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MILITARY JOB SATISFACTION AMONG USMA GRADUATES, (U)  
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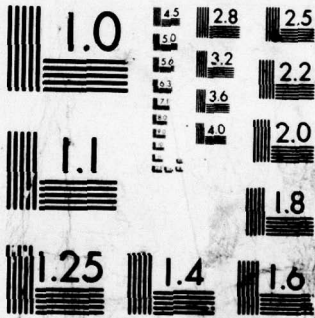
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Dr. Richard P. Butler

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## ABSTRACT

This study measured and compared military job satisfaction among former company grade, field grade, and general officers. A 13 item questionnaire that measured job satisfaction in five different areas was used to survey U.S. Military Academy graduates from the Classes of 1920-1949. It was found that general officers were more satisfied than were company and field grade officers, and that field grade officers were more satisfied than company grade officers. It was also found that there was a consistent trend for higher order needs to be less satisfied than lower order needs. Recommendations for change are given.

## MILITARY JOB SATISFACTION AMONG USMA GRADUATES\*

Like most large organizations the U.S. Army is concerned about retention of qualified personnel. The proposed elimination of the draft and reliance on an All-Volunteer force probably will make this problem even more acute. One method of increasing retention of qualified personnel is to increase job satisfaction.

The benefits of having satisfied personnel are ably pointed out in numerous studies conducted in industrial organizations. Research studies have consistently found negative relationships between job satisfaction and turnover and absenteeism (Brayfield and Crockett, 1955; Herzberg et al., 1957; Hulin, 1966; Ross and Zander, 1957; Speroff, 1959; Vroom, 1964). Other studies have reported a positive relationship between satisfaction and performance (Comrey, High, and Wilson, 1955a, 1955b), although their conclusions are not unequivocal. Thus, the individual who is dissatisfied with certain aspects of his job is more prone to resign, to be absent, and in some cases to perform at a level below his capacity.

Several studies investigating job satisfaction among Army officers also indicate the importance of this concept. Butler and McLaughlin (1971), using graduates from the U.S. Military Academy Classes of 1963-1967, found that job satisfaction was related to both the strength of military career commitment and retention on active duty. Johnson and Marcum (1968), using a design very similar to the one used in the present study, except for a different target population and a slightly different questionnaire, found that deficiencies in the satisfaction of various job characteristics tended to decrease as one moves from captain to major to lieutenant colonel and colonel. They also found that deficiencies were greatest for the ego and self-actualization job factors. The sample consisted of Regular Army officers who were attending Army service schools and who were in the combat branches of Armor, Artillery, and Infantry.

The present study is concerned with job satisfaction in relation to the amount and kinds of need fulfillment that the job affords. Maslow (1954) provides a most useful theoretical system for studies of this type, and the present one uses his theory as

\*The author would like to acknowledge the assistance of Specialist Felton Cameron, US Army, who was the computer programmer for this project.

a starting point. He groups needs into a hierarchy of prepotency, that is, as one need is satisfied the next higher level need emerges as the prime motivator of behavior. The theory states that there are basic needs, such as those for food, water, and sleep, that an individual satisfies first, after which he turns to higher-order needs, such as those for affiliation and esteem. Finally, if a person has achieved some degree of satisfaction of these first-order and middle-order needs, he will then try to satisfy the highest-order need, that of self-actualization, which is the desire for self-fulfillment or the tendency to become actualized in what one is potentially. In order from lowest to highest, Maslow's six main needs are physiological, security, social, esteem, autonomy, and self-actualization.

#### PURPOSE

The intent of the present investigation was to compare the extent of military job satisfaction of former Army officers at three different grade or rank levels (company grade, field grade, and general officers). In so doing, this study hoped to identify areas in which recommendations for improving job satisfaction could be made. The following hypotheses were tested: 1) that general officers would obtain more job satisfaction than field grade and company grade officers; and 2) that field grade officers would be more satisfied than company grade officers.

#### METHOD

##### Subjects

The sample consisted of 740 graduates of the United States Military Academy from the Classes of 1920-1949. This sample represented a response rate of 75 percent to the mailed questionnaire. Only those who were employed in a civilian capacity on a full-time basis were utilized. All the respondents had left active duty, the vast majority leaving between 1953 and 1970. In all, there were 106 company grade officers, 556 field grade officers, and 78 general officers. A respondent was placed in the proper rank grouping according to the highest rank that he had attained in the service.

##### Questionnaire

Data were collected by means of a 13-item questionnaire developed by Porter (1961), who derived the items from Maslow's theory. Respondents were asked to indicate on 7-point scales how much of the job characteristics there was in their last military assignment, and how much of the job characteristic there should have been in their last military assignment. A sample item, as it was stated in the questionnaire, is as follows:

**The feeling of worthwhile accomplishment:**

a. How much was there in your last military assignment?

(Min) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Max)

b. How much should there have been in your last military assignment?

(Min) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Max)

The five major need categories and the 13 specific items used to obtain information relevant to each category are presented below. The items were arranged randomly in the questionnaire but are here listed under their respective categories. The categories are arranged in an hierarchical sequence from lowest to highest order. Maslow's physiological needs are not included since it was thought that they are so well satisfied that questions concerning them would be irrelevant.

**I. Security Needs**

The feeling of security in job.

**II. Social Needs**

- a. The opportunity to give help to other people.
- b. The opportunity to develop close friendships.

**III. Esteem Needs**

- a. The feeling of self-esteem.
- b. The prestige inside the service.
- c. The prestige outside the service.

**IV. Autonomy Needs**

- a. The opportunity for independent thought and action.
- b. The feeling of authority.
- c. The opportunity for participation in the setting of goals.
- d. The opportunity for participation in the determination of methods and procedures.

**V. Self-actualization Needs**

- a. The opportunity for personal growth and development.
- b. The feeling of self-fulfillment.
- c. The feeling of worthwhile accomplishment.

## Procedure

In March, 1971, the questionnaire was mailed to a one-third sample of all living graduates of the Military Academy (Classes of 1920-1949) who were employed on a full-time basis in civilian life. The cover letter stated that the questionnaires were to be returned anonymously in an inclosed return-addressed envelope, and that only group data would be analyzed.

The amount of satisfaction for each of the 13 needs was determined as follows: the degree of perceived deficiency in fulfillment for each respondent on each of the items was obtained by subtracting the answer to "How much of the characteristic was there in your last military assignment?" from the answer to "How much of the characteristic should there have been in your last military assignment?" Thus, the smaller the difference, the greater the satisfaction. This method of measuring perceived need satisfaction is an indirect measure derived from two direct answers by the respondents to each item. In line with the hypotheses, one-tailed t-tests were employed to test for significant differences between grade levels for each need.

## RESULTS

Table 1 lists the average need deficiency or satisfaction scores for each need by rank groupings. It must be noted that the larger the score in this table the greater the need deficiency and the greater the dissatisfaction. In interpreting these data the absolute values of these scores are not as important as the relative values. Certain trends are discernable between and within ranks. Between ranks there appears to be a fairly strong tendency, except for the feeling of security need, for general officers to be more satisfied than field grade officers, and for field grade officers to be more satisfied than company grade officers. The t-values listed in Table 2 indicate that significant differences between rank groupings occurred in all cases, except for the feeling of security need for all three comparisons, and the company-field grade officers comparison on the opportunity to develop close friendships need. Overall, these findings indicate that satisfaction is greater at each higher level of rank within the military organization.

Within each of the rank groupings there is a trend for need satisfaction to decrease at each successive higher need in Maslow's hierarchy. The average of the items comprising each need category point this out rather clearly (see Table 3). Thus, the most satisfied needs are those listed under security, and the least satisfied are the self-actualization needs. Graphically, Figure 1 also shows these findings and further indicates that the differences between the three rank groupings becomes larger with each succeeding higher need.

TAB. 1

ITEM NEED DEFICIENCY SCORES FOR  
COMPANY, FIELD, AND GENERAL GRADE OFFICERS

	COMPANY (N = 106)		GRADE FIELD (N = 556)		GENERAL (N = 78)	
	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD
1. Security Need Feeling of security in job.	-0.07	2.14	0.11	1.50	0.01	1.23
2. Social Needs Opportunity to help people. Opportunity to develop close friendships.	1.01	1.44	0.66	1.13	0.30	0.67
3. Esteem Needs Feeling of self-esteem. Prestige inside the service. Prestige outside the service.	1.40	1.62	0.96	1.36	0.30	0.78
	0.90	1.36	0.54	1.09	0.27	0.78
	1.28	1.51	0.91	1.37	0.62	1.21
4. Autonomy Needs Opportunity for independent thought and action. Feeling of authority. Opportunity to participate in goal setting. Opportunity to participate in determining methods and procedures.	1.40	1.38	1.04	1.31	0.68	1.11
	0.87	1.48	0.59	1.28	0.35	1.14
	2.06	1.65	1.29	1.45	0.95	1.31
	1.81	1.59	1.01	1.35	0.47	1.32
5. Self-actualization Needs Opportunity for growth and development. Feeling of self-fulfillment. Feeling of worthwhile accomplish- ment.	2.24	1.74	1.25	1.55	0.53	1.04
	2.59	1.77	1.72	1.67	0.80	1.47
	2.40	1.79	1.47	1.65	0.85	1.40

TABLE 2

t-VALUES FOR COMPANY, FIELD, AND GENERAL  
GRADE OFFICER COMPARISONS ON EACH OF THE 13 NEEDS

	t-VALUES		
	COMPANY VS FIELD	COMPANY VS GENERAL	FIELD VS GENERAL
1. Security Need Feeling of security in job.	0.82	0.32	0.65
2. Social Needs Opportunity to help people. Opportunity to develop close friendships.	2.36**	4.44***	3.99***
	0.32	2.25*	2.77**
3. Esteem Needs Feeling of self-esteem. Prestige inside the service. Prestige outside the service.	2.61**	6.06***	6.23***
	2.56**	3.94***	2.69**
	2.34**	3.27***	1.94*
4. Autonomy Needs Opportunity for independent thought and action. Feeling of authority. Opportunity to participate in goal setting. Opportunity to participate in determining methods and procedures.	2.47**	3.90***	2.60**
	1.81*	2.68**	1.70*
	4.47***	5.05***	2.08*
	4.84***	6.20***	3.35***
5. Self-actualization Needs Opportunity for growth and development. Feeling of self-fulfillment. Feeling of worthwhile accomplish- ment.	5.44***	8.26***	5.31***
	4.66***	7.44***	5.06***
	4.94***	6.55***	3.56***

\* p < .05

\*\* p < .01

\*\*\* p < .001

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660

182

632

TABLE 3

CATEGORY NEED DEFICIENCY SCORES FOR  
COMPANY, FIELD, AND GENERAL GRADE OFFICERS

	GRADE		
	COMPANY	FIELD	GENERAL
Security Need	-0.07	0.11	0.01
Social Needs	0.64	0.44	0.16
Esteem Needs	1.19	0.80	0.40
Autonomy Needs	1.54	0.98	0.61
Self-Actualization Needs	2.41	1.48	0.73

NOTE: These are aggregate scores for each of the five major need categories. The item scores for each category were totaled and averaged to derive these scores. The lower the score, the higher the reported need satisfaction.

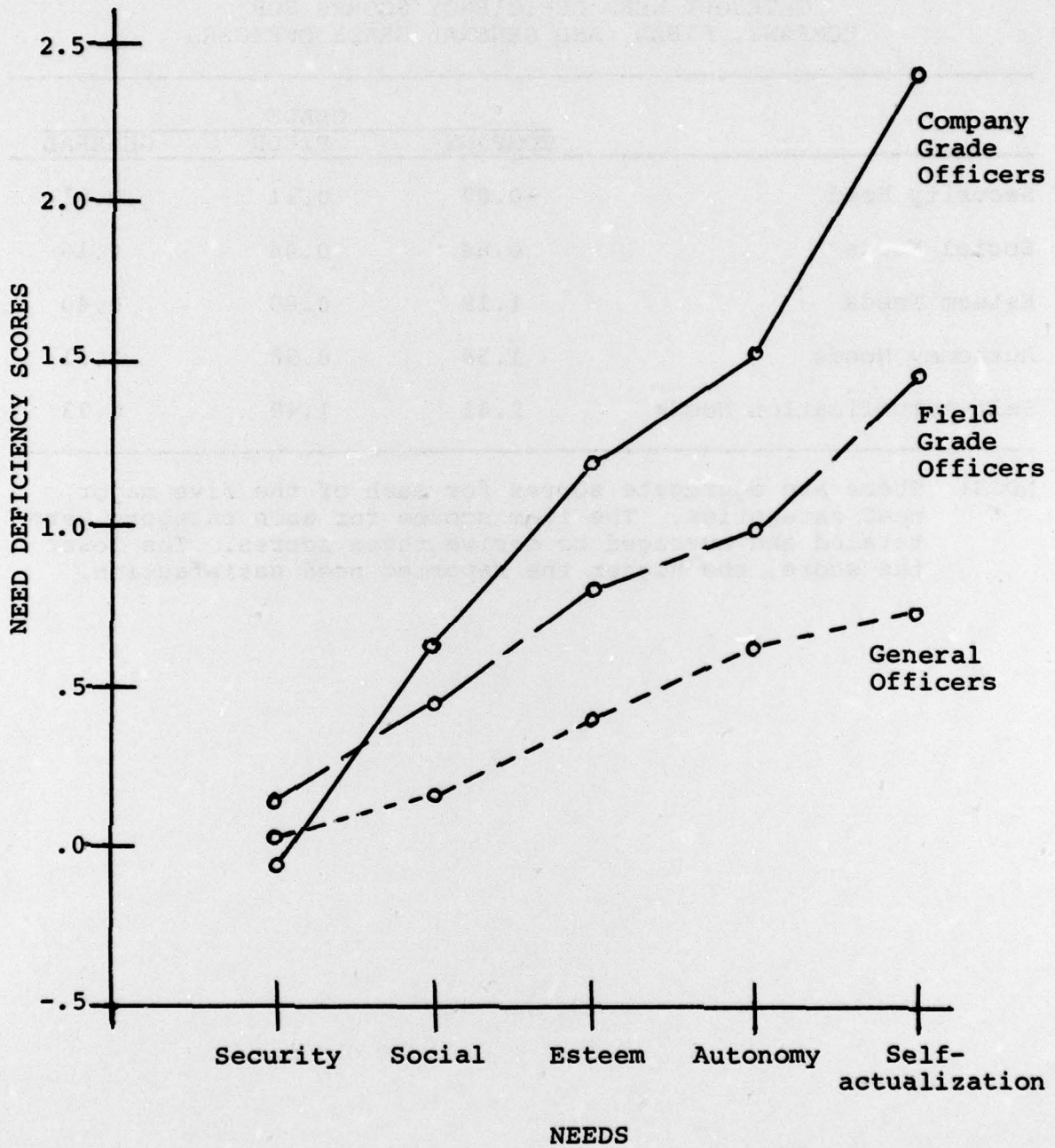


Figure 1. Graphical comparison of company, field, and general grade officers' category need deficiency scores.

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to compare the military job satisfaction of former company grade, field grade, and general Army officers. Both hypotheses were supported in that general officers were significantly more satisfied than company and field grade officers, and field grade officers were significantly more satisfied than company grade officers. Johnson and Marcum (1968), using career Army officers currently on active duty, found somewhat similar results in regard to more satisfaction at each higher rank. Together the findings of these two studies indicate that job satisfaction is greater at each higher level of rank within the military organization. These results appear to be both pessimistic and optimistic at the same time. They are pessimistic in that company grade officers were the least satisfied, and it is at this level that the officer drain is the greatest. The results are optimistic in that the job environment that the Army has created appears to be conducive to expanded satisfaction of needs as one moves up the rank structure, which allows for more and more of an officer's talents to be more fully utilized. During the career guidance programs it should be emphasized that need or job satisfaction probably will increase as the officers progress through their careers. However, the results of the present study are somewhat tempered by the impossibility of determining how similar the general officers were to the field and company grade officers when they were themselves field and company grade officers. The same can be said for the field grade officers in regard to their similarity to the company grade officers when they were themselves company grade officers. Naturally, the greater the similarity the greater the generality of the findings.

The lack of adequate norms makes it difficult to determine, in absolute terms, what the need satisfaction scores really indicate. However, some very tentative comparisons can be made with the findings of Porter (1962) and Johnson and Marcum (1968). Porter, using 2000 civilian managers from all levels of management and a wide variety of companies, divided his sample into categories which were somewhat comparable to the company grade and general officer categories used in the present study. Except for the need concerning job security, Porter's managers appear to be as satisfied or more satisfied than the company grade officers sampled in the current investigation. The differences were largest for the self-actualization needs. No consistent differences appear to exist between the need satisfaction scores of the general officers and Porter's comparable sample of managers. In Johnson and Marcum's study, for all the needs except self-actualization, the company and field grade officers appear to be less satisfied than their counterparts used in the present study. For the self-actualization needs Johnson and Marcum's respondents were more satisfied. While they do not indicate if Military Academy graduates were included in their

sample, it is likely that they were. However, it is extremely likely that a substantial number of respondents were not graduates of the Military Academy and it is this group that may have caused the differences in satisfaction scores.

While no firm conclusions can be drawn from the above comparisons because of the lack of identical samples and time-frames, some very tentative trends appear to be present. It seems that once an individual reaches general officer he can expect to obtain as much job satisfaction as civilians at comparable levels of management. However, except for job security, company grade officers appear to be less satisfied than their civilian counterparts, particularly with the self-actualization needs. Military Academy graduates who left the service were less satisfied with the self-actualization needs than were Army officers attending service schools. What this may indicate is that Military Academy graduates at the company and field grade levels may not at present have enough opportunities to satisfy their self-actualization needs. More occasions to fulfill growth and development needs, along with worthwhile accomplishments, should be present. Adequate job security appears to be present and further emphasis on this factor may be of little value. However, with the recent cutbacks in Army strength and tightening up of promotion policies this need may have become less satisfied since the time when the respondents in the current study were on active duty.

Another finding of some significance was that there was a consistent trend within all three rank groupings for each successive need to be less fulfilled, and thus less satisfied, than the ones below it in the need hierarchy. This result is closely related to what could be expected from Maslow's theory of need satisfaction. He postulated that because of the very basic structure of large organizations it is much more difficult to satisfy the needs that lie at the upper-end of the scale--the autonomy and self-actualization needs. Maslow also states that given the structure of our society, with little deficiency in the physiological and security needs, the most important task of upper-level management is to arrange organizational conditions and methods of operations so that individuals can achieve their own goals best by directing their own efforts toward organizational objectives. In essence this is a process of creating opportunities, releasing potential, removing obstacles, encouraging growth, and providing guidance. It is what may be referred to as "management by objectives" rather than "management by control". More specific guidelines for implementation can be found in the specific items listed under the autonomy and self-actualization needs. For instance, opportunities to participate in goal setting, independent thought and action, and worthwhile rather than make-work projects should be employed.

A methodological note should be explained at this time. It will be recalled that the respondents in the present study were no longer on active duty but were fully employed in a civilian capacity. This might have meant that the findings were irrelevant to those officers currently on active duty. Such, however, does not appear to be the case, since the results are very similar to those of Johnson and Marcum (1968), who used career Army officers on active duty, and Porter (1961, 1962), who used civilian managers at several levels from widely differing organizations. Both studies found that job satisfaction opportunities are better at successively higher levels in the organizational hierarchies. It seems that the findings of this study are part of a widespread phenomenon existing in both civilian and military organizations. They also are similar to what would be expected from Maslow's theory of motivation, in that each successive need in the hierarchy was found to be less fulfilled than the one below it.

#### CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the three most pertinent findings were:

1. USMA graduates who became generals obtained more job satisfaction in the Army than did USMA graduates who left active duty as company and field grade officers.
2. USMA graduates who became field grade officers obtained more job satisfaction in the Army than did USMA graduates who left active duty as company grade officers.
3. A consistent trend existed for higher order needs to be less satisfied than lower order needs.

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