

Strategy Research Project

Beyond Race and Gender: A Critical Evaluation of Officer Diversity

by

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United States Army War College
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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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Abstract

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Diversity is a powerful term advocated by an even stronger socio-political constituency. For some it portends a brighter, more resilient future. For others, it augurs a juggernaut on collision course with mediocrity. For most however, it arouses neither apprehension nor elation. Focusing on U.S. military officers, this strategy research project (SRP) reviews the current Department of Defense (DoD) and services' definitions of diversity, then it considers how recent considerations of diversity have impacted the race and gender representations in the officer corps. Following a "deep dive" into U.S. Census data, it analyzes how concerns about diversity have shaped policies and perceptions regarding the demographic make-up of our nation's population, which many believe our military should "reflect". Overall, it addresses the question of how far the DoD has gone—and should go—to promote diversity in its officer corps.

Beyond Race and Gender: A Critical Evaluation of Officer Diversity

If we are to achieve a richer culture, rich in contrasting values, we must recognize the whole gamut of human potentialities, and so weave a less arbitrary social fabric, one in which each diverse human gift will find a fitting place.

—Margaret Mead¹

History affirms that, although the United States of America is an exceptional country in which its citizens live freely, enjoying liberty and the pursuit of happiness, the course we have followed to warrant this exceptionality has been rife with troubling realities. Many turbulent events have shaped our society—sometimes unifying it, other times polarizing it. Nonetheless, one can argue that we have learned valuable lessons along this journey, ones which have strengthened the very fabric of our society. In turn, they have also improved the capability and competence of our military institutions, whose *raison d'être* is to preserve and defend our democratic way of life. As Joint Publication One declares, “The US Armed Forces fulfill unique and crucial roles, defending the US against all adversaries while serving the Nation as a bulwark and the guarantor of its security and independence....The US Armed Forces *embody the highest values and standards of American society and the profession of arms.*”² Such is the highest calling for which the best and most qualified men and women of this nation are sought. Now, introduce the terms “race”, “equality”, or “diversity” into the issue of *who* serves in the military; these concepts immediately trigger controversy and can evoke emotional responses. Diversity is a powerful term, advocated by an even stronger socio-political constituency. For some it portends a brighter, more resilient future. For others, it augurs a juggernaut on collision course with mediocrity. For most however, it arouses neither apprehension nor elation.

Acknowledging that many new ideas, perceptions, and even definitions of diversity are emerging, this SRP seeks to explore its impact on our military officer corps. It focuses on the classic factors of diversity—race and gender. It reviews the current Department of Defense (DoD) and services’ definitions of diversity, candidly considering race and gender in the broader context of these recent definitions. It then takes a “deep dive” into the evolution of the U.S. Census, showing how this powerful tool continues to shape policies and perceptions regarding the demographic make-up of our nation’s population—which many feel the military should “reflect”. Noting officers’ strategic roles as “Stewards of the Profession”, this SRP examines diversity across the DoD’s Active Duty officer population in the context of their representation of the men and women they lead and the citizens they serve. Debates over the diversity of the officer corps have ridden on the undercurrents of every military branch and unit across the force. But these debates are rarely conducted with frank and open dialogue. Most importantly, this SRP asks; to what extent will DoD go to achieve a more diverse military officer corps and it considers what a successful outcome will look like. This issue is typically perceived as too politically charged for honest deliberation. Maybe so—but here goes.

To many officers, “diversity” is manifest through annual Equal Opportunity training or the month-long observances which celebrate the historical and/or professional contributions of a protected minority group. For others, like those working in officer accessions, diversity is a daily consideration that carries with it real or perceived “targets” or “goals”, which are discussed only amongst recruiters behind closed doors. In either case, the clamor over diversity seems to have reached fever pitch. Armed with new “advisory” councils and task force reports, DoD leaders have

already initiated policy changes designed to increase diversity across the total force—and more are on the way. It has even been stated by high ranking military officials that “diversity is a strategic imperative.”³ Without question, diversity in our force has contributed to the United States having the world’s most lethal military. However, even with little empirical evidence to corroborate the “proof” of diversity’s strength, few ever contest this popularly held view.⁴

Yet others might say that our military is *already* incredibly diverse and that social progress has created irreversible momentum in maintaining diversity. In fact, notwithstanding some disparities attributable to specific branches of the Armed Forces, the overall demographic composition of the officers serving in our globally revered, all-volunteer force are reflected in the faces of the United States population.⁵ A critical analysis of those segments of society that could actually *qualify* for military service as an officer (age, college education, criminal history, health, fitness, etc.) is revealing to say the least. For example, in the case of black officers, the 2010 Census reported that 12.6 percent of the U.S. population is black or African-American.⁶ On the other hand, the 2011 DoD “Profile of the Military Community” reported that 9.5 percent of DoD’s officers are black.⁷ One could immediately argue there is a vast disparity (three percent) in the ratio of black officers to the “overall population.” Unfortunately, this is precisely the conclusion promulgated by the Military Leadership Diversity Council (MLDC) in their Final Report of 15 March 2011.⁸ However, the “missing” statistic they fail to divulge is that the civilian, “military-eligible” cohort (black college graduate, age 20-29) comprises only 8.5 percent of the population.⁹ So the black officer population is actually represented at one percent ABOVE their civilian equivalent slice of society. Does this

demonstrate that our officer corps is diverse? Not entirely, but it does affirm positive momentum that leaders must strive to maintain—not *misrepresent*.

In addition to race, one of the most “visible” forms of diversity, the DoD has begun to widen the aperture of inclusion of less conspicuous groups. With the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”, lesbians, gays, and bisexuals may now openly serve without fear of discharge. Moreover, the recently lifted ban on women serving in combat will bring more females into previously closed military occupations. Currently, DoD leaders are evaluating whether or not the “full inclusion” of women in infantry combat roles and Special Forces is also feasible. However, many service members consider these changes to be more about “forcing” diversity, not about enhancing our military capabilities. These changes and proposals have also spurred a DoD-wide “re-evaluation” of service standards to ensure that no arbitrary standards exclude any particular groups. This drive to be more inclusive is fueled by intense political pressures and has created perceptions that diversity “trumps” mission performance and will ultimately result in lower standards. Those in and out of uniform have taken notice; some wonder whether our military can retain its sharp, fighting edge. Again, consider the MLDC’s Report: “To attract and retain the range of talent they need, the Services need to broaden their conception of who belongs in the military and what it takes to be a member of the Armed Forces.”¹⁰ Its examples include recruiting wheel-chair bound candidates to fly drones or recruiting computer “nerds” for a singular purpose.

The recent publication of the Department of Defense Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan 2012-2017, claims that “Diversity is a strategic imperative, critical to mission readiness and accomplishment and a leadership requirement.” It further notes

that: “Diversity is all the different characteristics and attributes of the DoD’s Total Force, which are consistent with our core values, integral to overall readiness and mission accomplishment, and *reflective of the nation we serve*.”¹¹ Likewise, an excerpt from the 2011 National Military Strategy asserts: “An all-volunteer force *must represent the country it defends*. We will strengthen our commitment to the values of diversity and inclusivity, and continue to treat each other with dignity and respect. We benefit immensely from the different perspectives, and linguistic and cultural skills of all Americans.”¹² In its December 2010 “Diversity Roadmap”, the U.S. Army defines diversity as, “The different attributes, experiences and backgrounds of our Soldiers, Civilians and Family Members that further enhance our global capabilities and contribute to an adaptive, culturally astute Army.”¹³ Similarly, the Commandant of the Marine Corps General James F. Amos directly addressed diversity in his recent “White Letter 2-13”. In it, he reports that, “The Marine Corps defines diversity as the varied cultures, backgrounds, talents, skills, and abilities among Marines that complement our core values, contribute to our warfighting capabilities and *ensure our connectedness with the American public*.”¹⁴ The Air Force broadly defines diversity as a composite of individual characteristics, experiences, and abilities consistent with the Air Force Core Values and the Air Force Mission.¹⁵ Lastly, Admiral Jonathan W. Greenert, Chief of Naval Operations, in his “Diversity Vision” declares that: “To maintain our warfighting edge, it is essential that our people be diverse in experience, background and ideas; personally and professionally ready; and proficient in the operation of their weapons and systems.” He further qualifies that “Diversity is not founded on statistics, percentages, or quotas. Diversity is about achieving peak performance.”¹⁶ From DoD down through the

individual service branches, the entire U.S. military appears to be embracing a broader perspective; all of these definitions are conspicuously lacking any mention of terms such as “race” or “gender” and evoke a higher conceptualization of diversity, grounding it in such matters as experience, backgrounds, and cognitive perspectives.

The military is not the only organization taking this approach. This broad approach is increasingly more common in business and large corporate firms as well. A 2010 report prepared for senior-leaders of the Chartered Accountants of Canada opined that, “The concept of diversity is broader and encompasses factors including age, culture, personality, skill, training, educational background and life experience. The influence of a variety of perspectives and viewpoints can contribute to flexibility and creativity within organizations.”¹⁷ Honeywell Inc. champions a “Commitment to Diversity”: “Diversity is the foundation of a performance culture that promotes respect, understanding, and appreciation of different perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences.”¹⁸ These two corporate examples are also devoid of any terms classically associated with diversity.

On the surface—and to this dedicated, white, military professional who has given and gained much throughout a lifetime of service—the language of these policies reverberates with idealism, genuine equality of opportunity, and deference to merit over preference. Are we really moving to a place where race or gender are not the written, unwritten, overarching, or underlying issue connected to so many organizational tensions? Perhaps. After all, to perceive diversity only in terms of one’s skin color, reproductive organs, or sexual preferences is narrow-minded and simplistic at best. However, the coda of “reflecting the nation we serve” or the earnestly sought

“connectedness”, appear to cling, archaically, to the notion that perhaps every institution across America should employ precise, verifiable ratios of persons who visibly align with the categories of “race” as defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB). OMB offers five racial categories: White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.¹⁹ Used in the national census, these racial categories are “self-identified” by respondents. They are specifically used in determining national policy. In fact, federal laws and policies are based on the assumption that people identify with one of these categories—regardless of a growing awareness that our transforming U.S. population precludes the ability to neatly “label” everyone. Perhaps the most important requirement related to these five categories is that respondents to the census must fall within one of them to facilitate Civil Rights monitoring and enforcement.²⁰ According to Jennifer L. Hochschild, the H.L. Jayne Professor of Government and of African American Studies at Harvard University, “A census both creates the image and provides the mirror of that image for a nation’s self-reflection.” She further argues “that a nation’s census is deeply implicated in and helps to construct its social and political order.”²¹ In order to appreciate this “social looking-glass approach” that sets the bar for ascertaining diversity in our military, we need to explore the history of census-taking. In doing so, we are diving into the embarrassing and almost unbelievable past that has shaped our present and will influence our future.

A cursory evaluation of the original Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution reveals how the framers considered race, identified social class, and confirms that they determined the “value” of human lives as a function of being a slave or free man—as hard as this is

to rationalize today. Though later amended, the original methodology for determining representation and taxes read as follows: "Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole number of free persons, including those bound to service for a term of years, and excluding Indians not taxed, *three fifths of all other Persons.*"²² From the inception of our nation's democracy, we have ignorantly codified the premise that people are *not* equal and that the only way to identify, understand, and enforce this social stratification is through the census. The census separated whites from "all other free persons" as well as from slaves—thus building racial classification into the population counts needed for Congressional apportionment.²³ This "social order" is engineered and enforced by the ruling elite and validated or verified through each decennial census.

What emerged from the most abhorrent circumstances of repressive slavery has also underpinned the nation's past and present immigration policies, has rationalized the "disposal" of millions of Native Americans, and remains the greatest influential force in shaping Congressional districts, national fiscal policy, and relations among racial groups in America today. Additionally, volumes of researchable materials corroborate that census data have been used by governments for nefarious purposes. During World War II, the census enabled U.S. authorities to locate and inter Japanese-Americans who were contributing members of our society.²⁴ It also facilitated the rounding up of Jews in Vichy France.²⁵ The purposes and methodologies of censuses have also exacerbated disunity among various population groups. In the case of the Tutsi and Hutu people of Rwanda, the result was genocide. Linking genocide to a census may

appear extreme, but the facts are clear. During their nation's 1933-34 census, Belgian colonial leaders arbitrarily assigned Rwandans' social status based on wealth. Those with 10 cows or more were deemed Tutsi; less than 10 cows, Hutu. The origins of violence between these virtually ethnologically identical peoples are attributable to the "politically constructed identities" bestowed by the colonial state: Hutus were deemed indigenous, while the Tutsis were branded as "aliens."²⁶ This approach of categorizing certain racial or ethnic groups as "aliens" is not dissimilar from how the U.S. has crafted its immigration policies over time. These policies have characterized mainstream societies' perceptions of Asians, Hispanics, and other racial and ethnic groups. Given the above examples, how can a census have such influence over policy and human behavior?

According to Claire Jean Kim, a noted political scientist, almost every modern society "classifies" its population by using a census to structure the process. It is the vehicle which underlies the institutional expressions of the ethno-racial order through a combination of ideological beliefs along with institutional and social practices. "Together, beliefs and practices determine what the meaningful group categories are, how they are bounded, who belongs in each, and where each group's status is situated in relation to the others. The racial order helps to guide the polity's and individuals' choices about the distribution of goods and resources and does a great deal to shape each person's life chances."²⁷ A critical analysis of American history shows that people's racial classification largely shaped their social status, political standing, economic or educational opportunities, civil rights, and access to legal citizenship. "Socially constructed meanings are often added to perceived or actual differences whereby these

differences become signifiers for people's worth in a society."²⁸ Most often, for purposes of obtaining or retaining power, control, or social prestige, everyone pursues tangible or intangible things that will facilitate their success. However, the complex undertaking of determining whether and where new populations fit into the American racial order, along both horizontal and vertical dimensions, involves a myriad of institutions; from the local to the federal level, the information of the national census plays a decisive role.²⁹ Given the tremendous influence of the census itself, it falls under continual scrutiny. Its methodologies and assessment criteria are regularly challenged by those with vested interests in the outcomes, such as political parties and special interest groups. Fully elaborating on the intricacies and implications of the census is beyond the scope of this SRP. However, to explicate the impetus to build a military that "reflects" the nation's entire society, it is necessary to explore recent developments in census-taking.

For the first time in history, the 2000 census did—along with other changes—add this instruction: "Mark [X] one or more races to indicate what this person considers himself/herself to be."³⁰ The comparable 1990 question instructed respondents to "Fill ONE circle for the race that the person considers himself/herself to be."³¹ Such changes are long overdue; U.S. society is rapidly transforming, and racial lines are becoming more blurred with each generation. Moving toward a system that enables individuals to more accurately self-identify—beyond the government's previously imposed "five categories"—would appear the logical direction of a progressing society. However, in the years leading up to the 2000 census rollout, there were many groups who were not enthusiastic about the plan. Consider the following dissent: "We believe this could dilute the number of Latinos and African Americans counted," said Lisa Navarrate, a

spokeswoman for the Latino advocacy group, National Council of La Raza.³² This response is contrary to the ample outcry that census responses do not reflect the breadth of society's current and emerging diversity. Heavy opposition to the plan was also voiced by Harold McDougall, the Washington legislative director for the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). His organization also opposed the new category and he stated: "Some people who choose the multiracial designation could inadvertently 'disconnect' themselves from the larger and more powerful black coalition they now identify with. 'Will a new multiracial congressional district be set up out of this? No,' McDougall said. 'Now we are together as a large group, and to start to micro-define won't help'."³³ "Supporters say the move would help foster a sense of pride and self-affirmation among the swelling ranks of mixed-race Americans, many of whom feel ignored by the larger society."³⁴ Offering written testimony to the 1997 hearing on proposed census changes, Newt Gingrich strongly advised that: "We should...stop forcing Americans into inaccurate categories aimed at building divisive subgroups and allow them the option of selecting the category 'multiracial', which I believe will be an important step toward transcending racial division and reflecting the melting pot which is America."³⁵ Without question, the idea of allowing individuals to self-identify as "mixed race" sparked controversy and caused powerful minority group advocates to disclose their true agendas that seem to contradict the ideals of progress and equal opportunity. They appear rooted in special interests and a desire to maintain political power. Maintaining a perpetual focus on the "wrongs" committed by past generations is divisive; it fuels perceptions of perennial racism, impedes reconciliatory efforts, and overlooks the reality that mixed race children

increased by 49 percent between 2000 and 2010—more than any other group.³⁶ The most succinct encapsulation of the apparent fear of changing the census is conveyed in a quote from Tamara Jacoby’s essay “An End to Counting by Race?” In it she states:

Organizations like the NAACP, the National Urban League, and the National Council of La Raza recognized the threat such a mixed-race box would pose to the classifications that justify their existence: after all, every dark-skinned child registered in this category would shrink the government’s official count of blacks or Latinos or American Indians, eventually reducing the political influence of the organizations claiming to represent these groups. For the better part of the 90’s, minority activists and their allies in the federal government mounted an unstinting effort to block any change in the census form.³⁷

Rife with volatility, “clinging to the past” is easier than embracing the racially ambiguous future that obviates preferences for any group because the groups will be too diverse to consider. This gives way to a more rational approach to talent management; one that looks at ability and qualifications over race or gender.

Many experts point to the military as one of the most successfully diverse, “level fields of opportunity” for everyone who is capable of meeting entry-level standards; who can accomplish required physical, academic, and occupation specialty training; and who uphold the values and ideals of their respective service. Our military has not always been so diverse. Indeed, our “proud Services’ legacies” are tarnished by a history of prejudiced attitudes, gender biases, and racially discriminatory practices that limited the opportunities for countless talented and dedicated individuals. At best, it fueled a “rocky start” to shaping a more diverse military officer corps. A broader historical context will be discussed later. But to frame a realistic perspective in more modern terms, consider the following:

- In 1877, 75 years after opening its doors, 2nd Lt. Henry Ossian Flipper was the First African American to graduate from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.³⁸
- On December 15, 1943, Wilbur Carl Sze was the first Chinese American Officer commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps.
- On November 10, 1945, Frederick C. Branch was commissioned as the first Black Marine Second Lieutenant.³⁹
- On July 18, 1947, Florence A. Blanchfield was commissioned as Lieutenant Colonel (the first woman to hold permanent rank in the regular army) by General Dwight D. Eisenhower.⁴⁰

These, and many additional “firsts” far too numerous to list, may indicate “progress”. However, the pervasive racism and sexism that have persisted in our society’s evolution also affected our military institutions—in most cases to a lesser extent, but unacceptably nonetheless. Yet our military provides courageous and storied precedents of Black, Hispanic, and Asian men; along with women of all races and ethnicities, who have made exceptional sacrifices while contributing to the strength, defense, and development of this nation.

Crispus Attucks, a black patriot, died in the Boston Massacre during 1770 and holds the distinction of being one of the first men to die in the struggle for American independence.⁴¹ Many Hispanic Americans fought alongside other American patriots to defeat the British during the Revolutionary War.⁴² The bravery of these men was exceeded only by their determination to be accepted in the face of great prejudice.

During the Civil War, (1861-1865), black soldiers did serve in the “combat arms” of infantry and artillery, but they predominately performed the myriad of noncombat, support functions to sustain an army at war. According to the national archives, the Union forces included nearly 80 black officers. Records also validate that black women served as nurses, spies, and scouts. It is estimated that 179,000 black men (10 percent of the Union Army) served as soldiers in the Army, while another 19,000 served in the Navy. Records also indicate that approximately 40,000 black soldiers died during the war—30,000 of whom succumbed to infection or disease.⁴³ Nearly 20,000 Hispanic men fought for the Union and Confederacy by serving in the armies and navies of both the North and the South.⁴⁴ At no time did race, gender, skin color, or social standing have any impact on their capability or commitment to serve their fledgling Nation; regardless of persistent hostility and baseless discrimination.

Unequal treatment, racism, and the continuing practice of segregation did not deter those willing to struggle, sacrifice, and even die for the cause of what, for them, remained “elusive” freedom. The renowned, racially segregated unit the “Buffalo Soldiers” helped to secure the U.S. frontiers. After President Franklin D. Roosevelt, issued Executive Order 8802 (EO8802 in July, 1941) prohibiting *discrimination* (not segregation—that would come later in 1948) in the defense program, the “Tuskegee Airmen” began training for World War II combat at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama.⁴⁵ With approximately 930 black members of both the 99th Pursuit Squadron and later the 332nd Fighter Group, these organizations posted exceptional combat records during the War; unequivocally demonstrating that a person’s skin color has no impact on their abilities.⁴⁶

Arguably, some of the most rigid racial lines were drawn between white and black U.S. Marines. A post-revolutionary war policy declared, "No Negro, mulatto or Indian is to be enlisted."⁴⁷ This racial prohibition made the initial recruiting efforts in 1942 (after EO8802) a significant challenge since the black community had no tradition for serving in the Marines.⁴⁸ As blacks eventually joined the Marines, they trained in isolation, under hellish conditions, at Montford Point, North Carolina. Blacks who joined the Marines at that dreadful time in our history did so knowing they were at the forefront of change—change that would soon come in the form of greater protection of their rights under the law. Richard V. Washington, a 102 year-old Montford Point Marine; received a long overdue Congressional Gold Medal from a contingent of Philadelphia Marines on Saturday, August 18th, 2012. Washington declared, "I wanted to be a Marine because it was impossible to do—because they would not accept me as a black man."⁴⁹ In many—if not all—cases, the discrimination against minority men in the earliest years of the military was endured also by women to an even greater extent.

The first women seeking to contribute to National Defense served the force by nursing, cooking, sewing, and doing laundry at the camps of the Continental Army. Unable to enlist and legitimately bear arms, they faced the dangers of combat as men did and performed tasks vital to the force. A few acquired historical recognition such as "Molly Pitcher". She heroically manned a howitzer at the Battle of Monmouth in 1778. Women's commitment to serve only increased over the years throughout the Civil War, World War I, and World War II. Each conflict brought with it more female and minority participants. During the post-Pearl Harbor recruiting surge, an estimated 350,000 women volunteered to serve in one of the gender segregated service "auxiliaries." The

three most prominent were the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (later the Women's Army Corps or WAC), the Women Air force Service Pilots (WASP), and the Women Accepted for Volunteer Military Services (WAVES).⁵⁰ In keeping with the prevalent ideology of the time—that women should not be on the front lines in combat—they performed important stateside jobs such as administrative clerks, switchboard operators, and mail sorters, thereby enabling more men to deploy overseas to combat. However, danger, risk, and the possibility of death was a way of life for those women who served—and died—as nurses in combat. In perhaps the most conspicuous demonstration of their abilities, “more than 1,100 young women, all civilian volunteers, flew almost every type of military aircraft—including the B-26 and B-29 bombers—as part of the WASP program. They ferried new planes long distances from factories to military bases and departure points across the country.”⁵¹ This was irrefutable proof of a woman’s capacity to serve beyond the gender limitations and restrictions of the day.

The uphill battle for racial and gender equality in the military was propelled to new heights on both 12 June and 26 July, 1948, when President Harry S. Truman signed The Women's Armed Services Integration Act and Executive Order 9981. Women now had permanent, not “auxiliary”, status. Further, the newly established President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services began to dismantle the military’s apparatus of rigid segregation. However, the true catalyst for implementing “inclusion” was the war in Korea. Marines fighting in Korea were “much more concerned with staying alive than concentrating on the color of others in their outfits.”⁵² Events in Korea reinforced the utility, efficiency, and viability of racially integrated units. The Korean War demonstrated that whites could lead blacks and

blacks could lead whites. Further, military leaders learned that engaged leadership was the critical component for making it work.⁵³ Citing the effectiveness of military desegregation, in the 1960's, many regarded the armed forces as the model of racial integration. However, in this era of mounting racial tensions and civil unrest, fueled in part by the controversy over the Vietnam War, advocates of racial integration were bitterly opposed. However, to the military's credit, the mindset of collaboration and having been conditioned for team work while performing in combat or other training, persuaded many to avoid or at least "tone down expressions of racial animosity while on duty."⁵⁴ As military leaders worked to alleviate racial tensions and impose newly adopted Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) policy while winding down the Vietnam War, Pentagon officials were also bracing for the transition to an "All Volunteer Force" (AVF) and the unknowns this decision might present.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, looking back over 40 years, the U.S. military has seen the Cold War end, liberated Kuwait, invaded Iraq, and remains fighting in Afghanistan—all with volunteers, and while comprising the most diverse, professional force the nation has ever seen. In spite of these circumstances, the question being directly asked—or otherwise implied—is, why does the Active Duty officer population not more closely "reflect" the nation's racial composition and racial demographics of their enlisted men and women?

According to the 2010 census of the U.S. population, there are 308,745,538 Americans.⁵⁶ It is often said that those serving in the military are part of the "one percent"—that is the one percent of Americans who serve the nation. Considering the Active Duty segment of the Armed Forces, it would be more accurate to say part of the "0.46 percent", because according to the 2011, DoD Demographic Profile, there are

only 1,411,425 Active Duty Soldiers, Sailors, Airman and Marines, both officer and enlisted.⁵⁷ If you further isolate the officers from this population, the number would stand at a mere 215,530.⁵⁸ With shrinking budgets and looming defense cuts, this number will only become smaller. In spite of a lessening demand for officers as forces downsize, there is a growing fear amongst strategic leaders that the “talent pool”, from which military officers can be pulled, will not support future force requirements. Additionally, there is pressure to ensure that future force shaping efforts (specifically reductions) do not unfairly affect any specific racial or gender populations. The unique ability for statistics to evoke varying degrees of “perception” is not a new phenomenon. Certain groups can present statistics that will have mainstream media criticizing the military officer corps on the grounds of racial inequity. Others will tout that there is a gender-based crisis. There are also those who have inferred that the DoD should reevaluate “antiquated” concepts of morality, overly rigorous fitness standards, or job related educational requirements to immediately fill perceived shortages. Ideally, statistics should present unbiased data that accurately describes the environment. This enables stakeholders to determine whether or not a problem exists and helps shape solutions.

If the stated goal is to “reflect society”, key parameters must be clear, because raw census data, taken at face value, can be misleading. As presented earlier in this SRP, the example of comparing black officers to the “general population” yields a different perspective than when comparing them to the segment of their “military eligible” contemporaries. Another example of misleading information is reflected in the following statement about the white population: “the number of Whites who reported one race and identified as non-Hispanic numbered 196.8 million, or 64 percent of the total

population.”⁵⁹ However, on the opening page of the “Census Interactive Population Map” it shows the “White Alone” population to be 72.4 percent.⁶⁰ Additionally, the census presents that 16.3 percent of the population is Hispanic and in detailed addendum reports, elaborately correlates the 16.3 percentage to 50.5 Million people aligned with groups of diverse origins (whom they consider to be most culturally aligned with)—yet they are not their own category. The purpose of improving the census is to better understand the demography of the nation, not to misrepresent it. It should also be noted that the “white” population also includes those “diverse” cultures and ethnicities from the Middle East, such as Arab, Lebanese, and Palestinian; and from North Africa, such as Algerian, Moroccan, and Egyptian.⁶¹ This exemplifies how the census can potentially mislead the public while fueling debates over racial diversity. This is important because it demonstrates how bureaucrats can fixate on statistics. Instead of embracing non-racial and non-gender attributes such as education, skills, background, and perspective—as the “new” definitions of diversity imply—we are drafting new policies, re-defining old terms, and promulgating questionable demographic figures that create unnecessary focus on issues that are only skin deep.

The Nation’s current “reflection” is derived from the 2010 census and is compared below to the military officer population of DoD.

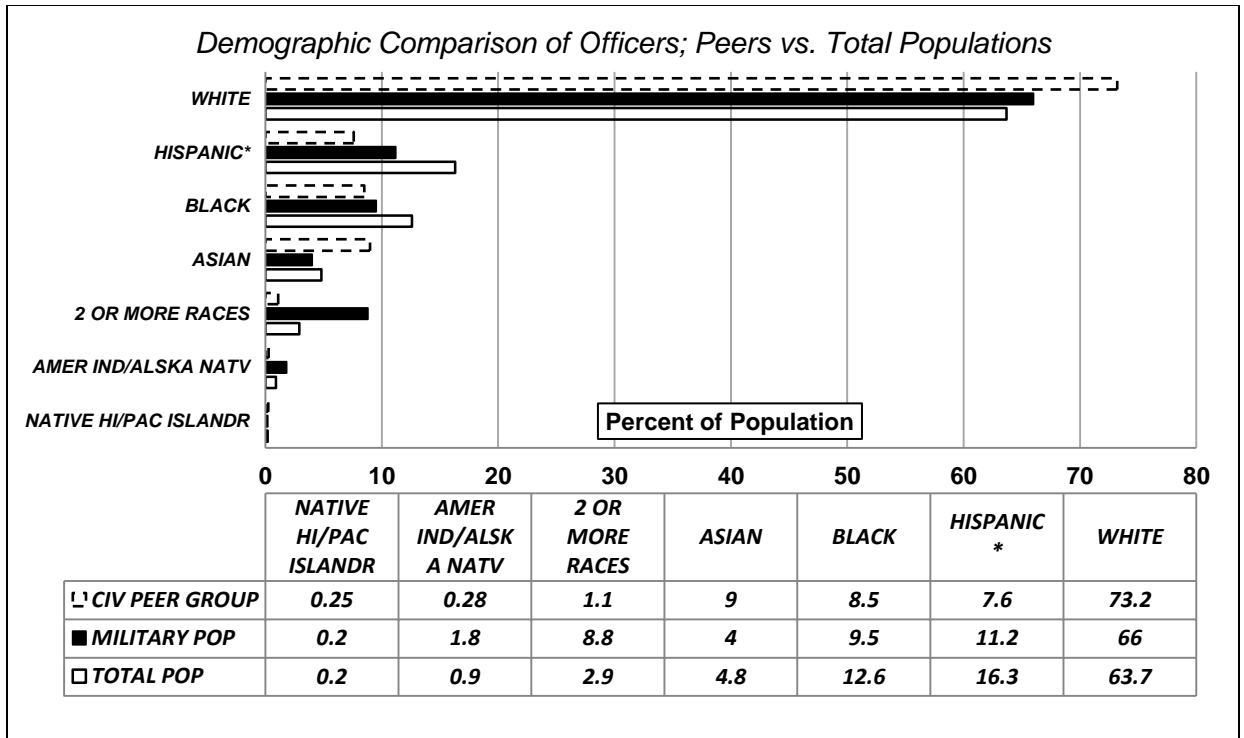


Figure 1: Comparison of Military Officer Population; National Total vs. Peer Group⁶²

Figure 1 illustrates that demographically, military officers are closely aligned or “representative” of the U.S. population and in some cases, exceed their peer group. It must be noted that the “peer group” data is a comparison to civilians, between the ages of 21-35, who have college degrees and are otherwise eligible for military service.⁶³ However, without running the “grads” through a fitness test or assessing their morals, ethics, and discipline, it might be presumptuous to think they would all make good officers; nonetheless, this is a more reasonable comparison than the mainstream provides. Notice again that there are only 8.5 percent of Black Americans in the group who would be eligible for military service. Once more, looking strictly at the Army, the black officer population is 12.6 percent which is 4.1 percent above the eligible population and on par with society overall.⁶⁴ The mixture of officers across DoD appears

balanced when you combine the demography with how we have now defined diversity; “...different attributes, experiences and backgrounds...” Yet, we remain steadfast in anchoring diversity in race and gender. The MLDC’s report references “demography or demographics” 175 times, “race/ethnicity” 47 times, and describes a vague notion of “barriers” 50 times. Perhaps they don’t fully embrace the definition they defined? More than likely it stems from the need for attribution; after all, how one thinks, where one was born, or how one was raised are “intangible” and policy requires “visible” traits—the only ones that allow empirical measurement—of what is being called the “new strength” that the military purportedly lacks. Those who make this claim however, will not concede that several studies have shown that, “Diverse groups are present in all organizations, and yet managers and researchers struggle to *conclusively* identify the direct effects of diversity on performance (Milliken & Martins, 1996; Webber & Donahue, 2001; O’Reilly, Williams, & Barsade, 1998).”⁶⁵ Regardless of such studies, those who live and lead in the military understand that leadership, above anything else, is the key to leveraging the incredible diversity of our servicemen and women. Next to race, gender—in most cases—is the other “visible” trait that will be explored next.

A brief look at gender reveals that women make up roughly 16 percent of the 215,530 Active Component military officers.⁶⁶ Additionally, and contrary to contemporary perceptions, a RAND study conducted for the DoD during the February 2012, “Women in Service Review”, “did not find *any indication* of female officers having less than equitable opportunities to compete and excel under current assignment policies.”⁶⁷ So why has the DoD changed its policy regarding the assignment of women to combat units? To some extent, the MLDC played a role here as well. Just as they presented

“fuzzy” statistics about racial demography, they also failed to highlight how successful women have actually been with regard to promotions and command. For instance, while they comprise only 16 percent of the overall military population, females do represent 7.1 percent of General/Flag officers.⁶⁸ The commission portrayed “eliminating combat exclusion policies” as the key to women succeeding in the future and was one of their top 10 recommendations.⁶⁹ Dose this commission really believe that female “grunts” will make the military stronger? They will contribute to greater “diversity” but are not likely to add more *strength*. Some perspectives on assigning women greater combat roles have been offered by two “pioneering” female Generals. Elizabeth Hoisington, Brigadier General, U.S. Army (Ret.), was the first female Brigadier General in the Army, and Jeanne Holm, Major General, U.S. Air Force (Ret.), was the first female of any service to attain the rank of Major General. When asked if she thought that putting women into combat units would reduce the effectiveness of our military forces, BG Hoisington (Ret.) responded,

Yes, I do. Women cannot match men in aggressiveness, physical stamina, endurance and muscular strength in long-term situations. In a protracted engagement against an enemy, soldiers with these deficiencies would be weak links in our armor. We cannot build a winning Army if the soldiers in it have no confidence in the long-term mental and physical stamina of their comrades.⁷⁰

Conversely, when asked if there should be any limit on the use of women in combat, MajGen Holm (Ret.) responded, “I see no reason for any restrictions on the use of women as members of *combat air crews*. I see no reason why they should not serve aboard *combat ships*. The bottom line is obviously infantry. There I have a little difficulty.”⁷¹ She went on to say, “Remember, only 8 percent of the people in the armed forces are infantrymen. There are other forms of combat without being in the infantry.”⁷²

They both agree on the “infantry issue” which is central to the heated debate within the services—in particular, the Army and Marine Corps. In fact, the Marine Corps recent “delay” in implementing a purported, “gender-neutral” physical requirement, after more than half of female Marines in boot camp could not do three pull-ups, is just another indicator of aggregate gender strength trends that cannot be ignored.⁷³ Critics of forcing the integration of women into frontline infantry, Special Forces, and other close combat units, allege it is political power-play; an act of asserting civilian dominance over the military to conduct “social experimentation.” Marine Captain Katie Petronio whose article, “Get Over It! We Are Not All Created Equal”, summarized her experiences fighting alongside Marine infantry as a combat engineer in Iraq and Afghanistan by saying, “The physical strain of enduring combat operations and the stress of being responsible for the lives and well-being of such a young group in an extremely kinetic environment were compounded by lack of sleep, which ultimately took a physical toll on my body that I couldn’t have foreseen.”⁷⁴ Captain Petronio performed her duties magnificently; leading men and women in the most austere and dangerous conditions while garnering the respect and admiration of seniors, peers, and subordinates. She excelled at what 99.9 percent of Americans (men or women) will never attempt and yet advocates a position for keeping the infantry occupation closed to women. She cites the physiological fact that female bodies are less adaptive to the arduous, physical stresses of ground combat resulting in more injuries and complications that are typically—though not exclusively—suffered less frequently by men under the same conditions. Moving forward, this issue requires measured prudence and careful consideration of facts. One only hopes that the political pressures driving females to the potentiality of hand to

hand, ground combat are not as strong as those that rushed Navy Lt. Kara Hultgreen to attain “combat fighter pilot” status to appease those pushing a “diversity” agenda; a course which subsequent investigations have linked to her death.⁷⁵ That said, countless talented and capable female pilots continue serving with distinction across the force; and as with any occupation requiring a high-level of sustained performance, “gender neutral” standards for pilots have been codified; to become one, *everyone* must meet and maintain them. Following this construct, if decisions to “broaden gender diversity” serve the best interests of National Defense, without sacrificing performance standards, history will judge them as sound. A further area which garners much attention is the perpetual debate over the lack of female and minority representation “at the top”; meaning those who fill the roles of General and/or Flag officers (GO/FO).

With roughly 34 percent of all officers being “minority” (if we can count Hispanics), approximately 10.3 percent of the population of GO/FO’s are minority.⁷⁶ 89 percent of them are white representing 0.51 percent of the white officer population. This means that a white male has a “one in 195 chance” to make GO/FO. Black males make up 6.7 percent of the GO/FO’s at 0.34 percent of the black officer population and have a “one in 292 chance” to attain O7.⁷⁷ As previously stated, 7.1 percent of the GO/FO’s are women giving the odds of making GO/FO “one in 525”. However, when you consider the tremendously competitive, 26-30 year (or more) term required to achieve these micro-percentage positions, these numbers do not seem that far out of balance. If anything, in the case of female GO/FO’s (as a function of the total serving military populations), women are arguably well represented—though you won’t read about this in the MLDC final report, *From Representation to Inclusion: Diversity Leadership for the*

21st Century Military. Again, this fact is often suppressed in favor of the “women need combat command to become general” storyline. A similar argument echoes across corporate America as it pertains to the lack of minority and female Fortune 500 Chief Executives, though this is trending upward in that 4.6 percent of the CEOs are women.⁷⁸ The same percentage (4.6) is also representative of the number of “minority” CEOs.⁷⁹ Understanding that diversity is much more than skin color or gender, are we wise to so aggressively chase statistics? Have we lost the ability to discern who is or isn’t the best, most fully qualified person for a particular role? If we are going to “manage” diversity, what are the right ratios of gender and color for these roles? Should every service branch contain 49 percent men and 51 percent women (per the U.S. population) with exactly corresponding ratios of race within each gender population? In the military officer corps, this would only be achievable through an engineered, measured draft that conscripted the precise race and gender ratios of college graduates—regardless of ability—needed to create an exact “reflection” of society. This would NOT be the right approach. What’s more, and given how the DoD has defined diversity, the more compelling concern should be finding, from across America, the *best qualified* officer candidates to lead our service men and women. Shouldn’t commitment, patriotism, selflessness, and the ability to meet/exceed physical and moral standards count more than the gender, race, or sexual orientation of someone who desires to serve? It is important to note that a successful military requires citizens to “rise to the occasion” by meeting the high standards and ideals of military service; the worst outcome is for the Services to “re-evaluate” (read; lower) the educational, moral, and physical standards to cater to the “lowest common denominator” of our society. There has never been a more

important time to ensure that military standards are maintained in light of the current problems facing our Nation's security and our society writ large. "To many observers, the values and social mores of 1990s America—narcissistic, morally relativist, self-indulgent, hedonistic, consumerist, individualistic, victim-centered, nihilistic, and soft—seem hopelessly at odds with those of traditional military culture."⁸⁰

Consider the significant problems facing the enlisted prospects for our military (and to some degree, would-be officers). Over one-third of youth (35 percent) have a medical disqualification, with obesity (17 percent) a large contributing factor. Drug or alcohol abuse removes 18 percent, and another 23 percent do not meet our standards for reasons such as criminal misbehavior, low aptitude scores, or having more dependents than can reliably be accommodated in the early career. This leaves only 25 percent that are actually eligible to serve.⁸¹ If we subtract the estimated 10 percent who are qualified but attending college, we are left with only 15 percent of the youth population who are eligible and available to serve. Without studying the demographics of this dilemma, maintaining optimal diversity may also be at risk. Perhaps due to the sensitivity or "political correctness" that pervades the information environments, we will continue failing to address the societal, cultural, and political forces which have brought us to this point (poverty, entitlement, breakdown of the family, etc.). Nonetheless, the military must remain strong. We must still train, equip, and compete against our adversaries with the Nation's most important "winning team", and selecting the *best officers* to lead the effort is strategically important. The officers must build cohesive, focused teams, capable of the most arduous work in austere environments; often working against the implications of the multicultural curricula and political programs so

keen to emphasize differences and pride in distinctive identities more than the shared interests, values, and *service culture* that have enabled our military to excel for generations.⁸² Once more, it is troubling to hear, from such an august group as was assembled to form the MLDC that, “Cultural assimilation, a key to military effectiveness in the past, will be challenged as inclusion becomes, and needs to become the norm.”⁸³ Is this saying that assimilating—the battle tested act of forging cohesive teams—is becoming obsolete? In spite of a refreshingly broad definition of diversity, the continuing effort to place “Special Emphasis” on various demographic segments begs the question; are we disguising and reviving Affirmative Action?⁸⁴ We seek to be more “inclusive” yet continue clinging to ideas that foster “exclusivity”. This can be seen in emerging concepts about mentoring and participation by some in “affinity groups”, also known also as networking groups. Such groups provide forums for employees to gather socially to share ideas in common that transcend their specific expertise, to mentor and be mentored. They are typically aligned with race, gender, ethnicity, country of origin, religion, physical disabilities, age, sexual orientation or other parameters.⁸⁵ Many groups have substantive value and without doubt, “mentoring” helps officers to be more successful. However, to infer that a mentor must represent your demographic to be effective is a divisive construct. This underlying concept that leadership needs to be a certain gender, race, or other distinguishing trait, to be respected or followed, is without merit. Professionals lead and mentor other professionals; this is a requirement of military leadership that transcends gender, race, or any other measurable trait. Additionally, by compartmentalizing the “team”, it serves only the special group’s agenda rather than the organization as a whole; not to mention fueling perceptions of a

segregationist mentality. An officer's ability to assimilate and model the military culture, while enforcing its standards, is critical to maintaining its strength and capability; to dismantle it, re-engineer it, or leave it bereft of merit—only for the sake of diversity—would jeopardize National Security and the future of the all volunteer force.

If history has taught us anything, it has proven that race, as a socially constructed phenomenon, reinforced by the census, cannot dampen patriotism or make one any less capable than another. It has also shown that being a woman does not impede the desire to serve ones country in any capacity that skill, determination, and brute strength allow. In the cases of race and gender, it was the ideas, perceptions, and laws of the day—not talent or ability—that precluded certain citizens' ability to serve in the military. However, these laws and many of the perceptions have now changed. If we truly have “redefined diversity”, we must then, reaffirm our commitment to maintaining the highest standards of performance and conduct for all officers across the Department of Defense. By virtue of the high calling to service, many are attracted to the ideals and challenge of leadership and we cannot let those prospective officers down. The military must not be viewed as a social experiment, but as the most powerful instrument of National power in the free world. Currently, according to a Gallup Poll, 43 percent of Americans “have a great deal of confidence in the military”, with small business and police garnering 29 and 26 percent respectively.⁸⁶ Maintaining public confidence in the belief that the United States Military is a fair, impartial, meritocratic establishment is critical. The moment this foundation of trust is compromised through the deliberate lowering of standards solely to “include” those who might otherwise not qualify to serve;

it will no longer be considered an “Employer of Choice” and will fail to attract the best, most qualified, and diverse talent that America has to offer.

In spite of having the world’s best and most revered military—which closely mirrors society in almost every way—special interest groups have continued to argue it is not “diverse” enough. This has led to the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” in 2011 and the extension of family benefits to same-sex couples in 2013. The service commissions evaluating whether or not females should be SEALs, Rangers, or other Special Forces must report their findings by 2016. The Air Force has recently repealed their ban on single parents entering officer training and the other Services will potentially follow suit.⁸⁷ There is a powerful lobby demanding that “Transgender” be allowed to serve and that military medicine must perform “reassignment” surgery if desired.⁸⁸ Many of these proposals clearly align with the new definitions of diversity, but are in no way empirically tied to increasing the strength, capability, or effectiveness of the Armed Forces. The officer’s principle role is to cultivate the future warriors of the force; holding them to high standards while embracing their ideas, backgrounds, contributions, and patriotism—more so than their race or gender. However, as we expand “diversity” beyond race and gender to encompass every possible group, sub-group, and microcosm of an arguably deteriorating society—and not require that they assimilate to the military’s organizational culture—we are courting mediocrity. We must never subordinate standards for flair or pretend that the military exists for any other purpose than to *fight and win our Nation’s wars*. Diversity initiatives must never undermine or erode this overarching precept. So, when will the military officer corps be diverse

enough? This may never be clear; however, from a pragmatic perspective, if *everyone* can be an officer, then we don't need officers.

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