

Coming Together: Strengthening the Intelligence Community Through Cognitive Diversity

David Kritz

ABSTRACT

In the 2019 National Intelligence Strategy of the United States of America, the word *integrate*, or a variation of the word, was depicted 51 times. Of the seven enterprise objectives set by the Director of National Intelligence, the first two focus on integration of mission and business management. The purpose of this article is to demonstrate that cognitive diversity can both enable and inhibit cooperation, is dependent upon leadership style, and can lead to real-world implications that move from strategy to execution. If the Intelligence Community has a cognitively diverse workforce, then innovation is more likely to occur and remain sustainable. A qualitative methodology was used to address the question: *How can cognitive diversity increase integration endeavors across the 18 agencies to achieve the Intelligence Community's Vision and support the Mission?* Findings substantiate the importance of cognitive diversity to problem solve, work through complexity, and improve decision-making during times of crisis.

Keywords: Cognitive Diversity, Complexity, Diversity, Intelligence, Integration, National Security

Unidos: Fortalecimiento de la comunidad de inteligencia a través de la diversidad cognitiva

RESUMEN

En la Estrategia Nacional de Inteligencia de los Estados Unidos de América de 2019, la palabra *integrar*, o una variación de la palabra, se representó 51 veces. De los siete objetivos empresariales fijados por el Director de Inteligencia Nacional, los dos primeros se centran en la integración de la misión y la gestión empresarial. El propósito de este artículo es demostrar que la diversidad cognitiva puede habilitar e inhibir la cooperación, depende del estilo de liderazgo y puede tener implicaciones en el mundo real que van desde la estrategia hasta la ejecución. Si la comunidad de inteligencia tiene una fuerza laboral cognitivamente diversa, entonces es más probable que ocurra

la innovación y siga siendo sostenible. Se utilizó una metodología cualitativa para abordar la pregunta: ¿Cómo puede la diversidad cognitiva aumentar los esfuerzos de integración entre las 18 agencias para lograr la Visión de la Comunidad de Inteligencia y apoyar la Misión? Los hallazgos corroboran la importancia de la diversidad cognitiva para resolver problemas, superar la complejidad y mejorar la toma de decisiones en tiempos de crisis.

Palabras clave: Diversidad Cognitiva, Complejidad, Diversidad, Inteligencia, Integración, Seguridad Nacional

聚集在一起：通过认知多样性加强情报界

摘要

美国《2019国家情报战略》中，“整合”一词或该词的变体被描述了51次。在国家情报总监制定的七项事业目标中，前两项聚焦于使命与业务管理的整合。本文旨在证明，认知多样性既能促进也能抑制合作，其取决于领导风格，并且能导致从战略到执行的现实世界影响。如果情报界拥有认知多样化的劳动力，那么创新更有可能发生并保持可持续性。使用定性方法研究一个问题：认知多样性如何增加18个机构的整合举措，以实现情报界的愿景并维护使命？研究结果证实了认知多样性对于解决问题、克服复杂性以及在危机时期提升决策的重要性。

关键词：认知多样性，复杂性，多样性，情报，整合，国家安全

Can we talk of integration until there is integration of hearts and minds? Unless you have this, you only have a physical presence, and the walls between us are as high as the mountain range.

—Chief Dan George (Chief of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation)

Introduction

If one thing continues throughout the 21st Century, it will be change. It is difficult to pin down the specificity of change as it is literally and

figuratively occurring all around us in many ways. An example is the repercussions for remaining stagnant during COVID-19, as businesses that did not evolve likely closed. Within the first year of the pandemic, approximately

200,000 U.S. businesses closed (Simon 2021). Change will emerge in predictable patterns, unpredictably by misinformation or disinformation, and perhaps a black swan or two will appear during an inconvenient time. Al-Asadi, Muhammed, and Dzenopoljac (2019) adroitly stated “since the postindustrial era, significant technological changes, innovation, and creativity have become the main pillars of sustainable competitive advantage of modern companies” (472).

If there is an emerging change to the way the world is perceived to work, then there needs to be an evolving and refinement with the skills employees possess if the institution is to remain relevant. This hypothesis statement is not only reflective of for-profit companies, but also includes government organizations, especially the Intelligence Community (IC). COVID-19 was a stark reminder for the IC that the value of intelligence does not lie with secrecy and working inside sensitive compartmented intelligence facilities, but finding truth to aid policymaker’s decisions. Global pandemic withstanding, the IC cannot close and temporarily adjust to working outside traditional settings. It is also challenging to pin down the specifics of changes the IC faces as the threats and opportunities continue to evolve. This is depicted within the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI’s) 2022 Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. IC, which has eight crucial topics ranging from specific countries to Health Security, climate change, and conflicts and instability.

As the world continues to evolve in complexity, there is no organization held more accountable to changes across a wide spectrum of areas than the IC. This is due to the valid reason of acquiring the dual responsibilities of informing policymakers for national interest endeavors and advising through intelligence to defend the nation. With the recent addition of the Space Force, the IC is now comprised of 18 organizations and agencies, with a National Intelligence Program budget appropriated in 2020 for \$62.7 billion. How the organizations within the IC interact to improve its mission is still occurring; however, due to the evolving landscape of threats and opportunities, the IC must evolve (Barger 2004). It is not lost on the senior leaders within the IC federation that change is needed to thwart adapting threats, maintain relevancy, and mitigate intelligence failures such as an attack against the nation. One harsh critique that sums up some of the previous perceived intelligence failures comes from a Pulitzer-winning author Richard Rhodes, who stated that “for all its accumulating trillions in national treasure, failed to predict 9/11, predicted Iraqi WMD that weren’t there, and in ‘the most glaring example ... the colossal intelligence failure of 2011,’ failed to predict the Arab Spring” (2011, n.p.).

To begin, we should acknowledge that the drive for change and integration emerged from the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (9/11). The IC was vastly different two decades ago in terms of organization and mindset. From the Cold War up to 9/11, the IC did not task for, nor have the aware-

ness, to appreciate integration across unity of effort as each agency focused on specialized missions to collect upon and then disseminate in finished and often classified reports (The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States 2004). In the aftermath, the IC went through a substantial change with the establishment of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence and the Department of Homeland Security. Transformational change in diversity was required to gain more profound knowledge in understanding global ethnic and cultural differences (Miner and Temes 2022).

Barger (2004), a RAND Intelligence Policy Center's 2003 IC Fellow, argues from the perspective of insiders claiming that while reform causes increased bureaucracy and regulation there is a paucity of increased intelligence performance. Perhaps, but perhaps not. Lingering attitudes of older workforce generations may include perceptions of change as being punitive and opening the aperture of building relationships across peer organizations within the IC is suspect. More egregious and hopefully uncommon event as suggested by Best (2011) is the attempt to prevent other IC organizations from the perception of one organization gaining leverage over another to get ahead through the willful decision not to cooperate in the sharing of information. The IC suffered from a dated Cold War mentality that inhibited collaboration and as a result the terrorist attacks on 9/11 demonstrated the IC needed to evolve in multiple areas to include increased communica-

tion and integration (Hamrah 2013). This mindset continues as the risk of complacency and not adapting is likely to lead to grave consequences from groupthink as a slippery slope. If threats toward national interests and the areas to communicate opportunities for decisionmakers evolve, then the IC needs to be agile and adaptive. This endeavor occurs with the model presented herein developed by the author of multiplying communication, cooperation, and collaboration to yield integration.

How the IC will implement change is depicted by the strategic direction provided by the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) across this federation every four years in the form of the National Intelligence Strategy of the United States of America. Of the seven enterprise objectives set by the DNI, the first two focus on integration of mission and business management. One method on how the IC will meet the DNI's primary objective of Integrated Mission Management is to "strengthen and integrate IC governance bodies to increase transparency, prioritize and optimize resources, balance tradeoffs, and manage risk" (National Intelligence Strategy 2019, 18). The DNI's second enterprise objective is Integrated Business Management. Within this objective the IC's business functions and practices include "the coordinated development, alignment, de-confliction, execution, and monitoring of strategies, policies, plans, and procedures needed to manage and secure the IC and its people, information technology, and physical infrastructure" (National Intelligence Strategy 2019, 19). The DNI's objectives

are aligned under the IC's vision and mission statement. The National Intelligence Strategy defines the IC Vision as "a Nation made more secure by a fully integrated agile, resilient, and innovative Intelligence Community that exemplifies America's values" (3) and the IC Mission to "provide timely, insightful, objective, and relevant intelligence and support to inform national security decisions and to protect our Nation and its interests" (3).

As the DNI charged the IC to fulfill customer requirements through collaboration, integration, and feedback, this article builds on the citizenship behaviors of employees and contributes originality by centering on the specific area of cognitive diversity and ramifications toward integration (National Intelligence Strategy 2019). This article addresses the question: *How can cognitive diversity increase integration endeavors across the 18 agencies to achieve the Intelligence Community's vision and support the mission?* The expectation for the IC to integrate also includes the workforce to be diverse and innovative. However, the review of the literature provides two major themes for group diversity. The first group diversity theme is positive as diversity increases innovation while the second is negative as group diversity tends to be divisive. The crux of the issue is that two of the DNI's main goals clash against each other due to the behavior of groups. This article will begin with a counterargument that will be nestled with cooperation theory to provide an argument that may seem counterintuitive. Although cooperation is perceived as a positive attribute, it ac-

tually presents a significant challenge for integration efforts of diverse populations. The next section will discuss cognitive diversity theory to frame the main argument on how cognitive diversity can enable integration. This study seeks to contribute to diversity theory by focusing on the ways cognitive diversity can increase integration within the IC. Finally, the article will conclude with implications for the IC to achieve its vision and mission focused on integration aspirations.

Although integration is a priority for senior leadership within the IC, there is a paucity of academic literature that focuses on the subject specifically linking avenues for this to occur. Therefore, this study directly contributes to the body of knowledge for IC integration endeavors. The research design selected to answer the central research question is a qualitative methodology with a case study that has positive association between crisis leadership and a cognitively diverse team. The findings from this exploratory social research may lead decision-makers to arrive at more informed decisions with less bias than just using personal experience or intuition.

Literature Review

The following literature review focuses on how the 18 agencies and organizations that comprise IC may become more integrated from three aspects. The article first examines cooperation theory to gain a deeper understanding of the criteria that enables and hinders cooperation in the

work environment. Second, diversity theory is researched to understand the opportunities that diversity brings to the workforce. Finally, the literature review focuses on how cognitive diversity can bridge the gap that exists between strategy and execution of having a more integrated federation that is responsible for finding opportunities and thwarting threats that affect national security and national interests.

Cooperation Theory

Cooperation in the workplace focuses on employees working together to achieve organizational goals. Teams help fill ability and skill gaps experienced by individual employees by blending their differences and advising through their collective differences (Oosterhof, Van der Vegt, Van der Vliert, and Sanders 2009; Godneanu 2012). Individuals have different backgrounds, morals, values, and life experiences and therefore a certain degree of diversity occurs in the workplace. As a result of the added diversity, there is a changing of organizational dynamics that stem from the individual level yet may affect the entire community with positive and negative consequences. An example of a major bureaucratic reorganization is the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, which stated that the Secretary of each military department will cooperate fully with personnel of the Office of the Secretary of Defense (Public Law 99-433-Oct. 1, 1986). Although institutions may cooperate to integrate when ordered to, it may not be the optimal way to create buy-in. It

should be noted that while the Goldwater Nichols Act is a great case to demonstrate integration within a government bureaucracy, it did take place several decades ago with different generations in the workforce. This point is provided to highlight current generations of employees have less institutional loyalty for long-term employment and thus key talent may be lost to turnover (Ertas 2015; Kritz 2018). It is essential for IC leaders and managers to understand and continue to work on retention efforts. The ODNI echoes this sentiment as they stated that due to complex national security threats, efforts must develop and retain its workforce that mirrors diversity (ODNI Diversity and Inclusion n.d.). Ertas' (2015) research focused on federal government employees, with an estimate that over 200,000 new employees would need to be hired to replace the retiring workforce. The literature depicts millennials as having less organizational loyalty than previous generations (Erta 2015). Previous research from Martin and Ottemann (2015) found the following work-related values for millennials:

Ambitious to make a difference and secure a comfortable life, pro-work-life balance, satisfied with work tasks, interest in learning (fast, eager learners), desirous of security (not stability), collectivism, team player, optimistic, creativity (extremely expressive), unrealistic entitlement expectations, soft communication skills, value prompt recognition and reward, adaptable to new technologies, fun loving,

casual, socially conscious, multi-tasking is second nature, pro diversity (multi-cultural), self-confident, not easily intimidated (technically or interpersonally), expect instant gratification (impatient) (94).

Integration and diversity efforts within the IC are still a work in progress. From a historical perspective, Miner and Temes (2022) postulate “transforming diversity policy into action has remained consistently inconsistent” (21). As this phenomenon of diversity amongst employees brings both opportunities and challenges, two key questions emerge that senior organizational leaders may want to explore. The first question is to what extent will the workforce cooperate. The second question to ponder that may lead to future implications includes will the stakeholders and lower-level leaders seek to achieve institutional goals or have hidden agendas? For both questions, the answers may be illuminated or misguided by using rational choice as a framework. It may very well be a key assumption that employees will act rationally and cooperate during times of change and integration. To this end, “when a decision involves two or more interactive decision makers, each having only partial control over the outcomes, an individual may have no basis for rational choice without strong assumptions about how the other(s) will act” (Coleman 2003, 139).

Key assumptions to check when new organizations are integrated into a larger confederation include that the employees will get along with one an-

other despite their differences. Regardless of the extent of diversity on a team, the beginning factor focuses on cooperation because, without cooperation, the institution’s productivity suffers. Imagine a work environment where employees are brought together from different organizations and look at issues with different perspectives and are expected to integrate. Now multiply that by 18 and we then arrive at the focus of this article—integrating the 18 agencies and organizations that comprise the IC. The components of the IC work separately and together to conduct intelligence activities necessary for the conduct of foreign relations and the protection of national security (Office of the Director of National Intelligence 2021).

What happens if integration does not occur? If the institution happens to be the IC, an intelligence failure is more probable to occur. One piece of evidence comes from the past as Best (2011) states “by the two congressional intelligence committees and the 9/11 Commission (the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States) concluded that a central obstacle to acquiring advance information on the plot was the inability to bring together all information that had been acquired about the plotters—there were many clues[,] but they were retained in the files of different agencies” (5). One alternate future is that the U.S. may experience an attack similar to Pearl Harbor or the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Unless we really understand the implications from failure and apply effective practices to mitigate future occurrences, then it is not

a lesson learned, but an act that will repeat in a similar manner.

The charge to lead integration is truly an esemplastic effort. Leading the IC in intelligence integration is the ODNI's core mission. They construe intelligence integration as "synchronizing collection, analysis, and counterintelligence so that they are fused, effectively operating as one team" (ODNI *How We Work* n.d., n.p.). To create an environment of integration, individuals need to work together and cooperate effectively. A dictionary definition of cooperation includes "an act or instance of working or acting together for a common purpose or benefit; joint action" (Dictionary.com n.p., n.d.).

Researchers continue to explore cooperation in the work environment, and one major theme of the literature spotlights labor-management cooperation. Labor-management cooperation is essential to analyze as it focuses on decisions made between stakeholders within a more comprehensive institutional arrangement (Ospina and Yaroni 2003) and is applicable to leverage this framework to the IC as the IC is a large federation. The National Intelligence Strategy provides strategic direction across the IC bestowed by the DNI every four years. Integrated mission management is the first enterprise objective of the 2019 and most current National Intelligence Strategy. To achieve the objective, the first bullet within the National Intelligence Strategy states the IC will "Provide leadership and community management to foster collaboration, streamline processes, and effectively

manage resources to achieve IC mission objectives" (18). Collaboration is a barrier within the IC for several reasons. The first reason includes an archaic Cold War culture to willfully not share intelligence with different organizational or agency intelligence professionals (Hamrah 2013). A second reason comes from Miles (2015) who adroitly stated, "functional and geographic separation can lead to or exacerbate differences in organizational culture ... that impede the desire to collaborate" (317).

Former President Obama issued the 2011 executive order 13583—Establishing a Coordinated Government-wide Initiative to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workforce. As the goal of the DNI is greater integration, then this author argues that Krtiz's "Model of Integration" [Communication x (Cooperation x Collaboration) = Integration] is a path to achieve the goal. Collaboration cannot be achieved without cooperation nor communication. For labor-management cooperation to occur, it takes a decision at the individual level to partake in cooperative behavior (Ospina and Yaroni 2003). Cooperation is both an attitude and an action. Cooperation Theory explains that employees swim or sink together due to the perception of goals being linked and thus tend to cooperate rather than compete (Godeanu 2012). Employees can be motivated to engage in cooperative behavior when both sides conclude that the incentive to cooperate yields a greater benefit from joint efforts if the act occurs (Cooke 1990; Ospina and Yaroni 2003).

Cognitive Diversity

The study of diversity and how diversity affects group dynamics, organizational culture, and organizational goals is a worthy pursuit in research. Although new knowledge is gained when diversity is researched, there is much to contribute toward its theory and as Austin (1997) argued the overall understanding remains fragmented. Diversity is important because it is a primer for innovation. The DNI recognizes the importance of diversity not only to create innovation but to build and retain a highly-skilled workforce (ODNI 2019). While there are numerous definitions for diversity in the literature, it is fitting to select the one most relevant to the topic. The DNI defines diversity as “a collection of individual attributes that together help IC elements pursue organizational objectives efficiently and effectively” (ODNI 2019, 20).

Not all diversity is beneficial to achieve organizational goals, and therefore the types of diversity matter for teambuilding. As a simple example, if a child were to take a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and pour orange juice on it, the ingredients would undoubtedly be diverse, but the result would be a mess. The same holds with individuals. Researchers Gynge and Eastal (2015) presented the argument “aspects of our moral psychology make it difficult for people to cooperate and coordinate actions with those who are very different from themselves” (66). Although our similarities may be closer than our collective differences, we are on different locations of the diversity spectrum.

Moreover, because of this diversity, cooperation may be more challenging to achieve for many reasons. Challenges with cooperation may emerge that affect communication and coordination with members of diverse teams (Gynge and Eastal 2015).

It would be hard to argue that there was a time when organizations were more heterogeneous than today. Academic strategic alliances, business mergers, and changes to the U.S. IC’s organizational structures are a few examples. Diversity will continue to increase amongst institutions, and this is a beneficial phenomenon for stakeholders. Previous research established that heterogeneous teams comprised of low and high skilled employees outperform homogeneous teams regardless of ability (Hamilton, Nickerson, and Owan 2003; Godeanu 2012). Although race, gender, and age certainly contribute to diversity, these types align more with a diversity of demographics. This research moves the argument into a deeper consideration of diversity that focuses on the diverse ways employees think about issues. This is important because groupthink while having high levels of cooperation, may lead to a low and dangerous level of decision-making. As Lowenthal (2015) argues:

The United States developed the concept of competitive analysis, an idea that is based on the belief that by having analysts in several agencies with different backgrounds and perspectives work on the same issue, parochial views more likely will be

countered ... and proximate reality is more likely to be achieved ... [and] be an antidote to group-think and forced consensus (17).

Callum (2001) argued the following regarding intelligence analysis and homogeneity as it “dooms the community to what is essentially one point of view on complex issues, and makes it all but certain that in the chaotic and uncertain post-Cold War international arena, U.S. intelligence will be fated to failures of greater number and magnitude” (26).

There are numerous definitions of cognitive diversity found within the literature. Some of the definitions were quite limited such as O'Donovan's (2010) writing “the diversity of cognition generated by cognitive disabilities” (172) as cognitive diversity is far more comprehensive than those who have cognitive disabilities. A more robust yet still abridged definition of cognitive diversity is defined “as variation in underlying attitudes, beliefs or values developed through individual experience and background” (Tegarden, Tegarden, and Sheetz 2009, 538). Within this study, this researcher defines cognitive diversity as the variation of thoughts amongst a team that comes through each individual's attitudes, beliefs, career backgrounds, cultural experiences, educational backgrounds, language abilities, locational backgrounds, morals, philosophical perspectives, personal life experiences, socioeconomic backgrounds, and values. There are numerous variables in my definition because people are complex, and adaptiveness continuously emerges.

Dr. Scott E. Page (2011), an American social scientist and John Seely Brown Distinguished University Professor of Complexity, asserts “systems that produce complexity consist of diverse rule-following entities whose behaviors are interdependent In addition, the entities often adapt. That adaptation can be learning in a social system” (17).

Although cognitive diversity may not arrive at the solution immediately, it will provide context and deeper thinking for decision-makers to select better decisions and arrive at a beneficial solution quicker than a team with less cognitive diversity. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) states they are mission dependent on diversity and inclusion as they need their officers to provide “a full range of perspectives, experiences, and talents to our mission, the Agency will be better prepared to address intelligence challenges and support its customers” (Working at CIA n.d., n.p.). Cognitive diversity positively affects team performance, notably during the beginning stages of strategic planning (Tegarden, Tegarden, and Sheetz 2009); this is why cognitive diversity is an important aspect for the IC. Further, previous research in business, economics, and other social sciences demonstrates that groups with more diversity outperform groups with less diversity when dealing with complexity (Gyngell and Easta 2015). This understanding of knowledge is essential for the IC as its prominent role is finding opportunities for and mitigating threats against national security endeavors. It is an understatement to write that the IC faces complexity with every challenge as the

goal of intelligence is to find truth, and denial and deception campaigns of adversaries often obscure the truth.

Organizational culture is a consideration for leading to a diverse workforce and then enablement of integration. Employees are often uncomfortable about change unless they perceive that the change will positively affect them. One such occurred when at the time, James Clapper, newly appointed DIA Director, who faced an employee revolt that caused him to quickly realize the difference in mindsets between military members who are accustomed to moving frequently within organizations and to new physical locations contrasted with a civilian workforce who are accustomed to staying within the same seat of an organization for multiple years. Clapper (2018) stated “whatever merits our reorganization plan had, we hadn’t sufficiently talked with the employees and worked out the details ... I learned that gaining employees’ buy-in before making big changes is essential, and that there are cultural differences between military and civilian employees” (73). Change in culture is difficult to manage in one organization. The degree of difficulty increases as the size of integration efforts increase. This is especially true when new or outside agencies are brought into the fold of a federation, as the culture can either help or hinder integration depending on workplace attitude and moral psychology.

As this article specifically focuses on the IC, there was a change to the federation in the first month of 2021 as the United States Space Force was

officially included as the 18th agency. During these periods of change, employees have new opportunities to work with employees from different agencies. The former National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency Director, Robert Cardillo (2010), argues that analytic tradecraft is the IC’s culture. One scholar of organizational culture, Schein (2004), as referenced in Cardillo (2010), defined organizational culture as:

A pattern of basic assumptions—invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaption and internal integration—that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (1).

Research Methods

While the DNI wants IC integration to occur, part of the solution lies with practitioners responsible for doctrine and the other half with academics to develop theory. Barger (2004) presented a strong argument “as no theory or doctrine exists to explain the changing role of intelligence in a changing world, the Intelligence Community also lacks an overarching strategy to meet new security challenges” (24). The first DNI, John Negroponte, countered this argument one year later by presenting the National Intelligence Strategy of the United States of America: Transforma-

tion through Integration and Innovation. Within this document, the DNI acknowledged former U.S. President Bush 43's task to "integrate the domestic and foreign dimensions of US intelligence so that there are no gaps in our understanding of threats to our national security" (ODNI 2005, 3). In a letter signed within the 2019 National Intelligence Strategy by the previous DNI, Daniel Coats, his intentions to the IC are evident as the first two of four bullet statements depict:

- Increase integration and coordination of our intelligence activities to achieve best effects and value in increasing our mission
- Bolster innovation to constantly improve our work (5).

Models can enable decision-makers to refine thinking through broad application for their usage to include how countries determine national security structures, including assessments to basic decision-making and policy, priorities, and resources (Kritz 2021, 105). Tuckman's 1965 influential Developmental Sequence model hypothesized groups moving throughout the following stages forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning (Tuckman and Jensen 2010). This model was considered as a framework to aid the IC toward integration across the federation however Tuckman's model is focused on small groups (15-20 individuals) and the IC is comprised of over tens of thousands of employees. Therefore, a larger model is needed to properly scope integration endeavors. One mod-

el that adds insight comes from the research of Miczka and Größler (2010) that focused on the dynamics evolving from two converging organizational cultures and changes in employee commitment. The "Merger dynamics" model depicted "the number of interactions and the willingness to cooperate" as the two emerging variables (Miczka and Größler 2010, 1501).

This article uses a qualitative methodology with a case study as the research method. The ways scientists study and bestow explanations through scientific inquiry are diverse. Although the case selected comes from the medical profession, case studies regardless of career sector may be useful as they provide a framework for analysis and help describe how solutions may be adapted within similar solutions, specifically for this article, the IC in times of crisis. Further, as a former program director, assistant professor, and intelligence officer at the National Intelligence University, this researcher heard on numerous occasions from senior leaders at the director level that the IC needs to leverage the business sector and others to help with innovation. Therefore, it seemed fitting to select a case the IC can leverage that occurred outside the IC. The research is focused on group behavior and how individuals within distinct groups can integrate under the IC federation to accomplish the DNI's vision and mission. To that end, a qualitative methodology seemed to be the most fitting to answer the central research question. Creswell (2009) defines qualitative research as "a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals

or groups ascribe to a social or human problem ... the final written report has a flexible writing structure” (232). A case study was selected as the research method to answer the central research question: *How can cognitive diversity increase integration endeavors across the 18 agencies to achieve the Intelligence Community’s vision and support the mission?* Creswell (2009) defines case studies as “a qualitative strategy in which the researcher explores in depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals” (227). Ragin (2009) states, “implicit in most social scientific notions of case analysis is the idea that the objects of investigation are similar enough and separate enough to permit treating them as comparable instances of the same general phenomenon” (1). Further, “the idea of comparable cases is implicated in the boundary between dominant forms of social science and other types of discourse about social life” (Ragin 2009, 2). It should be noted that case studies are not bound by nationality. The findings from this exploratory social research may lead decision-makers to arrive at more informed decisions with less bias than just using personal experience or intuition.

The Case Study: Cognitive Diversity as the Quality of Leadership in Crisis: Team Performance in Health Service during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Research conducted by Joniaková, Jankeľová, Blštáková, and Némethov (2021) was selected as a case study as the au-

thors “justified the positive association between crisis leadership and team performance, which is mediated by cognitive diversity, supporting the quality of decision-making in crisis leadership” (Joniaková et al., 2021, 1). The case study is relevant and relatable to the IC as the DNI’s third objective of the National Intelligence Strategy is that people and leadership will meet the objective by shaping “a diverse workforce with the skills and capabilities needed to address enduring and emerging requirements” (20). Using Joniaková et al.’s (2021) research as a case study to explore their event on cognitive diversity is also relevant to answer the central question and for the IC, as the DNI’s fourth objective is innovation and argues that the IC must “foster unconventional thinking and experimentation that addresses new, better ways of accomplishing the IC’s mission, especially those approaches that emphasize acceleration, simplicity, and efficiency without sacrificing quality and outcomes” (National Intelligence Strategy 2019, 21).

Joniaková et al.’s (2021) research explored the following problem: leaders of healthcare providers are challenged with managing teams of healthcare professionals during crises. Their study suggests that human behavior is the primary variable to determine organizational efficiency. The human element is not confined to this case but expands to all organizations, including the IC. Joniaková et al. (2021) study focused on crisis leadership (CL), team performance, cognitive diversity, and decision-making during a crisis. Calum (2001) makes a compelling argu-

ment on the human element in what he labels as the fundamental weakness of the IC and why cognitive diversity is essential for the IC. He states, “with many intelligence professionals cut from the same cultural cloth, analysts share ‘unacknowledged biases’ that circumscribe both the definition of problems and the search for solutions” (26). Joniaková et al. (2021) argue that uncertainty creates barriers to employees during a crisis. In comparison the IC often works within periods of crises that are often labeled as intelligence failures. Examples include Pearl Harbor, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and 9/11. The most common leadership themes Joniaková et al. (2021) determined within their literature review with a baseline variable they referred to as CL. Their research depicted four hypotheses: Hypothesis 1. CL is positively associated with medical teams’ performance (MTP); Hypothesis 2. The relationship between CL and MTP is positively mediated by crisis decision-making (CDM); Hypothesis 3. The relationship between CL and MTP is positively mediated by CDM; and Hypothesis 4. The relationship between CL and MTP is sequentially and positively mediated by Cognitive Diversity (CDL) and CDM.

Joniaková et al. (2021) used a questionnaire as a qualitative research tool that was electronically sent to healthcare facilities in Slovakia. Their research sample was 216 leaders (team leaders of medical teams) of private and public hospitals following the COVID-19 outbreak in Slovakia. Joniaková et al. (2021) control variables included “size of the healthcare facility

according to the number of employees, gender and age of the team leader, his position in the managerial hierarchy, and the length of experience in the team leader position” (6).

Case Study Conclusion

Joniaková et al. (2021) depicted relationships between individual variables determined by means of a correlation matrix. Of importance, “the hypothesis of dependence between leadership competencies and team performance, which is mediated by the quality of decision-making, supported by the cognitive diversity, has been confirmed by the research” (11).

Analysis

From the 2022 Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. IC, infectious diseases and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is one of the most serious threats facing the U.S. While IC professionals are certainly not healthcare professionals, the DNI is responsible for integrating teams of IC professionals in the form of agencies and organizations that comprise the IC federation during times of peace and crisis. The challenges facing the DNI are complex and challenging as having a cognitively diverse workforce enhances one issue (innovation) and yet inhibits another (cooperation). Austin (1997) summed up the literature’s findings that demonstrates evidence of opposing outcomes by stating “the two most consistent findings in the group diversity literature are that increased group diversity lead to (1) an increase in innovation and thinking, and (2) a

decrease in group cohesion, and subsequent increase in intra-group conflict” (348). The results from the case study found a positive outcome with cognitive diversity. This has implications for the IC that can lead to a path toward integration. If the IC is slow to select a cognitively diverse workforce, then the DNI’s mission and vision may not be achieved effectively nor efficiently. Hopefully, it will not take another catastrophic event similar to 9/11 to drive monumental change.

Within the second objective of the 2019 National Intelligence Strategy, the DNI tasked the IC to “promote and identify best business practices and functions to optimize solutions and increase collaboration to create a culture of continuous learning, innovation, and partnerships across the community” (19). To aid task fulfillment, this author noticed four main themes from Joniaková et al.’s (2021) research that IC decisionmakers can apply toward integration efforts: 1) Speed of leadership decision-making; 2) Cognitive diversity of teams managing crises; 3) Leadership sets example during times of crises; and 4) Promoting a culture of trust and teamwork.

Speed of Leadership-Decision Making

Timeliness is an essential aspect of intelligence. Getting the correct information to the right people at the right time is paramount and can be the difference between an issue becoming a policy success or an intelligence failure. Intelligence follows a five-step process: 1) Planning and direction; 2) Collection;

3) Processing; 4) Analysis and production; and 5) Dissemination. One can observe how the timeliness of leadership-decision making can affect all of the steps; however, the most felicitous step to focus upon is planning and direction. Planning and direction begin and concludes with leadership. To date, there have been seven DNIs elected to fulfill the position. A powerful start came from the fourth and longest serving DNI, James Clapper, who while describing the new IC IT Enterprise (IC ITE sounds like Eye Sight) from concept to implementation was instrumental in increasing intelligence integration and driving efficiencies (IC ITE Strategy 2016 – 2020). This sentiment expands on how intelligence is conducted to how teamwork and integration are essential to conduct its mission. As stated by the Office of the DNI (ODNI) regarding its core mission:

To lead the IC in intelligence integration, forging a community that delivers the most insightful intelligence possible. That means effectively operating as one team: synchronizing collection, analysis and counterintelligence so that they are fused. This integration is the key to ensuring national policymakers receive timely and accurate analysis from the IC to make educated decisions.

Cognitive Diversity of Teams Managing Crises

Cognitive diversity is essential because senior leaders within the IC are looking to younger generations of the

workforce to be innovative. O'Donovan (2010) stated "as one aspect of intellectual diversity, cognitive diversity promises novel ways of thinking and new understandings of what knowledge is, who makes it, and how it is made" (172). Innovation is important to the IC and, as the fourth objective in the DNI's National Intelligence Strategy "is critical to ensuring that the IC can provide the strategic and tactical decision advantage that policymakers and war-fighters require" (21). Further, it takes innovation to work through complexity and mitigate wicked issues. Wicked issues are considered as such due to differences in priorities amongst stakeholders and as they cannot be solved by a single organization or sector (Sachs, Rühli, and Meier 2010). Integration and innovation increase when teams can interact with those who have the least in common, and the empathy gap is mitigated. Diversity enables innovation by applying differences in abilities, experiences, and knowledge (Andersen 2007). The probability of achieving a high-quality solution increases with the level of group creativity when a team has a greater variety of perspectives on a problem-set (Hoffman 1979; Austin 1997).

Having a team of cognitively diverse employees who can cooperate mitigates groupthink by having rigorous discussions about the teamwork by their individual mental frameworks that, when openly discussed, creates a refinement of thought for the entire team. Previous research found that when diversity in teams is increased, it often causes an increase in knowl-

edge production, and solving complex issues is resolved through various background beliefs, concepts used, heuristics, reasoning styles, and representations (Pöyhönen 2017; Page 2019). The interaction of individuals with differing backgrounds increases opportunities to learn from each other. This is important because when cognitively diverse individuals interact and discuss an issue, a solution toward that issue may not immediately emerge; however, refinement of thought and deeper understanding of the issue occurs between the individuals, and with enough encounters, the organizational culture changes.

Leadership Setting the Example During Times of Crises

To achieve success for the DNI and answer the central question for this article, IC leaders from the top down will need to work with employees within their own organizations and agencies and the other IC agencies. This will take time as trust is the currency of leadership to change bureaucratic culture slowly. An emphasis on cognitive diversity as an organizational priority takes collective buy-in. A change in organizational culture may be both difficult and take a long period of time. In short, leaders, managers, and employees will need to demonstrate a desire to practice continuous learning. Further, effective communication, focused programs, and a high degree of trust between employees and bosses are factors that can positively affect organizational change.

Promoting a Culture of Trust and Teamwork

Trust issues within the IC stem from the lack of inter-agency collaboration and information gaps caused by a lack of sharing (Segall 2010). To promote a culture of trust and teamwork, director level IC leadership should continue to message the workforce the reasons why integration is vital to achieving the IC's vision and mission while simultaneously the federation must have a willingness to cooperate and collaborate with one another. The first DNI stated when discussing national intelligence that "it must recognize that its various institutional cultures developed as they did for good reasons ... that all cultures evolve or expire, and the time has come for our domestic and foreign intelligence cultures to grow stronger by growing together" (ODNI 2005, 3). This message should be presented to the IC workforce continuously. One method to achieve this endeavor is to continue to build upon the sense of community within the IC.

There are genuinely unique hurdles that face federal entities, including the IC. To become a member of the IC, a security clearance is needed due to the nature of working with classified information. Kyzer (2021) reports that the average processing time in 2021 for a Secret clearance is 132 days and 159 days for a Top Secret clearance. One of the implications with the time constraint is that it demonstrates cognitive diversity let alone normal hiring procedures for the IC does not occur instantaneously. The process of hiring individuals who

can obtain a security clearance and pass a polygraph test if required is a stark reminder that security comes before diversity. While security requirements for hiring is an opportunity to think through with hiring talent who may not wait over five months for a change in career paths.

Concluding Thoughts

This article commenced with an argument that the IC needs to make fundamental changes to remain relevant. The former DNI, James Clapper, correctly stated that IC must think differently to support customers as the threats continue to evolve (IC ITE Strategy 2016–2020). Two questions that the IC agency directors should ask include, what integration looks like and what are the expectations. While previous researchers such as Callum (2001) proposed a solution to imbue the IC with a competitive array cultures, mindsets, and ideas by expanding diversity, there is a challenge to overcome as found within the literature, diversity can act as an inhibitor to cooperation. Thus, leadership needs to be proactive with leading the workforce to provide a work environment that welcomes openness to diverse thoughts. Evidence to support this recommendation comes from the four themes from the discussion section of Joniaková et al.'s (2021) case study that IC decisionmakers can apply toward integration efforts: 1) Speed of leadership decision-making; 2) Cognitive diversity of teams managing crises; 3) Leadership sets example during times of crises;

and 4) Promoting a culture of trust and teamwork.

Having employees with different skillsets matters when it comes to working through complexity or mitigating wicked issues. The right mixture of individuals should be taken into account when forming teams, as not all diversity yields positive results when it comes to building teams for the purpose of innovation. Miner and Temes (2022) argue the importance of increasing diversity within the IC as they warn that “if the IC does not continue to routinely assess barriers to its personnel policies, practices, and programs, it will limit itself

to its old ways of recruitment, hiring, retention, and promotion and will miss out on the best talent, perspectives, and capabilities” (24). Characteristics worthy of consideration include selecting individuals with different life experiences including educational backgrounds and professional experiences. Teams that are cognitively diverse are able to problem-solve more effectively through refined thought, not as susceptible to groupthink, and create multiple solutions. Finally, the application of Kritz’s “Model of Integration” [Communication x (Cooperation x Collaboration) = Integration] may help the DNI achieve greater integration across the IC.

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David J. Kritz holds a Doctorate in Business Administration and an MS in International Relations. He is an Associate Professor of Intelligence Studies in the school of Security and Global Studies for the American Military University, an adjunct professor for SUNY Empire State College, and an official reviewer for the *Journal of Leadership Education*. He recently retired from the U.S. Air Force as an intelligence officer and the key position of MSSSI Program Director, and an Assistant Professor at the National Intelligence University. His research emphasis focuses on the U.S. Intelligence Community, national security issues, and complexity.

Appendix A

The below chart represents the 18 agencies and organizations, including the ODNI that comprise the IC led by the DNI.



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