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AN ANALYSIS OF THE NAVY ENLISTED PERFORMANCE EVALUATION SYSTEM

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE NAVY ENLISTED
PERFORMANCE EVALUATION SYSTEM

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October 1968

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SUMMARY

A. Problem

The Report of Enlisted Performance Evaluation (NAVPERS 792) has been the subject of frequent criticism. Due to restriction in marks assigned on the NAVPERS 792, the performance factor is thought to be ineffectively measured for enlisted advancement actions and other purposes.

B. Background and Requirements

The NAVPERS 792 provides for the evaluation of enlisted men on five traits, using a 10-point scale. Minimum marks on specific traits and on the overall average of all marks have been established for certain administrative actions. The most recent studies of the effectiveness of this rating form were conducted almost a decade ago. The present research was undertaken to update these earlier studies and to assess the current effectiveness of the NAVPERS 792 as an instrument for evaluating enlisted performance.

C. Approach

Three areas of performance evaluation were investigated: first, the administrative uses and needs for performance information were determined through interviews at the Bureau of Naval Personnel; second, the method of teaching evaluation techniques was investigated at the Instructor's Training School; and third, a Navy-wide sample of NAVPERS 792s was collected and the marks and comments thereon were statistically analyzed.

D. Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

1. Acceptable distributions of NAVPERS 792 marks should be established and enforced. (Pages 7, 10, 11, and 13)

2. A separate rating form should be developed for senior petty officers. (Pages 8, 11, and 14)

3. More adequate indoctrination of petty and commissioned officers concerning the NAVPERS 792 and its use is needed. (Pages 10 and 12)

4. The NAVPERS 792 should be used as a counseling instrument. (Pages 5 and 12)

5. Certain changes in content and format should be made on the NAVPERS 792. (Pages 5 and 11)

6. The NAVPERS 792 should be redesigned for use with automated data processing equipment. (Page 25)

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE NAVY ENLISTED PERFORMANCE EVALUATION SYSTEM

A. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Periodic evaluation of enlisted performance is basic to many Navy personnel actions, including, most importantly, advancement. The rating form in current use (copy in the Appendix) is the Report of Enlisted Performance Evaluation (NAVPERS 792), which replaced the Quarterly Marks Report in 1956. This performance evaluation is completed semiannually for enlisted Pay Grades E-1 through E-6 and annually for Pay Grades E-7 through E-9. Men are evaluated, using a 10-point scale, on five separate traits: professional performance, military behavior, leadership, military appearance, and adaptability. These trait marks are averaged for an overall numeric rating. Minimum marks for this average and for the specific traits have been established for certain administrative actions. The form also includes sections for a description of duties and accomplishments and for comments concerning the individual's command of the English language and quality of performance being rated.

The NAVPERS 792 suffers from the usual weaknesses and subsequent criticism of most rating scales, both in the military and in industry. Since human judgments are involved, objectivity and semantic agreement are always suspect. Yet, the importance of marks received on the NAVPERS 792 to the enlisted man's naval career demands that the form be as valid as possible and that it be filled out correctly.

The administrative uses of enlisted performance evaluations were surveyed by Enneis in 1960 and the trait mark distributions were monitored in 1957 (BUPERS-152 Memo 60-1) with generally favorable conclusions. However, when the findings of the Secretary of the Navy's Task Force on Personnel Retention were published in 1966, it was recommended that the NAVPERS 792 be reviewed again. It was believed that the distributions of marks assigned to the traits have become so restricted that the evaluations fail in their purpose of distinguishing among different levels of effective performance. The present report is one outgrowth of the Task Force's recommendations and will attempt to answer the following questions:

a. Does the NAVPERS 792 supply the needed information in a useful form for making the administrative decisions outlined in the Bureau of Naval Personnel (BUPERS) Manual?

b. Are the marks on the NAVPERS 792 representative of the described behavior?

c. Are there biases in assigning marks associated with pay grade, rating, or branch of the Navy?

Thus, this research is concerned with describing the present status of the enlisted evaluation system. Although the need for change may become apparent, no attempt will be made here to develop a new rating form. A separate, but related, project is underway at the Naval Personnel Research Activity, San Diego to develop an improved form.

B. PROCEDURE

The BUPERS Manual (C-7821) states:

"The Enlisted Performance Evaluation System is used:

- a. To determine eligibility of an individual for reenlistment, for honorable discharge, and for award of Good Conduct Medals.
- b. To permit the commanding officer to influence positively the advancement opportunities of outstanding individuals.
- c. By various selection boards which review enlisted service records in order to select personnel for advancement, appointment to commissioned status, assignment to special duties, and for special educational programs."

The research designed to investigate this system followed a three-pronged approach: first, determining the administrative needs and uses of the evaluation form; second, discovering the means used to inform petty officers of the methods and goals of enlisted evaluation; and third, analyzing the adequacy of the NAVPERS 792.

1. Sources of Data

a. Interviews were conducted with officers from each of the following areas in the Bureau of Naval Personnel:

Performance Evaluation Board
Advancement-in-Rating Control
E-8 and E-9 Selection Board
Instructor/Recruiter Assignment
Washington Detailing
MAAGS, Missions, Joint and Combined Staffs Detailing

The officers were asked to explain their particular need for a measure of enlisted performance, what sections of the NAVPERS 792 best suited this need, and how the form could be made a more effective instrument for their purposes.

b. Several visits were made to the Instructor's Training School, Naval Training Center, San Diego. A conference was held with members of the teaching staff to discover the orientation toward evaluation being taught in the school, the problems encountered, and any changes in the NAVPERS 792 Form or in the enlisted performance evaluation system they would recommend. Later, several sessions of the three-hour lecture devoted to this topic were audited to observe the interaction of the instructors and students and any changes in attitude that might be displayed.

c. During the first five months of 1967, all naval commands were instructed to forward to the Naval Personnel Research Activity, San Diego duplicate copies of the regular performance evaluations of enlisted men whose service numbers ended in "7," yielding a 10 per cent sample. Since such sampling of the higher pay grades would have resulted in too few men for the planned analyses, the evaluations of E-8s and E-9s whose service numbers ended in 1, 3, 5, or 9 were also requested. A short form identifying the command and indicating its size and deployment accompanied the NAVPERS 792s. E-1s do not usually receive marks on the NAVPERS 792 since the vast majority of men at this pay grade are recruits who are advanced to E-2 before the minimum 90-day marking period has elapsed. Therefore, evaluations received for E-1s were not included in the sample.

2. Analysis

A narrative report of pertinent information gathered in phases a. and b. above will be presented in the Results section. The procedures described below apply only to the data collected from the completed NAVPERS 792s forwarded to the Naval Personnel Research Activity, San Diego.

Distributions of all numerical marks assigned on the NAVPERS 792s were determined for the total sample, for each pay grade, and for selected ratings. The marking patterns on the five evaluated traits were also examined. Comparisons were made between these results and the distributions obtained in 1957 (BUPERS-152 Memo 60-1).

For each pay grade, one hundred NAVPERS 792s containing comments were randomly selected for analysis from among those received. The numerical sections on these forms were concealed and two Chief Petty Officer Personnelmen (one active, one inactive reserve) independently appraised the written sections and recorded their evaluations. Product-moment correlations between official marks and those assigned by each of the two chiefs were computed. The purpose of this analysis was to determine the consistency between the quantitative and qualitative sections of the NAVPERS 792.

The interrelationship of the individual trait marks and their relative contributions to the performance average were investigated through product-moment and multiple-correlational analyses. Comparisons between the marking patterns of 1957 and 1967 were also made.

C. RESULTS

1. Administrative Uses of the NAVPERS 792

a. Reenlistment and Honorable Discharge

The BUPERS Manual states:

"The following minimum standards must be met for Honorable Discharge and Reenlistment:

DISCHARGES

First Discharge: Final average of 2.7 and an average of not less than 3.0 in military behavior plus no General Courts Martial or more than 1 Special Courts Martial. Provided an average of 3.0 in military behavior is maintained for the last twenty-four months of active duty, disregard provision relative to courts-martial convictions.

Second and Subsequent Discharges: Final average of 2.7 and an average of not less than 3.0 in military behavior plus no General Courts Martial or more than 1 Special Courts Martial.

REENLISTMENTS

First Reenlistment: Final average of 2.7 and a minimum average of 3.0 in military behavior for the last twelve months of active duty.

Second and Subsequent Reenlistments: Honorable Discharge."

A man who fails to meet the above stated minimum requirements for honorable discharge or reenlistment is separated from the service with a general discharge unless his commanding officer recommends otherwise. The Performance Evaluation Board reviews all disagreements concerning type of discharge or eligibility for reenlistment. Disagreements may arise when a man appeals "unfair" marks, when a commanding officer wishes to present extenuating circumstances to overrule the minimum marks requirement, or when a man's marks are adequate but reenlistment or honorable discharge has not been recommended. The board also routinely reviews all the NAVPERS 792s in the service record of a man recommended for temporary disability retirement to determine the highest pay grade satisfactorily served.

The Performance Evaluation Board uses the marks on the behavior traits almost exclusively in preference to the comments because of

perceived inconsistencies between the two. If additional information should be needed, the board may obtain it directly from the man's command.

The first five sections of the NAVPERS 792 are adequate for the needs of this board and the only recommended improvement in the form would be to better define the block headings. With regard to the evaluation system, it was felt that a change is needed. That is, counseling should be required whenever the NAVPERS 792 is completed so that the men become aware of their deficiencies and have the opportunity to improve.

b. Good Conduct Medal

The Good Conduct Medal or certificate is awarded to all men who have had no mark below 3.0 in any trait within a given four-year period and no sickness misconduct,¹ convictions by court-martial, or confinement as a result of conviction by court-martial. However, "When the foregoing requirements have been met, but it is evident that the individual is not deserving of this award due to a repeated record of letters of valid indebtedness, or other acts which are not in keeping with the high moral standards required of all Navy personnel, the commanding officer will make appropriate recommendation to the Chief of Naval Personnel stating the reasons." (SECNAVINST P1650.1C)

The outlined conditions for awarding the Good Conduct Medal appear to meet with little controversy. Only one criticism was expressed concerning the use of the trait mark as a criterion for the medal. It was felt that in some cases 3.0 marks are assigned to meet the requirement rather than the award being based upon satisfactory behavior.

c. Advancement in Rate or Rating

"Recommendation for advancement in rate or rating is a command prerogative. No minimum qualifying marks for eligibility have been established." (BUPERS Manual C-7821)²

(1) Advancement to Pay Grade E-2. Since the NAVPERS 792 is not filled out for recruits, it rarely affects advancement to E-2.

¹"Sickness misconduct is a period in excess of twenty-four consecutive hours of absence from regular duty . . . which is determined to be due to intemperate use of drugs or alcoholic liquor, or to disease or injury resulting from the member's own misconduct." BUPERS Manual (C-10304A)

²In practice, if the performance average is below 2.5, a notice is sent to the command asking for a review of the service record to determine if the candidate should be recommended for advancement or if this mark is a typographical error.

(2) Advancement to Pay Grade E-3. This promotion is effected locally as no numerical limitations are set on general apprenticeships. Men who met the minimum time-in-service requirement, pass the locally graded examination (optional), and are not involved in circumstances which make them ineligible are advanced. Thus, the only influence of the NAVPERS 792 at this level would be in cases of unsatisfactory behavior.

(3) Advancement to Pay Grades E-4 Through E-7)

In all petty officer grades advancement is competitive and is based on knowledge, performance, and seniority. When a man becomes eligible for advancement he takes a Navy-wide examination which is developed and scored at the Naval Examination Center at Great Lakes, Illinois. If he passes the test, his final multiple score, described below, is used to determine his position in the rank ordering of all men of the same pay grade and rating who are currently being considered for advancement. Advancements to fill vacancies in the total Navy allowance are based on this final multiple score.

Table 1 presents the factors and weights that make up the final multiple. The value of the performance factor is determined by the following formula: $30 \left(\frac{\text{Sum of trait marks}}{\text{Number of traits marked}} \right) - 70.$

(4) Advancement to Pay Grades E-8 and E-9. While Chief Petty Officers have eligibility requirements similar to the lower pay grades, their promotion is not primarily based on the final multiple. E-8s and E-9s are chosen by a selection board which convenes annually at the Bureau of Naval Personnel. This board is composed of 24 commissioned officers who are divided into 12 panels specializing in specific ratings. These two-man panels review the records of their assigned candidates and make recommendations to the remainder of the board, briefing them on the criteria used. Usually formal selection follows the recommendations. In cases of disagreement, the man's whole record is reviewed.

The Navy's advancement system was designed to give considerable weight to the performance factor reflected in the NAVPERS 792 average. One of the criticisms made by the Secretary of the Navy's Retention Task Force was that, because too many high marks are being assigned, this factor counts only 14 per cent toward the final multiple rather than the intended 27 per cent (Parker, 1966). This figure is misleading, however, in that the weights in the final multiple vary systematically with pay grade. Table 2, based on a statistical analysis of earlier data, illustrates this trend and also reveals that the NAVPERS 792 marks have a far greater effect on the careers of E-4s than on E-7s.

The opinion expressed in Advancement in Rating Control of the Bureau of Naval Personnel was that the current advancement system and

TABLE 1

Factors and Maximum Points in the Final Multiple
Score for Advancement in Rating

Factor	Maximum Points	Percentage of Total ^a
Examination Score	80	43.3
Performance Evaluations	50	27.0
Length of Service	20	10.8
Service in Pay Grade	20	10.8
Good Conduct Medals ^b	10	5.4
Other Awards ^b	<u>5</u>	<u>2.7</u>
Final Multiple Score	185	100.0

Note.--

^aThese are the intended contributions of each factor to the advancement multiple and, as such, should be distinguished from the actual weights determined through statistical analysis of the scores of men qualified for advancement at a specific time.

^bPrior to August 1967 these two categories were combined under Medals and Awards with a maximum credit of 15 points.

NAVPERS 792 Form are satisfactory. It was felt that the primary problem with enlisted performance evaluation is lack of effective control. That is, the trait marks need to be monitored with authority to ensure conformity with desired standards. This recommendation was also proposed by the Ad Hoc Committee for Review of the Enlisted Advancement System (1965) and the Secretary of the Navy's Retention Task Force (1966).

It was suggested that the responsibility for insuring that the marks from each command show a reasonable spread be placed with the area or type commander. The area commander would know his exceptional ships and could permit some skewing from a normal distribution. Shore installations would be more difficult to monitor and a workable system would have to make allowances for the assignment of only outstanding men to certain billets.

TABLE 2

Percentage of Relative Influence (Weight) Exerted by
Each Factor in Computation of Advancement Multiple
(By Pay Grade for all Ratings, 1959 Study)

Factors	E4	E5	E6	E7
	%	%	%	%
Examination	39	33	24	32
Performance Marks	47	35	28	20
Total Service	5	14	18	14
Time in Pay Grade	7	11	20	24
Awards	<u>2</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>10</u>
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

Note.--Reprinted from Table 1 of Final Report of the
Ad Hoc Committee for Review of the Enlisted Advancement
System.

The E-8, E-9 Selection Board, recognizing that the average of all marks contains little variance, relies mainly on the comments sections of the NAVPERS 792 in judging quality of performance. Since each board is free to impose its own selection criteria, the amount of influence this factor has on promotions varies from year to year. In general, however, its effect is greater than length in service or time in rate, for the goal is usually to select up-and-coming young men as master and senior chiefs.

d. Appointment to Commissioned Status and Special Educational Programs. Enlisted personnel have the opportunity to advance to commissioned status or gain further professional training via many specialized programs. Although academic, experiential, and physical requirements vary among these programs, the performance evaluation marks on the NAVPERS 792 substantially influence both the applicant's commanding officer's forwarding recommendation and the respective boards that make the final selections.

e. Assignment to Special Duties

(1) Instructor/Recruiter Assignment

Instructors at service schools and Navy recruiters are chosen at the Bureau of Naval Personnel from among the applicants for

these positions. Since there are more billets than available men, these positions are not competitive and the selection task is basically one of eliminating those who do not meet the criteria.

One officer, responsible for making instructor/recruiter assignments, expressed great reliance on the NAVPERS 792 as a source of information concerning the applicant's military appearance, command of language, and adaptability. He considered the current form quite satisfactory for this purpose and used both the comments and trait marks in making decisions. The preponderance of marks at the upper end of the scale poses no particular problem since there is no need to discriminate among the good candidates.

(2) Washington Detailing

The assignment of enlisted men to the White House, Bureau of Naval Personnel, Office of the Secretary of Defense, and certain other support activities in the nation's capitol is accomplished at the Bureau of Naval Personnel. Proficiency in a specific rating, such as steward, photographer, or personnelman, is a major selection criterion along with the ability to project the desired U.S. Navy image.

The detailer interviewed made extensive use of the comments sections of the NAVPERS 792 but usually ignored the trait marks because of lack of differentiation. His job became more difficult if the description of assigned tasks and the performance evaluation were stated in generalities. However, he considered the current rating form satisfactory and attributed any weaknesses to those who fill it out.

(3) MAAGS, Missions, Joint and Combined Staffs Detailing

Enlisted men serving foreign governments or allied military staffs are also selected individually by the Bureau of Naval Personnel. Once professional qualifications have been established, all the evaluations in a man's service record are perused for additional information.

This detailer compared the trait marks over a period of several years to check for trends of improvement or regression. In general, he found that the comments on the NAVPERS 792 were descriptive of pertinent behavior and he saw no need for improving the form.

2. Teaching Enlisted Evaluation Procedures and Attitudes

Understanding of the enlisted evaluation system and its underlying philosophy is far from universal among petty officers, even though the responsibility for making performance evaluations is theirs. This omission is contrary to the BUPERS Manual which states:

"Commanding officers are responsible for indoctrinating officers and petty officers so that initial evaluations are consistent with the intent of the Enlisted Performance Evaluation System."

However, the results of an exploratory questionnaire³ administered to 160 petty officers at Service School Command, San Diego, (67 per cent of whom were E-6 or above) revealed that command indoctrination had been either cursory or nonexistent. Seventy-nine per cent of the respondents had never received written instructions on the NAVPERS 792 and 54 per cent had not received even oral instruction.

Discussions with the staff of the Instructor's Training School, San Diego revealed the strong feeling that many of the problems of the enlisted evaluation system can be solved through the education of both officers and enlisted men. Men assigned to this course receive three hours of instruction concerning the proper way to fill out the NAVPERS 792 so that the goals of a fair, service-wide evaluation system can be reached.

Direct observation of the three-hour class on the Performance Evaluation System for enlisted men was illuminating. The instructor passed out copies of articles in the BUPERS Manual for each student to read and keep. What followed resembled a group therapy session more than a lecture. Lively and sometimes heated discussions were generated when the instructor professed the "official" position that valid ratings throughout the Navy are possible and that the verbal descriptions on the NAVPERS 792 (for example, the 2.6-2.8 block of Professional Performance reads "Adequate, but needs routine supervision") do describe real behavior. Arguments contrary to his views were skillfully fielded to other students for rebuttal, a technique more apt to change basic attitudes than a direct reply by the lecturer. The students, all of whom were career enlisted men, expressed a consensus that all petty officers overrate their men unless a grudge is involved. They believed that those making the evaluations think in terms of a numerical scale rather than the verbal block headings. Some students stated that if the descriptive headings were read and followed, there would never be a 4.0 sailor, since this represents perfection.

When asked for suggestions to improve the form or system, education of raters and statistical normalization of the distribution of marks were mentioned repeatedly by the students. It was recommended that questions concerning the NAVPERS 792 be included in all advancement examinations and that leadership classes devoted to performance evaluation be required for all petty officers. The students suggested that trait marks be monitored within each command and a reasonable spread required. At no time, even when directly questioned, did anyone find fault with the current rating form itself. Instead, the men blamed the inequities in the evaluation system on the people making the evaluations and stated that a revision of the NAVPERS 792 could not correct the situation.

³ A revised version of this questionnaire was included in the Navy Personnel Survey, 67-1 Enlisted.

The staff of the school emphasized to the writer their belief that only surveillance by the Bureau of Naval Personnel over marks assigned on the NAVPERS 792 and the orientation of all naval officers could achieve the goals of a valid performance evaluation system. However, they also felt that the usefulness of the current form would be enhanced if the following improvements were made:

a. Include a reference to Article C-7821 of the BUPERS Manual on the NAVPERS 792.

b. Remove the asterisks from the form and change the instructions in the BUPERS Manual so that every mark on the NAVPERS 792 must be justified. At the present the required justification of only exceptional marks usually results in a paraphrasing of the block headings or a simple sentence to cover all areas. If all marks had to be justified individually more meaningful descriptions of behavior might result.

c. Relocate Sections 6 and 7, entitled Description of Assigned Tasks and Evaluation of Performance, to the top of the form. If these sections were completed prior to the assignment of marks, all of a man's duties would be considered and more consistency achieved between the comments and the marks.

d. Change Military Appearance to simply Appearance so that this trait includes the man's all-around visual impression; i.e., posture, facial blemishes, cleanliness of person, appearance in civilian clothing, etc. These factors are important in some assignments.

e. Reword the first block in the Military Behavior area in more realistic terms. The consensus of the school staff was that no one "always acts in the highest tradition."

f. Change the meaning of the Adaptability trait from "how well he gets along and works with others" to "how well he gets the job done."

g. Add a Moral Courage section to refer to the man's ability to stand up to a senior when the occasion demands.

h. Introduce the Desirability trait found on the Officers' Fitness Report. Putting your life in the hands of the enlisted man on watch is of grave importance.

In addition, the staff recommended the following changes to the Enlisted Evaluation System:

a. Discontinue use of the NAVPERS 792 for chief petty officers (a unanimous recommendation). The marks are not meaningful at this level because of the clustering at the top of the scale. An annual letter of evaluation, specifying individual accomplishments and describing in detail duties performed, would be far more relevant to the needs of the Navy.

b. Require that the completed NAVPERS 792 be signed and commented on in writing by the man being rated. This innovation would have several benefits. Namely, it would give a man knowledge of and possible recourse for an unfair evaluation, allow the supervisor to periodically impress on his men the implications of their behavior, and give the effective man needed feedback. A further benefit would result if a working copy of the NAVPERS 792 were completed halfway through the marking period so that there would be time for improvement before the official evaluation.

c. Shorten the list of conditions in the BUPERS Manual for making special evaluations. NAVPERS 792s filled out between regular marking periods are often unnecessary and discriminatory in that small commands are more apt to submit them than are large ones. Usually the information included can be incorporated in the semiannual evaluation or is already in the man's service record in some other form. The "COMMENTS" section of the NAVPERS 792 should not be used for commendations, for such behavior deserves a letter.

d. Marks on the NAVPERS 792 should not be the principal criterion for both awarding of the Good Conduct Medal and for reenlistment. Raters are reluctant to assign marks below 3.0 since such marks preclude the Good Conduct Medal being awarded. Thus, almost all medal holders are eligible for reenlistment by virtue of achieving at least a 2.7 average even though their performance on the job may not be satisfactory.

e. The initial evaluation, subject to review, should be made at the lowest supervisory level even if such a practice results in an E-4 rating an E-3. Also, leadership training and knowledge of correct evaluation practices should be required of all rated men.

3. Survey of the NAVPERS 792 Marks and Comments

a. Sample

If all the NAVPERS 792s requested had been received, 10.7 per cent of enlisted, active duty, Navy men (excluding those in Pay Grade E-1) would have been included in the sample. Performance evaluation forms for 33,918 men were used in the analyses, representing 5.2 per cent of the population. Table A in the appendix presents detailed information on numbers of NAVPERS 792 forms expected and received.

Some discrepancy was inevitable because of the exemptions noted in the BUPERS Manual (C-7821) from making a regular evaluation. Additional evaluations may have been missing for men deployed in the Vietnam war zone, although all commands were requested to forward the completed forms. Illegible or inadequate information resulted in less than 100 forms being discarded. Therefore, the major cause of diminution of the sample probably was due to noncompliance with the instruction.

b. Analysis

Soon after the NAVPERS 792 supplanted the Quarterly Marks System, research had been conducted to determine whether the new form was achieving the desired spread of scores for Pay Grades E-2 through E-7 (BUPERS-152 Memo 60-1). The median score fell slightly below 3.4 and it was concluded that the curve was satisfactory. The data for the present report were gathered ten years later. A comparison between the two distributions is presented in Figure 1.⁴ A chi square test (Johnson, 1949) revealed the differences between the two frequency distributions were too large to be merely chance differences (significant beyond the .001 level). Dichotomization of the samples at various points revealed that they failed to differ significantly only in the quantity of 1.0 and 2.0 marks assigned.

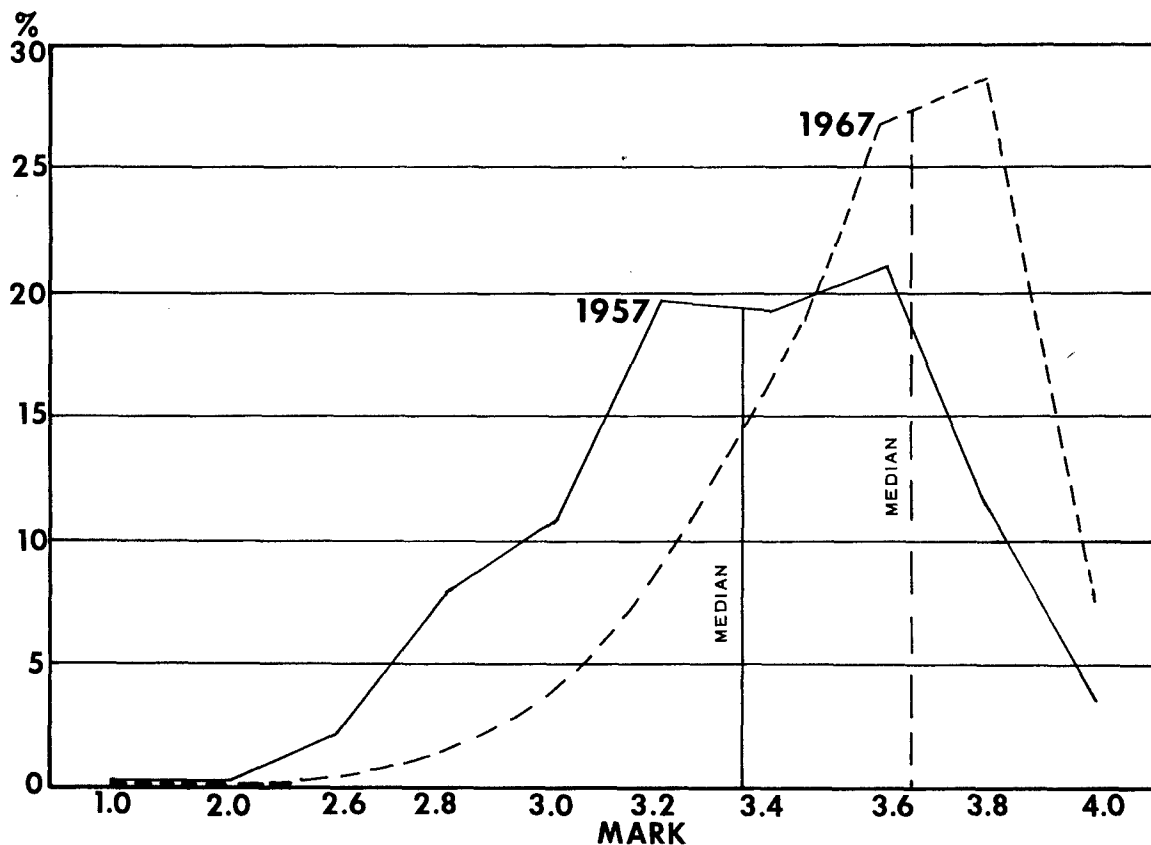


Fig. 1. Distributions of all trait marks on the NAVPERS 792 for Pay Grades E-2 through E-7 in 1957 and 1967.

⁴The numbers on the baseline of all the figures in this report are identical to the marks used with the NAVPERS 792.

Comparisons between the 1957 and 1967 samples by pay grade are presented in Table 3. No data for E-8s and E-9s were reported for the earlier group since these pay grades were not created until 1958. The table clearly shows that the average mark increased along with pay grade, as it should in a promotional system based on merit where a single rating scale is used. However, it appears that very little discrimination is now possible among the senior petty officers.

Figures 2 and 3 present the distributions of overall marks in 1957 and 1967 for several pay grades. It is interesting that the marks currently assigned to E-3s and E-5s are surprisingly similar to those of E-5s and E-7s respectively, in 1957. In addition, it can be seen that while the distribution for Pay Grade E-7 was generally adequate in terms of being able to differentiate among the men with high evaluations in 1957, this is no longer the case.

TABLE 3
Average Performance Marks for Each
Pay Grade in 1957 and 1967

	1957	1967
E-2	3.2	3.4
E-3	3.2	3.5
E-4	3.3	3.6
E-5	3.5	3.7
E-6	3.6	3.8
E-7	3.7	3.9
E-8	---	3.9
E-9	---	4.0
All Pay Grades	3.4	3.6 ^a

Note.--

^aThis average is based on Pay Grades E-2 through E-7 to make it comparable to that of 1957.

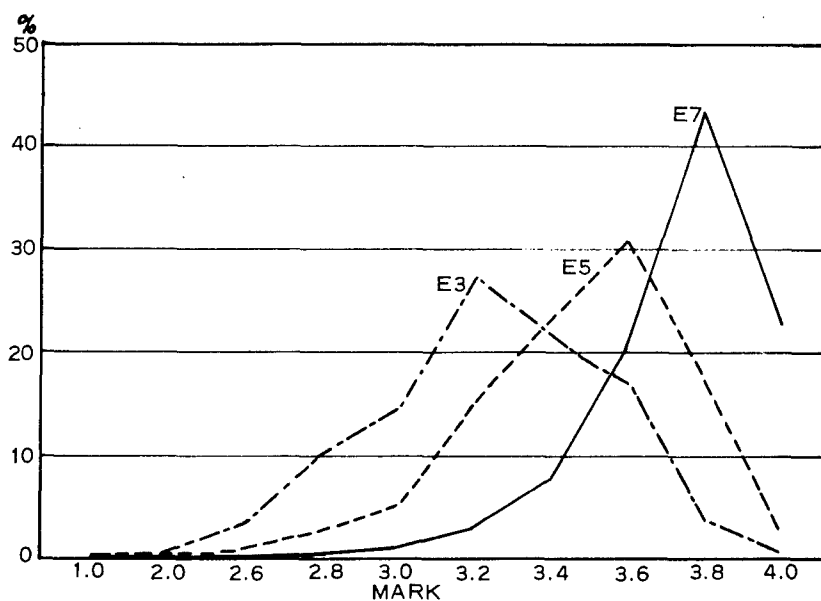


Fig. 2. Distributions of all marks for selected pay grades in 1957.

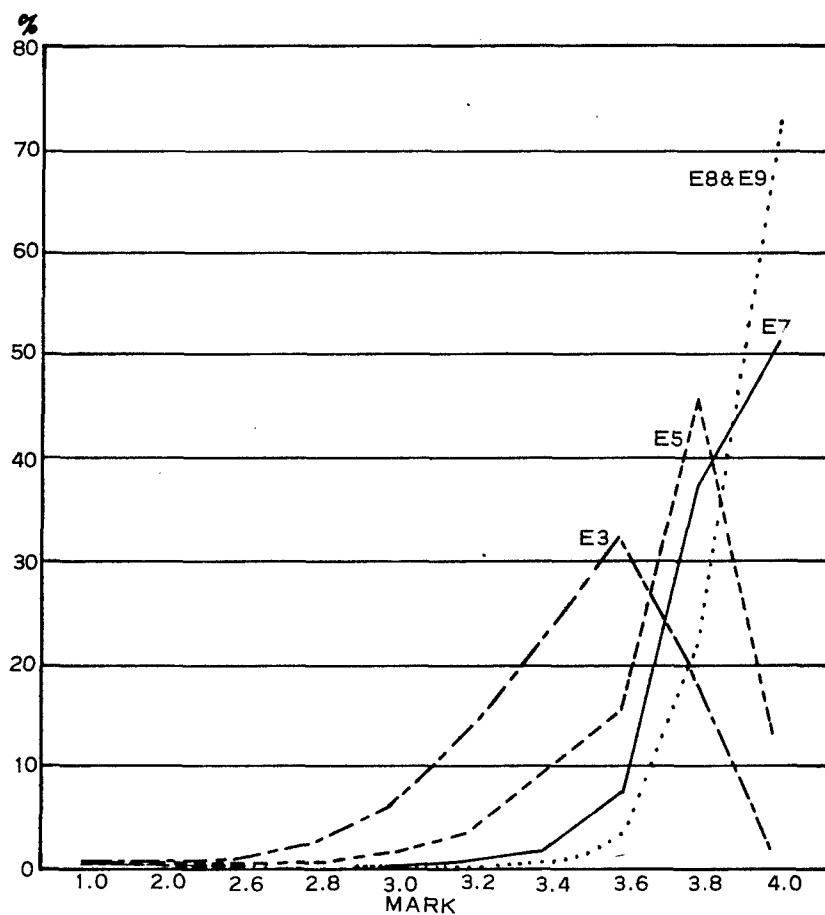


Fig. 3. Distributions of all marks for selected pay grades in 1967.

Figures 4 and 5 show the marking patterns of each trait in 1957 and 1967 respectively. With the earlier sample more variation in the shape of the curves was evidenced and Professional Performance approached a normal distribution. All pay grades were grouped in these figures.

The results of the correlational analysis of the behavioral traits for the entire 1967 sample (E-2 through E-9) are presented in Table 4. Bare (1956) has shown that these traits are nonindependent but the degree of relationship shown in the table is higher than expected. Intercorrelations among the traits computed within each pay grade were slightly lower than those of the total sample.

The unique contributions of the traits to the summed score were investigated through a type of regression analysis. Although each pay grade was treated separately, the results for the E-2s and E-3s and for Pay Grades E-4 through E-8 were quite similar and they have been so grouped in Table 5.⁵ Adaptability accounted for most of the variance in the overall rating of men in the lowest pay grades while Leadership seemed to be the most relevant trait for the petty officers.

The relationship between scores assigned by research raters to the written comments and the official marks on the NAVPERS 792 is shown in Table 6. The correlations between the official trait marks and the evaluated comments may be considered a type of validity. In other words, they reveal the degree to which the numerical scale is a valid measure of the described behavior. The correlations between the scores assigned independently by Raters A and B are interrater reliabilities.

If men are compared only to others in their own rate (pay grade and rating), the distributions of marks for each rating should be similar. Because it is commonly believed that differences consistently occur, however, six Navy ratings were identified for individual analyses. The criteria used in choosing them were representation in the sample proportional to that in the total Navy and belonging to unlike occupational groups. Two electronic ratings were included, one of which was an aviation rating, to investigate the frequently stated belief that the aviation branch of the Navy rate its men more leniently than the surface branch.

⁵The absence of Professional Performance from the table may partially be explained by the nature of the analysis. A computerized accretion program was applied to the data whereby the independent variable most highly related to the dependent variable (summed score) is identified. Then a second variable is chosen based on its ability to produce the highest multiple correlation in combination with the first. Since Professional Performance correlated higher than any other trait with Leadership (see Table 4), it had the least amount of unique variance to contribute to a multiple R containing Leadership, and thus was dropped from the analysis.

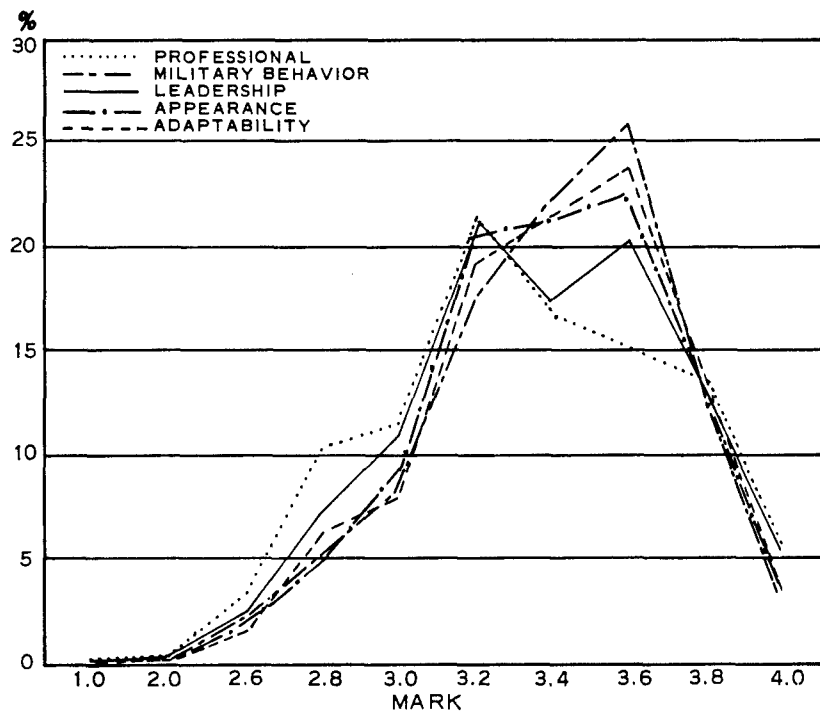


Fig. 4. Distributions of trait marks 1957.

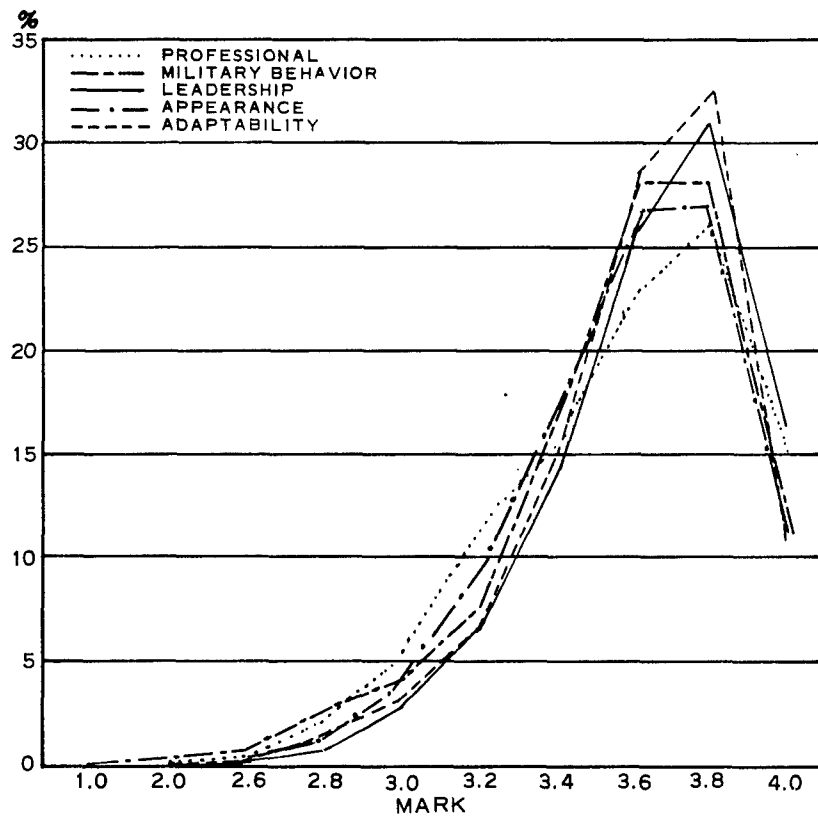


Fig. 5. Distributions of trait marks 1967.

TABLE 4

Means, Standard Deviations and Intercorrelations of the
Traits for the Total 1967 Sample
(N=33,918)

Trait	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
1. Professional Performance	--	.76	.84	.76	.81	3.62	.33
2. Military Behavior		--	.74	.74	.79	3.62	.33
3. Leadership			--	.72	.80	3.70	.28
4. Military Appearance				--	.77	3.63	.30
5. Adaptability					--	3.65	.28

The sample presented in Figure 6 consisted of rated men (E-4 through E-9) and ranged in size from 367 to 870. The number of E-7s, E-8s, and E-9s in each distribution is of importance since the earlier analyses established that men in the higher pay grades receive substantially higher marks. The percent of senior petty officers (E-7, E-8, and E-9) in these ratings was: Personnelman, 41 per cent; Radioman, 40 per cent; Hospital Corpsman, 41 per cent; Electrician's Mate, 37 per cent; Electronics Technician, 34 per cent; and Aviation Electronics Technician, 30 per cent. Thus, while the influence of pay grade on comparisons between paired ratings is slight, other comparisons, such as between Personnelman and Aviation Electronics Technician, should be made with caution.

TABLE 5

Multiple Correlational Analysis of the Unique Contribution of
Each Trait Mark to NAVPERS 792 Overall Rating

Trait	Correlation for Each Pay Grade				
	E-2	E-3			
Adaptability	.86	.87			
Adaptability & Leadership	.92	.94			
Adaptability, Leadership, & Military Behavior	.97	.96			
			<u>E-4</u>	<u>E-5</u>	<u>E-6</u>
Leadership			.88	.89	.89
Leadership & Military Behavior			.95	.95	.95
Leadership, Military Behavior, & Military Appearance			.97	.97	.97
					<u>E-9</u>
Leadership					.86
Leadership & Military Appearance					.93
Leadership, Military Appearance, & Adaptability					.97

Note.--The total score is the dependent variable in all correlations. The first row of correlations in each group represents the product-moment correlations of the trait accounting for the greatest amount of variance in the total score. The second row represents the multiple correlations resulting when the trait contributing the most unique variance is added to the first variable.

TABLE 6

Correlation Between Official Marks and Scores Assigned to Comments
on the NAVPERS 792 for Pay Grades E-4 Through E-9
(N=595)

Trait	Correlations		
	Rater A and Marks	Rater B and Marks	Rater A and Rater B
Professional Performance	.83	.84	.87
Military Behavior	.83	.84	.86
Leadership	.85	.85	.82
Military Appearance	.82	.77	.80
Adaptability	.70	.72	.66
Mean <u>r</u>	.81	.80	.80

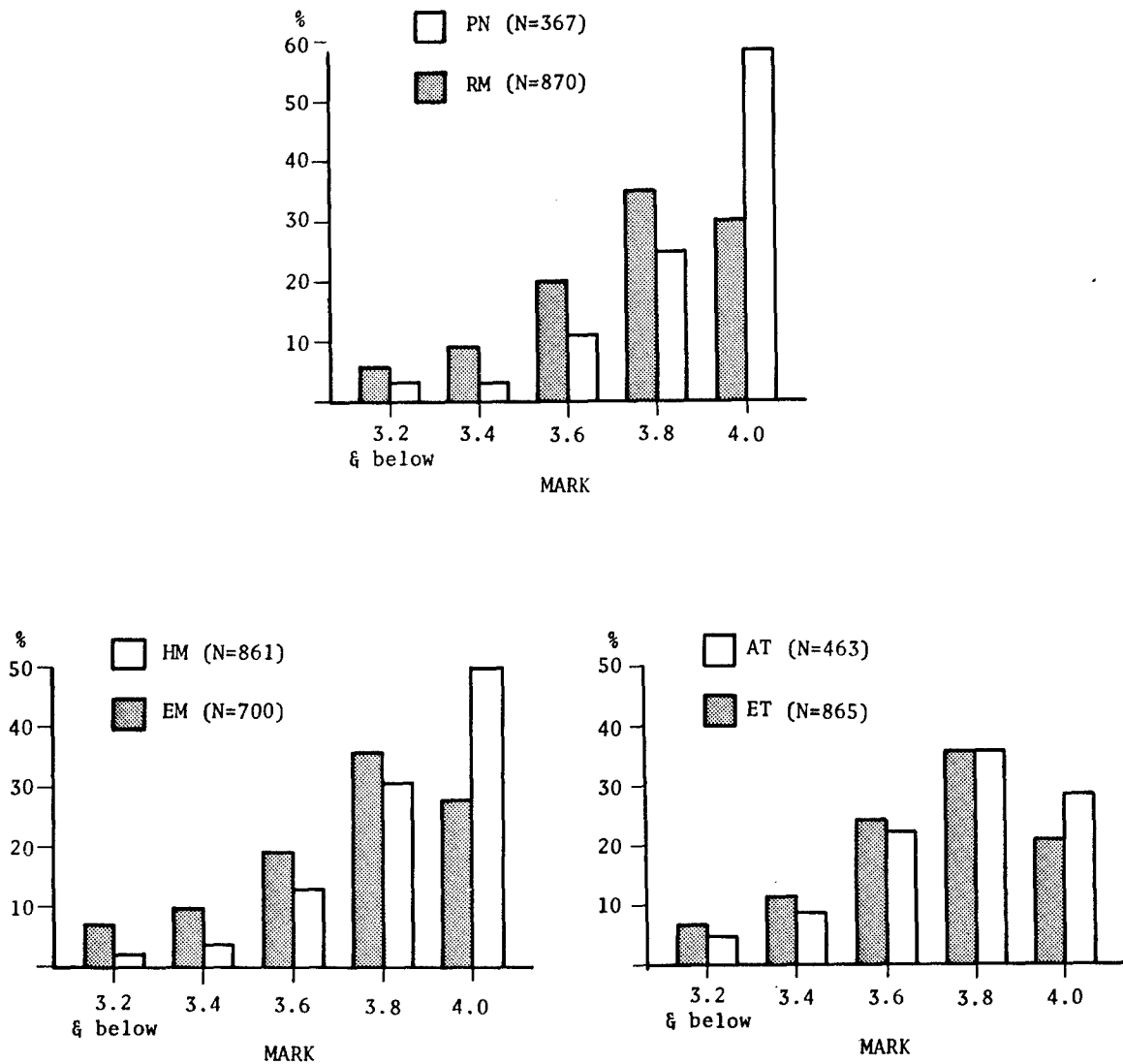


Fig. 6. Distributions of NAVPERS 792 marks for the Personnelman (PN), Radioman (RM), Hospital Corpsman (HM), Electrician's Mate (EM), Electronics Technician (ET), and Aviation Electronics Technician (AT) Ratings.

D. DISCUSSION

1. Administrative Uses of the NAVPERS 792. Commissioned officers in the Bureau of Naval Personnel responsible for making administrative decisions based on the performance evaluations found little fault with the NAVPERS 792. The only adverse criticism of the form was that the block headings needed improving. These officers did recommend two major changes in the enlisted evaluation system: first, effective monitoring of the NAVPERS 792 to ensure a reasonable distribution of marks within each command; and second, requiring that the NAVPERS 792 be signed by the man being evaluated to provide him with an awareness of his deficiencies and an opportunity for improvement.

2. Teaching Enlisted Evaluation Procedures and Attitudes

The staff and students of the Instructor's Training School, San Diego emphasized the need for formal instruction and orientation in the methods and goals of enlisted evaluation for all naval officers, both commissioned and enlisted. The BUPERS Manual requires that each command provide this type of instruction but the ineffectiveness of the directive was demonstrated through the responses to a questionnaire. While the school personnel felt that adequate education could initiate a fairer evaluation system, they felt that monitoring of the marks would be necessary in order to maintain it.

Although the students criticized the NAVPERS 792 only in the wording of some block headings, the staff had several suggestions for improving the form. The major changes would involve adding Moral Courage as a sixth trait and the "desirability" scale from the Officer Fitness Report, modifying the meaning of the Military Appearance and Adaptability traits, relocating the "COMMENTS" sections, and providing additional space for and requiring the justification of all marks.

The school staff also recommended several changes to the enlisted evaluation system. Most important of these were discontinuing use of a numerical rating form with Pay Grades E-7, E-8, and E-9 and requiring that men sign and make comments on their evaluations.

3. Survey of NAVPERS 792 Marks and Comments

Comparisons between the marks assigned to a 1957 Navy sample and those assigned in 1967 revealed a very significant and undesirable shift in the shape of the distributions. If the marks were valid measures of the behavioral descriptions on the NAVPERS 792, one could conclude that current enlisted personnel are performing at a level typical of 1957 Navy men who were two pay grades higher in the advancement structure. Rather than believe that the performance of sailors has greatly improved in the past ten years, it would be more reasonable to suspect that the raters have become more lenient in their marking habits.

The average performance mark rose hand-in-hand with pay grade, a not surprising finding since this is a factor in the advancement multiple.

However, the danger in this trend is that the preponderance of high scores can become so excessive that the marks cannot influence the administrative actions for which they are a criterion. This now appears to be the case for the upper pay grades.

The comparison between the 1957 and 1967 distributions of trait marks indicates that a larger halo effect seems to be operating. Although it is recognized that these behavior variables are nonindependent, marking trends are at the point where a single trait can account for the majority of the variance in the total performance score. This means that for advancement purposes, the performance average need not be determined from five factors since marks on only three traits, when optimally weighted, correlated .97 with the summed score. Before consideration is given to the elimination of variables that are not statistically functioning in the performance average, however, it must be remembered that marks on some of the individual traits are basic to administrative decisions. Thus, the problem of trait overlap becomes one of devising a means of influencing raters so that each trait is perceived as a separate entity.

The agreement between the numerical and verbal sections of the NAVPERS 792 was quite high and equal to that found between the two judges evaluating the written comments. This finding strongly disconfirms the oft-heard complaint of inconsistencies between the numerical marks and the comments.

Correlations for the Adaptability trait were lower than those found for the other traits. Since the correlations between the comments and marks were not lower than that between judges, less consistency on the NAVPERS 792 in evaluating this trait does not explain these results. Instead, there appears to be some confusion over how or to what degree "adaptability" is displayed. This finding reinforces the recommendation, made by the staff of the Instructor's Training School, to change the meaning and descriptions of this trait on the NAVPERS 792.

The limited comparisons made among the distributions of marks for selected ratings supported one popular belief but failed to support another. That is, it was found that substantial differences in assigned marks did exist between certain ratings, but that there was little difference in the evaluations of Electronic Technicians by the air and surface branches of the Navy. About 82 per cent of the marks given to Personnelmen and Hospital Corpsmen were in the highest descriptive block (3.8 and 4.0) as compared to 65 per cent for the Radiomen and Electrician's Mates, a finding somewhat confounded by the fact that there were slightly more chief petty officers in the former ratings. While inequality of performance evaluations among ratings is of interest, it has little practical effect on any administrative actions since advancement competition occurs only within rates and the truly ineffective or otherwise undesirable sailor is probably identified in spite of marking trends.

E. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There was widespread agreement among those interviewed that the current Enlisted Evaluation Form, the NAVPERS 792, is in general, satisfactory. Several minor changes were suggested but no call for the development of a new form evolved. This does not mean that problems in the area of enlisted evaluation were not acknowledged, only that it was felt by those interviewed that little would be accomplished by revising the rating instrument.

It was universally recognized by the interviewees and supported by the statistical analyses that marks assigned on the NAVPERS 792 pile up at the upper end of the range of scores. The consensus solution to this problem was the enforcement of desired distributions by the Bureau of Naval Personnel. Better orientation of petty and commissioned officers in the techniques and goals of performance evaluation was also suggested as a means of promoting more realistic distributions.

Discontinuing use of a numerical scale for senior petty officers was repeatedly mentioned. Analysis of the distributions of marks found for E-7s, E-8s, and E-9s amply demonstrated that discrimination among men in these pay grades is not being effected with the current scale.

Use of the NAVPERS 792 as a counseling instrument was also frequently recommended. It was felt that the enlisted man should be made aware of his official evaluation and that the ratee and his supervisor should discuss his performance.

More specifically, the following recommendations emerged from the research:

1. A desired distribution of marks for each pay grade should be determined and adherence to these standards be required and enforced by the Bureau of Naval Personnel.
2. A separate rating form for E-7s, E-8s, and E-9s should be developed.
3. Provision should be made to ensure that all commissioned and petty officers receive adequate instruction on the administrative uses, required dispersion of marks, and counseling possibilities of the NAVPERS 792.
4. The man being evaluated should be counseled, using the working copy of the NAVPERS 792, and be required to sign his official NAVPERS 792.
5. The NAVPERS 792 should be modified to improve some descriptive block headings and clarify the meaning of the Adaptability trait.

While the research described above was being conducted, certain developments were taking place which bear directly upon recommendations 1 and 2. These are:

1. Several BUPERS activities have acquired Optical Mark Reader (OMR) equipment which electronically transfers marks from a form to punched cards or magnetic tape. Thus, it is now feasible to monitor NAVPERS 792 marks, a procedure proposed by many respondents as the best solution to the problems of score pile-ups and differences in command marking practices. New types of performance evaluation forms, for use with OMR equipment, are being developed at the Personnel Research Activity, San Diego. Such forms will permit statistical corrections or adjustments to performance marks and will simplify the task of checking for conformance with regulations.

2. A separate performance evaluation form, designed for OMR processing, has been developed for use at the E-7, E-8, and E-9 levels. Although many respondents cited in this research report indicated they believed narrative information alone would suffice in the evaluations of chief petty officers, the new form is expected to provide a meaningful dispersion of marks. In addition, the OMR features of the form are amenable to the use of computer methods of treating the marks.

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APPENDIX A

REPORT OF ENLISTED PERFORMANCE EVALUATION NAVPERS 792 (Rev. 6-59)

PERIOD OF REPORT

To

NAME (Last, First, Middle)

SERVICE NO.

RATE ABG.

PRESENT SHIP OR STATION

INSTRUCTIONS

- For each trait, evaluate the man on his actual observed performance. *during this reporting period, evaluate him on what he did. Describe what he did in the "Comments" section.*
- If performance was not observed, check the "Not Observed" box.
- Compare him with others of the same rate.
- Pick the phrase which best fits the man in each trait and check left or right box under it. (Left box is more favorable.)

1. PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE: His skill and efficiency in performing assigned duties (except SUPERVISORY)

NOT OBSERVED ☐	Extremely effective and reliable. Works well on his own.	Highly effective and reliable. Needs only limited supervision.	Effective and reliable. Needs occasional supervision.	Adequate, but needs routine supervision.	Inadequate. Needs constant supervision.
	*				*

2. MILITARY BEHAVIOR: How well he accepts authority and conforms to standards of military behavior.

NOT OBSERVED ☐	Always acts in the highest traditions of the Navy.	Willingly follows commands and regulations.	Conforms to Navy standards.	Usually obeys commands and regulations. Occasionally lax.	Dislikes and flouts authority. Unseamanlike.
	*				*

3. LEADERSHIP AND SUPERVISORY ABILITY: His ability to plan and assign work to others and effectively direct their activities.

NOT OBSERVED ☐	Gets the most out of his men.	Handles men very effectively.	Gets good results from his men.	Usually gets adequate results.	Poor supervisor.
	*				*

4. MILITARY APPEARANCE: His military appearance and neatness in person and dress.

NOT OBSERVED ☐	Impressive. Wears Naval uniform with great pride.	Smart. Neat and correct in appearance.	Conforms to Navy standards of appearance.	Passable. Sometimes careless in appearance.	No credit to the Naval Service.
	*				*

5. ADAPTABILITY: How well he gets along and works with others.

NOT OBSERVED ☐	Gets along exceptionally well. Promotes good morale.	Gets along very well with others. Contributes to good morale.	A good shipmate. Helps morale.	Gets along adequately with others.	A misfit.
	*				*

6. DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNED TASKS

7. EVALUATION OF PERFORMANCE

* 8 THESE ITEMS MUST BE JUSTIFIED BY COMMENTS IN ADDITION TO THOSE IN ITEM 7 ABOVE

9. REASON FOR REPORTING

☐ SEMIANNUAL ☐ TRANSFER ☐ OTHER

10. DATE

11. SIGNATURE OF REPORTING SUPERIOR

12. SERVICE SCHOOL(S) ATTENDED DURING PERIOD OF THIS REPORT

INCLUSIVE DATES	SCHOOL	GRADUATED (YES-NO)	CLASS STANDING

13. SPECIAL QUALIFICATIONS NOT INDICATED BY RATING OR PRIMARY NEC ATTAINED DURING PERIOD OF THIS REPORT

14. OFF-DUTY EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS (USAFI, college courses, correspondence courses, etc.) COMPLETED DURING PERIOD OF THIS REPORT.

APPENDIX B

TABLE A

Expected and Actual Number of NAVPERS 792
Data Used in Present Study

Pay Grade	<u>N</u> Expected ^a	<u>N</u> Used in Analyses	Percentage of Pay Grade
E-9	1715	1173	34.2
E-8	4311	2677	31.0
E-7	3734	2520	6.7
E-6	7565	3078	4.1
E-5	10,096	4047	4.0
E-4	13,359	5464	4.1
E-3	20,915	11,468	5.5
E-2	8699	3491	4.0
TOTAL	70,394	33,918	5.2

Note.--

^aExtracted from BUPERS/NAVPERS 15,658;
for 31 January 1967, 28 February 1967,
31 March 1967, 30 April 1967, 31 May 1967
and 30 June 1967 Navy and Marine Corps
Military Personnel Statistics.

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13. ABSTRACT The Report of Enlisted Performance Evaluation (NAVPERS 792) provides for the evaluation of enlisted men on five traits. Minimum marks on specific traits and on the overall average of all marks have been established for certain administrative actions. The most recent studies of the effectiveness of this rating form were conducted almost a decade ago and there is reason to believe that, due to restriction in marks assigned, the NAVPERS 792 is no longer an adequate instrument for evaluating enlisted performance. Three areas of performance evaluation were investigated: first, the administrative uses and needs for performance information were determined; second, the method of teaching evaluation techniques was investigated; and third, a Navy-wide sample of NAVPERS 792s was collected and the marks and comments thereon were statistically analyzed. The following conclusions and recommendations resulted from this research: (1) Acceptable distributions of NAVPERS 792 marks should be established and enforced. (2) A separate rating form should be developed for senior petty officers. (3) More adequate indoctrination of petty and commissioned officers concerning the NAVPERS 792 and its use is needed. (4) The NAVPERS 792 should be used as a counseling instrument. (5) Certain changes in content and format should be made on the NAVPERS 792. (6) The NAVPERS 792 should be redesigned for use with automated data processing equipment.		

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