

ACCESSION AND RETENTION OF MINORITIES:
Implications for the Future

by

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The views expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views and policy of the United States Department of Defense.

Abstract

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Despite a significant increase in the numbers and proportion of minorities and women entering the military during the last two decades, little effort has been made to assess the implications of this trend for the future combat readiness of the nation. Using data from the Department of Defense, this article attempts to fill this gap by, first, analyzing the accession and retention patterns of these groups over the past 20 years in terms of their reward and punishment experiences. In this context, issues such as symbolic racism that affect non-White minorities, in particular, and problems related to child care, combat exclusion, etc., that concern women, are examined from the perspective of majority-minority relations. The paper then concludes with a brief statement regarding the implications of these issues for a military that, increasingly, must depend on a range of very sophisticated and technologically advanced weaponry.

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Introduction

This paper deals with accession and retention of minorities in the military during the 1971-89 period, and the implications of these factors for future combat readiness. This question is of special significance for a number of reasons. First, the 1991 Middle East war, coupled with America's need to defend "its way of life"--by force if necessary--underscore the need for an effective fighting force schooled in the latest techniques of modern warfare.

Second, despite the contention that the military is "one of the largest single employers of blacks" (quote by military analyst Edwin Dorn in the Navy Times, Profile Supplement, October 16, 1989) the strides it has made, nonetheless, have been uneven. This is particularly important when one considers that the welding of relatively large numbers of racial/ethnic minorities and women into a cohesive fighting unit remains a challenge that is perhaps unique to America. Indeed, the termination of the draft in 1972 has seen an unprecedented rise in the accession rates of minorities. In fact, minorities now comprise about 29.1 % of the active duty armed forces, 11.8 % of the officers,

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14.7% of the warrant officers, and 32% of the enlisted personnel; while 11.7% of the officers, 2.8% of the warrant officers and 10.9% of the enlisted personnel are women. (See Table 1).

Table 1
Distribution of Active Duty Forces, DoD, March 1990

Race	Officers		W. Officers		Enlisted	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
White	252,316	88.2	17,967	85.3	1,214,904	68.0
Black	19,316	6.8	1,841	8.7	406,232	22.7
Hispanic	5,739	2.0	468	2.2	86,948	4.9
Native Amer	1,149	0.4	94	0.4	11,694	0.7
Asian Amer	4,489	1.6	340	1.6	44,260	2.5
Oth/Unk	2,983	1.0	343	1.6	22,792	1.3
Total	285,992	100.0	21,053	99.8	1,786,830	100.1
Females	33,577	11.7	594	2.8	194,068	10.9

Source: Quarterly Statistical Profile of Minorities and Women in the Department of Defense Active Forces, and the United States Coast Guard, DEOMI, Patrick Air Force Base, March 1990.

Finally, significant demographic changes by the year 2000 are expected to produce a workforce that will grow more slowly, and become older, more female, and more disadvantaged. Indeed, the proportion of Blacks in the labor force is projected to rise to 12% by the year 2000, compared with 10% in 1976 and 11% in 1988, while that of Hispanics is

expected to rise from 7% in 1988 to 10% in 2000 (Fullerton, 1989). In addition, while non-Whites, women and immigrants will comprise five-sixths of the net new workers, between 1985 and 2000, only 15% of the net new workers are expected to be native White males (Johnston and Packer, 1990, p. xxi), though about 84% of the workforce will still be White (Johnston and Packer, p. 89). Further, since an estimated 41% of the new jobs will be in the highest skill category, that is, requiring more mathematics, language and reasoning skills, which many minorities may not have, young Whites may find their job prospects improving, while the situation for Black males and Hispanics may be especially difficult (Johnston and Packer, p. xxi).

Definitions and Methodology

The military defines a minority group as "any group distinguished from the general population in terms of race, religion, gender, or national origin (Department of the Army Pamphlet, 600-26, p. 12). This definition, however, does not help us to comprehend the dynamics of majority-minority relations. The question of power, in terms of the manner in which some members of the majority population set standards in their own interests and against those of the minority group, and the effects of this behavior on the thinking and personality of the latter are missing from the above portrayal.

These issues are all the more relevant in situations, such as the military, where decisions concerning promotion, access to operational experience, interpretation and implementation of combat exclusion statutes, etc., are made by relatively small groups composed mostly of white males,¹ about the life chances of different race/ethnic/gender groups. For the purposes of this paper, therefore, the term minority denotes those individuals who, by virtue of race, ethnicity, or gender, are defined differently, and who are "assigned an inferior status in society--that is [have] less than their proportionate share of wealth, power, and/or social status" (Farley, 1988, p. 6). Since minority groups are defined differently and are frequently treated differently by the majority group, who may or may not be numerically superior, women will be considered minorities. Further, the term gender will refer to the social definition that accompanies being a member of a particular sex.

Unless otherwise stated the figures contained in this paper were computed from data provided by the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC), and concern accessions and retentions for a census of Department of Defense (DoD) military personnel, as of September 1989, for cohort groups entering the Services in fiscal years 1971-1989. Also, individuals entering the military as line and non-line officers, those who joined as enlisted personnel before subsequently becoming officers, and warrant officers, are included in the officer category. Finally where convenient,

comments from minority personnel gathered through unstructured interviews are used to clarify the quantitative data.

Enlisted Personnel

In this section attention will focus on accession, retention, promotions and punishments of enlisted personnel by race/ethnicity and gender. In this context, it should be noted that while this paper takes the position that accession and retention are directly related to the rewards (promotions) and punishments (courts-martial, non-judicial punishments (NJP's), etc.), because of the limitations of space, attention will focus primarily on the question of promotions.

Accessions- From the perspective of gender, as Table 2 illustrates, during the 1971-89 period the Air Force had the best overall accession record for women--4.5% of those who joined this branch of the Services in 1971 were female, but by 1989 that figure had risen to 21.3%. On the other hand, 6.4% of those accessioned by the Marines in 1989 were females, up from 1.2% in 1971. While it is possible to argue that the 1989 Marine accessions were 5.33 times that of the 1971 numbers, and that of the Air Force was only 4.73 times that of the 1971 levels, it is to be noted that even when in 1980 there was an overall increase in the proportion of female accessions, the percentage in the Marines actually declined to 5.4%, from 5.5% in 1979. The relatively low rate

of female accessions in the Marines is, probably, a consequence of the fact that they are much more concentrated in direct combat positions from which women are legally excluded, and also because of the view that women are less capable of doing the job than are men. Seemingly, the recruiting slogan, "We Are Looking For A Few Good Men With The Mettle To Be Marines," supports the latter contention.

Table 2
Enlisted Accessions for Selected Years by Gender,
as of September 1989

Service	Year									
	1971		1975		1980		1985		1989	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Army	96.3	3.7	89.7	10.3	85.9	14.1	87.1	12.9	85.7	14.3
Navy	96.9	3.1	93.0	7.0	87.8	12.2	88.0	12.0	87.9	12.1
A. Force	95.5	4.5	86.8	13.2	80.8	19.2	83.1	16.9	78.7	21.3
Marines	98.8	1.2	97.7	2.3	94.6	5.4	93.6	6.4	93.6	6.4

Source: Computed from data provided by the Department of Defense, Manpower Data Center, FY 71-FY 89

With respect to race, Table 3 indicates that there was a significant decline in the proportion of Whites, especially males, accessed in the military. Indeed, White accession declined by 119,749, or 39.5% from 303,414 in 1971 to 183,665 in 1989, while that of White males decreased by 132,135, or from 82% of all males in 1971 to 70.4% in 1989 of the total number of males entering the military. Not

surprisingly, non-White accessions increased from almost 18% to nearly 31%, with non-White females almost doubling their rates, from 20.5% to 38%, and non-White males improving their proportion by 11.6%, from 18% in 1971 to 29.6% in 1989.

Table 3
DoD Enlisted Accessions FY 71 and FY 89,
by Race and Gender

Race	1971			1989		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
Whites	293210 (82)	10204 (79.5)	303414 (81.9)	161075 (70.4)	22590 (61.9)	183665 (69.2)
Non-Whites*	64349 (18)	2628 (20.5)	66977 (18.1)	67755 (29.6)	13915 (38.1)	81670 (30.8)
Totals	357559 (100)	12832 (100)	370391 (100)	228830 (100)	36505 (100)	265335 (100)

Source: Department of Defense, Manpower Data Center

Note: *Includes Hispanics, many of whom are Caucasian.
Percentages in parentheses

DMDC data, additionally, indicate that accession rates for Hispanics were relatively low. In 1971, for example, DoD enlisted 497 non-prior service Hispanic females, or 3.9% of the total number of females joining the military during that year. By 1980, that figure had risen to 1,630 (or approximately 3.3% of the total number accessed), and by

1989, to 2,034 (or 5.6% of the total number)--its highest point ever. By contrast, during the same period Black females increased their numbers more than five times--from 2,032 (or 16% of females) in 1971 to 10,733 in 1989 (or 29.4% of the total number of female accessions). Finally, during the same period the number of White female accessions more than doubled, but fell, proportionately, from 79.5% to almost 62% of the total female accessions. Indeed, during the period in question, the number of White females entering the military increased from 10,204 or 2.75%, to 22,590 or 8.5%, of the total number of accessions. (See Table 3).

Retentions- Here, it should be noted that any discussion of retention can only involve those cohorts who remain after having fulfilled their initial contractual obligations. DMDC figures show that non-Whites improved their retention rates while those of Whites fell during the period under consideration. It is noticeable, for example, that of those of the 1971 cohort who remained, 18,637 or 74.5% were White and 6,368 or 25.5% were non-White but, as was previously noted, 81.9% of the enlisted accessions were White and 18.1% were non-White (Table 3). A similar picture emerges when one looks at male enlistees who entered the military in 1971 and who were still there as of September 1989. Here one notices that although 82% of the males who entered in 1971 were White and 18% were non-White (Table 3), 18,048 or 75% of those males who remained as of September 1989, were White and 6,025 or 25% were non-White.

The overall retention rates are thrown into sharper relief when one controls for ethnicity and gender among minority personnel. DMDC figures between 1971 and 1989, for instance, show that 6.2% of White males and 5.8% of White females, compared to 9.8% of Black males and 14.7% of Black females, and 7.9% of Hispanic males and 6.8% of Hispanic females who entered the Services in 1971, were retained as of September 1989. Again, White females tended to have the lowest retention rates (with the exception of American Indian/Alaskan females, and Asians/Pacific Islanders, whose numbers were also very small and for whom figures were not available before 1977), and Black females had the highest retention rates.

In sum, accession rates of White females, both numerically and as a proportion of total accessions, increased during FY 1971-89, as did those of minorities, especially Black females. However, the declining proportions of Whites combined with the increasing numbers/proportions of non-Whites, if jobs become scarce, could conduce to more competition and, ultimately, tension between these two groups.

Upward Mobility- The question of upward mobility assumes particular significance, because the provision of opportunities to do so is one way in which an organization seeks to internalize a sense of commitment in its participants, by rewarding them for socially acceptable behavior and attitudes. Ideally, therefore, the more often

a behavior is deemed to be appropriate, the more often it is rewarded and the more likely the recipient is to be committed to the system's goals. Since they provide the best indication of upward mobility and the military's reward system, attention will focus only on the top grades, that is, E5 to E8.

Though they are not strictly reflective of promotion, since they involve both promotion and retention, DMDC figures, nonetheless, provide some indication of the reward system. These figures reveal, for example, that, generally, despite their low accession rates for females, the highest percentage of females remaining in the military were to be found in the Marines. Again, the highest proportion of females accessioned after 1980, who reached the E5 and E6 grades, were to be found in the Navy. On the other hand, especially after 1982, the lowest proportion was to be found in the Air Force although, as we saw, this branch had the best accession rate for females. And in the Army, the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Human Resources Division, in its Annual Equal Opportunity Assessment (DAPE-MPH-E) for FY 1988 notes that females have been consistently overrepresented in selection for promotion to the rank of Sergeant Major (E9). Additionally, although those females serving the longest seem to be in the highest ranks, this does not mean that they enjoy better opportunities for upward mobility than males. Indeed, when one considers that fewer females means larger percentages--for example, 0.4% of

the 1976 enlistees who reached the E8 grade by 1989 translates itself into 48 males, but only 4 females. Possibly also, the relatively high selection rates of females is due to their higher educational qualifications on entering the Services.

Turning to the question of race/ethnicity, DMDC data indicate that a higher proportion of Whites and Hispanics, than Blacks, were serving in the E5-E8 grades during FY 71-85. Among those who were accessed in 1971 and who remained in service in 1989, for example, 16.3% of Whites and 15% of Hispanics, compared with 10.9% of Blacks, had reached the E8 grade, as of September 1989. Also, of those who joined in 1980 and who were still part of the Services in 1989, 32.7% of Whites and 32.4% of Hispanics, compared with 25.8% of Blacks, had reached the E6 grade by September 1989. Seemingly, not only was there a higher promotion of Whites serving in the highest ranks, they were likely to be serving in these ranks for a longer period of time than either Hispanics or Blacks. In the Army, if one excludes American Indians/Alaskans, because of the smallness of their numbers, Blacks were least likely to be serving in the higher ranks. In fact, they were the only group whose selection rate fell below the norm in each of the four years under consideration (DAPE-MPH-E, FY 1988).

Punishments- The issue of punishments is contextually significant because (a) they are designed to discourage socially inappropriate behaviors and (b) of the obvious

relationship between punishments and retention. In the Army, for example, Blacks and Hispanics were more likely to receive Non-Judicial Punishments (NJP's) than Whites, and males were far more likely to have received NJP's than their female counterparts. Furthermore, proportionately, more males were court-martialed than females, more Black females were court-martialed than White females and, Black males had the highest incidence of courts-martial. (See Annual Equal Opportunity Assessment, Office of the Deputy Chief of Personnel, Human Resources Division, FY 1988). In the Air Force, Blacks were the only racial/ethnic group whose rates for courts-martial were above the rate for that branch of the Services. Indeed, they were most likely to receive Articles 15 (NJP's), courts-martial and, along with women enlistees, to have above average involuntary separation rates. (See Status of Personnel Equity - USAF, FY 1988).

Officer Personnel

Because of its leadership position the racial/ethnic make-up of the officer cadre, and its accession, retention, and promotion rates have serious implications for the future effectiveness of the nation's armed forces. Information on this group will be provided, beginning with FY 1972, because DMDC data existed only from this year.

Accessions- During the FY 72-85 period, the number of White male officers entering the DoD declined by 10,508, or almost 83%, from 31,321 to 20,813, while that of Hispanics

fell by 40 or 9.1%, from 441 to 401. All of the other groups (racial/ethnic and gender) showed increases in accessions, with Black females (from 52 to 457), Asian males (from 14 to 351), and Asian females (from 4, in 1974, to 67) being the largest. However, while the total number of White male officers continued to exceed that of the other groups, the disparity, numerically, fell from 25,827 in FY 72 to 13,540 in FY 85 or, proportionately, from 5.7 to 1 to 2.86 to 1.

Retentions- Table 5, which deals with percentages of entering cohorts who are still in DoD, indicates that, particularly among American Indians/Alaskans, the average retention rates of male officers exceeded those of females.

Table 5
DoD Officer Retention Rates for Selected Years,
by Race/Ethnicity

FY	Whites		Blacks		Hisp		Am Ind/ Alas		As/Pac Is	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
72	19.7	15.7	21.3	34.6	21.1	21.9	--	--	7.1	--
76	34.6	24.2	35.8	29.6	35.0	43.5	35.3	25.0	26.3	17.1
80	53.0	43.2	56.6	55.0	57.3	49.0	50.8	18.2	49.2	41.7
84	68.9	53.7	66.9	62.8	64.9	66.7	66.0	75.0	64.3	58.5
85	75.5	62.9	71.4	66.3	78.3	75.8	72.5	37.5	74.4	55.2
Av.*	45.6	36.0	46.5	43.6	46.2	39.7	56.6	41.5	48.6	39.9

Source: Computed from data provided by the Department of Defense, Manpower Data Center

* Annual average for FY 72-85

However, if one excludes this ethnic group and Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders, because of the smallness of their numbers, the retention rates of Black, Hispanic and White male officers were roughly similar.

Table 5 further shows that, for officers of both sexes, the retention rates of Blacks (45.5%), Hispanics (45.3%), and Whites (44.4%) were also roughly similar. However, the disparity in the proportion of White males, and Black and Hispanic males retained, is more evident when one looks at those officers who were accessed between FY 72-76. Arguably, the lower retention rates of White officers combined with their declining accession rates could mean that, in the future, there will be a smaller ratio of White to non-White officers. This may be desirable since there is a large difference in the representation of minorities in the officer and enlisted corps.

Upward Mobility- Like their enlisted counterparts, White officers were more likely than non-White officers, and Black officers were least likely, to be serving in a higher grade. In looking at the proportion of officers who had achieved the grades of major, lieutenant colonel and colonel, for instance, DMDC data reveal that roughly two-thirds, or 65.6% of the White officers who joined the military in 1972, and who were still part of the forces in 1989, had reached the rank of lieutenant colonel. This is in comparison to 56.6% of the Black officers and 59.0% of the Hispanic officers. This is particularly relevant in view of

the previously noted similarity in the retention rates of these three groups of officers. Again, while it is also true that a larger proportion of Hispanic officers (8% or 8 of those retained), than White officers (5% or 327 of those retained), had achieved the rank of colonel, the actual numbers do not make this as significant as the proportions appear to be.

Of further relevance, is the fact that among minority officers, Blacks were the least likely to be serving in, or seemed to more slowly reach the higher grades, despite the fact that they had been increasing their accession rates since 1972. This is thrown into relief when one considers not only the proportions of each group that achieved the highest ranks, but the actual numbers involved. Of those officers who were accessed between FY 72-79, for example, 40 Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders, 31 Hispanics, and 24 Blacks had achieved the rank of colonel by September 1989.

While it is possible that the source of the commission, and the fact that Black officers are less likely to have advanced degrees may help to account for the lower promotion rates of Blacks, it is also possible that being a minority is less of an obstacle to upward mobility than is skin color. Indeed, from the days of slavery, lighter-skinned Blacks in the Caribbean and America were always more favored by members of the White power structure. Since the definition of the situation critically influences subsequent behavior, what is perhaps more important is that Blacks in

the military seem to subscribe to this position. Similar views, to be sure, were expressed by a Black Coast Guard officer regarding the individual, who at the time was the only Black captain in that branch of the Services (St. Pierre et al., 1987), and by a Black enlisted serviceman. (Interview, August 13, 1990). Conceivably, therefore, Blacks do less well than Asians and Hispanics when it comes to promotion because they tend to be darker in complexion.

But there is, it seems, more to it than the question of color. Blacks, it is felt, tend not to do as well as Whites and Asians on entry level tests into the Services. This is largely the result of educational and other deficits that Blacks experience in America. It is, moreover, a problem that universities and employers face in their efforts to satisfy affirmative action guidelines, a problem that raises the specter of quotas and allegations of reverse discrimination. As the following comments of a Black serviceman indicate, these deficits are also of concern to some Blacks in the military.

In urban areas where most Blacks live, recruiters have special problems in recruiting young Blacks...Many can't pass the entry test because they don't have a high school diploma...those with a high school diploma want to work in the civilian field. Second, [Blacks] have a problem passing the medical because of health problems associated with low birth weight...problems like poor eyesight, [impaired] brain development, and heart disease...these problems are also related to poverty, drugs and having a criminal record. (Interview, August 13, 1990).

The dilemma that recruiters face in attracting well-qualified Blacks for entry into the Services, at the officer level, is also instanced by the comments of a Black officer, himself a former recruiter. "We were in competition with big firms like IBM and Texas Instruments, for Blacks in the natural sciences...the [branch of the Services] offered \$14,000, but the firms offered much more...we ended up with the non-Techs...they have a much more difficult time making it and moving through the ranks." (Interview, July 16, 1990). Many Asians, by contrast, who enter the military tend to have a much stronger natural science background, and are more likely to have acquired graduate degrees. Indeed, it has been suggested (during a personal conversation with a White officer on August 10, 1990) that many of the Asians who achieved the rank of colonel were non-line officers, having "entered as medical doctors...it's less difficult to make colonel if you enter as a doctor." Not only would many Blacks not have had those entry qualifications, but it has been suggested that Black officers from some southern Historically Black Colleges and Universities tend not to do as well as those who graduated from other Black colleges.

Discussion

Race/Ethnicity- Despite the decrease in their numbers and proportion, Whites will continue to be more likely to occupy the top positions in the military, because of their higher entry qualifications. Further, since non-Black

minority officers are likely to be promoted more rapidly than their Black counterparts, Black troops will continue to be commanded, primarily, by non-Black officers. Also, if tensions between Blacks and Orientals in the civilian society persist, because Blacks believe that Orientals have better job opportunities which they (the Blacks), as earlier arrivals in America, should have, these tensions are likely to spill over into the military, if Blacks believe that a similar situation exists there.

Again, while Blacks in the military appear, generally, to accept the contention that overt racism and racial violence are things of the past (see, for example, "Many see less bias in the military," Norfolk Virginian-Pilot, April 1, 1990; "Blacks conquer racism in U.S. Air Force," Chicago Defender, December 15, 1983, p. 23; and interview with a Black officer, July 16, 1990) they, nevertheless, continue to experience a degree of relative deprivation, which is associated with the feeling that their race still militates against equality of opportunity. As one Black officer put it, "Black officers do not get adequate mentoring, and even when they do get it," he continued, "it is often too late...the problem is that the few Blacks who have made it are busy covering their own behinds, they don't have time to help." (Interview, August 6, 1990).

Another recurring theme, also putatively associated with race, concerns the lack of opportunities to get the kinds of jobs that would go a long way towards assuring

promotion. "Getting your ticket punched along the way," for example, was the way one servicemen put it, while one minority officer suggested that "Getting a command position or an assignment at the Pentagon or as Chief of Staff are jobs that provide you with the necessary visibility." However, "because of subtle racism," explained another minority officer, "minorities do not get these kinds of positions earlier in their careers that will allow them to reach their fullest potential." Unfortunately, "Jobs such as administrative officers, in personnel, or in Social Actions, which Blacks are more likely to get," observed another Black officer, "are not in the tracks that will get you promoted."

These observations, in a sense, are supported by the finding that, although in FY 88 Blacks represented 5.5% of the Air Force officer corps, they comprised 16% of the administrative, 16% of the disaster preparedness, 15% of the supply management, and 14% of the personnel specialty areas. On the other hand, only 1% of pilots, 2% of the commander/director positions, and 3% of officers in scientific and development engineering were Black. A similar overrepresentation of Black enlisted personnel in services and administrative specialties--they represented 18% of the enlisted population, but made up 36% of services and commissary service career areas--and underrepresentation in the technical areas such as instrumentation (8%), avionics (8%), and special investigations (7%), existed. (See Executive Summary, Status of Personnel Equity, USAF, FY

1988). These findings, as previously suggested, should be viewed against the backdrop of the relative paucity of Blacks with technical qualifications in the civilian society, and the even smaller number who probably enter the military.

In addition, minority enlistees, especially Blacks, now have to contend with what has been referred to as symbolic racism (Gabrenya, 1988; Weigel and Howes, 1985; and McConahay and Hough, 1976). This form of racism, according to some, is evidenced by (a) a deeply socialized anti-Black affect and (b) a strong adherence to an individualistic Protestant ethic and a belief that Blacks don't hold these values (Gabrenya, p. 29). In these circumstances, symbolic racism may refer to "resistance to change in the racial order based on feelings that members of a minority race violate traditional values--self-reliance, the work ethic, obedience, and discipline" (Simpson and Yinger, 1987, p. 103). Consequently, some "Whites may feel that people should be rewarded on their merits, which in turn should be based on hard work and diligent service" (Kinder and Sears, 1981, p. 416). Symbolic racism thus tends to find its most vociferous expression in the political arena where such issues as "unfair" government assistance to Blacks are involved (Kinder and Sears, p. 416). In other words, Blacks are discriminated against because of failure or unwillingness to abide by the culture (rules) of the majority white population. Indeed, the "evaluation report

of a black enlisted man may be affected by an officer's perceptions of what is acceptable speech in white America. And an edge of doubt on the part of a black seeking a promotion can [therefore] hamper his chances of advancement." (See Norfolk Virginian-Pilot, April 1, 1990).

Also since minorities in general, and Blacks in particular, are more likely to be observed by members of the majority population in positions of authority (such as White male police officers), socially undesirable behavior on their part is more likely to be detected. Consequently, Black males are more likely to be arrested--White police officers more often perceive them as threats--more likely to be brought to trial, and more likely to be found guilty. Finally, since relatively powerless offenders (low status and unemployed minorities, of whom Blacks constitute a large proportion) are apt to receive harsher penalties (Hagan and Palloni, 1986), and race and power are intertwined, non-normative behavior on the part of Blacks is likely to be more severely punished. It is, therefore, possible to argue that the disproportionate amount of atypical behavior perpetrated by Black males--as opposed to that displayed by White males--is partly a function of the greater likelihood of detection and prosecution; and more severe punishment, such as a court martial in the military, the result of their relative powerlessness and exposure to symbolic racism.

Gender- The relatively high incidence of courts-martial received by Black female enlisted personnel, as compared to

White females, may be attributed, in part, to discrimination related to their race, as well as the frustrations they experience because of their gender. Since frustration tends to promote aggression, "Black females," according to a Black male sergeant, "may have a tendency to strike back, but if you do so, you will lose, because the system is not designed to let people vent their feelings and frustrations." This, however, does not mean that the military does not provide many opportunities for upward mobility for these females.

In addition to subtle racism Black females, like their Hispanic and White counterparts, also face the prospect of gender discrimination. American women, not unlike those in other parts of the world, encounter definitions of their worth that are inseparably linked to their status as females. Indeed, their most meaningful social existence is derived from the roles they play as mother and wife (Bardwick and Douvan, 1971).

These social definitions of sex roles--largely defined by males, and referred by the term, gender--influence perceptions women have of themselves, male-female relationships and, ultimately, their structural location. Women, some maintain, experience a fear of success (Feather and Simon, 1975 and Major, 1979), especially in competition with males in traditionally male-dominated fields, and are therefore less likely to be as aggressive and as competitive in jobs, such as many that exist in the military. Women, it is also argued, generally expect to earn less than men,

possibly because they are more likely to be concentrated in low paying, low status jobs. Furthermore, although they are aware of, and aggrieved about, their underpayment as a group, they tend to be "paradoxically contented" with their own underpayment because of the disparate emphasis they place on such instrumental job correlates as money (Jackson, 1989). Finally, while men tend to place greater value on opportunities to earn money, working on important problems and directing others, women are more likely to stress having friendly co-workers and pleasant working conditions (Beutell and Brenner, 1986).

To the extent that these observations are accurate they clearly have significant implications for women in the military. In the first place, the notions of "paradoxical contentment" and reduced emphasis on "directing others," raise the question of the psychological fitness of female soldiers to lead others, especially males, in the heat of battle. These issues are particularly relevant in view of the 1988 DACOWITS report that found that women in the military were still subjected to sexual harassment and job discrimination. Many of these females, the report continues, also believed that their careers were being jeopardized because their male counterparts "do not see them as leaders." Investigators were told of numerous cases where "enlisted women with college degrees were removed from skilled specialties and put into typing pools." (See "Women, Minorities Still Harassed in Military...Many Men in the

Services Do Not See Their Female Counterparts as Leaders," Washington Post, February 18, 1989, p. a08).

Secondly, there are those who believe that the presence of women in the front lines is undesirable, and would disrupt what men refer to as "unit bonding," that is, "the male bonding that theoretically allows warriors to perform acts of heroism under fire" (Newsweek, September 10, 1990, p. 23). Still others, like Brigadier General Ed Scholes, commander of the 18th Airborne Corps now in Saudi Arabia, who opines that "I want people on my right and on my left who will take the pressure when the shooting starts," and former Army captain and author of the book, Weak Link: Feminization of the American Military, Brian Mitchell, who suggests that "Men simply cannot treat women like other men. And it's silly to think that a few months training can make them into some kind of sexless soldiers" (Newsweek, September 10, 1990, p. 23), seem to be of the same mind.

Before leaving this topic, two other factors that influence the accession and retention of females ought to be addressed. These are child care and combat exclusion. Since the Vietnam war the military has, arguably, changed from a young bachelor force to an all-volunteer peacetime service in which 60% of the troops are married and almost 11% are female. Social concerns, consequently, increasingly center around the incidence of unmarried pregnant teenagers, the burgeoning number of single parents,² dual career marriages, and the shortage of child care facilities. One study of 789

pregnant servicewomen, for example, found that more than half were less than 21 years of age, two-thirds were in the four lowest enlisted ranks, and 41% were unmarried (See "New Lifestyles Undercut Readiness, Strain Facilities," Washington Post, September 25, 1989, p. a01).

The comparatively high incidence of single mothers poses special problems for the military and its future combat readiness. Some of these problems are related to military rules which state that women must leave the barracks after the birth of a their child, which forces many young women with minimal salaries into unfamiliar communities with no family support structure. Again, in many areas, especially at small U.S. bases and isolated overseas stations, the military is poorly prepared to deal with pregnancies and the increasing number of military spouses. Women stationed in the Mediterranean, for example, have had to rely on lab test results from Germany because the lab technician position at Naples had been vacant for months (DACOWITS, 1988 Report).

For single mothers in the military then, the greatest problem, unquestionably, is child care. This condition, however, is not peculiar to them and may place similarly situated civilian mothers considering a military career, in the unenviable position of having to choose between "going into the military or staying home...and probably winding up on welfare." (Washington Post, September 25, 1989, p. a01). Clearly, if these problems are not dealt with to the

satisfaction of those involved, the military runs the risk of being unable to retain enough qualified females. This is all the more important in view of the feeling that the military could not function effectively without its female members. Even worse, however, it may find that the people it wants to keep may be torn between conflicting loyalties involving family and children, on the one hand, and national security and combat readiness, on the other. As Army captain Lee J. Whiteside, commander of a missile support company in Germany, put it, "we spend long hours on weekends working unpredictable hours...We are alerted at 3 a.m., where does this single private take her baby when she has 10 or 15 minutes to get to the unit?" (Quoted in Washington Post, September 25, 1989, p. a01).

Furthermore, since pregnant women are limited in the things that they can do, and need time off for medical appointments, a heavy burden may be placed on their sometime unsympathetic male colleagues. Disruptions of duty rosters and, possibly, morale problems could thus ensue. Thus far, however, this does not seem to be the case as the amount of time that females in the military take off due to health problems is no greater than that of men, or women in civilian life, and "Their temporary absence [therefore] can usually be managed with relatively little long-term impact on the unit's mission" (Marx, 1990, p. 9). In any event, many of these problems could be alleviated if the duty

commanders provide a climate that is sympathetic to these gender-specific concerns of females.³

Finally, the increasing number of females in the military and their indispensability as far as combat readiness is concerned--they played key combat support roles in the bombing of Libya, the invasion of Grenada and Panama and during Operation Desert Storm in the Middle East--brings us to the question of combat exclusion. The issue of combat exclusion regulations is of particular significance because their implementation (a) disqualifies women from specific jobs and experience that are critical to advancement beyond a certain level (b) leads to frustration and (c) generates a number of problems that have implications for combat readiness.

The extent of the problem, to be sure, may be gauged from the estimate that in FY 87, a total of 375,275 Army jobs, and in FY 88, no less than 21,158 Air Force jobs, 122,260 jobs in the Marines, and 528,960 Navy jobs (includes enlisted projections for FY 91), were closed to women because of combat exclusion statutes and program needs. (See Women in the Military, More Military Jobs Can Be Opened Under Current Statutes, GAO/NSIAD-88-222, September 1988, p. 18). Again, in the Air Force, females were overrepresented in personnel and administrative career fields, but underrepresented, because of combat exclusion provisions, as enlistees, in aircrew operations and some career fields and, as officers, in the rated positions, such as pilots and

navigators. (See Executive Summary, Status of Personnel Equity, USAF, FY 1988).

While in this context, it should be noted that, while combat exclusion rules and social definitions regarding the occupational roles of women seem to preclude them from occupying, on an equal basis with men, career-enhancing positions in the military, successive modifications in these regulations have resulted in expanded opportunities for women. Not all, however, appear to have taken full advantage of this expansion in opportunities. A Department of Defense Report Task Force on Women in the Military, January 1988, for example, found that "about 1200 Navy enlisted billets on ships that are available to women [were] currently filled by men" (p. 22). Be that as it may, it seems fair to conclude that because of combat exclusion rules, and the manner in which each branch of the Services interprets them, statutory provisions do close many jobs to women. This has prompted one observer to conclude that, "In addition to closing combat jobs as required by law, the services close non-combat jobs to meet program needs created by the combat restrictions...Overall, about 1.1 million of 2.2 million military positions are closed to women. Of the remaining 1.1 million positions, women fill about 220,000." (See Women in the Military, More Jobs Can be Opened Under Current Statutes, GAO/NSIAD-88-222, September 1988, p. 17).

In view of the above, one can ask whether a continued combat exclusion policy is justified and what are the

implications for combat readiness and national security.⁴ In the first place, it should be noted that the policy seeks to eliminate the risk that women would be exposed to direct combat, hostile fire, or capture. In a 1988 revision of this policy, known as the DoD "risk rule," former Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci adopted the recommendations of the Defense Task Force on Women in the Military that "...If the risk of noncombat units or positions is less than comparable to air, land, or sea combat units with which they are associated, then they should be open to women." Risks from which women, by virtue of their gender, should be excluded involve, in particular, capture. (See comments by Lieutenant General Ono, before the Military Personnel and Compensation Subcommittee of the House of the Armed Forces Committee on Women in the Military, February 4, 1988, p. 2).

The risk rule, however, appears to be of no great concern to the women. Current military doctrine, asserts Dr. Jacqueline Davis, an advisor to the Secretary of Defense on issues involving women in the military, suggests that a fundamental way of prosecuting a war involves "attacking targets behind the front line" (Interview on 60 MINUTES, August 26, 1990). But since, according to Major Rosalind Goff, second in command of the 503rd Support Battalion, many women "are a forward-support Battalion and we follow into war the combat elements [in the event of war] we would be in the middle of combat in that your rear area...is always a target for the enemy because if you stop, you stop

logistics, you kind of stop the war" (Interview on 60 Minutes, August 26, 1990). Furthermore, maintains 2nd Lieutenant Dawn Reed of the 32nd Air Defense Command, women have no special monopoly on being sexually violated, since both male and female POW's are vulnerable to rape (Interview on 60 Minutes, August 26, 1990).

Combat exclusion policies, it should also be noted, can lead to contradictions in the system. Women, for example, can command units in which they cannot serve, a point that is illustrated by the experience of Lieutenant Roberta Spillane, executive officer and second in command of the U.S.S. Shenandoah, a Navy repair ship, who revealed that "To qualify for command at sea, to qualify for surface warfare I've been through all the training that my male counterpart has been through." Yet she intoned, "They [the Navy] ignored me when I volunteered to serve in a combat ship" (Interview on 60 Minutes, August 26, 1990).

In view of the above, and also because some males concede that one does not need the superior upper-body strength of a man to fly an F-16 combat plane (Comments by Major Jim Carter of the U.S. Air Force on 60 Minutes, August 26, 1990), the continuation of a policy that precludes women from getting the same operational experience, and therefore opportunities for promotion, as men, arguably, concerns (a) whether the American public is ready to accept large numbers of female casualties as a result of war and (b) the attitudes of the males who will be

fighting alongside these females. In the final analysis, however, the risks that women might face as POW's, such as rape, pregnancy, physical and psychological abuse, some contend, do not outweigh the overriding concern that, as human beings endowed with dignity and free will, they should have the "freedom of choice to fight and perhaps die for their country as patriots" (Dillingham, 1990, p. 229). Certainly, if Lieutenant Spillane's comment that,

"...When children die, it hurts regardless of the gender. So if they are not ready for their daughters to be killed in combat protecting this country, they'd better reconsider just how ready they are that their sons are doing it" (Interview on 60 MINUTES, August 26, 1990)

is typical the women, it seems, have already made that choice.

Finally, it should be noted that a committee established to advise the Pentagon on the status of women in the military (DACOWITS) recommended in April 1991, that Defense Secretary Dick Cheney repeal laws barring women from serving in combat positions. In commenting on this recommendation, Carolyn Becraft, author of a recent study on women's military roles in Operation Desert Storm, described the recommendation as "an extremely important step [because] it recognizes the reality...that when we go to war, women will go to war, too, and they shouldn't have these artificial restrictions." Further, she contended that "In this day and age, it's quite obvious that the battlefield has been narrowed to an extent where the

distinction between combat and support is not meaningful." (Quoted in The Baltimore Sun, April 25, 1991, p. 8A). This discussion, therefore, may soon become moot.

Summary and Conclusions

This paper analyzed the implications of a number of factors related to the increasing number and proportion of minorities, especially Black females, and a decreasing number and proportion of White males for the future combat readiness of the military. It was suggested that though the military has done a good job in ridding itself of the more overt manifestations of race and gender discrimination, more needs to be accomplished. Indeed, while White males continue to hold most of the top positions, the increasing presence of minorities and women means that the military will be forced to continue to deal with the vestiges of discrimination--symbolic racism for Blacks and combat exclusion regulations for females--that still preclude both minority groups from getting the kind of operational experience that will enable them to realize their fullest potential.

It was also suggested that while the military still views non-Whites, generally, as minorities, there is a perception that the question of color, seemingly, provides some, like Asians and Hispanics, with greater opportunities than darker-skinned Blacks. This could mean a continuing overrepresentation of light-skinned non-Black officers

commanding dark-skinned troops, with all the attendant implications for combat readiness in a society where it is estimated that by "2056, when someone born today will be 66 years old, the 'average' U.S. resident, as defined by Census statistics, will trace his or her descent to Africa, Asia, the Hispanic world, the Pacific Islands, Arabia--almost anywhere but white Europe." (See "Beyond The Melting Pot," Time, April 9, 1990, p. 28). Finally, issues such as the need to attract more minorities with the technical background and savoir faire to use the sophisticated weaponry that will surely be a part of future wars, a greater sensitivity towards health care for pregnant females, and a more comprehensive family policy that recognizes the needs of the increasing number of male and female single parents and husbands and wives, especially during wartime, must concern those preoccupied with the combat readiness of the military of the future.

Notes

1. It should be noted that promotion and other boards are required to be statistically representative, in terms of the race and gender of those whom they consider.
2. There are more single fathers than single mothers in the military, and an estimated 20,000 Navy, 32,800 Army and 12,900 Air Force single, service members who have custody of their children (Washington Post, September 25, 1989, p. a01).
3. For a fuller discussion of the pros and cons of this question, see Women in Combat, 1990.

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