

Navy Personnel Research and Development Center

San Diego, CA 92152-6800 TR 88-13 August 1988



AD-A201 779

DTIC FILE COPY

2



Officer Career Development: Problems of Three Unrestricted Line Communities



DTIC
ELECTE
NOV 03 1988
S H D

Approved for public release
distribution is unlimited

88 11 3 8 3

**Officer Career Development: Problems of
Three Unrestricted Line Communities**

Gerry Wilcove (Editor)

Reviewed by
John J. Pass, Ph.D.
Director, Personnel Systems Department

Released by
B. E. Bacon
Captain, U.S. Navy
Commanding Officer
and
J. S. McMichael
Technical Director

Approved for public release;
distribution is unlimited.

Navy Personnel Research and Development Center
San Diego, California 92152-6800

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

1a. REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED		1b. RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS	
2a. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY		3. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY OF REPORT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.	
2b. DECLASSIFICATION / DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE			
4. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S) TR 88-13		5. MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)	
6a. NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION Navy Personnel Research and Development Center	6b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable) Code 62	7a. NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION	
6c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) San Diego, CA 92152-6800		7b. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)	
8a. NAME OF FUNDING / SPONSORING ORGANIZATION Office of Naval Research	8b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable)	9. PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER	
8c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) Washington, DC		10. SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS	
		PROGRAM ELEMENT NO 62763N	PROJECT NO 16 R63521
11. TITLE (Include Security Classification) Officer Career Development: Problems of Three Unrestricted Line Communities			
12. PERSONAL AUTHOR(S) Gerry Wilcove, John Bruni, Leslie Davenport, Wayne Townsend-Merino, Thomas Bachman, and Catarina Martinez			
13a. TYPE OF REPORT Final	13b. TIME COVERED FROM 83 Jun TO 84 Feb	14. DATE OF REPORT (Year, Month, Day) 1988 August	15. PAGE COUNT 65
16. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION 62-86-14			
17. COSATI CODES		18. SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number) detailers, career management, bargaining style, assignment management, womens issues, career development, (SUC) <i>et</i>	
FIELD 05	GROUP 09		
19. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number) → This report is the fifth in a series that examines officer career development. Three unrestricted line officer communities were examined: air warfare, surface warfare, and general unrestricted line. Officers were asked to write about the career problems of their communities, especially those affecting their desire to stay or leave the Navy. Approximately 500 comment sheets were content analyzed from each community, and problems were rank ordered according to their perceived severity. Common problem areas across the communities were interactions with assignment managers ("detailers"), the promotion system, and managerial practices. Recommendations were offered regarding further research and some preliminary steps the Navy might take to solve the identified problems. <i>Keywords: Naval personnel</i>			
20. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED <input type="checkbox"/> SAME AS RPT. <input type="checkbox"/> DTIC USERS		21. ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED	
22a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL Gerry Wilcove		22b. TELEPHONE (Include Area Code) (619) 553-9120	22c. OFFICE SYMBOL Code 62

FOREWORD

This research and development was conducted within the exploratory development project RF63-521-804 (Manpower and Personnel Technology), work unit 031-03.04 (Personnel Distribution and Career Development). The purpose of the work unit is to identify career factors that are related to performance, officer continuance rates, and the development of skills necessary at senior officer levels.

The results presented in this report were given in a briefing to NMPC-41 and OP-130E on 7 March 1984. The report represents documentation of that briefing and should be archived to provide corporate memory on the project and its findings.

This report is the fifth in a series produced under this work unit. Previous reports described: (1) the factors that influence the early career development of surface warfare officers (SWOs) (TR 82-59), (2) background and initial sea tour factors that predict SWO continuance beyond obligated service (TR 83-6), (3) SWO career experiences and concerns (TN 83-11), and (4) aviation detailer decision making in the antisubmarine warfare patrol community (TR 84-31).

Appreciation is expressed to RADM Albert Herberger (formerly OP-13), ADM Richard C. Ustick (formerly NMPC-4), CAPT Phil Quast (formerly NMPC-412), CAPT L. N. Palmer (formerly NMPC-41), CAPT Roger Onorati (formerly NMPC-41B), CAPT Dallas Boggs (formerly OP-132E), CAPT Kathy Byerly (formerly OP-132E3), CAPT Lorraine Manning (formerly OP-130E3), and CDR Jerry O'Donnel (formerly OP-130E1). These individuals provided support and assistance critical to the design of the project and the collection of the data.

Point of contact at NAVPERSRANDCEN is Dr. Gerry Wilcove, AUTOVON 553-9120 or Commercial (619) 553-9120. Comments are welcome.

B. E. BACON
Captain, U.S. Navy
Commanding Officer

J. S. McMICHAEL
Technical Director



Accession For	
NTIS GRA&I	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
DTIC TAB	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unannounced	<input type="checkbox"/>
Justification	
By	
Distribution/	
Availability Codes	
Dist	Avail and/or Special
A-1	

SUMMARY

Only a few research efforts have examined officer career development, defined as the movement of individuals toward their own and the Navy's long-term goals. This lack of career development research makes it difficult to know what problems officers face as they attempt to become professionally competent and advance in their careers. For example, how do officers evaluate the usefulness of career planning information, the clarity of the career path, and the fairness of assignment policies and procedures? Problems in these areas could frustrate the individuals' attempts at career development and the Navy's long-term requirement for highly trained and experienced senior officers.

Objective

The purpose of this research was to identify the career problems of three officer communities: aviation warfare (AWO), surface warfare (SWO), and general unrestricted line officers (GenURLs).

Approach

The present research was conducted as part of a larger project on career development and management. Written comments on career problems were obtained and approximately 500 comment sheets from each officer community were analyzed. Questionnaire responses of 910 GenURLs, 5,028 AWOs, and 2,735 SWOs were analyzed to place identified career problems within a broader context.

Findings

The results that were similar for all three communities were:

1. Officers frequently expressed pride in being naval officers in spite of the problems they were experiencing in their careers. Questionnaire data shows they were generally satisfied with their careers, including their current duties and command, and planned to make the Navy a 20-year career.
2. Officers recognized the fact that many of their assignments were satisfying and beneficial to their careers. An exception was aviator lieutenants, who seemed to be feeling the effects of limited flying time, because of economic cutbacks and/or the prospect of a ship's company tour.
3. The assignment process (i.e., interaction with detailers) was identified as a serious problem. AWOs were concerned with the lack of consideration for their individual preferences; SWOs, with the perceived lack of integrity of the detailers; and GenURLs, with the legal and policy constraints on the assignments available to them.

Some results were common to two communities:

1. GenURLs and AWOs mentioned problems regarding their community's career path. GenURLs mentioned individuals essentially "start over" with each new assignment. AWOs criticized the rigidity of the career path, which restricted individual choice.
2. Management problems were a concern to both SWOs and AWOs. For SWOs, management was the top-ranked problem and reflected primarily junior officer's dissatisfaction with supervisory practices. For AWOs, dissatisfaction was expressed by all grade

levels and extended beyond supervisory practices to include general managerial style (i.e., crisis management) and community policies that seemed to unduly place ship and plane requirements first and the needs of personnel second.

3. Both SWOs and AWOs described problems they were having with the promotion system, with many comments devoted to the talents of "passed over" (non-promoted) officers.

4. Both AWOs and SWOs cited the problem of family separation and the lack of geographic stability.

A special problem of the GenURLs was reflected in their perception that they lacked parity with the other unrestricted line communities. Negative comments focused on the limited nature of the Women-in-Ships Program and the assignment to non-operational, non-career-enhancing billets.

Recommendations

1. The Navy should consider the formation of task groups to help solve the identified problems: the top problem for SWOs being managerial practices; for AWOs, the assignment process; and for GenURLs, the perceived lack of parity with other unrestricted line communities.

2. Among other issues, the Navy should attempt to determine (a) the relationship between SWO warfighting performance and managerial practices, (b) the impact of current assignment policies on the career development of AWOs, and (c) whether GenURLs feel a greater sense of parity with other unrestricted line officers as a result of a new policy granting them the power to detail officers in their community.

3. Follow-up surveys should be conducted periodically, perhaps every 3 to 4 years, to determine if the problems identified in the present research have been alleviated or whether they continue unabated.

CONTENTS

A Note on the organization of this report:

This report is divided into three tabbed sections, one for each officer community. Each section contains an introduction, a description of the data collection and analysis, the findings, and recommendations for further research.

For the reader interested in the entire report, some redundancy occurs because the purpose and method were basically the same for all communities. This "redundant" information has been repeated in each section for the convenience of the reader interested only in a particular community.

	Page
SURFACE	1
CAREER CONCERNS OF SURFACE WARFARE OFFICERS	3
AVIATION	23
CAREER CONCERNS OF AVIATION WARFARE OFFICERS	25
GENERAL URL	45
CAREER CONCERNS OF GENERAL UNRESTRICTED LINE OFFICERS	47

**CAREER CONCERNS OF
SURFACE WARFARE OFFICERS**

John Bruni, Jr.
Catarina Martinez

CONTENTS

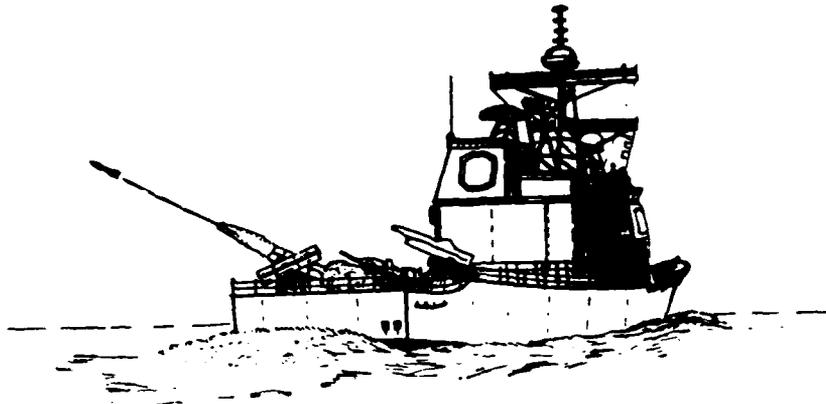
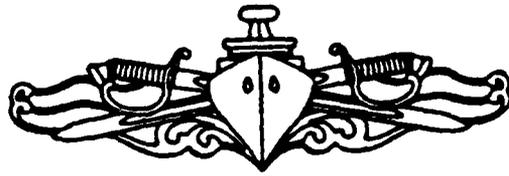
	Page
INTRODUCTION	7
METHOD	7
Questionnaire	7
Sample	8
Content Analysis	9
Data Analysis	9
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	10
Comments and Structured Questionnaire	10
Rank Ordering of Problem Areas	12
Grade Differences for Problem Areas	13
AN OVERVIEW OF PROBLEM AREAS	13
HIGH-PRIORITY PROBLEM AREAS	15
Concern No. 1: Quality of Management	15
Concern No. 2: The Assignment Process	15
Concern No. 3: Promotion Policies, Procedures, and Opportunities	16
MODERATE-PRIORITY PROBLEM AREAS	17
Concern No. 4: Family Issues	17
Concern No. 5: Career Path	17
Concern No. 6: Community Status	18
LOW-PRIORITY PROBLEM AREAS	19
Concern No. 7: Billets	19
Concern No. 8: Compensation	20
Concern No. 9: Career Advice	20
Concern No. 10: Sea Duty	20
SUMMARY	20
RESEARCH QUESTIONS	21
REFERENCE	21

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
1-S. SWO Comment Sample by Rank	8
2-S. Career Problem Areas, Definitions, and Number of Issues for SWO Sample	9

LIST OF FIGURES

1-S. Structured SWO career questionnaire: Percentage of favorable perceptions	11
2-S. Surface warfare officers: Percentage of negative comments made for each problem area	12
3-S. Percentage of negative career comments by problem and grade for surface warfare officers	14



INTRODUCTION

Officer career development, defined as the movement of individuals toward their own and the Navy's long-term goals, has been the subject of very few research efforts. The gap in knowledge makes it difficult to alleviate the problems officers face as they attempt to become professionally competent and advance in their careers. For example, how clear is the career path? How do officers see the fairness of assignment policies and procedures? How useful is the current career planning information? Problems in these areas could frustrate the individual's attempts at career development and the Navy's long-term requirement for highly trained and experienced senior officers.

The comments analyzed here were obtained as part of a larger ongoing study of the Navy's career management system and its effects. As part of this study, officers responding to the Surface Warfare Career Questionnaire had the opportunity to comment on any aspect of their Navy career they felt "affected their desire to continue as SWOs." The following material summarizes and prioritizes the career management concerns of SWOs.

METHOD

Questionnaire

Data for the present research were obtained as part of a larger study of the Navy's career management system (see Morrison & Cook, 1985). As a part of this broad project,

SWOs answered a comprehensive career questionnaire that included the following instruction on the last page:

If you would like to comment on any aspect of your Navy career as it affects your desire to continue as a Surface Warfare Officer, please use this space. Written comments may be used to support statistical summaries of data, but only if anonymity can be assured.

Data from these "comment sheets" were used to identify areas of career concerns to SWOs.

Sample

Of the 2,735 SWO officers who returned career questionnaires, 980 included comment sheets for commissioning years 1961 through 1980. A sample of 500 comment sheets was selected for detailed analysis. Based on a 95 percent confidence criterion, it was found that the results from these 500 comment sheets would produce no more than a 5 percent error when generalizing to all SWOs.

To examine the representativeness of the subsample of comments, the grade distribution of comment sheets by grade was compared with the grade distribution for the entire sample of returned questionnaires. A chi-square analysis indicated no significant differences between the two distributions; therefore, when analyzed by grade, the comment sample matched that of the returned questionnaires. (For a detailed description of the representativeness of the returned questionnaire sample, see Morrison and Cook, 1985.) The number of SWO comment sheets analyzed by grade of respondents is shown in Table 1-S.

Table 1-S
SWO Comment Sample by Rank

Rank	Number of Respondents	Percent
ENS	44	8.8
LTJG	67	13.4
LT	144	28.8
LCDR	131	26.2
CDR	114	22.8
Total	500	100.0

Note. The "S" in Table 1-S stands for SWOs. ENS = ensign, LTJG = lieutenant junior grade, LT = lieutenant, Lcdr = lieutenant commander, and CDR = commander.

Content Analysis

A subset of comment sheets ($n = 60$) was reviewed in depth to develop a tentative list of categories for analyzing the career problems described. Any difficulties in using the categories were discussed with researchers working on the content analysis for aviation warfare officers (AWOs) and general unrestricted line officers (GenURLs). Based on these discussions, a set of common categories and community-specific ones were identified (see Table 2-S). For the SWOs, comments could be sorted into 10 career problem areas, each with 1 to 7 issues. The 60 comment sheets were then rescored according to the new scheme and the rest of the sample of 500 was scored for the first time.

Table 2-S
Career Problem Areas, Definitions, and Number of Issues for SWO Sample

Problem Area	Definition	Number of Issues
Management	Concerns about administrative and management policies and procedures and the impact that superiors have on performance	7
Assignment process	Concerns about personnel policies and procedures, both formal and informal, relating to the assignment process.	2
Promotion policies, procedures, and opportunities	Concerns about administrative actions affecting billet assignments, performance appraisal procedures, and the consequences of adverse promotion decisions.	4
Family and personal	Concern with the effect of Navy career on the individual and his or her family.	4
Career path	Concerns related to the series of billets that are considered necessary for a particular career path.	3
Community status	Concerns about the organizational status of the surface warfare community relative to other communities (e.g., aviation, submarine).	2
Satisfaction with billet	Individual's evaluation of specific billets.	4
Compensation equity	Concerns related to the fairness of pay and benefit programs as applied to the warfare communities.	3
Career advice	Concerns about quality of career planning information	1
Sea duty	Concern about the requirements of sea duty	1

Note. Not all the problem areas were the same in the three officer communities covered in this report. Definitions also vary among the communities because of the nature of the comments involved.

Data Analysis

The analysis focused on negative comments in order to identify problem areas. Theoretically, it was possible for 100 percent of the SWOs to give a negative comment for

each category. This did not happen. Therefore, a statistic was computed that indicated what percentage of individuals gave a negative comment in each category. A person was counted only once regardless of how many of their comments were scored in a given category. This statistic was called the "percentage of people" statistic. A second statistic computed was termed a "percentage of comments" statistic. This statistic was formed by dividing the number of negative comments in each category by the total number of negative comments from all respondents in all categories. Career problems occurred in the same rank order regardless of whether the percentage-of-people or percentage-of-comments statistic was used. This report uses the percentage-of-comments statistic.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

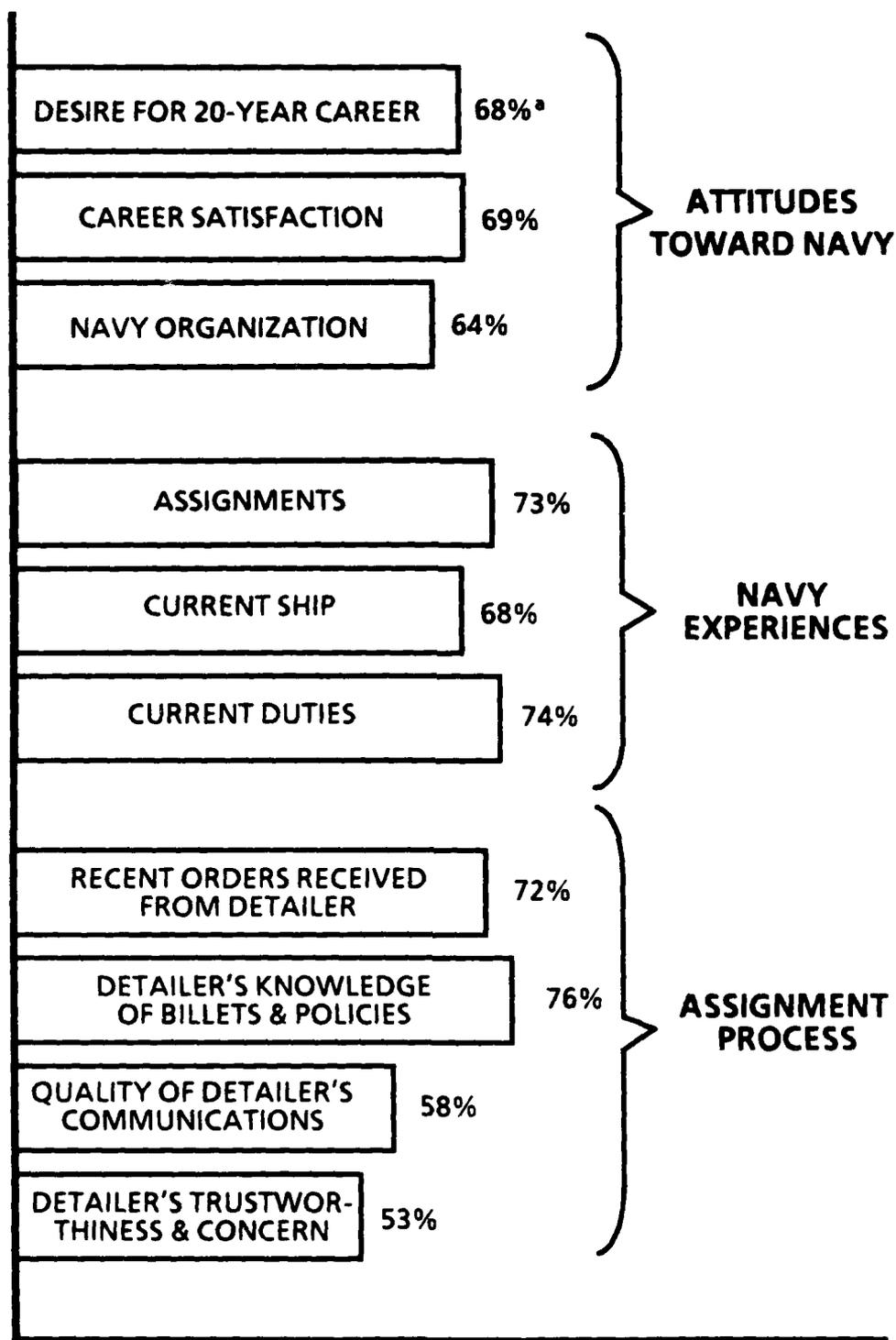
Comments and Structured Questionnaire

SWO problems are designated as high, moderate, or low priority, depending on the frequency with which they were mentioned in written comments. However, what does a high-priority problem imply--that officers are basically dissatisfied with the Navy? More specifically, what does it mean if the assignment process is identified as a high-priority problem--that a majority of the officers are dissatisfied with detailers?

To place current results within a broader context, responses to a career questionnaire were analyzed for 2,735 SWOs. The favorable responses of SWOs on a variety of issues are presented in Figure 1-S.¹ To measure "career satisfaction," officers indicated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with items such as: "I take great pride in my career," and "I would definitely like to change my career." To measure attractiveness of the "Navy organization," officers indicated their extent of agreement with items such as: "I talk up the Navy to my friends as a great organization to work for," and "I really care about the fate of the Navy."

Figure 1-S shows that 68 percent intended to make the Navy a 20-year career (only officers with 10 or less years of service were considered), 69 percent expressed satisfaction with their careers, and 64 percent viewed the Navy as an attractive organization. Approximately 7 out of 10 officers were pleased with the most recent orders they had received (i.e., with the match between the assignments they had received and the wishes they had expressed on their preference cards). However, only 58 percent were satisfied with the information conveyed to them by the detailer during negotiations. In addition, only 53 percent trusted the detailer (the others were neutral or negative), and only 53 percent believed that the detailer was concerned about meeting their needs.

¹Because some SWOs indicated they were "neutral," one should not conclude, for example, that if 68 percent of the SWOs gave favorable responses, then 32 percent gave unfavorable responses.



Note. Questionnaire was completed by 2,735 officers.

^aOnly officers with 10 years or less of service were included here (N = 1,496).

Figure 1-S. Structured SWO career questionnaire: Percentage of favorable perceptions.

Rank Ordering of Problem Areas

Figure 2-S shows the "percentage of comments" statistics for the problem areas in descending order. The areas with the most negative comments were (1) management, (2) the assignment process, and (3) promotion policies, procedures, and opportunities, which account for 53 percent of the negative comments. These areas are termed "high priority" problem areas in the report. Family and personnel issues, career path, and community status formed a middle group or "moderate priority" problem area. Minor "low-priority" areas were satisfaction with billet, compensation equity, career advice, and sea duty.

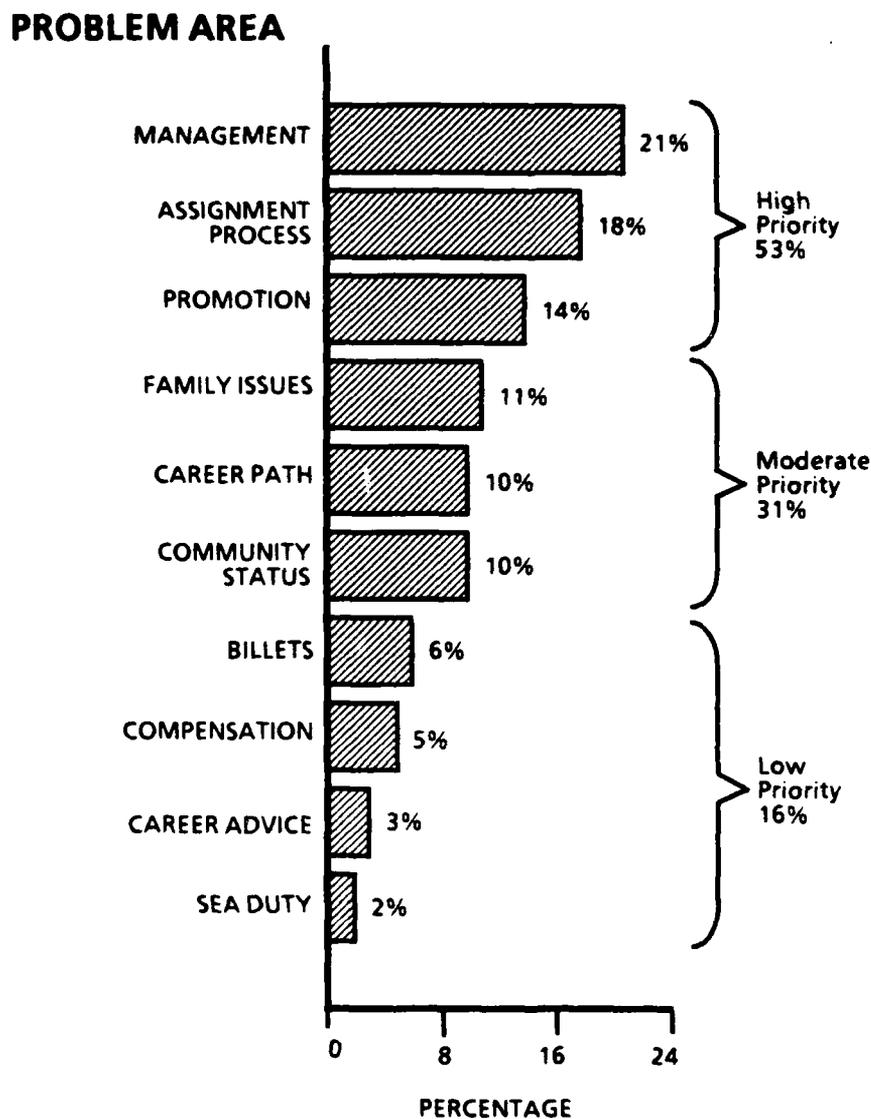


Figure 2-S. Surface warfare officers: Percentage of negative comments made for each problem area.

Grade Differences for Problem Areas

To further explore the distribution of negative comments for each of the problem areas, percentage of comments by rank was tested against the expected distribution based on chance alone. Differences between observed comments by rank and that expected by chance were assessed by calculation of a chi-square statistic for each area.

Significant differences were found for the area of assignment process ($X^2 = 22.33$, 4 df, $p < .05$), management ($X^2 = 12.70$, 4 df, $p < .05$), promotions ($X^2 = 12.70$, 4 df, $p < .05$), and community status ($X^2 = 15.02$, 4 df, $p < .05$).

For assignment process, fewer ENSs and CDRs made negative comments than would be expected, based on the proportion of officers in these grades. Fewer comments by ENSs could reflect the fact that these officers had fewer or no interactions with their detailer, as opposed to CDRs, who have a history of detailer interactions on which to base comments. The pattern was just the converse for management, with ENSs commenting more frequently. Again, this finding is consistent with an historical context: Fewer comments from CDRs may reflect the fact that officers with more experience in the Navy know that what appears to be mismanagement to junior officers reflects legitimate conflicts of multiple-mission organizations. ENSs, LTJGs, and LTs made fewer comments on promotion policies and more comments on community status than expected by chance. One explanation of these results is that almost all junior officers are promoted and thus would have little complaint with the system. In addition, because of their low position within the hierarchy, they would be more sensitive to status differentials, especially if they had been assigned against their will to a "low-prestige" community.

AN OVERVIEW OF PROBLEM AREAS

Figure 3-S is a three-dimensional plot that displays negative comments for combinations of rank and problem areas. The graph can be read as follows: Of the 986 comments, 3.6 percent were given by ensigns and 4.4 percent were given by LTJGs on the issue of managerial problems. If you add all the percentages in the graph, they will sum to approximately 100 (there is some round off error).

In interpreting the figure, the height of the bar indicates the seriousness of the problem for a specific grade. For example, reading solely in a vertical direction for the management problem, LTs have the highest peak. That is, among individuals who cite management as a problem, LTs constitute the biggest group, and thus the Navy might want to concentrate its efforts there. This argument is advisedly tendered with full recognition that the percentage of LTs affected might be less than the percentage of CDRs affected, and that the importance of a problem is not solely determined by the number of individuals involved. Reading in a horizontal direction for LTs, management is the greatest problem, followed in turn by assignment and promotion problems.

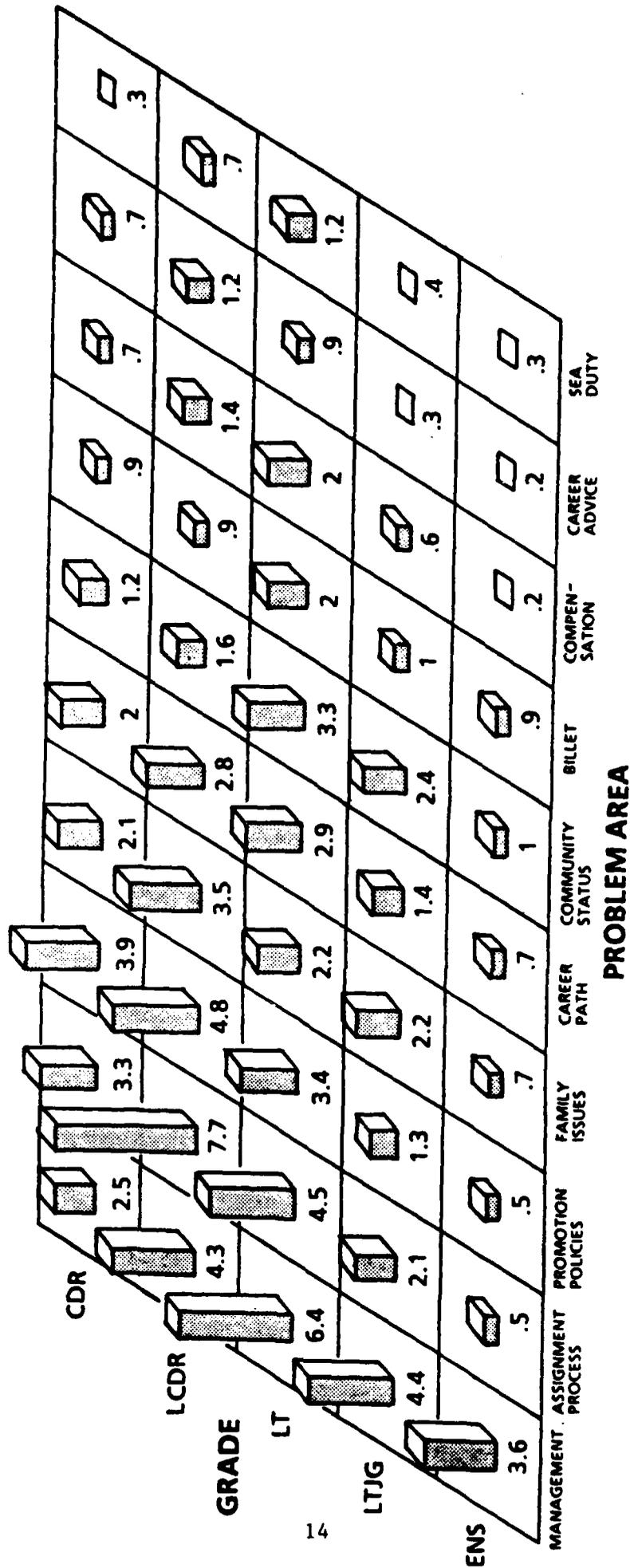


Figure 3-S. Percentage of negative career comments by problem area and grade for surface warfare officers.

HIGH-PRIORITY PROBLEM AREAS

Concern No. 1: Quality of Management

Management was the most frequently cited officer problem. Comments in this area addressed issues such as reward and recognition, a superior's managerial skills, "crisis management," inspections and paperwork, and the effects of management on the retention of quality officers, and training and education. The junior and senior SWOs who made negative comments expressed dissatisfaction with the Navy's management of its people and resources, predominantly its people.

Much of the dissatisfaction focused on immediate supervisors; in particular, the lack of recognition and rewards for good performance. One CDR, for example, commented that:

The Navy leadership exercises great rhetoric on the motto "people are our most important asset" but fails miserably in action to properly recognize and show appreciation at all levels.

Good performance, when recognized, was perceived in many comments as only producing greater responsibilities and more job demands. The increased demands were in turn seen as a way for superiors to further their own career desires. This led many officers to question whether quality individuals would remain in the Navy. Another aspect of mismanagement mentioned by SWOs was that most of their superiors have not been trained or acquired the skills to manage people.

Most of the SWOs who had negative comments on management felt that Navy management was crisis-oriented. This attitude was reflected in the following comments:

We are completely dominated by the OPP cycle and the engineering monster. There simply is not enough emphasis upon naval officers practicing their craft. (LCDR)

Everything seems top priority and has to be done now. (CDR)

Further, the combination of crisis management and the emphasis on passing inspections resulted in living "from inspection to inspection." This approach leads to a lack of tactical training, a lack of understanding by many officers of high-technology weapon systems, and, in the final analysis, decreased military capabilities.

Concern No. 2: The Assignment Process

The second most frequent area of negative comment was reassignment. Comments were about equally split between the detailer and the assignment system in general. The following comments are about the detailer:

One of the most frustrating aspects of my career over the past 10 years has been my dealing with detailers. I have no faith in their claims to be looking out for my best interests. (LT)

During 19 years of continuous active duty, I have developed a distinct distrust for even the best detailers. (CDR)

These comments reflect concerns over the integrity of detailers. Detailers were described further as "playing games," with their first priority being their own careers and the careers of their friends. In addition, detailers were perceived as being too concerned with filling billets than with the career needs of their constituents:

All too often one is left feeling he is simply a number, a warm body to fill a void. No real consideration seems to be given to career development. (LCDR)

The remaining comments addressed the assignment policies and procedures:

A naval officer's best detailer is himself. Don't expect to be given: Get it yourself. (LCDR)

The bureaucracy and inefficiency in the detailing process will never cease to amaze me. (LCDR)

Some officers indicated that the detailing system is dated and not an effective way to manage officer assignment or that the detailing system provided inadequate notification time regarding orders:

My last transfer was more in keeping with an episode of MASH than a straightforward change of station. I was over-toured by 10 months and when orders did come, they were received 3 weeks after I was detailed. (LCDR)

Concern No. 3: Promotion Policies, Procedures, and Opportunities

The third most frequently cited area of concern was promotion. Comments in this area were about equally split among three issues: (1) being passed over, (2) promotions and fitness reports (FITREPs), and (3) screening for executive officer (XO) and commanding officer (CO).

Officers commented that once they were passed over, their talents were wasted; for example, they were given unchallenging billets, even though they performed well on their last ones. Many comments reflected dissatisfaction with the impact of the fitness system on promotions. These officers felt that one bad FITREP can ruin an individual's chance for promotion, or a FITREP can be so inflated that it is difficult to know where one stands. A CDR stated:

Having now worked with aviators, I am convinced that the surface community has managed to devour themselves with FITREPs.

Regarding being screened for XO or CO, this comment was typical:

The Command Qualification process is being watered down too much by trying to cover everyone who may have been out of the mainstream of sea duty. (LCDR)

Critical comments were also made regarding the requirement that SWOs pass command qualification written examinations, especially since aviators are not required to pass such an exam.

Concerns 4, 5, and 6 constitute "moderate-priority" problem areas.

MODERATE-PRIORITY PROBLEM AREAS

Concern No. 4: Family Issues

This was the fourth most cited problem and included, in order of importance: (1) the effects of rotation on the family, (2) the effects of deployment, and (3) the costs of moving and buying a house.

The largest number of comments were on effects of rotation on the family and generally involved the issue of geographic stability and a stable home environment:

Geographic mobility is a serious concern today. My family is tired of moving and my wife, a college nursing professor, finds that career moves for me result in career setbacks for her, both in terms of moving up the professional ladder and in terms of real dollars. (CDR)

Another factor affecting family stability was the work schedules of officers on shore:

Long hours in port rob us of what little available time we have together. Eighteen-hour workdays is the norm. (LTJG)

With regard to family separations, many officers noted the stress placed on the family and the lack of support and understanding by the Navy:

Family separation is the item most frequently discussed among junior officers. Everyone understands overseas deployments and accepts separation as part of the job/career lifestyle. What is not acceptable to the junior officer community (and I suspect the senior officer as well) is family separation when a ship is in CONUS. (LT)

Finally, officers cited moves and the associated cost of housing:

The rapid inflation and high housing cost of the late 70s are taking a toll on career aspirations. While duty in Washington or other high cost areas may be career enhancing, it is a very heavy financial sacrifice to pursue the ticket-punch route to the star. (CDR)

Concern No. 5: Career Path

Negative comments in this problem area included three issues: structure, SWO qualification, and subspecialty development. Most comments concerned the structure of SWO career paths:

I feel that there should be at least one assignment in a career that is neither career enhancing nor the kiss of death. It should be an assignment that provides the SWO with the opportunity to try something slightly out of the ordinary. There is an automatic assumption that a career naval officer has a goal of command. This is obviously not true, but the effects of such an assumption are significant. The sooner we can identify the particular field an officer is interested in (AAW, ASW, ASUW, INT, ENG, etc.), the sooner we can remove such artificial assumptions about career patterns.

Comments were particularly critical of the assumption that SWOs must be generalists. They believe that this assumption produces an officer who is a jack-of-all-trades and master of none. This approach, however, is no longer acceptable because of the increasing role of high technology aboard today's ships. Most officers felt that the only answer was for the Navy to support specialization as an acceptable career path. Specialization would also provide the opportunity for individual officers to pursue those areas in which they were most interested without destroying their career.

The next largest set of comments on the career path focused on SWO qualifications:

My initial assignment was to an aircraft carrier and there was no program to get JOs qualified. The person in charge of the qualifications was a LT (aviation type). Although we had five LCDRs and numerous LTs, all SWOs, none of them showed much interest in the JOs' difficulty in obtaining SWO qualification. The result was a mass exodus of JOs. (LT)

This type of comment draws attention to the lack of standardized SWO programs aboard most ships, not simply carriers. Junior officer comments complained that most senior officers cared little about whether they become qualified or not:

I have seen very few COs who are the least bit concerned about anyone's career but their own and maybe some of their choice officers from the Academy. (LTJG)

Regarding subspecialty, many of the comments were of the following type:

I have picked up a subspecialty (communications) through the PG school and P-coded billet route. This subspecialty has a poor record for promotions and I note a lot of passed-over officers in the field. It doesn't seem to have affected progress in my warfare specialty yet, but I am convinced my changes of promotion will be degraded in the future. I regret that I was not steered away from the subspecialty.

The major theme here was the conflict between going to postgraduate school and still remaining visible, current, and part of the mainstream SWO community.

Concern No. 6: Community Status

The sixth most cited area of concern was community status. Comments in this area involved satisfaction with the surface warfare community vis-a-vis other communities, as well as possible plans by officers to change their designator. One example:

At the present time, the feeling among my peers (two NFOs, one submariner, one EDO, and two surface) is that Surface Warfare gets the "dregs" of the people. As I am intimately involved with the service selection for our NROTC midshipmen, I note nuclear power always skims off the top, aviation skims off the top of what's left (75 midshipmen turned down Jan 82) and Surface Warfare gets everybody who couldn't make it into "good" programs. It's not fun being a member of a losing group. Recommendations--put a ceiling on Surface Warfare and make the "dregs" choose aviation or 1100. (LT)

Negative comments on changing designators were mainly from O-1s, O-2s, and O-3s. They described frustration with the perceived lack of concern for SWOs:

I will not continue in the Navy as a Surface Warfare Officer and will be changing to the 3100 designator in March. There is no question regarding the importance and challenge of the SWO community, yet I have been quite dissatisfied with the Navy's evident lack of concern with SWO personnel. There have been great strides in other communities in increasing incentives for retention, but while the SWO community presents an equally horrid retention rate, little is apparently being done and the job continues to become more arduous. It seems that the backbone of the Navy has been relegated to a back seat position.

As would be expected, perceptions of this sort resulted in a lack of esprit de corps and camaraderie.

LOW-PRIORITY PROBLEM AREAS

These problem areas accounted for 16 percent of all the negative comments and included dissatisfaction with billets, compensation, career advice, and sea duty.

Concern No. 7: Billets

The most frequent comment involved dissatisfaction with particular types of billets. For example, officers found ship billets challenging and satisfying, but found most shore billets disappointing. This resulted from a feeling that those billets lacked challenge and were unimportant to the Navy's mission:

Since reporting to my new job, I've done a 180 and I plan to resign. There is no mental exercise, no learning in this job. I feel as though my talents are wasted. . . . I so dislike this idle time that I will go on to where I am challenged. I am still proud to be a naval officer, and am still excited about being both a leader and a ship driver. I've tried to talk myself into "sticking it out" until my next ship tour. But that is too much wasted time. (LT)

Additionally, officers commented that they had to change jobs just when they found a billet they liked or became proficient at what they were doing. These officers felt that fewer changes would reduce these problems as well as improving the effectiveness of the Navy.

Many officers commented on the impact that different billets had on their careers:

The myth that only performance counts, not one's billet, should be faced up to. No one is stupid enough to believe that equal performance as an EA to CNO, as a detailee, and the CO of a Reserve Training Center or SIM will be viewed the same, so why keep up the facade? (CDR)

Concern No. 8: Compensation

Most comments indicated that officers were not in the Navy for monetary reasons. However, most SWOs felt that when compared to the other communities, the surface community was last in pay, benefits, and bonuses:

The current policy and priorities and bonuses for the submarine and aviation communities tend to give SWOs the idea they are a low-priority community. (LT)

Concern No. 9: Career Advice

Career advice as a problem area received only 3 percent of the comments. Negative comments stated that the detailing system was, in its present form, unable to provide the type of career advice needed. For example, a LCDR stated:

When your detailer starts your initial phone conversation six months before your rotation with "Which job in Washington would you like?," you can figure out quickly that the counseling on your desires has become extremely unimportant to him.

Concern No. 10: Sea Duty

Comments on sea duty were almost evenly split between positive and negative. This was typical of the positive comments:

I think most SWO officers of my rank/billet feel that the challenge of sea duty/attainment of command is what makes the job worth having. Somewhere in your DH tour, you decide that driving ships is what you really want to do . . . then you go after it . . . despite the drawbacks of family separation, frequent moves, paperwork, and admin hassles. (LCDR)

Negative comments described drawbacks such as family separation, high pressure, and long hours.

Frankly, I am tired of going to sea and I feel the need for a break. Should I not get shore duty in August at my PRD, I most probably will quit. (LT)

SUMMARY

The present section of the report identifies the primary areas of concern to SWOs regarding the Navy's career management system. Problem area identification was based on a content analysis of written comments supplied by 500 SWOs as part of a comprehensive career development questionnaire.

Based on the analyses of SWO comments, six major career problem areas were identified as severe enough to affect desire to continue. In order of importance, these are managerial practices, the assignment process, promotion policies, family issues, the structure of the SWO career path, and the status of the surface Navy when compared with the aviation and submarine communities.

Comments were particularly critical of the way that Navy supervisors treated personnel under their charge. The major source of dissatisfaction in this regard was the lack of a fair system that recognizes and rewards good performance. Another area of dissatisfaction was the perceived mismanagement of the various components of the assignment process. Particularly important in this regard were the negative reactions of SWOs toward detailers. For example, many comments depicted detailers as insensitive to their needs and caring little if officers obtained the experience necessary to remain career-competitive. It should be noted that while a strong commitment to staying in the Navy was expressed, the frustration of interacting with the assignment system was a major factor in retention decisions.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The comments form a useful basis for constructing meaningful research questions. These questions should be used as a basis for structuring future research or survey efforts. These efforts would result in an ongoing source of information for formulating required policy changes. Some of the questions are as follows:

1. What are the personnel management training needs of senior officers (i.e., LCDR, CDR, CAPT)?
2. What is the long-term effect of crisis management on unit readiness?
3. What is the relationship between career management policies and SWO warfighting performance?
4. What changes are needed in the career management system to best utilize naval officers and meet mission requirements?
5. What are the long-term effects of the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) on the career management system?
6. What are the long-term effects of assignment policies and procedures on career decisions?
7. What are the characteristics of the constituent-detailer relationship that cause the negative reactions of constituents?
8. How can the Navy best use its "passed over" officers?
9. How far from the SWO career path can an officer deviate and still remain career-competitive?

REFERENCE

Morrison, R. F., & Cook, T. M. (1985). Military officer development and decision making: A multiple-cohort longitudinal analysis of the first 24 years (MPL TN 85-4). San Diego: Navy Personnel Research and Development Center.

**CAREER CONCERNS OF
AVIATION WARFARE OFFICERS**

Leslie C. Davenport
Thomas W. H. Bachman
Gerry L. Wilcove

CONTENTS

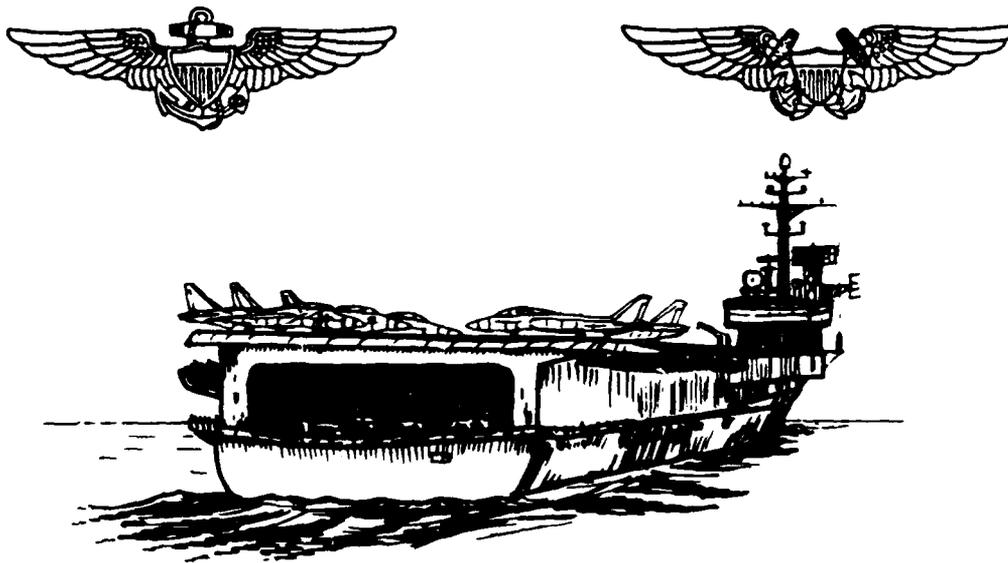
	Page
INTRODUCTION	29
METHOD	29
Questionnaire	29
Sample	30
Content Analysis	30
Data Analysis	31
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	32
Comments and Structured Questionnaire	32
Rank Ordering of Problem Areas	34
Grade Differences for Problem Areas	35
An Overview of Problem Areas	36
HIGH-PRIORITY PROBLEM AREAS	38
Concern No. 1: The Assignment Process	38
Concern No. 2: Career Path	39
Concern No. 3: Family and Personal Life	39
Concern No. 4: Promotion Policies, Procedures, and Opportunities	40
Concern No. 5: Quality of Management	40
LOW-PRIORITY PROBLEM AREAS	41
Concern No. 6: Compensation	41
Concern No. 7: Sea Duty	41
Concern No. 8: Satisfaction with Billet	41
Concern No. 9: Community Status	42
Concern No. 10: Career Advice	42
SUMMARY	43
RESEARCH QUESTIONS	43
REFERENCES	44

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
1-A. AWO Comment Sample by Rank	30
2-A. Career Problem Areas, Definitions, and Number of Issues for AWO Sample	31

LIST OF FIGURES

1-A. Structured AWO career questionnaire: Percentage of favorable perceptions	33
2-A. Aviation warfare officers: Percentage of negative comments made for each problem area	34
3-A. Percentage of negative comments by problem area and grade for aviation warfare officers	37



INTRODUCTION

Officer career development, defined as the movement of individuals toward their own and the Navy's long-term goals, has been the subject of very few research efforts. The gap in knowledge makes it difficult to alleviate the problems officers face as they attempt to become professionally competent and advance in their careers. For example, how clear is the career path? How do officers see the fairness of assignment policies and procedures? How useful is the current career planning information? Problems in these areas could frustrate the individual's attempts at career development and the Navy's long-term requirement for highly trained and experienced senior officers.

The comments analyzed here were obtained as part of a larger ongoing study of the Navy's career management system and its effects. As part of this study, officers responding to the Aviation Warfare Career Questionnaire had the opportunity to comment on any aspect of their Navy career that they felt "affected their desire to continue as AWOs." The following material summarizes and prioritizes the career management concerns of AWOs.

METHOD

Questionnaire

Data for the present research were obtained as part of a large study of the Navy's career management system (see Morrison & Cook, 1985). As part of this broad project,

AWOs answered a comprehensive career questionnaire that included the following instruction on the last page:

If you would like to comment on any aspect of your Navy career as it affects your desire to continue as an Aviation Officer, please use this space. Written comments may be used to support statistical summaries of data, but only if anonymity can be assured.

Data from these comment sheets were used in the present research to identify areas of concern to aviators.

Sample

Of the 5,028 usable aviation warfare career questionnaires returned, 2,273 of the officers included completed comment sheets. However, because of limited resources and the extremely long period required to do content analysis, a sample of 554 was chosen so that results, when generalized to the larger sample ($N = 5,028$), would be expected to produce no more than a 5 percent error. There was no significant difference between the distribution of officer grades in the sample and the grades in all the returned questionnaires ($X^2 = 3.04$, $df = 4$, ns). The distribution of comment sheets by rank is shown in Table 1-A.

Table 1-A
AWO Comment Sample by Rank

Rank	Number of Respondents	Percent
ENS	22	4
LTJG	56	10
LT	189	34
LCDR	181	33
CDR	106	19
Total	554	100

Note. The "A" in Table 1-A stands for AWOs. ENS = ensign, LTJG = lieutenant junior grade, LT = lieutenant, LCDR = lieutenant commander, and CDR = commander.

Content Analysis

A subset of comment sheets ($n = 60$) was reviewed and a tentative set of problem areas (i.e., categories) that reflected career concerns was constructed. Problem areas were discussed with researchers working on the same task for surface warfare officers (SWOs) and general unrestricted line officers (GenURLs). Based on these discussions, a common set of categories, as well as community-specific ones, were identified. For the AWOs, 10 career problem areas, shown in Table 2-A, were agreed upon, each area being comprised of 2 to 7 issues (i.e., subcategories). The 60 comment sheets were then rescored, and the remaining ones in the sample of 554 were scored for the first time.

Table 2-A

Career Problem Areas, Definitions, and Number of Issues for AWO Sample

Problem Area	Definition	Number of Issues
Assignment process	The Navy's policies and procedures, both formal and informal, that control reassignment.	7
Career path	The series of connected jobs that are considered necessary for professional development and advancement.	5
Family and personal life	The impact of being in the Navy on the individual's personal life.	5
Promotion policies, procedures, and opportunities	Concerns about the fairness of the system, the role of fitness reports, and the consequences of non-promotion	3
Management	Treatment of personnel by immediate supervisor and other superiors that affect performance and general quality of work life.	4
Compensation equity	The perceived fairness of the Navy's pay and benefit programs.	4
Sea duty	The individual's overall satisfaction with sea duty and with work responsibilities.	2
Satisfaction with billets	The individual's evaluation of his or her recent billet assignments.	2
Community status	The individual's evaluation of the aviation community or a specific community such as a patrol squadron (VP) in comparison with analogous groupings.	2
Career advice and information	The amount and quality of counseling and printed materials.	2

Note. Not all the problem areas were the same in the three officer communities covered in this report. Definitions also vary among the communities because of the nature of the comments involved.

Data Analysis

The analysis focused on negative comments in order to identify problem areas in working conditions and career management practices. Theoretically, it was possible for 100 percent of the individuals to give a negative comment for each category. This did not happen. Therefore, a statistic was computed that indicated what percentage of individuals gave a negative comment for each category. A person was counted only once regardless of how many of their comments were scored in a given problem area. This was called the "percentage of people" statistic. A second statistic computed was termed a "percentage of comments" statistic. This statistic was formed by dividing the number of

negative comments in each problem area by the total number of negative comments from all respondents in all categories.

A chi-square statistic was computed across grades, separately for each category and for both statistics, to determine if more negative comments were voiced for a grade than would be expected based on its proportion in the sample.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

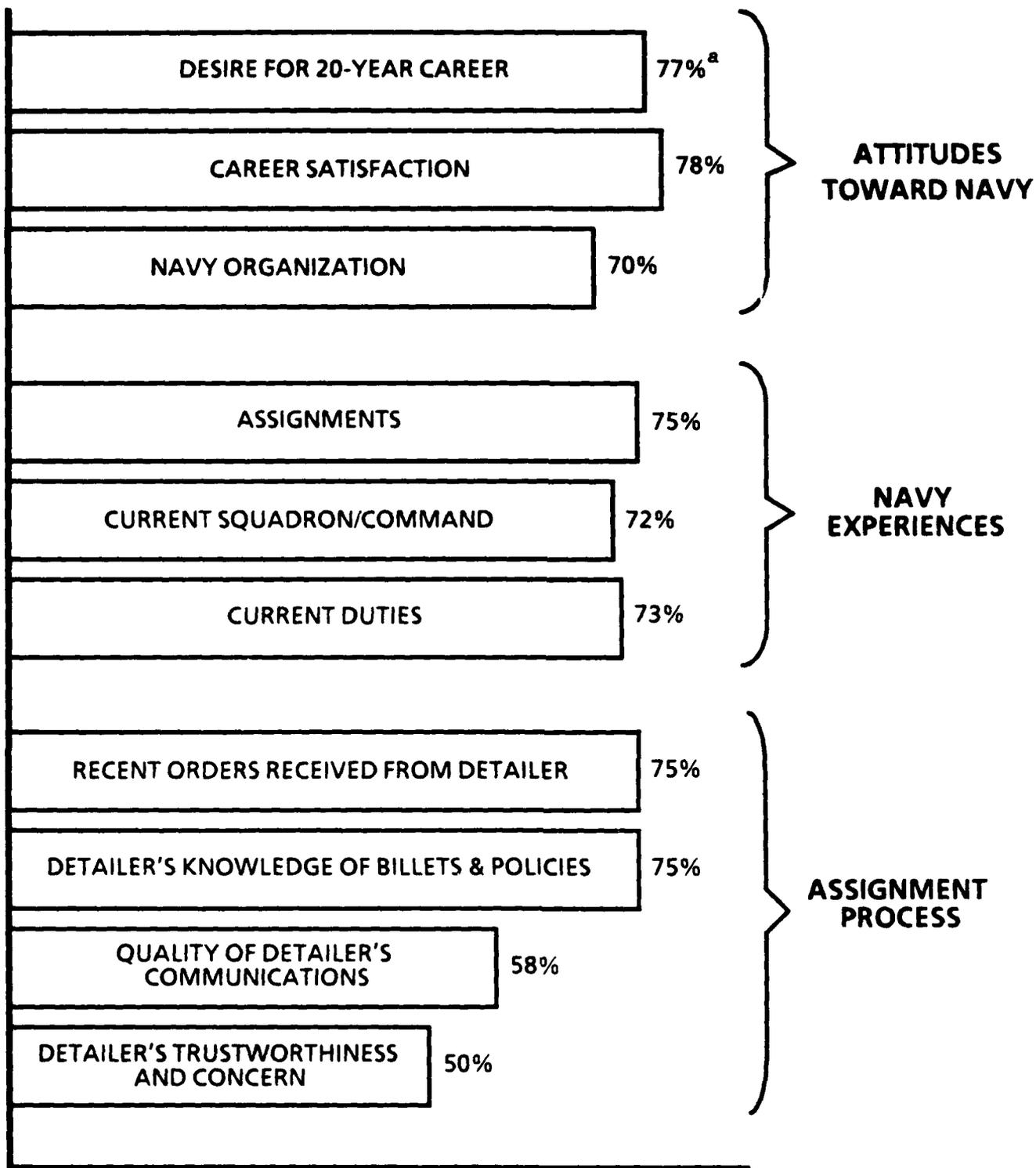
Comments and Structured Questionnaire

AWOs problems are designated as high or low priority, depending on the frequency with which they were mentioned in written comments. However, what does a high-priority problem imply--that officers are basically dissatisfied with the Navy? More specifically, what does it mean if the assignment process is identified as a high-priority problem--that a majority of the officers are dissatisfied with detailers?

To place current results within a broader context, questionnaire responses to a career questionnaire were analyzed for 5,028 AWOs. The favorable responses of AWOs on a variety of issues are presented in Figure 1-A.² To measure "career satisfaction," officers indicated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with items such as: "I take great pride in my career," and "I would definitely like to change my career." To measure attractiveness of the "Navy organization," officers indicated their extent of agreement with items such as: "I talk up the Navy to my friends as a great organization to work for," and "I really care about the fate of the Navy."

Figure 1-A shows that 77 percent intended to make the Navy a 20-year career (only officers with 10 or less years of service were considered here), 78 percent expressed satisfaction with their careers, and 70 percent viewed the Navy as an attractive organization. Approximately 3 out of 4 officers were pleased with the most recent orders they had received (i.e., with the match between the assignments they had received and the wishes they had expressed on their preference cards). However, less than 60 percent were satisfied with the information conveyed to them by the detailer during negotiations. In addition, only 50 percent trusted the detailer (the others were neutral or negative), and only 50 percent believed that the detailer was concerned about meeting their needs.

²Because some AWOs indicated they were "neutral," one should not conclude, for example, that if 68 percent of the AWOs gave favorable responses, then 32 percent gave unfavorable responses.



Note. Questionnaire was completed by 5,028 officers.

^aOnly officers with 10 years of service or less were included here (N = 2,876).

Figure 1-A. Structured AWO career questionnaire: Percentage of favorable perceptions.

Rank Ordering of Problem Areas

The same rank ordering of problem areas occurred regardless of which statistic was used. This report uses the "percentages of comments" statistic.

Figure 2-A shows problem areas in descending order. The highest percentage of negative comments was given for the assignment process, followed by the career path. The "assignment process" result may partially reflect the fact that more items were devoted to this area in the structured questionnaire than to any other area. Based on frequency of negative comments, the top five problem areas are designated as high priority areas in this report, and the bottom five as low-priority areas. Concentration on the negative side does not imply that the officers were generally negative towards the Navy.

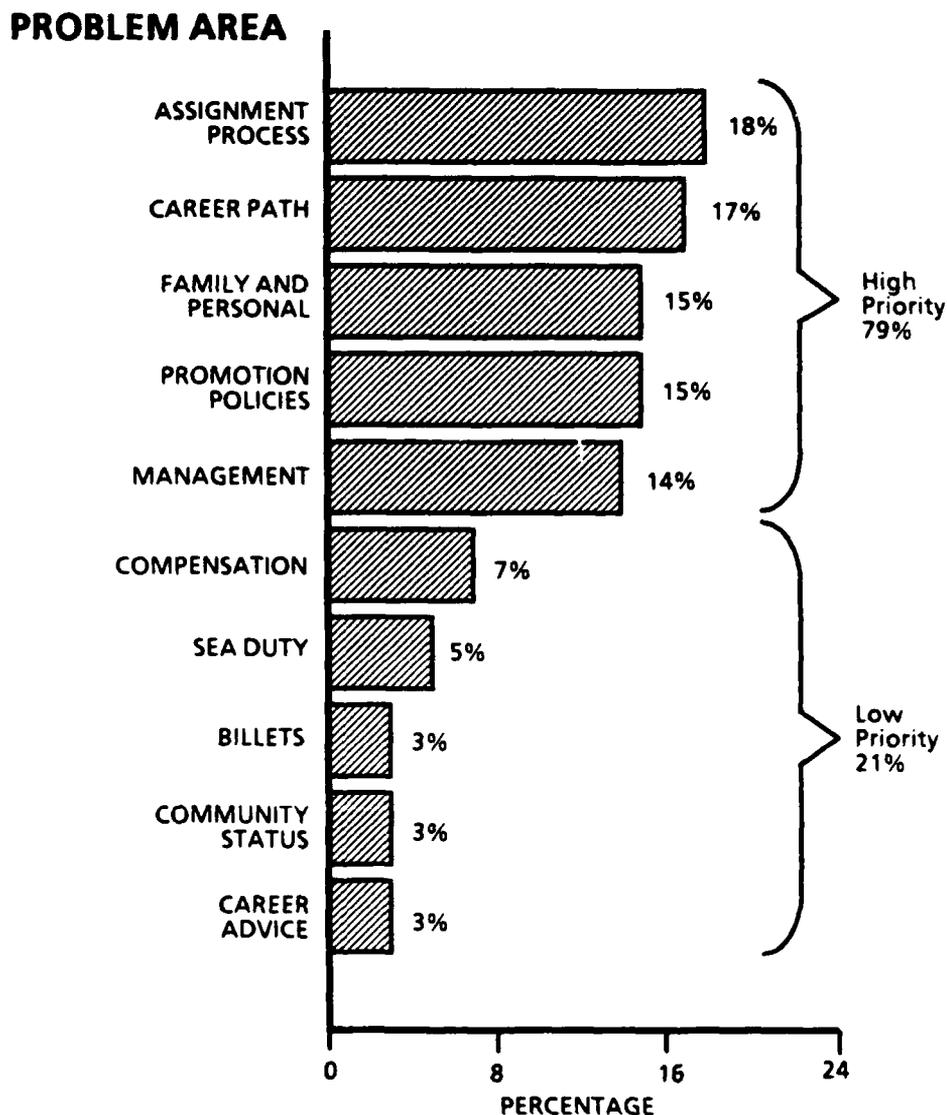


Figure 2-A. Aviation warfare officers: Percentage of negative comments made for each problem area.

Grade Differences for Problem Areas

A chi-square analysis was performed on each problem area to determine if more negative comments were obtained for each grade than would be expected based on its proportion in the sample. When negative comments exceeded the expected number, the problem was considered especially important for that grade. The expected number of officers commented negatively on the following problems: (1) sea duty, (2) family and personal life, (3) management, and (4) career advice.

However, regarding career path, LTs had more negative comments than expected ($X^2 = 12.76$, 1 df, $p < .001$), and CDRs had fewer ($X^2 = 4.74$, 1 df, $p < .05$). This finding can possibly be explained by the many LT comments describing how flight time became limited once they became LTs, and managerial roles became their primary duty. In addition, they were facing a ship's company tour, which typically was perceived as unattractive. Furthermore, it appears that LTs were just becoming aware of how narrow the career path was for aviators. In contrast, the CDRs appeared to have accepted this fact.

Compensation equity yielded a significant overall chi-square (9.50, 4 df, $p < .05$), although significant values were not obtained for any of the individual grades; that is, this area was not an extraordinary problem for any particular grade.

LTJGs had more negative comments on status of community than would be expected ($X^2 = 7.24$, 1 df, $p < .001$). These officers were just completing their training or just reporting to their squadrons and may have been disappointed about their assignment to a particular aircraft.

LTs mentioned their dissatisfaction with billets more than would be expected ($X^2 = 4.97$, 1 df, $p < .05$). This concern probably occurred at the point in their career path when they were approaching or were already in a ship's company tour. LCDRs were found to comment on their dissatisfaction with billets less than would be expected ($X^2 = 5.52$, 1 df, $p < .05$). Many LCDRs were approaching or were in the operational squadron department head tour, which was considered very desirable at that point in their careers.

LTs offered more negative comments than were expected ($X^2 = 4.12$, 1 df, $p < .05$) on the assignment process, and CDRs offered fewer ($X^2 = 4.56$, 1 df, $p < .05$). LTs apparently had fairly well-developed opinions on what they wanted and expectations of what they would receive but became frustrated by the actual outcomes of the assignment process. On the other hand, CDRs may not have had high expectations, given their experiences with the system, and thus accepted the assignments they received.

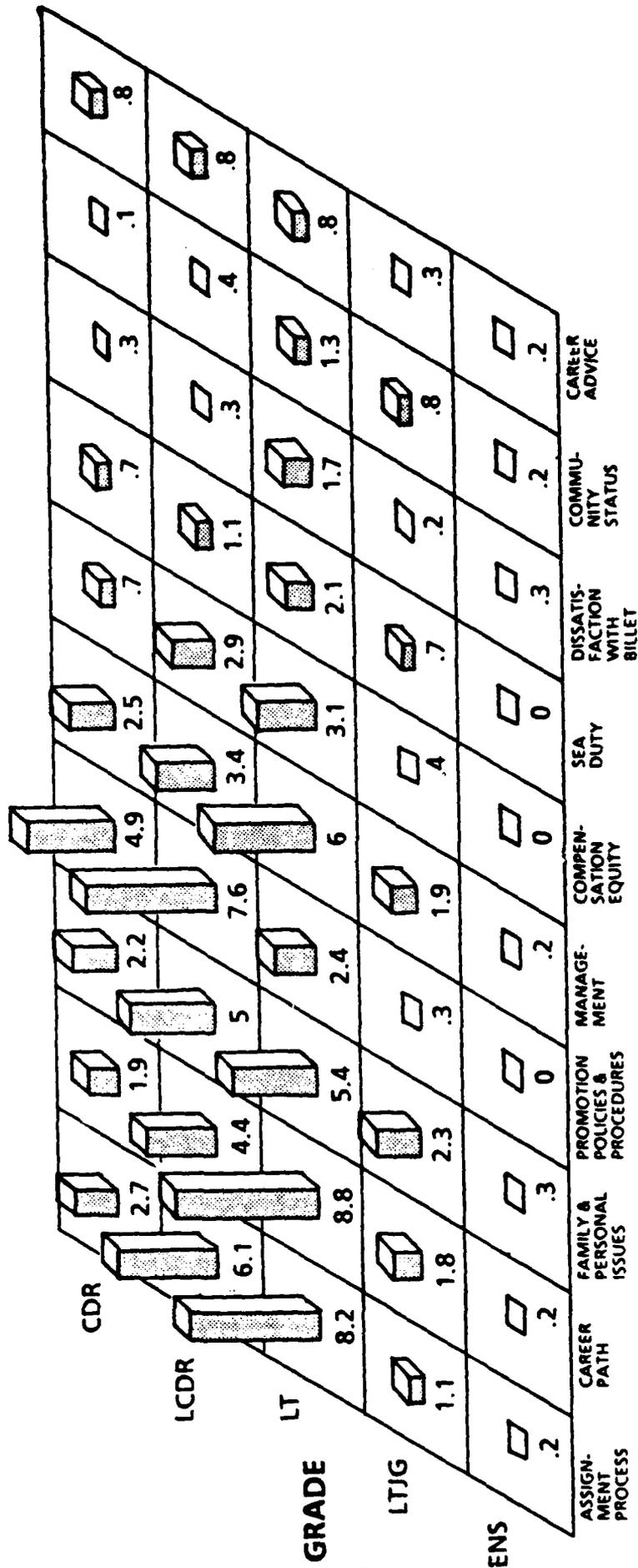
The last problem area that did not have a representative distribution across ranks was promotion policies. The proportion of negative comments of ENSs, LTJGs, and LTs was significantly lower; while LCDRs and CDRs mentioned promotion policies much more than would be expected (the overall X^2 across ranks was 51.4, 4 df, $p < .001$). Many of the LCDR and CDR comments regarding promotion policies dealt with the problems of being passed over. Junior officers are automatically promoted until they are screened for LCDR, but competition increases markedly at the higher grades. Furthermore, if a LT is passed over for LCDR, he must leave the Navy and thus would not be around to criticize the promotion policies.

An Overview of Problem Areas

Figure 3-A is a three-dimensional plot that graphically depicts the interaction between grades and the problem areas. The figure can be read as follows: Of the 898 comments, 2.7 percent were voiced by CDRs unhappy with the assignment process, and 6.1 percent were voiced by LCDRs who were critical of the same area. A total of 4.4 percent of the comments were offered by LCDRs who were critical of the existing career path. Summing all the percentages yields a total of approximately 100 (there is some round off error).

In interpreting the chart, the assumption is made that the height of the bar indicates the seriousness of a problem. For example, by reading vertically for the assignment process problem, the highest peak is at the LT level. Thus, if the Navy were going to try to solve the assignment process problem, the LT level would be the best place to start, if for no other reason than the sheer number of LTs in the Navy. This argument is advisedly tendered with full recognition that the percentage of LTs affected might be less than the corresponding percentage for LCDRs. With this caveat in mind, examination of Figure 3-A shows that the bulk of the comments were supplied by LTs through CDRs who were dissatisfied with the first five problem areas pictured (assignment process, career path, family and personal issues, promotion policies, and management).

Reading Figure 3-A across horizontally reveals the rank ordering of problem areas for each grade. As an example, the biggest problem area for LTs is the career path, followed by the assignment process, management, family and personal issues, and compensation equity, respectively.



PROBLEM AREA

Figure 3-A. Percentage of negative comments by problem area and grade for aviation warfare officers.

HIGH-PRIORITY PROBLEM AREAS

Concern No. 1: The Assignment Process

The greatest number of negative comments related directly to the detailer, and the second greatest number related to the assignment system in a larger sense. The most commonly mentioned problem concerning the detailer was a general disregard for individual needs and preferences, sometimes referred to as a "take-it-or-leave-it attitude":

The most frustrating experiences I have had in my career have been with the detailing process. My initial assignment after completing the training command was to a remote island naval station, followed by sea duty in a Fleet squadron. Initially my most recent PCS assignment was to another Rock. After appeals . . . to the CO of the FRS and a Flag Review Request (which was held up . . . in the aviation assignment branch), I received my present assignment to CONUS shore duty. (LT)

. . . I have received my wings and have been stashed here at HC-16 ever since. The detailer keeps telling me to stay here because there are no flying jobs open in the areas I want. In the meantime, there are pilots coming right out of the training command, getting their wings many months after me, and getting Fleet seats in the area that I desire. (ENS)

The second most serious problem was the inability to reach the detailer; the third, the detailer's lack of knowledge or dissemination of inaccurate information regarding the availability and/or content of a billet; and fourth, receiving orders too close to the projected rotation date.

Comments directed at the system as a whole attacked the message propagated by Navy officials that desirable assignments are distributed on the basis of job performance. Other comments related to the assignment system were more encompassing, as illustrated by the following comments:

Just a few years ago the Navy had too many pilots. BUPERS mismanaged and occasionally intentionally hurt people's careers by assigning them to non-flying jobs or non-operational jobs in hopes that the excess would "go away." Suddenly, a shortage developed and the Navy is now paying for those years of not taking care of the pilots. In other words, the Navy is now willing to do anything (bonus, this survey, etc.) when it needs pilots, but was not willing to do much when its pilots needed help. (LCDR)

There is no organization, management, or continuity at NMPC. An officer has no control over his duty assignment other than resignation, retirement, or intervention by senior officers. Preference cards are a waste of time because they are generally disregarded, and few officers have access to enough information to make astute duty assignment requests. (LCDR)

Concern No. 2: Career Path

The most critical problem in this area was the dissatisfaction with having to follow the "accepted career path" as dictated by Navy policy. This attitude is reflected in the following comments:

I believe that the Navy wastes tremendous talent by assigning aviators outside the aviation community. Most have one squadron tour, then some non-flying shore tour, then 90 percent of the time a disassociated sea tour, then another non-flying tour and after 8-12 years back to the cockpit. That "ideal" career path runs many aviators out of the Navy--we want to fly, not drive boats. (LT)

Aviators should not be forced out of the cockpit. There are some 40-year old commanders who can still fly an OK 3 and were not selected for CAG. I know it would require a whole alignment of the career path, but it is personally sad and seems a waste of a vast amount of talent to have one's aviator days end at age 40. (CDR)

Another way that officers expressed their dissatisfaction with the accepted career path was to say that their careers lack flexibility or latitude. For example, a LCDR LSO mentioned:

Career planning after the completion of a CAG LSO tour is generally assumed to be a shore tour, then squadron department head tour. However, too much emphasis is put on when you must get back to a squadron in order to be competitive for command screen. I would like to screen for command and complete my command tour as close to 20 years as possible. To do this, I would not want to screen early. Therefore, I don't want to get my department head tour too early. However, the detailers may not allow me to remain in my upcoming shore tour as long as I would like.

Concern No. 3: Family and Personal Life

This problem area was characterized by the following issues, presented in decreasing order of importance: (1) long family separations, causing undue hardships on the family unit; (2) lack of geographic stability, making it difficult to have a stable home environment, to establish roots, and for some wives, to pursue a career; (3) exorbitant moving costs and inadequate Navy stipends; and (4) extremely long working hours, not only aboard ship but also ashore, which constrain and complicate an officer's personal life. Some of these issues are expressed in the following comments:

I am leaving the Navy in 2 weeks. I love my job in virtually all aspects with the exception of the long family separation that is required. It is for this reason alone that I made my decision to leave the Navy. (LT)

Moving--it's a trauma for us to move around the way we are suppose to in order to ensure upward mobility; the government does not take care of us here in this respect. Once again, big business does--they pay all expenses involved including buying your house at fair market value or picking up closing costs, subsidizing exorbitant costs associated with today's housing market. (LT)

Concern No. 4: Promotion Policies, Procedures, and Opportunities

Three problems of equal importance were identified in this area. One problem reflected the belief that the opportunities for upward mobility are lacking, especially if the officer is from a particular community or year group. For example, a LCDR stated:

An officer has virtually no opportunity for flag selection if he is not TACAIR, in spite of the fact that more than half of all naval aviators serve in "cats and dogs" or support squadrons, and that these aviators are every bit as good as their counterparts in the "glamour" communities.

A second problem concerned the effects of being passed over for promotion. It appears that once passed over, an officer's career is ruined. In addition, there are few challenging billets for these officers while they complete naval service. Therefore, sustaining their motivation to perform well on the job becomes difficult. To help remedy this problem, officers vehemently called for a more satisfactory set of billets and policies. The overall problem is reflected in the following comment:

Too many careers are ruined because of the passed-over stigma. We've got a lot of excellent officers whose talents are being wasted because they've been a nonselect, when they are desirable, useful, and promotable. However, the detailer sends them to a nonviable billet. The corollary of course is too much talent is wasted, discouraged, or ignored. There should be upgrade programs for these individuals. (LCDR)

A third problem is dissatisfaction with the fitness reporting system (FITREPS), which was characterized as ineffective and inaccurate. For example:

I would like to see FITREPS tell it like it is--not be so inflated. It's tough to really know where you stand when nearly everyone reads like a water walker. (LCDR)

Concern No. 5: Quality of Management

Criticisms of management ranged in scope from community-wide practices to supervisory practices. Although some favorable comments were received and many comments did not mention managerial practices, negative comments from both junior and senior officers criticized some practices as demoralizing and inefficient.

Dissatisfaction with community-wide practices is illustrated by the following comments:

Carrier-based air ASW seems to be very poorly understood by the TACAIR communities, CV skippers, and flag officers. As a result, the assets are misused, the mission made even more boring than it inherently is, and the frustration level raised to intolerable limits. (CDR)

(Big problems include) total abandonment of personnel while we buy 600 ships, 10,000 airplanes, etc. Why don't you guys come to Barbers Point and tour the barracks, the gym, the chow hall . . . the MOQs and MEQs. . . . Maybe you wouldn't wonder why there is a retention problem! (LCDR)

The Navy's general managerial style was also criticized. That is, many comments described crisis management as the standard operating procedure. ("The Navy is a perpetual series of management crises. As a result, we have a very inefficient and poorly managed organization.") This situation was often seen as a systems or organizational problem (i.e., causal factors were viewed as external to the immediate command).

Another pattern in negative comments was that supervisors were often described as only being concerned with preserving and advancing their own positions, rather than with the development of their subordinates. Other comments stressed that managers should become more employee-centered, especially in the way they reward people. ("Every JO likes to get positive strokes for a job well done. Unfortunately, our department heads and above forget this important fact of executive management and only remember to rap our knuckles.") Some negative comments also stated that officers are not provided with the training necessary to be effective managers at the command level and are not rewarded for effective management.

LOW-PRIORITY PROBLEM AREAS

Concern No. 6: Compensation

The majority of comments dealt with inequitable pay policies, both in an absolute sense and relative to peers. Examples of the latter include the belief that the Navy discriminates against bachelors or accords a privileged status to certain communities such as Fighter Squadrons (VF) and Attack Squadrons (VA).

The second most serious issue noted was the erosion of medical, dental, and retirement benefits; the third reflected a tremendous resentment by those officers whose Aviator Career Incentive Pay (ACIP) was reduced, because they had accepted the Aviator Officer Continuation Pay (AOCP) bonus.

Concern No. 7: Sea Duty

Although a few aviators said they enjoy duty at sea that does not involve flying, the majority found it very distasteful. Some officers lamented the fact that this type of duty is required for visibility and that a successful tour in a non-flying role begets another. Some officers stated that they will leave the Navy to "avoid the boat." The following are typical comments:

Do away with disassociated sea tours for the VP community NFOs. Squadrons are short and people are being extended, yet many are out getting their "tickets punched." (LTJG)

Disassociated sea tours are a waste of manpower resources and a major reason so many of my peers are leaving the Navy. P-3 pilots do not want to be assigned to ships and will leave the Navy to avoid them. (LT)

Concern No. 8: Satisfaction with Billet

Unlike all other areas, there were as many positive as negative comments about billets. Satisfaction resulted from challenging, demanding, and interesting jobs; dissatisfaction, from "make-work" billets, lack of respect from others, pushing papers, and assignments that did not fulfill career requirements.

A satisfied LT stated:

Here is the positive. Nowhere else can I put my name on the line and check out a \$50 million "toy." Operating around the boat provides as much challenge as anyone could ever ask. It causes you to develop extreme trust in your fellow aviators as a screw up on their part can cost you your life or an airplane. Making a night trap is the most demanding thing I have done--period. My heart still comes out my mouth every time. A night catapult shot still scares me to death.

A dissatisfied LT stated:

Future duty assignment opportunities don't thrill me. The prospect of carrier or D.C. duty being "best" prospects for the future do not particularly excite me, particularly during a period of extreme pilot shortages.

Concern No. 9: Community Status

Dissatisfaction stemmed from the belief that certain communities, such as VF and VA, were widely respected, strongly supported by upper echelons, and characterized by attractive career options; on the other hand, the Helicopter Combat Support Squadron (HC), Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadron (HM), Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron (VAW) and Composite Squadron (VC) communities were described in less attractive terms.

A CDR, for example, offered this opinion:

VAW career officers have no chance of becoming CAGs or CV COs--not because they are not capable, but because the Navy mentality believes that if you are not VF/VA you do not qualify. This tends to filter into the junior ranks and discourages career intention.

Concern No. 10: Career Advice

Junior officer comments, in particular, criticized the lack of formalized career information and counseling. Comments from all ranks recommended that each aircraft community should publish information on career development, promotion statistics, and available billets. A general guide on detailing practices was also recommended in the comments, which suggests that the lack of career information and counseling is detrimental to career development.

Faulty advice, if received early, can negatively affect an officer's overall attitude toward the Navy and the course of their career, as suggested in the following LTJG comment:

My dissatisfaction with naval aviation began on Day 1 when I was advised by my recruiter that if I went to AOCS as an NFO I could easily switch to pilot. At the time there was a backlog in training pilots so only NFOs were being accepted (his story, not mine). Although physically and mentally qualified to be a pilot, I took my recruiter's advice and went as an NFO. Once at AOCS I was told that designator changes were virtually impossible, although not unheard of.

SUMMARY

Five high-priority problems emerged from the data. Aviators felt that the most serious problem was the assignment process; specifically, the detailer's apparent disregard for the individual's needs and preferences. LTs were especially vocal in this regard.

The second most serious problem mentioned was the career path, which was seen as narrow and inflexible. Again, LTs were the most critical, possibly because of limited flying hours and the additional managerial duties they were facing in a ship's company tour.

The third most serious problem concerned the impact of Navy life on the officer's family and personal life; specifically, the long family separations and the lack of geographic stability, which make it difficult to have a stable home environment and for wives to pursue a career.

The fourth most serious problem was seen as promotion. Several issues of apparently equal importance were identified. For example, some LCDRs faced the consequences of non-promotion; that is, that of finding meaningful billets. Other promotion problems were dissatisfaction with the fitness reporting system and the perceived lack of upward mobility opportunities for particular subcommunities or year groups.

Managerial practices were the fifth most serious problem. Poor managers were described as primarily concerned with their own advancement and not the development of officers under their charge. Criticisms transcended immediate supervisors to the extent that commanding officers, or those above them, were held responsible at times for creating a crisis-management mode of operation.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The comments of officers give rise to research questions, which should be investigated in a systematic manner as a prerequisite to implementing meaningful policy and procedural changes.

1. In terms of retention, would it be beneficial to the Navy to create more flexible career paths for aviators who want to be pilots rather than managers?
2. In general, how do current assignment policies affect the career development of officers?
3. What is the effect of long working hours and detachments while ashore on productivity and overall attitude toward a naval career?
4. What are the effects of continuous sea duty on retention?
5. Are current promotion procedures (e.g., the FITREP system) valid and adequate for predicting future performance?
6. Would it be beneficial to the Navy to retain "passed-over" officers by creating new career paths and/or programs?

7. How widespread is crisis management, and what effect does this problem have on the combat readiness of aviators?

8. Is personnel management training needed, or can commanding officers acquire the necessary skills through experience?

9. What is the effect of perceived pay inequities on retention?

10. Is there, and if so why is there, poor communication regarding ACIP and ACOP bonuses?

REFERENCE

Morrison, R. F., & Cook, T. M. (1985). Military officer development and decision making: A multiple-cohort longitudinal analysis of the first 24 years (MPL TN 85-4). San Diego: Navy Personnel Research and Development Center.

**CAREER CONCERNS OF
GENERAL UNRESTRICTED LINE OFFICERS**

Gerry L. Wilcove
F. Wayne Townsend

CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	51
METHOD	51
Questionnaire	51
Sample	52
Content Analysis	52
Data Analysis	53
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	54
Comments and Structured Questionnaire	54
Rank Ordering of Problem Areas	56
Grade Differences for Problem Areas	57
AN OVERVIEW OF PROBLEM AREAS	57
HIGH-PRIORITY PROBLEM AREAS	59
Concern Nos. 1 and 2: A Tie Between Equality and Career Advice	59
Concern No. 3: The Assignment Process	61
MODERATE-PRIORITY PROBLEM AREAS	62
Concern No. 4: Career Pattern	62
Concern No. 5: Promotion	62
Concern No. 6: Quality of Management	63
Concern No. 7: Billets	63
SUMMARY	63
RESEARCH QUESTIONS	64
REFERENCE	65

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
1-G. GenURL Comment Sample by Rank	52
2-G. Career Problem Areas, Definitions, and Number of Issues for GenURL Sample	53

LIST OF FIGURES

1-G. Structured General URL career questionnaire: Percentage of favorable perceptions	55
2-G. General URL Officers: Percentage of negative comments made for each problem area	56
3-G. General URL Officers: Percentage of negative comments by problem area and grade	58



INTRODUCTION

Officer career development, defined as the movement of individuals toward their own and the Navy's long-term goals, has been the subject of very few research efforts. The gap in knowledge makes it difficult to alleviate the problems officers face as they attempt to become professionally competent and advance in their careers. For example, how clear is the career path? How do officers see the fairness of assignment policies and procedures? How useful is the current career planning information? Problems in these areas could frustrate the individual's attempts at career development and the Navy's long-term requirement for highly trained and experienced senior officers.

This section summarizes comments made by a sample of general unrestricted line officers (GenURLs) on career-related issues. Data were obtained as part of a large ongoing study of the Navy's career management system and its effects (Morrison & Cook, 1985). As part of this study, officers responding to the General Unrestricted Line Career Questionnaire had the opportunity to comment on any aspect of their Navy career that they felt "affected their desire to continue as GenURLs." The following material summarizes and prioritizes the career management concerns of GenURLs.

METHOD

Questionnaire

A comprehensive Career Questionnaire was mailed to the entire GenURL community. The last page of the questionnaire included the following invitation: "If you would like to comment on any aspect of your Navy career as it affects your desire to continue as a General URL Officer, please use this space."

Sample

A total of 910 questionnaires were returned, and over 500 of them were accompanied by comment sheets. Since the larger project focused on commissioning years 1961 through 1980, comment sheets for officers commissioned before 1961 were dropped from the immediate analysis (N = 7). Comments from officers commissioned in 1981 and 1982 were included because there was no identifying information on the comment sheets to aid in excluding them. A total of 174 comment sheets from commissioning year 1981, and 9 from commissioning year 1982, were received. When analyzed by rank, the percentage of officers who completed comment sheets was not significantly different from the proportions that completed the rest of the questionnaire. Table 1-G presents the rank breakdown for the comment sample.

Table 1-G
GenURL Comment Sample by Rank

Rank	Number of Respondents	Percent
ENS	130	26
LTJG	125	25
LT	146	29
LCDR	63	13
CDR	33	7
Total	497	100

Note. The "G" in Table 1-G stands for GenURL. ENS = ensign, LTJG = lieutenant junior grade, LT = lieutenant, Lcdr = lieutenant commander, and CDR = commander.

Content Analysis

The researchers reviewed a subset of comment sheets (N = 60) and constructed a tentative list of career problem categories. These categories were discussed with researchers working on the same task for surface warfare officers (SWOs) and aviation warfare officers (AWOs). Based on these discussions, a common set of categories and community-specific ones were identified. For the GenURLs, seven career problem areas were agreed upon, with each area comprising one to four issues or subcategories. The 60 comment sheets were rescored, and the remaining ones in the sample were scored for the first time.

Categories, their definitions, and number of issues are presented in Table 2-G. Three categories that were included for the AWO and SWO communities are missing here: Compensation equity, and family and personal issues were not mentioned to any appreciable degree, and sea duty was largely irrelevant.

Table 2-G**Career Problem Areas, Definitions, and Number of Issues for GenURL Sample**

Problem Areas	Definition	Number of Issues
Equality	The feeling that one is equal in status and inter-personal respect with community and non-community members and members of the opposite sex.	2
Career advice and information	The frequency and quality of counseling received and printed information made available.	4
Assignment process	The detailers and the formal and informal policies and procedures that affect a person-job match.	3
Career path	The series of connected jobs that are perceived as necessary for career identity, the development of particular skills, and advancement.	1
Promotion policies, procedures, and opportunities	Whether or not the system is communicated, understandable, internally consistent, fair, and provides the necessary opportunities for advancement.	1
Billets	The quality of recent billets from the standpoint of content, autonomy, working relationships, and the opportunity to advance.	1
Management	Administrative and interpersonal actions of superiors that enhance or frustrate an individual's need for recognition and the opportunity to excel.	2

Note. Not all the problem areas were the same in the three officer communities covered in this report. Definitions also vary among the communities because of the nature of the comments involved.

Data Analysis

Analyses focused on negative comments in order to identify problem areas concerning working conditions and career management practices. Theoretically, it was possible for 100 percent of the individuals to give a negative comment for each category. This did not happen. Thus, a statistic was computed that indicated the percentage of individuals that gave a negative comment for each category. A person was counted only once regardless of how many of their comments were scored in a given category. This statistic was called the "percentage of people" statistic. A second statistic was also computed and termed a "percentage of comments" statistic. This statistic was formed by dividing the number of negative comments presented in each category or problem area by the total number of negative comments given by the entire sample for all the categories.

A chi-square statistic was computed across grades, separately for each category, and for both statistics, to determine if more negative comments were voiced for a grade than would be expected based on its proportion in the sample.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

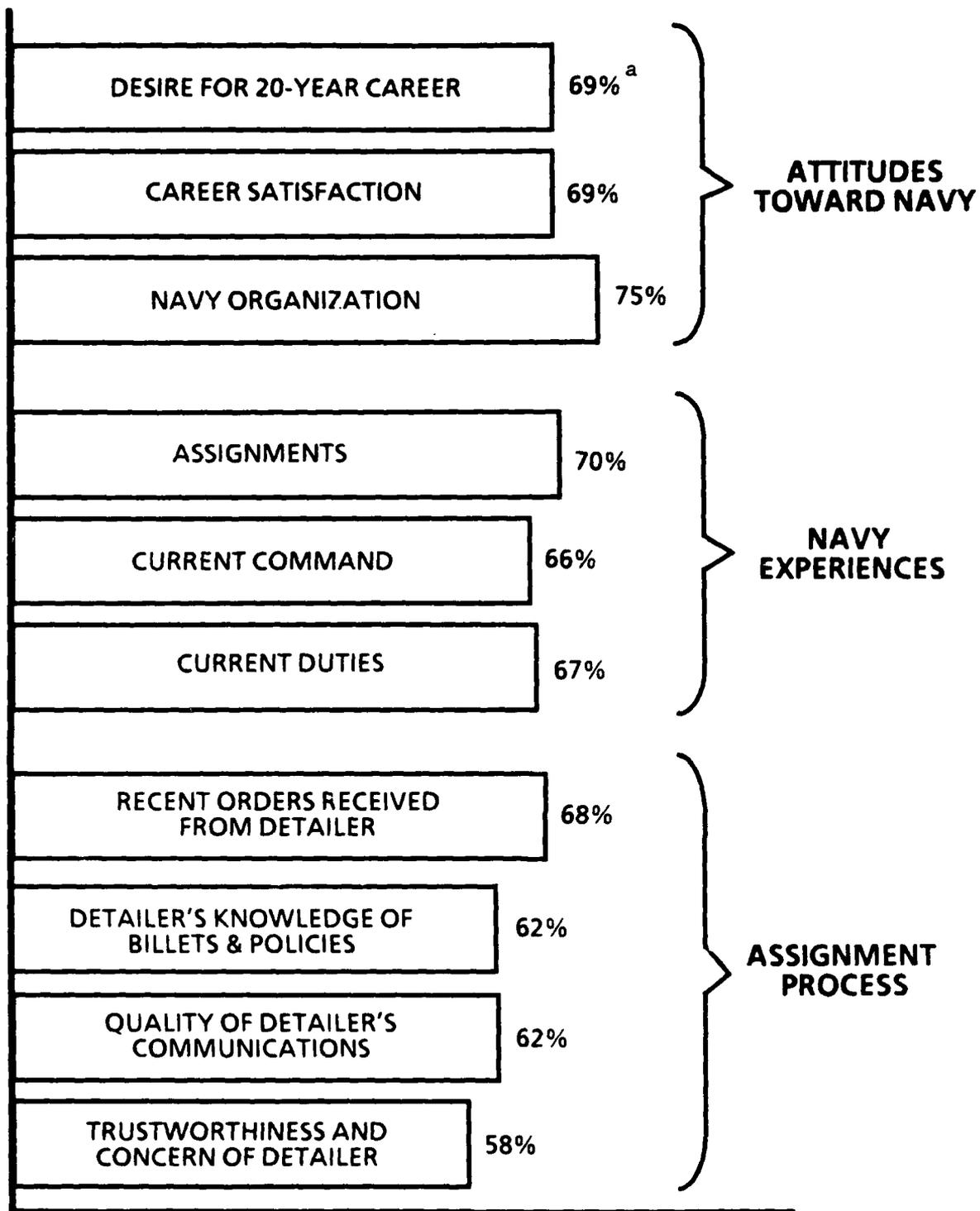
Comments and Structured Questionnaire

GenURL problems are designated as high or moderate priority, depending on the frequency with which they were mentioned in written comments. However, what does a high-priority problem imply--that officers are basically dissatisfied with the Navy? More specifically, what does it mean if the assignment process is identified as a high-priority problem--that a majority of the officers are dissatisfied with detailers?

To place current results within a broader context, questionnaire responses to a career questionnaire were analyzed for 910 GenURLs. The favorable responses of GenURLs on a variety of issues are presented in Figure 1-G.³ To measure "career satisfaction," officers indicated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with items such as: "I take great pride in my career," and "I would definitely like to change my career." To measure attractiveness of the "Navy organization," officers indicated their extent of agreement with items such as: "I talk up the Navy to my friends as a great organization to work for," and "I really care about the fate of the Navy."

Figure 1-G shows that 69 percent intended to make the Navy a 20-year career (only officers with 10 or less years of service were considered here), 69 percent expressed satisfaction with their careers, and 75 percent viewed the Navy as an attractive organization. Approximately 2 out of 3 officers were pleased with the most recent orders they had received (i.e., with the match between the assignments they had received and the wishes they had expressed on their preference cards). Sixty-two percent were satisfied with the information conveyed to them by the detailer during negotiations. Only 58 percent trusted the detailer (the others were neutral or negative), and only 58 percent believed that the detailer was concerned about meeting their needs.

³ Because some GenURLs indicated they were "neutral," one should not conclude, for example, that if 68 percent of the GenURLs gave favorable responses, then 32 percent gave unfavorable responses.



Note. Questionnaire was completed by 910 officers.

^aOnly officers with 10 years of service or less were included here (N = 787).

Figure 1-G. Structured General URL career questionnaire: Percentage of favorable perceptions.

Rank Ordering of Problem Areas

Figure 2-G presents the percentage of negative comments for problem areas in descending order. Equality and career advice were perceived as the most serious problems, followed by the assignment process, career path, promotion policies, managerial practices, and billets. The first three problem areas—equality, career advice, and assignment process—are called high priority areas in the report because of the number of negative responses associated with them. The remaining four are called moderate priority problem areas.

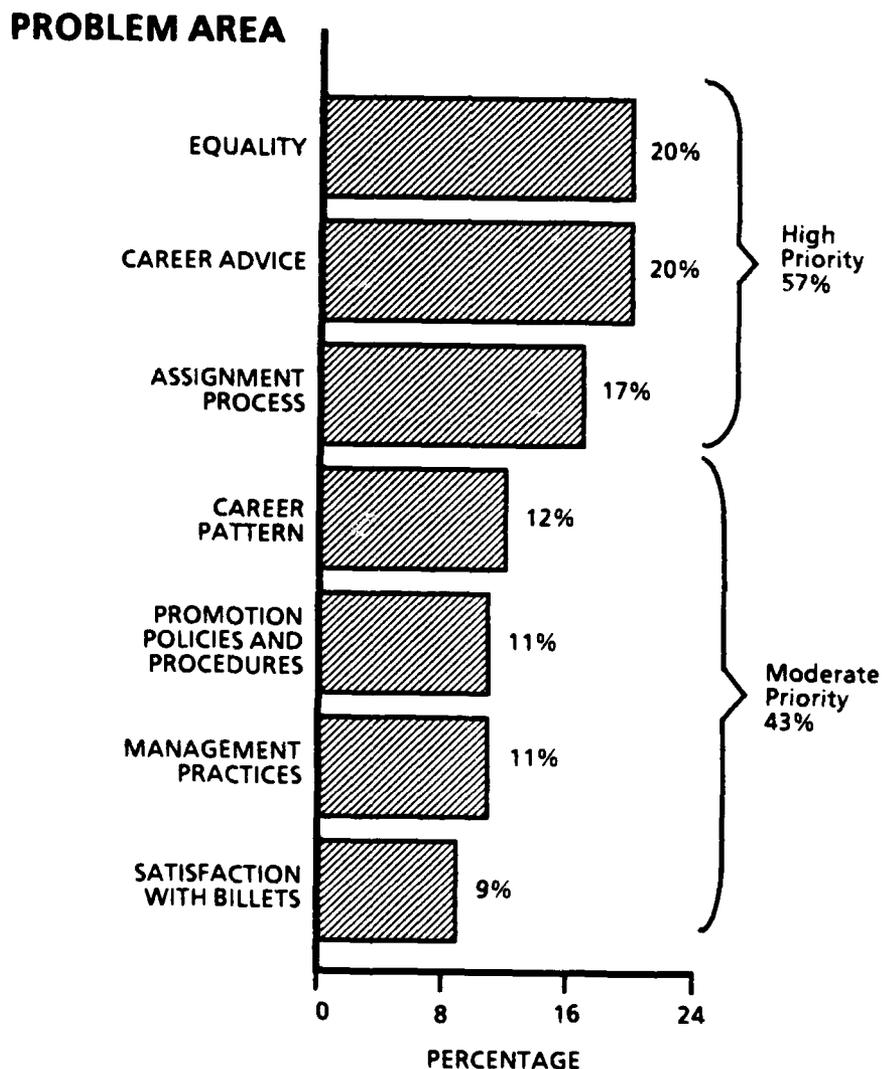


Figure 2-G. General URL Officers: Percentage of negative comments made for each problem area.

Grade Differences for Problem Areas

Percentages differed by rank for two categories: assignment process ($X^2 = 23.58$, 4 df, $p < .001$) and career advice ($X^2 = 13.79$, 4 df, $p < .01$). For assignment process, significance was due to the fact that (1) fewer ENS comments were received than would be expected based on the proportion of them in the sample, and (2) more LT and CDR comments were received than would be expected. ENSs are at their first duty station and have had little, if any, interaction with their detailer. On the other hand, LTs and CDRs have experienced reassignment and have definite ideas on the desirability of various billets. For career advice or counseling, fewer CDR comments were received than were expected. These individuals probably felt that they knew the system well enough to rely on themselves. If anything, they may have perceived themselves as the experts.

AN OVERVIEW OF PROBLEM AREAS

Figure 3-G shows where the greatest problems lie for officers if one considers both grade and problem area simultaneously (e.g., equality at the LT level or career advice at the ENS level). The figure can be read as follows: Of the 825 negative comments, 4 percent were given by ENSs regarding the problem of equality; 6 percent of the comments by LTJGs on the same problem, etc. Summing all the percentages yields a total of 100 excluding rounding error.

In interpreting the chart, the assumption is made that the height of the bar indicates the seriousness of a problem. For example, by reading vertically for the equality problem, the highest peak is at the LT level. If the Navy were going to try to solve the equality problem, the LT level would be the best place to start, if for no other reason than the sheer number of LTs in the Navy. This argument is advisedly tendered with full recognition that the percentage of LTs affected might be less than the corresponding percentage for LCDRs and fully recognizing that the importance of a problem is not solely determined by the number of individuals involved. By reading across horizontally, the rank ordering of problems within a given grade is evident. For example, for ensigns, career advice is the Number 1 problem as indicated by height of the bar, equality the Number 2 problem, etc.

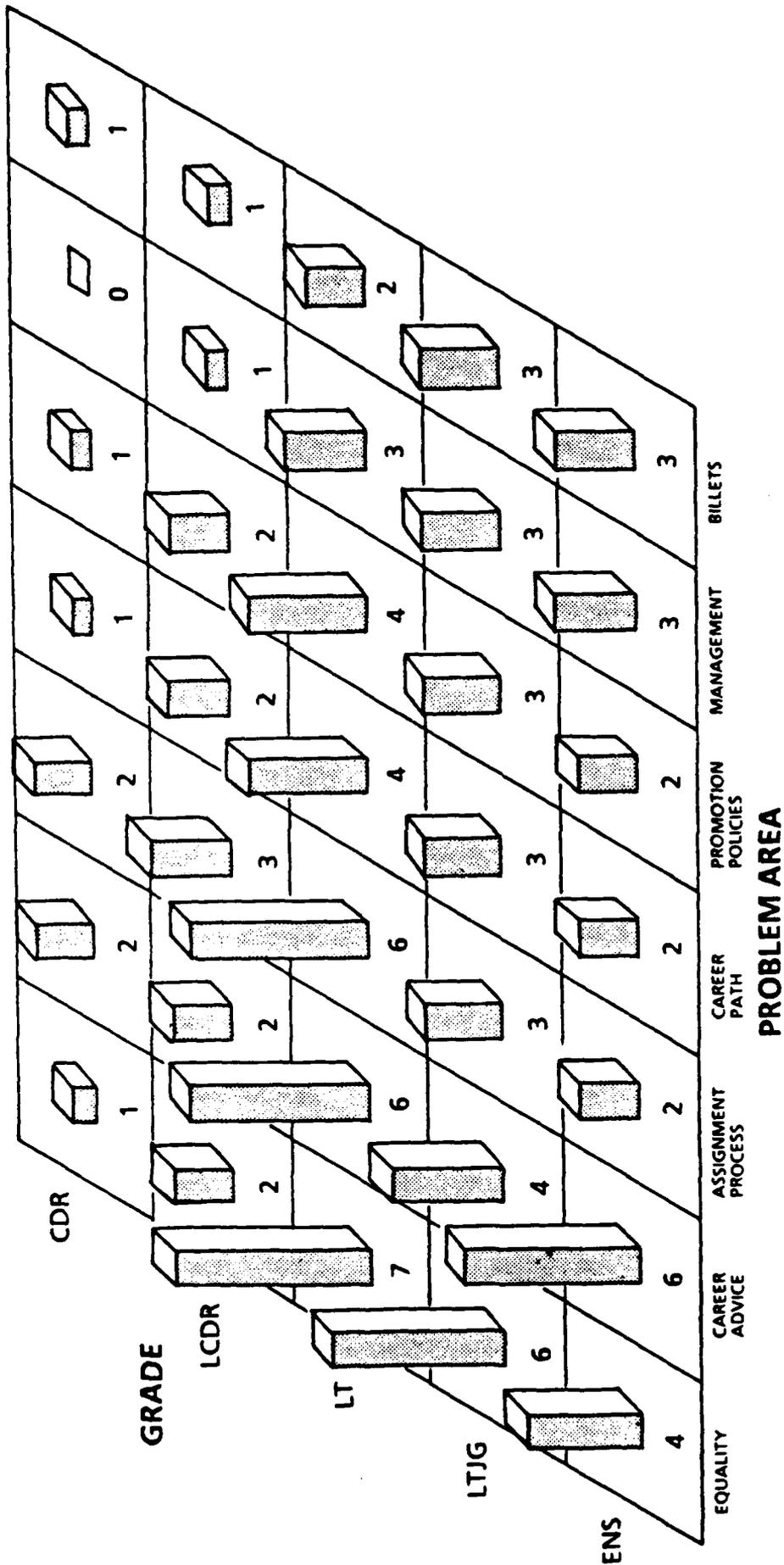


Figure 3-G. General URL Officers: Percentage of negative comments by problem area and grade.

HIGH-PRIORITY PROBLEM AREAS

Concern Nos. 1 and 2: A Tie Between Equality and Career Advice

Equality and career advice were the problems most frequently mentioned by GenURLs.

Equality

Female GenURLs often felt they were "looked down upon" by their male superiors, male peers from other unrestricted line communities, and detailers. They resented the law that prohibits women from serving in combat. Many women simply ascribed these problems to sexual discrimination and prejudice. An appreciable number, however, ascribed them to the inferior status and function of their community. It was often hard to disentangle the two issues in their comments.

Some comments that were classified as sexual discrimination were also put into other categories, because the comments dealt with a very specific example of discrimination (e.g., assigned or promoted differently than males because of gender).

Sexual discrimination comments could be split into two groups, depending on whether the source of discrimination was perceived as emanating from laws and policies or from individuals.

Most comments dealing with discrimination on the policy level were concerned with the Women-in-Ships Program. Women deplored the fact that only a small number of women were assigned to ships for temporary duty. (Women by law are prohibited from being permanently stationed aboard combatants.) This created a long waiting list and consequently very few women were stationed on a ship more than once. As a result, women were essentially limited to shore duty. The resulting comments showed that women felt restricted because of their sex:

The Women-in-Ships Program is a farce.

To join the SWOs waiting list is crazy.

Non-combatant duty is ridiculously limited.

These women felt that this apparent discrimination affects the attractiveness of future assignments and promotion rates.

A second, smaller group of comments dealt with individual acts of discriminatory treatment from other officers. One woman felt she received a poor fitness report because of a problem pregnancy and miscarriage. Another felt that as a GenURL officer, she had to constantly worry about becoming someone's administrative officer because of what she felt was a common stereotype ("women officers know admin").

Altogether, it seems that the comments offered in this area reflected the feeling that women were being discriminated against at the policy level and at the individual

level. Some comments seemed to say that discrimination at the individual level was a consequence of discrimination at the policy level. One officer wrote:

No other single group of Navy officers is equally circumscribed by law, by policy, by organizational or individual perception.

The second most frequently mentioned problem in the area of equality was community image. For there to be a community image problem presupposes, of course, that GenURLs feel they belong to a community. For some, there was no common thread that tied them together into a meaningful social and functional unit. A more typical concern, however, was that warfare specialty officers viewed them as being members of a "second class" community. This issue was brought up most often by LTs through CDRs; ENSs and LTJGs mentioned it relatively infrequently.

GenURLs attributed their apparent second-class status to the absence of a warfare specialty and to the types of billets that were available to GenURLs. They described many of their billets as nontechnical, non-operational, non-career-enhancing, support positions, which other unrestricted line officers did not want and were not asked to fill. While the lack of a warfare specialty was a prime contributor to dissatisfaction, some women were perhaps more appalled by their lack of assignment to operational shore billets, since it prevented them from fulfilling their role as a line officer. Another factor that contributed to their feeling of second-class citizenship was the perception of some that women were granted command of only certain activities, such as the Armed Forces Entrance and Examining Station (AFEES) and Personnel Support Attachment (PSA) offices, but not other activities, such as the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps (NROTC) units.

Some women resented the assignment to their community of men who had failed in their quest to obtain a warfare specialty. In their minds, GenURLs became a community of "leftovers, washouts, and women officers."

Another way to describe the community's image problem is to describe the feedback that some GenURLs received from those outside their community. Approximately 10 percent of the GenURLs (16% of the LTs) felt they were considered to be "losers, flunkies, sandcrabs, driftwood, deadweights, staffies, admin queens, no loads, air heads, cripples, or window dressing."

Career Advice and Information

GenURLs cited lack of counseling as frequently as equality problems. There were four counseling issues that were raised by all or most ranks. The two cited most often were a lack of counseling on career path and a related concern, billets. The first issue was well expressed by the officer who wrote:

As a female URL officer, there are many questions I have regarding career paths that I'm unable to get answers to, and I'm not alone. We can guess and speculate, but no one seems to have any real answers for us.

Individuals wanted information on what path they should follow in order to (1) make intelligent decisions and (2) to alter their plans should their billet history be off target. General guidelines like "be a super performer and get leadership levels checked off" were unsatisfactory to officers. Interestingly enough, some senior officers believed that in

contrast to themselves, junior officers were receiving useful information on career patterns.

GenURLs were also searching for information on a variety of billet-related questions. Which billets are career enhancing? What are the prerequisites for given billets? How does one qualify for a billet? From a competitive standpoint, what are the officer's chances of being selected for a particular assignment? Many officers felt that they were not in a position to answer these questions, nor was anyone else with whom they might consult.

Two other counseling problems were: (1) a lack of useful advice and information on promotions and (2) the lack of role models and mentors. Comments on promotions tended to be cryptic, but it was obvious that many officers felt frustrated by not knowing how to structure their careers so that their chances for promotion would be maximized. A LT simply stated, "I don't know all that much about promotion"; and another LT wanted to know "what a selection board actually looks for." A LCDR called for "a clearly defined officer promotion guide for women who were year group 1973 and senior." It was clear that these officers were motivated to advance but felt the need for more information to formulate their goals and evaluate their progress toward them.

The lack of role models and mentors was exacerbated when officers mistrusted their detailer and when the only personnel available for counseling purposes were AWOs or SWOs. Restriction of the Women Officers Network primarily to Washington was seen as another obstacle. It is interesting to note that the need for role models was not restricted to the junior ranks, as evidenced by the CAPT who said she has "finally" found role models within the ADP community.

The need for guidance began at the pre-commissioning level. One officer, for example, was upset because the recruiter did not familiarize her with the various restricted line designators. Another felt unprepared to make an informed decision regarding her first billet upon completing officer candidate school. Several pointed out that assignment to their first billet was their first contact with the assignment system and produced a lasting impression.

Many ENSs seemed to be groping for information. A major problem was expressed by one, who stated:

Questions generally are not asked, because the questions are not known--how can you ask a question about something you know nothing about.

Concern No. 3: The Assignment Process

The third most frequently mentioned problem (after equality and career advice) was detailing and assignment. This category was distinguished by references to the detailer, the types of assignments GenURLs received, and explicit statements about the process of detailing.

Most negative comments on assignment described the legal and policy problems that GenURLs must cope with because of their designator or gender. In terms of policy, officers noted that many billets required warfare qualification, even though they felt that they could perform well in these billets. That is, they felt that there were many jobs that are unfairly reserved for officers of other communities. The most striking example of

this unfairness, they believed, was the legal restriction against women serving permanently in combat billets.

Most of the other comments addressed the special detailer problems encountered by GenURLs. For example, some of the junior officers' (JOs) comments addressed the fact that GenURLs were detailed to a command, but not to a specific billet. The commanding officer then had free reign to assign them to any job, too often that of a "glorified clerk or secretary." Citing the fact that they were usually detailed by SWOs, many officers said their detailers did not care about them. In addition, detailers were seen as lacking knowledge about GenURL careers and women's careers.

Certain generic comments were offered on assignment problems that plague SWOs as well as GenURLs, such as detailer turnover, the heavy workload of detailers, how the "needs of the Navy" can cause person-job mismatches, and so on. These comments were not particularly numerous but potentially have far-reaching consequences.

MODERATE-PRIORITY PROBLEM AREAS

The problem areas discussed below are ordered from high to low according to the number of negative comments made.

Concern No. 4: Career Pattern

By definition, careers involve long-term progressions from relatively few skills to multiple or specialized skills, from relatively low status and respect to a position of higher prestige and recognition, and from relatively low pay to higher pay. It is usually assumed that this progression is contingent on a career path; that is, on a logical sequencing of positions or roles, together with accompanying training opportunities.

The lack of a career pattern was mentioned more frequently as rank increased, from a low of 16 percent at the JO level (ENS and JG) to 27 percent at the CDR level (although many of the CDRs commented on the lack of a clear career pattern for JOs). The most prevalent comments were that individuals essentially "start over" with each new assignment and that the career path was vague and unclear and produced a jack-of-all-trades. While flexibility was seen as an advantage to some, most perceived an unstructured career path as an obstacle to determining what was career enhancing and what was not. The official guideline to obtain subspecialty and leadership billets was too general for most individuals. Theoretically, deciding to obtain a subspecialty in a given area should have reduced ambiguity about which billets to obtain. However, individuals did not discern specific subspecialty career paths. Some senior officers, on the other hand, expressed an opposite kind of problem; namely, that career requirements and opportunities had been established that they could no longer meet or exploit. For example, the Women-in-Ships program was reserved for JOs; while subspecialty qualification was perceived as unrealistic by senior officers, given their career stage.

Concern No. 5: Promotion

Comments in this category concerned problems that GenURL officers had when competing for promotion. The major concern was that under the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA), GenURL officers must compete for promotions with warfare qualified officers, who have a distinct advantage, having served at sea.

Concern No. 6: Quality of Management

The most frequently cited issue was an enduring supervisory attitude or style that precludes development of an officer's abilities; for example, a superior's opinion that junior officers should not be developed until they have completed their Minimum Service Requirement (MSR); that GenURLs should not be developed at all, because their performance is unimportant to the command's mission; or that ENSs are so inexperienced that they should not be given a specific job. Some of these perceptions are reflected in the following comments:

Until I augmented and was promoted to LT, I felt as if I was regarded as only a 4-year asset with no consideration of what my usefulness would be after I had completed my 4 years of obligated service.

I have been told by senior officers that ensigns are not supposed to "do anything" or "really hold a job"; they are like an "apprentice" and should more or less drift until they are LTJGs. That is a waste of time and talent for people who have pursued college degrees and held positions of responsibility in the civilian world. . . .

Senior officers abuse the resourcefulness and energy that their junior officers generate to such an extreme that many are now leaving the service for civilian jobs.

A second problem, of lesser importance, was career management. Officer criticisms centered on their superior's ignorance of relevant GenURL career issues and requirements, a lack of motivation to help, or an attitude that counseling JOs was not the "Navy's way."

Concern No. 7: Billets

Of the comments mentioning billets, 36 percent were positive. These comments mentioned autonomy, scope of responsibility, the nature of the work, and personal growth. This percentage is high given the fact that requests for written comments generally tend to be negative.

The important negative perceptions concerning billets were covered earlier under the categories of equality and assignment process. A LT summarized the feelings of dissatisfied GenURLs when she stated:

I feel that General URL jobs are overall the least desirable within the Navy. These jobs are poorly defined, usually not operational or competitive, and require no special education or background. Many are nonessential and have no clear career path associated with them. They can be filled by anything from a CWO2 to a LCDR and are often gapped for long periods of time.

SUMMARY

The present effort identified the primary areas of concern to GenURL officers regarding the development of their careers. Results were based on the analysis of written comments supplied by officers who had completed a comprehensive career development questionnaire.

GenURLs identified two problems as the most serious ones characterizing their community: a lack of equality and a lack of sound career advice and information. Regarding the former, comments were critical of detailers, superiors, and SWO males, all of whom were portrayed as treating women and the GenURL community as second-class citizens. A major resentment was the legal restriction against serving in combat billets in other than a temporary status. The problem of equality was seen as extending to other areas, including the assignment process, and promotion policies, procedures, and opportunities.

Comments concerning the lack of career advice suggested that individuals urgently need a fortified set of guidelines to structure and regulate their career development efforts. While important strides have been made in this area recently, including the responsiveness of Perspective, more needs to be done. For example, career path guidelines specified in the URL Career Planning Guidebook were seen as too general. Counseling deficiencies extend into the assignment area, another high-priority problem area. One of the main counseling problems was that SWO detailers were seen as lacking knowledge of the GenURL career path and the requirements and consequences of various billets.

Moderate-priority problem areas (ordered from high to low as a function of number of comments received) were the lack of a career path, unclear promotion policies and procedures, managerial practices that prevent GenURLs from obtaining the training necessary to become competent and promotable, and unchallenging and non-career-enhancing billets.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The comments of GenURLs raise questions that need to be researched to provide policy makers and career managers with the information they need to make meaningful changes. Some of the questions are as follows:

1. If the Navy promulgates changes in order to produce greater equality with SWOs and AWOs, will these changes have the intended effect? (The primary role of researchers would be to evaluate the impact of policy changes on assignment opportunities, leadership practices, rewards and incentives, and training programs.) November 1984 changes concerning detailers, billet coding, and career tracks would seem a step in the right direction, but need to be evaluated.
2. What are the factors that make LTs the group of individuals most concerned about the lack of parity with other unrestricted line officers?
3. How do GenURLs operationalize their desire to serve the Navy? Are their ideas realistic, given the functions of their community; and if so, what can be done to help them implement their plans? Action in this area potentially could do much to establish a feeling of equality with other unrestricted line communities.
4. What are the factors that account for officers' evaluations of the reassignment process? It is believed that factors most closely related to the process have the greatest impact; for example, the current detailer's knowledge of specific billets has more impact than past experiences with detailers, detailer stereotype, or a general feeling concerning career satisfaction.

5. Will officer evaluations concerning the impact of DOPMA on promotions and assignments become more or less favorable over time?

6. What types of constituent behavior hinder the detailer? Interviews with detailers are recommended.

REFERENCE

Morrison, R. F., & Cook, T. M. (1985). Military officer development and decision making: A multiple-cohort longitudinal analysis of the first 24 years (MPL TN 85-4). San Diego: Navy Personnel Research and Development Center.

DISTRIBUTION LIST

Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Equal Opportunity) (OASD) (M,RA&L)
Executive Secretary, Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACO-
WITS)
Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Manpower)
Navy Military Personnel Command (NMPC-4) (2), (NMPC-41), (NMPC-43), (NMPC-4419)
(4)
Technology Area Manager, Office of Naval Technology (Code 222)
Chief of Naval Operations (OP-01B2), (OP-01W), (OP-13), (OP-39), (OP-59), (OP-130E1),
(OP-130E2), (OP-130E3), (OP-130E40)
Commander, U.S. ARI, Behavioral and Social Sciences, Alexandria, VA (PERI-POT-I)
Chief, U.S. ARI-USAREUR (Library) (2)
Commander, Air Force Human Resources Laboratory, Brooks Air Force Base, TX
Manpower and Personnel Division (AFHRL/MO)
TSRL/Technical Library (FL 2870)
Canadian Forces Personnel, Applied Research Unit, Canada
1 Psychological Research Unit, NBH 3-44, Australia
Navy Psychology, Australia (2)
Defense Technical Information Center (DTIC) (2)