morale. A full array of management practices, highlighted by creating cross-functional, mission-focused teams, turned this situation from negative to extremely positive.

Recommendations

This research addressed, in essence, the potential benefits of diversity management training for Air Force personnel. In combination with previous research [3 and 4], the case studies document a need for such training and suggest that it would have a valuable impact on mission capability. Based on the results reported in the paper, we make

the following recommendations for how diversity management training should be developed and implemented:

- Adopt the Diversity-Capability Model as the framework and basis for the diversity management training curriculum.
- Increase efforts to inculcate the broad, mission-focused definition of diversity or consider using a different word to avoid the unrelated connotations that seem to be associated with the word *diversity* and diversity-related efforts.
- Use rigorous testing to develop a supporting diversity management language that is consistent with Air Force culture and that resonates with Air Force personnel.
- To accompany the training, develop an accessible diversity management tool kit that is based on the practices and tools described in this paper.
- Add diversity management training to the leadership curriculum at all levels for officers, enlisted personnel, and civilians.

In the absence of formal diversity management training, we recommend that Air Force personnel from all components and at all levels consider incorporating the management practices and tools from this paper into their everyday work. The bottom-line conclusion is that good people management can enhance morale and teamwork and stimulate creativity and innovation in any setting, but it is especially valuable in the context of TFI and budget cuts.

Appendix A: Interview/focus group protocols

Basic structure

There are three separate protocols: one for the main subject of the case study, one for the subject's supervisor, and one for the subject's subordinates. The supervisor and subordinate protocols follow the structure of the subject protocol and are designed to explore the extent to which supervisors' and subordinates' perceptions of the role of diversity and how it is managed are consistent with the perceptions of the main subject.

The main subject protocol has six sections that relate to the flow of factors in the model. With the exception of the introductory section, each section has one or two main questions and a set of followup questions or topics. The main questions in each section are intended to allow respondents to tell their personal stories about the broad category. Issues discussed in this section are considered to have been raised “unaided” by the interviewers. The followup questions relate to specific phenomena or issues that have been identified as important in the research on diversity management [1]. They are intended to prompt people to talk about the specific factors and phenomena of interest. Issues raised in response to the followup questions are considered to have been raised after respondents were “aided” by the interviewers. This structure was intended to be flexible because research has shown that such flexibility allows subjects to feel engaged in the process and increases the quality of their participation. An overly structured protocol tends to decrease engagement.

The main subject protocol is designed for a 60- to 90-minute individual interview, and the supervisor protocol is designed for a 30- to 60-minute individual interview. The subordinate protocol is designed for a focus group that would last 60 to 90 minutes; the same protocol applies to both the midlevel and junior subordinates. The main subject protocol follows; the other protocols are available on request.

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Main subject protocol

Section 1: Introduction of project and definitions of diversity (10 minutes)

Tape recorder off:

An AF interviewer introduces the project [saying that this is an official AF-approved project, etc.] and the CNA interviewers, and hands out privacy statement.

A CNA interviewer covers any administrative points that the AF interviewer didn't, such as taping of the session.¹⁹

Tape recorder on:

Several types of diversity have been shown to have an impact on work-group processes and outcomes. We're interested in four types of diversity, though we want to hear about a different dimension if that's important in your squadron:

- Demographic diversity—this is the commonly understood dimension: it's usually age, race/ethnicity, religion, or gender.
- Functional diversity—these are differences in work-related background characteristics, such as AFSC or education and training history.
- Structural diversity—these are organizational differences, such as junior personnel working with senior personnel or reserves or civilians working with active duty.

19. Two CNA interviewers were present for most of the interviews, along with one of the two Air Force project members. (In some cases, both Air Force project members were present.)

- Global diversity—these are differences in citizenship and nationality, such as in-country civilians or coalition partners.

We want to talk about how you approach managing your squadron.

In addition to talking with you, we'll be interviewing your immediate supervisor(s) and some of your subordinates to get a feel for how your perceptions match up with theirs. We're not looking for an evaluation of your management, but for similarities and differences in the way people at different points in the chain of command talk about diversity and diversity management. To protect confidentiality, we aren't going to be able to share the interview transcripts. They'll be pulled together in a report that will provide recommendations to leadership about how to design diversity management training that is both distinct from and adds to existing leadership training. We hope you'll be able to read the report.

Question 1.1

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Question 1.2

As background (depending on advance information), please tell us:

- How long have you been in this job?
- How would you describe your squadron's primary task?
- Questions to get any necessary information about the squadron, such as: How many people are in the squadron? How many report directly to you? How many flights are there in the squadron?

[NOTE: We are only gathering information here, not discussing it.]

Section 2: Diversity type and saliency in the formation of social identity and in-groups and out-groups (15-20 minutes)

Question 2.1

Is there any type of diversity that is particularly important in the squadron you lead, and, if so, what type and why/how does it matter from a work group perspective?

Followup questions if the respondent doesn't think any diversity type is particularly salient:

- What type of diversity exists in your group?
- Do people from different groups interact easily and naturally? [Be alert for communication, conflict, cooperation, and trust, which are the major mediators found in the literature, and which we will probe in section 4.]
- Why do you think you were chosen as a subject for these case studies?

Followup questions/topics that relate to the model:

- Do you perceive that cliques form around this diversity dimension?
- Is one clique a dominant group?
- Do you see any effects on mission capability?

Question 2.2

Do you control the diversity composition of (this group...that was just mentioned)?

Followup questions/topics from the literature:

- How long have you worked with this group or how long has this group worked together? [We already asked how long the subject has been in this job; here we are focused on the group tenure because the literature (and reference [3]) tells us that

diversity issues, if well managed, disappear over time spent working together, as people substitute work-related identities for group identities.]

- When new members come into the group, how are they integrated?

Section 3: The role of management as a moderator (15-20 minutes)

Question 3.1

What do you see as your top three goals in your role as squadron commander?

Followup questions/topics [Touch on these but don't probe: this section will yield their "talk"; the other interviews will yield their "walk"]:

- Is your job more about leadership or management? Do you distinguish between the two?
- How do you balance mission accomplishment vs. development of people?
- What do you see as the best outcome for your own advancement? [This question is for context.]

Question 3.2

As squadron commander, how do you resolve the diversity issues you've mentioned to ensure that your goals are met?

Followup questions/topics:

- Have you had prior experience with managing diverse groups?
- Do you explicitly try to create a positive diversity climate? [If the subject's view of a positive diversity climate is unclear, ask for a description/definition.]
- Is it necessary to create a sense of mission?

- Is it necessary to find a common language for defining squadron- or unit-specific tasks and problems?

Section 4: The role/importance of work-group dynamics in work-group outcomes (10-15 minutes)

Question 4.1

What types of individual and group behavior do you try to encourage?
[Here we are asking for “what”; we will ask for “how” in section 5.]

Followup questions/topics:

- How important is teamwork and communication within the team?
- How important is risk-taking?
- How important is individual initiative?
- When/under what circumstances do you want people to be creative?
- When/under what circumstances do you want people to follow orders without questioning (do it “by the book”)?
- How important is getting input from all relevant parties?
- How important is individual engagement?

Question 4.2

How do the diversity issues you identified make it harder or easier to encourage the behavior you want?

Followup questions/topics: loop back to the topics in Q1.

Section 5: Use of the process management skills that have been identified as good for diversity management (15-20 minutes)

Question 5.1

What management techniques do you use to get the behavior and outcomes you want?

Followup questions/topics:

- How do you manage conflict within groups?
- How do you go about building a team around a mission?
- How do you motivate an individual based on his or her needs/goals?
- How do you facilitate a brainstorming session?
- Do you/do you know how to provide appropriate mentoring?
- Do you/do you know how to listen to all team members?
- Do you/do you know how to learn from diversity?
- Do you/do you know how to empower your subordinates to get their jobs done efficiently?
- Do you/do you know how to evaluate group processes?
- Do you micromanage?

Question 5.2

Do you use different techniques for diversity management than for general management?

Followup questions/topics:

- Do you think that diversity management requires different/extra skills?

Section 6: The role of training vs. experience in the development of management skills (10 minutes)

Question 6.1

How did you acquire these skills?

Followup questions/topics:

- Did you learn these skills in formal training?
- Did you learn these skills through career experience?
- Did you develop these skills with life experience outside your career—either before joining the Service or as part of non-professional experiences?
- Is diversity management something you do well innately, as part of your personality?

Question 6.2

What questions relevant to this interview would you like to see on an Air Force climate survey?

Potential clarifying statements:

- When you take the command climate surveys, are there questions you wish were asked?
- What would you like to know from a survey or what would you like your leadership to know?

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Appendix B: Case studies

Notes on coding and presentation

All the interviews for the following case studies were tape recorded and transcribed. Based on the protocols (appendix A), we developed code sheets for each of the four levels: subject, supervisor, midlevel subordinates, and junior subordinates. Working independently, both of the CNA analysts made relevant entries on these Excel spreadsheets, with page number references to their source in the transcripts. Then each analyst prepared a case study summary according to the sequence outlined in the protocol. Each summary included a fully specified version of the model, depicted according to the following color palette:

- Exogenous forces—**brown**
- Force diversity—**purple**
- Mechanisms—**orange**
- Mediators—**blue**
- Moderators—**olive**, with diversity management practices as *evergreen italics*
- Combat readiness/asymmetric advantage—**red**.

The analysts exchanged code sheets and summaries, and discussed any areas of disagreement. Once we reached agreement, we wrote the case studies, using both summaries and sets of code sheets and referring back to the transcripts for illustrative quotations. The case studies follow. These studies are named arbitrarily, as a tool for referencing them in the preceding text without revealing the name of the base or the type of squadron.

Writing the case studies while simultaneously observing the promises we had made about confidentiality was difficult and involved constant choices of what to say and what to mask. We decided to use the pronoun “he” for all subjects, as it could be easy to identify female subjects from the nature of the squadron described. We also tried to generalize about the squadron tasks as much as we could without losing important points. Finally, we tried to limit any references to the squadron locations, using only those that were absolutely necessary to describe important aspects of the diversity situation and context.

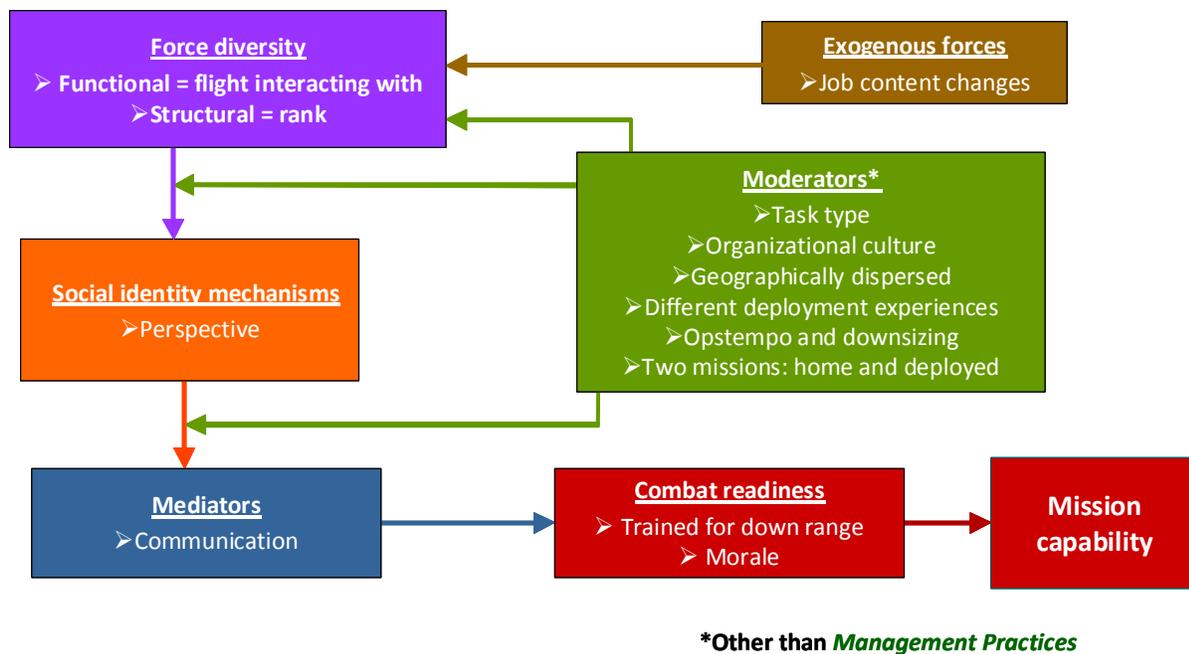
Alpha Squadron: A case study of functional diversity

Diversity types and dynamics

Alpha Squadron is engaged in base support. It has about 450 people, more than half of whom are civilian, and three flights. Each flight is technically specialized but in a different way. Members of each flight have a different AFSC from members of other flights as well as from the officers, whose AFSC requires a highly specialized college degree. The rationale for such a functionally diverse squadron is that an Air-Force-wide deployment would require the military members of the squadron to deploy together. In the current piecemeal deployment environment, however, deployment is intensely salient for one unit, less so for others, and not at all for the remaining units, including the largest one, which is mostly composed of civilians who would not deploy.

This functional diversity makes it challenging for the squadron commander to identify what is really mission essential. This, in turn, makes it challenging for him to prioritize for maximizing mission capability. In this case study, we look at diversity management in this squadron along two temporal paths: current and prospective—that is, day-to-day at base and a possible deployment of the military members in a future war situation. However, the subject and his supervisor's supervisor see the **combat readiness** aspect of mission capability, evident in **teamwork** and **morale**, as relevant only to the prospective path; in the current path, they generally view the absence of squadron-wide morale as irrelevant, and the absence of teamwork as a minor irritant. As a result, the subject has chosen a management style that makes him quite remote from the squadron members, compared to the other cases we studied.

Figure 3. Diversity dynamics in Alpha Squadron



All the social identity mechanisms occur in this case study, but differences in **perspective** may be most important. The pronounced functional diversity means that each flight, even those with large numbers of civilians, has a separate identity and perspective, and these all differ from the perspective of the squadron commander. There is broad understanding of the purpose of being in the same squadron (i.e., potentially deploying together, albeit in a kind of warfare that is not part of the current environment). However, the salience of this understanding is diluted by the presence of large numbers of civilian employees, who would not deploy under any circumstances. (Note that some movement of flights among squadrons in the wing was contemplated when this study was undertaken.)

The primary mediator is **communication**, which is characterized by the different perspectives of the squadron commander and squadron members. Specifically, communication between the squadron commander and his direct reports is determined by the extent to which

the squadron commander feels that he understands the technical aspects of each flight's work and whether he can evaluate how/whether the job is getting done, and/or how he is able to communicate his and his superiors' requirements down the chain.

In short, **communication** is not about identifying problems related to **mission capability** as defined by **training combat-ready personnel** or sustaining **morale** for both productivity and retention. Rather, **communication** in this squadron is largely top-down because the squadron commander perceives that his job is to convey direction and vision from higher to lower levels. To accomplish this, he tries to use the “language” of his AFSC to make sure that all hear the same thing. However, the other AFSCs do not share this “language.”

A one-way **communication** style seems to create credibility problems in such a diverse functional situation. The enlisted and civilian squadron members largely perceive the squadron commander as out of touch, even irrelevant to their major concerns. Although he works closely with his direct reports, they too have a different functional background from both Airmen and civilian employees, and are not experts on how the AFSCs they supervise actually work. In particular, **changes in jobs over time** complicate effective vertical communication; in two flights in particular, both peacetime and wartime technological changes are transforming functional self-identity. Since the officers don't deploy, however, they seem unaware of these nuances and unable to communicate them to the squadron commander. (The increased use of computerized communication in lieu of face-to-face communication is an additional barrier.) Finally, the flights are not only distanced by task, but are also **geographically** dispersed across the base and even beyond, inhibiting cross-squadron communication.

Task type is the primary moderator. It moderates the diversity dynamic in two ways: first, the technical nature of the tasks increases differences across flights, and, second, the squadron's **dual mission**—at home base and potentially deployed—intensifies these differences.

Task type also interacts with different **deployment experiences** within flights and across the squadron, as current warfare requires only some of the squadron's tasks down range. One unit has skills that are in particular demand in current warfare, and its members rotate in

deploying, usually with the Army, for longer tours than most Air Force personnel experience. Members of some other units also have skills that are called for in the current deployment environment. In no case, however, do squadron members deploy together as a flight or unit; rather, they deploy as “leased” help to fill organizational components of other Services. Consequently, the senior and junior members of those flights have very different perspectives. Specifically, the lack of deployment experience above the junior ranks creates a credibility problem for all management levels but particularly for the more senior ones, including the squadron commander. Meanwhile, the lack of a bottom-up communication channel means that senior ranks are unaware of this perception.

Other **moderators** exacerbate the diversity dynamic. At least two levels of **organizational culture** moderate the diversity, and they moderate it negatively: the broad technical task culture, including the personality characteristics (e.g., analytical, introverted) of the kind of people who self-select into the officer AFSC, inhibits communication, and the broader Air Force culture discourages push-back from below. The impact of **downsizing** and increased **operations tempo** exacerbates the latter difference, as midlevel subordinates in particular strongly critique senior officers' tendency to commit to additional tasks with insufficient resources. Here **organizational culture** intersects with management level in relation to the diversity dynamic, in the sense that the squadron is where the functionally different flights come together, but the squadron commander has little control over these moderating elements.

Leadership and management

The subject seemed to see leadership as related to engagement and morale, and management as related to “running the squadron.” He acknowledged his discomfort with “hurrah speeches” and considered that his primary leadership role was transmitting his “boss’s” vision and pointing the flights in the right direction. To him, “diversity” seemed to mean that he was responsible for putting together different pieces (people) to operationalize efficiently.

Within this vision, then, the moderated impact of functional diversity led the squadron leader to limit management practices to the flight leaders. The functional diversity context made it hard for him to identify what was really mission essential and, thus, to prioritize. In addition, a contemplated cross-squadron change seemed to have potential for reorganizing at least some of the problem away.

Previously identified management practices used by the subject

Use conflict management techniques. The subject says he talks to both sides involved, separately. He also takes advantage of specific incidents to broaden the talk with leaders to their leadership issues. It wasn't clear whether this relatively abstract approach was due to the subject's personal discomfort with human relations or to a conscious decision to empower people to resolve their own problems.

Build team around mission. The subject learned from failed efforts that diversity makes typical “bonding” activities—from squadron sports days to commander's calls—unproductive for building teamwork and morale, if only because the functional diversity creates schedule and location incompatibilities. Consequently, in response to the findings of a climate survey, he decided to hold his regular meetings with the leadership of each flight, in their space, to physically (if not verbally) communicate his connection with the flight. This seems like a good idea, though there was no particular evidence from focus groups with subordinates that this practice contributed more than an ability to recognize him.

Facilitate communication within the group. The squadron leader's primary cross-squadron activity is an effort to build teamwork between the flight commanders. He encourages them to learn from one another, despite their functional differences, so that they will avoid “reinventing the wheel” or relying on him to solve all their problems. In this sense, his management practices address the creativity and innovation potential for diversity to contribute to mission capability.

Provide appropriate mentoring. The subject's supervisor said the subject varies his leadership and mentoring style to suit the person's skill level and role. He also uses rotation to help midlevel and higher ranks to get (a) enough experience to see the big picture and (b) the right

experience to help them work on identified weaknesses. Note that these practices are directed to the military members of the squadron.

Empower subordinates. Midlevel subordinates seem to feel that he trusts their expertise and abilities to do their jobs. However, subordinates at both middle and junior levels say that the failure to manage stovepipes hinders capability.

Facilitate communication within group. Midlevel subordinates say he will listen to ideas about how to improve processes and will implement them if he can. In squadron meetings, he communicates the general direction/vision by generalizing from flight-specific material. However, juniors say the vision of capability is based on outmoded perceptions of what their jobs currently entail.

Additional management practices used by the subject

Integrate civilian/active units. When it suits a management purpose, such as on-the-job training (OJT) for active-duty Airmen in an AFSC where the squadron is short on NCOs, he orders the units to be integrated.

Advocate for a doable workload. The midlevel personnel gave a specific example of how the subject got a unit's workload reduced when its manning was low.

Impact on mission capability

Functional diversity across very technical tasks led the squadron commander to make his job doable by largely confining his interaction with his subordinates to interaction with the small leadership group of direct reports. This created a disconnect between the squadron commander and his people, and the subject did not seem to have a positive impact on the diversity-related aspects of mission capability (i.e., morale and teamwork). This did not seem harmful for some flights but did for others, particularly where changes in job content are redefining mission capability in meaningful ways. Since his communication style is top-down as well as distant, the subject was unaware of poor morale and less-than-optimal teamwork, especially teamwork that might have contributed more to training squadron

members for downrange missions. (Note that moderators, such as changing job content, also created some disconnect between junior and midlevel personnel, and the junior group challenged many of the assessments we heard from higher ranks.)

Diversity management summary

Neither the squadron leader nor his supervisor perceived a benefit to diversity, such as its being a source for a wider array of ideas. The diversity climate they set focused on management (getting the job done), and their responsibility for developing people, beyond getting them technical training, focused on managing the process (rewards, rotations, etc.) that advance the careers of promising juniors. They did not tend to see themselves as advocates (e.g., pushing back against resource constraints) for the larger body of people in their charge, whether as individuals seeking job satisfaction or units seeking to maximize their performance.

This stance reflected an essentially mechanistic view of commanding people: leading/managing is about making the cogs in the machine function optimally. They each had a top-down management style, thinking of empowerment in terms of empowering people to send “up” the information they wanted. It is not clear how much this viewpoint results from their roots in a highly technical field that values concrete evidence over human relations skills. Essentially, both are administrators, rather than leaders.

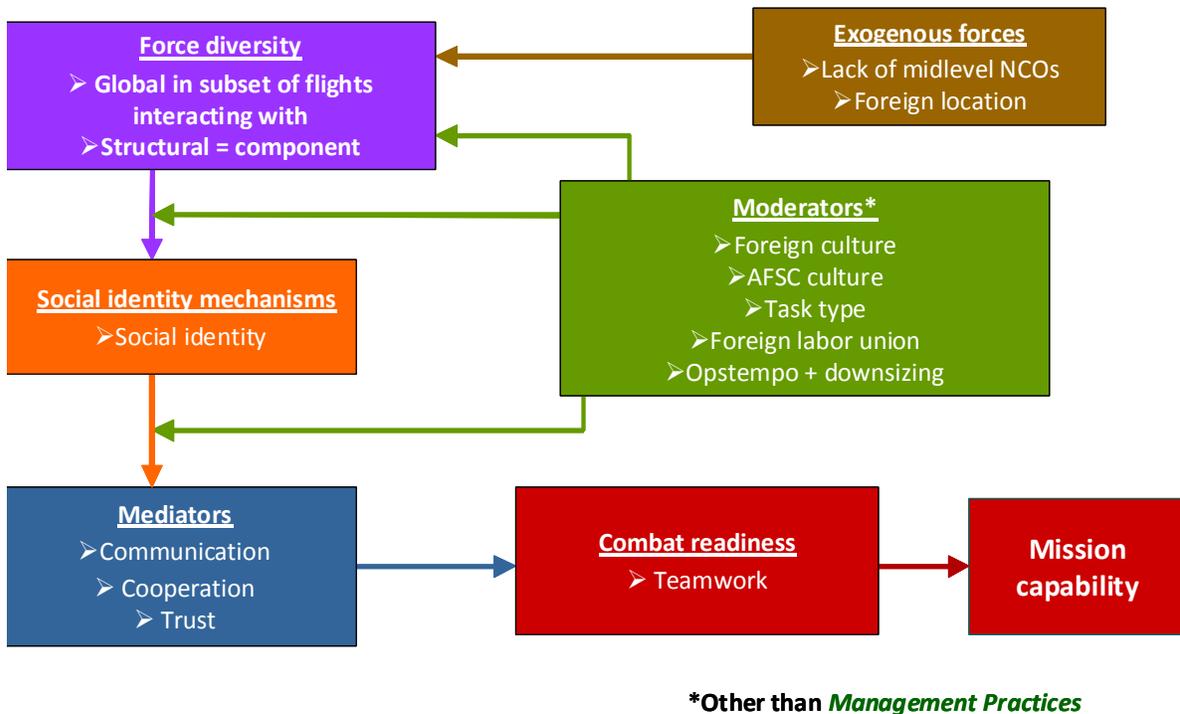
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Bravo Squadron: A case study of global diversity

Diversity types and dynamics

Bravo Squadron is engaged in base support at a large U.S. airbase in a **foreign country**. Over half the squadron consists of local civilians; in addition, the squadron commander has responsibility for managing important relationships and meeting specific requirements within the host community.

Figure 4. Diversity dynamics in Bravo Squadron



Global diversity occurs within flights, not across them—that is, some flights do not have any global diversity, and those that do may have a U.S. career civilian as flight commander. In this sense, global diversity interacts with **structural diversity**, specifically active duty/civilian. Global diversity is particularly salient for the squadron commander's supervisor, who is most concerned with managing important relationships with host country organizations. It is not salient at all in those flights that are uniquely composed of active-duty forces.

Within globally diverse flights, the **social identity** mechanism is social identity at its most basic; language and cultural barriers make it more difficult than usual for people to come together as team members. Nationality naturally defines flight members' **social identities**, and social identification, in turn, affects **communication, cooperation, and trust**.

Among these **mediators**, the language barrier directly affects **communication**, particularly when squadron members need to interact with non-employee civilians. However, the **task type** and **AFSC culture** facilitate **cooperation** and **trust** within integrated work groups, and limit the formation of the **in-/out-groups** that the diversity literature [1] would otherwise lead us to expect. This is particularly evident in one flight, where the task requires work groups to live together, to have a command-and-control orientation, and to have common training and practice. These task characteristics produce a common AFSC, and groups coalesce around their shared tasks. Indeed, many members of this flight make efforts to learn the local language, even though the local employees speak English fluently.

Global diversity is also moderated by interaction between nationality and component (a dimension of structural diversity), and the globally diverse flights display the strains commonly exhibited at U.S. bases when work units include both civilians and active-duty forces. These strains tend to focus on different work arrangements, including those mandated and enforced by civilian **labor unions**. Whether in the United States or abroad, the fixed civilian working day is a common frustration for active-duty personnel, who typically work until a job is done. Global diversity adds a **foreign culture** moderator: in this host country, people expect jobs to be lifelong and to follow a

structured progression based on seniority rather than accomplishments.

As at U.S. bases, there is a significant age difference between civilian employees and active-duty forces, paralleled by skill differences. Global diversity intensifies these differences, as the **foreign culture** places “work” within a set of boundaries that is narrow compared to American culture. This difference is exacerbated by a heightened **opstempo** and **downsizing**, which have created an **imbalance** of experienced NCOs relative to junior Airmen in at least one flight. However, in the host culture, civilians do not see training these juniors as part of their job. According to the squadron commander, “getting them to take the initiative to sort of take somebody under their wing is maybe more of a challenge than it would be somewhere else.”

Leadership and management

The squadron commander finds that functional diversity between the squadron's different flights makes leading the squadron as a whole particularly challenging; consequently, he relies on the commanders of those flights that contain **global diversity** to manage it. However, he provides direction, particularly if diversity gets in the way of developing **combat readiness** among Airmen and, thus, affects **mission capability**. For instance, the squadron commander ordered that work units in one flight be integrated:

When I got here, the...structure showed all the military guys sitting in one bucket and doing one type of work....I was like, “you need to spread them out, they're never going to get any experience if they don't integrate with the other people who have been doing this a lot longer.” And particularly for my Airmen, that's a problem because we're flooded with Airmen here, and I don't have enough NCOs in that particular career field.

Combat readiness thus calls for integrating work groups for training purposes, but global (and component) diversity complicates teamwork. Again, the squadron commander's impact comes from working through the relevant direct reports.

Global diversity also inhibits building morale: civilians go home after work, while active forces are living in a foreign country. The squadron commander acknowledges that common morale-building tools, such as squadron sports days or cookouts, are relatively ineffective in this globally diverse squadron, as these activities are not part of the host nation's culture. With the majority of the squadron composed of local nationals, this difference in perspective has caused the commander to give up on attempts to build morale squadron-wide. Since the civilians do not deploy, and the squadron's primary *raison d'être* is deployment based, the squadron commander leaves it to flight commanders to instill morale and teamwork where necessary.

Previously identified management practices used by the subject

Build team around mission. The subject recognized that the global diversity made such activities as squadron sports days and commander's calls unproductive, at least without more reworking than he thought worthwhile. Instead, he put stock in communicating a consistent sense of direction across the squadron.

Additional management practices used by the subject

Set priorities. The subject made sure that foreign civilian employees realized that their job included training the junior Airmen.

Impact on mission capability

As the squadron commander had different tasks (and a different work background) from the globally diverse squadron members, communication was his primary vehicle for building trust in his leadership, or at least a sense that he was relevant. Indeed, the squadron leader's supervisor asserted that global diversity calls for good communication and relationship skills; but the squadron leader seemed to lack confidence in his use of these skills. It is hard to see any diversity-related impact beyond the obvious need to get more training for junior Airmen.

Diversity management summary

The squadron leader and supervisor are aware of the direct benefits of global diversity. Having national employees within the work groups, many with long service, is beneficial for working with the host country, whether with individual civilians, communities, or governmental organizations. However, the squadron leader and supervisor do not perceive that they might learn from this diversity; rather, they simply use it as they see a need.

Where work and work groups are integrated, learning from diversity seems to occur. Shared professionalism, training, and practice trump national differences when people work together (and, in one flight, live together). In other words, in this squadron, it is work—not squadron leadership/management—that sets the global diversity climate.

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Charlie Squadron: A case study of structural diversity

Diversity types and dynamics

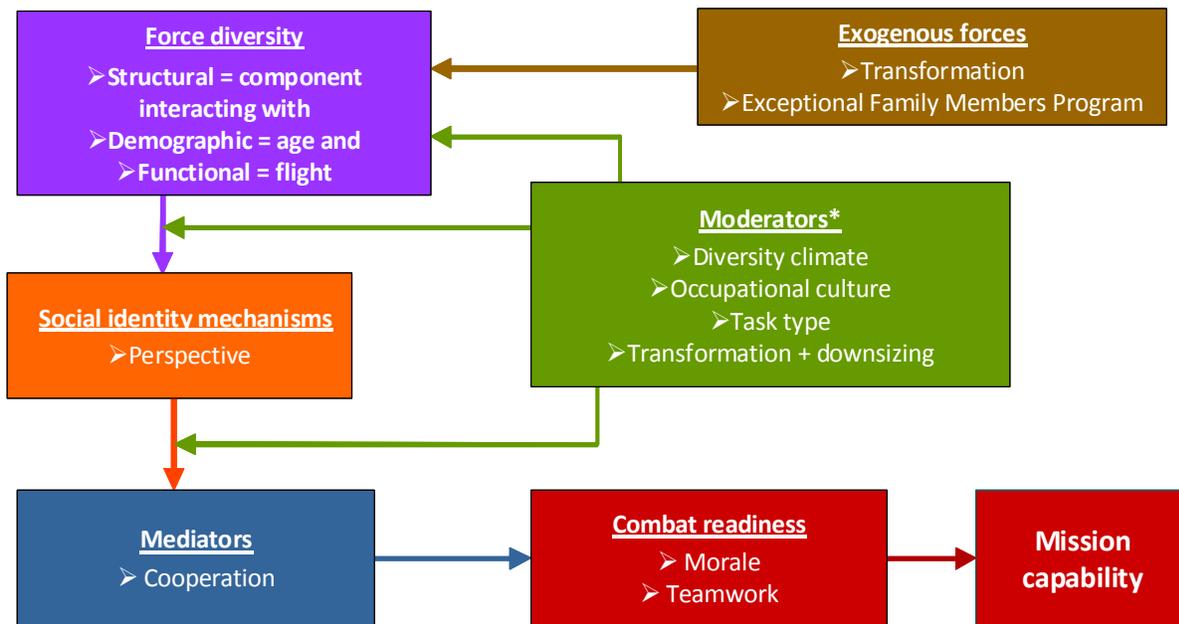
Charlie Squadron is engaged in base support. It contains Active, Reserve, and Guard components but is overwhelmingly civilian—even more so as a result of manning cuts. Some flights are all civilian, but most integrate military with civilians, often in unfamiliar ways. For instance, military personnel may report to civilian supervisors. In addition, the overwhelmingly civilian nature of this large base is contrary to military members' expectations of Air Force service, and this tends to affect **morale**, especially for active-duty Airmen.

By its nature, this **structural diversity** is accompanied by an important **demographic diversity**—age and tenure. The active-duty military are mostly quite young, and mostly relatively new in their jobs/careers; they also have a relatively short time horizon in this squadron. In contrast, the civilians have careers at this base that are decades long, and many Guard and Reserve members “have been here forever.” Other things equal, this contrast would support the formation of in-groups and out-groups. However, former active-duty members are sprinkled among the non-Active components and can moderate this diversity given a positive diversity climate.

Almost by definition, **structural diversity** is salient because different components have different work rules and practices. The component-specific **perspectives** on these differences, as opposed to the substance of the differences, tend to create mutual resentment in the workplace. As usual, different rules regarding time at and away from work tend to be a sore point. Civilians have a set workday, while the military don't, so when work needs to be done outside normal working hours, it falls to the military to do it. Correspondingly, if there is no work to be done, the military can be given time off but civilians

can't. Military personnel are also absent from work for both military (e.g., PT) and personal (e.g., medical appointment) reasons, while civilians need to use their leave time. At this base, a union also governs civilian work rules, further limiting the squadron commander's ability to mitigate the differences. This contrast produces what the squadron commander perceives as a basic culture divide, expressed this way: "Our training, our exercises and stuff we do to prepare to go to war, here they stop at 4:30."

Figure 5. Diversity dynamics in Charlie Squadron



*Other than *Management Practices*

There is also a cultural bias toward the Active components. Although this bias extends to members of the Guard and Reserves, they do not feel the difference in the same way. ("If you ask anybody outside this room, half the people in this unit can't even tell you who the Guard are.") It is also easier for the military components to integrate with

one another because they have more commonalities, such as shared award systems or deployment checklists.

This structural diversity interacts to some extent with **functional (AFSC) diversity**. From the group commander's perspective, functional diversity is even more salient than structural diversity. With the current mission sets and career fields, the flights can act independently; thus, without a common identity and sense of team, the squadron is simply “lots of moving parts that have to be managed together.” The group commander needs a cohesive team so he knows what everyone is doing; he also feels that all are more effective if they learn and share across stovepipes. In his view, “you get a whole lot further, quicker, if you can share the common experience.”

Transformation is “transforming” this functional diversity, in part by merging mission sets and career fields in this squadron; indeed, the squadron itself is shortly to merge with another squadron. Beyond the transformational goal of increasing efficiency, the group commander sees that making squadron members more generalized instead of specialized is a way to foster **creativity** and **innovation**. In this sense, it is all the more important for the squadron commander to instill **teamwork** and a common **social identity**, especially to help flight leaders learn from one another, and view their particular responsibilities through diverse lenses.

Meanwhile, the **Exceptional Family Members' Program** adds another component of structural/functional diversity. This program aids military people whose family health needs require facilities that exist near this base. Many who transfer here to take advantage of the program need to cross-train into new AFSCs because no jobs are available in their career fields. Subordinates described the impact of this program as potentially negative (working with inexperienced and sometimes reluctant work-group members), absent a positive **diversity climate**.

Earlier research at this base [4] found all of the **social identity** mechanisms in play; however, in this squadron, the commander has turned those mechanisms in a positive direction. As in other squadrons, structural diversity defines squadron members' **perspectives**: the squadron commander is aware that “both groups [civilian and

military] see things differently.” In particular, “Both groups see benefits that the other group has that they don't have.” The earlier work found that, absent a positive diversity climate, military and civilians at this base tended to focus on their differences (reinforcing structural **social identity**). This squadron commander's management/leadership focuses squadron members on what they share, so **cooperation** among civilians and military members mediates their diversity and limits the formation of **in-groups** and **out-groups**.

Similarly, “do more with less” **transformation-induced downsizing** has the potential to moderate structural integration positively or negatively (e.g., by blurring or reinforcing **task-based social identity**). Here, downsizing is merging career fields within a **climate** focused on high morale and a positive squadron identity, set by the squadron commander. The nature of the squadron's mission also determines its **occupational culture**, which moderates its structural diversity. That is to say, both civilian and military squadron members possess people-management tools, such as communication skills/processes, which they can use to reinforce their integration, given the positive **diversity climate**. Note that all the case-study participants talked explicitly about the positive relationship between morale and productivity, as well as the benefits for mission capability that result from working together across flight boundaries.

Leadership and management

In this case study, the management practices flow from the squadron commander's prioritization of people management over process or paper management. (“I would rather be with the folks or working issues with the folks than sitting behind the desk.”) This priority guides the commander's time management, shifting office work to after hours or on the weekend, if necessary. His underlying premise is that “if you take care of the people, they will accomplish the mission.” In terms of diversity, the squadron commander sees rules and other structural differences—not people differences—as the source of diversity-based conflict, and sees his task as setting a climate that will bridge that divide.

Previously identified management practices used by the subject

The subject exhibits fundamental management practices identified in the empirical diversity management literature [1], as well as in the management literature in general. The diversity difference comes in his conscious and consistent practice of inclusiveness; with this much diversity, these modern management tools wouldn't work if he hadn't built the squadron into a team. The following paragraphs describe four of his management practices:

Manage conflict. The subject is not afraid of conflicts, and uses clear language to talk about them (“I just call it as I see it”). He tells people what he has said about them to others, even though this is a hard conversation, so that everything will be on the table. When (non-active-duty) members of a work group did not want to work for a returned employee again, he met with the people and the returnee, separately, but made sure he told them all the same thing. His stance is designed to demonstrate that the important point is the mission, and that success depends on all succeeding: “If you don't believe I'm here to help you, you're missing something because I'd give my heart to making sure we all succeed.”

Listen to all group members. All the participant groups noted that the commander listens to all squadron members, without violating chain-of-command or other tried-and-true boundaries. He solicits input and encourages push-back (while avoiding getting defensive) until a decision is made. The subject also models two-way communication by making personal, hands-on connections, on work time and off, in his (open-door) office and in their space (management by walking around). Note, however, that command at this level requires a full range of communication management skills, such as how to talk both “male” and “female,” and the subject is aware that he has more to learn about how men and women may “hear” the same thing differently.

Empower subordinates/avoid micromanagement. He gives subordinates as much responsibility as possible, to increase their sense of responsibility for the process. Because he spends so much time with his people, all over the squadron, he doesn't have to micromanage to be confident that things are on track.

Provide appropriate mentoring (especially for midlevel managers). His key insight is that knowing his people is about knowing what motivates them. More generally, he understands that leadership is really all about people.

Additional management practices used by the subject

In terms of diversity, the subject has set a diversity climate that is robustly inclusive, focused on high **morale** and a positive squadron identity that promotes **teamwork**—all in the service of mission capability.

This climate is a product of the following management practices:

Treat squadron members with an even hand across components. This ranges from recognizing successful contributions, to demanding accountability for mistakes: the commander is willing to have the hard conversations necessary for the latter, as well as to shepherd the process for the former. Reference [4] found that commanders of structurally diverse squadrons tended to treat components differently, perhaps due to their greater familiarity with rules and award systems for military, especially active-duty components. However, it is not clear whether this commander could deal so effectively with conflict if he didn't manage so inclusively across components.

Build a common framework and language. The subject situates these practices within a cross-squadron framework of professionalism in the service of the common mission. This provides a shared language and builds cooperation and trust across diverse structural components.

Model strong, individual engagement (walk the talk). The commander believes that leadership is about “setting the right example for your people to make them want to follow you.” For instance, the squadron commander sponsors and actively supports inclusive, component-appropriate events to model cross-component engagement and to focus the squadron on what members share, not what differentiates them. One example: an extremely successful “dining out” event was suitable for members of all components and, given the age range of squadron members, far more suitable than the usual squadron sports day.

Demonstrate supportive practices. These practices include push-back to higher ranks in support of squadron members and getting them the resources they need to do their jobs, as well as “being there” at important moments—for all components. The squadron commander (and spouse) attend all deployment departures and returns, but the perception that the commander is genuine and caring goes well beyond such symbolism.

Impact on mission capability

The positive diversity climate set by the subject moderates potentially negative diversity mechanisms in such a way that, from a management perspective, they disappear. Put another way, the potentially positive elements, such as the high proportion of former active-duty personnel among the other components, are activated by the subject's leadership style and management practices. Thus, both demographic and structural boundaries yield to morale and teamwork. This is particularly helpful given the squadron's forthcoming merger with another squadron.

Diversity management summary

The main theme in this case study is that taking care of the squadron members and giving them the support and resources they need to do their jobs is key for getting the mission done. No one—not the subject, his supervisor, or their subordinates—sees a tension between taking care of people and achieving the mission; instead, they see taking care of people as the primary enabler of mission accomplishment.

Occupationally, however, this squadron and subject are service related and people related. It's not clear how much this affects the subject's approach to leadership and how the subordinates receive it. In addition, although the diversity climate seems positive and is working to improve morale and teamwork, there is little focus on the idea that diversity might add benefits. Also, there is no language for talking about diversity management vs. regular management.

In this case study, both the squadron and group commander see value in teamwork and cooperation across flight-specific stovepipes. The case study also shows that, even in a fairly large squadron, the commander can have meaningful contact with the juniors. This case study also highlights the role of the squadron commander as the person to set the tone and climate for the squadron.

Delta Squadron: A case study of structural diversity

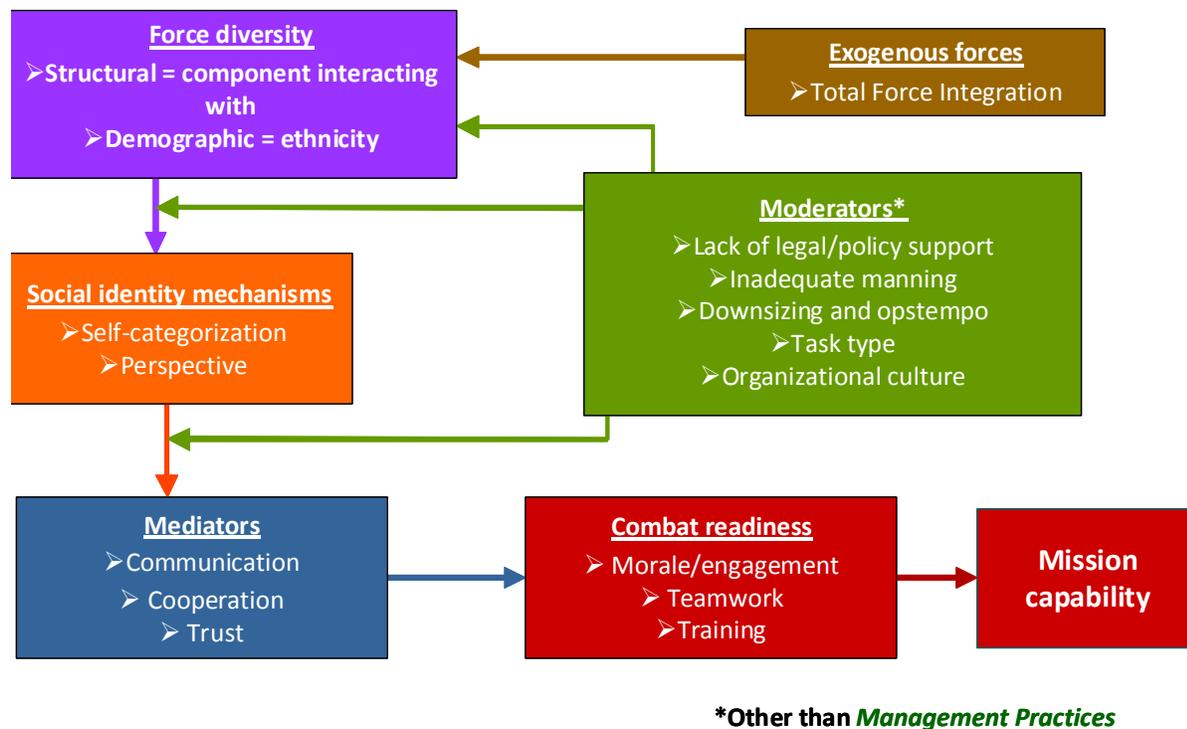
Diversity types and dynamics

Delta Squadron is a **structurally** integrated active-duty/Guard squadron engaged in aviation support. The squadron consists largely of technicians who are similar in job and training, and it is supposed to be truly integrated, with members of both components working together seamlessly to achieve the mission. The active-duty component is intended to account for 60 percent of the manning, and the Guard component for 40 percent, so both components are key to the squadron's success.

This squadron is the product of “a shotgun wedding” driven by **Total Force Integration (TFI)**. As one NCO described it: “It's just two different cultures, two different rules, trying to do one mission as the same mission.” In this context, TFI is an exogenous factor because it created the integrated structure. As indicated in figure 6, it is also a moderator because its downsizing intent determined important aspects of the integration implementation.

The active-duty squadron commander is charged with integrating the Guard component into the squadron. As a result of negotiations at higher levels across both components, this commander has operational “direction,” not “control,” over the smaller component, while a Guard commander—who is in another squadron—has administrative control. Moreover, the smaller component is **structurally diverse**: civilian on weekdays, National Guard on weekends. There are also some purely civilian employees, and the smaller component is governed by a civilian union as well as Title 32. As a result, the two components have different work rules, different administrative chains of command, and a potentially unclear operational command structure. Fortunately, they have a single, shared occupation and mission: “As specialists, we work hand in hand.”

Figure 6. Diversity dynamics in Delta Squadron



The **component diversity** interacts with **demographic, cultural, and tenure diversity** since the Guard members are almost all demographically different from most of the active duty. Also, they are careerists at a base in a geographically remote location with marked cultural differences. So, in addition to the normal short-timer vs. long-timer issues, there is a cultural divide between the two components.

The main diversity problem derives from the underlying policies that govern the relationship between the active-duty and Guard components (i.e., Title 10 vs. Title 32). At the time of our interviews, the squadron's operating interpretation of the law was that active-duty members could not command National Guard members. To get around this legal issue in the short run, high-level leadership developed the concept of "operational direction," which means that Guard leadership can command their personnel to take direction from the active-duty supervisors and commanders who officially run the squadron.

These lines of command had not been worked through at the time of the study, however, and there was a broad sense that the Guard middle managers had taken refuge in the legal differences to maintain operational control. This interpretation may or may not be fair, but the Guard members did insist on getting Guard supervisors—even from other squadrons—to validate operational directions from the active-duty supervisors. The active-duty supervisors bought into this necessity, lacking clear communication to the contrary. Meanwhile, the subject did not feel confident in addressing this lack of clarity because he had not been able to get a clear definition of the legal and operational resources/requirements.

Lacking common understanding of exactly what “operational direction” really means, this gray area created confusion about how to impose/follow the chain of command during the workday. One member of the junior focus group described it this way: “You’ll have to tell the same thing to five different people because there’s five different people in charge and none of them talk to anybody.” This confusion and chaos decreased both **teamwork** and **morale** and engagement. It also took away from the **training** role that senior, experienced Guard personnel were supposed to fulfill.

Demographic diversity in the Guard component was also perceived as a diversity problem by the subject, though not for most squadron members. (Indeed, one of the focus groups expressed the opinion that this diversity was helpful, given the chaos, because the Guard members are culturally more “laid back.”) Since the subject is unfamiliar—and thus somewhat uncomfortable—with this demographic identity (“I can’t spell their names...”), in his perspective, these differences reinforce the difficulties of structural integration. Fundamentally, he does not accept the component differences: to him, integration at all levels means doing things the active way. By conflating demographic with structural diversity, he shaped integration efforts toward getting the component personnel to dress and act like, not just work like, the active-duty personnel.

Given the chaos related to the lack of clarity in interpreting Title 32 and its implications for “operational direction,” the key social identity mechanism is **self-categorization**, and the key mediator is impaired

communication. Since component and demographic diversity overlap completely, differences in **perspective** are also in play in this squadron, and in a largely divisive way.

At the worker level, component and culture combine to define the **social identities** around which squadron members **self-categorize**. Members of each component stick to their respective chains of command, and work groups tend to form by component despite efforts to make integrated assignments. (Indeed, an initial vision of the “integrated” squadron was that members of the two components would create component-specific work teams and the planes under their care would be divided proportionately: 60-40.)

The two chains of command clearly hampered **communication** because two different messages are being promulgated. Because of the different work rules and different cultures, the two groups also tended to organize themselves differently at work. Meal arrangements were a typical sore spot. Active-duty personnel, who can be asked to work extra hours but tend to have more flexibility, can leave during shift to grab a quick lunch or dinner. In contrast, the Guard personnel, who have fixed work hours, assign two members to fix the main meal for the group rather than be out on the flight line. This created a great deal of misunderstanding, given the Active component's relative ignorance of the smaller component's workplace constraints, and inhibited **cooperation** across components.

Deployment changes this dynamic. The Guard (volunteers) deploys at the same rate as the active duty, and members deploy together. In the usual fashion [3], deployment develops trust and cohesion. As one focus group member said,

It was just like there was no more barriers all of a sudden. It was like we were all the same, you know, and I asked him: “How come we don't have that at home, you know?” They said there was too many people telling us what we can and can't do. That's why.

Self-categorization according to component-specific social identities also defines **perspectives** of the leadership (i.e., the squadron commander and just below the squadron commander). Specifically, the junior workers saw members of the two different management chains

blaming each other for problems. The active-duty personnel (including the squadron commander) believed that the problem was lack of **cooperation** from the National Guard leadership in the form of resistance to change and potential loss of turf. The National Guard personnel, however, saw the problem as too little **communication** from the commanders, including the National Guard commander.

Communication was a two-way problem. On one hand, the commander seemed to downplay the need to communicate the constraints on the other component to his active-duty personnel. On the other hand, he had not been given the information he felt he needed (e.g., union contract, Guard training records, and the contract that governs the Guard/Active component relationship) to communicate with confidence. Lack of knowledge that he could trust created a larger lack of **trust** on the part of the commander. This bled into his sense of accountability, and his concerns about allowing uncertified/untrained people to work on crucial machinery. In his understanding, he would be held accountable by higher-ups for the work the Guard does, and, absent training records that he could inspect, he didn't trust the assurances he got from Guard superiors regarding their personnel's capability.

The subject was planning to create a common **social identity** through superficial commonalities, such as a new hat, that lack meaning for the groups he was trying to integrate. In addition, civilian employees who were also Guard members were told to wear uniforms during the week so they wouldn't carry civilian relationships into the weekend when they were Guard.²⁰ But these gestures signaled a common identity that was neither felt nor accepted by the component groups. It seemed that the more the squadron acted (e.g., dressed) as a common unit, the more the fundamental diversity impact—a starkly different workload (described later in this section)—chafed, particularly for the active duty.

20. Since civilian rank can conflict with military rank, wearing the uniform all the time can put Guard members in awkward situations, such as supervising someone who outranks them militarily.

This case study features an extreme example of moderating factors in the **lack of legal/policy support**: specifically, the provision of Title 32 that says that National Guard members cannot be under the operational command of the active duty. Although the concept of “operational direction” seems clear enough, in practice it is too ambiguous to effectively “de-trigger” the diversity mechanisms and mediators discussed earlier. Adding to the frustration is the fact that neither the State nor the Air Force had been proactive about officially resolving this key tension between the structure of the unit and the governing legislation.

Given this context, **inadequate manning** was particularly responsible for exacerbating the negative diversity dynamics. The squadron was 100-percent manned to run two 8-hour shifts 5 days a week. At some point, however, a decision was made to change to three 8-hour shifts 7 days a week. As civilians, the National Guard component has union representation, position descriptions, and so on that limit what they can do and when they can do it; thus, absent volunteers from the Guard, the extra shifts have to be manned by the active duty alone. This means that for nights and weekends, the squadron is effectively only 60-percent manned; if members are sick, in training, or on TDY, manning is below 60 percent.

Furthermore, even during the regular week, the full complement of National Guard members was not reliably present. As legislation has lagged the operational situation, Guard supervisors seem to have used the legal ambiguity to maintain control; whatever their motives, they frequently assigned their members elsewhere. As a result, the Active component was significantly overworked and severe **morale** problems developed: junior Airmen were applying for other assignments or leaving the Service, and more senior members were retiring or resigning. When one member of the junior focus group commented that “people have countdowns wanting to leave here,” two others chimed in, “I have one on my computer right now.”

Downsizing is a third moderating factor. The TFI concept on which the integrated squadron is based is the direct result of downsizing. This integration actually kept many members of the Guard component from losing their jobs. The diversity literature reviewed in [1]

indicates that it is typical for members of different groups to retrench and protect turf during downsizing periods. Thus, the tendency for Guard supervisors to resist ceding operational direction of their people to the active duty is not surprising. To a certain extent, they worked against the spirit of the agreement (since there has been no “letter” of agreement), by setting up an independent chain of command, even for work on the same machinery, rather than supporting a unified chain of command.

The last moderating factor is an **organizational culture** that incentivizes people to handle problems at the lowest level. Because of this culture, many of the diversity-related problems weren't visible to higher levels of management. For example, although the squadron commander and midlevel and junior subordinates talked about the morale and potential retention problems, neither supervisor mentioned them. Similarly, the junior members said that many of their issues weren't making it to the squadron commander because the management in between would not raise them for fear of looking bad.

Leadership and management

The component integration involves several organizational levels, but the squadron leader is unquestioningly the right level to study in this case, as the squadron is the “heart and soul” (according to the group commander) of the integration effort. It will take higher-ranking personnel to resolve the Title 10/Title 32 conflict, or to rescind the decision to switch to a 24/7 schedule. Nevertheless, it's at the squadron level that the resultant issues of morale, teamwork, process, and so on, are being managed, albeit not very well.

Clearly, the squadron commander was not setting an inclusive climate in which all parties to the bad situation could air their concerns and offer their solutions. Nor was he managing his managers so that they were reading from the same page and giving the same message. For instance, it is unclear why there had been no all-squadron meeting (or set of meetings to accommodate shifts) to give a single interpretation of operational direction.

Although the squadron leader asserted that he was trying to achieve “fair and equitable treatment” for everyone regardless of component, and to “hold everyone to the same standard,” that standard is an active-duty standard. Indeed, his failure to communicate genuinely with members of the other component reinforced the perception that he was imposing active-duty standards and treatment on Guard and civilian workers. At best, he paid lip service to diversity, implying that once the Guard conformed to active-duty standards and practices, the active duty could enjoy their cultural differences: in his view, they needed to “do nuts and bolts today, cake and [local-style dinners] tomorrow.”

Previously identified management practices (not) used by the subject

The squadron commander didn't seem to be using any of the useful diversity management practices identified in the literature. The following paragraphs discuss five such practices.

Listen to all group members. For instance, the subject observes boundaries rigidly: when asked if he'd included his Guard counterpart in a staff meeting, he responded by saying that staff meetings are “operational” and that his counterpart is supposed to do “administration,” and seemed to think he'd answered the question.

Brainstorm, learn from diversity, or facilitate communication within the squadron. These things can't be done without listening. The one exception, holding an off-site to “work through some issues,” showed how “hearing” the other side can be helpful since it gave the active-duty supervisors an opportunity to identify things that the Guard could not change, and thus to move beyond fretting about them.

Motivate people based on their individual needs. He seemed to understand that he should be doing this but admitted that he didn't know how to do it with the Guard because he didn't understand their professional (vice demographic) culture, which is less militaristic than he is used to. He saw them as not being held accountable, but defined accountability in active duty terms, not Guard terms.

Build the team around the mission. Members of the junior focus group indicated that the priorities aren't being set by the mission: they feel that everything is rushed and in crisis mode due to integration difficulties, not to the mission. Members of both components are functionally identical, and all like their work functions; that unity centers them despite the diversity management challenges. For both components in this squadron, the mission is clear—which suggests that integration would be even more painful in squadrons with a more fluid mission.

Avoid micromanagement. Members of the midlevel focus group appreciated that the squadron commander was trying to address issues that the previous commander had allowed to fester, but their sense was that he was micromanaging rather than empowering them to do their jobs.

Additional management practices used by the subject

This subsection presents three management practices used by the subject that did not seem effective in a diversity situation.

Move personnel around. Instead of using management tools that require communication and people skills, the squadron commander was seeking to integrate the chain of command by filling some key positions with “pro-integration” Guard members.

Model divisiveness. He also decided that his first step in creating a common sense of squadron spirit was to model the behavior he wanted with his active-duty personnel first and then ask the Guard personnel to follow suit. To do this, he met with key members of the Active component but excluded members of the Guard component.

Command/control approach. The subject knows how to command, but only when he controls. When he is not in complete control, as here, he applies existing rules and policies with a heavy hand, rather than seeking to work out creative compromises with his leadership counterparts in the Guard. In other words, he tries to get people to follow rules dictated by either active-duty practices or the cooperative agreement for the squadron, which he was viewing through a command/control lens.

Impact on mission capability

The diversity problem's main impact on mission capability was via **morale** and **engagement**. Active-duty squadron members were burned out by overwork and discouraged by the chaos and lack of effective leadership. The civilians and Guard, who are there for the long haul and who are not overworked, were sympathetic (many are former active duty) but willing to wait out the transition period. This lack of buy-in limited the extent to which **teamwork** could address the under-manning problem.

The other impact on mission capability centered on **training**. The lack of cooperation (and even presence) of Guard members, combined with the way that the active duty were spread thin across shifts, kept inexperienced active-duty personnel from being paired with experienced Guard members to learn their jobs.

Diversity management summary

Progress was being made on truly integrating the squadron but it was very slow, especially considering the squadron commander's sincere, well-meant, and energetic efforts. He could not have been trying harder, but he lacked the management tools and skills that the policy rigidities and lack of planning/preparation for this effort called for. (He also had to overcome poor precedents set by his predecessor.) He was getting both support and considerable coaching from his supervisors, but his training and prior experience had not given him a mental framework for "hearing" them fully. The commander was seen from below as doing the best he could, but from above as having a "best" that wasn't doing the job. In short, he was digging out of a very deep hole, too slowly.

In this sense, this case study is a good "bad" example of diversity management, and it's very useful for showing how the lack of diversity management tools impedes progress...and makes a hard job even harder for the squadron commander. One civilian employee, a veteran of active-duty service in three squadrons and two civilian units, all in this same theater, said categorically that he had never seen "the morale and the communication flow as bad as I see here. It has

nothing to do with [the work], it isn't policy, it's just the fact that we have people that don't know how to deal with this merger, this integration.”

Since these case studies were designed to analyze successful examples of diversity management, readers may ask how such a bad example was mistakenly identified as good. Despite its difficulties in achieving true integration, the squadron is meeting or exceeding all mission expectations. Senior leadership, therefore, hold it up as a model of successful TFI. The culture that keeps problems at the lowest level seems to have left leadership unaware that integration is incomplete and has been troublesome. As one supervisor said, “What they don't see is the two people that had to work three weekend duties in a row and who worked ten days straight.” This may explain why active-duty and Guard leadership are lagging in resolving the legal and policy issues associated with trying to integrate Title 10 and Title 32.

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Echo Squadron: A case study of structural and functional diversity

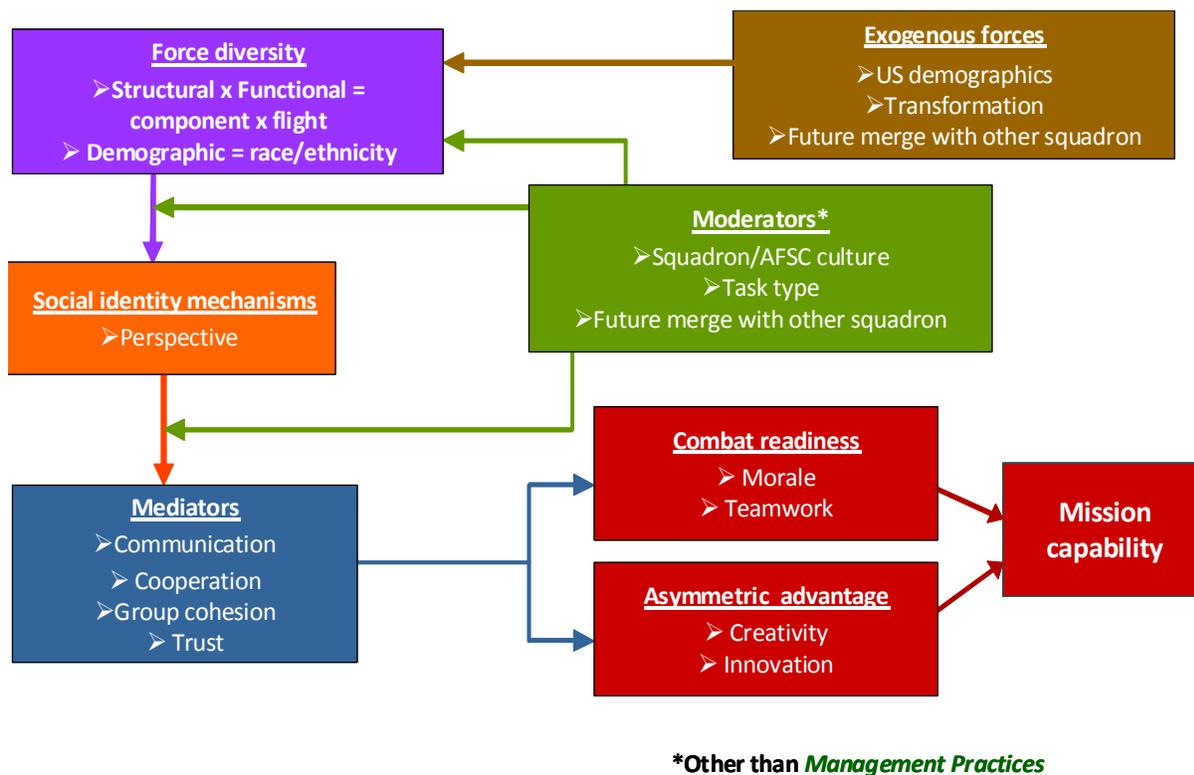
Diversity types and dynamics

With more than 600 people, five flights, and a few additional activities, Echo Squadron is large and complex. Significant **structural diversity** creates additional complexity for this base support squadron. Of the 600 members, the large majority are civilian; fewer than 100 are active-duty military. The civilian employees are further differentiated by employment status: there are appropriated-fund (APF) and non-appropriated-fund (NAF) civilians, each represented by a different union, as well as contractors. The way the squadron is organized also brings **functional diversity** into play. Although some flights have members from two or more structural categories, for the most part, people from each component/employment status are divided by function into flights or activities. As a result, the **structural and functional diversity** almost perfectly overlap in the sense that, if one can identify a squadron member's flight or activity, one can likely also identify the **component** to which he or she belongs.

All else equal, the literature and the model suggest that these structural and functional differences might lead to self-categorization or the formation of in-groups and out-groups that, in turn, might hinder cooperation and the development of trust. To avoid these potentially negative effects of **structural diversity**, the squadron commander must manage the differences in personnel rules and work arrangements that are associated with the different force components. He must also manage across the functionally defined flights to get benefits related to **functional diversity**. Although the flights can succeed or fail on their own, obvious synergies result from working together, such as the ability to market the squadron's services and activities to base members. More subtly, the success of one activity sets a favorable

climate for the others. It's up to the squadron commander, however, to educate members to this potential; they won't see it on their own. His leadership and their followership make the difference between achieving the squadron mission adequately or with efficiency and **creativity**.

Figure 7. Diversity dynamics in Echo Squadron



To achieve both these aims, the subject uses multiple forms of **communication** to create a common **perspective** vis à vis the mission. In particular, his focus is on doing things better—either more efficiently or more **creatively**. A key message to his people is that just because they've always done something a certain way doesn't make it right. He says, “They've learned I hate, ‘We've always done it that way.’” This focus on the mission, combined with other **management practices**, generates a positive diversity climate, which, in turn, prevents the

triggering of unhelpful social identity mechanisms. Thus, the diversity dynamic is characterized by high levels of **trust, communication, and cooperation**. In particular, squadron members indicated that they can trust the other flights for support when they need it: “No matter what flight you work in, you can call the other flights to help.”

There was one exception to this general observation. A Unit Climate Assessment identified a problem in one work group that was related to **demographic diversity**: a set of people were not working well together because of inability or unwillingness to cooperate across **racial** boundaries. This problem was attributed to specific people and to past management's failure to address unacceptable behavior. It did not reflect the squadron as a whole; rather, people mentioned it as an example of how the subject had successfully, or at least proactively, addressed a diversity-related conflict.

The most important moderator for this squadron is the positive climate set by the subject and the management practices he uses; they will be discussed below. There are, however, a few important, albeit less active, moderating factors. The first is the **squadron's culture**. The squadron's mission is to serve all the people on the base in various ways to maintain or improve the overall quality of life and, therefore, overall morale. Thus, working in favor of the diversity dynamic is the inherent people-focus of the squadron, which may mean that this group of personnel is particularly amenable or responsive to the subject's personal approach to management and leadership. Working against the diversity dynamic is the fact that the squadron is expected to absorb frequent extra tasking and has **a culture of not saying, “No.”** This can make the military-civilian differences in work rules more grating because it means that military members are frequently pulled out of their jobs for special assignments, leaving the civilians to pick up the slack. (One member said that the active-duty personnel are treated as “free labor” around the base.) It can also inhibit the inclination toward team building across flights, because different work rules prevent civilians from supporting the military in certain tasks. As a result, civilians typically can't reciprocate the support they get from their active-duty squadron mates. Furthermore, the squadron commander is limited in his ability to decline extra taskings. Located at a unified command headquarters, this squadron is

required to respond to requests from 4 four-star generals and to manage the multiple high-visibility events that they sponsor. That said, we heard fewer concerns from members of this squadron than from others in the study about being overtasked and undermanned. In other words, we heard very little about doing more with less. Of course, this may be a result of the subject's management, rather than something that moderates the environment; it's difficult here to tease out cause and effect.

Another moderator for this squadron is **task type**, since many of the activities are profit driven (i.e., they are required to be self-sustaining in the long run). Having a specific, measurable outcome may make it easier for people to know when they're succeeding and when they're not, which may help the overall morale. It might also facilitate the subject's approach to innovation and process change: squadron employees can see that a new approach is working because profits or revenues actually increase.

A third, potentially negative, moderator is the upcoming **merger with another squadron** from a different career field. Squadron members are very concerned about how this merger will affect them. People are worried about everything from losing their jobs, to being marginalized, to being managed by someone who doesn't understand or appreciate their career field and who, in particular, doesn't understand the diversity of rules and work arrangements among the different personnel statuses. The subject indicated that he is having some difficulty keeping people focused on the mission rather than worrying about the merger. Also, the subordinates explicitly acknowledged the possibility that they will become entrenched in their stovepipes when the merger occurs—after the subject has rotated to a new assignment. Many of the subordinates expressed the wish that the subject could help them through the transition: “He would have been the ideal person to take two totally different organizations and bring them together.”

Leadership and management

The wish of squadron members that the subject could remain to help with the future merger reflects his approach to management and

leadership, which hinges on his commitment to “making a difference” both in the lives of the people he leads and in the functioning of the squadron. He makes an explicit distinction between implementing change and making a difference; the latter is about helping people develop and grow and improving the squadron's performance, in terms of either quality or efficiency. His approach to leadership is also very personal. At one level, it stems from his passion for the job, which makes it personal to him. At another level, it's about making personal connections so that he can understand how to motivate people.

The subject appears to rely on three fundamental principles to translate his leadership vision into management practice:

1. Sharing information
2. Establishing credibility
3. Empowering his subordinates.

Previously identified management practices used by the subject

The subject uses nearly all the diversity management practices that were previously identified in [1] and were part of the coding scheme. A key feature of this case study is the fact that this subject provided many examples of how to do the things that the literature says are effective.

Manage conflict. As noted earlier, the subject proactively addressed conflict related to demographic diversity. Working with the civilian and military equal employment opportunity offices, he sponsored team-building training with the relevant groups. In addition, in an effort to preempt conflict related to different work statuses, he specifically works with his managers to make sure they understand the different rules and can both apply them appropriately and explain them to their subordinates.

Build team around the mission. The subject sees teamwork as the key to the mission. He says, “We're here to work together to accomplish the mission.” And, this message is being heard and embraced by his subordinates:

Participant 1: I apologize, I can't speak on the civilian behalf, but... in this squadron, we're a team, and if it means we're all working 12, 14, 16 hours (which I haven't had to do yet), but if it means we gotta do it, we'll do it because we're all in the same boat.

Interviewer: On the civilian side, do you have the same feeling of teamwork and pulling together?

Participant 2: Definitely.

Participant 3: Yes, very much so.

To keep people focused on the mission, the subject developed recognition programs for both military and civilian personnel that, according to his supervisor, “reach out to everybody.” In particular, he developed recognition programs for NAF employees who have traditionally fallen outside ordinary Air Force programs. He also uses informal recognition. He makes a point to personally thank people for their contributions by saying “thank you” and by sending cards or e-mails.

Empower subordinates. At the most basic level, the subject lets his subordinates do their jobs. He found that, under previous commanders, people had wanted to do things but hadn't been allowed to do them because it might have caused extra work. He says, “I'm here to work,” and supports his subordinates in projects that increase the overall visibility of the squadron. The subject also encourages his subordinates to be innovative and take risks. His message is: “Let's not be afraid to try new things because we might fail.” In both cases, he empowers his people by creating space for them to do things and ensuring that they have the resources to do their jobs. Specifically, he pushes back if people outside his organization have said “no” for “no good reason,” and, if people aren't getting what they need after going through “proper channels,” he uses his weight as squadron commander to make sure things happen.

Facilitate brainstorming. The subject facilitates brainstorming via constant discussions with his flight chiefs about their challenges and potential ways to address them. In addition, he asked each organization in the squadron for a talking paper on its achievements and

challenges, and he responded to each one. Indeed, a key part of brainstorming for this subject is followup and feedback. When people make suggestions or raise issues, he makes sure to respond with action or an explanation for inaction. He said, “I think if people just see some action out of bringing things up, they are more forthcoming with it.” He acknowledged, however, that it takes time to build this trust.

Facilitate communication within the squadron. The subject has multiple approaches for ensuring that information is shared within the squadron. Formal meetings include weekly staff meetings with the flight chiefs, as well as weekly meetings with the flight chiefs along with the activity managers and their secondaries. Once a month or so, he also holds extended staff meetings when everyone can “get together and promote our business.” The subject also communicates via e-mail:

I have a flight chief distro list in my e-mail and I have an activity manager list, which also includes all the secondaries. So, when I send out info on what's coming up, everybody gets all that because I think that the key is information and making them feel important—that they are important enough that I'm passing information and that they get to have a say.

He also facilitates communication between squadron members by helping and encouraging people to get to know each other and build relationships at the appropriate levels. For example, he walks new people around the squadron to introduce them to the people and activities. And, as part of preparing for the upcoming merger with the other squadron, he has supported the merging of the squadron softball teams.

If you let people start doing some things together—even if it's not working together—they at least know each other as a person. It's going to make it a little bit easier because they can appreciate that person for who they are.

Listen to all group members. Listening is a key part of the subject's approach to leadership and management. One squadron member said, “He's trying to be everywhere and listen to everybody.” In addition to holding meetings and exchanging e-mails (as described earlier), the subject also makes informal visits to all the activities to ask

people at all levels what they're doing and what they need. He says that the key to this approach is that it's casual and consistent, which allows people to become sufficiently comfortable with it to open up. As with brainstorming, followup is an important part of the way he listens because it confirms to people that he's heard them and it builds trust and credibility. One focus group participant said,

So if we have things we just want to tell him right then and there, we can get it out, you know? Or if it needs to be addressed later, he'll get back with us on it. He's real good at getting back with us on it.

Motivate in accord with needs/goals. To do this, the subject spends a great deal of time and effort getting to know his people. In addition to getting to know them during staff meetings and informal visits to their work places, he holds individual meetings with people to see how they are:

Part of the reason I like to walk and talk to people is because I think when you're dealing with them, especially if it's on an issue or disciplinary, or even something you want done, it helps if you know the person a little bit because you can find what might help to get them to understand that.

Knowing his people also includes knowing what they do (i.e., understanding not only what their organizations do but their roles within their organizations).

Provide appropriate mentoring. The subject holds formal mentoring sessions with the junior officers in the squadron. He prepares books with examples of personnel issues and how he dealt with them, as well as sharing his own officer performance reports. The subject also informally mentors all the members of his squadron. He does this by simply talking to people and sharing ideas:

Some of it is just talking. Some of it is, you know, when you're walking through and you're talking to a troop and start talking about something. You want, you just mentor there, okay, "Well, how do you think?" Or, if they say, "Sir, why are we doing this? I don't get it." You know, and explaining to them, I consider that part of mentorship. But, I think there's a formal process and there's an informal process. And I think, a lot of times, they get more out of the informal

because it's just the talking and the sharing. And, I get from it. I learn something new from them every day.

Avoid micromanagement. Despite the subject's close personal involvement with his people, members of both focus groups said that he doesn't micromanage them. "He lets us do our jobs, but if something comes across to him that doesn't make sense, you better be ready to explain it."

Additional management practices used by the subject

The subject also demonstrated additional practices that we had not previously identified. Most of these have to do with building credibility and demonstrating his commitment to his people and the mission.

Be accessible. Squadron members indicated that the subject has a real open-door policy: "You have a direct line to him, open door all the way." As part of this policy, the subject made himself more accessible by reconfiguring his office. He also comes out from behind his desk to sit with people at a table during informal conversations.

Be supportive. The subject supports his subordinates in symbolic ways by attending all the newcomer orientations and all departures and arrivals. He also gives more concrete support in the form of time off when work schedules don't allow people to take normal holidays.

Genuinely care about people and what they do. Members of both subordinate focus groups said that they valued the fact that the subject genuinely cares about them, and most gave a personal example. One member summarized it as follows:

He is a caring individual. And, it's not phony, you know what I mean? I mean, you can look at a person and tell when they're phony, okay? He is not a phony person. And so, what you see is what you get.

Don't ask others to work harder than you do. Focus group participants said that they don't mind working long hours because they see the squadron commander doing the same, and they appreciate his work ethic on behalf of the mission. This is shown by the following two quotations:

When we have our exercise, we work 12-hour shifts and he makes that call to work 12-hour shifts. But the thing is, we're working 12-hour shifts and *he's* working 12-hour shifts. So he doesn't mind staying behind or doing the same thing that we're doing.

He doesn't miss a beat. Okay and I kid you not, he does not miss a beat. It's not just with the morale, it's not just with taking care of his people. He gets the job done by any means. I was at work with him till almost 7:00 last night. So I know that he gets the job done; he works long hours to get the job done.

Be fair and consistent. In addition to recognizing squadron members for their contributions, the subject is seen as being a fair and consistent disciplinarian: "It's consistency across the board" and "When he needs to clean house, he cleans house."

Model the respect you expect to receive. Squadron members indicated that the subject models how to behave and thereby inculcates a concerned, caring culture in the squadron. One member said:

He gets everybody together to say, "Thank you. I know it's rough but bear with me, we're going to get through this." A lot of commanders don't do that. You know, they expect you to bend over backwards for them, but they don't return that same type of respect to you. And, when you get a commander like that, you know, you're going to do your job and you're going to be glad when that person leaves, period.

Furthermore, this behavior is picked up by the squadron's supervisors and managers: "Whatever he does, he leads all these other commanders to do it."

Prioritize and delegate. Both the supervisor and the subordinates indicated that the subject is able to spend so much time with his people because he is effective in prioritizing and delegating the squadron's work. His subordinates said, "He only gets into it at my facility when he has to. Otherwise, he lets the NCOIC handle his business," and "Prioritizing is one of his greatest strengths." His supervisor, however, acknowledged that this is a constant challenge: "To be effective, [you need to] delegate enough out where you're not consumed and not

lose the personal touch 'cause, you know, you are the head of that organization....Sometimes it bites him.”

In addition to the management practices demonstrated by the subject, people also talked a lot about his personal style. Specifically, they all described him as being “approachable,” “a people person,” and having good communication skills. They all said that everyone feels comfortable talking to him.

Impact on mission capability

By creating a positive, mission-focused climate, the subject has made the **structural and functional diversity** irrelevant with respect to the **teamwork and morale** aspects of combat readiness. The following quote is a typical comment from the focus groups: “I think that he sets the standard to what a commander should be. How they should behave, how they should treat their folks, because I've never seen a massive group of more happy, well adjusted people in my life.”

At the same time, the subject's focus on the mission, especially on constant process improvement, also increased **innovation and creativity**. His approach was not explicitly about harnessing diverse ideas to increase creativity, but simply empowering and supporting his people in their efforts to do their jobs as well as possible. The supervisor noted that the subject has achieved success by empowering his people to come up with new ideas that have led to “innovative business practices” that have improved the squadron's performance. By creating a squadron-wide environment that encourages risk-taking, the success of one flight or function serves as an example or inspiration for the others.

Diversity management summary

This subject's management can be summarized as follows: He asks all to do their best, supports them in doing it, and acknowledges their efforts and success. He focuses on the mission and makes everyone feel valued for their contributions to it. This is effective because he knows them and their activities well enough to discern individual contributions. His emphasis on innovation and continual process

improvement combines with empowerment to help people stay focused on the mission rather than being distracted by differences, such as different work rules for some. In short, this case stands out as a study of good people management that has overcome the potentially negative dynamics associated with structural and functional diversity and has generated high morale and engagement and good teamwork. It shows that if you manage people well, you don't need separate diversity management tools.

This case study also shows that the key role of the squadron commander is setting the overall climate—diversity and otherwise. It also shows that a positive climate can be set regardless of the size and complexity of the squadron. As one squadron member said: “Now we know that you can manage over 500 people and still be awesome. We know it's possible.”

Foxtrot Squadron: A case study of rank and age diversity

Diversity types and dynamics

Foxtrot Squadron is engaged in base support, and is fairly large, with over 400 members. More than 300 of these are active-duty enlisted personnel, about 170 of whom are age 22 or younger.²¹ These young Airmen are deploying at higher rates than other members of the Air Force and, especially, at higher rates than more senior members of their squadron, including their supervisors. Their deployment experiences also tend to differ from those of their superiors. Specifically, as support to Army and Marine Corps units, their deployments are longer and they spend more time outside base boundaries and potentially under fire. One focus group member said,

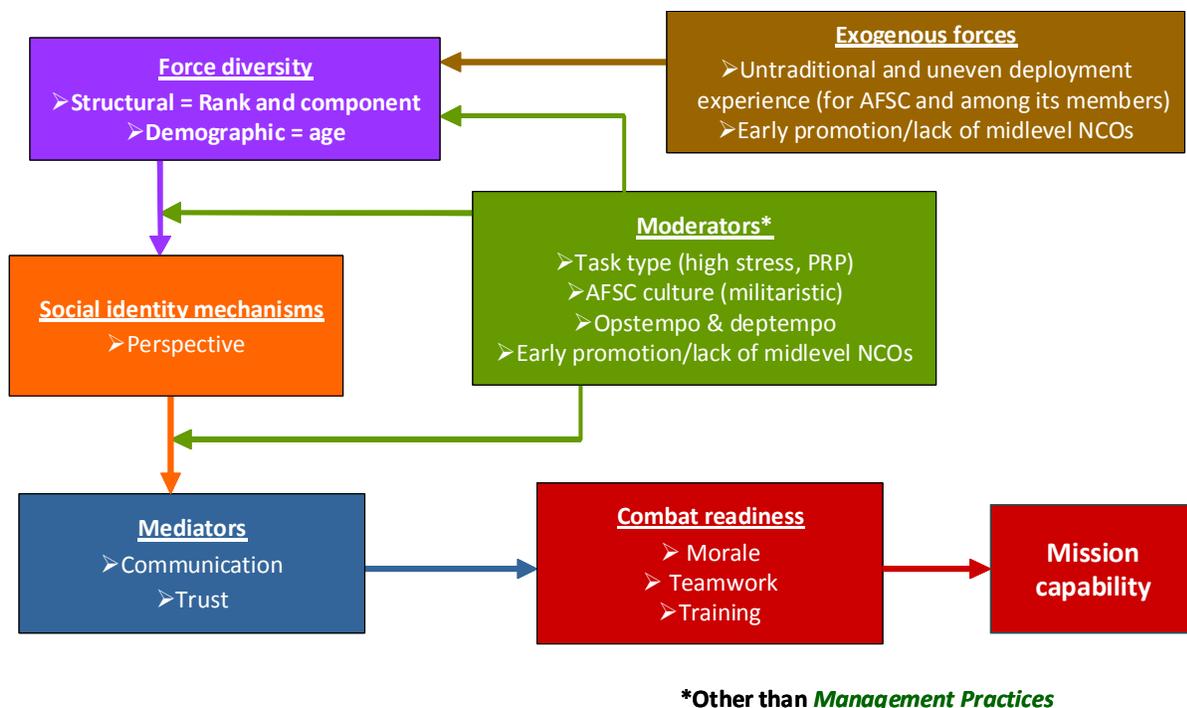
When they would come back and you'd talk to them as a group, they just looked different. You would say something and just a dead look, nothing. They just look at you. You could tell there were issues going on.

Because their supervisors do not share this extreme experience, there is a credibility gap between junior Airmen and the midlevel squadron managers who supervise them. This credibility gap lowers **morale** and engagement among the junior members who have returned from deployment and inhibits their successful reintegration into the base mission. It also stymies **teamwork** and makes **on-the-job learning** less effective so that some of these junior members are not well trained for their base mission.

21. The remaining 100 or so members include about 80 contractors and 30 members of the Air Force Reserve or Air National Guard.

By its nature, this “deployment diversity” triggers negative diversity dynamics associated with two other types of diversity: **rank (structural)** and **age (demographic)**. Thus, **perspectives** of junior members and their direct supervisors are defined not only by their deployment experiences (or lack thereof) but by preexisting ideas about the “other” generation. This social identity mechanism leads to a lack of **trust** and respect on both sides.

Figure 8. Diversity dynamics in Foxtrot Squadron



Specifically, the deployment experience of junior personnel defines their **perspectives** on work and priorities. In particular, junior troops who have returned from deployment tend to see a misalignment of priorities at the home base location:

It seems that the administrative tasks sometimes outweigh the flight duties. It seems that sometimes the diversity is that the experience you're having now, coming in as an Airman

and experiencing war instead of peacetime, changes your mentality.

Because of this different mentality or perspective, junior enlisted who have deployed may not **trust** senior enlisted personnel and officers to understand their issues and come up with good solutions to their problems. For example, members of the junior focus group said,

And not just officers, but some senior NCOs are out of touch, even though they've been up through the ranks. It's a whole different Air Force now. So they are completely out of touch because their deployment was "I went 3 months to Turkey when I was an Airman" instead of 8 months in Iraq or 365 to Afghanistan.

On another level, the lack of respect and **trust** for leadership threatens the command-and-control environment and inhibits learning. This attitude is captured in the following statement from a focus group member who directly supervises junior troops:

I'm not going to sit there and have a lieutenant or a captain tell my Airmen really what to do and show them how to do things. They're so far, I'll use the term, out of touch that it is literally making our job that much harder.

Furthermore, the problem isn't restricted to the squadron leadership; it reflects a general belief that the broader Air Force doesn't understand their issues.

We've had troops that didn't come home. And the Air Force doesn't see that. The Air Force goes on their 4-month deployment, they sit behind a desk or fly the plane, but they don't see us 8 months doing an Army mission kicking down doors. And now the Air Force doesn't know how to deal with it.

In contrast, midlevel managers' **perceptions** about generational differences define their perspectives on how the juniors behave. Older squadron members don't **trust** the work ethic of younger members:

The new age, the I-got-hand-eye-coordination-because-of-my-video-game age, they're all about how do we buck the system. They think they're smarter than the system. And right now they're capable of getting away with it. And it's

unfortunate but that, from a diversity perspective, says it the best because that age group is using it to their advantage, whereas we would never even consider it.

Although midlevel managers are sympathetic to the difficulties associated with reintegrating after deployment, they feel that the early deployment for new members hampers their initial indoctrination:

We send these 18- to 20-year-olds off to war—most of them barely got their ears wet just being in the unit—because, hey, we need people over there fighting the fight. They get back and don't really know all the discipline values that we've instilled here. And that's really what it is. Some of it gets lost over there because you get different, various leaders and these kids come back and they think we owe 'em something. They think that since they were in an environment that was a little more stressful, that they can come back and misbehave or act outside of the norm....So you almost have to refocus them and bring them back to the center line....So, it's problematic is what it is.

Three key moderators exacerbate the diversity dynamic described above. The first moderator is **task type**. The **tasks** being performed in this squadron are not technical but based on the application of judgment about situations and human behavior that is developed through experience and training. In some cases, these judgments are being applied in stressful, potentially life-threatening situations. Because deployment time has taken away from time for formal training for the peacetime mission, on-the-job training of subordinates by supervisors is all the more important. This places extra pressure on the strained subordinate-supervisor relationship.

This is further exacerbated by an exogenous factor: **lack of midlevel NCOs**. Often, mentoring and direct supervision is done by inexperienced personnel who were promoted early due to low retention in the cohorts ahead of them. The subject explained the situation:

In the active duty, we're missing the middle ranks right now. We've had a lot of people get out in the last 5 to 10 years, so there's this absence of seasoned, midlevel NCOs, and what that does for us is we've got the old, crusty guys who are getting ready to retire and then we've got young people and then some young people who got promoted really fast to

those middle ranks, who don't have the experience and the age to know how to deal with the issues of the guy who's 3 years younger than him but now he's completely in charge of him.

In other cases, on-the-job training is done by contractors. Although the subject sees these civilians as filling a key gap in the leadership, the juniors are as distrustful of them as they are of the active-duty supervisors who haven't deployed.

Task type also matters because it affects the amount and quality of **communication** up and down the chain of command. Since the work is done in two 12-hour shifts and is not office based, it is impossible for the squadron commander to hold a commander's call with 100-percent participation. It is also difficult to reliably **communicate** important information via e-mail because squadron personnel aren't sitting at desks.

The second moderator is **Foxtrot Squadron's highly militaristic and hierarchical culture**. Supervisors from this career field expect subordinates to obey orders without question and to "just suck it up" when times get tough, either in their personal lives or on the job. This message, however, is resented by subordinates who perceive that supervisors who haven't deployed can't possibly understand their issues. Thus, the differences in **perspective** and the consequent credibility gap between subordinates who have deployed and supervisors who haven't create a weak link in this command structure. This cultural tendency to persevere through any adversity is reinforced by the fact that this career field is covered by the Personal Responsibility Program (PRP).²² As a result, there is a strong disincentive for squadron members struggling with postdeployment reintegration to get help with their problems, because officially acknowledging them can have negative career implications. Thus, problems may last longer and/or be more severe than would be the case in career fields that aren't covered by PRP.

22. PRP is a program to ensure the highest possible standards of individual responsibility in those personnel who perform specialized duties with certain types of weapons.

The third moderator is the high **operational tempo** at the base combined with the fact that the squadron is constantly undermanned due to high **deployment tempo** (at any given time, at least half the active-duty members are deployed). The subject and members of the midlevel focus group indicated that the fast **operational tempo** takes time away from managing the issues associated with deployment diversity and general people development. The squadron commander summed up the situation in the following way, as he described his response when his supervisor asked him how things were:

And I'm like, "Sir, we're surviving: we're not succeeding, but we're not getting fired." I don't feel like we're reaching the goals we should be reaching and that we're doing things with excellence, it's really like with the hand that we've been given, we're doing the best that we can.

At the same time, the high deptempo and the fact that squadron members don't necessarily deploy as teams make it difficult for managers to make connections with their subordinates. Specifically, the supervisors neither deploy with their people nor get to know them before they deploy on their own, so the supervisors don't know their people's stories. The subject said:

I don't know any of the background on why Johnny's wife is having trouble, why can't she start her lawn mower, why is she getting written up for her lawn being out of regs, all those kind of things. None of that baggage, because we're chopping supervision so dramatically and that just adds to that craziness caused by the deployments.

Leadership and management

The squadron commander sets a positive overall climate by building trust and making a credible impact via face-to-face and other personal interactions. An explicit element of his leadership approach is to try to balance the need to achieve today's mission with the need to protect the long-run health of the squadron members. He and squadron members recognize that it is his job to "take care of his people." Doing this requires that he know them and their needs as well as how

to advocate for them with upper management, even if it means pushing back against higher-ranking officers.

Another key element of this commander's leadership approach is to model the hard work he expects from his subordinates at all levels: he visibly works as hard as they do and does not ask anything of them that he isn't willing to do himself. This translates to his treatment of his subordinates and his expectations of them: he says he “rides everyone hard.” Thus, fair and consistent treatment of all squadron members is also part of the positive climate.

Previously identified diversity management practices used by the subject

To set this positive climate, this squadron commander exhibits some of the management practices previously identified in the coding scheme.

Empower subordinates to do their jobs. One focus group member stated specifically, “I feel like I'm surrounded by a lot of people who give you the authority and the ability to do your job at your level, which you don't always see that.” More specifically, the subject supports his subordinates' decisions if they can explain the logic behind them. One of the subordinates described the following process:

Yesterday we went to the boss and said, “Hey, this is what we started with. A couple of these are a little blurry so we took those off. So this is what we're left with right now.” And, “Alright, cool, do it.” But now if we were to go in there just saying, “Hey, I want to do this with section....” “Why?” And I wasn't able to speak on that, didn't have all the information that these folks provided me, then I'd get stepped on. And no one has the time—I know he doesn't have the time and I know I don't have the time—to go in there and waste time not being prepared.

The supervisor referred to this management style as “delegation with trust and verification.”

Listen to all group members regardless of rank. Specifically, the subject gets input from his immediate subordinates regarding key decisions:

He comes to us and says “Tell me why. Don't tell me what to do, tell me why. I'll make the decision, but tell me why. Give me the inputs. If we're going down this road, tell me why we're going down this road and what the factors are that need to get us down this road.” He takes all that stuff in.

Learn from diversity by listening to those above *and* below. According to one subordinate, “We're all learning from each other.” And another said,

I think everyone sanity checks each other almost on a daily, sometimes on an hourly basis. [The squadron commander] will walk in and do a sanity check, “This is what I'm about to do. Is this the dumbest thing I'm about to do or the smartest thing I'm about to do?” And then we just kind of stare at him and we tell him.

Avoid micromanagement. Although his midlevel subordinates described the subject as being very involved, they said he will accept push-back if they feel he is getting in their lanes: “And he's very open to the fact when we walk in there and say, ‘You need to take a step back, this is our area. We'll bring it to you when it gets to your area.’”

Additional diversity management practices used by the subject

Members of the subordinate focus groups identified additional aspects of the subject's management style that are especially helpful for establishing trust and respect.

Know your people. Although the size of the squadron, the nature of the work, and the high opstempo make it difficult for the squadron commander to have as much interaction with the troops as he would like, he is as involved as he can be. One subordinate said,

I'm sure there's probably plenty of people out there in the line that are like, “Ah, Christmas and Easter are the only two times we ever see the Boss.” And that's always a common theme. I don't think you go to any squadron anywhere and not have someone say that. But he goes out of his way—more so than I've ever seen a commander—to actually do what's right and to put a face with a name, a face with a file, and not just say, “Oh, Article 15” or “Oh, I don't care,” which is very unusual.

Model strong individual engagement. The squadron members see that the commander works as hard as they do to do his own job and to support them doing theirs:

I've seen him stay late, come in early. I've seen him do great things in this unit because I've been here awhile and I've seen a lot of commanders come and go through. So when he says this is the way I want it about something, "Roger that, sir, that's the way you want it."

Take ownership of the squadron and your own mistakes. Midlevel subordinates trust the squadron commander because he can admit to a mistake:

Participant 1: And then sometimes when he does forget things, very rarely, he'll come back and be like, "I forgot, we need to pick this back up. My fault, I dropped it. Let's do it now, it needs to get done." So, he's very upfront; when something's completely flipped off his radar, he tells us.

Participant 2: He takes ownership.

Participant 3: Yeah, he does, he takes ownership of what happens.

Advocate for your subordinates with the upper ranks. These practices include push-back to higher ranks in support of squadron members and getting them the resources they need to do their jobs. According to one subordinate, he "definitely protects a lot of us from getting thumped." Another subordinate said,

I love that he's got that mentality of "Okay, we need that? Find out how we can get it. Let's get this done." You know? And then, I've known other people, it's like, "It's great and everything like that but, no." Well, are you going to try? "Mm, maybe, when it becomes official, yea, no problem." You know? It makes you want to rip all your hair out.

Demonstrate competence at your own job. At the most basic level, the subordinates perceive that the squadron commander is intelligent and grasps ideas quickly. They describe him as "gifted smart" and "scary smart." They also respect his ability to see both the little picture and the big picture. Regarding the commander's grasp of the small picture, one subordinate said:

No matter what my task list says and where I'm at on each item, he knows. And then that's impressive to me. And that's one of those things that's kind of disconcerting that I'm leaving because to know that you have a guy whose task list is everybody's because he's ultimately responsible, and still remembers those little key details and sometimes surprises you—it almost fell off my task list but you remembered it on yours so you're following up on it. That's not the norm.

Regarding his grasp of the larger picture, another subordinate said:

I think his toolbox is filled with a diversity of different tools....He has the different stuff that we're just not privy to, whatever they teach you at command school or whatever he got at AFIT, whatever he just has for being him, his toolbox is just much more diverse. Whereas we're kind of stove-piped, focused on this is the AFI, this is why we're doing it... he needs to look even bigger picture and he does a great job of that. It's using tools other than just the [career field] requirements, which we primarily focus on.

Managing deployment-related rank diversity

In terms of negative diversity dynamic associated with deployment experience and rank, the squadron commander is aware of the problem but is somewhat removed from it due to his place in the chain of command. One participant put it this way:

If something happened to Sgt [name] here, I'm going to be a lot more affected by it than the [commander] will. I'm not saying that he's not compassionate towards it but this is one of my best friends. I mean, if something like that happens, he's not as personal and he's not allowed to be as personal as we are with each other because of the rank structure and because of the different corps.

Within this context, the subject addresses the deployment issues in two ways. First, he tries to address the problem directly with the troops by making them aware of the support services that are available and encouraging them to use those services. He does this in both speeches to large groups and in conversations with individuals. The individual conversations occur as part of the formal reintegration process as well as through a general open door policy. The focus groups indicated that this approach is having some success, but the

overall culture will be slow to change. For example, one subordinate said, "He's got me through a lot of tough times and explained to me certain things that I didn't quite understand, and I'm a better person for it." But another squadron member said,

We know the system, and we know if we come back and if everyone's like, "Oh if you need help, go get help. If you need to talk to somebody, go talk to somebody." But we know the minute we walk in to talk to somebody or try to get help, we're done. Pack it up and go home.

The subject would also like to allow troops who have returned from deployment to work together so that they have mutual support from people who have had the same experiences. He has not been able to do this, however, because of differences between the deployment and home-base skill sets. He said, "I don't have a process in place right now to keep them working together because the skill sets I need when they deploy out in one group are different than the skills sets and the locations I need them in when they're home."

The second way the commander addresses the deployment issues is indirectly through his midlevel managers by asking them to echo the message that he's giving directly to the troops. More specifically, he asks his midlevel managers to know their people and their issues and encourage them to get help if they need it. This entails balancing the need to get the mission done today and the "just suck it up culture" against the need to protect the long-run health of the members. The subject said, "I need people healthy in the long term, mentally, to do that job. And when you say 'suck it up and go to work' all the time, eventually the long term effects are they shut down." It's not clear, however, that this message is getting through, as demonstrated by the following exchange:

Participant 1: As long as you show them that "I understand" and you can get them the services that they need, they'll be fine. You can't deal with everybody like "suck it up." You just can't do that.

Participant 2: Sure you can....In some cases, you may need to, but that may not be the best approach for everybody.

Impact on mission capability

In most respects, the subject is a strong commander who demonstrates both effective management skills and leadership capabilities; overall, his people respect him and are willing to follow him. One subordinate summed it up this way: “And what the [commander] manages in our unit is great. He sends warfighters out the door and he completes probably one of the toughest missions in the Air Force here.” Another said simply, “He does an awesome job. It's the truth. No person in this room can say that the [commander is] not kick ass.”

Thus, the subject's management works to ameliorate, but not eliminate, the negative diversity dynamic that is occurring between junior subordinates and midlevel managers. The **lack of trust** between subordinates who have deployed and supervisors (as well as the larger Air Force leadership) who haven't deployed primarily affects mission capability in terms of **combat readiness**. In particular, in a culture characterized by reliance on and trust in the chain of command, erosion of that trust threatens the basis for positive **morale** and effective **teamwork**. An additional exacerbating factor is the importance of **on-the-job training** of subordinates by supervisors. Clearly, the credibility gap between these followers and leaders is inhibiting the learning process, thus decreasing overall mission capability.

Diversity management summary

The major diversity problem is taking place below the squadron leader—partially because he is so busy and partially because, out of respect for the chain of command, he expects the midlevel managers to take the lead in reintegrating troops who are returning from deployment, though he supports them closely in their efforts to do so. This approach, however, misses the mark because the deployment issue is not seen as a diversity issue. Specifically, it is not perceived as resulting from differences of perspectives between two key groups in the squadron or as causing a fundamental disconnect between the junior people who have deployed and the midlevel people who haven't deployed but are charged with addressing their concerns.

At the same time, conditions work against the effective use of general management tools to address the diversity problem indirectly. In particular, constant rotation and high deptime make it difficult for supervisors to really get to know their people and potentially overcome the credibility gap associated with different deployment experiences. Likewise, due to the midlevel leadership vacuum, supervisors might not have the necessary skills to do this anyway. Nor is the commander able to keep returnees together in groups that might provide support, because of the mismatch between deployment skills and home-base skills.

Thus, this case study demonstrates the value of looking at management through a diversity lens. If this problem were seen as a rank diversity problem triggered by differences in deployment experiences, rather than just a deployment problem, the commander would be more clearly directed to address the junior-senior credibility gap head on.

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Golf Squadron: A case study of functional diversity

Diversity types and dynamics

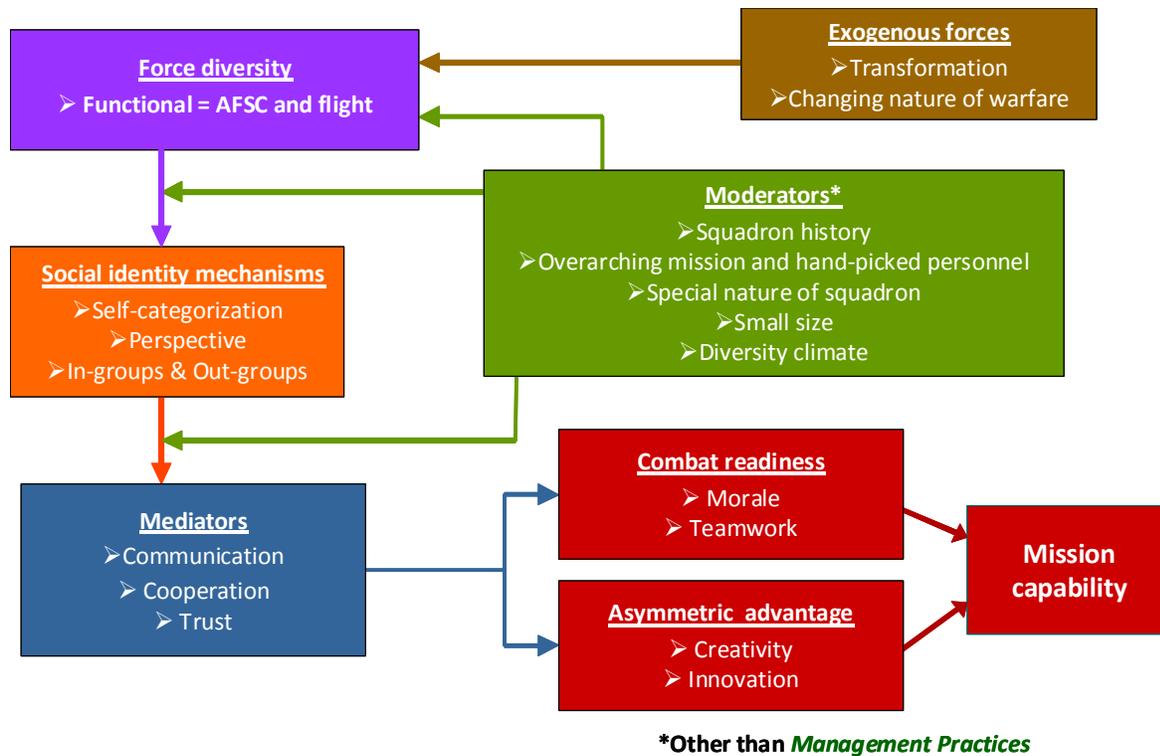
Golf Squadron is a relatively small squadron, especially compared to other squadrons with the same basic AFSC; at the same time, it has a dozen additional AFSCs in its three units. This **functional diversity** reflects the unique mission of the group that Golf is part of, as well as its goal of using multidisciplinary cross-functionality to minimize redundancy and maximize unity of effort.

Built to participate in the group's operational mission, Golf Squadron has no normal “garrison” duties. Its three units each have distinct assigned missions, such as training members of their basic AFSC across the theater, but they are also intended to support the larger group mission. Thus, AFSC diversity matters both within and across the three units in the squadron, while the mission diversity matters primarily across the three units in the squadron.

This design and purpose reflects a **transformational** response to perceived **changes in the nature of warfare**—namely, a need for rapid deployments into new fields of operation. The overall goal is to meld multiple skills into a single team that can work well together to deliver a complete operation on very short notice. Absent such a contingency (which has not occurred), the subject's challenge is to lead the squadron so that it is trained, resourced, and prepared to deploy, while still achieving the unit-specific everyday missions.)

The primary diversity problem has been how to create a sense of true squadron identity and “unity of effort” across the three unit missions and all the AFSCs. As the squadron commander puts it, the squadron has “a lot of moving parts for a relatively small squadron”; in terms of tasks, skill sets, and overall mission, it's a microcosm of the Air Force. When he arrived, he found two diversity-related problems.

Figure 9. Diversity dynamics in Golf Squadron



The first problem was high walls between units: routine transactions between them were being accomplished at the commander's level, members from only one unit would generally attend a squadron-wide event, and members of different units sat on different sides of the room at staff meetings. One unit in particular felt separated from the main operational part of the squadron because its members felt that the leadership undervalued their specific mission. Since members of this unit weren't getting awards or other recognition, this perception was probably correct.

The second problem was a divide between the personnel from the traditional AFSC and those from the additional AFSCs. Again, the “minority” AFSC members felt undervalued and underrecognized, and it appears that this perception was probably correct in that they were not getting awards or other recognition. In this climate, certain AFSCs ostentatiously self-identified as “not” the largest AFSC.

Yet a “brutal opstempo” meant that without **teamwork** across unit boundaries, or high **morale** among all AFSCs, the burden on squadron members was uneven and the squadron was not achieving its potential. Hence, the squadron commander devoted himself to tearing down both unit and AFSC walls and melding the squadron into a “family.” His goal was to take advantage of diversity by having everyone pitch in, to get the job done better and less painfully—and to deliver the cross-functional capability that the squadron was created to provide.

The problem of forming **social identity** around **functional diversity** is particularly striking because the squadron is structurally homogeneous: all its members are active-duty Air Force; no other components or Services are involved. Put another way, this diversity consists not of people who follow different rules or practices doing the same thing, but of people with the same rules and practices doing different things. This is the basis of the **self-categorization** that underlies the formation of **in- and out-groups**, as well as the inhibition of **communication, cooperation, and trust**.

On the positive side, the key mechanism is **perspective**. The squadron's members are mostly volunteers, selected on the basis of high motivation and positive attitudes: people who slip in without meeting these criteria tend not to stay. According to junior subordinates, “This is so much more of an easier place to work because everyone here has the same mentality,” and “You're speaking the same language.” This shared **perspective** provided a space in which the squadron commander could work to blur career boundaries, most substantively by establishing cross-unit multi-functional teams for special missions (many of which are high profile and therefore desirable). In the now-favorable **diversity climate** described by subordinates, the attitudinal similarity helps facilitate **cooperation** and **trust**, and it enables people from different AFSCs or with different primary missions to contribute different but functionally valuable perspectives to each shared mission. Other things equal, this creates a platform for nurturing **creativity** and **innovation**.

Reflecting its unique mission, Golf Squadron has an unusual array of moderators. The negative moderator—the **squadron's history**—is

probably not unusual in the context of organizational restructuring: the unit that felt isolated was the unit on which the squadron was built. When the current squadron was stood up, that unit essentially felt “taken over” by the new, larger mission. The unit’s resentment and distancing persisted for several years, until the current commander specifically addressed it. Given the **special nature** of the squadron, and its hand-picked volunteer members, the persistence of this resentment and isolation testifies to the importance of acknowledging—and managing—functional diversity.

However, the **overarching mission** and **hand-picked personnel** produce a homogeneous age/experience range among the enlisted forces (virtually all of whom are NCOs). Their resultant personal and service maturity lends itself to moderating the functional diversity, given a favorable **diversity climate**. In addition, this is a desirable unit: people want to come here and they don’t want to leave. As one junior subordinate put it, “This is, like, the coolest job,” and the commander has to be resolute about moving them on.

Because of their mission, unlike some other squadrons studied, they aren’t half-deployed/half-manned. If a team goes out, it’s measured in weeks, not months, and the teams go together. Plus, they don’t have to support a garrison mission; this is all they do. So, unlike other squadrons with the same basic AFSC, the members of Golf Squadron aren’t struggling with keeping up their home-base mission, training, and deploying all at the same time. Again, this creates a favorable platform for discouraging the negative aspects of diversity, and leveraging its positive aspects.

Thus, performance benefits are there for the taking, given that the **special nature** of the squadron features a commitment to exploiting potential synergies. There does not seem to have been a problem fulfilling this commitment in terms of working across squadrons within the larger group (on an AFSC basis). But the functional diversity of the squadron has required explicit management/leadership to get synergies within the squadron. For instance, the subject has made cross-training part of the culture, to support the four-person multi-functional teams he has created and to break down the functional boundaries.

Finally, the **small size** of the squadron makes it easier for the subject to keep track of the issues and manage in a person-focused way.

Leadership and management

The squadron commander summarizes his approach to leadership/management this way: “Leadership is the art: how do you develop the team/people/family so they want to do the best they can at moving the project from point A to point B? [whereas] management is the science of moving a project from point A to point B.” Thus, he views his job in terms of setting the vision for the squadron, motivating and inspiring his people to achieve the mission, and taking care of his people.

To do this, he communicates through both words and actions. In terms of words, he feels that the more people know the more they will understand and buy into the squadron vision and the squadron priorities. He also feels that lack of communication breeds distrust and uncertainty. In terms of actions, he leads by example and behaves in a way that is consistent with his articulated vision.

The subject is a tireless and energetic leader who wastes no effort: his words and deeds all support one another in service of the mission. The best illustration of this organic approach to leadership may be the squadron-wide event he organized. Other squadron commanders studied held a squadron-wide sports day, or a squadron-wide barbecue, to bring the squadron together and build morale. This commander organized a squadron-wide offsite training event, in which the (formerly isolated) trainers were the teachers of the members of the other two flights. At the end of the day, the overall group spontaneously went grocery shopping and had a cookout, followed by self-organized games. So, the event increased mission capability substantively, while also improving morale and teamwork in a genuine, unforced way. Note how the commander blended focus on mission, group facilitation, and empowerment—all successful diversity management practices in the empirical literature.

Previously identified management practices used by the subject

Specifically, the subject exhibits all of the practices identified in the coding scheme, and they are interrelated. For example, the conflict management practice would not be effective if subordinates were not empowered.

Manage conflict. Instead of resolving mundane cross-unit conflicts, as previous commanders did (one NCO said: “Just to get our folks some boots, we had to go all the way to the squadron commander”), he pushes responsibility down to the level where the conflict occurs by setting an example and making his expectations clear. This is the way the midlevel subordinates heard it:

We got to put all these little petty, you know, sibling rivalries, if you will, aside and say, you know, and keep that end goal in mind. And the end goal is, you know, take care of the mission, take care of your troops.

Build team around mission. The squadron-wide event described earlier exemplifies his integrated approach. Because of the diversity of the three flights, only the squadron commander can accomplish this.

Empower subordinates. “I like handling things at the lowest level because...it reinforces all levels of leadership.” He sees his role as giving them the “vector,” then letting them “use the experiences they’ve developed.” The small size of the squadron facilitates this practice, as it makes it possible for him to (with hard work) know his people—their names and their strengths and weaknesses.

Facilitate brainstorming. When there’s a problem, “I sit down with my officers or senior NCOs and we are trustworthy, experienced, mature, personnel who have been brought into this position for a reason, and we let everybody talk about it. And at the end of the day, we say, okay, what’s the best way...?”

Facilitate communication within the group. He uses commander’s calls and staff meetings to communicate, sharing as much information as he can so that people know what and why; in his words, he never “plays ‘I’ve Got a Secret.’” He works very closely with his senior

leadership so that they mirror both his behavior and his message and thus feel comfortable elevating issues to him.

Listen to all group members. He believes that “the communication should be flowing up and down the chain of command,” so all can learn from one another and be informed. His walk-around management style creates listening opportunities; for example, he goes on overnight training sessions and missions when he can. Another example is that he spent “about 45 days to soak the squadron in” when he arrived, before reading and communicating his agenda.

Learn from diversity. His perspective on AFSC diversity comports with an understanding of how being exposed to other jobs or practices can broaden people's perspectives as well as their capabilities. The majority of the squadron comes from

a homogeneous slice of the Air Force...now all of a sudden you come to an organization that's got 13 AFSCs... it's like wow. And you start learning things that other people do in the Air Force and then all of a sudden you go on the road with them and this is a pretty big deal.

Evaluate group processes. He addressed squadron dynamics first, then smaller team dynamics. “Our first effort was to get the squadron dynamic to a place that we were happy with and then let's start focusing on smaller teams.”

Motivate in accordance with needs goals. Rewards are frequent and distributed across all units, not just the one dominated by the eponymous AFSC, as before. To quote the subject:

And that's when people really started seeing the walls coming down. I think a lot of it had to do with the “non-[basic AFSC],” as these guys call themselves, really saying, wow, these guys really do care about us. So, they made an effort to...get along.

This is easier with a shared mission since all get the same rewards, and it fits the culture that was latent in the squadron: “None of us sit here and crave praise”: they want the praise/awards to come to the team or section.

Provide appropriate mentoring. Each new person is assigned a buddy/sponsor to show them the ropes. As one midlevel subordinate said,

This unit can be very intimidating, because it's such a cohesive unit, that an outsider coming in, they can really feel like an outsider. The commander helps to bring that person in and, along with his buddy, his sponsor, and kind of spins him up.

Avoid micromanagement. He sees this as a fine line to straddle. On one hand, he empowers subordinates, and sees this as keeping him from micromanaging, which he thinks “breeds discontent.” On the other hand, the mission-related diversity calls for his involvement. As one midlevel subordinate put it,

He trusts all of the senior leaders to run their sections the way they're supposed to. And he doesn't have to get involved and be so far deep into the weeds. It's, you know, unless there's a real problem. So, he can focus on the things he needs to focus on and get the overall arching.

Additional management practices used by the subject

The subject directly attacked the diversity challenge by using a “cross-pollination” strategy—that is, assigning cross-unit teams to down-range missions, including the members of the training unit when they are available. As the squadron commander put it, “every individual in the squadron has got an important ... primary task, but then their secondary task is to be available to support any of our number of operations that are going on at once.” From a mission perspective, this strategy mirrors the synergistic approach of the overall group, and keeps members' skills current and relevant, whatever their unit mission. Put another way, by organizing the squadron to support the overall mission, the subject leveraged diversity to deliver on the total utilization premise that underpins the establishment of the group.

The subject supports this strategy by the following practices, largely based on communication, inclusiveness, and mission focus. (Again, note how the practices support and reinforce each other.)

Communicate priorities. As the squadron commander sets squadron priorities according to conditions, he communicates them to every-

one so that those who are then relegated to “the back burner” understand the underlying reasons. His “body language” deliberately makes clear that all missions and skill sets are high priority: he spends equal time with all units so that none is perceived as being a higher priority.

Be consistent and fair with rewards and discipline. He maintains a consistent standard for decisions about positive things, such as assignments and awards, and negative things, such as discipline, to communicate that there is no favoritism. He fosters healthy loyalty to unit and competition between units but discourages divisive behavior in order to make sure that unit loyalty doesn't supersede squadron loyalty. (He told the leader of the aforementioned “non-[AFSC]” club to let go of it or go.)

Make personal connections. He has all-squadron dinners at his house so that people start to see themselves as one group and feel part of the squadron. He sets up these dinners so that people have to pass by him while he is cooking, to guarantee that they will interact with him in a genuine way.

All these people-based practices set a favorable diversity climate, and the subject unites them in a focus on the mission. Recall that the empirical literature finds that focus on a shared mission is effective in managing diversity [1]. This comment from the subject, in response to a question about the role of people development in his job, is illuminating: “It's not comparing apples to oranges [in terms of the diversity], but apples to the fruit basket.” Thus, breaking down diversity walls in service of the mission, while reinforcing squadron members' skills through “cross-pollination,” both polishes the apple *and* places it usefully in the fruit basket, or the overarching mission.

Impact on mission capability

It's a measure of how problematic working across AFSCs can be that, nearly a decade after it was stood up, Golf Squadron still offered so much scope for diversity management. But for many squadron members, this was the first time they'd worked with other AFSCs. The climate set by the subject cues them to “manage” the differences and focus on the shared mission instead of on AFSC and unit differences.

In addition to talking, and walking the talk, the subject set up the squadron members not just to work together successfully but also to learn from one another. (One example: a medic said that working with other AFSCs has taught him how “the line” thinks (i.e., in a different way), and now he knows how to secure awards.)

The subject's diversity management increased mission capability both directly and indirectly. The cross-function/unit teams spread the opstempo burden evenly *and*, by including members from all units, increased their skills as well as their morale. As team members learned new skills, their interaction created a space for innovation and creativity while building **morale** and **teamwork**.

As one midlevel subordinate said:

It takes all of us to get the overall mission done. And we have...people who were just keeping to themselves and...not establishing...rapports and relationships....It makes getting along a lot harder and overall getting the mission complete. So with these open lines of communication we have now, it's so easy for me to say, “Hey John, I need this. Oh, I got your back, brother. Not a problem.” And the same with the [another unit] folks.

The subject's strong leadership style, supported by effective management practices, seems to have overcome the functional diversity problems that were hampering communication and cooperation and thus decreasing teamwork and lowering morale. After 2 years of the subject's leadership, squadron members all saw value in and respected what members of the “other” group brought to the table.

Diversity management summary

This subject turned disparate units and AFSCs into a mission-capable whole. We acknowledge that it's a special unit with special people, and it has an overall mission that explicitly demands cross-functional and unit teamwork. But it still needed management to yield a performance dividend from diversity. Granted, the subject is a charismatic born leader. But he's also thoughtful and analytical, and in one way or another he has found all the diversity management practices that the literature suggests are effective. There is no reason that leaders who are less charismatic, or less analytical cannot learn the same practices and how to apply them.

Hotel Squadron: A case study of functional and demographic diversity

Diversity types and dynamics

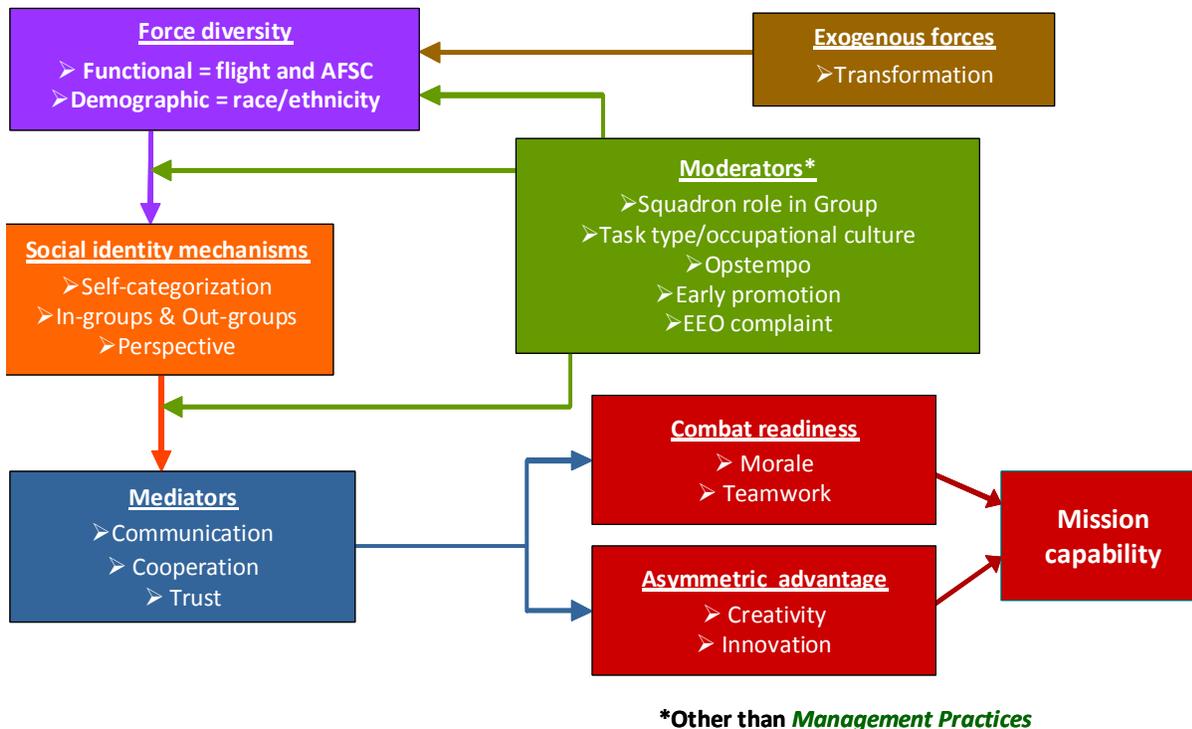
Hotel Squadron consists of several functionally defined flights, and these functions are quite specialized, although the officers all belong to the same AFSC. Members of the squadron also frequently interact with members of other squadrons in the group, which introduces additional functional diversity as well as global diversity because the group employs local nationals at this overseas base. Hotel Squadron also displays structural diversity (nearly one-third of its members are civilian employees or contractors), as well as the usual range of demographic diversity (i.e., gender, age, and race/ethnicity).

Squadron-wide, the most salient diversity type is **functional diversity**. It is the key focus of the subject's management as he tries to make sure that all members know something about the other functions their flights touch—either within or outside the squadron. “My mandate is to develop folks in my squadron to become better enlisted and officers. To understand why they're doing these things and how it's helpful to the wing's operations, to the group's operations.” **Demographic diversity** was and still is, however, the primary diversity type for one flight within the squadron because it had just been through a year-long investigation relating to a discrimination complaint made by its flight commander against the squadron commander (our case subject). The investigation determined that the complaint was unfounded.

Hotel Squadron provides support functions to the other squadrons in the group; it is not part of front-line operations. Based on this role, Hotel's flights are at least as likely to support flights from other squadrons as they are to support each other and, as a result, their teamwork can occur across the group. Thus, the subject manages the squadron

to try to enhance **creativity and innovation** in support of the group's overall mission capability.

Figure 10. Diversity dynamics in Hotel Squadron



Given the **functional diversity** within the squadron and the way the squadron interacts within the group, the model suggests that there is scope for problems with **teamwork** and **morale**. However, no such problem emerged. Instead, nearly all the participants who contributed described a situation in which the subject manages in a way that helps members of each section and each flight know how their function supports the overall group. He also tries to ensure that, even though they're not the glamorous squadron, they understand that the high-visibility work can't get done without them. People seem to be hearing this. The junior members said, "We are the important base," and they say that they're getting the recognition they should get

under this subject. They also say that their **morale** is high. Thus, Hotel Squadron appears to be characterized by positive diversity dynamics associated with **functional diversity**. Specifically, no one described **self-categorization** around functional identities, and all recognized the importance of their function-specific **perspectives** and roles for achieving the squadron mission to support the group. As a result, there is **trust** and **positive communication** and **cooperation** across functional boundaries. This is primarily based on the existing **occupational culture of professionalism** and the **trust** that the subject places in all of them to do their jobs properly.

In contrast, members of the flight with the **demographic diversity** problem appear to have **self-categorized** by function and appear to feel isolated as an **out-group** within the squadron. As a result, there are clear issues with **morale**. The one junior member who was willing to contribute felt isolated and unsupported by the subject. He didn't identify this as being a result of the complaint and resulting investigation during which the subject was barred from contact with the flight. Rather, he simply felt that their function wasn't on the subject's radar screen. The other members were simply unwilling to speak at all, and their unhappiness dominated the tone of the junior focus group. We only learned about the complaint from one of the participants after the tape recorder was turned off.²³ The dynamics here seemed to be based on lack of **communication** and loss of **trust** between the subject and the junior members of this flight. It's not clear how much this disconnect is the result of the rules barring contact between the parties to an EEO complaint during an investigation and how much is due to the subject's practice of managing primarily through his direct reports. In this situation, the complaint cut off his key conduit to his junior people. It's not clear whether any of the problems from the affected flight were spilling over to the other flights.

There are two key but opposing moderators in this case. On one hand, Hotel's **role as a support squadron** can make its members feel like the “stepchild” of the group, which could degrade **morale** and inhibit the **cooperation** and **teamwork** required for strong

23. The complaint was not discussed during the junior focus group; nor was it brought up in any of the other interviews.

performance. On the other hand, the **squadron culture of support and professionalism** means that the squadron members get satisfaction out of being in the support role and take pride in their work. The subject noted that many of the squadron members have additional education beyond that required for service in their respective communities (i.e., many enlisted personnel have associate or bachelor's degrees and many officers have master's degrees).

A third moderator is the **opstempo**. The subject explicitly identified the high **opstempo** as affecting his ability to manage/lead his squadron according to the principles he has adopted. In particular, high **opstempo** puts everyone in a reactive rather than proactive mode. It also makes setting priorities difficult because everything is considered urgent. This type of functioning, in turn, has negative effects on the long-term development of people. Specifically, there isn't time for formal training, and assignments that provide the best opportunities for on-the-job development, as well as advancement, end up being consistently given to the same high performers or those who already have experience. The subject described the current climate this way:

The unfortunate thing is 99 percent of the issues are time sensitive. And that's part of that thing I said earlier. How do we ensure that we're not allowing all of these things to be urgent? Everything's urgent. We as an organization, no kidding, need to be able to say routine and that means a couple of weeks versus I'm asking you every 5 minutes the status. Well that's not routine 'cause obviously if I know I have time, I can develop my folks in those tasks. It's the time you think you have....Need it tomorrow? Sorry. 'Cause you just don't have time to develop folks. And then the issue of if there's an error, then you get spanked....Well guess what? I don't want anyone to get spanked, so I give it to someone who's done it.

The subject also noted that the problem is exacerbated by the increasing numbers of **early promotions** resulting from the low retention rates over the past several years. People are being promoted to leadership positions without enough experience to adequately develop and mentor their troops.

Finally, the past **EEO complaint** is a fourth, clearly important moderator. It has darkened the outlook of the junior members of the

affected flight and inhibited the subject's ability to use management practices to address the problem.

Leadership and management

The subject has an executive leadership style and is very management focused. He has an M.B.A., as well as former consulting experience, and he continues to educate himself on corporate management techniques. In particular, he is very concerned about legacy management. In this sense, his leadership prioritizes people in service of the mission:

My principle is to develop everyone in my squadron to move into their boss's job. So they need to grow and learn how to do their boss's job 'cause, in essence, all of us are gonna be gone some day and, you know, once we leave, they should be able to understand why we made those decisions and how we came to those conclusions. So my constant mandate to all of my folks is you need to be looking at what your boss is doing and start learning that job. You then, in turn, look at folks who work underneath you and teach them your job so we have that perpetual development going on throughout the squadron.

His basic approach is to try to get people to think for themselves, thereby combining mission accomplishment with development of personnel. He does this by telling people what needs to get done but not how to do it, asking people to propose their own solutions to their problems, and pushing things down to the lowest level. Another element of his approach is to try to be proactive rather than reactive. In his view, if you're only reactive, you're not leading.

Most of the subject's management activities and effort are focused on his direct reports, as he explains below:

What I don't like doing is reaching down to the flight beyond the flight commander because then I'm in essence managing that flight if I reach down several layers. Then I undermine that authority of the flight commander or the NCOIC of the flight 'cause then they start taking direction from me versus taking direction from their boss.

Previously identified management practices used by subject

The subject demonstrated most of the practices on the list:

Conflict management. Consistent with the subject's efforts to get people to solve their own problems, he brings the parties in a conflict into his office and asks them to talk to each other while he just listens. He shares observations with them after they interact, but he makes them do the work.

Empower subordinates. Empowering his subordinates to do their own jobs is the main tool employed by the subject. His general approach is to share with people what needs to get done and how much time they have to do it, and then let them figure out how. He says the result is that “they come up with some solutions way beyond what you ever came up with.” In addition, when people come to him with a problem, he tries to get them to come up with their own solutions. “I spend time trying to share with them this is an opportunity for you to decide how best to do it.” Members of the midlevel focus group confirmed that he does this.

Over here, you make your own decisions. Of course, you run it through to the squadron commander and if everything's all good, no problem. You just let him know. You just keep him informed, pretty much. But he doesn't tell you, “Okay, step one, this is how you're gonna do it. Step two, you're gonna do it this way now.” He just tells you this is what we have to do. Fiscal year, this is what we have to get done. That's it. You do it your way. It's a challenge in the beginning but you actually grow more. You learn a lot.

Members of the junior focus group saw that he encourages his flight commanders and section chiefs to encourage them to do their jobs as they see fit so long as the work gets done on time and with the desired outcome. But, they are also told that they shouldn't try to reinvent the wheel or make their lives harder.

Facilitate brainstorming. The subject encourages his direct reports to brainstorm with their staffs. “Why don't you talk to your staff, work out some ideas and then if you want to, come back to me. Rarely do they come back to me because among their flight, they talk about it, they

come up with a solution and they're able to address and it's their solution vs. my solution.”

Facilitate communication within the group. He has weekly meetings with the flight commanders and Non-Commissioned Officers in Charge (NCOICs) and this helps create a common understanding of the mission and shared issues. He also tries to get his flight commanders to talk to flight commanders outside the squadron so that they know how they fit into the overall group mission. This interaction is typically informal and about making connections.

In addition, he has frequent commander's calls to get out information and his vision. The midlevel subordinates said that this works for them. The junior subordinates said that this is the only regular direct contact they have with the subject, but they see that he tries to make it comfortable for people. Consistent with his efforts to develop people by maintaining the chain of command, he doesn't get into details at commander's calls. Rather, he gives big-picture messages, typically centered around a theme—sometimes it's about recognition and positive feedback; sometimes it's about what's not going right. He says he expects the flight commanders to take care of communicating the details, but they (the junior subordinates) should let him know if they're not hearing more about any particular topic.

Listen to all group members. The midlevel focus group told us that the subject listens to their ideas. In staff meetings, he asks the flight commanders what they think should be done about things and discusses the pros and cons. If he believes that a suggestion has issues or “holes,” he'll say why he thinks it might not work, but he won't just say, “No, we're not going to do that.” The subject indicated that using this Socratic discussion method with his direct reports is a high priority for him; he works long hours since he spends the workday doing this. “It's not easy 'cause I have to spend a lot of time asking questions and you got these 15 other things going on.” The junior subordinates also confirmed that the subject is a good listener. They said that if someone tells him something's important, he'll make time for them and listen.

Learn from diversity. The subject's approach to functional diversity is about learning from others: if you know what the others do, you have

a better perspective on what you do. He also knows that he may not understand enlisted issues and likes to get his senior master sergeant's input on them. (See *Have an open-door policy*)

Motivate in accord with needs/goals. According to the subject, this is the essence of leadership, which is all about people: "People have feelings, so obviously you have to talk and understand what motivates an individual who's gonna bring that extra creativity to a solution." He did not, however, elaborate on how he does this.

Provide appropriate mentoring. The subject provides general mentoring that is applicable to all his people regardless of level or function. His advice includes such things as:

- Pause before you make a decision rather than just responding to stimuli.
- Have the end in mind for whatever you're doing because if you don't, you won't know if you hit the target.
- Identify core processes that are repetitive and document how you do them, both for the next person and so you can see how to make improvements.
- Know what happens a few steps before and after you, so you understand how your work fits in.

All this advice reflects the ways he empowers people. The subject also explicitly focuses on grooming people to do their bosses' jobs, or the next job in line. The supervisor said he's good at this. The midlevel subordinates said they know he thinks mentoring and development are important and that he acknowledges that it takes time for them to do this right. The junior subordinates said that, whenever he has the chance, he'll try to teach people things regardless of their level.

Avoid micromanagement. The complement of empowering is avoiding micromanagement. The subject says he tries to avoid it as much as possible. For example, he works mainly through his direct reports for giving assignments because the assignment obviously or naturally goes to a particular flight based on function. "I typically don't reach the Airman, the junior folks. I reach down to the captain, major, and

give them that project or that mission. They, in turn, decide who gets that project or requirement.” The midlevels confirm that he's a hands-off manager and it's important that he lets the flight commanders and more junior workers be the subject-matter experts. The junior subordinates also confirmed that he doesn't micromanage; he just says what needs to be done by when and asks them to let him know ahead of time if it's not going to happen. He also lets people set their own priorities rather than pushing his personal agenda.

Additional management practices used by the subject

Treat management as an explicit and nonnegotiable job duty. The subject does management during the day and “works the e-mails” in the evenings, which translates to very long hours. And, even still, he feels he doesn't spend enough time “taking care of his folks.”

Prioritize and provide top cover/push-back. With so many extra training requirements and taskings, he tries to “minimize what he sends down to folks” below him and tries to pick a few priorities to really follow, but so much comes from above that he can't always do that and he's not sure how the message is going down from his flight commanders. “And I wish we had a very consistent theme. And if we say education or whatever that priority is, we're able to stay on it. And because some other rabbit jumps out of the hole doesn't mean you chase it 'cause you're concentrating.” He sees it as his job to push back and try to set priorities (i.e., not make everything urgent). However, he feels he can't be the only squadron commander saying “no.”

Both the midlevel and junior focus group participants said that the subject will go to bat for them when they need something. The junior subordinates noted that their professionalism and the fact that they're doing their jobs well make this easier for him to do. The exception to this feeling came from the one member of the flight affected by the EEO complaint who was willing to speak. This member said that the subject isn't supporting his flight or going to bat for them. He spoke of this generally and also gave specific examples. A more senior member of this focus group gave two interpretations of the events described—one on the tape and one off. The on-tape interpretation was that the subject is always trying to get them to work

things through their chains in order to develop each other. In the example given, however, the subject might have been more sensitive to the time issue. The off-tape interpretation was that the subject was officially not allowed to have contact with that flight because of the investigation of the flight commander's EEO complaint against him.

Focus on positive rather than negative reinforcement. The subject cares about how the job gets done. He tries to ensure that his managers use positive, not negative reinforcement. He is against what he called "browbeating" and has told people that he won't reward a good outcome if they got it by abusing their employees. He monitors this through his senior master sergeant because the enlisted people feel comfortable bringing their issues to that position. If he hears of potential issues, he then goes to talk to the appropriate supervisor to validate the problem. In this process, he tries to get people to be receptive to changing how they approach managing their people.

Use assignments to create development opportunities when possible. According to the subject, his use of this tool is time dependent. If a tasking is associated with a quickly developing issue and needs to be addressed right away, it tends to be given to the known commodity and the person with experience. If there's more time, however, it should be given to someone new as a development opportunity.

Respect people's time. To show his people that the time he spends with them is important, he doesn't answer the phone if it rings when he's with them. He also makes sure he's on time for meetings and won't let meetings run long. He teaches them about time management by letting them have only the scheduled amount of time for a briefing.

Have an open-door policy. The subject's open-door policy involves telling people that they should go through their chains if they can; if they can't, his door is open. He tries to make it clear that going through the chain first doesn't reflect lack of interest or unwillingness to take time for them. Instead, it's about development: part of their responsibility is to learn to work with their bosses, and part of their bosses' responsibility is to learn to work with their employees. When meetings do occur, the subject asks people to think through what they want to discuss beforehand to ensure that the time is productive. Finally, when he meets with enlisted personnel, he asks his senior master

sergeant to attend. This has two purposes. First, the senior master sergeant can indicate whether the particular issue has arisen elsewhere in the squadron. Second, he can bring his enlisted understanding to bear on the issue. The subject acknowledges that he may just not understand an enlisted issue because his world and experience have been different. The midlevels confirm that the subject has an open-door policy: “Oh, yeah, he's always there” and “He may have to juggle 19 things, but he'll fit you in.” The junior subordinates said that, at the initial one-on-one with new Airmen, the subject tells them about the open-door policy and they feel that they could use it. One said, “He's a very busy man, but he will make the time.”

Work to get them recognition for performance. Since Hotel Squadron isn't a front-line operational squadron, its members can be less likely to get formally recognized for their accomplishments. The midlevel subordinates indicated that the subject has done a good job of “pushing their packages” and getting them the recognition and awards they deserve. The junior subordinates indicated that the subject makes them feel appreciated for what they do and that he's proud of the squadron.

Be approachable. Members of the midlevel focus group said that the subject gives them individual attention and that he is approachable. For example, one member—a contractor—mentioned that the subject met with her when she came on board; no other squadron commander had taken that time. Another said, “I've had some junior NCOs come up after seeing [the subject] and they're like, ‘Wow, this guy's a real human.’” Members of the junior focus group also find the subject approachable to the extent that they have contact with him; some said that being here and working for him is an improvement from other squadron commanders. They also noted that the subject participated fully in the Group Sports Day—either by competing himself or by cheering on his subordinates as they competed in events.

Be credible. According to the midlevel subordinates, the subject is a credible leader. His credibility comes first from his position, then from his experience at having done the jobs they're doing now.

Impact on mission capability

With the exception of the flight that was affected by the EEO complaint, there was a sense of good **teamwork** and **morale** in the squadron. People were proud of their support function and how they helped the group achieve its mission. When needed, they could also come up with **creative** solutions to squadron and group problems via **cooperation**. Empowerment to do their jobs via having the squadron commander's **trust** in their expertise, as well as having the tools to succeed, seems to be the key dynamic in this squadron. Thus, rather than directly addressing morale by cheerleading, the subject's management addresses it indirectly by helping squadron members feel competent and able to deliver maximum **teamwork, innovation, and creativity** to the group.

Diversity management summary

It appears that this subject's management is successfully mitigating any potential problems associated with functional diversity. The overall diversity climate set by the subject emanates from his focus on people development. With this starting point, he seeks to help everyone understand how his or her function fits into and contributes to the mission. He then sets a positive climate by empowering people to make their individual contributions within the broader mission context. The positive climate does not, however, appear to extend to the flight affected by the discrimination complaint.

In this case, looking through the diversity lens did not add substantially to our understanding of how the squadron functions and should be managed. Since the subject was already explicitly managing the functional diversity, the sharper focus only highlighted the specific dynamics at work. In contrast, it almost failed to surface the obvious demographic diversity issue. No one mentioned it except off the record and as an explanation for the obviously uncomfortable atmosphere in the junior focus group. This result may suggest that the issue was confined to the one flight and that others were either unaware of or unaffected by the situation. Alternatively, it could suggest that, because of their sensitive nature, understanding demographic diversity issues may require more focused inquiries.

Kilo Squadron: A case study of functional diversity

Diversity types and dynamics

Kilo Squadron has several flights and 150 members, all active duty. The squadron's mission requires it to field crews with members from 14 different AFSCs (i.e., from across flights). This **functional** diversity also contributes to Kilo's **demographic** diversity by broadening the squadron's range of age and experience.

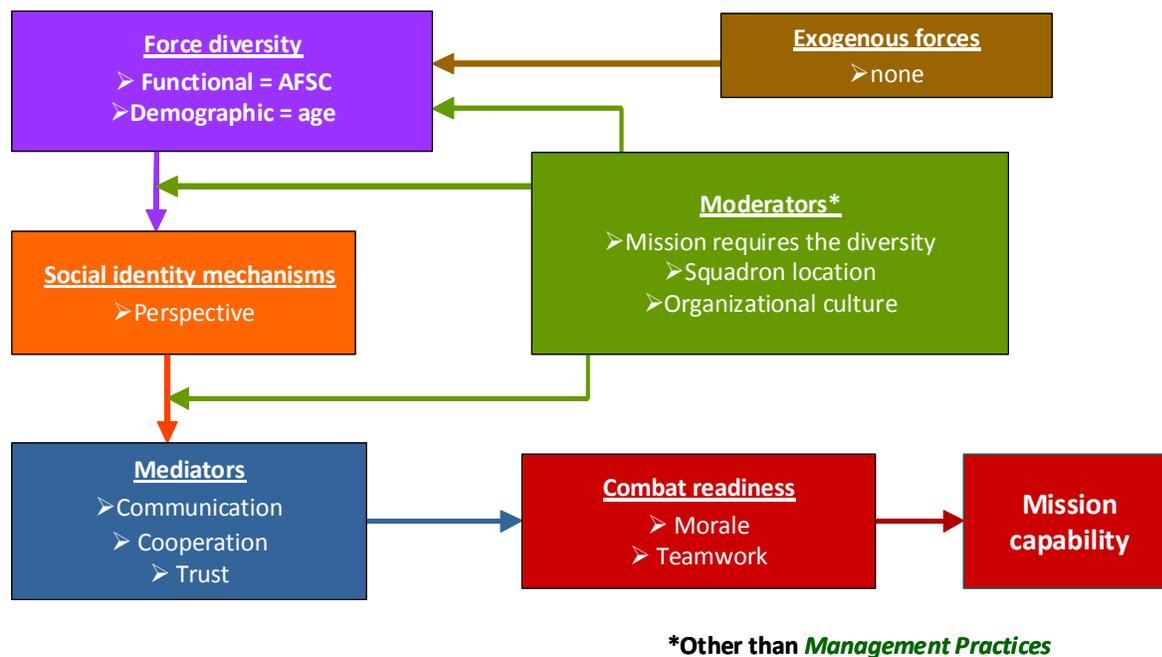
The challenge for this functionally diverse squadron is to unite the **perspectives** associated with each AFSC in a positive contribution to mission planning and execution. Crewmembers create an overall mission together, then separately plan their own pieces. But they need to execute as a **team**, and that requires finding ways to integrate their work. In their view, if each AFSC can understand what the other AFSCs do and how they think, they can prioritize their own work better and it can all come together “the way it's supposed to” in a timely, efficient fashion. Obviously, the level of **morale** can make a difference in achieving this goal.

The main diversity mechanism in this squadron is **perspective**. Each AFSC has its own perspective on the mission, based on the role it plays, and each is necessary to accomplish the mission. Normally, a mission focus provides a context for successfully integrating different **perspectives**, and Kilo Squadron is no exception. For the most part, we heard that squadron members' professionalism combined with the subject's management are effectively bringing all perspectives to bear on mission-related problems and keeping everyone pointed in the same direction.

The operational impact of uniting perspectives depends on the quality of **cooperation** and **communication** as well as the degree of **trust**

among crewmembers. We didn't hear anything in our interviews that indicated that any one AFSC is seen as less valuable or less highly regarded than any other. Rather, the issue is “the bringing them all together; everyone knowing their part and how it fits into the whole” (middle level). Therefore, the keys to developing good cooperation, communication, and trust on the plane are intensive cooperation and communication on the ground, along with skill development, so that everyone is competent fulfilling his or her AFSC-specific role.

Figure 11. Diversity dynamics in Kilo Squadron



The subject enhances **communication** and **cooperation** by ensuring that squadron members meet frequently, not just to mission-plan but also to share ideas, current experiences, welfare issues, and so on. Other squadrons we studied don't see the point of such all-inclusive meetings, and their members resent spending time listening to things they don't perceive as relevant to them. In those cases, the com-

mander seems to force squadron-level meetings as a way to build teamwork across the squadron because they're a squadron, not because accomplishing the mission demands it. Here, the mission ensures that squadron members appreciate the value of meetings for managing their diversity.

Communication also seems to mediate the age/experience diversity of Kilo Squadron, which is marked by different comfort levels regarding new technology and different attitudes to authority and rank. Older squadron members need to find a language/way for talking to younger members across the technology divide. They are also finding themselves called on to communicate more to young Airman about why they are doing things. "Maybe you should just say, 'Hey, this is what's going on; and this is why we're doing it.'" The commander's meetings, as well as his other communications, are the locus for doing this.

This **communication** and **cooperation** enhances **trust**, specifically trust that each AFSC will execute its specific tasks well. The ability to trust that crewmates know what they're doing is a big plus for the juniors in particular. As usual, familiarity from working together over time develops trust, and some juniors said that they would prefer to have stable crew membership. Others, however, recognized that switching crews regularly has its own benefits, making people learn more and figure out how to overcome obstacles. Also, the subject's practice of organizing the on-the-ground leadership duties cross-functionally (putting people in charge of functionally different crew positions) gave senior members a better knowledge of the other functions, letting junior members trust that their roles are understood.

The key factor moderating the diversity dynamic is that the functional diversity in this squadron is, and is seen as, **required by the mission**. There's no subtlety about identifying the diversity type or issue, and there's no angst about the need for the squadron commander to manage it. People from all points in the 360-degree interview structure understood that **teamwork** enhances mission execution and saw the importance of learning from the other AFSCs, so they could have a better overall picture of how to achieve the mission.

The squadron **location** is a second moderator, working both in favor of and against the diversity dynamic. First, at this location, many of the squadron members are quite junior and inexperienced. Members of the midlevel subordinate group, in particular, noted that there was an experience imbalance, with too many young, junior people direct from the “schoolhouse” (i.e., too many to be properly trained and mentored by the relatively few older, experienced squadron members). A high opstempo exacerbates this imbalance, as Kilo Squadron operates in a large region. Since skill development is important to creating the competency that breeds **trust**, this imbalance has the potential to make the cross-functional management more difficult. The squadron location also works as a negative moderator because the relatively limited facilities for formal training hinders skill development. On the positive side, the high opstempo creates many opportunities for exercises and deployment, which help develop skills.

This moderator also limits the use of diversity management techniques designed to build morale and teamwork through non-work-related social events. Since Kilo Squadron is far from home and in a foreign country/culture where members are unlikely to speak the language, its members rarely go “outside the base.” They have their families with them, and their families share the same isolation. This context changes the work/family equation, putting more emphasis on their family needs.

Finally, the **organizational culture** does not allow saying “no” to any operational options. “Even when we were down to two MMCs in the squadron...the message was, 'We can do it. It's OK. Everything's fine. Don't worry about it. We got it.'” The midlevel subordinates said they experienced the “push to always be OK” as one of the hardest things in the military environment. It was not clear, however, whether such strains exacerbated the diversity challenge or whether they minimized it—for example, by forcing people to depend more on each other, or bringing them together through sharing a difficult experience.

Leadership and management

The subject considers leadership “a whole level beyond management”: it's both communicating (the what and the how) and inspiring (others to do well). Based on his experience, he thinks leadership is both born and learned: a leader is born to be proactive rather than a bystander (e.g., he picks up a piece of trash and throws it away because he's proud of his squadron); a leader learns by watching how others conduct themselves.

Thus, his primary approach to leadership is to lead by example. He prefers to show/demonstrate what he wants and how people should be, rather than tell them. He is conscious that people will be watching him in the same way that he has watched others, and he feels that he “leads” through the way he conducts himself, wears the uniform, and so on. Still, however, he understands and values verbal communication; it's another key part of his approach to both leadership and management.

Previously identified management practices used by the subject

Manage conflict. The subject very publicly pulled the plug on a potentially divisive action (some squadron members were ostentatiously wearing an American flag patch instead of the squadron patch) in a way that reinforced the squadron's integration. Instead of choosing sides, he put a flag patch on himself and let the squadron know that either choice was permissible. Normally, he expects people to try to solve conflicts themselves before they come to him. “I've never heard of anything getting pushed up to the commander's level where he's had to say, ‘Hey knock it off’” (junior subordinate).

Build team around mission. The subject does this in a very concrete way, by structuring a “cross-flow” of flight officers/assistants in their onbase assignments, so they lead a unit with an AFSC different from their own. This creates a new vector of mutual understanding across functions. In addition, he is thoughtful about how he creates teams, assigning people to crews based on strengths and weaknesses: “This person is a not-so-strong pilot, I need to make sure I put him with this kind of flight engineer and this kind of navigator and build some

strength around him.” Note that the success of this mix-and-match approach depends on the team in place; the senior NCOs need to be strong enough to help the uninitiated flight commander know what matters for that AFSC. This suggests how learning from diversity can and can't happen (i.e., it's not automatic).

In a broader sense, the supervisor and midlevel subordinates see the subject from different angles in regard to team building. The supervisor seemed to think the subject was succeeding at what he sees as a big job: “Supposed to be in a million places all at the same time, and he can't. So, he's got to prioritize his time and delegate. And then, you know, he's still expected to know everybody in his unit, know about them, know their names, all that kind of stuff. In a large unit, that's a big challenge.”

The subordinates indicate that the subject's success is more professional than personal; compared to past commands, there's a lot of “mandatory fun” or symbolic togetherness in the service of morale. Although they appreciate his intentions, they seem to feel that this is an abuse of family time, given the opstempo and the fact that their families are socially isolated in this assignment. Another possibly counter-productive team-building effort is the subject's practice of having a person who is celebrating a birthday pick someone, in a large meeting, to sing “Happy Birthday.” These and other examples suggest that the subject is insensitive to personal differences.

Empower subordinates. The subject takes a top-down approach to leadership, reshaping three or four flight leaders to do mission-planning his way, and then empowering them. (Note that he is able to choose his flight commanders.) Some examples given by midlevel subordinates follow:

He is king of the leading question.

[He] wants you to come to your own conclusion.

He tries to get us to solve our own problems first. And when that fails, he steps in appropriately.

Yeah, he's good at that.

The juniors say he tells you the outcome he wants, and lets you figure it out.

Facilitate brainstorming The subject does this himself and also trains his direct reports by “demonstrating.” He may take control of one of their meetings to show them how, during a slide presentation, the presenter can generate a conversation that leads to learning:

So then you start talking about it and the folks on the crew that understand that concept are explaining it. And then you have this discussion going on and there's learning taking place. And now, folks aren't just staring at the slides that they see every day, but never asking, “What does that mean?”

Facilitate communication within the group. This is very important to his integration vision.

It could be nothing more than facilitating a discussion during the Mission Planning Session that I'm drawing folks from their stovepipes into “What is the goal of the Mission? What are we focusing on today? What's your primary job? What's your priority based on the face of the Mission?”

Seeing how well they can cross AFSC boundaries in group discussions gives him a feeling for how strong or weak the crew is.

Subordinates describe the constant communication through inclusive staff meetings as crucial to keeping everyone aware of everything.

We meet a lot. We talk a lot and share ideas, thoughts, what going on in everybody's flights—morale, welfare, discipline type issues, workload, forecasts for mission requirements, i.e., TDYs and things that we have to do. Our staff meetings are very, I would say “all inclusive.” Every shop head is there, and we're all given where we're going, the way ahead. He's merging all this in his mind, and we're all merging it together and figuring out where everyone stands in the process.

In other words, this goes beyond simply communicating, to making sense of the communication and putting it all together.

Note that the functional diversity makes this inclusivity necessary: They have to make sure that everyone is hearing the same message. “You have to bring that many entities together, into a single room to be able to disseminate words; otherwise it gets mutated with, you know, the telephone game, if you allow it to go off.” The juniors also say that the subject is a good communicator and gives them an understanding of the big picture, so they see how they fit into it.

Meanwhile, the subject uses the staff meetings to identify issues and the people who need to work together, perhaps across functions or units, to solve them. He also makes meetings efficient by making them about information dissemination and validation, and dealing with things that are not relevant to the whole group on an individual basis.

Listen to all group members. “There’s a line outside my door every day,” so the subject thinks he must be listening to everyone. (Subordinates say he wants you to know your stuff before you go there.) He tries to make sure people know they don’t need to make an appointment to see him, and he makes sure that when they come, he really focuses on them, stopping what he’s doing, getting up out of his chair, and so on.

Junior subordinates report that, when the subject arrived, he asked a lot of people to talk to him privately (at that time morale was low), and then started making little changes, such as a newsletter that explained policies they didn’t know about.

Learn from diversity. The subject tries hard to understand all the functions and spends a lot of (walk-around) time asking for and getting explanations from all the different “shops.” This enables him to lead based on real understanding of functions that he has not personally experienced. He uses this understanding to get others to learn from each other:

If my AWOs can understand, my Weapons Officers can understand how and why the “back row” I call it, the Surveillance Section, tracks and identifies aircraft, it helps them understand, obviously, their job and what iterations they have to go through to get to what we call a “Hostile Declaration.” Conversely, if the Technicians, the Trackers understand how the Air Weapons Officers interact with the Fight

Pilot to provide them what they need, it helps them prioritize their tracking and identification techniques so that it all comes together the way it's supposed to, in a timely fashion, an efficient fashion.

Evaluate group processes. The subject feels that people see through it if you set an artificial bar for them to jump. But when the bar is real, such as an inspection to make sure they're ready for combat, and their hard work pays off, then people feel really good.

Motivate in accord with needs/goals. He tied the above inspection to the mission—"our responsibility as service members"—positioning the inspection as a measurement of that, and he thinks that people bought into it that way. However, subordinates indicate that he often imposes his own needs/goals without considering that others might not share them, and that lessens the motivation (e.g., he thinks you should have joined to serve your country, whereas some joined to get educational benefits, learn a skill, or attain other things promised by the recruiter).

Provide appropriate mentoring. He tries to lead by example and by communicating, as described in the following quotation:

Mentoring is what you do every day. It's how you conduct yourself. It's how you interact with people. It's how I wear my uniform. It's how I answer people. How I talk. If you're watching me, and the commander's always being watched, then I'm mentoring you just by virtue of me doing my job. Yes, there is, once in a while, a sit down, let's talk about stuff, or let's bring a group of CGOs together and talk about a topic. Typically, that's thought of as a Mentor Session, but really it's everything you do. And, I tell my folks, "I'm not the only mentor in this squadron. You can mentor. All mentoring is, is teaching somebody else, who knows less than you. You know something, no matter where you are in your career. Teach that to somebody else who doesn't know what you know." That's all mentoring is.

The subject held one meeting where he told people about personnel issues he'd had to deal with and how he'd solved them. They found it very helpful, but he hasn't had time to do it regularly.

He realizes that personalities don't always “click,” and he makes an effort to develop his leadership team into surrogates for himself; that is, he makes sure there are other leaders for squadron members to connect with.

He is straightforward about how he rates people; in particular, he wants people to excel, not just pass.

No, this is an open book test. The answer's there, you've just got to find it. And, if you're stopping at an 80 or an 85, then you're not looking hard enough. And then, the other one is a closed book test. You're given all the answers, you've just got to study hard enough and memorize it. If you're not doing that, then there's something else going on too.

Avoid micromanagement. The subject sees micromanagement as the opposite of empowerment and tries to avoid it.

When I give somebody something to do, I give them some general guidance. And I generally let them run and do it. I don't think I'm a micromanager. And if somebody feels like I am, it may be because they're not giving me enough information to make me feel warm and comfortable about what they're doing.

As a former trainer, he feels he may jump in too quickly (as in the example under **Facilitate brainstorming**). However, the subordinates all report that he successfully avoids micromanagement: the midlevel personnel say his style is more “Here's where we want to be” and “Are you on track with what's going on?”

Impact on mission capability

The onbase cross-functional cooperation managed by the subject seems to result in good **teamwork** and to aid the mission integration. People are responsible for delivering their highly trained skills on the mission, and for maintaining them on base, while their onbase assignments are designed to broaden their understanding of other AFSCs (e.g., a navigator in charge of a tech shop). Squadron members really seemed to understand the need for and value of having all the AFSC perspectives represented during both the planning and execution phases of the mission.

This **teamwork**, along with mission accomplishment, seems to be sufficient for producing good **morale**, and social “morale-building” events may have the opposite effect, given the geographic and social isolation of this base. Note these remarks from midlevel subordinates: “If you've got a good morale in your office and the squadron, you know...you laugh and you maybe get to lunch, and this, that, and the other, and that's enough if everything's going good.” While such events may need “to be a tool for the commander if he's seeing a morale problem...there are other options out there than let's buy a bunch of soda, brats, and hot dogs and stand around....”

Diversity management summary

With the exception noted earlier (motivating according to his own values), the subject's leadership/management techniques seemed to produce benefits from the diversity situation. He is explicitly seeking a positive overall climate by trying to create an inclusive, family-like atmosphere. He is also explicit about the fact that he sees no need to focus on the diversity climate as a separate thing. This is probably correct in a squadron that doesn't have an important diversity challenge outside the mission-essential need to coordinate across AFSCs. The 360-degree interviews suggest that he is doing this and has found the right balance between monitoring what's going on and letting people do what's needed. In this sense, explicitly applying a diversity lens to analyze mission-imposed functional diversity did not improve the management focus beyond what was already being achieved with the subject's implicit application of the diversity lens.

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Lima Squadron: A case study of rank and functional diversity

Diversity types and dynamics

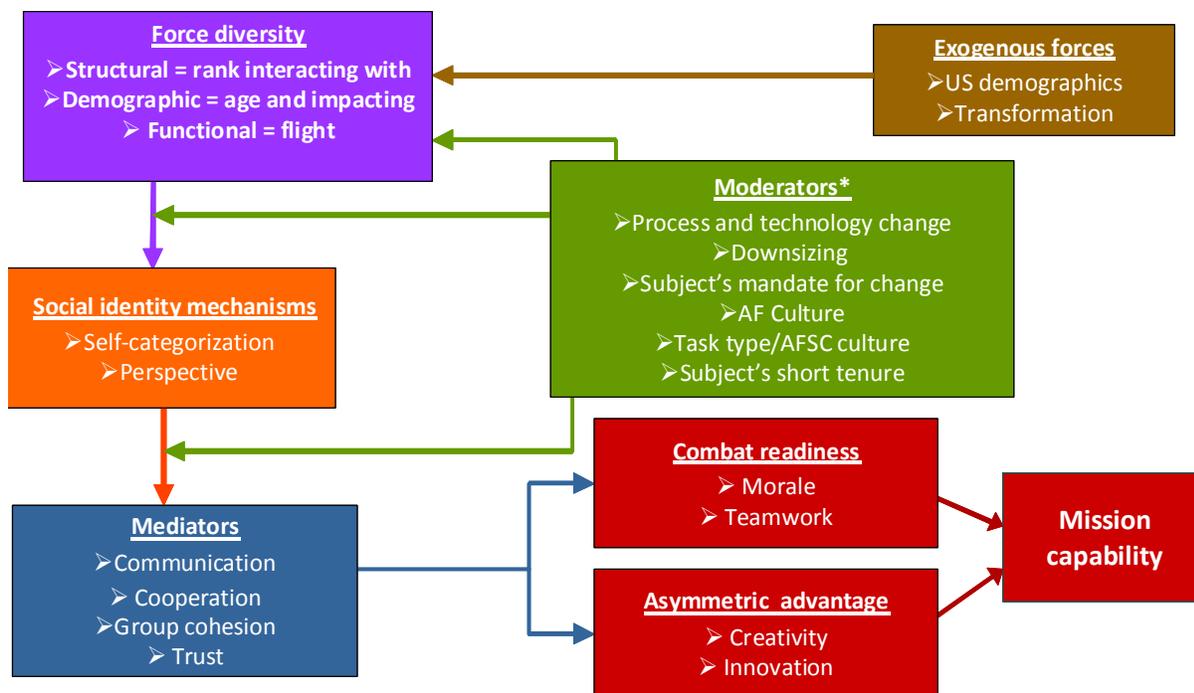
Lima Squadron consists of several functionally diverse flights engaged in base support—some are largely military, others largely civilian. Among the civilians, some have traditional civil service status (general schedule (GS) or wage grade (WG)), while others are covered by the National Security Personnel System (NSPS). This structural mix reflects both the long-standing shift from military to civilian manning for this career field and the recent introduction of NSPS. Also recently, key AFSCs have been reorganized across different units, and the squadron as a whole is now facing a merger with another squadron. In addition, the squadron serves a structurally and functionally diverse clientele, including members of other Service branches.

The usual conflicts over different civilian and military rules and practices are present in the squadron, as are the usual challenges derived from the age difference between the largely young military and the much older civilians. However, another diversity dimension, **rank**, stands out since each group or individual interviewed had a different idea of what type of diversity was salient, if any. In other words, there was not 360-degree agreement about what diversity type matters most for mission accomplishment in this squadron.

In the interviews, the subject focused on **structural diversity**—military vs. civilian and, within civilian, GS and WG vs. NSPS—and whether the different personnel rules are being implemented appropriately. The supervisor, however, only indirectly invoked structural diversity in identifying **age diversity** as salient, because the military are younger, on average, than the civilians. Members of the midlevel focus group didn't see any diversity as particularly salient. They

acknowledged that implementing the new NSPS program is causing issues, but they didn't see any problems working across structural or functional lines. Finally, members of the junior focus group talked most about **age and rank diversity** and their association with willingness to accept change and to adapt to new, technology-driven systems. These junior squadron members also said that **functional diversity** matters for squadron **cohesion**.

Figure 12. Diversity dynamics in Lima Squadron



*Other than *Management Practices*

These diverse responses represent the differential impacts of and responses to extensive change in the squadron and its career field—changes in how it does business, including reorganizations, decreased manning, and **process and technology changes**. Not everyone understands the changes equally well or is adapting at the same pace. This “change diversity” triggers negative diversity dynamics

associated with **rank** or **position** because the impact of change varies with organizational position. The change diversity also triggers negative **age diversity** dynamics, partly because age and rank are correlated in obvious ways and partly because there tends to be a relationship between age and adoption of new technologies and systems. To the extent that older supervisors and users are the slower adapters, this puts a strain on the younger, subordinate members who must implement the change. Note, however, that the age diversity issue may be a case of confounding rather than interacting if the slower response to process change is more about distance from that change than about an unwillingness or inability to adapt to it.

Thus, the case study, as a whole, sums up to a case of “change” diversity, more specifically of how the change experience differs at different levels of the military hierarchy. The shift from face-to-face to “virtual” service means that the computer replaces human interaction for the “worker bees” in the squadron, and this changes the environment for **morale and teamwork**. Specifically, as the pace of **systems and technology change** increases and **manning** stays constant or decreases, the squadron is increasingly characterized as having the type of environment in which diversity-related conflict or inefficiency is likely to occur as people entrench into **functional stovepipes** or **comfort groups**. The members of the junior focus group are already seeing this happening. The effect on mission capability is threefold:

1. In terms of **morale** (we're all in it together dealing with the same frustrations)
2. In terms of actually working as one **team**
3. In terms of using cross-functional synergies to generate **creative** solutions in implementing the changes to achieve the squadron mission.

Depending on where they sit in the organization, squadron members have different **perspectives** on how **process change** is playing out in the squadron.

Members of the junior focus group see themselves as being primarily responsible for implementing internal process changes (i.e., changes that relate specifically to internal squadron activities) that have been

dictated from above. They are told where they need to end up but not how to get there. In many cases, they see their immediate supervisors as inhibiting rather than helping their efforts to achieve these goals. Specifically, the supervisors can be slow to adapt to new ways of doing things and may not understand the manpower impacts of some of their decisions in the context of the new environment. This applies to both new AF systems and new technologies in general. Examples of the former include supervisors wanting signed paper copies of forms that are now computer based and hold-ups implementing the web-based tuition assistance program. According to one junior focus group member, “We were the last base in the Command to do it because the supervisor didn't want me to.” Examples of the latter include not knowing how to use Google and using paper surveys when the results of e-mailed surveys would have needed only half the processing time.

The midlevel managers, in contrast, see themselves as buffeted by both internal and external process changes (i.e., process changes that have been implemented command- or AF-wide) that have been inefficiently or prematurely implemented. Despite glitches in the new systems, they're expected to “salute smartly” and press on. This means that they must direct their subordinates to press on despite the glitches as well.

With such different **perspectives**, it is difficult for these two groups to **communicate** effectively, and some junior focus group participants said they have stopped communicating altogether. This reflects a lack of **trust** that their supervisors and leaders are supporting them by pushing back at higher ranks. At the same time, midlevel supervisors do think they're pushing back and feel that their subordinates must see the big picture. To some extent, the same dynamic is occurring between the midlevel managers and leadership above the squadron commander. Thus, the midlevel subordinates are stuck in the middle.

Both groups tend to translate their structural/rank differences in **perspective** into age-related stereotypes, as squadron members define their **social identities** based on generational differences. In particular, the junior members attribute their supervisors' lack of technical savvy and resistance to change as part of being older. In contrast, the

midlevel participants acknowledged that they don't have the computer skills that some of the younger people possess, but they also attribute some of the difficulties they're experiencing to lack of computer literacy at even more senior levels.

Finally, the junior members say that they are retreating into their functional stovepipes (i.e., **self-categorizing**) as the burden of **process change combined with downsizing** makes it more difficult for them to do their jobs. Specifically, they say that they should be helping each other and working across boundaries to deal with common problems, but increasingly they don't because there is so much pressure to get everything done. They also note that, because the squadron commander and his direct reports are no longer focusing on cross-flight interaction, they no longer have the types of personal relationships with members of other flights and even sections that would allow them to do this naturally. This type of **self-categorization** inhibits **communication, cooperation, and trust** across functional boundaries and is partly the result of differing **perspectives** on the need to foster inter-flight **cooperation** and **teamwork**. The subject and supervisor say that there is no need for squadron identity or cross-flight cooperation because the functional stovepipes are so clean. The midlevel subordinates say that they work across flight boundaries quite frequently and that this process is working well. Only the juniors felt isolated to the detriment of the mission.

Clearly, the most important moderator is the **process change combined with downsizing**. However, the recent **change of leadership** from the old squadron commander to the subject is also part of the current climate. The the previous commander had prioritized relationship building within the squadron over performance and mission accomplishment, and therefore was replaced by the supervisor. Acknowledging that both are important, the supervisor brought the subject on board to rebalance the focus toward the mission. As a result, the squadron members are now asked to perform to a higher standard, which, in turn, makes the process inefficiencies pinch all the harder.

Again, **perceptions** about the need for this change differ by rank or place in the organization. Specifically, everyone from the flight chiefs

up to the group commander agreed that reemphasizing the mission was necessary. One midlevel participant gave the following example: under the old commander, his flight's work was being double-checked when it went outside the squadron because of lack of trust in its quality. This doesn't occur under the new commander. Squadron members who are lower in the hierarchy, however, experience the new approach as a potentially counterproductive swing to the opposite extreme.

The subject and the supervisor predicted that we would hear this discontent at the lower levels; they were right. However, we heard conflicting assessments from the midlevel and junior focus groups, of how the change is being accepted. First, the midlevel managers (in this case flight commanders and section chiefs) have heard the grumbling:

And, I know for our flight...the leadership we have now is totally different than the past leadership. So it takes some adjustment, I know, for a lot of our younger Airmen to see... "Why are we doing it this way, when the way before is perfectly acceptable?" But, they weren't seeing the bigger picture where that wasn't acceptable.

The midlevel subordinates also indicated, however, that in their monthly meetings, they are effectively explaining why the new ways are necessary, and that the "light bulbs are clicking on."

In contrast, the junior subordinates feel overworked and underappreciated. First, they don't have the same view of the monthly meetings:

Participant 1: It's an hour and a half of, "You guys really need to start talking to your troops. You really need to start meeting your suspenses." And it's an hour and a half of that. So, then it's like, "Man, now I'm an hour and a half behind." That's supposed to be like our time to channel things up, to say, "Well, this is what I think for my Platoon or Section, da, da, da, da." And, it's not. It's just another set time to be told, "This is what you're doing wrong." And, "Oh, by the way, this is just open table and you won't be penalized for any of this." And then, you hear about it later.

Participant 2: No retribution.

Participant 1: Yeah [many people laughing]. Actually, I've gotten to the point where I just shut my mouth and keep going.

Second, they think their bosses make their jobs harder rather than easier by refusing to set priorities. In particular, they don't see their supervisors as being willing or able to push back:

Participant A: I think it all comes down to management because they don't want to say "no." They don't want to make themselves look bad. They don't want to tell the commander, "I'm sorry, we cannot do this. We just can't." It's "Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, and I don't care what I'm going to do to my people to get there." And, that's how I feel. And, maybe I have a negative view but that's...

Participant B: No, I'll back you up on that. [Many people laughing.]

Participant 1: I mean, I'll be, I'm leaving, I'm leaving the Air Force because I've just, I'm tired, burnt out. And, I've only been in 8 years. So, that's kind of sad.

This issue of "push-back" was raised by the midlevel focus group as well. When asked how they know when to push back, one participant said:

Well, you know, we try to judge it based off our Airmen and what we think...because we go to battle, not daily, but maybe every other day [many people laughing]. So, but, we try to defend quite a bit to protect them. And, like I said earlier, you know, sometimes we walk out of the office with our tail between our legs and other times we won the fight. So, it just depends. But, we just judge it on what we think our Airmen can do.

They also indicated, however, that within the **current AF culture**, it's getting increasingly difficult to push back:

Instead of pushing back at the group level or pushing back at the wing level, or just saying, "Enough's enough, we can't do it," there's more of the "Yes sir, yes ma'am, we'll find a way" kind of thing. And so, until we get that backbone again, and actually say, "no," it's always going to occur where we're just going to be taking on more and more. And, we're

depending more and more on our lower levels to keep the foundation up, and eventually it's just going to crumble.

More immediately, problems that they're experiencing with process change can't be fixed at their level or at the squadron commander's level, bringing another feature of the **AF culture** into play: people don't **communicate** problems up if they don't have a suggested solution. A counterbalancing moderator is the **task type** or **AFSC culture**. As support workers, members of this squadron share a commitment to customer service. They say the great satisfaction they get from their work is the source of their **morale** and what makes them willing to put up with the stress and frustration associated with process and culture change.

A final moderator for this case study is the **subject's relatively short tenure**, which makes it difficult to assess the impact of his management practices other than disturbance due to his mandate to make change. The members of the junior focus group, in particular, seemed to have had little direct contact with him and saw him as remote and potentially unapproachable.

Leadership and management

The subject's basic approach is to show technical competency and to model and live by the Air Force core values:

If you want to be respected, I think you have to stand for something. You have to let people know where you're coming from and you have to be human....But at the same time you have to know your stuff. You have to know your job. You have to know their jobs to a certain extent. You have to know your people....I'm a firm believer in you have to be a technical expert in your career field if you want to be respected and you have to have the core values: Service before self, Integrity, and Excellence in all you do. Those three things pretty much sum it up for me. If you can do those three things, I think it'll help you be a better leader.

He further defines the management vs. leadership distinction in terms of maintaining the status quo vs. providing direction for change. He said he sees leadership as "being able to look at something and say, How can we do it better? How can we serve our country

and the Air Force better? Again, I think all of my flight commanders are leaders and their personnel look to them for direction.”

Previously identified management practices used by the subject

The subject described using several of the management practices identified in the coding scheme. For the most part, however, his application of these techniques seemed to be limited to his direct reports. Thus, while the midlevel managers largely confirmed that he manages as he described and considered it to be effective, the junior subordinates sometimes had a different take.

Manage conflict. The subject pays explicit attention to conflict management, which he also characterizes as process management or facilitation or, more colloquially, “how to deal with people who aren't on board.” He does this through discussions in which he brings out the reasons for the disagreement or for not being on board and addresses them one by one. “If you come to the table and everybody discusses those reasons why and you come up with solutions, then I think it's a necessary step before you move forward.”

Build team around the mission. The subject acknowledged the team-building impact of deployment and noted that, in their environment, “it's not mortars, but difficult customers.” Here, he says his people have to know that he “has their back” with the customers. In terms of actual practices, he has held offsite team-building sessions with the flight chiefs to talk about their flight-specific mission statements. He also worked with them on gap analyses to define goals and identify places where they were falling short. The flight chiefs confirmed that these exercises help them execute their missions and that they benefit from sharing each other's wisdom and expertise. They also noted that they are comfortable going to each other with questions or problems when there are projects or issues that require them to work across flight boundaries.

These efforts are, however, occurring at the flight-commander level only. The subject's stance is that all squadron members need to know is that the point is to do what's best for the Air Force. This does not seem to be enough, because the junior subordinates do not feel

motivated around the mission and don't have a sense of squadron- or even flight-level teamwork:

But, nobody cares about the team. It's all about, "I've got to get my work done because if I don't, then so and so is going to come down on me. So, I don't care about what the other section is doing."

They attribute this directly to the new focus on achieving the mission and the fact that the subject doesn't place emphasis on cross-flight cooperation or relationship building. Instead, they say they only see each other at commander's calls or if they have complaints about each other's work.

Empower subordinates. The focus group interviews gave us the sense that the commander is pushing the process improvement/redesign down to the people who actually do the work. This is stressful but empowering. He asks people to let him know what he can help them with, probably knowing full well that they will try to figure it out themselves. In some cases, the squadron commander will use push-back against upper levels or outside organizations to get his people the time they need to do their jobs. He keeps an open-door policy and otherwise symbolizes that he is there to help if needed, and this gives his direct reports a psychological safety net.

Facilitate brainstorming. He has brainstorming meetings and watches how everyone is participating. If someone isn't participating or is uncooperative (e.g., "rolling their eyes"), he talks to him or her about it individually.

Facilitate communication within the group. Participants from the midlevel focus group said that the subject communicates regularly with them and facilitates their communication with each other. For example, they have weekly staff meetings during which he communicates his vision/requirements and they exchange information that helps identify issues from one flight that might have an impact on another or that makes them aware of the different issues that arise because of the component-specific personnel rules. The subject also holds special meetings when needed. For example, he convened a meeting where people could learn from each other about how to

implement NSPS. Members of the junior focus group, however, aren't experiencing this same sense of communication flow. In particular, they say there is no communication across sections:

But, I think the, you know, lateral communication would really help us out because, you know, we're not in it alone....If we had more of that cross lateral like: "Oh, what are you guys doing over there? God, you guys are swamped. Maybe I can come volunteer and help out or something." You know, that we all see what you guys are doing, you know, and kind of work on building those bonds.

Listen to all group members. The subject is open to listening and allows direct subordinates to push back if they have an approach that differs from the one he has suggested.

I always tell them, if they have a problem with something I'm doing, or they have a question about something I'm doing, come talk to me about it. Because if both of us believe we are doing the right thing for the Air Force...if I believe what I'm doing is best for the Air Force and they believe that what they're doing is best for the Air Force and they come in and talk about it, we're going to come up with the right answer, we're going to come up with the best answer. They might just have to show me why what they're doing is better for the Air Force than what I was suggesting, but I'm open to them challenging me on that.

Specifically, he encourages them to do this by giving examples of when someone else did it and he responded with change. The midlevel subordinates confirmed that they feel comfortable doing this.

Evaluate group processes. (See ***Facilitates brainstorming***)

Provide appropriate mentoring. The subject has regular one-on-one mentoring meetings with the flight commanders.

Avoid micromanagement. The subject is aware of the need to avoid micromanaging: "I try to give them as much autonomy as possible to do what they need to do within their flights." One of his methods for allowing autonomy is to give his direct reports explicit guidance regarding when they should elevate an issue to him. The members of

the midlevel focus group confirmed that the subject gives them space to do their jobs, so long as they keep him informed about what's going on.

Additional management practices used by the subject

Model how you want to be treated. The subject has thought explicitly about respectful treatment of others. He said, "I've found that in every culture I've been in, you treat people the way you expect to be treated and you expect them to treat you the same way in return. And if they don't, you correct them and you move on."

Have an open-door policy. Members of the midlevel focus group indicated that the subject has an effective open-door policy: "He's very available if we have any questions at all during the day or during the week."

Manage by walking around. The subject acknowledged the value of "managing by walking around" and getting to know his people but indicated that he only has time to do it with his direct reports. The members of the junior focus group confirmed that their contact with the subject is limited. For example, one participant described being told by a supervisor that the subject had complimented her work on a project:

[The commander] said you did a great job on that project. It's like, "Oh, thanks..." He's right over there, you know? I mean, that would be the one, the main difference between the current commander and the last commander. You know, the last commander would first just ask about your personal life and then, "Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, did you get that stuff done?" So, I mean, it's one extreme of social versus business. And, it'd be nice to have somewhere in between.

Make expectations known and correct by the book. Especially with his civilian employees, the subject relies heavily on explicitly stated rules and guidelines to both set expectations and correct behavior.

I ask my labor relations people, what is the appropriate punishment for that behavior? There is actually a table in the civilian personnel books that says, if they do this or this, then the appropriate punishment ranges from this to this. I talk

to their supervisor and come up with it. It's usually, most of my corrective actions, they come into my office and we sit down and I tell them why what they did was wrong, what my expectation is, what will happen if they do it again, tell them how it's going to be documented, and how I will do follow up actions.

Impact on mission capability

This case may be more about change management than diversity management per se, but the differential impacts of change on specific groups make it diversity related. In not addressing this problem, the subject seems to be missing an opportunity to create a mission-related squadron identity to address overall change in the career field. In other words, thinking that functional stovepiping doesn't matter means that he isn't taking advantage of potential synergies that would help address the issues associated with change diversity.

Because they have different functions, the flights can and do stand alone. However, they have the common problem of serving multiple organizations, with different rules, systems, and the like, so they can be more effective in their own work if they share experiences and learn from one another. In other words, positive **teamwork** and **morale** can improve mission capability. Sometimes it's to do with individuals within a particular flight (a flight commander who has some NSPS employees in a largely GS flight learned how to manage them from other flight commanders). Other times, **teamwork** is called for across flights, especially to rectify manning issues. In this sense, the **creativity** that diversity can produce *could* help at the middle level and below in figuring out how to use the new processes to deliver what they used to deliver when they had more time and more people.

Diversity management summary

The overall climate is set by the subject's focus on mission accomplishment—doing the job right and holding people accountable when it isn't done right. He is also setting a cooperative climate among his direct reports, but this isn't filtering down. Creating a mission-focused climate is usually considered a good thing for the diversity climate [1], but in this case the lack of support for **cooperation** at lower

levels has created conditions that exacerbate the structurally different burdens of technology and process change. The mission accomplishment focus exists at the expense of facilitating relationship building within the squadron. As a result, junior members feel that they're more likely to be corrected than recognized and more likely to hear about customer complaints than compliments.

Appendix C: Air Force Diversity Statement



SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON

MAR 27 2008

MEMORANDUM FOR ALMAJCOM-FOA-DRU/CC
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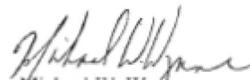
SUBJECT: Air Force Diversity Statement

As an expeditionary military force, the United States Air Force operates in a global environment in partnership with representatives of many different countries. In order to be prepared to respond to a wide variety of threats throughout the world, our Airmen must be able to fight effectively in this dynamic global environment. Air Force personnel must be prepared to successfully work with, or fight against, military forces and people of differing cultures and views. Further, to most effectively defend the nation, we must each be committed to an environment of mutual respect that allows every member of the Air Force team to achieve his or her greatest potential.

Diversity in the Air Force is broadly defined as a composite of individual characteristics, experiences, and abilities consistent with the Air Force Core Values and the Air Force Mission. Air Force diversity includes, but is not limited to, personal life experiences, geographic background, socioeconomic background, cultural knowledge, educational background, work background, language abilities, physical abilities, philosophical/spiritual perspectives, age, race, ethnicity and gender.

Air Force capabilities and warfighting skills are enhanced by diversity among its Airmen. At its core such diversity provides our force an aggregation of strengths, perspectives, and capabilities that transcends individual contributions. Air Force people who work in a diverse environment learn to maximize individual strengths and to combine individual abilities and perspectives for the good of the mission. Personal experience within such a diverse force is an important component of Air Force leadership development.

We expect Headquarters Air Force and each command to incorporate this broad concept of diversity into their operations and activities, tailoring it as specific circumstances and the law require. The United States Air Force embraces such diversity, convinced it significantly enhances the quality of our Total Force and our ability to accomplish our mission.


Michael W. Wynne

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