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**U.S. Army Research Institute
for the Behavioral and Social Sciences**

Research Report 1662

Perceptions of Army Officers in a Changing Army

**Beverly C. Harris
U.S. Army Research Institute**

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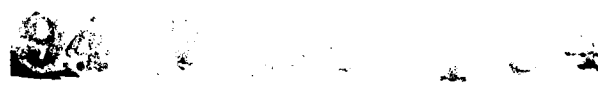
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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188), Washington, DC 20503.

1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)	2. REPORT DATE 1994, June	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Final Jun 88 - Apr 94
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4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Perceptions of Army Officers in a Changing Army	5. FUNDING NUMBERS 62785A 791 2304 H01
6. AUTHOR(S) Harris, Beverly C.	

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences 5001 Eisenhower Avenue Alexandria, VA 22333-5600	8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER ARI Research Report 1662
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9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences ATTN: PERI-RG 5001 Eisenhower Avenue Alexandria, VA 22333-5600	10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER --
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11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES
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12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.	12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE --
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13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words)

The purpose of the Longitudinal Research on Officer Careers (LROC) research project was to track the changes in attitudes and career experiences of company grade officers over time; to identify the individual, organizational, psychosocial, and family factors that influence officer career decisions; and to investigate the effects of policy change and world events on the attitudes and career decisions of officers. The LROC survey was conducted annually from 1988 to 1992. Interviews were also conducted in 1991. This report highlights results from the four surveys and the interviews. Specifically, the report focuses on the factors that potentially influence career decisions, namely, organizational identification, job/career issues, and the perceived impact of downsizing.

Results indicate that officers participating in the LROC project were strongly committed to the Army; however, they were more concerned and less confident about their career prospects in 1992 than they were in 1988. About 35-40% of the officers were not in the branch of their choice. This branch mismatch negatively influenced their job and career satisfaction and their perceptions of their career prospects.

(Continued)

14. SUBJECT TERMS Attitudes Company grade officers Branching Retention Career experiences Downsizing Career intentions	15. NUMBER OF PAGES 37
	16. PRICE CODE --

17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Unlimited
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13. ABSTRACT (Continued)

Officers who stayed in the Army over the 4 years of LROC became increasingly more concerned about their transition to a civilian job. More officers who left, in contrast, felt it would be easy to find a good civilian job.

Officers were increasingly concerned about the negative impact of downsizing on them, their careers, and the Army. About 30% reported high to extremely high stress levels in their jobs. Increasing demands, high levels of stress, and few perceived alternatives for branch change or civilian opportunities may have a negative impact on morale, performance, and, ultimately, on readiness. Company grade officers are very vulnerable to the changes taking place in the Army and, as the middle of the workforce, would be impossible to immediately replace.

Research Report 1662

Perceptions of Army Officers in a Changing Army

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Department of the Army

June 1994

Army Project Number
2Q162785A791

Manpower, Personnel and Training

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FOREWORD

The Leadership and Organizational Change Technical Area (LOCTA) of the Manpower and Personnel Research Division, U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) conducts research on leadership, personnel, and organizational change. As part of this program, longitudinal research has been conducted over the last 5 years on the attitudes, career experiences, and career decisions of company grade officers in the U.S. Army. The major component of this research has been an annual survey, the Longitudinal Research on Officer Careers (LROC) survey, administered from 1988 to 1992.

The LROC survey has been conducted during a period of major change for the Army. Since 1988, when it was first administered, Congress has mandated significant reductions in the size of the military, troops were deployed for Operation Desert Shield/Storm (ODS), and the Army began actively downsizing the force immediately after the ODS conflict. The data from the LROC survey provide a unique opportunity to examine changes in the attitudes, career experiences, and perceptions of officers who have been in the Army during this chaotic period of change.

This report highlights results from the 1988-1992 LROC surveys, as well as officer interviews conducted in 1991, to track changes in attitudes over the four surveys. Specifically, the report focuses on the factors that potentially influence career decisions, namely, organizational identification, job/career issues, and the perceived impact of downsizing. Findings from each survey have been briefed to directorates and commands throughout the Army since 1989. Information on the 4-year trends was briefed to the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, early in 1993.

EDGAR M. JOHNSON
Director

PERCEPTIONS OF ARMY OFFICERS IN A CHANGING ARMY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Requirement:

The purpose of the Longitudinal Research on Officer Careers (LROC) survey was to track the changes in attitudes and career experiences of company grade officers over time; to identify the individual, organizational, psychosocial, and family factors that influence officer career decisions; and to investigate the effects of policy change and world events on the attitudes and career decisions of officers. This report highlights results from the 1988-1992 LROC surveys, as well as officer interviews conducted in 1991, to examine the changes in attitudes over the four surveys. Specifically, the report focuses on the factors that potentially influence career decisions, namely, organizational identification, job/career issues, and the perceived impact of downsizing.

Procedure:

In the fall of each year, beginning in 1988, the Longitudinal Research on Officer Careers survey was mailed to a stratified random sample of company grade officers (second lieutenants, first lieutenants, and captains) commissioned from 1980 through the year preceding the survey year. The sampling plan called for stratification by gender, source of commission, and year of commissioning. Survey content centered on the attitudes, career experiences, satisfaction, and family experiences of officers from commissioning through mid-career (approximately 10 years). To obtain the maximum number of longitudinal respondents, officers were kept in the sample and resurveyed every year of the research unless they left the Army. Including both the new sample selected for each year and respondents retained from previous years, approximately 10,000 officers were surveyed each year.

The cross-sectional respondents for each survey totaled 5,598 officers in 1988; 5,553 in 1989; 4,997 in 1990; and 4,563 in 1992. Response rates were 63%, 51%, 52%, and 47%, respectively. Overall, the respondents were fairly representative of the total population of company grade officers.

In the fall of 1991, individual interviews were conducted with 458 company grade officers attending an Officer Advanced Course (OAC) at one of nine Training and Doctrine Command

(TRADOC) schools. Interviews were conducted to provide additional insight into data from the LROC surveys.

Findings:

Overall, the company grade officers participating in the LROC surveys were strongly committed to the Army. However, they were more concerned about their career prospects now than they were in 1988. In addition, officers felt that the downsizing would have a negative impact not only on them, but on the Army as well.

Organizational Identification

Over 90% of the officers in all years indicated that they were proud to tell others that they were in the Army, over 70% were satisfied with their Army jobs and with life as an officer, and about 66% of the married officers reported that their spouses were satisfied with the Army as a way of life. In 1988, 47% of the officers thought the Army would protect their benefits and retirement; by 1992 this percentage dropped to 29%. The percentage of officers saying that job security was better in the Army than it would be in any civilian organization also dropped from 63% in 1988 to 40% in 1992.

Job/Career Issues

About 73% of the officers consistently reported that they were satisfied with their jobs. However, there was a substantial increase in the number of officers who were concerned about the impact of manpower changes and Congressional budget cuts on their careers, and satisfaction with career prospects dropped from 61% in 1988 to 49% in 1992. The percentage of officers expressing confidence in their promotions and assignments also decreased. In addition, about 1/3 of the officers surveyed in 1990 and 1992 reported high to extremely high job stress.

Over the course of the research, approximately 38% of the male officers and 48% of the female officers indicated there was not a match between the branch they wanted to be in and their branch assignment. Officers indicating this branch mismatch were also less satisfied with their jobs and career prospects and fewer were confident about promotions and assignments. However, officers said that changing branches, particularly after a few years, was too costly to their careers.

Civilian Alternatives

Responses to the set of questions on the ease of making the transition to a civilian job changed substantially over the 4 years. A decreasing number of officers perceived that it was

easy to find a good civilian job, and over half indicated that it would be financially difficult to be without a job for 2 to 3 months if they needed time to find a new job. In contrast, more officers who left the Army over the 4 years of the survey felt it would be easy to find a good civilian job based on their responses to the last LROC survey they completed. (From the 1990 survey responses, 56% of those who left versus 39% of those who stayed said it would be easy/very easy to find a good civilian job.)

Utilization of Findings:

The LROC results provide a tracking of the trends and changes in Army officer attitudes and career decisions. Taking the "pulse" of the officer corps allows senior leadership to more clearly evaluate the impact of events and policy changes on officers. The longitudinal data also allow more dynamic analyses of the impact of events such as ODS and downsizing on the factors that are related to officer retention. The results from LROC provide key information for the development of manpower policies and plans for accession, branching, and retention of the officer corps.

This longitudinal research will continue in 1994/95 and officers will be surveyed every 1 to 2 years to continue taking the "pulse" of the company grade officers. This project provides feedback to decisionmakers on a very important component of the workforce--early and mid-career Army leaders. These leaders maintain the continuity and capability to field an adequate force through the process of downsizing and represent the selection pool for the future senior leadership of the Army.

PERCEPTIONS OF ARMY OFFICERS IN A CHANGING ARMY

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PERCEPTIONS OF ARMY OFFICERS IN A CHANGING ARMY

Introduction

The last 5 years have witnessed unprecedented world change and turmoil. The cold war ended; Russia and Germany, in particular, have experienced structural, political, and economic instability; and military forces from all over the world came together to stop Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm (ODS). The United States, during this same period of time, experienced significant economic problems resulting in budget cuts affecting both the public and private sectors. For the military, these budget cuts were particularly extensive and called for significant force reductions into FY 1995 and beyond. Force reductions were put on hold during ODS; however, they began almost immediately at the end of the war.

For the Army, downsizing includes closing bases in the U.S. and Europe and reducing personnel from approximately 750,000 to approximately 530,000 by FY 1995. In addition, there has been an increased concern that the end strength may go below 500,000 with the reductions extending even beyond FY 1995. At the same time the Army is dramatically changing the structure and function of the organization, it must maintain the capability to field a quality force not only for combat missions but for expanding operations other than war, such as U.N. peacekeeping, peace enforcing, humanitarian relief, and disaster relief, to name a few.

Although the Army has downsized and restructured after every major conflict, the last being Vietnam, this is the first significant reduction in personnel since the Army became an all volunteer force. Before downsizing, officers who volunteered were "promised," directly or indirectly, a career as one of the benefits for taking on a very demanding job that included the possibility of putting their life on the line to defend their country. In an update of DA PAM 600-3 dated 30 April 1986, a chart stated the promotion opportunities for newly commissioned officers: 100% would be promoted to first lieutenant (1LT), 95% would be promoted to captain (CPT), and 80% would be promoted to major (MAJ) based primarily on time in service and an acceptable Officer Evaluation Report (OER). Once promoted to MAJ, officers perceived that they were "guaranteed" basic retirement at 20 years. Downsizing has significantly changed these organizational norms by limiting lieutenant accessions, convening Selective Early Retirement Boards for high ranking officers, limiting promotions at all ranks, targeting officers for potential involuntary separation at all ranks, and creating an uncertain, highly competitive environment with no guarantees of a career or retirement. These fundamental changes cannot help but affect perceptions of the Army, particularly for officers

evaluating their jobs and their long-term career potential. The changes taking place could potentially shift officers' perspectives in a way that tips the existing balance between their demanding jobs and the benefits of their Army careers (Moskos, 1987).

The U.S. Army Research Institute has been engaged in a program of research over the last 5 years entitled Longitudinal Research on Officer Careers (LROC) as part of its ongoing manpower research on leadership, retention, and organizational change. The main part of this research has been the LROC Survey conducted annually to track the attitudes and concerns of company grade officers [second lieutenants (2LT), first lieutenants (1LT), and captains (CPT)] from 1988 through 1992. The longitudinal nature of this research and the coincidence of the LROC Surveys with the budget cuts and downsizing allows an examination of the changes in attitudes and concerns of company grade officers on a number of career and Army issues. In addition, for the 1990 and 1992 Surveys, a specific set of questions was added to address the perceptions of officers on the impact of downsizing on them, their job/career, and on the Army.

This report provides a summary of the changes in attitudes and perceptions of all officers responding to each of the four LROC Surveys (1988-1992). Specifically, it focuses on the factors that potentially influence career decisions, namely, organizational identification, job/career issues, and the perceived impact of downsizing.

Method

In the fall of each year, beginning in 1988 and ending in 1992,¹ the LROC Survey was mailed to a stratified random sample of company grade officers commissioned from 1980 through the year preceding the survey year. The sampling plan called for stratification by gender, source of commission [Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) and United States Military Academy (USMA)], and year of commissioning. Survey content centered on the attitudes, career experiences, satisfaction, and family experiences of officers from commissioning through mid-career (approximately 10 years). To obtain the maximum number of longitudinal respondents, officers were kept in the sample and resurveyed every year of the research unless they left the Army. Including both the new sample selected for each year and respondents retained from previous years, approximately 10,000 officers were surveyed each year.

¹ Delays in returns of the 1990 LROC Survey caused by deployments for Operation Desert Shield/Storm (ODS) and troop movements post-ODS necessitated a change in mailing date of the 1991 Survey from fall 1991 to February 1992. To avoid confusion, the name was changed to the 1992 LROC Survey reflecting the time of mailing.

The cross-sectional respondents for each survey totaled 5,598 in 1988; 5,553 in 1989; 4,997 in 1990; and 4,563 in 1992. Response rates were 63%, 51%, 52%, and 47%, respectively. Overall, the respondents were fairly representative of the total population of company grade officers. More detailed information on the background of LROC, the sampling plan, and the strata is available in Harris and Wochinger (1993).

To supplement the LROC Survey data, individual interviews were conducted in the fall of 1991 with 458 company grade officers attending an Officer Advanced Course (OAC) at one of nine Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) schools. Information from these interviews provided additional insight into data from the LROC Surveys. More detailed information on the interviews is available in Connelly, Dunn, Phillips, Schwartz, and Harris (1993).

The original sampling plan for the LROC Survey called for oversampling female officers and officers commissioned from USMA to insure adequate numbers for subgroup analyses. Weighting procedures were used to correct for oversampling so that analyses reported here are representative of the population of company grade officers in the Army at the time of each survey.

Results

Respondents to each of the surveys were demographically very similar. Unweighted percentages from the 1988 Survey indicate:

- 73% were male; 27% female.
- 84% of male officers were white, 10% black, and 7% other minorities; 71% of female officers were white, 21% black, and 8% were other minorities.
- 10% were 2LTs; 31% were 1LTs; and 59% were CPTs.
- 27% were commissioned from ROTC scholarship programs; 36% from ROTC non-scholarship programs; and 37% from USMA.
- 54% were in Combat Arms branches; 18% in Combat Support branches; 19% in Combat Service Support branches; and about 10% in Special branches.
- 39% were from Forces Command; 20% from Training & Doctrine Command; and 31% were from Europe in 1988 dropping to 19% in 1992.
- 67% of male officers were married in 1988 increasing to 74% in 1992; 51% of female officers were married in 1988 increasing to 58% in 1992.
- 99% had bachelor's degrees; by 1992, 41% reported education beyond the bachelor's degree.

Because officers were kept in the sample and resurveyed each year, respondents tended to increase in rank over the course of the research--in 1992, 8% were 2LTs, 22% were 1LTs, 66% were CPTs, and 4% were MAJs.

Approximately 85-90% of the respondents were assigned to Army Competitive Category branches:

- Combat Arms (CA) branches
 - Infantry (IN)
 - Armor (AR)
 - Field Artillery (FA)
 - Air Defense Artillery (AD)
 - Aviation (AV)
 - Special Forces (SF)
 - Corps of Engineers (CE)
- Combat Support (CS) branches
 - Signal Corps (SC)
 - Military Police Corps (MP)
 - Military Intelligence (MI)
 - Chemical Corps (CM)]
- Combat Service Support (CSS) branches
 - Adjutant General (AG)
 - Finance Corps (FC)
 - Transportation Corps (TC)
 - Ordnance Corps (OR)
 - Quartermaster Corps (QM)]

Officers assigned to these branches are the primary focus of this report. Officers assigned to the Special branches [Judge Advocate General Corps (JA), Chaplain Corps (CH), and all medical/dental branches (MD)] are only included when branch comparisons are made.

Organizational Identification

Over 90% of the LROC officers said they were proud to tell people they were in the Army and they were pleased when their work made a contribution to the Army mission. About three-quarters felt they were a part of the Army and were satisfied with their life as an officer. Also, 66% of the married officers reported their spouses were satisfied with the Army way of life.

Overall, career intentions remained fairly stable over the four survey years. However, if we only look at officers who said they intend to stay in the Army 20 or more years, the percent of male officers increased from 51% in 1988 to 62% in 1992. For female officers, the percentages were 34% and 48%, respectively. In 1992, in addition to the question "how many years do you expect to stay in the Army," officers were asked "how many years would you like to stay in the Army." Figure 1 compares the percentage of officers who indicated 20 or more years for these two questions by rank and gender. Figure 1 illustrates that

significantly more company grade officers would like to stay 20 or more years than expect to stay 20+ years. Also, more male officers than female officers expect to/would like to stay 20 or more years. At field grade level (MAJ) gender differences disappear.

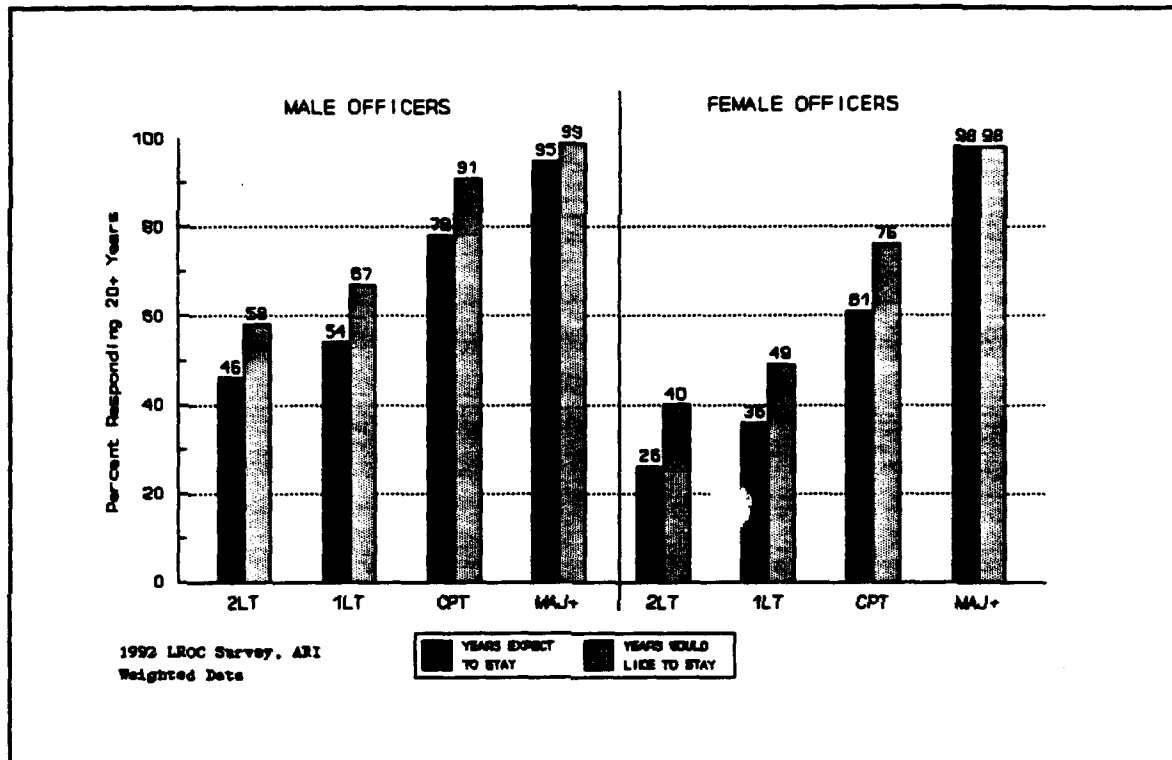


Figure 1. More LROC officers would like to stay in the Army 20 years or more than expect to stay 20 years or more.

When asked to identify factors that were better or much better in the Army compared to civilian organizations, about half of the officers consistently said retirement benefits, other benefits, educational assistance, feelings about the organization's mission and goals, and the level of integrity.

However, the perception of two organizational issues changed over the course of the research. In 1988, 63% of the officers felt that job security was better or much better in the Army than in civilian organizations; this percentage dropped to 40% in 1992. Also in 1988, 47% agreed that the Army would protect their benefits and retirement; by 1992, only 29% agreed.

Job/Career Issues

Job/work environment. Overall, job satisfaction for both male and female officers (see Figure 2) remained fairly constant over the 4 years with approximately 73% indicating they were satisfied/very satisfied with their jobs and about 80% were satisfied with the kinds of assignments they have had. Two-thirds or more were satisfied with the kind of work they do in their current assignments, and their opportunity to learn and develop relevant skills, to do work that interests them, and to exercise their initiative.

Over the 4 surveys, the officers reported an average work week of 57 hours. Officers in 1992 reported that the shortest average work week was 45 hours for both male and female officers and the longest was 70 hours for male officers and 60 hours for female officers. About 35% of officers also reported high to very high stress levels in their jobs for both 1990 and 1992. Interviews with CPTs in the Officer Advance Course (OAC) (Connelly, et al., 1993) indicated that job stress was related to the commander's style, lack of resources to accomplish tasks, and long work hours. Most officers felt that a certain amount of stress "just went with the job." However, only 33% of officers said they were satisfied with the time available to pursue personal life goals, and slightly fewer than 30% agreed that a rewarding career could compensate for a limited personal/family life.

Career prospects. Unlike job satisfaction which remained fairly constant, the percent of officers reporting satisfaction with their career prospects dropped from 61% in 1988 to 49% in 1992. Figure 2 provides a comparison of the changes in job satisfaction and career prospect satisfaction for each year of the survey. As Figure 2 illustrates, there was considerable agreement on these items between male and female officers and a clear differentiation between the concept of job and that of career.²

Consistent with the changes in career prospect satisfaction, fewer officers were confident about other career issues, especially male officers. Table 1 gives the percent of officers who agreed or strongly agreed with two statements related to their future careers in 1988 compared to 1992.

² Any exceptions to male/female agreement are noted in the text, tables, or figures in this report.

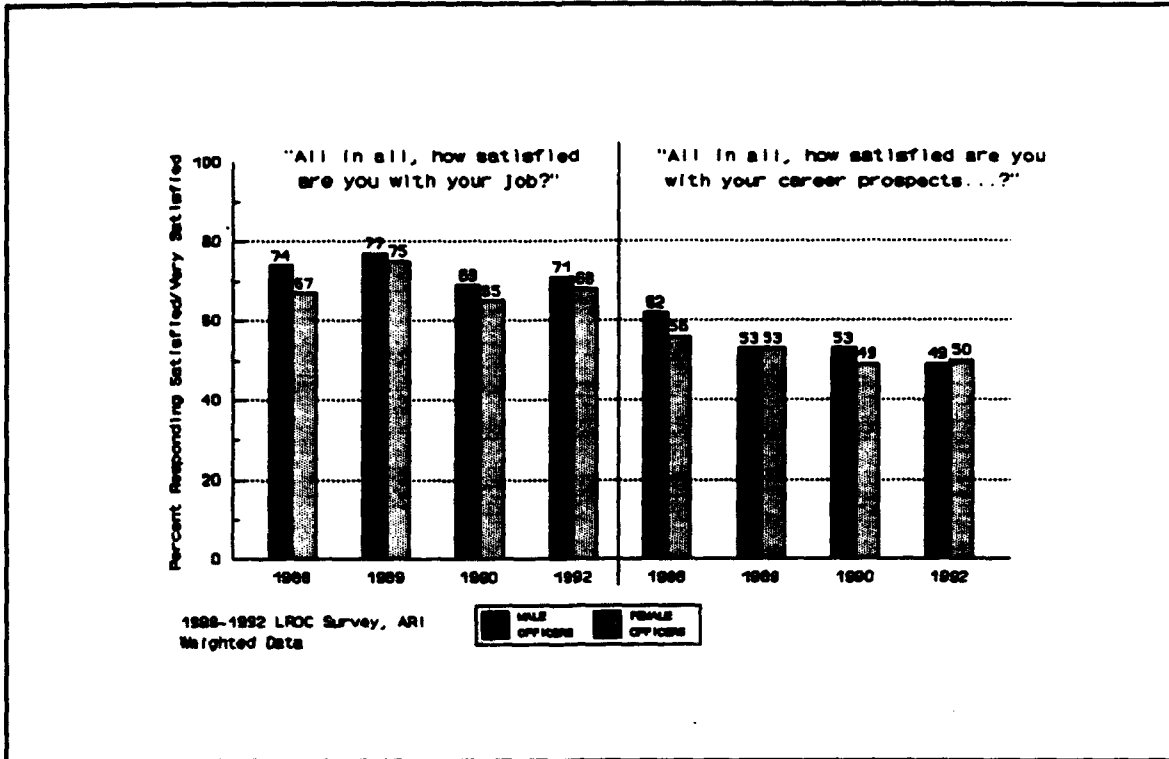


Figure 2. Army officers reporting job and career prospect satisfaction from 1988 to 1992: Stability vs. decline.

Table 1

The Percent of Officers Who Were Confident in Promotions and Assignments Decreased From 1988 to 1992.

	<u>Male Officers</u>		<u>Female Officers</u>	
	<u>1988</u>	<u>1992</u>	<u>1988</u>	<u>1992</u>
	% indicating agree/strongly agree			
"I am confident I will be promoted as high as my ability and interest warrant if I stay in the Army."	67%	54%	67%	63%
"I am confident I will get the kinds of assignments I need to be competitive for promotions."	55%	47%	47%	42%

At the same time that confidence in career prospects decreased, there was an increase in the percent of officers who were concerned about the impact on their careers of changes in Army manpower needs and Congressional budget cuts. Figure 3 shows the changes for each year of the survey and again indicates considerable agreement between male and female officers.

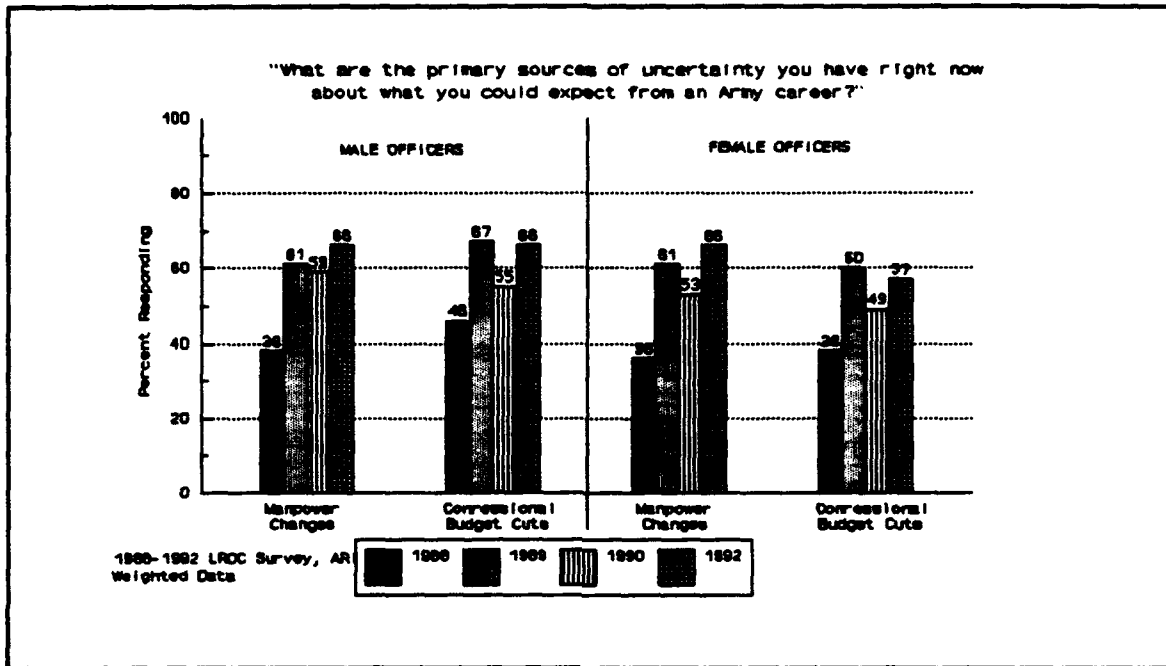


Figure 3. The percent of Army officers concerned about Army manpower changes and Congressional budget cuts increased from 1988 to 1992.

Interestingly, the changes in Figure 3 appear to track the events and changes that were taking place in the Army--talk of downsizing in 1989, ODS during 1990, and downsizing actions beginning in 1991.

Officer evaluation/selection system (OES). Consistently over the 4 years of the survey, few officers considered the OES an effective system for evaluating the officer corps. About 30% of the male officers and 22% of the female officers agreed or strongly agreed that the "Officer evaluation/selection system is effective in promoting the best officers" and that the "Officer evaluation/selection system rewards officers for integrity and professionalism."

From the written comments received on the surveys and the interviews conducted in 1991 (Connelly, et al, 1993), officers indicated little confidence in the OES as a reliable, objective way to discriminate excellent, good, marginal, and poor performing officers. At a time when the Army needs to accurately evaluate performance both for downsizing and effective force

restructuring, this lack of confidence in the evaluation system is particularly troubling. Officers gave a number of reasons why the system was not working, including: inflated ratings; ratings based on personality not performance; senior raters too far removed; and the system needs more quantification (as in the NCO Enlisted Evaluation Report).

Branch assignments. When officers are commissioned into the Army, they are assigned a basic branch (i.e., Infantry, Signal Corp, Corp of Engineers, Ordnance, etc.). This branch assignment determines, in many respects, key work and career issues, such as the types of assignments available, the kind of work required, career potential, promotion and command opportunities, etc.

In 1988, more male officers than female officers thought that the opportunities for advancement in their branch were good or very good (64% vs. 58%). However, by 1992 this gender difference had disappeared (55% vs. 54%). Over all 4 years of the survey, about 23% of the male officers and 38% of the female officers have consistently felt that command opportunities in their branch were limited or very limited. In 1992, two additional questions revealed that about 28% of all officers felt there was a close match between their branch duties and their college majors; however, 64% of the male officers and 55% of the female officers said their expectations about their prospective branch duties were close to their actual branch duties.

Beginning in 1988, the LROC Survey results have consistently found that about 38% of the male officers and 48% of the female officers were not in the branch they preferred. Based on previous research, the mismatch of officers' preferences with their actual assignments could, potentially, influence satisfaction, performance, and retention (Caplan, 1987). The 1992 Survey results in Table 2 illustrate this impact of branch mismatch on both attitudes and satisfaction.

It is also interesting to note the similarities in 1992 between branch matched officers and branch mismatched officers. For example, in both groups:

- About 90% said they were proud to tell people they were in the Army.
- Few thought the Army would protect their benefits and retirement (about 30%).
- Few thought it would be easy to find a good civilian job (about 28%).
- Over half said it would be financially difficult to be unemployed for 2-3 months to find a job.

Table 2

More 1992 LROC Respondents IN the Branch They Preferred (Branch Match) Were Satisfied Than Those NOT IN the Branch They Preferred (Branch Mismatch)

	Branch Match	Branch Mismatch
	% indicating satisfied/very satisfied	
"How satisfied are you with your current job?"	75%	64%
"How satisfied are you with your career prospects in the Army?"	54%	41%
"How satisfied are you with life as an officer?"	77%	67%
	% indicating agree/strongly agree	
"I am confident I will get the kinds of assignments I need to be competitive for promotions."	51%	39%
"I am very likely to get assignments that match my skills and interests if I stay in the Army."	50%	34%
"The officer evaluation/selection system is effective in promoting the best officers."	35%	24%
"The officer evaluation/selection system rewards officers for integrity and professionalism."	32%	21%

Table 2 (continued)

	<u>Branch Match</u>	<u>Branch Mismatch</u>
	% indicating very good/excellent	
"How good are the opportunities for command in your branch?"	52%	37%
	% indicating close/very close	
"How close/far is the fit between your college major and your branch duties?"	32%	20%
"How close/far is the fit between your initial expectations vs. the reality of your branch duties?"	72%	47%
	% indicating very good/excellent	
"How good are the opportunities for advancement in your branch for someone who has had the types of assignments you have had?"	61%	46%

Gender differences were found on three questions. For officers with a branch match, about 10% fewer female officers than male officers agreed that the OES is effective at promoting the best officers or rewarding integrity and professionalism; for officers with a branch mismatch, about 8% fewer females agreed. Also, 15% fewer branch-matched female officers than male officers (38% vs. 53%) indicated that opportunities for command in their branches were very good; for officers reporting a branch mismatch, 27% of the female officers versus 39% of the male officers said their command opportunities were very good.

Officers interviewed in 1991 who wanted to change branches gave a number of reasons which were consistent with and expanded on the findings from the surveys, including: (1) to attain more marketable skills, (2) for diversity in assignments, (3) for a

closer match to their civilian education, (4) for more challenge, and (5) to be in a branch where the work represents the "real" Army. Officers interviewed also indicated that changing branches, particularly after a few years into their careers, was almost impossible because the "cost" in terms of lost time and career progression was too high.

Perceived civilian alternatives. Perceptions of civilian alternatives changed significantly over the course of the LROC research for all officers. Table 3 indicates that a decreasing percentage of officers perceived it would be easy to transition out of the Army.

Table 3

The Percent of Officers Who Said It Would Be Easy to Transition to a Good Civilian Job Decreased From 1988 to 1992

	<u>1988</u>	<u>1992</u>
	% indicating easy/very easy	
"How easy/difficult do you think it would be for you to find a good civilian job right now, considering both your own qualifications and current labor market conditions?"	56%	28%
"How easy/difficult would it be for you to leave the Army in the next year or so, given your current personal or family situation?"	41%	27%
"How easy/difficult would it be for you financially to be unemployed for 2 or 3 months if you needed time to find a new job?"	23%	21%

Perceived Impact of Downsizing

Impact on officers. In 1990, a set of questions was added to the survey to specifically capture the perceptions of officers regarding the impact of downsizing on them, their job/careers, and on the Army. Figure 4 compares the responses of officers in 1990 and 1992 on four items concerning the impact of downsizing on them, their families, their work hours, and their promotion potential. As Figure 4 indicates, about 60% of the male officers and 70% of the female officers in 1990 and 1992 indicated that it was likely that they would work more hours as a result of downsizing. It is important to note that these officers already report working an average of 57 hours a week, with a range from 45 to 70 hours a week. In fact, written comments and interviews indicated that officers felt that it was not possible for them to work longer hours and that additional work hours would begin to affect efficiency and performance. Only about 1/3 of the male officers and 40% of the female officers thought it was likely they would be promoted on or ahead of schedule and, in both years, approximately 18% of the males and 19% of the females thought it was likely or very likely they would be involuntarily released from the Army.

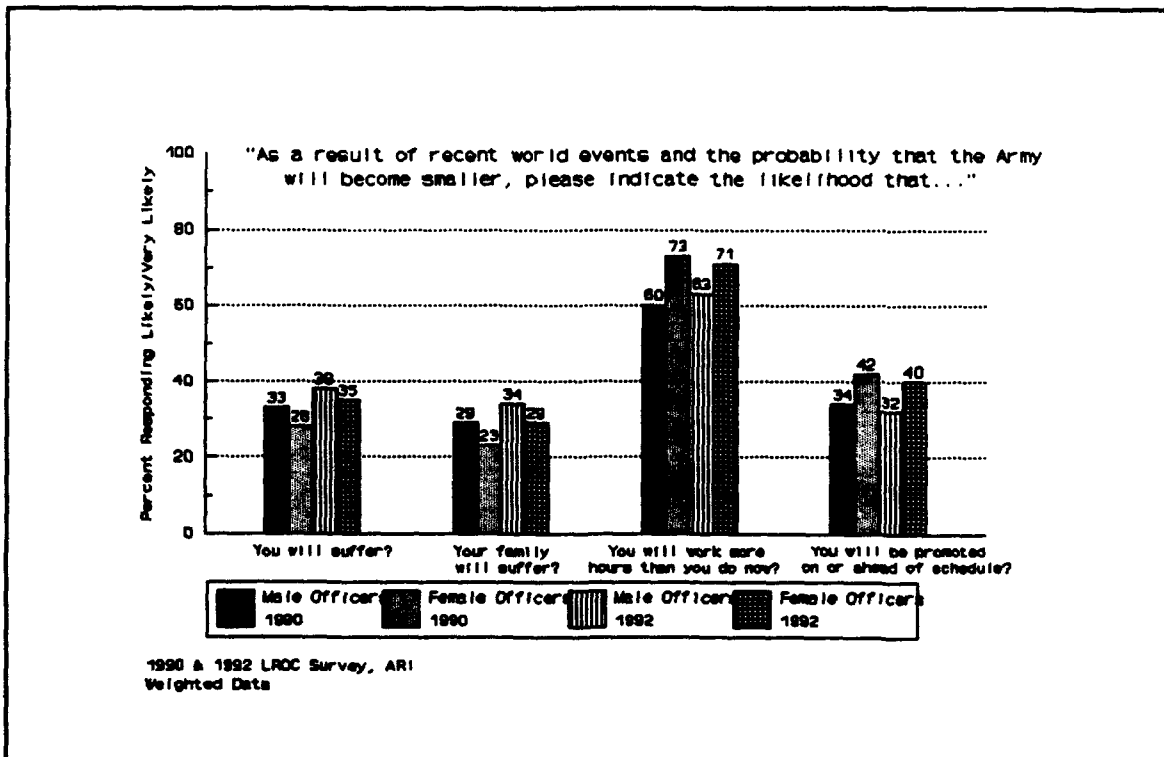


Figure 4. Officers perceived that downsizing would negatively impact them, their families, and their jobs in both 1990 and 1992.

Impact on the Army. Figure 5 displays graphs for the five questions on the 1990 and 1992 Surveys that addressed the potential impact of downsizing on the structure and function of the Army. There was a decreasing trend in the percentage of officers who believed that the "best" soldiers would stay in the Army; and an increasing trend in the percentage who believed that morale and readiness would suffer as a result of force reductions. As illustrated in Figures 4 and 5, there is considerable agreement between male and female officers on the possible impact of force reductions.

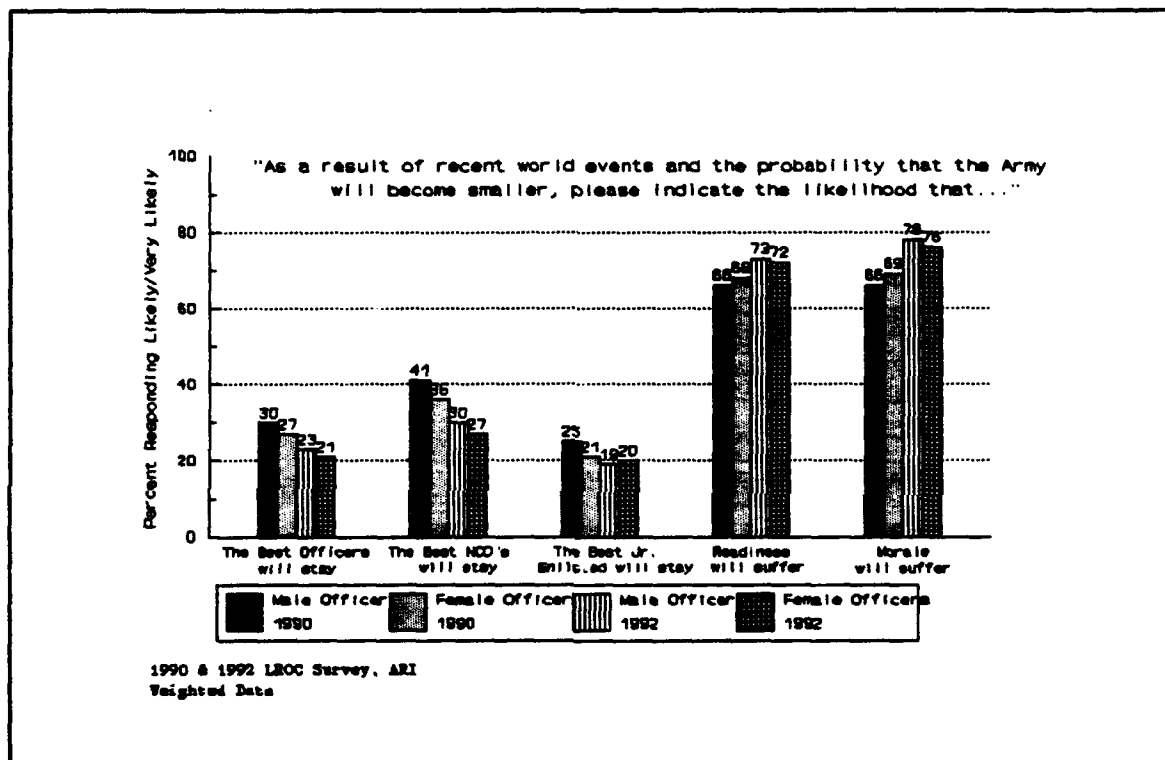


Figure 5. Officers were less optimistic in 1992 than in 1990 about the impact of downsizing on the Army.

Have career intentions changed? Overall, career intentions remained fairly stable over the course of the LROC research, with some increase in the percent intending to stay beyond their obligation to retirement. A comparison of the question on career plans in 1988 versus 1992 for male and female officers is

provided in Table 4. Although more male than female officers were leaning toward/planning an Army career, there was a slight increase for both over the 4 years.³

Table 4

Comparison of Career Plans for Male and Female Officers for 1988 vs. 1992

	<u>Male Officers</u>		<u>Female Officers</u>	
	<u>1988</u>	<u>1992</u>	<u>1988</u>	<u>1992</u>
"Right now I am..."				
Leaning toward/planning an Army career	60%	63%	46%	52%
Leaning toward/planning a civilian career	24%	22%	34%	30%

In 1990, an additional question was included in LROC to more directly assess the potential for downsizing and force restructuring to change officer career intentions. About half indicated that their career plans would not change as a result of downsizing. However, in 1990, 29% of the male officers and 33% of the female officers indicated that the probable reductions in the size of the Army made them less/much less interested in staying in the Army compared to a year ago; by 1992, this percentage increased to 38% for males and 35% for females.

For these two subgroups of officers reporting they were less interested in staying in the Army, the question comes to mind, were they always planning to leave the Army? The answer is no; for a substantial number, career plans changed over the course of the research.

- For officers who said they were less interested in staying in the Army in 1990:
 - 57% said they were leaning toward/planning an Army career in 1988 dropping to 38% in 1990.
 - 20% were leaning toward/planning a civilian career in 1988 increasing to 41% in 1990.

³ As mentioned earlier, the sampling design of LROC kept officers in the sample over all years unless they left the Army. As a result, respondents increased in rank, age, time in service, percent married, as well as intended length of service.

- For officers who said they were less interested in 1992:
 - 63% said they were leaning toward/planning an Army career in 1988 decreasing to 37% in 1992.
 - 15% were leaning toward/planning a civilian career in 1988 increasing to 42% in 1992.

For these officers, career intentions did not remain stable or increase, nor did satisfaction or confidence. For the 1992 subgroup, the percent reporting they were satisfied with their job dropped from 73% in 1988 to 60% in 1992; those satisfied with their career prospects dropped from 63% to 26%; and those confident they would be promoted was 65% in 1988 dropping to 37% in 1992.

Who Left the Army During the LROC Research?

During the course of the LROC research, 4,500 officers who were in the original LROC sample left the Army; 792 left in 1989, 2,402 left in 1990, and 1,306 left in 1991. Data exist in one or more surveys for 2,737 of these officers who left:

- For the 792 officers who left in 1989
 - 306 responded to the 1988 Survey
- For the 2,402 who left in 1990
 - 1106 responded to the 1988 Survey
 - 895 responded to the 1989 Survey
- For the 1,306 who left in 1991
 - 498 responded in 1988
 - 529 responded in 1989
 - 503 responded in 1990

Unweighted demographics for the 1990 LROC respondents who left in 1991 indicate that:

- 64% were male; 36% were female
- 33% were commissioned from USMA; 32% were ROTC Scholarship officers
- 35% were 1LTs; 57% were CPTs
- 42% were CA; 21%, CS; 18%, CSS; and 20%, Special Branches
- 83% were white; 8% black; 9% other minority
- About 60% were married
- 22% majored in engineering in college; 16% in social science; and 13% in business/finance.

The officers who left the Army were different from the officers who remained in the Army on a number of the issues covered throughout this paper. For example, they were less satisfied with their jobs and less confident in their career prospects than were the officers who remained in the Army. In addition, these officers were more likely to identify with their technical or professional peer group than with other officers. They also perceived more conflict between their demanding Army careers and their family life. Figure 6 compares the officers who left the Army⁴ with those who remained in the Army on job and career satisfaction, spouse satisfaction, and career confidence. Figure 7 compares officers who left with those who stayed on the three questions about how easy it would be to transition to a civilian job.

In most cases, fewer officers who left were satisfied or confident in their careers. Counter to this, about 57% of those officers who left consistently thought that it would be easy or very easy to find a good civilian job. For the officers who stayed in the Army, the percentage who thought it would be easy to find a good civilian job dropped from 54% in 1988 to 39% in 1990. For the officers who remained and responded to the 1992 Survey, this percentage dropped even lower to 28%.

As illustrated in the graphs in Figures 6 and 7, the change in attitudes for the officers who left vs. those who stayed follows several patterns: (1) In some cases, such as spouse satisfaction, both trend lines remain fairly flat with the line for officers who left at a lower magnitude than for those who stayed; (2) in other cases, such as career satisfaction, the trend lines for both groups decrease over time, again with the line for officers who left at a lower magnitude; and, (3) the trend line for officers who left remains fairly flat with the line for officers who stayed decreasing over time, such as in ease of finding a good civilian job.

⁴ Officers who left the Army from 1989 to 1991 and who responded to the LROC Survey in 1988, 1989, or 1990.

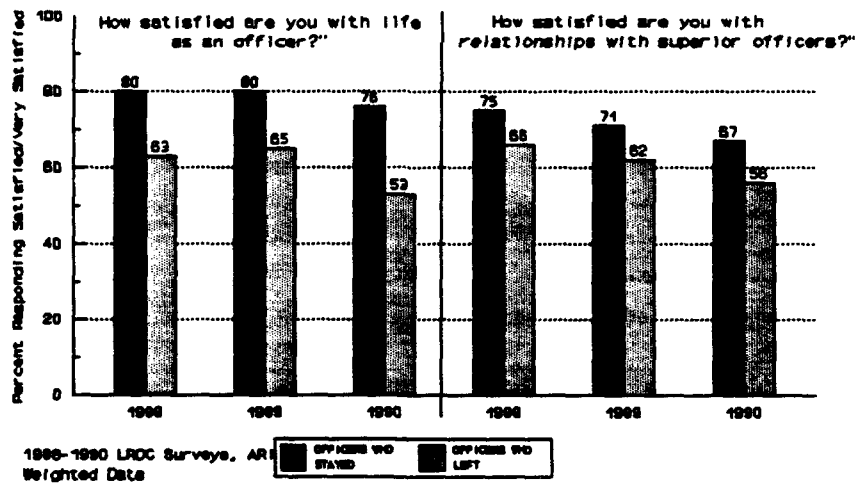
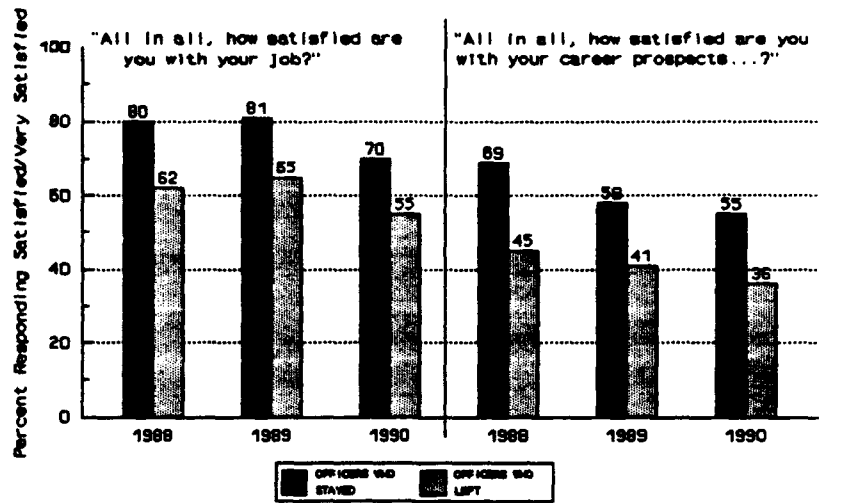


Figure 6. LROC officers who left the Army were less satisfied and confident in their careers than officers who stayed

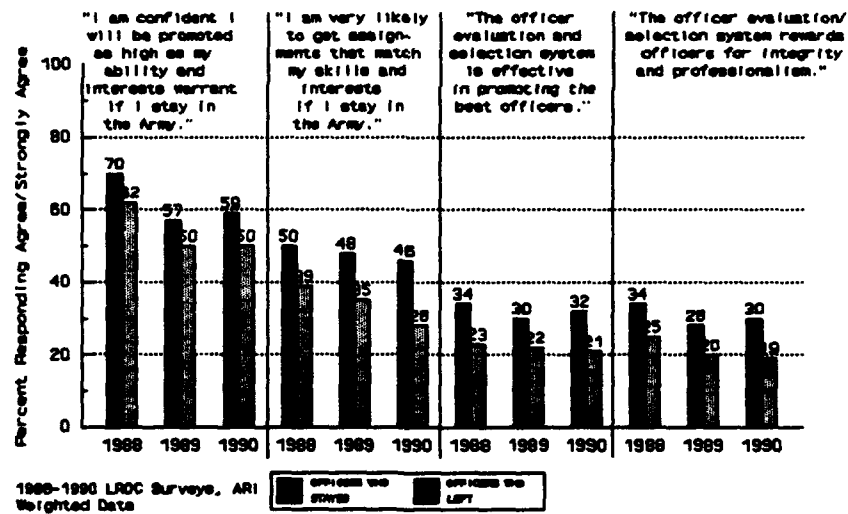
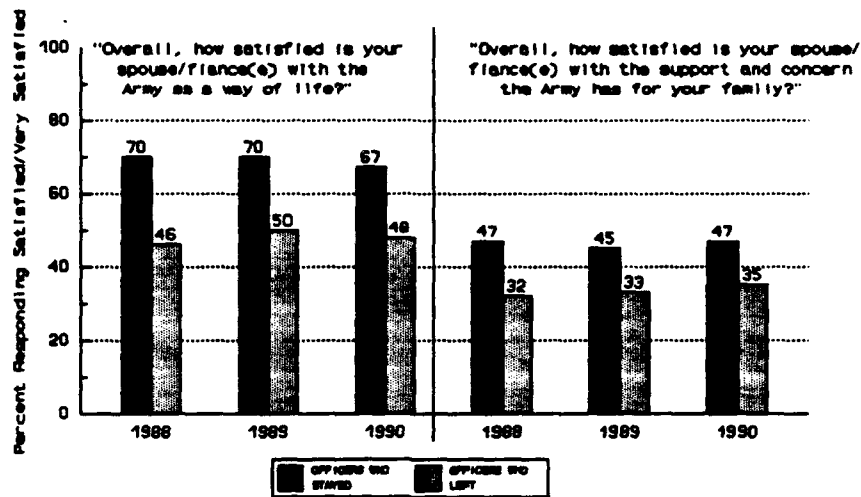


Figure 6 (Continued).

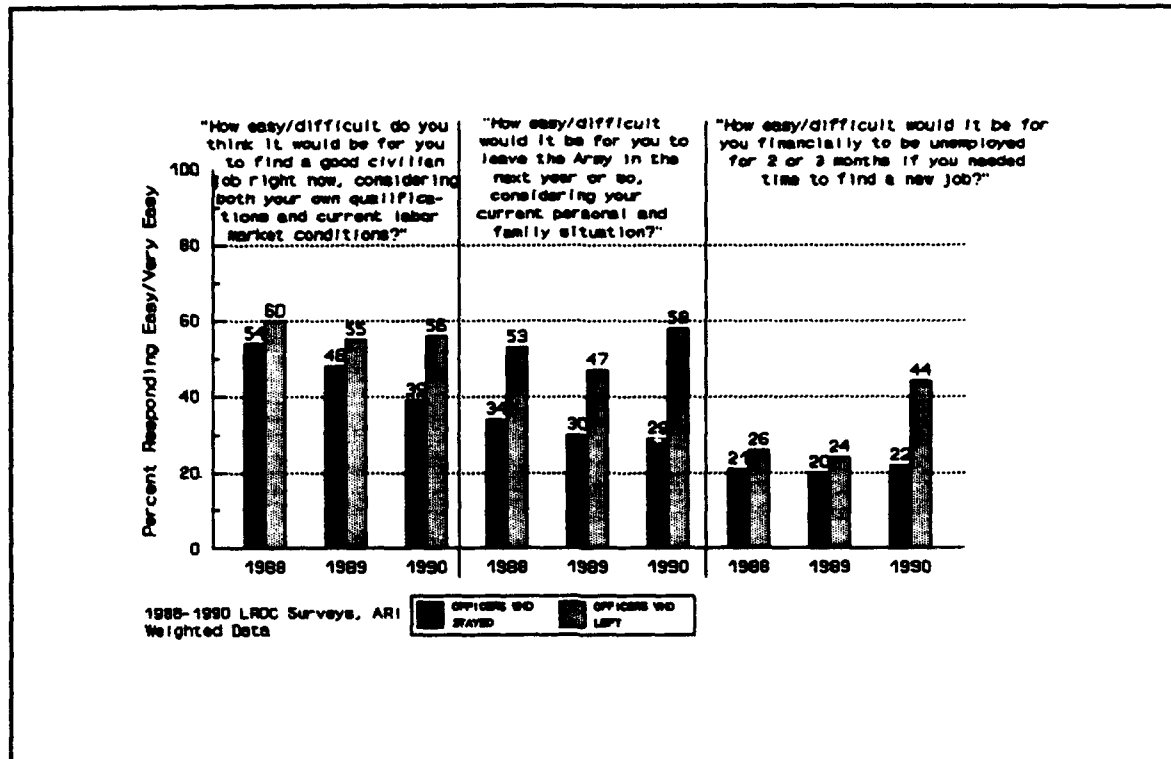


Figure 7. LROC officers who left the Army were more optimistic about the ease of transitioning to a civilian job than officers who stayed

Although the group of officers who left was less positive about their Army careers from the beginning, there was also considerable change in the negative direction. If we look at those officers who left in 1991, 40% said they were leaning toward/planning an Army career in 1988 decreasing to 26% for those responding in 1990. The percentage saying they were leaning toward/planning a civilian career increased from 37% in 1988 to 62% by 1990.

Summary

This report has presented an overview of the findings from a 4-year research project to track the changes in attitudes of company grade officers in the U.S. Army. The annual LROC Survey was completed by approximately 5,000 officers each year and has captured the attitudes and opinions of company grade officers over a particularly dynamic period of world events and changes in the Army. This report has focused on the changes in attitudes related to issues of organizational identification, job/career confidence and satisfaction, and downsizing the Army. A summary of each major topic follows.

Organizational Identification

All officers who participated in this research were very positive about the Army and about being an officer. Even many of the officers who left the Army were proud to be in the Army. Interviews and comments supported a strong organizational identification that has remained over the survey years. As officers increased in rank and time in service, they were more likely to want to stay in the Army 20 or more years.

Job/Career Issues

A majority of officers consistently said they were satisfied with their jobs and specific aspects of their work environment, such as the kinds of assignments they have had, the work in their current assignment, the opportunity to learn relevant skills and to do work that interests them. However, officers reported working very long hours, as much as 60-70 hours a week, and about 2/3 reported high to very high job stress. Comments indicated that, as the downsizing progressed, officers experienced time and resource limitations that contributed to their workload. The perceptions were that it was not possible to work longer hours without experiencing a deficit in quality and readiness.

Unlike job satisfaction and aspects of their work environment, a decreasing number of officers were satisfied with their career prospects and there was less confidence in promotion and command opportunities and in job security. Over the four surveys, few officers thought that the officer evaluation/selection system was effective and almost 40% indicated that they were not in the branch they preferred. Comments indicated that officers did not perceive that it was possible to change branches without negative career outcomes. In addition, an increasing number of officers said it would be difficult to find a good civilian job and that it would be difficult to leave the Army because of their current personal or family situation.

Impact of Downsizing

Over the two years that specific questions were asked about the impact of downsizing, two-thirds of the officers thought they would work longer hours as a result of downsizing and only 1/3 thought they would be promoted on or ahead of schedule. In addition, few officers felt that the "best" soldiers would remain in the Army and over 2/3 thought that readiness and morale would suffer as a result of the downsizing. Also, a decreasing number of officers were confident that the Army would protect their benefits.

The Future of LROC

This summary report has provided an overview of the changes in Army officer attitudes over 4 years of LROC Survey research. It has only scratched the surface. Because of the considerable

environmental and organizational changes described throughout this paper, the interrelationships between career, job, and family issues and external events and constraints need to be assessed in a more sophisticated, multivariate model approach. Research of this type is currently underway, and will not only look at the factors that predict career intentions, but also test a model designed to predict actual behavior from a longitudinal perspective.

The LROC Survey is currently under review and will be administered again in 1994/95. The longitudinal perspective of this research affords an understanding of the impact of events and policy change unavailable with one-time surveys. The project will continue to take the "pulse" of the officer corps every 1 to 2 years to provide trend information to senior policy makers on a very important part of the workforce--early- and mid-career Army leaders. These leaders help the Army maintain continuity and function effectively during downsizing, and they provide the selection pool for the future senior leaders of the Army.

Implications

As the results summarized above indicate, the changes in attitudes and perceptions over the 4 years of the LROC Survey are complex. At a time when organizational identification and job satisfaction have remained high, career satisfaction and confidence have decreased. Many of the attitudes expressed throughout this paper seem fairly realistic, such as the expectation they will work longer hours in a time when there are fewer people to accomplish the same workload. Also, the perception that promotions will be limited or that certain jobs may not be available may be realistic in a time of budget cuts and restructuring. Officers who perceive an increasing difficulty in finding a good civilian job may also be accurately assessing the civilian job market based on the number of budget and personnel cuts currently taking place in the private sector of the economy.

It is difficult to judge how "realistic" the officers' perceptions are that the "best" are leaving the Army and that morale and readiness will suffer as a result of the downsizing. Certainly the comments and interviews indicate that officers are seeing high quality soldiers leave, and they believe that the reduced resources, increased workload, and increased pressures will negatively impact on effectiveness and, ultimately, on readiness.

Whether or not the perceptions expressed by these officers accurately reflect reality, they can influence behavior, motivation, and morale. The link between attitudes and behavior has been well established (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Steel & Ovalle, 1984; Sheppard, Hartwick, & Warshaw, 1988). These attitudes may also influence career intentions, performance, and future readiness. There have been changes taking place in the Army since the end of conscription (Moskos & Woods, 1988).

However, the changes taking place today as a result of downsizing and, indeed, the changes taking place in the world order and in the U.S. civilian economy are unprecedented.

Should the downsizing continue for a long period of time, or should the Army fail to define the future in very concrete terms, there may be a real cause for concern. First, the changes in attitudes and perceptions reported throughout this paper, may influence the company grade officer population to leave at a higher rate than is needed for the downsizing, and at a higher rate than can be tolerated to maintain readiness. Second, the increased stress, increased uncertainty, and decreased resources may well negatively impact performance and readiness. The company grade officer population is particularly vulnerable to being "squeezed" from all directions--increased competition for jobs in the Army, increased workload and pressure to perform, and few perceived civilian alternatives.

As the Army continues its process of downsizing and restructuring, the data and interviews suggest that speed is of the essence on a number of issues. Completing the downsizing rapidly would help to eliminate the negative focus and stress related to job uncertainty (Kozlowski, et al., 1991).

It is also imperative that the Army address officers' career concerns and provide realistic information that will help officers make a more informed decision about staying in or leaving the Army. Again, this would reduce the stress and uncertainty that currently exists. Some of the career issues that appear to be important are promotion potential, assurance (or lack of assurance) of retirement, expected percentages of personnel at the different rank levels, evaluation criteria, expected length of assignments, or changes in the branching process or functional area skills process, to name a few. Any changes in the career process that would take branch preferences more into account, would allow more flexibility in changing branches, or would allow more cross-over in skills or functional areas could provide additional benefits in increased satisfaction as well as additional opportunities for officers. Combined with officers' strong organizational identification, clear, concrete information from the Army about what they can expect from their career could go a long way toward motivating them to stay.

Restructuring and prioritizing of tasks and missions is also essential. It is essential from two perspectives: (1) Officers say it is impossible to do the same thing with less unless it's done differently. The stress and fatigue that comes from the long work hours and doing tasks with fewer people can only have a negative impact on morale, on readiness, and, ultimately, on retention; and (2) Officers indicate that the number of missions and tasks is actually increasing. This may exacerbate the negative outcomes that already exist and cast more doubt on officers' abilities to perform their missions, and the Army's long term ability to maintain readiness.

As mentioned earlier in this paper, it is difficult to predict how the changes in the Army, coupled with the economic and employment constraints in the civilian sector, will impact the company grade officer corps--but there is cause for concern. As mentioned earlier, this group of officers is particularly vulnerable to the complex pressures resulting from the changes taking place in the Army. They are also a very important resource for the Army--one that cannot be immediately replaced. These organizational changes have changed attitudes, and, more importantly, may have changed the implied contract for this group of officers potentially tipping the balance that currently exists between the demands of an Army career and the perceived benefits offered in exchange. As the Army works toward balancing the outside demands for cuts in personnel with the internal demands for fielding an adequate force in a time when missions are increasing, not decreasing, there is one additional demand. The Army is faced with structuring a personnel system that can reestablish the perceived balance between the demands and the benefits of an Army career.

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