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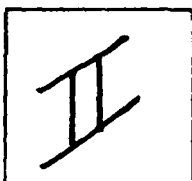
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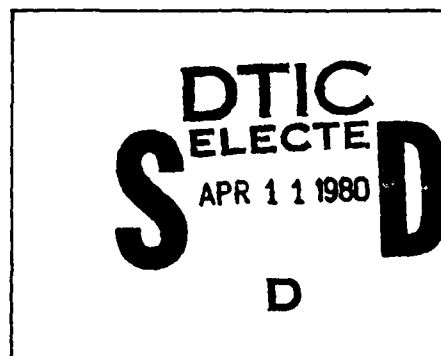
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**OBSERVATIONS OF INTERRANK CONFLICTS
AT THE COMPANY LEVEL:
DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE**

William C. Eckerman and Jay R. Williams
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OBSERVATIONS OF INTERRANK CONFLICTS AT THE COMPANY LEVEL: DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE

The period of greatest public concern with drug abuse as a serious social problem was the early 1970's, and the Army felt a special concern about drug abuse as a possible threat to defense readiness. As a result, the Army Research Institute conducted research in 1971-1975 on the behavioral and social aspects of drug and alcohol abuse in the Army. This report is of interest in 1977 in light of the company-level leadership problems now being addressed by organizational effectiveness programs Army-wide.

The present research memorandum presents observations collected during a 1974 investigation of the relationships between company-level leadership and the illicit use of drugs or excessive drinking; the data consist of responses to structured questions asked during small group discussion sessions with peer groups of various ranks in Army companies.

METHOD

In order to explore possible relationships between company level leadership, the level of drug use, and of excessive drinking, a large scale survey of 24 Army companies at four posts was conducted in 1974; two in the Continental United States and two in Germany. These companies were selected, on the basis of an anonymous drug-use questionnaire, as representing units on the two ends of a continuum of drug use level in companies. Questionnaires incorporating a variety of indices of leadership behavior were administered to over 2,000 EM, NCOs, and officers, in addition to small group discussions held with a number of company level personnel. A complete description of the study design, methodology, and results is presented in a separate paper ¹; this report deals only with the results of the small group discussion sessions.

Six companies were selected at each of the four installations for study. Discussion sessions were held (and tape-recorded) with the following groups at each post:

1. Commanders of all six companies (one session).
 2. First Sergeants of all six companies (one session).
 3. Platoon leaders of each company (six sessions).
-
1. Eckerman, W. C., Cook, R. F., & Ramsay, D. A. Exploratory research on the role of company level leadership in preventing drug abuse in the U.S. Army. ARI Technical Paper (in preparation).

4. Platoon sergeants of each company (six sessions).
5. Squad leaders of each company (two groups per company--12 sessions).
6. Selected squads (two squads per company--12 sessions).

Because of scheduling and technical problems with some of the tapes, fewer than the expected number of discussion sessions were available for analysis. Table 1 presents the potential and actual number of sessions.

TABLE 1
DISCUSSION SESSIONS POTENTIALLY AND ACTUALLY TAPED

Personnel Level	Potential Number	Actual Usable Discussion Session Tapes
Company Commander	4	4 (100%)
Platoon Leaders	24	21 (87.5%)
1st Sergeants	4	4 (100%)
Platoon Sergeants	24	22 (91.6%)
Squad Leaders	48	39 (81.3%)
Selected Squads (E1-E3)	48	41 (85.4%)

The taped sessions were analyzed for content and a simple count made of particular points covered during the discussion. No attempt was made during the discussion to reach a consensus on any particular point because it would have severely disrupted the flow of the discussion. These types of discussion groups, unlike fixed-response questionnaires, provide no measure of intensity or strength of the response. On occasion, relatively frivolous or minor issues may be raised, with no way of measuring the relative importance of the point. The data to be presented, then, are purely descriptive, representing the subjective impressions of a variety of men at different levels in the hierarchy of the Army company.

No attempts were made at determining levels of statistical significance. The descriptive statements will merely indicate the number of sessions in which a given response was made.

RESULTS

All discussion groups agreed that illicit drug use was widespread and most agreed that it was a problem. When asked to estimate the percentage of EM entering the Army as drug users, the estimates, as shown in Table 2, were in general agreement. The First Sergeants were unwilling to hazard a

guess. They were also unwilling to estimate the percentage of men entering the Army as alcoholics or becoming heavy drinkers while in the Army. These estimates may be compared with the results of an anonymous survey of EM conducted during the larger study. Table 3 presents the results from soldiers in pay grades E1-E5.

TABLE 2

ESTIMATES OF PERCENTAGE OF ENLISTED MEN USING DRUGS ON ENTRANCE TO ARMY

<u>Estimator</u>	<u>Estimate</u>
COs	At least 50%
1st Sergeants	No estimate
Platoon Leaders	Over 60%
Platoon Sergeants	67%
Squad Leaders	61%
EM	57%

TABLE 3

RESPONSES BY EM REGARDING DRUG USE BY TYPE DRUG

Type of Drug	Used Regularly Some Time in the Past		Just Tried a Few Times in the Past		Never Used		Not Ascer- tained		Total	
	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>(N)</u>
Marihuana	40.3	(683)	26.7	(452)	30.0	(508)	3.0	(51)	100.0	(1694)
Hashish	26.9	(455)	27.9	(473)	42.0	(712)	3.2	(54)	100.0	(1694)
Cocaine	5.6	(95)	18.5	(313)	72.3	(1225)	3.6	(61)	100.0	(1694)
Hallucinogens*	14.9	(252)	19.2	(325)	62.1	(1052)	3.8	(65)	100.0	(1694)
Amphetamines	18.9	(320)	19.2	(325)	58.0	(983)	3.9	(66)	100.0	(1694)
Barbiturates	8.2	(139)	13.3	(226)	74.7	(1266)	3.7	(63)	100.0	(1694)
Other Sedatives**	6.3	(107)	12.9	(218)	76.8	(1301)	4.0	(68)	100.0	(1694)
Methadone	1.9	(33)	5.0	(85)	89.0	(1507)	4.1	(69)	100.0	(1694)
Heroin	5.8	(98)	10.2	(173)	79.8	(1351)	4.3	(72)	100.0	(1694)
Other Opiates***	5.0	(85)	13.6	(231)	77.3	(1309)	4.1	(69)	100.0	(1694)

* Includes LSD, DMT, mescaline, peyote, STP, etc.

** Includes Doriden, Mandrax, Sernyl, etc.

*** Includes morphine, opium, Demerol, codeine, etc.

As can be seen, the group discussion estimates are close to the figures for self-admitted use of marijuana, but are gross overestimates for other drugs and drug classes. The group discussions did not specify types of drugs or frequency of use, making comparisons difficult with the results from the survey questionnaire. Table 3, however, illustrates the problems of using blanket terms in a complex area like illicit drug use.

All discussion groups were asked for their recommendations for curbing drug use and excessive use of alcohol in the Army. The responses to this

TABLE 4

PERCENT OF SESSIONS WITH SUGGESTIONS FOR WAYS TO CURB DRUG ABUSE AND ALCOHOLISM

(Number of Sessions)

	COs	1st Sgts	Platoon Ldrs	Platoon Sgts	Squad Ldrs	EM
USABLE N =	4	4	21	22	39	41
Therapeutic measures, counseling, treatment programs	75 (3)	75 (3)	48 (10)	59 (13)	54 (21)	41 (17)
Stricter regulations, enforcement of rules, punishment	50 (2)	50 (2)	62 (13)	50 (11)	44 (17)	5 (2)
Screen out users, dis- miss users from the Army	50 (2)	50 (2)	43 (9)	59 (13)	18 (7)	0 (0)
Recreational programs, scheduled activities for free time	0 (0)	25 (1)	24 (5)	0 (0)	18 (7)	12 (5)
Legalize soft drugs, allow alcohol in the barracks	0 (0)	0 (0)	5 (1)	9 (2)	8 (3)	10 (4)
Don't open clubs until 4:30	0 (0)	0 (0)	5 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (1)
Better drug education	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	5 (2)

question, provided in Table 4, illustrate the diversity of opinion and obvious lack of unanimity both within and between groups. Several comparisons in Table 4 warrant attention. In roughly half of the sessions with company commanders, first sergeants, platoon leaders and platoon sergeants, the suggestion was made that users be screened out or dismissed from the Army. On the other hand, the need for treatment and counseling programs was recognized in even more of the sessions with these groups. These actions are not mutually exclusive because the Army screened for drug use and subsequently discharged those who were not successful in the treatment and rehabilitation process. Interestingly, the only mention of drug education was in two of the EM sessions.

The squads were asked the more specific question of how NCOs and officers should handle drug use and alcoholism. Their responses are summarized in Table 5. As can be seen, with lower ranking EM the emphasis is on more permissive attitudes, a reduction in harassment, and the need for counseling and treatment. In only three sessions was there a suggestion recommending stricter discipline.

TABLE 5

EM SUGGESTIONS RELATING TO THE HANDLING OF DRUG USE AND ALCOHOLISM

<u>Suggestions</u>	<u>Number of Sessions in Which Suggestion was Mentioned</u>
1. Counsel; or refer for counseling and treatment	7
2. Ignore problem - let a person do what he wants	6
3. Engage in less harassment; get warrants for room searches; be more lenient	7
4. Alcohol problem should be treated differently	6
5. Be more understanding; try to help	4
6. Less leniency; burn pushers; get on drinkers who cause disturbances	3

In each discussion session with those in leadership positions a substantial amount of time was devoted to the basic question of how the Army could assist the handling of EM. Table 6 provides a comparison of various suggestions made by the different leadership levels. Two comparisons

TABLE 6

PERCENT OF SESSIONS WITH SUGGESTIONS FOR WAYS THE ARMY COULD HELP LEADERS

COPE WITH NEW EM OF TODAY

(Number of Sessions)

	COs	1st Sgts	Platoon Ldrs	Platoon Sgts	Squad Leaders
USABLE N =	4	4	21	22	39
Improve methods of recruitment, eliminate undesirable personnel	75 (3)	100 (4)	76 (16)	36 (8)	64 (25)
More discipline, enforce regulations, more use of authority	25 (1)	50 (2)	48 (10)	45 (10)	44 (17)
Improve living conditions, increase benefits	25 (1)	50 (2)	43 (9)	41 (9)	67 (26)
Job related improvements	0 (0)	75 (3)	0 (0)	45 (10)	59 (23)
Relax regulations and policies, better treatment	25 (1)	25 (1)	57 (12)	0 (0)	67 (26)
Make Army more attractive, more exciting programs, better pay, more frequent promotions, less red tape, shorter hours	75 (3)	0 (0)	86 (18)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Change administrative policies	0 (0)	75 (3)	0 (0)	36 (8)	0 (0)
Train NCOs and Officers to handle men	0 (0)	0 (0)	38 (8)	0 (0)	0 (0)

stand out among the suggestions. Almost every level of command showed a desire to get better material to work with, i.e., throw out the "bad apples" and improve recruitment. Most of the other suggestions were for organizational changes. Only among the platoon leaders was the suggestion made that they be given training in handling people. This is the only response category which would entail a change in the leaders' own behavior.

The EM in squads were asked for their impressions of the treatment they receive from both NCOs and officers and what they felt were the sources of conflict, if any. Out of the 41 squads 19 felt that they were definitely treated unfairly by officers; another 17 had mixed feelings about their treatment. In a related question regarding sources of conflict between EM and NCOs and how to avoid them, 16 squads felt that the burden lay entirely on the NCOs; in eight sessions, however, the responsibility was perceived as shared. The squads were asked to identify specific sources of conflict with leaders. The responses with respect to officers are presented in Table 7; for NCOs in Table 8. The most frequently

TABLE 7

PERCENT OF SESSIONS WITH EM IMPRESSIONS OF TREATMENT BY OFFICERS

(Number of Sessions)

Sources of Conflict	Sessions*
Treated as inferior simply because of rank	32 (13)
Officers unfriendly, difficult to approach, unconcerned and unsympathetic to EM needs	63 (26)
Officers not performing their duties properly or not available	39 (16)
Officers lack training for their job, are ineffective, and don't know what they are doing	19 (8)
Unfair promotional practices, lack of recognition for job well done	22 (9)
Favoritism and unequal treatment	22 (9)
Undemocratic methods, EM can't express an opinion, ask questions, or be given a reason for doing things	15 (6)
Too Many chiefs	7 (3)

*Usable N = 41

voiced complaint of EM about both officers and NCOs was that they are unfriendly, difficult to approach and unconcerned about EM needs and problems. NCOs were seen as sources of conflict because of "unfair practices and disciplinary measures," probably because their jobs often entail the administering of disciplinary measures. The response categories in Table 7 and 8 primarily reflect concern about organizationally defined social relationships in an hierarchy of power.

TABLE 8

PERCENT OF SESSIONS WITH EM IMPRESSIONS OF TREATMENT BY NCOs
(Number of Sessions)

Source of Conflict	Sessions*
NCOs are unwilling to listen	27 (11)
NCOs are unfriendly, difficult to approach, and unconcerned about EM problems	59 (24)
NCOs practice unfair policies and disciplinary measures	59 (24)
NCOs invade the privacy of EM	22 (9)
NCOs play favorites among the troops	15 (6)
NCOs are not trained for their jobs	10 (4)
NCOs lie to or about EM	10 (4)

*Usable N = 41

DISCUSSION

The material presented here represents only a portion of the recorded discussion sessions, which often deteriorated into "gripe sessions." With respect to the drug and alcohol issue, most discussion groups viewed these problems as widespread and serious. Generally, the EM held more permissive attitudes, as might be expected, but were far from unanimous about solutions to the problems.

There was ample evidence that the enlisted man of today was viewed as a different breed from earlier times and that value-attitudinal differences among EM, NCOs and officers created conditions conducive to continuing conflict. On the other hand, it is unlikely that the situation vastly differs from that of earlier times. For example, a survey conducted 30 years ago among 5,000 officers and 3,500 EM in the United States (before the end of WWII) asked the question: "Below is a list of things enlisted men commonly gripe about. In your experience which of these things do you think enlisted men usually have a good reason to gripe about?" Table 9 shows the percentages of officers and EM who thought the gripes were usually justified.²

TABLE 9
COMPARISON OF OFFICERS' AND ENLISTED MEN'S ATTITUDES TOWARD
ENLISTED MEN'S COMPLAINTS*

	Per Cent Who Think Enlisted Men "Usually Have Good Reason To Gripe about Listed Complaint		
	Among enlisted men (N = 237)	Among officers (N = 5000)	Difference
"Discipline too strict about petty things"	51	23	28
"Not enough passes & furloughs"	53	28	25
"The wrong men get the breaks"	53	28	25
"Too much 'chicken' to put up with"	71	49	22
"Work too hard or hours too long"	23	9	14
"Too much time wasted during the day" †	48	59	-11
"Wrong job assignment"	64	59	5
"Promotions frozen or too slow"	69	68	1

*Source: The American Soldier, Vol. 1, 1949.

† It is possible that officers and men interpreted this item differently. Enlisted men commonly gripe about their time being wasted by officers requiring them to wait, a complaint epitomized in the Army expression, "Hurry up and wait." Officers, on the other hand, are more likely to be critical of time wasted by enlisted men through goldbricking and dilatory tactics.

2. Stouffer, S. A., Suchman, E. A., DeViney, L. C., Star, S. A., & Williams, R. M., Jr. The American soldier: Adjustment during army life. Vol. 1. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1949, p. 396.

A survey conducted among stateside training companies in the late spring of 1943 illustrates that things haven't changed much in a generation. Given various hypothetical situations, officers, NCOs and EM were asked how they would handle these situations. Table 10 shows the breakdown, by rank, of responses to two questions relating to the use of alcohol.³

TABLE 10

COMPARISON OF PRIVATES, NONCOMS, AND OFFICERS ON WHAT THEY
SAY THEY WOULD DO AS NONCOMS IN SPECIFIC SITUATIONS*

Hypothetical situation	Privates (N = 384)	Noncoms (N = 195)	Officers (N = 31)
"Suppose you are a squad leader. One night you go into town and find one of your men lying drunk in the gutter. What do you think you would do?			
Per cent saying: "Take him back to camp, and not say anything about it."	51	52	19
"Suppose you are a platoon sergeant and you find that one of the men in your barracks has brought a bottle of liquor into camp. What do you think you would do?"			
Per cent saying: "Warn him to be careful and not to do it again"	70	59	35

*Source: The American Soldier, Vol. 1., 1949

3. Stouffer, et al., 1949, op cit., pp. 395-396.

Reviewing these and other studies conducted at that time, the authors concluded that:

"The power relationship was an obvious barrier. A considerable difference in perspective between officers who exercise authority and men over whom the authority is exercised is probably inevitable, at least in an organization operated on an authoritarian basis. And whether in the Army or elsewhere, completely candid interchange of attitudes on all subjects does not ordinarily occur between those who wield power and those who are subject to that power."

Although made some 30 years ago during wartime, these observations still appear pertinent to the all-volunteer Army of the '70s. What has been called the generation gap might more appropriately be termed the power gap in the Army, and quite possibly, in the civilian sector as well.