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Development and Evaluation of Counseling Training for Commanders to Enhance U.S. Army Company Grade Officer Career Continuance

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April 2011

United States Army Research Institute
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**U.S Army Research Institute
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14. ABSTRACT *(Maximum 200 words)*:   We developed and evaluated a retention counseling training program targeted at influencing factors identified as important to company grade officers' retention decisions. Training was given to Company Commanders, Battalion Commanders, XOs, and S3s in four brigades. The impact of training was evaluated by administering pre- and post-surveys (four months after training) to company grade officers under the trainees' command. Trainee feedback was used to revise the training program. Hierarchical regression analyses controlling for Time 1 satisfaction demonstrated that both the quantity and rated quality of counseling were related to Time 2 satisfaction levels on many factors believed to have the strongest connection to career continuance. Among those who received counseling from someone we trained, there was a significant increase in intention to stay in the Army from Time 1 to Time 2. The training focused on the importance of conducting informal counseling in addition to formal counseling, and results showed that both types of counseling interact to influence variables such as career satisfaction, leadership satisfaction, and morale. Recommendations are made to introduce training similar to that used in this intervention to officers early in their career, with periodic retraining of the counseling strategies and behaviors throughout an officer's career.

15. SUBJECT TERMS

company grade officer retention, officer retention training, officer counseling training, career continuance

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DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION OF COUNSELING TRAINING FOR COMMANDERS TO ENHANCE U.S. ARMY COMPANY GRADE OFFICER CAREER CONTINUANCE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research Requirement:

Retention of officers, primarily company grade officers at the rank of captain during years four through seven after commissioning, is a significant issue for the Army. In order for the Army to have an appropriate number of senior-level officers in the future, it is important that a minimum proportion of officers choose to remain in the active Army after the required Active Duty Service Obligation (ADSO) or to stay in active service until eligible to retire. In response to the need to improve retention among enlisted Soldiers and company grade officers, ARI instituted a research program entitled "Strategies to Enhance Retention" (referred to as "STAY"). The officer portion of the STAY program sought, over a three-year period, to improve the continuance of the Army's company grade officers. One purpose of the officer portion of STAY was to recommend, develop, and empirically evaluate interventions for improving the continuance of company grade commissioned officers. An overriding model of officer retention and 29 potential interventions were identified, and three of the interventions were chosen to be developed and evaluated during this three-year period. The purpose of this research was to develop and evaluate one of these interventions, a counseling training program for commanders that was designed to enhance company grade officer retention.

Procedure:

We identified relevant counseling strategies and tactics and common counseling scenarios through a review of the counseling literature and a series of interviews with battalion and brigade commanders. These scenarios, strategies, and tactics were reviewed by senior officers at the Army War College and focus groups of junior officers at two installations. In a series of five workshops with 10 subject matter experts at Human Resources Command, we generated and/or refined a number of documents that were then used to create the training manual.

The training program has three primary objectives. First, to train battalion and company commanders (and other appropriate individuals) to provide counseling that actively courts company grade officers to stay beyond their first ADSO. Second, to energize commanders to take on the challenge of successfully applying the training. Finally, to sensitize commanders to opportunities to provide retention counseling that are easily lost.

We delivered the training in multiple small group sessions at a single post. Two brigades were trained in April and May, 2008, and two brigades were trained in August and September, 2008. Each training session was 3 to 4 hours in duration. Following training, participants had a period of 3 to 4 months during which they were asked to use the retention counseling training they received to counsel company grade officers under their command. We trained 117 battalion commanders, company commanders, and majors. Effect on counselee attitudes and intentions was assessed by administering a pre-survey to all lieutenants and captains in each brigade prior

to training and administering a post-survey approximately three to four months after training. There were 152 company grade officers who completed both surveys.

Findings:

We found significant improvement in retention-related attitudes from Time 1 (prior to training) to Time 2 (approximately four months after training). Time 2 ratings were significantly higher for career satisfaction, satisfaction with leadership, job involvement, satisfaction with pay, perceived organizational support, work/family conflict, and career intentions. Another analysis of attitude change indicated that a combination of formal and informal counseling had a significant impact on several attitudes, including affective commitment, career satisfaction, satisfaction with leadership, morale, and perceived unit morale. We also found that the quality of counseling impacted retention-related attitudes. Rated counseling quality had an impact on attitudes such as career satisfaction, satisfaction with leadership, morale, perceived organizational support, and perceived unit morale. Thus, commanders who did a better job of counseling according to those counseled, regardless of quantity, were more successful in influencing officers' attitudes and were seen as more effective leaders.

Utilization and Dissemination of Findings:

We recommend that some form of formal counseling training be provided to commanding officers, to ensure that the officers under their command receive the appropriate counseling and accurate information that is relevant to their decision about whether to stay in or leave the Army. We agree with the recommendations made by numerous trainees that some kind of counseling training should be provided early in an officer's career, with periodic retraining of the important counseling strategies. If instituted as early as the Basic Leadership course, this could be a training of the core counseling strategies presented in the training manual we developed, along with examples of effective and ineffective behaviors. We believe this could potentially be wrapped into (and add considerable value to) the current training in leadership skills. Then, at later points in an officer's career (e.g., Captains' Career Course and potentially even later in the Commander's Course), this training might better take the form of leader/mentorship guidance, with exercises to remind officers of the general principles involved and opportunities provided to practice them and obtain feedback on their performance, perhaps drawing from one or several of the role plays developed for this training program. One key to the success of this training will be embedding an awareness of how critically important the various counseling strategies and behaviors are to the retention decision-making process, even if the training program is not labeled as such.

We recommend that the results of this research be disseminated widely to all officers in a command position and incorporated into future counseling training. Some commanders may not believe that having a few meaningful informal conversations with their subordinate officers will have any influence on their attitudes or career decisions, but the results clearly demonstrate otherwise. Having hard data to back up this point should help future trainees to see the value of effective counseling and help motivate them to engage in it.

DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION OF COUNSELING TRAINING FOR COMMANDERS TO ENHANCE U.S. ARMY COMPANY GRADE OFFICER CAREER CONTINUANCE

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Introduction

To fulfill its missions, the United States (U.S.) Army must meet its personnel needs. Individuals who have developed or can develop the qualities needed for high job performance and organizational effectiveness are needed to join the Army and stay with the Army for significant periods of time. Through the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) and United States Military Academy (USMA) scholarship programs, the Army heavily invests in the development and commissioning of high quality company grade officers. When officers leave early in their careers, the Army does not receive a satisfactory return on this investment. Of greater concern, lower than desired retention rates can leave the Army shorthanded and hampers its ability to fulfill missions. Retention of officers, primarily company grade officers at the rank of captain during years four through seven after commissioning, is a significant concern. The strength of the Army's officer corps is determined in part by decisions made by company grade officers to remain in the Army and pursue advancement to field grade and beyond.

Multiple factors likely contribute to decisions to leave the Army, including individual difference factors, the changing nature of the military organization and its missions, reduction in the career fields available to officers due to conversion of some military functions to the civilian workforce, economic factors, societal changes with respect to work-family goals and responsibilities, and the high activity levels and stresses associated with America's ongoing war on terrorism. Problems retaining officers may become an even greater risk to Army effectiveness as the Army expands and moves toward a future force of officers who, compared to today, must have and maintain stronger levels of motivation and capabilities for service performance. The Army needs practices and prevention strategies that address the full complexity of the retention issue.

In response to the need to improve retention among enlisted Soldiers and company grade officers, the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) instituted a research program entitled "Strategies to Enhance Retention" (referred to as "STAY"). The officer portion of the STAY program sought, over a three-year period, to improve the continuance of the Army's company grade officers. In this program, "company grade officers" are commissioned officers (principally, lieutenants and captains) in their first obligation who are part of the Active Army, Army Reserves, and National Guard.

One purpose of the officer portion of STAY was to recommend, develop, and empirically evaluate interventions for improving the continuance of company grade commissioned officers. An overriding model of officer retention and 29 potential interventions were identified, and three of the interventions were chosen to be developed and evaluated during this three-year period. This report describes the development and evaluation of one of these interventions – retention counseling training for commanders.

Selection of Interventions

The first year of the officer portion of STAY was devoted to developing an understanding of officers' retention decision processes. On the basis of focus groups with company grade officers, interviews with field grade officers, interviews with other subject matter experts (SMEs) in one or more areas relevant to the career cycle of officers, and literature review, Personnel Decisions

Research Institutes (PDRI) research scientists and their colleagues developed a preliminary model of officer retention (Schneider, Johnson, Cullen, Weiss, Ilgen, & Borman, 2006). In addition, a large number of potential interventions for improving officer retention rates were identified (Mael, Quintela, & Johnson, 2006). Each intervention was designed to address the possibility of increasing retention in relation to one or more aspects of the conceptual model. The interventions included direct efforts aimed at influencing the individual's decision process by making a case for staying versus other alternatives, as well as indirect efforts designed to change the conditions under which the officer is working and living.

On the basis of an evaluation of each intervention's likelihood of impacting retention and feasibility of implementation, we chose 13 potential interventions on which to focus further attention with the goal of choosing three "best bet" interventions for development, implementation, and evaluation. The criteria used to define a best bet intervention were (a) the intervention should support the testing and refinement of the preliminary continuance model (Schneider et al., 2006); (b) there must be strong evidence from our research that the intervention is very likely to increase company grade officer continuance; (c) there should be a practical and valid way of evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention; (d) the intervention should be cost-effective, in that the potential benefits far outweigh the cost; (e) some interventions may already be planned for implementation, in which case we should take advantage of that opportunity, if possible; (f) an intervention that is of particular interest to someone who is in a position to implement it (e.g., Brigade CO) would be favored; (g) the intervention should have the potential to be used Army-wide; and (h) the best interventions for this study would be practical to implement at the brigade level and below. No intervention was expected to meet all of these criteria, but the most promising interventions met a greater number of them.

We then organized a Retention Strategies Working Group (RSWG) composed of three colonels, four current or former lieutenant colonels, and one major, all of whom had interest in and experience with officer retention issues. We conducted a meeting with the RSWG to present the potential interventions to the group and get their opinions on (a) the likely impact of each intervention, (b) the feasibility of implementing each intervention, and (c) any changes that needed to be made to any interventions. During this meeting, we chose a small set of tentative best bet interventions that could be piloted in a relatively short time, have a meaningful impact, and were cost effective.

Following this meeting, we met with 19 Majors attending the Command and General Staff College School of Advanced Military Studies (CGSC SAMS) course at Ft. Leavenworth. Over two sessions, we presented our ideas for the best bet interventions, as well as other potential interventions, and elicited their opinions on them. Based on their feedback, we adjusted the planned interventions and selected three that were practical and had potential for short-term impact. They were (a) retention counseling training for company and battalion commanders, (b) a website devoted to issues relevant to company grade officer retention, and (c) a video featuring interviews with former officers to present their perspective.

Overview of Counseling Training Intervention

The relationship between company grade officers and their commanding officers (COs) is of paramount importance. Indeed, it emerged during focus groups with company grade officers that

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the first CO an officer has in his/her career plays a key role in company grade officer satisfaction. Consistent with this, the Majors attending the CGSC SAMS course indicated that a company grade officer's first CO is the most influential factor in the decision to stay or leave. In particular, company grade officers regard mentoring/coaching sessions with COs as playing an extremely important role in their retention decisions. We also learned, however, that mentoring and coaching does not come easily to many COs. An extensive series of focus groups with company grade officers and commanders and interviews with civilian and military personnel at Human Resources Command (Mael et al., 2006) revealed that at the current time, some commanders fail to devote the necessary time to this endeavor. In addition, some commanders are viewed as lacking the information or credibility to be the primary source of advice or guidance for the company grade officer considering leaving the Army. It is therefore critical that COs be provided with the training necessary to help them counsel their subordinate officers effectively, especially with respect to career continuance issues.

We define "retention counseling" as providing information, advice, and support -- often informally, proactively, and over multiple occasions -- to company grade officers with the goal of persuading those high quality officers to remain beyond their first ADSO. This is not the same as performance counseling, which focuses on the officer's job performance. Retention counseling is broader in scope, in that any kind of counseling can help an officer with issues that may influence later career continuance decisions. It is also focused on the goal of influencing career continuance decisions rather than on improving performance.

The training program has three primary objectives. First, to train battalion and company commanders (and other appropriate individuals) to provide counseling that actively courts company grade officers to stay beyond their first ADSO. Second, to energize commanders to take on the challenge of successfully applying the training. Finally, to sensitize commanders to opportunities to provide retention counseling that are easily lost.

The counseling training includes a 3-hour lecture-and-discussion session and a training manual. The lecture-and-discussion component includes, among other things, (a) motivating commanders to engage in counseling, (b) describing and discussing retention counseling scenarios and tactics, (c) observing and engaging in role plays, and (d) discussing how commanders will apply what they have learned. The manual supports the training by providing a reference for looking up more detail on points made in training and for addressing specific situations. The manual includes (a) factors influencing why officers stay or leave, (b) suggestions for when and where to engage in counseling, (c) descriptions of counseling strategies and tactics, (d) role plays, and (e) useful resources for finding retention-related information.

Why and How This Intervention Would Impact Retention

Our preliminary model of company grade officer career continuance (Schneider et al., 2006; see Schneider, Johnson, Cochran, Hezlett, Foldes, & Ervin, 2009, for the final model) guided the design of the training program and its evaluation. Key variables in this model and their relationships are shown in Figure 1. The model specifies taxonomies of the key variables. For example, the taxonomy of context evaluation variables includes Perceived Organizational Support, Job Satisfaction, Perceived Family Satisfaction/Support, Perceived Career Satisfaction/Support, and Army Identity Salience. Because the purpose of this intervention is to

increase COs' retention counseling skill and motivation, it should influence a number of the variables contained in the model.

For example, one aspect of retention counseling is correcting misperceptions by presenting accurate information. This would yield more accurate company grade officer perceptions of the organizational context, which should increase overall satisfaction with different aspects of Army life. This, in turn, should increase affective commitment and psychological investment in the Army, which should ultimately enhance retention.

This intervention should also be very helpful to COs who must counsel officers through critical events such as being passed over for promotion, threat of divorce, and unexpected deployments. Counseling officers more effectively through these critical events should mitigate their effects on thoughts of leaving, both directly and (depending on the nature of the critical event) indirectly by affecting officers' perceptions of their work context.

Although much of the training is targeted to points in the retention process prior to the time when an officer is thinking about leaving, more effective retention counseling should also help to interrupt the relationship between thoughts of leaving and intention to leave. For example, this training will provide information related to dealing with an officer who has been approached by a headhunter and is, consequently, thinking about leaving the Army for the apparently greener pastures of the civilian sector. Armed with information about how to handle these types of scenarios, counselors should more effectively prevent thoughts of leaving from turning into intentions and, ultimately, decisions to leave.

Yet another way this intervention should impact retention is by addressing company grade officers' expectations regarding Army life, culture, and career shortly after the time of commissioning. These variables affect several antecedents of retention in the Schneider et al. (2006) model, including perceived work context (e.g., perceptions of career advancement opportunities), context evaluation variables (e.g., job and career satisfaction), and affective commitment. This intervention should also affect perceived organizational support. More frequent and effective retention counseling by COs should enhance company grade officers' beliefs that the Army values their contributions and cares about their well-being.
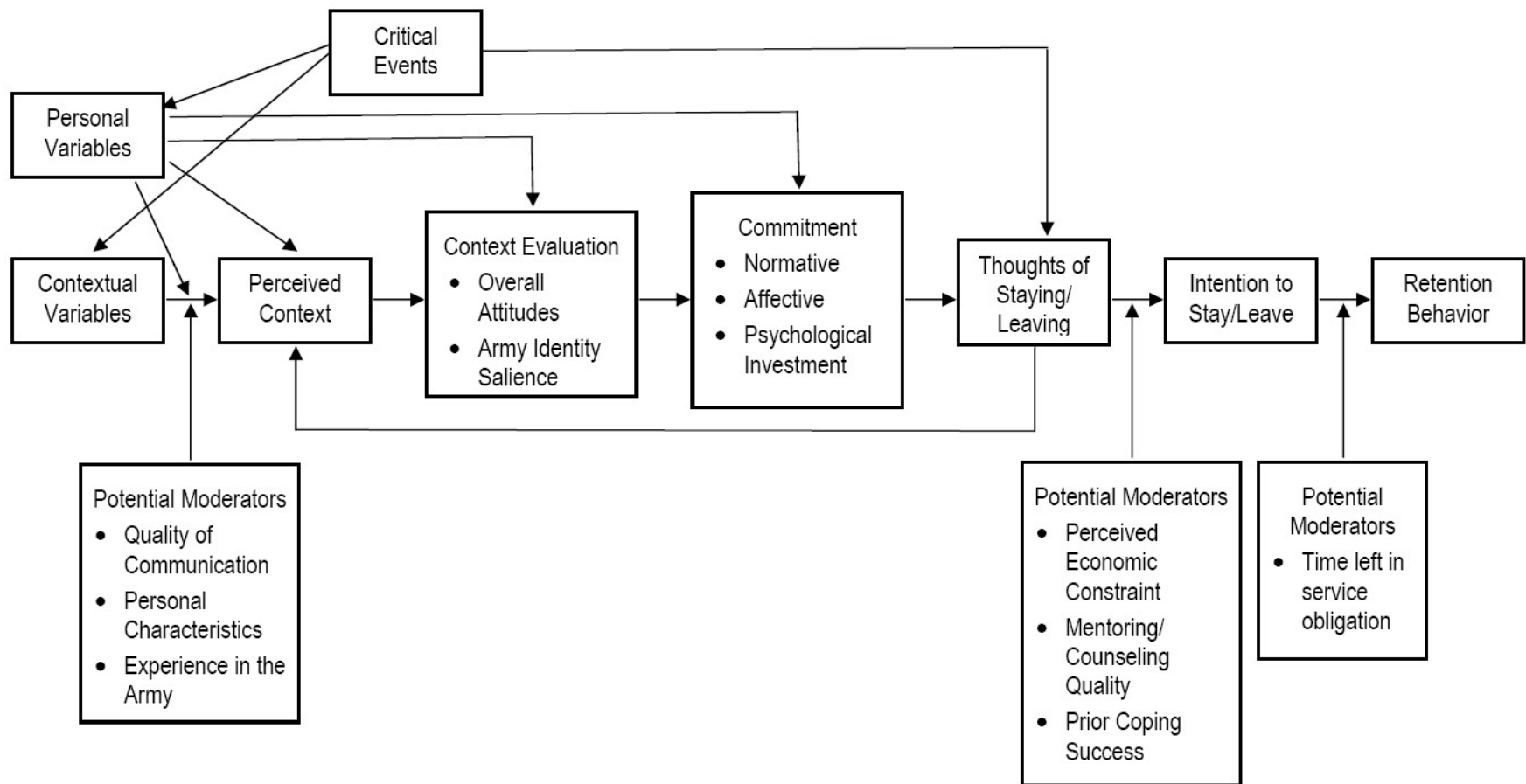
Figure 1. Preliminary company grade officer career continuance model (Schneider et al., 2006).

Organization of this Report

This report is organized into two major sections. First, we present the details of the training program. This includes discussion of (a) the development of training content, (b) the training method, (c) revisions made to the training, and (d) trainee reactions and feedback. Second, we present an evaluation study that measures the impact of the training intervention on the attitudes and intentions of company grade officers who are the beneficiaries of the counseling delivered by the participants in the training program. The report wraps up with a Discussion section that analyzes the implications of the trainee reactions and the evaluation study and makes recommendations for moving forward.

Development of Training Content

We identified relevant counseling strategies and tactics and common counseling scenarios through a review of the counseling literature and a series of interviews with battalion and brigade commanders. These scenarios, strategies, and tactics were reviewed by senior officers at the Army War College and focus groups of junior officers at two installations. We met with 10 SMEs at Human Resources Command in a series of five workshops. Participants included one Chief Warrant Officer (CW5), two captains (CPTs), six majors (MAJs), and one lieutenant colonel (LTC). Eight of these SMEs had experience as career managers. During these workshops, we generated and/or refined a number of documents that were then used to create the training manual: (a) retention counseling success stories, (b) general counseling tips, (c) common retention counseling scenarios, (d) specific counseling tactics to address different scenarios, (e) a list of when various tactics are most likely to work or not work, (f) a list of benefits and incentives to counteract perceived costs of leaving, and (g) role-plays designed to illustrate critical retention counseling tactics.

Identification of Training Needs

These workshops also resulted in the identification of a broad set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that were capable of being trained, and which were expected to positively influence retention counseling performance. In preparation for the development of the retention counseling training program, we refined this input by organizing it into a more specific set of training needs. In this context, training needs are the determinants of retention counseling performance that are capable of being trained (Campbell, 1988, Campbell & Kuncel, 2002). Typically, these trainable elements include declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge, and attitudes (Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, & Sager, 1993).

Based on the SME input, and an examination of more general models of counseling from the psychological literature, we concluded that the declarative knowledge to be trained included a set of 11 counseling strategies: (1) preparation, (2) establishing rapport, (3) attending and listening, (4) asking open questions, (5) using restatements, (6) reflecting feelings, (7) using challenges, (8) providing information, (9) disclosing personal experiences, (10) providing direct guidance, and (11) disclosing personal strategies. The declarative knowledge to be trained also included a set of effective behaviors associated with each strategy. The procedural knowledge to be trained was knowledge of how to implement these strategies during a retention counseling session. The attitude to be trained, as identified in the SME workshops, was increased motivation to conduct retention counseling. Together, this set of declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge, and attitudes constituted the training needs for the retention counseling training program.

Identification of Training Objectives

Having identified this broad set of training needs, the next step was to translate these needs into more specific training objectives. The purpose of articulating training objectives is to specify what the learner should know or be able to do following training that he or she did not know or could not do prior to training (Gagne, Briggs, & Wager, 1988). Ideally, the training objectives would (a) be stated in observable terms; (b) incorporate the correct capability (e.g., the development of knowledge or an observable skill such as a psychomotor, physical, or

interpersonal skill); (c) indicate the conditions under which trainees should be able to exhibit the capability; and (d) specify the level of proficiency to be attained (Campbell, 1988; Campbell & Kuncel, 2002). In designing our training objectives, we attempted to meet all of these criteria.

The training objectives identified for the declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge, and attitudinal components to be trained were as follows:

1. *Declarative Knowledge*: Acquire and retain knowledge of effective retention counseling strategies and associated effective behaviors, such that this knowledge is readily accessible to trainees when called upon to apply this knowledge during actual retention counseling sessions.

2. *Procedural Knowledge*: When called upon to do so, effectively and skillfully apply retention counseling knowledge, such that retention counseling positively affects the decision to stay.

3. *Attitudes*: Acquire and maintain increased motivation to engage in retention counseling, such that trainees have an increased desire to perform retention counseling, and in fact conduct retention counseling more often than they did prior to training.

An important goal in designing training objectives is to ensure they are framed in such a manner that it is possible to determine whether or not they have been attained following training. According to the model of training evaluation developed by Kirkpatrick (1959, 1996), relevant training outcomes can include reaction, learning, behavioral, and results criteria. Usually, learning is the criterion of interest because it is the outcome most proximal to training and the one least affected by extraneous influences. For instance, behavioral criteria are usually measures of on-the-job performance, and results measures are frequently operationalized using utility analysis estimates (Arthur, Bennett, Edens, & Bell, 2003). As such, these criteria may be affected by learning, but they may also be affected by environmental variables beyond the control of the learner.

In the current study, practical limitations prevented us from evaluating the training program using learning criteria. However, we were able to measure trainee reactions to the training. Although trainee reactions are not necessarily related to the amount learned during training, or even to other behavioral or results criteria (Alliger, Tannenbaum, Bennett, Traver, & Shotland, 1997; Arthur, Tubre, Paul, & Edens, 2003), they are relevant for providing insight into what trainees found to be especially useful in the training, and how the training can be improved. To measure trainee reactions to the training program, we developed a trainee reaction questionnaire which is described in a subsequent section, along with a description of how the input from this questionnaire was used to refine and improve the training program.

Identification of Training Content

Having determined the training objectives for the retention counseling training program, we next considered (a) how to specify the training content, and (b) how the training content should be organized within the training program to maximize learning, retention, and transfer. Development of the training content involves specifying, for each of the training objectives, the

specific facts, concepts, principles, skills, and patterns of choice behavior to be trained. Organization of the training content involves specifying the sequence in which the declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge, and attitudinal components should be taught.

Sources of Training Content

Training content may be specified by experts or by consulting relevant theories and prescriptions in the literature (Campbell, 1988; Campbell & Kuncel, 2002). In this case, the declarative and procedural knowledge to be trained was primarily specified by SMEs in workshops held in 2006 and 2007. In those workshops, SMEs familiar with retention counseling practices articulated the strategies and associated behaviors that they had found to be useful in everyday retention counseling. This specification of the knowledge domain by SMEs formed a core part of the declarative knowledge to be trained. This domain was subsequently refined by consulting the professional literature on counseling psychology. Because our goal was to develop, in essence, a retention *counseling* program, we decided that many of the principles from the psychological literature on counseling would be applicable and relevant to include in our training program.

The content for the attitudinal component of training derived from the psychological literature on motivation. SMEs had previously indicated that the development of increased motivation to counsel was an important training need, so we examined various extant theories of motivation to guide our choice of the appropriate training content for developing this motivation. There are a number of theoretical frameworks for understanding motivation within psychology, including (1) expectancy framework, which focuses on individual assessments of whether effort invested will lead to valued outcomes (Vroom, 1964), (2) reinforcement theory, which emphasizes that the likelihood individuals will engage in a behavior depends on their view of how personally reinforcing it will be (Skinner, 1954), and (3) goal setting theory, which is based upon the belief that human behavior is chiefly a function of consciously chosen goals and intentions (Locke & Latham, 1990).

Arguably, the dominant paradigm for understanding motivation within industrial and organizational psychology is goal setting theory (Mitchell & Daniels, 2002). Accordingly, although the relevance of other motivational paradigms was not ignored in developing the training content for increasing motivation to retention counsel, the content of our training for this attitudinal component derived primarily from the prescriptions of goal setting theory.

Declarative Knowledge Training Content

Development of the training content for the declarative knowledge to be trained involved specifying the strategies for effective retention counseling and the effective and ineffective behaviors associated with those strategies. To this end, we provided trainees with the 11 counseling strategies gleaned from workshops and the counseling literature. For each strategy, we included (a) a definition of the strategy, (b) the likely effects of employing the strategy, (c) information about *when* the strategy ought to be employed during the retention counseling process, (d) a list of the effective behaviors associated with each counseling strategy, and (e) a list of the ineffective behaviors associated with each strategy.

Based on our review of the counseling literature, we decided it was appropriate to place these strategies into four stages, corresponding to the rough order in which the strategies were likely to be used during counseling. Stage 1 was titled "Preparation" and contained the Preparation strategy. Stage 2 was titled "Exploration" and contained the Establishing Rapport, Attending and Listening, Asking Open Questions, Using Restatements, and Reflecting Feelings strategies. Stage 3 was titled "Examination" and contained the Challenging, Providing Information, and Disclosing Personal Experiences strategies. Stage 4 was titled "Resolution" and contained the Providing Direct Guidance and Disclosing Personal Strategies strategies. For illustrative purposes, we provide a sample of the effective and ineffective behaviors associated with the strategy "Building Rapport" in Table 1.

Table 1. Effective and Ineffective Behaviors for the Strategy "Building Rapport"	
Effective Behaviors	Ineffective Behaviors
1. Treating officer with respect	1. Punishing officer for giving you bad news
2. Demonstrating empathy (i.e., putting yourself in officer's shoes, and feeling as though you are that officer)	2. Making sarcastic or insensitive remarks
3. Demonstrating genuineness (i.e., being genuinely available to the officer, rather than being phony or inauthentic)	3. Becoming defensive or adversarial
4. Listening attentively	4. Stereotyping
5. Suspending judgment when officer's opinions/goals differ from your own	5. Making rash judgments
6. Treating officer as an individual (e.g., demonstrating interest in officer's family)	6. Behaving inflexibly (i.e., by ignoring officer's individual situation, needs, concerns)
7. Establishing trust (e.g., by finding ways to show officer you are "in his/her corner")	7. Consistently treating officer's personal life and family as "out of bounds"
8. Validating officer's concerns (e.g., agreeing that officer's reasons for wanting to leave the Army make sense)	8. Acting in ways that affirm the power differential associated with rank
9. Making officer aware of his/her abilities and accomplishments and their value to you and the Army	9. Promising more than you can deliver
10. Being aware of your strengths and weaknesses as a counselor, and refraining from implementing counseling skills you have not practiced sufficiently or are not qualified to implement	10. Telling officer that his/her reasons for wanting to leave the Army are baseless
	11. Taking officer's abilities and accomplishments for granted
	12. Attempting to implement counseling techniques that you have not practiced sufficiently or for which you do not have the requisite qualifications

For the Providing Information strategy, one of the key behaviors involved responding to a specific area of concern that may influence an officer's decision to stay. Previous workshops with SMEs had identified that the most important retention-related areas of concern were (a) work/family issues, (b) professional/career issues, (c) job satisfaction issues, (d) organizational support issues, and (e) miscellaneous critical events. To help facilitate counselors' ability to respond to these concerns, we included a set of Army "selling points" in the training materials. The selling points provided a comprehensive set of facts related to each of these issues for counselors to use in responding to a concern raised by a company grade officer. For illustrative purposes, we include a sample of the selling points for organizational support issues in Table 2.

Table 2.
Examples of Army Selling Points for Organizational Support Issues

> ➢ Sense of higher purpose: Opportunity to impact lives of those under your command and defend the American way of life.
>
> ➢ Tax-free income earned during combat (this will be perceived as a benefit primarily by single officers).
>
> ➢ Opportunity to collect a pension after 20 years of service (pensions in corporate America have largely been phased out); this enables officers to have two separate and distinct careers within a lifetime if they wish.
>
> ➢ In the Army, some types of special pay as well as various sources of income over-and-above base pay (e.g., allowances, bonuses, and wages earned in a combat zone) are not subject to income tax.
>
> ➢ The Army provides more vacation days than most civilian sector organizations (30 days of paid vacation per year after the first year of service) immediately upon accession; don't have to "bank" vacation time before taking it.
>
> ➢ A CPT with 5 years in the Army stationed at Ft. Carson has a take home income of $68,000. They do not pay for healthcare, retirement fund, housing tax, etc. A civilian would have to have a base salary of approximately $90,000 to maintain the same life style.
>
> ➢ The following argument is very effective: "It will take over $1.2 million in savings (401k), depending on years of service, to equal the pension you will receive from the Army.

We also provided some additional training content for the initial preparation strategy. According to senior officers with whom we spoke, preparing for the retention counseling session, creating action items, and following up on the session are some of the most important parts of the counseling experience. To help counselors in these tasks, we created (a) a set of general recommendations for counseling preparation and follow-up, and (b) two worksheets to help them plan and document the retention counseling session.

The general recommendations covered key "Dos" and "Don'ts" for (a) establishing ongoing rapport and credibility with company grade officers, (b) seeking out and creating opportunities for informal counseling, (c) preparing for formal counseling sessions, (d) conducting a formal counseling session, and (e) providing action planning support and follow-up.

The first worksheet was focused on helping counselors plan for an upcoming retention counseling session. It contained separate sections relating to (a) scheduling the session, (b) gathering and reviewing information prior to the session, and (c) planning the session. The second worksheet was focused on helping counselors document what had happened in the counseling session, and plan for future sessions. It contained separate sections relating to (a) summarizing the issues discussed, (b) summarizing the action recommendations, (c) summarizing perceptions of the session, (d) summarizing agreed-upon follow-up actions, (e) indicating potential obstacles to the follow-up actions, and (f) scheduling a follow-up counseling session.

Procedural Knowledge Training Content

The training content for the procedural knowledge component of the training program was the same 11 counseling strategies and associated effective behaviors identified for the declarative knowledge to be trained. Although the training content for the declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge was similar, however, the *methods* for training these distinct types of knowledge differed. The next section describes the training methods employed to train the declarative and procedural knowledge, and to improve motivation to counsel.

Training Content for Motivation to Counsel

The training content for the attitudinal component of the training was a goal setting exercise. In goal setting research, the consistent finding in work settings is that inducing employees to have specific, difficult, and achievable goals leads to superior effort, investment, and performance than simply asking employees to do their best (Locke & Latham, 1990). Thus, our goal in constructing the goal setting exercise was to force trainees to set specific, difficult, but achievable retention counseling goals. To that end, the exercise asked trainees to set specific goals for how they would use the strategies and associated behaviors in the months to come. First, trainees were asked to think of at least five company grade officers they could use the strategies on in the next month, and to note which strategies deserved special emphasis for a given officer. Next, they were asked to identify the obstacles to success in using the strategies with each officer. Finally, they were asked to consider how they would overcome those difficulties.

Sequencing of Training Content

Having identified the training content, the next step was to consider how to sequence that content within the training program. Ideally, the content should be sequenced in a manner that fosters optimal learning, retention, and transfer of all of the content to be learned. Following advice from other training researchers, we decided to train the declarative knowledge components first, then the procedural knowledge, and finally the motivational components. Specifically, we sequenced the training to comport with Anderson's ACT theory of learning (Anderson, 1982, 1989).

Anderson's ACT theory of learning suggests that learning proceeds through a series of stages, including the declarative, knowledge compilation, and procedural stages. In the declarative stage, learners spend most of their time encoding and storing basic task rules and strategies through rehearsal. During knowledge compilation, learners no longer need to verbalize training content. Instead, they focus on establishing associations between stimulus inputs and the responses required for effective performance. During the final stage, procedural knowledge is encoded in terms of condition-action pairs. In this final stage, task performance becomes fast and effortless, and is not easily affected by additional information-processing demands (Ackerman, 1987).

Accordingly, we facilitated encoding and storing of basic information during the initial declarative stage by teaching basic retention counseling strategies and behaviors first. Subsequently, we facilitated knowledge compilation by having trainers demonstrate these

strategies and behaviors via a series of realistic counseling scenarios. Demonstration of these scenarios, and the behaviors required for effective counseling, allowed trainees to establish associations between the concerns a counselee might actually verbalize and effective behavioral responses. Finally, we facilitated the development of procedural knowledge by providing two role playing exercises that forced trainees to practice using the retention counseling strategies and behaviors. Once trainees had acquired the relevant declarative and procedural knowledge, we provided a goal-setting exercise to increase their motivation to use what they had learned.

Training Method

A training method represents a structural relationship between instructor, learning, and the material to be learned that dictates how the content of instruction is to be taught (Reigeluth, 1999). The major training methods include information presentation (frequently in a lecture format), modeling, discovery, cooperative, tutorial, and independent learning. Each of these basic methods encapsulates a host of secondary methods, and each is premised on a different theory of learning. A given training method may employ a variety of training media, such as videotapes, workbooks, the Internet, or multimedia (Campbell & Kuncel, 2002).

Frequently, a training program may utilize more than one method to meet its objectives. In choosing a training method, two considerations are paramount: (a) the instructional events that comprise the method should support or be consistent with the cognitive, physical, or psychomotor processes that lead to mastery; and (b) the capability incorporated in the training objective should be reflected as closely as possible in the training method (Campbell, 1988; Campbell & Kuncel, 2002). In choosing the training methods for the retention counseling training program, we attempted to meet both of these criteria.

For the retention counseling training program, we employed two different training methods: (a) information presentation, with provision for learner response, and (b) modeling. We chose the information presentation method, with provision for learner response, for training the declarative knowledge and the attitudinal components, and the modeling method for training procedural knowledge.

We chose these two methods for training these specific training objectives for two reasons. First, we believed both of these methods reflected the capabilities to be trained. The information presentation method, with its emphasis on provision of material, detailed explanations of the material, and asking questions, is well-suited for training knowledge of retention counseling principles. In contrast, the modeling method, with its emphasis on watching others perform behaviors and trying to model their behaviors, is well-suited for training retention counseling skill. Second, meta-analytic evidence supports the use of these methods for training these types of knowledge (Arthur et al., 2003). The meta-analytic evidence is particularly strong for training interpersonal skills, such as retention counseling skills, using modeling techniques (Taylor, Russ-Eft, & Chan, 2005).

Training Knowledge of the Strategies

The trainer commenced the training session by reviewing the agenda. The agenda included such topics as (a) factors affecting counseling activity, (b) timing of retention counseling, (c)

retention counseling strategies, (d) developing retention counseling skills, and (e) setting goals for retention counseling. We provided an agenda for training because the use of advance organizers helps trainees focus their attention on upcoming content, organize incoming information, and relate new information to pre-existing knowledge (Mayer, 1989). Subsequently, the trainer reviewed the 11 counseling strategies, together with the associated effective and ineffective behaviors. During the course of this review, participants were encouraged to ask questions and seek clarification.

Next, to assist in the compilation of this declarative knowledge, the trainers demonstrated the use of the strategies and behaviors in the context of 13 retention counseling scenarios we created. The scenarios depicted brief counseling interactions between a captain and his/her commander. In the first twelve scenarios, a single counseling strategy was demonstrated; in the final scenario, *all* of the retention counseling strategies were demonstrated. Some previous studies have demonstrated that the use of both positive and negative examples in modeling can enhance learning and transfer of learned material (Baldwin, 1992). Accordingly, the first 12 role plays contained examples of both effective and ineffective behaviors associated with the strategies. During the last scenario, however, only effective behaviors were displayed.

As the first 12 scenarios were role-played by the trainers, trainees were asked to follow along by reading the scenarios in the materials, and to identify the effective and ineffective behaviors used. For the 13th scenario, trainees were asked to identify the strategies used and the positive behaviors demonstrated. As mentioned earlier, the intent in creating these scenarios was to assist trainees in knowledge compilation, in helping trainees form associations between stimulus input (i.e., what the captain said in the scenario) and the correct response (i.e., use of the correct retention counseling strategy and response). To increase the realism of the scenarios, each scenario centered on a separate "critical event" in the life of a junior officer that may prompt him or her to consider leaving. Some examples of the critical events depicted in the scenarios include (a) losing a friend in combat, (b) being approached by a headhunter, and (c) difficulty in making a dual military career marriage work. The critical life events were generated during prior SME workshops.

Training Knowledge of How to Apply the Strategies

Following this portion of the training, the emphasis moved to training the procedural knowledge objective, which was how to effectively apply retention counseling strategies and behaviors in a counseling session. To facilitate the development of procedural knowledge, we created two mock retention counseling role plays. The purpose of the role plays was to give trainees practice in using the strategies and effective behaviors, and to provide informational feedback about what they were doing right, and what could be improved.

We created two separate role plays, each of which took place in three rounds. For each round, there were three roles – counselor, counselee, and observer. The plan was to have trainees conduct the role plays in groups of three, and rotate through roles so that all trainees had a chance to role play the role of counselor.

To facilitate the role plays, each role was provided with a set of materials. Counselors were provided with background information about a counselee who had set up a meeting with him or

her. The background information contained details about why the counselee was considering leaving the Army. Counselors were instructed that their role in the upcoming counseling session was to use as many of the retention counseling strategies and behaviors as possible to help the counselee resolve the problem. Prior to the counseling session, counselors were provided with a worksheet to prepare their strategies.

The counselee was provided with background information about why he or she was considering leaving the Army. The counselee was also provided with a role play script to guide the discussion during the upcoming mock counseling session. The script was designed to loosely structure the dialogue so that the counselor would have the opportunity to use as many of the counseling strategies as possible.

Finally, the observer was given a checklist with the 11 counseling strategies and associated behaviors, and was asked to keep track of the strategies and behaviors used by the counselor during the counseling. Following the counseling, the observer was asked to provide feedback to the counselor about the effective behaviors used, and how performance could be improved in the future.

The mock counseling sessions were conducted, and the trainer subsequently led a group discussion about (a) how the counseling went, (b) which aspects of the counseling were challenging, and (c) which specific strategies trainees had struggled to use.

Improving Motivation to Counsel

Training concluded with the goal-setting session previously described. The general recommendations for counseling preparation and follow-up, and the planning and documentation materials described earlier, were not covered in the training itself but were provided in the materials as a reference source for trainees to use following the training.

Enhancing Transfer of Learned Material

Whichever training method is chosen to train a given knowledge, skill, or attitude, it is important to consider which design characteristics to include in the training method to optimize learning and transfer. Ideally, to enhance transfer, a training method will include opportunities for goal setting, guided practice, and informational feedback (Locke & Latham, 1990; Ericsson & Charness, 1994; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). Whenever possible, it should also foster the development of self-efficacy, a mastery-oriented approach to learning, and interest in the material. Such characteristics have been demonstrated to positively affect various learning processes, such as motivation to learn, information processing, and the use of meta-cognitive strategies, which in turn positively affect both short and long-term learning (e.g., Ford, Smith, Weissbein, Gully, & Salas, 1998; Gist, Stevens, & Bavetta, 1991; Mathieu, Tannenbaum, & Salas, 1992; May & Kahnweiler, 2000; Noe & Schmitt, 1986).

In designing the retention counseling training program, we sought to capitalize on as many of these training design characteristics as possible. For instance, in developing the scenarios and role plays, we attempted to enhance opportunities for practice and feedback. Demonstration of the scenarios allowed trainees to practice *identifying* effective and ineffective behaviors during realistic negotiation sessions. Trainees were subsequently provided with feedback about how

well they had identified the effective and ineffective behaviors. Subsequently, the role plays allowed trainees to practice *implementing* the behaviors in a realistic negotiation setting. They received feedback individually from the observer following the role play, and in the group discussions that followed. In the final section of the training, we purposely built a goal-setting intervention into the training materials.

Finally, throughout the training, trainees were encouraged to participate actively. For instance, they were frequently asked questions to ascertain their level of comprehension, and provided with opportunities to comment and ask their own questions. In short, our goal in creating the training program was to develop an active, interesting, and stimulating program that encouraged trainees to relate the training to the real-world challenges of retention counseling.

Delivery and Revision of Training

We delivered the training in multiple small group sessions of no more than 15 officers attending each session. We also limited all participants within a session to those in the same rank. Participants in two brigades were trained in April and May, 2008 and participants in the other two brigades were trained in August and September, 2008. Each training session was 3 to 4 hours in duration. Following training, participants had a period of 3 to 4 months during which they were asked to use the retention counseling training they received to counsel company grade officers under their command. We recommended that Company Commanders attempt to counsel all of the lieutenants under their command. They were asked to recommend that individuals they believed needed further counseling see the Battalion Commander. The Battalion Commanders were asked to counsel any of these lieutenants who were recommended to them in addition to the captains in their battalion. Battalion Commanders could delegate some counseling to Battalion Executive Officers (XOs) or Operations and Training Officers (S3s) who had participated in the training.

Based on delivery of the training program to the first two brigades in April and May, 2008, several revisions were made on the basis of (a) trainee reactions, as documented in a trainee reaction survey and discussions with participants during and following the training; and (b) trainer experiences delivering the program.

Reactions to the training were captured via a trainee reaction survey. This survey, shown in Appendix A, contained 14 questions about trainees' satisfaction with various aspects of the training, a list of 14 possible suggestions for improvement with instructions to "mark all that apply," and 7 open-ended questions asking for suggestions for improvement. After the first set of training sessions in two brigades ($n = 48$), the suggestions most frequently chosen from the list of 14 were:

- Provide better information before the program (35.4%),

- Speed up the pace of the program (29.2%),

- Make activities more stimulating (20.8%), and

- Shorten the time for the program (20.8%).

Based on these results and additional suggestions made in written and verbal comments, we revised the training to make the lecture portion shorter, provide more interactive exercises to practice counseling, focus more on motivating than on providing information, and increase the amount of information in the training manual. The first suggestion was related to the amount and accuracy of information participants received when they were scheduled to attend the training. The information they received was often very minimal and sometimes inaccurate (e.g., they were told the training would take only an hour). We redoubled our efforts to ensure that our various POCs gave participants the training description we had provided when they scheduled them for training.

The intent of the revisions we made to the training program was to maintain the original training needs and objectives, while incorporating changes that we believed would make a difference to how the training was received by participants. New content was added where necessary, but we sought to keep the materials as concise as possible. The one section that remained unchanged was that which covered goal setting activities. We summarize below the revisions that were made to other sections of the manual, as well as how this impacted the structure and delivery of the training program itself.

Revisions to Training Program

Introduction

The revised training manual can be found in Cullen, Foldes, Houston, Schneider, Duehr, and Johnson (2009), which is a Research Note that serves as an appendix to this report. In the original manual, the introduction was quite brief and its purpose was primarily to provide participants with a general orientation to the training program and materials contained within the manual. The introduction was revised to provide participants with a more in-depth presentation of key issues related to officer retention. This information was drawn from workshops and interviews we had previously conducted with company grade and field grade officers. Much of this information was already included at a broad level in the slides that accompanied the training, but based on participant feedback, we decided it deserved greater attention in the manual as well. Specifically, we added information about (a) the factors that positively and negatively influence retention decisions; (b) the kinds of retention decision scenarios that commanders cite as commonly generating retention discussions; (c) the role of retention counseling, its formality, and timing; and (d) the important role played by commanders in impacting officers' retention decisions.

A clear distinction was made in the original manual between formal and informal counseling. Although we stressed the importance of informal counseling in the training, the key counseling strategies and behaviors were presented more as they pertained to formal counseling. During initial delivery of the program, feedback from participants suggested that frequent and informal counseling discussions would be more successful than a lesser number of formal counseling attempts. Therefore, in the revised manual and training we oriented the focus of the training more toward *informal* counseling activities, which seemed to resonate better with the officers being trained.

Counseling Strategies

We originally proposed 11 counseling strategies, presented linearly, as four stages corresponding to the rough order in which the strategies would likely be used. Certain strategies certainly do make sense to engage in before others (e.g., preparation before direct guidance). Many strategies can be employed in more of a "tool kit" fashion, however, such that officers apply their best judgment about which combination of strategies to use in a given counseling situation. To better represent this, we re-organized the counseling strategies in a circular, pinwheel graphic (see Cullen et al., 2009; p. 17). Based on discussions with participants and our initial experiences delivering this training, we believe this better represents each strategy as a discrete tool that can be used at the counselor's discretion.

Within the pinwheel graphic, the number of strategies was reduced from 11 to 10. Based on feedback captured during initial training delivery, participants indicated that neither self-disclosure nor sharing personal (retention) strategies is perceived to be widely accepted within Army culture. Nevertheless, some behaviors associated with these two strategies were thought to be useful and effective. Therefore, we identified the key behaviors associated with "Self-disclosure" and "Personal Strategies" and combined them into a single, new strategy called "Share Anecdotes." Taking the key elements of these two principles and relabeling them under a new strategy was an attempt to retain critical counseling behaviors and reframe them in a more appealing and acceptable light. To this end, *all* strategy labels were revised to better communicate their core content in a more active voice. The revised labels are as follows: (a) Prepare, (b) Establish Rapport, (c) Attend and Listen, (d) Ask Open Questions, (e) Restate Key Information, (f) Acknowledge Feelings, (g) Challenge, (h) Provide Information, (i) Share Anecdotes, and (j) Offer Direct Guidance.

In the original version of the training manual, each strategy was presented in a table that included the following information: (a) definition, (b) effects, (c) timing, and (d) a comprehensive list of effective and ineffective behaviors associated with each strategy. In the revised manual, we presented much of this same information, but in a more concise manner. Minor revisions were made to strategy definitions, effects, and timing. Further, rather than include *all* associated behaviors, a shortened bullet point list of exemplar behaviors was included. For some, but not all strategies, these behaviors were followed by a brief set of recommendations for things to avoid saying or doing in a retention counseling discussion. These recommendations corresponded largely to a concise version of the original set of ineffective behaviors described in the original manual. The most important information within each bullet point was highlighted in bold font to allow someone to quickly scan and identify the key behaviors.

Another revision to this section was to incorporate any materials relevant to a specific strategy that had previously been included elsewhere in the manual. These were now located immediately following the strategy to which they were linked. For example, we had developed a form intended to be used to help officers prepare for and document their counseling activities. Originally, this form appeared toward the end of the manual in its own section. During training, discussion of this form entailed participants having to locate it within their own copy of the manual, which proved somewhat distracting at times. In the revised manual we included this document directly following the page describing the "Prepare" strategy. Similarly, we added a page of example open-ended questions directly following the "Ask Open Questions" strategy.

Sample Counseling Scenarios

Originally, each strategy was followed by one or two brief (two to three minutes) sample counseling scenarios, which were intended to model the kinds of effective and ineffective behaviors relating to a particular strategy. Rather than have the trainers read through each script, we gave participants the opportunity to interact and read scenarios out loud. After discussion of each strategy and associated behaviors, a trainer and a participant would act out the scenario. Participants were then asked to identify which behaviors were effective or ineffective, and a brief discussion about the strategy and behaviors would follow.

Initial delivery of the program indicated that the sample scenarios were not universally well-received by participants. Our assessment of participant reactions suggested three main reasons to account for this. First, the scenarios and associated dialogue were perceived as somewhat contrived in nature. This was primarily due to the fact that the scenarios were used to briefly model a specific set of behaviors for a particular strategy. A second, related issue was that participants indicated that the dialogue did not consistently portray a realistic discussion between a commanding officer and his or her subordinate. While the critical events on which the scenarios were based were perceived as realistic, the short bits of specific dialogue came across as less realistic. Finally, a logistical issue associated with the sample scenarios was simply the large amount of time it took to run through and discuss at least one per counseling strategy (it could take up to an hour to complete all the scenarios).

A related reaction to the counseling strategies, behaviors, and sample scenarios (as a set of materials) is that while participants found them to be useful in the aggregate, many also commented that they were rather remedial in nature. In other words, they reported that the strategies and behaviors could largely be characterized as intuitive and based on common sense. Many participants indicated that they already knew how to conduct informal counseling with their junior officers. The bigger hurdle to counseling was finding the time and motivation to engage in these discussions. To this end, therefore, we modified the training agenda such that we spent less time reviewing in detail each of the strategies and associated sample scenarios, and more time engaged in practice-related effective counseling.

Even though we spent less time on the sample scenarios in the revised training, it should be noted that when asked, participants could identify relevant counseling behaviors for each. This prompted interesting and useful discussion on multiple occasions. As such, the sample scenarios functioned as a valuable learning tool, so the following three key revisions were made: (a) we incorporated more realistic language, based on trainee suggestions, (b) we made the scenarios and embedded behaviors less formal, by moving the settings from all in the office to a range of locations/settings, and (c) we placed the scenarios within their own section of the manual, which gave us flexibility in terms of when and how to use them depending on time constraints.

Following these initial suggestions and subsequent revisions, we asked several PDRI colleagues who had worked extensively with the Army to review the role-plays and provide feedback about the language used, the nature of the scenarios, and the degree to which a balance was achieved between script length and number and kind of embedded counseling behaviors. A further round of revisions was made based on feedback from these reviews.

In the revised training program, we typically ran through the first two or three sample scenarios following discussion of the relevant strategies. Due to time considerations, however, we did not run through all of them. So that participants would know which behaviors were considered effective/ineffective, the key behaviors were highlighted via comments inserted in the margin (see Cullen et al., pp. 47-72). These comments indicated the specific behavior demonstrated in the role-play as well as the counseling strategy to which it belonged. By modifying the manner in which the sample scenarios were used, this allowed us to cover the counseling strategies more efficiently, and move more quickly onto the applied exercises.

Exercises

The original manual transitioned from training knowledge of the strategies via information presentation and the sample scenarios to training knowledge of how to apply the strategies using two mock counseling sessions. The latter included a loosely structured script to guide the discussion. In the revised manual, two versions of this exercise were again included (see Cullen et al., pp. 77-95). The specifics of each scenario were modified for realism and accuracy based on feedback received during initial delivery of the program. During early sessions, participants preferred just to work from the background materials, rather than have the counselee use the loose prompts provided. Therefore, we removed the prompts and added more information to the background materials to make it easier for both the counselor and counselee to improvise based on the information given. In doing so, this exercise became considerably less structured, but also provided participants with the opportunity to more realistically practice effective counseling behaviors.

The observer materials for the two role-plays were also shortened, such that, in the revised materials, observers were given a two-page worksheet that listed the 10 strategies and included a space next to each to record key behaviors. This replaced the original materials that included a checklist of all the effective and ineffective behaviors associated with each strategy, plus a notes page on which to write overall observations for each strategy. We determined that the checklist was too detailed to work with effectively during a role-play, and opted instead for instructions that asked participants to take notes about key behaviors as they observed them.

A new exercise was added to the training program. It is a full-length, entirely scripted role-play between a Commander and a company grade officer (see Cullen et al., pp. 65-75). In this respect, it closely resembles the sample scenarios developed to demonstrate key behaviors for individual strategies. The new role-play especially resembles the original final sample scenario in which all of the retention counseling strategies were demonstrated. The dialogue used for the new role-play was directly adapted from one developed with an SME panel during the development of the training program. This meant that it was quite a bit longer and more detailed, but also more realistic. Therefore, it did not suffer from some of the issues associated with the original sample scenarios. The new role-play covered three "acts" set at different points in time (e.g., deployment, back at garrison). During training, three participants were asked to volunteer to play the different roles.

In the revised training program, therefore, we started the applied portion of the training with the new, fully-scripted role-play exercise in lieu of using each and every sample scenario. We found participants to be more receptive to participating in a structured role-play than the more improvisational mock counseling session. The new role-play also served as a helpful bridge between training knowledge of the strategies and training knowledge of how to apply the strategies. Following a run-through of the scripted role-play, trainers facilitated a discussion about what participants observed to be the effective and ineffective behaviors demonstrated by the Commander. This was followed with one or both of the mock counseling sessions, as time permitted. This exercise gave participants the opportunity to practice applying the effective counseling behaviors within a loosely defined counseling context, as outlined in the background materials.

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Army Selling Points

This section in the original manual listed an array of benefits of staying in the Army, organized by content area. Items on the list were gathered from workshops conducted with SME panels during training development. Initial training delivery using these selling points suggested that several were not perceived as benefits by all officers, or not deemed particularly helpful in the context of a counseling discussion, or, in some cases, simply not true. In some cases the list actually served to provoke debate among participants rather than its intended purpose of providing counselors with useful information to share with officers during counseling.

In the revised manual, therefore, we removed this entire section. We did, however, underscore the importance of the following: Any officer engaged in a retention-related discussion should (a) maintain their own list of Army selling points, which they could speak about comfortably and knowledgeably, and (b) stay up-to-date on incentives, benefits, and other information that might positively impact an officer's retention decision if shared during the course of one or more counseling discussions.

General Recommendations for Counseling Preparation and Follow-Up

This section was included in the original manual. During revisions, however, we found that much of the information originally included here overlapped substantially with material presented in other sections. Therefore, in order to streamline the contents of the manual, we eliminated this section and incorporated the material into other relevant sections. For example, key activities such as "prepare for formal counseling sessions," "establish ongoing credibility and rapport with officers," and "provide action planning support and follow-up" were already captured in key behaviors describing the counseling strategies. The points listed under the key activity "seek out/create opportunities for informal counseling" were incorporated into the introduction sub-section about the formality, timing, and location of counseling.

Planning and Documenting the Counseling Session

This section was included in the original manual. It included two example worksheets, one for planning an officer counseling session, and one for documenting the discussion that takes place during a session. Each worksheet was two pages in length. To encourage trainees to use these materials, we shortened and combined the two worksheets into a single worksheet, with planning and documenting recommendations being one page each. We then incorporated this document into the strategies section, directly following the "Prepare" strategy (see Cullen et al., pp. 22-23).

Slides

A PowerPoint presentation was prepared to cover key material included in the training manual, as well as provide instructions for the group exercises. The slides were revised several times, based on the trainers' preferences for the order and depth in which material should be delivered. Participants did not receive a copy of the slides because they were redundant with material from the manual.

Trainee Reactions

The revised program was delivered to participants in the second two brigades in August and September, 2008. Across all four brigades, the training sessions were well attended by Company Commanders ($n = 68$) and Majors ($n = 40$). About half the Battalion Commanders from three brigades attended a session ($n = 9$), but none of the Battalion Commanders from the fourth brigade could attend a session due to scheduling constraints. Thus, 117 officers attended training sessions. In a few cases, mostly among Company Commanders, officers participated in most of the training but had to leave a little early due to other obligations. Everyone heard the primary messages of the training so we do not believe that the small number of officers who left early affected our results in any way.

Participants were generally quite receptive to the training. We used the sessions to deliver the planned material as well as to solicit feedback about the program. We found that participants were fairly candid in sharing their opinions and we learned a great deal from them about the training program specifically and about the issue of officer retention in general.

Almost unanimously, participants agreed that there should be some kind of training like the one we delivered for Commanders. The majority of participants felt that counseling of this sort is critically important, and that there should be formal training for it. In this section, we report on the trainee reactions that were captured directly after the program via a paper-and-pencil survey. We also summarize here broader feedback we gathered both during and after the training sessions, as well as lessons learned.

Trainee Reaction Survey

The short survey given to trainees directly after the training sessions contained 14 questions about their satisfaction with various aspects of the training (as noted previously, this survey is shown in Appendix A). We collected completed surveys from 98 of the 117 training participants. Descriptive statistics for the 14 satisfaction questions are presented in Table 3. In general, most participants were positive about the training, and 86.7% gave a favorable rating to the overall satisfaction question.

The item with the lowest endorsement rate was item 9 ("the role-playing exercises gave me sufficient practice and feedback to improve my counseling skills"). Only 51% of respondents agreed with this statement and 20% disagreed. This was not surprising because the limited amount of time available for training did not allow for the amount of practice time we would have preferred.

Recall that our revisions to the training program after training the first set of participants were guided by the trainee reaction survey results at that point ($n = 48$). We looked at the most frequently endorsed suggestions, which are listed below, with the percentage endorsing each, before and after the revisions ($n = 50$ after revisions):

- Provide better information before program (38.8% before; 42.0% after),

- Shorten the time for the program (17.3% before; 12.0% after),

- Speed up the pace of the program (16.3% before; 4.0% after),

- Make activities more stimulating (16.3% before; 12.0% after), and

- Add the video (16.3% before; 20.0% after).

The last suggestion refers to the former officer video that was one of the other interventions developed for the STAY project (Mael, Alonso, Johnson, & Babin, 2009). We included a showing of the video in this training. Based on discussions with trainees, there were mixed reactions to the notion of including this video in the training program. At least 20% felt it should be included in the training based on the survey response, but it is not clear what the feelings were among the other 80% of the participants who did not endorse this response.

Table 3.
Descriptive Statistics for Questions from Trainee Reaction Survey

Item	N	M	SD
1. I had the prerequisite knowledge and skills for this training program.	98	4.13	0.95
2. The learning objectives for the training program were stated clearly during the training session.	98	4.42	0.59
3. The training program content was set up to achieve the learning objectives.	97	4.33	0.67
4. The training program content and presentation were well organized.	97	4.33	0.75
5. The training manual was well organized.	95	4.35	0.68
6. The training program was well presented.	97	4.42	0.69
7. The pace of the training program was appropriate.	97	4.02	1.00
8. The instructor was knowledgeable and able to explain the material.	98	4.56	0.58
9. The role-playing exercises gave me sufficient practice and feedback to improve my counseling skills.	94	3.40	1.08
10. The training activities stimulated my learning.	96	3.71	1.05
11. My expectations for the training program were met.	96	3.77	0.95
12. The training motivated me to increase the amount of counseling I do.	95	3.63	1.19
13. I intend to use the counseling strategies I learned in training.	97	4.04	0.83
14. Overall, I am satisfied with the training program.	97	4.01	0.92

Note. Items were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*.

Based on the 42% of respondents who suggested providing better information before the program, there apparently was no improvement in the extent to which training participants were given information when they were scheduled for training sessions. This would be an area for improvement if changes are made to the training program. However, the revisions made to the training did seem to positively impact other areas of concern following the early training sessions. After the revisions made to the training, fewer participants chose "shorten the time for the program," "speed up the pace of the program," and "make activities more stimulating" than chose those options before the revisions.

We turn now to a discussion of the verbal feedback we received related to the training program, and related to the broader issues of officer counseling and officer retention.

Participant Feedback

Core Content of Training

Overall, there was broad agreement that the material covered in the retention counseling training program is critically important and that it should be introduced relatively early and revisited often throughout an officer's career. Several participants also recommended that some version of the materials should be made available online, along with tools to accompany counseling activities (e.g., counseling preparation/tracking document, career timeline). Trainees felt that having the entire training manual online would provide a useful reference and depository for "best practices." This would promote the notion that these skills can and should be developed and used regularly, and can be broadly applied to a range of leadership situations in which commanders counsel their company grade officers.

Timing of Training

Given the consensus shared by most participants that retention counseling training is so important, we further asked about when and where the training should take place. Most participants felt that training should take place at several different times during an officer's career (e.g., Basic Leadership training, Captains' Career Course, and at the Commander's Course). Accordingly, it was recommended that there should be different versions of the training at each level, to accommodate the varying amount and types of counseling experiences officers would have at each point in their career, as well as the types of issues and potential solutions an officer might be exposed to at different levels. Some even suggested that this material could be trained as early as ROTC, and reinforced at key points during an officer's career. Even as Platoon Leaders, for example, officers find themselves in a position to counsel enlisted Soldiers about career issues and decisions. Other participants cautioned that if delivered too early, the material might be less meaningful and it could get "lost" in the midst of an abundance of other, seemingly more important, information.

Usefulness of Role Plays in Training

The applied exercises constituted a key element of the training because they were intended to build participants' procedural knowledge of counseling skills via practicing the core strategies and behaviors. The exercises we developed were based on two kinds of role-plays: one set that was highly structured and scripted, and one set that was open-ended and largely improvised.

Several of the Company Commander groups of trainees reported that they did not believe role playing was a particularly effective learning tool to build counseling skills. Trainees indicated that, even if the role plays are taken seriously, the behaviors demonstrated in the role plays are often not the same as those that would be performed in real life. As an alternative, participants suggested using video-based vignettes depicting informal counseling scenarios, such as the ones already developed. The exercise would ask participants to identify effective and ineffective behaviors, followed by a facilitated discussion based on their observations. While this form of exercise would be less focused on practice and skill development, it would at least serve to model the Commander's role in promoting retention-related discussion, the timing and formality of discussions, and effective and ineffective behaviors. This may be a good alternative in situations in which there is a limited amount of time available for practicing counseling behaviors. Ideally, training would consist of a combination of both modeling appropriate behaviors and practicing those behaviors.

Naming and Framing the Training

While there was relative consensus about the need for some sort of counseling training that would be concerned with and have an impact on retention decision-making, there was less agreement and considerably more discussion about what focus and form this training should take. These discussions highlighted for us at least two related issues: (a) that retention is an extremely sensitive topic that should be handled neither too lightly nor too directly and formally; and (b) that retention is an issue that is inextricably embedded within the broader context of an officer's Army career. This broader context encompasses, among other things, leadership climate, goals, educational objectives, family, and deployment. With these two points in mind, it became clear from participant feedback that having a training program focused specifically on retention counseling might represent an approach that is too direct and narrow. In the end, finding the right way to "package" the training could be the key to its ultimate success. The core material and program were viewed quite positively, while there was much more concern and contradictory feedback/suggestions around the framing and focus of the training. The feedback summarized below in large part speaks to the issue of how the training might be better framed and focused. It also suggests that the participants – who endorsed retention counseling as an important activity – were divided as to the best approach for building the relevant knowledge and skills.

An early and important piece of feedback concerned the degree to which counseling should be or could be enforced. We heard several times that it would be important not to enforce retention counseling as either "inspectable" or mandatory. Doing so would greatly detract from the efficacy of the counseling, as officers would be less likely to speak with their commander about retention-related issues and interests under these circumstances. This feedback signaled to us early on that, due to the sensitive nature of retention, conversations that seek to address it must be handled with care. Further, commanders must be as motivated to engage their officers in these discussions as their officers should feel at ease speaking candidly about their unique situations. If retention discussions are handled too formally and/or directly, a commander may jeopardize future opportunities to speak openly with an officer about retention. Learning this prompted us to revise our materials for delivery to the second two brigades. In doing so, we sought to refocus the training such that it served to promote the real value of informal, ongoing discussions for generating retention counseling opportunities. In isolation, each discussion may

not focus exclusively or even at all on retention. In the aggregate, however, they serve to keep a commander informed about what an officer is thinking about his or her career, education, and family, and how any or all of these relate to a retention decision.

The notion that these informal "check-in" discussions with company grade officers can provide an important entry into more targeted counseling around retention was, however, more difficult to impart than expected. Two obstacles contributed to this challenge. First, now more than ever, "retention" is considered by many in the Army to be a "dirty word." Second, "counseling" as an activity holds similarly negative connotations. Therefore, presenting officers with "*retention counseling*" training marries two concepts that are not particularly popular.

Across all brigades, many participants shared with us first- and second-hand experiences of peers who had been mistreated by speaking about or making the decision to leave the Army. It is clear that retention counseling discussions will not take place in a climate wherein mistreatment necessarily follows from not only deciding to leave, but admitting to thinking about leaving. To the extent that Army leadership either implicitly or explicitly tolerates such mistreatment, it is unlikely that officers will open up about issues related to career and family regardless of individual counseling attempts. Under these circumstances, retention decisions will be made in the dark, without any external guidance, and possibly infused with shame. According to our research, negative perceptions of retention are pervasive and senior leader reactions to officers leaving or considering leaving often only add to the stigma. This presents a very real obstacle to motivating officers – both potential counselors and counselees – to engage in retention-related discussions.

Focusing on Leadership/Mentoring Skills and Family/Career Issues

Because of the potentially negative stigma surrounding "retention counseling," many participants indicated a strong preference for focusing the training more on improving leadership skills related to career counseling rather than on retention counseling specifically. A related recommendation, made by a few participants, was to frame the training as building mentorship skills rather than counseling skills. The theory here was that the word "counseling," like the word "retention," can have negative connotations (e.g., incident and performance counseling). During training we repeatedly reinforced the notion that retention counseling should be largely informal and take place on a regular basis. Yet we still found that the word "counseling" invoked the image of a formal and mandatory discussion that not all officers find productive or wish to take part in. In contrast, participants observed that "mentorship" conveys more of a genuine concern for officers' well-being, which extends far beyond discussions about whether an officer will stay in or leave the Army. Field Manual 22-100 defines "mentoring" as "the proactive development of each subordinate through observing, assessing, coaching, teaching, developmental counseling, and evaluating that results in people being treated with fairness and equal opportunity" (FM 22-100, 1999; para 5-83). Thus, mentoring is a broader concept that includes counseling in addition to coaching and teaching.

With a more general career counseling or mentorship concept in mind, several groups of participants suggested training commanders to provide support (i.e., counseling or mentorship) around career management and related opportunities. Among the officers we trained, most reported receiving irregular career counseling at best, and only a few had been asked to think

through the milestones that anchor their career from commission to retirement. At least one or two participants in each training group had experienced a commander who engaged them in productive career discussions. A common thread to these discussions was the use of a career timeline, which was used effectively to promote a frank and thoughtful exchange about career progression and potential opportunities. Further, we heard that it was also useful to overlay a spouse/family timeline so that broader life goals can be jointly considered (e.g., having children, spouse education and employment).

Training officers how to counsel or mentor company grade officers about their careers, along with spouse/family plans, may serve to address several of the factors that influence retention without having to directly engage officers in a retention counseling discussion. This approach inherently acknowledges that retention is not an isolated issue, but one that exists alongside multiple aspects of an officer's Army career and personal life. The training was developed to attend to this wide array of related issues, but its focus in its present form is primarily on the retention decision-point rather than the entire career. Compared to retention counseling, career counseling would more naturally occur early and often, and would more proactively address many of the issues that figure heavily in an officer's retention decision. Future development of this training program should include a broader focus on the entire career.

Importance of Obtaining Accurate Career and Other Information

One note of caution for this career counseling approach is that we learned Company Commanders often do not have enough of the right kind of information to share with their officers, especially about specific opportunities and career paths. Participants reported that this is a routine and very real obstacle to them engaging in effective counseling of any kind. It is believed that Battalion Commanders are in a better position to provide useful information about assignments, branch sites, career opportunities, etc., but there is considerable variance in the quality and quantity of Battalion Commanders' engagement with company grade officers (not just in terms of retention discussions). A number of training participants listed this as one of the greatest obstacles facing effective retention counseling (i.e., the lack of knowledge about options and alternatives that can make a real difference to officers who are considering leaving the Army). One solution is to make this type of information available in a central location such as a website. The Commander's Officer Retention Toolkit is a currently available website that contains some of this information, but it could be more user-friendly and contain more information. Another solution is to encourage Company Commanders to refer the officer to the Battalion Commander when it is necessary to get more specific information that is not generally available to Company Commanders.

Motivation to Counsel

Many training participants suggested that the single greatest obstacle to effective retention counseling is not about the requisite counseling knowledge and skills *per se* but is, rather, about the motivation to counsel. This motivational aspect was originally identified during the workshops with SME panels while developing the training program, where it was highlighted as a key training need. As the training program evolved with subsequent deliveries, we paid even greater attention to the issue of motivation.

By the time we delivered the training program to the second two brigades, we determined it was more productive to spend more time explaining and underscoring the importance of the commander's role in retention decisions and less time reviewing the strategies and behaviors in detail. In doing this, we sought to motivate participants to find the time to counsel and to educate themselves about information that would be useful in the context of career and retention counseling. To this end, the purpose of the applied exercises evolved such that they not only served to develop key skills, but equally importantly, they modeled what could be accomplished in relatively little time under mostly informal circumstances.

Evaluation Study Design

To evaluate the effect of the training program on those it was intended to impact (i.e., company grade officers who are considering leaving the Army), we designed an evaluation study including company grade officers in the brigades in which we administered training. Training was administered to Battalion Commanders, Company Commanders, and majors in four brigades. Effect on counselee attitudes and intentions was assessed by administering a pre-survey to lieutenants and captains in each brigade prior to training and administering a post-survey approximately three to four months after training. During this evaluation period, the plan was for trainees to provide formal and informal counseling to company grade officers under their command, using the strategies and tactics presented to them during training.

The ideal study design would be a pretest-posttest control group design, in which one group receives training and a randomly equivalent group does not receive training. This design was practically impossible. We could not train some commanders within the same brigade and not others because (a) those who did not receive training would likely feel slighted and would probably have found out about the training content through their friends, and (b) we needed to maximize our sample size. We could not train commanders in one brigade and use another brigade as a control group because the groups would not be randomly equivalent. Brigades differ for a variety of reasons, and the "culture of counseling" could easily be very different in one brigade vs. another. In addition, we could not obtain access to enough brigades that we could spare using some as control groups. Given the limited amount of time in which to conduct this research and the small number of brigades to which we could gain access in that time, we needed to train as many commanders as possible in order to achieve the sample sizes we desired.

Therefore, we planned to use officers who were not counseled during the evaluation period as a naturally occurring control group. Although the groups would not be randomly equivalent, the company grade officers who were not counseled by any of our trainees would be as similar as possible to those who were counseled by virtue of being in the same brigade, being at the same post, having the same commanding officers, having the same deployment schedule, and performing the same jobs. After collecting the results, however, there were very few officers who could be considered to not have had any counseling at all. In our training, we emphasized the importance of informal counseling through normal conversation as well as formal counseling. Thus, our intended control group would be those who responded "Never" to both of the questions about amount of counseling in the past four months (i.e., how often have you "participated in a formal counseling session" or "participated in an informal, one-on-one conversation"). This was only nine respondents in the group that completed both surveys, which was too small to have adequate power to detect real differences. Therefore, we used two different approaches to assessing the effect of commander training on attitudes of counseled officers:

1. *Quantity of Counseling.* Under this approach, we did not attempt to dichotomize the sample into counseled or not counseled. Rather, we included the ordinal variables in a regression equation to determine if the amount of counseling (formal and informal) influenced officers' attitudes and intentions. We also included the interaction between formal and informal counseling to determine if a combination of both types of counseling has an added benefit. This has the advantage of being able to use all the information in the counseling variables and consider both formal and informal

counseling at the same time. We also conducted this analysis with the counseling variables dichotomized (0 = Never, 1 = At least once) so we could determine if the quantity of counseling is important or if any change is just due to the fact that the officer was counseled at all.

2. *Quality of Counseling.* Under this approach, we evaluated the impact of counseling quantity on officers' attitudes and intentions. Our post-survey included 12 questions asking about the quality of the counseling experience, from which we computed an overall satisfaction with counseling quality variable. We included overall satisfaction with counseling quality as an independent variable in a series of regression equations in which the dependent variables were Time 2 attitudes and Time 1 attitudes were used as control variables. This allowed us to test whether those who rated their counseling experience more favorably tended to show greater improvement in attitudes.

For exploratory purposes, we also conducted analyses directly comparing Time 1 and Time 2 attitudes and intentions. Under this approach, we selected anyone who indicated they had a formal counseling session or at least one informal conversation and assessed the significance of the change in their attitudes pre- and post-training. The advantage of this approach is we can directly assess attitude change from pre-training to post-training. The disadvantage is we cannot be sure that any attitude changes are not due to some other unmeasured factor independent of the training intervention. In addition, we cannot identify if there would have been a decrement in attitudes that was ameliorated by counseling (i.e., there is no change but there would have been a decrease in the absence of counseling). We attempted to investigate any environmental changes that could have influence attitudes from Time 1 to Time 2 apart from the training.

<center>Method</center>

<center>*Participants*</center>

We obtained high-level support for conducting this research at a post located within the continental United States. Our requirements for choosing participants were that participating brigades had to have been back from deployment for at least 90 days and would remain in garrison for at least four months. Four brigades met these requirements, which we labeled Brigades A, B, C, and D to maintain anonymity. Brigades A and B were trained in May, 2008, while Brigades C and D were trained in August and September, 2008.

Trainees

All Battalion Commanders, Battalion XOs, S3s, and Company Commanders within participating brigades were informed of the research, its purpose, and the support for it from post leadership. We worked with a designated point of contact within each brigade schedule training participants. Because of scheduling conflicts, we were able to train most but not all commanders. Within Brigades A and B, we trained 36 Company Commanders, 13 Majors, and 6 Battalion Commanders. Within Brigades C and D, we trained 32 Company Commanders, 27 Majors, and 3 Battalion Commanders. This was a total of 117 trainees.

Survey Respondents

We targeted all Lieutenants and Captains in participating brigades for pre-survey administration. Within Brigades A and B, we obtained completed surveys for 20 2nd Lieutenants (2LTs), 58 1st Lieutenants (1LTs), and 62 Captains (CPTs). We also received responses from two Majors but disregarded their data because this rank was not the focus of the research. Within Brigades C and D, we obtained completed surveys for 23 2LTs, 59 1LTs, 73 CPTs, and three respondents did not indicate their rank. This was a total of 298 respondents to the pre-survey.

There were 190 respondents to the post-survey, 152 of whom could be matched to their pre-survey data. We relied on officers' responses to linking questions on each survey (further described in the next section) to match their responses to the three surveys. We could not match surveys if officers failed to respond completely to these questions or did not respond to them consistently. Some officers appear to have intentionally avoided providing accurate answers to all of the linking questions, suggesting concerns about being identified. Other officers provided responses to the linking questions, but their responses did not match across survey administrations. It is unclear if this was due to intentional distortion or simple mistakes made during survey completion. We could not match post-surveys to pre-surveys for 38 respondents. Because it is impossible to tell how many of these 38 actually did take the pre-survey and could not be matched and how many took the post-survey but did not take the pre-survey, the response rate for the post-survey among those who completed the pre-survey could have been as high as 63.8%, but useable post-survey data were obtained from 51.0% of those who completed the pre-survey.

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Pre-Survey

Company grade officers (2LTs through CPTs) who could potentially be counseled by the officers who participated in the counseling training completed a paper-and-pencil survey in a large group session. The survey is included in Appendix B. The development of the surveys was guided by the preliminary model of company grade officer retention (Schneider et al., 2006), which guided our expectations for the counseling intervention. When available, we selected or adapted items from previous Army surveys. For example, we used items from the 2007 Survey of Officer Careers (SOC), the 2006 Sample Survey of Military Personnel (SSMP), a clinician retention survey (Duehr et al., 2008), and surveys created earlier in the STAY project. We sought to minimize the length of the survey wherever possible.

Linking Questions

The first set of questions on the survey was developed to enable us to match officers' responses across the surveys while protecting their anonymity. These questions asked officers to report the month and day of their mother's birthday, the month and day of their father's birthday, and the year of graduation from high school. We also asked officers to indicate their brigade to facilitate matching data across surveys. This information was collected by researchers on the pre-survey and was also requested from officers on the post-survey.

Demographic and Army Experience Questions

Officers were asked questions about their demographic characteristics and their Army experience. Demographic items elicited information about officers' birth year, sex, race, highest level of education, marital or dating status, and number of dependent children. Army experience items included questions about officers' current assignments and military experience. Current assignment questions asked about officers' current Army status, rank, branch, and kind of unit. Military experience items included commissioning source, years of service completed, years of service left on the current obligation, and the number of times and total months officers had been deployed for Operation Iraqi Freedom and/or Operation Enduring Freedom.

Perceived Context

Perceived Context is how an officer perceives the context in which he or she works and lives (Schneider et al., 2006; 2009). These are attitudes about specific aspects of the officer's situation. We selected or wrote items to measure those aspects of perceived context that we expected to be most influenced by counseling. These included variables such as perceived pay and benefits, leadership, educational/training/development opportunities, and career advancement opportunities. We asked officers how they would describe the status of several aspects of their perceived context on a five-point Likert-type scale. The scale anchors were 5 = *Excellent*, 4 = *Very Good*, 3 = *Good*, 2 = *Fair*, and 1 = *Poor*.

Context Evaluation

Context evaluation refers to overall evaluations based on an implicit weighting and combining of specific attitudes to form an overall impression (Schneider et al., 2006; 2009). For our purposes, we did not need to include overall evaluations because we could create composite variables from the perceived context items to create a broader construct. Army Identity Salience is a context evaluation variable that cannot be created as a composite of perceived context items, so we included six Army Identity Salience items on a five-point Likert-type scale. The scale anchors were *5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neither Agree Nor Disagree, 2 = Disagree,* and *1 = Strongly disagree.*

Commitment

We asked officers 11 questions about their commitment to the Army. The items were selected to measure the three aspects of work commitment posited to influence officers' thoughts of staying in the Army: (a) affective commitment, (b) continuance commitment, and (c) normative commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997). The commitment items were answered on the same five-point Likert-type agreement scale used for the Army Identity Salience items. One of these items was reverse scored (*I am not afraid of what might happen if I quit the Army without another job lined up*). We formed three commitment scales corresponding to the three aspects of commitment.

Thoughts of Leaving

We included one item on the survey that asked officers about their thoughts of leaving the Army. Officers indicated the extent to which they agreed with the item on our five-point agreement scale.

Career Intentions

The survey included two questions about officers' intentions to stay with the Army, both taken from the SOC. The first asked about officers' career plans when they first entered the Army, on a 4-point scale ranging from *I was undecided about my Army career plans* to *Stay until eligible for retirement (or beyond)*. The second asked officers about their current active duty career intentions, on a 6-point scale ranging from *I will definitely leave the Army upon completion of my obligation* to *I plan to stay in the Army beyond 20 years* (see Appendix B, items 64 and 65).

Counseling Experience

We included six items that asked officers to indicate how often they engaged in counseling activities over the past four months. Items included formal and informal counseling activities with the officers' rater, senior rater, or other superior officer within the battalion. These items were rated on a four-point scale where 1 = *Never*, 2 = *Once*, 3 = *2-3 times*, and 4 = *4+ times*. These items were included to assess a baseline frequency for counseling activities prior to the training intervention.

Post-Survey

The post-survey included most of the items on the pre-survey, with the exception of the demographic questions. The post-survey is included in Appendix C. Items on perceived Army context, context evaluation, commitment, thoughts of leaving, and current career intentions were identical on the pre- and post-surveys. We used these items to create post-survey measures corresponding to the pre-survey scales. Correlations between pre-survey and post-survey scales ranged between .51 and .72, indicating some variability in the stability across time of the variables under investigation. The magnitude of the correlations indicates that there were likely changes in attitudes from Time 1 to Time 2 beyond what would be expected just based on test-retest reliability.

In addition to completing these questions, officers were provided with a list of individuals who completed the counseling training program and asked whether they had engaged in counseling activities with any of the trained individuals. The items were parallel to the items on counseling experience in the pre-survey; however, they referred specifically to counseling with the trained commanders.

We also asked officers 12 questions about their reactions to counseling. Officers were instructed to base their responses on recent conversations and/or counseling sessions with the person who had counseled them the most in the past four months. These questions used our five-point agreement scale.

Results

Table 4 contains the demographic characteristics of company grade officers who responded to both the pre- and the post-survey. Table 5 contains descriptive statistics for survey items that were measured on both surveys. Some constructs were measured with multiple survey items, so we computed composite scores for these constructs. Means, SDs, and alphas for these composite variables are shown in Table 6.

Table 4.
Demographic Characteristics of Officers Who Completed Both the Pre-Survey and Post-Survey

	N	Percentage
Gender		
Female	25	16.4
Male	127	83.6
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin		
No	140	92.1
Yes	11	7.2
Race		
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	-
Asian	3	2.0
Black or African American	18	11.8
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0	-
White	120	78.9
Multi-racial	10	6.6
Marital Status		
Married	75	49.3
Legally separated or divorced	1	0.7
Single, never married	68	44.7
Divorced	8	5.3
Dependent Children		
Yes	41	27.0
No	111	73.0
Highest Education Level Completed		
Some college	1	0.7
Bachelor's degree	128	84.2
Some graduate school credits	16	10.5
Master's degree or equivalent	7	4.6
Current Active Status		
Active Army	151	99.3
Active Reserve	1	0.7

Table 4.

Demographic Characteristics of Officers Who Completed Both the
Pre-Survey and Post-Survey (continued)

	N	Percentage
Brigade		
A	65	42.8
B	12	7.9
C	30	19.7
D	45	29.6
Kind of Unit Currently Assigned		
Combat Arms	104	68.4
Combat Support	11	7.2
Combat Service Support	35	23.0
Current Grade		
2LT	21	13.8
1LT	66	43.4
CPT	65	42.8
Source of Commission		
USMA	34	22.4
OCS	36	23.7
ROTC	80	52.6
Other	2	1.3
Branch		
Infantry	26	17.1
Field artillery	13	8.6
Quartermaster	17	11.2
Military Intelligence	11	7.2
	M	*SD*
Age ($n = 151$)	28.16	4.36
Total years of active service ($n = 148$)	5.07	4.14
Total years of reserve service ($n = 30$)	3.52	2.56
Years left on current obligation ($n = 118$)	2.58	2.12
Times deployed for OIF/OEF ($n = 152$)	1.13	.86
Total months deployed for OIF/OEF ($n = 144$)	12.69	8.84

Note. $N = 152$ except where one or more respondents did not provide a
response.

Table 5.
Item Means and Standard Deviations for Officers Who Completed Both Surveys

	Pre-Survey			Post-Survey		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
1. It is difficult to balance the demands of my Army job with my personal/family life.	151	4.05	.85	152	3.89	0.88
2. When someone criticizes the Army, it feels like a personal insult.	152	3.60	.96	152	3.59	0.89
3. I am very interested in what others think about the Army.	149	3.49	.93	152	3.49	0.85
4. When I talk about the Army, I usually say "we" rather than "they."	151	3.87	.93	152	3.86	0.80
5. This Army's successes are my successes.	152	3.48	.87	152	3.57	0.78
6. When someone praises the Army, it feels like a personal compliment.	151	3.54	.91	152	3.55	0.85
7. If a story in the media criticized the Army, I would feel embarrassed.	152	3.16	1.01	152	3.37	0.84
8. The Army has a great deal of personal meaning for me.	152	3.82	.84	152	3.94	0.79
9. I do not feel "emotionally attached" to the Army.	152	3.42	.99	152	3.33	1.01
10. I do not feel a strong sense of belonging in the Army.	152	3.66	.88	151	3.55	0.89
11. I do not feel like "part of the family" in the Army.	151	3.54	.97	152	3.52	0.88
12. I am not afraid of what might happen if I quit the Army without another job lined up.	152	2.83	1.31	152	2.87	1.35
13. Too much of my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave the Army now.	152	2.43	1.19	152	2.55	1.22
14. It would be too costly for me to leave the Army in the near future.	152	2.43	1.16	152	2.53	1.21
15. One of the problems with leaving the Army would be the lack of available alternatives.	152	2.18	1.13	152	2.21	1.08
16. I would feel guilty if I left the Army.	152	2.56	1.20	151	2.54	1.12
17. I would not leave the Army right now because I have a sense of obligation to the people in it.	152	2.97	1.12	152	3.04	1.13
18. If I left the Army, I would feel like I let my country down.	152	2.37	1.10	151	2.46	1.11

Table 5 (continued)

Item Means and Standard Deviations for Officers Who Completed Both Surveys

	Pre-Survey			Post-Survey		
	N	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*M*	*SD*
19. I frequently think about leaving the Army.	152	3.66	1.11	152	3.55	1.11
20. Status of your pay	152	3.06	0.94	152	3.19	0.91
21. Status of your benefits	152	3.51	0.95	152	3.59	0.92
22. Status of your health	151	3.75	0.94	152	3.66	0.97
23. Status of your current morale	150	2.78	1.01	152	2.74	1.06
24. Status of the current morale in your unit	152	2.53	0.96	152	2.57	0.99
25. Status of the camaraderie in your unit	152	2.92	0.90	152	3.01	0.92
26. Status of your military educational opportunities	152	2.72	1.03	152	2.78	1.04
27. Status of your civilian educational opportunities	152	2.47	1.05	152	2.57	1.11
28. Status of your access to Army training courses/schools	152	2.51	1.01	152	2.66	1.02
29. Status of your command opportunities	152	2.82	1.07	152	3.09	1.06
30. Status of your promotion opportunities	151	3.48	0.97	151	3.55	0.91
31. Status of your leader development opportunities	152	3.06	0.96	152	3.23	0.97
32. Status of your opportunities to do work that matches your skills and interests	152	2.51	1.10	152	2.67	1.13
33. Support from Army leadership to achieve your career goals	152	2.63	1.06	152	2.89	1.12
34. Quality of leadership at your place of duty	152	3.07	1.04	152	3.28	1.06
35. Amount of respect from superiors	152	3.20	0.92	152	3.31	1.02
36. Level of competence of superiors	152	3.20	0.92	151	3.40	1.05
37. Your prospects for a successful career as an officer	152	3.30	1.00	152	3.47	1.07
38. Your ability to get a civilian job if you wanted to leave the Army	152	4.14	0.95	152	4.04	0.90

Note: Scale ranged from 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree for items 1-19; scale ranged from 1=Poor to 5=Excellent for items 20-38.

Table 6.
Composite Variable Means, Standard Deviations, and Alphas

	Pre-Survey			Post-Survey		
	M	*SD*	*alpha*	*M*	*SD*	*alpha*
Affective Commitment	3.61	.76	.84	3.58	.73	.83
Continuance Commitment	2.47	.98	.84	2.54	.94	.78
Normative Commitment	2.63	.97	.82	2.68	.96	.82
Army Identity Salience	3.53	.65	.78	3.57	.60	.81
Career Satisfaction	3.06	.77	.82	3.25	.79	.83
Education/Training Opportunities	2.56	.86	.79	2.67	.91	.82
Leadership	3.15	.86	.87	3.33	.97	.92

Note. N = 152. Scale ranged from 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*.

Amount of Counseling

Both surveys included six items asking questions about how often respondents engaged in counseling activities in the previous four months. To evaluate change in the quantity and type of counseling before and after training, we conducted paired samples *t* tests on these items for officers who completed both surveys. Results are shown in Table 7. There were no significant differences in the amount of formal counseling or in the amount of informal one-on-one conversations. There was a significant increase in the extent to which respondents discussed Army career goals, work/family balance, and personal problems during counseling sessions or informal conversations. There was no significant difference in the extent to which respondents discussed leaving the Army. Taken together, these results suggest that trainees did not do any more counseling than they did prior to training, but they did focus more on issues that impact retention than they did before. They did not necessarily discuss these issues in the context of leaving the Army, however, because there was no difference in the extent to which leaving the Army was discussed. This may suggest that counselors were not waiting for the topic of retention to come up before bringing up these issues.

Table 7.
Paired Samples *t*-tests of Pre- and Post-Survey Counseling Frequency Items

	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey			
	M	SD	M	SD	N	t
Participated in a formal counseling session	1.89	.78	1.78	.86	151	1.38
Participated in an informal, one-on-one conversation	3.37	.78	3.43	.88	150	-0.75
Discussed your Army career goals	2.15	.87	2.48	1.03	151	-3.65***
Discussed work/family balance	2.03	1.02	2.24	1.10	152	-2.20*
Discussed personal problems	1.45	.83	1.60	.97	152	-1.98*
Discussed leaving the Army	1.50	.88	1.59	.92	152	-1.25

Note. Scale ranged from 1 = *Never* to 4 = *4+ Times*

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Attitude Change Following Intervention - No Control Group

For this analysis, we selected respondents who received any formal or informal counseling and responded to both surveys (*N* = 142). We conducted paired samples *t* tests to compare attitudes at Time 2 to attitudes at Time 1, presented in Table 8. At Time 2, respondents who had been counseled were significantly more satisfied than at Time 1 with their career opportunities, leadership, job involvement, pay, perceived organizational support, and work/family conflict. They also had significantly more positive career intentions. It is important to note that we did not apply a Bonferroni adjustment to the alpha level to adjust for the number of statistical tests. To keep the overall alpha level of the set of significance tests at .05, the alpha for each individual test would have to be .05/22 = .002. Because of our relatively low sample size, however, this is probably an overly conservative adjustment. Leaving alpha = .05 for each individual hypothesis test means the error rate per experiment (i.e., the expected number of times the null hypothesis of no difference is incorrectly rejected) is .05 × 22 = 1.1 (Howell, 1987). Thus, it is probable that at least six of the seven significant results in Table 8 represent real differences in the population.

Table 8.
Paired Samples *t*-tests Comparing Pre-Survey to Post-Survey

	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey			
	M	SD	M	SD	N	t
Army Identity Salience	3.52	0.66	3.58	0.61	142	-1.30
Affective Commitment	3.61	0.78	3.61	0.73	142	0.08
Continuance Commitment	2.45	0.97	2.53	0.94	142	-1.36
Normative Commitment	2.62	0.98	2.69	0.97	142	-0.95
Career Satisfaction	3.05	0.78	3.24	0.81	142	-3.23**
Education/Training Opportunities	2.55	0.87	2.66	0.91	142	-1.49
Leadership	3.16	0.88	3.32	0.99	142	-2.05*
Current active duty career intentions	4.70	1.44	4.50	1.44	140	2.90**
Opportunities to do work that matches skills/interests	2.48	1.10	2.65	1.14	142	-1.99*
Status of pay	3.05	0.96	3.20	0.92	142	-2.07*
Status of benefits	3.49	0.97	3.58	0.94	142	-1.11
Status of current level of morale	2.75	1.00	2.74	1.04	141	0.17
Ability to get a civilian job if you wanted to leave the Army	4.13	0.96	4.04	0.91	142	1.16
Satisfaction with Army support and concern for your family	2.25	1.50	2.32	1.62	142	-0.50
How well family has adjusted to being an "Army family"	2.20	1.92	2.28	1.87	142	-0.71
Satisfaction with the support and concern the Army has for you	2.93	1.00	3.15	0.92	142	-2.98**
Spouse/girlfriend/boyfriend's satisfaction with the Army as a way of life	1.63	1.28	1.73	1.34	142	-1.11
Supportiveness of spouse/girlfriend /boyfriend of you continuing in the Army beyond obligation	2.65	1.89	2.65	1.95	142	0.06
Camaraderie in your unit	2.93	0.91	3.00	0.94	142	-0.86
Current level of unit morale	2.52	0.96	2.55	1.01	142	-0.35
Difficulty of balancing the demands of Army with personal/family life	4.06	0.85	3.93	0.87	141	1.98*
Frequently think about leaving the Army	3.68	1.11	3.56	1.11	142	1.52

Note. All variables were rated on a 5-point scale except current active-duty career intentions, which had a 6-point scale.
* *p* < .05. ** *p* < .01. *** *p* < .001.

Table 9 shows a cross-tabulation of Time 1 career intention with Time 2 career intention, which showed a significant mean difference. A chi-square test was also significant, χ^2 (25) = 263.4, $p < .001$, indicating differences in responses across surveys. The largest movement came from those who were definitely planning to leave after their obligation, probably leaving after their obligation, and undecided. Among those who were definitely leaving at Time 1 ($n = 16$), 11 were still definitely planning to leave but five had changed their intention to probably leave. Among those who were probably leaving at Time 1 ($n = 27$), only three responded they were still probably leaving at Time 2. Five were now definitely planning to leave but 19 officers (70%) had changed their intention to something more positive. Among those who were undecided at Time 1 ($n = 40$), 21 were still undecided at Time 2, five intended to definitely or probably leave, and 14 intended to stay beyond their obligation. Overall, 55.0% of respondents had the same opinion at both times, 31.4% were more likely to stay at Time 2 than at Time 1, and 13.6% were less likely to stay at Time 2 than at Time 1.

Table 9.
Career Intentions of Officers Who Completed Both Surveys

Pre-Survey Career Intentions	Post-Survey Career Intentions						Total
	A: 20+ years	B: Until retirement	C: Beyond obligation	D: Still undecided	E: Probably leave	F: Definitely leave	
A: 20+ years	10	1	0	0	0	0	11 (7.9%)
B: Until retirement	2	16	2	2	0	0	22 (15.7%)
C: Beyond obligation	2	2	16	4	0	0	24 (17.1%)
D: Still undecided	0	0	14	21	3	2	40 (28.6%)
E: Probably leave	0	1	3	15	3	5	27 (19.3%)
F: Definitely leave	0	0	0	0	5	11	16 (11.4%)
Total	14 (10.0%)	20 (14.3%)	35 (25.0%)	42 (30.0%)	11 (7.9%)	18 (12.9%)	

Note: N = 152. A=Stay in the Army beyond 20 years; B=Stay in the Army until retirement; C=Stay in the Army beyond obligation, but undecided about staying until retirement; D=Undecided about staying in the Army beyond obligation; E=Probably leave the Army upon completion of obligation; F=Definitely leave the Army upon completion of obligation.

The danger with a no-control group design is that changes from Time 1 to Time 2 could be due to events or circumstances independent of our intervention. We are not aware of any changes at this post or within the participating brigades that may have had the effect of improving retention-related attitudes and intentions. If there was some kind of change at this post or within

a particular brigade, we would expect to see the change in attitudes occur at a particular time and not at another. This can be tested because the training evaluation study took place at two different times (May – August for Brigades A and B; August – December for Brigades C and D). Within Brigades A and B ($n = 71$), change in career satisfaction was significant at $p < .05$ and change in satisfaction with pay, satisfaction with education/training opportunities, and perceived organizational support were significant at $p < .10$. The other variables that showed significant differences in the full group had higher means at Time 2 than at Time 1 within Brigades A and B, except for work/family conflict. The mean difference in career intention was not significant, but there was significant improvement at Time 2 when examining it as a categorical variable, χ^2 (25) = 141.7, $p < .001$.

Within Brigades C and D ($n = 70$), change in career satisfaction and perceived organizational support were significant at $p < .05$, and change in job involvement and perceived unit cohesion were significant at $p < .10$. All other variables that showed significant differences in the full group had higher means at Time 2 than at Time 1 within Brigades C and D. The mean difference in career intention was significant at $p < .01$, as was the improvement at Time 2 when examining it as a categorical variable, χ^2 (25) = 131.2, $p < .001$. Because there was improvement in attitudes and intentions during both time periods in which the evaluation study took place, it is unlikely that a single event or change in circumstances at the post- or brigade-level took place to cause the changes.

One thing that could have an effect on intentions to stay in/leave the Army that took place during our evaluation study was changing perceptions of the strength of the American economy. From May to December of 2008, it became more and more clear that the economy was weakening. The public became most aware of the economic difficulties in late September when President Bush called for, and Congress approved, the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008. It is likely that this would be a strong critical event that would shock officers into considering whether they would stay in or leave the Army (see Schneider et al., 2009). When the economy is perceived to be weak and jobs are more scarce, officers would be expected to be less likely to intend to leave the economic security of the Army. We can test the hypothesis that the economy caused the increased intention to stay because three survey items measured officers' perceptions of how economic factors might influence their decision to stay or leave. They read as follows:

- "I am not afraid of what might happen if I quit the Army without another job lined up." (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)

- "One of the problems with leaving the Army would be the lack of available alternatives." (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)

- [How would you describe the status of the following at the present time?] "Your ability to get a civilian job if you wanted to leave the Army." (Poor to Excellent)

We conducted paired samples t tests on these three items to determine if these perceptions significantly changed along with other variables that showed significant differences from Time 1 to Time 2. None of these items showed a significant change from Time 1 to Time 2, either overall or within time periods of the evaluation study. This indicates that the economy did not

affect perceptions of economic constraint and thus was not the cause of the stronger intent to stay in the Army. Of course, the economy would not have been expected to cause the other significant improvements we observed in retention-related attitudes (e.g., job involvement, perceived organizational support).

Attitude Change Following Intervention - Quantity of Counseling

We used hierarchical regression to evaluate the influence of the quantity of counseling on changes in attitudes and intentions. In this procedure, independent variables or groups of independent variables are entered in steps so that the increase in R^2 of a specific variable or group of variables can be evaluated. In our analyses, the dependent variable was the post-survey (Time 2) measure of a variable in the preliminary company grade model of retention (e.g., affective commitment, satisfaction with leadership, career intention). Covariates were entered on the first step, including the corresponding Time 1 variable and any demographic variables to be controlled. For example, if Time 2 affective commitment was the dependent variable, one of the covariates was Time 1 affective commitment. Demographic variables to be controlled were pre-survey variables that were significantly related to formal or informal counseling quantity. Controlling for the Time 1 attitude and other variables related to counseling quantity ensures that any effect of counseling quantity (entered in the second step) on the dependent variable is due entirely to counseling quantity rather than to some other variable that is related to counseling quantity.

On the second step, we entered (a) the quantity of formal counseling (ranging from never to at least four times), (b) the quantity of informal conversations (ranging from never to at least four times), and (c) the interaction between the two. The interaction variable was computed by multiplying the standardized formal counseling variable by the standardized informal conversation variable. A significant change in R^2 indicates that counseling had a significant impact on the dependent variable above and beyond the variables entered in Step 1. If the increase in R^2 was significant when these three variables were added, we examined the significance of each regression coefficient to determine which variable (if any on its own) had significant effects.

To identify potential covariates to be included in Step 1 of the regression, we computed correlations between ordinal-level or dichotomous Time 1 variables and formal or informal counseling at Time 2. For categorical variables (e.g., race, brigade), we conducted one-way ANOVAs with quantity of formal and informal counseling as dependent variables. Three variables were significantly related to either formal or informal counseling: (a) months deployed, (b) Army identity salience, and (c) unit. For months deployed, those with more deployment experience tended to have less formal counseling ($r = -.16$, $p < .05$). For Army identity salience, those who identified more with the Army tended to have more formal counseling ($r = .20$, $p < .05$). For unit, those in Combat Service Support were less likely to have formal counseling ($M = 1.46$, $SD = 0.66$, $n = 35$) than were those in Combat Arms ($M = 1.85$, $SD = 0.88$, $n = 103$) or Combat Support ($M = 2.00$, $SD = 1.10$, $n = 11$). Those in Combat Service Support were also less likely to have informal counseling ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 1.11$, $n = 35$) than were those in Combat Arms ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 0.77$, $n = 102$) or Combat Support ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 0.93$, $n = 11$). These three variables were included as covariates in Step 1 of the hierarchical regression.

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For each regression, the dependent variable was the Time 2 variable of interest (either an attitude or career intention). The corresponding Time 1 measure was entered on the first step of the regression, along with months deployed, Army identity salience, and unit. On the second step, we entered the formal counseling variable, the informal counseling variable, and their interaction. The interaction represents a possible combined effect of formal and informal counseling that contributes to attitude change above and beyond the simple main effects of the amount of formal and informal counseling. The change in R^2 for each tested variable is displayed in Table 10. There was a significant ($p < .05$) increase in R^2 for 10 of the 22 variables tested. If we apply a Bonferroni adjustment keeping the alpha for the set of comparisons at .10, we would use an alpha level of .0045 for individual tests. At that more stringent level, there was still significant improvement for affective commitment, career satisfaction, satisfaction with leadership, morale, and perceived unit morale.

Table 10 also contains the standardized regression coefficients for formal counseling, informal counseling, and the interaction. The regression coefficient for formal counseling was never significant at $p < .05$, although it was significant at $p < .10$ for career satisfaction, satisfaction with benefits, and perceived unit morale. Informal counseling was usually the key driver of attitude change. In addition, the interaction between formal and informal counseling added significantly to the prediction of career satisfaction, satisfaction with leadership, morale, and perceived unit morale. This indicates that a combination of formal and informal counseling has a multiplicative effect on officer retention-related attitudes.

It is unclear from this analysis whether increasing amounts of counseling are beneficial beyond just doing counseling at all. To examine this, we dichotomized formal and informal counseling where 0 = Never and 1 = At least once. It was not possible to include the interaction between these variables in a regression analysis because the interaction is completely predictable from the dummy variables when formal counseling and informal counseling are dichotomized. We conducted the hierarchical regression analysis with these dummy variables and there was only one significant increase in R^2. This was for affective commitment, and this difference would not have been significant if a Bonferroni adjustment is applied ($p = .035$). These results indicate that a single counseling session has very little impact on attitudes, whereas the results of our other analyses indicate that there is a substantial impact as the amount of counseling increases. This is especially true with informal counseling.

Table 10.

Hierarchical Regression Testing Effect of Amount of Formal and Informal Counseling on Attitude Change

Variable	N	k	R^2	Final R^2	ΔR^2	F	Formal β	Informal β	Interaction β
Army identity salience	147	7	.454	.467	.013	3.39	.047	.043	-.085
Affective commitment	147	8	.524	.553	.029	8.95**	.038	.160	.002
Continuance commitment	147	8	.527	.543	.016	4.83*	.074	.052	.082
Normative commitment	147	8	.416	.421	.005	1.19	-.042	.093	.031
Career Satisfaction	147	8	.406	.451	.045	11.31**	-.161	.344**	.221*
Education/Training opportunities	147	8	.343	.350	.007	1.49	-.063	.133	.115
Leadership	147	8	.275	.330	.055	11.33**	-.080	.283*	.305**
Intention to stay	145	8	.734	.735	.001	0.51	.017	.018	.033
Job Involvement	147	8	.354	.378	.024	5.32*	-.060	.222*	.116
Satisfaction with pay	147	8	.360	.394	.034	7.74**	-.114	.224*	.034
Satisfaction with benefits	147	8	.288	.317	.029	5.86*	-.205	.135	.034
Morale	146	8	.334	.386	.052	11.60**	-.060	.283*	.271*
Perceived economic constraint	147	8	.254	.259	.005	0.93	.030	-.099	-.025
Support for family	147	8	.199	.211	.012	2.10	-.131	.133	.057

(table continues)

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Table 10.

Hierarchical Regression Testing Effect of Amount of Formal and Informal Counseling on Attitude Change (continued)

	N	k	R^2	Final R^2	ΔR^2	F	Formal β	Informal β	Interaction β
Family adjustment	147	8	.513	.526	.013	3.78	.014	.065	-.069
Perceived org support	147	8	.320	.332	.012	2.48	-.088	.172	.079
Spouse satisfaction	147	8	.498	.508	.010	2.80	.005	-.067	-.122
Spouse support	147	8	.537	.551	.014	4.30*	.015	.052	-.086
Unit cohesion	147	8	.204	.217	.013	2.29	-.096	.186	.113
Unit morale	147	8	.306	.383	.077	17.22***	-.182	.416***	.365**
Work/family conflict	146	8	.402	.408	.006	1.39	-.046	-.012	.062
Thoughts of leaving	147	8	.428	.432	.004	0.97	-.005	.062	-.008

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Perceptions of Counseling

In one section of the post-survey, we asked officers who experienced counseling to answer 12 questions about the counseling. They were instructed to base their responses on recent conversations and/or counseling sessions with the person who counseled them the most over the past four months. Responses were on a 5-point scale where 1 = *Strongly Disagree* and 5 = *Strongly Agree*.

All Counseled Respondents

Table 11 contains the means and percentage of favorable responses (combining the *Agree* and *Strongly Agree* categories) for everyone who indicated they had at least one formal counseling session or more than one informal conversation with one or more of our trainees.

Perceptions of the counseling tended to be quite favorable. Most officers who were counseled by our trainees agreed or strongly agreed that the counselor (a) listened to his/her perspective (79.9%), (b) showed respect for his/her personal and career goals (75.9%), (c) offered new insights (63.5%), (d) got to know him/her better as an individual (62.3%), (e) would follow through on any agreed-upon actions (69.8%), and (f) cares about his/her well-being (77.4%). A majority also agreed that they would go to this person in the future to discuss their Army career (61.6%). Counseling did have an effect on career continuance intentions for some participants, as 32.1% of respondents indicated they were more likely to consider staying in the Army past their current obligation and 21.2% indicated they were more likely to consider staying in the Army through retirement as a result of the counseling session(s).

Those who indicated they were more likely to consider staying in the Army past their obligation or through retirement following counseling appear to be consistent, as this subset of respondents ($n = 45$) had a significant increase in their career intentions, $\chi^2 (20) = 84.9$, $p < .001$.

Comparisons to Those Counseled by Non-Trainees

Although counseling from our trainees was evaluated positively, it is possible that other types of counseling could provide better results. To test this, we compared those who were counseled by one of our trainees to those who were counseled by someone who did not go through our training. It is difficult to identify these groups without having some overlap. We focused on formal counseling because almost all participants received either formal or informal counseling from one of our trainees. We considered anyone who did not have formal counseling from one of our trainees but indicated they had participated in formal or informal counseling with someone who was not in our training to be in the "other counseling" group ($n = 58$). Within the "other counseling" group, we were not able to distinguish between those who only had formal counseling from someone who was not in our training and those who only had informal counseling from someone who was not in our training. Anyone who had formal counseling from one of our trainees was considered to be in the "trained counseling" group ($n = 97$). We recognize that those in the "other counseling" group may have received some informal counseling from one of our trainees and those in the "trained counseling" group may have received some type of counseling from someone who was not in our training. This type of

overlap is necessary to have adequate power to conduct this analysis, but it does suggest that our tests are conservative. When responding to the questions asking about quality of counseling, respondents were asked to base their responses on recent conversations and/or counseling sessions with the person who had counseled them the most in the past four months. It is reasonable to assume that respondents in the "trained counseling" group were likely to have been considering one of our trainees and respondents in the "other counseling" group were likely to have been considering someone who was not in our training.

Table 11.
Post-Survey: Rated Quality of Counseling by Those who Received Formal Counseling or More Than One Informal Conversation with a Trainee

Item	N	M	SD	% Favorable
This person listened to my perspective.	159	3.97	0.82	79.9
This person showed respect for my personal and career goals.	158	3.94	0.88	75.9
This person cares about my well-being.	159	3.86	0.94	77.4
I am confident that this person will follow through on any actions agreed upon during our conversations.	159	3.79	0.98	69.8
This person got to know me better as an individual.	159	3.67	1.03	62.3
This person offered new insights into my situation.	159	3.62	1.00	63.5
I will go to this person in the future to discuss my Army career.	159	3.61	1.13	61.6
My morale is higher.	159	3.12	1.00	34.6
I am more likely to consider staying in the Army past my current obligation.	159	3.02	1.06	32.1
This person challenged at least one assumption I had about Army life.	158	3.01	0.95	29.7
I would like my spouse to be able to join a conversation with this person.	155	2.88	1.00	21.3
I am more likely to consider staying in the Army through retirement.	158	2.72	1.13	21.2
Overall Mean	159	3.44	0.75	

We conducted independent samples t tests to determine if those receiving formal counseling from our trainees rated their counseling more favorably than did those who received counseling from someone who did not participate in our training. Results are shown in Table 12. Means were higher for the "trained counseling" group on every item. Significant differences ($p < .05$) were found for "listened to my perspective," "showed respect for my personal and career goals,"

and "got to know me better as an individual." "Offered new insights" approached significance (p = .051). Standardized mean differences (d) ranged from 0.33 to 0.40 for these items. These results indicate that counseling sessions with those who participated in our training tended to be rated higher than counseling sessions with those who did not participate in our training.

Table 12.

Post-Survey Reactions to Counseling Experiences with Officers Counseled by Our Trainees Compared to Officers Counseled by Someone Else

	Counseled by Our Trainees			Counseled by Someone Else				
	N	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*d*
This person listened to my perspective	97	4.08	0.75	58	3.81	0.87	2.07*	0.34
This person showed respect for my personal and career goals	96	4.07	0.78	58	3.78	0.92	2.13*	0.35
This person offered new insights into my situation	97	3.78	0.94	58	3.45	1.16	1.97	0.33
This person got to know me better as an individual	97	3.84	0.96	58	3.43	1.06	2.43*	0.40
I am confident that this person will follow through on any actions agreed upon during our conversations	97	3.91	0.94	58	3.66	0.97	1.60	0.27
I will go to this person in the future to discuss my Army career	97	3.67	1.11	58	3.47	1.14	1.10	0.18
I would like my spouse to join a conversation with this person	93	2.98	1.02	58	2.76	0.94	1.32	0.22
This person challenged at least one assumption I had about Army life	96	3.09	0.92	58	2.98	0.98	0.71	0.12
This person cares about my well-being	97	3.96	0.92	58	3.83	0.82	0.89	0.15
I am more likely to consider staying in the Army past my current obligation	97	3.05	1.09	58	2.90	0.97	0.89	0.15
I am more likely to consider staying in the Army through retirement	96	2.73	1.12	58	2.69	1.06	0.22	0.04
My morale is higher	97	3.23	0.97	58	2.98	0.91	1.55	0.26
Overall satisfaction with counseling experience	97	3.53	0.72	58	3.31	0.74	1.85	0.31

Note. Scale ranged from 1=*Strongly Disagree* to 5=*Strongly Agree*.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Effect of Counseling Quality

To determine the impact of counseling quality on attitude change following counseling training, we performed a hierarchical regression analysis in which the dependent variable was the Time 2 attitude or intention of interest and the variable entered on the final step of the regression was the mean overall rating of counseling quality. The covariates were the Time 1 variable associated with the dependent variable and four variables found to be significantly related to the mean rating. These were (a) status of health, (b) Army identity salience, (c) satisfaction with assignment, (d) a dummy variable for brigade with 1 = Brigade A and 0 = Other and (e) a dummy variable for brigade with 1 = Brigade B and 0 = Other. We selected respondents who indicated they had at least one formal counseling session or more than one informal conversation with one of our trainees. Table 13 shows the change in R^2 for each dependent variable when adding overall mean counseling quality. Those who rated overall counseling quality higher tended to increase their ratings from Time 1 to Time 2 on career satisfaction, satisfaction with leadership, morale, perceived organizational support, and perceived unit morale. In addition, higher overall counseling ratings were associated with decreased ratings on satisfaction with pay and perceived spouse satisfaction.

A result directly supportive of our intended purpose is that the variable that was influenced the most by counseling quality was leadership, which had a change in R^2 of .13 ($p < .001$). This indicates that the quality of counseling provided by leaders has a large impact on perceptions of those leaders. Perceptions of leaders became more favorable as counseling quality increased. Because it was the respondents' leaders that received the counseling training and we controlled for Time 1 satisfaction with leadership, this result also indicates that there was a change in counseling quality from pre-training to post-training.

Table 13.

Hierarchical Regression Testing the Effect of Mean Counseling Quality Ratings on Attitude Change

	N	k	R^2	Final R^2	ΔR^2	F
Army identity salience	124	6	.493	.493	.000	0.00
Affective commitment	124	7	.595	.595	.000	0.01
Continuance commitment	124	7	.481	.481	.000	0.00
Normative commitment	124	7	.461	.467	.006	1.35
Career Satisfaction	124	7	.409	.448	.039	8.18**
Education/Training opportunities	124	7	.439	.455	.016	3.29
Leadership	124	7	.283	.413	.130	25.58***
Intention to stay	124	7	.727	.727	.000	0.22
Job Involvement	124	7	.379	.380	.001	0.18
Satisfaction with pay	124	7	.357	.382	.025	4.68*
Satisfaction with benefits	124	7	.324	.326	.002	0.24
Morale	123	7	.282	.335	.053	9.18**
Perceived economic constraint	124	7	.278	.282	.004	0.58
Support for family	124	7	.219	.225	.006	0.91
Family adjustment	124	7	.609	.609	.000	0.00
Perceived org support	124	7	.356	.402	.046	8.88**
Spouse satisfaction	124	7	.484	.506	.022	5.15*
Spouse support	124	7	.573	.573	.000	0.08
Unit cohesion	124	7	.220	.220	.000	0.03
Unit morale	124	7	.254	.314	.060	10.11**
Work/family conflict	123	7	.407	.417	.010	2.04
Thoughts of leaving	124	7	.468	.485	.017	3.83

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Discussion

The development of a counseling training program for commanders that focuses on retention of company grade officers was selected as one of the "best bet" interventions for addressing the challenge of retaining quality company grade officers in the Army. There was a great deal of support for counseling training as an intervention because COs play a very important role in the retention of company grade officers but they are not always adept at counseling and mentoring. We conducted a series of interviews and focus groups with officers to gather input on the content that should be included in the training. After developing the training, we administered it during in-person training sessions to Company Commanders, Majors, and Battalion Commanders in four brigades. We evaluated the training by measuring trainee reactions and by measuring changes in retention-related attitudes and intentions among company grade officers in participating brigades before the training was administered and four months after training.

Training was administered at two different times during the evaluation study (April-May and August-September). After the first round of training, the trainee reaction survey indicated that trainees were very positive about the training content but they suggested several areas of improvement, most notably the speed and pacing of the training and making the training more stimulating. We made some changes to the training based on this feedback and implemented them in the second round of training. Results from the second round of trainee reaction surveys, reported in the prior section, suggested that the revisions made were moderately successful in addressing the areas of concern.

The results of the examination of attitudes before and after training among the company grade officers who had the opportunity to be counseled by training participants indicated that the training had some influence on those who were counseled. We found several significant changes in attitudes between Time 1 and Time 2 among those counseled by our trainees. This was a very meaningful result because trainees only had four months to apply what they learned in counseling situations with a large number of company grade officers in their brigades. We found that 92.6% of the respondents to the post-survey had some kind of counseling with one of our trainees. Of these, 55.7% had at least one formal counseling session and 63.2% had four or more informal conversations. We were unable to measure how much formal and informal counseling the trainees had done in the four months prior to training, but it appears that they were performing a substantial amount of counseling in the four months after training.

We were able to determine that, compared to the counseling respondents got in the four months prior to training, the counseling they experienced following training was more likely to include discussion of their Army career goals, work/family balance, and personal problems. They were not more likely to discuss leaving the Army, suggesting that formal counseling or informal conversations may have been more proactive than in the past, rather than in response to an issue related to leaving the Army. This was a point emphasized in training. If an officer comes to the CO and is already talking about leaving the Army, it is usually too late to change his or her mind. Commanders were trained to look for opportunities to discuss career, family, and personal issues that could lead to separation down the line, and our evidence suggests that they were proactively utilizing these opportunities.

We found significant improvement in retention-related attitudes from Time 1 (prior to training) to Time 2 (approximately four months after training). Time 2 ratings were significantly higher for career satisfaction, satisfaction with leadership, job involvement, satisfaction with pay, perceived organizational support, work/family conflict, and career intentions. Many of these things were identified in our focus groups and interviews as factors that negatively influence retention decisions (Johnson, Hezlett, Mael, & Schneider, 2009), so it is not surprising that improved attitudes toward these factors coincides with more positive career intentions. Examination of attitude changes within brigades that participated in the evaluation study at different times indicated that there was likely not a single event or change in circumstances beyond our training intervention that influenced attitudes. Examination of attitudes measuring concern about economic conditions indicated that the faltering economy was not a significant contributor to changing attitudes or intentions.

Our further analysis of attitude change indicated that a combination of formal and informal counseling had a significant impact on several attitudes, including affective commitment, career satisfaction, satisfaction with leadership, morale, and perceived unit morale. Informal conversations tended to have a larger effect than formal counseling. In addition, having both types of counseling had a multiplicative effect on some attitudes, such that the impact of using both types of counseling was significantly more than the simple additive effects of each alone. The implication of these results is that commanders should use both formal counseling sessions and informal conversations with their officers as tools in enhancing retention-relevant attitudes. This research suggests that informal conversations have a bigger effect than formal counseling sessions, so this result should help commanders who are less comfortable or feel too busy to schedule formal counseling. Informal conversations are easier to get into and can happen during other activities (e.g., PT, meals, field exercises). For maximum impact, however, both formal and informal counseling are necessary.

We also found that it was not just the quantity of counseling that impacts retention-related attitudes, but the quality of counseling as well. Respondents who had formal counseling from one of our trainees rated their counseling experience significantly higher than respondents who experienced counseling from someone else on the extent to which the counselor listened to their perspective, showed respect for their personal and career goals, and got to know them better as individuals. Rated counseling quality had an impact on attitudes such as career satisfaction, satisfaction with leadership, morale, perceived organizational support, and perceived unit morale. Thus, commanders who did a better job of counseling, according to those counseled, were more successful in influencing officers' attitudes. The attitude that was impacted the most by counseling quality was perceptions of leadership, so commanders who counsel well are seen by their subordinates as more effective leaders.

Examining the results of each set of analyses together shows that there are certain attitudes that were influenced by counseling and others that were not. The attitudes that were most consistently influenced across the different analyses were career satisfaction, satisfaction with leadership, morale, perceived unit morale, job involvement, satisfaction with pay, and perceived organizational support. Career satisfaction and satisfaction with leadership improved following counseling training in every analysis we conducted. These were two of the factors that we identified as having the largest influence on retention decisions in our focus groups and interviews (Johnson et al., 2009). Attitudes that were not influenced in any of our analyses

included Army identity salience, normative commitment, satisfaction with education/training opportunities, perceived economic constraint, support for family, family adjustment, spouse satisfaction, unit cohesion, and thoughts of leaving.

According to the model of officer retention (Schneider et al., 2006; 2009), shown in Figure 1, the attitudes that we found to be influenced by counseling should influence career intentions. We found that there was a significant improvement in career intentions from Time 1 to Time 2, but this was not directly related to counseling quantity or quality. We can speculate that this is due to counseling having a more proximal effect on attitudes and a more distal effect on career intentions, at least in the context of this evaluation study. Looking at Figure 1, we see that counseling is expected to be a key moderator at two primary places in the retention model. Those are (a) between context and perceived context, and (b) between thoughts of staying/leaving and intention to stay/leave. Improved counseling was expected to change perceived context either by directly changing the context (e.g., leaders showing more concern for their officers leads to more favorable perceptions of leaders and organizational support) or by better communicating the actual context (e.g., better explanations of pay and benefits leads to more favorable perceptions of pay and benefits). This is why we see improvement in variables that fall into the perceived context or context evaluation boxes of Figure 1. Counseling would be less likely to show a moderating effect between thoughts of staying/leaving and intentions to stay/leave because there are likely relatively few officers who participated in this four-month evaluation study who were open to having their minds changed through counseling. Counseling almost always has an indirect effect on career intentions through its effect on more proximal variables in the model. Therefore, counseling will have a weaker effect on intentions than on the variables that lead to the intentions, except when counseling has the direct effect of changing an officer's mind. Because this will rarely happen with a relatively small sample during a short period of time, we did not see a significant relationship between counseling and change in career intentions (except when simply comparing differences between Time 1 and Time 2). Given that (a) there were significant improvements from Time 1 to Time 2 in attitudes that were influenced by counseling, (b) these attitudes are theoretically related to career intentions, and (c) career intentions significantly improved from Time 1 to Time 2, we have strong evidence to conclude that our counseling training intervention had a positive indirect influence on career intentions.

Recommendations

The results of the evaluation study discussed above, together with the verbal feedback obtained from training participants, and the results from the short trainee reaction survey, suggest several recommendations. First, we recommend that some form of formal counseling training be provided to commanding officers, to ensure that the officers under their command receive the appropriate counseling and accurate information that is relevant to their decision about whether to stay or leave the Army. Throughout this study, from initial workshops and interviews investigating the reasons officers stay or leave the Army, through the meetings with SMEs to develop this training program, it was reported that one of the primary factors influencing the decision to stay or leave is the extent to which an officer receives effective counseling on this topic from his/her commanding officer. During the delivery of the training program, there were large numbers of officers who reported that they stayed beyond their first obligation almost entirely because their commanding officer had spoken with them, usually informally, about how important it was to the Army for them to stay and helped them plan a career that they perceived

as rewarding. Although that reporting was anecdotal, the evaluation study conducted here provides strong support for the idea that introducing the kind of counseling training that was developed for this intervention will indeed have a positive impact on the variables that influence intention to stay in the Army.

Although the training we provided was found to be effective, we believe there is room for improvement and that different types of training may be more and less appropriate at different points in an officer's career. We agree with the recommendations made by numerous trainees that some kind of counseling training should be provided early in an officer's career, with periodic retraining of the important counseling strategies. If instituted as early as the Basic Officer Leader Course I (BOLC I), this could be a training of the core counseling strategies presented in the training manual we developed, along with examples of effective and ineffective behaviors. We believe this could potentially be wrapped into (and add considerable value to) the current training in leadership skills. Then, at later points in an officer's career (e.g., Captains' Career Course and potentially even later in the Commander's Course), this training might better take the form of leader/mentorship guidance, with exercises to remind officers of the general principles involved and opportunities provided to practice them and obtain feedback on their performance, perhaps drawing from one or several of the role plays developed for this training program. One key to the success of this training will be embedding an awareness of how critically important the various counseling strategies and behaviors are to the retention decision-making process, even if the training program is not labeled as such.

We recommend that the results of this research be incorporated into future counseling training. Given the limited amount of time available for training, we focused more on motivating commanders to do the counseling than on teaching knowledge and skills. Some commanders may not believe that having a few meaningful informal conversations with their subordinate officers will have any influence on their attitudes or career decisions, but the results of this study clearly demonstrate otherwise. In a brief evaluation period of only four months, the quality and quantity of counseling by commanders who had been trained with this program had a demonstrable effect on company grade officers' attitudes that are highly relevant to retention. Having hard data to back up this point should help future trainees to see the value of effective counseling.

Regardless of precisely how and where this training is implemented, we believe there are three main "lessons" that are critical to include. First, the focus of the training should not be solely on retention counseling; it should be broader, to include basic mentoring and career and family counseling, because that is at the heart of the most effective "retention" counseling. Second, training should strongly emphasize that the most effective counseling relies on the majority of it being performed informally, as opportunities to talk with officers present themselves or by individuals creating those opportunities (e.g., suggesting lunch or a run). As the evaluation study showed, the combination of formal and informal counseling has the greatest positive impact, but the informal counseling provides a critical role in ensuring that the formal counseling will be productive. Finally, the Army must be seen as endorsing the importance of this kind of training, or it simply will not happen. Whether this is done by implementing some kind of more or less formal progress reporting, or simply by making this training a part of several larger training initiatives (thus achieving importance by virtue of repetition), there needs to be

what we heard described as a "culture shift" in the Army, to increase the motivation levels for commanding officers to take the time to perform this incredibly important function.

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Appendix A

Trainee Reaction Survey

ARMY OFFICER COUNSELING TRAINING
POST-TRAINING QUESTIONNAIRE

Please complete this post-training questionnaire. Your evaluation and comments about the training program give us information we can use to improve the program. Your feedback is valued and appreciated. Thank you!

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I had the prerequisite knowledge and skills for this training program.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The learning objectives for the training program were stated clearly during the training session.	1	2	3	4	5
3. The training program content was set up to achieve the learning objectives.	1	2	3	4	5
4. The training program content and presentation were well organized.	1	2	3	4	5
5. The training manual was well organized.	1	2	3	4	5
6. The training program was well presented.	1	2	3	4	5
7. The pace of the training program was appropriate.	1	2	3	4	5
8. The instructor was knowledgeable and able to explain the material.	1	2	3	4	5
9. The role playing exercises gave me sufficient practice and feedback to improve my counseling skills.	1	2	3	4	5
10. The training activities stimulated my learning.	1	2	3	4	5
11. My expectations for the training program were met.	1	2	3	4	5
12. The training motivated me to increase the amount of counseling I do.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I intend to use the counseling strategies I learned in training.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Overall, I am satisfied with the training program.	1	2	3	4	5

How would you improve this training program? (Check all that apply.)

❏ Provide better information before program. ❏ Clarify the program objectives. ❏ Reduce content covered in program. ❏ Increase content covered in program. ❏ Update content covered in program. ❏ Improve the instructional methods. ❏ Make program activities more stimulating. ❏ Improve program organization.	❏ Make the program less difficult. ❏ Make the program more difficult. ❏ Slow down the pace of the program. ❏ Speed up the pace of the program. ❏ Allot more time for the program. ❏ Shorten the time for the program. ❏ Add video to the program.

Did the training program do a good job of focusing your attention on learning the counseling strategies? If not, how could this be improved?

Did you exert your <u>full</u> effort in learning the counseling strategies? Why/why not?

Could anything about the training program be changed to get you to exert more effort in learning the counseling strategies? If so, what?

What other improvements would you recommend to this training program? (Please be specific.)

What was <u>least valuable</u> about this training program? (Please be specific.)

What was <u>most valuable</u> about this training program? (Please be specific.)

Would you recommend adding this training to an existing course (e.g., Captains Career Course, BOLC)? If so, where?

Thank you for your responses!

A-3

Appendix B

PRE Survey

PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT

In accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974 (Public Law 93-579) this statement gives you notice. This statement is NOT a consent form and it will not be used to release your information.

I.   The U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) may collect the information requested during this session under the authority of 10 U.S. Code 2358, "Research and Development Projects."

II.   The purpose of this research is to obtain information that will help ARI in research on the retention of Army company grade officers. We are in the process of developing several products that are designed to help shape the retention decisions of company-grade officers. The insights that you provide today will be used to help us evaluate these products.

III.   Your participation is needed. The Army needs information from you in order to make informed decisions and the data collected during this session will only be used for research purposes and will not be used to evaluate you in any way. Failure to respond to any particular questions will not result in any penalty. However, your participation is encouraged.

IV.   Responses will be anonymous in that personal identifiers are not being collected or recorded. As a result, the data provided by a participant will not be linked in any way, either directly or indirectly, with the participant. Respondents to this survey will be asked to generate their own identification code so that Survey #1 and Survey #2 responses can be linked, but these codes will be based on information that would not identify the respondents to the researchers (e.g., family members' birthdays). This code will be deleted and replaced with a random ID number after the surveys have been linked.

V.   Providing information in this study is voluntary. The data collected here today will be used only by persons engaged in, and for the purposes of, the research.

If you have any questions about this research or have additional thoughts to add
please call or send an email to:

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Project STAY Training Evaluation Study
Survey #1

LINKING INFORMATION

We want to protect your anonymity, but we must have some way of linking your responses to this survey with a follow-up survey we will administer later. Therefore, please answer the following questions to create a unique numeric identifier for yourself.

Please indicate the month and day of your <u>mother's</u> birthday (e.g., February 7 would be listed as 0207). If unknown, enter 0000.

Month: ⓪ ①
        ⓪ ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨

Day: ⓪ ① ② ③
        ⓪ ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨

Please indicate the month and day of your <u>father's</u> birthday. If unknown, enter 0000.

Month: ⓪ ①
        ⓪ ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨

Day: ⓪ ① ② ③
        ⓪ ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨

Please indicate the year you graduated from high school (or received your GED).

Year: ⓪ ① ②
        ⓪ ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨
        ⓪ ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨
        ⓪ ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨

What brigade are you in? [Brigade names removed to maintain anonymity]
    O A
    O B
    O C
    O D
    O Other _____

CURRENT ASSIGNMENT

1. **To what kind of unit are you currently assigned?**
   - O Combat Arms (CA) (TOE units only)
   - O Combat Support (CS) (TOE units only)
   - O Combat Service Support (CSS) (TOE units only)
   - O Joint Command
   - O Allied/Multinational Command
   - O Institutional Command (TDA units only)
   - O Other Command (TDA units)
   - O Does not apply; I am currently in school.
   - O Do not know

How satisfied are you with the following?

		Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
2.	Your geographic location	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.	Your post	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.	Your Branch	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.	Your assignment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

6. **How many times have you been deployed for Operation Iraqi Freedom and/or Operation Enduring Freedom (OIF/OEF)?**
   - O 0
   - O 1
   - O 2
   - O 3
   - O 4+

7. **How many total months were you/have you been deployed for OIF/OEF?**

   - O Less than one month

   Number of months: ⓪ ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦
   ⓪ ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨

ARMY LIFE

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
8.	It is difficult to balance the demands of my Army job with my personal/family life.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9.	When someone criticizes the Army, it feels like a personal insult.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10.	I am very interested in what others think about the Army.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11.	When I talk about the Army, I usually say "we" rather than "they."	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12.	This Army's successes are my successes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13.	When someone praises the Army, it feels like a personal compliment.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14.	If a story in the media criticized the Army, I would feel embarrassed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15.	The Army has a great deal of personal meaning for me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16.	I do not feel "emotionally attached" to the Army.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17.	I do not feel a strong sense of belonging in the Army.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18.	I do not feel like "part of the family" in the Army.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19.	I am not afraid of what might happen if I quit the Army without another job lined up.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20.	Too much of my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave the Army now.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21.	It would be too costly for me to leave the Army in the near future.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22.	One of the problems with leaving the Army would be the lack of available alternatives.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.	I would feel guilty if I left the Army.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.	I would not leave the Army right now because I have a sense of obligation to the people in it.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25.	If I left the Army, I would feel like I let my country down.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
26.	I frequently think about leaving the Army.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How would you describe the status of the following at the present time?

		Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
27.	Your pay	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
28.	Your benefits	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
29.	Your health	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
30.	Your current level of morale	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
31.	The current level of morale in your unit	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
32.	The camaraderie in your unit	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
33.	Your <u>military</u> educational opportunities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
34.	Your <u>civilian</u> educational opportunities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
35.	Your access to Army training courses/schools	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
36.	Your command opportunities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
37.	Your promotion opportunities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
38.	Your leader development opportunities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
39.	Your opportunities to do work that matches your skills and interests	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
40.	Support from Army leadership to achieve your career goals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
41.	Quality of leadership at your place of duty	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
42.	Amount of respect from superiors	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
43.	Level of competence of supervisors	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
44.	Your prospects for a successful career as an officer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
45.	Your ability to get a civilian job if you wanted to leave the Army	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

FAMILY MATTERS

46. What is your current marital status?
- O Married
- O Legally separated or filing for divorce
- O Single, never married
- O Divorced
- O Widowed

47. How supportive is your spouse/girlfriend/boyfriend of your continuing in the Army beyond your current service obligation?
- O Not applicable; I do not have a spouse or girl/boyfriend
- O Very supportive
- O Fairly supportive
- O Mixed or neutral
- O Fairly unsupportive
- O Very unsupportive

48. Overall, how satisfied is your spouse/girlfriend/boyfriend with the Army as a way of life?
- O Not applicable; I do not have a spouse or girl/boyfriend
- O Very Satisfied
- O Satisfied
- O Neutral
- O Dissatisfied

49. Do you have any dependent children?
- O Yes
- O No

50. How satisfied are you with the support and concern the Army has for you?
- O Very Satisfied
- O Satisfied
- O Neutral
- O Dissatisfied
- O Very dissatisfied

51. How satisfied are you with the support and concern the Army has for your family?
- O Not applicable; I do not have dependent family members
- O Very Satisfied
- O Satisfied
- O Neutral
- O Dissatisfied
- O Very dissatisfied

52. In general, how well has your family adjusted to the demands of being an "Army family"?

- O Not applicable; I do not have dependent family members
- O Extremely Well
- O Well
- O Neither
- O Badly
- O Extremely Badly

YOUR BACKGROUND

53. In what year were you born?

19 |___| ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨
|___| ⓪ ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨

54. Are you male or female?

- O Male
- O Female

55. Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin or ancestry (of any race)?

- O No, not Hispanic/Latino/Spanish
- O Yes, Chicano, Cuban, Mexican, Mexican American, Puerto Rican, or other Hispanic/Latino/Spanish

56. What is your race? MARK ALL THAT APPLY.

- O American Indian or Alaska Native (e.g., Eskimo, Aleut)
- O Asian (e.g., Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese)
- O Black or African American
- O Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (e.g., Samoan, Guamanian, Chamorro)
- O White

57. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- O Some college
- O Bachelor's degree
- O Some graduate school credits
- O Master's degree or equivalent
- O Doctorate or professional degree, such as MD, DDS, or JD

58. What is your current status?

- O Active Army
- O Army Reserve
- O National Guard
- O Active Guard Reserve

59. What is your current grade?

O 2LT	O MAJ
O 1LT	O LTC
O CPT	O COL

60. What was the source of your commission?
- O USMA
- O OCS
- O Direct Appointment
- O Other (please specify): _____
- O ROTC scholarship (1-3 years)
- O ROTC scholarship (4 years)
- O ROTC non-scholarship

61. What is your basic Branch?
- O Infantry
- O Field Artillery
- O Adjutant General
- O Chemical
- O Transportation
- O Ordnance
- O Quartermaster
- O Finance
- O Military Intelligence
- O Air Defense Artillery
- O Armor
- O Engineer
- O Signal
- O Military Police
- O Aviation
- O Other (please specify): _____

62. How many years of Active Federal Military Service (AFMS) and/or Reserve service have you completed?
- O Total years of <u>Active</u> component service: _____
- O Total years of <u>Reserve</u> component service: _____

63. How many years do you have left on your current obligation?
- O Does not apply; I am in indefinite status.
- O Less than 1 year.
  Years: |___| ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨

CAREER INTENTIONS

64. When you first entered the Army, what were your Army career plans?
- O I was undecided about my Army career plans.
- O Complete my initial obligation and then leave.
- O Stay beyond my initial obligation, but not necessarily until eligible for retirement.
- O Stay until eligible for retirement (or beyond).

65. Which of the following best describes your current active duty career intentions? MARK ONE.
- O Does not apply; I am currently mobilized from the Reserve component to serve on active duty.
- O I plan to stay in the Army beyond 20 years.
- O I plan to stay in the Army until retirement (e.g., 20 years or when eligible to retire).
- O I plan to stay in the Army beyond my obligation, but am undecided about staying until retirement.
- O I am undecided whether I will stay in the Army upon completion of my obligation.
- O I will probably leave the Army upon completion of my obligation.
- O I will definitely leave the Army upon completion of my obligation.

COUNSELING

In the past four months, how often have you engaged in the following activities with your rater, senior rater, or other superior officer in your battalion?

		Never	Once	2-3 times	4+ times
66.	Participated in a formal counseling session	☐	☐	☐	☐
67.	Participated in an informal, one-on-one conversation	☐	☐	☐	☐
68.	Discussed your Army career goals	☐	☐	☐	☐
69.	Discussed work/family balance	☐	☐	☐	☐
70.	Discussed personal problems	☐	☐	☐	☐
71.	Discussed leaving the Army	☐	☐	☐	☐

If you would like to make any additional comments on the topics in this survey please write them in the space below.

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY

Appendix C

Post-Survey

In accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974 (Public Law 93-579) this statement gives you notice. This statement is NOT a consent form and it will not be used to release your information.

I.   The U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) may collect the information requested during this session under the authority of 10 U.S. Code 2358, "Research and Development Projects."

II.   The purpose of this research is to obtain information that will help ARI in research on the retention of Army company grade officers. We are in the process of developing several products that are designed to help shape the retention decisions of company-grade officers. The insights that you provide today will be used to help us evaluate these products.

III.   Your participation is needed. The Army needs information from you in order to make informed decisions and the data collected during this session will only be used for research purposes and will not be used to evaluate you in any way. Failure to respond to any particular questions will not result in any penalty. However, your participation is encouraged.

IV.   Responses will be anonymous in that personal identifiers are not being collected or recorded. As a result, the data provided by a participant will not be linked in any way, either directly or indirectly, with the participant. Respondents to this survey will be asked to generate their own identification code so that Survey #1 and Survey #2 responses can be linked, but these codes will be based on information that would not identify the respondents to the researchers (e.g., family members' birthdays). This code will be deleted and replaced with a random ID number after the surveys have been linked.

V.   Providing information in this study is voluntary. The data collected here today will be used only by persons engaged in, and for the purposes of, the research.

Project STAY
Post Counseling Survey

LINKING INFORMATION

The following questions will allow us to protect your anonymity while still linking your responses to this survey with the previous survey we administered about three months ago. Please answer the following questions in the same way that you answered them on the previous survey.

Please indicate the month and day of your <u>mother's</u> birthday (e.g., February 7 would be listed as 0207). If unknown, enter 0000.

EXAMPLE (*to show how to mark responses when survey is completed on a computer*):

Month: **X**⓪ ①
       ⓪ ① ② ③ **X**④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨

Day: ⓪ ① **X**② ③
      ⓪ ① ② ③ **X**④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨

YOUR RESPONSE:

Month: ⓪ ①
       ⓪ ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨

Day: ⓪ ① ② ③
      ⓪ ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨

Please indicate the month and day of your <u>father's</u> birthday. If unknown, enter 0000.

Month: ⓪ ①
       ⓪ ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨

Day: ⓪ ① ② ③
      ⓪ ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨

Please indicate the year you graduated from high school (or received your GED).

Year: ⓪ ① ②
     ⓪ ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨
     ⓪ ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨
     ⓪ ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨

What brigade are you in? [Brigade names removed to maintain anonymity]
   O A
   O B
   O C
   O D
   O Other _____

ARMY LIFE

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	It is difficult to balance the demands of my Army job with my personal/family life.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.	When someone criticizes the Army, it feels like a personal insult.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.	I am very interested in what others think about the Army.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.	When I talk about the Army, I usually say "we" rather than "they."	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.	This Army's successes are my successes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.	When someone praises the Army, it feels like a personal compliment.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7.	If a story in the media criticized the Army, I would feel embarrassed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8.	The Army has a great deal of personal meaning for me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9.	I do not feel "emotionally attached" to the Army.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10.	I do not feel a strong sense of belonging in the Army.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11.	I do not feel like "part of the family" in the Army.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12.	I am not afraid of what might happen if I quit the Army without another job lined up.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13.	Too much of my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave the Army now.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14.	It would be too costly for me to leave the Army in the near future.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15.	One of the problems with leaving the Army would be the lack of available alternatives.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16.	I would feel guilty if I left the Army.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17.	I would not leave the Army right now because I have a sense of obligation to the people in it.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18.	If I left the Army, I would feel like I let my country down.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19.	I frequently think about leaving the Army.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How would you describe the status of the following at the present time?

		Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
20.	Your pay	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21.	Your benefits	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22.	Your health	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.	Your current level of morale	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.	The current level of morale in your unit	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25.	The camaraderie in your unit	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
26.	Your <u>military</u> educational opportunities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
27.	Your <u>civilian</u> educational opportunities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
28.	Your access to Army training courses/schools	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
29.	Your command opportunities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
30.	Your promotion opportunities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
31.	Your leader development opportunities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
32.	Your opportunities to do work that matches your skills and interests	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
33.	Support from Army leadership to achieve your career goals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
34.	Quality of leadership at your place of duty	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
35.	Amount of respect from superiors	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
36.	Level of competence of supervisors	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
37.	Your prospects for a successful career as an officer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
38.	Your ability to get a civilian job if you wanted to leave the Army	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

39. Which of the following best describes your current active duty career intentions? MARK ONE.
- O Does not apply; I am currently mobilized from the Reserve component to serve on active duty.
- O I plan to stay in the Army beyond 20 years.
- O I plan to stay in the Army until retirement (e.g., 20 years or when eligible to retire).
- O I plan to stay in the Army beyond my obligation, but am undecided about staying until retirement.
- O I am undecided whether I will stay in the Army upon completion of my obligation.
- O I will probably leave the Army upon completion of my obligation.
- O I will definitely leave the Army upon completion of my obligation.

FAMILY MATTERS

40. How supportive is your spouse/girlfriend/boyfriend of your continuing in the Army beyond your current service obligation?
- O Not applicable; I do not have a spouse or girl/boyfriend
- O Very supportive
- O Fairly supportive
- O Mixed or neutral
- O Fairly unsupportive
- O Very unsupportive

41. Overall, how satisfied is your spouse/girlfriend/boyfriend with the Army as a way of life?
- O Not applicable; I do not have a spouse or girl/boyfriend
- O Very Satisfied
- O Satisfied
- O Neutral
- O Dissatisfied

42. How satisfied are you with the support and concern the Army has for you?
- O Very Satisfied
- O Satisfied
- O Neutral
- O Dissatisfied
- O Very dissatisfied

43. How satisfied are you with the support and concern the Army has for your family?
- O Not applicable; I do not have dependent family members
- O Very Satisfied
- O Satisfied
- O Neutral
- O Dissatisfied
- O Very dissatisfied

44. In general, how well has your family adjusted to the demands of being an "Army family"?
- O Not applicable; I do not have dependent family members
- O Extremely Well
- O Well
- O Neither
- O Badly
- O Extremely Badly

COMMANDER COUNSELING SESSIONS

The following list of individuals completed the counseling training program.

[IN THE ORIGINAL SURVEY, THE NAMES OF ALL OFFICERS WHO COMPLETED THE COUNSELING TRAINING PROGRAM FOR THE BRIGADE BEING SURVEYED WERE INCLUDED IN THIS SECTION. THESE NAMES HAVE BEEN REMOVED FROM THIS REPORT FOR PRIVACY PURPOSES.]

In the past four months, how often have you engaged in the following activities with <u>any</u> individual listed above?

		Never	Once	2-3 times	4+ times
45.	Participated in a formal counseling session	☐	☐	☐	☐
46.	Participated in an informal, one-on-one conversation	☐	☐	☐	☐
47.	Discussed your Army career goals	☐	☐	☐	☐
48.	Discussed work/family balance	☐	☐	☐	☐
49.	Discussed personal problems	☐	☐	☐	☐
50.	Discussed leaving the Army	☐	☐	☐	☐

51. In the past four months, have you participated in a formal or informal counseling session with someone <u>not</u> on the list above?
O Yes
O No

52. Did you complete the counseling training program?
O Yes
O No

When indicating how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements, please base your responses on recent conversations and/or counseling sessions with the person who has counseled you the most in the past four months.

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
53.	This person listened to my perspective.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
54.	This person showed respect for my personal and career goals.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
55.	This person offered new insights into my situation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
56.	This person got to know me better as an individual.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
57.	I am confident that this person will follow through on any actions agreed upon during our conversations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
58.	I will go to this person in the future to discuss my Army career.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
59.	I would like my spouse to be able to join a conversation with this person.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
60.	This person challenged at least one assumption I had about Army life.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
61.	This person cares about my well-being.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
62.	I am more likely to consider staying in the Army past my current obligation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
63.	I am more likely to consider staying in the Army through retirement.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
64.	My morale is higher.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

65. In the past four months, did anyone who counseled you recommend that you use the Officer Retention Resource Website (http://ari.touch-point.net)?
- O   Yes
- O   No
- O   Not Applicable; Have not been counseled

66. Have you visited the Officer Retention Website?
- O   Yes
- O   No

67. If you visited the Officer Retention Resource Website, please use the space below to tell us how it helped you and/or how it could be improved?

If you would like to make any additional comments on the topics in this survey please write them in the space below.

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY