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TECHNICAL RESEARCH REPORT 1124

**Attrition Reduction Task--
Status Report, 30 June 1962**

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RESEARCH
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Army Project Number
OJ95-60-001

Attrition Reduction

USAPRO Technical Research Report 1124
ATTRITION REDUCTION TASK--STATUS REPORT, 30 JUNE 1962

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USAPRO Technical Research Reports and Technical Notes are intended for sponsors of R&D tasks and other research and military agencies. Any findings ready for implementation at the time of publication are presented in the latter part of the Brief. Upon completion of a major phase of the task, formal recommendations for official action normally are conveyed to appropriate military agencies by briefing or Disposition Form. Status reports in the blue cover depart from the usual format in that they do not necessarily contain separate management and technical supplements.

BRIEF

ATTRITION REDUCTION TASK--STATUS REPORT, 30 JUNE 1962

Requirement:

Manpower shortages in critical areas have recently highlighted the need for reducing attrition during training and promoting performance at a level appropriate to the individual's abilities. Classification measures used in assigning men to training, particularly in technical specialties, require vigilant and continuous appraisal in view of constantly changing requirements.

Procedure:

Three related lines of research have been pursued:

1. Continued evaluation of the operational effectiveness of the Army Classification Battery tests and aptitude area composites.
2. Efforts to identify personality factors leading to attrition during training and to underachievement in training or job.
3. Research to improve the utilization of WAC personnel.

Findings:

Data on prediction of success in 103 MOS have been collected.

Hypotheses were formulated concerning the personality correlates of attrition and underachievement.

No serious administrative obstacles were encountered when enlisted women were assigned along with men to training at the Signal School at Fort Monmouth. Command acceptance of women in the particular duties appeared to be a critical factor in the successful utilization of WAC personnel.

Utilization of Findings:

Accumulated prediction data provided information for use in (1) the reconstitution of the Aptitude Area System in 1955, (2) the introduction in 1958 of aptitude area composites to measure combat potential, and (3) continuing refinement of differential classification measures.

The feasibility of assigning enlisted women in carefully selected technical job areas hereto reserved for enlisted men was clearly indicated.

ATTRITION REDUCTION TASK--STATUS REPORT, 30 JUNE 1962

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ATTRITION REDUCTION TASK--STATUS REPORT, 30 JUNE 1962

TASK OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of the ATTRITION REDUCTION TASK has been to improve procedures for identifying men who will succeed in training for critical jobs and technical specialties. The task, programmed through FY 1962, has built upon the foundations of selection and classification research in the earlier tasks of TECHNICAL ABILITY and SCHOOL AND JOB SUCCESS. Research effort during FY 1962 has pursued three separate, but related, approaches to the objective:

1. Continued evaluation of the operational effectiveness of Army Classification Battery (ACB) measures and aptitude area composites.
2. Study to identify personality factors leading to attrition during training and to underachievement in training or job, that is, achievement below the level to be expected in view of measured capabilities.
3. Research to improve the utilization of WAC personnel.

VALIDITY STUDIES OF THE ACB

Background

When, in 1949, the Aptitude Area System of differential classification was adopted, procedures were immediately established for evaluating the operational effectiveness of the ACB tests and the aptitude area composites designated as selectors for given families of Army jobs. The research program was designed to assure that instruments and procedures have continued to meet the Army's changing job and manpower requirements and to serve as a basis for continued--if gradual--improvement in the operational measures.

Basic to this continuing appraisal has been a series of studies to predict performance by enlisted men within training course or MOS. As each study of prediction achieved within a given MOS was completed, designation of operational aptitude area selector for the course or MOS was reconsidered, as well as the appropriateness of the aptitude area score prerequisite for assignment to training in the MOS.

The Individual Evaluation Study

Each study has concentrated on prediction attained in training and on jobs in a single occupational area. First, courses and jobs were identified for study on the basis of: (1) need for improved allocation of ability resources to the more highly skilled MOS in the given occupational area, (2) importance of the MOS as a critical skill, high-input

job, or "benchmark" MOS, and (3) existence of a continuing attrition problem. Through visits to the school or training center, arrangements were made to obtain background data from the Soldier's Qualification Card, DA Form 20, covering such items as age, civilian education, and Army Classification Battery (ACB) scores as predictors, and final course or training grades as criteria. A follow-up procedure was instituted by which on-the-job ratings by the immediate supervisor and four peers were completed seven months after the trainee left the course, whether or not he completed training. Data collection for a given course was usually terminated when the number of cases reached 600 or at the end of two years if the flow of data proved inadequate.

The method of analysis consisted of obtaining correlation coefficients for all predictors--both individual tests and composites--with the training criterion and with the job criterion (job study samples generally constituted 25 to 50 percent of the original training sample). All coefficients were corrected for restriction in range occasioned by selection of the aptitude area of selection, using the univariate method (Campbell, Johnson, Brown, and Birnbaum, 1952). The correction was made so that results could be considered applicable to a population similar to a full mobilization Army population. (All current ACB tests have been standardized, either directly or by means of an intermediate reference measure, on a sample representative of the full World War II military population in which the test has a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 20.) The operational aptitude area of selection was then compared with alternate forms to determine, within the constraints of management considerations, whether a change in operational selector should be made, and what level of prerequisite score should be established in order to reduce attrition as much as possible and still assure an adequate resource of qualified trainees.

Utilization of Findings

Decisions based on the research findings have been incorporated in the Army School Catalog (DA Pamphlet 20-21, latest issue dated May 1961) in which aptitude area prerequisites are designated for particular courses and for related courses and jobs across the whole spectrum of Army occupational areas.

On the basis of findings across a number of occupational areas, decisions have been reached concerning the advisability of developing alternate forms of existing ACB tests and of developing measures of human factors not now included in the ACB. Findings accumulated on prediction within over 100 MOS have formed the basis for comprehensive research on the total differential classification problem and on problems of manpower allocation.

Earlier studies in the series provided accumulated findings on which was based the reconstitution of the Aptitude Area System in 1955. Instead of the ten original composites consisting of from two to four tests, the number of aptitude areas was reduced to seven--all two-test composites. Considerable economy was realized, and--more important--greater differentiation among the aptitude area measures.

In October 1958 based on studies in combat selection conducted under other research tasks, two new tests predictive of combat potential--the Classification Inventory (CI) and the General Information Test (GIT)--were introduced into the Army Classification Battery. The aptitude area composites for Infantry and for Armor-Artillery-Engineer, introduced at the same time as the new tests, were arrived at through consideration of validity and intercorrelation findings from the school and job studies.

Task Orientation During FY 1962

During 1962, data collection and analysis of data continued on studies originated earlier. Research on a number of additional MOS was undertaken. With the development of models for computerized manpower allocation procedures for initial enlisted classification under another USAPRO task (COMBAT ALLOCATION), emphasis shifted from "shortage area" course and jobs to courses with particular selection problems. New MOS, existing MOS and training programs which had been substantially revised, MOS courses with high attrition rates--these were selected for study.

Plans for statistical analysis were changed in that provision was made for use of multivariate methods to correct for restriction in range (Gulliksen, 1950), using all ACB tests as variables of explicit restriction. This change appeared to reflect the actual operational situation better than the assumption of univariate aptitude area restriction alone, in that the pool from which a given MOS was drawn had been affected in many cases by selection on other aptitude areas for other courses.

In all, data on 103 MOS have been collected. All data collection at schools will have been completed by the close of FY 1962, and results on the majority of these studies are expected to be available by that time. By March 1963, it is anticipated that on-job ratings will have been received on all these studies, with analysis to follow under the New Classification Techniques Task.

In addition to the research effort, data collections and procedures have been modified to facilitate effort required of Army schools and operational units. The new procedures, by increasing the percentage of follow-up job ratings obtained, can be expected to reduce the number of cases required for the original school samples.

RESEARCH TO IDENTIFY FACTORS IN ATTRITION AND UNDERACHIEVEMENT

With increased requirements for personnel with highly trained technical skills, improved procedures are needed for identifying men who will succeed in training for critical jobs where attrition is most costly to the Army's mission. A related problem--less manifest but no less substantial--is that of identifying the probable underachiever, the man who will fail to perform, either in training or on the job, at a level commensurate with his abilities. Measures are needed which will indicate whether a man will use his abilities--and after assignment, has trained skills--sufficiently well to profit from training.

Research to develop predictive measures has concentrated initially on identifying personal factors which affect attrition in Army training courses and lead to underachievement in both training and jobs. Non-cognitive predictors are sought which can be applied as a part of selection and classification procedure to reduce the number of men who fail to complete training, and ultimately to improve the overall level of job performance.

Exploratory Study of the Attrition Problem

After conferences with personnel of the Schools Division of G-3, U. S. Continental Army Command, examination of USCONARC summary reports of attrition and of reports on relief and reassignment of individual students submitted by Army schools, and visits to ten Army schools, concepts of two aspects of the problem were formulated:

1. An appreciable proportion of Army school failures consist of "attrition-prone" students who are poorly motivated or poorly adjusted to the requirements of the Army school situation. These students may be reported as failing because of academic deficiency, lack of interest, character deficiency, or for a miscellany of other reasons.

2. The attrition problem is one function of a more general problem of underachievement in Army training courses. While attrition rates may vary with administrative policies, underachievement is a more constant loss to the Army, even though its costs may be hidden in less adequate gains in skill and knowledge from training, and less adequate job performance.

Leads from this early exploration were followed in two projects: (1) a review of the literature on attrition-prone individuals in both civilian and military education and training programs, and (2) an analysis of data on six MOS training courses, relating motivation and personality characteristics of students to underachievement (failure to attain academic grades predicted by their aptitude levels).

The review of prior research reported in the literature has been completed. Extensive studies in academic settings, particularly at the college level, did not prove applicable generally to the short-term, practically-oriented Army enlisted school courses. On the other hand, previous military studies and development of tests in USAPRO led to the formulation of certain broad hypotheses as follows:

1. Early attrition in Army training courses among individuals of adequate cognitive ability is related to the ability to adjust to a highly disciplined, structured learning situation.

2. The individual enlisted man's identification with his peers is indicative of positive identification with Army organizational goals.

3. Any facet of the Army training situation perceived by the individual as contributing to loss of his individuality will precipitate a nega-

tive response, generalized to the overall Army situation. The converse will be true of any facet of the Army training situation perceived by the individual as enhancing the development or maintenance of his individuality.

- Pilot Analysis of Attrition Factors

From the preliminary investigations of attrition problems in their operational setting and from the current status of related research, a pilot study was designed in which motivational and personality characteristics were studied in relation to failure to complete training or to perform at a level appropriate to ability. Background data, results of experimental noncognitive instruments, and records of achievement have been obtained on students in six MOS training courses. Data analysis is nearing completion.

UTILIZATION OF WAC PERSONNEL

The subtask, "Evaluation of WAC performance in selected MOS (pilot study)" developed out of a prior task "Utilization of Women." In the event of mobilization, increased demand for enlisted men with high combat potential may leave a critical shortage of men qualified for technical training. One phase of the predecessor UTILIZING WOMEN TASK involved research to find whether, in the event of mobilization, women could be utilized in job areas where their assignment is not now authorized and where critical manpower shortages are likely to occur.

Findings from a series of studies established a number of jobs in the electronics and electrical maintenance areas that are suitable for women. A survey of WAC recruiting personnel and WAC recruits gave strong indications that the offering of Army training in electronics to enlisted women would have a beneficial effect on WAC recruiting. Full-scale research to determine the practicability of assigning women in these technical areas would call for the training, job assignment, and follow up of a large number of enlisted women in a variety of electronics and electrical maintenance MOS. A planned study to evaluate WAC performance in selected MOS could not be carried out because the Army had only a limited number of training spaces in which women could be assigned. A small-scale study was, however, conducted in an effort to find whether assignment of women to technical training along with men would introduce special administrative or situational problems. Twenty enlisted women who met the minimum qualification (Electronics Aptitude Area score of 100) and who volunteered for the experimental training program, were assigned to the Signal School, Fort Monmouth, N. J., for 14 weeks on-the-job training as Fixed Station Attendant (MOS 270.0). Two to four enlisted women trained in a class with 15 to 20 male students. The case-study technique was used in following the women through training and for six months following completion of training, during which the women worked along with men.

Recurrent interviews with women trainees and with their peers and supervisors revealed no serious obstacles--administrative or situational--to the introduction of women into training and jobs in an occupational area which had customarily been the exclusive domain of male personnel. Acceptance of women in these positions by the chain of command appeared to have considerable influence on the ease with which the integration of women into the Army job structure was accomplished. Additional studies of enlisted women in other Electronics and Electrical Maintenance MOS have been deferred until required by future Army developments in planning for personnel utilization.

In response to a need expressed by both Office, Director Women's Army Corps and Military Personnel Procurement Division for a short personality instrument which could be utilized as an aid in the screening of applicants for enlistment in the WAC, an experimental instrument, the Checklist for Women, has been brought to final stages of development. The instrument was tried out on a sample of approximately 200 enlisted women basic trainees. Results obtained are now being checked out on a second sample. If satisfactory prediction of training performance is attained, savings could accrue to the Army from the elimination of enlisted women who have low potential for adjustment to Army life.

CONTINUING EFFORT UNDER THE NEW CLASSIFICATION TECHNIQUES TASK, FY 1963

Findings from the evaluation studies on the ACB tests will continue to be utilized, along with results on newly devised experimental tests, in effecting improvements in the differential classification of enlisted men. The effort has been programmed as a subtask of the NEW CLASSIFICATION TECHNIQUES TASK: Validation and Standardization of New ACB Tests.

Leads to be pursued in developing noncognitive measures for use in reducing attrition in training and improving job performance of men with given levels of ability are to be pursued under the NEW CLASSIFICATION TECHNIQUES Subtask, Development of Measures of Occupational Motivation.

No additional effort on the utilization of WAC personnel is programmed for FY 1963.

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by W. H. Helme and A. Katz. June 1962. Report of Attrition
Reduction Task--13 p. incl. 17 Ref. (USAPRO Technical Research
Report No. 1124) Unclassified Report
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