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Increasing diversity and inclusion is an imperative for MARSOC because it will increase effectiveness through problem solving and cross-cultural competence, it will maintain our legitimacy as a fighting force, and it will open our recruiting aperture to more talent, leading to increased individual standards. The way to do this is by attacking key points of the MARSOC recruiting process and emphasizing cradle-to-grave mentorship of aspiring candidates and seasoned Raiders, especially among minorities.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: Humans are More Important than Hardware: Harnessing Diversity and Inclusion to Maximize MARSOC's Irregular Warfare Effectiveness

Author: Major Jeffrey T. Schuele, United States Marine Corps

Thesis: Increasing diversity and inclusion is an imperative for MARSOC because it will increase effectiveness through problem solving and cross-cultural competence, it will maintain our legitimacy as a fighting force, and it will open our recruiting aperture to more talent, leading to increased individual standards. The way to do this is by attacking key points of the MARSOC recruiting process and emphasizing cradle-to-grave mentorship of aspiring candidates and seasoned Raiders, especially among minorities.

Discussion: MARSOC recruits its elite special operators exclusively from within the Marine Corps, yet its racial demographics are significantly skewed towards white non-Hispanic Marines compared to the pool from which it recruits. MARSOC's total accessions of enlisted Critical Skills Operators (Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) designator of 0372) since its founding in 2006 have been 84% white. Special Operations Officers (MOS designator of 0370) in total since 2006 have been 87% white.

A growing body of research points to the inherent value of diversity within teams, showing better outcomes across multiple domains to include problem solving and innovation. Likewise, diversity provides benefits in the realm of cross-cultural competence, a major component of most special operations missions. The current lack of diversity within MARSOC also signals that we are not necessarily accessing all of the possible talent pools available for service as special operators. Finally, diversity and inclusion within the force is a must for political legitimacy. Failure to take positive steps now could result in directed changes or the loss of MARSOC's legitimacy as a force in the eyes of Congress and the nation.

While this paper is focused on the particulars that apply directly to MARSOC, there are indeed many interconnected facets to the issue within the greater Marine Corps. Likewise, much of the discussion and some solutions will likely apply, at least in part, to the greater Marine Corps and other branches of the armed services as well.

Conclusion: MARSOC should take aggressive steps to increase its ability to access and recruit the most talented Marines across all demographic groups in the Marine Corps. We are in a competition for top talent and must revolutionize our recruiting practices to reflect this. A comprehensive study of the various stages of the MARSOC initial entry pipeline points to possibilities for targeted efforts with high payoff. Additionally, MARSOC must increase its focus on the building and maintenance of mentor networks within the force to better recruit, retain, and develop our Raiders, fully realizing the first SOF Truth: "Humans are more important than Hardware."

DISCLAIMER

THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

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Preface

I decided to tackle this issue when I saw a Facebook post from a friend who happens to be a black former Marine officer in the spring of 2020. He posted a story about his time at The Basic School, recounting how he had been belittled in front of his peers by a superior officer in a completely unprofessional and troublingly racialized outburst. Here is a man who was a 3x national collegiate boxing champion and Naval Academy graduate who, after his time in the Marine Corps, has gone on to found multiple nonprofit organizations and small businesses to great success. Clearly a high performer, but he had a hard time in the Marine Corps. How could that be? I realized in that moment that the Marine Corps experience is not the same for everyone as it is for me. I suppose I had known all along but had never stopped to think about it. I was on deployment in Iraq, and we were just starting to wrap our heads around how significant the COVID-19 outbreak was going to be. Little did any of us know that the political discourse in the United States was about to change forever. Days later, the television screen in the corner of our joint operations center broadcast the grisly scene of a police officer slowly killing George Floyd with a knee on his neck over the course of eight minutes, while helpless bystanders begged him to stop. Since that moment, the issue of diversity and inclusion has shot to the forefront of the national discourse in the military and civilian worlds, but it has always been important.

I then thought about my own organization, MARSOC, which suffers from a dearth of racial and ethnic diversity. But we are a small and agile organization, and therefore can institute and implement change much faster than the average military bureaucracy. MARSOC has acted as a testbed for the larger Marine Corps many times in the past for tactics, techniques, and equipment. What if we can do the same for diversity and inclusion? What if MARSOC can be the unit to develop techniques for improving diversity and inclusion, and further demonstrate how diversity and inclusion initiatives can actually improve operational effectiveness and lethality? I had already experienced this phenomenon firsthand in my own time as a Marine Special Operations Team Commander. The fact that we had operators from multiple racial backgrounds and even two immigrants within my 14-man team always added more perspectives and overall positive dynamics to our problem-solving approaches, not to mention the increased aggregate cross-cultural aptitude. Every member of the team regardless of background was a high performer, but the addition of diversity allowed us to be greater than the sum of our parts.

I would like to thank my amazing wife, Carey, and our three awesome kids for being a part of this past year's journey with me. Coming home from deployment and moving immediately to Quantico as a geo-bachelor was not easy for anyone, but they have been rock stars. I specifically would like to thank you, Carey, for adding perspective to my work from your experience as a woman in the Marine Corps. I would like to thank my advisors, Dr. Kerry Fosher and LTC Jeremy Glauber, who have been instrumental in my development as a researcher, thinker, and writer, and guided me through this entire process. I would also like to thank Kate Kuehn, who deftly guided me through the complex Human Subjects Research protocols and offered critical expertise in statistics and data analysis. I would like to thank the Marines of MARSOC's Marine Raider Training Center, the Assessment & Selection Branch, and the Recruiting & Screening Branch. The data and insights you provided were instrumental in my research, and I look forward to working with you further as we explore the implementation of

these ideas. Finally, I would like to thank all of the people who I interviewed for the research to include Mark Donald and Thomas Hobbs. Your perspectives were incredible, but what you all are doing in your daily lives, mentoring and developing the next generation of high-performing military and civilian leaders, is inspiring even more so. Thank you.

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Introduction

The U.S. Military is searching for its third offset against peer and near-peer adversaries. Some would contend that this offset will come from emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and autonomy within battle networks, or some other form of advanced (and expensive) technology.¹ However, in an age of rapid technological proliferation, what if the United States military's competitive advantage came not from its things but from its people? What if the United States, being a nation built of immigrants from all over the world, possessed a built-in advantage stemming from racial and ethnic diversity itself? In this thesis, I set forth to answer these questions for a small subset of the military: Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command (MARSOC), the Marine Corps' Special Operations Forces (SOF) Component. The first SOF Truth is "Humans are more important than hardware." In order to fully embrace this ethos and gain maximum advantage through our people, MARSOC (and the Marine Corps writ large) can, and must, fully embrace an attitude of diversity and inclusion. Increasing diversity and inclusion is an imperative for MARSOC because it will increase effectiveness through problem solving and cross-cultural competence, it will maintain our legitimacy as a fighting force, and it will open our recruiting aperture to more talent, leading to increased individual standards. The way to do this is by attacking key points of the MARSOC recruiting process and emphasizing cradle-to-grave mentorship of aspiring candidates and seasoned Raiders, especially among minorities.

Current situation

The United States formally desegregated its armed forces in 1948, and the time since then has been marked with increasing progress for racial minorities in the Armed Services and

increasing racial diversity across the force. Likewise, since the civil rights movement the United States has seen a parallel trajectory for racial minorities across the country. However, even though outright racial discrimination has been outlawed for decades, there are still areas of society and the military that exhibit a significant lack of racial and ethnic diversity. One such area is MARSOC. MARSOC recruits its elite special operators exclusively from within the Marine Corps, yet its racial demographics are significantly skewed towards white non-Hispanic Marines compared to the pool from which it recruits. According to Marine Corps Manpower & Reserve Affairs (M&RA) data, MARSOC's total accessions of enlisted Critical Skills Operators (Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) designator of 0372) since its founding in 2006 have been 84% white. Special Operations Officers (MOS designator of 0370) in total since 2006 have been 87% white.² What does this mean on the ground? It means, for example, that there have only been two black Marine Special Operations Officers in the history of MARSOC. It means we are missing out on talent.

MARSOC finds itself already at a disadvantage for recruiting diverse talent because it recruits exclusively from within the Marine Corps. The Marine Corps is the least diverse service by a third compared to all others, and in fact it is the only service that has become less diverse over the last ten years, as illustrated in Table 1 and Figure 1 below. While this paper is focused on the particulars that apply directly to MARSOC, there are indeed many interconnected facets to the issue, and thus I will also speak to diversity issues within the greater Marine Corps. Likewise, much of the discussion and some solutions will likely apply, at least in part, to the greater Marine Corps and other branches of the armed services as well.

Table 1: Minority representation by service, 2010-2019³

Service Branch	2010			2015			2019		
	Enlisted	Officers	Total	Enlisted	Officers	Total	Enlisted	Officers	Total
Army	31.1%	27.5%	30.5%	34.5%	26.5%	32.9%	33.8%	26.6%	32.4%
Navy	41.5%	19.1%	37.9%	42.2%	21.0%	38.6%	41.2%	22.9%	38.2%
Marine Corps	21.7%	19.3%	21.4%	20.7%	19.2%	20.5%	20.1%	20.3%	20.1%
Air Force	28.5%	19.8%	26.7%	29.4%	19.8%	27.5%	30.3%	21.8%	28.7%
Total DoD	31.4%	22.7%	30.0%	33.2%	22.8%	31.3%	32.8%	23.9%	31.2%

Note: Race/Ethnicity trend exhibits do not include the years 2000 and 2005 due to a change in race category definitions by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).
 Source: DMDC Active Duty Military Personnel Master File (September 2010, 2015, 2019)

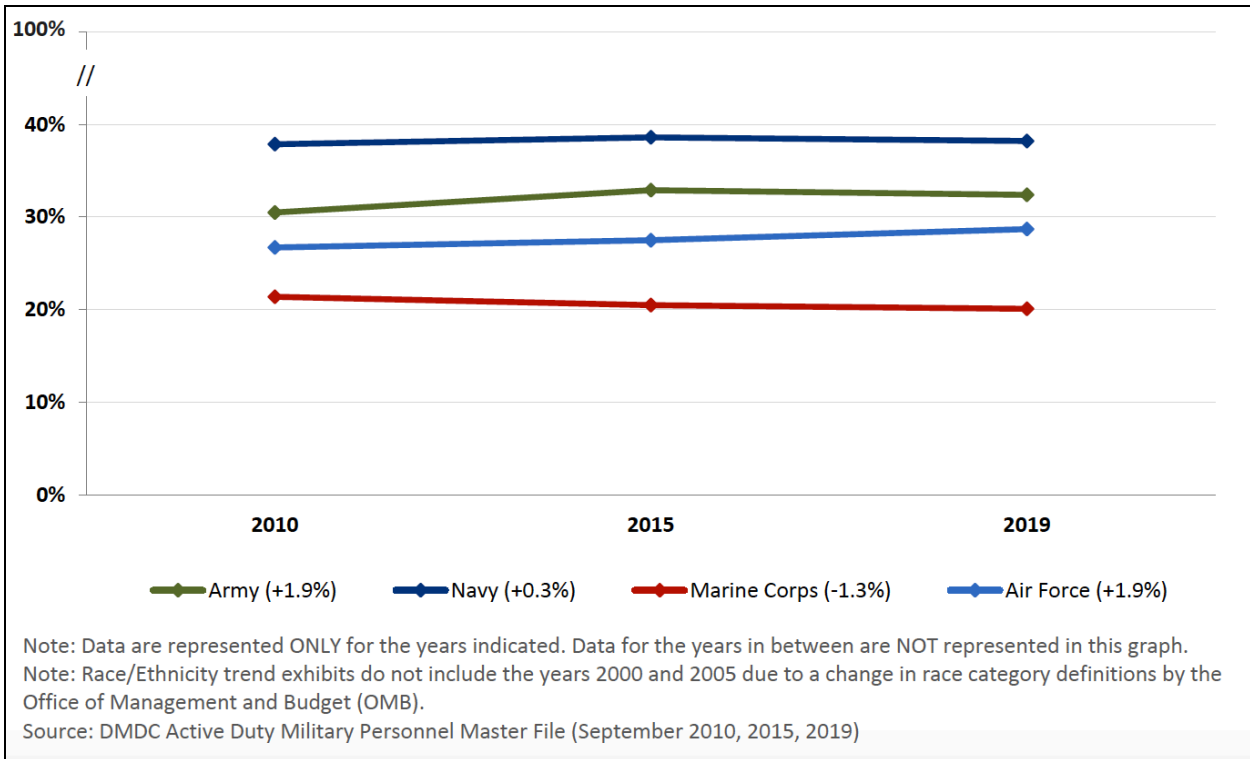


Figure 1: Minority representation by service trends, 2010-2019⁴

To examine these issues, I conducted a literature review of relevant military and scholarly references and past efforts to address diversity and inclusion within the Department of Defense, the Marine Corps, and USSOCOM, reviewed personnel data for MARSOC and other services, and conducted interviews with four individuals who are subject-matter experts in the preparation and mentoring of minority candidates for competitive programs in the military and civilian

world, developing programs to do so of their own personal volition. I also conducted interviews with two top-tier college football recruiting directors to gain insights and parallels with how other high-performance organizations recruit and develop top talent. I conducted an analysis of demographic data at various points along the Marine Raider pipeline and isolated specific points to apply leverage. Finally, I applied the lenses of the prior research and lessons learned from interviews to these specific leverage points to develop solutions that are directly applicable to MARSOC today.

Literature Review

Diversity's effect on groups and organizations

A growing body of research shows that diverse teams solve problems more effectively and are better at creative thinking than homogenous teams due to cognitive benefits inherent in working with people who are different. A 2006 Tufts University study found that racially diverse jury panels performed better than racially homogeneous ones when adjudicating mock trials- specifically that they committed less factual errors both before and after deliberation.⁵ Similar studies in both 2004 by Anthony Listing Antonio and 2006 by Margaret Neale et al. replicate these findings; both determined that racially diverse groups outperformed racially homogeneous groups on cognitive problem-solving tasks. In these studies, the presence of racial diversity specifically changed the way that group members received, perceived, and processed the *exact same information*.⁶

A 2008 Northwestern study found that socially diverse teams performed better in deliberative problem-solving tasks. In this study, diversity was not defined by race but defined as including someone from a defined social outgroup. Of note, “performance gains were not due to

newcomers bringing new ideas to the group discussion. Instead, the results demonstrate that the mere presence of socially distinct newcomers and the social concerns their presence stimulates [among the ingroup] motivates behavior that can convert affective pains into cognitive gains.”⁷ A 2017 study by Kathleen Goodman published in the *Journal of College Student Development* found that racial diversity increases members of a group’s need for cognition (defined as the mental motivation to engage in complex and creative thinking) which leads to an improvement in group learning outcomes.⁸ This study accounted for and compared viewpoint and racial diversity and showed that while viewpoint diversity did create positive outcomes, they were less prevalent than the improvements created by racial diversity.⁹

Further study on the effects of diversity on performance can be found in the business world. A significant body of research has shown demonstrably higher performance and better decision making from firms with racially diverse executive leadership teams.¹⁰ One highlight is a 2015 McKinsey study of 366 publicly traded companies reported that “Companies in the top quartile of racial/ethnic diversity were 35 percent more likely to have financial returns above their national industry median [while] Companies in the bottom quartile for both gender and ethnicity/race were statistically less likely to achieve above-average financial returns than the average companies in the dataset (that is, they were not just not leading, they were lagging).”¹¹ A 2013 study of 2600 London firms by Max Nathan and Neil Lee found that companies with more diverse leadership teams gained an advantage described by the authors as a “diversity bonus” in three key areas: They were more likely to innovate, they were better at reaching international markets, and they were better able to access London’s cosmopolitan population. In particular, the study established strong links between migrants and entrepreneurial behavior.¹²

Decades ago, the benefits of diverse groups were not universally recognized in the same way, especially with regards to group cohesion. A 1991 study by Anne Tsui et al., while acknowledging the increased problem-solving outcomes of diverse teams, highlighted a key negative in that majority members showed more psychological discomfort when working with minorities.¹³ This feeling of unease in racially diverse groups leads to concerns about unit cohesion in diverse teams. However, the 2008 Northwestern study specifically indicates that the added friction caused by outgroup members is actually the key to more successful problem-solving results; it causes the ingroup members to question their own biases and assumptions.¹⁴ Furthermore, a 2015 study by Robert Lount et al. showed that perceived relationship conflict in diverse groups tends to be overblown. In the study, participants observed interactions of both racially homogeneous and diverse groups and consistently rated higher levels of relationship conflict and lower perceived effectiveness in the diverse groups. The catch was all of the interactions were scripted and identical in every way except for the racial group makeup.¹⁵ Homogenous teams just *feel* easier both to those on the teams themselves¹⁶ and outside observers¹⁷ even though the results say otherwise.

Implicit bias

In 2006, Anthony G. Greenwald and Linda Hamilton Krieger described the theory of implicit bias with a basic position that “actors do not always have conscious, intentional control over the processes of social perception, impression formation, and judgment that motivate their actions.”¹⁸ This is in keeping with the overall study of innate human heuristics and biases advanced in the field of behavioral economics by Nobel Laureate Daniel Kahneman.¹⁹ The preferred tool of measuring implicit bias is the Implicit Association Test (IAT), introduced in

1998, which measures implicit attitudes between two groups by a series of timed responses. A 2009 meta-analysis of 122 studies shows that IAT results of a group have a cumulative effect, displaying predictive validity with behavioral measures.²⁰ Put another way, while a single IAT may not be a good predictor of an individual's tendency towards biased behavior, when analyzed in large numbers, perhaps across an organization, IAT results can predict future subconsciously biased behaviors.

These subconscious biases can manifest in everyday life, behavior, and decision-making, causing unintentional negative effects on minorities. One place where this effect has been studied extensively is in hiring decisions. Generally, those doing the hiring or recruiting tend to favor applicants that are similar to themselves, particularly when it comes to race. A 1996 study by Carol Goldberg of job recruiters and interviewees determined that "recruiter-applicant race similarity had significant direct effects on overall interview assessments and final offer decisions."²¹ A 2004 Study by Marianne Bertrand and Sendhil Mullainathan found a significant disparity in callbacks and job offers between identical resumes with the only difference being "black" or "white" names.²² A similar study conducted in 2003 by Devah Pager found that white job applicants *with a criminal record* were more likely to receive a callback than black applicants with no criminal record.²³

Color blindness

A common counterargument to diversity initiatives is rooted in the idea of color blindness, defined as "the belief that racial group membership should not be taken into account, or even noticed as a strategy for managing diversity and intergroup relations."²⁴ Color blindness is perhaps best encapsulated by the 2007 opinion from US Supreme Court Justice John Roberts

in an affirmative action case: “The way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race.”²⁵ Organizational colorblindness, however, has been shown to produce more negative than positive effects, especially among minorities. A 2008 study by Valerie Purdie-Vaughns et al. indicated that minority job candidates responded positively to organizations that were seen to be racially diverse while espousing a colorblind culture. Conversely, candidates showed diminished trust in organizations with a colorblind culture and lower minority representation.²⁶ When it comes to actual employees, a 2009 analysis of over 4,000 diversity climate survey responses conducted by Victoria Plaut et al. found that colorblind attitudes among majority group members correlated with lower engagement and higher perceptions of bias among minority group members. Of note, the same survey responses saw higher engagement and lower perceptions of bias among minorities when the majority espoused attitudes of multiculturalism, defined as a pluralistic ideology of recognizing and celebrating group differences.²⁷

Race as a social construct

From 1990 to 2003 a coalition of scientists took on the task of mapping the human genome. During this period and since, the field of genetics has definitively debunked many racially motivated myths about perceived differences between human populations or “races”. According to the National human Genome Research Institute, all human beings share 99.9% of their genetic code.²⁸ A landmark Stanford study in 2002 found that even inside of this .1% variation, there is vastly more difference within regional populations (93-95%) than between them (3-5%). The extremely few genetic markers that are unique to a specific region are only present within 1% of the population of that region.²⁹ These studies re-confirmed, this time from a

genetic standpoint, what anthropologists and biologists have held in general consensus since as early as 1950, that groups of human beings were more similar than different and the rejection of the concept of biologically distinct races.³⁰ Another 2002 study by Chiara Romuldi et al. titled “Patterns of Human Diversity, within and among Continents, Inferred from Biallelic DNA Polymorphisms” stated in no uncertain terms: “there is little evidence, if any, of a clear subdivision of humans into biologically defined groups.”³¹ Indeed, the idea of race itself is widely recognized as a social construct in the scientific community, with human diversity described instead using the term “ancestry.”³²

However, this has not always been the case. Historians depict a repeated narrative of racist policies buttressed by racist attitudes and supported by racist pseudo-scientific claims. From the very first large civilizations, those in power constructed hierarchies both to maintain order and to entrench the powerful classes. These hierarchies were supported by religious doctrines or other traditions. Examples include the ancient Chinese creation myth,³³ the Hindu caste system,³⁴ and Hammurabi’s code in ancient Babylon.³⁵ Even Aristotle of Greek society espoused the notion that some men were naturally slaves while others were naturally free.³⁶ Not surprisingly, all of these imagined hierarchies maintained the societal advantage of those who constructed them.

Starting in the late 1400s, as Western Europe became a player on the world stage and intercontinental interaction between human populations became increasingly common, those in power constructed a specific idea of “race” to create new types of hierarchies that entrenched power and justified the dehumanization and exploitation of certain groups of people. According to antiracist scholar Ibram X. Kendi, the royal chronicler Gomes de Zurara became the first “race-maker” when he published *The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea* in

1453 which described Africans as an inferior people, justifying slavery as a way to bring them to salvation. The book was published only after Portugal began realizing the incredible economic benefit of trafficking in African slaves.³⁷ The same story took place in the Spanish Inquisition, this time constructing racialized ideas to entrench the power of the elite classes against the rising economic status of Jewish converts to Catholicism.³⁸ This attitude of biological racism spread from Europe to the new world where biological race theories were widely promulgated to justify the exploitation and maltreatment of the Native Americans as the Anglo-American population pursued the doctrine of “Manifest Destiny.”³⁹

In the meta-history of humankind, “Sapiens,” Yuval Harari describes a self-reinforcing cycle of racial hierarchy where the lower socioeconomic status of a disadvantaged group is held up as proof that the group is, in fact, inferior. This allows the “inferiority” of the group to be used as a reason to further perpetuate their societal disadvantages.⁴⁰ Ibram X. Kendi, Robert Sussman, and Reginald Horsman have taken this theory further, stating that in many cases over the course of history it was not racist ideas that drove racist policies, rather it was the other way around; exploitative and hierarchical policies, typically with a strong economic incentive for the privileged group, were created first and then buttressed by racist ideas.⁴¹ While the exact nature of the interplay between policy, racism, and power is not a settled matter, there is no doubt as to its existence.

Bias, racism, and the Marine Corps

Tracking along with American society, The Marine Corps has shown significant progress over time in the reduction explicit or overt racism. Likewise, the dominant viewpoint among military leadership is that the US Military has at this point eliminated racism and is a truly

colorblind meritocracy. This mindset was affirmed in 2019 by GEN John Hyten during his confirmation hearings to become the vice-chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff when he remarked that he had seen racism “eliminated from the formation” by commanders and further stated “when I am in uniform, I feel colorblind.”⁴² However, a 2019 Military Times/Syracuse University survey of over 1600 active-duty servicemembers showed that 36.3% of respondents had personally witnessed white nationalism or racism within the ranks. The percentage of minority respondents who had personally witnessed the same was 53.5%.⁴³

Still unclear are the effects both of hidden racist attitudes and unintentional implicit bias. Initial studies have been conducted that indicate potential racial disparities across multiple domains. A 2012 Center for Naval Analysis (CNA) study found that black and Hispanic officers received lower evaluation ratings from their Reporting Seniors (RS/first line supervisor) and Reviewing Officers (RO/senior supervisor) than white officers in the same occupational field. (.12 difference in RS rating and .22 difference in RO rating for black officers, .07 difference in RS rating and .13 difference in RO rating for Hispanic officers) The CNA report also found that on promotion boards, “black and Hispanic officers each tend to have a recommendation one tier lower than a white officer—with the same RV [Relative Value, or the composite score of their evaluations]—28 percent of the time.”⁴⁴

When it comes to discipline, the 2011 Military Leadership Diversity Commission’s final report, a 2017 study by the nonprofit Protect Our Defenders, and a 2020 report from the government accountability office report all found disparities within the Marine Corps’ military justice system. According to the studies, black Marines are twice as likely as white Marines to be investigated⁴⁵, 63% more likely than white Marines to be court martialed⁴⁶, and once there, 60% more likely to be found guilty.⁴⁷ Further analysis shows that black Marines are 29% more likely

to be found guilty at Non-Judicial Punishment (NJP).⁴⁸ Furthermore, the 2020 Government Accountability Office report states that “Officials from DOD [Department of Defense] and the military services acknowledged that they do not know the cause of the racial disparities that have been identified in the military justice system. This is because they have not conducted a comprehensive evaluation to identify potential causes of these disparities and make recommendations about any appropriate corrective actions to remediate the cause(s) of the disparities.”⁴⁹

Previous studies and efforts

The most recent comprehensive study on the lack of minority representation in SOF was conducted by RAND Corporation in 1999 at the behest of United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). This study was conducted before the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the global war on terror, and the creation of MARSOC. The study took into account demographic data at the time, focus group discussions, and interviews with SOF recruiters, trainers, and personnel managers. The study found both structural and perceived barriers to minorities in SOF. Structural barriers included Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) cutoff scores, requirements for a clean discipline record, swimming requirements, and land navigation requirements. Perceptual barriers included a lack of knowledge of SOF, lack of community support for minorities considering SOF, and a lack of identification with SOF among minorities. Of note, all of these perceptual barriers stemmed in whole or in part from the lack of diversity already present in SOF.⁵⁰

To address the structural barriers, the study recommended a review of entry, assessment, and training requirements to ensure that they are valid and relevant to mission goals, and

maintaining a more thorough database of information on all recruits to include demographic data. Of note, the study emphasized the importance of retaining valid requirements, stating that “Members of the SOF and focus groups from all ethnic/racial groups were adamant about retaining valid requirements and saw any lowering of them in an attempt to draw in more minorities as detrimental for both the mission and the minority group.”⁵¹ To address the perceptual barriers, the study recommended various methods of increasing outreach to minority populations both inside and outside the service.⁵² Considering that MARSOC still contains a significant underrepresentation of minorities, the findings and recommendations of this RAND study are likely still relevant.

In 2011, the Department of Defense’s (DoD) Military Leadership Diversity Commission issued its final report. The commission was established by the 2009 National Defense Authorization Act with a charter to “conduct a comprehensive evaluation and assessment of policies that provide opportunities for the promotion and advancement of minority members of the Armed Forces, including minority members who are senior officers.”⁵³ Among the recommendations from this study were the adoption of a common definition of diversity across the DoD, recruiting outreach efforts to underrepresented groups, efforts to expand the pool of eligible candidates through a review of entry requirements, and numerous accountability mechanisms between the services, the Secretary of Defense, and congress towards a 20-30 year pipeline that yields (1) an officer and enlisted corps that reflects the eligible U.S. population across all Service communities and ranks and (2) a military force that is able to prevail in its wars, prevent and deter conflict, defeat adversaries and succeed in a wide range of contingencies, and preserve and enhance the all-volunteer force.”⁵⁴

The Marine Corps in its own right has conducted relatively little study at this time focused on racial and ethnic diversity. In 2017 the Marine Corps Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL) conducted a study on organizational culture and provided a report in response to the “Marines United”⁵⁵ Facebook Group scandal that included interviews with a wide range of Marines, but it focused on gender issues and did not present specific effects of race in the Marine Corps.⁵⁶ Of note, according to the research director for the report itself, the research group intended to study race and its effects in addition to gender issues but was shut down before the analysis could be completed.⁵⁷

Diversity as a Worthy Goal

The first question that needs to be answered- is diversity a worthwhile goal for MARSOC in and of itself? The nexus of research from the academic and business realm points towards yes: evidence shows that racial (in addition to social and viewpoint) diversity increases productivity, innovation, problem solving skills of the group. But how well do these studies translate to potential positive outcomes in the unique realm of Special Operations? To answer this question, I analyzed the current research and its applicability to a SOF and Marine Corps context.

In 2018, MARSOC published MARSOF 2030, its strategic vision document which lays out innovation pathways for the next decade. One such pathway is “The Cognitive Operator,” described below:

Built upon a solid foundation of continued tactical excellence, the 2030 Raider must be as comfortable working as a part of interagency or multinational effort as serving inside of a MARSOF formation. This concept will place increased emphasis on the qualities of intellect, judgment, creativity, and teamwork while maintaining attributes like

determination and endurance that have been critical to our success to date. The cognitive operator must have the curiosity and intellect to see the whole picture and infer underlying problems, the skill to convey those layers to leaders, the creativity to recommend effective multi-domain action, and the drive to see those actions through to completion.⁵⁸

Some key words from this description are multinational, creativity, curiosity. Indeed, one of the main differentiators between special and conventional military operations is the broad range of options and capabilities available to the SOF team or operator on the ground. SOF are first and foremost problem-solvers who can be employed in a range of dangerous and politically sensitive environments, who are able to act as a connector between disparate organizations with both interdependent and independent goals to generate solutions for the joint force. Likewise, as discussed in the literature review above, the studies of the past decades on diversity's effects on teams found that increased diversity creates positive group outcomes comprising the same qualities that are critical to successful special operations and highlighted in MARSOF 2030: creativity, collaborative problem solving, questioning assumptions, need for cognition, and innovation. The problem-solving advantages derived from diversity are not only applicable to SOF missions, but they will become indispensable in the future as problems take on an increasingly interconnected, trans-regional and multi-domain nature.

Cross-cultural competence is one of the most important skills for Special Operations Forces (SOF) personnel who overwhelmingly work by, with, and through partner forces. In a 2010 article for *Armed Forces and Society*, Remi Hajjar, director of the sociology program at West Point, explored links between cross-cultural competence developed within the ranks and executed in overseas deployments, stating “the fundamentals of cross-cultural competence apply

similarly, regardless of the context of their application.”⁵⁹ Along these lines, MARSOC’s Marine Raider Training Center has recently begun implementing initiatives to better evaluate the “cultural IQ” of its Raiders while they are in their initial training to determine what languages they are best suited to learn. With the collection of more data, MARSOC can further study the connections between accession of operators from diverse backgrounds and the overall cultural IQ of the force.

Some skeptics of diversity initiatives equate them with affirmative-action style quotas and the lowering of standards. These critics eschew changes to the status quo and claim that such changes are driven by political correctness, arguing that military effectiveness is the only priority.⁶⁰ High, uncompromising individual standards are indeed a hallmark of SOF and the larger Marine Corps, so this comes as no surprise. If a case is to be made for diversity initiatives, it must be a case based in effectiveness and not come at the expense of valid standards. The 1999 RAND study cited these same concerns which remain relevant today. The tension between group benefits from diversity and maintenance of high individual standards is foundational to the analysis and solution development presented in this thesis, with a goal of gaining in the former without sacrificing the latter.

Diversity and Political Legitimacy

“We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”⁶¹ These words should be intimately familiar to any U.S. Servicemember as the preamble to the Constitution of the United States, the

same document that we all have sworn an oath to support and defend, and the same document authorizes the very existence of the armed forces. Indeed, the constitution of the United States forms the basis for the civilian control of the military. Specifically, Article I, Section 8 grants Congress the powers to raise Armies and maintain a Navy, and “To make Rules for the Government and Regulation of the land and naval Forces.”⁶² In his book on civil-military relations, *The Soldier and the State*, Samuel Huntington wrote along these same lines: “The military profession exists to serve the state ... The superior political wisdom of the statesman must be accepted as a fact”⁶³

All of this is to say that the military is an inherently political institution. Carl von Clausewitz described war as such: “War is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means... for the political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose.”⁶⁴ Therefore, while military members are forbidden from participating in partisan activity, it would be foolish to believe that the military is an apolitical institution or is exempt from political realities. The U.S. Congress, as the elected representatives of “we the people,” exercise control over the armed forces – indeed this is what maintains the legitimacy and authorities of the military to provide for the common defense.

The 1999 RAND study of minorities in Special Operations found a significant lack of diversity which persists in MARSOC today, a fact that has not been lost on our political leadership. In June of 2020, Senator Tammy Duckworth introduced the Equality in Leadership and Inclusion in Top Elements (ELITE) Act of 2020, finding that “No significant independent study has been performed by a federally funded research and development center into increasing minority participation in the special forces since 1999.”⁶⁵ The ELITE act calls for the Secretary

of Defense to commission an independent study similar to the 1999 RAND report on barriers to minority participation in Special Operations Forces to include MARSOC. At this time, the bill has been referred to the Senate Armed Services Committee.

In today's political climate where America's racial tensions are on the forefront of the national discourse, MARSOC should read the writing on the wall. As the rest of American society finds ways to not only normalize but gain the increased benefits of diversity and inclusion, the old explanations as to why the Marine Corps and Special Operations cannot find a way to accomplish these same things will lose their validity. MARSOC risks facing the choice of losing its political legitimacy or having changes thrust upon it by Congress. The Marine Corps adamantly resisted racial integration in 1941,⁶⁶ the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" in 2010,⁶⁷ and the opening of combat jobs to women,⁶⁸ yet they all happened. Instead of repeating the past, MARSOC should embrace these political realities and use them as fuel to transform the organization into one that is *both maintains political legitimacy and increases effectiveness*.

Context – The personal impact of race in the Marine Corps.

An underreported piece of data at this time is the lived experiences of Marines of color in recent years. Demographic and survey data only tell one side of the story but do not capture the nuances of the minority experience in a tradition-laden Marine Corps. This section provides context to the analysis and data with first-person stories from current and former Marines of color. DoD and US Navy policies constraining the Marine Corps' Human Subjects Protection Program limited my ability to conduct direct interviews, so I have instead gathered these accounts from various previously published sources to include podcast interviews and a recent article in the Marine Corps Gazette.

These accounts paint a qualitative picture of the lived experiences of some minority Marines, a context that (largely white) leadership is, for the most part, missing. My analysis of the various themes presented in these accounts is not definitive as the sample size is too small but is still useful and could serve as a launching-off point for future research. These stories both illustrate the effects of racialized experiences on Marines of color and act as a resource for developing inclusive solutions. To date, no Marine Corps-sponsored efforts have been completed to collect this type of qualitative data on a service-wide scale for further analysis. Below are some of the few publicly available stories that contextualize the minority experience within the Marine Corps:

A former black infantry officer describing an experience while briefing a sandtable exercise at TBS: “And one of the captains was a white captain, he asked us to ... brief our platoon on what we thought the enemy would do. So I raised my hand... And I briefed ... that the enemy was going to try to use hit and run tactics on our unit. And the captain stopped me and said, the enemy wasn't going to be doing a “drive by.” And he told me not to use slang when I spoke and told me that “this wasn't the ghetto.” And he did this in front of everybody, in front of all my peers.”⁶⁹

A former black infantry officer describing the relationship between black senior officers and black junior officers, especially in an instructor/student role: “There was only three of us going through the course; there was a black officer on staff there. But even with that, it's this sense of...they expect so much of you...[because] now, you're gonna make them look bad... It's the feeling of, they'll probably do more harm than good if they mentor you or anything. So they've got to keep you on defense and be sometimes harder on you.”⁷⁰

A former black infantry officer: “Being a Marine Corps officer in general, a lot of times, it felt like a being a black guy in an entirely white room. More often than not, you know. And if you've never experienced that feeling... have you ever walked into a room where you're the only white person? It's like, 100 black people. How do you move in that room? How do you talk? How do you feel really comfortable? Are you really the most confident?”⁷¹

A black infantry officer describing an IOC instructor using the term “Sand N*****” twice in front of a room full of students: “It was 2012. And I was like, you know, here is a captain, O-3 in the Marines in front of a classroom full of people... and for him to use that word, that is displaying more than something about just him, because that's a smart person, and that's a rational person. And so he has to be confident enough in his position, and in his culture, and in his power, that he can say that word to a room full of 80 white dudes and two black men, and nothing's gonna happen... And it was telling me and [the other black Lieutenant] to stay in our place... [saying that] ‘you can get here, and maybe you'll get through this school. But at the end of the day, I can stand up here and say the N word twice.’ And that's what this culture is, and that's what it signaled to me... and that made me really doubt the choices that I made in my life to even bring me into an environment like that would treat me that way. And to risk my life for an organization that would treat me that way.”⁷²

A black infantry officer describing what his instructor said to him at his IOC graduation: “[He said] ‘Hey, you know, you guys don't normally make good grunts, but you're an exception. I want to shake your hand’ ... *That guy now is an RS CO.*”⁷³ *Author comment: RS CO stands for Recruiting Station Commanding Officer, generally considered one of the most prestigious officer assignments and a fast-track to Battalion Command, not to mention that the Marine Corps*

formally assigned an officer who, in his own words, does not believe black Marines make good infantrymen, to a position specifically charged with recruiting the next generation of Marines.

A Basic School 2ndLt in 2015: “At TBS, during our first meeting with our SPC, he went on a tangent about how the Civil War wasn’t about slavery, but about states’ rights. As the only black lieutenant in the platoon, I did not know if I should confront the captain to tell him the states’ right in question was the right to allow slavery. I immediately felt alone and uncomfortable in my platoon, knowing that both my leadership and peers felt fine publicly expressing and agreeing with that point of view.”⁷⁴

An infantry Lieutenant describing his experience at IOC in 2019: “At IOC, one of my peers said I was there because ‘they can’t drop all of the black guys.’ I thought he believed I earned a “quota” spot despite fighting for my MOS by graduating in the top 5% of my TBS class and being an Ivy League graduate.”⁷⁵

A Judge Advocate 1st Lt in 2019: “I finished Naval Justice School as the honor graduate. However, I had to fight to have my merit accurately reflected because several times my earned grade was recorded as a lower grade. I thought the instructors deliberately tried to obscure my grades so a Black woman would not become the honor graduate.”⁷⁶

An infantry Colonel in 2020, describing experiences throughout his career: “Even though I was an infantry officer, many white officers asked if I was the adjutant or Motor-T Officer.” I thought they were saying I could not be a good infantry officer, and I did not belong on the team.⁷⁷

An infantry Colonel, describing experiences throughout his career spanning 1996-2020: “As an infantry officer from captain to colonel, fellow Marines questioned: ‘How did you get here?’ This comment implies I am not supposed to be here. Twenty-six years ago, these

comments were unacceptable and not asked of my white peers, it is frustrating that these comments are still made in the year 2020.”⁷⁸

A logistics Captain in 2020: “Throughout my career, and most recently in discussing George Floyd’s killing, I’ve been told ‘oh, you’re different, you’re not like those blacks who [insert false stereotype here].’ In response, I explained that I was not an exception. In viewing me as an exception, you completely marginalize black people and projected biases against them. Biases that are often demonstrated against black Marines when not in uniform.”⁷⁹

A manpower officer LtCol in 2020: “I was driving on the highway with my eleven-year-old daughter and was stopped by police. The police officer had his hand on his gun, said he stopped me because he smelled weed, and asked if I was transporting drugs. As a Marine, who served all over the globe, I found it sadly ironic that while home in America a police officer accused me of transporting drugs and threatened me and my child’s life by placing his hand on his gun.”⁸⁰

A Supply Officer 2nd lieutenant in 2015: “Having just checked in to my first unit in the fleet, my battalion commander said the “N” word several times in a joke about black men and being lazy during a staff meeting. No one flinched. As the only black Marine in the room, I instantly knew I’d never truly be a part of his team.”⁸¹

A back Colonel in 2020: “Each year I review the officer promotion selection rates for captain to colonel and notice the selection rate for black officers is lower at each rank than the rate for white officers.” I wonder why this happens. Are black officers not as good as white officers? Is the Corps failing black officers? Does my race make it harder to get promoted?⁸²

A retired infantry Colonel describing an encounter with his BN CDR as a Lieutenant: “I was half Asian, and I had one other Asian Lieutenant the whole time... we were on a jog. [The

BN Commander] took all lieutenants out for a run before he went our UDP to Okinawa a couple weeks prior. So every Lieutenant at the time are all jogging. The Japanese American officers were there with us... a couple black guys, every else is white, all infantry right... Well, he stopped at Marsden pavilion... and he gathers [us] around, he starts talking to us about Okinawa, now, the battalion commander, now he's saying 'Jap this', and 'the Jap cops' and the 'Jap this' and he must have said Jap 30 times... So I went up to him right before we gather to continue our run. I said, Hey, sir, if anybody ever said 'Jap' around my mother, I'd [expletive] kill him. And then I got back in formation and ran. Well I was ranked 20 of 20 lieutenants by him as reviewing officer. But the point is, no white officer said [anything], and I had a full Japanese American Lieutenant brother right there. And I said something, and then I get punished on my reviewing officer comments from him. That guy ends up being a three-star general”⁸³

A Japanese American infantry 2ndLt who was sent as a unit representative to an event highlighting WWII veterans from the Pacific theater (without being told ahead of time what the event was): “And then they have all the World War two vets with their hats and their pins... The first guest speaker comes up... and he says, ‘when I was killing japs on Tarawa’ or something like that... to be fair maybe it wasn't an intentional thing by my unit ... [but] in that moment, I realized that people are gonna look at me different no matter what... I also wish that my unit or whoever was in charge of doing this would have a little bit of sensitivity... These are some of the small things like the death by 1000 cuts where you're told that you're different in different ways, even if it's not intentional.”⁸⁴

While some of these instances are older, most are within the past decade; many Marines on both ends of these exchanges are likely still in the Marine Corps, and the perpetrators likely moved on to positions of greater and greater influence in the ranks. The goal of highlighting

these experiences is not to indict the entire Marine Corps as an organization or draw any type of service-wide conclusions, but instead to illustrate, in their own words, the lived experiences of our Marine brothers and sisters whose stories are rarely heard by institutional leadership. Why are these stories rarely heard?

Due to the colorblind mentality of the Marine Corps, race tends to be a taboo subject. Col Christopher Shaw attests to this in a recent Marine Corps Gazette article, “One Tribe Requires Inclusion,” saying, “before CMC’s direction, I never specifically asked Marines whether they experienced racism even though I am a black American. I never brought it up because I felt wary of talking about race... Further, black Marines felt it violated a clear unwritten rule to share issues of race with their non-black peers or seniors, similar to my hesitance to discuss these issues with them.”⁸⁵ In the same way, Col (ret) Thomas Hobbs, author of a recent article in the Marine Corps Times titled “The Marine Corps: Always faithful — to white men” spoke about the same phenomenon on a podcast interview: “Until you publicly state where you stand, no one's going to talk to you... [as] open-minded as I like to believe I am, My black lieutenants that are still friends with me this day, did not tell me what their experiences were like until I published that article.”⁸⁶

“All Marines are Green”

MARSOC, and the Marine Corps in general, ascribe to a colorblind ethos, marked by a prominence of the “equal opportunity” mindset that is regulatory and reactive in nature. An example Equal Opportunity (EO) statement can be seen in Appendix A. Most EO statements throughout the Marine Corps read very similarly to this example, with formulaic legal wording that ensures fulfillment of Marine Corps policy requirements. In theory, colorblind statements

communicate that everyone is equal under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. In practice, however, colorblind statements are counterproductive for three reasons: They focus only on overt racism (or sexism), they make these issues out as individual problems, and they place the burden of fixing these problems on the victims of discrimination. Taken together, these factors discount any effects from implicit bias or other environmental factors faced by minorities, and by focusing on enforcement and compliance, they absolve institutions and commanders of responsibility for fostering a truly inclusive environment or getting ahead of the problem.

As presented in the literature review, when organizations espouse a colorblind mentality without the racial diversity to back it up, that signals a lack of inclusivity to minority applicants and employees. Equal Opportunity statements ring as empty programs and could in fact act to bolster systemic biases. An organization that lacks representation while espousing a colorblind mentality also risks broadcasting the hidden message of “minorities are underrepresented here because they are generally less qualified.” Finally, both overt racism and implicit bias exist in American society from which the Marine Corps is drawn, and therefore exist within the Marine Corps. While there is legitimate argument as to the degree, the evidence presented in the literature review and in the lived experiences of minority Marines affirms this. A colorblind mentality paints instances of bias as individual problems with solutions based on individual compliance rather than systemic problems with systemic solutions. This mindset in effect absolves the institution of responsibility for taking proactive measures to seek out and correct systemic issues. *Just because we say we don't discriminate, doesn't mean that we aren't discriminating*, and maintaining this mindset just may prevent us from seeking out how we can do better.

The most telling example of MARSOC's colorblind mentality became evident to me when I began seeking historic racial demographic information from MARSOC's recruiting and Assessment & Selection (A&S) branches. The data simply do not exist, in any form for any years before 2020. Indeed, race does not play a part in whether or not an individual Marine is qualified to be a Special Operator, and on an individual level, is not necessarily relevant. In fact, the non-collection of racial data, within a colorblind framework, could act as a hedge against discrimination: you can't discriminate if you don't know who is a minority, right? This logic is only possible within the framework and assumptions of colorblindness.

However, this mentality also brings unintended consequences and effects, especially on minorities. First, it assumes away the effects of implicit bias or other systemic factors. Second, it removes any institutional introspection and self-accountability measures. If we don't collect the data, then there is nothing to tell us how we are getting off track, or even if we are getting off track. Third, the lack of data collection presents another question: since we already know that MARSOC is significantly less diverse than its eligible recruiting pool, were we not collecting racial data simply because we were afraid of being accused of discrimination? Fortunately, MARSOC has recently reversed course on this, collecting racial data for the first time in the January 2021 A&S course. Furthermore, the Marine Raider Training Center has undertaken the labor-intensive effort to dig up backdated demographic data from recent years and so far has completed it for 2020. This development is an important step towards moving from a colorblind and compliance-based organizational mentality to one of multiculturalism and inclusion.

The Power of Mentorship

To me, the most fascinating part of my research focused on mentorship. This happened not by design but by discovery learning. The theme of mentorship rose to the forefront of every conversation as I conducted interviews with four subject-matter experts on diversity and inclusion and their relationship with performance. These individuals have undertaken personal efforts on their own time and at their own expense to seek out, cultivate, prepare, and mentor high-performing individuals, overwhelmingly minorities, through some of the most competitive military and civilian career pipelines. Their mentor networks span across multiple Special Operations branches, but also include pilots, doctors, submariners, C-level business executives, and Service Academy and Ivy League graduates to name a few. These informal mentorship programs and networks are truly cradle-to-grave. They include outreach to minority and underprivileged communities, preparation for hiring and training milestones, and consistent career mentorship between senior and junior members of the network embedded within the hierarchies of their respective fields. The interviewees have demonstrated incredible success rates, far surpassing the pass rate of any of the training or hiring pipelines they had prepared their people for. As an example, one individual, a former Navy SEAL, has prepared and sent seven out of eight black Naval officers successfully through the arduous SEAL training pipeline since 2011, an 88% pass rate.⁸⁷ The *What* was clear in the accomplishments of the mentees. My interview questions focused on the *Why* and the *How*. What I learned has absolute applications to increasing accessibility and representation of minority groups within competitive units like MARSOC, but more importantly points to a model that cuts across racial and ethnic lines towards better scouting, recruiting, development, and retention of top talent across the board.

The first interview question for each individual was: “Why do you do what you do?” Every response fit within the same theme. These mentors do what they do because they saw a need and they wanted to fill it. Most of them saw this need in their own personal experience; they reflected on their past and their lack of support and mentorship and decided that they wanted to provide for others what was not provided to them. Some highlights from my interviewees were:

A former black Navy pilot who now flies for a major airline: “I do it because *I needed that*. There was a 12 year old... [me] who was looking for representation. I knew I wanted to be a pilot. I'm from a small town in Virginia... there are not a lot of black professionals period, there was no one that was doing what I wanted to do... And unfortunately, the representation in that pipeline wasn't there... we had to reach out and find guys that looked like us. And they were willing to help once we found them, and asked them for help, but there was nothing set up there. And we determined that... once we get to where we're in the system, and we can reach back and set up this network and help out, we're going to do it because we remembered *our* struggle.”⁸⁸

Mark Donald, a Mexican-American retired Reconnaissance Marine, Navy SEAL medic, Navy Physician's Assistant, and Navy Cross recipient: “The mark of a leader is, is when you look around him, the people that they mentored went far beyond what they ever did... when I step back, and I look at things, I want to know that what I left was more than just something about me being part of something, it was about me trying to help other people be part of something that I love... It was never about, I'm going to go make SOF operators, that was never the intent. The intent was, I'm going to go help people that I know need to get, you know, retaught. Most of these people don't even have fathers... they don't have any mentor, anyone to guide them.”⁸⁹

A black former Navy SEAL who has 20+ years of mentorship experience, after describing negative and racially charged experiences early in his career but having nobody he could talk to about it: “The problem was, I was in my own head.. When you don't know where you're at, or the actions you should take, you spin around in your own head... Nothing good comes out of your own thoughts in situations like those... You need somebody [to talk to]... When I got out, I was like, look, *no one is going to have that experience.*”⁹⁰

Thomas Hobbs, an Asian-American retired Marine Colonel who created a Marine Officer Basic School (TBS) prep course for lieutenants from disadvantaged backgrounds: “I've only done the one [TBS Prep Course] with three lieutenants. But I did it because I highlighted these problems [that] I believe are in the Marine Corps in my first paper [“The Marine Corps: Always faithful — to white men”] and talked about how TBS has systemic racism in it, and it results in biased outcomes, and how to fix that is with preparation to raise all lieutenants up to the same starting line... So then, it occurred to me that maybe I could do it, on my own, so I just put my money where my mouth is and decided to give it a shot.”⁹¹

When talking about the “How” of these informal mentorship programs and networks, there were several common themes: selection of the right talent, personal and interpersonal accountability, pushing to their full potential, preemptive and immediate problem solving, organic generation and expansion of the network, a “lift as you climb” mentality, and cradle to grave mentorship.

Talent selection and accountability

A key aspect of these mentorship programs for elite organizations is that they won't take just anyone – you have to be willing to put in the work. All of the mentors I spoke to were

adamant about this fact, and that their intent was not to simply increase minority accession into competitive programs but to match talented individuals with opportunities that they may not have had access to otherwise. As one mentoring expert and former Navy SEAL put it: “I’m not a diversity guy, I’m a success guy.”⁹² Stemming directly from talent selection is accountability – not just from the individual mentees but from the network. Successful mentors constantly hold mentees accountable for their preparation and execution through both training pipelines and careers. On top of that, mentors and mentor networks are accountable to the organization for the quality of their mentees, or else they lose credibility.

An example was given to me by a former Navy pilot and current airline pilot, speaking about the Organization of Black Aviation Professionals (OBAP). OBAP works in underprivileged areas to open up aviation opportunities to people who otherwise would not have them, to include mentorship, training, and networking assistance. He told the story of United Airlines contacting OBAP as part of a diversity initiative, asking for 25 resumes a year from minority pilots that would be prioritized for screening, and that OBAP’s response was to send 25 applicants that were top talent, because their credibility as an organization hangs on the quality of these applicants. Additionally, OBAP took the responsibility of ensuring the preparation and success of these applicants. This is a perfect illustration of a win/win situation where the airline both increases diversity and either maintains or increases their aggregate individual talent.⁹³

This speaks directly to the tension between efforts to increase diversity and inclusion and the importance of maintaining high individual standards. The fact is one is not necessarily at the expense of the other. Taking a “yes, and” rather than an “either, or” approach leads to finding, cultivating, and bringing in the right talent across all racial demographics for maximized group benefit and even increased individual standards.

Pushing, potential, and problem solving

Stemming from the theme of accountability is the pushing of mentees to their full potential. A common theme across the interviews was that oftentimes minority candidates for high-performance but low-representation career fields face barriers to entry in that they don't know what they don't know, and they are unaware of the steps required to realize their full potential. I heard stories of mentors pushing mentees to enroll in SAT prep classes after receiving a low score, retake the ASVAB multiple times until earning the required score, spending endless hours in the pool learning to float when they naturally sink, and preparing for rigorous interviews. These things are not unfair advantages, as they are accessible to all. However, the extra push from mentors simply allows mentees' inner talents to come to the forefront and for them to realize their full potential.

Related is the concept of both anticipatory and emergency problem solving. Mentors with expertise and experience work to anticipate common tripping points during a training pipeline or career and pre-empt them with their mentees. Second, when a mentee runs into an unanticipated problem, they have what one mentor referred to as "the bat phone,"⁹⁴ which is simply the knowledge that a support network is only a phone call away. With minority candidates, this also includes preparing them for incidences of bias in the workplace, and the best ways to respond and recover without negative consequences. Again, the goal is not to provide an advantage, but to give training, preparation, and career advice to maximize mentees' ability to fulfill their potential and prevent small problems from becoming big ones, potentially leading to failure.

Organic networks – the “lift as you climb” approach

Perhaps the most important piece of all is the organic creation of mentor networks as opposed to simply individual mentors. This organic growth is made possible by the instilling of a “lift as you climb”⁹⁵ mentality across the board. Best said by Mark Donald, describing a conversation with one of his successful mentees: “[I told him] You owe me one of you. And I'm going to remind you that every year and one day, you're going to tell me who the one of you is. That's the graduation I want to attend. Not yours. I want to see that one.”⁹⁶ On the civilian side, some of these networks are formalized such as the OBAP. On the military side, they tend to grow organically once representation reaches “critical mass,”⁹⁷ both horizontally with consistent accession and vertically as representation moves up through the ranks. Until then, however, the mentorship network requires active cultivation.

Pipeline Analysis

MARSOC’s lack of racial or ethnic diversity within the population of Marine Raiders is pronounced, but the loss of representation does not happen all at once. There are multiple steps to becoming a Marine Raider to include joining the Marine Corps, completion of an initial term of service in any MOS, attendance at MARSOC Assessment & Selection (A&S), and completion of the Individual Training Course (ITC). Table 2 below illustrates the analysis of this process using all available demographic data. The first column of the table lists the demographic percentages of the eligible American population. (Defined as Americans ages 18-44 with a high school diploma or equivalent for enlisted and college degree or equivalent for officers). The second column shows the same for all of Active Duty DoD – a proxy for those Americans that are both qualified and willing to serve and a population that the Marine Corps competes with the

other services to recruit. The third column shows the entirety of the Marine Corps as of 1 December, 2020. The fourth column shows the eligible population for attendance at MARSOC A&S as of January 15, 2020 (defined as All Marines with the appropriate Time in Grade/Time in Service/rank requirements, no more than 2 incidences of nonjudicial punishment, a PFT score of 235 or higher, and a General Technical (GT) score of 105 or higher). The fifth column shows the attendance at A&S (Note: the data is extremely limited for this stage as racial/ethnic demographics are available from only three A&S classes for a total of 618 Marines). The sixth column encompasses all Marines assigned the 0372 or 0370 MOS from 2012 to present. One dataset that is missing is ITC. Since the course is almost ten months long, any demographic data is yet to be collected across multiple iterations of the course. However, the difference between A&S Attendance and the final number of Raiders accounts for both selection at A&S and attrition at ITC.

Table 2: Racial/Ethnic demographics through the MARSOC recruiting funnel

	Eligible American Pop ⁹⁸	Active Duty DoD ⁹⁹	Marine Corps ¹⁰⁰	Eligible Marine Corps ¹⁰¹	A&S Attend ¹⁰²	037X ¹⁰³
AMERICAN INDIAN / ALASKAN NATIVE	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%	1.1%	1.6%	1.0%
HAWAIIAN / PACIFIC ISLANDER	1.0%	1.0%	0.8%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%
ASIAN	5.0%	4.0%	3.0%	3.4%	5.2%	1.1%
HISPANIC	16.0%	17.0%	20.9%	20.2%	12.9%	7.2%
BLACK	16.0%	16.0%	9.7%	5.6%	2.3%	2.7%
WHITE	55.0%	57.0%	60.7%	68.2%	69.7%	84.6%
DECLINED TO RESPOND			1.4%	0.8%	5.5%	2.1%
OTHER	4.0%	2.0%	2.5%		2.8%	1.3%
Total population size	>10 Million	1.3 Million	186,000	30,000/year	500/year	80-120/year

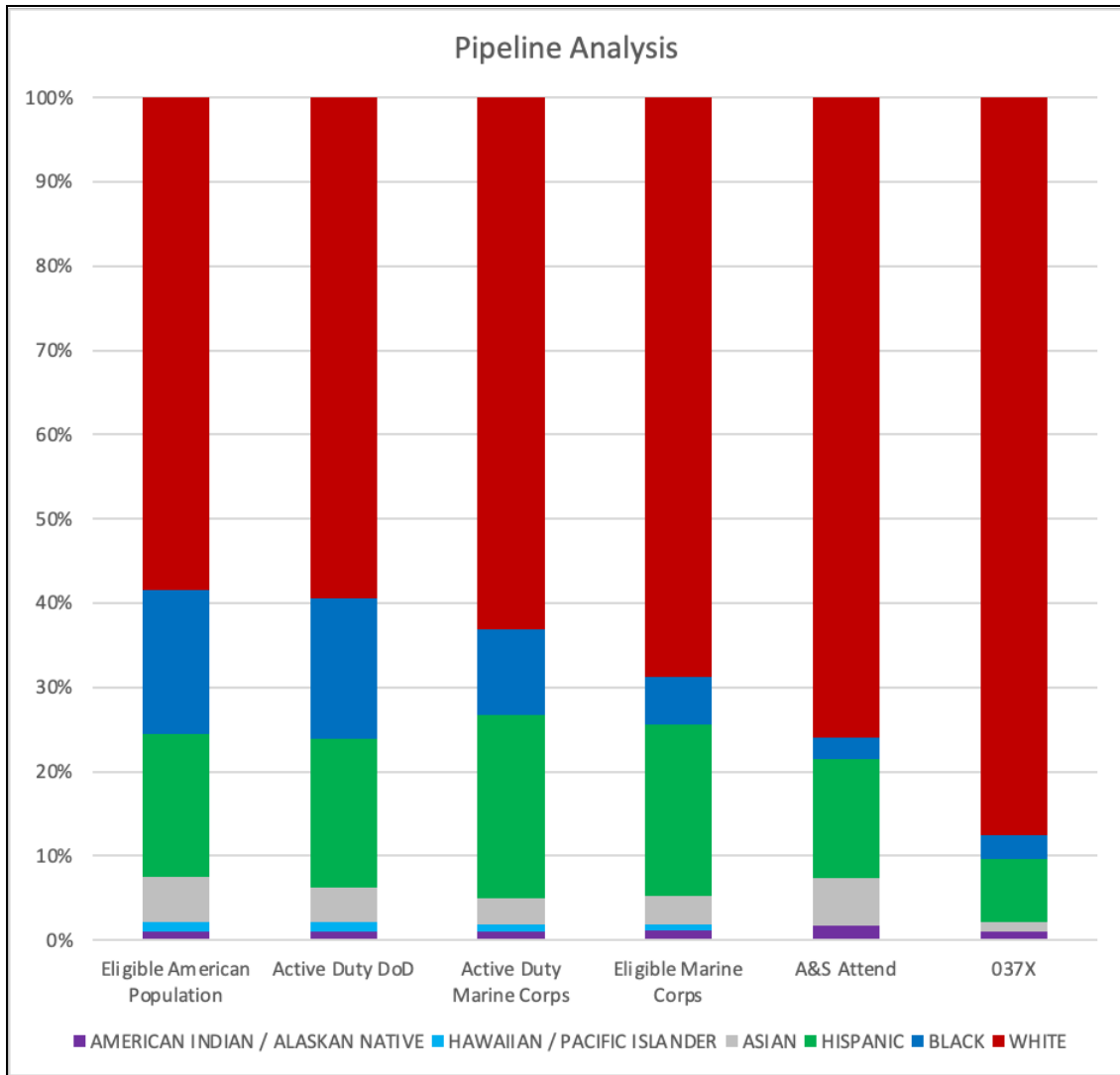


Figure 2: Racial/Ethnic demographics through the MARSOC recruiting funnel

As shown in Figure 2 above, minority representation drops at each stage of progression to becoming a Marine Raider. While the bars are the same size in the chart to illustrate percentages, the process looks more like a funnel. First, from tens of millions of eligible Americans to 1.3 Million active service members¹⁰⁴, to 186,000 Marines¹⁰⁵. Of the approximately 30,000 Marines eligible each year to screen for MARSOC¹⁰⁶, approximately 500 a year will attend A&S and approximately 100-150 of those will be selected for follow-on training.¹⁰⁷ Further attrition during the Individual Training Course leads to a final production of 80-120 Raiders per year to

maintain a total population of approximately 1100 Marine Raiders across all ranks¹⁰⁸, or 0.6% of the Active Duty Marine Corps.

The small numbers towards the right end of the funnel mean that MARSOC seeks highly specialized and talented individuals. It also means that small inputs can have outsized effects on the final makeup of the force when it comes to diversity. Further analysis on three key focus points illustrate opportunities to tweak the funnel in early stages to create a more inclusive recruiting model: Active Duty Marine Corps to Eligible Marines, Eligible Marines to A&S Attendance, and Eligible US Population to Active Duty Marine Corps.

Solution Development

MARSOC Assessment and Selection: the little end of the funnel

MARSOC Assessment and Selection evaluates and selects Marines according to the ten MARSOC Attributes, listed in MARSOC Publication 1. They are: Integrity, Effective Intelligence, Physical Ability, Adaptability, Initiative, Determination, Dependability, Teamwork, Interpersonal Skills, and Stress Tolerance. A&S is specifically designed to test and evaluate across all ten attributes by collecting thousands of observed data points from dozens of instructors on each candidate during events that are designed to elicit responses in accordance with the key attributes. To remove potential for favoritism and bias impacting the process, instructors do not share observations about any candidates among themselves. This is not to say that bias does not exist, but one instructor's bias would likely be mitigated and limited in its ability to effect outcomes due to processes in place. Nonetheless, MARSOC should internally reassess A&S and ITC processes to validate them through the lens of inclusion. However, since MARSOC just this year began collecting racial demographic data for A&S and ITC, the full

ability to examine historical outcomes through the lens of diversity and inclusion does not yet exist. For these reasons, my recommended solutions all focus “to the left of the bang,” taking programmatic steps in concert with the Marine Corps to shape the Raider producing funnel in a way that maximizes talent and representation going into A&S, creating more diverse and inclusive outcomes on the back end.

Active duty to eligible Marines: Casting the right net

When it comes to determining who is eligible to attend A&S however, the list of requirements is not closely tied to MARSOC attributes and therefore artificially restricts potentially qualified candidates from attendance. The two screening factors besides time in grade/time in service are a GT Score of at least 105 and a First-class Physical Fitness Test (PFT) – score of 235 or above. What are the effects of these filters? Are they reflective of the MARSOC attributes? One significant effect of the GT filter is the elimination of a disproportionate number of minorities from eligibility to attend A&S. Table 3 and accompanying Figure 3 below show the demographic makeup of eligible Marines with various GT cutoff scores.

Table 3: Demographic breakdown of eligible A&S pool by GT Score cutoff¹⁰⁹

Race/Ethnicity	GT Cutoff 105	GT Cutoff 80
AMERICAN INDIAN / ALASKAN NATIVE	1.1%	1.1%
HAWAIIAN / PACIFIC ISLANDER	0.7%	0.9%
ASIAN	3.4%	3.5%
HISPANIC	20.2%	25.9%
BLACK	5.6%	10.1%
WHITE	68.2%	57.7%
DECLINED TO RESPOND	0.8%	0.8%
Total eligible Marines	31,824	63,752

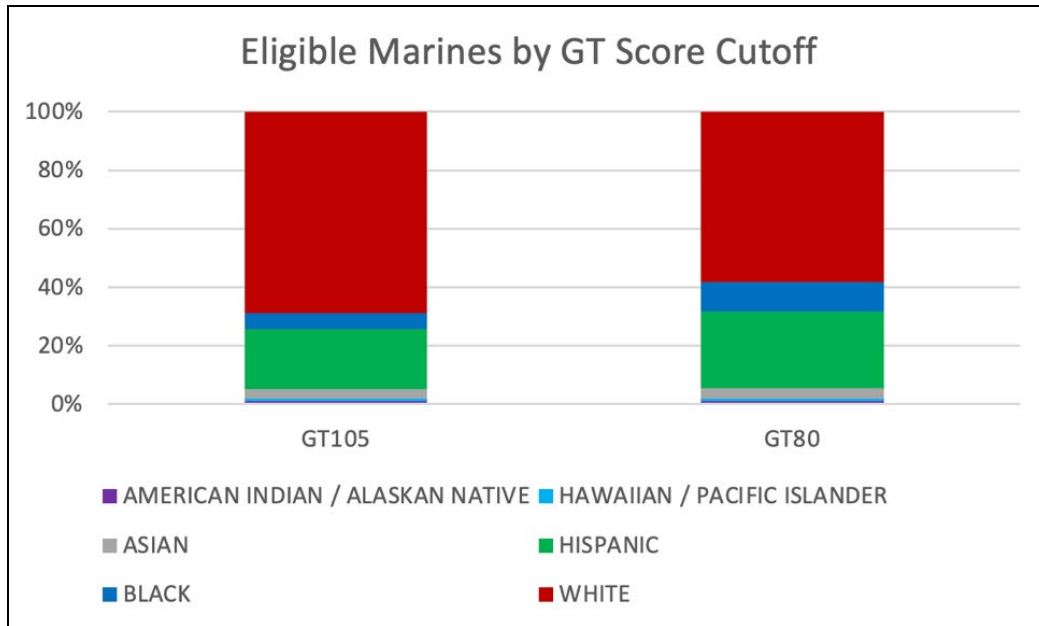


Figure 3: Effect on representation by reducing GT score requirements

For background, a Marine’s GT score is derived from their score on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), a standardized test given to all recruits before initial entry into the armed services used to determine eligibility for various MOSs. The reasons behind more minority Marines with lower GT scores are complex and not a part of this analysis. There is still a very active debate as to the presence of racial bias in standardized testing, but I am not here to take either side of that issue. Instead, I will contend that GT score is a bad proxy regardless for the desired attribute of effective intelligence and a poor predictor of success at A&S and therefore the requirement should be reduced, eliminated, or made more easily waivable. To validate this assertion, I conducted a logistic regression of multiple factors which analyzes a given candidate’s likelihood of selection at A&S based on GT score, PFT score, 8-mile ruck run times, and 300-meter swim times, the events evaluated during the first few days of A&S. The full details of the analysis can be seen in Appendix B. In short, the results indicate that GT score is a poor predictor for success at A&S and there are likely significant numbers of

quality candidates who are currently ineligible to attend A&S due to the arbitrary GT score cutoff of 105.

Additionally, the A&S program itself contains multiple better methods of testing for effective intelligence across multiple modalities including written IQ tests, psychologist interviews, and problem-solving events that test for the ability to apply intelligence to real-world problems. These methods present a more holistic picture of a candidate's effective intelligence compared to a Marine's GT score, which is a snapshot from a single standardized test likely taken in high school and years out of date by the time a Marine is screening for A&S. Due to the redundancy of evaluations presented at A&S itself, reducing or eliminating the GT score requirement poses little to no risk to overall quality as the A&S standards remain unchanged, but presents a significant upside as it opens the recruiting aperture to more Marines, some of which likely have high potential for success as Raiders. Doing so would effectively double the representation of black Marines in the pool eligible for A&S, increase the number of eligible Hawaiian or Pacific Islander Marines by 28%, and increase the number of eligible Hispanic Marines by 28%, not to mention essentially doubling the overall pool of eligible Marines.

Eligible Marines to A&S attendance- Outreach and mentorship

In order to bring in the top talent regardless of racial demographic or background, MARSOC must refine its recruiting approach. Indeed, A&S does the work of separating those Marines who possess the right attributes and demonstrate potential for success, work that the recruiting section cannot and should not do. However, when examining the demographic makeup of the Marines that even attend A&S, it is clear that we are missing out on some top talent as minorities are vastly underrepresented compared to the force, not to mention society. If we are

truly seeking the top 0.6% of the Marine Corps, and we believe that no one race is inherently more talented than any other, then that top 0.6% should cut across all races and ethnicities. Indeed, MARSOC is a volunteer organization, but we need to ask ourselves “Why are we not attracting the top talent across all demographic groups?”

Instead of assuming that the top talent will naturally come to us and there is nothing to do about those who don't, we should instead view ourselves in a constant competition for the best talent. This competition is not against other units in the Marine Corps but against top universities, tech startups, fortune 500 companies, the interagency, and other services' SOF branches, all of which are destinations for the same type of Marine that MARSOC wants to hire – those that are looking for something more.

Instead of recruiting using the formulaic approach of the military, we should instead recruit more like top college athletic programs – going out and finding the best talent and bringing them into our organization. This means nonstandard outreach and personalized approaches to top prospective Marines. It means seeking out Marines who show a propensity for language and culture, and perhaps those that already speak multiple languages. It also means establishing mentor relationships early with Marines, many of whom may be minorities or Marines from outside the infantry MOS, who show potential but are missing the guidance needed to get them to success. This is not to say that our current processes do not bring in great talent- they surely do. This is to say that there is an unrealized potential to replace the bottom few Marines in each A&S class (that had little chance of being selected anyways) with a few top performers who otherwise would not have even shown up. In a small community, that can make all the difference.

Put another way, the University of Alabama football team has unequivocally been the most dominant American college football program over the last decade, winning five of the last ten national championships. They have also brought in more 5-star recruits (the highest rating for a football prospect) than any other school – 44 since 2011. The next three teams on the list are Georgia with 34, Ohio State with 26, and Clemson with 20.¹¹⁰ Of course there are many factors to Alabama’s success, but this still illustrates what a difference just ten supremely talented people can make over the course of a decade. But those players didn’t just show up; Alabama had to go get them!

To explore the carryover from recruiting highly talented individuals in a competitive field, I conducted interviews with two college football recruiting directors with decades of experience between them both coaching and recruiting at all levels of college football. The college football recruiting process, like MARSOC’s, resembles a funnel but includes a significant outreach portion. Different programs take a different approach depending on the level of competition and the academic requirements of the school. Some programs take a process-based approach, some focus on “measurables” such as size and speed, and others focus on specific athletes who will best fit the personality of the organization. The constant is competition. The best athletes routinely receive scholarship offers from over a dozen schools, so coaches spend an outsized amount of time and effort on their top prospects. One recruiting director even mentioned that he may spend up to 90% of his time on his top two or three prospects he is recruiting in a given year.¹¹¹ MARSOC should continue to engage with other high-performing organizations across all domains to collaborate on cutting-edge recruiting, development, and talent management practices.

Eligible US population to US Marine Corps: Expanding the pool

If you are a motivated young American with the drive and desire to serve your country by joining Special Operations, where do you go? The answer is: not the Marine Corps. That is for the simple reason that the Marine Corps is the only service that does not offer direct accession into special operations, compared to the Army, Navy, and Air Force. This is considered by many in the command to be one of MARSOC's strengths- we assess that our process brings a more mature and experienced force to bear, and that is true. However, there is a way to take a "yes, and" approach to this dilemma by MARSOC working with the Marine Corps to offer recruits a SOF-Option contract.

These contracts could be in any MOS, active or reserve, and would simply guarantee the recruit an opportunity to attend MARSOC A&S within a predetermined time window. This opens up MARSOC's aperture to a more diverse pool of applicants. As shown in Figure 1 at the outset of this paper, the Marine Corps is the least diverse of the military services, especially among black Americans, while the other services track much more in line with the demographics of the eligible American population. Opening up MARSOC's recruiting to all Americans with a penchant for service and a desire to pursue a Special Operations career greatly increases the available pool for candidates of all races. The effect is particularly pronounced among black Americans who are the most underrepresented group in the Marine Corps.

The win-win of this situation is that all of these highly motivated SOF-aspiring individuals still must serve a first tour of duty in the conventional Marine Corps, and potentially more than that if they are not selected for MARSOC. These are the same quality individuals that, right now, are instead serving in Special Forces, Rangers, Para-Rescue, and the Navy SEALs, but could be serving in the Marine Corps' combat arms and support units. Especially with the

Marine Corps' need to recruit a force prepared for distributed expeditionary advanced base operations, highly motivated and independent thinkers are a must.

Finally, MARSOC should work with SOCOM, the Marine Corps, and the Department of Defense to re-invigorate and subsequently better take advantage of the Military Accessions Vital to National Interest (MAVNI) program. This program was put in place in 2008 to offer accelerated citizenship to recruits joining the armed forces in high-demand fields. Between 2008 and 2016 the program was used to recruit healthcare professionals and language specialists before being suspended in 2016 under the Trump administration. If this program were reinstated and applied to recruiting potential SOF operators with language and culture expertise, it would increase diversity in multiple domains, and provide all-important cross-cultural expertise which is invaluable in unconventional warfare. Of course, there are security concerns with this program, but these can be mitigated by proper protocols at DoD and with the Office of Personnel Management. At a minimum, the servicemembers brought into SOF through MAVNI would be required to attain a SECRET clearance just like all other applicants to MARSOC.

The importance of representation- “If you can see it, you can be it.”¹¹²

My final recommendation is an overarching theme that touches on all aspects of the recruiting and training pipeline as well as Marine Raiders' careers, and that is representation. As discussed in the sections on mentorship, the presence of minorities often acts as a positive force for the recruiting and retention of minority talent. Lack of representation, conversely, acts as a negative force. As put by one of my interviewees: “You don't have any, because you don't have any.”¹¹³ Current MARSOC recruiting materials to include pamphlets, the MARSOC website, and mobile apps, feature almost exclusively white males depicted as Raiders. All of our

commanders at the battalion level and above are white and with very few exceptions, they have all been white. When combined with an outwardly espoused colorblind mentality, this lack of representation presents a perceptual barrier to quality minority candidates and likely discourages many from even considering MARSOC as a career choice.

Instead of simply accepting the status quo, MARSOC must actively increase its representation of minority Raiders depicted in recruiting materials and participating in outreach programs. The unit has taken some steps already such as assigning minority Marines to the recruiting and Assessment & Selection sections, but this will be difficult to maintain given the low numbers of minority Raiders to draw from for these assignments. When MARSOC is not able to maintain a minority presence in these critical areas, we should find other creative ways to visually depict minority representation to prospective candidates. Likewise, MARSOC's recruiting, advertising, and public affairs offices should undertake a deliberate effort to broadcast outward-facing displays of minority representation within MARSOC in all recruiting materials, presentations, websites, and social media.

Finally, MARSOC should work with the Marine Corps to increase the representation of minority Marines within the stories we tell, especially during entry-level training. The Marine Corps' storied history is not lacking in heroes of all shapes, sizes, and colors, but for some reason the heroes who are nonwhite tend to be overlooked in Marine Corps lore. Entry-level schools should make a concerted effort tell the stories of the Montford Point Marines, James Capers, and other heroes of color alongside those of Chesty Puller and Dan Daly. James Capers is not just a Marine Corps but SOF living legend, whose exploits as a Force Reconnaissance Marine in Vietnam earned him not only a silver star and two bronze stars but a place as one of only seven Marines inducted into USSOCOM's Commando Hall of Honor.¹¹⁴ The more Marines are able to

see with their own eyes the honored place that Marines from all walks of life hold in the Corps' pantheon of heroes and legends, the more Marines of color will see the potential for themselves to find their own place among them.

Recommendations for the service

The greater Marine Corps faces the same struggles as MARSOC when it comes to diversity and inclusion. It remains the least diverse service and carries with it a history of being the most resistant to social change. The Marine Corps writ large should take the same opportunity as MARSOC right now and undertake serious efforts to increase its inclusiveness and to do it the right way. The Marine Corps, fiercely loyal to traditions, faces the same risks of losing political legitimacy if it cannot find a way to take concrete steps towards a more diverse, inclusive, and representative force compared to our nation. In today's environment, the Marine Corps is already facing scrutiny from the public as to its lack of minorities in senior officer roles, and is still reeling from the "Marines United" Facebook Group scandal just a few years ago. The Marine Corps also faces the risk of losing out on talent, being that it already recruits the lowest proportion of women or minorities into its ranks.

The first step in addressing the problem is to undertake serious efforts to understand it. In the second half of 2020, even though the DoD was in the process of conducting its own diversity and inclusion review on order by the Secretary of Defense, the US Department of the Air Force (DAF) also conducted its own internal study directed by its Inspector General (IG). This study undertook serious efforts to survey and interview Airmen across the force at all ranks to take stock of the current state of racialized issues within the force. At a time of heightened political and racial tensions in America, taking on this study and making these findings public was a

courageous decision. The study took on topics of racial disparity in the fields of military justice and discipline, administrative disciplinary actions and discharges, accessions, Professional Military Education (PME), promotions, and retention. It also collected survey data from and listened to the lived experiences of a significant cross-section of the force: Over 123,000 DAF members responded to surveys with over 1300 Airmen providing inputs in small-group discussions. Additionally, DAF members provided more than 27,000 single-spaced pages of free text comments. Perhaps most telling as to the level of commitment by the service this substantive 150 page report was completed in 120 days.¹¹⁵ The Methodology sub-section of the DAF IG report is included in Appendix C for reference.

The Marine Corps should take note of how this review was conducted and follow suit with its own study with the appropriate levels of senior leader buy-in, manpower, and funding. This will enable the Marine Corps to conduct a *thorough and timely* review that can present real findings and actionable recommendations without being bogged down in endless bureaucratic processes. While the Marine Corps has given attention to diversity and inclusion in the past, it has not yet engaged in the type of robust internal research needed to fully understand the problems. Even when it has conducted research, there seems to be a lack of follow-through when it comes to developing and implementing actionable solutions. Two recent examples of this challenge are detailed here. In 2013 CAOCL and RAND partnered proposed a broad ethnographic research effort to build a base of data about the current state of Marine Corps culture. The proposal, however, “never emerged from the staffing process with either a positive or negative decision,”¹¹⁶ according to the research team. After the Marines United scandal, CAOCL was tasked to conduct a similar albeit smaller qualitative research project referenced in the literature review above.¹¹⁷ However, this effort again suffered from bureaucratic delays

preventing release for over a year and was shut down before it could be fully completed, and it is not clear what if any actions the Marine Corps took based on the results of this study.¹¹⁸ As our political leaders and other services place increased emphasis on diversity and inclusion, the Marine Corps should adopt a proactive approach to the issue. This effort will enable the Marine Corps to get ahold of the scale and scope of potential diversity and inclusion issues and formulate agile solutions from the ground up.

Conclusion

The world is changing, and MARSOC must change with it. Peer adversaries continue to gain relative advantage in the conventional domain, while others continue to build expertise and experience in proxy and irregular warfare. SOF increasingly see themselves deployed at the intersection of both of these trends, on the cutting edge of modern warfare. In order to be best postured for success, it is imperative that MARSOC pursue creative techniques to ensure that we are recruiting and training the most effective force possible from a standpoint of both individual talent and group problem solving ability. Opening the aperture of diversity and inclusion is key to pursuing this goal.

The world is changing at home too, from the standpoint of political realities and expectations. MARSOC, and the Marine Corps as a whole, must always remember that our legitimacy is derived from the constitution and the congress that exerts civilian control of the military, as representatives of the American people. Whether we agree with congress's decisions or not, we cannot let partisan politics cloud these basic facts. Given the current political environment Congress is likely going to eventually ask SOF why they are not diverse, in fact the ELITE act currently in committee does just that. Directed changes from people who may not understand SOF missions and requirements could potentially hurt combat effectiveness in the

short term until the force adapts to them, increasing the overall risk to the nation in the interim. This would be objectionable to many leaders in SOF. It would also be *our own fault*. We have the fleeting opportunity *right now* to shape our own destiny and answer to political realities *while increasing our lethality*.

There will always be tension between the gains from a diverse force and maintaining rigorous individual standards and indeed the individualized nature of SOF selection processes. It is easy to fall into the trap of thinking we can only have one or the other, but this is a false choice. We can, and we must find a way to do both. MARSOC is made up of volunteers from within an already volunteer force, but we cannot use that fact as a shield from criticism. We must move from a fixed mindset of “we can only hire the people who apply” to a growth mindset that seeks to constantly improve our ability to recruit and retain the best people, across all demographic groups, period.

If a battlefield commander does not like the way things look on the ground, they don't just accept it. They use SOF to shape the environment *to the left of the bang* to facilitate success. This is our mission, and it's in our organizational DNA. We must shape the recruiting environment the same way, to the left of the bang, before our candidates arrive at A&S. This involves outreach beyond our own organization and builds on relationships with the Marine Corps, USSOCOM, the DoD, and civilian society, which is again, exactly how SOF operates on the battlefield.

The specific solutions and recommendations discussed in this paper and consolidated in Appendix D are concrete first steps, but far from an exhaustive list. The real change must be cultural, and with cultural change the combined initiative and genius already present within MARSOC will generate a multitude of innovative solutions. The culture must shift from

compliance to true inclusion and multiculturalism, where both the leadership and population of MARSOC understand and espouse the intrinsic value and potential present in the diverse tapestry of cultures present in our population. This internal culture of inclusion coupled with high standards must be commonly understood, practiced implicitly, codified in official policy, and widely broadcast to the service and our civilian leadership. Change is hard. Organizational change is harder. Cultural change may be the hardest of all. Failure to change, though, carries the greater risk of decreased effectiveness and legitimacy over time: a risk that MARSOC, and our nation, cannot afford to take.

Notes

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Appendix A: Example Policy Statement on Equal Opportunity¹



COMMANDER'S POLICY STATEMENT ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITY



I am fully committed to the fair and just treatment of every Marine, Sailor, and Civilian assigned to U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command (MARSOC). This command relies on the individual and team efforts of everyone. In order to gain the best results from these efforts, every leader must work to create an environment that fosters trust, confidence, and cohesion.

Equal Opportunity (EO) is a leadership issue, based on fair, equal treatment and respect of all. The Marine Corps' policy on equal opportunity is clear and simple – No form of discrimination to include, age, color, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, national origin or sexual harassment will be tolerated. The chain of command is the primary and preferred method for identifying and correcting discriminatory practices.

Members of MARSOC are encouraged to report disparate treatment and inappropriate behavior without fear of reprisal. The chain of command has an obligation to ensure that all personnel understand the Marine Corps Policy regarding equal opportunity, and how to contact their unit's Equal Opportunity Representatives.

The Informal Resolution System (IRS) should be used whenever possible to resolve issues quickly and fairly at the lowest level possible. If the IRS process does not resolve the issue, the preferred course of action to file a formal complaint is Request Mast. All allegations of discrimination or sexual harassment will be swiftly and thoroughly investigated and appropriately acted upon in accordance with current directives and regulations. Those who are found guilty will be subject to disciplinary actions, as well as those who knowingly make false allegations.

The Command EO Manager is Master Gunnery Sergeant Willie Morgan Jr. His office is located in the MARSOC Headquarters Building, RR400, Room 2219 and can be reached at Comm 910-440-0948 or DSN 758-0948. Email willie.morgan@socom.mil.

My policy on Equal Opportunity is clear: Provide equal treatment and opportunity for all members of this command to achieve their full potential based solely upon individual merit and fitness. Bottom line, **I will not tolerate discrimination of any type by any member of MARSOC.** Everyone within this command will be treated with dignity and respect, and I charge every member of MARSOC to help make this happen.

CARL E. MUNDY III
COMMANDER,
U.S. MARINE CORPS FORCES
SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

¹ Provided by MARSOC Recruiting & Screening Branch, February 26, 2021.

Appendix B: GT Score as a Predictor of Success at MARSOC A&S

The dataset consists of every A&S class from 2014 through 2020, a total of 3146 records that includes PFT Score, GT Score, 8 Mile Ruck Time, and 300-meter swim time to find out if in fact these were predictors for success. All data was provided by the MARSOC Assessment & Selection Branch as of January 13, 2021. The PFT and GT scores are taken from each Marine's records and the swim and ruck events are a part of the in-test given during the first few days of A&S and evaluate the different domains of physical ability tested in the course. Any records missing data were removed from the regression analysis, leaving 2731 records.

First, examining the distribution of GT scores, it is important to note that the model does not include any significant data for GT scores below 105 since they are generally not in the sample (only one out of 3146 records). For this reason, the analysis is predictive of likelihoods for candidates with a GT score below 105 but there is a possibility that other factors would affect the outcome.

The table and graphic below illustrate the numbers of candidates of various GT Score groupings, both select and non-selects, that have attended A&S since 2014.

Table 4: GT Scores of A&S Candidates, 2014-2020¹

GT Score	Total	Select	Non-Select	%
80-84	0	0	0	0%
85-89	1	1	0	100%
90-94	0	0	0	0%
95-99	0	0	0	0%
100-104	0	0	0	0%
105-109	733	149	584	20%
110-114	776	221	555	28%
115-119	511	157	354	31%
120-124	488	156	332	32%
125-129	362	135	227	37%
130-134	133	57	76	43%
135-139	91	36	55	40%
140-144	36	18	18	50%
145-149	12	8	4	67%
150-154	2	2	0	100%
155-160	1	1	0	100%

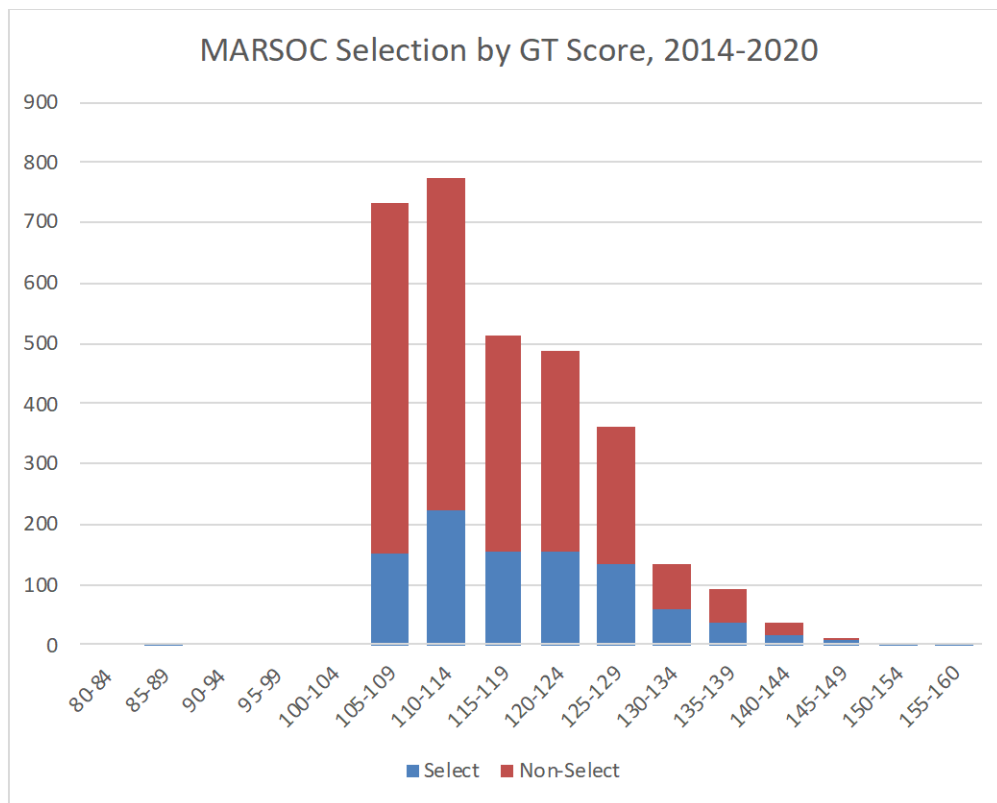


Figure 4: MARSOC Selection by GT Score, 2014-2020

The table below describes the data parameters from the records used in the regression analysis:

¹ Data provided by MARSOC Assessment & Selection Branch, January 13, 2021

Table 5: 2014-2020: Descriptive Statistics for A&S Candidate Measurables¹

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
BTR / PFT	225	300	280	15
GT	86	157	117	9
Swim Time (Minutes)	5.5	20.9	9.6	1.7
Ruck Time (Minutes)	67.9	161.9	106.6	12.4

The correlation matrix for the four variables is presented below. The low correlation coefficient between GT score and the other variables confirms the qualitative assumption that GT Score (a standardized test of mental ability) is not correlated with a candidate's ability to score well on a PFT, swim, or ruck run.

Table 6: Correlation Matrix for A&S Candidate Measurables

Variables	BTR / PFT	GT	Swim Time	Ruck Time
BTR / PFT	1.000	0.054	-0.159	-0.323
GT	0.054	1.000	-0.110	-0.172
Swim Time	-0.159	-0.110	1.000	0.334
Ruck Time	-0.323	-0.172	0.334	1.000

A Logistic regression analysis of the dataset with success at MARSOC A&S can be seen below. The intercept is 3.215 and the logit function is:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Predicted Logit of Selection} \\ = 3.215 + 0.0161 \times \text{PFT Score} + 0.0155 \times \text{GT} - 0.261 \times \text{Swim} - 0.0724 \times \text{Ruck} \end{aligned}$$

Note: PFT Score and GT Score are measured in points, Ruck and Swim times measured in minutes.

¹ Data provided by MARSOC Assessment & Selection Branch, January 13, 2021, Analysis by author.

Standardization of the variables produces the following results shown below, validating the assertion GT score is the least strong predictor of success at MARSOC A&S compared to the other factors.

Table 7: Standardized Coefficients for A&S Candidate Measurables, 2014-2020

Source	Value	Standard error	Wald Chi-Square	Pr > Chi ²	Lower bound	Wald Upper bound (95%)
BTR/PFT	0.131	0.028	22.172	<0.0001	0.077	0.186
GT	0.077	0.025	9.583	0.002	0.028	0.126
Swim Time	-0.248	0.031	63.176	<0.0001	-0.310	-0.187
Ruck Time	-0.508	0.034	224.762	<0.0001	-0.574	-0.441

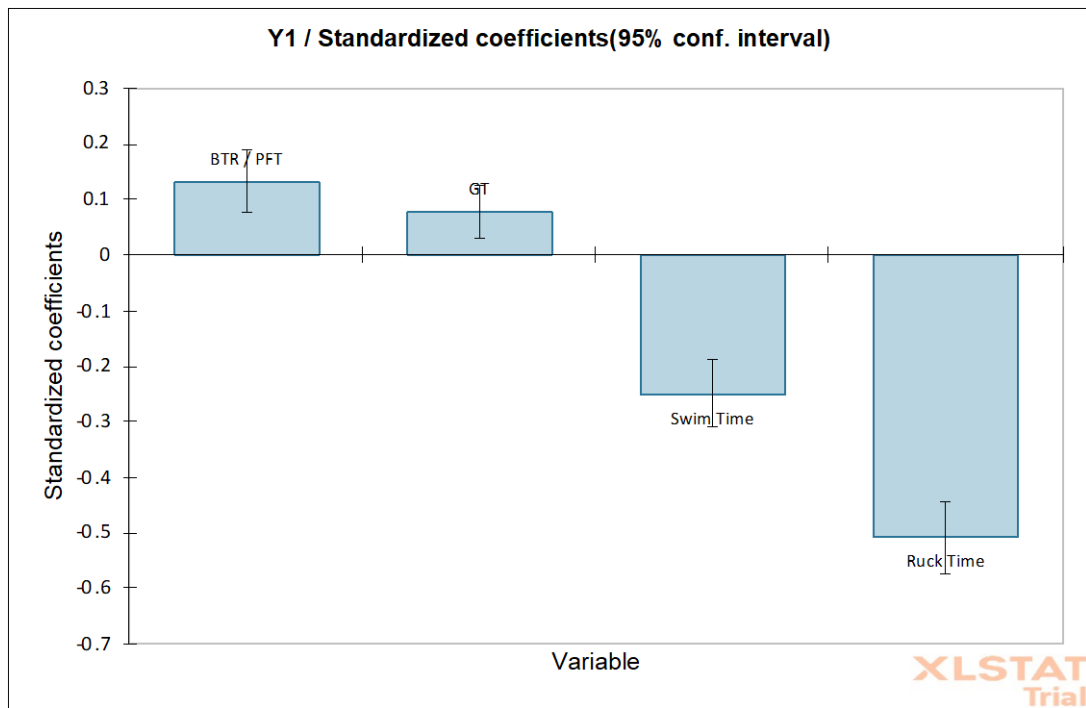


Figure 5: Standardized Coefficients for A&S Candidate Measurables, 2014-2020

The chart below shows this model as a predictor for likelihood of selection at A&S with a range of GT Scores from 80 to 160 while holding PFT, Ruck, and Swim Times constant at the mean of all attendees, showing GT Score’s effect on selection likelihood for those of average PFT, Ruck, and Swim Times.

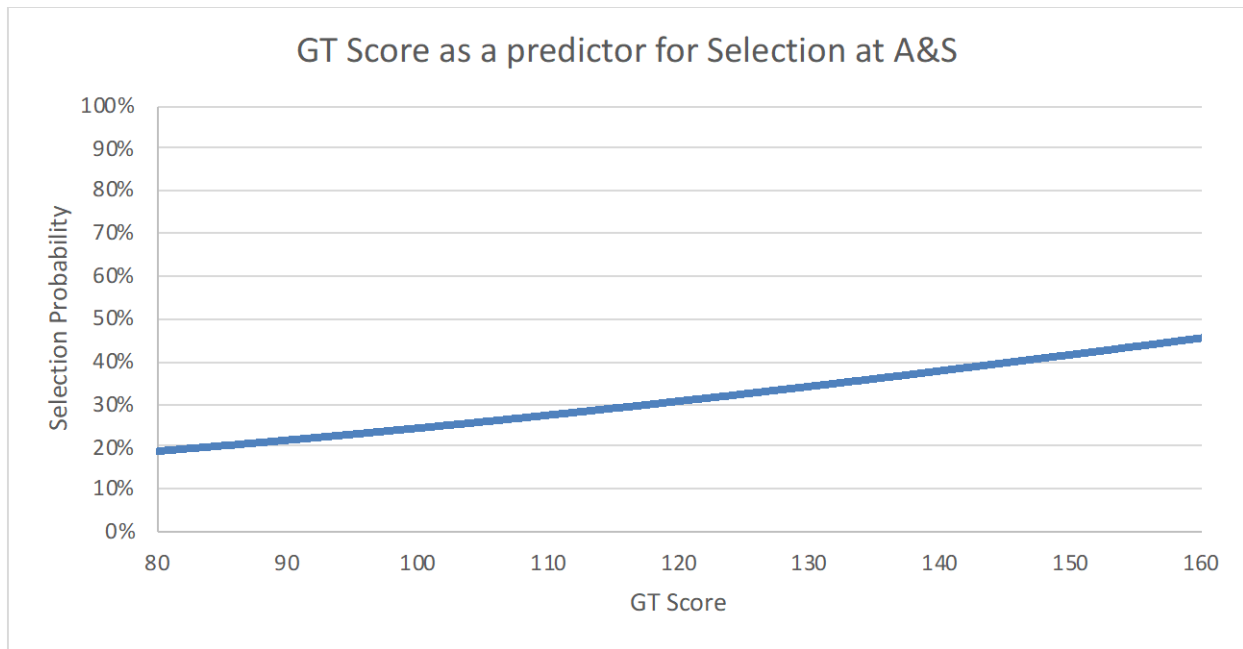


Figure 6: GT Score as a Predictor of Selection

As seen in the chart, while higher GT scores do track slightly with higher likelihood of success, there is still a significant predictive likelihood of success with a GT score lower than 105, which is truly an arbitrary cutoff. There are likely a fairly significant number of Marines in the GT Score range below 105 currently ineligible to attend A&S who can meet the requirements for selection, especially given that the evaluation mechanisms present at A&S are much more tailored to the type of effective intelligence required for success than the ASVAB test from which GT scores are derived.

Appendix C:
Excerpt from December 2020 Department of the Air Force IG Report

The below is excerpted directly from the referenced report¹

METHODOLOGY

It is important for the reader to understand the scoping and methodology of this Review. A key element of the effort was timeliness, which in turn required a careful focus to ensure thoroughness without delaying the report. The initial goal was to complete the Review in 120 days. Root cause analyses of the disparities found during the Review were not conducted as that would have taken considerably more time. The intent was that root cause analyses would follow completion of the DAF IG report, as necessary.

Most crucially, this Review was designed to not only analyze existing information, but also to hear directly from our Airmen and Space Professionals through five lines of effort: (a) anonymous surveys, (b) written feedback to DAF IG, (c) feedback through the DAF IG telephone and email hotline, (d) individual interviews of senior leaders, subject matter experts (SMEs), and service members, and (e) in-person group discussions with Airmen and Space Professionals across all MAJCOMs and the USSF.

While the Review team fully appreciates limitations of surveys, this tool was deliberately chosen and included to capture the voice of our Airmen and Space Professionals. The response we received was strong and the substance was detailed. Over 123,000 members of the DAF chose to share their views through the survey in just a two week period. Another 1300 plus Airmen and Space Professionals offered their inputs in small-group discussions with DAF IG. Our service members and civilians also provided their experiences and thoughts in the form of more than 27,000 single-spaced pages of free text comments. The voice of our Airmen and Space Professionals was an important element of this Review and its intended purpose to ensure commanders at all levels heard the perspectives and concerns of all our DAF members.

Key themes from the surveys, individual feedback from Airmen and Space Professionals, and interviews were further explored in 138 in-person group discussions with members from across all MAJCOMs and the USSF as well as meetings with wing commanders, vice commanders, command chiefs, Staff Judge Advocates, and Area Defense Counsels across 20 installations. Importantly, the Review found that all feedback conduits consistently reinforced common themes, providing confidence in the overall findings.

Next, the Review assessed the feedback received as it related to Air Force demographic data in the areas of military discipline as well as career development and opportunities. Specifically, this Review included an examination of the DAF military justice data dating back to 2012; an examination of career development and opportunity data involving civilian, enlisted, and officer

¹ Inspector General, Department of the Air Force, Report of Inquiry: Independent Racial Disparity Review, (Arlington, VA: Department of the Air Force, 2020), 1-3, <https://www.af.mil/Portals/1/documents/ig/IRDR.pdf>.

ranks; a review of all pertinent 36-series (personnel) and 51-series (legal) Air Force Instructions and related publications; a re-examination of 23 past studies and reports involving race and demographics in the military; and an examination of other information and data culled from thousands of Airmen, Space Professionals, and civilian employees, DAF and third-party subject matter experts, retired senior military officers, and Air Force MAJCOM as well as Space Force representatives.

Finally, please note that the identification of racial disparity does not automatically mean racial bias or racism is present. This Review focused on the existence of racial disparity, but it did not specifically assess racial bias or individual acts of racism within the DAF, which may cumulatively contribute to racial disparity overall. Thousands of black service members and civilians reported experiencing issues ranging from bias to outright racial discrimination. These experiences indicate bias and isolated individual acts of racism may contribute to the racial disparities identified in this report.

Appendix D: Consolidated Recommendations

MARSOC Internal Recommendations:

- Continue to collect and analyze racial demographic data for A&S and ITC, and reassess A&S and ITC processes to validate them through the lens of inclusion and implicit bias.
- Continue to implement Cultural IQ initiatives for students at Marine Raider Training Center, using the data to refine recruiting and training processes.
- Eliminate or reduce GT score as a screening tool for attendance at A&S.
- Recruit more like top college athletic programs by implementing nonstandard outreach and personalized approaches to top prospective Marines in order to find the best talent and bring those Marines into the organization.
- Continue to engage with other high-performing organizations across all domains to collaborate on cutting-edge recruiting, development, and talent management practices.
- Undertake a deliberate effort to broadcast outward-facing displays of minority representation within MARSOC in all recruiting materials, presentations, websites, and social media.
- Actively increase the representation of minority Raiders participating in recruiting and outreach programs.

Recommendations for the Marine Corps:

- Implement a SOF-Option contract at initial entry. These contracts could be in any MOS, active or reserve, and would simply guarantee the recruit an opportunity to attend MARSOC A&S within a predetermined time window.
- Increase the representation of minority Marines such as the Montford Point Marines and James Capers within collective Marine Corps lore, especially during entry-level training.
- Conduct a comprehensive study on racial issues and perceptions within the force similar to that executed in 2020 by the Air Force Inspector General with the appropriate levels of senior leader buy-in, manpower, and funding.

Recommendation for the DoD:

- Re-invigorate and leverage the MAVNI program to recruit potential SOF operators with language and culture expertise.

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