

Why Black Officers Still Fail

IRVING SMITH III

The Problem

Many, including Charles Moskos and John Sibley Butler, have suggested that the US Army is a meritocracy at the forefront of diversity efforts.¹ In fact, Moskos and Butler go so far as to state “It is the only place in American life where whites are routinely bossed around by blacks.”² They, and others who espouse this point of view, routinely emphasize three facts. First, the Army was one of the initial US institutions to integrate blacks and whites as a result of President Harry Truman’s Executive Order 9981.³ Second, blacks have risen to the highest levels of command in the American military, including Colin Powell’s appointment to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Finally, a black man, Barack Obama, has risen to the rank of Commander-in-Chief. While these points are immutable, it is also true that two of them are simply anomalies.

Moskos and Butler described an Army they believe has ideally accommodated African-Americans. In their vision, the Army is an inclusive

Colonel Irving Smith III is a 1987 graduate of the US Military Academy. He holds an M.B.A. from the Columbia Business School and M.A. degrees from the Naval War College and the US Army War College. His Ph.D. is in Sociology from the University of Maryland. He currently serves as an Assistant Professor and Director of Sociology at the United States Military Academy.

Report Documentation Page

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.

1. REPORT DATE 2010		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2010 to 00-00-2010	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Why Black Officers Still Fail				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College, Parameters, 122 Forbes Avenue, Carlisle, PA, 17013				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

organization in which African-Americans can rise to the highest level, proving that the Army values African-Americans' unique cultural perspective. At the same time, however, that Moskos and Butler came to the conclusion that America's Army was akin to a utopia for the black man and woman, Colonel Remo Butler, a student at the US Army War College (USAWC) came to a very different conclusion. He found that black officers were not, in fact, serving in a form of utopia; indeed, they were failing when compared with their white contemporaries. Based on his research project while a student at the USAWC, Butler offered evidence of his finding, "black officers are falling behind their white counterparts in promotions at and above the rank of lieutenant colonel at a disconcerting rate."⁴

Butler and various sociologists offered evidence that the Army has done a remarkable job in providing African-Americans in the noncommissioned officer (NCO) and enlisted ranks exceptional opportunities to grow, develop, and prosper professionally. Black officers, however, appear to have encountered structural barriers they were unable to overcome when Remo Butler wrote his treatise in 1995. It is this author's contention that these barriers persist today. Black officers are still failing.

Several USAWC student papers over the past 20 years affirm there is a perceived problem from the black officer perspective regarding professional opportunities. It was only Butler's research paper, however, that received any extensive attention throughout the Army. Following the major drawdown of Army forces in the 1990s, Butler published a later version of his study that stated the reason for black officers falling behind their white peers was due to "a debilitating inertia in the way young black officers are mentored and a lack of common cultural understanding among both black and white officers."⁵ As a result of these observations and a simple convenience survey conducted during his student year at the USAWC, Butler determined the remedy for this deficiency was fourfold:

- Minimize the influence of the "good old boy network" in an effort to get young black officers quality assignments.
- Increase the quality of the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) cadre by increasing the status of ROTC assignments.
- Provide quality mentoring for young black officers.
- Educate officers and senior leaders in cultural awareness.

Ensuing Army initiatives to improve the environment were based on a number of Butler's recommendations and well-received at the time. Indeed, his report was mandatory reading for various units in the late 1990s. The problem, however, persists: black officers still lag behind their white counterparts in much the same fashion as Butler identified in 1995. Specifically, black officers are still failing to reach the rank of general officer in numbers commensurate with their representation at senior levels of the Army.

Butler suggested black officers were failing in two areas that ultimately reduced their chances for promotion to general officer: promotion to the rank of lieutenant colonel and selection for battalion and brigade command. This article extends Butler's study by attempting to determine what, if anything, has changed in the 14 years since he published his paper. One of the biggest criticisms of Butler's paper was that his methodology was overly simplistic and lacked intellectual rigor. It was, however, this simplicity that made his study understandable and appealing to a broad audience. This study replicates Butler's 1995 methodology, understanding that his methods were unrefined, while preserving his work's integrity and allowing for a comparative dialogue.

Black officers . . . continue to fail in today's Army.

The hypothesis for this article is that little has changed: black officers, as a collective, continue to fail in today's Army. Failure in this study is defined as not obtaining the rank of general officer. Understandably, some will take issue with this definition of failure and by default the associated definition of success. From an institutional perspective, however, it is hard to argue that blacks should not be represented in the highest leadership echelons at rates proportional to those who serve within the organization. From a collective perspective, the inability to obtain representation at the highest level of the organization is failure.

Study Comparisons

The first data Butler extrapolated was the number of blacks serving in the Army. According to Butler, in 1994, blacks made up 27 percent of the Army and 11 percent of the officer corps.⁶ Today, blacks make up 19.8 percent of the Army and 12 percent of the officer corps.⁷ So, the total percentage of black Army officers has changed little over the past 14 years. Butler then compared the number of officers by race and rank, using the racial categories of black and white non-Hispanics. Table 1 depicts these comparisons. In 1995, Butler noted that blacks comprised about 12 percent of the officer corps through the rank of major; however, that percentage dropped off precipitously at the rank of lieutenant colonel. He found that whites' proportionate numbers increased continually through the rank of general officer. Today's findings are similar to Butler's with a few significant differences.

Table 1: Comparison of the Number of White and Black Officers by Rank in 1994 and 2007.

Rank	White (Non-Hispanic)		Black (Non-Hispanic)	
	1994	2007	1994	2007
General Officer	307 (91.6%)	293 (84.9%)	22 (6.6%)	23 (6.7%)
Colonel	3,460 (90.9%)	3,661 (82.7%)	185 (4.9%)	453 (10.2%)
Lieutenant Colonel	7,951 (86.6%)	7,668 (78.5%)	762 (8.3%)	1,192 (12.2%)
Major	11,713 (80.7%)	11,627 (74.0%)	1,812 (12.5%)	1,984 (12.6%)
Captain	21,111 (80.1%)	19,009 (69.6%)	3,258 (12.4%)	3,553 (13.0%)
1st Lieutenant	7,027 (79.0%)	5,713 (71.0%)	1,135 (12.8%)	1,059 (13.2%)
2d Lieutenant	7,453 (81.0%)	7,196 (69.8%)	927 (10.1%)	1,311 (12.7%)

First, blacks now represent 12 percent of the officer corps through the rank of lieutenant colonel, whereas Butler’s study found that black representation fell precipitously at the rank of major. Second, there has been a dramatic increase in the percentage of black colonels since 1995. Finally, although the percentage of white officers still increases through the rank of general, the percentages are much lower than Butler reported in 1995.

There are several plausible explanations for these differences. The most obvious of these is the difference in selection rates in 1994 versus 2007. In 1995, the selection rate for the 1985 cohort to major was 62 percent.⁸ By 2007, as a result of the need for an increased number of officers to fight two wars, the selection rate ballooned to 91 percent;⁹ officers were being promoted earlier in their careers as well.¹⁰ With regard to the decreased percentage of white officers in the Army, a plausible explanation is the fact that other minorities are increasingly joining the officer ranks; Asians, Hispanics, and other minorities have been commissioned at much higher rates since 1994.¹¹

Table 2 depicts the percentage of change by race for officers at a particular rank between the 1994 and 2007 data. For whites, the only increase occurs at the rank of colonel; whereas the percentage of blacks has increased at every rank except first lieutenant. This table clearly depicts the dramatic increase in the number of black colonels; it also reveals the relatively small

increase in the number of black generals. One statistic that Butler did not consider was the ratio of second lieutenants to general officers. In 1994, 4.1 percent of white lieutenants could anticipate becoming general officers, whereas only 2.4 percent of black lieutenants could statistically share this expectation. By 2007 this ratio had hardly changed for white officers at 4.1 percent, but it had fallen to 1.8 percent for black officers.

Table 2: Percentage of Change in Rank Between 1994 and 2007 Statistics.

Rank	White (Non-Hispanic)	Black (Non-Hispanic)
General Officer	-4.56%	4.55%
Colonel	5.81%	144.9%
Lieutenant Colonel	-3.6%	56.4%
Major	-0.7%	9.5%
Captain	-10.0%	9.1%
1st Lieutenant	-18.7%	-6.7%
2d Lieutenant	-3.4%	41.4%

Perhaps Butler would characterize these changes as encouraging or, at the very least, a step in the right direction. He would probably concur that black officers are still failing to achieve the very highest ranks in the Army. Darlene Iskra has identified the phenomenon of particular groups failing to achieve upward professional mobility in the military as a “Brass Ceiling.”¹² Although Iskra focused most of her attention on structural barriers, she did highlight a number of the cultural aspects related to the brass ceiling. It is fair to conclude that black officers similarly serve under a brass ceiling, which is more of a cultural barrier than a structural phenomenon.

Remo Butler identified part of the problem as the pipeline (the supply of officers available for promotion). He reasoned that fewer officers selected at a lower rank meant that fewer officers were retained within the population to compete at the next higher rank. For example, if a year group hypothetically consisted of 100 second lieutenants and only 75 percent of them were promoted to first lieutenant, then only 75 remained available for consideration to captain; whereas, if 90 percent of these officers were promoted to first lieutenant, then 90 could potentially be promoted to captain. When these decrements are factored all the way to the rank of colonel, one sees how the pipeline may tend to shrink if blacks are systematically and disproportionately eliminated from the promotable pool. In order to quantify this phenomenon, he analyzed selection rates from captain through the field grade ranks for year groups 1973 and 1974 (Table 3). He selected these year groups because they were the predominate year groups of students at the

USAWC where he conducted his study. His findings corroborated the first part of his study; blacks were falling behind beginning at the rank of major.

Table 3: Percentage of Selection Rates of Whites and Blacks for Years 1973 and 1974.

Rank	Comparative Selection Rates			
	Year Group 1973		Year Group 1974	
	Overall	For Blacks	Overall	For Blacks
Colonel	42.8%	41%	Unavailable	Unavailable
Lieutenant Colonel	61.4%	65.6%	60.5%	61.7%
Major	79%	72.9%	78%	66.9%
Captain	95.5%	92.8%	91.1%	88.4%

This study replicates Butler’s methodology for analysis of selection rates based on race. It surveys year groups 1986 and 1987 for comparison, which made up a large percentage of the officers enrolled in the USAWC class of 2010. Butler’s analysis of selection rates from captain to major led him to conclude that the selection rates for black officers were a key problem in getting blacks to the senior ranks of the Army. Specifically, in year groups 1973 and 1974, the overall white selection rates were much higher than black rates: 6 percent higher for year group 1973 and 11 percent higher for year group 1974. Accordingly, Butler concluded that racially disparate selection rates to major were the genesis of the pipeline issue.

Analysis of year groups 1986 and 1987 provides similar evidence. Black officers in these year groups were selected at much lower rates than their white peers. For year group 1986, the difference was 14 percent, and for year group 1987 the difference was 8 percent. In the aggregate, the differences in Butler’s sample population were smaller than the differences in the current population. At the rank of colonel, however, the numbers converge. In year group 1973, the difference between blacks and the rest of the cohort was only 1.8 percentage points. Although there was little difference in the promotion rates to colonel, there was a significant difference in the number of officers ultimately selected. Selection of 42.8 percent for promotion to colonel produced 455 white colonels; selection of 41 percent of the black officers for promotion produced only 48 black colonels. Butler believed these numbers validated his pipeline theory that blacks are systematically squeezed out.

Similarly, for year group 1986, blacks were promoted at a rate that was two percentage points higher than whites. White officers in this year group had a 53.1 percent selection rate to colonel; 408 of 760 eligible white

officers were selected. Of the 98 black officers eligible for promotion, 54 were ultimately selected. Clearly, Butler’s theory of the constricting pipeline was at play for this year group as well. Butler did not have an opportunity to compare the ratio of the number of officers who began with the year group to the number who ultimately were selected for colonel because the data were not available at that time.¹³

Butler’s analysis, however, extends beyond statistics. The numbers were merely a starting point supporting his primary contention that the dearth of black officers at the field grade ranks made it almost impossible for a significant number of blacks to be promoted to general. He also espoused that blacks who made it to the ranks of lieutenant colonel and colonel were being selected at lower rates for command-designated positions than their white contemporaries. In 1995, Butler reasoned that the gateway to promotion to colonel was battalion command. Today, battalion command is no longer seen as a prerequisite for promotion to colonel. Selectees for battalion command certainly have a greater likelihood of being selected for promotion to colonel than those who have not commanded at that level.

Those selected for battalion and brigade command are much more likely to ascend to the rank of general officer. In an attempt to validate his command selection hypothesis, Butler examined the lieutenant colonel command designated position list (CDPL) board selection rates for black and white officers for fiscal years 1993 through 1995 (see Table 4).

Butler’s analysis of the data suggested that blacks had a much lower selection rate than whites across the board. He reasoned that their nonselection rates put blacks at a disadvantage for promotion to colonel. To replicate Butler’s year group selection analysis, this study uses fiscal years 2005 through 2007 for comparison of white and black officers’ selection to the CDPL.¹⁴ Table 4 depicts this comparison.

Table 4: 1993-95 & 2005-2007 Board Selection Rates for Lieutenant Colonel Command Designated Positions

Selection Rates for	Comparative Fiscal Years					
	Butler’s Subset			Author’s Subset		
	1993	1994	1995	2005	2006	2007
Whites	13.86%	12.66%	12.06%	26.98%	25.84%	23.07%
Blacks	12.06%	8.43%	5.54%	30.24%	18.69%	14.96%

These data bear out the fact that there is still a disparity between black and white selection rates for the CDPL at the lieutenant colonel level. These results are substantively different for fiscal years 2006 and 2007, and significantly different in fiscal year 2006 ($P < .01$).¹⁵ Based on this analysis

one may conclude that white officers still get selected at significantly higher rates than blacks.¹⁶

Discussion

These data reveal that, although there has been progress since the time that Butler initiated his original study, black officers are still failing, based on the criteria that Butler established in 1995. Why has there been so little progress for blacks over this extended period? It would be hard to deny that the institutional Army has made valiant attempts to institute programs and policies that enable black officers to thrive within a meritocratic system. It would also be difficult to blame the victim and suggest that black officers are doing something collectively or individually to keep themselves from reaching the highest levels. In an attempt to discover why so little progress has been made between 1995 and 2010, it is necessary to examine what Butler defined as the four root causes of the problem: education, mentorship, culture, and the “good old boy network.”

Education

By education Butler simply meant that black officers were not getting a quality undergraduate military experience. He reasoned that most black officers were being commissioned through ROTC units from historically black colleges and universities. These young officers were not properly socialized to understand the nuances of an institution dominated by white officers. In fact, he stated that black officers commissioned through West Point, more often than not, did better than their black peers commissioned through ROTC. The reason for these differences was not the education per se, but the level of professionalism of the officers that comprised the faculty serving at those institutions. He felt that the best and brightest officers were on the faculty at West Point and that ROTC programs were being staffed with lower performing and less qualified officers to educate young black officers. He based this conclusion on evidence that a number of the black officers who taught at West Point were ultimately selected for battalion command while few of the black ROTC faculty officers were selected.

Since the publication of Butler’s thesis in 1999, there have been a great number of changes regarding the assignment of officers to ROTC duty; however, the preponderance of his premise still rings true. One change that has not helped develop young, black officers or officers in general is the use of contractor personnel to support ROTC programs. Although active lieutenant colonels and colonels still serve as Professors of Military Science in various ROTC programs, many of the Senior Military Science

Instructors, Military Science Instructors, Administrative Technicians, and Staff Specialists are contractors. The contract personnel are retired or former active component officers, who are either retired or serving as Reserve or National Guard Army officers.¹⁷ ROTC cadets now receive much of their exposure to and understanding of the military profession from these contract personnel, while West Point cadets continue to receive their exposure to and understanding of the Army from a hand-picked cadre of active duty officers all of whom have at least a master's degree. Without denigrating the quality of contractor ROTC cadre, it appears that, in the aggregate, black officers commissioned through ROTC are probably not being exposed to the same quality of faculty as those commissioned through West Point. Remo Butler's education hypothesis may still play a large part in this relationship and the ensuing challenges.

Mentorship

Butler also determined that young, black officers were not receiving the type of mentorship required to be successful in the Army. Specifically, he believed that junior black officers did not have senior role models to help them grow and develop professionally. Although Butler states that "mentoring should be color-blind," he concedes that a successful black officer might be better able to relate to a junior black officer, thereby ensuring greater success in the mentorship process. In an effort to validate this hypothesis, Butler used anecdotes from his classmates in the USAWC class of 1995. This subjective survey supported his original assessment that there was a dearth of senior black officers available to serve as mentors. The anecdotal information obtained from classmates in the USAWC Class of 2010 was amazingly similar to Butler's conclusions. Whites tended to say that they had one or two black officers who were really good, and those officers tended to be West Point graduates. They also implied that junior black officers were as technically and tactically proficient as their white peers, but they (the senior white officers) had to make an extraordinary effort in getting to know junior black officers. Others (students and authors) who have studied similar theses have come to mutually supporting conclusions. In a 2008 USAWC Strategy Research Project, while exploring the effects of ethnocentrism and its affect on work experiences and career outcomes, Colonel Florentino Carter stated, "There is not a conscious effort on the part of leaders to exclude minorities but rather a recognition that certain innate human tendencies affect how leaders are more apt to mentor member[s] of his [or] her own phenotype."¹⁸ Although an officer's branch selection was not a part of the author's analysis, some have suggested that an officer's branch selection is a decisive factor in whether or not they attain the rank of

general officer. If this assertion is true, mentoring may be a way to get black officers to understand the value of branching in the combat arms.

A number of the black officers in the USAWC class of 2010 suggested that, although they did mentor junior black officers, they themselves had few black mentors and role models in their careers. A number of white officers in the class also related how they had never had a black mentor or immediate supervisor during their entire career in the Army. This implies that there may still be a racial divide that manifests itself between whites and blacks in social and professional relationships and impacts the development of the contemporary officer.

Culture

One of the most controversial of Butler's arguments is his assertion that blacks and whites in America have different cultures and that these cultures reveal themselves in everyday military life. In an effort to provide context for his assertion, Butler used anecdotal evidence from his own experiences and that provided by his USAWC classmates regarding dress, music, and social interaction. He believed that blacks grow up with a set of cultural mores that are different than those of whites and radically different than those of the white-dominated military. For example, he suggested that the expected mode of dress for officers at civilian functions is khaki pants, a collared shirt, and loafers—commonly referred to as “vintage casual” at the USAWC. Although he did not state it explicitly, Butler suggested that blacks do not generally dress in this manner and thus had to learn this new behavior or be ostracized. According to Butler, these differences are the result of a system of cultural mores that have to be inculcated by blacks if they are to succeed in the military. He went on to espouse the belief that blacks are not normally exposed to these cultural imperatives unless they are commissioned at West Point or some predominantly white institution.

Although Butler's line of reasoning still makes sense, many basic facts have changed since the early 1990s. Most of the USAWC students interviewed in 2010 believe that the cultural gap between black and white youth is much narrower than it once was. They alluded to the fact that today's youth, white and black, tend to be attracted to similar music and style of dress. Scholarly research in this area, however, does not appear to be nearly as certain regarding this narrowing cultural gap. In 2002, the National Endowment of the Arts reported that whites were three times as likely as blacks to attend a classical music performance, opera, or ballet, or even watch such events on TV.¹⁹ In any case, there has been insufficient research to ascertain whether the cultural gap that Butler spoke of has broadened or narrowed, but there is little

doubt that it still exists to some degree and needs to be considered as part of the reason that black officers continue to fail.

“Good Old Boy Network”

One of the most obvious, but shortest, explanations Butler provided for why black officers fail was the “good old boy network.” In fact, he only spent one paragraph on this topic. He believed that the pervasive notion that it is all about who you know was a key component accounting for black officer failure. Sociologists often refer to this as interpersonal work relationships. He reasoned that black officers who had few mentors and little social interaction with senior black or white officers were less likely to be selected for battalion operations and executive officer positions. As a result, they were less likely to be selected for command and ultimately qualify for general officer. It is the subjective belief of this author that the “good old boy network” is still alive and well. In conversations with this author’s peers, both black and white, they universally expressed the belief that who you know is equally important as individual performance; this belief was especially true as one became senior in rank. Of particular interest was the recounting of the same story several times over about being selected to be on a certain staff because the individual officer had a prior relationship with the commander or senior leader. In essence, Butler’s notion of the “good old boy network” is still important in understanding why black officers are not promoted to general officer.

Conclusion

One would like to believe that the Army has progressed to a point in its history where race is no longer a factor in the success or failure of an individual service member; however, one can also make the case that we have not yet reached that point. Based on this author’s analysis of the current data, the conclusion is obvious, we have not changed much since Remo Butler penned his thesis in 1995. Black officers are still failing. Not only do black officers continue to fail, but it would also appear that we have not made significant progress in the areas that Butler described as the root causes of the problem: education, mentorship, culture, and the “good old boy network.”

As a result of the 2010 study, it is suggested that the Army needs to take a new approach to increasing black officers’ potential to reach its most senior levels. Several authors and sociologists have argued that there needs to be a top-down approach if we are to be successful in this endeavor. John Kotter, a well-known expert in the field of organizational change, stated,

“Major change is often said to be impossible unless the head of the organization is an active supporter.”²⁰ The following advice is generally directed to senior leaders and more specifically to senior white leaders charged with improving Army diversity.

First, the institution needs to move beyond the concept of managing diversity to actually developing a diversity execution strategy. The development of the Commission on Officer Diversity and Advancement (CODA) and the subsequent creation of the Army Diversity Office are certainly steps in the right direction. It appears, however, that even these well-intentioned organizations have accomplished little beyond generating rhetoric and tomes having little impact on assisting black officers in reaching the highest levels of the Army. It has become apparent that the Army’s rank and file are not buying into or actively supporting diversity initiatives. The belief that this author took away from his analysis was that black officers believe that diversity efforts are ineffective and that a number of white officers feel these initiatives actually work against them. The one thing that these two groups do agree on is that diversity training is a waste of time. But the Army should not feel it is alone in trying to meet these challenges. The following quote suggests corporate America is struggling with many of the same issues.

Mandatory diversity seminars or training programs can encounter just as much eye-rolling resistance from black executives as from white. It is not that they do not support the goal. But the general consensus is that it is going to be a waste of time. Even if everyone herded in the room agrees the goal is something that they all should care about, the didactic tone usually accompanying that process makes the participants feel as if they are being forced to eat vegetables.²¹

Diversity initiatives cannot exist as standalone programs if they are to be effective. They need to be integrated into and aligned with the organization’s strategic plan.

Second, senior leaders have to communicate precisely why diversity is important. The Army has been less than successful in clearly communicating why diversity is critical to its success. There are two points that senior leaders should make perfectly clear. The first is that diversity is linked to performance as an institution. This is a difficult message to develop and communicate, because research on diversity with respect to complex tasks and group performance is rather ambiguous. Various individuals and institutions that have studied the problem have found that demographic diversity produces few if any benefits to group performance.²² Others have determined that demographic diversity does, in fact, increase group performance.²³ In any event, if there is any modicum of chance that diversity increases organizational performance or mission accomplishment, then the Army needs to actively embrace it. The environments that senior leaders

in today's Army face are laced with complex problems requiring cognitive diversity, something that springs from cultural diversity. Furthermore, as a public institution, the Army needs to reflect society as a whole. In the end, an institution that claims to be representative of its host society needs to display a high level of professional and social competence if it is to gather the support of the American people.

Third, the Army needs to develop quantitative and qualitative criteria that will permit it to measure the impact of diversity efforts. In this respect, the author is in total agreement with Representative Elijah Cummings, who, in the following letter to the Secretary of the Army stated:

While the Army has made a good faith effort to address areas of minority underrepresentation, more aggressive steps are needed in order to achieve a fully diverse force and capitalize on the strength of this diversity. The Army has yet to identify concrete metrics to capture performance progress. Having addressed this issue for the past three years, the Army should be able to provide tangible results as a true measure of the leadership's commitment to institutionalizing diversity into the culture through their effective and efficient practices.²⁴

The criteria for achieving such goals needs to be linked to senior officer performance appraisals. If senior officers are held accountable through their performance appraisals for underwriting diversity, the entire organization will have little choice but to get onboard. Many senior leaders may balk at this recommendation, because they view it as an attempt to foster affirmative action, or even worse, as an action that will place unqualified officers in positions of increased responsibility, thereby decreasing the overall effectiveness of the Army. It is this author's belief that finding qualified black officers for positions of greater responsibility should not present a challenge. These individuals already exist in large numbers throughout the Army, and it is the senior leadership's obligation to recognize, develop, and mentor these individuals if we are going to be truly successful.

Fourth, the Army needs to select the right individuals to lead its diversity office. The right people are those with the appropriate education, experience level, organizational knowledge, and passion to accomplish the mission. The designation of "right education" suggests including sociologists, cultural anthropologists, and social-psychologists.

Individuals selected to lead the diversity enterprise need to have a complete understanding of organizational culture and what is entailed in leading organizations through change. It would appear that the Army has taken a position based on the belief that if it selects successful black officers to oversee its diversity initiatives, then the successful pursuit of its diversity goals is assured. A cursory review of the officers assigned to CODA reveals what would appear to be a listing of successful black officers. Unfortunately,

in a number of cases, these officers are no more qualified to lead a diversity study or enterprise than white officers with similar credentials. Cora Daniels, a teaching professional at New York University, sums it up nicely, “Basically there is a no barrier to entry. It requires no degree, no verification process, and no common credential for people to claim to be diversity gurus. Virtually anyone can hang up a shingle and proclaim their expertise.”²⁵

Fifth, the Army needs to undertake the development of a talent management enterprise. Such an enterprise is fashioned in much the same manner as many of the top civilian firms: to identify an organization’s best talent; ensure they get the right assignments; and provide them career advice and mentorship. It has been well-documented that many blacks enter the service in an attempt to gain skills for use in the civilian sector. Once they have gained these skills and fulfilled their service obligations, they will leave active service unless they see the Army as adding value to their lives. There needs to be an organization designed to monitor qualified officers, provide them career guidance, and ensure they get the assignments required to be successful. In essence, the Army needs to have an active strategic process for identifying and developing this diverse pool of black officers. The tangible result will be more qualified officers, of every race, eligible to serve at the executive levels of the Army.

Finally, the Army needs to inspire its senior black officers to have a stake in the development of junior black officers. In order to make this a reality, the Army’s senior leadership needs to accomplish three things. First, senior leaders need to ask senior black officers what they are doing to mentor black officers. Many white officers may feel uncomfortable asking this question; however, it is critical that senior black officers know that this is an imperative. Moreover, people pay attention to what the boss pays attention to. Second, senior leaders should weed out those black officers unwilling to rise to the challenge. There are a number of senior black officers who feel no obligation to mentor junior officers. They are what Nathan Hare described as the black Anglo-Saxons, blacks who have “made it” but for some reason have become disconnected from their race.²⁶ Senior officers should hold them accountable by asking the question “what are you doing to resolve the problem?” Finally, the Army needs to put those who are willing to make a difference in the right positions, where they can have an impact. This includes executive command positions as well as administrative positions where they can expose junior black officers to their example, mentorship, expertise, and passion.

This study attempted to determine what, if anything, has changed since Remo Butler wrote his thesis in 1995. The findings overall suggest that contemporary black officers are getting promoted to the ranks of lieutenant colonel and colonel at higher levels than in 1995. Blacks are being

selected for battalion- and brigade-level command at higher rates than 1995. Unfortunately, blacks are still failing to rise to the strategic decision-making levels of the Army. In trying to come to grips with this, the author found that there are some limitations inherent in this study. The first is that the supporting analyses do not employ a rigorous, methodological approach in evaluating senior officer perceptions. Instead, it relies on anecdotal evidence, much like Butler's original thesis, to support contentions. Additionally, as with Butler's study, this paper takes a myopic black and white approach to understanding why black officers fail. It is apparent after reviewing the initial data that the problem needs to be examined from a wider perspective. More specifically, the growth of the Asian and Hispanic officer populations needs to be factored into the equation. The number of general officer positions available is fixed throughout the Army and every position that goes to a Hispanic or Asian officer is one that cannot be filled by a black officer. In effect, it truly is a zero-sum game. A more in-depth study and comprehensive analysis would consider and control variables such as region of origin, parental education, and parental service affiliation to name a few. Ultimately, by examining the data in this study and addressing its limitations, the Army may gain a greater understanding of how best to increase its overall diversity in an effort to become a more effective organization.

NOTES

1. Charles C. Moskos and John Sibley Butler, *All That We Can Be: Black Leadership and Racial Integration the Army Way* (New York: Basic Books, 1996).

2. *Ibid.*, 2.

3. Harry Truman, Executive Order 9981, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/photos/9981a.jpg> (accessed March 2, 2010). President Truman's Executive Order 9981, did not end segregation or begin integration it more generally declared, "equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion, or national origin."

4. Remo Butler, "Why Black Officers Fail," *Parameters* 29, no. 3 (Autumn 1999): 54, <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/USAWC/PARAMETERS/99autumn/butler.htm> (accessed March 4, 2010).

5. *Ibid.*

6. Remo Butler, *Why Black Officers Fail In the U.S. Army*, Strategy Research Project, (Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College, April 15, 1995), <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA309248&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf> (accessed August 31, 2009). Even though Butler's paper was written in 1995, he used 1994 data which was the most current data available at the time.

7. Remo Butler never clarified whether his numbers were based on the total Army or just the active component.

8. *Ibid.*

9. Reserve Component Readiness, http://www.army.mil/aps/08/reserve_component_readiness/reserve_component_readiness.html (accessed August 31, 2009).

10. Charles A. Henning, Army Officer Shortages: Background and Issues for Congress, in CRS Report for Congress, July 5, 2006, 10. <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL33518.pdf> (accessed March 4, 2010).

11. Butler's paper was written in 1995; however, his data were taken from the DSCPER-441, Racial Statistical by REDCAT Grade Quarter Ending September 1994.
12. When speaking about women and their lack of opportunity to reach the highest ranks in the Department of Defense, Dr. Darlene Iskra dubbed this phenomenon as a "Brass Ceiling." Darlene M. Iskra, *Breaking Through the Brass Ceiling*, (Germany: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller Aktiengesellschaft & Co. KG, 2008).
13. Butler, *Why Black Officers Fail In the U.S. Army*.
14. In keeping with Butler's methodology, it would have been more advantageous to move forward thirteen years instead of twelve. However, at the time the data for Fiscal Year 2008 was not available.
15. In order to conduct the test for significance, I used the Z-Test for independent groups to determine if they were significantly different from one another.
16. I conducted an analysis to see if Fiscal Year 2005, the year that blacks had higher selection rates than whites, was an outlier and found that there have been two other Fiscal Years in which blacks had higher selection rates on CDPLs. Those years were 1998 and 2001.
17. The Communication Technologies (COMTEK), Inc., AROTC, <http://www.comtechnologies.com/comtek-services/training-support-services/arotc.html>, (accessed February 26, 2010).
18. Florentino Carter, *Applying a Cultural Diversity Metric to the Selection of Armor Brigade Command Selectees*, Strategy Research Project (Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College, March 15, 2008), 12.
19. "The Black Wide Divide in Cultural Pursuits," *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, http://www.jbhe.com/news_views/58_cultural_divide.html (accessed February 8, 2010).
20. John P. Kotter, *Leading Change*, (Boston: Harvard Business School Press), 6.
21. Cora Daniels, *Black Power Inc.: The New Voice of Success*, (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2004), 89.
22. Lisa Hope Pelled, Kathleen M. Eisenhardt, and Katherine R. Xin, "Exploring the Black Box: An Analysis of Work Group Diversity, Conflict, and Performance," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 44, no. 1 (March 1999): 23.
23. Pamela Tudor, "Adding Value with Diversity: What Business Leaders Need to Know," 6, <http://www.aimd.org/files/PamelaTudor.pdf> (accessed February 22, 2010).
24. Elijah Cummings, 24 June 2009, quoted in Lawrence Sellin, "Outside View: Is Diversity an Army Euphemism?," UPI.com, 18 November 2009, linked from UPI.com at "Analysis," http://www.upi.com/Top_News/Analysis/2009/11/18/Outside-View-Is-diversity-an-Army-euphemism/UPI-83691258560000/ (accessed February 20, 2010).
25. Daniels, *Black Power Inc.: The New voice of Success*, 86-87.
26. Nathan Hare, *The Black Anglo-Saxons*, 2nd ed., (Chicago, Illinois: Third Word Press, 1991).