

THE FORCE MULTIPLIER OF THE HUMAN DIMENSION
IN U.S. ARMY AVIATION

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Art of War Scholars

by

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ABSTRACT

THE FORCE MULTIPLIER OF THE HUMAN DIMENSION IN U.S. ARMY AVIATION, by MAJ Nicole L. Kruse, 104 pages.

Racial and ethnic minority officers play a critical role in the U.S. Army's pursuit of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). In turn, DEI promotes adaptive and cohesive teams in support of the nation's national security objectives. As racial and ethnic minority officers are joining support branches at increased numbers, combat branches, especially U.S. Army aviation, are proportionally less diverse. To counter this undesirable trend, the U.S. Army must examine ways to recruit and retain highly qualified racial and ethnic minority officers equitably across all branches.

This thesis aims to identify which U.S. Army policies should be revised to better engender diversity and maximize combat effectiveness within the aviation branch by best supporting the recruitment and retention of racial and ethnic minority aviation officers. Using a qualitative research step-by-step approach, analysis of the evaluation criteria found that adopting policies which reduce structural and perceptual barriers and encourage cross-racial mentorship ultimately enhances recruitment initiatives and pipeline progression of highly qualified minority officers. These findings suggest that the U.S. Army has written policies that support racial and ethnic minority officers, however, a coalition of leaders must still emphasize the importance of diversity among the force to garner the full benefit of these policies.

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I embarked on the journey of writing this thesis because I desired to make a difference in the Army and its Aviation branch. My experience as a member of the “second graduating class” at the United States Military Academy, where I saw very few minority cadets branch aviation from year to year, inspired me to seek opportunities to engender diversity within the aviation branch. Of course, I would be remiss if I said I traveled this journey alone. I would like to thank my husband, Will, without whom there would be no thesis. His constant encouragement, continuous support and enduring love were a guiding hand through this adventure; because of him, I was never alone on this journey. And to our son, Chastan, thank you for enduring dull weekends and evenings so I could devote time to research and writing. You are and always have been my inspiration, buddy. I love you both.

I would also like to thank my mentors. Regardless of gender, skin color, branch, or background, I have been fortunate enough to find mentors to support me through the good and the bad. These mentors believed in me even when I did not believe in myself. Moreover, my lived experience with cross-racial and cross-gender mentorship demonstrated the importance of these diverse relationships and provided firsthand experience to draw from in writing this thesis.

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ACRONYMS

ADP	Army Doctrine Publication
AIM	Assignment Interactive Module
ATAP	Army Talent Alignment Process
BCAP	Battalion Commander Assessment Program
BLM	Black Lives Matter
CAC	Combined Arms Center
CCC	Captains Career Course
CGSOC	Command and General Staff Officer Course
COL	Colonel
CSA	Chief of Staff, Army
DA	Department of the Army
DEI	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
DMPM	Directorate of Military Personnel Management
HRC	Human Resource Command
HQDA	Headquarters, Department of the Army
KSB-P	Knowledge, Skills, Behaviors, and Preferences
LOE	Lines of Effort
LTC	Lieutenant Colonel
MLDC	Military Leadership Diversity Commission
OER	Officer Evaluation Report
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
ORB	Officer Record Brief
PMS	Professor of Military Science

ROTC	Reserve Officer Training Corps
SIFT	Selection Instrument for Flight Training
TAB	Talent Assessment Battery
TDY	Temporary Duty Assignment
TMTF	Talent Management Task Force
TRADOC	Training and Doctrine Command, U.S. Army
USMA	United States Military Academy

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FOREWORD

It was not until I joined the Army that I experienced systemic racism. Growing up, I never thought about how I may be different from others or questioned my own identity. I was never asked to explain my background, and I never felt the need to pretend to be someone or something that I was not. I was never the only minority in a room. I had never heard the words “white privilege,” and I did not consider that my voice might be silenced.

I grew up in the heart of Minneapolis, Minnesota. Then, as it is now, the city was a melting pot of races and ethnicities. Until recently, most non-residents only associated Minneapolis with the movie Fargo or a vaguely Canadian accent. Now, Minnesota is inextricably tied to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. However, not until the tragic death of George Floyd was this true, at least not in my personal experience.

As a youth in Northeast Minneapolis, my best friends represented many diverse backgrounds. There were white girls and black girls in my small group of friends—including a girl from Ethiopia and a mixed-race African/Asian whose father was raised in India. I was an Italian and Native American girl raised by her single mother. I am often mistaken for being Hispanic, but as a child in Minnesota, no one mistook me for anything because they did not think it necessary to guess. We were all different without paying attention to that fact; we fit in because of, not despite, our differences.

When I decided to enlist in the Minnesota Army National Guard, I was not aware of our Army’s diversity issues. When I first arrived at my unit, our first section sergeant was a white woman. Our team leader was a Native American woman. There were many racially and ethnically diverse Soldiers in the company. However, when I attended

Advanced Individual Training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, I noticed that I was the only female in the training battalion. Because of this, I was at once segregated from the rest of the battalion. In fact, while waiting for the training cycle to begin, I was sent to work in the battalion S-1 office instead of taking part in work details with the rest of the holdovers in the battalion. This forced me to ask myself why I was being treated differently from the other Soldiers in my unit and our Army, especially in my own training battalion.

Later, when I began attending the University of Minnesota's Army Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program, it became obvious that there were extremely few minorities or females in the program. There were a few females in the program; however, they were all white. It was through this experience that I began to question my own identity. I wondered how I needed to act, whom I needed to "be" so that my peers would accept me.

At the ROTC program, I tried to change my identity to reflect my white peers more closely. I started to dress differently, to speak differently, and to listen to different music, while still trying to figure out how to fit in better. In this effort, I lost my identity and forgot how to be myself. I was unsure of what I wanted to do in the Army because I did not know who I was, let alone what my purpose was.

By the time I was able to place my branch preferences, I had decided to apply for an educational delay to join the Judge Advocate General (JAG) Corps. During that time, I was fortunate to have great faculty members who served as personal mentors. My Professor of Military Science (PMS), an older white male, was an Army Aviator and my biggest mentor. In so many words, this mentor advised, "Nicole, you can always become a lawyer, but you only have one chance to become an Army helicopter pilot." I will never

know if he was simply trying to get everyone to branch aviation, as many aviators try and do, but he pushed me in that direction, and that is all that matters to me. Despite my own doubts and hesitation, his mentorship shaped my future.

I have experienced many difficulties during my active duty career, but I love my profession, and I love putting on the uniform every day to serve my country. I have worked hard my entire life and, through it all, persevered when many assumed that I would fail. As a young female lieutenant, I struggled to fit in. I was extremely physically fit and proved that I could keep up with my male counterparts, but that did not mitigate harassment from the “good ole boys.”

By the time I arrived at my first unit, I was recently divorced and the single mother of a three-year-old boy. However, I did not want the negative stigma of being a single parent less committed to the unit than her peers, so I worked twice as hard as the other officers in my unit. I worked hard for the organization and for my Soldiers; however, I later found out that the extra hours I worked led some people in my unit, and some of their spouses, to believe that I was having an affair with my First Sergeant. My extra effort did not gain my acceptance into the unit but instead outcast me even further. It became difficult to come to work some days because I did not have anyone I could talk to. While there was one other female aviator officer in my battalion, she was a company commander who seemed far too busy to listen to a young lieutenant’s gripes and complaints.

The longer I stayed in the Army, the more I felt that had to prove. I realized that if I want to be on the same playing field as my peers, I have to work harder, be smarter, and never let them see me falter. By the time I made it to the United States Military Academy

(USMA) to serve as a Tactical Officer, I had made it a personal commitment to coach, teach and mentor as many cadets I could, whether male or female, minority or not. I was one of a handful of female aviators stationed at the Academy, one of two racially diverse aviators there, and the only racial minority, female aviator stationed at West Point. Hardly surprisingly, I realized that few racial and ethnic minority cadets branch aviation. However, my platform allowed me to show many of them that they can become successful Army aviators, even if they are a minority or a female. During my time at USMA, I tried my hardest to recruit minority cadets into the aviation branch. Despite my efforts, during my final year at the Academy, only five black cadets branched aviation. I could not figure out why this was the case. Although I have seen an increase in female cadets branching aviation over the past few years, the branch still lacks racial minorities.

This study attempts to identify why racial and ethnic minority cadets are not branching aviation at the same rate as their white, male counterparts. Moreover, my experiences have led me to believe that the Army should increase diversity in the aviation branch. I believe that retaining more minority army aviation officers would create greater diversity of thought, increased cross-racial mentorship, and higher recruitment and retention rates across aviation formations. The Army can conduct this by revising current recruitment and retention policies specifically branch accession policies, broadening assignments for minority officers, and retention policies that encourage minority officers to serve beyond their initial service obligation. Finally, this thesis will explore ways to better recruit and retain racial and ethnic minorities beyond their initial commitment and increase diversity within the aviation branch to attain greater team performance.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

In June 2020, the Secretary of the Army, the Honorable Ryan D. McCarthy, and the Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA), General James C. McConville, unveiled *Project Inclusion* (OCSA Staff 2020). This program is the Army's latest initiative to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion across the force and to build cohesive teams. *Project Inclusion* is nested within the five goals of the *Army People Strategy*, which are: Leader Commitment, Talent Management, [creating] Organizational Structure, [providing] Training and Education, and [building an] Equitable and Inclusive Environment. *Project Inclusion's* initiatives include: updating diversity and inclusion training for service members, suspending the use of Department of the Army (DA) photos for promotion boards, and redacting race, ethnicity, and gender data from Officer Record Briefs (ORB) (OCSA Staff 2020). The *Project Inclusion* initiative is vital for two reasons. First, the U.S. Army is proving its recognition for the need to foster inclusion within its diverse force, a force where people should feel that their leaders will hear their voices and concerns; this leads to building cohesive teams. Second, suspending DA photos from promotion boards and redacting race, ethnicity, and gender data from ORBs are steps toward merit-based promotion and retention, without subconscious biases. Finally, training and education across all ranks will create an environment of accountability.

In the *Army People Strategy*, the U.S. Army articulated that people are critical to achieving its mission of fighting and winning the nation's wars (OCSA Staff 2020). The strategy stands for a commitment to improving personnel management through a 21st

century talent management system that identifies people as the Army's center of gravity. The *Army People Strategy* and *Project Inclusion* are not the only attempts that the Army has made to promote diversity, and they will not be the last. If the Army intends to become the "national leader in providing equitable and inclusive opportunities and find[ing] ways to eliminate any subculture that threaten the Army Values," it must ensure that its policies are enforced throughout the enterprise (OCSA Staff 2020).

The United States Census Bureau defines race as a social definition based on self-identification rather than biological, anthropological, or genetic classification. The Census Bureau collects race data in adherence to Office of Management and Budget (OMB) guidelines (Census 2017). The OMB has identified five categories: "white," "black or African American," "American Indian or Alaska Native," "Asian," and "Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander." Respondents may choose more than one race to reflect their racial identity accurately. Of note, "Hispanic" is considered an ethnicity rather than a race. For this thesis, the term "racial and ethnic diversity" refers to all of the non-white categories identified by the OMB. Further pertinent terms are defined in the Key Terms section.

The Problem

Despite Army initiatives to promote inclusion throughout the ranks, there continue to be disproportionately few minority aviation officers. Without diversity, the aviation branch could continue to suffer from groupthink, unchallenged biases, limited role modeling for minority Soldiers, and lower-than-average recruitment rates among minorities. Unfortunately, a lack of diversity in the Army dates to its foundation. This

thesis will briefly recount historical attempts at inclusivity within the U.S. Army to illuminate this issue and attempts to mitigate it.

The history of the integration of people of color in the Army has been a long and often frustrating process. During World War II (WWII), the U.S. Army limited the number of black soldiers allowed to serve so that it would not have to fund the building of the separate facilities, which were required by segregation policies at the time (CMH n.d.). The U.S. Army restricted its few black soldiers to non-combat positions, relegating them to service branches despite any aptitude, education, or experience (CMH n.d.).

In 1948, President Truman brought the official end to racial segregation in the military. Initially, this policy change brought with it little change in reality. It was not until the Korean Conflict that black soldiers were—still unofficially—assigned to white units *en masse*. Vietnam brought the first officially and actually integrated combat units. Interestingly, Army segregation policies only applied to black soldiers instead of all people of color. The U.S. Army did not track Hispanics as a demographic, and Asians were discriminated against due to national policy rather than military policy. Finally, there is a striking lack of data on Native Americans' and Pacific Islanders' service throughout this era.

In 2003, then-CSA General Eric K. Shinseki, the first Asian American four-star general, championed the most recent attempt to modernize Army inclusion efforts (CMH n.d.). General Shinseki directed the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) to study the underrepresentation of women and racial minorities in the Army's senior ranks. This directive prompted the creation of a diversity department within Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA). In 2005, the newly formed

Army Diversity Office began operations out of the Human Resources Policy Directorate, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1. However, the project quickly floundered due to a lack of support from senior leaders.

In 2007, CSA General George W. Casey, Jr. created the Army Diversity Task Force to reinvigorate the program. The task force, led by a brigadier general, reported directly to the Secretary of the Army and the CSA and soon merged with the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), where it resides today (CMH n.d.). In 2010, the Army Diversity Office formed into the Diversity and Leadership Office, which includes the Equal Employment Opportunity Civil Rights Office and the Equal Employment Opportunity Compliance and Complaints Office (CMH n.d.). The mission of the Diversity and Leadership Office is to “act as the Army’s facilitator for diversity in policies, programs, and practices so that the service can use all its human resources to their fullest potential (CMH n.d.).”

In April 2009, the Army released its definition of diversity: “Army diversity is defined as the different attributes experiences, and backgrounds of our Soldiers, Civilians, and Family members that further enhance our global capabilities and contributes to an adaptive, culturally astute Army (MLDC 2011b, 13).” The Military Leadership Diversity Commission (MLDC) noted that the different branches of service, when creating their respective definitions and diversity policies, focused on adopting the goal of mission capability regarding a broader range of attributes rather than focusing on race, ethnicity, and gender (MLDC 2011b, 13). The Army is currently updating its policy on diversity to nest it with the *Army People Strategy*; this will be discussed in-depth in chapter 4 of this thesis.

In March 2010, the MLDC published the findings of its “Officer Retention Rates across the Services by Gender and Race/Ethnicity” (MLDC 2010). The MLDC examined continuation rates as a way of assessing the Services’ abilities to increase continuation rates for ethnic- and gender-specific members of the Armed Forces (MLDC 2010, 1). The MLDC measured the following race/ethnicity categories for their issue paper (IP): white non-Hispanic, black non-Hispanic, Asian and Pacific Islander non-Hispanic, other non-Hispanic (included American Indian, Alaska Natives, and individuals of more than one race), and Hispanic. From the data collected on officer continuation rates by race/ethnicity, one can derive that minority members of the Army are less likely than their white counterparts to remain on active-duty past specific years within their respective careers (see figure 1) (MLDC 2010, 5). However, on average, black non-Hispanics and Hispanics are greater than or equal to whites at every year of service and Asians/Pacific Islanders are less than or equal to whites’ rates. Therefore, the MLDC concluded that minority officer retention, in general, was not lower than whites and did not require an immediate need for a policy response (MLDC 2010, 7).

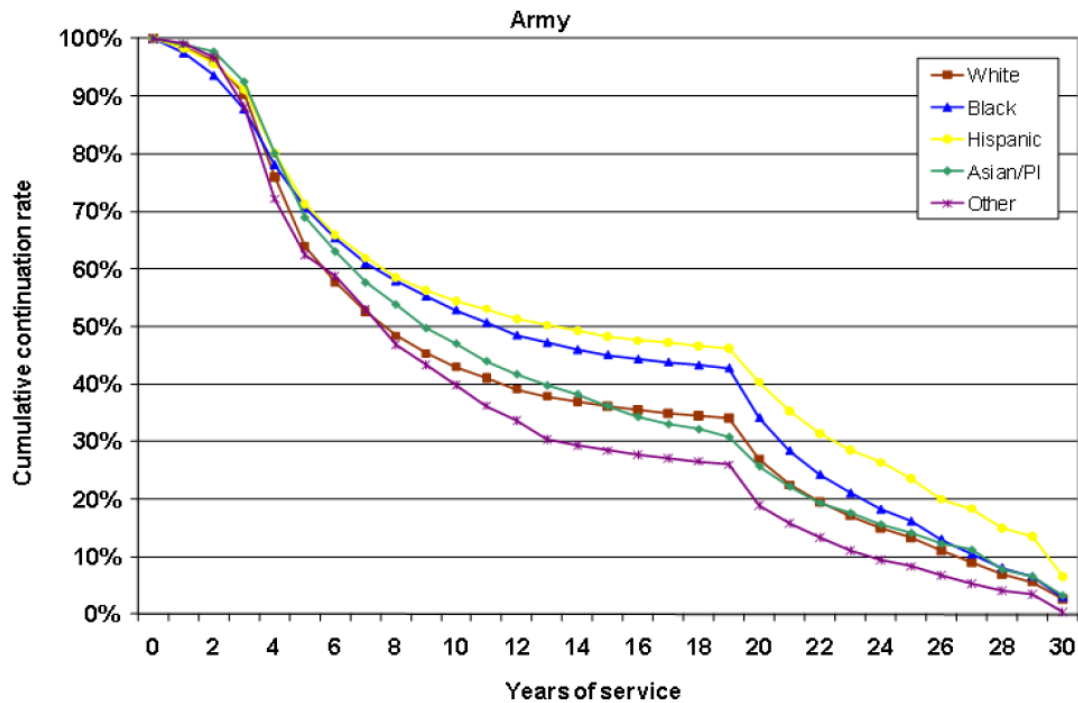


Figure 1. Cumulative Continuation Rates in the Army, by Racial and Ethnic Status, Fiscal Years 2000-2008

Source: MLDC 2010, 5.

In 2019 Lieutenant General Thomas C. Seamands, Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, briefed the House Armed Services Committee’s military personnel subcommittee that, “We want our Army to look like our nation, and to reflect what’s best of our citizens” (Brading 2019). He further said that the U.S. Army’s approach to diversity includes “the diversity of thought, talent, knowledge, skills, and experience—which adds to the richness of the Army” (Brading 2019). Recruiting efforts through the U.S. Army’s outreach initiatives “Meet Your Army” and “What’s Your Warrior?” put Soldiers in diverse communities that have historically experienced little of the Army’s attention. Added efforts to send recruiters to colleges in cities like Los Angeles, where the demographics lend themselves to minority recruitment, encourage students’

enrollment in its college ROTC, with the ultimate goal of commissioning. Furthermore, Lieutenant General Seamands explained that retaining a diverse force takes time and is considered a long-term approach. The new *Army People Strategy* includes a new talent management system, the Assignment Interactive Module 2.0 (AIM). AIM's purpose is to take out the middle man—the career manager—and to create a marketplace where everyone has the opportunity to contact units directly and share qualifications beyond those listed in their ORB. But is this enough? And are these current policies recruiting and retaining more racial and ethnic minority officers for Army Aviation?

The Primary Research Question

The primary research question explores the idea of changing current policies to recruit and retain more racial and ethnic minority army aviation officers, who will increase the branch's diversity, thus leading to greater team performance. The primary research question is:

Should the U.S. Army change current recruiting and retention policies to support racial and ethnic minority aviation officers, which engenders diversity of thought and increased cross-racial mentorship to enhance the combat effectiveness of the aviation branch?

Secondary Research Questions

The secondary research questions seek to understand which better practices the U.S. Army can implement to encourage retention and improve recruitment of racial and ethnic minority officers in Army Aviation. Currently, the Army Aviation branch lacks policies that could promote diverse teams and combat effectiveness. The secondary

questions will help create the foundation to understand why change is necessary to build diverse teams that support maximum combat effectiveness.

1. How does racial and ethnic diversity support Army Aviation in the fight to win our nation's wars?
2. What is the Army doing to recruit racial and ethnic minorities into Army Aviation at its commissioning sources (USMA/ROTC)?
3. What is the Army doing to retain racial and ethnic minorities in Army Aviation?
4. How can cross-racial mentorship support diverse formations?

This thesis will review questions 1 through 4 in the literature review (chapter 2) and define its methodology in chapter 3. It will then summarize findings from chapter 2 and provide an aggregate analysis of all secondary questions in chapter 4. Finally, recommendations for both decision-makers and future research will be presented in chapter 5.

Limitations and Delimitations

For the purpose of this research, Limitations and Delimitations have been grouped into a single category as delineating the two can become confusing and is generally unnecessary. Limitations—the specific areas and scope that this thesis addresses—can affect the results of a study. Delimitations—those areas that the thesis does not address—can also affect the results of a study. The difference between the two is the degree of control which the author has over those factors. Regardless of whether they are best categorized as limitations or delimitations, the following factors were identified as having an impact on this study:

1. The region of origin, level of parental education and parental service affiliation of racial and ethnic minority officers, and their influence on branching decision.
2. Racial and ethnic minorities' educational backgrounds and collegiate academic performance as it affects the accessions process.
3. The effects of imposter syndrome on racial and ethnic minorities' decisions when choosing a branch.
4. Limited time range with ongoing DoD policy changes occurring concurrently which may have variables not covered in this study. The information cut-off date for this thesis is May 1, 2021.
5. Due to the limited timeframe of the thesis, this study will rely upon extant data rather than new data gathered specifically for this study.

Assumptions

An assumption is something that researchers believe to be true, though it has not yet been proven. Often researchers are dependent upon logically sound assumptions to allow their research to continue. Moreover, assumptions may also be used to determine the extent to which a given factor might influence the study. The following factors were identified as having an impact on this study:

1. Recruitment and retention of highly qualified officers is necessary for Army aviation to field an effective force; Army Aviation should seek to modify existing policies so that it better recruits and retains highly qualified diverse officers who will, in turn, build diverse teams that will maximize combat effectiveness and increase team performance within the aviation branch.

2. Mentoring helps cadets and officers to make career decisions that lead to greater career satisfaction. High-quality mentorship will help to recruit and retain racial and ethnic minorities, creating a more diverse force within Army aviation.
3. Despite aviation being the preferred branch for many cadets, racial and ethnic minority cadets select it at a low rate; commissioning sources should identify ways to recruit qualified racial and ethnic minority cadets who desire to select aviation but are not doing so.

Key Terms

For this thesis, key terms are listed and defined to support the understanding of broad definitions that could have multiple meanings.

American Indian or Alaska Native: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment (Census 2017).

Asian: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam (Census 2017).

Black or African American: A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa (Census 2017).

Cross-racial Mentorship: Long-term relationship between a mentor and protégé who are of different races or ethnicities (Wagner 2020).

Cross-gender Mentorship: Longer-term relationship between a mentor and protégé who are different genders (Wagner 2020).

Culture: “The way we do things around here and the manner in which these norms and values are communicated” (Burke 2014, 232). Beliefs and values about how a community of people should and do act (Kreitner and Kinicki 2013).

Diversity: All attributes, experiences, cultures, characteristics, and backgrounds of the total force which are reflective of the Nation served by U.S. Army personnel and enables them to deploy, fight and win (U.S. Army 2020, 4).

Ethnicity: Sense of peoplehood, when people feel close because they share physical characteristics, linguistic characteristics, behavioral or cultural characteristics, and environmental characteristics such as living in the same region (Australian Department of Home Affairs 2005).

Information Diversity: Ability of the individual to include education level, work experience and organizational tenure (Tudor 2016, 4).

Mentor: Long-term mutual relationship developed with a protégé (Wagner 2020).

Mentorship: Military purposes—occurs away from the unit, and away from the job where a senior or more experienced person take an interest in helping someone do better, get better, and perform at a higher level (Wagner 2020).

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands (Census 2017).

Protégé: Long-term mutual relationship developed with a mentor who started out as a coach and counselor (Wagner 2020).

Race: A biological quality that groups people together who have the same perceived similarities (as defined by the author).

White: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa (Census 2017).

Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the history of diversity inclusion efforts made by the U.S. Army and introduced current projects, such as *Project Inclusion*. The chapter also discussed the current inclusion gap within Army aviation, from which this thesis derives its primary research question: “should the U.S. Army change current recruiting and retention policies to support racial and ethnic minority aviation officers, which engenders diversity of thought and increased cross-racial mentorship to enhance the combat effectiveness of the aviation branch?” Chapter 2 will consist of a literature review with a thematic approach to answering the secondary research questions. The literature review will examine whether diversity will enhance the combat effectiveness of Army aviation and the policies which effect the recruitment and retention of racial and ethnic of minority officers within the aviation branch. Chapter 2 will then attempt to identify how cross-racial mentorship creates an increase in valuing diversity within the Army aviation branch.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the history of the U.S. Army's inclusion practices and current projects. It also introduced the primary research question of this thesis, which seeks to identify gaps in existing policies that should be modified to increase diversity in Army aviation. The primary research question of this thesis is "should the U.S. Army change current recruiting and retention policies to support racial and ethnic minority aviation officers, which engenders diversity of thought and increased cross-racial mentorship to enhance the combat effectiveness of the aviation branch?"

Since 2010, the U.S. Army has sought to diversify its force and foster inclusion. While some of its initiatives enjoyed mild success, the U.S. Army needs to take aggressive steps and to develop execution strategies through its policies if it seeks to realize significant progress. If the U.S. Army intends to capitalize on the strength of its diverse force, it must spark a cultural shift that values diversity. To accomplish this, it must harness its leaders, develop formal processes that support mentorship among minority officers, and remove structural barriers that hurt minority recruitment.

This chapter will review literature relevant to primary and secondary research questions. The purpose of this review is to understand better how the U.S. Army can recruit and retain racial and ethnic minority aviation officers and to understand the critical role mentorship plays in creating and sustaining a diverse formation. There exists scant research on the subject of why the Army continues to experience disproportionately fewer racial and ethnic minority aviators. However, a handful of scholarly works seek to

understand the reasons for the difficulty in recruiting and retaining minorities within the Army writ large. This literature review will attempt to facilitate an understanding of how to best answer the research questions, especially whether or not increased diversity equals increased team performance.

Does an increase in diversity equal an increase in team performance?

An increasing number of studies argue that diverse teams outperform homogenous teams. A report from the Journal of Applied Psychology found that the disruptive effects of diversity fault lines can be overcome by groups that value diversity; those groups tend to perform better than groups that have pro-similarity beliefs (De Dreu, Homan, Van Kleef, and Knippenberg 2007, 1189). Similar research posits that diversity enhances performance only if the team is well managed by leaders who realize the value in diversity (Tudor 2016, 2). Unfortunately, and more specifically to the U.S. Army, research has found that black officers fail to make it to the senior ranks because senior leaders fail to clearly communicate why diversity is important and how it is critical to the success of fighting and winning our nation's wars (Smith 2010, 12). One study addressed the need for spokesmen, or change agents, to help build a consensus of converts who will ultimately lead to valuing diversity amongst the ranks (Starry 1983, 3).

Valuing diversity can vanquish diversity fault lines (De Dreu et al. 2007, 1189). A 2007 Danish study found that organizations rely on cross-functional groups to stimulate innovation, solve problems, and make decisions that require high technical expertise from group members. Of course, mixed-gender groups do not enhance a team's performance just because they bring diversity. Simply being in a diverse group is not enough to enhance performance; instead, the group members must actually value their diversity.

Information diversity is defined as “differences in knowledge bases and perspectives that members bring to the group” (De Dreu et al. 2007, 1189) and diversity beliefs are defined as “beliefs about the value of diversity to work group functioning” (De Dreu et al. 2007, 1190). Diverse, or heterogeneous, teams who do not share diversity beliefs and value information diversity experience no marked advantage over homogenous teams. Pro-diversity beliefs remove barriers for the benefit of the group; therefore, to enjoy the advantage of diversity, team members must value the team’s information diversity. In other words, a group must be heterogeneous, and its members must have pro-diversity beliefs or there is no advantage to promoting diversity.

As depicted in figure 2, the Danish study found that pro-diversity beliefs are higher in groups with heterogeneous information (i.e. information diversity) than in groups with homogeneous information (figure 2). Thus, those that performed best had pro-diversity beliefs and their performance was further enhanced if they possessed heterogeneous information.

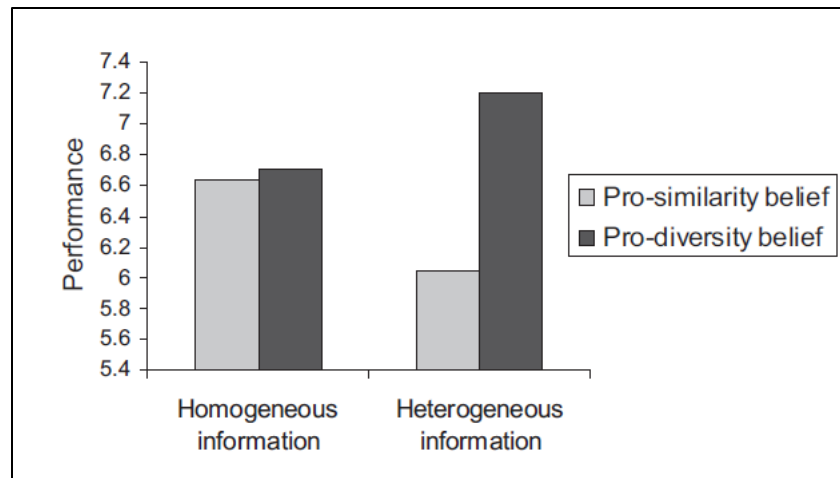


Figure 2. Group Performance as a Function of Information Diversity and Diversity Beliefs

Source: De Dreu et al., 2007, 1194.

Often, leaders know that diversity is beneficial, but implementing a diversity strategy is not usually a priority (Tudor 2016, 2). Furthermore, past research has been confused by mixed results on whether diversity positively affects team performance. Considering conflicting research, Tudor studied “under what conditions would diverse teams produce beneficial, quantifiable results” (Tudor 2016, 3). Her findings demonstrated that teaching conflict management techniques aids in creating an inclusive environment and, most importantly, enhances team effectiveness. This study, once again, proved that diversity alone does not provide a benefit. Leaders must value that diversity and create an environment in the workplace that encourages others to realize their value as well.

Diversity can have multiple meanings. It has a social category (visible demographic characteristics), information category (education level or work experience of individuals), and goals or values category (team goals and underlying work values).

Leaders must have a good understanding of each type of diversity when managing diverse teams.

In addition to the types of diversity are three types of conflict that can occur when interacting with diverse teams. The three types of conflict are relationship conflict, task conflict and process conflict. The most important type of conflict that most military leaders face is relationship conflict. Relationship conflict occurs when there is disagreement and issues of incompatibility among team members, such as personality and communication styles. Social diversity increases relationship conflicts; that conflict often affects performance and morale (Tudor 2016, 6). While the team may initially suffer from this conflict, once the team realizes that their performance potential can increase, their morale will increase, and the group will overcome the conflict. Interestingly, teams with social and information diversity often develop innovative solutions. To ensure groups live up to their performance potential, leaders must continue to create organizational cultures that emphasize the importance of diverse peoples.

In the study, *Why Black Men Still Fail*, Smith argues two points regarding the Army's lack of progress in communicating the tie between diversity and mission success. First, senior leaders need to make it clear that diversity is linked to performance. This is difficult to do because, as mentioned above, studies on the topic have produced differing results. Some research has found that demographic diversity produces few benefits to group performance, while others determined that demographic diversity does increase group performance (Smith 2010, 12). Therefore, given the strong likelihood that diversity increases organizational performance, the Army must embrace it and this change must begin at the senior leader levels. Smith argues that leaders face complex problems

requiring cognitive diversity, which may originate in cultural diversity if given a chance (Smith 2010, 13). Therefore, the Army needs more minorities in senior positions, but until that occurs, senior leaders must emphasize the importance of diversity.

The U.S. Army has embraced the topic of organizational change since the early 1970s and recently examined how to embrace diversity amongst its ranks. In 1983, General Donn A. Starry identified the necessary changes for the U.S. Army to keep up with shifting reforms. One important note was that a spokesperson must build a consensus among the wider audience. This still holds true today. Senior leaders must be the spokesperson for change among their formations so that their subordinates embrace diversity among the ranks.

What is the U.S. Army doing to recruit racial and ethnic minority officers?

Data shows that leadership diversity is directly proportional to racial and ethnic accession and promotion rates. MLDC reported in 2011 that there were barriers keeping minorities and women from entering tactical and operational career fields. Additionally, Smith found that the type and professionalism of faculty working at commissioning sources affected the development of minority students. Smith describes the type and level of professionalism of both USMA and ROTC faculty as the best and brightest serving at the former and the lower performing and less qualified serving at the latter. This subsequently affects the quality of education and level of development received by black officers who attend ROTC programs.

The level of professional development of the commissioning source's faculty directly affects the military development of most students, especially students who are racial and ethnic minorities. USMA faculty are often more professionally and

academically developed than their ROTC counterparts, especially ROTC faculty at historically black colleges (Smith 2010, 8). While there have been significant changes in officers' assignment to ROTC programs, black students are more likely to be exposed to contractors and retired or former active component officers. On the other hand, students at USMA continue to be led and taught by hand-selected active-duty cadre, all of whom have earned master's degrees (Smith 2010, 9). This point is not meant to degrade ROTC cadre; instead, Smith presents it to highlight the fact that the aggregate of black officers commissioned from ROTC are not exposed to the quality of faculty to which black cadets at West Point are exposed to. Black officers may still be failing in the operational Army because of this root cause. They are not exposed to professional mentors; therefore, they fail because they lag behind their peers, especially those who commission out of West Point.

Perceptual and structural barriers limit racial and ethnic minority students (MLDC 2011a, 19). Perceptual barriers are beliefs and perceptions resulting from a lack of role modeling or community support. Examples of perceptual barriers are the attitudes or beliefs that lead minorities to believe they cannot or should not pursue a job or career field (MLDC 2011a, 19). Structural barriers block minorities from tactical and operational career fields. Examples of structural barriers are test scores and the academic requirements necessary to enter a career field (MLDC 2011a, 19).

Research presents evidence on the effect of perceptual barriers on minority men. According to MLDC, "more white men than minority men prefer tactical/operational career fields in the Army" (MLDC 2011a, 19). Four barriers show why minority men do not choose to enter tactical/operational career fields. The first is that skill development

preferences may differ among race and ethnicity groups: minorities may prefer skills that transfer to the civilian sector (MLDC 2011a, 19). Second, minority communities and families may not have the same level of knowledge about or support for specific career fields when juxtaposed to most white soldiers, who often learn about the Special Forces as children (MLDC 2011a, 19). Third, minorities may perceive that people in individual branches hold racist attitudes; many minority military personnel believed that the Army Green Berets were white organizations with racist attitudes (MLDC 2011a, 19). Lastly, minorities may not identify with certain career fields because they contain few successful minority role models. A 2009 report stated that the Army had not done enough to advocate for blacks in combat arms; moreover, black officers often make a concerted effort to dissuade black men and women from serving in combat arms (MLDC 2011a, 19). The lack of racial and ethnic minority senior role models, especially in combat arms, limits perceived branch options for most minority cadets (Smith 2010). To mitigate this, black officers must receive quality mentorship before deciding on their branch.

The structural barriers that restrict minorities from entering the tactical/operational career fields are twofold. The first is the racial and ethnic difference in the commissioning sources. In 2009, only nine percent of the black officers who commissioned in the Army were from the Service Academy. The U.S. Army allocates a larger proportion of combat arms slots are provided to the Service Academy, where there are fewer minorities. This allocation leads to a greater proportion of West Point graduates entering combat arms than officers from other commissioning sources, which eventually impacts the demographics of Army senior leadership.

Figure 3 illustrates that the fraction of officers from the tactical/operational occupations increases with rank through the flag/general officer levels (MLDC 2011a, 5). The figure shows that, in fact, 80 percent of flag/general officers are from a tactical branch. This pattern suggests that flag/general officers are drawn from the tactical/operational career fields and are less likely to be a minority.

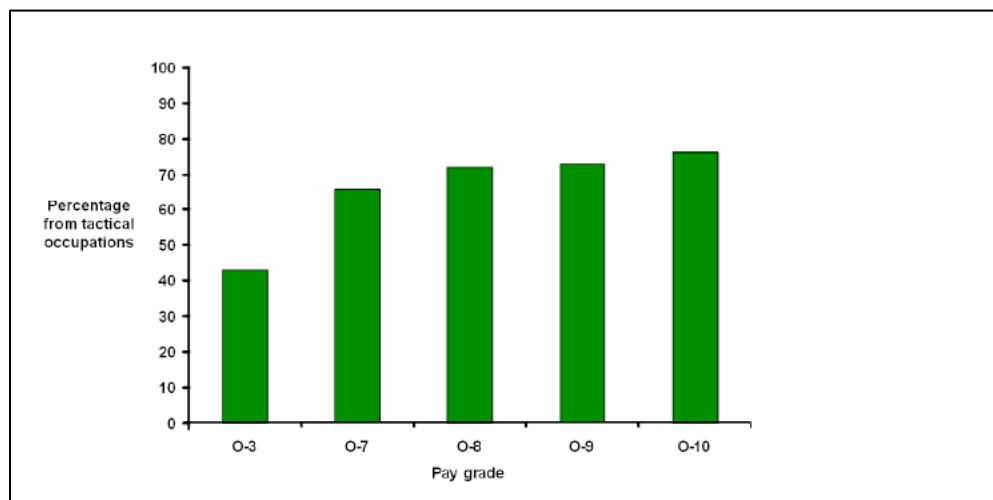


Figure 3. Percentage of Officers in Tactical/Operational Occupations by Pay Grade

Source: MLDC 2011a, 6.

What is the U.S. Army doing to retain racial and ethnic minority officers?

The U.S. Army is attempting to revise its talent management process through the AIM 2 initiative; however, this new program may not mitigate the root causes of perceptual and structural barriers. In his study, Smith observes that a top-down change is requisite to rid the organization of the “good old boy networks” (Smith 2010, 2). Additionally, pipeline progression is tainted due to barriers to key assignments including

mentoring, career counseling, and career development resources. To change, there must be a cultural shift, and an organizational change effort. The Kotter change model provides a framework for such an effort. First introduced in Harvard Business Review's 1995 May-June issue, John P. Kotter described how organizations tend to fail at leading transformation efforts. He therefore developed an eight-stage process to aid organizations with effectively managing change (Kotter 1995).

In the 2012 book, *Leading Change*, Kotter provided eight-steps for effectively managing change within an organization, they are: establishing a sense of urgency; creating a guiding coalition; developing a vision and strategy; communicating the changed vision; empowering broad-based action; generating short-term wins; consolidating gains and producing more change; and anchoring new approaches in the culture (Kotter 2012). This thesis will employ Kotter's model in the form of his enhanced *8 Accelerators*, published in 2014 as an eBook, *Accelerate*. The revised process focuses on running the steps concurrently and continuously, forming a large volunteer army from above, below, and across the organization, functioning as a flexible network outside of the traditional hierarchy, and consistently seeking and acting upon opportunities (Kotter 2014, 8).

Top-down change, though the education of leaders on interpersonal work relationships, is necessary to mitigate "good ole boy networks" (Smith 2010, 11). Limited social interaction between minorities can limit pipeline availability to promotion. Often, a key component in the success or failure of black officers is "who you know." In fact, networking is equally important as individual performance (Smith 2010, 11). Therefore, the institution must move beyond managing diversity into developing a diversity strategy

(Smith 2010, 12). Most diversity efforts are believed to be ineffective by minority officers because most view diversity training as a waste of time. The Army is not actively supporting or buying into diversity initiatives. It is too early to tell whether the current Talent Management policies, to include AIM 2.0, effectively retain more racial and ethnic minority officers.

There are numerous models available to leaders when they are leading change. Kotter's enhanced *8 Accelerators* and four Change Principles provide military leaders with a straightforward approach for leading organizational change successfully. The four change principles consist of capitalizing on windows of opportunity, providing greater meaning and purpose to the effort, using leaders at all levels to help change, and making existing team members feel included (Kotter 2014, 9) Regardless of the specific change model, or tool, used, the Army must provide leaders with training and resources as well as solutions to problems.

While the Army is taking a stand on developing of the talent management enterprise, black officers continue to enter the service to gain skills for use in the civilian sector. Additionally, the same issues are holding back other non-white officers; indeed, the example of black officers can be extrapolated to represent diversity overall. To realize higher retention rates, the Army must monitor qualified officers and provide them with career guidance to ensure they serve in assignments that contribute to successful careers (Smith 2010, 14). The results will be more racial and ethnic minority officers eligible for executive levels.

Pipeline progression is linked to key assignments for officers in tactical/operational career fields (i.e., maneuver, fire, and effects) (MLDC 2011a, 10).

While the Army does not collect information on race, ethnicity, or gender of leaders in key assignments, racial and ethnic and gender minorities are underrepresented at command selection boards. This underrepresentation and under selection is likely the result of race, ethnicity, and gender differences in accessions, branching, continuation, and key assignment selection (MLDC 2011a, 47). Key assignments include key developmental positions, key billets, and education milestones.

Although there is no checklist of assignments to guarantee promotion from one grade to the next, there are career paths and educational requirements that make officers most desirable for senior leadership positions. The MLDC 2011 report found that at least 80 percent of officers selected for Lieutenant Colonel or Colonel command were white men (MLDC 2011a, 17). The representation of command selectees for minorities and women were low because they were not equitably represented in the candidate pool for command assignments. Considering the lack of senior leadership opportunities for ethnic/minority officers, Colonel (Retired) Dwayne Wagner inquired, “why are minority officers opting out of command or retiring at 20 years?” (Wagner 2020).

Figure 3 illustrates the tendency for tactical/operational careers to contain a higher percentage of white males. Note that 80 percent of the flag/general positions were held by white males.

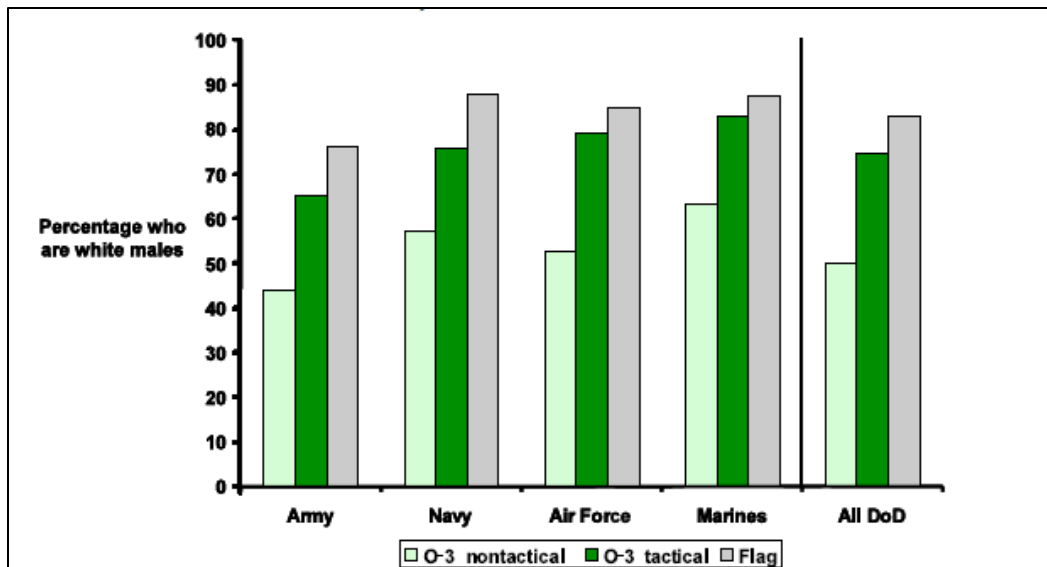


Figure 4. Percentage of Officers in Nontactical/Nonoperational and Tactical/Operational Occupations who were White Men

Source: MLDC 2011a, 7.

How can mentorship support an increase in diversity?

Mentorship is a critical piece to diversity initiatives. Research has found that minorities who lacked senior role models did not receive the mentorship required to succeed in the Army (Smith 2010, 9). Therefore, the Army should focus on providing adequate career counseling and career development resources to its cadets and officers (MLDC 2011a, 44). While some may argue that the Army should not implement a mandatory mentorship program because it detracts from the voluntary nature of mentorship, the enterprise should advocate for increased mentorship across the force, especially cross-racial and cross-gender mentorship (Wagner 2020).

Mentoring programs, career counseling, and career development resources can assist with pipeline progression (MLDC 2011a, 44). Many organizations use mentorship programs that seek to encourage career progression and address issues of racial, ethnic,

and gender diversity. While the Army has not established a formal mentorship program, research exhibits that mentored individuals have higher compensation, more promotions, greater career satisfaction, greater expectations for advancement, and more career commitment than non-mentored individuals (MLDC 2011a, 32). Furthermore, research shows that the following practices characterize effective mentor/protégé relations: clear objectives for the mentoring program, allowing mentors and protégés to establish multiple mentoring relationships, and providing high quality training for both mentors and protégés (MLDC 2011a, 32). Finally, the Army should continuously evaluate the program's effectiveness against predetermined goals and criteria (MLDC 2011a, 32).

Cross-racial and cross-gender mentorship is necessary as the Army continues to evolve (Wagner 2020). Senior leaders must be willing to invest in subordinates who do not look like them. Simultaneously, subordinates must be receptive. As an enterprise, the Army must understand that formal coaching and counseling occur on duty, but mentorship occurs off duty; the Army is terrible at understanding this (Wagner 2020). Therefore, Army leaders must develop relationships from coaching/counseling to mentorship with all subordinates, regardless of their gender, race, or ethnicity.

Table 1 describes the goals, assumptions, and features of the U.S. Army's mentoring programs. As seen in the table, the Army indicates that mentorship benefits protégés, mentors, and the service as a whole. Nevertheless, the U.S. Army has neither included mentorship within an official diversity strategy, nor has it published formal guidance for mentor/protégé relationships.

Table 1. Comparison of Goals and Assumptions, Features, and Measures of Effectiveness Across the Services' Mentoring Programs

	Air Force	Army	Coast Guard	Marine Corps	Navy
Goals and assumptions					
Mentoring improves career potential of protégés	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mentors and Services benefit from mentoring	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Equal access to mentors/everyone should have a mentor	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mentoring is part of an official diversity strategy			✓		✓
Features					
Development plans include mentoring tools	✓	✓	✓		
Mentoring handbook/guide	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mentoring websites	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Web-enabled mentoring tools	✓	✓	✓		✓
Supervisor directed to mentor all subordinates	✓			✓	
Formal guidance for mentoring relationship (e.g., how often mentors and protégés should meet)				✓	✓
Mentors are screened and trained					✓
Mentor-protégé matching tool provided			✓		✓
Contract has to be signed					✓
Measures of effectiveness					
Survey questions about mentoring	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Source: MLDC 2011a, 34.

According to MLDC, “women and racial and ethnic minorities are more likely to be in mixed mentoring relationship than white men, the concern then becomes whether they receive similar benefits from the mentoring relationship” (MLDC 2011a, 51). The quality of mentorship is variable; however, research indicates that mixed mentoring can provide career benefits in addition to the psychological benefits of homogeneous mentoring (MLDC 2011a, 51).

Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed relevant literature to enlighten the reader on the topic of diversity and its application within the Army. The literature review illustrates the importance that the Army train its leaders on valuing diversity, identify barriers for

recruiting and retaining racial and ethnic minority officers, and value the effect of mentorship (cross-racial and cross-gender) on the successful career progression for minorities. Chapter 3 will outline the purpose of this study and the methodology used to understand and evaluate current Army diversity, recruitment and retention policies. Chapter 3 will address gaps in current policies and present possible solutions for the Army to adopt.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to answer the primary research question “should the U.S. Army change current recruiting and retention policies to support racial and ethnic minority aviation officers, which engenders diversity of thought and increased cross-racial mentorship to enhance the combat effectiveness of the aviation branch?” Chapter 2 provided an overview of available research on the positive results of valuing diversity, mentorship, and cultural barriers as experienced by racial and ethnic minorities in the Army with regards to recruitment and retention. Chapter 3 will identify the methodology used to analyze the results found in chapter 4. Additionally, this chapter will cover the secondary research questions that must be understood before answering the primary research question. The secondary questions are as follows:

1. How does racial and ethnic diversity support Army aviation in the fight to win our nation’s wars?
2. What is the Army doing to recruit racial and ethnic minorities into Army aviation at its commissioning sources (USMA/ROTC)?
3. What is the Army doing to retain racial and ethnic minorities in Army aviation?
4. How can cross-racial mentorship support diverse formations?

Purpose of this Research

The purpose of this study is to determine if current Army policies engender racial and ethnic diversity in Army aviation and, if so, how does the branch recruit and retain racial and ethnic minorities. This thesis will propose policy recommendations for the U.S. Army to adopt with the aim of ensuring that diversity is valued among the organization while increasing the recruitment and retention rates of racial and ethnic minorities. The U.S. Army is making significant strides in implementing inclusion practices amongst the organization; however, there continue to be disproportionately sparse numbers of racial and ethnic minority officers within the aviation branch. Therefore, enforcement of strategic messaging within the lower ranks is necessary to address the root causes of why minorities are not branching aviation and why they are underrepresented at senior levels.

Methodology

The qualitative research methodology was used for this thesis for the following reasons. First, there is not enough research or data examining the lack of diversity within the aviation branch. Second, qualitative research will facilitate analysis and understanding of why minorities either do or do not select aviation as their branch preference. Additionally, there is no comprehensive database that collects data regarding why minorities persistently leave the service after their initial service commitment. Lastly, qualitative research may help make sense of current U.S. Army policies and the modifications necessary to engender diversity among the organization.

According to Merriam, qualitative research is “understanding the meaning people have constructed; that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (Merriam and Tisdell 2016, 15). Qualitative research focuses on

meaning and understanding (Merriam and Tisdell 2016, 15). This thesis and its primary research question focus on understanding how current policies affect racial and ethnic minority officers and how that intent/effect gap can be minimized to generate a force that can fight and win our nation's wars while maintaining the trust of the American people. Moreover, to retain that trust, the Army must look like the American people it represents.

The second characteristic of qualitative research is that the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam and Tisdell 2016, 16). This thesis is based on concepts and research found in scholarly journals, government documents and websites. For researchers, biases that shape the collection and interpretation of data need to be acknowledged. Due to a particular lack of information surrounding the research question, the process is inductive (gather data to build concepts, hypotheses, or theories) (Merriam and Tisdell 2016, 17). Finally, researchers need to be rich in description with words and pictures rather than numbers used to convey what has been learned (Merriam and Tisdell 2016, 17).

This thesis employs a step-by-step approach to identify if current Army policies need to change to engender diversity within Army aviation and to increase recruitment and retention of racial and ethnic minorities. Step 1 in the research design is the literature review, found in chapter 2. Step 2 of the research design will analyze the first secondary question regarding how racial and ethnic diversity supports Army aviation in the fight to win our nation's wars. Step 3 of the research design will analyze the second secondary question of what the Army is doing to recruit racial and ethnic minorities into Army aviation at its commissioning sources (USMA/ROTC). Step 4 of the research design will

analyze the third secondary question of what the Army is doing to retain racial and ethnic minorities in Army aviation. Step 5 of the research design will analyze the fourth secondary question of how cross-racial mentorship can support diverse formations. Step 6 in the research design will aggregate the findings once the evaluation criteria have been applied to answer the primary research question. The final and last step in the research design will be the presentation of conclusions and recommendations.

Evaluation Criteria

To evaluate current U.S. Army policies, the established criteria examine the effectiveness of espoused policies, written policies, and applied policies with regards to valuing diversity, recruitment and retention of racial and ethnic minorities, and mentorship. The policies will be ranked by whether the espoused, written, or applied policies hurt, somewhat help, or significantly help diversity initiatives for racial and ethnic minorities. Espoused values are values without policy or emphasis. These can hurt diversity initiatives because they can come off as insincere or condescending to minorities. Written policy without emphasis acts in the interest of minorities as defined in the policy but may be interpreted incorrectly or not properly implemented. Applied and emphasized policy is enforced through strategic messaging and action from senior leaders through leaders at the lowest levels.

Table 2. Evaluation Criteria

	Espoused without policy or emphasis	Written in policy but without emphasis	Applied through emphasized policy
How does racial and ethnic diversity support Army Aviation in the fight to win our nation's wars?			
What is the Army doing to recruit racial and ethnic minorities into Army aviation at its commissioning sources (USMA/ROTC)?			
What is the Army doing to retain racial and ethnic minorities in Army aviation?			
How can cross-racial mentorship support diversity formations?			

Source: Created by author.

Threats to Validity

The research seeks to examine current policies that are implemented and followed by an ever-evolving population. Maturation effects are a function of the process both biological and psychological operating within the respondents because of the passage of time (Sekaran and Bougie 2013, 177). Participant led factors can be difficult to control,

reducing the internal validity of the research. In addition to maturation, the researcher often has personal involvement in the topic which creates biases in the research findings and recommendations.

Ethical Assurances

The research design of this thesis focuses on collecting data to analyze secondary research questions against evaluation criteria to answer those research questions. There is potential to pull primary data from the Directorate of Military Personnel Management (DMPM) to support the recommendations made in chapter 5 of this thesis. Discretion and confidentiality will be applied to data and personally identifiable information (PII) collected from earlier surveys or DMPM. This study does not involve research of human subjects (i.e., conducting interviews); nonetheless, integrity and transparency are vital to the project. Because researcher relies heavily on literature from earlier studies, honesty, accuracy, efficiency, and objectivity are invaluable to correctness. Finally, this study will acknowledge, in the reference list and parenthetical citation, the work of any author which was used in this study.

Chapter Summary

This chapter described the methodology used for this research as well as the evaluation criteria used to answer the secondary research questions. The next chapter will present the data used for the step-by-step approach to answer the primary research question.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

We win by doing the right things the right way; we win with our People, and that is why People matter.

—General James C. McConville, quoted in U.S. Army, *Army People Strategy: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Annex*

Chapter Introduction

Chapter 1 of this thesis introduced its central argument through the historical context of diversity in the U.S. Army and the lack of racial and ethnic minority officers in Army aviation. Moreover, it highlighted that the lack of diversity within the aviation branch could undermine its combat effectiveness.

Chapter 2 summarized some of the current literature that addresses themes across each secondary question and how those themes provide insight into the primary research question. Chapter 3 presented the research methodology to answer the primary research question. The primary research question is: should the U.S. Army change current recruiting and retention policies to support racial and ethnic minority aviation officers, which engenders diversity of thought and increased cross-racial mentorship to enhance the combat effectiveness of the aviation branch?

The purpose of this chapter is to present current Army aviation recruitment and retention policies and initiatives, analyze their effectiveness in recruiting and retaining racial and ethnic minorities, and provide answers to the primary and secondary research questions. The secondary questions follow:

1. How does racial and ethnic diversity support Army aviation in the fight to win our nation's wars?

2. What is the Army doing to recruit racial and ethnic minorities into Army aviation at its commissioning sources (USMA/ROTC)?
3. What is the Army doing to retain racial and ethnic minorities in Army aviation?
4. How can cross-racial mentorship support diverse formations?

Summary of Literature Review

Chapter 2 introduced literature relevant to understanding how the U.S. Army can best recruit and retain racial and ethnic minority aviation officers; it highlighted the critical role of mentorship in creating and sustaining diverse formations and it explored the notion that increased diversity equals increased team performance. This chapter bucketed literature into the following themes: the importance of valuing diversity, perceptual and structural barriers, the professionalism of ROTC instructors, and effective mentorship approaches.

The first question investigated in the literature review was: does an increase in diversity equal an increase in team performance? The answer to the question was “yes,” but only if diversity is both valued within the organization and encouraged by senior leaders. A Journal of Applied Psychology report found that the disruptive effects of diversity fault lines can be overcome if groups value diversity (De Dreu et al. 2008, 1189). In *Adding Value with Diversity: What Business Leaders Need to Know*, a similar study observed that diversity only enhances team performance if the leader(s) realize its value. Merely being in a diverse group does not guarantee enhanced performance; the group members must actually value their diversity. Consequently, organizations like the

U.S. Army need change agents to build a consensus of converts who will inspire Soldiers and Civilians to value diversity (Starry 1983, 3).

The second secondary question was: what is the U.S. Army doing to recruit racial and ethnic minority officers? The themes within this section of the literature review focused on perceptual barriers, structural barriers, and faculty professionalism at various commissioning sources. Barriers hinder racial and ethnic minorities from entering tactical career fields, as noted in the Military Leadership Diversity Commission report entitled *“Branching and Assignments”* (MLDC 2011a, 19). Structural barriers sometimes originate from the commissioning sources themselves. Compared to ROTC programs, a small number of racial and ethnic minorities commission from USMA; however, more combat arms branch allocations are available at USMA despite its comparatively few minorities (MLDC 2011c, 23).

In addition to structural barriers, there are perceptual barriers that stymie racial and ethnic minorities’ entrance into combat arms. First, skill development preferences often differ among races and ethnicities, leading cadets to seek skills that are more readily transferable into the civilian workplace. Second, minority families seldom support the decision of their children to enter combat arms career fields, often simply because they do not have much knowledge of those branches—especially by comparison to white families. Third, minorities often perceive that people within certain combat arms—such as the Special Forces, which is predominantly composed of white males—hold racist attitudes (MLDC 2011a, 19). Finally, minorities may not identify with some branches due to a lack of successful racial and ethnic minority role models who have achieved success in those branches.

Moreover, disparate levels of professionalism at various commissioning sources may impact racial and ethnic minorities' branch preferences. USMA faculty are hand-selected and sent to a graduate school before their assignment at West Point; ROTC faculty are not. While all officers assigned to USMA are Active Duty, many officers assigned to ROTC programs are either retired or reserve component officers. This can lead to ROTC cadets—who are more likely than their USMA peers to be racial and ethnic minorities—to lack exposure to professional mentors.

The third question within the literature review explored what the U.S. Army has done to retain racial and ethnic minority officers. The theme of perceptual and structural barriers remained noticeable in this section. Although current initiatives, such as the Assignment Interactive Module 2.0 (AIM 2), are revising the Army talent management process, these initiatives will require a top-down change to eliminate the “good old boy networks” that continue to plague the assignments process. Moreover, pipeline progression is often hampered because of barriers to key assignments, including mentoring, career counseling, and career development resources. Therefore, an organizational change effort and subsequent cultural shift are necessary. While the Army is making progress regarding the talent management process, racial and ethnic minorities are still underrepresented at command selection boards. This is likely due to race, ethnicity, and gender differences in accessions, branching, continuation, and key assignment selection (MLDC 2011a, 18).

The final question in the literature review was: how can mentorship support an increase in diversity? Mentorship and diversity topics are often linked in literature because mentorship is critical to successful diversity initiatives. Although forcing a

mandatory mentor program would miss the benefits of voluntary mentorship, the Army enterprise should advocate for increased mentorship somehow. Research attests that providing clear objectives for a mentoring program, allowing mentors and protégés to establish multiple mentoring relationships, and providing high-quality training for both mentors and protégés will create effective mentor/protégé relationships. In addition to the typical mentorship relationship, cross-racial and cross-gender mentorship are necessary as the Army continues to evolve. Mentorship programs may support individual career progression and address racial, ethnic, and gender diversity issues. Additionally, mentoring programs, career counseling, and career development resources assist with “pipeline” progression. Army leaders must develop relationships with all subordinates, from coaching and counseling to mentorship, regardless of their subordinate’s or their own gender, race, or ethnicity (Wagner 2020).

Overall, the literature provided insightful information to enlighten the reader on diversity and its relevance to the Army. The literature explored various themes that illustrate the importance of training leaders to value diversity, identify perceptual and structural barriers to the recruitment and retention of racial and ethnic minority officers, and the effectiveness of mentorship for successful career progression.

Analysis of First Secondary Question: how does racial and ethnic diversity support Army Aviation in the fight to win our nation’s wars?

Over the last few years, the Army has taken great strides in diversity, equity, and inclusion. The latter is often overlooked when designing diversity initiatives; of course, diversity and inclusion are separate concepts with separate definitions. According to Bernardo M. Ferdman, diversity is “the representation of multiple identity groups and

their cultures in a particular organization or workgroup” (Ferdman 2011, 3). Ferdman describes how diversity, on its own, does not necessarily produce benefits; instead, it often requires the additional condition of inclusion. Inclusion is generally regarded as the critical approach to reaping the benefits of diversity. In short, inclusion is described as “how well organizations and their members fully connect with, engage, and utilize people across all types of differences” (Ferdman 2011, 4). While organizations and leaders must value diversity, they must also understand the meaning of inclusion at the individual and group levels, and how people are affected by behaviors, leadership approaches, collective norms, practices, and social values (Ferdman 2011, 4).

The method of measuring or assessing performance is critical. While research has proven that team performance is enhanced when team members and their leaders value diversity and that diverse groups are more cognitively flexible and creative than homogenous groups, there is a lack of research describing how these benefits might increase military effectiveness, especially in the aviation branch. Therefore, it is necessary to consider how military effectiveness is measured.

According to Millett and Murray, military effectiveness is the process by which armed forces convert resources into fighting power (Millett and Murray 2010, 7). Essentially, this translates to the ability to destroy an enemy while preventing or mitigating the damage dealt by that enemy. Military effectiveness is linked to tactical effectiveness, and its success depends on weapons, terrain, training, quality of the troops, morale, and weather. The relationships among troops, the importance of which is often overlooked, can risk tactical ineffectiveness. According to Millett and Murray, “one cannot limit the judging of military effectiveness to nondynamic assessment of tactical

units. One must include in the analysis nonquantifiable organizational attitudes, behaviors, and relationships” (Millett and Murray 2010, 27). Therefore, the aviation branch must understand that its success depends not only on tactical aptitude, but also on the human dynamic that its officers bring to the fight.

In their new book, *The Culture of Military Organizations*, authors Peter Mansoor and Williamson Murray explore how culture is a determinant to the effectiveness of an organization (Mansoor and Murray 2019, 3). If senior military leaders do not grasp the organization’s culture, their change efforts will be hampered. Like the Air Force, Army aviation can engender a highly technical culture that aims for effectiveness but may only achieve efficiency (Mansoor and Murray 2019, 11.) Therefore, U.S. Army aviation’s organizational effectiveness is dependent upon its leaders valuing “nonquantifiables.” Cultural biases which produce unstated assumptions may have a “deep impact on the making of strategy, operational planning, doctrinal creation, and the organization and training of armed forces” (Mansoor and Murray 2019, 449).

During the 2020 Association of the U.S. Army Annual Meeting and Exposition, General James C. McConville briefed that, “the time is now . . . to transform how we take care of our people and how we compete for and manage their talents . . . transform our doctrine, our organizations, our training, our equipment and how we compete around the world” (OCSA Staff 2020). He stated that “people first” is not only a philosophy but it is now the U.S. Army’s number one priority. While readiness remains critical to the Army’s ability to complete its mission, the total force will experience a much stronger and committed Army if people are taken care of and treat each other with dignity and respect.

The *Army People Strategy* was published in October 2019; since its debut, the Army has focused on how the enterprise can best take care of its people and manage their unique talents. Some changes introduced by the strategy were the Battalion Commander Assessment Program and the Colonels Commander Assessment Program, which are each essential for selecting the right leaders for some of the Army's most consequential positions. The Army has also revised the assignments and promotions processes. Moreover, the *Army People Strategy* initiated *Project Inclusion*, which focuses on the policies, procedures, and resources that will enable inclusivity across the formation. The CSA briefed that he is searching for ways to improve the way the Army recruits, retains, develops, and employs the diverse talents of its people with the aim of ensuring that everyone has a path to success, putting the right person in the right place at the right time.

The *Army People Strategy* describes the shift from “distributing personnel” to deliberately managing the talents of Soldiers and Civilians. Within the strategic environment, threat and non-threat trends continue to shape the increasingly complex global security environment. Now that the gap between capital expenditures and technological advances with great powers is closing, the U.S. Army's enduring strategic advantage will be its people. Moreover, the information age and shift in generational values facilitate a workplace where diversity—more than homogeneity—engenders creative thinking and innovation.

The strategic approach is to achieve cohesive teams for the Joint Force by pursuing four strategic outcomes, supported by four critical enablers, along four lines of effort. The four lines of effort are: Acquire, Develop, Employ, and Retain Talent. The Strategic outcomes are: Ready, Professional, Diverse, and Integrated. The Critical

enablers are: 21st Century Talent Management, Quality of Life, Army Culture, Resources and Authorities (figure 5). The *Army People Strategy* has already enjoyed more success than previous initiatives, especially with regards to valuing diversity, inclusion, and the requirements to compete in the high-demand, high-skill labor market.

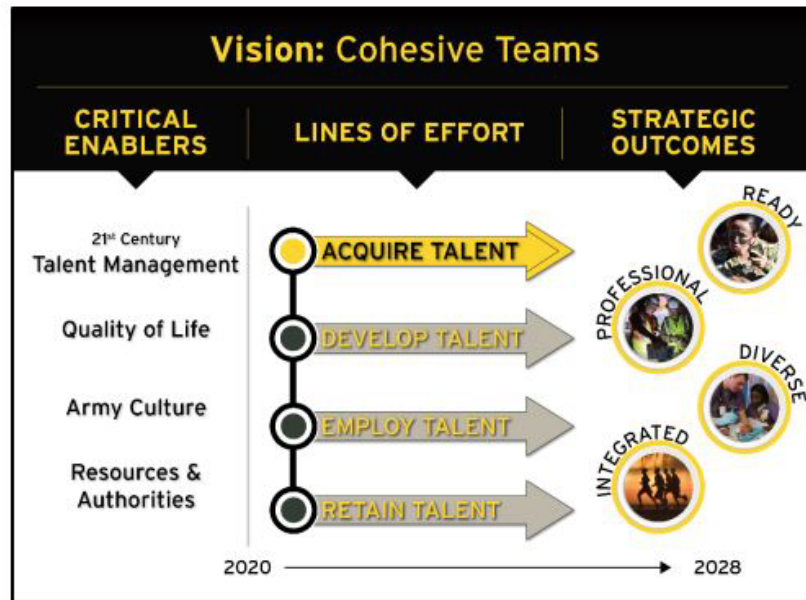


Figure 5. Strategic Approach through 2028

Source: U.S. Army 2019, 5.

Nevertheless, the question of how all this helps leaders value diversity within the aviation branch remains. While the LOE implementation priority of Build Readiness calls for “Total Army end strength growth, reductions in non-deployable rates, improvements in talent alignment, and improved training outcomes,” it requires the total integration of the third critical enabler, Army Culture, to assist Army aviation in increasing racial and ethnic diversity within the branch. Its focus on building teams through the “This is my Team” initiative is essential to the first step of learning, understanding, and valuing

diversity. The added benefit of this focus is destroying harmful behaviors and building trust across formations. Healthy behaviors to replace harmful ones include: civility and positive relationships; diversity, equity, and inclusion; honor and respect; empathy; and care for Soldier and Civilian well-being (U.S. Army 2019). Moreover, the drive behind the change in culture must be leaders who clearly define, effectively communicate, and foster this initiative through authentic role modeling.

The *Army People Strategy*'s "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" (DEI) annex outlines the Army's DEI Strategic Plan through 2025 and supersedes the Army's Diversity Roadmaps of 2011. The annex endeavors to establish how the U.S. Army can communicate the importance of valuing and integrating diverse cultures, backgrounds, and talents. Interestingly, the annex highlights that the Army officer corps is not as diverse as its enlisted corps. The future force will be much more diverse and require the Army to institute policies and systems to ensure representative diversity of leadership. Currently, of the total army officer population, white officers represent between 70 to 84 percent of the population (figure 6). Moreover, figure 7 depicts a decrease of white officer representation compared to their racial and ethnic minority officers from 2019 to 2060. In short, the annex "provides direction for organizational, command climate, structural, and procedural changes to enable the Army to become a model example of DEI" (U.S. Army 2020).

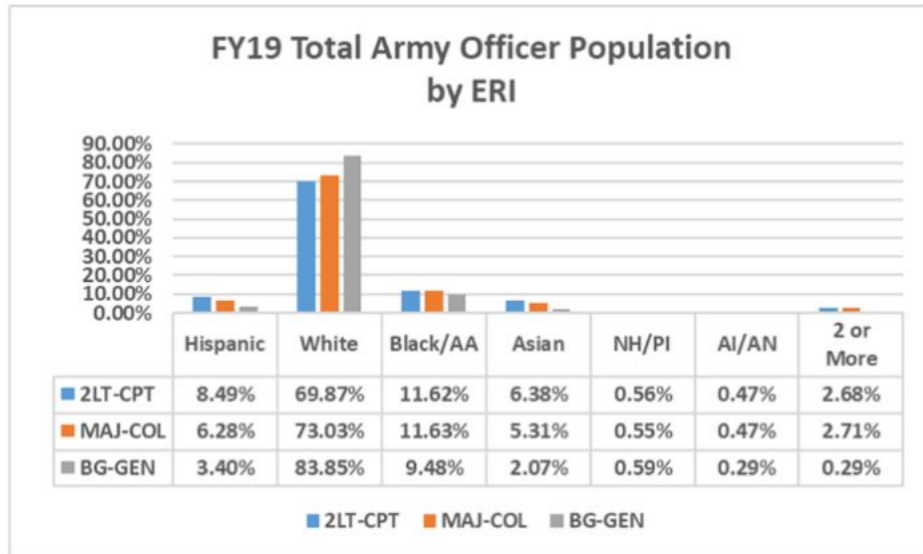


Figure 6. FY Total Army Officer Population by ERI

Source: U.S. Army 2020, 2.

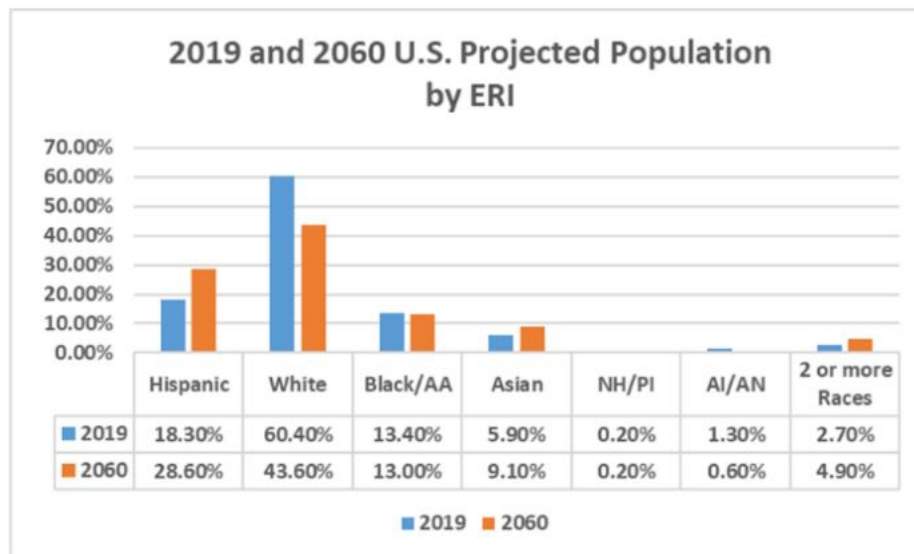


Figure 7. 2019 and 2060 U.S. Projected Population by ERI

Source: U.S. Army 2020, 3.

The Annex defines diversity, equity, and inclusion as follows:

a. Diversity—All attribute, experiences, cultures, characteristics, and background of the total force with are reflective of the Nation we serve and enable the Army to deploy, fight, and win.

b. Equity—The fair treatment, access, opportunity, choice, and advancement for all soldiers and civilians while striving to identify and encourage drivers and identify and eliminate barriers that prevented the full participation of the total force.

c. Inclusion—The process of valuing and integrating each individual's perspectives, ideas, and contributions into the way an organization functions and makes decisions; enabling workforce members to achieve their full potential in focused pursuit of organizational objective. (U.S. Army 2020, 4)

The Army plans to achieve its DEI vision through the annex's five strategic goals, twenty-five objectives, and Army Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plans (which are not yet published). The five strategic goals are: leader commitment; talent management; organizational structure; training and education; equitable and inclusive environment. For the analysis of the first secondary question, the thesis will review the strategic goals of leader commitment, training and education, and an equitable and inclusive environment.

Table 3. Evaluation Criteria: Winning Wars

	Espoused without policy or emphasis	Written in policy but without emphasis	Applied through emphasized policy
How does racial and ethnic diversity support Army Aviation in the fight to win our nation's wars?			
Army People Strategy Leader Commitment			X
Army People Strategy Training and Education		X	
Army People Strategy Equitable & Inclusive Environment		X	

Source: Created by author.

Army People Strategy Leader Commitment

Prior to publishing the *Army People Strategy*, there was no written policy on training leaders to promote diversity—let alone inclusion—within their ranks. The necessity of diversity may have been espoused at the individual level, but training, if any, did not focus on inclusion standards, methods, or procedures. Other than the monthly heritage observances, there were scarce mediums for Soldiers and Civilians to gain an appreciation for the cultures of their brothers and sisters in arms. While the strategy is still publishing ways for the objectives to meet the leader commitment goal, senior leaders are pushing the initiatives at their level to ensure all leaders value diversity and treat diverse talent equitably.

Army People Strategy Training and Education

The new policy provides leaders the training necessary to improve their efforts to root out biases and increase cultural competency. Implementation of the policy will not

only improve unit integration and team cohesion, but it will also benefit recruitment and retention efforts targeted at racial and ethnic minority aviation officers. The goals discussed in this thesis are only written and not yet actualized in practical training. It is unclear when the necessary training will be incorporated into officer professional military education. However, training is now beginning at the most senior levels within the Army to foster commitment to DEI from the top down.

Army People Strategy Equitable and Inclusive Environment

Creating and supporting a fair and inclusive environment is one goal that is easier said than done. While the U.S. Army would like to think that its officer corps values the diverse attributes, experiences, cultures, characteristics and backgrounds of its subordinate population, unconscious biases may impact how inclusive a leader may be—no matter how deliberate they are. Consequently, leaders must build trust throughout the force by emphasizing equitable treatment and inclusive environments that favorably impact recruitment, retention and mission accomplishment.

Analysis of Second Secondary Question: what is the Army doing to recruit racial and ethnic minorities into Army Aviation at its commissioning sources (USMA/ROTC)?

In 2019, USMA unveiled its first-ever market-based branching model; this model has since evolved into the Talent-Based Branching process that ROTC Cadet Command now employs. As West Point continues to refine the market-based branching approach, its goal remains the same: to align cadets with the branches that best fit their talents (Courtesy 2020). The cadets of the West Point Class of 2021 were assigned branches based on a function of their preferences and how each branch commandant rated them. Following an interview with their respective branch commandant, each cadet was rated

into one of three categories: “Most Preferred,” “Preferred,” and “Least Preferred.”

Subsequently, each cadet was ranked in an Order of Merit List (OML) within those categories.

Cadet Command adopted a similar approach to branch selection for ROTC cadets. Much like USMA’s approach, ROTC Cadet Command’s virtual branch orientation website explained their new model. Its site provides a dedicated page to every branch, with each containing an introductory video, the talent priorities of the branch, and the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and intelligences that are prioritized by that branch. This information supports cadets in making an informed decision by reflecting on their own attributes and comparing them to what each branch values. Talent matches are achieved through similarities between the cadet’s file, their preferences, and branch feedback. The intent behind this program is to assess the right officer into the right position, and to reap the rewards of greater officer job satisfaction, performance, and retention. This is a departure from the legacy branching system that assigned cadets into a branch based solely on their preference and standing on the OML. Moreover, the new branching system allows cadets to learn more about their own strengths through the Talent Assessment Battery (TAB) which consists of cognitive and non-cognitive tests to assess their talents relative to those of their peers (Courtesy 2020).

The process to branch Army aviation is complicated. Branching aviation requires initiative and the willingness to incur a 10-year service obligation, which is twice as long as the average Army officer service obligation. Along with the new TAB system, cadets who are interested in branching aviation, regardless of commissioning source, must pass a flight physical (Class 1A) stamped qualified by the Army Aeromedical Center at Fort

Rucker and complete Selection Instrument for Flight Training (SIFT) with a minimum passing score of 40.

The first step on a candidate's journey is to take SIFT. Aviation branch policy affords cadets two chances to pass the SIFT; failing twice disqualifies them from aviation service. According to the Fort Rucker FAQ sheet for cadets and candidates, the SIFT is a measure of multiple aptitudes that scores core competencies, judgmental measures, cognitive skills, preferences, mandatory screening, behavioral study, and situational judgment abilities. It assesses mathematical skills and aptitude, the ability to extract meaning from written passages, familiarity with mechanical concepts and simple machines, the ability to perform mental rotations to determine aircraft orientation in three-dimensional space, and the ability to identify patterns quickly. The SIFT also measures an examinee's knowledge of aviation terminology, familiarity with aircraft components and function, knowledge of basic aerodynamic principles, and a grasp of basic flight rules and regulations (Courtesy 2020). Once a cadet passes the SIFT, he or she can schedule his or her flight physical. The Aviation branch recommends that cadets take and pass the SIFT and begin the flight physical during the second semester of their junior year of undergraduate education; however, many full-time students find it difficult to travel to a testing location or to schedule an appointment for the flight physical with a flight doctor. Regardless, cadets must be aware of these demanding requirements early and take the initiative to accomplish them concurrent with their academic and everyday lives. Despite previous research examining how aviation selection testing and its minimum scores affect minorities, this thesis will not discuss the attrition which results

from the test. Instead, it will demonstrate that there is one more avenue which hinders racial and ethnic minorities from selecting to branch Army aviation.

According to the U.S. Army Combined Arms Center (CAC), Army aviation candidates must possess specific intelligences, skills, knowledge, behaviors, and talent priorities (figure 8). Their talents must demonstrate them to be prudent risk-takers, interpersonal, interdisciplinary, spatially intelligent, innovative, and multi-taskers (Army Aviation n.d.). While the branch is open to officers with academic backgrounds that span the entire spectrum of disciplines and majors (knowledge), the CAC lists fourteen different behaviors (in addition to foundational ones). These recommend that a candidate be adaptable, agile, a critical thinker, disciplined, flexible, independent, demonstrate initiative, be innovative, intellectually curious, perceptive, precise, problem-solving, a prudent risk-taker, and stress-tolerant. Notably, this seemingly exhaustive list omits the terms compassionate, collaborative, ethical-moral, expert, inclusive, inspiring, integrator, team player, thoughtful, visionary that are mentioned by other branches. In addition to the intelligences of bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and spatial, aviation officers must have the skills that result in their ability to “quickly and effectively analyze situations, rapidly process and prioritize requirements and actions, communicate effectively and make independent and integrity-based decisions” (Army Aviation n.d.).

In stark contrast, the transportation branch focuses on mindsets over skillsets; they approach this by stating that transportation officers are “leaders who deliver outcomes, but also embrace and promote diversity, possess empathy and compassion for others, and create environments where individuals are accepted, understood and valued” (Branching

2021). It can be argued that those skills can be valued by both “skillset branches” and “mindset” branches.



US Army Combined Arms Center
SOLDIERS AND LEADERS - OUR ASYMMETRIC ADVANTAGE



Aviation

Cadets

INTELLIGENCES: Bodily-Kinesthetic, Interpersonal, Spatial

SKILLS: Aviation Officers must be able to understand, process, and translate vast amounts of data into understandable concepts. As such, they must master concepts across multiple disciplines (e.g., air and ground combat operations) while integrating them into an operational perspective in order to support their maneuver partners. Aviation Officers must also be capable of rapid visualization, possess an acute sensitivity to visual details and spatial relationships, and be able to orient multiple dimensions with ease. Aviation Officers must think creatively, in an innovative and novel fashion, devising solutions and responses to unforeseen challenges in the most effective, yet prudent fashion. As a result, Aviation Officers quickly and effectively analyze situations, rapidly process and prioritize requirements and actions, communicate effectively, and make independent and integrity-based decisions.

KNOWLEDGE: The Aviation Branch desires officers with academic backgrounds that span the entire spectrum of disciplines and majors offered at our nation's educational institutions. Broad individual experiences contribute to the success of the branch.

➤ **RELEVANT TRAINING / EXPERIENCE:** Cadet Troop Leading Time in combat arms, military intelligence, logistics, or air traffic control. Small unit leadership responsibilities requiring independent operations with minimal oversight. Leading higher ranking cadets or peers (1SG, COs, etc.), and small teams with honor and respect, and an emphasis on communication and problem solving while under a stressful timeline.

➤ **RELEVANT CERTIFICATIONS / ACCREDITATIONS:** Airborne, Air Assault, Pathfinder, Civil Fixed Wing License, Combat Lifesaver, Master Fitness Trainer (not all inclusive).

BEHAVIORS: (In addition to foundational)

➤ ADAPTABLE	➤ DISCIPLINED	➤ INITIATIVE	➤ PERCEPTIVE	➤ PRUDENT RISK TAKER
➤ AGILE	➤ FLEXIBLE	➤ INNOVATIVE	➤ PRECISE	➤ STRESS TOLERANT
➤ CRITICAL THINKER	➤ INDEPENDENT	➤ INTELLECTUALLY CURIOUS	➤ PROBLEM SOLVING	

TALENT PRIORITIES:

1. **PRUDENT RISK TAKER:** Acts boldly yet maintains appropriate focus upon personnel, Soldiers, and unit safety.
2. **INTERPERSONAL:** Skilled in developing appropriate relationships. Able to connect with others to achieve positive results.
3. **INTERDISCIPLINARY:** Synthesizes and applies knowledge from multiple disciplines into a coherent overarching perspective.
4. **SPATIALLY INTELLIGENT:** Easily perceives, understands, and operates within the multi-dimensional world.
5. **INNOVATIVE:** Creative, inquisitive, and insightful. Easily identifies new solutions and catalyzes change.
6. **MULTI-TASKER:** Rapidly processes and prioritizes multiple demands simultaneously. Takes appropriate action.


1

Figure 8. Aviation Talent Demand

Source: Branching 2021.

The *Army People Strategy* focuses on recruitment to Acquire Talent (i.e., LOE 1) and to Develop Talent (i.e., LOE 2). The policy seeks to recruit diverse military talents to produce the Multi-Domain Operations capable force of 2035 that the *Army Strategy*

envisions. The Army must revisit current systems to better understand and appreciate Soldier and Civilian talents. This will enable the Army to maximize individuals’ talents and target their development needs (U.S. Army 2019, 7). LOE 3, Employ Talent, aligns Soldiers and Civilians with positions that unleash their passions and talents, maximizing their performance and productivity (U.S. Army 2019, 7). According to the Army People Strategy: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Annex, Goal 2 aims to “institutionalize the talent management processes to acquire, develop, employ, and retain a cadre of high performing Soldiers and Civilians to address diversity in senior military and civilian leaders” (U.S. Army 2020, 9). The goal is especially important when recruiting racial and ethnic minority cadet prospects and future Army aviators.

Table 4. Evaluation Criteria: Recruiting

	Espoused without policy or emphasis	Written in policy but without emphasis	Applied through emphasized policy
What is the Army doing to recruit racial and ethnic minorities into Army aviation at its commissioning sources (USMA/ROTC)?			
Talent-based Branching process			X
Qualified to Branch Aviation		X	
Army People Strategy Diversity Outreach and Recruitment		X	
Officer Assignments ROTC & USMA		X	

Source: Created by author.

Talent-based Branching Process

Analyzing policies against the second secondary question, to include current data from the AY21 branching results from ROTC and USMA, the branching process has evolved to incorporate cadet and branch commandant's input. It is up to the branch to decide the type of future officer they are looking for by examining the cadet's espoused desired Knowledge, Skills, and Behaviors. Nonetheless, branch commandants' biases may affect the decision on which cadets are identified as "Preferred" for the branch. Cadets are also affected by how they view themselves, their mentors, and the outcomes of the TAB. This change led them to believe that they are better suited for a different branch than they may have initially preferred.

Aviation is a high demand branch that generally reaches its branch allocation by assigning cadets who preference it as their number one choice. According to DMPM, racial and ethnic minority cadets at USMA prefer aviation at a lower rate than other branches. Only 54 of the 224 cadets in the Class of 2021 who picked aviation as their number one preference were racial and ethnic minorities (Post 2020, slide 6). Like USMA, ROTC has low representation of racial and ethnic minority cadets who preference aviation as their number one choice. Out of 606 cadets who selected aviation as their first preference, only 119 of those first preferences came from racial and ethnic minority cadets. ROTC has had a steady increase of racial and ethnic minority cadets assigned to aviation; however, it is disproportionately lower than of white cadets as well as compared to USMA (table 5). Additionally, according to DMPM, USMA has had a slight increase of racial and ethnic minority cadets assigned to aviation since the

implementation of the talent-based branching process, however, the numbers remained at 22 percent for the Class of 2020 and Class of 2021 (table 5).

Table 5. Assigned Aviation Demographics

Commissioning Source	USMA		ROTC	
Race	White	Other	White	Other
YG2021	78%	22%	81%	18%
YG2020	79%	22%	85%	14%
YG2019	83%	17%	84%	12%

Source: Created by author using Post 2020, slides 2 and 3.

Qualified to Branch Aviation

Unfortunately, the talent-based branching process does not tackle how aviation can recruit highly qualified cadets from diverse backgrounds. Nonetheless, aviation addresses a step-by-step process of what cadets must do to become qualified to branch aviation. Racial and ethnic minority cadets from both ROTC and USMA qualify at considerably lower rates than that of white cadets. Of the 163 USMA cadets who qualified, only 38 were racial and ethnic minorities. Additionally, only 35 of the 229 ROTC cadets who qualified were racial and ethnic minorities (Post 2020, slide 9). However, once qualified, racial, and ethnic minority cadets are assigned aviation at the same rates as qualified white cadets (Post 2020, slide 9). Can USMA or ROTC recruit early on knowing that some racial and ethnic minority cadets are suited for Army aviation, keeping them on track to branch aviation instead of letting them gravitate to the support branches that their predecessors have historically chosen?

Lack of qualified ROTC racial and ethnic minority cadets can be attributed to a number of reasons. First, by the time a minority cadet decides on branching aviation, there may not be enough time for them to take the SIFT and complete the flight physical in time for branching assessments. Historically, racial and ethnic minority cadets do not show interest in aviation early in their cadet career because of previously addressed structural and perceptual barriers. However, for the Class of 2021, aviation branch representatives held an informative session with cadets with Tuskegee University to dispel myths and answer questions about the branch (Morris 2020). This effort is heading in the right direction of recruiting racial and ethnic minority cadets early enough to allow them enough time to qualify. Second, testing locations are considerably more difficult for ROTC cadets to get to depending on the location of the testing facility and its distance from the school. This especially has been an issue in the past for minority cadets enrolled in ROTC programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Army People Strategy Diversity Outreach and Recruitment

The *Army People Strategy* seeks to “develop and implement mechanisms to efficiently integrate and synchronize army diversity outreach and recruitment strategies to achieve optimal leader participation and acquire highly qualified Soldiers and Civilians from diverse backgrounds” (U.S. Army 2020, 10). The *Army People Strategy* emphasizes Soldiers and Civilians; however, the U.S. Army cannot afford to sacrifice the recruitment of talented racial and ethnic minorities for ROTC programs. Moreover, the Army Aviation branch recruitment endeavors must put emphasis on early recruitment of racial and ethnic minorities, so they are not omitted from the condensed qualified timeline.

Officer Assignments ROTC and USMA

Even though the branching process does not significantly differ between USMA and ROTC, cadet professional development and branching mentorship at the various commissioning sources does. Professional development differences between ROTC and USMA differ in many ways; however, the most noteworthy is the sheer number of officers available to mentor at USMA compared to ROTC programs. Not only are there a considerable number of officers at West Point, most if not all, have a master's degree. Additionally, the quality of officer assigned to West Point is thoroughly examined by the Academy's Staff and Faculty as well as the officer's career manager prior to being assigned. However, the same diligence is not done when screening officers as ROTC cadre. It is too early to determine if the Army's Talent Alignment Process will have any positive effect on assigning top-quality officers to ROTC programs. Therefore, the aviation branch must continue to maximize effort in virtual mentoring programs for racial and ethnic ROTC cadets.

Analysis of Third Secondary Question: what is the Army doing to retain racial and ethnic minorities in Army Aviation?

Historically, the U.S. Army put forth little to no effort to record the race or ethnicity of Army officers who filled key developmental roles and went on to compete for Centralized Selection List (CSL) command. Therefore, it is difficult to address the number of racial and ethnic minority aviation officers who followed the "proper path" for pipeline progression to compete for battalion and brigade command. Additionally, it is challenging to address attrition rates of racial and ethnic Army aviators because this information is not readily available to the public. However, the U.S. Army is making

strides when it comes to addressing talent management concerns. Only time will tell if the Army Talent Alignment Process will affect retention of racial and ethnic minority officers and support for their progression to battalion and brigade command.

Three years before the publication of the Army People Strategy, the Talent Management Task Force was established in 2016. In fact, as early as 2009, the U.S. Army sought to implement strategies of success, explicitly focusing on talent, for its officer corps. The U.S. Army identified the need to enhance readiness by changing the Officer Personnel Management System (OPMS) and addressing talent management. According to the U.S. Army's Talent Management Task Force website, "The Army is developing a new Talent Management system to acquire, develop, employ, and retain talent for the future" (U.S. Army n.d.). Essentially, the Army is endeavoring to position the right officer with the right skills in the right job to increase both work performance and job satisfaction. As for the Army's take on talent, the TMTF describes as a "unique intersection of knowledge, skills, behaviors, and preferences (KSB-Ps) in every officer" (U.S. Army n.d.). Identifying KSB-Ps in the talent matching process will aid in the assignment process, how officers are promoted, and showing the career path the officer chooses to pursue.

The 2019 National Defense Authorization Act granted the U.S. Army nine new authorities which will help to implement the future talent-based system. With these authorities, the U.S. Army has several more tools to meet the challenges of 21st century warfare. First, the Army Talent Alignment Process (ATAP) is enabled by AIM 2.0 software and provides greater individual and commander influence on job assignments. Conducting officer management through a talent-based approach allows the Army to

better understand the individual and their unique talents. Officers are not interchangeable parts and, to enhance readiness, the Army must maximize human potential. Second, talent assessments must occur to gather data about an officer's talent. Current assessments are Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) given to officers at the Captains Career Course, the Battalion Commander Assessment Program (BCAP), and the Colonels Command Assessment Program (CCAP). Third, the U.S. Army wants to develop options so officers can have flexible career paths. Lastly, the Army intends to modernize promotion and selection processes.

This thesis will discuss three parts to the 21st Century Talent Management System that have been implemented: the ATAP's AIM marketplace, the BCAP, and modernization to the promotion and selection processes.

The Assignment Interactive Module, or AIM, is web-based software that helps provide data to the U.S. Army Human Resources Command (HRC) to best place the right officer in the right assignment at the right time. In short, AIM enables commanders and officers to communicate their needs and preferences with each other. Theoretically, officers are given more control over their careers while the unit is still allowed a vote on whom they select. Most importantly, the marketplace encourages and facilitates officers and units to communicate amongst each other.

The Battalion Commander Assessment Program changes the Army's longstanding promotion board and follow-on centralized selection list process. Major General Joseph P. McGee, Talent Management Task Force Director, explained the BCAP process and the fiscal year 22 results on the podcast, *From The Green Notebook*. In an episode titled "The Battalion Commander Assessment Program Results Explained," he described that the

goal of the new officer management system is to move from an industrial based system to an information age-based system that provides information rich data about the officer (McGee 2021). In this effort, BCAP allows officers to be analyzed holistically before selection for command. The BCAP selection consists of a five-day process with the following assessments: file review before entrance to BCAP, written and verbal communication skills, physical fitness, and psychological assessment. There are also peer and subordinate feedback mechanisms and a double-blind interview.

The double-blind interview, known as the Army Comprehensive Talent Interview, consists of panel of five Army senior leaders. This thesis will explain how the interview is designed to reduce bias toward minority officers. A Harvard Business Review article titled “Reinventing the Leader Selection Process: The U.S. Army’s new approach to managing talent” by Colonel Everett Spain discussed the strategies to mitigate biases implemented through the BCAP interview process. Colonel Spain presented five critical points. First, each panel will be diverse, comprised of personnel with different genders, ethnicities, specialties, and previous assignments. Second, each panel member will receive in-depth antibias training, with refresher training each morning prior to the start of interviews. This training informs panel members how to mitigate several types of biases, including *primacy*, *contract*, *halo/horn*, *stereotyping*, and *similar-to-me*. Third, panelists are not able to evaluate candidates they know. Fourth, to level the playing field between those who present well during an interview and those who are more introverted, candidates are instructed to use the “STAR Method” when answering questions. The Star Method consists of describing the situation, explaining the task, detailing the action taken, and recounting the result. Finally, the interviews will be double-blind. The Boston

Symphony Orchestra originated the double-blind practice in 1952 when it conducted interviews with a black curtain separating the candidates from the panelist. While this process reduces judgment, it does not eliminate biases altogether as candidates' voices can reveal gender and accents and speaking styles might give away specific demographics. While it is unclear how the BCAP process will impact senior leader diversity, specifically the interview element, clearly the data collected through the BCAP process will set the foundation for future assessments of officers of varying ranks and positions.

The U.S. Army promotion and selection system changed considerably following the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act. The authority was granted for Army officers to opt out of promotion boards; in effect, this allows officers to participate in advanced educational programs or special assignments without adversely affecting their pipeline progression. Additionally, officers are granted the choice to opt-in to promotion if they completed the Captains' Career Course, completed key developmental positions, or have completed 24 or more months in a functional area. A further change is the merit promotion initiative, which replaces the "below the zone" system. The merit promotion initiative allows promotion selection boards to recommend that officers of merit be placed higher on the promotion list so that they are promoted at the beginning of the list's execution. Whether an officer has a choice to opt-out or opt-in of a promotion board or the board selects them as an officer of high merit, it is important to address in this thesis focuses on if racial or ethnic officers have the same chance for promotion as their white peers, especially when subjective evaluations are still being considered. On 8 July 2020, the U.S. Army issued a Military Personnel (MILPER) Message stating the elimination of

Department of the Army (DA) photos, race, ethnicity, and gender data on officer record briefs for officers during selection boards. This is in addition to Army Regulation 623-3, Evaluation Reporting System, which prohibits comments or remarks that draw attention to differences relating to race, color, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, or national origin. Moreover, this regulation states that subjective evaluation of a rated soldier will not reflect a rating official's personal bias or prejudice (HQDA 2019b, 58).

Talent management is one of five DEI strategic goals of the *Army People Strategy* and, along with its six objectives, helps address the critical role of leveraging the talent of the Army's diverse workforce. One of the objectives of the talent management goal is creating and maintaining an equitable and inclusive environment that helps the Army to acquire and retain qualified personnel from diverse backgrounds. This goal focuses on building trust throughout the force by creating a positive work environment that embraces diverse viewpoints, encouraging creativity and innovation. Achievement of the goal will result in the implementation of the total force strategic plan that expands diversity, equitable treatment, and inclusion throughout the Army (U.S. Army 2020, 13).

Table 6. Evaluation Criteria: Retention

	Espoused without policy or emphasis	Written in policy but without emphasis	Applied through emphasized policy
What is the Army doing to retain racial and ethnic minorities in Army Aviation?			
Assignment Interactive Module		X	
Battalion Commander Assessment Program			X
Modernized Promotion System		X	

Source: Created by author.

Assignment Interactive Module

ATAP is making progress in its endeavors, especially with the Assignment Interactive Module; however, there continue to be underlying issues with the system, such as needs of the Army almost exclusively outweighing needs of the soldier. Even though the marketplace is functional, officers are often selected for assignments that they did not preference while others subvert the marketplace system altogether through unofficial methods between career managers, units, and officers. Moreover, these methods undermine the AIM marketplace and the intent of ATAP. While there was a 45 percent success rate for one-to-one matches during the Fiscal Year 20-2 cycle, the remaining 55 percent who potentially matched with a unit which they did not preference or was on the very low end of their list (U.S. Army n.d.). Though there is no doubt that the Talent Management Task Force (TMTF) is requesting feedback to improve the system, it is uncertain how many officers will leave the Army because the AIM marketplace is not working in their favor.

Moreover, the subjectivity of KSB-Ps makes it difficult for an officer to sell him or herself to a prospective unit. There is little feedback or assessment to help an officer determine if he or she selected the KSB-Ps valued by a given unit. Currently, junior officers take the GRE at the Captains' Career Course; this may help inform officers of their KSB-Ps. Officers grow and change over time and with each assignment, therefore, TMTF is implementing an assessment at each level of PME that can be used to gauge the KSB-Ps prior to future assignment changes.

According to John Kotter's 2014 book, *Accelerate*, which is an update to his original version, *Leading Change*, the fifth step of the 8-step process for leading change requires removing barriers to enable action (Kotter 2014). Racial and ethnic minority officers are often underrepresented at command selection boards due to a lack of key assignment selection during pipeline progression. Racial and ethnic minority officers seldom receive guidance and coaching to assist them when selecting assignments, which is especially crucial when selecting preference for assignment in AIM. Moreover, because units continue to ask for Officer Evaluation Reports (OER) when putting together packets for interviews, they will often know the interviewee's race and ethnicity and may still be biased for or against them, whether consciously or unconsciously. Additionally, while the Army may have removed DA photos from promotion boards, the marketplace runs on interviews. As we've previously discussed, interviews and interviewers can be biased based on structural barriers, which need to be removed to fix the assignment process. As stated by Kotter, "innovation is less about generating brand new ideas and more about knocking down barriers to making those ideas a reality" (Kotter 2014, 23).

Battalion Commander Assessment Program

Ensuring BCAP's continued success, General McConville asked senior leaders to weigh-in on the assessment to show that the senior leadership is behind the program and that leaders at all echelons should back it too (Spain 2020). According to Kotter's model, the second step of building a guiding coalition is the nerve center of the 8-Step Process. Without it, an organization will continue to rely on traditional ways of operating (Kotter 2014) The results and subsequent data following BCAP 21, BCAP 22, and CCAP 22 have set the foundation for the future management of officers and how forthcoming assessment programs will be conducted (McGee 2021). However, data still does not provide insight into whether the assessment programs support or further hinder racial and ethnic minorities. Moreover, officers must still go through the original CSL selection process and be invited by their branch to participate in the assessment. Data is showing is that some officers who typically would not have been selected based on the old system are now being selected, with this more subjective system. This is because they are more physically fit, have better verbal and written communication skills, score well on cognitive and non-cognitive assessments, and are less toxic. Officers may not be selected for command because they failed the height and weight requirement, failed the Army Physical Fitness Test, or received negative comments from their Army Talent Comprehensive Interview. However, those not selected for command can attend a second assessment held within the same fiscal year. While BCAP is in its initial stages, it is evaluated as a policy applied through emphasis because of the amount of time, effort, and leader support to ensure the right leaders are selected to lead America's sons and daughters.

Modernized Promotion System

According to the Directorate of Military Personnel Management (DMPM), U.S. Army Aviation has the lowest ratio of officer diversity compared to the other 17 branches (Post 2020). In June 2020, only 15 percent of aviation officers were considered racial and ethnic minorities (Post 2020). The next lowest ratio was the Infantry branch, with 21 percent of its officers labeled as “other” compared to 79 percent white officers. The branch with the highest ratio of diverse officers was Adjutant General (AG), with 48 percent of its officer population considered diverse. The second highest was Quartermaster, with 46 percent of its officer population diverse and 54 percent of the officers being white. The data shows more than three times the number of diverse officers in AG and 11 percent more diverse officers in Field Artillery (the highest number of diverse officers among the combat arms branches) than in the Aviation branch. So, the question is, why does aviation have less diversity among its officer corps than other branches?

In June of 2020, unpublished data pulled by DMPM on diversity by rank among aviation officers, showed a drop in the number of diverse officers who represent 2nd Lieutenants compared to those diverse officers who represent Captains (18 percent compared to 14 percent diverse officers represented). Additionally, following promotion to Major, there is a steady decrease in diversity among the Lieutenant Colonel, Colonel, and General Officer levels. Diversity at the rank of Major is 15 percent, with 13 and 12 percent diversity among the LTC and COL ranks, respectively. However, there was no racial or ethnic diversity at the rank of Brigadier General.

While the U.S. Army is implementing initiatives to remove biases from promotion boards by eliminating DA photos, race, ethnicity, and gender identification data on officer record briefs, the board is still heavily reliant on a quick overview of the officer's profile, which consists of subjective evaluations. Additionally, the new promotion board opt-out option may give an opportunity for a racial or ethnic minority officers to obtain one more evaluation that could improve their chances for selection. However, it is too early to review any data that might support this outcome. The fact of the matter is that there are not enough racial and ethnic minority aviation officers at the company, battalion, and brigade command levels—and when the senior leaders do not look like you, you are less likely to pursue a career in the Army. While there are substantial change efforts in the U.S. Army's People Strategy, there remain structural and perceptual barriers—as well as individual mindsets and biases—that may hinder either the advancement of racial or ethnic minorities or the desire for those officers to remain in the Army or, at least, the aviation branch.

Analysis of Fourth Secondary Question: how can
cross-racial mentorship support diversity?

Unlike the earlier analysis of secondary questions, there are no formal policies to address the fourth secondary question as there are no current policies regarding cross-racial mentorship within the U.S. Army. The U.S. Army recognized the term mentorship for some time; however, until recently, it did prescribe guidance on mentoring relationships, mentor training programs, or mentor-protégé matching tools. Interestingly, the U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Navy did these things (MLDC 2011a, 34). To fix this shortfall, the 2020 *Army People Strategy* DEI Annex aims to “enhance mentorship,

coaching guidance and processes to ensure professional development opportunities extend across the Army” (U.S. Army 2020, 10). Though the U.S. Army, through the DEI annex to the People Strategy, is looking ahead to retain talent through inclusive practices, it is essential first to understand the Army’s current practices.

Before the publication of the Army People Strategy, the Center for Army Leadership (CAL) developed an interactive Field Manual (FM), FM 6-22 Leader Development, which is still considered a “living doctrine supplement” and provides leaders with tools to develop themselves and their subordinates. As an example of its benefit, the platform supplies a practice tool that presents techniques of scheduling time to speak to subordinates and ways to seek opportunities to coach on specific issues, whether on or off duty (HQDA 2015b).

In 2019, CAL published an updated Army Doctrine Publication (ADP), ADP 6-22, Army Leadership and the Profession. The most meaningful change is that this ADP explains to leaders how they can best develop subordinates through counseling, coaching, mentoring by defining each role and how they compare to one another (HQDA 2019a). According to the publication, leaders are responsible for developing others, preparing themselves in areas of leader responsibility, creating a positive environment, and stewarding the profession (HQDA 2019a, 6-1). The ADP states that leaders must consider how they approach relationships with subordinates, how they assess the developmental needs of those subordinates through feedback mechanisms, and, ultimately, how they foster learning. The recommended steps and the benefits of this process follow.

First, leaders should counsel their subordinates. According to ADP 6-22, “counseling is a process used by leaders to guide subordinates to improve performance and develop their potential” (HQDA 2019a, 6-10). The purpose of counseling is to review the subordinate’s duty description, identify past or current performance objectives and highlight future goals. According to ADP 6-22, the three principles of counseling are that it should be conducted within the chain of command, it is considered a requirement associated with performance evaluations, and it can be formal or informal. Moreover, the Officer Evaluation Report (OER) support form must have recorded formal counseling dates. Counseling is especially useful when the rater finds a specific need to address. Finally, commanders should emplace counseling systems for all subordinates they rate or senior rate.

Second, coaching helps leaders understand their own current level of performance and identify ways to maximize their potential. Coaches are considered experts in their field and are assigned to leaders to create focus goals, create self-awareness, uncover potential, eliminate developmental barriers, and develop plans of action (HQDA 2019a, 6-10). To maximize the benefit of their knowledge and expertise, coaches should be outside the chain of command and can be either assigned voluntarily or mandated. Over the last few years, the U.S. Army piloted the Army Coaching Program (ACP) at the Captains Career Course and the Army Command and General Staff Officer Course. In May 2020, the Army BCAP gave candidates the opportunity to participate in the ACP. According to the Talent Management Task Force website, “The Army Coaching Program is a non-attributional, officer-focused, confidential, and career-long program” (Talent Management n.d.). While officers can opt-in to receive development from certified

coaches following the BCAP and CCAP assessments, students at BOLC, CCC, and CGSOC continue to receive mandatory coaching from their small group leaders.

The last principle to consider under the umbrella of leader development is mentoring. According to ADP 6-22, “mentorship is a voluntary developmental relationship that exists between a person of greater experience and a person of lesser experience that is characterized by mutual trust and respect” (HQDA 2019a, 6-11). While counseling and coaching are strictly professional, mentorship is an opportunity for leaders and subordinates to engage in conversation at the personal level. Most importantly, mentorship requires a mutual agreement between the mentor and protégé. Often, the mentor applies experience, shares knowledge, and supplies challenges to the protégé to aid in their professional and personal growth (HQDA 2019a).

Though assessments are not considered a leader’s principal role in leader development, they help supply the feedback and individual awareness that counseling, coaching, and mentorship strive to reach. According to FM 6-22, assessments are enablers for learning and are divided into three categories: formal, semiformal, and informal (HQDA 2015a, 2-5). Formal assessments are performance evaluations and command climate surveys. Semiformal assessments are multi-source assessments and 360 degrees leader-feedback for self-assessment. Informal assessments come from day-to-day observations and sensing sessions with advice from peers and supervisors alike. In the future, the Army intends to integrate assessment opportunities at various levels of officer professional military education. For example, officers attending BOLC, CCC, or CGSOC will have an opportunity to make use of the newly integrated Project Athena Leader Self-Development Tool. Project Athena provides officers with an understanding

of their leadership, cognitive, and personal qualities to aid in their career progression and performance.

Table 7. Evaluation Criteria: Mentorship

	Espoused without policy or emphasis	Written in policy but without emphasis	Applied through emphasized policy
How can cross-racial mentorship support diversity formations?			
Counseling			X
Army Coaching Program		X	
Mentorship (Cross-racial)	X		
Formal Assessment Programs		X	

Source: Created by author.

Counseling

Counseling has been—and remains—a critical tool for Soldiers and officers alike. It serves as a conduit of feedback on performance from either a rater or senior rater. The U.S. Army’s emphasis on counseling in doctrine, professional military education programs, and within organizations of all levels justifies analysis through the evaluation criteria of “Applied through emphasized policy.” While the effectiveness of counseling varies with leaders, units, and organizations, its importance is stressed at all levels within the total force. Since counseling varies with leaders and organizations, it is difficult to assess whether it hinders or supports racial and ethnic minority officers’ performance, potential, retention, or pipeline progression to the next rank or position. Regardless, leaders need to counsel all subordinates, not just the ones they favor.

Coaching

While the updated doctrine highlights multiple ways to approach coaching, it describes it as a developmental technique that differs from the ACP's approach. A coach is not just a leader, but someone credentialed and certified to guide an office. However, there is no need to discredit ADP 6-22's definition and approach to coaching if leaders know and understand the difference between counseling, coaching, and mentoring individuals when using the coaching principal during the developmental process.

To the benefit of racial and ethnic minority officers, ADP 6-22 states that a coach can help a subordinate end structural or perceptual developmental barrier by implementing effective plans and resources to progress and improve performance. While the ADP does not say how this approach can assist with areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion, it does provide a method in which a coach can help identify developmental needs that may hinder a subordinate's ability to get past barriers (HQDA 2019a, 6-10). Unfortunately, whether informally or through the Army Coaching Program, coaching in the U.S. Army is still a voluntary program into which racial and ethnic minorities may not opt-in. With any luck, the ACP will reach all officers and aid them assessing and making use of their talents.

Cross-Racial Mentoring

Undoubtedly, as long as there has been a U.S. Army there have been numerous types of mentor and protégé relationships between officers. Views on formal and informal mentorship have changed throughout the years, varying with organizations and leaders; however, leaders have assuredly, consistently desired that their protégés succeed. The U.S. Army has always been eager to keep mentor/mentee relationships voluntary, as

mandating them may inhibit their effectiveness. ADP 6-22 recognizes mentorship as a means to develop leaders and it characterizes how that mentorship can guide personal and professional growth.

Unfortunately, doctrine neither emphasizes nor even discusses cross-racial mentorship. Officers of all branches value and espouse the importance of mentorship; however, there is no formal education on the significance of cross-racial or cross-gender mentoring. The formal aviation branch mentoring program at USMA may be the vanguard for cross-racial mentorship, but only if there are enough racial and ethnic minority aviation officers to mentor or and enough racial and ethnic minority aviation cadets to be mentored. Meanwhile, ROTC cadets may not consistently receive formal branch mentorship depending on their group. Although ROTC cadets may have a challenging time finding an aviator mentor, the U.S. Army aviation branch has shifted its focus to providing cadets with diversity mentorship events.

Assessments

Assessments are now a key component of officer development as the U.S. Army shifts its focus through the Army People Strategy. Gone are the days of 360-degree assessment block checks on the OER support form. Assessments like the Project Athena Leader Self-Development tool support racial and ethnic minority officers with insight. Additionally, this assessment will be conducted at the various levels of PME (CCC, CGSOC, BCAP, Senior Service College), which will provide officers with an understanding of their developmental needs for promotion and help to measure their competency to perform against KSBs. The most crucial factor to consider going forward

is whether these assessments will continue to supply data to the U.S. Army and help its leaders make informed decisions to improve talent use.

Aggregation and Analysis of Steps 2-5

Table 8. Evaluation Criteria with Policy Totals

	Espoused without policy or emphasis	Written in policy but without emphasis	Applied through emphasized policy
How does racial and ethnic diversity support Army Aviation in the fight to win our nation's wars?		2	1
What is the Army doing to recruit racial and ethnic minorities into Army aviation at its commissioning sources (USMA/ROTC)?		3	1
What is the Army doing to retain racial and ethnic minorities in Army aviation?		2	1
How can cross-racial mentorship support diversity formations?	1	2	1
Total Policies Evaluated	1	9	4

Source: Created by author.

This thesis shows that not more than ten years ago, the U.S. Army was no farther along in its quest for diversity, equity, and inclusion among its force than during the Cold War when it integrated black soldiers in all white units. However, the strides in developing policy and how senior leaders are emphasizing diversity has been encouraging. The aggregated data illustrates that of the 14 policies analyzed, one policy is espoused without policy or emphasis, nine policies are written without emphasis acts in the interest of minorities, but address concerns within the secondary questions, and four are applied and its policy is enforced through strategic messaging and action from senior leaders through leaders at the lowest levels.

The leading challenge for an organization as large as the U.S. Army, which has units spread across the world, is to ensure that written policies cross the threshold of action, and are enforced through appropriate leader influence. Current senior leaders are calling for the necessary change to move the organization from a monolithic institution that treats its people like interchangeable parts into an organization focused on valuing diversity, inclusion and converging the right people in the right job at the right time. Nonetheless, the Army cannot lose its momentum in paving the way for change by executing its goals and objectives of the Army Campaign Plan, Army People Strategy, and Army talent management process. Additionally, the four policies identified as applied through emphasis and enforced by strategic messaging will continue to require refinement to support the recruitment and retention of minority aviation officers.

Answer to Primary Research Question

This chapter considered the primary research question: Should the U.S. Army change current recruiting and retention policies to support racial and ethnic minority

aviation officers, which engenders diversity of thought and increased cross-racial mentorship to enhance the combat effectiveness of the aviation branch? Yes, the U.S. Army should change its policies, to varying degrees, to support racial and ethnic minority aviation officers. Many of the policies analyzed require slight modification and or emphasis by leaders at all echelons. While other policies deserve increased focus and research for implantation.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an analysis of the current implementation and plans of the *Army People Strategy* while showing shortfalls regarding racial and ethnic minority officers especially within the Army aviation branch. The next chapter will focus on the way forward, informed by future research and recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter Introduction

The research and analysis of this thesis explored the primary research question: Should the U.S. Army change current recruiting and retention policies to support racial and ethnic minority officers, which engenders diversity of thought and increased cross-racial mentorship to enhance the combat effectiveness of the aviation branch? The answer to the primary research question is, yes, at varying degrees, changing current policies will enhance recruitment initiatives of racial and ethnic minority cadets, support retention of highly qualified racial and ethnic minority aviation officers, and create diverse teams that will maximize the combat effectiveness of the U.S. Army aviation branch.

Conclusions

This thesis examined 14 existing U.S. Army policies that have the potential to promote diversity of racial and ethnic minority officers in the U.S. Army aviation branch. Using a qualitative research step-by-step approach, this thesis measured the effectiveness of the policies against the following evaluation criteria: espoused without policy or emphasis; written in policy but without emphasis; and applied through emphasized policy. The analysis of the evaluation criteria found that the U.S. Army should consider the immediate change of four of the 14 policies to align with the Chief of Staff of the Army's "people first" initiative, valuing diversity within the organization along with the recruitment and retention of highly qualified racial and ethnic minority aviation officers.

The U.S. Army should consider providing the total force with the training and education necessary to root out biases and increase cultural competency. Senior leaders currently receive in-depth anti-bias training at the Battalion Commander Assessment Program; leaders down to squad-level should receive the same training. This training and education focuses on stereotyping, attributional errors and blind-spot biases within the formation. Quality training and education will foster an organizational culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion by making them a part of professional military education and daily interactions.

In addition to the in-depth anti-bias training and cultural competency education, the U.S. Army should encourage branches to re-examine their approaches to marketing through the talent-based branching process. While individual branches are entrusted to produce their own talent demands, it is evident that there is a variance in the level of priority certain branches place on promoting diversity. For example, logistics branches tend to deliberately market themselves to racial and ethnic minority officers while the aviation branch values the technical skills and cognitive abilities of its individual officers over the diversity of its branch. Without minimizing the importance of technical skills and cognitive abilities, the aviation branch should strive to follow the logistics branches' lead by employing explicit language within its talent demands which promote diversity and inclusiveness. Moreover, the aviation branch itself should advocate for early recruitment of racial and ethnic minority cadets so that they can qualify in time for branching. Proactive measures such as virtual question and answer forums with racial and ethnic minority officers will help minority cadets—especially those who are negatively influenced by structural and perceptual barriers—view aviation as an attainable goal.

During the talent-based branching interview process, eliminating biases by conducting double-blind interview and anti-bias training, branch commandants could reduce biases when considering the preference ranking of the cadets they interview.

The U.S. Army should immediately revisit the Assignment Interactive Module 2.0 process and its implementation. While the current framework is designed to improve personnel management for active-duty officers through collaboration with units and transparency of available assignments, the process needs refinement. Officers who do not have the tools or guidance to sell themselves through KSB-Ps or the interview process will not gain a successful match. However, their inability to sell themselves does not mean that these officers lack talent; it simply means that they have not adapted to this new process. There are three issues with the current policy that the U.S. Army should consider. First, units should not request officer evaluation reports during the interview process. OERs are subjective and could create an unclear picture of an officer based on a snapshot in time that may not accurately reflect that officer. Even if an individual officer benefits from sharing his or her OERs, this should not be allowed writ large so as not to disadvantage those who do not wish to share. Second, double-blind interviews should be employed to remove biases by unit representatives. While a double-blind interview does not necessarily conceal a person's voice, tone, and language, it does remove visual biases. Too, senior leaders should not influence the matching process through "by name requests." Formal assessment programs, such as the Project Athena Leader Self-Development Tool, should be used to assist with developing and updating resumes. Moreover, career counselors should be available on every installation to assist with resume creation and facilitate mock interviews. Unfortunately, AIM 2.0 may become just

another structural barrier for racial and ethnic minority officers who do not have the network capabilities of their white counterparts.

Finally, the U.S. Army should consider creating a comprehensive database to collect data on why racial and ethnic minority aviation officers leave the Army when their initial service obligation is complete. Additional data collection regarding the reasons racial and ethnic minority officers transfer out of aviation to other branches or functional areas should be captured so that this data can be used to inform what the branch can do to best retain officers.

Table 9. Examined Policies for Change

	Espoused without policy or emphasis	Written in policy but without emphasis	Applied through emphasized policy
Army People Strategy Leader Commitment			X
Army People Strategy Training and Education		X	
Army People Strategy Equitable and Inclusive Environment		X	
Talent-based Branching Process			X
Qualified to Branch Aviation		X	
Army People Strategy Diversity Outreach and Recruitment		X	
Officer Assignment ROTC & USMA		X	
Assignment Interactive Module		X	
Battalion Commander Assessment Program			X
Modernized Promotion System		X	
Counseling			X
Army Coaching Program		X	
Mentorship (Cross- racial)	X		
Formal Assessment Programs		X	

Source: Created by author.

Recommendations for Decision Makers

There are several policies that the U.S. Army should consider revising to best support the recruitment and retention of racial and ethnic minority aviation officers. Moreover, U.S. Army policies should better align with the CSA's "people first" initiative.

First, the U.S. Army should consider Temporary Duty Assignment (TDY) to Fort Rucker, Alabama for all ROTC cadets who wish to take the SIFT and flight physical. This TDY trip should be available every summer before cadets' senior year, to ensure all interested cadets have the opportunity to become qualified. This would directly address the primary reason racial and ethnic minority cadets are unqualified for aviation: an inability to complete the SIFT or flight physical. Second, the U.S. Army should enhance the professional development of active-duty officers assigned to ROTC programs. Highly qualified officers should have the opportunity to attend graduate-level schooling prior to their ROTC assignment. This would provide them with the same opportunity as their USMA counterparts. This professional development would have two-fold benefit: it would enhance the development of the individual officer and it would contribute to the development of racial and ethnic minority cadets. Third, the U.S. Army should overhaul the current officer evaluation report (OER) system. The current report is subjective and vulnerable to biased opinions, which often negatively affects the successful pipeline progression of racial and ethnic minority officers. While the Army is taking strides with the *Army People Strategy* DEI Annex, several programs, including promotion boards and command assessment programs, continue to rely on OER assessments. To mitigate, the U.S. Army should consider emphasizing cross-racial and cross-gender mentorship in ADP 6-22. The revised ADP should also address the perceptual barriers that affect

minority officers, such as the perception that they are “unwelcome” or “unfit” for certain assignments typically. Codifying the benefits of cross-racial and cross-gender mentorship in doctrine would highlight the fact that mentorship reduces the barriers that hinder the self-development of racial and ethnic minority officers.

Recommendations for Future Research

This thesis addressed several recommended policy changes that require the attention of the U.S. Army to support the recruitment and retention of racial and ethnic minority aviation officers. However, some policies were not considered because they were either outside the scope of the research or are too new to understand their impacts. As a result, the following policies warrant research in the future.

Future research should seek to identify whether or not the SIFT hinders racial and ethnic minority cadets who wish to qualify to branch aviation. Regardless, Army aviation currently experiences difficulty qualifying racial and ethnic minority cadets. If the SIFT is a structural barrier to racial and ethnic minority cadets, the SIFT itself needs to be reviewed.

Because this thesis was written concurrent to the publication of the *Army People Strategy*, some policies of that strategy were too new for this thesis to identify recommendations for implementation or improvement. The implementation of the Army Talent Alignment Process (ATAP), powered by AIM 2.0, is designed to provide officers with greater ownership of their own careers and to align their talents with unit preferences. Future research should seek to determine if this new process empowers racial and ethnic minority officers to manage their own career paths. Finally, future researchers should explore if and how the modernized promotion system supports racial

and ethnic minority officers and their career progression. Ultimately, the question remains of whether or not the *Army People Strategy* is capable of engendering a diverse force which is both inclusive and equitable because the strategy itself is too new to clearly evaluate its results.

Closing Comments

Everything in war is very simple, but the simplest thing is difficult.
—Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*

The U.S. Army creates doctrine to provide its forces with ways to fight and win its Nation's wars. However, it is difficult to write a holistic set of policies that informs leaders of how to effectively lead people of different races, ethnicities, or genders. Throughout its history, the U.S. Army has attempted to integrate racial and ethnic minorities into its force successfully; several times the initiatives were unsuccessful. However, the nation's survival requires the creation and maintenance of a diverse army which reflects the nation that it is sworn to protect. "The time is now," said the Chief of Staff, General McConville, "to transform how we take care of our people, our doctrine, our organizations, our training, our equipment and how we compete around the world" (OCSA Staff 2020). However, it is not as simple as said. The U.S. Army requires a cultural shift as it ensures diversity, equity and inclusion among its force. This cultural shift requires a coalition of leaders who are ready to adopt policies and emphasize the importance of diversity and maximizing talent among the force.

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