



Developing a Better Understanding of the Personal Dimensions of Working at the Central Intelligence Agency

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Developing a Better Understanding of the Personal Dimensions of Working at the Central Intelligence Agency

Abstract

Working at the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) is shrouded in mystery. Film, television and fictional spy stories are often the leading sources of information that allow the general public insight into the “spy world.” These often inaccurate depictions not only cause careers at the CIA to be misunderstood, but also create false perceptions of the employees of the CIA. Because of this, the general public—including those interested in pursuing a career within the CIA—is not presented with an accurate view of the personal aspects regarding motives, perceptions, and costs related to working at the CIA. In order to aid those individuals interested in pursuing a career within the CIA, this study will examine the available information provided by the CIA’s official website, determine what information may be lacking, and attempt to provide a better depiction of the personal dimensions of working at the CIA through a variety of firsthand accounts provided by former members. By providing potential employees with this information, they will be better able to weigh the costs and benefits of working at the CIA and make a more informed decision in regards to their career path, reducing cultural mismatch and turnover.

Disclaimer

All statements of opinion, or analysis expressed in this paper are those of the author and the former members of the Central Intelligence Agency interviewed. They do not reflect official positions of the Central Intelligence Agency or any other US government entity. Nothing in the content should be interpreted as asserting or implying US government endorsement of the author’s statements or views.

Introduction

Because the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) must maintain an immense level of security they must also maintain a deep level of secrecy. Due to the level of security and secrecy, the amount of information the CIA is able to provide to the general public, specifically those interested in pursuing a career in the CIA, remains scarce. In today's modern age most job search related activities happen online and the CIA can benefit from this tremendously. In film and television members of the CIA are sensationalized. Whether it is Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan, the analyst turned action hero, or Robert Ludlum's rogue agent Jason Bourne looking to take down the corrupt conspiring members CIA, these adaptations do not represent the CIA culture accurately. The news media will often only focus on controversial events or the agency's mistakes. We less frequently are made aware of their successes partly due to the clandestine nature of operations.

Regardless of what independent source you look at, there is a common theme: whatever is said will not be confirmed, corrected, or denied by the CIA. Today, all of these independent sources can be accessed via the internet, a platform for both fact and fiction—and little credibility checking (or separating the wheat from the chaff). Because of this, the CIA through their official website can give the needed insight into CIA culture. This research will attempt to bridge the gap between what is available to potential employees and what can be available through testimonies of former CIA officers. What I hope to achieve is to show that through the use of the web, the CIA can provide potential employees with a more in-depth look inside CIA culture by providing the testimonies of former CIA officers through its website without endangering the CIA or national security. By doing so, potential employees will be able to better understand the personal dimensions of working at the CIA prior to applying. This may be able to save both the potential employee and the CIA time and money.

Justification for the Study

Organizational Socialization: The First Step

In Dr. Rob Johnston's *Analytic Culture in the US Intelligence Community: An Ethnographic Study*'s chapter eight, co-written by Stephen H. Konya, they stated:

“Every organization has a unique culture that is defined partly by its individual members and partly by its structure, history, and policies. For that culture to endure, it must be transmitted from current members to new members. This process, known as organizational socialization, is especially important in organizations with strong, insular cultures, as those with weak cultures have less to transmit and will tend to experience culture changes as members come and go.”¹

¹ Johnston, Rob and Stephen H. Konya, *Organizational Culture: Anticipatory Socialization and Intelligence Analysts*, in *Analytic Culture in the US Intelligence Community: An Ethnographic Study* (Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Intelligence, 2005), 97, available at:

Simply put, organizational socialization is the process by which a potential employee transitions from a non-member to a member of an organization. In order to explain the process, Johnston and Konya present Daniel Feldman's three stages of organizational socialization: "getting in (or anticipatory socialization), breaking in (or accommodation), and settling in (often referred to as role management)."² My research focused entirely on the first stage—anticipatory socialization or the getting-in stage. "During the getting-in stage, potential employees try to acquire information about an organization from available sources, such as Web sites, professional journals, and corporate annual reports."³ The focus of this paper will be a comparative study of what information the CIA provides to potential employees versus the information I gathered from former members of the CIA through interviews.

Looking specifically at web-based resources, if you were to google "CIA" the first website you would see is the CIA's official website. Following the official website is the CIA's *Wikipedia* page, then the CIA's official *Twitter* page, the CIA's *Wikileaks* page, and six magazine and/or newspaper pages with articles pertaining to topics including Iran, drone strikes, and enhanced interrogation. On the first page of *Google* only two of the ten websites provided are official CIA sites. Out of these two websites, only one is meant to aid potential employees. Throughout the getting-in stage potential employees will also begin to develop expectations for working at the CIA. It is important for these individuals to have a realistic understanding of what a career at the CIA entails in order to remain satisfied with their job.

"What a person has heard about working for a particular organization, such as an intelligence agency, provides an idea of what to expect if hired. Conversely, individuals who do not believe they would fit in may decide not to apply."⁴

CIA Recruitment Sources versus Independent Sources

"Company-dependent sources such as advertising are part of the organization's recruitment activities and can be directly controlled to communicate a positive message to potential applicants. Conversely, company-independent sources such as word-of-mouth can be influenced only indirectly through other recruitment activities and can contain positive as well as negative information."⁵

Seeing as there is no way to control what most independent sources state about the CIA and its members, the CIA should provide an almost equal amount of information pertaining to both the CIA as an agency and the CIA as a group of people. This would combat the information provided by independent sources. Upon review of the CIA's official website I found that the amount of information pertaining to the CIA as an

https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/books-and-monographs/analytic-culture-in-the-u-s-intelligence-community/analytic_culture_report.pdf.

² Ibid, 98.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid, 99.

⁵ Greet Van Hoye and Filip Lievens, "Investigating Web-Based Recruitment Sources: Employee Testimonials Vs Word-of-Mouse," *International Journal of Selection and Assessment* 4:15 (December 2003): 373.

agency was sufficient; the website covered everything from purpose and mission to leadership and history. Conversely, the CIA website did not present enough information about the individuals who make up the agency, a topic that will be more thoroughly addressed in the sampling and methods portion of this paper.

Because the number of former CIA officers is fewer than other professions—and these individuals have the choice to disclose whether or not they were previously employed by the CIA—it is difficult for potential employees to have a sit-down conversation in order to discuss life at the CIA. Potential employees who are not able to speak with a former CIA officer will have to rely on either independent sources for first-hand accounts or the CIA’s website. The CIA website can more sufficiently utilize the section titled “Employee Profiles” to present potential employees with a variety of in-depth testimonies provided by former CIA officers. “Potential applicants are more attracted when testimonials provided information about individual employees than about the organization.”⁶ Therefore,

“Using employee testimonials in recruitment advertising might help to address the problem by combining the advantages of company-dependent recruitment sources that can be directly controlled to promote a favorable image, with the characteristics of word-of-mouth as an interpersonal information source. In fact, employee testimonials can be seen as company-controlled imitations of word-of-mouth.”⁷

Sampling and Methods

CIA.gov

“The CIA is separated into four basic components: the National Clandestine Service, the Directorate of Intelligence, the Directorate of Science & Technology, and the Directorate of Support. They carry out ‘the intelligence cycle,’ the process of collecting, analyzing, and disseminating intelligence information to top US government officials.”⁸

Initially, I examined the CIA’s official website to determine what information was provided to aid potential employees in determining if the CIA is the right career path for them, as well as which directorate they are better suited for. The “Careers and Internships” portion contains ten subsections:

- Career Opportunities
- Student Opportunities
- Application Process
- Life at CIA

⁶ Ibid, 372.

⁷ Ibid, 373-374.

⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, “Today’s CIA,” *CIA.gov*, available at: <https://www.cia.gov/about-cia/todays-cia>.

- Benefits
- Diversity
- Military Transition
- Tools and Challenges
- FAQs
- Video Center

After review of each subsection it was clear that the website provides an assortment of informative data that could be beneficial to potential employees. The “Careers and Internships” section of the website allows insight into the many career paths within the four directorates that make up the CIA. Each job is provided a detailed description including: what the job is, location, salary, minimum requirements and additional application requirements. The website also provides additional information that could benefit more specific individuals like former/current military members looking to transition to the CIA as well as interested students. My focus within the “Careers and Internships” section was “Life at CIA,” which deals more with the personal dimensions of life as a CIA officer and less about the more technical information such as job descriptions.

Life at CIA

“The CIA offers exciting career opportunities and a dynamic environment. We’re on the forefront of world-altering events—as they happen. So working here isn’t just a job, it’s a mindset and a lifestyle.

You’ll find a supportive environment to help you grow and excel both professionally and personally. And a culture that expects you to do your personal best every day. Explore our world and imagine yourself working for the nation, in the center of intelligence.”⁹

The subsections under “Life at CIA” include:

- Top 10 Reasons for Working at the CIA
- Why Choose the CIA?
- Our Culture
- Benefits
- Employee Profiles
- Discover The Washington, D.C. Area

These subsections all portrayed a positive outlook on employment at the CIA, as expected, being that the website is a recruitment tool. But can this be a disservice to the CIA? I believe so—in a sense. When deciding whether or not to apply for a job at the CIA, potential applicants more than likely know the benefits of working at the CIA. The answers given to me by the individuals I interviewed were very similar to those presented by the website. But “positive information has relatively little impact on job

⁹ Ibid.

seekers' attraction immediately after exposure, suggesting it is less relevant to them at this stage of the recruitment and job search process."¹⁰ In contrast, "negative information has a much larger impact than does positive information on job seekers' organizational attraction immediately after exposure to the information."¹¹ And "job seekers who were exposed to negative information were much less attracted to the organization compared to participants who were only exposed to neutral information, suggesting it was particularly salient to job seekers."¹² On the CIA website, one employee recalled:

"I came across the CIA at a career fair. I thought I would give it a shot for a year, but as soon as I got there, I loved it. I have a double major in nuclear engineering and history, and I write analytic papers on nuclear issues, so my career is a great fit. I get to look into some incredible issues and give briefings to senior policymakers. It's very exciting to see our Government up close, influence policy and see decisions get made."¹³

Retention in the Agency

Because the CIA website provides solely a positive description of life at the CIA and the fact that negative information is more heavily weighed compared to either positive or neutral information by potential employees, I searched for information that showed the more "negative" aspects of CIA employment. In a 2010 report by the CIA's Office of Inspector General, I found data pertaining to retention and turnover at the CIA. The top ten reasons for leaving the CIA in 2009 were:¹⁴

1. Lack of advancement opportunities.
2. Poor management at office or NCS-division level.
3. Lack of communication about things that affect my work.
4. Desire to do something different.
5. Lack of appropriate recognition for my contributions.
6. Poor management at first-line supervisor level.
7. Lack of management support for prudent risk taking.
8. Make a better use of my skills and knowledge.
9. Poor management at directorate level.
10. Lack of promotions.

Other reasons among resignees cited as cause of leaving the CIA were:

¹⁰ Adam M. Kanar, Christopher J. Collins and Bradford S. Bell, "A Comparison of the Effects of Positive and Negative Information on Job Seekers' Organizational Attraction and Attribute Recall," *Human Performance* 3:23 (2010), 193-212.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 20.

¹² *Ibid*, 20.

¹³ Central Intelligence Agency, "Frederick: Analyst", *CIA.gov*, available at:

<https://www.cia.gov/careers/life-at-cia/employee-profiles/employee-profile-transcripts/frederick-analyst.html>.

¹⁴ Central Intelligence Agency's Office of Inspector General, *Report of Follow-up Inspection: Retention in the Agency*, (Washington D.C., CIA [Office of Inspector General], 2010), 13, available at: <s3.documentcloud.org/documents/741885/cia-employee-retention-report.pdf>.

- Opportunity issues, including lack of interesting and/or challenging assignments (forty-five percent of resignees compared with twenty-eight percent of retirees) and a lack of opportunities for field assignments (forty-one percent of resignees compared with twenty percent of retirees).¹⁵
- Expectation issues, including that the work was not what they expected when they joined CIA (forty-five percent of resignees compared with eleven percent of retirees), a poor onboarding experience (thirty-four percent of resignees compared with nine percent of retirees), or that they never intended to stay with CIA for a full career (eighteen percent of resignees compared with four percent of retirees).¹⁶
- Although not among the top ten reasons for leaving or considering leaving the Agency, discrimination on the basis of race/ethnicity and racial harassment were significantly more likely to be cited by Black, Asian, and Hispanic employees as reasons than by Whites.¹⁷
- Although not among the top ten reasons for leaving or considering leaving the Agency, unfair performance appraisals and unfair assignments processes were cited more frequently by Asian, Hispanic, and Black employees than by Whites.¹⁸

By providing this information or more recent reports to potential employees, they can better weigh the negative and positive aspects of working at the CIA—in some cases possibly causing individuals to lose interest and look elsewhere. But providing this information, I believe, can make the CIA, which has no shortage of applicants, appear more open and committed to good job fit.

Finding the Middle Ground

Another option which would be a more likely choice is to provide the general public and potential employees with unscripted approved testimonies of former CIA officers through their website within the “Employee Profiles” subsection. I believe that by combining CIA-dependent recruitment sources (*CIA.gov*) and word-of-mouth testimonials (former CIA officers), a more balanced and complete picture is possible. The next step in this paper is to show that former CIA officers can provide a detailed narrative of life at the CIA without divulging any sensitive information.

¹⁵ Ibid, 19.

¹⁶ Ibid, 19.

¹⁷ Ibid, 23.

¹⁸ Ibid, 23.

Developing a Set of Questions

In order to get a more broad understanding of life at the CIA, I developed a set of open-ended questions meant to induce a narrative. These questions included:

1. Background: Academic?
2. Background: CIA career?
3. Why did they join the CIA?
4. What difficulties they encountered while employed at the CIA?
5. What surprised them about working at the CIA?
6. If it was difficult to balance the CIA with their regular life?
7. What did they find most rewarding about working at the CIA?
8. What is life like after the CIA?
9. What advice do they have for potential employees?
10. What areas of interest should potential employees focus on in regards to national security?

After gaining approval from the University of Texas at El Paso's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and completing the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Program's Social and Behavioral Researchers course I set out to recruit potential interviewees. I made the choice to focus on two positions in particular.

- Directorate of Intelligence (now Directorate of Analysis) - Intelligence Officer or Analysts
- Directorate of Operations (formerly the National Clandestine Services) - Operations Officers

I chose these positions for the following reasons: A) They are the more commonly known and desired positions at the CIA. B) They entail the two core functions of the CIA—analysis and operations. C) A view that they are the more commonly misinterpreted positions within the CIA.

“Intelligence is providing analyzed information to the right customer at the right time. Covert action is actually doing something. It's (covert action) got something in it, it's not providing information—it's implementing policy. Covert action is a policy tool like diplomacy or military action, it's not intelligence. Only if you look at intelligence as an institutional definition rather than a functional definition can you include covert action. There are things you do when implementing policy that you don't do when you're collecting information.”¹⁹

Recruitment

Through the use of an advertisement placed in the Association of Former Intelligence Officers weekly newsletter, and recommended individuals from a professor, I was able

¹⁹ Interview with former CIA officer, 2015.

to find seven individuals willing to take part in an interview. They were informed that they would remain anonymous, and that per IRB requirement any documentation I collected would be destroyed subsequent to the study. Other precautionary measures were taken to assure that the identities of these individuals remained undisclosed. These individuals included:

From the Directorate of Analysis (DA):

- Directorate of Analysis Interviewee 1 (DAI1): Four years at the CIA
- (DAI2): Thirty-three years at the CIA
- (DAI3): Ten years at the CIA

From the Directorate of Operations (DO):

- Directorate of Operations Interviewee 1 (DOI1): Eight years at the CIA
- (DOI2): Thirty-five years at the CIA
- (DOI3): Thirty years at the CIA

Served in both Directorates:

- Analysis and Operations Interviewee 1 (AOI1): Thirty years total at the CIA

Interviews

Because the individuals I interviewed lived throughout the United States, I conducted each interview either by phone or email. Only one individual was entirely interviewed via email. All other interviewees were interviewed over the phone with follow-ups also conducted over the phone or by email. Each interview ran for approximately an hour (not including follow-ups), in which individuals answered my initial line of questioning and provided any additional information that was brought up during our conversations. The interviewees reserved the right to not answer any questions they did not feel comfortable discussing. They were also made aware they were being recorded for the purposes of reference and recall only, under the supervision of a faculty advisor.

Findings

Q1: Academic Background?

All interviewees possessed a bachelor's degree and some possessed master's degrees and PhD's. These degrees included: Political Science, Foreign Affairs, Foreign Service (International Economics), Economics, Engineering, History, Modern European History (Central Europe), and Philosophy.

Q2: CIA Background?

Within the DA (Analysis): the Office of Near East, South Asia and Africa, Soviet Military and Defense Economic Issues, Europe including Bosnia, Directorate of Central Intelligence Analytic Support Team, Crime and Narcotics, Transitional Issues, Science

and Technology: Weapons Issues, Terrorism, African Issues, and Psychiatric Profiling (of world leaders).

Within the DO (Covert Action and Human Intelligence (HUMINT)): Europe Division, Latin America Division, Soviet Division, East Asia Division, Terrorism, Narcotics, Trafficking, Non-Proliferation - Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), Hostile Intelligence Services (foreign), and Rogue Nations.

Q3: Why did you join the CIA?

Common themes for reason(s) for joining the CIA were:

- Support the US in a meaningful way.
- Protect and serve the US.
- Long line of former government/military family members.
- The mystique of the CIA.
- Travel and living overseas opportunities.
- Interested in international affairs.
- The high level of expertise and available information within the CIA.

Some longer explanations included:

“In the early 1990s, I had dropped out of college and wasn’t sure what to do. I thought about a variety of ‘protect and serve’ jobs. I took a couple of criminal justice courses at the local community college, and talked to an Army recruiter. But those jobs weren’t quite right. And then I read the Tom Clancy books and decided that what Jack Ryan did sounded like it would be fun to do. He was an analyst, but was involved in all these adventures. After transferring to a four year university, I took as many courses as possible on issues like international relations, international ethics, international economics, American foreign policy, national security, and so on. There was a course taught on intelligence there at the time, so I took that too. And then I wrote my senior thesis on the cause of intelligence failure, and my honors thesis on the post-Cold War roles and missions of the intelligence community. I ended up graduating magna cum laude, with honors in political science, elected to Phi Beta Kappa, etc. Basically, college worked out well for me when the motivation was there to put in the effort. When my university’s career services center organized the opportunity to speak with a CIA recruiter, I put in an application and that’s how it all started. Protect and serve, but in a thinking way.”²⁰

“No career planning, it was a generational thing. Married into the CIA. Worked in the Foreign Services as a staff officer, met my spouse while working who worked for the CIA. Died suddenly three years after marriage and the CIA offered me a job. The CIA is very good at taking care of its family. My spouse worked in

²⁰ Interview with former CIA officer, 2015.

operations and since they were the ones to offer me a job, that's how I began my career in operations."²¹

Q4: What, if any, difficulties are encountered while employed at the CIA?

"Having diarrhea in a foreign country that you don't know the language...got to a pharmacy and try to get medicine for it. Simple circumstances turned very difficult. It's part of the job."²²

All but one individual stated that they did not encounter any difficulties while employed at the CIA. Interviewee DOI2 stated that "at times it felt like management was oblivious, and policymakers need to be better versed in intelligence and how to use it, but those things are manageable."²³

Q5: Was it difficult to balance life at the CIA with life outside of the CIA?

All interviewees felt that balancing the CIA with their personal lives was as complicated as any other job, just in a different sense.

"It's useful early on to tell your family roughly what you are doing, so they understand that at times you can't make it home for dinner, or that you have to travel for a 'while' and won't be there. A strong family relationship mitigates problems that may arise, and every job can cause issues, I'm not persuaded that because one has a challenging job at the agency—that it is the sole cause for your divorce, you need good communication between you. As far as children, there is a time for your child to hear what you do, till then they do not care what you do for a living. Your family will get used to hearing 'I can't talk about I'."²⁴

"I had a cover story, that's the difference between the DA and the DO—being overt and covert. The agency guides you on who to tell the truth, I did not tell my family (parents and sibling) the truth, they were given the cover story. My spouse worked for the government as well so I never found it difficult to speak with h**. My spouse understood that there were some things I couldn't talk about. When leaving the agency I told my family the truth. They never suspected that I worked for the CIA, but it was easier to hide it from them because they lived in other areas of the country, so it was easier to maintain cover. You have to always remember you are living your cover. You also have to always be aware of your surroundings. These things are learned, but difficult at times."²⁵

Q6: What surprised you about working at the CIA?

Common themes interviewees presented were:

²¹ Interview with former CIA officer, 2015.

²² Interview with former CIA officer, 2015.

²³ Interview with former CIA officer, 2015.

²⁴ Interview with former CIA officer, 2015.

²⁵ Interview with former CIA officer, 2015.

- How different the CIA was from how the public view it.
- There is no James Bond stuff.
- Cultural mismatch will occur.
- The level of sophistication is impressive.
- The amount of expertise within the CIA is impressive.
- CIA headquarters doesn't feel like a government agency, it has a special feel to it.
- You can always feel the energy of the people there which is fueled by their purpose.
- There is a real sense of family with the people you work with, everyone looks out for everyone.
- The Esprit de Corps is real at the CIA.

Q7: What did you find most rewarding about working at the CIA?

“While recruiting from different colleges I would ask you, ‘If you were to write your memoirs, would people be interested in reading them?’ Working at the CIA the answer is yes they would, and your record of accomplishments will outlive you.”²⁶
Other themes included:

- Getting critical intelligence to policymakers.
- Keeping fellow CIA members safe.
- The sense that what you are doing was contributing to the security of the country.
- Being part of the intelligence process and affecting policy in a positive sense.
- Preventing terrorist attacks.
- Disrupting drug trafficking organizations operations.
- In a sense making history.

“I thought I was making a difference, you know? Avoiding a nuclear holocaust...that's pretty important.”²⁷

Q8: What is life like after the CIA?

“I know people who left the CIA and pursued very different career paths. Because so many members are PhDs and a lot of what we do is closely related to research done in academia people tend to transition to teaching at universities.”²⁸

Q9: What advice do you have for individuals interested in pursuing a career at the CIA?

²⁶ Interview with former CIA officer, 2015.

²⁷ Interview with former CIA officer, 2015.

²⁸ Interview with former CIA officer, 2015.

“First think carefully about what you like to do and are good at. Do something related to that. If that means be an intelligence officer, then do that. But find out what the job entails first. More important than the job title is to enjoy what you do...that is most important. But if you enjoy the requirements of the intelligence analyst—research, reading, thinking, writing and speaking—then expose yourself to a variety of ways of doing each of these. Get as much breadth and depth as possible, because after you start working full-time you won’t have time to learn new and different ways to do the job.”²⁹

“The CIA looks for a strong technical background—hard science (chemistry, mathematical statistics, physics, engineering)...or very strong area studies (Masters or PhDs), and language capability. People who get a degree in intelligence—that isn’t the best preparation for work in intelligence. Get your substantive foundation first, you need to be really expert in either a functional area like economics or statistics or cyber or a geographic area. You want to have that in place before you walk in the door.”³⁰

“It’s easier to go in single, bypass the decision on who to tell. You have to be career oriented. If you want to make a change (leave the CIA), the skill set isn’t directly relevant to a lot of civilian careers, and you may have restrictions on what you can say about you did, that lack of information makes it harder to show that you are a qualified individual.”³¹

“Part of the job is a sense of adventure, you cannot live in fear. Experience the cultures. You’ll never be a native, nor does the CIA want you, but you need to understand the cultures. Go into it as a career, this is not a job hop. In operations it takes about ten years before you get the real sense of what’s going on. Within operations it’s important to understand the business. Within the CIA there are other opportunities, even if you don’t want to continue doing the same job, the CIA has many other jobs to choose from. And speak truth to power—it doesn’t matter if the president is republican or a democrat; politics should not determine your effectiveness within the agency.”³²

“Figure out what you would like to do first; don’t come up with an image of what a CIA person does. The agency needs every kind of person, go be you first. If you intend to be James Bond—know that he wouldn’t last five minutes at the CIA, he’s too flashy. Things are done in teams, you can’t care about who will get credit.”³³

²⁹ Interview with former CIA officer, 2015.

³⁰ Interview with former CIA officer, 2015.

³¹ Interview with former CIA officer, 2015.

³² Interview with former CIA officer, 2015.

³³ Interview with former CIA officer, 2015.

Q10: What areas of interest should potential employees focus on?

This list includes possible areas of interest that the interviewees felt would be of concern to the US and national security. By providing this information, potential employees can choose an area of interest to focus on. It was also suggested that potential employees review the Worldwide Threat Assessment.

- Cyber security
- Terrorism
- WMD proliferation
- Iran
- North Korea
- Extremist groups (Amorphous groups and religiously motivated violence).
- Russia
- China
- South Asia
- India
- Pakistan
- Counter-narcotics
- Latin America (Mexico, Brazil, Columbia)
- The Balkans
- Power concerns throughout the world.
- Fragility of economic systems and how they interrelate across the world.
- The clash for various resources (water, land).

Limitations*Quantity not Quality*

Because of the time permitted per IRB requirements I was only able to recruit seven individuals –a larger sample would have been preferable. Part of the issue with recruitment was finding potential candidates. In comparison to researching a career as an attorney, one cannot simply look in a phonebook for former CIA officers. As a personal choice, I felt the need to leave out certain minor details about the individuals because I felt they could possibly be used as identifiers. If the CIA were to add former member testimonies to their website, it may be able to provide these details. I would have been interested in hearing what potential employees would like to know about life at the CIA. Future research could also include the testimonies of spouses or children of former CIA officers in order to get both perspectives of how life is affected during and after the spouse or parents employment at the CIA. Developing testimonies for other members within the other two directorates at the CIA would also be useful to potential applicants. Finally, and also dealing with potential applicants, is feedback from them as to whether or not the information was useful and if it in any way (positively or negatively) affected their decision to apply.

Conclusion

“Most of the general public don’t have an understanding of what the intelligence community (IC) is in general. Matter of civics, it’s good for Americans to have a better understanding of the CIA and its role in the IC, to gain a more objective understanding without being privy to secret information. Americans must trust their government. Secrecy is needed to function in the global environment to protect the US...Distrust comes from a lack of information. The only things you hear about are the failures or shortcomings of the agency. You never hear the good stories or successes. The agency does make mistakes, officers can break the law or there can be a scandal, but the agency is made of people who make mistakes.”³⁴

In conclusion, it is pertinent for potential employees to be provided as much information as possible prior to applying. By providing unbiased, unscripted testimonies to potential employees via the CIA website, potential employees will have a better understanding of who works at the CIA, and what CIA life is like. By doing so both the employer and employee can avoid cultural mismatch, aiding job fit and employee retention. Also I have shown that it is possible to allow an in-depth look at what working at the CIA is like without divulging any sensitive information that could be damaging to the CIA or national security.

³⁴ Interview with former CIA officer, 2015.