Barriers to Minority Participation in Special Operations Forces

RAND

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PREFACE

RAND's National Defense Research Institute was asked to assess minority representation and recruiting in special operations forces. Our study is a quantitative and qualitative research effort to evaluate the level of minority representation in special operations forces and the reasons for current representation and to suggest policy changes that might, if necessary, increase minority representation in these forces.

The study may be of interest to other agencies or organizations concerned with issues of minority representation, both within and outside the Department of Defense.

This study was sponsored by the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), and it was carried out in the Forces and Resources Policy Center of RAND's National Defense Research Institute, a federally funded research and development center sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the unified commands, and the defense agencies.

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SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

All the military services have units composed of personnel with specialized training and equipment. These units maintain a higher level of readiness than general military units, are typically regarded as elite, and carry out a wide range of operations, from rescues at sea, to hostage rescues, to infiltrating enemy facilities. Collectively, they are known as Special Operations Forces (SOF). They represent an important military capability for the nation.

PURPOSE AND APPROACH OF STUDY

In 1997, the House of Representatives voiced concern regarding what they termed "a significant underrepresentation of minorities in certain areas of SOF." RAND's National Defense Research Institute was asked to study this issue. The study has two purposes. The first is to examine the extent of underrepresentation of minorities, if any, in SOF and the reasons for such underrepresentation; and the second is to provide recommendations to help improve minority representation in the SOF. We formulated three questions to guide our research:

- Are minorities underrepresented?
- What can explain the small numbers of minorities in SOF?
- Given that we identify barriers to minority participation in SOF, do current service policies address these issues?

To answer these questions we took a two-part approach. To address the first question of underrepresentation in SOF, we used personnel data from the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and the various component commands to portray the racial/ethnic composition of SOF and then compared them to the racial/ethnic composition of three comparison groups, using data provided by the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC). The first comparison group is the male active duty population for FY97. This comparison is most likely at the heart of the Congressional concerns, but it is probably not the relevant comparison to determine if minorities are truly underrepresented, because not all military personnel can meet the stringent requirements for joining SOF. Therefore, we defined a second comparison group: source populations for each service SOF using a variety of criteria—primarily age, grade, and test score cutoffs. We then compared the racial/ethnic composition of these source populations to that of SOF units. A third comparison group was defined, by adjusting the source population by the likely proportion of nonswimmers (who may self-select out of the source population because of the rigorous swimming requirement for SOF) and those ineligible because of not having a clean discipline record.

To determine why so few minorities join SOF, we looked for barriers, which we classified as structural or perceptual. We defined a barrier as a prerequisite, requirement, or perception that causes minorities to be less interested in SOF or to be excluded from SOF to a relatively greater extent than non-Hispanic whites. To examine barriers, we used data from service schoolhouses that select, assess, and train SOF candidates; data from the Youth Attitude Tracking Study; and information from 54 focus group discussions that we conducted with SOF personnel and source populations.

Finally, to assess the effect of service policies, we interviewed SOF recruiters, trainers, and personnel managers. We gathered data on policies and practices that affected minorities or the barriers we identified in our research.

WHAT DID WE FIND?

First, minorities are clearly underrepresented among SOF officers, whether the comparison is by service or by source population. Among enlisted personnel, Hispanics and other minorities have rea-

sonable representation in some SOF communities. However, blacks are particularly underrepresented when compared with their presence in the source populations.

Second, both structural and perceptual barriers impede minority members from joining SOF. Structural barriers, which are more likely to eliminate minority than white candidates, exist in entry, assessment, and training requirements. These include:

- Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) cutoff scores;
- Requirement for clean discipline records;
- Swimming requirements both during entry and training; and
- Land navigation components of training.

The focus groups identified several perceptual barriers. These include the following:

- Lack of individual knowledge and community support among minorities for a SOF career;
- Lack of identification with SOF defined as a lack of comfort that minorities feel when in units where they may be the only minority;
- A perceived racism in Army SOF that deters minorities from applying; and
- Lack of interest in SOF arising from minority preferences for occupations with less risk or greater civilian job transferability.

WHAT SHOULD THE SERVICES DO?

Some of these barriers, particularly the perceptual ones, are difficult to overcome. However, the services can do a number of things to mitigate if not eliminate them. Indeed, the Army and Navy have several efforts under way to increase minority representation in SOF. Some of the recommendations we offer include those efforts. We mention them here either by way of endorsement or to suggest an even more vigorous effort. Also, since some of the programs are

service-specific, we mention them so that other services can consider adopting them.

Recommendations to Help Overcome Structural Barriers

The institutional barriers reflect service policies and practices. Thus, the services have complete freedom to address these. Our recommendations include the following:

- Ensure that entry, assessment, and training requirements are relevant and support mission goals. Some of the service differences in entry requirements, e.g., swimming, suggest that some requirements may be more stringent than they need to be and thus might be inadvertently screening minorities out.
- Retain valid requirements. Members of the SOF and focus groups from all ethnic/racial groups were adamant about retaining valid requirements and saw any lowering of them in an attempt to draw in more minorities as detrimental for both the mission and the minority group.
- Support youth programs, such as swim teams, water polo teams, Boy Scouts, and similar organizations, particularly in minority communities. The Navy does this now. This support can both provide minorities better able to meet the screening requirements and help improve knowledge about and identification with SOF.
- Review entry requirements. Currently, the Army uses the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery General Technical (ASVAB GT) composite as one of the entry criteria. Other composites/subtests may be equally good performance predictors but may allow more minorities to be included.
- Track ethnic/racial data. The Army and Navy currently do so. These data provide insights into what parts of entry, assessment, and training processes pose the most difficult hurdles for minorities.
- Remove disincentives. For example, the Air Force requires SOF candidates to forfeit any job guarantee, which could deter a candidate—minority or majority—who has doubts about his ability to complete the training.

- Investigate the value of enhanced monitoring capability. The Army Special Forces (SF) has benefited from a detailed database on SF candidates. This database allows the Army enhanced monitoring capabilities and provides early indications of potential problems.

Recommendations to Help Overcome Perceptual Barriers

Overcoming perceptions is difficult; however, we make a number of recommendations that might help change how minorities perceive SOF. Many of these center on recruiting efforts. These include:

- Educate recruiters and consider delayed goals. Recruiters represent a key source of information for potential recruits. However, we found both SOF operators and source population participants who had not received accurate information about SOF options from their recruiter. The services may also wish to hold recruits accountable for the recruits they send to the SOF community by withholding credit for the recruitment until, say, the recruit at least passes initial screening.
- Use high-profile parachute teams to raise awareness of SOF. The Navy has been using this technique and perceives some benefits from it.
- The Army should educate personnel early about the SF option. Members of our source population focus groups often indicated that had they known more about SF when they were junior enlisted members, they might have seriously considered applying when they became eligible.
- The Navy should continue shipboard informational efforts. Some of the source population focus group participants, who had been exposed to Sea, Air, and Land teams (SEALs) at work on board ships or in a "Captain's Call" featuring SEALs, had a positive view of the SEALs after such sessions.
- Increase SOF presence in minority high schools and historically black colleges and universities. Both the Army and Navy have such efforts under way.
- Continue programs with small payoffs. Given that minorities have highlighted the importance of identification and role mod-

els, getting even a few more minorities into SOF is important because it establishes a presence with which other minorities can identify.

- Depict minority SOF in recruiting materials. The Army has initiated a new recruiting campaign featuring minority SOF personnel. Our focus group discussions suggest that this will have a positive effect because it addresses the issue of lack of identification on the part of minorities. The Navy's current set of SOF recruiting materials uses drawings rather than photographs to depict SEALs. The Navy might consider adopting the Army approach and featuring minority SEAL personnel in their materials.
- The Army should determine whether a basis for perceptions of racism exists. Given the widespread presence of these perceptions and their extremely negative effect, they deserve additional inquiry. Such an effort should include operator units in diverse geographical locations and should consider behavior both in the workplace and at unit social events. The effort should distinguish between negative or racist attitudes, which the services cannot control, and negative behaviors, which they can and should prevent.
- Emphasize the positives. SOF service has many positive attributes: membership on an elite team, demanding training, highly skilled colleagues, and important service to the nation. Recruiting materials already emphasize some of these, but perhaps they could be highlighted even further. In addition, it might also be useful to highlight the fact that some civilian agencies do value the types of skills learned in SOF, most notably law enforcement organizations, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms agency (ATF).

SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Perhaps the central issue raised in this study relates to the reasons why minority representation in SOF is considered important. On the one hand, many participants pointed to reasons why diversity in SOF is important. First, SOF, like other military units, is short of personnel and increasing minority participation could offer a solution to the

staffing problem. Second is the simple value of diversity in general. Third, and more pointed, given SOF missions, is the value that people of different races, backgrounds, and cultures bring to units that traditionally work in foreign countries. Minorities may blend in better with non-white populations. Furthermore, ethnic minorities often bring language skills and familiarity with other cultures and customs that enhance unit effectiveness in foreign countries.

On the other hand, many participants were vehemently opposed to quotas or the lowering of standards to achieve greater diversity. This was true across majority and minority personnel, operators, and source populations. Minority groups particularly voiced strong opposition to such policies because they create an atmosphere where all minorities are viewed as substandard and of suspect quality. Many asked why it was important for SOF to mirror society or the service with which they were associated, given that SOF is a voluntary career choice.

These issues suggest the need for a guidance statement from USSOCOM. Such a statement should include the reasons minority representation is perceived to be important and the representation goal. This would at least address the issue of how much is enough and would reaffirm that standards and personnel quality are still of paramount importance to the organization and its mission.

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ACRONYMS

AFQT	Armed Forces Qualification Test
AFSOC	Air Force Special Operations Command
AR	Arithmetic Reasoning subtest
ARI	Army Research Institute
ASVAB	Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery
ATC	Air Traffic Control
ATF	Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms agency
BDU	Battle Dress Uniform
BUD/S	Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL
C2W	Command and Control Warfare
CA	Civil Affairs
CA	Combat Arms
CBT	Combating Terrorism
CCT	Combat Controller Technician
CINC	Commander in Chief
CMF	Career Management Field
CO	Combat Arms subtest

CP	Counterproliferation
CSAR	Combat Search and Rescue
DA	Direct Action
DEA	Drug Enforcement Agency
DMDC	Defense Manpower Data Center
EOD	Explosive Ordnance Disposal
FA	Field Artillery
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FID	Foreign Internal Defense
GAO	General Accounting Office
GT	General Technical subtest
HA	Humanitarian Assistance
HALO	High-Altitude Low-Opening parachute jumps
HBCU	Historically Black Colleges and Universities
IW	Information Warfare
JFC	Joint Force Commander
JFK	John F. Kennedy
JSOC	Joint Special Operations Command
MC	Mechanical Comprehension subtest
MEOC	Military Equal Opportunity Climate
MOS	Military Occupational Specialty
NAVSPECWARCOM	Naval Special Warfare Command
NCO	Noncommissioned Officer
NJP	Nonjudicial Punishments

OASD/SOLIC	Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
PAST	Physical Abilities and Stamina Test
PJ	Pararescue Jumper
PSYOP	Psychological Operations
PTRR	Physical Training, Rehabilitation, and Remediation
Q-course	*See* SFQC
RASP	Ranger Assessment and Selection Program
RI	Representation Index
RIP	Ranger Indoctrination Program
ROP	Ranger Orientation Program
ROTC	Reserve Officer Training Corps
SA	Security Assistance
SDV	SEAL Delivery Vehicle
SEAL	Sea, Air, and Land team
SF	Special Forces
SFAS	Special Forces Assessment and Selection
SFQC	Special Forces Qualification Course
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SR	Special Reconnaissance
STS	Special Tactics Squadron
SWCC	Special Warfare Combat Crewman
USAJFKSWCS	U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School

USASOC	U.S. Army Special Operations Command
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command
VE	Verbal subtest
YATS	Youth Attitude Tracking Study

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

REASONS FOR THE STUDY

RAND was asked by the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) to undertake a study of minority representation in special operations forces (SOF) as a result of concerns expressed by the House of Representatives regarding the "significant underrepresentation of minorities in certain areas of the SOF" (U.S. Congress, 1997). The study has two primary objectives:

- To examine the extent of underrepresentation of minorities, if any, in SOF and the reasons for such underrepresentation; and
- To provide recommendations to help improve minority representation in the SOF.

Although the original focus of the study emphasized recruiting, our initial research suggested that an understanding of the selection and training process for SOF was crucial to understanding minority participation in SOF. Thus, we expanded the project to encompass selection and training issues and to permit an assessment of not just how individuals are attracted to the SOF community but also of how they become SOF operators to determine whether there are barriers that disproportionately affect minorities during the entry and training process.[1]

[1]Appendix A provides a brief overview of SOF and their history, mission, and structure. Appendix B describes the assessment and training process that SOF candidates undergo to become members.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS, DATA, AND APPROACH

The report focuses on three research questions, which form the underpinning of our analysis.

1. Are minorities "underrepresented" in SOF?
2. What can explain the small numbers of minorities in SOF? and
3. Given that our findings identify a number of actual and perceived barriers to minority participation in SOF, do current service policies address these issues?

Addressing the research questions delineated above requires a two-part approach based on both quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

To address the first question of underrepresentation in SOF, we used personnel data from USSOCOM and the various component commands to portray the racial/ethnic composition of SOF. We then compared it to the racial/ethnic composition of three comparison groups, using data provided by the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC). The first comparison group is the male active-duty population for FY97. However, although such a comparison is most likely at the heart of recent Congressional concerns, this does not seem to be an appropriate comparison group because SOF have stringent entry criteria and not all military personnel are eligible. Thus, we used the DMDC data to define a second comparison group: the source populations for each service SOF using a variety of criteria—primarily age, grade, and test score cutoffs. We then compared the racial/ethnic composition of these source populations to that of SOF units. Source populations are the primary recruiting pools for SOF and thus are a more appropriate comparison group when discussing questions of underrepresentation. A third comparison group, labeled the eligible population, was defined as a subset of the source population by adjusting it by the proportion of nonswimmers (who are likely to self-select out of the source population because of the rigorous swimming requirement for SOF) and those ineligible because they do not have a clean discipline record. Both these adjustments are ad hoc because we do not have firm data on either; nonetheless, they are useful in understanding the constraints facing SOF recruiters.

Quite apart from the question of underrepresentation, however, it is clear that the actual number of minorities in SOF is very low and this in itself, given an increasingly diverse ethnic population, gives rise to questions. In this report, we distinguish between structural or institutional barriers and perceptual barriers to minority participation. Barriers are defined as prerequisites, requirements, or perceptions that cause minorities to be less interested in SOF or that exclude them to a relatively greater extent than non-Hispanic whites.

Structural barriers include entry prerequisites (for example, minimum Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) score cutoffs) and training and assessment requirements (for example, swimming and land navigation) that are particular hurdles for minorities. To examine barriers during entry, selection, and training, we used data from the component command schoolhouses that run the assessment and training courses for SOF candidates. This provided us with an overall picture of graduation rates and actual hurdles faced during the assessment and training process. We do not suggest that these prerequisites or training criteria are unjustified or should be changed. If these barriers are linked to performance or qualifications needed to carry out SOF missions, then there may be little that can be done to alter them. Nonetheless, understanding the structural barriers to minority participation is an important first step in addressing the question of low minority participation.

Perceived barriers encompass those perceptions, attitudes, or beliefs that lead minorities to believe that they cannot or should not pursue SOF as a job or career option. These include perceptions of SOF and a SOF career, lack of individual knowledge about SOF and lack of community support for a SOF career, lack of identification, and perceived difficulty with the swimming requirement. In addition, we include as a perceptual barrier lack of interest in SOF arising from minority preferences for occupations with less risk or greater transferability to the civilian workplace. To address this issue of lack of interest in SOF, we also used data from the Youth Attitude Tracking Study (YATS) for selected years to highlight the differences in attitudes of minority and white youth toward military service.

Data addressing the question of perceived barriers to minority participation were limited, sparse, and largely anecdotal. Thus, we conducted 54 focus group discussions with SOF operators and source

populations to gather data on perceptions, opinions, and attitudes regarding SOF and minority participation. These discussions were held with both majority and minority personnel, officers and enlisted, in a variety of locations. The qualitative data gathered through focus group discussions provide a richness and a complexity to our quantitative data and to previously conducted research. Although such data can be somewhat limiting because of their very nature, they are optimal for developing, testing, and refining hypotheses. Data from the focus group discussions provided insights that gave depth and breadth to the hypothesized barriers listed above and helped us refine and hone these concepts further.

To address the third question, we interviewed a number of SOF recruiters, trainers, and personnel managers to gather data on policies and practices targeted at minorities and the barriers we identified during the focus group discussions.

The real contribution of this study lies in its amalgamation of quantitative and qualitative methodologies to address the policy debate about minority representation in SOF. The insights gained from analysis of the qualitative data are unique and shed considerable light on perceived barriers to minority participation in SOF that should be useful to SOF in understanding the level of current minority representation and in developing policies for the future.

FOCUS OF THE STUDY

In conjunction with USSOCOM, we decided to focus the study on active duty SOF personnel and on SOF "operators" defined as members of Army Special Forces (Army SF), Army Rangers, Navy Sea, Air, and Land teams (SEALs), and Air Force Combat Controller Technicians (CCTs) and Pararescue Jumpers (PJs). Three points are important to note: First, the distinction between operators and other SOF personnel was not as clearcut with respect to the Air Force, and we relied upon USSOCOM guidance to define the Air Force SOF operator community. The CCTs/PJs are clearly analogous to Army SF and Navy SEALs; they undergo similar training programs and often deploy on operations together. However, the work of other personnel, whom the Air Force designated as SOF operators, is more similar to other Air Force assignments than to the work done by SOF

operators of the other services. As a result, with respect to Air Force SOF, we included only CCTs/PJs in the qualitative aspects of the study. The data analysis does include all Air Force personnel with SOF-unique skill identifiers, but they are addressed separately from CCTs/PJs.

Second, Navy Special Warfare Combat Crewmen (SWCC), although operators, were not included in the study because they only recently changed over to a closed-loop career pattern. Previously, unlike other SOF operators, they went in and out of SOF assignments and thus were not part of a distinct SWCC community. As with the additional Air Force SOF personnel, we did include SWCC in the data analysis, but they were not included in the focus group discussions conducted with operators and source populations.

Third, because there are so few female SOF operators (they are only in the Air Force) and they are not among our defined "operators," we limited the study to male personnel.

ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

The next chapter addresses the question of underrepresentation of minorities in SOF. Chapter Three examines barriers to minority participation during the selection and training process and presents data on outcomes of various SOF courses by race/ethnicity. The next several chapters report our qualitative data analysis. Chapter Four provides a brief overview of our qualitative methodology. Chapters Five to Nine examine the several perceived barriers to minority participation: perceptions of SOF and a SOF career, lack of individual knowledge about, interest in, and community support for a SOF career, lack of identification, and perceived difficulty with the swimming requirement. In addition, Chapter Nine presents data from the YATS and from DMDC on military occupations to shed further light on the question of minority occupational preferences. Chapter ten discusses current service policies aimed at addressing a number of these barriers. Chapter Eleven briefly summarizes our research conclusions and offers recommendations intended to help increase minority representation in SOF.

A number of appendices provide additional information and data on various topics. Appendices A and B provide background information

on SOF and describe the SOF assessment and training process. Appendix C provides additional quantitative data regarding the SOF source populations. Appendix D compares the racial/ethnic composition of SOF with that of selected civilian organizations. Appendix E contains analyses of data from the Army Special Forces Assessment and Selection (SFAS) course. Appendix F presents the focus group protocols.

Chapter Two

ARE MINORITIES UNDERREPRESENTED IN SOF?

This chapter first presents the racial/ethnic minority composition of SOF. We use three comparison groups to address the question of underrepresentation: (1) the active duty male population in the associated service; (2) source populations within each service who meet the entry criteria for SOF in terms of ASVAB score cutoffs and age, grade, and military occupational specialty (MOS) restrictions; and (3) eligible populations adjusted for the proportion of minorities likely to be nonswimmers and to have received nonjudicial punishments (NJPs).[1] Nonswimmers may self-select out of the eligible pool because of the rigorous swimming requirements, whereas those receiving NJPs are generally ineligible for SOF because a clean discipline record is a prerequisite in both the Army and Navy SOF. Estimating the eligible population is largely a notional exercise because we do not have firm data on the proportion of nonswimmers and NJPs among the source population, but it is useful in showing the constraints facing SOF in their attempts to increase minority representation.

RACIAL/ETHNIC MINORITY COMPOSITION OF SOF, 1997

The Department of Defense SOF community is small and consists of a little over 10,000 operators. Table 2.1 shows the number of SOF operators in each SOF community. The Army SF is clearly the

[1]NJP (sometimes known as "Article 15") is part of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). This allows commanders to impose punishments for minor violations and infractions of the UCMJ.

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Table 2.1

Number of SOF Operators, by Service, FY97

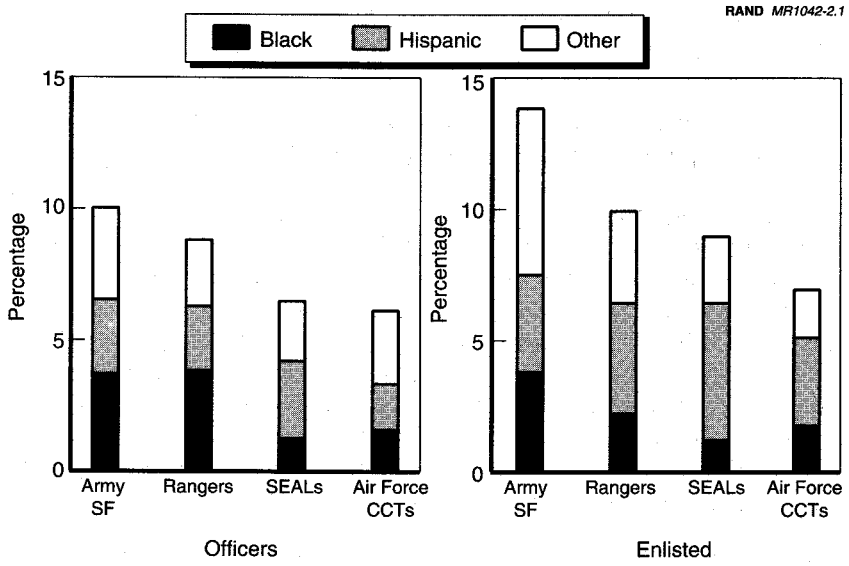
	Officer	Enlisted
Army		
SF	1,041	4,020
Rangers	127	1,783
Navy		
SEALs	492	1,889
SWCC	—	591
Air Force		
CCT/PJs	60	419
Total	1,720	8,702

SOURCE: USSOCOM.

largest, consisting of approximately 1,000 officers and 4,000 enlisted personnel. The Air Force CCT/PJ community is the smallest, consisting of 60 CCT officers (there are no PJ officers) and about 400 CCT and PJ enlisted operators. The comparatively small size of the U.S. SOF community with respect to other units in the military is important for two reasons: First, it allows SOF to be more selective and stringent with respect to entry criteria because these forces need small numbers of people; second, as we see below, if the community wishes to increase its minority representation, even programs that provide only small increases in the number of minority personnel may be worth implementing.

Figure 2.1 presents the racial/ethnic composition of SOF in the three services as of FY97. Included in the chart are blacks, Hispanics, and all other racial or ethnic minorities grouped into the category "other." The last category includes primarily Asians, Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans. The omitted group is white, non-Hispanics.

Overall, the aggregate percentage of minority officers in SOF ranges from 8–10 percent in the Army to a little over 6 percent in the Navy SEALs and 5 percent in the Air Force CCTs. Among enlisted personnel, minorities account for 10–14 percent of Army SF and Rangers, 9 percent of Navy SEALs, and 7 percent of Air Force CCTs/PJs.



SOURCE: USSOCOM.

Figure 2.1—Racial/Ethnic Minority Composition of SOF Officers and Enlisted Personnel, FY97

SWCC, although not shown here, have the highest percentage of minorities among enlisted personnel: 17 percent. In addition, the percentage of minorities in the Air Force SOF increases to 7 percent among officers if we broaden the definition of operators to include pilots, navigators, and others with the "S" designation.[2] Among enlisted personnel, the proportion of minorities increases to 10 percent if we include flight engineers, loadmasters, sensor operators, and aerial gunners serving on SOF-specific aircraft.

Presenting data on minority composition inevitably raises the question of whether racial/ethnic minority groups are proportionately "represented." We address this issue in the next several sections, using three comparison groups: active duty male population, source populations from which the SOF primarily recruit, and eligible popu-

[2]The "S" designation indicates SOF-specific aircraft.

lations adjusted for proportion of nonswimmers and those receiving NJPs.

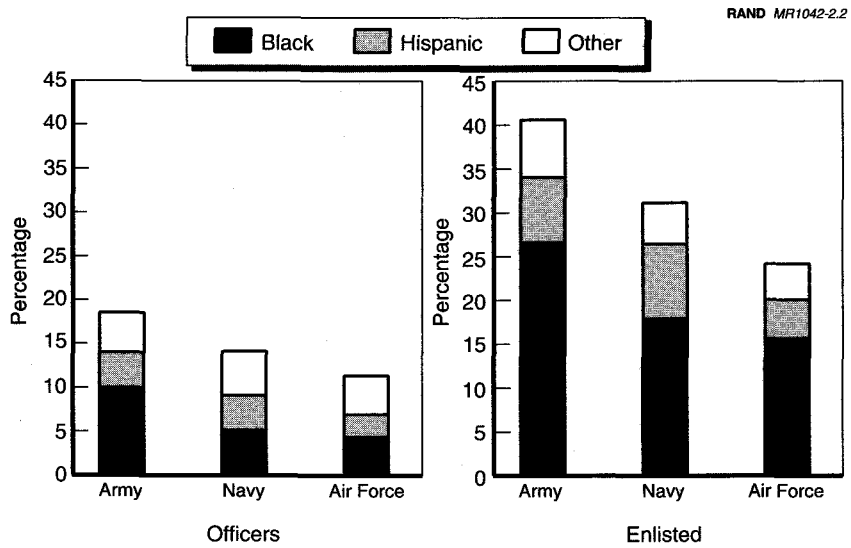
COMPARING SOF TO THE ACTIVE-DUTY MALE POPULATION IN THE ASSOCIATED SERVICES

The most frequent comparisons used in discussions of minority underrepresentation in particular military occupations or units are service-based. Do Army SF units have much lower representation than the greater Army? What about Navy SEALs compared with the Navy as a whole? Even these comparisons are not as straightforward as they might appear because the answers differ depending on which military groups we are talking about. For example, are we concerned about the service as a whole or about the cohorts of new recruits entering the service? There are differences by service, by officer/enlisted, and within that, by paygrade.

Here we use the overall representation in the service as a benchmark against which to judge the extent of minority underrepresentation in SOF. Figure 2.2 presents the minority representation in the services for male officers and enlisted personnel for FY97. The representation of specific minority groups varies across the services. The Army has the largest percentage of minority officers, a little over 18 percent, including the largest proportion of blacks. The Air Force has the lowest representation of minorities: under 12 percent. The Navy is in the middle, with about 14 percent minority officers. About 5 percent of Navy and Air Force officers are black, compared with over 10 percent in the Army.

Among the enlisted force as a whole, again, the representation of minorities varies considerably by service. For example, about 40 percent of Army male enlisted personnel are minorities, but the corresponding number for the Air Force is much lower: 24 percent.

Almost a third of Navy male enlisted personnel are minorities. The representation of specific minority groups also varies by service: The Army is relatively more successful in recruiting and retaining blacks (27 percent) than the Navy and Air Force (18 and 16 percent,

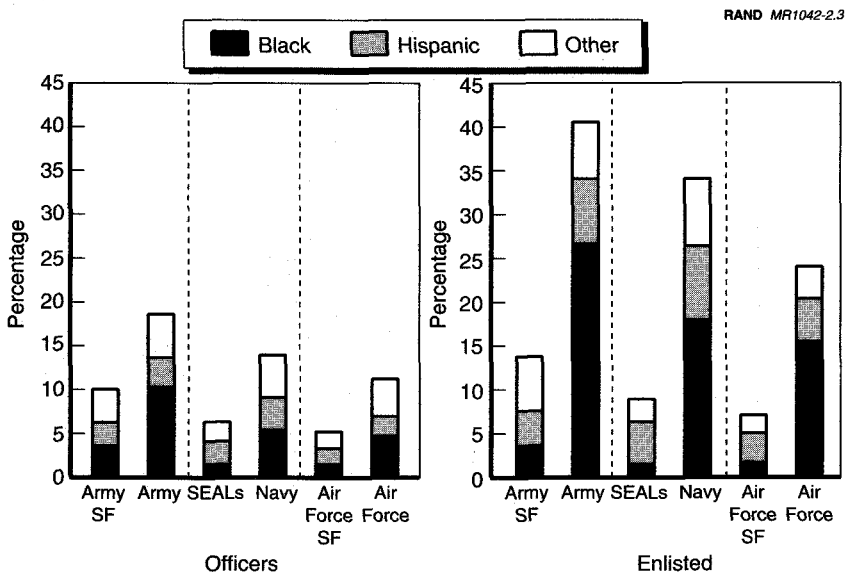


SOURCE: DMDC.

Figure 2.2—Racial/Ethnic Minority Composition of the Army, Navy, and Air Force, Officers and Enlisted Personnel, FY97

respectively), whereas the Navy is relatively more successful in recruiting and retaining Hispanics (a little over 8 percent).

Figure 2.3 compares minority representation in the SOF communities with their associated service for both officers and enlisted personnel. To make the graph more readable, we have omitted Army Rangers, using the Army SF data as a benchmark for the Army SOF instead. It is clear that compared with the associated service, SOF units suffer from low minority representation among both officers and enlisted. For example, among officers, about 10 percent of Army SF officers are minorities compared with 18 percent in the Army. The Navy particularly suffers from this comparison: A little over 6 percent of Navy SEAL officers are minorities compared with 14 percent of Navy officers.



SOURCE: USSOCOM and DMDC.

Figure 2.3—Racial/Ethnic Minority Composition in SOF and Associated Services, Officers and Enlisted Personnel, FY97

Among enlisted personnel, the discrepancies are even more marked. About two-fifths of Army male enlisted personnel are minorities compared with only 14 percent of Army SF enlisted; 9 percent of Navy SEALs and 7 percent of Air Force SOF are minorities compared with one-third of Navy and one-fourth of Air Force enlisted personnel.

Figure 2.3 also makes clear that blacks are severely underrepresented in SOF compared with their overall representation in the three services, and this is true for both officers and enlisted personnel. Presumably, it is comparisons such as this that gave rise to Congressional concerns about minority representation in SOF.

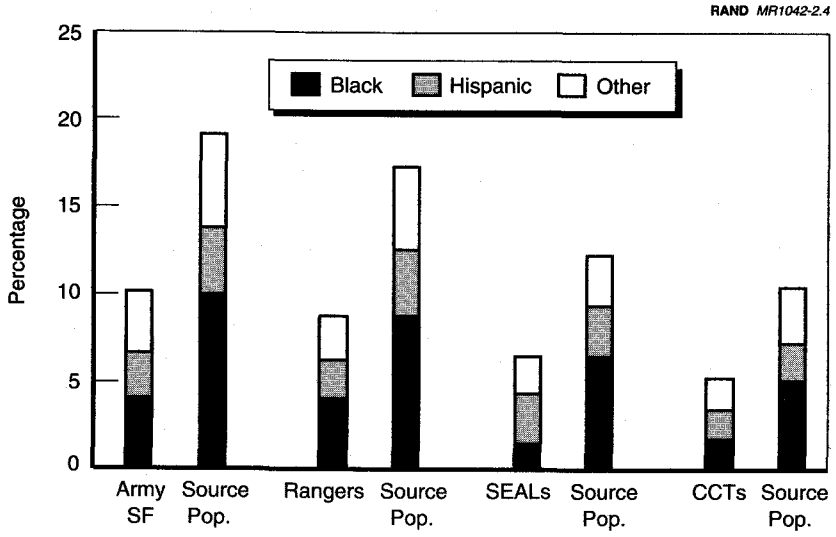
It should be emphasized, however, that not all members serving in the military are eligible to join SOF. A better comparison would be between SOF and their source populations, defined as their primary recruiting pools. One possible reason for low minority representa-

tion in SOF then would be low representation in the source populations. We turn now to defining SOF source populations.

DEFINING SOURCE POPULATIONS

Officers

SOF tends to recruit primarily from junior officers, grades O-1 to O-3. The Army SF draws from current officers in grades O-2 and O-3. In addition, Rangers further restrict eligibility to combat arms branches only (Infantry, Armor, Cavalry, Battalion and Company Fire Support, Short Range Air Defense, Special Forces, Combat Engineer). Figure 2.4 compares the minority composition of officers in SOF with that of the source population, defined as officers in ranks O-1 to O-3 and for Rangers, junior officers serving in the combat arms branches. As found in the previous comparison with the associated service as a



SOURCE: USSOCOM and DMDC.

Figure 2.4—Racial/Ethnic Minority Composition of SOF Officers and Their Source Population, FY97

whole, minority officers are underrepresented in SOF compared with their representation in the source populations from which SOF recruit. However, the extent of underrepresentation varies considerably by racial/ethnic group.

For example, in Army SF, blacks constitute 3.8 percent of officers compared with 9.8 percent in the source population, whereas Hispanics constitute 2.7 percent of SOF compared with 3.9 percent in the source population. Hispanics account for 2.4 percent of Ranger officers compared with 3.7 percent in the source population. However, 3.9 percent of Ranger officers are black compared with 8.7 percent of the source population. Among the SEALs, Hispanics and other minorities appear to be equally or fairly well represented (2.8 and 2.2 percent, respectively, compared with 2.8 and 2.9 percent in the source population) but blacks are severely underrepresented (1.2 percent compared with 6.4 percent in the source population). Among the CCTs, Hispanics are well represented compared with the source population: 1.7 versus 2.1 percent, although the small number of CCT officers (60) should be taken into account here.

Enlisted Personnel

Age, Grade, and MOS Restrictions: SOF draw from very different pools depending on the service. Army SF draw candidates from experienced Army personnel. Enlisted members from E-4 to E-7 with less than 14 years of service and less than 12 months time in service at E-7 are eligible to apply.

Rangers do not have specific paygrade restrictions but draw from the following MOS: Infantryman (11B), Indirect Fire Infantryman (11C), Heavy Anti-Armor Weapons Infantryman (11H), Fighting Vehicle Infantryman (11M), Combat Engineer (12B), Fire Support Sergeant (13F), Avenger Crewman (14S), Special Forces Weapons Sergeant (18B) and Special Forces Engineer Sergeant (18C), Cavalry Scout (19D), and Armor Crewman (19K). All of these are considered combat arms career management fields (CMFs).

Navy SEALs require no prior service experience and one can be recruited for the SEALs training course (Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL or BUD/S course) straight out of basic training. Individuals currently serving in the Navy are also eligible to take the

physical test and apply for BUD/S. Potential recruits can enter the Navy on the "Dive Fare" program with a contract to become a SEAL. During basic training, new recruits receive a briefing about the SEAL (and SWCC) programs and can receive special physical conditioning training while in basic training to help prepare them for the physical test. There is also an age limit (less than 28 years); however, this can be waived on occasion.

Air Force CCTs and PJs do not require prior Air Force experience and new recruits in the Air Force receive a briefing on the CCT/PJ programs. They also recruit from current Service members.

ASVAB Score Cutoffs: All enlisted SOF candidates must meet certain test score cutoffs. Each SOF community uses different composites or subtests of the ASVAB to determine eligibility for SOF candidacy. The Army SF uses a cutoff score of 100 on the General Technical (GT) composite; this was changed two years ago from a cutoff score of 110. The Rangers use either the same cutoff as the Army SF or a score of 90 or higher on the Combat Arms (CO) composite. The Navy uses a combination of the Verbal (VE) composite and the Arithmetic Reasoning (AR) and Mechanical Comprehension (MC) subtests: $VE + AR \geq 104$ and $MC \geq 50$, although on occasion, these can be waived if the candidate scores high on other criteria. The Air Force uses a general cutoff score of 43 on the ASVAB (43rd percentile).

Clean Discipline Record: The Army requires that SOF candidates have a clean discipline record, although this can be waived in rare instances. Navy SEALs also require that the candidate have a clean discipline record for the past 12 months.

Physical Standards: In addition, all SOF candidates are expected to pass a relatively strenuous physical test whose standards differ across the services. The test primarily consists of timed swimming, running, sit-ups, push-ups, and pull-ups. The severity of the test differs considerably across the services, as does the order of the events, the amount of rest time provided, and the required attire.

The prerequisites discussed above are summarized in Table 2.2, which shows the eligibility criteria for SOF in the three services. These define the source populations for each service. In addition, we show the requirements for the swim and run portions of the test to highlight the service differences. The swim requirements for the

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Table 2.2

SOF Entry Prerequisites and Selected Physical Aptitude Standards, by Service for Enlisted Personnel

	Army SF	Army Rangers	Navy SEALs	Air Force CCT/PJs
Entry Prerequisites				
ASVAB score cutoffs	GT ≥ 100	GT ≥ 100 or CO ≥ 90	VE + AR ≥ 104 MC ≥ 50	General ≥ 43
Grade/MOS	E-4 to E-7	CA CMFs	N/A	N/A
Clean discipline record	Yes	Implicit	N/A	N/A
Selected Physical Aptitude Standards				
Swim	50 m in boots and BDUs[a]	50 m in boots and BDUs	500 yd in 12:30 min	25 m underwater; 1,000 m in 26:00 min
Run	2 miles in 14:54 min	2 miles in 14:54 min	1.5 miles in 11:30 min	1.5 miles in 10:30 min

SOURCE: Recruiting materials provided by component commands.
[a]Battle dress uniform.

SEALs and SWCC are known for their difficulty, but note that the Air Force entry test for CCTs and PJs is also extremely arduous. In fact, CCT and PJ candidates must swim twice the distance, at a similar pace, as that required of SEAL and SWCC candidates. These differences in entry standards are likely related to differences in mission or working conditions of the various SOF communities but there appeared to be no clearly articulated justification for the differences.[3]

As we show below, minorities are disproportionately affected by the ASVAB score requirement, the swim test (particularly blacks), and to a much smaller degree, the discipline record.

We used data from the FY97 active duty personnel master file to define the source populations first for each service SOF, using the ASVAB, grade, and MOS cutoffs. We compare the source population with the associated service to show the effect of these entry prerequisites on the minority composition of the source populations. The next subsection then compares SOF with the source populations.

[3]We return to this point below.

Army SF: The only criterion that was used to define the source population was a GT score ≥ 100. This substantially reduces the minority content of the source population, compared with that of the service.[4] For example, where minorities constitute close to 40 percent of the male enlisted population, they constitute between 24 and 29 percent of the source population in the various paygrades eligible to apply for Army SF (see Appendix C, Figure C.1). Blacks and Hispanics are both affected by the GT score requirement. Among the Army male enlisted population as a whole, blacks accounted for 26.7 percent and Hispanics for 7.2 percent. The GT cutoff reduces the percent of blacks in the source population to 16 and the percent of Hispanics to 4.6.

To estimate the proportion of the population rendered ineligible by the GT score requirement, we examined the distribution of GT scores for the different racial/ethnic groups in the male enlisted population (see Appendix C, Figure C.2). Overall, about 60 percent of all Army male enlisted have GT scores ≥ 100. However, the percentage varies markedly across the different racial/ethnic groups. For example, although 75 percent of non-Hispanic whites have scores of 100 or higher, only a third of the blacks, 43 percent of the Hispanics, and 49 percent of other minorities do so. This explains the significant decrease in the minority composition of the Army SF eligible source population compared with the overall Army.

Army Rangers: The two main entry prerequisites are (a) CO score of 90 or higher and (b) Combat Arms CMF. (Appendix C, Figure C.3, shows the distribution of CO scores for the four racial/ethnic groups.) The CO score cutoff does not pose as big a hurdle for minorities as does the GT score cutoff. Ninety percent of whites pass this screen as do two-thirds of blacks, and close to 80 percent of Hispanics and other minorities.

However, the combination of this test score requirement and the restriction on career management fields (11, 12, 13, 18, 19) reduces the minority composition of the source population substantially. Minorities are underrepresented in combat arms or general military

[4]This GT score was changed from 110 to 100 in FY97 to increase the size of the source population. It also had the effect of substantially increasing the numbers of minorities who were eligible to apply for Army SF. See Chapter Three for more details.

occupations (see Appendix C, Figure C.4). The percentage of minorities, in particular blacks, in support and administration, for example, is more than double the percentage in general military occupations.

As a result, the racial/ethnic minority composition of the source population—particularly the percentage of blacks—for Rangers is substantially lower than that of the overall Army (see Appendix C, Figure C.5). Overall, minorities constitute between 22 and 25 percent of the source population for Rangers compared with 40 percent in the Army and the difference is largely attributable to the much lower percentage of blacks who meet the Ranger criteria—11.7 percent compared with 26.7 percent Army-wide.

Navy: Similar results hold for the Navy, where applying the score cutoffs and age requirement lowers the percentage of minorities in the source population by a third compared with the Navy overall (see Appendix C, Figure C.6). Overall, the minority source population for the SEALs consists of 8.3 percent black, 9.3 percent Hispanic, and 4.7 percent other minority. Again, the decline is particularly marked in the percentage of blacks in the source population compared with the overall Navy.

Air Force: The Air Force uses a general score on the ASVAB of 43 or higher. This score cutoff does not have much effect on the minority composition of the source population for the Air Force SOF because the Air Force primarily recruits from high-quality youth (see Appendix C, Figure C.7).

DEFINING ELIGIBLE POPULATIONS

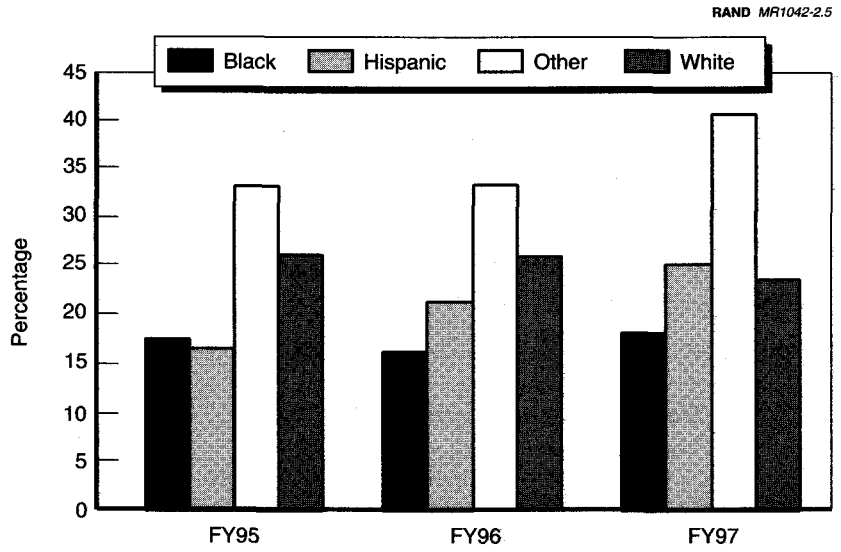
Swimming Requirement

One further prerequisite measure needs to be applied before we can fully define the eligible source population. The swimming requirement is a particularly difficult one for minorities to meet, especially blacks (Brooks and Zazanis, 1997). The Army has made its swimming test largely diagnostic in the sense that failure to pass it at this stage does not disqualify someone from attending the Army Special Forces Assessment and Selection (SFAS) course. However, the swimming requirement is still a hurdle. It is important to note that the Army

swimming requirement is considerably less demanding than that of the other services. In addition, as we pointed out, the entry physical requirements for Navy SEALs and the Air Force CCT/PJs are renowned for their difficulty. To pass the swimming portion of the test for SEALs or CCT/PJs requires better-than-average swimming ability and comfort in the water.

In the entrance tests for the Army SF, failure rates for blacks for the swim test were almost six times higher than those for whites, according to Army Research Institute reports (Brooks and Zazanis, 1997). The success rates in passing the BUDS/S selection test given at Great Lakes Training Center show clear differences in the pass rates for blacks and Hispanics (Figure 2.5) compared with that for whites, and again, the swim requirements appeared to be the major hurdle.

As a result, using the score, grade, age, and occupation restrictions to define the source populations is useful but could be misleading in the sense that some proportion of the source population will not



SOURCE: Data provided by SEAL Dive Motivators, Great Lakes Training Center.

Figure 2.5—Pass Rates for Enlistees Taking the BUD/S Selection Test, by Race/Ethnicity, FY95–FY97

apply for SOF because of the swimming requirement. Thus, they should be excluded from the source populations, to identify the *eligible* source population most likely to be willing and able to apply. Undoubtedly some nonswimmers or weak swimmers can learn or improve enough to pass the test, but a much larger portion will self-select out of the candidate pool because of this requirement, and this is especially true for the Navy SEAL and Air Force CCT/PJ programs.

A simple notional exercise will help show the effect of the swimming and clean discipline record requirements on the minority composition of the source populations. Lacking data on how many minorities cannot swim or are comfortable in the water, let us assume that about one-third of minorities in the Army source population and one-half of the Navy and Air Force source populations drop out because of the swimming requirement. The higher proportion of nonswimmers in the Navy and Air Force source populations is dictated by the more demanding swimming requirement in these two services' entrance tests. However, this is not the only adjustment that is needed to transform the source population into the eligible population.

Clean Discipline Record

In addition, some small proportion of minorities will fail to meet the Army SOF and Navy SEALs entry prerequisite for a clean discipline record. For example, data from the Army on NJPs in FY91 show that the NJP rate was 8.8 percent for blacks, 8.3 percent for Hispanics, and 2.9 percent for other minorities. For the Navy, the corresponding NJP rates were 9.1 percent for blacks, 6.7 percent for Hispanics, and 3.1 percent for other minorities (Walker, 1992).

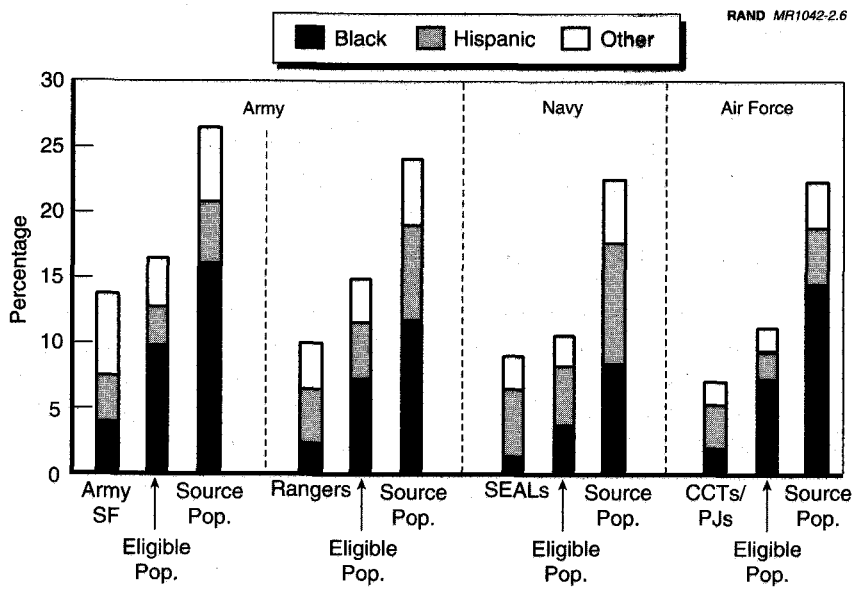
One can argue whether the likelihood of receiving an NJP is the same among the "swimmers" as among the "nonswimmers." Lacking any real data, we assume that the probability of receiving an NJP is the same across the two. Thus, to estimate the eligible population, we would need to adjust the source population by the percentage of nonswimmers and by the percentage ineligible because of having received NJPs. The minority composition of the source populations and eligible populations is shown in the next section, where these populations are compared with SOF.

COMPARING SOF AND SOURCE/ELIGIBLE MINORITY REPRESENTATION

The final comparison of SOF minority representation with that of the source and eligible populations is summarized in Figure 2.6. To reiterate, source populations are defined using the ASVAB, grade, MOS, and age restrictions; eligible populations are defined by adjusting for proportions of nonswimmers and those with NJPs.

There are two basic lessons to be learned from this comparison:

- Overall, minorities are underrepresented in SOF compared with their presence in the source populations.



Source population: based on ASVAB, grade, age, and CMF restrictions, where appropriate. Eligible population: source population adjusted by estimated proportion of nonswimmers and proportion with NJPs.

SOURCES: USSOCOM and DMDC.

Figure 2.6—Racial/Ethnic Minority Composition of SOF, Source Populations, and Eligible Populations, by Service, FY97

- The underrepresentation seems to be limited largely to blacks, who seem to participate in SOF in disproportionately lower numbers compared with their representation in the source and eligible populations.

Comparing the minority composition of SOF to that of the eligible populations reveals that the differences between the two are considerably smaller than other comparisons would suggest: 14 percent in Army SF compared with 16 percent in the eligible population; 10 percent in Rangers compared with 15 percent; 9 percent in SEALs compared with 11 percent; and 7 percent in CCTs/PJs compared with 11 percent in the eligible population. Again, these numbers are clearly notional in the sense that we do not have firm data on the kinds of adjustments we made, but they are useful in highlighting the limited recruiting pool for SOF.

Figure 2.6 also shows that underrepresentation among the enlisted SOF appears to be clearly limited to the black population. The services do relatively well in terms of recruiting from the eligible populations of both Hispanics and other minorities.

REPRESENTATION INDEX

It is useful to summarize the information we presented above by means of a representation index (RI). This measures the degree to which the actual representation of a specific group varies from what would be expected given that group's proportion in the population at large (Nordlie et al., 1979). The RI is computed as follows:

$$RI = ((\text{actual number}/\text{expected number}) * 100) - 100$$

where

actual number = proportion of the specific minority group in SOF, and

expected number = proportion of that group in the source population.

Thus, RI = 0 when the actual and expected numbers are the same, i.e., the group is proportionately represented in SOF, given its proportion in the source/eligible population. An RI = –50 would imply

that the group in question is 50 percent underrepresented compared with what one would expect, given its representation in the source population. The representation index for SOF personnel is shown in Table 2.3.

Minorities—particularly blacks—are clearly underrepresented in SOF when we compare SOF to the source populations, although the extent of underrepresentation varies by group and by SOF community. Using the adjustments made above to refine the enlisted source population into the eligible population and comparing enlisted

Table 2.3

Representation Index for SOF Officers and Enlisted Personnel, FY97

	Black	Hispanic	Other Minority
Officers: Comparing SOF to Source Population			
Army			
Special Forces	–61.2	–30.8	–35.2
Rangers	–55.2	–35.1	–50.0
Navy			
SEALs	–78.1	0.0	–24.1
Air Force			
CCT	–66.0	–19.1	–46.9
Enlisted Personnel: Comparing SOF to Source Population			
Army			
Special Forces	–75.6	–21.7	6.9
Rangers	–79.5	–44.4	–31.4
Navy			
SEALs	–83.1	–46.2	–46.8
Air Force			
CCT/PJs	–86.8	–23.3	–51.4
Enlisted Personnel: Comparing SOF to Eligible Population			
Army			
Special Forces	–60.2	28.6	63.2
Rangers	–66.2	–9.1	6.1
Navy			
SEALs	–63.1	13.6	8.7
Air Force			
CCT/PJs	–73.6	50.0	–5.6

SOURCE: Calculated from data provided by USSOCOM and DMDC.

SOF to the eligible population reduces the extent of the underrepresentation and shows that it is largely confined to blacks. In some instances, Hispanics and other minorities are proportionately represented or overrepresented.

The answer, then, to whether minorities are underrepresented in SOF depends on the comparison group and differs between officers and enlisted personnel. For officers, minorities are underrepresented in SOF regardless of whether the comparison is with the active duty population or source population (with one exception: Hispanics in SEAL communities are proportionately represented compared with the source population). Other than this one exception, blacks, Hispanics, and other minorities are all underrepresented compared with their source populations. For enlisted personnel, minorities are underrepresented compared with either the active duty population or the source population (with one exception: "others" are slightly overrepresented in Army Special Forces). However, when compared with the eligible source population, only blacks remain clearly underrepresented. Hispanics and other minority group are typically overrepresented (see Table 2.3).

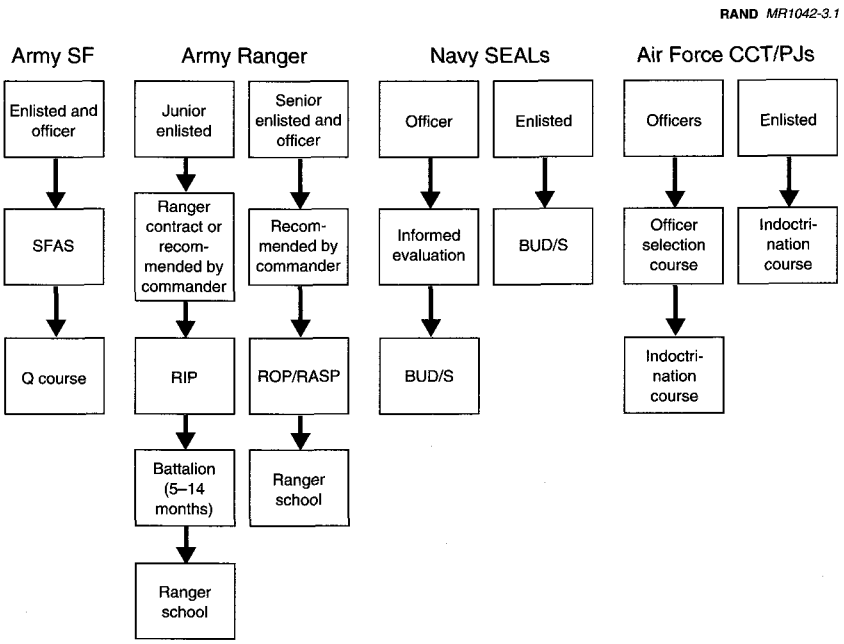
Chapter Three

BARRIERS TO MINORITY PARTICIPATION IN THE ASSESSMENT AND TRAINING PROCESS

In defining the source populations for SOF, we examined a number of entry prerequisites and identified some barriers to entry that disproportionately affect minorities. These are primarily the ASVAB score cutoffs, the swim requirement, and to a much lesser degree, the requirement for a clean discipline record. We now turn to the next step in the process: assessment and training that all SOF candidates must undergo to become SOF operators. The first section briefly outlines the training that each SOF community requires of its candidates. The next section provides data on graduation rates of the different racial/ethnic groups to identify barriers to minority participation in the assessment and training process.

SOF ASSESSMENT AND TRAINING

Figure 3.1 summarizes the various steps needed to become a SOF operator, according to material supplied by the component command schoolhouses. Appendix B provides details on each selection, assessment, and training course of the various SOF communities. In addition to the courses shown here, each community requires a number of additional courses and training. We show only the first steps in the process with the understanding that once a candidate gets past these steps, he has a much greater chance of successfully meeting the remaining hurdles.



SOURCE: Materials supplied by component commands.

Figure 3.1—Steps in Initial SOF Assessment and Training, by Service, 1998

Army SF

All enlisted personnel and officers meeting the prerequisites may attend the SFAS course, a three-week course held at Fort Bragg. Successful completion of SFAS allows them to attend the Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC, often referred to as the Q-course), which lasts 143 days.

Army Rangers

Junior Rangers attend the three-week Ranger Indoctrination Program (RIP) after Basic Training, Advanced Individual Training, and Airborne school. These personnel are then assigned to units to serve for 5 to 14 months before attending Ranger school for 61 days. A "zero week" is offered one week before the starting date of the

class, to help soldiers prepare for Ranger school. Successful completion of the Ranger course entitles the soldier to wear the Ranger Tab.

Senior enlisted personnel and officers who receive an assignment to a Ranger unit are typically already Ranger-qualified. They attend the two-week Ranger Orientation Program/Ranger Assessment and Selection Program (ROP/RASP).

Navy SEALs

Once selected for BUD/S, each student goes to Coronado where he undergoes two weeks of physical training and indoctrination before beginning the 29-week BUD/S program. On completing BUD/S, students are assigned to a SEAL or SEAL Delivery Vehicle (SDV) team to complete a six-month probationary period before being allowed to wear the Naval Special Warfare insignia.

Air Force CCT/PJs

All enlisted candidates passing the Physical Abilities and Stamina Test (PAST), which is part of the entrance requirement, attend the 12-week indoctrination course at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. Upon graduation from this selection process, the airman moves on to specialty training. Upon completing all this training, the airman chooses whether to be a PJ or a CCT and then undergoes further training in his specialty.

EVIDENCE ON GRADUATION RATES FROM SOF ASSESSMENT AND TRAINING COURSES

This section provides data on the graduation rates of minorities in the various SOF assessment and training courses described above. The John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School at Fort Bragg tracks Army SFAS and SFQC candidates using an extraordinarily rich and detailed database. We have data on candidates attending the SFAS course during FY94–FY97 and candidates attending the Q-course in FY94–FY96. Army Ranger data, obtained from the Ranger Training Brigade, covered the last three years of the Ranger course, 1996–1998. The 1998 data span the first six months. These data also include specific reasons for failing the course.

Data from the Naval Special Warfare Center allow us to examine graduation rates by race/ethnicity over time, but they do not have the same detail as found in the Army SF data. In addition, the small numbers of minorities make comparisons of graduation rates across the groups difficult and somewhat suspect.

The Air Force Special Operations Command provided us with data on graduation rates from the indoctrination course held at Lackland. Unfortunately, they do not track data by race/ethnicity, so these data do not contribute much to this research effort.

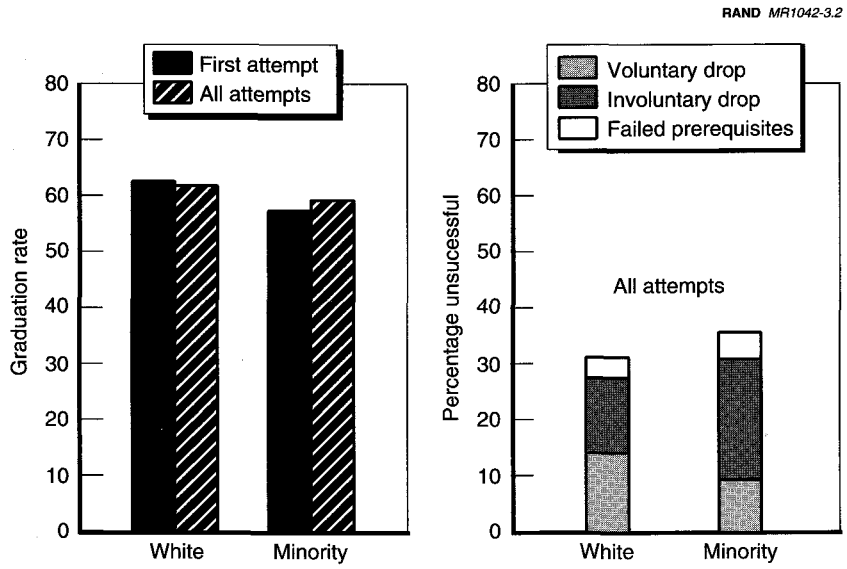
Army SF

SFAS: SFAS classes have been increasing in size over time and in FY97 consisted of 165 new officer and 1,226 enlisted candidates, for a total of approximately 1,400. With recycles, the number of officers and enlisted attending SFAS was somewhat larger, at around 1,700. About 11 percent of officers and 17 percent of enlisted candidates are minorities. However, in FY97, the percentage of minority candidates increased to 21 percent (from 15 percent the previous year). This was partly because the GT score cutoff was waived from 110 to 100, making a higher proportion of minorities, particularly blacks, eligible for SFAS. In fact, the number of new black candidates more than doubled in FY97 (from 38 in FY96 to 85 in FY97).

Detailed analysis of SFAS classes and outcomes is presented in Appendix E. Officers have much higher pass rates than do enlisted personnel: over 60 percent compared with 36 percent over the four years. The first-attempt graduation rate has risen markedly over time among both officers and enlisted personnel. The increase among enlisted personnel is particularly noteworthy because of the change in the GT score, which has been shown to be directly related to SFAS success. Some of the increase may be due to changed policies: For example, successful completion of the swim requirement was shifted from SFAS to SFQC (Brooks and Zazanis, 1997), thus providing candidates a longer time to train and pass the 50-meter swim test, and the extra motivation of having successfully completed SFAS. Some of the increase may be due to better training methods and greater assistance being provided to soldiers for the more difficult skills (such as land navigation).

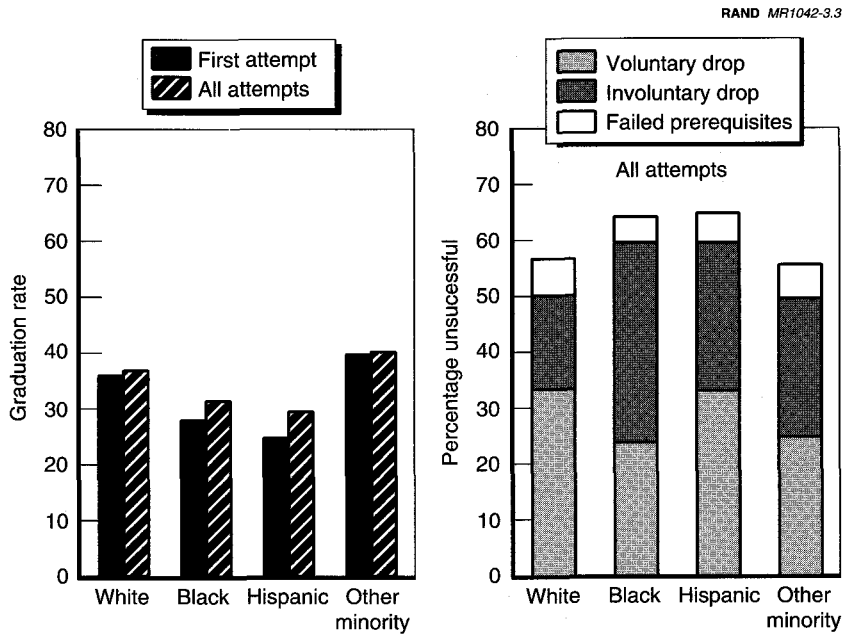
Figures 3.2–3.3 show outcomes by race/ethnicity. There are very few minority officers (71 across the four years, a total of 103 attempts); as a result, we aggregated them into the category "minority." There is a small difference in graduation/selection rates by minority/nonminority status and in the reasons for nonselection. About 62 percent of white officers graduate from SFAS at the first attempt compared with 57 percent of minority officers. However, there is little difference in the graduation rates of white and minority officers, when we consider all attempts.

Fourteen percent of white officers voluntarily withdrew from SFAS, compared with 10 percent of minority officers, but a higher proportion of the latter were dropped involuntarily (21 percent compared with 14 percent of white officers). Most involuntary drops result from a failure to meet standards.



SOURCE: JFK Special Warfare Center SFAS database.

Figure 3.2—SFAS Outcomes for Officers, by Race/Ethnicity, FY94–FY97 Combined



SOURCE: JFK Special Warfare Center SFAS database.

Figure 3.3—SFAS Outcomes for Enlisted Personnel, by Race/Ethnicity, FY94–FY97 Combined

We find that among enlisted personnel, minorities have the highest graduation or selection rates among all the groups, but that blacks and Hispanics have graduation rates that are between 6 and 10 percent lower than that of whites.

We see the same pattern among enlisted personnel with regard to the reasons for nonselection as was evident among the officers. The rate of involuntary drops for blacks is double the rate for whites, whereas the rate among Hispanics and other minorities is 8–9 percentage points higher than the rate for whites. However, the voluntary drop rates are considerably lower for blacks and other minorities than for whites. Once at SFAS, commitment among these groups appears to be quite high. The percentage failing prerequisites is approximately the same across the four groups.

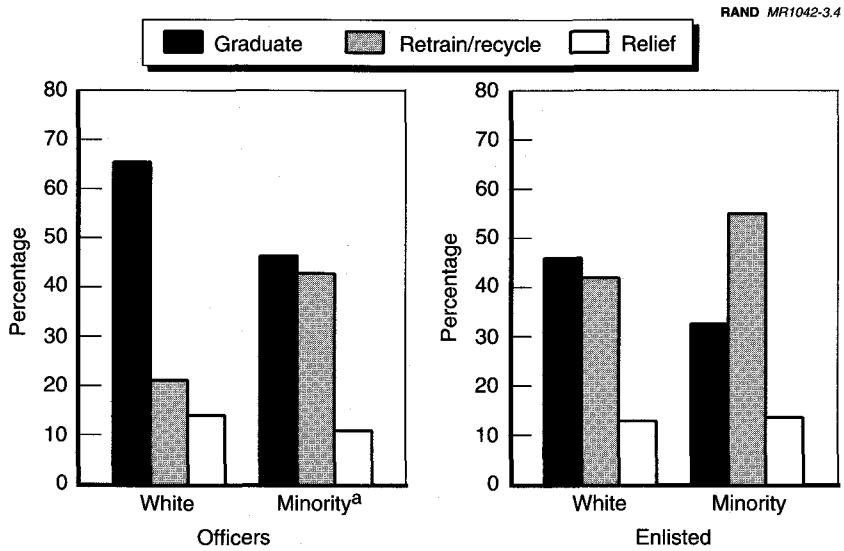
For FY97, minority officers had *higher* selection rates than white officers for both first attempts and all attempts; however, the small numbers make this comparison suspect. Among the enlisted, the FY97 first-attempt selection rates showed a 6 percentage point difference between white and black candidates (41 percent compared with 35 percent) and a 12 percentage point difference between white and Hispanic candidates (41 percent compared with 29 percent). Other minorities had the highest selection rate (44 percent). However, the selection rate among all attempts showed no difference between black and white candidates (39 percent) but a 9 percentage point difference between Hispanic and white candidates.

The differences in the selection rates for minority and nonminority candidates can be largely explained by the differences in their military backgrounds (see also Teplitzky, 1992a and 1992b; Lappin, 1996). In general, minority candidates tend to come from noncombat arms occupations and to score lower on the GT composite.[1]

SFQC: We have data on SFQC classes for FY94–FY96. The total number of minorities attending SFQC is quite small: 28 officers and 121 enlisted personnel over the three years, although counting recycles, the total number of starts by minorities is 38 minority officers and 212 enlisted candidates.

Figure 3.4 shows the first-attempt graduation rates for minority and white officers and enlisted personnel over the three years combined. There is a substantial difference in the first-time graduation rates between minority and nonminority candidates on both the officer and enlisted side but the small numbers of minorities make such comparisons less than robust. On the enlisted side, we find a 13

[1]We estimated a simple logistic model to examine the relationship between SFAS selection and a number of explanatory variables such as fiscal year, race/ethnicity, education, GT score, paygrade, and Combat Arms MOS. Because the model was exploratory, we do not report the results here. Nonetheless, the findings are suggestive and confirm the discussion above. Controlling for all other characteristics, race/ethnicity had no independent effect on the likelihood of selection. The only variables of importance in the model were GT score, lower paygrade (which was inversely related to the probability of success), noncombat arms occupation, and fiscal year.



SOURCE: JFK Special Warfare Center SFAS database.

[a]Very small sample size: 28 minority officer candidates in FY94–96 classes, out of a total of 338.

Figure 3.4—SFQC Outcomes for Officer and Enlisted Candidates, FY94–FY96 Combined

percentage point difference in the first-attempt graduation rate of whites and minorities from SFQC. The "retrain/recycle" rate for minorities is higher than that for whites but there is no difference in the percentage of each group that is "relieved" (the SFQC term for failures). When we examine all attempts, the difference between white and minority pass rates is somewhat higher (48 percent versus 32 percent).

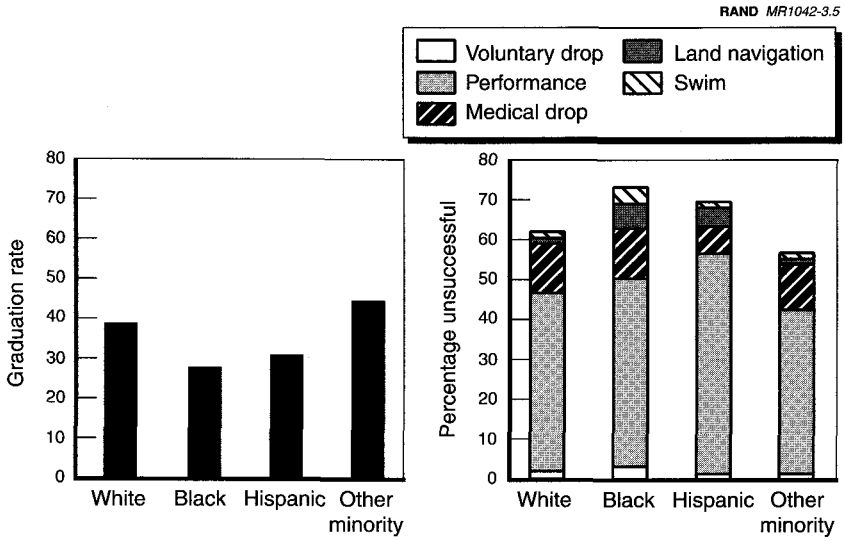
ARI has done detailed studies of attrition during SFQC and has shown that many of the same factors that explained SFAS differences among the racial/ethnic groups explain the differences in graduation rates we see here (Brooks and Zazanis, 1997). First, a higher proportion of minorities tend to come from noncombat arms MOSs, and they have higher failure rates because of difficulty with land navigation. Second, the fact that black and Hispanic soldiers are concentrated at the lower end of the Armed Forces Qualification Test

(AFQT) distribution means they may be less well prepared to deal with the academic requirements of SFQC. Because we have little to add to ARI's findings, we did not carry out a detailed analysis of SFQC data.

Army Rangers

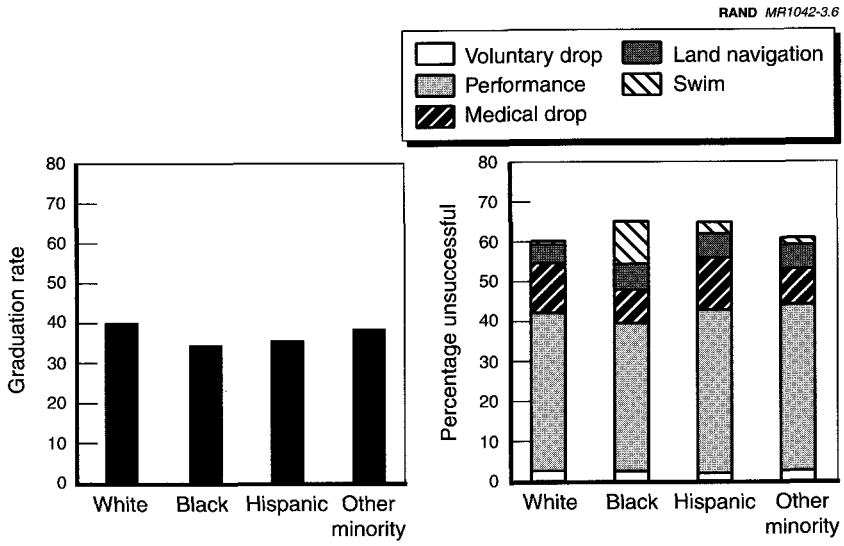
About 3,000 individuals attend the Ranger course every year. Of these, about 15–20 percent are minorities, although the proportion of minorities has declined over time. In the first six months of 1998, for example, only 15 percent were minorities compared with 21 percent in 1996. The biggest change has been in the proportion of blacks attending the course. The percentage of blacks attending the course declined from 7.6 percent in 1996 to 5.6 in 1997 to 3.7 percent in 1998.

Figures 3.5–3.6 provide overall graduation rates for each year by race/ethnicity and the reasons for failure for officers and enlisted



SOURCE: Ranger Training Brigade.

Figure 3.5—Outcomes for the Ranger Course, by Race/Ethnicity, Officers, 1996–1998 Combined



SOURCE: Ranger Training Brigade.

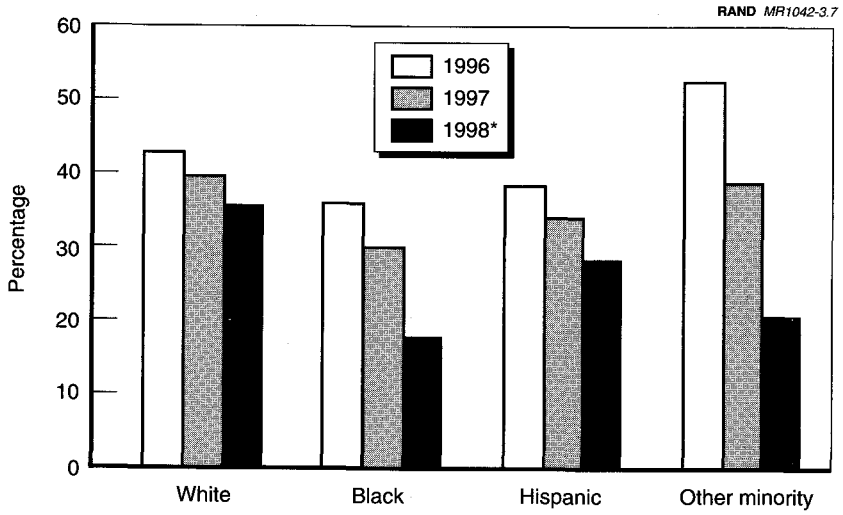
Figure 3.6—Outcomes for the Ranger Course, by Race/Ethnicity, Enlisted Personnel, 1996–1998 Combined

personnel. The overall graduation rate for the Ranger course is about 40 percent, slightly lower for officers. There are marked differences in graduation rates by race/ethnicity and this is true among both officers and enlisted personnel. Blacks have the lowest graduation rates among both officers and enlisted personnel (28 percent among officers and 31 percent among enlisted personnel) and whites and other minorities have the highest (among officers, 39 percent of white officers and 45 percent of other minority officers pass; among enlisted personnel, the graduation rate for both groups is around 40 percent).

When we examine reasons for failure, we find that between 40 and 45 percent of both officers and enlisted personnel are eliminated because of failure to meet performance standards (slightly higher percentages among officers) and around 10–12 percent because of medical problems. The rate of voluntary drops is very small across all racial/ethnic groups and across officers and enlisted: between 1 and 3 percent. However, note that the failure rate for blacks in the

swim and land navigation tests is markedly higher than that for whites. For example, 4 percent of black officers and 11 percent of black enlisted failed the swim test compared with less than 1 percent of whites; 6 percent of blacks (officers and enlisted) failed the land navigation portion of the course compared with 2–3 percent of the whites. Clearly, as with the Army SF, these tests are more of an obstacle for blacks than for others.

There is one disturbing trend with respect to graduation rates over time. Figure 3.7 shows the graduation rates for the different racial/ethnic groups in succeeding years. We combined officers and enlisted personnel for this graph. We caution that the 1998 data are incomplete and the sample sizes are relatively small; nonetheless, the downward trend in graduation rates, across all groups, is noticeable.



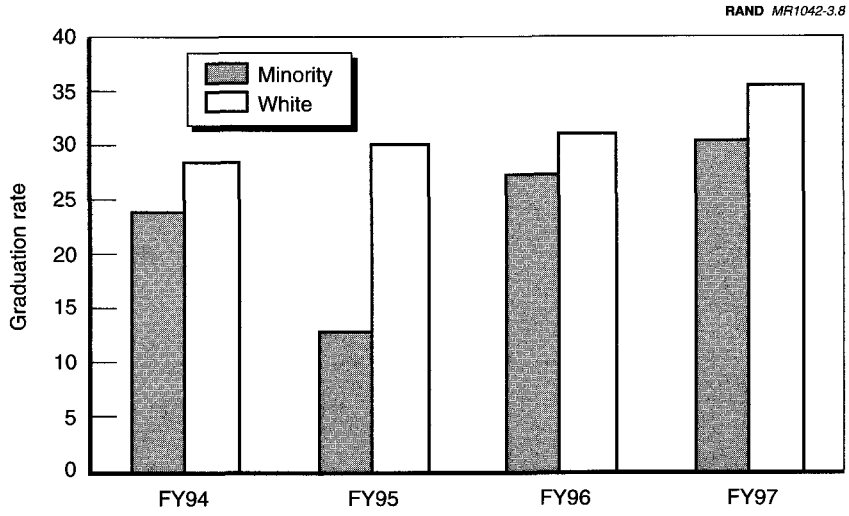
SOURCE: Ranger Training Brigade.
*Data are for part of the year only.

Figure 3.7—Graduation Rates over Time for the Ranger Course, by Race/Ethnicity

Navy SEALs BUD/S Course

For a given fiscal year, 600–700 individuals attend BUD/S. The total number of minorities attending BUD/S is small but has been increasing in recent years: 54 minorities started BUD/S in FY94, 85 in FY95, 102 in FY96, and 160 in FY97. Minorities accounted for 21 percent of the FY97 class, up from 15 percent in the previous year. The number of minorities in the FY98 class dropped slightly to 145 but the total class was also smaller than the FY97 class (672 versus 751). This suggests that the efforts of the SEAL recruiters in targeting minorities are paying impressive dividends with respect to increased minority participation at BUD/S.

The overall graduation rate is about 28–30 percent, including recycles, although this increased to 35 percent for the FY97 class. Minority pass rates are somewhat lower than that of whites, although the difference varies by class (see Figure 3.8). The efforts made by the Naval Special Warfare Center to provide remedial instruction in a



SOURCE: Naval Special Warfare Center.

Figure 3.8—Graduation from BUD/S, by Race/Ethnicity and Fiscal Year Classes, FY94–FY97

number of areas including swimming and academics (see Chapter Eleven for more details on this program) seem to have increased graduation rates among both whites and minorities for the FY97 class.[2]

CCT/PJ Indoctrination Course

As we explained above, the Air Force does not keep statistics on the outcomes of the indoctrination course by race/ethnicity. As a result, we are able to show data only for all students attending the indoctrination course at Lackland during 1996–1998. There has been a significant change in the types of students over the three years; where before nonprior-service candidates constituted between 40 and 55 percent of the students, in 1998, they make up less than 20 percent. The bulk of the students (70 percent) are drawn from guaranteed enlistments, i.e., new recruits entering the Air Force with a guarantee of a CCT/PJ assignment if they make the grade. This is because for the first time, recruiters were given quotas to fill for the CCT/PJ specialties.

Figure 3.9 shows the outcomes for the CCT/PJ course at Lackland. The graduation rate is the lowest among all the SOF assessment and selection courses (10–15 percent). The trend in voluntary drops (student-initiated elimination) is disturbing, as is the decline in the number recycled (set back). Incidentally, we find that the recruiters are not very successful in screening for the qualities that ensure success in the CCT/PJ program. The graduation rates for guaranteed enlistments are equal to or slightly lower than those of nonprior-service recruits.

Interviews with Air Force personnel indicate that the Air Force is concerned about the high attrition in the course and is currently studying ways in which to reduce attrition.

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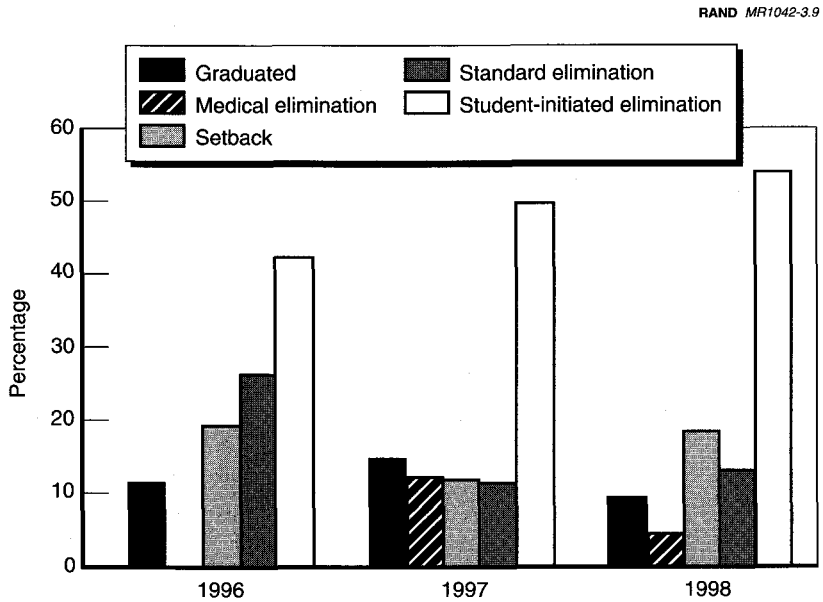
[2]Between FY94 and FY98, 86 blacks attended BUD/S. Fifteen have graduated, 11 of whom spent time in the remediation program, five for water deficiency. Five from the FY98 class still remain at BUD/S. Of the 297 Hispanics who began BUD/S training during the same period, 67 have graduated, 33 of whom spent time in the remediation program, 15 for water deficiency. Twenty from the FY98 class are still at BUD/S.



SOURCE: Lackland CCT/PJ Schoolhouse.

Figure 3.9—Outcomes for the CCT/PJ Indoctrination Course, by Fiscal Year

SUMMARY

This chapter has examined attrition in the assessment and training courses that SOF candidates are required to take to qualify as SOF operators. We find that where data exist, minorities do appear less successful in these courses than their white counterparts but that these differences can largely be explained by the noncombat arms backgrounds of minorities (particularly blacks), their somewhat lower aptitude scores, and the difficulty they have in meeting the swimming requirements.

Thus far, we have identified several structural barriers to minority participation in SOF: ASVAB score cutoffs, combat arms MOS restrictions, swimming, and land navigation knowledge. We should reiterate that the term "barriers" defines factors that appear to disproportionately affect minority participation in SOF and does not

imply a judgment of their validity. Such institutional requirements and training are justified if they are related to performance and mission success and that is an issue for USSOCOM and its component commands. We turn now to evidence gathered from our focus group discussions on perceived barriers to minority participation in SOF.

Chapter Four

QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

The next five chapters discuss findings from our qualitative research, which resulted from the focus group discussions. This work provides a richness and complexity to the quantitative analysis discussed in the prior chapters and is a unique contribution to previous research. This chapter provides a brief overview of qualitative research and our methodology to set the context for our findings and to ensure that the reader understands the limitations of the data and the inferences that can be drawn from them.

QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

The strengths of well-done qualitative research are several. These data focus on naturally occurring events in ordinary settings and are "locally grounded." In other words, the data are collected in "close proximity to a specific situation, rather than through the mail or over the phone" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 10). "Qualitative data, with their emphasis on people's 'lived experience,' are fundamentally well suited for locating the *meanings* people place on the events, processes, and structures of their lives: their 'perceptions, assumptions, prejudgments, presuppositions' (van Manen, 1977) and for connecting these meanings to the *social world* around them" (p. 10). Qualitative data are often advocated as the optimal strategy for developing hypotheses; they can be equally useful in testing hypotheses and in explaining and illuminating quantitative data.

One main method of conducting qualitative research is through focus groups. Focus groups are special types of groups in terms of purpose, size, composition, and procedures. "A focus group is typi-

cally composed of 7–10 participants who are selected because they have certain characteristics in common that relate to the topic of the focus group" (Krueger, 1994). The focus group is repeated several times with different groups of people. The objective is to create a permissive environment that allows different points of view and perceptions to be freely aired, all within the context of a carefully planned discussion. Focus groups have high face validity (results seem believable), and the results are easily understood. They are also a relatively low cost method of obtaining data.

However, the strengths of qualitative data are balanced by several weaknesses as well. The inherent nature of qualitative data—gathered through observations and interviews—and the fact that the researcher is the main measurement device mean that the data lend themselves more easily to distortion or misinterpretation. There is less control in group discussions because members interact with each other, so a dominant individual, unless carefully handled, can change the tenor or tone of the discussion. In addition, the fact that the discussion groups are small and generally purposefully chosen means that one cannot generalize from these data to the larger population of interest.

Nonetheless, in our study, we believe that qualitative data obtained through focus group discussions add a richness and complexity lacking in our quantitative data and allow us to test and refine the hypotheses we outlined above regarding barriers to minority participation in SOF.

HOW LOCATIONS WERE SELECTED FOR THE STUDY

At the outset, we decided that we wanted to hold focus group discussions with both operator units and source populations for each service. However, the process of selecting units was constrained. We were limited to units that were not deployed, and given the current frequency of deployments for special operations forces and for some of our source populations, this was occasionally problematic. We were also limited to individuals who were not deployed, and in one instance, we conducted two visits to the same location to interview personnel who had been unavailable during our first trip.

In most cases, we received full support from the commanders of the units. This was especially true of SOF commanders. At other times, our study appeared to receive relatively low priority at the locale, and we were disappointed with the support we received. This occurred primarily at source population locations where unit schedules or training made it difficult for units to accommodate us.

The units selected represent two categories: SOF operator units and source population units. We included operator units from each service's SOF. The source population units were chosen after we determined the source population. Source population for the Air Force included basic trainees; for the Navy, basic trainees, midshipmen at the Naval Academy, and personnel from the fleet; and for the Army, combat arms personnel as well as combat support and combat services support personnel.

Units are not identified here for confidentiality reasons.

In an ideal research situation, we would have included more operator units from each service's SOF in different geographical locations to determine the effect of location, geographical mission focus, and different commanders. Likewise, an unconstrained research effort would also have incorporated more geographical diversity into the source population selection. Our research resources—both time and money—were unable to accommodate such a large-scale effort; nonetheless, our findings provide valuable insights.

FOCUS GROUPS

The focus groups consisted of up to ten individuals and were divided by race and by rank. Focus group sessions were scheduled to last 90 minutes. Thus, at most locations, we conducted discussions among majority officers, minority officers, majority enlisted, and minority enlisted personnel. We also separated the senior enlisted from the junior enlisted personnel at source population locations, but we did not do so at the SOF locations; we were advised by SOF personnel that these distinctions are not stressed as much within the SOF community. When conducting groups with basic trainees and academy midshipmen, we also separated those personnel who had expressed an interest in joining the SOF community from those who had not expressed interest in SOF. In total, we held 54 focus groups

in which we interviewed 102 operators and 241 members of the source populations. Table 4.1 shows the composition of the focus group discussions.

Table 4.1

Sample Sizes for Focus Groups and Focus Group Participants

Category of Participant	No. of Participants/Groups	
	Operators	Source Population
Minority	43/10	154/21
Majority	59/11	87/12
Officer	34/9	71/10
Enlisted	67/12	170/23
Total	102/21	241/33

HOW INDIVIDUALS WERE SELECTED TO PARTICIPATE

At each research location, we were given a contact person who scheduled the discussions, arranged for a facility, and in some cases, identified individuals to participate in our research discussion groups. At some of the source population locations, discussants represented several units. In these instances, our contact had requested that units provide participants by race and rank—e.g., minority officers, majority officers, minority enlisted of particular grades, etc.

At most operator locations, the participants represented only one or two units. In these instances, the local representative or someone within the units determined which majority personnel would participate, but we often needed to include every minority individual who was not deployed to fill the discussion groups. At each location, we gained a general understanding of how the individuals were selected. Although we acknowledge the possibility that units might have prevented our access to individuals whom they perceived to have objectionable views, we have no reason to believe that was the case.

On several occasions, the number of minority SOF operators present was so few that the group discussion turned into an interview. Although we asked the same questions, there was less opportunity

for the participants to debate or discuss issues among themselves in these instances.

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

The focus groups were led by two researchers. In an introduction, we explained the reasons for the study and emphasized the confidentiality of the discussion. We reassured the participants that no one would be able to attribute comments to individuals or to specific units, that their comments would not be reported to the chain of command, and that any list of participants held by the unit would be destroyed. We told them that the session was voluntary and that they were welcome to leave or not to respond to any questions with which they were uncomfortable. We stressed the confidentiality of the session and asked for everyone in the room to acknowledge that they both agreed to participate and to keep the contents of the discussion confidential. We were prepared to excuse anyone who did not agree to these ground rules, but we did not need to excuse any participants.

Once we began the discussion, our questions concentrated upon the following issues: reasons for joining the service, career plans, impressions of SOF, knowledge of SOF, and perceptions and concerns about minority representation in SOF. The protocols we used for our sessions are attached in Appendix A, along with our introduction.

We turn now to our findings from these focus group discussions. These results are reported under the following broad headings that our analysis identified as perceived barriers to minority participation in SOF:

- Perceptions of SOF and a SOF career;
- Lack of individual and community knowledge of SOF;
- Lack of identification;
- Swimming requirement; and
- Lack of interest.

Chapter Five

PERCEPTIONS OF SOF AND A SOF CAREER AS BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

Before discussing in detail the perceptions of participants about SOF and SOF careers, it is helpful to step back and discuss the reasons people gave for joining the military and making their career choice, whether SOF or non-SOF. This has some relevance to what they think about a SOF career, especially in the case of source populations. We then describe the perceptions of the SOF community, including the stated appeal and negatives of a SOF career, the way SOF operators are perceived, and attitudes toward SOF missions.

WHY DO INDIVIDUALS ENLIST IN THE MILITARY?

Individuals offered many reasons for enlisting in the military. Some reasons were common to both majority and minority participants, but we found some distinguishable patterns by race/ethnicity. Some participants entered the military to carry on a family tradition, and a few were attracted to the military as a means to establish self-discipline. Although a small number of both majority and minority enlisted personnel in our source population discussion groups were interested in the excitement or challenge of a military job, most discussants were interested in the education and health benefits, and the financial stability of a regular paycheck. In this way, both majority and minority enlisted personnel viewed the military as a problem solver—providing the money and benefits they could not find outside the military.

However, there were differences in the views of majority and minority enlisted discussants. Majority groups were more likely to mention the opportunity to travel as a positive and exciting aspect of military life, whereas minority discussants were more likely to view the military as a means to escape an unpleasant past. For example, one Hispanic participant told us, "I came in because of trouble in the streets, and I wanted to get away." One new black recruit explained, "it seems like the only way you can get ahead is through education, and you can't find that in the ghettos and on the streets—those jobs are in the suburbs." Thus, for many minorities in urban areas, the military provided a means to an end. Unlike the majority recruit who said "I always wanted to come into the Army, because of the toy figures I played with. I asked my parents every day, can I join the Army?" The minority recruits were much less likely to view the military as their goal, and thus placed more emphasis on skill training and employment. As some minority participants said:

> Minorities join the Navy to get a job;
>
> We want jobs and to know what we'll be doing later in life;
>
> Minorities don't want to shoot guns; we want more education and something to fall back on.

There is some debate in the research literature as to whether minorities place greater emphasis than do Caucasians on the transferability of skills to the civilian workplace. For example, a recent RAND survey did not find a greater interest among minorities in civilian transferability of military jobs (Tiemeyer, unpublished). Data on reenlistment and career lengths show that enlisted minorities have higher reenlistment rates and are much more likely to stay in until retirement; this suggests that minorities do tend to view the military as a career rather than as a short-term opportunity to get skill training. Although this is certainly true, occupation data (such as those shown in Chapter Two) show that minority officers and enlisted personnel are much less likely to select combat arms occupations than combat support and service support occupations. These data suggest that minorities are interested in working at jobs that have some counterpart in the civilian sector, perhaps out of a

desire to appear attractive to civilian employers when they do eventually leave the military.

Individuals may choose to enlist in the military for reasons not conducive to a SOF career. Individuals enlisting primarily for education benefits or to learn a specific skill that they plan to use in future civilian employment are far less likely to be attracted to SOF than are individuals who enlisted mainly for travel, adventure, and heroism. If, as our limited data suggest, minorities are more interested in jobs or skills, they would be less attracted to SOF. We explicate this point further below.

HOW DO ENLISTED PERSONNEL SELECT THEIR SERVICE?

Given their decision to join the military, there was considerable variability in how individuals selected a service. Some followed a family member's footsteps into a particular branch, or, conversely, selected a service to be different from a family member. Often, individuals' perceptions about the services had influenced their choice of service. For example, Air Force recruits generally believed that they had signed up for a better quality of life than the other services could offer. Air Force recruits believed that the "Air Force is interested in how smart you are, not how fit you are." They believed that the "Air Force has better facilities, and benefits." Source population personnel from the other services often saw the "Chair Force" as less physically active "computer geeks," even as some of these individuals regretted that the Air Force had not wanted them. Although some were very impressed with the Marines and thought that the "Marine Corps is appealing because it is an elite organization," others believed the "Marines are too stiff" or that "[the Marines] brainwash you." The Army and the Navy were generally perceived as less structured and physical than the Marine Corps but more demanding than the Air Force. Even so, the Army is perceived to be more physical than the Navy and more likely to be dangerous. For instance, one Navy recruit said, "I narrowed it down to the Army or the Navy and I heard people talking about Desert Storm. The Army in trenches while Navy was eating ice cream, watching CNN, and waiting to push a button." Some attitudes about the services were based on cosmetic impressions, such as appearance of uniforms, or the required haircuts.

These attitudes about the service are important to SOF recruiting because they also indicate the type of individual who might be more interested in a SOF career. Those who entered the Air Force because of the quality of life and a perceived lack of physical requirements are less likely to be interested in becoming a CCT or a PJ than those who were attracted to the eliteness and the physicality of the Marine Corps. As one enlisted CCT said, "the average airman doesn't have the mindset for our kind of job. Those people are in the Navy, Marines, or Army in their special ops—most people don't know about combat control and pararescue." This explains why a few of our SOF operators were prior Marines and indicates that SOF recruiting efforts that target Marine Corps personnel, using advertisements in newspapers near Marine Corps bases, for example, are probably a good investment.

Other participants' decisions to enter a particular service were based on happenstance. Many stressed the importance of recruiter interactions and the need for open, honest information from the recruiters.

WHY DO OFFICERS ENTER THE MILITARY?

Both majority and minority source population officers entered the military primarily either for the college education provided or for an exciting job. Some officers also cited the influence of military families. Among majority officers, many aspired to military careers. Among those who did not plan to remain in the military until retirement, civilian job transferability was a consideration. There was disagreement among minority source population officers regarding whether minority officers are more interested in civilian job transferability than are majority officers. Our minority officers were not more likely than the majority officer participants to place a high priority on civilian-transferable jobs. Instead, we heard from both minority and majority officers that they believed their education and leadership experience would be the primary emphasis of their resumes, rather than any specific job skills.

WHY DOES SOMEONE BECOME A SOF OPERATOR?

The operators who participated in our focus group discussions could not always separate the reasons they joined the service from their reasons for becoming a SOF operator. Many enlisted operators had always wanted to be in the military, and with the exception of CCTs and PJs who generally had not known about that career option when they were children, many had always wanted to be a SOF operator. Enlisted operators also mentioned college money as an original motivator for joining the service, although most of them saw considerable irony in this, given that most operators report that frequent deployments make it extremely difficult to pursue an education while remaining in the SOF community. SOF officers, like the source population officers, tended to enter the service either because they needed college money, because they had always wanted to be in the service, or because they had always wanted to be a SOF operator.

Those who had not always wanted to become SOF operators frequently decided to join SOF once they were in the service. Often, they were searching for greater challenge:

> [The] conventional Army fostered a standard of mediocrity. I wanted an association with a unit that did everything a little better;

> I was in an MI [military intelligence] unit before I joined the Rangers, but there wasn't enough discipline there;

> I wanted to lead the best soldiers in the Army.

Those who entered the service to join the SOF community often had reasons for being more interested in a particular service's SOF community than in the others. We discuss below the perceptions that individuals, both operators and source population, have of the specific SOF communities and how these perceptions affect an individual's propensity to join SOF.

PERCEPTIONS OF SOF AS A CAREER

Most focus group discussions articulated both positive and negative aspects about being a SOF operator, even when the participants were

not themselves interested in a SOF career. Operators and source populations agreed that certain attributes of the career were positive or negative, though to differing degrees, but the groups diverged on some issues highlighting the different priorities and interests of the two groups.

The appeal of SOF was often attributed to its elite nature and the high quality of SOF personnel. Most discussants, including both the operators and source population personnel, perceived SOF operators to be elite professionals in a mentally and physically challenging career. For some, the mental and physical demands were an appealing aspect of SOF; for others, they were a definite drawback. The ability to work as a tight-knit group and operate in small units where the commanders know all the personnel personally was often mentioned. Source population personnel were envious that SOF units have the opportunity to concentrate on their mission. We found a general perception that SOF units get more training time and resources and that they are not saddled with nonmission duties on base, such as parades, mowing, or funeral details. Additionally, enlisted SOF personnel are perceived by all to have more autonomy and responsibility than their non-SOF peers.

Both source population and operator groups were vocal about the negatives of the SOF community. The first negative that most people mentioned was the high optempo of SOF units. Personnel in SOF units are frequently deployed, and this is felt to have an extremely negative effect on the families of these personnel. Although operators felt that being away from their families was a sacrifice they made to gain the other positive aspects of the job, many source population participants believed that the benefits of the SOF career could not outweigh the negatives. Said one source population discussant, when responding to a peer comment about the tremendous respect for SOF personnel and the pride they are perceived to have, "pride isn't going to keep your wife happy or let you see your baby's first steps." Likewise, one participant expressed the following concern: "You don't want to be 'oh, that's daddy, he just visits every couple of weeks.'" A few source population participants even felt that married people should not be permitted in the SOF community, or that they should be compelled to "sign a waiver telling you up front what can happen to you. [This would] make the individual take the sole responsibility for destroying his family." These findings are confirmed

by a civilian study, which found that one major barrier for Hispanics contemplating a Navy career was the inability to be with family (Rosenfeld and Culbertson, 1992).

Small Team Organization

Although the small team organization appealed to those who like to work in small, tight-knit groups, it is a negative to officers who would like to lead large numbers of men, such as in a combat arms company. Some officers were also dissuaded from joining SOF because of the extremely limited number of command opportunities later in the career, at the O-5 grade and higher. This limitation was recognized even by those enthusiastic about joining SOF: "There are only two admirals in all special warfare—I don't think any of us aspire to be admirals."

Financial Compensation

Financial compensation was a frequent discussion point. The Air Force CCTs and PJs receive more additional compensation than do the other service SOF operators. The Air Force SOF personnel expressed satisfaction with their compensation, and often the additional pays were cited as part of the initial motivation to join SOF. The other services did not receive as many additional pays, and this was a sensitive topic for some operators, and a frequent topic among source population participants when discussing the greater dangers and demands of a SOF career. Although pay and compensation were often topics during discussions with operators, many were happy with their career choice, regardless of the compensation. The difference in the following quotes is telling.

From a source population discussion:

> I'm chilling in the motor pool and other Special Forces E-5s are making the same money.

From an operator discussion:

> The reality is that if you look at other jobs, I can turn a wrench, sit in an office and pick at a typewriter. Who wants to do that when you

> can skydive, etc.? And we are getting paid to do that; while we do our missions we are having a great time. Why have a miserable job where you have to get drunk and go home to beat the kids to release some tension when you can have fun at your job? If I'm sitting at the motor pool, I'm not going to be a happy camper.

In short, additional special pays may attract more candidates, and they may compel some operators to remain longer than they would have otherwise. However, most of the operators are motivated by the job itself and not by the compensation.

Civilian Job Transferability

Source and operator populations interviewed differed in the perceptions of whether SOF skills have civilian transferability and the importance of civilian job transferability in making career decisions. Many of the enlisted source population discussants linked career choices to future civilian employment, but few SOF enlisted operators placed much emphasis on civilian job transferability. However, when asked about civilian job transferability and their careers after SOF, their views about the transferability of SOF skills differed dramatically from those of the source populations. The source population tended to perceive SOF skills, with the exception of the SOF medics, as completely valueless to the civilian employment market:

> It wouldn't help me when I'm out. I won't need to sneak through trees in my civilian job.

> What do you do after being a war guru?

> My recruiter recommended not going in. How are you going to use that when you get out of the Navy?

> You don't want to be in a situation where they want you to be a killing machine; then what are you going to do in civilian life—put on your resume that you can kill a man with a spoon?

> If you are going to do SF you need to make it a career because you can't do anything with it when you get out unless you are going to

> be a mercenary. When you apply to corporations they'll say 'What are you going to do, blow up my computers?'

In addition, the dangerous aspect of SOF compounded these concerns about future civilian employment.

> When I get out now, I'm in a good position, but if I go Special Forces, I'm not in a good position and if I get hurt, it will be worse.

> Would you live to be forty? Get a bigger funeral?

Likewise, many of the participants knew that SOF personnel deploy frequently. This was another issue of concern to individuals who came into the service planning to get a college education so that they could qualify for better civilian employment when they left the service. Not only did they feel that their on-the-job training as a SOF operator would be less attractive than a non-SOF alternative, they did not think that they would be able to complete an education while deploying on the SOF schedule.

Despite the source population's perceptions that SOF skills are not useful in the civilian sector, many enlisted SOF operators believed that they would have little difficulty obtaining civilian employment. Often they mentioned civilian law enforcement and paramilitary organizations, such as the ATF, DEA, or FBI, and many were aware of the requirements of these organizations: "The DEA will pick you up in a heartbeat. Border patrol doesn't require any college, for the DEA you need at least a two-year degree or they will waiver [for SOF experience] and pick you up as a contractor . . . ." Others mentioned international opportunities, such as humanitarian aid, anti-drug campaigns, and contractor jobs in Africa and Central and South America as available to SOF personnel because of their experiences in dealing with people of other cultures. In these instances, the foreign language and diplomatic experiences gained during their SOF career were perceived as directly transferable.

SOF officers were also generally unconcerned about their attractiveness to civilian employers, but for different reasons. Many SOF officers explained to us that their most marketable features were their education, management skills, and leadership skills. "Getting out of the Academy you are already set up." For these officers, SOF did not

make them more or less appealing to potential employers than would service in non-SOF units, although some thought that they might be more likely to get an initial interview if someone saw, for example, "Navy SEAL" on their resume and was curious.

Additionally, we perceived, not surprisingly, a considerable amount of self-confidence among SOF operators. As one operator expressed: "You get guys who are self-confident, but not too much. The program builds that into you; you don't need anyone but yourself." Even those who did not cite future plans to join organizations such as the DEA were confident that they would succeed later in civilian life, because

> guys in the teams have the ability to succeed—people who excel there will excel in life when they get out;
>
> SF can only be a good thing—looks good on a resume;
>
> you can conform your resume to the job—management, leadership, integrity, moral skills abound;
>
> anyone would be a fool not to hire a guy like us—[we] adapt and overcome easily.

In short, although operators did not base their decisions to join SOF on civilian job transferability, few were worried about their civilian future. They felt that their skills, experiences, and qualifications were transferable for the kinds of civilian jobs they would be interested in, and they were self-confident individuals unconcerned about their future success. If source populations can be convinced that SOF careers do have civilian job transferability, the pool of individuals interested in SOF careers may expand.

PERCEPTIONS OF SOF COMMUNITIES

Although these positive and negative attitudes about SOF apply to all the service SOF, the perceptions toward and attitudes about each service's SOF personnel and missions vary by service. The following section describes the attitudes of source populations and other operators to each service's SOF. With only a few exceptions, as will be

noted, minority and majority officers from the source population tended to have similar views of the SOF community, and the officers from each service had more knowledge and more accurate information about SOF than did the enlisted community.

Perceptions of Army SF and Rangers

Some Army officers perceived Army Green Berets positively and cited their excellent training and their mission-oriented focus, but the Army officer source population had less positive regard for their own service's SOF than did Navy officers for SEALs (discussed below). Army officers were more likely to see Green Berets as lacking discipline or ignoring the line between noncommissioned officer (NCO) and officer because of the small team structure. Although there were few comments overall, we did receive more negative comments from the Army majority source population about their service's SOF than we did from the Navy source population. Army enlisted source population participants revealed less respect for the Green Beret mission and a resulting perception of Green Berets as "just instructors, not doers." Some Army personnel referred to Green Berets as "snake-eating, brain-washing people" who had "frequent deployments punctuated by frequent barbecues."

Some of the difference in perspective between the Army and the Navy source populations might be attributed to the degree of in teraction with SOF. The Navy fleet sees the SEALs at work, in a professional environment. In contrast, the Army source population interacts with Army Green Berets only around town and in social circumstances, not when they are exhibiting their professional capabilities.

Army combat arms personnel tended to view the Rangers more positively than they did the Green Berets, but these perceptions were due to the Ranger mission, not to the individual Rangers. The source population respected the direct action emphasis of the Rangers in contrast to the training emphasis of the Green Berets, but they tended to believe that they could perform just as well as any Ranger, given the opportunity. These views were based on their beliefs that Rangers received more training, had higher authorization levels, and did not have to tolerate discipline problems:

> I don't think they are any better as people, they just have better training;
>
> Those people are no different from us; they are just allowed resources and training time;
>
> They have more manning . . . undermanning creates leadership challenges;
>
> [They] all volunteer to work their butts off to do their best. Lots of our guys have discipline problems, so we have other challenges dealing with these soldiers, whereas they can get rid of people a lot faster.

These comments indicate a general lack of awe for individual Army Rangers, but they also reveal a perception that the discussants believed they could be proficient Rangers. Some of the majority combat arms personnel included in the discussion groups, especially the majority officers, would consider joining the Rangers, if given the opportunity.

Perhaps the bigger problem for minority recruiting in Army SOF is the considerable number of minorities in the Army who perceive racist attitudes and behaviors in Army SOF, including both Green Berets and Rangers. This perception is heightened by the southeastern location of many of the Army SOF training facilities and units; discussants mentioned the Ku Klux Klan signs on the local highways and the racist attitudes of the locals. In addition, many people erroneously associated the "Fort Bragg incidents"[1] with Army SOF and mentioned that these incidents had affected their perception of Green Berets and Rangers.

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[1]Many discussants mentioned the "Fort Bragg incidents." This reference encompassed two incidents. First, in December 1995, a Fayetteville black couple was murdered by Army soldiers assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg. At least one of these soldiers identified himself as a "skinhead." As a result of these murders, Secretary of the Army Togo West ordered an Army-wide investigation into soldier links to extremist groups. Second, in July 1996, swastikas were painted on the barracks doors of six black SF soldiers by a disgruntled black soldier.

Some of the focus group members were not surprised that these pro-white attitudes existed within SOF; they believed that these views were consistent with those of society at large. Given discrimination and racism in American society, participants asked why the military should be different. When pressed, the overall impression was that, although racism exists and is more prevalent in some units than others, the military was "better" than society as a whole.

Individuals mentioned having heard about racism in Army SOF from both military and civilian sources, suggesting that the civilian community also believes that Army SOF contains many individuals with racist attitudes and behaviors.

Because of the limits of our research, we were unable to visit all the operator locations to determine whether there is a basis for these perceptions. However, we feel that these attitudes were mentioned often enough to warrant further investigation, which should include all operator units. In addition, the unit climate surveys, which were not available to this study because of confidentiality restrictions and which we did not pursue for that reason, should be closely examined. It is important to recognize the difference between *attitudes* of individuals, which are not controllable by their service, and *behaviors*, which are.

The perceptions of the Army SOF as a racist organization deter minorities from considering SOF careers. We were told by minority participants that the training is extremely difficult and that the additional burden of having to deal with negative or racist attitudes would be overwhelming to the minority candidate.

In addition, some people believed that majority personnel who have these attitudes might be drawn to the SOF community, thus reinforcing and strengthening these attitudes within SOF.

Perceptions of the SEAL Community

The SEALs were very highly regarded by their source population, which described them as "intense," "best of the best," and "humble gods." Some Navy personnel from the fleet had encountered SEALs while on board ship, and at least one captain had interviewed the SEALs and encouraged a question and answer session during a tele-

vised "Captain's Call" on board. Individuals who had interacted with SEALs in a professional environment were especially impressed by them, although these interactions occasionally appear to disprove common stereotypes about SEALs. For example, one sailor said that, although he had been very impressed with the SEALs, "they were much smaller than I thought they'd be."

Although SEALs are generally very positive about their colleagues and their mission, Army SF operators are generally less impressed with SEALs and their skills out of water. They perceive the SEALs to have a very narrow mission, and to be younger and less mature than other SOF personnel. Some of these comments might be considered healthy competition between professionals, but they also indicate that, in all likelihood, other service SOF communities are not fruitful recruiting pools for the different SOF communities, with the exception of CCTs and PJs, as discussed below.

Perceptions of Air Force CCTs and PJs

The CCTs and PJs are not widely known by the source population. Although this lack of knowledge makes the general recruiting effort extremely problematic, the benefit is that the source population is not aware of the groups' racial demographics and does not have preconceived notions about the community, such as the perceptions of racism among Green Berets and Rangers. However, this lack of knowledge makes the briefings that provide information to Air Force basic trainees about the CCT and PJ career options even more important, because this is the first time that most trainees have heard anything about Air Force SOF. As we discuss below, the Air Force is having some problems recruiting from these basic trainees.

SOF operators from the other services are more familiar with the Air Force SOF personnel, because they deploy with CCTs for many joint SOF missions. Although we did not include Marine Corps personnel in our study, some of our group discussions suggested that Marines, especially Force Reconnaissance personnel, are also aware of the Air Force SOF because of joint missions. A few of the operators with whom we spoke were former Marines, and other discussants knew of the Air Force SOF because a Marine they knew had told them about CCTs and PJs. Some even told us that they were going to join the Marine Corps, with the hope of being selected for Force Reconnais-

sance, but that another Marine suggested they try CCTs instead. This suggestion usually was based upon the knowledge that the Air Force SOF community receives better compensation and special pays, and that the Air Force treats its personnel better than do the other services. Thus, although the CCT and PJ career options seem not to attract many new recruits who come into the Air Force for technology-oriented jobs, they are attractive to personnel serving in the Marines, or even in other service SOF. Some Rangers mentioned seeing advertisements for Air Force SOF in newspapers in or around the Army base, and our findings suggest that the Air Force should continue advertising to attract other service personnel.

Chapter Six

LACK OF INDIVIDUAL KNOWLEDGE AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT OF SOF AS A BARRIER TO PARTICIPATION

Our focus group findings suggest that lack of knowledge and differences in the reception of SOF information may contribute to low minority participation.

Lack of knowledge is a barrier that could prevent otherwise qualified individuals from seeking career opportunities within SOF. Indeed, as we discussed above, lack of knowledge is a barrier for the Air Force, as very few enlisted discussants—minority or majority—knew about Air Force SOF. Numerous enlisted groups asked: "The Air Force has Special Operations?" Air Force SOF operators recognized the general lack of knowledge regarding their career field. As one operator said, "It's hard to get them into our career field in the first place . . . the problem is getting them in because no one knows about them."

With respect to Army and Navy SOF, our focus group enlisted majority members were more likely than their minority peers to know about SOF and SOF missions. Enlisted majority groups were far more likely to mention a SOF professional visiting their high school or community and to indicate that they were aware of SOF before entering the military. In fact, many majority discussants idealized SOF and had at one time wanted to be SOF operators. One majority discussant, for example, told us that being a SEAL was "every boy's dream." Majority discussants were also more likely to mention playing with childhood toys that represented SOF operators. Further, unlike minority participants, majority discussants told us that when people in their community became aware that they were

entering the military, they were asked if they were going to become a SEAL, Green Beret, or a Ranger.

We did not find a lack of knowledge about SOF among our source officers, as most of the officers learned about SOF in the academies or Reserve Office Training Corps (ROTC), but several minority officers mentioned that their communities lacked knowledge about SOF and military career possibilities in general. In contrast to a majority enlisted discussant who was asked, "Are you going to be a SEAL?" when he mentioned that he was joining the Navy, one minority officer said, "Kids in the inner city schools ask, 'why are you going to swab decks?'" Another discussant said: "I go home and people don't know anything about it. I talk to people in my church—Italians and whites, they know all about it, but blacks don't."

The lack of knowledge within communities can translate into lower levels of support for a SOF career and this in turn could affect propensity to volunteer. Our discussion above highlighted the perceived negatives to a SOF career, including the extremely high deployment rate and negative effects on family life. Thus, any individual interested in SOF and in having a family would require the complete support of his family to succeed in both. This is likely to be especially difficult for minority families, given the lack of SOF knowledge within minority communities.

ROLE MODELS

Although both majority and minority participants in our focus groups discussed having military role models, minorities were less likely to have SOF role models than were their majority peers. Majority and minority focus group participants discussed their role models, often family members, whom they emulated and from whom they gained knowledge about life and career paths. Our findings regarding the influence of role models is consistent with prior civilian research that discusses the influence that "significant others"—primarily family members or teachers—exert over the career decisions of youths (Peterson, Stivers, and Peters, 1986; Sewell, Haller, and Ohlendorf, 1970).

About one-third of all our discussants had family role models who were career military. Enlisted source populations were even more

likely to have military families. Many of these individuals cited family military tradition as a reason to join the service:

> I joined for family tradition and college. Every male on my mom's side of the family has been in the military for 10 generations.

> I joined the Army because I grew up in a military family . . . my brother is in communications, another brother is in supply, my dad is career infantry.

Numerous majority enlisted operators not only had military families but also had family members in SOF who had clearly influenced their career decisions.

> My older brother was in a team (SEAL). It sounded good, so I joined;

> My dad was a Ranger. I joined the Army because I dreamed about it ever since I was a kid. I always wanted to be a Ranger;

> My dad is a retired SEAL. I wanted to show him I could land nav better than him—I chose the Army (Green Berets) over the Navy (SEALs) to irritate him.

Our minority enlisted operator discussants were much less likely to have SOF military family traditions than their majority peers.

Minority and majority operator officers were least likely to report military families. Surprisingly, none of the majority operator officer discussants had SOF military families. Only one of the minority SOF operator officers had a family member in SOF, and that family member advised him against a SOF career.

Group discussants, especially our officer source populations, also mentioned the influence of teachers as role models who had helped inform and shape their career decision. For instance, several of our combat arms officers mentioned their ROTC instructors as influencing them to choose a combat arms career, and we found that faculty and staff at the Academies also influenced officer career decisions.

Given the current low minority representation in SOF, it is not surprising that minorities have fewer SOF role models than do their majority peers. The low numbers of minority SOF role models may contribute to minorities' lack of knowledge regarding SOF and may lead to their greater lack of interest in SOF. Our research findings also suggest that minority role models may discourage minority youth from considering a SOF career, either by actively selling their own military career choice or by speaking negatively about SOF.

EFFECT OF MOVIES AND RECRUITING MATERIALS

Most enlisted participants, both majority and minority, gained much of their SOF knowledge from movies, but minority and majority attitudes and perceptions gained from these movies differ. Although Hollywood movies about SOF typically glorify SOF careers, minorities may not take away the same image of personal glory that their majority peers do. Minority discussants consistently mentioned that SOF movies (e.g., Navy SEALs) feature minorities in small, supporting, short-lived roles—typically, "one black man who always dies." As one minority enlisted participant said, "Most of the SEAL movies I've seen, if there is a minority, he gets killed off." So, although majority individuals receive images of SOF as a heroic, exciting, and elite occupation, minority individuals receive images of a SOF career as one of personal isolation and danger.

Another source of SOF information mentioned by our participants is official recruiting activities and materials. Our findings indicate that minorities are not necessarily receptive to the information from official recruiting sessions and materials that might otherwise counter the influence of popular movies, especially if briefed by someone who was not a minority. We found that minority enlisted source discussants were more distrustful of official recruiting information and materials than their majority counterparts. Minority focus group participants described informational videos or recruiting pitches as slanted, purposefully incomplete, or containing outright lies. Comments from minority enlisted source populations about SOF recruiting materials included:

> You need realistic videos, where everyone doesn't always smile. I don't always smile;

> They [recruiters] did the SEAL thing [the video] with guitars in the background making it sound like the best thing in the world—I don't want to be jumping out of trees and eating squirrels;

> I don't believe any of it [the video]—they don't want to show the part where they try to drown you;

> I have my guard up when I hear a recruiter or recruiting pitch—when they say four to six months, it could be three years.

Some minority enlisted participants said they would be more likely to trust information they received from another minority. As one minority said, "minorities have been through a lot together, in general, if you ask him [a minority] a truthful question, he will say the truth or say that he can't say—unless he has something to gain." Other minorities in our groups, while believing there was value in having minority recruiters, did not agree that minorities were more trustworthy than whites.

Chapter Seven

LACK OF IDENTIFICATION AS A BARRIER TO PARTICIPATION

Our research findings suggest that low minority representation tends to perpetuate itself. This finding is reinforced by data from the civilian sector as well.

IDENTIFICATION

Everyone has social identities that help him relate to other people in his environment. People identify to others in numerous ways:

> The child who imitates a parent; the sports fan decked out in the jacket, shirt, hat or buttons of the home team; the nationalist who fights for country or the political activist who seeks to promote the agenda of his other group: Each of these cases illustrates people viewing themselves in collective terms . . . . Identification is distinct from a simple physical grouping, in which the individual stands alongside others who may or may not share similar characteristics. Rather, through the process of identification, each person forms a psychological bond with others that can exist independently of any physical contact. (Deux, 1996.)

One primary way that individuals socially identify is by race/ethnicity, "seeing someone who looks like you." Having someone in a group with whom to identify increases an individual's comfort level, and this was an important topic in our minority focus groups. Identification was a more important issue for minority source populations from the fleet, enlisted combat support, and combat services support populations, where there is higher minority representation.

It was less of an issue for members of source populations containing smaller numbers of minorities, such as officer and combat arms populations. This may be because individuals who already chose to be a part of a group with low minority representation may not place as much importance on identification by race/ethnicity.

Regardless of the degree to which identification by race/ethnicity was emphasized, it was an issue in all of our minority source population groups. Minority source participants said that being in SOF would mean being "out of your comfort zone" and that seeing minorities in SOF would make the prospect of joining SOF more appealing. For instance:

> If someone is there and you can relate to them, they can become your guiding light;
>
> When you are new to anything, you do need to see someone you can make the identification with. You think, today isn't the best day, but if he or she can do it, I can do it;
>
> I can't speak for everyone, but as minorities, it has appeal to us to have someone in there of our own race. If they can do it, I can do it. It gives us something to strive for;
>
> It would motivate you because you look at them, and you see yourself. You can identify yourself with them. You really don't want to think like that, but you do.

Minority operators also discussed the importance of identification and viewed their presence as attracting other minorities to the career field. A minority SEAL commented, "Minorities have more interest when they see me. I have been stopped by minorities when in uniform and asked, 'You're a SEAL? How do I do that?'" and a minority Green Beret said, "My presence gives hope and light to other minorities."

For majority groups, identification by race/ethnicity is not a matter of concern, as whites are well-represented in the SOF career field. Of the three majority groups who did comment on identification issues, most were trying to put themselves in the place of minorities and imagining what it would be like to join a group with very few others

with whom they could personally identify. For example, one majority operator commented, "If I were somewhere all black and trying to join a black club or fraternity, and there was a white guy there, and he got to say that this is the best, and if he is honest with me, then I could be put at ease and think that the group would be great to join." A majority officer captured the self-perpetuating nature of low minority representation when he said,

> It's a Catch 22. There aren't a lot of minorities in there now, so you won't attract more minorities. Speaking for myself, I want to go to a unit where there are people I can relate to. There must be some discomfort to be somewhere where there is no one to relate to.

The importance of identification by race/ethnicity has implications for SOF recruiting of minorities. Minority source discussants commented that they tended to have positive reactions to recruiting information containing minority faces, as they associated these faces with themselves. Some participants particularly mentioned the television commercial with the "brown Marine" and said, "the Marine Corps has the guy going through the maze and you say 'that could be me.'" Participants did warn, though, that seeing one minority in a sea of white faces was distinctly uncomfortable. As one minority source officer said, "If there is only one, you think that there's only one guy—he's not the norm, so let's think of something else."

Minority source participants also liked receiving recruiting information from other minorities. One minority midshipman described how having a minority recruiter influenced him: "I saw the Naval Academy guy and how he looked [sharp] and thought that's what I want to be." Some participants suggested that having mixed groups of recruiters for SOF could also be helpful.

"SOLO STATUS"

Closely related to identification is the concept of "solo status."[1] According to social psychological research, when an individual is a solo, he is more prominent than nonsolos, and during the initial

[1]The term "solo" is used here to refer to more than a single individual when there are relatively few minorities in proportion to whites in a given work group.

stages of a working relationship, a solo is often subject to exaggerated expectations and extreme evaluations (Pettigrew and Martin, 1987).

We found enlisted minority source participants more sensitive to the prospect of being a solo than minority officers, and minority source participants who perceived their service's SOF as containing individuals with racist attitudes and behaviors were especially concerned about being one of only a few minorities in SOF. A number of these participants said that it would be more difficult to be in SOF and to complete SOF training as one of only a few minorities. Minority participants said:

> You go through more in SF because of your skin color, if black—having skin color, they will really push you, people think you don't have the intelligence to be there;
>
> If you are black or Hispanic, you are being pushed harder and are under a looking glass;
>
> Minorities are seen as representing their entire ethnicity/race.

A few of our minority operators reported feeling the effect of being a solo explaining:

> As a black man, I'm judged on a different scale. Often told I'm "not like all the other brothers."
>
> You are scrutinized because you're a minority.

Many of these minority enlisted source population participants felt that going through SOF training would be difficult enough without the additional pressure associated with being a solo. As one participant commented, "Why should we put up with red tape and be singled out as different? It's too much of a hassle." This reaction is supported by civilian literature that finds that minorities may not decide to apply for, not accept, or not keep jobs in fields and organizations with low minority representation. This literature also indicates that, although minorities may feel the effects of being a solo in a group, the majority members of the group are unlikely to notice if minority members are treated differently (Pettigrew and Martin, 1987; and

U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 1996). We found this consistent with our findings from majority personnel who saw the prospect and process of being a minority in SOF ostensibly the same as being a majority in SOF.

Our research findings suggest that low minority representation in SOF may perpetuate itself, as it causes a SOF career to appear different to minority candidates than to majority candidates, thus potentially creating lower levels of interest in the minority source population. Increasing SOF minority personnel's visibility may help break this cycle. Also, our findings suggest that even small increases in the numbers of minority SOF personnel now may attract larger numbers of minorities in the future.

Chapter Eight

SWIMMING REQUIREMENT AS A BARRIER TO PARTICIPATION

Data presented above on the swimming requirement in SOF entry, training, and selection show that minority personnel tend to be somewhat less proficient at swimming than are whites. This is supported by many of our interviews and focus group discussions. The reason that minorities are less likely to swim is widely debated. Some discussants and interviewees believed in a physiological difference, which impeded blacks' swimming ability; that blacks have more dense muscles and less body fat, resulting in a quicker loss of body heat in the water, as well as a lack of buoyancy. We do not address this hypothesis here; however, there is both research and anecdotal evidence to suggest that socioeconomic and cultural differences play a large role in explaining this disparity in swimming skills (Mael, n.d.). Many minorities who join the military are from urban areas and do not have the financial resources required to gain access to pools and swimming lessons. Crowded urban pools and lack of interest or swimming proficiency on the part of parents may be other factors contributing to the disparity in swimming skills. As Mael writes, "The most salient influence on swimming ability among blacks appears to be somewhat related to socioeconomic status and family recreational habits" (p. 9).[1]

[1]Our research effort was unable to explore the degree to which differences in experience and ability of majority and minority personnel can be explained by socioeconomic status before entering the military.

Most discussants knew that swimming is required for SOF, and many offered that as an explanation for low minority representation. Although both the Army and Navy offer programs to help with swimming, these programs are not widely known and were rarely mentioned in our focus group discussions with source populations.

Some of the minority discussion groups were quick to dispute swimming as a barrier, asserting that they had learned to swim and that other minorities could also. These discussants were generally officers, with more education, and from higher socioeconomic strata than those who claimed that swimming was an absolute barrier.

Some discussants asserted that, even if minorities can learn to swim, because they are learning as adults they will never acquire the degree of "water comfort" necessary to be successful as a Navy SEAL or as an Air Force CCT or PJ. It is considerably more likely that nonswimmers could acquire swimming skills sufficient to satisfy the Army SF and Ranger requirements.

Chapter Nine

LACK OF INTEREST IN SOF AS A BARRIER TO MINORITY PARTICIPATION

Our focus group discussions, along with other data from surveys and data on occupations, suggest that minorities may be less interested in SOF as a career. However, the findings regarding the relatively greater emphasis placed on civilian job transferability by minorities run somewhat counter to a recent RAND survey of first-term enlisted personnel. That study found that minorities were no more likely than whites to join the military for the purpose of learning a skill. The fact that minorities in general tend to reenlist and make the military a career at higher rates than do whites also refutes the idea that minorities see the military simply as a way of obtaining training to be used in the civilian sector. However, it may be that the emphasis on civilian job transferability refers to later civilian careers, after retirement from the military.

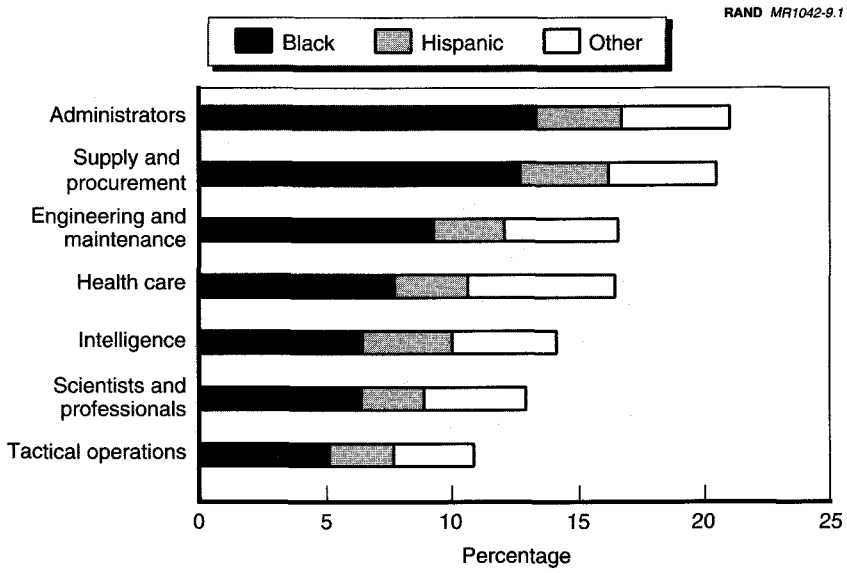
Data from the YATS provide evidence regarding minorities' relatively lower interest in combat-related occupations. The YATS is an annual survey conducted by the Department of Defense to measure youth interest in military service and is administered to approximately 5,000 to 10,000 16–24 year-olds. Orvis et al. (1996) examined data from the 1990–1994 YATS on high-quality males, 16–21 years old, and concluded that there is "a greater perception among African-American youth of danger in military service, as compared with whites, and a corresponding greater reluctance to serve under conditions involving potential exposure to combat." (Orvis et al., 1996). For example, among these high-quality males, 45 percent of blacks strongly agreed that "life in the military involves great danger and personal risk" compared with 22.5 percent of whites. Thirty-seven

percent of black respondents, compared with 17 percent of white respondents, said they would not volunteer to serve in combat-related jobs even if it meant higher chances of promotion.

In addition, the 1996 YATS showed that, among high-quality males, about 53 percent of blacks mentioned that experience that prepares one for a future career or job was extremely important to them (compared with 31.8 percent of whites). Similar differences were found with respect to the importance of learning a valuable trade or skill (45 percent of blacks felt this was very important, compared with 28 percent of whites). Further, 67 percent of blacks and 70 percent of Hispanics mentioned that staying near family and friends was very important or extremely important to them (compared with 56 percent of whites).

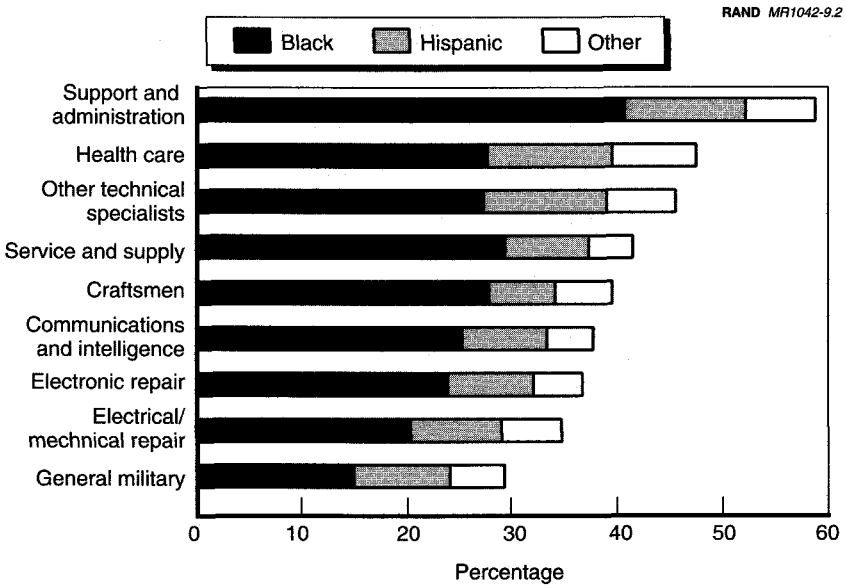
Regardless of the relative merits of the arguments for and against greater emphasis on civilian transferability by minorities, occupational data do show that far fewer minorities select combat-related occupations. For example, data on the occupational distribution of officers and enlisted personnel (Figures 9.1 and 9.2) across all services reveal that combat-related occupations have the lowest proportion of minorities among all occupational groups. The largest proportion of minorities, blacks in particular, are in service/administration-related occupations.

Data such as these, along with the opinions presented above, if pervasive among military personnel, would help explain the low minority representation in SOF. The combined data also suggest that the services may experience continued difficulty in recruiting minorities.



SOURCE: DMDC.

Figure 9.1—Percentage of Minorities, by Occupational Area, Officers, FY96



SOURCE: DMDC.

Figure 9.2—Percentage of Minorities, by Occupational Area, Enlisted Personnel, FY96

Chapter Ten

SERVICE EFFORTS TO INCREASE MINORITY REPRESENTATION IN SOF

The previous chapters identified several actual and perceived barriers to minority participation in SOF. As a result of our discussions, we can group these barriers into the following broad headings:

- ASVAB score cutoffs;
- Swimming requirement;
- Lack of knowledge;
- Lack of identification;
- Perceived racism; and,
- Lack of interest.

Many of these findings are not new and they reinforce what previous studies (Teplitzky, 1992a; Lappin, 1996; and Brooks and Zazanis, 1997) have found as well as SOF experience with recruiting and training at the various schoolhouses. The services in general are being rather aggressive and have already implemented policies to address several of these issues. These policies are discussed in this chapter.

SERVICE ATTITUDES TOWARD MINORITY REPRESENTATION IN SOF

Each service addresses the issue of minority representation in SOF differently. The Army has determined that increasing minority rep-

resentation in SOF may help resolve its manpower shortages in that community. As a result of this determination, the Army has established an advisory group on minority recruitment for SOF at the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS) and has enacted various measures and policies to increase minority representation. Although some Navy personnel have views similar to those of the Army and perceive the minority source population to be a potential solution to the shortage of enlisted SEAL candidates, the majority of Navy personnel with whom we spoke seemed to want to increase minority representation because they felt that it is the "right thing to do." In contrast, minority representation is not overtly a current issue of concern in Air Force SOF. SOCOM officials informed us that while the Air Force, and in particular, the Air Force SOF leadership are interested in pursuing any and all appropriate avenues to increase minority representation in SOF units, the Air Force is having a great deal of difficulty in recruiting any qualified candidates for these two critically manned fields. Regardless of race, these career fields require individuals with extraordinary physical ability including strong swimming and water confidence. Thus, the Air Force asserts that, in terms of ethnicity, the CCT/PJ recruiting results are determined by the market's response to the recruiter's efforts and the ability to qualify for the career fields. As a result, the Air Force does not track the SOF population by race or ethnicity and is not currently implementing any specific policies regarding minority representation in the SOF communities.

SERVICE POLICIES TO INCREASE MINORITY REPRESENTATION IN SOF

This section focuses primarily on Army and Navy efforts to target minorities.

Swimming

The Army and the Navy have both addressed the issue of swimming as a barrier to minorities. The Army has revised its use of the swimming requirement; now, the swimming test is administered before SFAS only as a diagnostic to identify personnel who need additional swimming tutelage. Although the swimming requirement itself has not changed, and personnel must still pass the same test to enter and

graduate from SFQC, the swimming requirement will no longer prevent someone from attending the selection course. The Navy provides basic trainees with the opportunity to participate in physical fitness training with "Dive Motivators" at Recruit Training Command in Great Lakes. Trainees may elect this training—which emphasizes swimming and other preparation for the SEAL, Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD), and Navy Diver qualification tests—in place of the standard physical fitness training given to all basic trainees. During our visit to Great Lakes, we found that the Dive Motivators were making an extra effort to encourage interested minority personnel to obtain this additional swimming training. Additionally, if individuals have difficulty with swimming while at BUD/S, the Navy provides them with repeated opportunities to improve their swimming competency. The Physical Training, Rehabilitation, and Remediation (PTRR) unit at BUD/S is responsible for working with students who suffer a medical setback, academic deficiency, or performance failure (e.g., swimming). PTRR has had a positive effect on minority graduation rates, as shown in Chapter Three.

Aptitude Score

The Army is currently waiving the minimum required score on the ASVAB GT composite from 110 to 100. Although many believe that this action was instituted to increase the number of minority personnel in the eligible population, current policy language states that this change was implemented to increase the eligible population overall. Regardless, the personnel affected by this change are disproportionately minority. The Navy also waives the ASVAB requirement for enlisted personnel on a case-by-case basis for candidates who are close to the cutoff score and are otherwise well-qualified. We should note here that our research indicates an overwhelming concern from both minority and majority personnel about lowering any legitimate standards.

Lack of Knowledge

Both the Army and the Navy have increased their efforts to disseminate information about SOF to minority communities. The Army is sending SOF representatives to historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), targeting their recruiting advertisements in mi-

nority publications, and recruiting from noncombat arms Army units. For example, in FY98, USAJFKSWCS representatives visited four HBCUs and two minority colleges; in FY99, they plan to visit seven HBCUs and six minority colleges. The officers who participate in this program are both role models and examples of minority officers who have been successful in SOF. The Navy is sending SOF personnel to black high schools and swim teams for recruiting and using the Navy Parachute Team to increase their visibility in urban areas. In fact, three out of the four Navy SOF recruiters are minority.

Although the Air Force does have an elite parachute team, it does not deliberately recruit from the minority communities. We were told at the time of our interviews and discussions with Air Force SOF personnel about the uncertain funding and continued existence of this elite parachute team, which has since been funded. However, this prior uncertainty may indicate the low priority of the program overall.

Lack of Identification

Although the Army and the Navy have both addressed the issue of minority identification in their recruiting materials, their approaches are very different. The Army has highlighted current minority SOF personnel in their recruiting materials. In contrast, the Navy has chosen to minimize any racial recognition in their recruiting materials by using artwork, rather than photography, to blur racial distinctions. Our research suggests that the Army's approach may be more productive. Minority individuals in our focus group discussions indicated that they identified with recruiting materials that included minorities. Given that the SEALs are widely perceived as a "white" organization, using artwork to reduce the emphasis on white SEALs may not be as productive as publicizing the existence of minority SEALs.

Chapter Eleven

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The quantitative analyses presented above show that minorities are underrepresented in SOF when compared with the source populations from which these forces recruit, but the extent of underrepresentation differs between officer and enlisted ranks and among the different racial/ethnic groups. The combined quantitative and qualitative analyses highlight a number of barriers to minority participation in SOF.

In this report, we distinguish between structural or institutional barriers and perceptual barriers to minority participation. Structural barriers are defined as prerequisites or requirements that exclude minorities to a relatively greater extent than non-Hispanic whites. Structural barriers are inherent in the policies and procedures of the institution and appear in such things as entry requirements (for example, ASVAB score cutoffs). Perceptual barriers encompass those perceptions, attitudes, or beliefs that lead minorities to think that they cannot or should not pursue SOF as a job or career option.

Below, we specify the types of barriers affecting minority representation in SOF and follow each with recommendations that the services may wish to consider. Indeed, in some cases, one or more of the services have already initiated some of the policies or programs that we recommend. We mention them here because they may be appropriate to all services.

ENTRY PREREQUISITES AS STRUCTURAL BARRIERS

The barriers in this category include the ASVAB score cutoffs, the swimming requirement, and, to a much smaller degree, the requirement for a clean discipline record. In general, these tend to affect minorities to a greater degree than they do whites. The ASVAB score cutoffs, in particular, have a substantial effect because minorities—particularly blacks—tend to score lower than whites.

Recommendations that may help lower barriers in these areas include the following:

Examine Entry Standards for Relevance and Preserve Valid Standards. We examined entry standards to determine whether they were biased against minorities. Most standards are objective but differ by service in terms of cutoff scores, stringency of the swimming requirement, and other physical standards. Good rationales, such as different mission requirements, may underpin these differences, but it is not clear that the requirements have all been objectively tied to performance. For example, the difference in the swimming requirements between the CCT/PJs (25 meters underwater and 1,000 meters in 26 minutes) and the Navy SEALs (500 meters in 12.5 minutes) is quite large. In this case, the degree of difference suggests the need for further assessment. However, the SOF community should resist any attempt to change entry standards that do relate to job performance. We found considerable concern in both the SOF community and source populations about lowering standards or instituting quotas. This concern cut across racial/ethnic boundaries.

Recognize and Support Particular Youth Programs. Many of the SOF operators who participated in the focus group discussions were once involved in youth swim teams, water polo teams, Boy Scouts, and similar organizations, which suggests these may be fruitful recruiting pools. The Navy has targeted minority swim teams for SEAL recruitment. The Army and Air Force should consider recruiting from, and where necessary supporting, local youth programs, particularly in minority communities. This might include informational visits or establishing information booths at large events (e.g., Boy Scout Jamboree).

Consider Using the Field Artillery (FA) Composite Score Rather Than the GT Score. The Army should consider ARI's recommenda-

tion to use the FA composite of the ASVAB rather than the GT composite. This step would increase the number of minorities in the source population who would meet the requirement.

Track SOF Race and Ethnicity Data. The Air Force should begin to track race and ethnicity data. This would provide insight into what parts of the entry, assessment, and training processes pose the most difficult hurdles for minorities. It would also enable the Air Force to determine whether any of its policies or practices in this area are disproportionately affecting minorities and would provide a basis for any future policy actions.

Reconsider the Job Guarantee Policy. The Air Force should revisit its policy of requiring that a new recruit sacrifice a job guarantee upon deciding to become a SOF candidate. This policy could well deter both majority and minority candidates unsure of their ability to make it through the SOF selection process.

Continue to Advertise SOF Opportunities in the Newspapers at Other Service Locations. Our findings suggest that Army Rangers and Marine Corps personnel are excellent candidates for Air Force CCTs (the SOF community with the highest rate of failure in their training courses). The combat skill training of these prior military recruits and the fact that they have already met demanding physical requirements suggest that they should enjoy a high level of success in negotiating the assessment and training requirements for CCTs. The other SOF communities might also be interested in targeting the Marine Corps.

ASSESSMENT AND TRAINING REQUIREMENTS AS STRUCTURAL BARRIERS

In general, minorities tend to have lower pass rates than do whites. For the Army SF, about which we have the most data, this difference is largely explained by the fact that the minorities tend to come from non-combat arms MOSs, score lower on the ASVAB, and have more difficulty with the swimming and land navigation aspects of the courses.

Investigate the Value of Enhanced Monitoring Capabilities. The Army SF has benefited from a detailed database on its SF candidates,

which includes demographics, military service, aptitude scores, and outcomes in individual subtests of SFAS and SFQC. The Navy and Air Force should consider establishing similar databases. These would allow them enhanced monitoring capabilities and provide early indications of potential problems.

Examine Training and Assessment Requirements for Relevance and Preserve Valid Requirements. The SOF community should investigate the training curriculum for relevance to job performance. However, again, the SOF community should resist any attempt to change validated assessment or training requirements. As mentioned above, we found considerable concern in both the SOF community and source populations about lowering standards or instituting quotas. This concern cut across racial/ethnic boundaries.

LACK OF KNOWLEDGE AND FAMILY SUPPORT AS PERCEPTUAL BARRIERS

The minorities in our focus group discussions knew less about SOF than their white counterparts and the discussions suggest that this lack of knowledge is shared by the minority community at large. Lack of knowledge on the part of the families of potential candidates means that they receive little encouragement to explore SOF as a career choice and if they do choose SOF, they are less likely to receive the support of their families. Family support is particularly important given the difficult lifestyle and adverse effects on SOF families. This is self-perpetuating. Since minorities tend not to join SOF, there are fewer family role models to encourage or inspire minorities to join SOF or to provide information to minority communities.

Educate Recruiters and Consider Delayed Goals. We encountered SOF operators who made their career choice despite a lack of knowledge on the part of their recruiters. We also found source population personnel who had been misinformed. Because recruiters represent a key source of information for potential recruits, the services may wish to better educate their recruiters about the SOF option. Given that the CCT/PJ field particularly suffers from this lack of knowledge, we recommend that Air Force Academy liaison officers and ROTC recruiters be educated about these career fields so they can carry this message to the schools they visit. In addition, the services may also

wish to hold recruiters accountable for the recruits they send to the SOF community by withholding credit for the recruitment until, say, the recruit at least passes initial screening.

Use High Profile Parachute Teams to Raise Awareness. All the services have demonstration parachute teams that routinely perform at public events, such as football games and parades. These teams could assist recruiters by raising the awareness of SOF among minorities, particularly if they focus on events that take place in urban areas with high minority populations. The Navy has been using this technique and perceives some benefits from it.

Educate Personnel Early About SF Option. The Army should consider making its personnel aware of SF option earlier in their careers. Members of our source population focus groups often indicated that by the time they became aware of the SF option, they had already made career plans. Had they known more about SF when they were junior enlisted members, they might have seriously considered applying when they became eligible.

Continue Shipboard Informational Efforts. Navy SEALs conduct information briefings and other activities on board Navy ships. Some of the discussants in our source population focus groups had been exposed to SEALs at work on board the ship or in a "Captain's Call" featuring SEALs who answered questions from the ship's company. Discussants tended to have a positive view of the SEALs after such sessions, and, given that positive response, it would seem that the Navy should continue or perhaps even expand this program.

LACK OF IDENTIFICATION AS A PERCEPTUAL BARRIER

The focus groups indicated the importance of having someone in a group with whom individuals can identify. In particular, minority group participants expressed a reluctance to join organizations with low minority presence. Thus, the relative underrepresentation of minorities in SOF tends to perpetuate itself.

Increase SOF Presence in Minority High Schools and HBCUs. Minority youth need exposure to SOF as a potential career choice. As we mentioned above, both the Army and Navy have such efforts under way and they are making special efforts to ensure that minority

SOF are among those who visit the high schools. The services could encourage greater efforts in this direction by considering a policy granting SOF personnel an additional day of leave that does not count against the annual total, if the operator agrees to visit a local high school or college during his leave. As we saw, very little is known about Air Force SOF options. It might be useful for the Air Force to strongly encourage visits by its minority operators to community events and high schools to provide greater exposure to the CCT/PJ fields.

Continue Programs with Small Payoffs. If increasing minority representation in SOF is important, the services need to take advantage of every opportunity to do so. In that regard, even programs that yield only small results are important. Given that minorities have highlighted the importance of identification and role models, getting even a few more minorities into SOF is important because it establishes a presence with which other minorities can identify.

One program that should be continued is the swimming assistance offered by the Army and Navy. However, the program could be better publicized, especially in the Army where applicants need only basic swimming skills. Army personnel interested in joining SOF should know that programs exist to teach them how to swim.

Continue Featuring Minority SOF in Recruiting Materials. The Army has initiated a new recruiting campaign featuring minority SOF personnel. Our focus group discussions suggest that this campaign will have a positive effect because it addresses the issue of lack of identification on the part of minorities.

Consider Revising SOF Advertising and Recruiting Materials. The Navy's current set of SOF recruiting materials uses drawings rather than photographs to depict SEALs. Although this is an improvement over the previous materials that featured only white SEALs, the Navy might consider adopting the Army approach and might feature minority SEAL personnel in their materials.

PERCEIVED RACISM AS A PERCEPTUAL BARRIER

The Army SOF are perceived by some minorities to exhibit racist attitude or behaviors. This perception naturally makes minorities un-

willing to apply, which exacerbates other barriers as well, for example, lack of identification.

Determine Whether a Basis for Perceptions of Racism Exists. The scope of this study did not include all operator units, so we are unable to confirm or deny that a basis for these perceptions of Army SOF exists. However, given the widespread presence of these perceptions and their extremely negative effect, they deserve additional inquiry. Indeed, USASOC has been moving on this issue. Operators have the opportunity to provide feedback to the command in the comprehensive command climate surveys and the Military Equal Opportunity Climate (MEOC) surveys conducted by ARI and USASOC's Equal Opportunity Office. The Army asserts that results from the ARI surveys suggest improvements in job satisfaction, with senior leaders, empowerment, and supervision and that the results of the MEOCS indicate that the equal opportunity climate is healthy in the operational units, but also suggest areas requiring particular command emphasis.

We urge USASOC to supplement written surveys with focus group discussions, similar to those conducted for this study. Such an effort should include operator units in diverse geographical locations and should consider behavior both in the workplace and at unit social events. The effort should distinguish between negative or racist attitudes, which the services cannot control, and negative behaviors, which they can and should prevent.

The Navy also conducts its own annual Command Managed Equal Opportunity surveys to determine the effectiveness of its equal opportunity efforts.

LACK OF INTEREST IN SOF AS A PERCEPTUAL BARRIER

Evidence from our quantitative and qualitative analyses suggests that minorities tend to be less interested in combat arms and related occupations and place more emphasis on civilian job transferability in their choice of career fields. Minorities may, therefore, find the SOF career option—given the arduous training, the long deployments, the secrecy, and perceived lack of civilian job transferability—unappealing.

Emphasize the Positives. It is difficult to address this issue. SOF duties are what they are, and the services can do nothing to change them. Nor should they. However, SOF service does have many positive attributes: membership on an elite team, demanding training, highly skilled colleagues, and important service to the nation. Recruiting materials already emphasize some of these, but perhaps they could be highlighted even further. In addition, it might also be useful to highlight the fact that some civilian agencies do value the types of skills learned in SOF, most notably law enforcement organizations such as the FBI and ATF.

SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Perhaps the central issue raised in this study relates to the reasons why minority representation in SOF is considered important. On the one hand, many participants pointed to reasons why diversity in SOF is important. First, SOF, like other military units, is short of personnel, and increasing minority participation could offer a solution to the staffing problem. Second is the simple value of diversity in general. Third, and more pointed given SOF missions, is the value that people of different races, backgrounds, and cultures bring to units that traditionally work in foreign countries. Minorities may blend in better with non-white populations. Furthermore, ethnic minorities often bring language skills and familiarity with other cultures and customs that enhance unit effectiveness in foreign countries.

On the other hand, many participants were vehemently opposed to quotas or the lowering of standards to achieve greater diversity. This was true across majority and minority personnel, operators, and source populations. Minority groups especially opposed lowering standards and instituting quotas because such policies create an atmosphere where all minorities are viewed as substandard and suspect. The following quotes from both majority and minority participants highlight these concerns:

> Can't have people who give up in the middle of a hump in the jungle;

> You can't force people into it—quotas are very bad. No guarantee a guy will carry out his job if forced into it . . . lives are at stake;

> Take whoever's most qualified. Cannot compromise someone's life because of minority representation issues;

> If you make it easier on minorities, there will always be a stigma that they made it through [qualification course] only with help.

Finally, a related question is one that has plagued all attempts to have the military mirror society: How does one define "enough?" Should SOF mirror society or the service with which they are associated? Should we set some other representation standard?

These issues suggest the need for a guidance statement from USSOCOM. Such a statement should include the reasons minority representation is perceived to be important and the representation goal, if one is desirable. This would, at least, address the issue of how much is enough and it would reaffirm that standards and personnel quality are still of paramount importance to the organization and its mission.

Appendix A

SOF: BACKGROUND AND MISSIONS

> Special operations encompass the use of small units in direct or indirect military actions that are focused on strategic or operational objectives. They require units with combinations of specialized personnel, equipment, training, or tactics that exceed the routine capabilities of conventional military forces. (USSOCOM, 1996.)

Although such operations played a role in U.S. military history as early as colonial times, the origin of contemporary special operations forces can be traced to World War II, during which organizations such as the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), 1st Special Service Force, Scouts, Raiders, and the air commandos played a key role. Following World War II, the numbers of special operations forces ebbed and flowed based on external pressures, and only 3,600 troops remained assigned to active duty Army Special Operations Forces units in 1979 (Marquis, 1997, p. 4).

The Mayaguez incident in 1975 and the failed Iranian hostage rescue mission in 1980 are generally recognized as key factors that prompted members of Congress to investigate and then implement the means to develop, support, and maintain a credible and effective special operations capability. An amendment to the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 created two new defense organizations: the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict (OASD/SOLIC), and the USSOCOM. OASD/SOLIC was chartered with overall supervision of special operations and low intensity conflict activities of the U.S. Department of Defense, and USSOCOM was to carry out the assigned SOF missions.

USSOCOM was formally established in April 1987 as a unified combatant command, with budgetary independence, to be commanded by a four-star general or flag officer. The legislation prescribed the following responsibilities and authorities:

- Developing strategy, doctrine, and tactics;
- Preparing and submitting to the Secretary of Defense program recommendations and budget proposals for special operations forces and for other forces assigned to the special operations command;
- Exercising authority, direction, and control over the expenditure of funds for forces assigned to USSOCOM and for special operations forces assigned to other commands;
- Training assigned forces;
- Conducting specialized courses of instruction for commissioned and noncommissioned officers;
- Validating requirements;
- Establishing priorities for requirements;
- Ensuring interoperability of equipment and forces;
- Formulating and submitting requirements for intelligence support;
- Monitoring the promotions, assignments, retention, training, and professional military education of special operations forces officers;
- Ensuring combat readiness of forces assigned to the command;
- Monitoring preparedness to carry out assigned missions of special operations forces assigned to other commands; and,
- Developing and acquiring special-operations-peculiar equipment, supplies, and services (6 USC §167).

STRUCTURE OF SOF

U.S. special operations forces include:

- U.S. Army Special Forces (SF), the 75th Ranger Regiment, the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne), psychological operations (PSYOP), and civil affairs (CA) units.
- U.S. Navy Sea-Air-Land (SEAL) teams, special boat units, and SEAL delivery units.
- U.S. Air Force special operations squadrons (fixed and rotary wing), special tactics squadrons, and a foreign internal defense squadron.

MISSIONS

A USSOCOM publication describes SOF missions as follows:

> Special operations are conducted in war and peace, either independently or integrated with conventional operations. They are targeted on strategic and operational objectives (psychological and civil affairs operations are the exceptions; they normally operate at all levels simultaneously) in support of the Joint Force Commander's (JFC' s) campaign plan in war, or the geographic CINC' s regional plan or the U.S. ambassador' s country plan in peacetime. Political-military considerations frequently shape operations, requiring clandestine, covert, or low-visibility techniques and oversight at the national level. Special operations differ from conventional operations in their modes of employment, operational techniques, independence from friendly support, and dependence on detailed operational intelligence and indigenous assets. (USSOCOM , 1996)

SOF may be assigned a mission because they are the best suited for it, given their unique training, equipment, and experience, or because they are the most readily available force, and are commonly recognized as vital to U.S. national security objectives. As stated in a 1997 General Accounting Office report:

> In general, there is common understanding of and agreement on primary SOF missions priorities between the CINCs and SOF unit commanders assigned to each of the CINCs, and the CINCs often consider SOF their force of choice for many diverse combat and peacetime missions. However, there is some disparity on the priorities for collateral activities for SOF, such as embassy support and antiterrorism activities. (GAO, 1997.)

The current principal special operations missions include the following:

Direct Action (DA). Short duration strikes and other small-scale offensive actions by SOF to seize, destroy, capture, recover, or inflict damage on designated personnel or material in denied areas. In the conduct of these operations, SOF may employ raid, ambush, or direct assault tactics; emplace mines and other munitions; conduct standoff attacks by fire from air, ground, or maritime platforms; provide terminal guidance for precision-guided munitions; conduct independent sabotage; and conduct anti-ship operations. Targets have strategic or operational significance.

Special Reconnaissance (SR). Reconnaissance and surveillance actions conducted by SOF to obtain or verify, by visual observation or other collection methods, information concerning the capabilities, intentions, and activities of an actual or potential enemy or to secure data concerning the meteorological, hydrographic, or geographic characteristics of a particular urban or denied area. It includes target acquisition, area assessment, and post-strike reconnaissance in denied areas against targets of strategic or operational significance.

Foreign Internal Defense (FID). Participation by U.S. civilian and military agencies in any of the action programs taken by the host government to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency.

Combating Terrorism (CBT). Offensive measures taken to prevent, deter, and respond to terrorism.

Counterproliferation (CP). Actions taken to locate, identify, seize, destroy, render safe, transport, capture, or recover weapons of mass destruction.

Civil Affairs (CA). Activities that establish, maintain, influence or exploit relations between military forces and civil authorities, both governmental and nongovernmental, and the civilian population in a friendly, neutral, or hostile area of operations in order to facilitate military operations and consolidate operational objectives. Civil affairs may include performance by military forces of activities and

> functions normally the responsibility of local government. These activities may occur prior to, during, or subsequent to other military actions. They may also occur, if directed, in the absence of other military operations.
>
> PSYOP. Planned operations to convey selected information to influence the emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals. The purpose of psychological operations is to induce or reinforce foreign attitudes and behaviors favorable to the originator's objectives.
>
> Information Warfare (IW)/Command and Control Warfare (C2W). Actions taken to achieve information superiority in support of national military strategy by affecting adversary information or information systems while leveraging and protecting U.S. information and information systems. (USSOCOM, 1996, pp. 3-2–3-4.)

The collateral missions that SOF units conduct will change and evolve depending on the changing nature of international threats. Current collateral missions include such operations as coalition support, combat search and rescue (CSAR), counterdrug activities, humanitarian assistance (HA), security assistance (SA), embassy support, and antiterrorism (USSOCOM, 1996; GAO, 1997).

Since 1986, there has been an expansion of Special Forces and this has led in turn to manpower shortages (severe in some cases) in some forces (Marquis, 1997). In addition, there has been a rapid growth in the headquarters organizations as forces from the three services (Army, Navy, and Air Force) became components of USSOCOM. Three service commands and one joint command were established: USASOC, NAVSPECWARCOM, AFSOC, and the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC). The need to supply personnel to run the higher headquarters also contributes to the burden already placed on these small forces (Marquis, 1997, p. 259).

All special forces operators "have skills and missions in common, yet each has its own special capabilities and competence" (Marquis, 1997, p. 262). SOF stress their history and their organizational culture and make sure that these are maintained through a careful entry, selection, assessment, and training process. The characteristics

that make them distinctive, however, also set them apart from the conventional military, which frequently views these "individualistic, rank-unconscious, questioning" special operators with distrust and suspicion (Marquis, 1997, p. 4). The conventional commander "does not trust what special operators do, does not understand how they do it, and rejects a force that rarely confronts the enemy head on, but, instead, conducts most operations in peacetime, under cover, or behind the lines." (Marquis, 1997, p. 4.)

SOF publications emphasize the importance of careful selection and training, that people—not hardware—make the critical difference, that quality—not quantity—matters, and that special operators Should not be mass-produced (USSOCOM, 1996).

Appendix B

SOF ASSESSMENT AND TRAINING

This appendix provides details on the assessment and training process that SOF candidates undergo in the various SOF communities.

ARMY SF

All enlisted personnel and officers meeting the prerequisites may attend the SFAS, a three-week course held at Fort Bragg. The program has two phases. The first phase assesses physical fitness, motivation, and ability to cope with stress and includes activities such as psychological tests, swim tests, runs, obstacle courses, rucksack marches, and military orienteering exercises. At the end of this phase, an evaluation board meets to determine which candidates will be allowed to continue in the program. The second phase assesses leadership and teamwork skills. At the end of the second phase, another board meets to select those soldiers who may attend the SFQC, often referred to as the Q-course.

The Q-course consists of three phases. Phase I emphasizes collective training and focuses on land navigation skills, patrolling, etc. It lasts 40 days. Phase II lasts 67 days and provides specific MOS training. Phase III (36 days) again stresses collective training and includes a live exercise called "Robin Sage." After successfully completing the Q-course, soldiers are sent for functional language training (see http://www.goarmy.com/sorc/sfas.htm).

ARMY RANGERS

Junior enlisted personnel may become Rangers by either receiving a Ranger contract or by being recommended by their commander. Junior Rangers attend the three-week RIP after Basic Training, Advanced Individual Training, and Airborne school. Its purpose is to assess the physical readiness of the students, to indoctrinate them in the basic Ranger values and standards, and to prepare them should the Rangers deploy immediately after their arrival at the unit. The curriculum covers Ranger history, rappelling, land navigation and map reading, combat lifesaver course, and physical training (including a water survival test).

These personnel are then assigned to units to serve for between 5 and 14 months before attending Ranger school. The purpose of the Ranger school is to "teach and develop combat arms functional skills relevant to fighting the close combat, direct fire battle" (U.S. Infantry School, Ranger Course Pamphlet, Section III). The Ranger course is 61 days long, although a "zero week" is offered one week before the starting date of the class, to help soldiers prepare for Ranger school. Statistics for FY97 indicate a lower attrition rate during the first five days of Ranger training for individuals attending zero week. The first phase of Ranger training, held at Fort Benning, Georgia, emphasizes physical training and instruction in and execution of squad combat patrol operations. The second phase, held at Camp Frank D. Merrill, Georgia, provides instruction on military mountaineering tasks and techniques for operating in a mountainous environment. The third phase, held at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, builds on the students' combat arms functional skills and teaches them how to operate in jungles and swamps. Successful completion of the Ranger course entitles the soldier to wear the Ranger Tab.

Senior enlisted personnel and officers who receive an assignment to a Ranger unit are typically already Ranger-qualified. These personnel must be recommended by their unit commander. They then attend the two-week ROP/RASP. In ROP/RASP, candidates must meet physical standards and undergo psychological and peer evaluations. A board meets to determine the overall status of each candidate. Those who are not Ranger-qualified must also successfully complete Ranger School before reporting to a Ranger unit (see http://www.benning.army.mil/RTB/RANGER/PAMOPEN/htm).

NAVY SEALs

Because of current manpower shortages of enlisted SEALs, all interested enlisted personnel meeting the SEAL prerequisites attend BUD/S. Interested officer candidates meeting the prerequisites are selected to attend BUD/S through an informed evaluation process. Once selected for BUD/S, each student goes to Coronado for two weeks of physical training and indoctrination, before beginning the 25-week BUD/S program. The training process is described in a Navy SEAL recruiting pamphlet as follows:

> BUD/S training is broken down into three phases. First phase is the basic conditioning phase and is eight weeks in length. Physical training involves running, swimming, and calisthenics, all of which become increasingly difficult as the weeks progress. The fifth week of training is "Hell Week," which is five and a half days of continuous training with little or no sleep. This week is designed to push the students to their maximum capability both physically and mentally. The remaining three weeks are spent in hydrographic reconnaissance. Second phase is the diving phase and is seven weeks in length. Students learn combat diving, both open and closed circuit, with emphasis placed on long distance underwater dives with the goal of training students to become combat divers. Third phase is in the demolitions and land warfare phase and is ten weeks in length. This phase concentrates on teaching land navigation, small unit tactics, patrolling techniques, rappelling, individual infantry weapons, and military explosives. The final four weeks are spent at San Clemente Island where students apply techniques acquired throughout training in a practical environment. After graduation, trainees receive three weeks of basic parachuting at Fort Benning, Georgia. They will then be assigned to a SEAL or SDV Team to complete a six month probationary period before being allowed to wear the Naval Special Warfare insignia. (Navy SEALs Recruiting Pamphlet.)

AIR FORCE CCT/PJs

All enlisted candidates passing the PAST that is part of the entrance requirement attend the 12-week indoctrination course at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. An article in the *Armed Forces International Magazine* describes the indoctrination course as follows:

> In addition to physical conditioning, the course also includes marksmanship training (M16 and M92), physiological training (altitude and dive chambers), and academic instruction in dive physics and metric measurements.
>
> Upon graduation from this selection process, the airman then moves on to specialty training. This includes Army parachute training at Ft. Benning, GA; SCUBA training at Key West, FL; water survival training at Tyndall AFB, FL; remote area survival training in the state of Washington; and back to Ft. Benning for military freefall parachuting school. There the airman learns how to do HALO (High-Altitude Low-Opening) jumps.
>
> Upon completing all this training, the airman must choose whether to be a PJ or a CCT. Pararescue volunteers next follow a path of instruction that emphasizes rescue and recovery techniques as well as advanced medical training. The Combat Controllers, on the other hand, learn about Air Traffic Control (ATC) procedures and navigation aids, and also receive additional training in small unit tactics, land navigation, communications, assault zones, demolitions, and jumpmaster procedures. Those who complete Pararescue training are awarded a maroon beret and wear an Air Force crest that reads, "That Others May Live"; Combat Controllers receive a scarlet beret and a crest reading, "First There."
>
> These qualified airmen can all be assigned to one of the conventional CCT/PJ units under Air Combat Command, but placement in an AFSOC Special Tactics Squadron (STS) is extremely selective. It is not unusual for only about nine individuals out of a CCT/PJ class of 80, or just 10 percent, to be chosen as STS material. For those who are, the final step is several months of intense Army Ranger training. (Pushies, 1997.)

Officers interested in being a CCT must submit an application package. From this pool, a select group of officers is chosen to attend a week-long officer selection course that evaluates both physical and psychological fitness. Officers who pass the selection course are sent to Lackland to commence the training process.

Appendix C

DEFINING SOURCE POPULATIONS FOR SOF

Unless otherwise noted, the graphs refer to the FY97 enlisted population and the source for all the data displayed here is DMDC.

SOURCE POPULATION FOR ARMY SF AND RANGERS

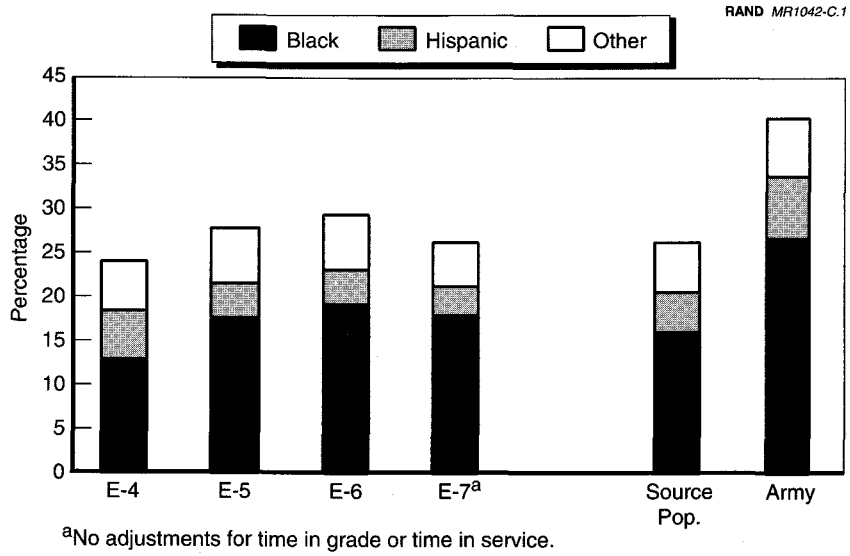


Figure C.1—Racial/Ethnic Minority Composition of Source Population for Army SF, by Paygrade and Army As a Whole, FY97

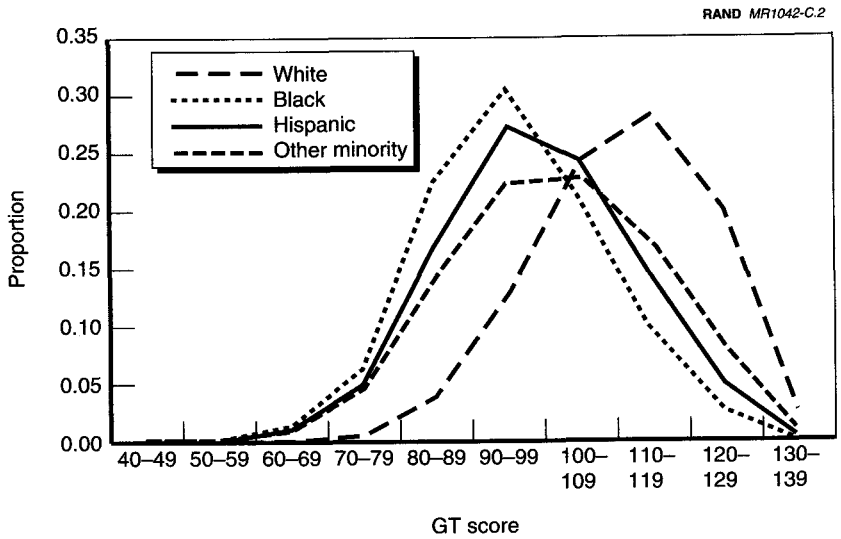


Figure C.2—Distribution of GT Scores Among Army Male Enlisted Personnel, by Racial/Ethnic Group, FY97

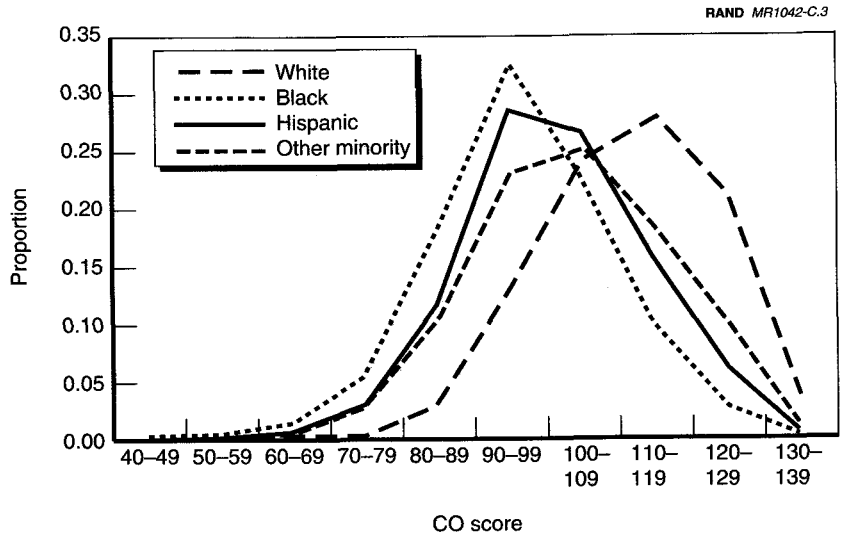


Figure C.3—Distribution of CO Scores Among Army Male Enlisted Personnel, by Racial/Ethnic Group, FY97

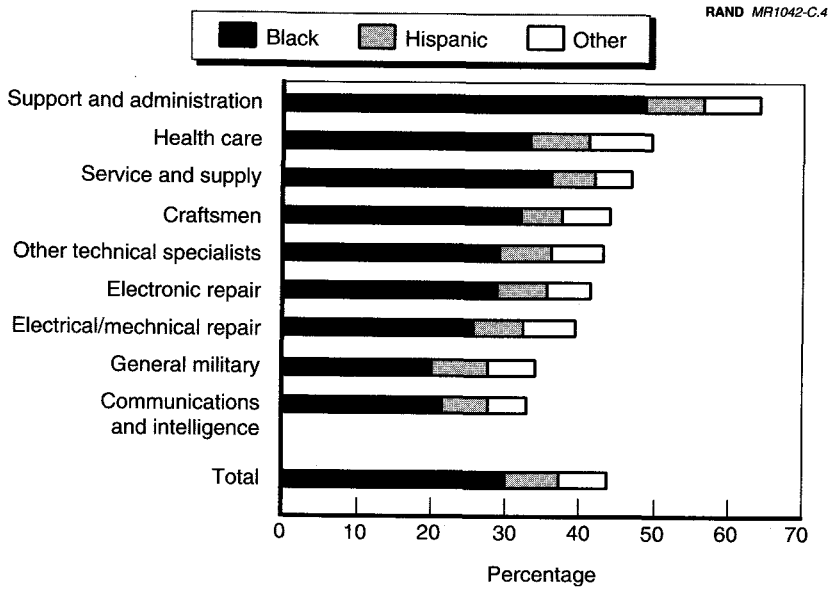


Figure C.4—Racial/Ethnic Minority Composition of Military Occupations, Army Male Enlisted Personnel, FY97

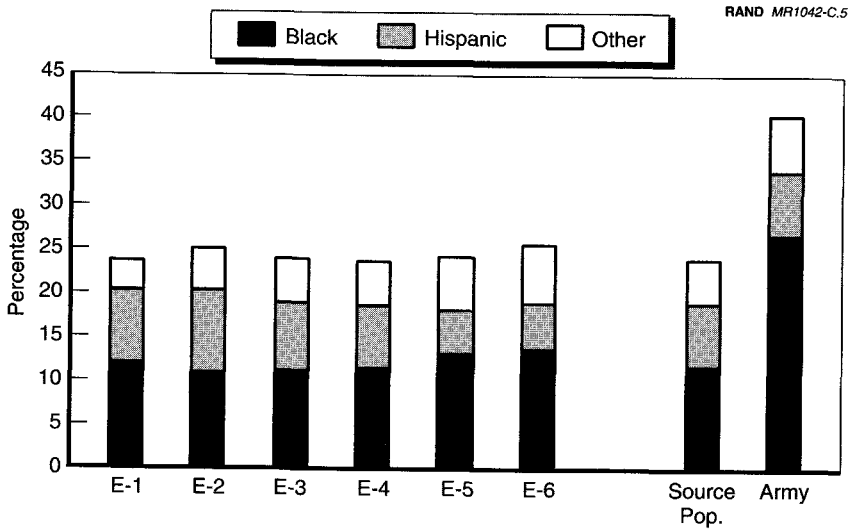


Figure C.5—Racial/Ethnic Minority Composition of Source Population for Army Rangers, by Paygrade, and Army As a Whole, FY97

SOURCE POPULATION FOR NAVY SEALs

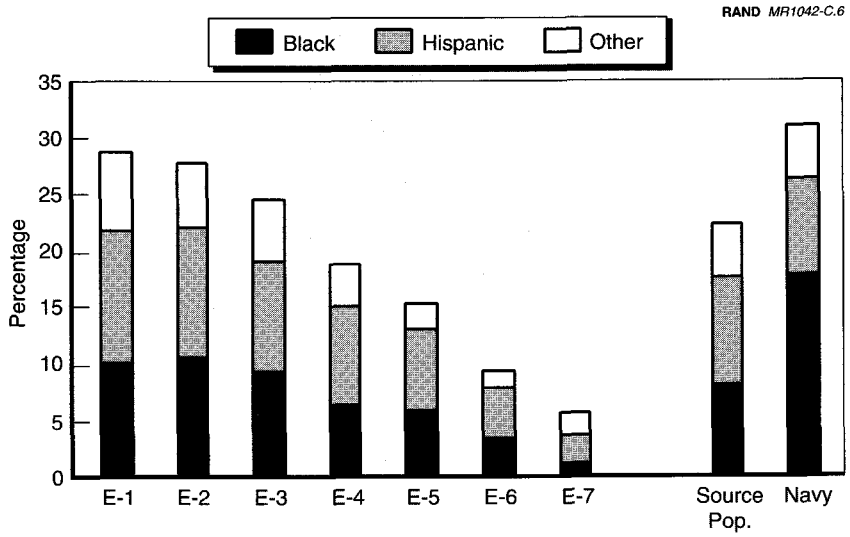


Figure C.6—Racial/Ethnic Minority Composition of Source Population for Navy SEALs, by Paygrade, and Navy As a Whole, 1997

SOURCE POPULATION FOR AIR FORCE CCT/PJs

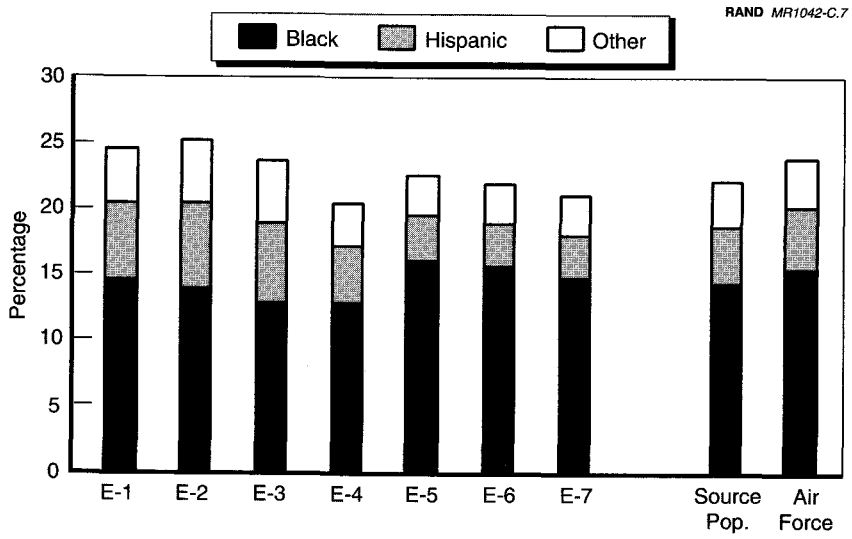


Figure C.7—Minority Composition of Source Population for Air Force CCT/PJs, by Paygrade, and Air Force as a Whole, FY97

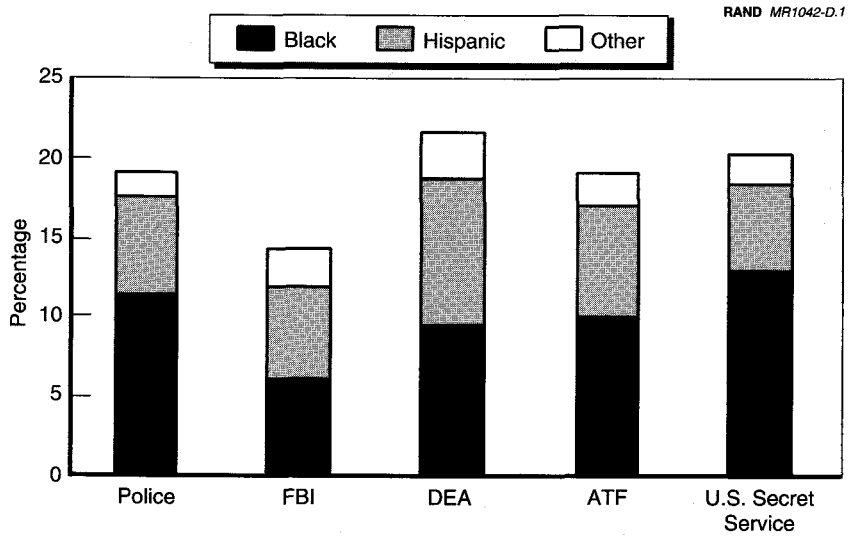
Appendix D

COMPARISONS OF SOF WITH SELECTED CIVILIAN ORGANIZATIONS

This appendix compares the racial/ethnic makeup of civilian organizations that share some of the same characteristics as SOF in terms of risk, training, and professionalism. Although such comparisons are useful, we need to be cautious about reading too much into them; these civilian organizations and SOF are ultimately very different organizations.

Figure D.1 shows the racial/ethnic makeup of police officers and federal officers with arrest and firearms authority (a better comparison than the agencies as a whole) in various civilian organizations for 1996. Data for the Drug Enforcement Agency are for 1992. These data are drawn from the Bureau of Justice statistics.

Police departments require that applicants have a high school diploma, similar to the enlisted force. Overall, about 18 percent of police officers are racial/ethnic minorities and the representation of other minorities is particularly small. The FBI and the ATF agency have entrance requirements that are similar to those for SOF officers: a college degree, passing of an examination, background investigation, physical requirements, and a subsequent period of intensive training. In addition, the FBI requires three years full-time work experience except for law school graduates, those fluent in a foreign language, or graduates with a degree in accounting (see http://www.fbi.gov/over/agents.htm). The FBI has the lowest percentage of minorities—less than 14 percent—and the lowest proportion of blacks at around 6 percent. On the other hand, the relatively high proportion of blacks in the U.S. Secret Service, given their



SOURCES: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1996; DEA data are for 1992.

Figure D.1—Racial/Ethnic Minority Composition of Selected Civilian Organizations, Males Only

requirement for a college degree, is particularly noteworthy. The DEA seems quite successful in recruiting Hispanics.

Data on comparable civilian organizations help provide some insight into the possible attractiveness of such occupations for minorities. It appears that each of these paramilitary organizations is fairly successful in recruiting minorities compared with SOF. Recall that the percentage of minorities in SOF ranged from a high of 10 percent among Army SF officers to less than 5 percent among Navy SEAL officers, and between 7 and 14 percent among enlisted personnel. As a result, the experience of these organizations could help inform SOF recruitment and retention efforts. However, given the time constraints of our study and the sensitivity that most agencies displayed regarding minority recruiting, we were unable to gather more data on their hiring policies.

Appendix E

ANALYSIS OF ARMY SFAS DATA, FY94–FY97

INTRODUCTION

This appendix provides a detailed analysis of the SFAS FY94–FY97 classes and outcomes shown in Chapter Three. To maintain the coherence of the discussion, some of the data presented earlier are repeated in this section. All the data shown here are drawn from the JFK Special Warfare Center SFAS database.

Table E.1 shows the number of officer and enlisted candidates for the FY94–FY97 classes as well as the total number of starts. This latter number includes all attempts (first attempts plus all subsequent attempts) and shows the racial/ethnic composition of the classes. The classes have been increasing in size over time and in FY97 consisted of 165 new officer and 1,226 enlisted candidates, for a total of approximately 1,400. With recycles, the number of officers and enlisted attending SFAS was somewhat larger, at around 1,700. About 11 percent of officers and 17 percent of enlisted candidates are minorities. However, in FY97, the percentage of minority candidates increased to 21 percent (from 15 percent the previous year). This was partly because the GT score cutoff was waived from 110 to 100, making a higher proportion of minorities, particularly blacks, eligible for SFAS. In fact, the number of new black candidates more than doubled in FY97 (from 38 in FY96 to 85 in FY97).

Examining the GT score for the FY97 enlisted candidates reveals that about 28 percent of FY97 candidates scored between 100–109 and would not have been eligible to enter in the previous year; 41 percent scored in the 110–119 range and the remaining 30 percent

Table E.1

SFAS FY94–FY97 Classes, by Size and Racial/Ethnic Composition

Characteristic	Officers	Enlisted Personnel
Number of candidates		
FY94	137	175
FY95	176	672
FY96	183	1,087
FY97	165	1,226
FY94–FY97	661	3,160
Number of starts		
FY94	235	696
FY95	219	756
FY96	256	1,269
FY97	216	1,465
FY94–FY97	926	4,186
Race/ethnicity of candidates (FY94–FY97 combined)		
Non-Hispanic whites	89.3	82.9
Black	4.2	4.7
Hispanic	2.9	7.3
Other minority	3.6	5.2
Race/ethnicity of starts (FY94–FY97 combined)		
Non-Hispanic whites	88.9	82.6
Black	4.4	5.3
Hispanic	3.1	7.0
Other minority	3.6	5.1

SOURCE: JFK Special Warfare Center SFAS database.

had scores of 120 or higher.[1] It is interesting to note that in FY96, 43 percent had scores of 120 or higher.

[1]Because the GT score cutoff was changed in 1997, it makes little sense to compare the distribution across years or even to show the distribution for the combined FY94–FY97 classes.

SFAS OUTCOMES

By Fiscal Year Classes

We first present SFAS outcomes for the different fiscal year classes. The next subsection shows differences in outcomes for the different racial/ethnic groups, and the third subsection examines the relationship between outcomes and characteristics other than race/ethnicity that have been found to be related to SFAS success (Teplitzky, 1992a; Lappin, 1996; Brooks and Zazanis, 1997).

Figures E.1 and E.2 present overall outcomes for the four fiscal year classes for officers and enlisted personnel. They show graduation rates for first attempts and all attempts (including recycles and first attempts) and the percentage of voluntary and involuntary drops and those failing prerequisites (among all attempts). Officers have much higher pass rates than do enlisted personnel: over 60 percent compared with 36 percent over the four years. The first-attempt graduation rate has risen markedly over time among both officers and enlisted personnel. Among officers, it rose 17 percentage points from FY94 to FY97 (53 percent to 70 percent); among enlisted, it rose 13 percentage points (from 27 percent in FY94 to 40 percent in FY97). This increase among enlisted personnel is particularly noteworthy because of the waiver of the GT score, which has been shown to be directly related to SFAS success. Some of the increase may be due to changed policies. For example, successful completion of the swim requirement was shifted from SFAS to SFQC (Brooks and Zazanis, 1997), thus providing candidates a longer time to train and pass the 50-meter swim test and the extra motivation of having successfully completed SFAS. Some of the increase may be due to better training methods and greater assistance being provided to soldiers for the more difficult skills (such as land navigation). The ARI has had a long and productive history of working with the Army SF to enhance their training and assessment process and these higher graduation rates may be due to changes implemented as a result of ARI's recommendations.

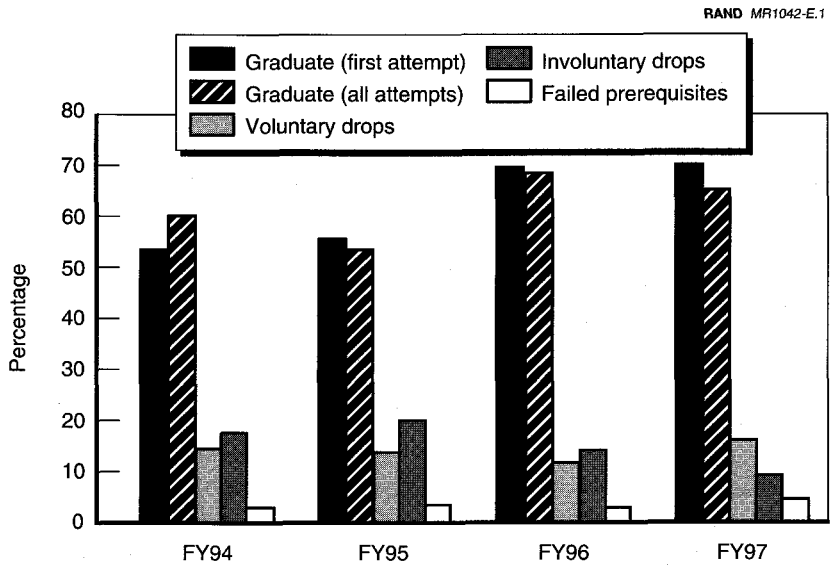


Figure E.1—SFAS Outcomes for Officers, by Fiscal Year Classes, FY94–FY97

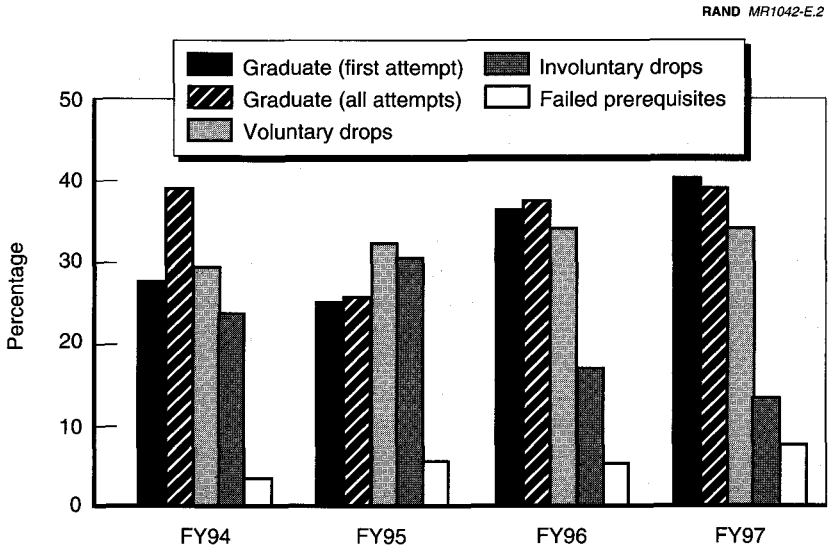


Figure E.2—SFAS Outcomes for Enlisted Personnel, by Fiscal Year Classes, FY94–FY97

By Race/Ethnicity

Figures E.3–E.4 show outcomes by race/ethnicity. There are very few minority officers (71 across the four years, a total of 103 attempts); as a result, we aggregated them into the category "minority." There is a small difference in graduation/selection rates by minority/nonminority status and in the reasons for nonselection. About 62 percent of white officers graduate from SFAS at the first attempt compared with 57 percent of minority officers. However, there is little difference in the graduation rates of white and minority officers when we consider all attempts.

Fourteen percent of white officers voluntarily withdrew from SFAS, compared with 10 percent of minority officers, but a higher proportion of the latter were dropped involuntarily (21 percent compared with 14 percent of white officers). Most involuntary drops result from a failure to meet standards.

We find that among enlisted personnel, other minorities have the highest graduation or selection rates among all the groups, but that blacks and Hispanics have graduation rates that are between 6 and 10 percentage points lower than that of whites.

We see the same pattern among enlisted personnel with regard to the reasons for nonselection as was evident among the officers. The rate of involuntary drops for blacks is double the rate for whites, whereas the rate among Hispanics and other minorities is 8–9 percentage points higher than the rate for whites. However, the voluntary drop rates are considerably lower for blacks and other minorities than for whites. Once at SFAS, commitment among these groups appears to be quite high. The percentage failing prerequisites is approximately the same across the four groups.

For FY97, minority officers had *higher* selection rates than white officers for both first attempts and all attempts; however, the small numbers make this comparison suspect. Among the enlisted, the FY97 first-attempt selection rates showed a 6 percentage point difference between white and black candidates (41 percent compared with 35 percent) and a 12 percentage point difference between white and Hispanic candidates (41 percent compared with 29 percent). Other minorities had the highest selection rate (44 percent). However, the selection rate among all attempts showed no

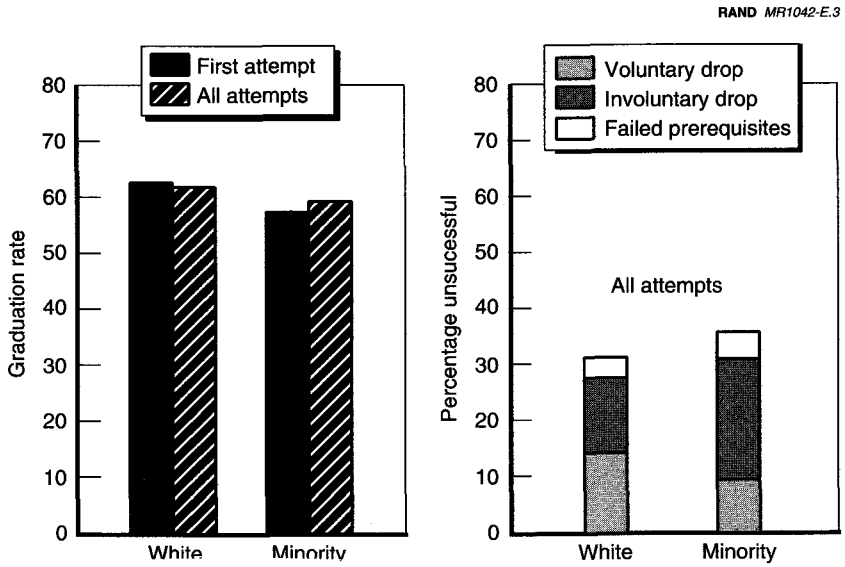


Figure E.3—SFAS Outcomes for Officers, by Race/Ethnicity, FY94–FY97 Combined

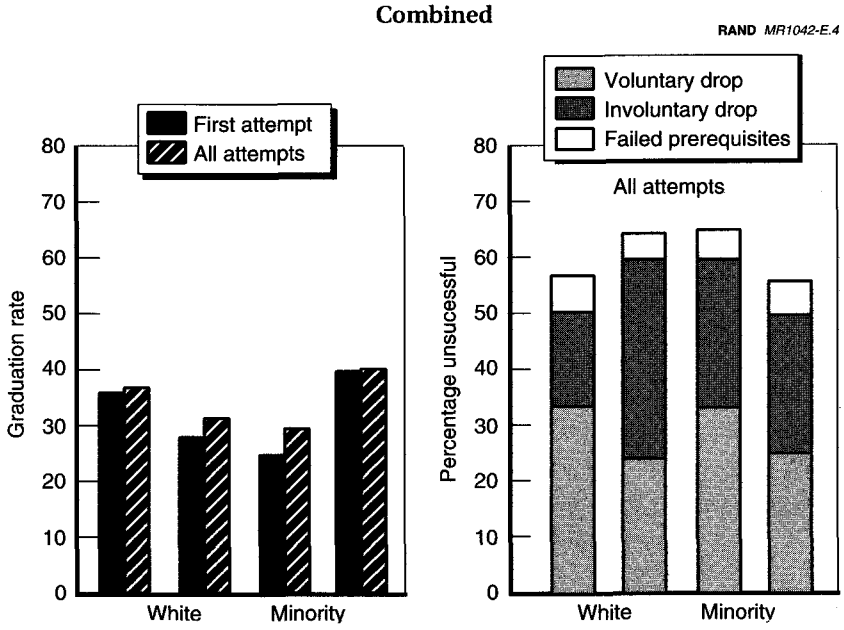


Figure E.4—SFAS Outcomes for Enlisted Personnel, by Race/Ethnicity, FY94–FY97 Combined

difference between black and white candidates (39 percent) but a 9 percentage point difference between Hispanic and white candidates.

By Selected Characteristics

To understand reasons for the differences in SFAS outcomes among the enlisted racial/ethnic groups, we first investigated several variables that ARI has shown previously to be important in SFAS and SFQC success, namely, combat arms MOS, being Ranger-qualified, and higher aptitude scores (Teplitzky, 1992a; DeMatteo et al., 1991). Figure E.5 shows these relationships for the FY97 class. We also include differences by Airborne-qualified status. The graph makes clear that each characteristic has a substantial effect on the probability of selection.

The selection rate for CA MOS soldiers is 12 percent higher than the rate for those in non-CA MOS. The success rate of those who are Ranger-qualified is double that of those who are not Ranger-qualified. There is a 21 percent difference in selection rates between

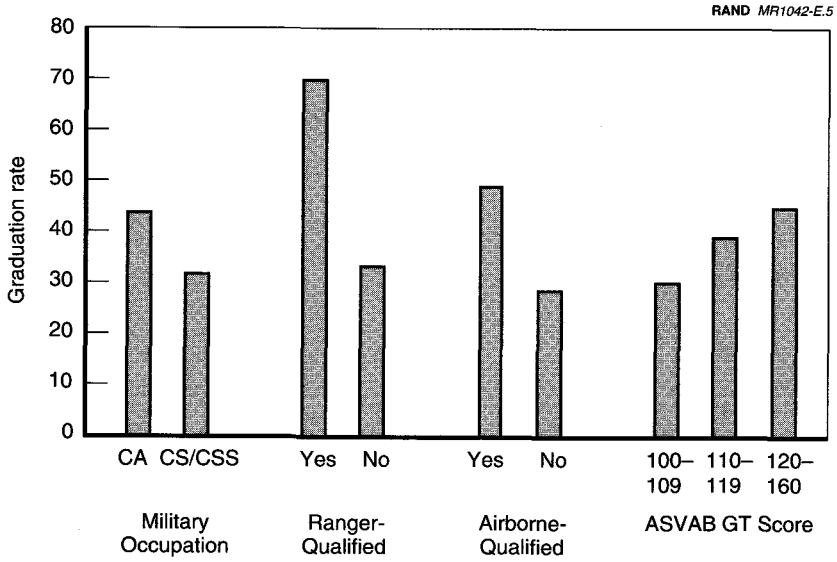


Figure E.5—Differences in SFAS Graduation Rates, by Selected Characteristics, FY97 Classes

those who are Airborne-qualified and those who are not. Differences similar to these are present in previous years as well.

In years before FY97, there was a persistent 6–7 percent difference between those scoring between 110–119 on the GT subtest and those scoring above 120. In FY97, the distribution of GT scores changed in the candidate population as candidates scoring lower (between 100 and 109) were admitted for the first time.[2] There is an 8 percent difference in selection rates for those scoring between 100 and 109 and those scoring between 110 and 119 and a 15 percent difference between the lowest and highest GT score categories (above 120). The differences are slightly larger for first-attempt selection rates.

Table E.2 provides a profile of the four racial/ethnic groups in terms of these variables. The differences in military backgrounds of the black and white candidates and the lower aptitude scores help explain the differences in outcomes we saw earlier (see also

Table E.2

Profile of Enlisted SFAS Candidates, by Race/Ethnicity and Selected Characteristics, FY94–FY97 Combined

Characteristic	Non-Hispanic White	Black	Hispanic	Other Minority
Ranger-qualified	12.5	7.8	9.3	14.0
Airborne-qualified	49.4	39.5	44.7	44.3
Combat Arms MOS	57.8	32.0	47.6	54.5
GT score (FY97)				
100–109	22.8	35.8	39.4	41.1
110–119	43.1	45.9	40.4	40.0
120–160	34.2	18.3	20.2	19.0
Number of starts	3,456	223	294	213

[2]Before this, waivers were given for low scores on an individual basis, but rarely (for example, five candidates in FY97 were admitted with scores lower than 110).

Teplitzky, 1992a; Lappin, 1996). Other minorities come from military backgrounds similar to that of the white candidates and this may help explain their higher pass rates (although they do score lower than whites on the GT subtest). The aptitude scores of Hispanics resemble that of blacks but they tend to have more of a combat arms background, so the lower selection rates of Hispanics are a little puzzling.[3]

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[3]We estimated a simple logistic model to examine the relationship between SFAS selection and a number of explanatory variables such as fiscal year, race/ethnicity, education, GT score, paygrade, and Combat Arms MOS. Because the model was exploratory, we do not report the results here. Nonetheless, the findings are suggestive and confirm the discussion above. Controlling for all other characteristics, race/ethnicity had no independent effect on the likelihood of selection. The only variables of importance in the model were GT score, lower paygrade (which was inversely related to the probability of success), noncombat arms occupation, and fiscal year.

Appendix F

PROTOCOLS FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

INTRODUCTION

I'd like to introduce myself and my colleague.

RAND is a nonprofit research organization that serves as a federally funded research and development center for OSD, the Air Force, and the Army. As part of our work for OSD, we have been asked by USSOCOM to conduct a study investigating the current level of minority representation in special operations units. This study has resulted from Congress's concern regarding the number of minorities in special forces units.

We are talking to individuals from the Army, Air Force, and Navy about (their experience in) or their knowledge of special operations—both those who are already in special operations forces and those who might be interested or might be eligible to join SOF. You were selected solely because of your scheduling availability during this time.

I need to turn on the tape recorder to record my next remarks. Please be advised that we are recording but that we will turn *off* the recorder before you are asked to say anything.

Your performance in this discussion is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to participate you may leave, or you may decline to answer any questions that you are uncomfortable with. We will keep everything you say confidential. We do not have a list of your names and will ensure that any list that the Training Center has currently will be

destroyed. Although we will be taking notes, we will not insert your name into the notes, and we will not show the notes to anyone outside of RAND. We work very hard to ensure that your comments cannot be attributed back to you. We also ask that each of you commit to keeping today's discussion confidential. What each of you says should remain in this room.

I'd like each of you to acknowledge that you consent to participate in our discussion and that you agree to respect the confidentiality of this session by not discussing any of the remarks made in this group outside this session.

Will you please raise your hand if you agree to these ground rules?

[Group leader will acknowledge that x of n hands are raised. For example, 12 of 12 hands are raised, or 11 of 12 hands are raised and that one person is being excused from the group.]

I am going to turn the recording off now.

[End recording before continuing.]

SOURCE POPULATION PROTOCOL—NEW RECRUITS

Please each take a turn and tell us briefly where you're from and what you want to do in the [SERVICE].

How/when did you decide to join the [SERVICE]?

How many of you are familiar with special operations forces? Which ones?

Green Berets

Rangers

CCTs

PJs

SEALs

SWCC

When did you first hear about them?

What kind of impression did it make upon you?

Were you ever interested in joining them? Why or why not?

Some people refer to SOF as "elite" units. Why would they be considered elite?

Do you know anyone in SOF?

What is their experience like?

We were asked by General Shelton and USSOCOM to specifically look at the level of minority representation in SOF. What kind of representation do you think exists in your service SOF?

Some people believe that more minorities should be participating in SOF. Do you agree?

Why do you think they feel this way?

Are there things the services could do to increase the number of minorities in SOF?

Should they do so?

SOURCE POPULATION PROTOCOL

Please each take a turn and tell us briefly what you do in your job and how long you've been in the [SERVICE].

How/when did you decide to join the [SERVICE]?

How many of you are familiar with special operations forces? Which ones?

Green Berets

Rangers

CCTs

PJs

SEALs

SWCC

When did you first hear about them?

What kind of impression did it make upon you?

Were you ever interested in joining them? Why or why not?

Some people refer to SOF as "elite" units. Why would they be considered elite?

Do you know anyone in SOF?

What is their experience like?

We were asked by General Shelton and USSOCOM to specifically look at the level of minority representation in SOF. What kind of representation do you think exists in your service SOF?

Some people believe that more minorities should be participating in SOF. Do you agree?

Why do you think they feel this way?

Are there things the services could do to increase the number of minorities in SOF?

Should they do so?

OPERATOR PROTOCOL

Please each take a turn and tell us briefly what you do in your job and how long you've been in the [SERVICE].

How/when did you decide to join the [SERVICE]?

When did you first hear about SOF?

What kind of impression did it make upon you?

How/when did you decide to join the [TYPE OF SOF]?

How many of you are familiar with the other services' special operations forces? Which ones?

Green Berets

Rangers

CCTs

PJs

SEALs

SWCC

Will you stay in SOF for the rest of your careers—are you happy in SOF?

Why/why not?

What are the positive aspects of serving in SOF?

What are the negative aspects of serving in SOF?

We were asked by General Shelton and USSOCOM to specifically look at the level of minority representation in SOF. What kind of representation do you think exists in your service SOF?

Why do you think that is so?

Some people believe that more minorities should be participating in SOF. Do you agree?

Why do you think they feel this way?

Are there things the services could do to increase the number of minorities in SOF?

Should they do so?

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