

Mastering Workforce Transformation: Strategies of Senior Executive Leaders



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Training for Senior Leaders on Force Shaping

Overview

The present document introduces the military concept of ‘force shaping’ and provides training opportunities to senior leaders in the Department of Defense (DoD) as it relates to the advancement of diversity, equity, and inclusivity in the military. Force shaping, sometimes referred to as force structuring or a reduction in force (RIF), exists to help adjust an optimal military force to “chart a course toward a better world” (Cancian, 2022, p. 2). Force shaping utilizes military strategic planning to appropriately mold a force that meets the necessary conditions of current and future missions (Cancian, 2022). This process is based not only on determining the size (i.e., end-strength) of the force itself, but effectively allocating resources, assigning role duties, and filling skill shortages within units. The current document outlines relevant military reports/programs along with applicable DoD and military policies that closely align with a senior leader’s role in diversifying the military force through positive influence. Lastly, training activities and programs are provided that facilitate informing and engaging leadership to direct, implement, and enforce the goals and objectives of a unified military force.

Policy and Definitions

The concept of force shaping is loosely defined as ‘the recruitment, retention, and reorganization of personnel in the military’ (e.g., Callander, 2004; Thomas, 2004); this can also include resource allocation (e.g., increasing, reducing, or shifting existing resources) to fit the needs of the force. Similarly, force structure is defined by the DoD as “the number, size, and structure of units” (Cancian, 2022, p. 13). More specifically, force shaping can be accomplished through either the *reduction* of personnel overages, or *shaping* (i.e. structuring) the existing personnel and/or resources in the force to meet mission requirements (Callander, 2004).

Across all military branches, force shaping is largely determined by the decisions and objectives associated with defense strategy planning and budgetary conditions. Other factors that can play a role in how force shaping manifests include national, global, and environmental conditions. For example, the presence of war (e.g., the 9/11 attacks – led to high retention rates) or the start of a pandemic (e.g., Coronavirus – unexpected layoffs) can impact force shaping efforts. Americans’ public opinion can also have a strong influence on the direction that force shaping takes, specifically regarding the *size* of the military (Cancian, 2022). For example, if the majority of the public believes the military budget should focus more on building and acquiring sophisticated technology, a force reduction may be inevitable, especially if mandated by Congress. In other words, more funds will be allocated to technology and less towards the number of military personnel.

Although the terms ‘reduction in force’ and ‘force shaping’ are often used interchangeably, they have different meanings. A reduction in force specifically refers to the *size* or end-strength of a military branch, whereas force *shaping* refers to the “*construction* of a more favorable environment through changing military relationships, the characteristics of partners, or the behavior of allies” (Wolfley, 2021, para. 2). It is equally important to note that although force shaping is influenced by a combination of varying factors and encompasses multiple facets of strategic planning, the current document mainly focuses on how senior leadership within the military can affect force shaping initiatives and in turn, how those initiatives then impact the current status of military personnel as it relates to diversity, equity, and inclusivity.

Alignment with Diversity and Inclusion DoD Policy

It is DoD policy that “the defense of the United States requires a well-trained volunteer force, military and civilian, active and reserve” (Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and

Readiness, 2018, p. 2). Moreover, it is imperative that the military support a diverse and inclusive force when recruiting top talent to achieve Total Force Readiness. As a fundamental step towards this effort, the DoD published a Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan that outlined primary goals and subsequent steps needed to be taken in order to achieve those goals. The strategic plan is continuously updated to reflect the current demographic composition of the Nation.

Under the DoD Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan of 2012-2017, Executive Order (E.O.) 13583 encourages executive departments and agencies to “develop and implement a more comprehensive, integrated, and strategic focus on diversity and inclusion as a key component of their human resource strategies” (U.S. Department of Defense, 2012). The overarching purpose of this DoD report (U.S. Department of Defense, 2012) is guided by three main goals:

- “Ensure leadership commitment to an accountable and sustained diversity effort” (p. 4)
- “Employ an aligned strategic outreach effort to identify, attract, and recruit from a broad talent pool reflective of the best of the Nation we serve” (p. 4)
- “Develop, mentor, and retain top talent from across the total force” (p. 4)

On June 25, 2021, President Biden issued E.O. 14035, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) in the Federal Workforce, which recognizes the vital role DEIA plays in “cultivating a workforce needed to mitigate the threats of tomorrow” (Department of Defense, 2022, p. 3). As a result, the DoD updated the Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan for fiscal years 2022-2023. The DoD began by providing the civilian workforce with a DEIA self-assessment to review employment practices, policies, and programs. This self-assessment led to

five recommended improvements to advance DEIA in both the civilian and military workforce (Department of Defense, 2022):

- Conduct an expansive analysis of civilian employment data within the DoD
- Standardize DEIA data collection and assessment processes
- Formalize DEIA policy in order to guide future implementations of DEIA policy and processes within Military Departments and DoD Components
- Implement centralization at the DoD level to ensure collaboration and role-responsibility for DEIA efforts
- Create more opportunities for individuals with disabilities, including reviewing programs (e.g., Workforce Recruitment Program) to ensure more availability and accessibility in the force

Furthermore, as a result of the new strategic plan, each unit would need to ensure senior leadership reinforced DEIA efforts in order to promote increased cohesion and integration as well as reinforce a strategic approach to DEIA “beyond the traditional focal areas of demographic representation to better achieve DoD’s broader mission of providing the forces necessary to secure the nation” (Department of Defense, 2022, p. 3).

Alignment with Total Force Management DoD Policy

Total Force Management, which is a large component of force shaping, is supported by the Officer and Enlisted Force Management Policy; which includes multiple DoD instructions. For example, Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 1332.32, *Selective Early Retirement or Removal of Officers on the Active-Duty List, the Warrant Officer Active-Duty List, or the Reserve Active Status List*, dated May 2, 2014, discusses the responsibilities for three types of early retirement and/or removal of military Service members from the force. The three examples

include the selective early retirement or removal (Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, 2020) of:

- “commissioned officers and warrant officers from the active duty list or warrant officer active duty list” (p. 1)
- “commissioned officers from the Reserve active status list” (p. 1)
- “officers in the Navy Reserve, serving in an active status, in the grade of rear admiral (lower half) or rear admiral and officers in the Marine Corps Reserve, serving in an active status, in the grade of brigadier general or major general” (p. 1)

Additionally, DoDI 1315.18, *Procedures for Military Personnel Assignments*, originally dated October 28, 2015, reinforces the need to ensure career attractiveness and professional development through actions such as equitable assignments and reassignments for Service members, as well as the standardization of permanent change of station (PCS) policies and tour lengths.

According to DoDI 1327.07, *Career Intermission Program (CIP) For Service Members*, dated October 18, 2018, the issuance supports retention efforts through providing policies and procedures from Section 710 of Title 10, United States Code (U.S.C.) as well as providing a Career Intermission Program (CIP). Essentially, CIP can provide Service members the ability to temporarily transition from active duty to the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) so that they may pursue personal or professional growth outside the service; the CIP also ensures a mechanism for their seamless return to active duty. In essence, “the long-term intent of this program is to retain the valuable experience and training Service members possess that might otherwise be lost by permanent separation” (Secretary of the Army, 2021, p. 1). In order to keep track of the required reporting components of the CIP for each branch, the Career Intermission Program Report

Template is utilized. Similarly, DoDI 1332.45, *Retention Determinations for Non-Deployable Service Members*, originally dated July 30, 2018, also provides guidance and instruction regarding non-deployable Service members as well as deployment data and retention of the Total Force. To coincide with this directive, the Monthly Non-Deployable Report Template is utilized to review and manage Total Force Readiness with regards to retention. This template categorizes the reasons why Service members may not be deployable and provides a DoD total monthly count of the end strength of all military branches. The template also includes individuals who are approved for retention, and Service members who are deployable but with limitations. To examine some of the specific criteria that must be met for any individual to be cleared for deployment, please review the Army Directive 2018-22 Retention Policy and DoDI 1332.45.

Finally, the DoDI 1336.07, *Management of Personnel Tempo*, dated December 28, 2020, “establishes policy, assigns responsibilities, and prescribes procedures for the reporting and management of personnel tempo (PERSTEMPO) deployment and non-deployment events” (Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, 2020, p. 1). Deployment events relate to operations, exercises, unit training, and mission support *not at or near* the Service member’s homeport (HP) or permanent duty station (PDS). Conversely, non-deployment related events relate to individual training, hospitalization, disciplinary actions, and duty in garrison *at or near* the Service member’s HP or PDS, among many other events.

Alignment with DoD Initiatives and Directives

The DoD Directive (DoDD) 1020.02E, *Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity in the DoD*, dated June 1, 2018, showcases that diversity and inclusion must be integrated across the DoD, in order to attract, recruit, develop, and retain diverse personnel as it relates to the Diversity and Inclusion Management Program, Military Equal Opportunity (MEO), and Equal

Employment Opportunity (EEO). Furthermore, DoDD 1020.02E directs the DOD to maximize “the productive capacity of those recruited, hired, retained, and promoted through diversity and inclusion” (Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, 2018, p. 2). To assist in these efforts, DoDI 1020.05, *DoD Diversity and Inclusion Management Program*, issued on September 9, 2020, mandates a Diversity and Inclusion Management Program to: 1) promote a diverse workforce, 2) promote an inclusive culture, and 3) use data to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. DoDI 1020.05 further requires training to include DEIA messaging that emphasizes the importance of a workforce with diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and expertise to best address complex global security challenges.

Both the DoDI 1332.43 and DoDD 1332.46 showcase opportunities for Service members that may be impacted by force shaping. For example, DoDI 1332.43, *Voluntary Separation Pay (VSP) Program for Service Members*, establishes policy, assigns responsibilities, and provides procedures for the administration of the Voluntary Separation Pay Program along with payment of VSP, and benefits to service. Furthermore, the policy recommends that Military Departments should use VSP authority to minimize involuntary separations as a part of force shaping measures. Military Departments “must make every effort to use voluntary programs before using involuntary separation authorities to separate qualified Service members who, in accordance with existing policies, would normally be allowed to continue until eligible to retire” (Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, 2017, p. 3). Along the same lines, DoDI 1332.46, *Temporary Early Retirement Authority (TERA) for Service Members*, establishes policy, assigns responsibilities, and provides procedures for the administration of TERA. More specifically, TERA can serve as a force management tool “to retire Service members who are excess to service short-term and long-term needs, and who, absent the availability of TERA,

would have been expected to pursue and qualify for a 20-year retirement” (Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, 2018, p.3).

Alignment with Secretary of Defense Memos

The U.S. Secretary of Defense issued a memorandum, *Actions to Improve Racial and Ethnic Diversity and Inclusion in the U.S. Military*, dated December 07, 2020, detailing 15 recommendations to improve diversity and inclusion within the DoD and increase equal opportunity for all members of the Armed Forces. The recommendations center around the topics related to data-driven recruitment and retention policies, a diverse and inclusive hiring process based on current demographic trends, and strategies to increase the number of qualified Service members and Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) applicants. These 15 recommendations are listed in great detail in the *Department of Defense Board on Diversity and Inclusion Report: Recommendations to Improve Racial and Ethnic Diversity and Inclusion in the U.S. Military* (2020).

Additionally, the U.S. Secretary of Defense issued a memorandum, *Strengthening Economic Security in the Force*, dated November 17, 2021, detailing procedures to aid in strengthening economic security in the force as it relates to financial hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and competitive housing markets (Secretary of Defense, 2021). The memorandum provides Service members with the ability to receive temporary housing allowances and an extension of temporary lodging expenses, specifically where housing shortages exist. The primary goal of the memorandum is to create and increase stability for both Service members and their families.

Another force shaping effort comes from the U.S. Secretary of Defense memorandum, *Expansion of Temporary Authority to Immediately Appoint Retired Members of the Armed*

Forces to Certain Positions in the Department of Defense, Including Major Range and Test Facility Bases, dated July 28, 2022. The memorandum states that due to recruitment or supply needs, Service members may be immediately appointed to certain competitive Service positions to close that gap (Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, July 2022, pp. 2-3).

Alignment with Service Specific Policies

Army. Force Shaping is a part of a four-stage process referred to as the Department of Defense Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution Process (Yuengert, 2020). The Defense Planning Guidance (DPG) is utilized in phase one to begin making major decisions about the structure and development of the force. In order to minimize the negative impacts of force shaping, it is recommended that senior leaders utilize the Sustainable Readiness (SR) Process/Model to effectively shape and equip military forces with resources needed to fulfill future mission requirements (Department of the Army, 2019; Yuengert, 2020). The SR process/model was designed to assist with maintaining Total Force Readiness by providing quarterly predictions related to force planning factors (e.g., budgetary limitations, resource allocation). Army service members are most affected by force shaping initiatives that result in the reduction of personnel (Cancian, 2022).

Air Force. The Air force offers numerous force-shaping early release programs and opportunities to Airmen that may otherwise experience a layoff as a result of force shaping. These early release programs include waiving some active-duty service commitments so that Airmen can separate or retire without any negative backlash (Thomas, 2004). Additionally, some bonus payback requirements may also be waived (Thomas, 2004), and Airmen may leave early but preserve operational capability to re-enlist in the future.

One example of a specific transfer program includes the FY21 Expanded PALACE CHASE Program that provides Airmen an opportunity to apply for a transfer from active military service to an Air Reserve Component position (Air Force Personnel Center Public Affairs, 2021). Another example of a transitioning service is the Operation Blue to Green Program, which “gives an option for Airmen [and Sailors] chosen for separation the chance to transfer to the Army and remain on active duty” instead (U.S. Army Welfares, 2015), with a large monetary bonus for applicants that are accepted into the program.

Navy. The 21st Century Sailor and Marine initiative was established in 2012 and “provides our Sailors [and Marines] and [their] families with the support network, programs, resources, training, and skills needed to overcome adversity and thrive” (MyNavy HR, n.d.a; The Maritime Executive, 2012). Sailor 360, the Navy’s newest leadership training program, was developed to provide Sailors an additional opportunity to learn the skills needed to become professionally competent leaders capable of making decisions with integrity (U.S. Pacific Fleet Public Affairs, 2019). The Sailor 360 program includes quality curricula, but it also relies on candid group discussions, interactive presentations, and direct talks with leadership.

Marine Corps. The Marine Corps’ *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan*, dated May 2021, supports the overall strategic landscape to promote DEIA and specifically reinforces the initiative to increase diversity, equity, and inclusivity within the branch of the Marine Corps. As part of this 5-year plan, the decision was made to also re-activate the Diversity Review Board. As a part of the Marine Corps Strategic Plan for *Talent Management 2030* (U.S. Marine Corps, 2021 November), three of the main objectives include:

- Matching individual talents with organizational needs and “provid[ing] incentives to retain those in specialty roles and high-performing Service members” (U.S. Marine Corps, November 2021).
- Developing evidence-based and appropriately validated technical measures to assess Marine job performance.
- Proactively assisting individuals to enhance their skills in order to make career advancements and perform at their best both physically and mentally.

Developed to coincide with force shaping events, the Marine Corps Temporary Early Retirement Authority (TERA) Program “provides an overview of the manpower force shaping authorities and tools Manpower and Reserve Affairs (M&RA) plans to use to conduct its active-duty end strength reduction in accordance with Force Design Phase One requirements” (U.S. Marine Corps, 2020, p. 1-2). Furthermore, the M&RA will increase the use of inter-service transfers (IST) and voluntary force shaping tools such as the TERA program and Time-in-Grade Waivers. The use of involuntary tools may be utilized if the mission calls for it (U.S. Marine Corps, 2020).

Impacts on Individuals

The concept of force shaping is not meant to be positive or negative; it is simply a process that is followed by all military branches to achieve Total Force Readiness (e.g., Wolfley, 2021). Part of the force shaping focuses on retraining personnel into careers where they are needed most: filling critical shortages, contracting positions to private industry, and shifting positions from military personnel to civilian employees (Thomas, 2004). This in turn can improve diversity, which helps maintain a competitive advantage. However, the impacts associated with force shaping on individuals and the organization itself are far more complicated and result in both advantageous

and disadvantageous outcomes, depending on the strategies applied and the perspectives examined.

For example, as a result of military force shaping, a reduction in force (RIF) may occur and the possibility of being laid off becomes very real for service members and other staff. Which rank or career gets cut is determined by various metrics, such as end-strength goals, foreign policy, the need for new technology and skill, and other crucial factors required to meet deployment demands (e.g., Guina, 2020). Additionally, both officers and enlisted service members are impacted by an RIF. Therefore, it is crucial that senior leaders ensure that objective measures are used to dictate the specific individuals that should be cut.

Personnel can prepare for a reduction in force in multiple ways. The first step should be to explore the programs available, as leaving the force is often only one of several options. If personnel are leaving the force, they can opt to receive Involuntary Separation Pay (ISP) in the form of bonus pay, to account for unexpected layoffs (Guina, 2020). In contrast, Voluntary Separation Pay (VSP) also accounts for unexpected layoffs, but in this instance an early or voluntary exit from the military is approved in exchange for bonus pay. A final option is to file for any service-specific program that provides financial assistance to ex-Service members (of all ranks) who meet eligibility criteria (e.g., Unemployment Compensation Program; Department of Defense Military Compensation, n.d.). It is important to note that not all Service members qualify for these options as there are certain restrictions and required criteria to meet. However, there are options that allow individuals to remain in the Armed Forces without being cut. For example, Air Force personnel may still continue their service by voluntarily transferring into the National Guard or Reserves (Callander, 2004; Thomas, 2004). Additionally, the Air Force offers current Airmen in overpopulated career fields the opportunity to cross-train and learn the skills

necessary for roles with severe shortages (Callander, 2004). Although it is not possible to completely avoid force shaping, a final step to reduce your chance of being cut is to be proactive and increase your value and contribution to the Armed Forces (Guina, 2020). Service members who meet their promotion schedules, take additional education and leadership courses, and achieve difficult benchmarks are less likely to be chosen for separation from the military. On the other hand, failing fitness exams, incomplete training, and numerous infractions on personnel records (e.g., DUI) will likely lead to being cut (Guina, 2020).

Outside factors can also impact force shaping efforts on individuals. For example, racial tension in the workplace may be an impediment to productivity and motivation (Cha & Roberts, 2019). Additionally, repeated organizational change (i.e., restructuring and reorganization) can impact employee mental health (e.g., Fløvik et al., 2019). More precisely, Fløvik et al. (2019) suggest that mental health effects are derived more so at the work-unit level, with regards to reorganization, downsizing, and layoffs. For example, individuals that remain employed after a downsizing event can experience feelings of guilt and uneasiness as a result (e.g., Rhodes & Cooper, 2013). Employees are also “more likely to listen to rumors or make their own assumptions about key company decisions” if they are unaware of reorganization efforts (Nouri, 2018, para. 9). Therefore, it’s important for senior leaders to reinforce effective communication *at all levels* (i.e., intra- and inter-communication).

Individuals can also experience anxiety when entering a new organization (e.g., Albrecht et al., 2015). Although military personnel are used to moving positions as well as transferring to various locations, the internal anxiety and stress can still take a toll. Therefore, in order to reduce anxiety, senior leaders should instill a sense of excitement regarding these changes in order to fortify future work engagement and reduce overall stress (e.g., Albrecht et al., 2015).

Senior leaders within the Armed Forces can further influence the impacts of force shaping. They not only have the ability, but the responsibility to govern decisions that affect current Service members. For example, based on the security and budgetary needs of the nation, senior leaders are the ones who construct a defense strategy to ensure sustainability for the foreseeable future (Cancian, 2022; Miller, 2020). Ultimately, force shaping is a constant tug-of-war and sacrifice between multiple strategic plans; for example, one goal may be to maintain end-strength despite a decrease in budget, at the cost of losing modernization. Therefore, senior leaders must be proactive in determining the needs of the organization to ensure that any changes and impacts are balanced to maintain total force readiness.

Senior leaders can also minimize the effects of force shaping. One positive approach is transformational leadership (e.g., inspirational motivation, individualized focus, etc.), which has been shown to reinforce positive job satisfaction and group morale (e.g., Office of People Analytics, 2020). For example, research shows that “employees from a large, multinational firm undergoing a merger showed increased acquisition acceptance, job satisfaction, and performance in response to transformational leadership” (e.g., Nemanich & Keller, 2007). Therefore, in order for force shaping to be efficient and to mitigate as many negative impacts as possible, senior leaders need to showcase strong transformational leadership qualities.

In addition to ensuring senior leaders take a transformational leadership approach to how they delegate, it is vital that they are continually involved with mentorship and coaching for subordinate leaders. The mentorship and development of subordinate leaders is a crucial step in shaping future leaders to make decisions that not only protect our Nation and its citizens, but also keep the best interests of each Service member in mind. For example, some research suggests that mentorship can be a powerful tool to support minorities in receiving promotion and

advancement (Edmondson, 2012). In addition to mentoring, the coaching of subordinate leaders promotes self-awareness as it pertains to strategic goals, such as the retention and recruitment of Service members (e.g., MyNavy HR, n.d.b). Coaching can facilitate open, honest, and respectful communication among all levels of the organizational hierarchy. Moreover, coaching can provide bi-directional feedback and collaborative communication in order to foster individual growth and performance, ultimately enhancing “warfighting capability and Force lethality” (MyNavy HR, n.d.b). As a result of mentorship and coaching, senior leaders can pass down invaluable knowledge on force shaping efforts to subordinate leaders, who can utilize that information to strengthen their own units.

As previously mentioned, the implementation of transformational leadership through force shaping efforts can result in higher job satisfaction and morale, as well as the promotion of strong, qualified personnel (e.g., Nemanich & Keller, 2007). On the other hand, when supervisors engage in toxic leadership behaviors such as deception, degradation, and acts of aggression, negative individual outcomes associated with force shaping are more likely to be reported, including reports of lower job satisfaction and morale (e.g., Office of People Analytics, 2020). For example, women of color are likely to experience “double jeopardy” and are at risk of harassment based on race and sex simultaneously (Office of People Analytics, 2020). Additionally, toxic leaders can recommend changes that negatively impact specific demographics, especially minority groups (Fernandez de Bobadilla Lorenzo et al., 2017), whether intentionally or unintentionally. Toxic behaviors can often lead to negative attitudes towards supervisors (Ivey & Kline, 2010) and the force as a whole if the military branch does not overtly express support and respect for all their Service members equally and fairly. Thus, individuals voluntarily leave the Armed Forces because the benefits of serving do not outweigh

the associated costs they personally experience, resulting in a significant retention issue for the military. Therefore, if a senior leader is toxic, they are less likely to assess individual and Force needs reliably, and may make recommendations to remove or reorganize individuals based on variables influenced by unconscious biases or even worse, intentional discrimination such as racism and/or sexism.

Impacts on Organization/Unit

In terms of organizational impacts, force shaping affects the Armed Forces in numerous ways. It is the responsibility of senior leaders to carefully examine these impacts and develop policy and procedures that provide preventive and protective measures to reduce the negative outcomes of military force shaping. With preventive measures in mind, the DoD should “develop Defense planning scenarios and planning assumptions for a range of near-, mid-, and long-term conflicts and crises” so that they are prepared to tackle unexpected challenges that directly go against initial strategic plans (Cancian, 2022).

There are multiple, negative organizational impacts that can occur as a result of force shaping efforts. For example, there are associated financial implications for establishing training and re-training personnel. More specifically, Myers (2022) notes that “the cost to recruit and train a new service member varies, but the Army — the largest service — estimates it spends about \$15,000 to bring someone into the service and another \$50,000 to \$75,000 to prepare them to join their first unit, depending on their job” (para. 13). If new personnel are consistently being re-trained due to a reduction in force, budgetary conditions are significantly affected and in turn, less funds are allocated to resources required to meet mission demands. Additionally, removing personnel or allocating personnel to different career fields can lead to an increased workload for remaining individuals. Interestingly, some research suggests that increased workload is

associated with a negative attitude, including boredom (Teng et al., 2017). Moreover, increased boredom correlates with turnover intentions (Teng et al., 2017). In other words, high workloads can lead to frustration and stagnant behavior, which in turn can impact an individual's likelihood to leave the organization.

On top of that, some research suggests that a small percentage of individuals are likely to leave their respective company due to organizational restructures (e.g., Peters, 2019). However, restructuring can also lead to a reduction in negative public opinion and thus, prevent attrition. For example, in 2015, Volkswagen sold their vehicles “with an emissions compliance defeat device installed to bypass environmental regulation in the USA” (p. 4). Not only did their sales and stock price decline as a result of the public frustration, but fines and legal settlements began to pile on. Consequently, the company had to undergo a major restructuring process, with a primary goal of “enabling the company to redefine its focus and simplify the leadership organization so that the company could make more efficient, timely and smarter decisions” (p. 8). For example, the new CEO restructured leadership by cutting managerial roles in half, as well as reducing compensation of remaining leadership. This served as a means to change public perception while simultaneously offsetting the financial burden of the scandal. As a result of the restructure, the company was able to overcome the scandal and build a new image for themselves. Although this example is specific to a corporation, it can also be applied to military populations as it highlights how important it is for senior leaders to balance the perception of the public with the needs of the force.

Senior leaders can also assess organizational and personnel needs by reflecting on their own leadership, processes and procedures, and reinforcement of excellence (U.S. Marine Corps, 2021, May). This is important as leadership is a critical factor in reinforcing a positive

organizational climate (e.g., Aryati et al., 2018). In addition to avoiding toxic leadership behaviors, senior leaders also want to avoid passive leadership behaviors as these can also be detrimental to unit cohesion. In fact, passive leaders do not behave like leaders; they avoid conflict and confrontation, they constantly disappear when needed, and they do not support and back-up Service members in their assigned unit (Office of People Analytics, 2020).

The carefully considered decisions of transformational leaders results in a demographically diverse force; a well-rounded group of individuals that includes top talent. Transformational leadership behaviors may also lead to improved hiring practices and an equal opportunity to apply to all career fields, including specialty roles, as transformational leaders can serve as a change agent for an organization (e.g., Northouse, 2019). In the long term, this may also lead to improved performance models that reflect the needs of Service members while keeping generational differences in mind to ensure all personnel are accommodated accordingly. Another positive organizational outcome of supportive leadership is the ability to enact encouraging policy [change] – this requires the constant examining, re-assessing, and adapting of current DoD policies (e.g., Office of People Analytics, 2020). For example, on August 24, 2021, The Secretary of Defense issued a memorandum that all members of the Armed Forces would be required to take the COVID-19 vaccine (Secretary of Defense, August 2021). Additionally, the *Executive Order on Requiring Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination for Federal Employees* required all federal employees to take the COVID-19 vaccine (The White House, 2021). These policies were implemented to protect personnel in the Force, which would ensure mission readiness (e.g., preventing transmission of sickness); if individuals did not want to take the vaccine (e.g., refused the vaccine), they would be separated from their post/position without dishonorable discharge. After about two years, the Secretary of Defense issued a follow up

memorandum rescinding the mandate for the COVID-19 vaccine for military members (Secretary of Defense, January 2023). DoD policies are also enacted and amended to protect Service members in support of a diverse and inclusive military force. For example, DoDI 1300.28, *In-Service Transition for Transgender Service Members*, change effective December, 2022, in accordance with the authority in DoDD 5124.02, mandates that all Service members be treated with respect and dignity, held to the same standards, and provides Transgender Service members with a process to transition and oversight of associated medical treatment plans while serving in the Armed Forces (Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, December 2022). These examples showcase how senior leaders can reinforce key institutional functions of force shaping (e.g., molding the force to meet current and future needs) through the enforcement of policy and culture change. Finally, knowledge of training and education can be passed through as a result of encouraging leadership. Senior leaders can teach new Service members about the history and core values of their military branch, and how changes related to force shaping fit into the bigger picture, leading to increased unit cohesion and feelings of belongingness (Air Force, 2014).

On the other hand, toxic and passive leadership styles can aggravate the processes and organizational outcomes of force shaping. Adverse consequences can include the loss of knowledge/expertise on training and education, often because its importance is either downplayed or unrecognized by leaders who are less than prepared, or unwilling to raise their concerns. Furthermore, the actions of senior leaders that do not prioritize the well-being and growth of Service members eventually create a workplace climate that thrives on confusion, lack of confidence and counterproductive work behaviors (Aryati et al., 2018), both in times of certainty and in times of change. This leads to a lack of diversity and weakened force readiness,

and creates negative perceptions of the military for both Service members and the American public. A negative image associated with the military is problematic, as this can impact funding and where the public believes funding should go, which could result in further need of force shaping. Moreover, it hinders recruitment efforts. Instead, a diverse military should be advertised so that a comprehensive pool of talented individuals are enticed to join. This would provide the DoD with the ability to select the individuals best-suited to fulfill both the short-term and long-term needs of the force, allowing for more adaptability as the needs of the nation shift.

To ensure a workforce that is ready and best-placed to anticipate and adapt to the demands of an ever-changing world, senior leaders must ensure that their decisions are informed and data-driven. Quarterly and annual reports on applicant demographics and results (regarding both recruitment and promotion) are necessary to ensure practices are equitable and provide the Service with the most qualified individuals. Furthermore, leadership must take the initiative to develop evidence-based measurement tools to examine interpersonal/soft skills (e.g. professionalism, emotional intelligence) in addition to technical/hard skills when considering duty assignments and promotions. This is relevant because both are considered valuable skills, yet soft skills are often ignored in favor of hard skills that rely on performance standards alone (Webb, 2020, para. 1). As a result, the best individual(s) for the role may not be recruited and the strength of the unit as a whole does not meet the requirements of Total Force Readiness. Moreover, all relevant variables and outcomes should be tracked and securely stored in a data bank, so that lessons can be learned from previous interventions. In order to maximize the usefulness and validity of this information, both the variables and outcomes should be measured using evidence-based methods. Finally, all military data collected (e.g., tendency to serve,

accession, retention, etc.) should consistently and continually be viewed with racial/ethnic variability in mind to fortify a diverse military force (e.g., Blue Star Families, 2021).

Antecedents

The military exists to protect and defend the people of our Nation. According to Michael Dominguez, USAF's Assistant Secretary for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, force shaping exists to "transform that force so that it can more effectively meet the demands of the Global War on Terror" as U.S. security priorities continue to shift (Callander, 2004). In alignment with the Air Force, the Marine Corps believes that "only as a unified force, free from discrimination, racial inequality, and prejudice, can we fully demonstrate our core values, and serve as the elite warfighting organization America requires and expects us to be" (U.S. Marine Corps, 2021, May). Thus, the DoD must continuously transform as the needs and demands of national and global security do, while leveraging diversity and inclusion.

History of Force Shaping

It was only after the end of the Cold War that the term 'force shaping' was codified into U.S. foreign policy documents, and not until the mid-2000s that it officially became an accepted and recognized type of military operation (Wolfley, 2021). As the world continues to grow and advance, the Armed Forces must adapt to these changes through a restructuring process. More specifically, there may be new threats from non-state actors that require more personnel or new technologies to appropriately and successfully defend the Nation. Thus, the military may need to increase their size and recruit additional Service members to meet these new challenges as a part of force shaping.

During World War II, the United States of America still relied on their horse-bound Cavalry Regiment, and by the time the Vietnam War concluded, the military had adopted the

Air-Land Battle doctrine that allowed Army ground units to work hand-in-hand with the Air Force to create tactical openings (O'Brien, 2016). This illustrates the incredible difference in resources, skills, and abilities that was needed from one conflict to the next. Since the end of the Cold War, three administrations (Bush 1989-1993, Clinton 1993-2001, and Bush 2001-2009) attempted but failed to transform the force (Worley, 2013). As the major threats to our Nation change, military force shaping methods must also change with it. Nevertheless, the force may encounter a new and unfamiliar threat, which will require clear vision and masterful leadership to successfully execute the transformation process; thus, the role of senior leaders is paramount.

Service Specific Examples of Force Shaping

An annual report was created by the Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS) International Security Program, *U.S. Military Forces*, dated March, 2022, on “how changes in the defense budget and in the security environment are shaping the size and composition of the force, and what those changes mean in terms of cost, strategy, and risk” (Cancian, 2022, p. 3). The change in U.S. force shaping plans over time can be viewed in Figure 1 below.

The Administration’s FY 2022 Plan for Force Structure

Table 1 shows the evolution of force structure plans.

Table 1: Force Structure Targets

	Obama FY 2020 Goal	FY 2021	Trump FY 2025 Goal	FY 2022 Budget
Active-Duty End Strength	1,000,500	1,351,000	1,361,000	1,346,400
Guard and Reserve End Strength	739,1000	800,200	806,200	799,500
Regular/Reserve Army End Strength	450,000/ 530,000	485,900/ 526,300	490,500/ 529,300	485,000/ 525,500
Army Brigade Combat Teams: Total, (Active/Reserve)	56 (30/26)	58 (31/27)	58 (31/27)	58 (31/27)
Navy Carriers	11	11	11	11
Navy Ships	295	306	315	297
Air Force TacAir A/C (4th/5th Generation)	1,101 (699/402)	1,194 (939/255)	~1,200	1,207 (904/303)
USMC End Strength	180,000	181,200	184,100	178,500

Source: Author's compilation through external resources.

Note: "End strength" is the number of military personnel in the service at the end of the fiscal year (September 30). Excludes Space Force since it is so new and without these historical data.

Figure 1. Force Structure Targets. From Cancian, M. (2022). *U.S. Military Forces in FY 2022: Peering into the Abyss*. Center for Strategic & International Studies.

Navy. According to the CSIS Report entitled *U.S. Military Forces in FY 2022* (2022), Navy end-strength continues to remain stable, however, personnel within the Navy Reserve continues to decline while the Navy Civilian Workforce steadily increases. The Biden administration provides support to expand the Navy, but a limited budget makes it difficult to reach current fleet architecture goals. Fleet size is crucial for naval deployments, but due to these budget restrictions and a constrained shipbuilding plan, the overall ship count continues to decline (Cancian, 2022). Moreover, the Navy has allocated funds to purchase more expensive ships due to their size and capability. This increases the strength of each individual ship, but not the manpower of the fleet as a whole. Despite this shortcoming, the Navy continues to adjust its

strategic plans to ensure that it meets global day-to-day demands and Total Force Readiness (Cancian, 2022).

Air Force. The Air Force originally had difficulty keeping their retention rates high, so they recruited more people than needed without serious consideration for the skills those individuals had. As a result, the Air Force had to adjust their force structure by “retraining people into careers where they are needed more, outsourcing jobs to private industry, and converting some jobs from military people to Air Force civilian workers” (Callander, 2004; Thomas, 2004). Eventually, both military personnel levels and aircraft inventories in the Air Force leveled out and by fiscal year 2022, have remained unchanged (Cancian, 2022). However, due to high costs the Air Force is not able to purchase enough new aircraft to meet long-term operational demands. Moreover, budgetary limitations prevent the Air Force from obtaining enough remotely operated aircrafts, and thus, unmanned fleets have plateaued at about 6.5% of the total force (Cancian, 2022). Additionally, as a result of the pandemic, commercial airlines drastically reduced the number of new pilots they hired, which subsequently reduced the Air Force’s pilot shortage for the time being (Cancian, 2022). Overall, Air Force active-duty and reserve end-strength remains strong, with a slight increase in civilian personnel.

Army. According to the *U.S. Military Forces in FY 2022* (2022) report, “three opposing dynamics pull the future size and shape of the Army: guidance to focus on China, demands of day-to-day operations, and potential *recruiting challenges*” (p. 22). Related to retention issues in the Army, Soldiers who have been approved to transfer post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to family members will be treated the same as other force shaping separations (DOD News, 2018). In essence, the transferability of education benefits while continuing to serve is a DoD retention

incentive. Soldiers are still able to transfer benefits despite the inability to fulfill service requirements as a direct result of force shaping decisions.

Marine Corps. Upon his promotion to commandant, General Berger stressed the importance of a new force structure and proposed a redesign plan for the Marine Corps. General David Berger's *Force Design 2020* initiative "aims to restore the Marine Corps to its naval roots after two decades of operations ashore, invest in capabilities focused on great power conflict in the Pacific, and divest forces unneeded for these conflicts" (Cancian, 2022, p. 85). In order to achieve full operating capability by 2030, Berger's force shaping plans include the removal of the Marine's tanks and heavy bridging equipment to divert funding to modernization efforts and to pay for new capabilities/weapons against the fight with China (Cancian, 2022). Moreover, Berger's reshaping plans include decreasing active-duty end-strength by 12,000 by cutting units and personnel. Although plans surrounding the Marine Corps' ground force units are still experimental, General Berger's goal is to move towards a 100 percent fill of its infantry units (Cancian, 2022). Despite a decrease in end-strength, Berger believes this shift in allocation of resources will lead to "greater lethality" and thus, a significant increase in Marine Corps' readiness.

Each branch of the military should create a standardized and transparent selection process, and simultaneously work towards reducing Service member overages and filling career shortages. Force shaping tasks may be needed to fill these gaps in order to meet specific mission requirements. Additionally, research suggests that "agencies who fail in balancing self-interest with existing perspectives and concerns of military [veteran] employees, might find themselves unable to maximize the contribution and commitment" of those employees (Liggans et al., 2018, p. 146). Force shaping in the military is an evolving process and it is vital that Service members

welcome and adapt to these changes. Therefore, senior leaders must “learn and implement appropriate strategies for instituting policies and practices that account for the varied perspectives of diverse groups” (Liggans et al., 2018, p. 146) to ensure Service member efficacy and an effective total force.

Risk and Protective Factors

The current work discusses risk and protective factors of individual Service members and the military as a whole as it relates to DEIA efforts, and the role of senior leadership in mitigating force shaping outcomes.

Risk Factors

Experiencing harassment and the accompanying stress leads to the diminished psychological health of Service members. This puts the entire force at risk during deployments because research shows individuals facing serious mental stressors are less likely to make informed and sound decisions, which are integral to the success of military missions (e.g., Blanc et al., 2018; de Graaff et al., 2019; Kligyte et al., 2013). Moreover, and as previously mentioned, toxic or passive leadership behaviors also negatively impact members of the Armed Forces and may lead to lower levels of moral courage, as well as less identification with the core values of the organization (Hannah et al., 2013) within specific military units.

General barriers to increasing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) in the military include misleading or inaccurate demographic data and/or generational trends as it relates to force shaping. For example, leaders with less perspective may make less informed decisions regarding force shaping efforts. Specifically, research shows that when Service members are in high-intensity decision-making situations, those individuals will tend to draw on their own previous experience to make decisions and engage in less critical thinking (de Graaff

et al., 2019). A leader could make a decision based upon their own experiences - but in doing so, would not see the impact it has on other individuals. Therefore, it is imperative that senior leaders be open to new perspectives to ensure force shaping efforts are not stagnant.

When leaders practice and promote uniqueness and belonging, it increases positive perceptions of work group performance, especially among minorities (e.g., Jin et al., 2017). Conversely, research has shown that minority groups may feel discouraged to apply for a promotion or cross-train for another career field due to their racial/ethnic background, despite having met all the requirements of the position (Blue Star Families, 2021). Moreover, minority groups may lose hope and confidence that they can make any significant advancements within their careers without the support and encouragement of senior leadership (e.g., Barkhuizen et al., 2022). Therefore, the assumption could be made that if leaders do not reinforce these inclusive behaviors, especially as they make decisions regarding personnel, minority population work performance may decrease.

As a result, subordinates that do not see leadership engaging in behaviors that encourage inclusiveness and belonging would be more likely to separate from the force, whether voluntarily as their decreased performance may lead them to become an “unofficial candidate” for potential layoffs, or involuntarily as research suggests that “diversity climate, inclusion, and job satisfaction are key ingredients that influence whether or not an employee intends to stay with an organization” (Brimhall et al., 2017, p. 85). For example, research suggests that active-duty and Veteran family members of color “consider racial/ethnic discrimination in family conversations regarding whether or not to remain in Service” (Blue Star Families, 2021, p. 7). Another barrier is the socio-economic status (SES) of future and current Service members, as well as their families. For example, “military spouses of color report a greater need for two household

incomes than their white, non-Hispanic peers, and they experience substantially higher unemployment rates and lower earnings than their civilian counterparts" (Blue Star Families, 2021, p. 48). Moreover, military spouses can face difficulty gaining employment or career progression, due to factors such as "Service member day-to-day job demands, lack of affordable child care, frequent PCS moves, and difficulty pursuing further education" (Blue Star Families, 2021, p. 52). Thus, certain groups may not have the same opportunities to further their education in comparison to other majority groups.

Protective Factors

Not surprisingly, the opposite can be said for fostering an inclusive and diverse work environment. Specifically, Chung et al. (2021) highlighted a positive correlation between inclusive human resource (HR) practices that reinforced belonging (e.g., development opportunities, quality of services, etc.) and the ability to attract and retain employees. An inclusive climate can also lead to an increase in innovative practices and job satisfaction (Brimhall et al., 2017). Therefore, inclusive, supportive environments that encourage personnel uniqueness and foster a sense of belonging can promote total force readiness and unit cohesion. Other protective factors that can reduce the likelihood of valuable personnel leaving are work-life balance (e.g., Jaharuddin & Zainol, 2019) and self-efficacy (e.g., Karakus et al., 2021) programs. For example, Karakus et al. (2021) suggest that when individuals have high self-efficacy they may "feel more competent to handle stressful situations at work, and consequently are less likely to experience burnout and depression" (p. 247).

Inclusive leadership in a diverse work environment is associated with a variety of positive outcomes such as empowerment (Hollander, 2009) and psychologically safe work environments (Edmondson, 1999). For example, when employees feel heard and supported by

leadership, they are more likely to believe that employment decisions and assessments are fair (e.g., Hoang et al., 2022), which is important during times of change. Moreover, research suggests that effective diversity management from leadership is associated with higher organizational performance (Choi & Rainey, 2010).

Cross-cultural competence in the military can be defined as “the knowledge, attitudes, and behavioral repertoire and skill sets that military members require to accomplish all given tasks and missions involving cultural diversity” (Hajjar, 2010, p. 249). Moreover, cross-cultural competence is required within the diversity and inclusion landscape (e.g., Kaufmann et al., 2014). Therefore, culturally competent leaders can promote diversity and inclusion policies as it relates to force shaping efforts. For example, culturally competent leaders can reinforce both uniqueness and accountability within an organization, encourage belonging through strong orientation programs, and promote intentional recruitment of diverse individuals (Chung et al., 2021). Culturally competent leaders can also promote a wider perspective, applying different approaches and solutions to challenges in force shaping, in order to create an environment that is safe for dissent (e.g., The Military Leader, n.d.), and foster team alignment and total readiness as a result. When leaders do not allow room for dissent, they reinforce an environment that creates “a team full of Yes Men who not only fail to speak up when they disagree with mundane issues, but are also trained to remain quiet in the face of critical decisions” (The Military Leader, n.d., para. 3). This in turn can reduce job satisfaction, stifle creativity, and reinforce toxic positivity (e.g., Lyon, 2021).

As previously mentioned, transformational leadership can enhance job satisfaction and morale (e.g., Office of People Analytics, 2020) as well as performance and acceptance (e.g., Nemanich & Keller, 2007). Further, transformational leadership behaviors can serve as

predictive indicators of operational readiness (e.g., situational awareness and interpersonal influence) in military officers (e.g., Eid et al., 2004).

Training and Force Considerations

Education and training are essential to force readiness. “The Army defines professional development and education as a deliberate, continuous cycle of ‘education, assessment, and feedback’” (Department of the Army, 2017, p. 5). It requires Soldiers and civilians to attend training and education seminars to further develop their careers (Department of the Army, 2017). Additionally, new leaders have a responsibility to shift the workplace culture to one that emphasizes increased diversity, inclusion, and equity (e.g., Marine Corps, *Talent Management 2030*). Therefore, evidence-based training and intervention strategies are highly recommended, as an alignment already exists within the military space. Moreover, a data-driven approach allows agencies to assess activities and outcomes, and then apply evidence-based practices, programs, and policies to advance the DEIA initiative. The following recommendations are provided to enable senior leaders to improve the overall experience of force shaping while limiting potential adverse effects.

General Recommendations

The DoD Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plans (e.g., 2012-2017; 2022-2023) focus on best practices in recruitment and retention efforts. Therefore, implementing data-backed recruiting and retention methods is an excellent starting point (U.S. Department of Defense, 2020). For example, the DoD recommends increasing community involvement and that all current recruitment flyers and materials are updated and accurately represent the demographic structure of the military and the Nation (U.S. Department of Defense, 2020). Furthermore, it recommends that senior leaders must rely on effective strategic communications, especially in

the digital world (U. S. Department of Defense, 2020). For example, it is recommended that leadership utilize social media to target a variety of cultures when recruiting, and that leaders “appreciate generational differences; what worked to recruit Baby Boomers may not work today” (U. S. Department of Defense, 2020).

Research shows that the military has a tendency to recruit younger individuals, with 67% of active-duty personnel in the military (in 2018) consisting of people between the ages of 17 and 30 (Department of Defense Under the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy, 2019). Although younger recruits are more likely to have better physical health, they lack experience and are very impressionable. Thus, the Army recommends that officials recruit slightly older individuals with more experience, and offer incentives to Soldiers to retrain for positions with shortages (Army Reserve, 2010). Additionally, promotions may be offered to retain current effective Service members, as this is more cost effective than recruiting new Service members with little to no experience (e.g., Myers, 2022). Moreover, the Army Reserve offers Soldiers more time with their families before deployment to prevent attrition (Army Reserve, 2010). Although maintaining retention levels can be stressful, the recommendation remains the same: do not over recruit, stay within the authorized end strength recommendations for each branch of the military, and continue to prioritize retention efforts.

Another avenue vital to the success of the DoD DEIA initiatives is continued training and education delivery within the Armed Forces. Training should equip leaders to create an inclusive work environment so that “the DoD can achieve greater strategic advantages against adversaries by leveraging the background and thought diversity of all personnel” (Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, 2020, September 9, p. 12). Since most active-duty

personnel want professional development and training (e.g., Blue Star Families, 2021), a common recommendation across all military branches is to start training as early as onboarding. Training should continue long-term by providing consistent formal training every quarter or fiscal year, with each new training reinforcing and building upon previously trained material. Examples of various initiatives are provided in *Table 1* below; these programs can be leveraged to help build, retain, and redirect the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) in personnel to achieve a diverse and effective workforce.

Branch of Service	Affiliated Programs & Initiatives
Army	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Talent Management initiatives (e.g., Department of the Army, 2017) ● Army Credentialing Opportunities Online (COOL)
Air Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Synchronous and asynchronous education opportunities (e.g., United States Air Force, 2022)
Navy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sailor 360 ● 21st Century Sailor ● Navy Credentialing Opportunities Online (COOL)
USMC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 21st Century Marine ● Marine Education Initiative ● Marine Corps Credentialing Opportunities Online (COOL)
Coast Guard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Professional Development (e.g., United States Coast Guard, 2022)

Table 1. Service-specific examples of affiliated programs and initiatives as it relates to education and professional development.

Senior leaders need to make objective decisions regarding force shaping and potential lay-offs. For example, senior leaders should use data to develop new empirically supported force shaping tools (e.g., Thomas, 2004). Utilizing data as a means to promote evidence-based tools will minimize subjectivity. For example, demographic variables should not be considered as objective measures of job performance or a determining factor in the likelihood to remain employed within the military because this can lead to intentional and unintentional

discrimination. Evidence-based tools can ensure decisions are merit-based and not prejudiced.

There is untapped potential within underrepresented groups that should be harnessed, and these bias mitigation efforts can prevent that.

Senior leaders can also use data to provide and evaluate transparent, factual statements and statistics regarding available career fields. This is important because false information may prevent certain individuals from applying to a role they incorrectly believe they are not qualified to fulfill. For example, data shows that minority groups, specifically blacks and women, are equally interested in flying as other majority groups (National Research Council, 1997) and thus, their interest in the role should be supported and encouraged. This could be in the form of recruitment efforts (e.g., representing women as pilots in advertisement), and of retention efforts that further reinforce recruitment (e.g., providing and advertising programs for maternity leave and showing that women do not need to choose between motherhood and flying; encouraging male pilots to take paternity leave to show that these are the needs of parenting and not a limitation of female pilots). Therefore, senior leaders should strive to engage with metrics that can measure the current state of, and improvements towards a diverse force; these measures should be appropriately examined to ensure proper reliability and validity. Additionally, evidence-based solutions should be carefully studied, adapted, and evaluated to ensure they are effectively implemented within the DoD.

It is equally important for senior leaders to shift the perceptions of the American public as well as perceptions of individuals in the Armed Forces regarding the military as a whole (e.g., from negative to positive). If the perception is negative, there is the possibility that individuals within the military will have intent to leave their position or that civilians who have a lot to offer may not be recruited. Moreover, the American public has a significant influence on the size of

the military through their representation in Congress and the Executive Branch. Therefore, it is imperative that senior leaders take into account how force shaping efforts look from the outside as much as how they impact Service members and the mission on the inside.

Evidence-based Activities

This section presents evidence-based activities and assessments that senior leadership can participate in to become more effective at their roles. In addition to relying on empirically validated activities, leadership should develop their own activities and tailor them to the specific needs of their unit. The idea that education and learning does not have an end-point, but is rather continuous, should be heavily promoted. Professional and leadership development is an opportunity that lasts a lifetime (Department of the Army, 2012) and senior leaders should strive to continually benefit from education and training programs to build and reinforce their unique skill sets (Allen et al., 2022).

Over time, case studies and focus groups continue to provide invaluable insights regarding the overall health and climate of military units (e.g., Office of People Analytics, 2020). Within the context of this work, focus groups could be utilized to enhance force shaping skills. For example, in one focus group senior leaders could work together to build a strategic plan that enhances diversity within the total force or within their own separate units. Another focus group could review demographic information to identify disparities among promotions, awards, and punishment (e.g., is one demographic being targeted more/less when compared to other groups?). In essence, various types of focus groups using real-life or simulated data and scenarios could promote discussions that increase awareness and perspective among leaders, influencers, and policy-makers, effectively driving policy change as it relates to DEIA force shaping.

Furthermore, case studies could be used to gather data on current Service member perceptions and attitudes as it relates to DEIA initiatives and help senior leaders prioritize training sessions in order of importance or need. Case studies can be as direct and straightforward as responding to particular situations or dilemmas (e.g., Taylor & Vorster, 2017) in order to ascertain to what extent Service members' perceptions align or deviate regarding a specific topic. Case studies can also be used to review past and current force shaping events and tools utilized (e.g., Operation Blue to Green program), which can help senior leaders evaluate how to approach future force shaping events.

Finally, the utilization of scenarios and group discussions, another equally valuable method of information gathering (e.g., Allen et al., 2022; Office of People Analytics, 2020), is highly recommended. Group discussions are useful in facilitating open and honest conversations between Service members and senior leadership, in order to foster a sense of trust within military units. However, if Service members seem initially hesitant, leaderless group discussions (e.g., Hurtwiz & Hurtwitz, 2020; Taylor & Vorster, 2017) are encouraged to allow Service members to speak freely and without fear of retaliation or reprisal. Regardless of the activities and assessments that are selected and presented, the information utilized should meet the following requirements at the minimum: (1) be accurate and data driven, (2) be user friendly, and (3) be actionable (Office of People Analytics, 2020).

Force shaping efforts serve multiple functions and thus, can sometimes be at odds with each other. Therefore, senior leaders need to view force shaping efforts through a holistic lens to not only improve the capacity and capability of the armed forces, but to maintain alignment with the DoD's initiative to increase diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility in the military.

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Appendix A: Activities

PRIOR TO ANY AND ALL USE OF THE ACTIVITIES IN THIS APPENDIX, PLEASE VERIFY THAT AUTHOR/OWNER PERMISSION IS OBTAINED WHERE NEEDED AND THAT USE OF THE MATERIALS DOES NOT RESULT IN COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT.

Case Studies & Videos

Participants can be provided with a variety of case studies regarding recruitment and retention efforts. Such case studies can include:

- [AskEARN - Retention in Action: Case Studies](#)

Other resource materials can be provided as well. For example, some include

- Article 1: [Employee Feedback: The Key to Retention During the Great Resignation](#)
- Article 2: [QuikTrip's Investment in Retail Employees Pays Off](#)
- Video 1: [Recruiting with conscience when hiring diverse talent](#)
- Video 2: [Why great people quit good jobs](#)
- Video 3: [Ideas, Growth, and Great Works Begin with Inclusion](#)

Using either a case study, article, or video provided, facilitators can prompt discussion around the impacts of retaining a diverse workforce, including challenges and resolutions. Facilitators should help participants understand the impacts of recruiting, hiring, and retaining a diverse workforce.

Force Shaping Events Discussion

Participants can be provided with a variety of resources that are specific to Force Shaping in the Military, both past and present. For example, some can include:

- [Force Shaping \(Callander, 2004\)](#)
- [Force shaping: The right sizing of the force](#)

- [Force Shaping and Involuntary Separations – How to Handle Being Laid Off from the Military \(Podcast 003\)](#)
- [Pentagon budget 2023: DoD to trim military end strength](#)
- [Air Force proposes to cut military jobs, aircraft in 2023](#)
- [Army Cuts Force Size amid Unprecedented Battle for Recruits](#)

After providing one of the force shaping articles, facilitators can prompt discussion around the impacts of the force shaping event, including how to better navigate obstacles and improvements towards future force shaping events, as well as how to improve perceptions of Service members and the public.

Force Shaping Strategic Plan Activity

Participants can watch the following TedTalk: [Why corporate diversity programs fail -- and how small tweaks can have a big impact](#). After watching the video, participants will craft a strategic plan on recruitment and retention in order to enhance diversity within their units or within the total force. Participants will need to focus on the importance of metrics as a means of recruiting and retaining a diverse population. Additionally, participants will want to keep in mind the following items with regards to recruitment:

- Internal Recruitment: cost-effective but may not yield the diverse results you are looking for in a candidate. Advertisements are typically internal and applications are recruited through networking.
- External Recruitment: this type of recruitment expands the available talent pool, which can create more diversity, but can be costly. This includes the traditional methods of advertising, including job fairs, the internet, or online recruitment websites.