

Comparing characteristics of successful vs. non-successful candidates within an elite special forces unit.

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Background: As far back as WW2 governments have been interested in the creation of special warfare units. One example of such a unit was the storied American unit, the Office of Strategic Service (OSS)(Banks, 2006). This group represents the first documented circumstances of a strategic and systematic assessment processes in the book “Assessment of Men” (OSS Assessment Staff, 1948). With the ever changing landscape of war, the demand for SOF units has dramatically increased, particularly since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and the Iraq and Afghanistan wars (Tucker,1951). With this increase in demand, a premium has been placed on refining the identification and selection of appropriate personnel. Individual units are tasked with various capabilities that help protect their individual country’s national interests. Establishing archetypes and minimum thresholds for individuals who successfully complete and enter into these units may help enable effective and efficient selection of its personnel.

Objective: The scope of this project is to develop a better understanding of individuals who successfully complete both the assessment period and special operations qualifications course and subsequently graduate to operations within the unit.

Method: Data collected prior to the assessment period and special operations qualifications course will be analyzed and compared to the success rate of candidates through course.

Significance: Due to the nature of Special Operations units and national security concerns the majority of literature published remains classified, this leaves individual units to develop internal protocols that are both relevant and practical to their needs and capabilities. To better understand the individuals who enter into this particular unit and subsequently inform future decisions the unit has placed a high premium on developing a multi-dimensional archetype for its incoming Operators. This project represents one of the many efforts to accomplish this task.