

A Comparative Analysis of Ethnic Groups in Military and Federal Services on Measures of Perceived Organizational EO Climate, Commitment and Job Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

A study of the Native American racial/ethnic group in the military and federal service reveals some striking differences in perceptions and attitudes of this group when compared to other ethnic groups employed within the Department of Defense. These differences would give cause for concern for any Equal Employment Officer (EEO). The purpose of this paper is to examine the Military Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (MEOCS) data to determine the depth, and breathe of the observed differences for the American Indian/Alaskan Native ethnic group. Further we will offer possible theoretical explanation as to why the Native American and Alaska Native ethnic group does standout from other races/ethnic groups on these measures of perceptions and attitude. This study is clearly in the initial stages and suggestions for future research are offered.

Keywords: Native Americans, Job Satisfaction, Military, Ethnicity, Equal Opportunity Climate

INTRODUCTION

The Office of Management and Budget published its revisions to the standards for the classification of Federal data on race and ethnicity October 30, 1997. The categories for data on race and ethnicity for Federal statistics, program administration reporting, and civil rights compliance are: American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian, Black or African American; Hispanic or Latino; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; and, White. The reporting category American Indian or Alaska Native is the smallest recognized ethnic group in the United States. The U. S. Census Bureau reports for the year 1999 that of the 299.4 million population 2.9 million, or 1 percent, identify themselves as among the Native American ethnic group (U. S. Census Bureau, p. 9). The composition of the military reflects a very similar distribution. Of the 1,369,167 members of the active duty armed forces, 14,433, or 1.1 percent, are Native American (Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute, p. 12).

The Directorate of Research (DR) at the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) has primary responsibility for administering the Military Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (MEOCS) within the Department of Defense at the request of any military or civilian unit. As an aid for the improvement of the equal opportunity and organizational climates within a unit, the MEOCS contains 100 items assessing equal opportunity (EO) and organizational effectiveness (OE) issues. These items are used in scales to measure nine EO and three OE factors. Table 1 below presents a brief description of these twelve scales (Landis, Dansby & Faley, 1993).

Since 1990, over 6,000 MEOCS unit-level surveys have been completed and returned to DR. DR currently maintains this cumulative database containing over 1,000,000 individual cases. In an exploratory examination, the researchers stratified the data by gender and race. Table 2 below reveals the breakdown of this database by Sex and Racial-Ethnic Group. The data demonstrate that the American Indian/Alaskan Native segment of the sample data, while greater than the general population, is a relatively small percentage: approximately 3%. While the percentage is small we are still talking about over thirty thousand individuals.

Next, the data was further examined with respect of perceptions and attitudes by gender and race. These data are presented in Table 3 below. As revealed in Table 3, American Indian/Alaskan Natives when compared to other ethnic groups are generally on the low end of the various perceptual and attitudinal measures presented in the MEOCS. The means for cells which are underlined denote that they are the lowest score by gender across that MEOCS scale. It is the purpose of this paper to determine if these differences are statistically significant and to suggest a possible explanation for these observations.

TABLE 1
Descriptions of the MEOCS Scales (Landis, et. al., 1993)

Perceptions of EO Behaviors

<u>Scale Name</u>	<u>Description</u>
Sexual Harassment and Sex Discrim. (SHD)	Perceptions of how extensively sexual harassment and discrimination against women are thought to occur within the respondent's unit. The scale assess the perceived chance that, within the last 30 days, that a harassment/discrimination action has occurred is 1) very high; reasonably high; 3) moderate; 4) small; or, 5) almost none.
Differential Command Behavior (DCBM)	Perceptions of differential treatment of minority members Toward Minorities within the unit (for example, if they are not as likely to be offered opportunities for Service-related schools). Same scale as used for SHD.
Positive Equal Opportunity (PEOB)	Estimates of how well majority members and minority Behaviors (PEOB) members get along in the unit and how well integrated women and minorities are in the unit's functioning. The scale addresses how frequently positive actions occur and ranges from 1 to 5 with 5 the most equal opportunity for women and minorities.
Racist/Sexist Behaviors (RSB)	This factor taps perceptions of traditional overt racist or sexist behaviors, such as name calling and telling sexist or racist jokes. The same scale is used as for SHD.
Reverse Discrim. Index (RDI)	Measures the extent to which so-called "reverse" discrimination is thought to occur within the unit. Same scale as used for SHD.
Perceptions of Organizational Effectiveness	
Organizational Commitment (OC)	Measures commitment to the organization. A higher score means the respondent identifies with the organization to which he or she is assigned and would like to remain in that organization. The scale ranges from 1 to 5 with a 5 representing the highest organizational commitment.
Perceived Mission Effectiveness (PME)	This factor reflects the degree to which the respondent's unit is perceived to be productive and effective in accomplishing its mission. The scale ranges from 1 to 5 with 5 representing the highest perceived effectiveness.
Job Satisfaction (JS)	Indicated the degree of satisfaction the respondent has with his or her current job. The scale ranges from 1 to 5 with a 5 representing the highest satisfaction with the job.
Attitudes toward EO Issues	
Discrim. Towards Minorities or Women (DTMW)	In general, how much are minorities and women discriminated against? The scale ranges from 1 to 5 with 5 representing the perception of the least discrimination towards minorities or women.
Reverse Discrim. II (RDII)	Similar to RDI except this scale relates more generally to the Service and the general environment and not just the particular unit of assignment. The scale ranges from 1 to 5 with 5 representing the perception of the least discrimination towards minorities or women in the general environment.
Attitudes Towards Racial Separatism (ARS)	This factor measures how much respondents believe the races should remain separate. The scale ranges from 1 to 5 with 1 representing the attitude that the races should remain separate.
Overall EO Climate (OEOC)	This is a global measure of how the respondent views EO within the unit of assignment. It reflects the respondent's rating of the EO climate on a 5 point scale with 1="very poor" to 5="very good".

TABLE 2
Summary of Sex by Racial-Ethnic Group for MEOCS Database

SEX	RACIAL-ETHNIC GROUP						Total
	Am Ind/ Al Nat	Asian/ Pac Isl	Black (non Hispanic)	Hispanic	White (not Hispanic)	Other	
Female	7499	10588	46885	14669	98044	13323	191008
Male	23854	34055	136188	77676	510921	54040	836734
Total	31353	44643	183073	92345	608965	67363	1027742

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

A study of the Native American racial/ethnic group in the military and federal service reveals some striking differences which should be cause for concern for any Equal Employment Officer (EEO). The analysis presented here will examine the Military Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (MEOCS) data. The data set containing over 1,000,000 respondents was “cleaned” eliminating any subject with missing data for any of the twelve variables reported in Table 3. This resulted in a final sample size of 850,395 respondents.

TABLE 3
Summary of Comparisons of Racial-Ethnic Groups on MEOCS Measures for Women and Men

MEOCS Measures*	RACIAL-ETHNIC GROUP													
	Am Ind/ Al Nat		Asian/ Pac Isl		Black (non Hispanic)		Hispanic		White (not Hispanic)		Other		Total	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
SHD	<u>3.37</u>	<u>3.74</u>	3.58	3.85	3.73	3.89	3.80	3.96	3.83	4.11	3.67	3.93	3.76	4.03
DCBM	<u>3.63</u>	3.92	3.73	3.91	3.78	<u>3.81</u>	4.02	4.02	4.41	4.43	3.87	4.09	4.12	4.24
PEOB	3.47	3.55	3.46	3.50	<u>3.39</u>	<u>3.40</u>	3.51	3.51	3.96	3.89	3.43	3.56	3.70	3.73
RSB	<u>3.51</u>	<u>3.67</u>	3.66	3.74	3.92	3.79	3.93	3.82	4.16	4.05	3.83	3.84	4.01	3.95
RDI	<u>3.50</u>	<u>3.61</u>	3.68	3.79	3.99	3.90	3.98	3.90	4.04	3.93	3.86	3.76	3.97	3.89
OC	3.02	3.03	3.09	3.15	2.94	3.02	3.12	3.13	3.26	3.23	<u>2.90</u>	<u>2.96</u>	3.12	3.16
PME	<u>3.59</u>	<u>3.67</u>	3.62	3.69	3.82	3.78	3.76	3.76	4.01	3.95	3.72	3.75	3.89	3.88
JS	<u>3.43</u>	<u>3.46</u>	3.53	3.59	3.68	3.65	3.68	3.66	3.74	3.69	3.51	<u>3.46</u>	3.68	3.66
DTMW	3.19	3.61	3.25	3.44	<u>2.96</u>	<u>3.14</u>	3.34	3.48	3.81	4.15	3.22	3.72	3.47	3.85
RDII	<u>3.14</u>	<u>3.14</u>	3.38	3.53	3.89	3.79	3.72	3.65	3.50	3.31	3.59	3.33	3.60	3.43
ARS	<u>3.58</u>	<u>3.81</u>	3.76	3.93	4.28	4.14	4.28	4.23	4.48	4.28	4.17	4.10	4.32	4.21
OEOC	<u>2.59</u>	3.03	2.81	3.15	2.87	<u>3.02</u>	3.14	3.27	3.46	3.62	2.90	3.20	3.18	3.43

* See Table 1 for an explanation of the acronyms.

A one-way analysis of variance was conducted using SPSS Version 13.0 to determine if the observed differences reported in Table 3 above were statistically significant. The American Indian/Alaskan Native ethnic group was compared to each other ethnic group on three outcome variables of interest to these researchers: Organizational Commitment (OC), Job Satisfaction (JS), and Overall Equal Opportunity Climate (OEOC). The descriptive statistics are reported in Table 4a. The results of this analysis are reported in Table 4b below.

With but one exception the Native American/Alaskan Native was found have a significantly lower score on all three outcome measures examined than any of the ethnic groups in the study. Blacks (Non-Hispanic) were found not to be different than the American Indians/Alaskan Natives on OEOC. The magnitude and consistency of these finding are notable. In the section which follows the authors will offer a highly plausible explanation of these findings.

TABLE 4a
Descriptive Statistics of the Six Racial-Ethnic Groups

Racial-Ethnic Group						
N = 850,395	Am Ind or Al Nat n = 22008	Asian or Pac Isl n = 31926	Black (non Hispanic) n = 145585	Hispanic n = 73785	White (not Hispanic) n = 522750	Other n = 54341
Org. Commitment Mean: S.D.:	3.0328 0.85659	3.1628 0.77508	2.9945 0.80677	3.1379 0.83274	3.2402 0.91670	2.9354 0.87272
Job Satisfaction Mean: S.D.:	3.5180 0.91664	3.6573 0.87439	3.7010 0.85940	3.7161 0.86959	3.7160 0.84437	3.4855 0.90873
OEOC Mean: S.D.:	3.0077 1.17760	3.1697 1.09282	3.0053 1.00823	3.2739 1.02737	3.6108 0.99980	3.1511 1.08992

TABLE 4b
One-Way ANOVA American Indian/Alaskan Native Versus Other Ethnic Groups

	American Indian/Alaskan Native n=22,008		
	<u>Org. Commitment</u>	<u>Job Satisfaction</u>	<u>Org. EO Climate</u>
White (Not-Hispanic) n=522,750	df 1 and 544756 F 1085.71 Sig. .000	1 and 544756 1152.42 .000	1 and 544756 7567.13 .000
Hispanic n=73,785	df 1 and 95791 F 266.40 Sig. .000	1 and 95791 858.10 .000	1 and 95791 1061.41 .000
Black (Non-Hispanic) n=145,585	df 1 and 167591 F 42.51 Sig. .000	1 and 167591 851.52 .000	1 and 167591 .101 ns
Asian/Pacific Island n=31,926	df 1 and 53932 F 317.66 Sig. .000	1 and 53932 335.93 .000	1 and 53932 268.628 .000
Other n=54,341	df 1 and 76347 F 197.18 Sig. .000	1 and 76347 19.93 .000	1 and 76347 258.51 .000

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

There may be several different explanations for the general dissatisfaction and negative perceptions of the general working environment reported by American Indians and Alaskan Natives in the MEOCS data. One possible explanation is “post traumatic stress disorder” (PTSD). In their review of the literature on PTSD, Lev-Wiesel and Amir (2001) cite several studies suggesting the disorder may be transmitted from those who actually experienced trauma to those with whom they are in a close or intimate relationship such as spouses, children or caregivers, i.e., secondary traumatic stress disorder (STSD). They cite studies demonstrating the STSD is characterized by symptoms nearly identical to those suffering from PTSD. The only difference being that for STSD exposure to the traumatic event(s) is indirect while for the PTSD victims the traumatic event is directly experienced.

The symptoms of STSD include general distress, psychoticism, phobic anxiety, avoidance behavior, and depression among other things. The study conducted by Lev-Wiesel and Amir (2001) concluded that PTSD experienced by a survivor of the holocaust contributed significantly to the STSD symptoms of their spouses who had not directly experienced the holocaust.

Kellermann (2001) discusses how PTSD may be transmitted to the children of holocaust victims. Four models of transmission are discussed which suggest that PTSD in parents produces in their children emotional problems, difficulties in coping with stress, impaired self-esteem with persistent identity problems and anxiety, among other things (Kellermann, 2001: 259-260).

The general population is reported to experience PTSD at the rate of 8%, research suggests that 22% American Indians display symptoms of PTSD (Yellow Horse Brave Heart, 2003). Many researchers have argued that the Native American history of trauma and unresolved grief plays a significant role in the current social pathology of the Native American today (Yellow Horse Brave Heart and DeBruyn, 1998; Yellow Horse Brave Heart, 2003; Walter, et al., 2002; and, Tann, et al., 2007). They have labeled this phenomenon as “historical unresolved grief” and link it to high rates of suicide, homicide, domestic violence, child abuse, alcoholism and other social problems among this effected group. These authors cite much literature drawing the parallels between the Jewish Holocaust in Europe with that of the American Indian (Yellow Horse Brave Heart and DeBruyn, 1998: 62-64).

This proposition seems to hold credence when you consider the history of the Jews after WWII and the Black African American who historically suffered similar trauma under slavery. For the holocaust victims there was a final victory—Germany lost the war. There were trials, people were punished for their roles in the holocaust and Israel was created. Each of these events could ease the process of healing from such trauma.

For the Black American there was a Civil War and slavery was abolished. There were civil rights protests and riots in the 50’s, 60’s, and 70’s resulting in victories for equal rights and opportunities for minorities in the United States. These too would serve to help heal the wounds of trauma experienced by generations of Black Americans. But, for the American Indians there has been little or none of this and thus, the healing has not taken place.

To conclude, there is general agreement in the literature with regard to the existence of this problem for the Native American population. As to a major contributor to the problem,

historical trauma has gained general acceptance as a primary causal factor within the Native American populations (Whitbeck, et al., 2004). But, in terms of proffering a solution, the literature presents no quick or easy remedy. Yellow Horse Brave Heart and DeBruyn (1998: 75) suggest that “community healing along with individual and family healing are necessary to thoroughly address historical unresolved grief and its present manifestations...without such commitment to healing the past, we will not be able to address the resultant trauma and prevent the continuation of such atrocities in the present”. Walters, et al. (2002) posit a similar solution, i.e., one which focuses on family, community, spirituality and traditional Native American healing practices.

FUTURE RESEARCH

This paper is clearly a preliminary examination of an important issue. These authors plan to expand their review of the literature on the issues of traumatic stress. The data base will be examined more closely to determine if there are specific issues/events in the American Indian/Alaska Native experience within the Department of Defense which may contribute to or create the problems identified here. The effectiveness of potential solutions needs to be examined. Finally, the authors will investigate to what extent there may be gender differences in the American Indian/Alaskan Native organizational commitment, job satisfaction and organization equal opportunity climate.

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