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Racism, male chauvanism, and the generation gap are three facets of a broad problem facing naval management under the general heading of minority-majority group relations. With the advent of the all-volunteer force, the military has found it increasingly important to identify with the humanistic aspirations of its people. How well the Navy can deal with these questions will have a grave impact on the service and will ultimately determine the future of the zero draft.

UNDERSTANDING RACE RELATIONS AS AN ASPECT OF THE MANAGEMENT OF MILITARY PERSONNEL ¹

A lecture delivered in the Defense Economics
and Decisionmaking Curriculum at the Naval War College

by

Dr. Lawrence Podell

No other major segment of American society has dealt with institutional racial segregation with the swiftness and thoroughness of the military. Discriminatory practices in industry, commerce, schools, colleges, and housing continue today on a far larger scale and with much greater persistence than in the armed services. Some knowledge of these facts is essential if one is to properly describe and assess today's military race problem. However, traditional aspects of race relations in America, those most often corrected by "official" action as with the Navy, have in some measure been superseded by the new attitudinal problems of black consciousness and white backlash. Commanders, the field managers of military personnel, must understand these phenomena if they are to accomplish their mission.

Racial equality became an issue for the United States, and particularly for the military, with the Emancipation Proclamation. Much has happened since that time, and a broad review of service racial policies should be of some benefit in understanding present-day problems. During the Civil War, the Union Army included 180,000 blacks serving in white-officered segregated regiments. After the war, four Regular Army Negro regiments policed the Western frontier and battled Indian tribes; some of these fought in Cuba during the war with Spain. In World War I the combat performance of all-Negro units was mixed, with the 92d Infantry Division coming under particular criticism. After World War I the racially segregated Army imposed a Negro quota. Designed to equal the 9.8 percent proportion of blacks in the U.S. population, at the

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onset of World War II only 5.9 percent of the Army were Negroes. At that time there were also only five black Army officers, three of whom were chaplains. During World War II, blacks remained in segregated units—mostly in transportation, quartermaster, and engineer outfits, never exceeding 10 percent of total personnel. Nevertheless there were some black combat units and, by this time, some black officers, but once again the all-Negro 92d Infantry Division came under criticism for its combat performance. However, during the Battle of the Bulge, black platoons were assigned to white rifle companies on an experimental basis. The program was a marked success both in terms of combat performance and white reaction.

After World War II two Army boards—in 1945 and again in 1950—recommended a return to segregation, quotas, and support duties for blacks. President Truman ignored their recommendations and in 1948 ordered racial integration in the Armed Forces. The manpower crises of the Korean conflict and later Vietnam hastened the desegregation process to the point where the proportion of blacks in the Army rose from 8.8 percent in 1948 to 15.1 percent in 1972.

Let us now consider the Navy. Blacks served in the U.S. Navy during and after the Civil War. The early 1900's saw restrictive policies introduced and, at the onset of World War I, only 1 percent of Navy personnel were Negro. Following World War I, the Navy simply barred blacks from enlisting; but this was later amended to allow them to become mess stewards. Early in World War II, blacks were allowed to enter other occupations in the Shore Establishment, and later a few blacks in general service went to sea. In 1946 Secretary Forrestal ordered all Navy ratings opened to all sailors, a decision which placed the Navy ahead of the other services in the pursuit of racial integration. This fact notwithstanding, the proportion of blacks in the

Navy has remained small and nearly constant over the past two decades—about 5 percent.

The Marines before World War II barred Negro enlistments entirely, but during the war used blacks as laborers and ammunition handlers. After the war the corps followed the lead of the Navy and implemented a policy of racial integration. The proportion of Negro marines rose from 2 percent in 1949 to 12.5 percent in 1972.

In 1972 the total proportion of blacks in the armed services stood at 11.1 percent, about the same as that of the general population. A further breakdown of this figure, however, indicates significant differences among the armed services, with the Army containing 15.1 percent, the Marines 12.5 percent, the Air Force 10.8 percent, and the Navy 5.6 percent. They also differed in terms of rank distribution. The ratio of black to white officers in the Army was 1 to 25, in the Air Force 1 to 60, in the Marines 1 to 70, and in the Navy 1 to 110. Finally, the Navy also had the greatest underrepresentation of blacks in the NCO grade of all the armed services.

The all-volunteer military of the 1970's will probably include a greater proportion of Negro personnel, especially if the civilian economy undergoes recession. Perhaps the prime motivation for these black volunteers will be the search for advancement opportunity, and they will expect that this opportunity be offered regardless of race.

The visibility of color has made it readily apparent to many frustrated blacks that they were being racially excluded from the better service schools, job assignments, and, ultimately, from advancement. The most common official rationale for their not being selected for technical training was inadequate preparation in civilian life, but whether this was a reason or a rationalization, the lesser likelihood of

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advancement was perceived by blacks as de facto discrimination, and it has had a most significant impact. In studies done in 1964 and again in 1972, black volunteers were found to be twice as likely as whites to mention self-advancement as their reason for enlistment. And blacks are about twice as likely to reenlist in search of a career. When such aspirations are frustrated, reactions are to be expected. A common response to being excluded from the formal power structure is to band together with others who, like oneself, are also excluded.

Therefore, while by the 1970's racial integration was the official policy in all branches of the armed services, within the context of formal integration, patterns of racial polarization arose. Sometimes this polarization can be traced back to real and/or perceived discrimination, but more often it is a result of the emerging race consciousness among blacks and the reaction to it by whites.

A conspicuous example of this consciousness is demonstrated in the symbolic behavior which emphasizes a "consciousness of kind" such as handshakes, jargon, or jewelry. Off-duty activities are characterized by self-imposed informal segregation. Whites have reacted to such symbolic behavior in a variety of ways—suspicion, fear, and hostility among them. Amidst these signs of overt racial polarization and militancy, however, there is another point to be remembered. As the sociologist Charles Moskos observed:

Without in any way understating the amount of racial tension in the Armed Forces, it should also be made clear that Military life is still characterized by an interracial egalitarianism seldom found in the other major institutions of American society. Color barriers at the formal level are absent throughout the Military community. Equal treatment regardless of race is official policy in such nonduty

facilities as swimming pools, chapels, barbershops, post exchanges, movie theaters, snack bars, and dependents' housing, as well as in the work assignments and living conditions of members of the Armed Services. Efforts to remove off-post discrimination of black servicemen have also accelerated in the past few years. Moreover, white personnel are often commanded by black superiors, a situation rarely obtaining in civilian life. In their performance of military duties, whites and blacks typically work together with little open display of racial animosity. A sense of perspective requires that these facts also be kept in mind.²

The military has attempted, and in some measure successfully, to resolve race relation problems by a variety of steps: the Defense Race Relations Institute, founded in 1971, develops course materials and trains instructors (at a planned rate of 1,400 per year); race relations councils have been created at major military installations; and officers are evaluated in terms of their handling of race relations in their commands. Whether these and still other to be developed programs will be successful remains to be seen.

The early attempts at dealing with racial problems in the Navy during World War II apparently involved already skilled and mature artisans who, by virtue of their technical proficiency and personal demeanor, earned the respect of their shipmates. They constituted the "fine cutting edge" which sliced into racism. But, despite the evidence, the stereotypical categorizing attitudes continued to exist; these pioneers could be easily passed off by bigots as exceptional cases. Conversely, in the 1960's, when large numbers of underprivileged and uneducated blacks were recruited from the rural South and the urban slums, prejudiced whites

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recognized them as typical of all blacks. Nonetheless, formal integration was successful and now the job of the Navy is to deal with the informal, attitudinal racism in the Navy.

Beginning to be recognized is the fact that other white reactions—not just racism—must also be dealt with: many whites believe that reverse discrimination is occurring, depriving them of equal opportunity; color visibility and banding together increase fears of black hooliganism among younger whites. Whether these reactions will be satisfactorily dealt with also remains to be seen.

Further, there are ethnic and racial minorities which have suffered from local discrimination at various times and in various parts of the country. The Spanish speaking groups from the west coast, Southwest, and Puerto Rico; the Chinese- and Japanese-Americans in the West; and the native Americans, the Indians, each represent a different problem for the management of personnel within the American military context.

Another minority for whom concern has surfaced recently is women. Instead of race relations, the topic is gender relations, but the primary issue is still one of opportunity.³

In 1970 women constituted 1.35 percent of military personnel in the United States. (In the United Kingdom, which has had an all-volunteer force for 10 years, women were 3.8 percent of military personnel.) By 1972 the proportion had risen to 1.8 percent with the distribution by armed services as follows: Army, 1.9 percent; Navy, 1.5 percent; Marines, 1.2 percent; and Air Force, 2.2 percent.

In marked contrast to the situation of other minorities, the ratio of officers to enlisted personnel was twice as high for women as for men. In 1970, for example, 36 percent of female personnel were officers, as opposed to 13 percent of the males. In part, this was due to the concentration of females in

nursing, a commissioned speciality.

During World War II, women filled mainly nursing, clerical, and administrative positions, though some were involved in naval communication and intelligence. In the United Kingdom, where the manpower shortage was acute, experiments in assigning women to ships were discontinued when the relatively minor manpower advantages failed to outweigh the person inconveniences. The U.S. Navy has recently allowed women both aboard ship and to fly some types of aircraft. Today, although the number of women involved is still small, there are few, if any, naval occupations not open to women. The programs involving women are on a limited scale, almost experimental, and large areas of difficulty are still apparent. Many women perceive the Navy's efforts as tokenism where the vast majority of women are still confined to a relatively narrow range of assignments. Perhaps the most difficult problem the Navy must as yet face is the acceptance of the right of women to have children and still pursue military careers.

It is expected that the absolute and relative number of women in the armed services will grow due to several factors. The manpower deficiencies created by the all-volunteer force, the growth in administrative and other support functions in the Military Establishment, and the changing role of women in America are but a few of the issues involved. It is also possible that the military would deal with its manpower problems by substituting a large number of civilians for military personnel in the clerical and administrative areas. If so, the additional women in military assignments might be civilians.

Race relations and gender relations are part of a larger subject heading in the management of military personnel: minority-majority group relations. Another topic that falls within this general heading is that of age relations.

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The younger and the older continually interact, and special situations, such as the relationship between mature senior NCO's and young junior officers, must be dealt with.

The issues involved in general minority-majority group relations should be viewed in terms of the changing nature of the armed services. Before World War II the military community was a relatively small and insulated segment of society—a minority group all its own. With World War II and mass conscription, military service became a near universal experience that affected not only the population but the Military Establishment as well. The participation of large and representative segments of the American society made the postwar American military much more likely to reflect the characteristics of the people it served. This copy of attitudinal and behavioral patterns that were common in American society went so far as to include the development of occupational and organizational forms similar to those of the governmental, educational, commercial, and industrial bureaucracies that had become so predominant in the larger society.

As the proportion of personnel in combat occupations has declined, so the proportion of officers in tactical operations has decreased. The predominant organizational orientation has been shifting away from combat and toward resource management. Nearly a third of the present-day officer corps occupy positions devoted to administration, coordination, logistics, planning, research, and other functions to be found outside, as well as inside, the military. What effect this shift is having upon career motivation, job satisfaction, and organizational integrity, efficiency, and economy remains to be seen. Sociologists Janowitz and Little⁴ have described the conditions as giving rise to the "civilianization" of the military. As evidence, they observe a military that seeks to deter violence rather than wage

it; military leaders increasingly involved in broad issues of political, social, and economic policy; automation of weaponry, complexity of the machinery of warfare, and the technical requirements for research, development, and maintenance that have weakened the boundary separating the military from the civilian worlds.

In broader terms these authors characterized basic changes in the American military over the past 50 years as follows:

1. Changing Organizational Authority. There has been a change in the basis of authority and discipline in the Military Establishment, a shift from authoritarian domination to greater reliance on manipulation, persuasion and group consensus.

2. Narrowing Skill Differential Between Military and Civilian Elites. The new tasks of the Military require that the professional officer develop more and more of the skills and orientations common to civilian administrators and civilian leaders.

3. Shift in Officer Recruitment. The Military elite has been undergoing a basic social transformation since the turn of the century. These elites have been shifting their recruitment from a narrow, relatively high social status base to a broader base, more representative of the population as a whole.

4. Significance of Career Patterns. Prescribed careers performed with high competence to lead to entrance into the professional elite, the highest point in the Military hierarchy at which technical and routinized functions are performed. By contrast, entrance into the smaller group, the elite nucleus—where innovating perspectives, discretionary responsibility, and political skills are

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required—is assigned to persons with unconventional and adaptive careers.

5. Trends in Political Indocination. The growth of the Military establishment into a vast managerial enterprise with increased political responsibilities has produced a strain on traditional military self-images and concepts of honor. The officer is less and less prepared to think of himself as merely a military technician.⁵

Technology and the development of mass armies has necessitated a military professionalism based largely on performance, specifically performance within an organizational context. It is the authority component of military organization and its emphasis upon performance and evaluation that enabled the armed services to desegregate as rapidly and as fully as they did.

We appear to be entering an era in which the perceived external threat has lessened. In such times, the military may be seen as less necessary, which often lessens the prestige of its leadership and weakens the legitimacy of its authority. Popular support for the military may depend increasingly upon its success in identifying itself with the aspirations of the American people. But keeping touch with the popular will

may become increasingly difficult if the officer corps becomes more insulated (a possible result of the narrowing of its base of recruitment) and the enlisted personnel less representative of the citizenry (the all-volunteer armed services may include a disproportionately large segment of the less educated, the underskilled). These circumstances present a challenge which military professionals cannot afford to overlook.

BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY



Dr. Lawrence Podell did his undergraduate work at the City College of New York, earned his master's degree from Syracuse University and his Ph.D. from Cornell University. He has served as professor of sociology at City College of New York; as Assistant to the Commissioner for Research, New York City Department of Social Services; as professor of urban affairs, Doctoral Program in Business, Bernard M. Baruch College, City University of New York; and as University Professor and Director of Research, Office of Urban Affairs, City University of New York. Dr. Podell has written numerous books and articles on social and urban affairs and is currently serving as University Dean for Program and Policy Research at City University of New York.

NOTES

1. This presentation was made before students of Management at the Naval War College on 22 November 1973. The major sources for much of the material contained herein were Robin M. Williams, Jr., particularly his paper, "Institutional Stability and Change: the Case of Military Organization in Modern Society," presented before the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, New York, August 1973; and Charles C. Moskos, Jr., particularly his article, "The American Dilemma in Uniform: Race in the Armed Forces," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, March 1973, pp. 94-106. Other references on this topic include the following: Leo Bugart, *Social Research and the Desegregation of the U.S. Army* (Chicago: Markham Press, 1969); Jonathan F. Borus, et al., "Racial Perceptions in the Army: an Approach," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 128, May 1972; Richard M. Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1969); Eli Ginzburg, "The Negro Soldier" in his *The Negro Potential* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956); Ulysses Lee, *The Employment of Negro Troops*, Special Studies on the United States Army in World War II by the Office of the Chief of Military History (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1966); David G. Mandelbaum, *Soldiers Groups and Negro Groups*

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(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1952); Charles C. Moskos, Jr., "Studies on the American Soldier: Continuities and Discontinuities in Social Research," Paper presented before the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, New York, August 1973; "Minority Groups in Military Organization," Roger W. Little, ed., *Handbook of Military Institutions* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1971); and *The American Enlisted Man* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1970); Lee Nichols, *Breakthrough on the Color Front* (New York: Random House, 1954); Alvin J. Scheinder, "The Emergence of Brother Me: Symbols of Solidarity Among Blacks in the Armed Forces," Paper presented before the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, New Orleans, La., August 1972; Richard J. Stillman II, *Integration of the Negro in the U.S. Armed Forces* (New York: Praeger, 1968); Samuel A. Stouffer, et al., *The American Soldier: Adjustment During Army Life* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1949), v. I; John A. Williams, *Captain Blackman* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1972); and Adam Yarmolinsky, "Military Service and Race," in his *The Military Establishment* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).

2. Moskos, "The American Dilemma in Uniform," p. 99.

3. Much of the material in this section of the paper derived from Nancy Goldman, "The Utilization of Women in the Military," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, March 1973, pp. 108-116.

4. Morris Janowitz and Roger Little, *Sociology and the Military Establishment* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1965), pp. 18-19.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.



There is a tendency to judge a race, a nation or any other distinct group by its least worthy members.

Eric Hoffer, The True Believer