



## ACQUISITION RESEARCH PROGRAM SPONSORED REPORT SERIES

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### **Overcoming Barriers: The Impact of Job Satisfaction on the Retention of Minority Officers**

March 2021

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**LT. Christopher G. Smith II, USN**

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Graduate School of Defense Management

**Naval Postgraduate School**

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Prepared for the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA 93943.



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## ABSTRACT

This thesis uses a mixed method approach to evaluate the impact of job satisfaction on the retention of minority officers in the Surface Warfare Officer community. In the context of this study, job satisfaction includes the following components: sense of affiliation, sense of inclusion, need to belong and perceived organizational support. Using these components, this thesis performs a comparative analysis of survey data from junior officers (O1 to O3) and thematic analysis of twelve interviews from senior officers (O-4 and above) to identify commonly perceived barriers to retaining a diverse workforce. The surveys are developed to measure individual job satisfaction, while the interviews have complementary questions to determine factors affecting retention decisions among various demographic groups. Our analysis identifies sense of affiliation and belonging as components of job satisfaction that remain unmet for minority officers in our sample. Based on these findings, our recommendation is to try to address these job satisfaction components by introducing soft leadership skills at milestone schools, leveraging affinity groups to improve mentorship opportunities and implementing strategies to hold the organization accountable. Although diversity and inclusion efforts have improved, there is still room to enhance the sense of equity throughout the force.



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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**LTJG Jude Akpunku** is a native of Imo State, Nigeria and a 2016 graduate of The United States Naval Academy where he started as a member of the football team and served as treasurer of the Midshipmen Black studies group. LTJG Akpunku commissioned with a Bachelor of Science in International Relations. He is on course to graduate from the Naval Postgraduate School in March 2021 earning a Master of Science in Manpower Systems Analysis and serving as the Vice President of student affairs.

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I have leaned on Philippians 1:6 throughout my life, thus I thank God for blessing Chris and me with the platform to produce a thesis that will contribute to academia. I thank my parents and aunt and uncle who raised me. I thank my siblings, cousins, and friends for always motivating me to be better. I thank my thesis partner, Chris, for his patience and willingness to always put in the extra hours. This thesis would not have been possible without the help of my mentor, Captain Janet Days. I thank her for her selfless leadership. I thank my thesis advisors, Dr. Simona Tick and Dr. Paul Lester, for the patience, wisdom, kindness, and understanding they have shown to me throughout my time at NPS. Lastly, I thank all of you who take the time to read it. This is an important subject: diversity management is an iterative process, which begins with dialogue.

—LT Jude Akpunku JR

To my wife, Saffire, thank you for supporting me throughout this master's program and sticking with and supporting me every step of the way regardless of what our time at NPS threw at us. To my parents, Chris and Jeanette, thank you for remaining steadfast in your faith in me and the man upstairs to help guide me through this program from near and afar. To our advisors, Dr. Lester and Dr. Tick, we could not have done this without your unwavering expertise, guidance, and support. Last, but certainly not least, to my thesis partner, Jude, thank you for keeping me on task and focused to make it to the finish line. I know that was not easy at times, but we definitely persevered and made it through.

Thank you for making this process as easy and enjoyable as possible. I look forward to sharing the experiences and lessons that I've learned here with those on my future assignments and for that I am greatly appreciative.

—Christopher G. Smith II, LT, SWO, USN



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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADM	Admiral
ADOC	Advanced Division Officer Course
BDOC	Basic Division Officer Course
CNO	Chief of Naval Operations
CNP	Chief of Naval Personnel
CNSF	Commander Naval Surface Force
CO	Commanding Officer
COE	Culture of Excellence
DH	Department Head
DON	Department of the Navy
I&D	Inclusion and Diversity
IRB	Institutional Review Board
MLDC	Military Leadership Diversity Commission
NJOC	Naval Junior Officer Counsel
NNOA	National Naval Officers Association
NPS	Naval Postgraduate School
OPTEMPO	operations tempo
ORS	Officer Retention Survey
POS	Perception of Organizational Support
SAPR	Sexual Assault Prevention and Response
SWO	Surface Warfare Officer
TF1N	Task Force One Navy
USN	United States Navy
XO	Executive Officer



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## BACKGROUND

The U.S. Navy has implemented three reforms to address race relations within its organization since 1970. The first initiative was led by the nineteenth Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), Admiral Elmo Zumwalt. He was met with much resistance, but he began racial integration efforts service-wide to improve diversity throughout the force based on the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (Naval History and Heritage Command, 1970). A later CNO, ADM Gary Roughead, reinvigorated inclusion and diversity committees based on guidance from Congress as part of the Military Leadership Diversity Commission in 2009 (Military Leadership Diversity Commission [MLDC], 2011). This effort provided a framework and context for how diversity was viewed by the outside world and ways to improve and readdress the influence lack of diversity brings to a large organization such as the Department of Defense. The last official service-wide initiative was placed in the hands of Task Force One Navy (TF1N) in 2020. This task force is organized to reevaluate policies and procedures that inspire division within the ranks and detract from mission readiness. Upon conclusion of their research the task force was assigned the responsibility to provide the CNO with the sentiments of where division still exists and a comprehensive report on how to improve those pitfalls.

## PURPOSE OF STUDY

Previous studies discovered that minority officers separated from the service because their social needs were not validated (Rodriguez Hernandez and Serna, 2020; Thomas and Dunklin, 2020). These social needs are what Maslow's 1954 research describes as the need to belong (1954). Maslow refers to social needs as the sense of friendship, family, and connection as components to be of job satisfaction. This thesis seeks to dig deeper into the components of job satisfaction among minority groups that lead to early attrition from the sea services. This analysis will focus on the following research questions.



### **Primary Research Question**

What factors affect job satisfaction among Junior Officers? How are these factors different, if at all, for minority and majority officers?

### **Secondary Research Questions**

What is the relationship between a need for affiliation and intention to attrite? How is this relation different, if at all, for minority and majority officers?

## **METHODOLOGY**

This thesis uses a mixed- method approach to evaluate the impact to job satisfaction on retention among junior officers. This analysis uses a validated survey tool and semi-structured interviews where a thematic analysis is performed to assess overall job satisfaction. This study explores job satisfaction as a component of required social needs that influence retention decisions. In this study, the sense of belonging, need for affiliation, and perceived organizational support are components of job satisfaction (Eisenberger et al., 2002; Leary, 2017; Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). We evaluate how these measures impact an individual's decision to continue or end their service.

This thesis used a six-week data collection window to deploy its survey tool and conduct interviews with units and personnel across the waterfront. The survey tool was used to evaluate the impact job satisfaction had on retention decisions of officers O1 to O3 on various platforms. Twenty junior officers responded to the survey call. While the number is small despite our best efforts in this pandemic year, the responses complement the interview data. The interviews were reserved for senior officers O4 and above, who had screened for or held command, to discuss their perception of what barriers exist for junior officers in underrepresented groups. We collected 12 interviews. Once all data were collected, the results were then analyzed to identify which barriers present the largest impediments to retaining a diverse workforce.

## **RESULTS**

The analysis of the survey data provided insight into how minority and majority officers experience the workplace differently. The interview results were broken down into



five common themes: Expectations of life at sea, Mentorship, “Culture of Excellence,” Representation at the next level and Homosocial reproduction. The first theme presents issues with the expectation and reality of the duties and responsibilities of surface warfare officers being unaligned. Mentorship was valued differently between majority and minority officers but communicated to hold the highest impact of the remaining themes. The “Culture of Excellence” was also viewed differently between the majority and minority officers. Representation at the next level was communicated to remove a glass ceiling for minority officers by invoking a sense of hope that upward mobility exists. Lastly, homosocial reproduction is a phenomenon where a preferred racial or gendered group benefits, by offering preferential treatment to those who think, and look like them (Elliott and Smith, 2004).

Minority officers exhibited a greater need for affiliation and inclusion when compared to majority officers. The survey results expressed that the affiliative and inclusion components of job satisfaction held the greatest impact on retention in the sea service.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Sentiments of unequal treatment were illustrated in our survey and interview results. Diversity management is an iterative process that must be sustained. Mentorship and representation at the next level serve as catalyst to retention. A rigid pipeline serves as an obstacle to achieving diversity at the next level. We find that, in our sample, expectation misalignment with reality of SWO lifestyle discouraged retention. One recommendation is for the Navy to consider utilizing the milestone training as a time to shape warfighters by introducing soft leadership skills that focus on empathy and emotional intelligence in hopes to combat unconscious bias. Another recommendation is leveraging affinity groups, such as National Naval Officers Association (NNOA) to take charge of mentorship and uplifting sailors by providing them with the knowledge and ingenuity needed to succeed in the fleet. The service has proven time and time again that they do not have the bandwidth to police and manage diversity efforts internally. Thus, we recommend that the sea service can work with other organizations to help implement I&D. The service can also model I&D efforts after the SAPR program which brings in a non-uniform member to facilitate. In addition, the sea service can reexamine the 12–12-5 initiative which targeted 12% African



Americans 12% Hispanic Americans and 5% Asian Americans at the accession source to be officers (Manning, 1997).

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. BACKGROUND

The issue of diversity and inclusion in the workforce has been debated in depth for decades because of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Department of Labor, 1964). This legislation mandated racial integration and formally ended segregation in all aspects, impacting the hiring and firing processes of government and government-funded organizations. In the present, the U.S. Navy (USN) has transitioned from an all-White male service and should now begin to reflect the composition of the American populace. The naval service employs people from all walks of life and views diversity as a strength it can draw from (U.S. Navy [USN], 2020). In efforts to make the service more inclusive, the USN has launched multiple initiatives to identify shortfalls and determine solutions to bridge gaps that enhance unit cohesion and widen the Navy's pool of talent.

The first initiative was assumed by Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Admiral Elmo Zumwalt on December 17, 1970. On that day, ADM Zumwalt codified these efforts to promote inclusion with a message to the fleet, known as Z-Gram 66 (Naval History and Heritage Command, 1970). During a time of national racial unrest, he acknowledged that those racial issues would bleed over into the ranks and that a plan needed to be in place to overcome that obstacle. He took these problems very seriously and implemented those concerns of division into his strategic goal to modernize a technologically archaic Navy and humanize policies and processes for all personnel under his charge (Naval History and Heritage Command, 1970). Z-Gram 66 changed the composition of the force as it opened all ratings and designators to men of underrepresented groups and acknowledged that there was a persistent problem within the ranks that required a solution to move toward the more diverse, inclusive, and representative force he envisioned. Acknowledging that attitudes and expectations in the United States had shifted, ADM Zumwalt established focus groups and implemented policy to ensure that equity was the standard rather than an afterthought (Naval History and Heritage Command, 1970). Understanding that diversity included not only race but gender as well, ADM Zumwalt also disseminated Z-Gram 119, which opened



various ratings and designators to women, starkly changing the landscape and workforce composition again within a short time.

The second initiative was prompted by the Military Leadership Diversity Commission (MLDC) in 2009. This initiative was led by Congress to take another look at how the services manage diversity within their respective departments. The Department of the Navy (DON) was led by CNO Admiral Gary Roughead, who made diversity and inclusion a service priority again. The MLDC provided the framework and context for how diversity was viewed by the outside entity, and each service was left to resolve the existing barriers to entry at all levels (Military Leadership Diversity Commission [MLDC], 2011). The expectation was for each service to provide a comprehensive plan on how they intended to accomplish the goal of improving diversity within their respective branches. The all-encompassing plan from each service had to address the remaining barriers to advancement, recruiting goals and strategies, culture, and integration of these efforts.

Recently, many anecdotal stories and analyses have been published that shed light on racism and sexism faced by service members, illustrating that the problem is more complex and that it must be addressed in a different way compared to past efforts. This press has called for the DON to launch its most current initiative—led by Task Force One Navy (TF1N)—which is designed to reevaluate current policies and practices that promote divisiveness throughout the force. Considering a recent period of racial unrest as a result of police brutality and residual racism throughout the country, CNO Admiral Michael Gilday created a focused task force to address remaining policies and processes that inspire division within the ranks and detract from mission readiness. TF1N has been directed to provide a comprehensive review of active policies within the USN and to capture the sentiments of how these policies impact Sailors.

## **B. ORGANIZATION OF STUDY**

This is a five-part thesis that captures factors of job satisfaction that affect the retention of minority officers in the sea services. Chapter I contains an introduction, explanation of purpose, and description of our research questions and methodology. Chapter II includes the literature review of available information on impacts to minority retention. In Chapter III, we describe our data and methodology used to perform this study.



Chapter IV includes our results received from our comparative statistical analysis of survey data and thematic analysis of the interview data collected. In Chapter V, we provide the conclusion and recommendations based on the findings from this study.

### **C. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to analyze the barriers to minority officer retention. Military leadership is focusing on improving diversity and inclusion among the officer corps, especially at the command level. The creation of TF1N by the chief of naval personnel (CNP) is intended to place an emphasis on diversification—ensuring that diversity among naval forces is representative of the larger society. The last notable attempt at diversifying the officer corps was the 12–12-5 initiative (Manning, 1997). The 12–12-5 initiative attempted to enhance representation among minorities in the officer corps. The 12–12-5 initiative required that of all officers commissioned in the year 2000, at least 12% had to be African American, 12% Hispanic, and 5% Asian (Manning, 1997). The policy noted that minorities were overrepresented in the enlisted ranks yet underrepresented in the officer corps (Manning, 1997).

Prior to the passing of this policy, there had been only a marginal increase in diversity. Military leaders hoped this policy would be the catalyst for true inclusion and diversity. The White House conducted a study to further analyze the status and projections for a diversified Navy.

In 1949, 0.9 percent of all officers were African American; today [1998], that proportion is 7.5 percent; in 1975, only five percent of active duty officers across all services were minorities, and today that proportion is 13 percent. At senior levels, over the past two decades there has been a fairly steady increase in, for example, the numbers of African Americans at the colonel/Navy captain rank; General and flag officer representation increased until roughly 1982, and has been essentially steady since then. (White House, n.d.)

The 12–12-5 initiative was to boost diversity within 20 to 25 years (White House, n.d.); however, the sea service is still a long way from reaching the initial goals. Figure 1 illustrates the status of diversity in the sea service as of 2018.



## Race and Ethnicity by Rank, 2018

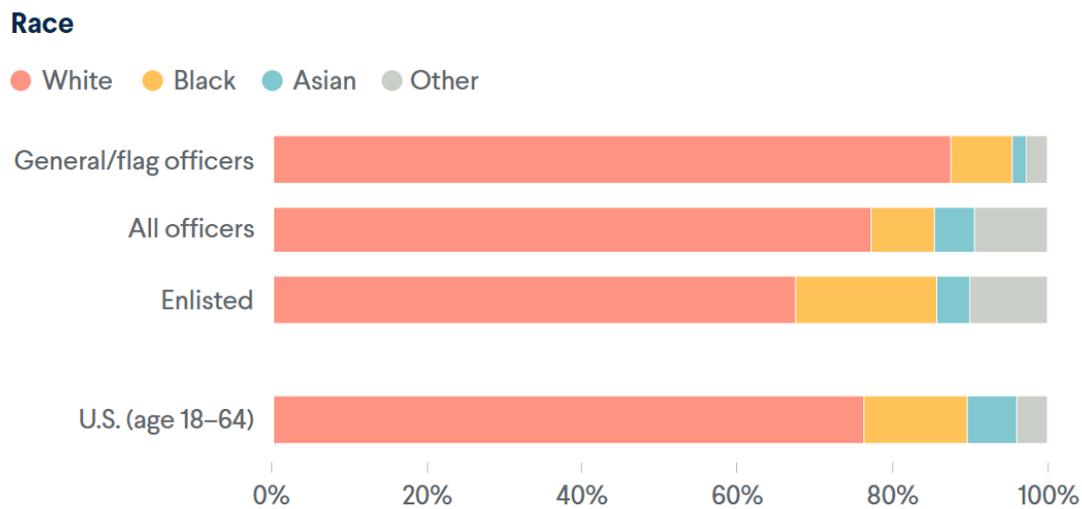


Figure 1. Race and Ethnicity by Rank, 2018.  
Source: CFR.org Editors (2020).

Minority representation is still anemic in the officer corps, but it is pronounced in the enlisted ranks. Figure 1 leads to the conclusion that recruitment cannot be the single agent for diversity; the sea service also focuses on attrition and retention among minority groups.

This thesis uses a validated survey tool and in-depth interviews to evaluate the relationship between inclusion, affiliation, perceived organizational support, and intention to attrite as components of job satisfaction. As minority officers, we believe these factors may influence stay-or-leave decisions by minority Sailors.

This thesis is significant to policymakers as it may lend insight to better understand the lack of minority leadership. Understanding and implementing policies that enhance diversity in the sea service aligns with the CNO-mandated Sailor 2025 program (White House, n.d.). This policy seeks to train and retain the Navy's top talent.

### D. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions in this thesis were formulated to understand the influence that job satisfaction has on minority officer retention and how that compares to majority



officers. A *minority officer* is defined as an officer who is not a White male. The second research question is posed to identify how the need for organizational support influences stay-or-leave decisions for officers and how this influence varies for majority and minority officers.

**1. Primary Research Question**

What factors affect job satisfaction among junior officers?

**2. Secondary Research Questions**

What is the effect of the relationship between a need for affiliation and the intention to attrite for minority officers?

Is this relationship like that of majority junior officers?

**E. SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY**

After performing a comprehensive review of available work relevant to our thesis, we conduct an analysis on how job satisfaction factors into retention decisions of junior officers. Previous studies used statistical models, surveys, and interviews to diagnose the issues for retention. In this thesis, we further explore the results of those studies more intimately in efforts to better guide policies and processes that enhance future retention efforts. This analysis uses validated survey tools and semi structured interviews to assess overall job satisfaction. This study explores job satisfaction as a component of required social needs that influence retention decisions. In this study, the sense of belonging, need for affiliation, and perceived organizational support are components of job satisfaction. We evaluate how these measures impact an individual's decision to continue or end their service.

This study is designed to examine the DON's officer corps measures of job satisfaction and assess the impact job satisfaction has on retention of personnel in underrepresented groups within the surface warfare officer community. This study uses a mixed method approach to further assess the barriers to retention of minority officers. This study's mixed method approach includes a comparative statistical analysis for survey data of junior officers (O-1 to O-3). We also perform a qualitative thematic analysis from



interview data of senior officers (O-4 and above) to connect perceptions and identify common barriers to retaining officers in underrepresented groups.



## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. INTRODUCTION

Barriers to minority officer retention in the sea services are debated more than studied. There is limited empirical research that is germane to the betterment of minority officer retention. On June 3, 2020, the CNO addressed the fleet and stated that diversity is the Navy's greatest strength (USN, 2020). The CNO called for an increase of naval forces, including the addition of 10,000 service members to the already diversified sea service (Eckstein, 2020). It is imperative to examine why minority officers attrite at a level significantly higher than their minority counterparts. The retention of minority officers is an important component and correlates to the retention of the Navy's enlisted sailors. In this literature review, we review academic studies that focus on retention of minority enlisted personnel; moreover, we focus on factors that influence their decision to stay or leave.

This literature review highlights research by Golan et al. (2010), who developed a bivariate probit model to quantify the disparity in promotion and retention rates between minority enlisted Sailors and their majority colleagues—asking and answering the following questions: Does the Navy treat various demographic groups unequally? Do the Navy's policies have an important effect on Sailor retention?

Additionally, research by Hernandez Rodriguez and Serna (2020) and Greene (2019) focused on the influence that peer effects and command leadership have on minority retention.

### B. U.S. NAVY PROMOTION AND RETENTION POLICY

Research by Golan et al. (2010) answered two important policy questions:

- Does the Navy treat various demographic groups unequally?
- Do the Navy's policies have an important effect on Sailor retention?  
(Golan et al., 2010)

Understanding that promotability often guides retention, the study used a model that factored promotability in retention. Golan et al. (2010) obtained a data set that covers enlisted Sailors (E3–E7) from January 1997 to May 2008 and tracks Sailors from the first



month they promote until they exit (promote or separate). To analyze a Sailor’s promotability and a Sailor’s decision to exit, authors Golan et al. combined two equations creating the bivariate probit model in Figure 2.

$$z_{11} = \beta_1'x_{11} + \varepsilon_1, \quad y_{11} = \text{sign}(z_{11}),$$

$$z_{12} = \beta_2'x_{12} + \gamma y_{11} + \varepsilon_2, \quad y_{12} = \text{sign}(z_{12})$$

$Z_{11}$  = latent variable related to whether the individual is promoted by the Navy.

$Z_{12}$  = latent variable for re-enlistment, and the errors are assumed to be distributed  $[\varepsilon_1, \varepsilon_2] \sim \text{BVN}(0,0,1,1,\rho)$ , where BVN is the bivariate normal distribution and  $\rho$  is the correlation coefficient between the two equations.

Figure 2. Bivariate Probit Model Utilized for Promotion and Retention by Race and Sex Study. Source: Golan et al. (2010).

The first equation estimates a Sailor’s promotability based on aptitude, which is codified by evaluations, awards, and promotion exam results. This is then valued against the Navy’s need for the Sailor. The second equation captures the Sailor’s decision to stay or exit the service upon being offered the promotion. In Figure 2,  $Y_{11}$  is a binary variable that equals 1 if the Sailor is promoted and 0 if not; the second equation  $Y_{12}$  equals 1 if the Sailor accepts the promotion. The study used several predictors such as the Armed Forces Qualification Test; level of education (separated by Sailors with only a high school diploma and Sailors with post-high school education); indicator variables that distinguish a Sailor’s duty status, partitioned by sea duty or shore duty; dummy variables for enlisted pay grades E-3 (which is the reference group), E-4, E-5, and E-6; dummy variables for race (i.e., Black, Hispanic, and other, with White as the reference group); and a dummy variable for female, with male as the reference group. The authors uniquely distinguish between war and peacetime by separating accessions pre- and post-9/11. Due to promotions being contingent upon a Sailor’s acceptance to be promoted, the authors excluded one-seventh of all observations. Figure 3 displays the bivariate probit and probit results separated by race, sex, and status (peace or war).



Variable	Bivariate Probit		Probit
	Promote	Retain	Promote and Retain
Black × E4	<b>-.1510</b>	<b>.5831</b>	<b>-.1694</b>
Hispanic × E4	<b>-.1927</b>	.3252	<b>-.2017</b>
Other × E4	<b>.0046</b>	<b>.4679</b>	-.0177
Female × E4	<b>-.2448</b>	-.1724	<b>-.1511</b>
Black × E5	-.0486	<b>.7216</b>	.1049
Hispanic × E5	<b>-.2564</b>	.3825	-.0957
Other × E5	-.0464	<b>.7212</b>	.0888
Female × E5	<b>-.2281</b>	<b>-.3139</b>	<b>-.2519</b>
Black × E6	-.0960	<b>.8399</b>	<b>.3224</b>
Hispanic × E6	<b>-.2498</b>	<b>.6189</b>	-.0177
Other × E6	-.1635	<b>.9129</b>	.0351
Female × E6	.0456	-.2875	<b>-.2249</b>
September 11, 2001	-.0357	.0458	<b>1.6997</b>
Peace time trend (before 9/11)	<b>-.1922</b>	.2386	-.1056
Peace trend squared	<b>.0301</b>	-.0422	<b>.0613</b>

Figure 3. Bivariate Probit Model Utilized for Promotion and Retention by Race and Sex Study. Source: Golan et al. (2010).

The study indicated that, on average, across all pay grades—regardless of war or peace—minority Sailors were less likely to be promoted compared to their majority counterparts. This finding was significant, as Figure 3 also showed that as minority Sailors ascended to higher ranks (E-6 and above) their promotability regressed compared to their majority counterparts, yet they were more likely to be retained at the same pay grade. This disparity in diversity is on par with our research as we attempt to identify why minority officers often remain stagnant at the O-3/O-4 level. Golan et al. (2010) expounded on this, stating that there is a disparity in diverse representation:

We have very clear-cut results concerning race. Despite the Navy’s elaborate controls to ensure fairness, the probability of promotion varies statistically and significantly across races and by sex. Blacks, Hispanics, and other races were less likely to be promoted and more likely to stay in the Navy than Whites. (pp. 25–26)

The predictions in Figure 4 represent pre- and post-9/11 promotion probabilities by pay grade and race. The authors accounted for the ongoing drawdown in the Middle East,



which is depicted by the reduction in coefficients. Across all pay grades and pre- and post-9/11, minority Sailors were less likely to promote than White Sailors.

	White	Black	Hispanic	Other	Male	Female
<b>Pre-9/11</b>						
<b>E4</b>	56.7	47.9	51.1	55.3	54.0	49.7
<b>E5</b>	37.6	33.7	31.9	37.3	36.0	34.0
<b>E6</b>	40.6	33.6	34.9	35.7	36.4	39.6
<b>Post-9/11</b>						
<b>E4</b>	45.9	37.4	37.0	40.0	43.1	37.1
<b>E5</b>	29.4	23.2	20.7	24.9	28.2	19.5
<b>E6</b>	29.9	21.6	20.2	24.8	25.5	26.3

Figure 4. Promotion Probabilities by Pay Grade, Race, and Sex.  
Source: Golan et al. (2010).

Golan et al. (2010) discovered that race and gender play a significant role in both promotion and retention. It was revealed that as rank increases, the margin for promotion of non-White and female Sailors diminishes, albeit the study finds that minorities chose to stay in longer than exit when given the option. Golan et al. give three potential reasons that could justify the disparities in promotion and retention between majority and minority Sailors.

First, demographic groups could be treated differently by the Navy in the sense that people with the same characteristics but who differ in terms of race or sex have different probabilities (i.e., the coefficients on individuals' characteristics are the same across demographic groups). Second, these groups could have different mixes of observed characteristics such as education and experience. Third, there could be differences in unobserved characteristics across the demographic groups (Golan et al., 2010, p. 25).

Golan et al. (2010) uniquely incorporated race, gender, economic condition, and current Navy policy in their model to account for stay-or-leave results of enlisted personnel. This study is useful to our research as it analyzed whether minority Sailors were treated differently than their majority counterparts—by using an if-then statement modeled in two separate equations. This study highlights the importance of considering race and gender in promotion and retention studies. The model illustrates the lack of uniformity in



promotion and retention between minority and majority Sailors. The disparity within the higher (E-6) ranks is significant and can be parallel to that of the officer corps.

### **C. PEER AND ROLE MODEL EFFECTS**

Hernandez Rodriguez and Serna's (2020) model observed, evaluated, and simulated effects with increases to selected demographics—specifically female, Black, and Hispanic—to guide their focus. These scholars discussed the notable effects on minority retention when there is a significant increase in representation of peers, role models, and senior leaders. Hernandez Rodriguez and Serna (2020) discovered evidence that retention of Black and Hispanic officers was positively impacted by peers who represented them demographically as role models and senior leaders. After observing the effects of same-dimension role models on retention, there was clear evidence that a positive interaction exists for Black and Hispanic officers. However, when evaluating female officers' retention, they did not find similar evidence, which suggests that their findings possibly suffered from measurement error due to a limited number of that demographic within the sample (Hernandez Rodriguez & Serna, 2020). These findings also suggest that either a different approach or more information about the subjects is required to better fit future models and correct the lack of same-dimension effects on female officers. Their results suggest that retention of officers and Sailors has racial rather than gender overtones. These findings expanded the understanding of how same-dimension peers and role models affect retention decisions throughout the force.

### **D. EVALUATING ESTIMATORS**

While researching this topic, we found the literature to be filled with various studies examining leadership and peer effects on retention that were measured through various statistical models. In efforts to predict effects on retention, these models provide a snapshot of what impacts exist in managing diversity throughout the force but provide limited insight into the true effects. Greene (2019), Hernandez Rodriguez and Serna (2020), and Terranova (2019) relied on statistical methods that used surface-level descriptive data acquired from large databases to run models that examine leadership and peer effects on retention. These models described the effects that race, gender, and representative leadership have on



retention. In doing so, their findings revealed a theme that same-dimension leadership plays a positive role in the retention of officers from underrepresented groups.

The studies performed by Greene (2019) and Hernandez Rodriguez and Serna (2020) revealed consistent results that retention of Sailors was strongly correlated when peers and leadership belonged to the same minority demographic of the evaluated Sailor. On the other hand, Terranova's (2019) model depicted that leadership's demographic makeup showed little significance and that demographics proved an insignificant factor when determining individual retention. Researchers evaluated their studies to limit omitted variables, reverse causality, and self-selection biases during execution (Arkes, 2019). These biases were mitigated in the ship assignment process because Sailors do not pick their leadership or vessel. In each study, the authors also recognized their information and sample size limitations. Not having enough data about the Sailors limits what the researcher knows about their subjects to build the best fit model. The other limiting factor stems from the effect that explanatory variables have within the model. The sample sizes were also acknowledged to pose potential issues when measuring effects. Hernandez Rodriguez and Serna's study recognized the presence of an insufficient sample size due to a lack of variation within Sailors' responses on individual platforms. Recognizing these trends led Hernandez Rodriguez and Serna to believe that the model impacted the true effects of variables, which could result in insignificant coefficients within their models.

The models developed by Greene (2019) and Hernandez Rodriguez and Serna (2020) highlight the scope of the problem and provide an opportunity for refinement of future models. Both sets of researchers used linear probability models to predict human behavior. These models implemented controls for individual units, demographics, and fiscal years to limit the introduction of bias. Using these controls allowed for valid comparisons of individuals on similar platforms and ratings to evaluate the peer and role model effects.

When used to describe the world around us, quantitative models require more data from respondents to create additional explanatory variables to these retention decision models while performing analysis on historical trends. In doing so, the addition of more variables to these models runs the risk of their being overfit and providing explanatory



variables with insignificant values. To develop an understanding of what impacts these decisions have on individuals, qualitative and quantitative mixed method approaches bridge these gaps. Few researchers use these methods because they require a great deal of resources from the individuals and use a different aspect to evaluate how subjects are affected by policy, peers, and leadership. This endeavor was discussed and explored by Thomas and Dunklin (2020) in efforts to analyze and evaluate what affects retention of minority Sailors and officers in the sea services. Their study generated both qualitative and quantitative estimators that would require further research to invalidate statistically insignificant determinants discovered in previous studies.

## **E. SOCIAL NEEDS**

The study performed by Thomas and Dunklin (2020) sought to identify and understand the biggest influences on enlisted Sailors' decision to stay or exit. Their research was built on Herzberg's (1959) two-factor theory and Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs. The analysis performed on first-term enlisted members focused on what Herzberg described as hygiene factors and motivators and what Maslow described as deficiency needs in efforts to identify what discourages retention within underrepresented groups.

Frederick Herzberg's (1959) two-factor theory breaks down into two levels, which are labeled as hygiene factors and motivators. Hygiene factors are external elements that contribute to members of an organization being unsatisfied. Hygiene factors relate to interpersonal relationships, company policies, supervision, salary, and working conditions (McLeod, 2018). These measures are not controlled by personnel and are given by the organization. For example, Sailors do not get to choose their workplace environment when they select orders. They have no control over who their peers, role models, or supervisors will be at their next command. Motivators, on the other hand, are factors that are internal in nature and are viewed as aspects of job satisfaction that are controlled by the individual. Motivators are expressed as achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement, and the work itself (McLeod, 2018). Relating this back to Thomas and Dunklin's (2020) study, these aspects are influenced by the individual Sailor's effort and dedication to their job and the organization.



Maslow's (1954) theory for the hierarchy of needs is broken down into five categories that start with the lowest level, physiological, followed by safety, belonging, esteem, and the highest level, self-actualization. The five categories are then broken down into deficiency and growth needs. Deficiency needs are fluid, meaning that an individual can move between stages when one of those needs is not met. Thomas and Dunklin's (2020) study focused on what Maslow referred to as the deficiency needs, which are the physiological, safety, belonging, and esteem needs. Physiological needs relate to survival: receiving adequate clothing, exercise, food, sleep, and water (Maslow, 1954). Safety needs revolve around the individual being able to have a stable environment, both physiologically and physically (Maslow, 1954). Sense of belonging is where individuals feel a sense of social belonging through friendship, trust, and general acceptance by others. Esteem needs have two parts and are realized as self-esteem and respect from others (Maslow, 1954). Self-esteem is sustained through dignity and achievement, whereas respect from others is realized through a person's status or prestige within their organization (Maslow, 1954).

Using these two frameworks, Thomas and Dunklin (2020) performed surveys and interviews of enlisted personnel on four USN ships as their data collection method. Over the course of their research, Thomas and Dunklin discovered that minority Sailors had negative experiences pertaining to social needs. Their need for affiliation was not met, which prompted them to lean toward attrition. Compared to their majority counterparts, minority Sailors experienced negative coefficients regarding need for affiliation. The study discovered this disparity and recommended a change in policy that closes this gap.

## **F. SUMMARY**

While a significant portion of research concerning promotion and retention of minority military personnel has proven fruitful to diversifying enlisted ranks, there has not been as much effort in understanding the officer corps in the same depth. Evaluation of Herzberg's two-factor theory and Maslow's hierarchy of needs has created the foundation on which we pursue our research. Previous research has focused on enlisted personnel and illustrated that same-dimension peers, role models, and leadership have a significant impact on promotion and retention of individuals in underrepresented groups (Greene 2019; Hernandez Rodriguez & Serna, 2020; Thomas & Dunklin, 2020). The literature



surrounding the impacts of these factors is in its infancy for the officer community; furthermore, it will serve as the guide for how we explore the impact that need for affiliation, sense of inclusion, and perceived organizational support have within the officer corps.



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### III. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

#### A. INTRODUCTION AND DATA DESCRIPTION

In this study, we define *minority* as other than White male. This definition allows us to closely align our findings with the newly formed Task Force One (TF1N) (2020). This definition allows us to closely align our findings with the newly formed Task Force One (TF1N) (Kime, 2020).

Thomas and Dunklin's (2020) study used Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory and Herzberg's two-factor theory to evaluate reasons for attrition of personnel within demographically underrepresented groups, where it was determined that social needs were left unmet. Thomas and Dunklin (2020) used their findings as a reference point and evaluated social needs as a component of job satisfaction. Job satisfaction was then broken down into three components to be evaluated: (a) need for affiliation, (b) sense of inclusion, and (3) perceived organizational support.

In this study, we combined three valid survey tools to analyze the effects that different components of job satisfaction have on the retention of minority officers. Once we received 25% of survey responses from the Officer Retention Survey (ORS) tool, we conducted interviews with command-level officers with questions that are connected to the areas that the survey tool examines (see Appendix A). The survey tool and interview questions were developed to provide insight on which social needs of officers are left unmet.

This study defines *command-level officers* as all officers who have held command; this includes sea- and shore-based command. We interviewed command-level officers, both minority and majority, to potentially shed light on how organizational support influences intention to attrite. The importance of interviewing command-level officers is to gain insight from officers who have potentially overcome barriers to reach a significant milestone within the service. The interviews were conducted with the intent to gain insight into whether the officers had barriers to overcome, what those barriers were, and how they overcame those potential barriers. The most important analysis from the interviews could potentially be the difference organizational support has on minority compared to majority



officers' intention to attrite. Interviewing command-level officers helped us make recommendations as to what the sea service should do to mitigate barriers that may potentially exist within the officer corps. The command-level officer offers a different perspective than junior officers, who could potentially be making retention decisions based on their first tour.

## **B. SAMPLE CRITERIA**

This study surveys and interviews personnel who fall in the line of ships' company. This includes:

- 1110: Surface Warfare Officers
- 1160: Student Surface Warfare Officers
- 1160X: Student Surface Warfare Officers
- 13XX: Naval Aviator
- 1810: Cryptologic Warfare Officer
- 1820: Information Professional Officer
- 2100: Medical Corps
- 2200: Dental Officers
- 3100: Supply Officers

This thesis excludes chief warrant officers and limited duty officers; the exclusion is not because they do not have important insights but because their journey to a commission and their retention factors are very different than the bulk of the officer corps who are the focus of this study. We also wanted to receive insights from officers who have held command to get a more senior perspective. We believe that our results from both levels of data collection—junior officers and command—will provide a deeper understanding of the intangibles that could help leaders better manage, influence, and retain quality officers of all races during and after their initial tours.

## **C. SURVEY DATA**

Data in this study were collected using the LimeSurvey tool, and all collected responses came from active-duty junior officer personnel onboard USN surface ships. This study used the ORS to measure which components of job satisfaction affect retention. The ORS is comprised of the following survey scales: Need to Belong scale (Leary, 2017), the



Leader–Member Exchange 7 scale (LMX-7; Wayne et al., 1997), and the Perceived Organizational Support scale (Eisenberg, 1984). Each of these scales uses the Likert scale to quantitatively measure qualitative responses. The Need to Belong scale measures sense of inclusion, the LMX-7 scale measures an individual’s need for affiliation, and the Perceived Organizational Support scale measures the perceived support received by an individual within a given group or organization.

This ORS utilized a 5-point scale to capture the impact that each individual category has on overall job satisfaction. The ORS used a rating scale where:

- 1 denotes that the subject *Strongly Disagrees* with the statement
- 2 denotes that the subject *Moderately Disagrees* with the statement
- 3 denotes that the subject *Neither Agrees nor Disagrees* with the statement
- 4 denotes that the subject *Moderately Agrees* with the statement
- 5 denotes that the subject *Strongly Agrees* with the statement

The ORS was comprised of 39 questions that were divided into the following question groups to evaluate components of job satisfaction independently and collectively: demographic, affiliation and inclusion, perceived organizational support, sense of belonging to the military, and retention. Each question group was further categorized to evaluate each scale independently. The OSR coded each scale independently to measure the individual effects that each component of job satisfaction has on retention. The subcategorization of the survey tool led to the following coding structure to measure the effects each question group has on retention:

- Demographic (DEMO)
- Need to Belong (NTB)
- Need for Affiliation (LMX7)
- Perceived Organizational Support (POS)
- Sense of Belonging (MIL-BELONG)
- Retention (RETENTION)

The answers within these categories provide an insightful snapshot of current feelings toward diversity and inclusion within the fleet. The samples’ responses also provide an individual assessment of each component of job satisfaction. All survey data results are discussed further in Chapter IV of this thesis.



## D. INTERVIEW DATA

Interview data was collected from command-screened officers across the waterfront. This study used a semi-structured interview process for command-level officers to assess their perception of what barriers exist for minority junior officers. The interview tool used in this study is designed to connect the perceptions of junior officers with those of senior officers to assess the overall impact these factors have on retention within the sea services. The interview data were analyzed for themes that reflected the measures from the survey data. The thematic analysis was categorized in the following coding structure:

- **need for affiliation:** green
- **sense of inclusion:** yellow
- **perceived organizational support:** red

The interview data collected in this study were used to bridge the perceptions of junior officers with those of senior officers to assess what perceived obstacles exist between majority and minority junior officers.

## E. APPLICATION OF THEORIES

Since we are looking at social constructs more closely than the previous studies, Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory and Herzberg's two-factor theory have critical application to how we view the responses to our study. In reference to the components of job satisfaction in this study, we took a closer look at what social needs are being left unmet and expound upon Thomas and Dunklin's (2020) research when assessing the officer community.

In this study, Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory refers to a five-stage system where different individual needs must be met to move onto a higher level of satisfaction, as indicated in Figure 5.



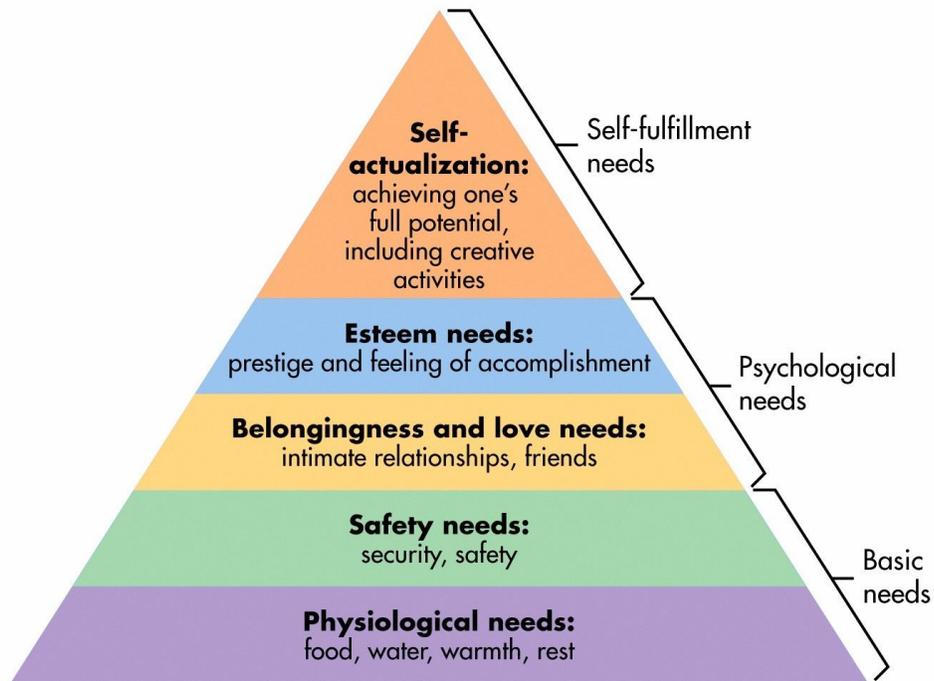


Figure 5. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory.  
Source: Mcleod (2018).

The first four stages are labeled as deficiency needs. These needs are dynamic and can be filled or unfulfilled simultaneously. The first level of basic needs are physiological needs, which relate to an individual having sufficient access to food, water, sleep, and so on. Safety needs relate to an individual feeling safe in their environment, whether that be at home or work. Social needs include sense of belonging, social interactions, and intimacy. Self-esteem needs relate to self-confidence and how individuals view themselves and how others view them. Each of these stages must be filled to achieve the highest individual need of self-actualization, where the individual is comfortable with all aspects of their life and has achieved overall satisfaction.

In the context of this study, we assume that officers' basic physiological and safety needs are met and focus on officers' social needs, much like Thomas and Dunklin (2020). Previous findings have led us to believe that this need is critical to organizational fulfillment. This thesis views social needs as the need for affiliation, a sense of inclusion, and the perception of organizational support to determine which aspect of social needs or job satisfaction has the biggest influence on an individual's decision to remain in or leave the service. This theory serves as the primary focus for evaluating the impact

these components of job satisfaction have on stay-or-leave decisions among minority junior officers.

The ORS focuses on the three components of job satisfaction: need for affiliation, sense of inclusion, and perceived organizational support. This survey addresses these aspects, using the scales mentioned in Section C to evaluate which aspect has the greatest influence on retention decisions. The LMX-7 scale found in Appendix B measures individual need for affiliation. The Need to Belong scale measures individual sense of inclusion, and the Perceived Organizational Support scale measures individual perceptions. Consolidating these scales into one survey allowed for a comprehensive view of impacts on retention.

Herzberg’s two-factor theory enables us to look at external and internal factors that influence stay-or-leave decisions. This theory also addresses two categories of job satisfaction: motivators and hygiene factors. Motivators are internal factors that are tied to individual motivation, such as achievement, recognition, and responsibility; hygiene factors serve as points that enhance or detract from job satisfaction—such as interpersonal relations, organizational policy, and administration or management, for example—and can be seen in Figure 6. This theory allowed us to perform thematic analysis for the interviews conducted in this study to determine how those aspects of job satisfaction impact the retention of minority junior officers.

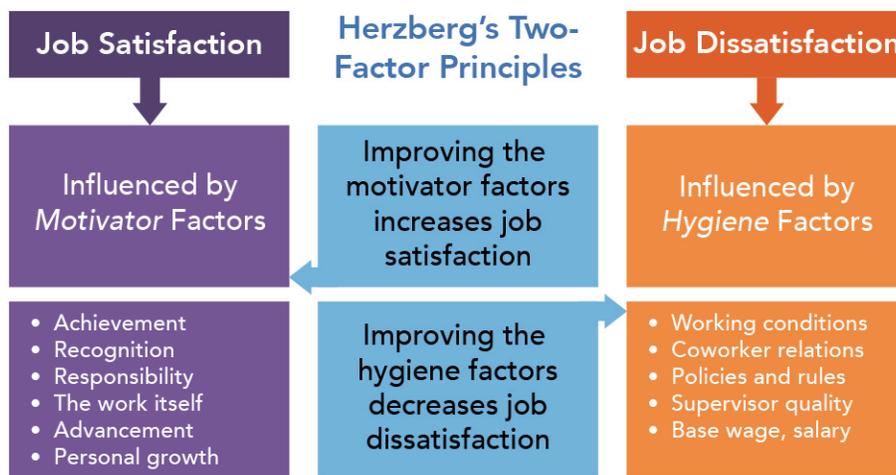


Figure 6. Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory. Source: Herzberg (1959).



## **F. CONCLUSION**

We received support from over 20 units to participate and provide data that can be analyzed across platforms. This study performs a comparative statistical analysis using survey data and performing thematic analysis of interview data. The data collected will be used to examine the effects that environment, organizational support, sense of affiliation, and sense of inclusion have on retention using interview and survey methods. In the following chapter, we examine in more depth which common themes exist between junior officers and senior officers to describe the effects that various components of job satisfaction have on retention.



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## IV. RESULTS

This section serves to produce the results, and limitations of the surveys. This section is organized according to survey results, followed by our interview results.

### A. INTRODUCTION AND COLLECTION METHOD OF THE SURVEYS

Understanding that the emergence of the coronavirus would restrict our study, we utilized LimeSurvey to complete data collection. To satisfy Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol, we were tasked with contacting type commanders afloat and ashore to ensure we had the appropriate permissions to survey active-duty officers—leading us to contact with Commander, Naval Surface Force Pacific, who is dual hatted as Commander, Naval Surface Force (CNSF). CNSF disseminated our survey requests to over 20 U.S. Navy ships, reaching over 200 junior officers. We understood there would be challenges due to not being able to administer the surveys in person, but with the assistance of the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) public affairs officer and the NPS media maintainers, we hoped to bridge interpersonal gaps that the lack of an in-person visit would create. We successfully created a YouTube video describing the importance of our study, which was stored on the NPS YouTube webpage and disseminated to the waterfront by CNSF. Our sample population for this thesis was 200 survey respondents; due to coronavirus restrictions and the increasing operations tempo (OPTEMPO) of surface vessels, we were able to meet 10% of our desired target, or 20 respondents. Table 1 illustrates the demographics of the officers who completed their surveys.

With the demographic data and our survey results, we were able to categorize and analyze each demographic's perception on affiliation and inclusion, perceived organizational support, sense of belonging, and retention and how they differ from and compare to the majority's perception. For each subcategory, we utilize a Likert scale to quantitatively measure qualitative responses:

- 1 denotes that the subject *Strongly Disagrees* with the statement
- 2 denotes that the subject *Moderately Disagrees* with the statement
- 3 denotes that the subject *Neither Agrees Nor Disagrees* with the statement



- 4 denotes that the subject *Moderately Agrees* with the statement
- 5 denotes that the subject *Strongly Agrees* with the statement.

### 1. Demographic Information of Sailors Who Participated in Our Study

We completed 20 of 200 potential junior officer surveys. The table below illustrates the sample size of officers who participated in this study. The low response rate could be indicative of a higher OPTEMPO that precluded officers from taking part in this study or indicative of other externalities that were not considered.

Table 1. Demographic Information of the Sailors Who Participated in Our Study

Demographics	Sample
Gender	Female: 6 Male: 14
Rank	Ensign: 7 Lieutenant Junior Grade: 5 Lieutenant: 8
Community	1110 (SWO): 11 1160 (P-SWO): 6 13XX (Aviator): 1 Not Completed or Not Displayed: 3
Race	African-American/Black: 4 Asian: 3 Caucasian/White: 10 Hispanic/Latino: 3 Not Completed or Not Displayed: 2

### 2. Affiliation and Inclusion Data

This section was created utilizing Graen and Uhl-Bien’s (1995) LMX-7 theory and Baumeister and Leary’s (1995) theory of the Need to Belong:



A hypothesized need to form and maintain strong, stable interpersonal relationships is evaluated in light of the empirical literature. The need is for frequent, nonaversive interactions within an ongoing relational bond. Consistent with the belongingness hypothesis, people form social attachments readily under most conditions and resist the dissolution of existing bonds. (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 497)

The questions in this section measure the respondents' sense of belonging within the sea services. These questions are succinctly presented to maximize the respondents' willingness to be transparent.

For this subcategory, we perform a comparative analysis on the minority against the majority's perception on need for affiliation and need for inclusion. (As was already mentioned, the Need to Belong portion of the ORS measured the respondent's sense of inclusion, and the LMX-7 measured the need for affiliation.) Figures 7 and 8 illustrate side-by-side comparison of aggregate perception of affiliation and inclusion.

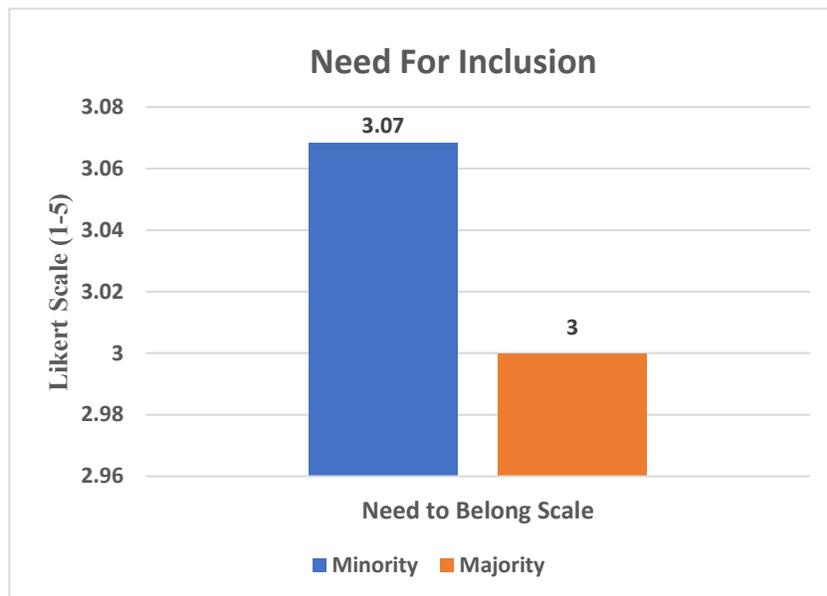


Figure 7. Need for Inclusion

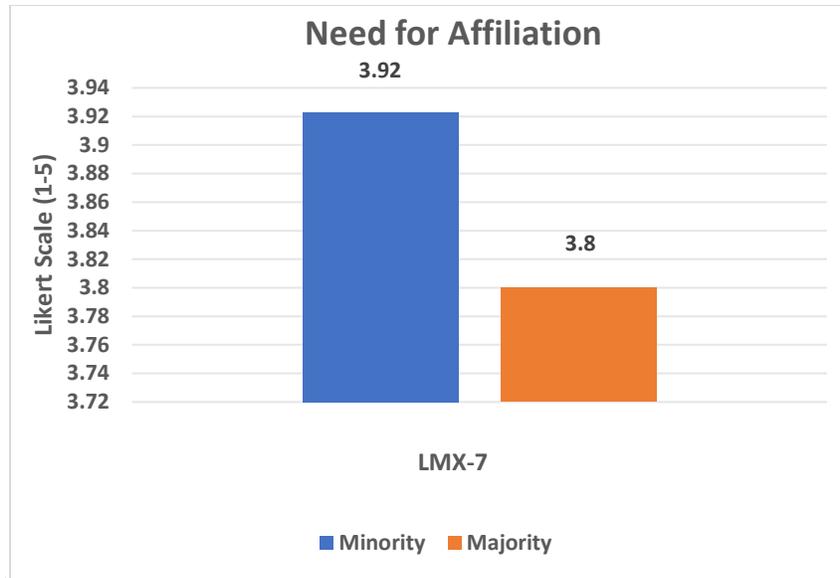


Figure 8. Need for Affiliation.

Figures 7 and 8 show that, in comparison with their majority counterparts, minority officers have a more profound need for affiliation and inclusion. This gives insight to our initial question: *For minority officers, what is the effect of the relationship between a need for affiliation and intention to attrite? Is this relationship like that of majority junior officers?* The responses from this section of the ORS illustrate that minority officers have a greater need for affiliation and inclusion.

### 3. Perceived Organizational Support

This section of the survey was developed using Robert Eisenberger's (2002) Perceived Organization Support Scale, which measures the respondents' feelings regarding organizational support. For this subcategory, we performed a comparative analysis on the minority against the majority's perception of organizational support. Figure 9 illustrates the side-by-side comparison of aggregate perception on organizational support.



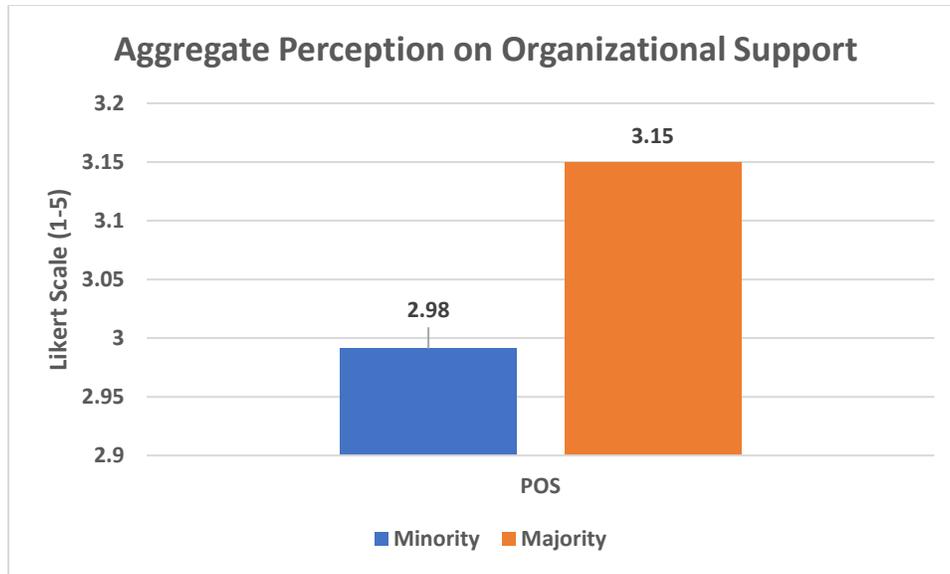


Figure 9. Aggregate Perception on Organizational Support

Among surveyed officers, the respondents who are of majority background felt a greater sense of organizational support. This analysis illustrates that safety needs among majority officers are adequately met, in comparison with minority junior officers—whose needs are not being met to the same degree. This analysis could be attributed to positive command leadership and a relaxed command OPTEMPO. This also sheds light on our question, *what factors affect job satisfaction among junior officers?* We observe that safety and security needs influence minority officers on a more significant level than their majority counterparts.

#### 4. Sense of Belonging in the Military

This section of the survey was derived utilizing key questions that take an in-depth approach to sense of belonging within the military. The questions were formulated with transparency in mind; thus, we ensured the word *military* was included in all of them.

For this subcategory, we performed a comparative analysis of the minority against the majority’s perception on sense of belonging. Figure 10 illustrates a side-by-side comparison of aggregate perception on sense of belonging.



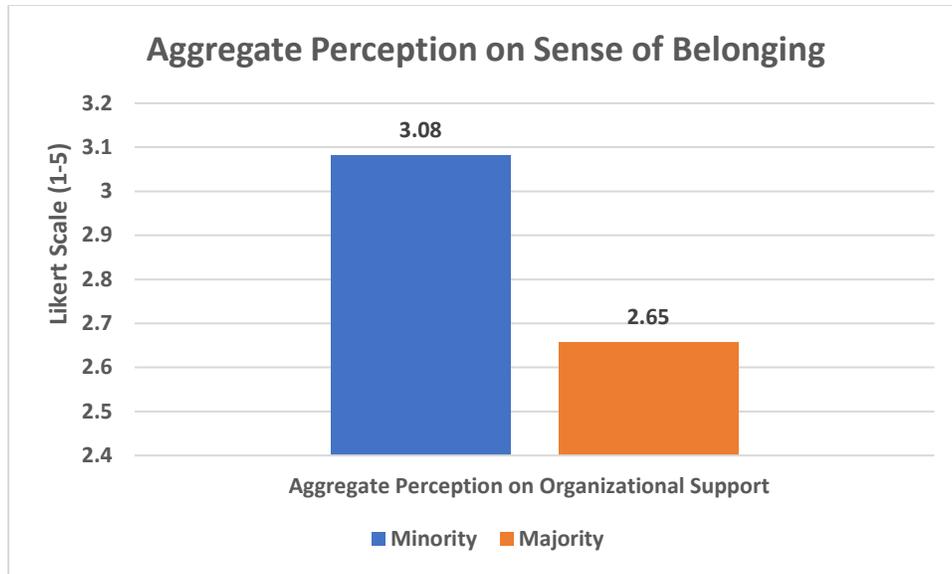


Figure 10. Aggregate Perception on Sense of Belonging

Among the respondents, minority officers placed a higher premium on sense of belonging in comparison with the majority. This illustrates that minority officers have greater social needs in the form of peer support, professional mentorship, personal mentorship, and overall camaraderie (Thomas & Dunklin, 2020).

## 5. Retention

This section summarizes the survey questions that examined the respondents' intention to attrite and interpolating factors that may influence individuals' stay-or-leave decisions. Figure 11 illustrates survey respondent's intention to stay in the sea service.

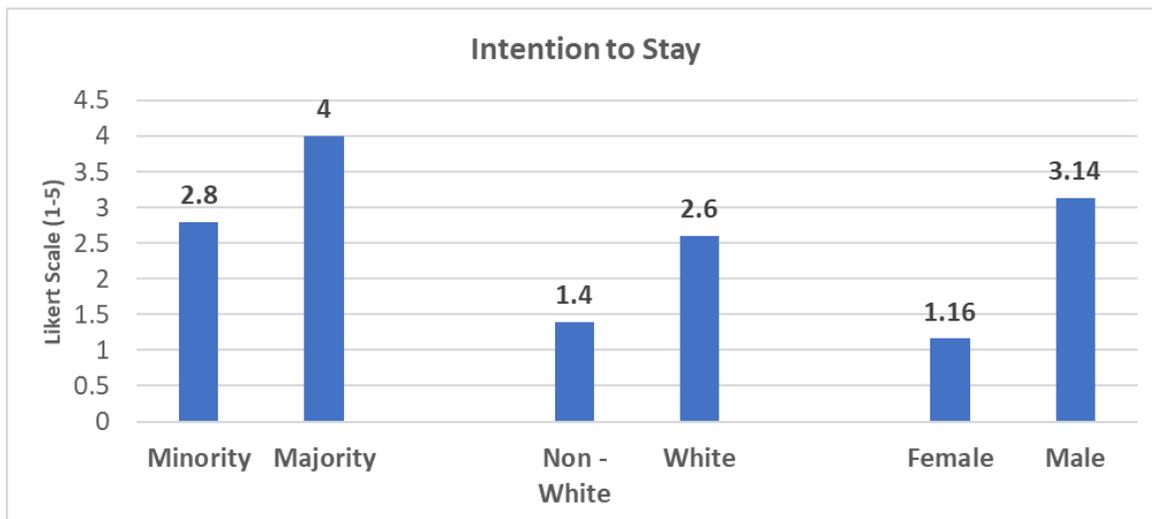


Figure 11. Intention to Stay



## **6. Conclusion**

With the passage of the Women’s Armed Services Act on June 12, 1948, persons of color and women can serve on active duty in the Navy—yet data still illustrates their dissatisfaction with their treatment in the service. This could suggest that the Navy still does not understand how to manage a diverse workforce. Data from the junior officer survey determined that, in comparison to their majority counterparts, minority officers place a higher premium on affiliation and inclusion, perceived organizational support, and sense of belonging. These gaps shed additional light on the importance of developing policies that will improve job satisfaction within the minority community.

### **B. INTERVIEW RESULTS**

The results in this section are provided to connect the perception of the junior officer with that of senior officers responsible for evaluating personnel in the O-1 to O-3 pay grades. The survey results indicated that disparities continue to exist among minority and majority officers with respect to what social needs are being met adequately in three distinct categories, which were the individual sense of belonging, affiliation and inclusion, and perceived organizational support. The survey questions with the most polarized results were in the following question groups: affiliation and inclusion, perceived organizational support, sense of belonging, and retention. Since the results brought forth such stark differences, we used that feedback to analyze the results of the junior officers and compared them to those provided by the senior officers. Using the individual interviews of the senior officers allowed us to connect the experiences of the past with those of the present. Discussing the concepts of inclusion and diversity was beneficial to further our understanding of how policies and behaviors have changed over time.

#### **1. Interview Methodology**

The semi-structured interview recruitment process was initiated through a message from CNSF to the commanding officers (COs) across the waterfront. The message sent by CNSF was generated by the research team to solicit participation for this study. COs and executive officers (XOs) were the only members who could volunteer their personnel to participate. Using this method, the sample taking the survey was a different sample than



the interview sample. The ORS evaluated the sentiments that junior officers had toward our measures of diversity and inclusion, and the interview sample included only senior officers. We garnered interest from 21 units for junior officer participation in the ORS, and 12 senior officers volunteered to take part in an interview. COs and XOs then served as conduits for encouraging participation of junior officers for the ORS, and then the senior officers coordinated with the NPS research team for a separate meeting to conduct their interview.

The interview questions were not given to personnel ahead of the meeting in an effort to receive the most candid responses regarding diversity and inclusion. The interview questions were designed in a way that allowed responses to be connected with the valid survey scales used in the ORS. This qualitative method was employed to connect recurring themes with the results of the ORS to analyze the perceptions of junior and senior officers on the evaluated components of job satisfaction. Throughout the 12 interviews performed, we discovered the following themes: mentorship, lifestyle adjustment periods, developing a culture of excellence, representation at the next level, and homosocial reproduction. These themes are significant because they indicate various areas of improvement within the Surface Warfare Officer (SWO) community to diminish barriers presented to junior officers.

## **2. Demographic Data**

We completed 12 of our desired goal of 20 interviews for this study. Tables 2 and 3 give a breakdown of the sample's demographics. The demographics of the sample used in this study are overrepresented in the minority categories. As a result, the appeal of this study clearly garnered more support from minority officers to support interviews. The sample size could also be reflective of officers interested in and committed to improving racial and gender representation throughout the ranks and enhance the sense of inclusion.



Table 2. Overall Interview Sample Demographic

Demographics	Sample
Gender	Female: 4 Male: 8
Rank	Commander: 10 Captain: 2
Race	African American/Black: 5 Caucasian/White: 7

Table 3. Interview Sample Race and Gender Demographics

Race	Male	Female
African American/Black	3	2
Caucasian/White	5	2

### 3. Themes

In this section, we present the findings of the semi-structured interviews. The purpose of performing the interviews was to gather additional insight from officers who have experience and are now responsible for the well-being of the survey population in this study. These interviews provided descriptions of barriers to retention as well as recommendations on how to improve the current climate within the SWO corps, which will be discussed in the following section of this thesis.

Listed below are five themes that were identified from analyzing the interview transcripts. These themes highlight the insight gathered on what impacts retention of junior officers in relation to social need deficiencies throughout the SWO community:

- Theme 1: Lifestyle Adjustment Period
- Theme 2: Mentorship (Affiliation and Inclusion)
- Theme 3: “Culture of Excellence” (Retention)
- Theme 4: Representation at the Next Level (Sense of Belonging)
- Theme 5: Homosocial Reproduction (Perceived Organization)



*a. Theme 1: Lifestyle Adjustment Period*

All respondents addressed the SWO lifestyle as the barrier to retention with the greatest impact on a junior officer's desire to continue their service. All respondents addressed how first tour experiences imprint on junior personnel and mold their view of the organization as a whole. This view is dictated by the rigid nature of how individuals progress through the SWO training and milestone pipelines. First tour officers will become supervisors to the smallest organization on board the ship, a division. Then they will move on to becoming department heads (DHs) after completing two division officer tours and then on to subsequent XO and CO billets for their future job on board a ship.

Respondents reported that the necessity to hold a particular milestone job such as DH, XO, and CO is incredibly daunting when there are few alternatives offered to upcoming SWOs. This rigidity in promoting through the ranks highlights discrepancies between the expectation and reality of SWO career options. The senior officers relayed that they felt junior officers are not adequately prepared to understand the time commitment required to run a successful division or to run a ship. Newly commissioned officers experience an adjustment period during which they may enter an environment where they may either thrive or falter. Depending on commissioning source, the emphasis on what is expected of an SWO may or may not meet the reality they face once they reach their first ship. It was observed that the adjustment period impacted majority and minority officers similarly. Although addressed in the same line of questions, the intersectionality of racial and gender biases was treated separately from the issue of adjusting to ship life.

Lastly, respondents highlighted the importance of the individual's job fit. The personal job fit of being an SWO presents a burden on junior officers. Senior officers expressed that SWO life is personality driven, and junior officers who exhibit a higher motivation to adapt to the demanding lifestyle of ship life than those who do not may be better fit into other designators and are observed to have different experiences on board their respective vessels. The topic of job fit was reported to have a great impact on junior officer retention and could serve as a separate factor that affects a member's decision to leave or remain on active duty.



***b. Theme 2: Mentorship***

Ninety-five percent of respondents placed a significant emphasis on mentorship. This emphasis highlighted the beneficial impact that mentorship has on career progression. Mentorship provides access to senior personnel and opportunity to receive guidance from people who have held similar positions. The role of the mentor was described as someone who is competent, motivating, and trustworthy. Mentorship was also described as having a person who took a significant interest in bettering their career, provided a sounding board, and felt an obligation to provide access and insight to the next level. Respondents also reported barriers to effectively mentoring a greater influx of junior personnel. This was referred to as a significant leadership issue because COs are directly responsible for officer development. They expressed that they have finite resources on board because the officers able to provide guidance are severely outnumbered. Although the importance of this theme did not vary between majority and minority officers, the context in how mentorship was important did.

Majority officers referred to mentorship generally as a mechanism used to gain a competitive edge or further professional insight on what the next milestone tour has in store. Commitment to having a single dedicated mentor did not share the same importance as having available mentorship. Acquiring various mentors appeared to serve as a networking tool, as receiving an instrument to gain access to someone who can give advice or listen to a problem. Majority officers tended to express lower search times for mentors in comparison to their minority counterparts. This phenomenon can speak to the comfort level of the individual in their environment or the low inventory of personnel that share the same demographic background at the next level.

Instead, minority officers put mentorship in the context of an additional layer in their support system. Minority officers referred to mentors as individuals that they would trust with not only professional but personal guidance on how to navigate the social norms that they may not understand or for networking purposes. Minority officers tended to have longer search times when looking for mentors that shared similar demographic background due to a low inventory at the next milestone or lack of access to those individuals outside of their organization. Minority officers that did not experience low search times attributed



that to their own performance in their ability to acquire a mentor by communicating a reason to invest time into their talents.

Respondents also referred to mentorship as a mechanism that can enhance or detract from individuals' sense of affiliation or sense of belonging and inclusion. This concept was highlighted in the ORS results in Figures 12 and 13 where minority junior officers reported a higher need for affiliation and inclusion. The mentor–mentee relationship can be symbolic of the member feeling accepted in the organization as their social network grows with positive and meaningful relationships.



Figure 12. Aggregate NTB Results

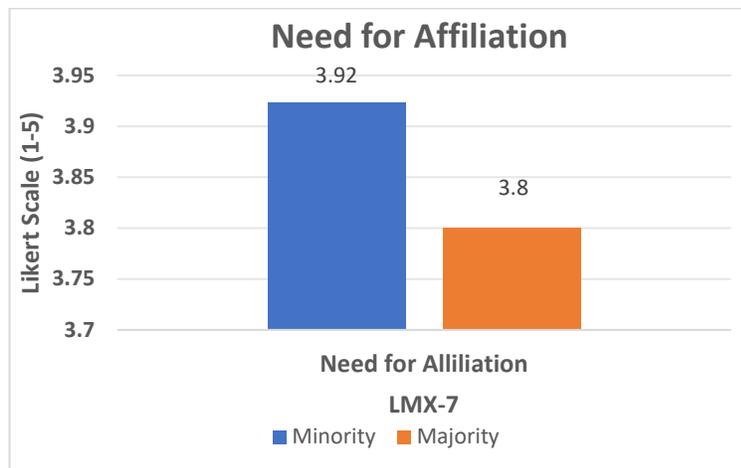


Figure 13. Aggregate LMX-7 Results



All respondents communicated that addressing affiliative and inclusion needs provide areas that require much attention in the officer community. All participants highlighted the importance of mentorship aiding in officer development through internal and external means. This function within the organization illustrated how mentorship positively influenced their decisions to remain on active duty. Mentorship fosters a relationship that makes a person feel cared for. This mechanism highlights and satisfies a sense of belonging and inclusion within the community. This mechanism allows members to feel accepted by their peers and superiors by communicating a personal commitment to the development of junior personnel by senior personnel.

*c. Theme 3: “Culture of Excellence”*

The “culture of excellence” (COE) is an analogy that COs across the waterfront have internalized from the 21st Century Sailor office provided on behalf of the CNO (Chief Naval Officer [CNO], 2020). The COE is a pillar in a comprehensive approach toward warfighting and can affect retention. This mantra is used to empower Sailors to foster environments that enhance ethical, mental, moral, and physical fortitude to improve unit cohesion with efforts that do not detract from mission readiness (CNO, 2020). Given that all COs received this guidance, each respondent had a unique take on the COE, and they reserve the right to implement their nuanced approach. It was inferred from the interviews that the COE was effectively a talent management tool for COs and other supervisors to use to enhance unit performance.

Most majority officers expressed that the COE was measured by completion of the missions assigned, compared to minority officers who provided additional measures of excellence, including focusing on Sailor well-being and addressing impactful current events that have transpired over the past year. Majority officers articulated that the mission included the general well-being of their crew where their basic needs were met such as physiological and safety needs illustrated in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory (Maslow, 1954).

Minority officers tended to be more concerned with how recent events impacted personnel and jeopardized their image of the COE. This concern enabled commanders to prioritize their subordinates’ need for belonging and prompted actions to create



environments that allowed subordinates to gain clarity on where they stand within the organization. Our study highlights the disparities in two distinct categories for retention that illustrate the importance of recognizing the importance of recognizing the subtle obstacles to achieving a COE. In this study, female respondents reported 1.98 percentage points higher than their male counterparts when making decisions to remain on active duty when asked about how gender affected their experience, as shown in Figure 14.

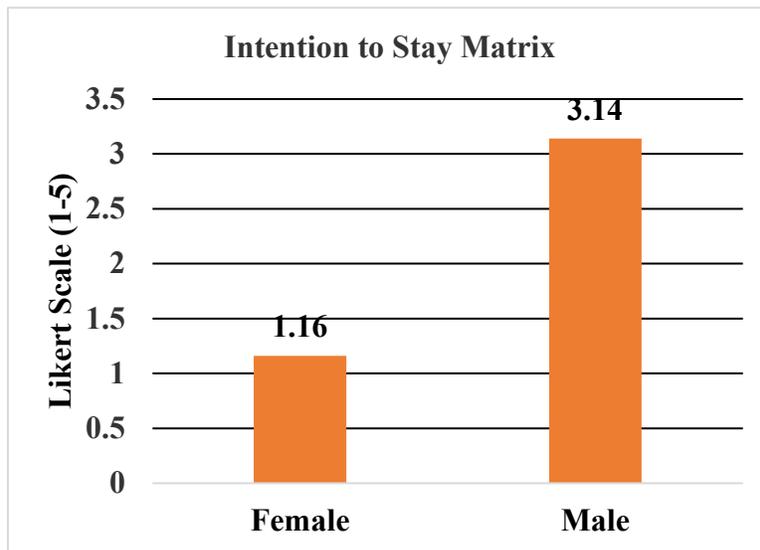


Figure 14. Retention Affected by Gender

When respondents were asked about how race impacted their retention decision, racial minorities reported a 0.8 percentage point difference in comparison to their majority counterparts, illustrated in Figure 15. These findings were consistent with findings from previous literature and highlights the intersectionality of how gender and race influence how members are treated, regardless of whether that treatment was deliberate or incidental.



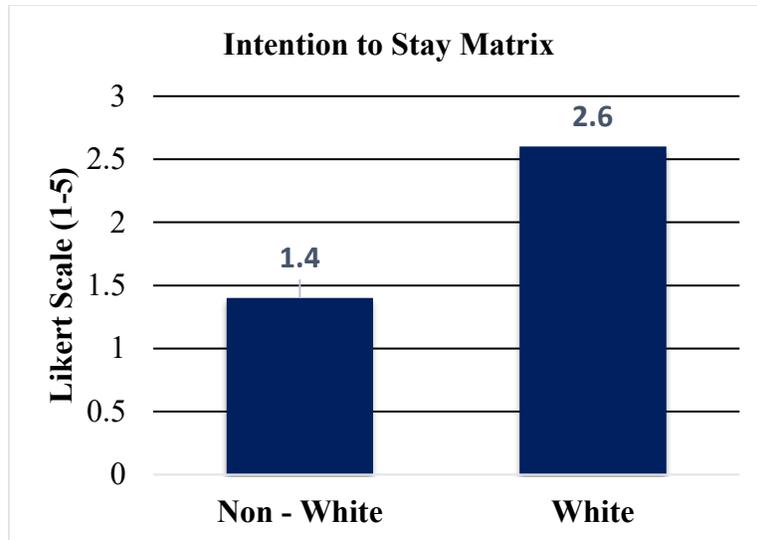


Figure 15. Retention Affected by Race

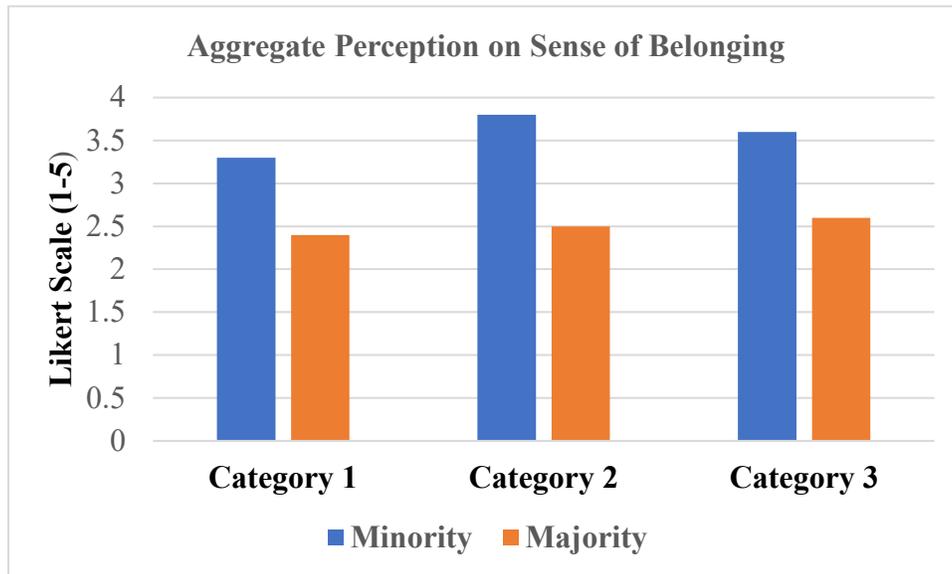
*d. Theme 4: Representation at the Next Level*

Representation at each level affected majority and minority officers differently. This topic carried greater importance for minority officers in comparison to majority officers. Majority officers saw the position only as the next milestone required of moving up the ranking structure, whereas minority officers saw the next milestone as an opportunity to provide representation for upcoming junior officers of the same or similar demographic. This concept of representation at the next level for underrepresented groups did not vary among minority groups. Respondents communicated that this type of representation exhibited a sense of opportunity, belonging, and hope to rise through the ranks.

Minority officers reported that having or not having a leader in the same or similar demographic was discussed as a double-edged sword, because it can serve as a motivator or detractor when discussing impacts on retention. This discussion was broken down into two categories: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Individuals who had higher intrinsic motivation appeared to have a high self-worth that enabled them to persevere and use their internal drive to achieve their goals, whereas the extrinsically motivated person may need visual representation of personnel with the same or similar demographic characteristics to enhance their sense of belonging at the next level. In this study, minority respondents reported a higher premium on their sense of belonging and perceived organizational



support than their majority counterparts, as displayed in Figures 16 and 17. These findings were also supported through the interview process, as minority officers reported that they wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to be the representation that they did not see earlier in their careers.



Category 1: “I feel like ‘part of the family’ in the military.”

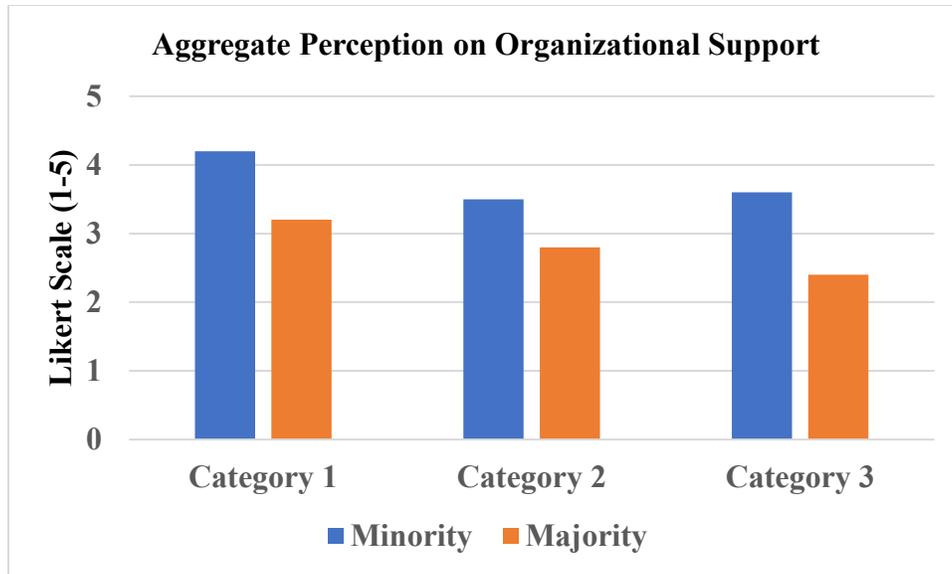
Category 2: “The military has a great deal of personal meaning for me.”

Category 3: “I feel a strong sense of belonging to the military.”

Figure 16. Sense of Belonging Results

Representation at the next level exhibits that upward mobility exists and serves a powerful message. This enables personnel to feel represented at all levels and aids in the breakdown of preconceived notions, stereotypes, and unconscious biases. This also speaks to perceived organizational support from peers and superiors that display confidence in the individual’s ability to lead at the next level. In reference to the ORS, minority officers reported that they experienced higher levels of support in comparison to their majority counterparts illustrated in Figure 17.





For this section, the most polarized responses were

Category 1: “The organization values my contributions to its well-being.”

Category 2: “The organization takes pride in my accomplishments at work.”

Category 3: “The organization really cares about my well-being.”

Figure 17. Perceived Organizational Support Results

**e. Theme 5: Homosocial Reproduction**

This theme is related to the previous theme and impacted by representation at the next level. *Homosocial reproduction* is defined as a mechanism within an organization that promotes personnel into the power structure through an in-group preference as a result of a preferred race or gender (Elliott & Smith, 2004). This phenomenon generates a population of leadership that looks and thinks similarly when determining probability of promotion and retention. Homosocial reproduction is an approach to understanding why higher-level leadership positions are held primarily by a majority demographic. When this topic was broached, demographically majority officers stated that preferential treatment did not exist for those of similar background and expressed that they believed other factors impacted representation at each level. Conversely, demographically minority officers relayed a different experience; when looking at who their peers are, these officers reported that the system was objective but acknowledged the existing imperfections since the system has people in the loop. These stark differences can speak to a changing culture of the officers who have undergone the several iterations of diversity and inclusion training but



may fail to recognize the interconnectedness of how mentorship, representation, and lifestyle impacts affect junior officers' propensity to continue with their service.

Homosocial reproduction reinforces the need for identity, affiliation, and inclusion within the organization as it can be linked to the junior officers' motivation to move on to the next level. This concept also reinforces stereotypes that are either exacerbated or reduced by how personnel are represented and treated over the course of their career. This is significant because the interviews of minority officers communicated the need to conform to specific social norms. This overall culture is defined by majority officers, as they predominantly hold positions of great influence and establish the expectations for the force. When it came to evaluating this phenomenon, we discussed the impact to the junior officer's career. Those that have an easier time adjusting to the social norms experience more success than those that experience a more difficult time adjusting. This was reported to be independent of commissioning source or upbringing but appeared to present a greater barrier to racial minorities in comparison to White women.

Minority officers also discussed the complexities in gender and racial acceptance, as they present huge factors into how people are treated and what considerations are made when given opportunities to display empathy or sympathy. Majority officers discussed how they treat each junior officer the same and either ignore or are unable to recognize their other unconscious biases when dealing with people different from them, whereas minority officers tended to highlight the subtleties in how either they or their peers were treated. This indicates inconsistent behavior that is reinforced by the dominant culture established by the majority officer, since the expectation remains to conform to the mainstream culture.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Our analysis of the semi-structured individual interviews and survey tool indicate that there are still areas of improvement to achieve a better sense of diversity and inclusion. The results in this study remain consistent with those in previous literature by highlighting which components of job satisfaction are still left unmet. These findings can be used to direct future efforts to improve various aspects of diversity and inclusion. These findings relay that leadership must remain engaged with Sailors and maintain open dialogue to enhance the sense of diversity and inclusion.



## V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. CONCLUSION

This study analyzed how specific factors of job satisfaction influenced the retention of minority officers in the sea services. Our research discovered evidence confirming that unequal treatment throughout the officer corps still exists. This research also illustrated how difficult diversity management is in practice at the organizational level. This study suggests that mentorship and representation at the next level will have positive effects on retaining personnel moving forward and will serve as the catalyst to improving diversity throughout the force.

This thesis sought to determine what factors influence job satisfaction among junior officers. The components of job satisfaction that were evaluated were sense of inclusion, need for affiliation, perceived organizational support, and sense of belonging. These factors were important in different ways when comparing majority officers to the minority, a finding consistent with previous studies. The survey data collected has limited generalizability due to the small sample size but provided similar results as Greene (2019), Hernandez Rodriguez and Serna (2020), and Thomas and Dunklin (2020). This study suggests that efforts should be made to evaluate minority officers' need for affiliation and sense of inclusion more closely. The results of this study illustrated that minority officers have higher needs for those factors to receive a better sense of acceptance within the workplace.

The interview data collected allowed us to connect concepts of what barriers exist and evaluate which areas could be addressed, as they stifle efforts to achieving a better sense of inclusion and diversity among minority officers. Understanding that diversity management is an iterative process, the senior officers that participated in this study stated that mentorship and representation are two aspects with great influence on achieving that goal. Mentorship provides transparency to the organization as a whole, and representation provides the visual cue that upward mobility exists; it eliminates the perception that a glass ceiling exists. Supplementing the soft skill sets of the officer corps is believed to pay great dividends forward when it comes to both talent management and diversity.



## **B. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Navy has a diverse workforce, and in this section, we discuss recommendations provided by this study. To achieve true inclusion, there must be accountability. As it stands, the sea services struggle to manage diversity efforts internally, suggesting that they should coordinate with other organizations to help implement inclusion and diversity (I&D) standards. The following recommendations are designed to incorporate the findings from this study to strengthen the Navy's ability to improve how it meets the affiliative and inclusive needs of its minority officers. After analyzing the results from this study, aligning I&D efforts with the improved accountability measures, perspective on leadership and mentorship should improve retention efforts of officers in underrepresented demographic groups. The following sections detail how these recommendations can be implemented at the organizational level.

### **1. Hold Organizations Accountable with Personnel Dedicated to the Mission of Diversity and Inclusion.**

The sea service can structure their I&D efforts after the Sexual Assault and Prevention Response (SAPR) program, a program that brings in nonuniform members to regulate the management of the program. The Navy should have personnel at each command that are designated as the I&D officer. This should be managed like the SAPR program, where a nonuniform member functioning as regional equal opportunity coordinator would be tasked with creating quarterly programs and trainings. This ultimately begins with an evaluation of each command's level of I&D. This evaluation can be done utilizing a validated survey tool. Following this evaluation, command-specific training should be developed and administered quarterly. Officers would be required to attend at least two of these sessions each fiscal year. At the end of a four-quarter cycle, each command would be reevaluated on the effectiveness of the administered training. This is an effective means of solving the I&D issue, as it identifies a specific deficiency and administers a treatment to solve it. Most importantly, it involves an objective member to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. The program would take a dynamic approach, including both active and passive learning objectives to maximize effectiveness.



**2. Refine Leadership Training at the Macro Level to Create a Continuum of Learning at Each Milestone School, which Will Impact Division Officer (DIVO), DH, and XO/CO.**

The accountability must be supplemented with a fundamental shift in the way leadership is taught, utilizing a top-down approach to revamp the leadership training and reduce the sense of marginalization throughout the force. There must be more diverse representation at the flag and O-6 levels. To successfully accomplish this, the Navy must refocus and begin at the accession source. The service should revisit the 12-12-5 initiative, which methodically recruited minority personnel into the officer corps. The need to target minorities at the accession source is imperative, but only after there has been a refurbished approach to leadership training.

The command-level officers should partake in I&D education that focuses on emotional intelligence and strengthens their soft leadership skills. This instruction would include case studies and tools for leaders to facilitate open discussions with the wardroom to continue dialogue and highlight the importance of I&D. This would create a strong core of leaders who understand the need for I&D. The focal area for this new training program would be the middle management or department heads, where there is significant drop off from O-3 to O-4 in terms of diversity. This can be attributed to minority officers at the junior level (O-1-O-3) having negative experiences with their department heads. This makes it critical that department heads foster an environment that promotes equality. The success in maintaining a diverse workforce is contingent on the quality of training that is administered to the department heads.

**3. Strengthen Mentorship Programs and Opportunities in the Officer Corps.**

In this study, mentorship was pronounced to have the ability to improve the sense of affiliation and inclusion for all officers. There are areas of improvement in the officer mentorship program in the service as it stands; the Navy should create a program that matches willing participants to seek mentors and mentees. Since minority officers demonstrated a higher desire for those social needs to be met in comparison to their majority counterparts, our findings suggested that both formal and informal means to improve mentorship within the organization are needed. Formal training on how to provide



adequate mentorship can be injected at each level within the leadership modules of each milestone course such as the basic and advanced division officer courses (BDOC, ADOC), DH School, and Sea Commander's Course (SCC) to introduce a continuum of learning. Introducing this subject at different levels provides an opportunity to refine those softer managerial skills, as the breadth of knowledge, influence, and responsibility of the individuals increases.

Addressing mentorship informally should be supplemented through availability of more social events on the waterfront to allow officers to meet personnel outside of their chain of command. Using venues away from the ship gives officers an opportunity to see other professionals that may share similar demographics in an informal setting, if that is desired, or another officer who takes a keen interest of the individual. This type of interaction allows for an organic relationship to be made that is beneficial for both parties and eliminates fear of retribution or reprisal within their chain of command. This also grants the junior officer a wider selection of mentors from which to choose. The Navy should lean into programs like the Naval Junior Officer Counsel (NJOC) and other affinity groups to ensure that mentorship outside of the lifelines of the ship remains accessible. NJOC is a new program that is designed to promote mentorship of junior officers at the organizational level by increasing access to senior officers through electronic means. Although this program is in its infancy, it has the potential to facilitate great positive change that reverberates throughout the organization and potentially enhance talent management efforts. Lastly, for efforts like these to have the desired impact, these types of programs should be advertised at commissioning sources and entry-level milestone schools such as BDOC to raise awareness to all junior officers.



## APPENDIX A. OFFICER RETENTION SURVEY TOOL

Instructions: For each of the statements below, indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the statement by marking the space beside the question using the scale below:

Question Group 1: Demographics										
1	What is your rank?	O-1	O-2	O-3						
2	What is your race?	African-American/Black		Asian	Caucasian/White	Hispanic/Latino	Native American	Pacific Islander		
3	What is your gender?	Female	Male							
4	What platform do you currently serve on?	LCS	DDG	CG	LSD	LPD	LHD	STAFF		
5	What is your designator?	1110	1160	1160X	13XX	1810	1820	2100	2200	3100
Question Group 2: Affiliation and Inclusion (Leary, 2017; Wayne et al, 1997)										
		1	2	3	4	5				
		Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree				
6	If other people don't seem to accept me, I don't let it bother me.									
7	I try hard not to do things that will make other people avoid or reject me.									
8	I seldom worry about whether other people care about me.									
9	I need to feel that there are people I can turn to in times of need.									
10	I want other people to accept me.									
11	I do not like being alone.									
12	Being apart from my friends for long periods of time does not bother me.									
13	I have a strong need to belong.									
14	It bothers me a great deal when I am not included in other people's plans.									
15	My feelings are easily hurt when I feel that others do not accept me.									
16	I feel like "part of the family" in the military.									
17	I usually know where I stand with my supervisor.									
18	My supervisor has enough confidence in me that she/he would defend and justify my decisions if I was not present to do so.									
19	My working relationship with my supervisor is effective.									
20	My supervisor understands my problems and needs.									
21	I can count on my supervisor to "bail me out," even at his or her own expense, when I really need it.									
22	My supervisor recognizes my potential									
23	Regardless of how much power my supervisor has built into his or her position, my supervisor would be personally inclined to use his/her power									
Question Group 3: Perceived Organizational Support (Eisenberger et al, 2002)										
		1	2	3	4	5				
		Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree				
24	The organization values my contribution to its well-being.									
25	The organization values my contribution to its well-being.									
26	The organization fails to appreciate any extra effort from me.									
27	The organization would ignore any complaint from me.									
28	The organization really cares about my well-being.									
29	Even if I did the best job possible, the organization would fail to notice.									
30	The organization cares about my general satisfaction at work.									
31	The organization shows very little concern for me.									
32	The organization takes pride in my accomplishments at work.									
Question Group 4: Sense of Belonging to the Military										
		1	2	3	4	5				
		Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree				
33	The military has a great deal of personal meaning for me.									
34	I feel a strong sense of belonging to the military.									
35	I feel emotionally attached to the military.									
36	I believe the military validates my social needs									
37	The military does not advocate for inclusion and diversity									
38	The military is an advocate for minorities.									
Question Group 5: Retention										
		Separate	Possibly Separate	Neutral	Possibly Continue	Continue Service				
		1	2	3	4	5				
39	What are your intentions to separate from the Navy in the next 5 years?									
		Not at all	Small Amount	Moderate Amount	Large Amount	Complete Amount				
		1	2	3	4	5				
40	How much does how you were treated based on your race factor into your retention/separation decision?									
41	How much does how you were treated based on your gender factor into your retention or separation decision?									

\*The ORS tool was created using LimeSurvey and can be accessed at the following link:  
<https://survey.nps.edu/825996/lang-en>

\*\*The ORS was only administered to junior officers between the ranks of O-1 and O-3.



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**APPENDIX B. NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
TEAM INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR  
COMMAND-LEVEL NAVAL OFFICERS**

- 1.) Based on your experience, what are some barriers to junior officer retention?
  - a. Would you say this differs among minority groups?
  - b. Why or why not?
- 2.) What barriers do you see to the retention of junior officers (White, Black, Hispanic)?
- 3.) Have you experienced organizational support in the Navy?
  - a. Is this support or lack thereof distributed fairly?
  - b. Why or why not?
  - c. If you have not experienced this, what helped you overcome this, especially as a junior officer?
- 4.) What experiences have influenced your decision to remain on active duty?
- 5.) Do you have a need for affiliation?
  - a. If yes, has The Navy adequately met this need? How?
  - b. Is the need for affiliation different for minority groups?

\*Minority is described as other than White male.

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