



MLDC Research Areas

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

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

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Department of Defense Core Values

Abstract

The commission's charter tasks it to create a definition of *diversity* that is congruent with DoD values. In this paper, we characterize the concept of core values, list DoD and Service core values, and discuss the relationship between core values and diversity in an organization. Research has shown that because an organization's core values shape how its people conduct business day to day, they also shape how its people view and relate to the organization's diversity. In particular, core values give people in an organization a shared identity that can allow them to leverage diversity for the benefit of the mission.

One of the tasks for the Military Leadership Diversity Commission (MLDC) is to develop a uniform definition of *diversity* to be used throughout the Department of Defense (DoD).¹ This task requires the commission to create a definition that is *congruent with the core values of DoD and the vision of the department for the future workforce*. As part of a series of issue papers intended to aid the commission in its task, this paper presents an overview of the implications of DoD core values for a diversity definition.

Core Values in DoD and the Services

Core values are unchanging foundational principles that guide how people in an organization will conduct their everyday business (see Collins and Porras, 1996, and Lencioni, 2002, for example, for definitions of organizational core values). An organization's core values do not require external justification. They are the internal structure that underlies interactions among its members and that guides the strategies that the organization will employ to fulfill its mission. Ultimately, they motivate how the

organization works and give a shared identity to people belonging to it.

The DoD core values are leadership, professionalism, and technical know-how (Department of Defense, n.d.). However, DoD also places particular emphasis on the special core values that everyone in uniform must live by: "duty, integrity, ethics, honor, courage, and loyalty" (Department of Defense, n.d.).

Although the DoD core-values statement indicates that uniformed military members share a common set of core values, each Service's identity is reflected in its own uniquely defined core values, which serve as common ground for all its members. For example, the Marine Corps' core values "form the bedrock of [a Marine's] character" (Sturkey, 2001), the Air Force's "tell us the price of admission to the Air Force itself" (United States Air Force, 1997), and the Army's are "what being a soldier is all about" (United States Army, n.d.). We list the core values for DoD and each of the Services below.

The Core Values of DoD and the Services²

- **DoD:** Duty, integrity, ethics, honor, courage, and loyalty.
- **Air Force:** Integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do.
- **Army:** Loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage.
- **Coast Guard:** Honor, respect, and devotion to duty.
- **Marine Corps:** Honor, courage, and commitment (Department of the Navy).
- **Navy:** Honor, courage, and commitment (Department of the Navy).

Core Values and the Impact of Diversity

Core values provide the common ground shared by all individuals in each of the Services. However, individuals also bring their personal characteristics to their organization. The interaction between the common ground

and the diversity of individual characteristics determines how an organization will function.

Research conducted for the Air Force by Farnsworth Riche, Kraus, Hodari, and Depasquale (2005) identified three factors that help manage diversity so that an organization's mission can be successfully carried out:

- explicitly managing communication
- explicitly managing conflict
- creating a shared identity focused on the mission.

Although core values permeate all three of these factors, they directly relate to the third. If a diverse group of individuals shares an identity focused on a mission, this identity will facilitate the leveraging of that diversity to serve the mission. Thus, a strong sense of organizational identity can reinforce the benefits of diversity for that organization.

In a subsequent paper, Farnsworth Riche and Kraus (2009) provided two recommendations for training leaders to manage diversity that directly relate to the issue of core values:

- Pay attention to human processes, such as the effect of social identity on work groups.
- Set a positive overall unit climate, such as a strong common identity.

These recommendations indicate that, to achieve full benefits from diversity, managers need to be mindful of how individuals view themselves within the organization and how this view affects how they interact with each other. Again, this suggests that core values play a role in framing what diversity means to an organization because core values (1) govern interactions and, therefore, how diverse groups of people interact and (2) provide individuals with an organizational identity in which they can leverage their differences.

Summary

Core values provide a strong organizational identity. In addition to providing a shared identity, core values govern how people interact within the organization and guide the actions of individuals. Both factors shape the role of diversity for mission effectiveness.

While DoD provides an umbrella set of core values for uniformed personnel, each Service brings to the table its own identity in the form of Service-specific core values. A definition of diversity that is consistent with DoD's core values should also be consistent with the Services' core values.

Notes

¹ For a full description of the congressional charter for the MLDC, please refer to the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act.

² Quoted from the Web sites of DoD and each of the Services. For more details, please see the appendix.

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