

# **Minority Participation in the US All-Volunteer Force: Implications for the Civilian-Military Gap and Military Effectiveness**

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## **Staffing the US Armed Forces – Historical Background**

Since the American Revolution, nearly all young adult males were obliged to serve in the military. On many occasions, such service was necessary due to the magnitude of engagements requiring large numbers of soldiers. The obligation to serve, in part, was borne out of the local militia in pre-American Revolutionary times, comprised of local residents called to arms when threats emerged. Since the American Revolution, the US has had, from time to time, drafts or compulsory military service for young males. One of the early experiences was during the American Civil War (1861-1865) when both the North and the South needed many more soldiers than those who had volunteered. To meet these shortages, conscription on both sides started early in the war. Policymakers and military leaders realized compulsory military service, a.k.a. “the draft”, was a necessity – especially in large-scale mobilization and deployments.

To meet the challenges for military personnel during World War I, the US Congress passed the Selective Service Act in 1917, which instituted mandatory registration for young men. From these, men would be selected to serve in the military. Most of the conscripted at the beginning of World War I were unmarried (90%) and were farms hands or manual laborers (70%) (Vandergriff, 2008). After the First World War, the US military became small in numbers. At the start of World War II in early 1940, there was a need to quickly staff the US military. To accomplish this, the Selective Training and Service Act (STASA) was passed. Nearly 50 million men registered, and of these, 10 million were drafted into military service (Segal & Segal, 2004). After World War II, the draft ended, but only briefly due to the military having met less than half of its needed recruits – 12,000 of 30,000 annually (Vandergriff, 2008).

With shortages in recruits and new geopolitical threats posed by the Soviet Union in Europe and People’s Republic of China in the Pacific, the US Congress in 1948 passed the Selective Service Act. The legislation lowered the draft age to 18 years of age. Men of the ages 18 to 26 years were required to register for mandatory military service. Previous deferments for married men without children were cancelled and the length of obligatory military service became 2 years (Vandergriff, 2008). When the Korean War (1950-1953) ended, the draft continued but became increasingly unpopular, even though about 16 percent of the military were draftees. The US Congress repeatedly debated the issue of a conscripted force, but renewed the policy until, in 1964, controversy shyly set in, confirmed and redoubled by Vietnam War experiences, which eventually resulted in the

loss of public support for the draft. During the years of the Second Indochina War, from 1965 to 1973, there were 1,728,254 Selective Service inductions of draftees (Vandergriff, 2008, p.61). The greater majority (88%) of infantry soldiers who served in Vietnam had been drafted, and so had over half of the combat deaths in 1969 (Vandergriff, 2008 ; Van Creveld, 1991). These experiences led to the All-Volunteer Force (AVF) legislation of 1973, discussed in a subsequent section.

## **Defining Minorities and Immigrants in the US Context**

This article is about minorities and immigrants serving in the US military. The minority population of the US is generally considered to comprise those who self-identify as Black American, Hispanic, Asian American, American Indian, and Pacific Islander (see Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, 2016). Self-report is usually obtained by way of a paper-and-pencil surveys. The majority population is considered to consist of those individuals who self-identify as white, though not of Hispanic descent. In 2010, nearly three-quarters (72.4%) of the US population was white.<sup>1</sup> A little over one-tenth (12.6%) was Black and 5.9 percent fell into the categories of Asian American, Pacific Islander, or American Indian. There were 6.2 percent of those having “other” identification (US Bureau of Census, 2010). Non-white Hispanics were about 16.3 percent. The present article here focuses on Black or African-Americans. This focus was chosen due to the predominance of Blacks in the US military relative to other minorities, in addition to the unique history of Blacks in the US – having been enslaved and inequitably treated, impacting how Blacks were subsequently viewed and treated in their military service after emancipation. There also was concern to keep the article to a manageable length.

Immigrants are defined as those individuals who live permanently in the US, without having US citizenship. Other terms to describe immigrant status include: permanent resident, green card holder, and resident alien.<sup>2</sup> Gaining immigrant status can be a lengthy and a complex process often requiring working with an immigration attorney. Immigrant status for those in the US military is determined by official documents at the time of induction into military service (Berkeley International Law Office, 2016). In social science research, there are numerous methods to determine immigrant status, for example, “generational distance” from the native-born country and language fluency in the dominant society (Griffith, 1983). Such definitions are often used to assess having been assimilated into the dominant culture, having maintained exclusively the native country culture, and

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<sup>1</sup> The 72.4% figure is based on self-identification, and specifically refers to the 2010 Census respondents who reported being of “white alone” descent, as opposed to “white in combination” (74.8%), a “multiple race” option introduced in the 2000 Census and available since then, which generates no fewer than 57 possible combinations. See : US Census Bureau, September 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Immigrant status differs from non-immigrant status, which applies to individuals who enter the US on a temporary basis – whether for tourism, business, temporary work, or study. Once a person has entered the US in nonimmigrant status, they are restricted to the activity or reason for which they were allowed entry. Some people may have more than one visa in their passport, but they can only be admitted into the US in one type of nonimmigrant status at a time. Most nonimmigrant visas are issued only to applicants who can demonstrate their intentions to return to their home country.

having adopted both or being bicultural (see Griffith, 1983). These categories likely relate to mechanisms of minority and immigrant integration into the dominant society and in the military, as well as dominant members' perceptions of minorities and immigrants in society and in the military. This is discussed in greater detail later within the context of social identity theory. The next sections describe the involvement of Blacks and immigrants in the US military over time, highlighting special circumstances of their involvement, such as the need for military personnel to adequately staff the US military juxtaposed racial / ethnic prejudices.

### **Black Americans in Military Service: Need versus Acceptance**

Early in American history, military service was not considered appropriate for Blacks, with some exceptions. From time to time, Blacks were allowed to serve voluntarily in the US military under varying conditions. In early 1776, Washington discontinued the ban on Black enlistment in the Continental Army due to shortages of soldiers. At least 5,000 African American soldiers fought in the American Revolutionary War, and at least 20,000 served with the British. Many were slaves who were promised freedom for serving and others came from Haiti. Blacks served in separate all-Black units (Nash, 2012).

Increasingly, conflicts involved large numbers of personnel, as the cases of the American Civil War and World War I. Blacks were seen as a means to augment the size of the military. The means involved a balance between the need for personnel and ways for the heretofore excluded group to be included. Because of their unique history as slaves and cultivated prejudices of inferiority, Blacks were segregated in units led by white officers and units performed combat support rather than combat roles. In the American Civil War, Blacks served in units of the North. Both freed Blacks and runaway slaves served. Again, due to shortages of volunteers, the North instituted conscripts to fill its ranks, including the acceptance of Blacks. In the Union Army, about 186,000 Blacks served in some 160 units (Aptheker, 1947).

From 1914 to 1918, the armies of Europe were involved in large-scale trench warfare in which millions served. When the US entered the war in 1917, there was a need for military personnel. Over 350,000 Blacks served in the American Expeditionary Force. In World War II, about 370,000 Blacks were drafted (13% of the total), compared to about 2.5 million white (87%). About 125,000 American Blacks served in overseas units. As before, they served in separate units which performed support roles and did not see combat (Lee, 1966). There were, however, several examples of distinguished war-fighting Black units, such as the Tuskegee airmen and the 761<sup>st</sup> Tank Battalion.

Having Blacks serve in the US military was not without obvious discriminatory practices. "Blue discharges", instituted in 1916, enabled commanders to discharge soldiers without specific grounds. The discharge replaced two previous discharge classifications – the administrative discharge without honour and the unclassified discharge. The blue discharge was not honourable or dishonourable, and Blacks were among those disproportionately discharged. Nearly a quarter of all blue discharges during World War II

were among Blacks, while Blacks comprised about 6 to 7 percent of the Army (McGuire, 1993). At the end of World War II, President Truman ordered the desegregation of military units. The order also carried penalty under military law for making discriminatory comments about Blacks. Over the next few years, during and after the Korean War (1950-1953), units became integrated; Blacks served alongside others.

The Vietnam War eventually involved a large number of US ground forces, numbering half a million in the late 1960s. To sustain the numbers, the US military relied on the draft. Young men aged 18 years were conscripted. Deferments from the draft were permitted for pursuing college degrees and for specialized skilled tradesmen. Such deferments resulted in proportionally more Blacks than Whites entering compulsory military service, and the majority of the military serving in Vietnam was draftees, rather than volunteers and careerists. Being over-represented meant Blacks were proportionally more among the casualties (Westheider, 2008). This fuelled the growing unpopularity of the war by pointing out the inequities in those who served and those who did not (Armor, 1996 ; Mershon & Schlossman, 1998). In 1973, compulsory military service ended, creating what is known as the All-Volunteer Force (AVF). From that time on, the US military relied exclusively on volunteers. Blacks' subsequent participation in the US military is described in the recruitment section below.

### **Immigrants in Military Service – Need versus Domestic Politics**

Immigrants serving in the US military have a long history. Immigrant non-citizens have served in the US military since the American Revolutionary War. During the 1840s, foreign-born residents comprised half of all US military recruits, and during the American Civil War, 20 percent of the 1.5 million service members in the Union Army were foreign-born (One America, 2016). These were primarily immigrants largely from Germany and Ireland, who were not US citizens and served in separate units (Segal & Segal, 2004). At the time of the Spanish-American War (1898), nearly a quarter of the US military was foreign-born, higher than that found in the US population, 15 percent (Segal & Segal 2004). More recently, it has become essential to peacekeeping and State-building operations to recruit immigrants with needed languages (Quester, 2005). Nearly 5 percent of today's US military are immigrants – of whom, two-thirds are naturalized citizens (Batalova, 2008, cited in Lutz, 2008).

In 1947, under Selective Service, young men aged 18 years old were required to register for the eligibility to be conscripted. This included citizens and non-citizens, namely – permanent residents, non-visa seasonal agricultural workers, refugees, parolees, and illegal immigrants. Failure to register resulted in problems when later applying for citizenship (Stock, 2006, cited in Lutz, 2008 ; Selective Service System, 2016). For non-citizens who served, naturalization was accomplished more easily (US Naturalization and Immigrant Services, 2016a). The draft, however, ceased to be a concern when it was finally abandoned, which occurred in 1973.

Four decades later, an Executive Order was issued (Section 329 of the Immigration and Nationality Act) in 2002, which made it easier for non-citizens who served honourably in the military to become citizens. In 2003, the policy allowed naturalizations to take place outside of the US, while serving overseas. Additionally, these actions offered means to address the lack of volunteers to serve in the US military, particularly from 2005 to 2007 timeframe, when the US military had difficulty meeting its recruit goals. The Obama administration, having failed the passage of legislation favourable to immigrants currently living in the US, sought other ways to formally allow immigrants to remain in the US.

Since 2002, about 5,000 non-citizens, nearly all permanent residents, have entered military service each year (Tilghman, 2014). Table 1 displays the number of foreign nationals naturalized as US citizens annually since then. In 2006, the US military began accepting foreigners with non-permanent visas, such as students or tourists. Military service expedited citizenship (US Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2016a). For example, immigrant new recruits were allowed to complete requirements for US citizenship during initial basic training. In the more recent wars, foreign nationals with foreign language expertise or specialized health care training were actively recruited.

**Table 1** : Foreign Nationals Naturalized As US Citizens Annually Since 2002

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Number Naturalized</b>
2002	2,434
2003	4,659
2004	6,327
2005	7,136
2006	8,538
2007	5,895
2008	7,865
2009	10,505
2010	11,146
2011	10,334
2012	8,693
2013	5,563
2014	9,526
2015	5,132
<b>Total</b>	<b>107,398</b>

Source : US Citizenship and Immigration Service (2016b).

## **Representation Issues in the All-volunteer Force**

With the advent in 1973 of the All-Volunteer Force, a policy concern was whether the US military would represent “all walks of life” or disproportionately more minorities and low-income volunteers, those who had less opportunities in civilian life than others (Armor, 1996). Another concern stemmed from recent experiences of the Vietnam War, during which Blacks had been over-represented among draftees as well as among

casualties (Westheider, 2008). Some argued that representation was critical to the legitimacy and credibility of the military within American democracy (Janowitz, 1998). These policy concerns gave rise to studies of “social representation”, which monitored percentages of various racial/ ethnic groups who served in US military (see Congressional Budget Office, 1989). In addition, which recruitment strategies and incentives worked effectively with which group were studied, along with monitoring the propensity of various racial/ ethnic groups to join military service.

One of the initial findings was that Blacks volunteered for military service proportionally more than expected (Levy, 1998). In 1972, Black representation in the US military had increased from 11 percent in 1972, proportional to their occurrence in the general population, to 30 percent by the mid-1980s. In the early 1980s, the percentage of Blacks among non-prior service enlistees was about 20 percent and remained so until about 2000. During the First Gulf War, Blacks comprised a large proportion of the US military – upwards of 20 percent (Buckley, 2001). However, after 1991, Black enlistments declined.

Since 2000, enlistment rates among Blacks have declined, from 24 percent in 2000 to 14 percent in 2005. A sharp drop also occurred in 2002 and continued, when in 2006, Black non-prior service enlistments fell to the lowest level since the all-volunteer force (Armor & Gilroy, 2010; Segal & Segal, 2005). While slight increases occurred in 2007 and 2008 (Armor & Gilroy, 2010), a recent Department of Army report noted further declines. Fewer Blacks and more Whites have entered military service, in particular in the Army. From 1995 to 2009, for instance, the percentage of Black enlisted soldiers has decreased from 27 percent to 20 percent in the active component Army and from 16 percent to 13 percent in the Army National Guard. Conversely, the percentage of white enlisted soldiers has increased from 62 percent to 63 percent (Department of the Army, 2006).<sup>3</sup>

## **Recruitment Strategies during the All-volunteer Force**

This section provides a broad overview of strategies used by the US military to recruit young adults to join the military, with emphasis on what strategies worked most effectively for minorities – in the present focus, Blacks – and immigrants. Recruitment efforts also assess young adults’ “propensity”, a term used to describe the likelihood of a young adult joining the military. In scientific probability surveys, young adults are asked the likelihood of joining the military.

Dating back to the American Revolutionary War, efforts were made to recruit young males into military service, though not extensively, largely due to the US military’s reliance on the draft (Selective Service System) to augment personnel it lacked through

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<sup>3</sup> Contrasted with Blacks, Hispanics have been generally under-represented. Historically, Hispanics have served at lower rates than Blacks. At the start of the All-Volunteer Force, about 2 percent of the force was Hispanic, increasing to about 10 percent in 2001, serving largely in the Marine Corps. During the same period, about twice as many Blacks served (Segal & Segal, 2004). In 2002, Hispanics comprised 10 percent of the active-duty enlisted force, compared to about 14 percent of the 18-24 year-old civilian population in 2002 (cited in Kleykamp, 2008 ; Department of Defense, 2004). Hispanics have been less likely than Whites or Blacks to enlist (Kilburn & Klerman, 1999). Since about 2001, however, there has been an upward trend for Hispanic enlistments (Department of Defense, 2004 ; Segal & Segal, 2004).

volunteers. Blacks and immigrants were required to register for the draft, and thus, from World War II until the AVF, could be drawn on any time to complement the force. However, in 1973, the AVF meant that recruitment and how to effectively secure accession goals took on greater significance.

Experiencing adventure, gaining social status, in addition to serving the country and having educational and job skill training opportunities emerged as themes during World War II recruitment (Padilla & Laner, 2001). When the AVF started in earnest in the mid-1970s, recruitment themes emphasized making the military more of a job option among civilian job choices. Conditions of military service, compensation, and opportunities for training in skilled jobs were emphasized. These incentives apparently worked well as efforts resulted in enlistments that exceeded expectations during 1975-76 (Padilla & Laner, 2001). Over time, some have become critical of marketing military service as civilian jobs. Moskos (1977) described this portrayal of military service as an “occupation” – with expected workload and defined hours of work and motivated by extrinsic factors, primarily in the form of tangible rewards, such as money, time off, promotions, etc. This contrasted with the military of the past as an “institution” – serving others and motivated by intrinsic factors, primarily in the form of intangible rewards, such as honour through service, sense of duty, and loyalty to others. Some have seen this shift as having implications for retention and combat readiness (Griffith, 2008). An institutionally-motivated soldier would likely be more strongly committed to the military and the unit, be more willing to undergo adversities to serve others, and display more tenacity to accomplish the unit mission than the occupationally-motivated soldier. In short, the former would likely be more effective soldiers than the latter.

In the late 1970s, the US military was having difficulty recruiting young adults to meet end-strength goals. The military then embarked on aggressive marketing campaigns consisting of slogans and imagery to inform and persuade young adults to join. Table 2 below displays several example slogans. Table 3 (next page) lists reasons for joining the military, typically used in surveys of young adults who have yet to join as well as those who had already joined.

**Table 2** : Examples of Past Slogans Used for US Military Recruiting

<b>Slogan</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
<i>“Guaranteed pay and benefits. Every month”</i>	Material benefit
<i>“The few. The proud. The Marines”</i>	Self-image enhancement
<i>“Join the Army and learn a valuable skills”</i>	Job skill development
<i>“Be all you can be”</i>	Self-improvement
<i>“Join the world and see the world”</i>	Growth experiences

Source : Park, Shoieb, & Taylor, 2016.

**Table 3** : Examples of Reasons for Joining Used in Propensity Surveys

<i>Underlying Need</i>	<i>Reason</i>
<b>Material benefit</b>	Obtain educational benefits Earn money Receive bonus money Work on retirement benefits
<b>Job skill development</b>	Develop civilian job skills Experience military training
<b>Self-image enhancement</b>	Serve my country
<b>Self-improvement</b>	Be physically and mentally challenged Develop discipline and confidence Be recognized and promoted
<b>Growth experiences</b>	Experience overseas training and travel opportunities Experience military life Have friends in the military

Source : Griffith, 2009.

To better develop and implement a marketing strategy, a more systematic examination of recruiting was instituted, including among eligible youth who might join (called “propensed youth”), to fathom their reasons for joining (incentives), whether they had heard messages, their ability to recall the messages, and the association of message content with propensity to enlist. The result was the Army Communications Objectives Measurement Study, dubbed ACOMS (Gaertner & Elig, 1988). This study routinely surveyed young adults from carefully selected random, national samples. The study tracked propensity of youth over time. Propensity was examined by individual demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, and race, in addition to geographic areas for the purposes of developing profiles and marketing strategies specific to subpopulations. There was particular interest in propensity by race/ ethnic categories, not only for marketing subpopulations, but also to anticipate the extent to which the military would be representative of the US population.

Today, for the Army, the US Army Recruiting Command (USAREC) employs the Fors Marsh Group based in Arlington, Virginia, to conduct periodic surveys of youth’s propensity and what they look for in military service (see Ford, Gibson, Griepentrog & Marsh, 2014). To date, the US military has successfully recruited American youth for military service by offering bonus money, money for college, job training, and retirement benefits. Research has shown that strong incentives for joining the military have been : receiving money; expecting experiences associated with self-development (e.g., becoming more mature, responsible, or disciplined) ; and gaining job skills transferable to civilian jobs (Baker, 1990 ; Gade, Elig, Nogami, Hertzbach, Weltin & Johnson, 1984).

Minorities, largely due to lower socio-economic standing and limited opportunities, were attracted to military service for job skill training and educational benefits. Also, the military tried to effectively manage any prejudice and discrimination against Blacks. As a result, the military often represented a more favourable work environment for Blacks than those in civilian work settings. Indeed, at the start of the AVF, Black representation in the US military increased substantially (Levy, 1998). Opportunities often unavailable to Blacks in civilian life, such as job skill training, good paying job, upward job and career mobility, etc., were found in military service (Gropman, 1997). Blacks, for example, are found proportionally more in the military's medical occupations than other occupations (Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute, 1996).

Between mid-2000 and 2012, the military experienced difficulty in recruiting – despite the surge of patriotic feelings following 9/11, whose impact on enlistments soon waned as the wars progressed and casualties mounted. Part of the problem was the shrinking pool of eligible young men, of whom fewer and fewer met the standards for military service (Morgan, 2001). Nearly three-quarters of American young adults between 17 and 24 years of age were not eligible for military service for fitness reasons, academic deficiencies, and law infractions. There were also lifestyle value changes in America not conducive to military service, including increased hedonism, greater personal expression, opposition to the military lifestyle, resistance to authority, greater emphasis on personal freedom, and increased moral criticism (*ibid.*). During these periods, the US military used large bonuses to attract recruits and to increase retention. Some of these programmes were later discovered to be mismanaged (Knauth, 2016). In addition, the military appeared to have lowered recruit standards to meet end-strength goals (Gallaway *et al.*, 2013). During the period 2004-2006, applicants with misdemeanours, behavioural health conditions, weight, etc., were allowed to join to increase the size of the US Army (Lipscomb, 2015).

Immigrants were seen as a source of needed personnel (Quester, 2005) and were largely attracted to military service to expedite their naturalization as US citizens. Of particular note is that far fewer Blacks were volunteering to join. Many speculated that the Vietnam War had a more lasting effect on minorities' desire to serve in the military, due to their over-representation among those drafted and among the casualties. There was a sharp drop in Black enlistments in 1991 right after Desert Storm, followed by another sharp drop in 2002 just after 9/11 and a continued decline at the beginning of the Iraq War in 2003. By 2006, Black enlistments among non-prior enlistees were 13 percent (Armor & Gilroy, 2010). There was a slight increase in 2008 to 15 percent. At the same time, both Hispanic and white enlistments increased.

## **Perceptions of Blacks and Immigrants in Military Service**

Both Blacks and immigrants were not always accepted into US military service. Blacks long had to overcome perceptions of being inferior and needing to be separated from white service members. These perceptions largely stemmed from the past history of

Blacks in America. Immigrants were not always accepted either and were recipients of prejudicial and discriminatory treatment. As these two groups as well as other minorities increasingly comprise the US military, their perceptions matter, especially as they are often tinged by felt threats from the public and from majority service members.<sup>4</sup> Several factors contribute to these perceptions. First, minorities and immigrants often do not share the same birth status or history as do majority members. Thus, their commitment and loyalty may be seen as suspect. Second, intertwined with racial/ immigrant status is their predominantly low socio-economic status, which in the days of conscription offered Blacks and immigrants less opportunity to avoid the draft (e.g., attend postsecondary education, private health care exemptions, etc.), thus contributing to inequities. Third, the recent rise of domestic terrorism by “outsiders” contributes to negative perceptions of members of outgroups.

## **Blacks**

Early in American history, when Blacks served, the primary issue was how best to integrate them into the US military. Their treatment with regard to military service related largely to public attitudes concerning who should serve, and historical dealings with Blacks. In early colonial times, military service was for privileged citizens, e.g., landowners, skilled tradesmen, etc. Military service was viewed as an honour and largely expected of those of higher status. Blacks, who were predominantly slaves, were generally not accepted into the forces, notwithstanding a few exceptions in early American wars (Gropman, 1996). This situation remained unchanged until there was a need for a great number of personnel, as in the American Civil War (1861-1865). While Blacks in the South were slaves and unable to serve, in the North they were needed to meet recruitment goals but were segregated in units normally not allowed to participate in combat. More than 180,000 Blacks served in 120 infantry, cavalry, and artillery Union regiments during the Civil War.<sup>5</sup>

In the two world wars, there was even a greater need for military personnel. Blacks, whose military service was largely restricted by their social standing and ideas about their inferiority, were generally limited to combat support roles, though two Black divisions served on the western front in World War I. A US Army War College report completed after World War I examined the feasibility of including them in future large-scale mobilizations. On the one hand, the report argued the necessity for all US citizens to serve in the military (Gropman, 1997). On the other hand, the report concluded Blacks’ military

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<sup>4</sup> “Majority” refers to one or more racial/ ethnic subpopulations that make up the majority relative to the national population. Traditionally, this term is applied to non-Hispanic Whites. “Minority” refers to one or more racial/ ethnic subpopulations that make up less than the majority relative to the national population, and traditionally, has included Blacks, Hispanics, and Asian Americans.

<sup>5</sup> Immigrants were also recruited for military service. Noteworthy are the riots in New York City in 1863, at a time when the Union Army was in desperate need of soldiers (Foner, 1988 ; William, 2015). These riots were prompted by an inequitable law passed by Congress to draft young men to fight for the North. While young men of wealth could pay not to be drafted, the poor could not – many of whom were working-class men of Irish descent.

service should be limited due to their lack of physical courage, lower intelligence, and moral character weaknesses.

Blacks were drafted during World War II, but largely served in segregated units. After World War II, domestic social unrest and the return of many Black veterans now eligible for GI benefits such as college education, home loans, etc., gave rise to pressures for integration in both civilian society and the military. In the immediate post-war period, the main concern about Blacks was how they would be represented in the US military – both in terms of numbers and how organized. The age-old discrimination came to an end during the Korean War (1950-1953), as a result of enacted policies which gave Blacks equal footing with Whites in the US military, overcoming broad-based societal prejudices against them – believing them to be intellectually inferior, cowardly, unclean, and “untouchable”.

Blacks and immigrants in military service were not seen as threats. Blacks in the US had no real defined linkages to the loyalties of other countries or ideology. Though they had largely come from Africa to be enslaved, most were without any direct ancestry to Africa. With their presence dating back to earlier centuries, they were “Americans”. The only thing close to ideology that parted from the mainstream of American loyalty came in the 1960s with the socialist advocacy of the Black Panther Party in the 1970s and Malcolm X’s Black supremacist Nation of Islam (Watson & Akhtar, 2012). For some Blacks, these became groups with which they identified. These movements stemmed from inequities between Blacks and others in the larger society – reflected in the unfair distribution of fighting burdens<sup>6</sup> which made the Vietnam War unpopular from 1967 onwards, and led to much domestic unrest.<sup>7</sup>

After Vietnam, the All-Volunteer Force was instituted. A primary concern was the extent to which Blacks would continue to serve voluntarily, in particular, after the great civil unrest of the late 1960s. The policy issue of “social representation” became increasingly of military and civilian interest (Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Military Personnel Policy, 2016 ; Department of Defense 2004). The main concern was whether various racial/ethnic groups would participate in military service proportional to their occurrence in the US population. In spite of the Vietnam experience, for the first 15 years or so Blacks represented a greater proportion in the military than their share in the civilian population. This is explained in terms of the upward social and economic opportunities the military offered minorities.

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<sup>6</sup> As already mentioned, college deferments favoured middle-class youth of draft age, and thus increased the need to draft others in order to meet greater force level requirements as the Indochina war’s pressures mounted. But that was not the only imbalance involved : whereas regular soldiers were a majority in the military as a whole, over half the casualties incurred in Vietnam were draftees.

<sup>7</sup> During this period, despite the civil rights legislation passed by the US Congress, gross inequalities still existed between Blacks and Whites. Inequities were greatest in the northern and western US where they were more heavily concentrated in urban areas with high unemployment and substandard living conditions (Bloom & Martin, 2012). In the summer of 1967, over 150 riots occurred in inner cities across the nation : cf. McLaughlin, 2014.

After the Gulf War, however, and more so since Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom, Blacks have shown decreased propensity to join the military. Most recently, media attention to law enforcement violence against Blacks, often unarmed and unjustly treated, has given rise to Black advocacy groups, for example, “Black Lives Matter” (Day, 2015), which often view the police as the problem as well as larger domestic inequities experienced by Black Americans. Identification with these issues and groups make Blacks less likely to serve broader societal institutions, such as the armed forces.

### **Immigrants**

Immigrants served in the US military in earlier wars, such as the American Civil War, World War I and World War II. During these times, there were strong pressures to assimilate and to integrate into one unified American identity. Non-English speakers were discouraged to use their native language, or display particularistic behaviours and attitudes. In late 20<sup>th</sup> century, a critical response to cultural assimilation was multiculturalism. Evidence had accumulated showing that assimilation for immigrants often was associated with diminished student self-esteem, learning, and achievement (Zirkel & Cantor, 2004). As a result, maintaining racial/ ethnic identity was encouraged. Recent emphases on multiculturalism, diversity, and so forth have lessened assimilation and strengthened the hand of immigrants who wish to keep their ethnic/ cultural identities. These changes are evident in the US military – introducing into the chaplain corps a variety of religions, allowing military personnel to wear personal attire and maintain behaviours specific to religious faiths, etc.

The extent to which the country of origin and different religion pose challenges for loyalty and commitment to the US as a whole is unclear. Allowances made by the US military for immigrant members to maintain religious personal attire and behaviours made differences more readily observed. These individuals may be seen as threats with rising terrorist acts associated with immigrant status and religious identity. Evident from the current conflicts in the Middle East is the widespread appeal of religion, specifically Islam, crossing national boundaries. These events are consistent with Huntington’s (1993, 1996) speculation that post-Cold War conflicts will stem largely from differences in culture and ideology rather than differences between the interests of countries.<sup>8</sup> Yet, viewing immigrants as internal threats to the US is a recent phenomenon: such a perception was largely unheard of until Major Hasan, an Army psychiatrist who was Islamic, shot and killed dozens of soldiers at Fort Hood.

In summary, perceptions of Black and immigrant participation in the military stem from the interplay among several factors – the public’s and policymakers’ view of who should serve; domestic attitudes of minorities and immigrants, often negative, towards serving under arms; disenfranchisement; socio-economic standing associated with low

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<sup>8</sup> In the Cold War, writes Huntington, conflicts occurred between Western capitalist and Eastern communist countries. Now, conflict is most likely to occur among the world’s major civilizations, such as Western, Latin American, Islamic, Sinic (Chinese), Hindu, Orthodox, Japanese, and African.

domestic opportunities as well as discriminatory treatment in the military; and changing views of obligatory military service. Minorities – Blacks and Hispanics – in the US military have not been viewed as internal domestic threats. Any negative perceptions of African-Americans largely stemmed from their history of enslavement, perceptions of their inferiority, and lower socio-economic standing. Initially, the US military did not know exactly how to organize Blacks, but over time saw their effectiveness, and in an evolving military where few young men wanted to serve, filled personnel shortfalls.

### **Social Identity Theory and Minority/Immigrant Military Service**

Service members' attitudes towards Blacks and immigrants also related to their participation in the military, e.g., perceived differences requiring segregation, assumed inferiorities making them unsuitable for military service (e.g., the "blue discharges"), etc. Finally, the extent to which Blacks and immigrants identify with issues of their respective populations in society influences individual attitudes toward military service, e.g., inequities that survived the 1960s civil rights movement. Social identity theory seems highly relevant to these various individual perceptions based on group identification, as well as the attitudes of groups influencing individual attitudes and behaviours.

*Social identity theory* describes relationships of attitudes and perceptions of individuals in relation to groups in which they have membership. Such groups often provide a basis for self-identity through interpersonal interactions that develop normative behaviours and attitudes, expectations, role behaviours, identity, and internalized values. According to the theory (Hogg & Abrams, 1988 ; Stryker & Burke, 2000 ; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), people come to know who they are through interactions with others and subsequently take on an identity and accompanying way of behaving or role. People develop many identities through their interactions, such as father, husband, friend, occupation, hobbyist, and so on. Identities are expressed as attitudes, behavioural tendencies, and behaviours expected of the identity or the role. Thus, people assume role identities, organized hierarchically according to the probability that they become the basis for action, determined by salience.

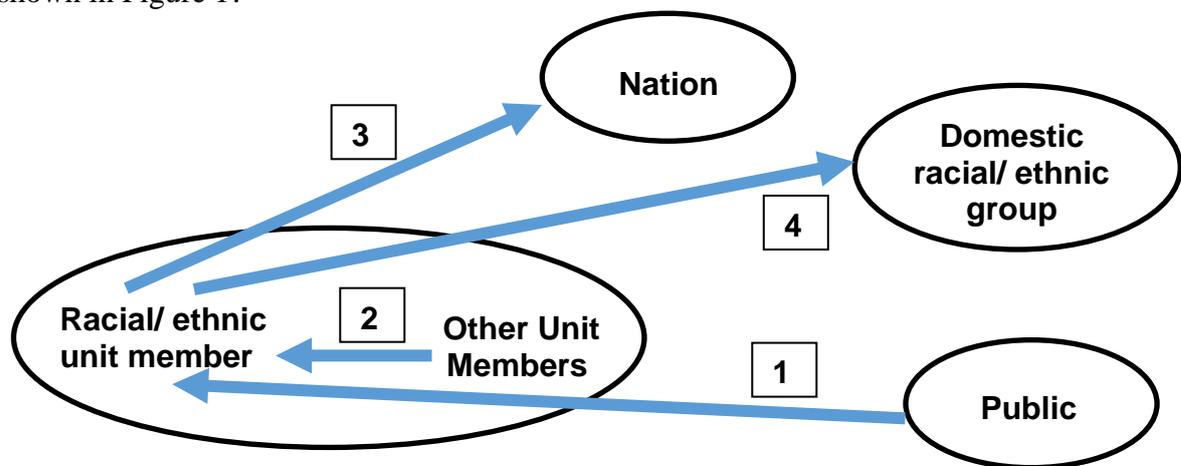
*Identity salience* is defined as the likelihood the identity will be invoked in a variety of contexts. Some identities have more self-relevance than others. Those positioned at the top of the hierarchy are more likely to be invoked in a particular situation and more self-defining than those towards the bottom of the hierarchy. For example, defining oneself as a parent and being in a context associated with parenting (e.g., weekend days) makes it more likely the parent role would be acted out, contrasted with a job or work role held during the week.

Another important concept is *commitment to a role identity*, as it determines the likelihood a particular identity will be invoked and acted out. When an identity is necessary in maintaining the individual's relationships with others, then the commitment to that identity is high and the identity will likely be displayed. In the present context, then, minorities and immigrants would be expected to display their predominant identity –

whether it be military unit member, racial/ ethnic group member, or a combination. Ideally, these combinations would be mutually reinforcing, though the possibility exists that they may conflict: for instance, when African-American or recent immigrant service members identify more with their racial/ ethnic group and lack commitment to the US military, or conversely so imbued with their unit member role that they give up identification with their racial/ ethnic group. Identities differ concerning their involvement in and commitment to military service, and thus, have implications for who joins and remains in military service, and the extent service members see the need to be combat-ready.

Finally, the term *prototype* is used to describe the individual’s cognitive image of the “most typical member” of the reference group. In other words, the prototype is a set of attributes or characteristics the individual sees the ideal group member as having. For example, a prototype of a Boy Scout troop member might include: male, lean and strong, skilful (especially outdoors), adventuresome, considerate, nature-loving, etc. The more closely perceived attributes correspond to those of most members of the group, the greater the individual’s sense of identity to members and the group, and the group’s felt sense of cohesiveness (Hogg, 1992).

When applying social identity theory to the topic at hand, there are at least four basic relationships concerning minorities and immigrants serving in the US military, as shown in Figure 1:



**Fig. 1** : Four Basic Relationships Concerning Perceptions of Minorities and Immigrants serving in the US Military

**Public and Unit Members**

*Condition 1*

The more closely the public’s prototype of service members corresponds to minority/immigrant service members, the greater the public’s perception and feelings of unanimity and universal patriotism. And conversely, the more closely the public’s prototype of minority/ immigrant service members corresponds to members of the broad racial/ ethnic group having less respect for US interests, the more likely it is that the public will not see them as part of the unit and as posing threats to themselves and others.

*Condition 2*

The more closely unit members' prototype corresponds to minority/ immigrant service members, the greater the cohesiveness and feelings of unanimity. Conversely, the more closely unit members' prototype of minority/immigrant service members corresponds to members of the broad racial/ ethnic group having less respect for US interests, the more likely it is that unit members will not see them as part of the unit and as posing threats to themselves and others.

**Minority/ Immigrant Members**

*Condition 3*

The more closely minority/immigrant service members' prototype corresponds to that of unit members and the broader nation, the greater unit cohesiveness and patriotism respectively, and associated outcomes, namely – combat readiness and effectiveness.

*Condition 4*

The more closely minority/immigrant service members' prototype corresponds to that of members in the broad racial/ ethnic group, the more minority/ immigrant service members relate to issues and concerns of the racial/ ethnic group in society, such as prejudice and discrimination, inequities, etc. – resulting in less effective units and less desire to join and be part of the military.

These conditions are not mutually exclusive, and when occurring together can be complementary and reinforcing (e.g., Blacks in the American Civil War, serving the unit and the North in the hope of improving the broader condition of Blacks) – and as well as contradictory, lessening military service commitment (e.g., Blacks early in Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom, whose recruitment declined as the operations continued – reminiscent of Blacks' disproportionately participating in the Vietnam War).

A recent study provides support for the use of social identity theory in understanding attitudes and perceptions of immigrants. Hainmueller and Hopkins (2014) described two broad mechanisms underlying negative attitudes held by members of the dominant or majority society towards immigrants. The first (called *egotropic*) occurs when immigrants are seen as threatening economic opportunities through competition for jobs and resources. The second (called *sociotropic*) manifests itself if immigrants diverge culturally and ethnically from the dominant culture. Hainmueller and Hopkins cite more evidence for the latter than the former as explaining majority members' attitudes towards immigrants. Not without reason: immigration attitudes are *not* clustered by geography, occupation, or industry in ways consistent with labour market competition, as would be expected for the egotropic hypothesis – attitudes to immigrants based on social behaviours are more likely. By definition, attitudes towards immigration are about people who have membership in groups and how members and the group challenge boundaries of other groups, in particular, the majority group (e.g., Theiss-Morse, 2009; Wong, 2010; Schildkraut, 2011).

Thus, the attitudes of immigrants relate more strongly to perceptions about immigrants' impact on salient social groups. So, the more strongly they diverge from the dominant culture by accentuating differences in language, attire, ethnic-based behaviours, and religious practices specific to their culture, the more negatively immigrants are viewed, largely due to immigrants' effects on social groups of the dominant culture. Such processes are likely mitigated by societal influences. For example, despite obvious appearance and ideological differences of US service members, the latter have not generally been viewed as threats to others and national security. To boot, the US military has a long history of greater tolerance and non-discrimination towards those of minority racial/ ethnic and religious backgrounds. Long-standing discriminatory treatments or the more recent inequities of Blacks' disproportionate representation in the Vietnam War gave way to systematic efforts to train service members to be more accepting of the diverse groups represented in the services. In 1971, the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) was established. Attendance at equal opportunity seminars, which were largely on race relations at first, was mandatory and conducted routinely.

Political correctness, which emerged in the early 1990s (Bernstein, 1990), overshadowed identifying and speaking out against potential terrorist threats on the basis of country origin, religion, etc. This term described avoidance of inappropriate behaviour, largely verbal, which excluded, marginalized, or insulted groups of people who are socially disadvantaged or discriminated against. Clinton's "Don't ask, don't tell" policy (DoD Directive 1304.26, issued on December 21, 1993) also extended acceptance to homosexuals serving in the military. Significant aspects of federal legislation concerning penalties for discriminatory behaviours toward people of minority race, ethnic identification, religion, age, gender, and sexual preference were also hardened. At the same time, multiculturalism and diversity became increasingly evident in many societal settings, such as public education. These efforts generated greater acceptance of individual differences, and some speculated that this led to failures to recognize true threats. Several reports indicated that the Army psychiatrist who shot dozens of service members at Fort Hood in 2009 had displayed "*very strange*" professional behaviours, such as medical presentations to others regarding the Muslim faith and how it conflicted with US military service (Priest, 2009). Indeed, several collegial and supervising psychiatrists, while perceiving these behaviours as inconsistent with those of a military service member, withheld criticism due to espoused tolerance attitudes (*ibid.*).

In the last few years, there has been less emphasis on political correctness, with the increased terrorist threats from people of Arabic descent and/or Muslim faith. In the wake of terrorist attacks on civilians in Europe and the US, a major issue in the recent American presidential campaign was whether to purposefully identify and scrutinize Muslims now living in the US and to prohibit further immigration to the US (Davidson, 2015). Viewing immigrants as threats and acting in a discriminatory manner against them does not go without precedents, e.g., the US government's internment of Japanese Americans in 1942-1944 (see National Archives Catalog, 2016 ; Truman Library and Museum, 2016).

## Implications of Applying Social Identity Theory

When applied to the topic of minority and immigrant participation in the US military, social identity theory offers several implications. To begin with, it relates to the civilian-military gap (Feaver & Kohn, 2001). Proportional representation of societal members in the military *prima facie* makes the military, its missions and values synonymous with society at large. The greater the disproportion in the representation of a group's members in the military relative to the civilian population, the more the military will be seen as separate and different, having serious implications for readiness, in terms of recruiting sufficient service members, retaining them, and preparing them for military missions. Now, by comparison, if proportionally fewer members of racial/ethnic groups participate in the military, military service will be seen as a preserve of special (majority) segments of society and, in turn, will likely affect combat readiness (see Mills, 2015). When the military and its members are seen as different from society at large, adults in the civilian population will identify less with the military and its members – as was the situation during the Vietnam War, and more recently, during combat operations in the First Gulf War, in Iraq and Afghanistan, when fewer Blacks volunteered and more poor Whites from the southeastern US served (Zucchini & Cloud, 2016). Disproportional representation between who serves and who does not widens the gap between civilians and the military, resulting in difficulty when it comes to maintaining its strength and fighting capabilities, and in a lesser commitment of the civilian population to support combat operations. Indeed, a Pew Research Center study (cited in *ibid.*) reported that only about a quarter of civilians with no family serving in the US military followed news about the US involvement in the recent wars. Half of these civilians said the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan made little difference in their lives, and were not worth fighting.

Emergent identities in themselves also have significant implications for recruitment and retention, leading to questions such as “What kind of soldier does the military want?” For the present purposes – a military of diversity –, the answer would be : the most inclusive. The more often young adults perceive model or ideal members of the US military to have their own desired attributes, the stronger the aggregate intent to join military service. It is, therefore, important to examine the correspondence of ideal service members' attributes with those of the relevant reference groups, such as minority or immigrant groups. Periodic scientific polling can assist in this process, much like the past Youth Attitude Tracking Surveys and the current JAMRS studies.<sup>9</sup> Of importance is examining the extent to which young adults' perceptions of ideal members of the US military diverge from predominant identities of young adults, in particular regarding minority and immigrant participation, as well as perceptions of minority and immigrant youth. The greater the disparities, the less likely youth see the military as a possible choice.

Concerning retention, identity theory predicts that the greater the correspondence between attributes of individual identity and those of the ideal service member, the more likely the service member will want to remain in military service – and *vice versa*. Also

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<sup>9</sup> See : Orvis, Sastry, & McDonald, 2007 ; Joint Advertising Market Research & Studies, 2016.

relevant is the identification of minority/immigrant service members with the broader minority/immigrant group. If, for example, they identify with these groups, and the latter are seen as unjustly treated in society (e.g., due to social inequalities, threat of deportation, disproportionate burden of national defence, etc.), then minority/immigrant service members are less likely to re-enlist, which may even have implications for combat effectiveness through weakened cohesiveness among unit members (Griffith, 2007). The importance of these relationships was observed during Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. Some soldiers who initially joined one of the reserve components (or even the active-duty military under “delayed-entry” programmes), had identified military service primarily as an avenue for social mobility by obtaining educational benefits, and were surprised to find they had to leave college and deploy. These soldiers did not strongly associate service in uniform with possible mandatory deployments overseas, with the result that many shunned reenlistment, or even opted for premature separation from service (Griffith & Perry, 1993; Griffith, 2009). These various identifications also have implications for combat readiness. For example, when minority/immigrant members identify more with unit members and the broader national interests than with those of their minority/immigrant group, their ties to the unit and military service, and corresponding combat readiness and effectiveness, will be stronger (Griffith, 2009). Such implications need more thought and consideration in future examinations of racial/ethnic groups’ participation in the US military.

Indeed, the extent to which minorities and immigrants identify with the military and service members impacts their recruitment. The fewer immigrants and minorities who serve in the US military, the less likely members of these groups will join and serve. Further, once serving, the less likely they will feel a part of the military and be retained. And finally, the more often minorities and immigrants perceive the military as not representative of society, in particular of their racial/ethnic groups, the less likely they will fully support military missions, which they see as benefitting others in the military and society rather than the groups with which they identify.

## **Summary and Conclusion**

The topic of this article was recruitment and retention of minorities, with special focus on Blacks and immigrants. A review of US military’s approaches to staffing its force showed the increasing importance of recruiting and retaining both Blacks and immigrants for national security and defence. Ideologically, all members of the society should share this responsibility, but from time to time, Blacks and immigrants serve disproportionately – at times more and at other times less, as a function of domestic and geopolitical events. These events over time shape perceptions and attitudes towards Blacks and immigrants and how they should be treated, in particular, in US military service. They also shape Black and immigrant recruitment intentions, and for those already serving, retention and combat effectiveness. Social identity theory was advanced as a means to explicate the mechanisms involved in the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours that relate to issues of Black and immigrant membership and operational readiness. This application offers possible directions for future research and policy questions.

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