

MANAGEMENT

A Soldier's Life for Her

► On March 13, 2006, Elizabeth A. Okoreeh-Baah did what no woman had done before: She piloted the V-22 Osprey—a flying behemoth that takes off like a helicopter and then cruises like an airplane. The Marine Corps captain and graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy joined the military for challenges like this, as well as for educational and travel opportunities. But she stays in the service in large part for the equality.

“Nowhere else would I be guaranteed equal pay to my male counterparts,” says Okoreeh-Baah. “In the Marines, I know that another person with the same rank, the same position, and the same time in the service is getting paid exactly the same as I am. But in the civilian world, women are paid about three-fourths as much as men,” she notes. “That’s a major concern.”

Such unflattering views of “the civilian world” make women and minorities in the military quite pleased with their employ, finds Jennifer Hickes Lundquist, an assistant professor at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Across many occupations and many studies, white men report the greatest job satisfaction. But Lundquist’s research shows that in the U.S. Armed Forces, black women are happiest with their jobs, followed by black men, Latinas, Latinos, and white women. (White men are the least wowed by their work.) Lundquist’s analyses further show that women’s and minorities’ perceptions of



The military’s better than civilian life, say minorities and women such as Marine Corps Capt. Elizabeth Okoreeh-Baah, the first woman to pilot the V-22 Osprey.

better pay, promotions, and overall quality of life within the military, as compared to outside of it, drive their contentment.

“Most people don’t consider the military the best place to work because of the risk of death, loss of autonomy, constant deployment, and family separations,” Lundquist explains. “But for people who are disadvantaged in society, it’s a more level playing field.”

One field-leveler is the military’s rigid enforcement of equal employment opportunity policies. “In businesses, you can’t have top-down enforcement of equality,” says Lundquist. “And so private firms are going more into the area of diversity training, addressing inequality at the individual level rather than at the structural level.” Yet clear and consistently enforced employment, advancement, and

pay policies seem to smooth a faster path to workplace equality, other research shows. (For instance, see “Diversity Training Doesn’t Work” in the winter 2007 issue of the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*.) In the military, for example, sex ratios across occupations are more equal than among civilians.

“Having those rules written down and knowing that everyone knows about them empowers you to speak up against harassment or ill treatment,” attests Okoreeh-Baah. “The problem with most organizations is that they don’t have these things written down, and managers aren’t willing to talk about or deal with them.”

Because the military mandates evenhandedness, “there’s a lot more fraternization between people of all colors,” continues Lundquist. “[U.S.] civilian society still has so much residential and occupational segregation that some sociologists call the situation ‘apartheid.’ But in the military, people of all backgrounds live next door

to each other, shop together, work together.” This contact fosters warmer interracial relations, suggests a statistic from another one of Lundquist’s studies: Rates of interracial marriage are two to three times greater in the military than in the civilian world.

To examine gender and racial patterns in military job satisfaction, Lundquist analyzed the responses of 30,489 military service people to the Pentagon’s 1999 Survey of Active Duty Personnel. Her analyses controlled for age, education, rank, service branch, occupational area, time in service, marital status, and several other confounds.

“Often people think of the military as a conservative organization,” Lundquist concludes. But when it comes to racial and gender equality, “it has been very progressive because it wants to have efficient use of its manpower. If you have unity, you have a more efficient force.” ■

Jennifer Hickes Lundquist, “Ethnic and Gender Satisfaction in the Military: The Effect of a Meritocratic Institution,” *American Sociological Review*, 73, 2008.

DEVELOPMENT

Can’t Buy Me Democracy

► “Pretty much every agency or nonprofit out there acts under the assumption that if you help people grow economically, this will lead to democracy,” says Simon Johnson, a professor at MIT’s Sloan School of Management. Yet the widespread notion that increasing per capita income will cause democracy simply isn’t true, report Johnson and his colleagues in a