

Growing the Ranks of African-American Infantry and Armor Officers

Part I: Introduction

The United States Army is widely recognized for its outstanding and well-deserved reputation for integrating previously excluded groups, specifically racial minorities and women. Presently, the Army has a shortage of senior African-American officers due to underrepresentation in the ground maneuver branches, Infantry and Armor. Both branches are central to the Army's core competencies: combined arms maneuver and wide area security,¹ where leaders apply the warfighting functions,² typically provided by operational support and force sustainment branches in the successful conduct of combat operations. Accordingly, Infantry and Armor produced 32% of the Army's currently serving general officers and ten of the Army's 12 four-star generals.³ However, African-Americans compose only six percent of the Infantry and Armor branches and only eight percent of the General Officer population,⁴ despite comprising 13 percent of the officer corps and 21 percent of the enlisted ranks.⁵ Thus, the Army faces the challenge of building a senior officer corps that represents the increasing diversity of the population it serves and the formation of Soldiers that they will lead.

General Raymond T. Odierno, the Army's 37th Chief of Staff, addressed the importance and difficulty of building diversity in the senior leader ranks through accessions into the Infantry and Armor branches during an address to ROCKS Incorporated⁶ on 30 March 2012 when he stated, "I don't know what's causing it [underrepresentation of African-Americans in Infantry and Armor], but it's something that

weighs heavily on me because I need African-American leaders at all ranks. It's critical to our moving forward and being successful."⁷ This project identifies some of the causes for the underrepresentation of African-Americans in the ground maneuver branches through addressing the question: "Why are African-Americans underrepresented in the Infantry and Armor branches?" This study will provide the Army's senior leadership with recommendations to increase the number of African-American Infantry and Armor officers by addressing the question: "How can the US Army increase the number of African-American Infantry and Armor Officers?"

Part II – The Underrepresentation Problem

Our Leadership Recognizes the Problem

Our national and military leadership are committed to understanding and addressing the challenge of growing diversity in the senior leader ranks in our Armed Forces. The underrepresentation of African-Americans in the Army's senior leadership is a subset of a larger issue for the US Armed Forces. A fact recognized by Congressman James E. Clyburn (D-SC), who stated, "Just as our military looks like America, so too must our general officers. If minorities are asked to go into harm's way, they must be allowed to lead as well." Congressman Clyburn continued, "A military that is proportionally representative of all races, cultures, and ethnicities increases the readiness and efficiency of our fighting forces."⁸ Consequently, Congress took action to address the importance of diversity in the senior leadership of our military by

establishing the Military Leadership Diversity Commission (MLDC) in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2009.

The Military Leadership Diversity Commission evaluated and assessed policies that provide opportunities for promotion and advancement for minority members of the Armed Forces, including minority senior officers. The commission's report, *From Representation to Inclusion: Diversity Leadership for the 21st Century Military*, proposed recommendations to assist the Armed Forces to develop demographically diverse leadership.⁹

Secretary of the Army, John M. McHugh, and General Odierno addressed challenges in officer talent management for racial minorities by issuing an "Action Plan to Address Disparate Trends in Officer Talent Management," on March 4, 2014. The action plan addresses negative trends in accessions, branching, key duty assignments, coaching, mentorship, assignment locations, promotion and retention for racial minorities in the Army. The Secretary and Chief of Staff of the Army assigned responsibility to the Department of the Army Headquarters and subordinate commands to address current challenges identified in the action plan, and to ensure continuous attention on divergent trends in Army officer talent management.¹⁰

Barriers to African-American Accessions in the Maneuver Branches

The Army operates a closed personnel system that only promotes its leaders from within the organization. Unlike civilian businesses, the Army cannot hire its leaders from other organizations, nor can it insert its leaders into its hierarchy at the mid-grade or senior level. The Army must select, develop and promote its leaders from within the

organization.¹¹ As a result, when the Army accesses few African-American Infantry and Armor officers into the organization as second lieutenants, it ultimately limits the number of African-American officers available for promotion to the senior ranks in the future. Officer accessions in 2013 from the United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point, the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), and Officer Candidate School (OCS), yielded only 34 African-American officers of the 674 second lieutenants commissioned into Infantry and Armor.

| Source of Commission | African-American Armor Officers | Armor Officer Total | African-American Infantry Officers | Infantry Officer Total |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| USMA | 6 (7.5%) | 80 | 6 (2.8%) | 214 |
| ROTC | 3 (3.7%) | 79 | 14(6.8%) | 204 |
| OCS | 4 (14.8%) | 27 | 1 (1.5%) | 68 |
| Total | 13 (7.0%) | 186 | 21 (4.3%) | 488 |

Table 2-1: 2013 African-American Infantry and Armor Officer Accessions¹²

The lack of African-Americans admitted into the United States Military Academy leads to limited accessions in the maneuver branches. West Point produces approximately 20% of active-duty commissions for the Army. However, West Point accessions for African-Americans have remained stagnant between 6-9% for the last 32 years, despite the academy’s target of 11-13% for each class. West Point’s graduating classes are typically 6% African-American, which limits the number of African-American cadets available to select Infantry or Armor.

The US Army Armor School conducted a study on minority officers in Armor under the direction of Lieutenant General (Retired) Larry R. Jordan, and found that 41% of Armor officers originated from five schools: West Point, the Citadel, Virginia Military

Institute, Texas A&M and Norwich University.¹³ All of these schools have relatively low minority enrollment. Lieutenant General (Retired) Jordan recommended that the Army and Cadet Command focus their efforts to increase the number of African-American cadets in each of the ROTC programs that traditionally produce Armor officers, given their historical success in the branch.¹⁴

Preference for Non-tactical career fields

The Military Leadership Diversity Commission's report cited research that found that racial minorities preferred military career fields in non-tactical and non-operational career fields that will readily transfer to the civilian sector.¹⁵ In addition, the MLDC found that some racial minorities perceived that certain military occupational specialties and organizations (Army Special Forces and Rangers) were believed by many to be white organizations with racist attitudes.¹⁶

The Army leadership's "Action Plan to Address Disparate Trends in Officer Talent Management," identified that African Americans have the most limited preference among racial minority groups for participation in the maneuver branches. The action plan also recognized cadet branch preferences and overall performance factors as limitations to African American male accessions in the maneuver branches.¹⁷

ROTC Branching as a Barrier

A Rand Corporation study (2009), "Officer Classification and the Future of Diversity Among Senior Military Leaders: A Case Study of the Army ROTC," concluded that branching in ROTC presents a barrier to minority accessions in the Maneuver, Fires and Effects (MFE) branches¹⁸ because the process relies heavily on order of merit and

cadet preferences.¹⁹ African Americans tend to rank lower in order of merit score and to prefer Operations Support and Force Sustainment branches.²⁰ The authors found that the Army should examine current policy-driven incentives and consider strategies to increase the attractiveness of the MFE branches to African-Americans to improve future minority representation in the general officer ranks.²¹

The Promotion and Selection Process is Lengthy and Highly Competitive

The process of growing senior leaders in the Army is lengthy, which exacerbates the challenge of building diversity in the general officer ranks. Colonel Stephen G. Smith, author of “Achieving Army Senior Leader Racial/Ethnic Balance: A Long Term Approach” described the process:

“The desired time to produce a Colonel in the Army is 22 years (plus/minus a year) and the average time it takes to produce a Brigadier General is 26 years. Every year we delay making significant changes to the way we recruit, develop, and retain officers, we add a year to an already major challenge of achieving reasonable racial/ethnic balance.”²²

Selection to the general officer ranks is highly competitive. The Army selects the top 15-19% of its lieutenant colonels for command at battalion level, and only the top 15% of battalion commanders make the cut for brigade command. Subsequently, the Army selects the top 1.95% to 2.05% of colonels in the Army Competitive Category for promotion to brigadier general.²³

I observed the competitiveness of the battalion command selection process and the underrepresentation of African-American Infantry officers first-hand when I served as the Infantry Branch Chief at US Army Human Resources Command (HRC) from 2007-2009. During my service at HRC, the Army only chose one African-American

officer among the forty-three Infantry lieutenant colonels selected for battalion command in 2008. The selection process yielded nearly identical results in 2009, as the board selected only one African-American among the 49 Infantry officers designated for battalion command.²⁴

The limited number of African-American Infantry and Armor officers selected for command creates what General (Retired) Larry Ellis called a “bubble” in the selection system that results in cohorts of leaders over several year groups that lack diversity.²⁵ This bubble in the system manifested itself in the scarce selection of minority officers over the past four centralized selection boards for battalion command, as only 12 (4%) of the 292 Infantry officers selected for battalion command between fiscal years 2011 and 2014 are African-American.²⁶ Hence, the “bubble” in the system in 2013 and 2014 yielded only one African-American Infantry brigade commander and one African-American Armor officer brigade commander in each year.²⁷ Consequently, these four future brigade commanders represent the only African-Americans in the ground maneuver branches over a span of two year groups who will be competitive for selection to the general officer ranks.

The “Good Old Boy Network”

Brigadier General (Retired) Remo Butler’s 1996 US Army War College Strategy Project, “Why Black Officers Fail,” which was revisited by Colonel Irving W. Smith III in 2010 in his Army War College Strategy Project, “Why Black Officers Still Fail,” both cite an informal institutional barrier they describe as the “good old boy network.” Butler and Smith describe the perception of the importance of informal interpersonal work

relationships, a “good old boy network” that is perpetuated between white officers that is important to promotion and selection, especially at the senior levels. Colonel Smith further addressed the perception of a “good old boy network” as an obstacle to the success of African-American officers.²⁸ Brigadier General (Retired) Butler identified perceived challenges to success for young African-American officers, but also recognized opportunities when he stated, “A lot of these disparities can be overcome by mentorship, educating the leaders and future leaders in cultural awareness, and lessening the impact of the ‘good old boy network.’”²⁹

A Lack of African-American Mentors

The Army recognized importance of mentoring in the development of its leaders by codifying mentoring as a doctrinal term in Army Doctrine Reference Publication 6-22, Army Leadership. Mentoring is defined as, “the voluntary developmental relationship that exists between a person with greater experience and a person of lesser experience characterized by mutual trust and respect.”

The lack of African-American mentors presents a barrier to accessions in the Infantry and Armor branches. For example, a related study (Gates-Jordan 2007), “Why not the Infantry? An Analysis of African-American Career Path Decisions,” found that a shortage of mentors was a disadvantage to African-American officers due to the limited number of minority leaders in maneuver units to serve as mentors.³⁰ Similarly, Colonel Randolph C. White Jr.’s U.S. Army War College Strategy Project, “Wasting Time: Black Participation in the Combat Arms Branches,” found that the lack of ROTC instructors from the MFE branches presents a barrier to African-American participation in the

maneuver branches because the instructors have difficulty convincing cadets to branch into maneuver branches.³¹

The aforementioned Military Leadership Diversity Commission also identified a barrier to African-American participation in the senior leader ranks due to lack of African-American mentorship on initial career path decisions prior to commissioning. The commission concluded that the lack of mentorship limits access to knowledge that operational career paths lead to a significantly better opportunity for promotion to flag/general officer positions.³² The Military Leadership Diversity Commission reviewed a number of studies on mentorship to confirm the personal and professional merits of mentorship and the impact of race in mentorship relationships. One such study, (Allen, T.D. et. al. 2004) "Career Benefits Associated with Mentoring for Protégés: A Meta-Analysis," identified that individuals who receive mentorship have greater expectations of promotion and advancement, tend to be more committed to their career and more satisfied with their job than those who were not mentored. Consequently, they recommended, "Mentoring and career counseling efforts shall start prior to the initial career field decision point and continue throughout the service member's career."³³

Race can serve as a barrier to mentorship in organizations with limited racial minority representation. A study on cross-race mentoring in the U.S. Army (Cho, 2011) cites several studies on mentorship that suggest that racial minorities experience difficulty gaining access to mentors due to their preference for mentors of their same race when the number of same race mentors is small.³⁴ The study also indicated that interpersonal barriers and differences in background could limit the access of racial

minorities to Caucasian male mentors. Consequently, Cho’s study of cross-race mentorship is significant to understanding potential barriers caused by the lack of minority mentors in the Infantry and Armor officer ranks.

Part III: Research objective and methodology

The objective of this study is to identify reasons for the underrepresentation of African-American Infantry and Armor officers and to offer recommendations to increase the number of African-Americans in the Infantry and Armor officer ranks. To that end, I surveyed African-American Infantry and Armor lieutenants in the Infantry and Armor Basic Officer Leader Courses and analyzed the deliberate assignment of African-American Infantry mentors to West Point from 2008-2013.

A Survey of the Infantry and Armor Officer Basic Leader Courses

I conducted a survey of 43 active component African-American Infantry and Armor officers in the Infantry Basic Officer Leader Course (IBOLC) and the Armor Basic Officer Leader Course (ABOLC).³⁵ The survey allowed me to gain the perspective of newly commissioned officers on their perceptions of the branch selection process and factors that influenced their branching decision. Table 3-1 depicts the survey respondents by Basic Officer Leader Course and their source of commission.

| | ROTC | OCS | USMA | total |
|-------|------|-----|------|-------|
| IBOLC | 19 | 6 | 6 | 31 |
| ABOLC | 8 | 3 | 1 | 12 |
| Total | 27 | 9 | 7 | 43 |

Table 3-1. IBOLC and ABOLC Survey Respondents by source of commission

Survey Results

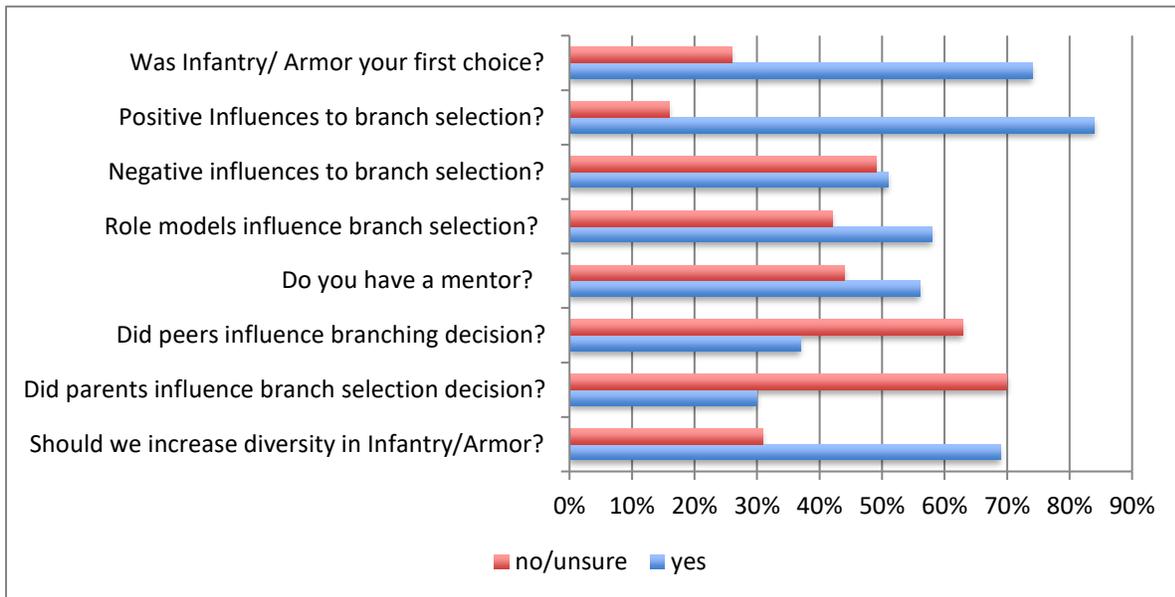


Table 3-2: IBOLC and ABOLC Survey Results

Influences on Branch Selection

The feedback from the aforementioned survey depicted in Table 3-2, yielded results that are consistent with existing literature. Seventy-four percent of the officers surveyed selected Infantry or Armor as their first choice in branch selection, when we account for nine officers in the survey population who are branch detailed to the Infantry or Armor.³⁶ Eighty four percent of the survey respondents identified positive influences on their branch selection, citing positive role models, mentors and the importance of the Infantry or Armor mission as important to the selection of their branch. Nineteen officers, who cited positive influences, identified an ROTC instructor, OCS Cadre, or member of staff and faculty at West Point as a positive influence in their decision to branch Infantry or Armor. This observation accentuates the importance of assigning Infantry and Armor cadre in the commissioning sources to provide a positive influence

on branch selection. However, 51 percent of the respondents identified negative influences such as stereotypes of possible racial discrimination due to a limited number of minorities in Infantry and Armor, the inherent danger of the Infantry and Armor mission, and discouragement from service in the Infantry or Armor by parents or peers. Eight of the respondents mentioned cultural stigmas about the affinity of African-Americans for service in Operations Support or Force Sustainment branches and limited career opportunities upon completion of their military service as a negative influence to service in Infantry or Armor.

The Importance of Mentorship

Only fifty-six percent of the lieutenants in the survey reportedly have mentors. However, when we account for the fact that the West Point graduates all have mentors, the percentage of respondents decreases to 47 percent. When we further subtract the lieutenants who identify a non-military parent as their mentor, the numbers decline to 36 percent. Only three of the nine of the Officer Candidate School graduates in the survey had mentors, with a non-military parent and an OCS Company First Sergeant as two of the three identified mentors. This glaring lack of mentors is a potential barrier to success for junior officers, as several of the respondents stated that they need a mentor and did not know how to approach a senior officer appropriately to ask for mentorship.

More respondents (45%) identified that mentors had a more significant influence on their branch selection than their peers or parents. Less than one-third of the surveyed officers (30%) cited their parents as an influence on branch selection and 37 percent of the respondents indicated that their peers influenced their branching

decisions. In many cases, the lieutenants made the choice to branch Infantry or Armor against the advice of their parents or peers, instead following the guidance of a mentor.

Volunteers Only

Forcing officers into Infantry and Armor, although expedient, is neither feasible nor suitable due to the unique professional requirements in both branches to lead Soldiers in close and often brutal ground combat. Consequently, when asked if the Army should increase the number of African-American officers in Infantry and Armor, twenty-two of the survey respondents offered that branching into Infantry and Armor should remain voluntary. Additionally, feedback from the branch detailed officers was overwhelmingly supportive of voluntary service in the Infantry and Armor and against forced branching.

Case Study: The Power of Mentorship at West Point

Mentors had a powerful influence on my personal and professional development as a West Point cadet from 1984 to 1988, most notably on my branch selection and initial career decisions. I enjoyed the privilege of having two outstanding African-American Infantry officers serve as my company tactical officers: Major Earvin Rosier and Major Lloyd Austin.³⁷ In addition, Colonel Fred Black (Ph.D.), a senior African-American Infantry officer and exceptional Soldier-scholar who served as my academic advisor at West Point, greatly influenced my decision to branch Infantry. The professionalism and exemplary leadership exhibited by these mentors set an excellent example for cadets in general, but more importantly, their presence removed any

perceived barriers to participation or potential success in the Infantry for African-American cadets.

However, as Infantry Branch Chief, I was troubled to discover that there was only one African-American Infantry officer assigned to West Point's staff and faculty in 2007. The lack of African-American Infantry officers assigned to West Point was surprising, given the academy's consistent efforts to maintain racial and ethnic diversity in its cadre, highlighted by the service of Brigadier General Leo A. Brooks Jr., a former Infantryman, as the 68th Commandant of Cadets from 2002-2004.

Infantry remained a popular branch among male cadets at West Point upon the initiation of combat operations in Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003 and through the sustained combat in the years that followed. However, West Point only commissioned two African-American Infantry officers in 2007. To that end, I initiated actions at Infantry Branch to assign high quality African-American officers to key positions at West Point to encourage African-American cadet accessions in the Infantry. Table 3-3 depicts male cadets at West Point from 2000-2013, as well as the number of African-American and white male cadets and those who branched Infantry over the period.

| | AA USMA Infantry | AA USMA Male | White USMA Infantry | White USMA Male | USMA Infantry | USMA Male |
|------|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|--------------|
| 2000 | 7 | 62 | 126 | 701 | 150 | 751 |
| 2001 | 7 | 52 | 129 | 701 | 149 | 726 |
| 2002 | 6 | 63 | 177 | 731 | 201 | 786 |
| 2003 | 5 | 64 | 152 | 630 | 186 | 717 |
| 2004 | 7 | 70 | 152 | 689 | 193 | 745 |
| 2005 | 4 | 66 | 155 | 656 | 187 | 741 |
| 2006 | 5 | 46 | 166 | 631 | 189 | 692 |
| 2007 | 2 | 44 | 177 | 764 | 200 | 838 |
| 2008 | 4 | 57 | 182 | 737 | 219 | 801 |
| 2009 | 5 | 66 | 171 | 702 | 200 | 809 |
| 2010 | 2 | 48 | 173 | 778 | 198 | 868 |
| 2011 | 4 | 58 | 204 | 753 | 235 | 881 |
| 2012 | 7 | 50 | 199 | 765 | 238 | 848 |
| 2013 | 6 | 53 | 173 | 733 | 214 | 849 |
| | 71 | 799 | 2336 | 9971 | 2759 | 11052 |
| | | 8.80% | | 23.40% | | 25% |

Table 3-3. USMA Infantry Officers 2000-2013³⁸

The Assignment Process

Infantry Branch and West Point’s leadership identified several critical duty positions at West Point that would afford mentors significant interaction with cadets.³⁹ We assigned Captain Darren Spears, an ROTC graduate to the Department of Military Instruction as the Infantry Branch Representative, the duty position that provides information on service and opportunities in the branch. We assigned Captain Tony Wrice, a West Point graduate, for the Eisenhower Leadership Development Program at Columbia University and subsequent assignment as a company tactical officer, where he could provide a visible daily presence in the cadet barracks area.⁴⁰ We assigned Captain Adisa King, a former West Point football player, as the Admissions

Representative to the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics due to the importance of the athletics department in West Point’s minority recruiting and admissions efforts. In addition to the three company grade officers, we assigned Lieutenant Colonel Stephen Michael, an exceptionally talented former Battalion Commander to the Brigade Tactical Department as a Regimental Tactical Officer, responsible for the supervision and mentorship of one fourth of the Corps of Cadets.

| AA Mentor Year Assigned | Graduation Year | Junior Year | Sophomore Year | Freshman Year | AA USMA AR | AA USMA IN |
|-------------------------|-----------------|-------------|----------------|---------------|------------|------------|
| 2 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 | 2 | 5 |
| 4 | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2 | 2 |
| 4 | 2011 | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 0 | 4 |
| 1 | 2012 | 2011 | 2010 | 2009 | 1 | 7 |
| 1 | 2013 | 2012 | 2011 | 2010 | 6 | 6 |

Table 3-4. USMA African-American Infantry Mentors assigned by year and the number of African-American cadets branched Armor and Infantry by year.

Positive Impact on Infantry and Armor

The positive impact on the Corps of Cadets was immediate and profound, as these handpicked officers provided mentorship and guidance to thousands of cadets and yielded positive results, as the number of cadets who selected Infantry and Armor increased significantly with exposure to mentors. The mentors guided cadets to both Infantry and Armor due to the relocation of the Armor School to Fort Benning to join the Infantry School to form the Maneuver Center of Excellence, and the interchangeable duty positions for Infantry and Armor officers in modular brigade combat teams. Table 3-4 depicts the period of assignment for the deliberately assigned African-American

mentors and the number of cadets who branched Infantry or Armor from 2008-2013. Moreover, analysis of the branching data using a chi-squared test on the branching outcomes during the period of assignment for the African-American mentors at USMA demonstrates that the results of the assignment of mentors were statistically significant. The data indicates a 91 percent probability that the mentors affected the branching preferences toward Infantry and Armor over the five-year period.

| YG | AA USMA Male | Males not branched AR or IN | AA USMA Armor | AA USMA Infantry | Total male enrollment in Infantry or Armor | Total male enrollment as percent of class AA males |
|-------|--------------|-----------------------------|---------------|------------------|--|--|
| 2009 | 66 | 59 | 2 | 5 | 7 | 11% |
| 2010 | 48 | 44 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 8% |
| 2011 | 58 | 54 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 7% |
| 2012 | 50 | 42 | 1 | 7 | 8 | 16% |
| 2013 | 53 | 41 | 6 | 6 | 12 | 23% |
| Total | 275 | 240 | 11 | 24 | | |

Table 3-5: USMA African-American Cadets branched Infantry and Armor by year.⁴¹

OEMA Branching Study Confirms the Importance of Mentors

The Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis (OEMA) at West Point conducted a USMA branch preference survey for the Class of 2013, one of two classes who interacted with the African-American Infantry mentors for four years. The OEMA survey supports the effectiveness and positive impact of mentors on male African-American West Point cadets in the class of 2013, as 88 percent reported that mentors were very helpful and the most frequently reported factor in the selection of their branch. Sixty three percent of white male cadets reported mentors as very helpful in the branch

selection process.⁴² Hence, the OEMA survey data reinforces the efficacy of the deliberative assignment of African-American mentors. This represents an opportunity for both Infantry and Armor branches to employ the power of mentorship at USMA, OCS and ROTC programs across the country to increase the number of African-American maneuver officers, and potentially the diversity of the senior leadership of the Army.

Part IV – CRP Conclusion and Recommendations:

The literature and the survey supporting this study identified several causes for the underrepresentation of African-Americans in the ground maneuver branches. The most notable causes include a lack of African-American accessions in the maneuver branches, a shortage of Infantry and Armor mentors in the commissioning sources, and significant African-American cadet preference for service in Operations Support and Force Sustainment branches.

The Army's leadership continues to address the challenge of building an effective force that reflects the diversity of our nation by developing the "Action Plan to Address Disparate Trends in Officer Talent Management." Additionally, General Odierno addressed the lack African-American diversity in the senior leader ranks of our Army with President Obama and National Security Advisor, Susan Rice to enlist the assistance of the Congressional Black Caucus to increase African-American nominations to West Point.⁴³ He also assigned several studies to address racial and ethnic diversity in the Army. This project is one such step to address the issue of

growing the senior ranks of the Army to reflect the growing diversity of the Army and the nation.

I offer the following recommendations for the Department of the Army, The Maneuver Center of Excellence, U.S. Army Cadet Command and the United States Military Academy at West Point to increase the number of African-American Infantry and Armor officers in the Army.

Department of the Army

Strategic Communications by African-American Senior Leaders

The Military Leadership Diversity Commission report praises the efforts of the Services to advertise in minority communities through affinity groups and media sources with minority appeal such as Black Entertainment Television, TV One, and magazines with African-American readership such as: *Ebony*, *Jet*, *Black Enterprise*, *The Black Collegian* and *The Root*.⁴⁴ The Army should publicize the success of African-American senior leaders through strategic communications in both traditional and social media. The communications should feature the experiences and accomplishments of retired and current African-American General Officers to help the African-American community identify personally with these leaders as role models and emphasize their paths to success in the military and in their post-military careers. In addition, the General Officers can speak from their first-hand experiences about the tremendous leadership opportunities the Army affords to those who command in the ground maneuver

branches. The findings of this study compliment the MLDC's recommendation on the positive effects of strategic communications on minority groups. The findings also suggest that personal success stories of inspirational role models can resonate within the African-American community to encourage accessions in the maneuver branches.

Increase African-Americans in Infantry and Armor through OCS

The Army should increase the number of African-American Infantry and Armor officers commissioned through OCS. Male African-American OCS candidates comprised 21 percent of the males commissioned through OCS from 2000 through 2013, but only 7 percent of male African-American OCS candidates branched Infantry or Armor.⁴⁵ Officer Candidate School is a subordinate organization of the Maneuver Center of Excellence (MCoE), at Fort Benning, Georgia, the home of Infantry and Armor. The MCoE should increase its efforts to inspire and motivate African-American OCS candidates to select Infantry and Armor as their branch of service.

Cross Race Mentorship as a Bridge

Given the importance of race in mentorship relationships as identified in several studies (Butler, 1995; White, 2009; Smith, 2010; Cho, 2011; MLDC, 2011) and the lack of African-American officers in the Infantry and Armor, cross-race mentorship can be an effective bridge to the growth of a larger cohort of African-American mentors for Infantry and Armor officers in the future. Additionally, I recommend that the Army address and encourage cross-race mentoring. The mentoring relationship should remain voluntary, however, through the encouragement of cross-race mentorship, the mentors and

protégés can both gain awareness of the importance to embrace racial diversity in the mentoring process.

Maneuver Center of Excellence

Mentorship Program for IBOLC and ABOLC

This study identified that nearly half of the IBOLC and ABOLC lieutenants surveyed lack mentors. Consequently, I identified the shortcoming to Major General H.R. McMaster, Commanding General of the Maneuver Center of Excellence (MCoE) and Fort Benning, and recommended that the MCoE establish a program to incorporate Maneuver Captain's Career Course⁴⁶ (MCCC) students as mentors for all IBOLC and ABOLC lieutenants. The mentorship program will leverage the relationships between captains in MCCC and lieutenants in IBOLC and ABOLC for initial mentor/protégé relationships. The lieutenants will benefit from the advice and counsel of officers who have served in their initial assignments, many of whom have recent operational experience, while the captains will gain valuable practicum in the leader development of junior officers prior to company command. Major General McMaster approved the mentorship recommendation and directed the formalization and implementation of the mentorship program on February 5, 2014.

The lack of minority officers in both branches and all three courses will add a cross-racial component to the IBOLC/ABOLC and MCCC mentorship relationships at the MCoE and assist the minority lieutenants to become more comfortable when seeking out mentors outside of their race when they report to their first duty assignment. Potentially, a successful cross-race mentorship experience for both the

mentor and protégé can break down barriers to accessions in the ground maneuver branches. While this mentorship program will not directly influence the growth of the African-American Infantry and Armor officer ranks, it will increase the junior officers' chances of initial success in the Army, improving their potential for retention, promotion, and opportunity to become future mentors themselves.

Increase Minority Cadre in IBOLC and ABOLC

Several of the survey respondents in this study identified a lack of minority officer cadre at MCoE, specifically in IBOLC. The MCoE should work closely with US Army Human Resources Command (HRC), specifically Infantry and Armor Branches to identify high quality minority officers to serve as cadre in IBOLC and ABOLC to provide an additional group of potential mentors for the minority lieutenants.

Infantry and Armor Visits to ROTC Programs

Training and Doctrine Command should coordinate efforts between MCoE and U.S. Army Cadet Command to formalize a program to task successful African-American Infantry and Armor officers to visit Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and other ROTC programs to increase the awareness of opportunities in the ground maneuver branches for racial minorities. Respondents surveyed in this study, who identified perceptions about potential racism in the Infantry and Armor branches, shared the MLDC observation that some racial minorities perceived that certain military occupational specialties and organizations hold racist attitudes. Consequently, leader visits to ROTC programs will increase awareness of operational assignments and

command opportunities for officers in the Infantry and Armor, while debunking stereotypes of racism in the ground maneuver branches.

U.S. Army Cadet Command

Assign Maneuver Officers and NCOs to ROTC

Over one third (37%) of the ROTC graduates surveyed in this study identified the positive influence of their ROTC cadre on their branching decision to select Infantry or Armor, and emphasizes the importance of the existing studies (Gates-Jordan, 2007 and White, 2009) that identify the lack of cadre from MFE branches in ROTC programs. I recommend that Cadet Command coordinate with HRC to assign Infantry and Armor officers and noncommissioned officers (NCOs) to ROTC programs with significant minority populations or in areas of the country with high concentrations of minority students. The assignment of Infantry and Armor officers to HBCUs should not be limited only to African-Americans, given their scarcity in the officer population, but should strive to assign African-Americans when possible. The Infantry and Armor ROTC instructors will provide cadets with first-hand knowledge of the leadership and command opportunities as well as senior leadership opportunities for minorities in the Infantry and Armor. In addition, the Army should assign African-American Infantry and Armor NCOs to ROTC programs across the country, to provide a positive perspective on branch selection in the ground maneuver branches to African-American cadets.

Focus on the Programs that Produce Armor Officers

Cadet Command should employ Lieutenant General (Retired) Jordan's recommendation to increase the number of African-American cadets at the Citadel, Virginia Military Institute, Texas A&M, and Norwich University, given the proclivity of these programs to produce Armor officers. Their historical success could result in growing more African-American Armor officers if the universities increase the racial and ethnic diversity in their Army ROTC programs.

Cadet Command Office of Diversity Outreach

The "Action Plan to Address Disparate Trends in Officer Talent Management," tasked US Army Cadet Command as the office of primary responsibility to "Provide a plan for shaping minority cadet branch preferences beginning with the Class of 2015, with full implementation for the Class of 2016."⁴⁷ I recommend that Cadet Command address this requirement by studying and coordinating with West Point's Office of Diversity Outreach in its Department of Admissions. West Point's Office of Diversity Outreach is dedicated to the recruitment of minority candidates for USMA and minority outreach efforts across the country.⁴⁸ Cadet Command should consider a similar organization in support of the eight Regional ROTC Brigades. The Cadet Command Office of Diversity Outreach can employ Infantry and Armor liaison officers from the MCoE to focus on the recruitment of minorities into the ground maneuver branches. The Infantry and Armor liaison officers can also focus their efforts on recruiting minority cadets into the Infantry and Armor at the Leader Training Course and Leader Development and Assessment Course.

United States Military Academy

Increase African-Americans in the Corps of Cadets

West Point should increase its efforts to recruit qualified African-American candidates for the Corps of Cadets. The Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis provided data for this study that showed 14 percent of the male African-American West Point cadets over the past ten years have branched either Infantry or Armor, while 35 percent of white male cadets branched Infantry or Armor over the same period. However, the relatively small number of male African-American cadets in each class is a barrier to producing a greater number of African-American Infantry or Armor officers.

A lack of Congressional nominations for African-American West Point candidates exacerbates the shortage of African-Americans in the Corps of Cadets. Members of Congress who had 5,350 available nominations in 2013 for the West Point class graduating in 2017, only nominated only 200 African-Americans. Moreover, members of the Congressional Black Caucus had 700 available nominations and only nominated 42 of the 200 African-American candidates. Army and West Point senior leaders must continue to engage Congress, especially the Congressional Black Caucus to assist their efforts to identify and nominate qualified African-American candidates to increase the number of African-American West Point cadets.

Assign African-American Maneuver Officers to Staff and Faculty

West Point should formalize a program to actively recruit and assign African-American Infantry and Armor officers for service on the USMA staff and faculty. Despite the effectiveness of the deliberate assignment of African-American Infantry mentors to West Point identified earlier in this study, the assignment actions only placed temporary

“band aid” on the underrepresentation of African-Americans in the Infantry and Armor at USMA. The responsibility to identify and nominate future mentors to grow the next generation of African-American maneuver leaders at West Point falls squarely on the shoulders of HRC and West Point’s leadership who should develop a formalized process to assign African-American Infantry and Armor officer as mentors in West Point’s staff and faculty.

Recommendations for Future Study

I recommend the following areas for further study on the problem of underrepresentation of African-American Infantry and Armor officers in the U.S. Army:

1. The Army should study the effectiveness of cross-race mentorship, given the voluntary nature of the mentor-protégé relationship as defined in ADRP 6-22.
2. The Army should study the effects of mentorship on promotion and selection, particularly of minority officers.
3. The Army should continue to study the changing demographics of the US population with regard to race and ethnicity, to shape the future of the Army’s demographics to reflect the population we serve and the Soldiers we lead.
4. The Army should study the efforts of the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Naval Academy in minority outreach and recruiting, to improve US Army, USMA, and ROTC outreach and recruiting.

Appendix 1: IBOLC and ABOLC Survey

**US Army War College Fellowship Study:
“Growing the Ranks of African-American Infantry and Armor Officers”**

Please circle your branch: INFANTRY ARMOR
Please circle your source of commission: OCS ROTC USMA
Please circle your component: Active Duty USAR Army National Guard

1. Was Infantry/Armor your first choice in branch selection?
2. If so, what influenced you to choose Infantry/Armor as your branch?
3. What were your primary reasons for selecting Infantry/Armor as your branch?
4. Were there positive influences that motivated your branch selection decision?
5. If so, what were the influences?
6. Were there any negative influences on your branch selection decision?
7. If so, what were the influences?
8. Do you have a mentor? If so, describe your mentor.
9. Did role models/mentors influence your branch selection decision?
10. If so, why? What characteristics of the role model/mentor influenced your branch selection decision?
11. If not, please explain.
12. Did your peers influence your branch selection decision?
13. If so, why?
14. Did your parents influence your branch selection decision?
15. If so, why?
16. What are your thoughts on African-American representation in your branch?
17. Should the Army increase the number of African-American officers in Infantry and Armor?

18. If so, why?

19. If so, how should the Army increase the number of African-American officers in Infantry and Armor?

20. If not, why?

21. In conclusion, please provide the researcher any additional information you may want to contribute to the study regarding the increase of the number of African-American Infantry and Armor officers in the US Army.

Endnotes

¹ Army Doctrine Publication 3-0, Unified Land Operations. (October, 2011). 5.

² Warfighting functions are a group of tasks and systems (people, organizations, information, and processes) united by a common purpose that commanders use to accomplish missions (ADP 3-0).

³ U.S. Army General Officer Management Office (GOMO), Army General Officer Public Roster (By Rank), (January 2, 2014), 1-4.

⁴ U.S. Army General Officer Management Office (GOMO), General Officer Minority Report (By Rank), (January 2, 2014)

⁵ Headquarters, Department of the Army, Deputy Chief of Staff, Army G-1. “Blacks in the U.S. Army then and Now” (September 22, 2010), 2.

⁶ The ROCKS, Inc. is a national level organization that provides mentorship, scholarship, and leadership outreach to ROTC Cadets, active duty or reserve component commissioned officers, and active duty or reserve component warrant officers.

⁷ www.army.mil. “Chief asks for mentorship help from ROCKS.” (April 10, 2012)

⁸ Congressman Kendrick Meek. Sr. Press Release: “House Armed Services Committee Approves Senior Military Officer Diversity Commission; Increases Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps Units” May 15, 2008.

⁹ Ibid., xiii.

¹⁰ Secretary of the Army John M. McHugh and Chief of Staff of the Army Raymond T. Odierno, “Action Plan to Address Disparate Trends in Officer Talent Management,” memorandum for Principal Officials of Headquarters, Department of the Army and MACOM Commanders, Washington, DC, March 4, 2014.

¹¹ Ibid., 44.

¹² Office of Economic & Manpower Analysis, United States Military Academy. Army Competitive Category Officer Branching Data. West Point, NY (December 2, 2013).

¹³ Lieutenant General (Retired) Larry R. Jordan, “Minority Officers in Armor,” briefing slides, Fort Knox, KY, U.S. Army Armor Center, November 1993.

¹⁴ Lieutenant General (Retired) Larry R. Jordan, Former Commander, US Army Armor School and Fort Knox, telephone interview, February 13, 2014.

¹⁵ Military Leadership Diversity Commission. “From Representation to Inclusion: Diversity Leadership for the 21st Century Military.” (2011). 68.

¹⁶ Ibid., 68.

¹⁷ Secretary of the Army John M. McHugh and Chief of Staff of the Army Raymond T. Odierno, “Action Plan to Address Disparate Trends in Officer Talent Management,” memorandum for Principal Officials of Headquarters, Department of the Army and MACOM Commanders, Washington, DC, March 4, 2014.

¹⁸ The Army currently uses the term: Maneuver, Fires and Effects instead of the aforementioned term: combat arms.

¹⁹ Nelson Lim, Jefferson P. Marquis, Kimberly Curry Hall, David Schulker and Xiaohui Zhuo. “Officer Classification and the Future of Diversity Among Senior Military Leaders: A Case Study of the Army ROTC.” Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2009.

²⁰ Ibid., 20.

²¹ Ibid., 14.

²² Colonel Stephen G. Smith. “Achieving Army Senior Leader Racial/Ethnic Balance: A Long Term Approach,” Civilian Research Project (Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College, April 2013), 5.

²³ Senior Leader Development, Colonels Management Office “Brigadier General Selection Board,” <https://www.srleaders.army.mil/portal2/UI/InformationalPage.aspx?PageId=174> (accessed February 3, 2014).

²⁴ Major Marcus W. Wright. “IN Branch – CSL Minority Statistics (FY08-FY14),” briefing slides, Fort Knox, KY, U.S. Army Human Resources Command, February 12, 2014.

²⁵ General (Retired) Larry Ellis. Former Commander, US Army Forces Command, telephone interview, February 1, 2014.

²⁶ U.S. Army Human Resources Command, Officer Personnel Management Directorate, Maneuver Fires and Effects Division, Infantry Branch Data. (January 29, 2014).

²⁷ FY13 and FY 14 Colonel Centralized Selection List - Command and Key Billet Principal Lists (Maneuver Fires and Effects, Operational Support, Force Sustainment)

²⁹ Brigadier General (Retired) Remo Butler. “Why Black Officers Fail.” Research Project, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, 1996. 8.

³⁰ Shirley Gates-Jordan. “Why not the Infantry? An Analysis of African American Career Path Decisions.” A Dissertation Proposal Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy, Capella University. April 2007. 58.

³¹ Colonel Randolph Clifford White Jr. “Wasting Time: Black Participation in the Combat Arms.” Strategy Research Project (Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College, April 15, 2009), 11.

³² Military Leadership Diversity Commission. “From Representation to Inclusion: Diversity Leadership for the 21st Century Military.” (2011). 70.

³³ Ibid., 70.

³⁴ Hyo Jin Cho. “Unspoken Leadership Development Tool: A Phenomenological Study on Cross-race Mentoring in the United States Army.” A Dissertation Proposal Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Management in Organizational Leadership, University of Phoenix. July 2011. 27.

³⁵ Newly commissioned Infantry and Armor officers attend their respective Basic Officer Leader Courses at the Maneuver Center of Excellence at Fort Benning, Georgia to complete their basic level of professional military education prior to reporting to their first unit of assignment. These officers have the most recent experience in the branch selection process and first-hand knowledge of the initial entry training environment.

³⁶ The branch detailed officers will serve as an Infantry or Armor officer in their initial assignment (2 or 3 years), then transition to their control branch, a non-maneuver fires effects branch for their remaining time in service.

³⁷ General Lloyd Austin is currently a four-star general and Commanding General of US Central Command.

³⁸ Office of Economic & Manpower Analysis, United States Military Academy. Army Competitive Category Officer Branching Data. West Point, NY (December 2, 2013).

³⁹ West Point’s leadership was supportive of the plan to assign African American Infantry mentors to the academy’s staff and faculty. The Commandant of Cadets at the time, then-Brigadier General Robert Caslen and his successor, then-Brigadier General Michael Linnington both spoke with the author, and openly supported the plan, then assisted in nominating and assigning officers to West Point’s staff and faculty.

⁴⁰ The company tactical officer is the individual responsible for the day-to-day supervision and mentorship of each the thirty-six companies of approximately one hundred and twenty cadets.

⁴¹ Office of Economic & Manpower Analysis, United States Military Academy. Army Competitive Category Officer Branching Data. West Point, NY (December 2, 2013)

⁴² Office of Economic & Manpower Analysis, United States Military Academy. Branching-Survey-YG-2013, version 3. West Point, NY (December 3, 2013).

⁴³ General Odierno told the author during a video teleconference on October 9, 2013, that he addressed the lack of diversity in the senior leader ranks of the Army with President Obama and National Security Advisor, Susan Rice. He also asked the President for assistance in addressing the Congressional Black Caucus regarding their lack of nominations to the federal service academies.

⁴⁴ Military Leadership Diversity Commission. "From Representation to Inclusion: Diversity Leadership for the 21st Century Military." (2011). 53.

⁴⁵ Office of Economic & Manpower Analysis, United States Military Academy. Army Competitive Category Officer Branching Data. West Point, NY (December 2, 2013)

⁴⁶ The Maneuver Captain's Career Course is a 22 week professional military education course conducted at Fort Benning, Georgia for Maneuver Captains. The course prepares the Captains for command at company level and to serve successfully as staff officers at battalion and brigade level.

⁴⁷ Enclosure to Secretary of the Army John M. McHugh and Chief of Staff of the Army Raymond T. Odierno, "Action Plan to Address Disparate Trends in Officer Talent Management," memorandum for Principal Officials of Headquarters, Department of the Army and MACOM Commanders, Washington, DC, March 4, 2014. 3.

⁴⁸ The West Point Diversity Outreach Team is led by an Army Major, and manned by junior captains or senior lieutenants in each of five geographic regions of the country, supported by a Diversity Admissions Specialist at West Point.