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**MIDCAREER OFFICER FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL**

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**I. INTRODUCTION**

First, I'd like to introduce myself and my colleague . . .

*Q1: Have you been told anything about why you are here today?*

RAND is a nonprofit research organization that serves as a federally funded research and development center of OSD, the Air Force, and the Army. As part of our work for OSD, we are studying the accession and career progression of minority and female officers. This research is supporting an officer pipeline study being conducted by the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness at the request of Mr. Perry. Our study team has already talked to the headquarters offices responsible for officer management policy in all the services. We are also interviewing officers who have sat on promotion boards to get their views.

Our purpose in talking to you today is to further develop our understanding of the development of officer careers and to get your views on what steps an officer must take to be competitive for promotion to O-5 and O-6. We're going to be asking you a series of questions about training, assignments, milestones, evaluations, and so forth. While we'll occasionally ask questions directed at eliciting straightforward pieces of information, most of our questions will try to elicit your opinions and observations of how the process works.

Your participation in this discussion is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to participate, you may leave. Also, please feel free to not answer any questions that you are uncomfortable with. We will keep

everything you say confidential. We will not keep a list of your names. (X) will be taking notes during our discussion, but will not insert your name into the notes. We will not show the notes to anyone outside of RAND. Our report will include only a general description of the people who participated from all the services and a summary of the discussions from which the identity and views of the participants cannot be inferred. We also ask each of you to commit to keeping today's discussion confidential. What each of you says should remain in this room.

At the end of our discussion, we will pass out a very short evaluation form. If there are any issues you prefer to discuss with us privately, you can indicate on the form how we can contact you. You should also feel free to call any of us at the number listed on our business card.

*Q2: Before we get started, do you have any [further] questions about us, RAND, or the purpose of this discussion or project?*

*Q3: Please introduce yourself and tell us briefly about your background: college, accession source, rank, occupation/branch and years of service*

## **II. BECOMING AN OFFICER (10)**

### **A. Motivations**

*Q1: Why do people choose to become officers*

*Q2: What choices and actions signal career intentions*

*Q3: Do motivations affect career-related decisions*

### **B. Accessions**

*Q1: What influence does source of commission have*

*Q2: Are officers from different commission sources equally prepared for their career*

### III. FIRST YEARS (15)

#### A. Failures

- Q1: *What reasons are there for separation in first year or two: problems in basic school, lack of fit*
- Q2: *What might explain race/gender differences in separation rates during this period*

#### B. Key Events

##### 1. Choice of Occupation

- Q1: *What factors affect an individual's choice of occupation*
- Q2: *Does occupational choice affect later career chances*
- Q3: *Are individuals aware of this when they make choice*
- Q4: *How does an officer learn this and influence the assignment*
- Q5: *Are there occupations minorities/women are more likely to choose*

##### 2. First Assignment

- Q1: *How much does one's first assignment matter*
- Q2: *Are there good/bad assignments*
- Q3: *How does an officer learn this*
- Q4: *How does an officer influence the assignment*

### IV. BEYOND INITIAL OBLIGATION (15)

#### A. Decision

- Q1: *Why are some more likely than others to leave after their initial obligation*
- Q2: *What internal/external pressures act on women at this time*
- Q3: *What's the constancy of intentions from time of accession*

**B. Ticket punches**

- Q1: *In the 4–6 years period, what experiences are officers trying to get: command, school, early augmentation*
- Q2: *What assignments are considered good/bad*
- Q3: *How does one learn about the tickets to punch and influence the ability to get them punched*

**C. Mentors**

- Q1: *How important to have a mentor in first 6–7 years*
- Q2: *Who has/doesn't have mentors, why*
- Q3: *What do mentors provide: information, access, influence*

**V. 0-5 AND BEYOND**

**A. Ideal career track**

- Q1: *What does the ideal career track look like: assignments, commands, school attendance, timing of these factors*
- Q2: *Other "hidden" requirements?*
- Q3: *How do you get information on the ideal career track*
- Q4: *How do you influence the ability to fill boxes*

**B. Who makes it /who doesn't make it**

- Q1: *Why might someone choose not to pursue the O-5–O-6 rank*
- Q2: *How easy to juggle career and family*
- Q3: *How early in a career can you identify those who will be COL v. those who won't make LTC*
- Q4: *What particular factors might directly affect women and minorities at this stage*

## **VI. EVALUATIONS AND BOARDS**

### **A. OERs**

- Q1: *Beyond job performance, how can an officer work to get best possible evaluation: personal relationship w/supervisor, background, interests, tastes, cultural, geographic*
- Q2: *How do perceptions/misunderstandings due to race/gender affect evaluation*
- Q3: *What other than job performance affects one's reputation as an officer: social, volunteer, sports/hobbies, spouse*
- Q4: *Does race/gender affect perceptions and expectations in these areas, positive/negative*
- Q5: *Other important informal rules, in what career segments*

### **B. File**

- Q1: *What can officer do to ensure file is accurate*
- Q2: *How proactive are officers in doing this*

### **C. Perception of board deliberations**

- Q1: *Does race/gender affect promotion chances or chances before other boards*

## **VII. RACE AND GENDER ISSUES**

### **A. Social relations**

- Q1: *Is there social self-segregation*

### **B. Misunderstanding/expectations**

- Q1: *Do misunderstandings arise*
- Q2: *Are their perceptions or expectations that lead the misunderstandings to arise*
- Q3: *Have issues related to sexual/racial harassment affected interactions between males and females*

Q4: *Does the fear of sexual/racial harassment influence choices made by individuals regarding their military career*

**C. Superiors' comfort with race/gender**

Q1: *Are some superiors/senior rates more comfortable with individuals of a different race and gender*

**D. Assignments and requirements**

Q1: *Are some assignment environments more comfortable for those of a different race and gender*

Q2: *Do some educational/technical requirements and assignments affect perceptions of a person's authority on the basis of race/gender*

**E. Does race/gender still matter?**

Q1: *Does race/gender still matter? Justify your answer in light of the observed differences in promotion and separation*