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CHANGES IN BLACK AND WHITE PERCEPTIONS OF THE ARMY'S RACE RELATIONS/EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROGRAMS--1972 TO 1974

James A. Thomas

ARI FIELD UNIT AT PRESIDIO OF MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

November 1976

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This Utilization Report outlines the findings obtained from the replication of a survey of the attitudes toward, and knowledge and perceptions of, the Army's race relations problems and equal opportunity and treatment (EOT) programs. The initial survey was conducted in the summer of 1972, the replication in the summer of 1974. Data were collected using the Enlisted Personnel Questionnaire with 2,246 white and 1,943 black Army enlisted personnel at 13 Army installations (eight in the Continental U.S.; three

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20. in U.S. Army, Pacific; and two in the U.S. Army, Europe) as respondents. The report summarizes a comparison of the 1972 and 1974 findings.

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FOREWORD

Typically, R&D Utilization Reports discuss the effective utilization of research developed by the Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) or under contract to ARI. Final reports contain a more detailed presentation and are available on a limited basis.

In response to specific requirements of the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs of the Army Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel (DCSPER) and of Army Project 2Q763744A769, "Army Contemporary Issue Development," ARI initiated broadly based surveys in 1972 and 1974 to determine the attitudes and perceptions of Army personnel on race problems and the Army's equal opportunity programs. The surveys were conducted and analyzed, under ARI guidance, by Human Sciences Research, Inc., under Contracts DAHC 19-72-C-0014 and DAHC 19-74-C-0047.

J. E. UHLANER
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CHANGES IN BLACK AND WHITE PERCEPTIONS OF THE ARMY'S RACE RELATIONS/EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROGRAMS--1972 TO 1974

In 1972, the Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) initiated an Army-wide survey to determine how black and white Army personnel perceived the nature and severity of the race problem, and how they perceived the various equal opportunity and treatment programs then in existence. In 1974, the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs, DCSPER, which had sponsored the 1972 survey, requested ARI to conduct a follow-up survey to determine what changes, if any, had occurred in these attitudes and perceptions during the intervening period.

PROCEDURE

ARI contracted with Human Sciences Research, Inc. (HSR) to replicate, in essence, the 1972 survey which HSR had also conducted under ARI guidance. The Enlisted Personnel Questionnaire used in the 1972 survey covered eleven content areas, as shown in Table 1. This instrument, with only a few slight modifications, was administered during June-September 1974 to a sample of 2246 white and 1943 black enlisted personnel at the same 13 installations surveyed in 1972 (eight in the Continental U.S.; three in U.S. Army, Pacific; and two in U.S. Army, Europe). The composition of the 1972 and 1974 enlisted samples, compared with the composition of the total Army at the time of the sampling, is shown in Table 2. The 1972 survey also sampled, by interviews and a questionnaire, the perceptions of 127 commanders and 126 personnel with responsibility in the equal opportunity and treatment programs.

FINDINGS

The findings from these surveys can be generalized and summarized for discussion under the broad categories of (1) how Army personnel perceived the Army's race problem, (2) how they perceived Army Equal Opportunity and Treatment programs, and (3) their experiences and perceptions of race relations education programs.

Table 1

DESCRIPTION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

	Content Area	No. of Questions
I.	Respondent Background	11
II.	Race Problems in the Army in General	34
III.	EOT Regulations and Procedures	26
IV.	Promotion/Selection	6
V.	Military Justice System	37
VI.	Services and Products Available to Minorities	24
VII.	EOT Officer	19
VIII.	Off-Post Housing	15
IX.	Race Relations Education	28
X.	Race Relations Seminars and Councils	34
XI.	Racial Attitudes and Perceptions	43
		277

Table 2

COMPARISON OF ARMY COMPOSITION AND SAMPLE COMPOSITION FOR 1972 AND 1974

	1972 (N = 3,656)		1974 (N = 4,189)	
	Army Composition	Survey Sample	Army Composition	Survey Sample
Pay Grade				
E2-E4	57.4%	57.4%	62.1%	56.3%
E5-E6	31.8%	33.2%	27.8%	32.2%
E7-E9	10.7%	9.3%	10.1%	11.5%
Race				
White		53.0%		54.0%
Black		47.0%		46.0%

On the basis of the results of the 1972 survey, it was concluded that:[1]

> First and foremost, a distinct cleavage exists with respect to how the race problem is perceived. . . . Whites tend to buy the proposition that the Army is as its basic policy says it is--free from racial discrimination. Blacks, on the other hand, see the Army as highly discriminatory by race. This difference is also correlated with grade, such that officers and higher enlisted grades tend to see the race problems as less serious than do the lower enlisted grades. The overall result is that the majority view and the view of Army leadership tends to be that the race problem in the Army is really not a serious problem. This predominating view tends to mask and obscure the fact that the dissenting view is held by those who are the victims of racial discrimination--the racial minority.
>
> Moreover, whites tend to see the race problem as getting worse, whereas blacks tend to see it as getting better. Could both be attending to the same thing?
>
> For blacks, the areas of highest concern are: (1) the administration of military justice and (2) promotions and selection. There appear indications that blacks perceive the Army as taking positive actions in other areas such as race relations education and in providing minority-oriented products and services, but that these areas are perceived as less important sources of racial tensions.
>
> An issue of considerable import is the question of the extent to which improving race relations is accepted as a <u>leadership responsibility</u> by Army leadership. Although official doctrine and pronouncements by the Secretary of the Army and other Army leaders have stated unequivocally that it is a leadership responsibility, Army enlisted personnel do not perceive that Army leaders accept it as such. Our overall impression was that although the realization that race relations and equal opportunity are leadership responsibilities is growing, it is far from being universally accepted.

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[1] Nordlie, P. and Thomas, J. Black and White Perceptions of the Army's Race Relations/Equal Opportunity Programs (U). ARI Technical Paper 252 (FOUO). May 1974. (AD 919 587)

Results from the 1974 survey did not contradict these 1972 findings. The differences which did appear between the 1972 and 1974 results were small in magnitude and occurred at a level of detail such that the general findings were highly similar for the two years; for the most part those differences emphasized the trends identified earlier rather than negating them. The basic cleavage in perceptions still existed, with whites seeing a favorable picture and blacks seeing the continued existence of basic inequities throughout all important aspects of Army life dealt with in the surveys. Promotion and selection and military justice continued to be regarded as the areas most in need of improvement, and few enlisted personnel saw most of their leaders as accepting equal opportunity and treatment of their men as a leadership responsibility.

In 1974 a few more blacks as well as whites saw the state of Army race relations as not so bad, and improving over time. However, the favorable implications of that finding were somewhat balanced by signs of growing "white backlash" attitudes. Backlash was evidenced by the small but growing proportions of white personnel who felt that the Army Race Relations/Equal Opportunity program gave black Army personnel an unfair advantage.

The overriding generalization from the data, however, was again that the perceptions of blacks and white in the Army still differed sharply, although the small changes which were discernible in 1974 tended to be in the direction of coming together.

Perceptions of the Equal Opportunity and Treatment Programs

The 1972 survey reported reasonable satisfaction with availability of services and products oriented to minority groups (such as black-oriented products in the PX), in contrast to the dissatisfaction with the lack of such items a few years before. In 1974 complaints were even fewer and satisfaction higher, especially among black soldiers; improvement was still perceived to be occurring.

In 1974, knowledge about the existence of all EOT programs had become more widespread among enlisted personnel than in 1972, and for whites even more than blacks. Accuracy of knowledge about a number of procedures and regulations concerning equality of opportunity and treatment had also increased to a modest extent among both races. The number of enlisted personnel who attributed a great deal of command support to EOT programs had increased. The program for Equal Opportunity in Off-Post Housing was still not widely known, however. Utilization of the Housing Referral Office had increased since 1972, but user satisfaction had taken a decided drop, especially among blacks.

Knowledge of the existence of the Equal Opportunity Officer had increased at the local level since 1972, although the proportion of people utilizing the services provided by the EO Officer had remained the same. Fewer enlisted personnel felt that the position of EO Officer was a necessary one in 1974 than in 1972, especially among whites.

Overall, more people were aware of the existence of EOT programs, but proportionately fewer were satisfied with the effectiveness of those programs. One possible explanation is that the quality of service provided by the programs had deteriorated with age or with increased demands. Another possibility is that in 1972 the survey respondents were evaluating a program which had existed for only a short time, while in 1974 they were evaluating programs which had been in existence for two or more years. Perhaps expectations were unrealistically high and had not been met; or perhaps the relative improvement over the two-year span was so small as to be negligible, and that fact was being reflected in responses to the survey.

Whatever the explanation, the clear implication was that EOT programs needed to have their achievements publicized--or might actually have needed to be upgraded in order to create higher levels of user satisfaction. But at the same time, it must be recognized that such efforts would have resulted in increased backlash feelings among whites who may have seen themselves as not only not gaining anything from EOT programs, but perhaps losing an advantage they felt they already had. Thus, there was the implied need for developing means to avoid the backlash effect.

Army Experience with Race Relations Training

At the time of the 1972 survey, the Army's massive program of race relations education was relatively new. Only a minority of the officer sample and less than half of the enlisted sample reported having received race relations training, either as the Race Relations course given during Basic Combat Training or the "Leadership Aspects of Race Relations" course, in 1972. By the time of the 1974 survey more than 60% of the respondents had received race relations training in one or the other of these courses. Participants felt that while the courses were clear, informative, and basically well taught, the probability of their producing any real and lasting change in communication or interpersonal relations was rather small. Considerably fewer respondents in 1974 than in 1972 seemed to feel that such courses should be mandatory, and whites more frequently than blacks expressed the opinion that the courses should not be required.

Blacks in general had a higher opinion of the courses than did whites. Blacks more often felt they had benefited from the instruction in specific ways, and they attached considerably more importance to such training than whites.

Much the same generalizations held for Racial Awareness Program (RAP) Seminars, where attendance was up, but with increasing numbers of people who considered their value to be limited. Here again, blacks were more favorably disposed than whites.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the perceptions of the Army personnel sampled, both black and white, substantially supported the proposition that the racial situation in the Army had improved.

The areas of promotions and military justice remained the primary sources of dissatisfaction for blacks, although significant improvement in both areas were perceived. There was far less dissatisfaction in 1974 with military justice than there was in 1972.

The role of Equal Opportunity Officer had become clearly recognized in the Army.

Favorable perceptions of race relations training had decreased compared with 1972, but the results of race relations training in terms of increased knowledge and awareness appeared definite.

Although the sharp cleavage in black-white perceptions and attitudes noted in 1972 still existed, there also had been a clear-cut convergence of black and white perceptions on certain basic issues.

The findings are believed to generally indicate real and important changes which have occurred in the Army with respect to equal opportunity and treatment. Even though the changes in perceptions were small, they were consistently in the same direction. It is believed, although it cannot be proven with the data of this survey, that the positive changes were, for the most part, the direct result of the Army's race relations and equal opportunity programs.

UTILIZATION

The Director, Office of Equal Opportunity Programs treated the 1974 report as an initial evaluation of the Army's Race Relations/Equal Opportunity Program, and used it as a primary data source in the revision of the RR/EO program, as well as in preparing guidelines for the revision of Unit Race Relations Training Program. This office is currently planning to publish a condensed version of this research as a DA Circular. The Administration Center, Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana included findings in the Command and Equal Opportunity Staff

Manager's Guide. The Commander, 25th Infantry Division, required all officers on his staff to read the report to insure their keeping abreast of recent developments in this area.

Race Relations educators and trainers, including those at the Defense Race Relations Institute, Patrick Air Force Base, Florida used the report as a resource reference in updating race relations training programs.

The Feedback reports submitted to commanders of the data collection installations were used at some installations to upgrade indicated program deficiences.

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