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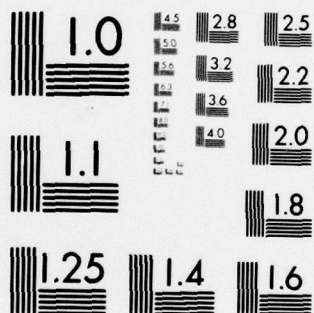
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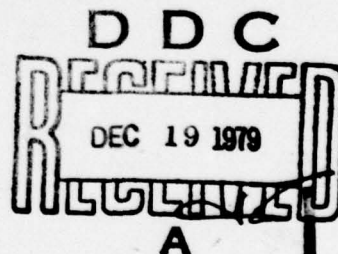
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Research Memorandum 66-5

SELECTION OF ARMY FIRST-LINE CIVILIAN SUPERVISORS--SURVEY OF CURRENT PRACTICES

Research conducted by the
✓ Research Center for Industrial Behavior,
✓ New York University
for the Department of the Army
under Contract No. DA-49-008-ARO-24 ✓
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July 1966



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Army Project No.
2J024701A722

Contract No. DA-49-092-AR0-24
Civilian Personnel Research Task

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Research Memorandum 66-5

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SURVEY OF CURRENT PRACTICES

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Research Memorandums are informal reports on technical research problems. Limited distribution is made, primarily to personnel engaged in research for the U. S. Army Personnel Research Office.

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FOREWORD

The CIVILIAN PERSONNEL RESEARCH Task of the U. S. Army Personnel Research Office seeks to achieve for the Army a better understanding of factors important to smooth-working civilian personnel operation and to more effective military-civilian team operation.

During FY 1964 and 1965, research was conducted under contract on problems concerning the impact of the civilian executive on the nature of the position he occupies, motivating factors for civilian scientists, and local factors which affect selection of first-line supervisors. Recent contract efforts have been extended to studies of communications media and content as applied to civilian personnel.

Research Memorandum 66-5 is a report of a survey of local factors in Army installations which affect selection of first-line civilian supervisors. The survey was conducted by the Research Center for Industrial Behavior, New York University, for the U. S. Army Personnel Office to meet requirements of the Office of Civilian Personnel, Department of the Army.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Sincere appreciation is expressed to the members of Office of Civilian Personnel and to the executives at the field installations whose cooperation made this study possible.

We also acknowledge our indebtedness to the Office of Civilian Personnel, Chief of Staff, the Army Personnel Research Office, especially to Mr. Edmund F. Fuchs, Dr. Julius E. Uhlaner, and Dr. Arthur J. Drucker.

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SELECTION OF ARMY FIRST-LINE CIVILIAN SUPERVISORS--SURVEY OF CURRENT PRACTICES

SUMMARY

To provide a basis for research on first-line supervisors, information was needed to explain the shifts in critical selection factors across different installations and time frames found in prior studies. Members of the staff of the Research Center for Industrial Behavior interviewed personnel officers and second-line supervisors in six installations to develop recommendations for improving the selection of first-line supervisors.

FINDINGS

1. Respondents manifested an apparently unwarranted complacency with the quality of first-line supervisors. This in spite of the conjectural nature of the criterion of supervisor success presented to the researchers.
2. From 85 to 95 percent of selections are made from the immediate work group. Often the selecting official pays little attention to candidates from other work groups. The selection program is viewed as ritualistic in the sense that selection has been determined by the selecting official before the selection procedure is initiated and the entire selection procedure may serve as a rubber stamp for an a priori decision.
3. With selection commonly made from the immediate work group, high potential individuals may be blocked in their career by accident of initial assignment since they are seldom considered for promotion outside of their own work group.
4. The primary predictor tools in the official selection procedure are the performance appraisal and the evaluation yielded by the panel interview. The performance appraisal is looked upon as providing little discrimination among candidates. The panel's evaluation is reportedly biased in the direction of the selecting official's preference--if unbiased--or is characterized by low inter-rater reliability. No tests are used as selectors.
5. Certain aspects of the current selection program are considered unnecessary or impractical by those involved in selection. Tryouts on the job are never used--for apparently legitimate reasons.
6. A more valid criterion of success and development is needed before validation studies can be done. Predictor information should be collected and preserved to enable comparison with a criterion of success in supervision and advancement in the organization.

DEFINITION OF THE POPULATION UNDER CONSIDERATION

First-line supervisors are those whose supervisory duties are a major concern in performance of the job, but who do not supervise other supervisors. They may be in Classification Act or Wage Board positions. Technically, the positions are those specified by the local Civilian Personnel Office in accordance with CPRN2 ¹. To keep the population as homogeneous as possible, the following groups were excluded:

1. Individuals in the Classification Act category explicitly provided for by various Career Field Programs.
2. Individuals primarily in the Wage Board category who are not officially designated as supervisors by their Personnel Office, but are rather lead men, straw bosses, or working foremen.
3. First-line supervisors who are professionals supervising other professionals (e. g., a lawyer who supervises other lawyers).

SURVEY METHOD

PROCEDURE

All the data of this study were collected through a group interview procedure.

Initially, an outline of interview topics considered relevant to the research problem was prepared (see Appendix). A copy of this outline was mailed to each Civilian Personnel Office to be visited by the researchers prior to their arrival at the installation. Respondents thus had opportunity to familiarize themselves with some of the interview topics before discussing them with the researchers.

Two separate groups of personnel were interviewed at most of the installations visited: (1) representatives from the Civilian Personnel Office of the installation, and (2) second-line supervisors having recent experience with the selection process. The representatives of the personnel office were in most installations interviewed first, the interview lasting an average of three to four hours and divided into two sessions. The interviews with the second-line supervisors ranged in length from one and one-half to two and one-half hours.

¹ Civilian Personnel Regulation, "Merit Placement and Promotion." September 27, 1962.

THE SAMPLE

Data were gathered from the following installations: Brooklyn Army Terminal, Ft. Jay, Aberdeen Proving Ground, Rock Island Arsenal, Ft. Meade, and Ft. Belvoir. Brooklyn Army Terminal served as the pilot installation.

At each installation, at least two representatives from the Civilian Personnel Office were interviewed. These were chosen as respondents on the basis of their routine concern with operating the selection program for first-line supervisors. At each installation except Ft. Jay, from five to eight second-line supervisors were chosen on the basis of their recent experience with the implementation of the selection program, either as selecting officials or as members of a panel formed to interview candidates. The group of second-line supervisors included both Classification Act and Wage Board personnel.

LIMITATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

Certain characteristics of the procedure and sample used in the study may have limited the quality of the data obtained. As an almost inevitable consequence of the interview technique, the degree of candor or accuracy of the respondents was occasionally questionable despite all attempts at explaining the nature and purpose of the study and assuring the anonymity of the respondents. For example, all the personnel officers interviewed either implied or stated that failure to promote the best man into supervision is extremely rare. They thus claimed nearly 100 percent accuracy for their selection. Since such validity in a selection program is as yet unknown, such a response must be suspect.

A further procedural limitation concerns the type of information obtained. Since all personnel officers reported that because of the demands of their organization at the time of the interview, they had been unable to search their files for data, most of the responses to statistical or demographic questions were informed estimates rather than precise fact. Question might be raised concerning the representativeness of the installations visited. Two notable omissions from the sample were an installation in the southern states and an installation in an economically depressed area. These two omissions might possibly bear on the findings regarding equal opportunity and available labor pool.

At each installation, the representativeness of the interviewees might be considered. The representatives from the Civilian Personnel Offices were not the chiefs of their offices, but those involved directly in the selection process. The decision to have persons at their level serve as respondents was based on the opinion that respondents at that level typically have had more direct experience with details of operating the selection program. Had the directors of the personnel offices served as interviewees they might well have discussed the selection program from a broader viewpoint, but at the expense of important

details with which their subordinates were familiar.

Staff of the personnel offices chose the second-line supervisors who served as interviewees. The representativeness of these supervisors might be questioned on several counts. Although the personnel offices were cautioned against excluding "grippers" or "trouble-makers" from the sample and including only "model" or "cooperative" supervisors, there was no doubt some selection on this basis, due either to the selection method of the personnel office or to the "unavailability" of the grippers. In any event, the sample showed a heavy preponderance of second-line supervisors highly sympathetic to the personnel office.

The identification of effective first-line supervisors for promotion from non-supervisory positions was treated as a typical selection problem. Some predictor of effectiveness was sought which might be related to a criterion of effectiveness in first-line supervision. Such an approach to evaluating the selection program was soon found to be virtually impossible. It was found that no formal objective criterion of effective supervision has been established, or, if established, at least is not readily available. In addition to this problem, there is virtually no agreement on what a criterion of effective supervision should be. All findings concerning the value of current selection programs are therefore based on the respondents' opinions concerning the effectiveness of CPRN2, their description of the problems encountered in the daily operation of the program, and the researchers' attempts to interpret this information. The findings are thus limited to a certain extent by the candor, meaningfulness, and accuracy of the opinions provided.

THE FINDINGS

In any attempt to maintain an effective force of first-line supervisors, two separate problem areas might be considered. The first problem area is here termed the "pre-recruitment" problem and refers to the problem of whether enough capable people are recruited into the organization to provide sufficient supervisory material at a later time. If an installation is unable to recruit people with a potential for supervision, the problem of an effective selection program for first-line supervisors becomes secondary. The "post-recruitment" problem refers to the selection of the best supervisory material from the pool of candidates within the organization, assuming that such a pool is available.

PRE-RECRUITMENT PROBLEMS

No installation reported that the recruitment of capable persons into the organization was a problem. All personnel officers were of the opinion that they have an adequate labor pool to recruit from and, in general, succeed in recruiting a capable work force into the orga-

nization. As a consequence, all respondents felt that they had within their own installation an adequate pool of candidates for first-line supervisory positions. Three problems in recruiting capable personnel were mentioned, but were considered minor:

Competition from Other Government Agencies. Two installations in the vicinity of Washington, D. C. mentioned this as a problem. The problem is apparently maximized when the competing agency is new or expanding and geographically near.

Competition from Private Industry. The primary factor here is apparently the higher pay scales of private industry; secondary are such factors as the shorter work week, coffee breaks, and air-conditioning offered by private industry. All installations except the Brooklyn Army Terminal reported such competition as a problem. Some installations reported this problem to be most severe on the clerical level, while others reported the professional level to be most affected by such competition.

Location of the Organization. This is a generic problem not entirely independent of the above mentioned problems. Typically, an installation suffers from competition only if there are other agencies or industries nearby. Three installations mentioned their location as posing significant problem in transportation for personnel. One of these, Fort Jay, is located on an island (Governor's Island) in New York harbor and is accessible only by government ferry. This installation reported that the problem is fairly severe because of the unique location, which even causes such additional problems as the lack of shopping facilities for female employees. At Ft. Jay, this problem is heightened by the sharp competition within the New York City area. The Brooklyn Army Terminal and the Rock Island Arsenal reported that their location in a metropolitan area is an advantage with regard to transportation facilities and labor pool. The rural installation typically reported that it draws on the labor force of nearby cities, and that its recruitment problems tend to fluctuate with the urban labor pool. One reported advantage of a rural location is that it tends to attract many capable people who enjoy country living.

POST-RECRUITMENT PROBLEMS

There was unanimous agreement among the six installations on the following:

1. There are enough capable candidates from which to choose effective first-line supervisors.
2. Representatives of personnel offices either implied or stated that the most capable individuals are, in fact, chosen for first-line supervision, that errors in selection are insignificant.
3. The Merit Placement and Promotion Program is in general unnecessary in moving the most capable man into first-line supervision.

The first area has been treated in the previous section. The second and third areas are what might be called the criterion and predictor problems.

Quality of First-line Supervisors. There were divergent opinions between the personnel office and staffs and the second-line supervisors on the quality of present first-line supervisors. The personnel representatives unanimously regarded errors in selection as minimal and insignificant. The second-line supervisors, on the other hand, were not entirely convinced of this generalization and viewed errors in selection as a problem.

The quality of present first-line supervisors has obviously not been systematically investigated, or perhaps even regarded as a potential problem by any of the personnel offices in the present sample. When asked about the effectiveness of CPRN2 in terms of the quality of first-line supervisors promoted through this program, the evidence presented by the personnel offices was generally of a negative nature. For example, a respondent might report that, in passing second-line supervisors on his way to lunch, he had not heard any complaints about first-line supervisors; or that, as he thinks back over merit reviews, he cannot remember any reviews which might be indicative of problems with effectiveness of first-line supervisors in general.

In brief then, the researchers have not been able to discover any objective evidence on the effectiveness of the current selection program. No consistent opinion on supervisory effectiveness was revealed, much less an objective reliable criterion of effectiveness. If the purpose of CPRN2 is to serve as a predictor of supervisory effectiveness, and the personnel offices for one reason or another are not mindful of a criterion for such effectiveness, then the establishment of such a criterion is a problem in and of itself.

Effectiveness of Official Procedures. Since, in the opinion of the researchers, a satisfactory estimate of the effectiveness of first-line supervisors has not been or could not be obtained by the methods used, a general evaluation of CPRN2 as a predictor becomes difficult, if not impossible. Useful information has been obtained, however, on the effectiveness of certain aspects of CPRN2. Each of the provisions of CPRN2 is discussed below in terms of its contribution to the selection of effective first-line supervisors.

STANDARDS AND REQUIREMENTS OF THE GENERAL PROVISION "MERIT PLACEMENT AND PROMOTION PROGRAM" (CPRN2)

General Provisions

Area of Consideration. The stated objective in defining the area of consideration is to afford employees reasonable opportunities for advancement and provide an adequate supply of well-qualified candidates. The provision was seen as unnecessary for various reasons in two out of six installations. Most second-line supervisors preferred to promote someone they know over someone they don't know, even if the latter appears to be better qualified. Furthermore, second-line supervisors tended to

feel that it is necessary to promote a man from the immediate work group, even if he is not the best qualified, in order to avoid problems of morale which they are sure will ensue from choosing a candidate outside the immediate group. The second-line supervisor, it was reported, has typically made his choice before selection procedures are even initiated; the selecting supervisor may well have committed himself to the candidate, and his choice may become common knowledge in his immediate group. Whatever the reasons, the fact is that in general 85 to 95 percent of promotions into first-line supervisions are made from within the immediate work group under the vacant position.

Various personnel officers have complained that this provision permits or encourages incumbents of related job areas to file applications for promotion when they don't really have what the second-line supervisor considers proper technical qualifications. There are several possible reasons for this opinion. On the one hand, the magnitude of this problem may be overestimated by the second-line supervisors who, through a lack of appreciation of the true demands of first-line supervision, overemphasize the technical aspects of the job. On the other hand, assuming that many applicants are lacking necessary technical qualifications, this lack may be the fault of the personnel office; jobs may be described too broadly to permit specification of technical demands, or even though the job description may be narrow enough, the personnel office may fail to sufficiently specify qualifications for eligibility as provided for in CPRN2 (para. 3-la (5)).

Personnel from two installations reported that use made of this provision by many installations runs counter to the apparent intended purpose--the personnel office may use the area of consideration as a means of limiting rather than expanding the number of potential candidates for the purpose of minimizing the initial work load of screening candidates.

Automatic Consideration. In four out of six installations, complaints were voiced about this provision for two basic reasons: It is viewed as being highly uneconomical, and it imposes an unnecessary work load on the personnel office concerned. The criticism was leveled mainly at automatic consideration of employees in the immediate work group where the vacancy occurs. Some felt that the assumption that all in the immediate work group are qualified is grossly naive. The feeling is that this provision is unnecessary since employees in the immediate work group who are genuinely interested in the vacant position will file an application on their own initiative. Two installations cited the experience that many employees are automatically considered repeatedly for the same or similar positions so that it becomes quite apparent that they are not interested in promotion into the vacant position. It is felt by the personnel office staffs that, if the automatic consideration provision were modified appropriately, these employees would be "self-screened" if left to their own initiative to file an application, thereby freeing the personnel office on an unnecessary workload. This modification, of course, would apply only to the immediate work group or installation where notice of the vacancy can be readily communicated to employees, and employees can readily

apply. Several advantages of the automatic consideration provision, as well as several disadvantages of an alternative filing procedure, were cited. One personnel office reported that some highly skilled Wage Board personnel of the craftsman type are too "proud" to file for promotion. They constitute a very close-knit and exclusive group where all know each other's skills and abilities very well. These men feel no need of, and are almost insulted at, filing an application for promotion since there is unanimous agreement among supervisors and subordinates on who deserves the promotion. A second advantage to automatic consideration concerns the timid employee who might not apply if left to his own initiative. One personnel office was of the opinion that there is a sizable number of employees who feel many are more qualified for promotion than they, when in fact this is not the case. The result is that the best qualified employee may not even apply.

Qualification Requirements. Two installations in one Army area reported instances where this provision was abused in order to favor military personnel. In one instance, it was alleged that occasionally requirements are established so that only retired military men are likely to qualify. These requirements are primarily in terms of certain types of experience which civilians are extremely unlikely to have had. In the second instance, it was alleged that, to circumvent the competitive regulations of CPRN2, an existing job description was dropped for a vacant position, and a new, although similar, description was written. This new job description, however, was obviously tailored to the qualifications of a military man about to retire and eliminated a civilian who would have qualified under the old job description.

In citing these instances of favoritism toward the military, the personnel offices seemed to imply that military personnel, if not actively supporting the practice of such favoritism, nevertheless maintained silence despite their awareness of it. The exact level at which this favoritism was shown was not clearly located by the respondents; it can only be said that it occurred at some higher echelon than the local personnel office.

Release of Employees. All respondents reported that this provision is carried out as specified.

Keeping Employees Informed. Two out of six personnel offices reported that, despite their best efforts, their workload is frequently so great that there is a delay in informing employees of the results of their applications. The implication is that this delay is the source of some degree of dissatisfaction among employees.

Selection of Supervisors

In this section those features of CFRN2 which have been established as additional mandatory standards in the selection of supervisors are considered. Again the discussion is primarily in terms of those aspects of the selection program which were viewed as problems by the respondents.

Qualification Requirements. As was briefly mentioned in the discussion of the area of consideration provision, the selecting official may tend to overemphasize technical qualifications in making his choice for a first-line supervisor. Whether this is a genuine problem is uncertain. Judging from the response of certain Wage Board second-line supervisors, however, it appears that, in some cases at least, the selection official seriously underestimates the demand for leadership, management, and administration ability in first-line supervisory positions.

Panel Interviews. All respondents indicated that the panel interview is always used as a tool in selection. Several factors were seen as limiting the effectiveness of the interview. The primary function of the panel was seen by the personnel office representatives as that of providing an evaluation of the candidate's personal, rather than technical qualifications; yet the personnel office was of the opinion that the panel often falls back on technical qualifications of the candidates in making evaluations. It appears that this problem may be more the fault of the personnel office, or more specifically, its representative on the panel, than of the other panel members, particularly since the second-line supervisors, in their capacity as panel members, expressed a need for guidance in this area of judging personal characteristics of candidates.

A second problem, acknowledged by both personnel office representatives and second-line supervisors is what might be termed the "favorite son" problem. In most cases, the panel members know the second-line supervisor who is the selecting official and who is very likely to have expressed his choice of candidate to the panel members. In such cases, the panel is extremely biased, with the result that the selecting official's choice is virtually guaranteed a place on the "Best Qualified" list.

Where the panel has not been biased in this fashion, two additional problems may occur. The personnel office suggested that, if the evaluation is unbiased, inter-rater reliability of the panel is commonly poor. Furthermore, where the selecting official is genuinely desirous of help in making a final selection, he often feels that much helpful information is lost in the panel's communication to him; he voices the need of having the panel furnish him with a report sufficiently detailed to be of help to him. The question arises of whether it might be

beneficial to have the selecting official participate in the panel to a limited extent, even if only as an observer, to witness the proceedings of the panel.

One further aspect of the panel interview was discussed by the second-line supervisors. It was pointed out that each time a given candidate applies for a vacant position, he must appear before a panel. It sometimes happens that, when applying for several positions within a short period of time, the candidate may appear before the same panel and be asked the exact same questions each time he applies. The panel members consider this practice extremely wasteful and a source of poor motivation on the part of both panel and candidate.

Tryout on the Job. All respondents indicated that official tryouts are never used. According to the personnel office representatives, the amount of paper work involved in an official tryout makes the technique prohibitive. Furthermore, the duration of an official tryout is about three months--a period generally considered insufficient to make a valid judgment on the candidate's ability. It is felt that at least six months are necessary for the candidate to become sufficiently familiar with the job. An additional point was made: when several candidates are to receive tryouts, the total tryout period may be as long as nine months or a year, during which time the pool of available talent may have changed for the better. Yet, even though the vacancy still exists, the new talent is not considered.

Perhaps the major problems with this technique concern the second-line supervisor and the immediate work group where the vacancy exists. During any extended tryout period the immediate work group suffers through lack of a permanent experienced supervisor; the second-line supervisor is burdened by the additional demands of guiding the candidate during the tryout or of taking a more active role in certain aspects of first-line supervision. The second-line supervisor is likely to feel an additional problem: if members of his immediate work group are assigned to a tryout, the unit will be short one man during the tryout period. The supervisor may also fear that this situation may be taken as evidence that he can function effectively without the job slot vacated by the man on tryout assignment, with the result that his unit may lose the position. Similar disadvantages are seen in the use of alternative techniques such as competitive details and understudy assignments. One common substitute for the tryout technique, apparently in use, is a type of unofficial detail. An example is temporary assignment of the candidate to the supervisor's position.

Review of the Record. The chief tool used in evaluating the candidate's performance is the "performance appraisal" previously completed by the candidate's supervisors. These appraisals are viewed as rather weak measures of the candidate's performance

and a poor predictor of supervisory success. A number of reasons were cited for the attitude, commonly held by all respondents. The supervisors tend to dislike the narrative form of appraisal and many feel they are unable to write the statements in satisfactory form. As a result, one or two supervisors may write performance appraisals for a number of supervisors; or a supervisor may reuse the same appraisal statement year after year. Many supervisors tend to dislike global ratings. These ratings often do not allow for sufficient discrimination among candidates. Even though the rating form may provide the minimal discrimination of "Outstanding", "Satisfactory", and "Unsatisfactory", the "Outstanding" category is little used because of the explanatory paper work involved. Often, the rating is reduced in practice to a dichotomous classification of Satisfactory-Unsatisfactory. In addition, the supervisor often fears to rate a subordinate as "Unsatisfactory" since the rating may be challenged via grievance mechanisms. Since a rating on either end of the continuum is likely to result in additional paper work or other demands upon the rater, there tends to be a fairly large error of central tendency in performance appraisals.

As a result of these attitudes, performance appraisals are looked upon with suspicion by the personnel office, and, even assuming validity, are seen as providing only minimal discrimination among employees in terms of performance effectiveness.

The personnel office, recognizing the possible weakness of performance appraisals, typically attempts to consider other indications of performance effectiveness; these consist mainly of promotions, raises, awards, etc. The personnel office acknowledges weaknesses in these criteria of ability, however--mainly that such indications of ability are not equally available to all employees.

Special Provisions

Temporary Promotions and Understudy Details and Assignments. These techniques are rarely used officially for reasons similar to those mentioned in the discussion of tryouts. The primary prohibitive factor is the paper work involved. These techniques are used to some extent unofficially. When official recognition of such assignments occurs, it generally follows the fact--an applicant for promotion asks his supervisor to insert in his official record the fact that the applicant had such experience.

Classification to Higher Grade of Occupied Positions. One installation indicated some degree of confusion as to when a given job should be upgraded and when it should be filled competitively. When the expectations of the immediate work group surrounding the position are that the position should be upgraded, there is apparently a strong possibility that morale problems will result if a competitive announcement is made. One implication of the discussion of this provision is that the personnel office is in need of more specific guidelines for

making a decision with regard to upgrading a position rather than utilizing competitive procedures. A further implication is that, if such guidelines were established, the problem of justifying a competitive procedure to the present incumbent of the position in question would be somewhat reduced.

GENERAL ATTITUDES TOWARD THE SELECTION PROGRAM

In attempting to evaluate current selection procedures, consideration of the motives involved in their use cannot be avoided. These motives are seen to be closely linked to the attitudes of all those on whom the selection program has an effect.

THE PERSONNEL OFFICE

Staff members of the typical Civilian Personnel Office appear to be highly sympathetic toward the stated purposes of the "Merit Placement and Promotion Program" regarding the selection of the first-line supervisors: to select on the basis of merit and fitness these supervisory personnel who will constitute a high-quality management staff, at the same time affording maximum opportunity for employment and optimum development and utilization of employee skills.

Regarding the question of how well the provisions of CPRN2 are actually accomplishing the stated purposes, the personnel officers were somewhat more skeptical. They tended to feel that what CPRN2 is intended to accomplish in principle is often not accomplished in practice. The fault, it is suggested, tends not to be in CPRN2 itself, but rather in the people who use it. Even though some of its provisions were deemed impractical, CPRN2 could accomplish two broad purposes: provide the organization with an expanded pool of talent and provide the individual with greater opportunity for promotion and optimum placement. But these purposes must be recognized by those who use the program on a daily basis, namely, the higher echelon supervisors who are ultimately responsible for selecting first-line supervisors. In too many cases, it was reported, the supervisors fail to appreciate the fact that CPRN2 is potentially of great benefit to them, and, as a consequence, too infrequently they use CPRN2 to support their choice for first-line supervision. Some personnel officers felt that it would be very difficult if not impossible to improve the attitudes and enthusiasm of these supervisors to any great extent.

THE SELECTING OFFICIALS

The second-line supervisors who served as respondents had recently served as members of a panel interviewing candidates for first-line supervision. They had in many cases acted as selecting officials. These respondents were able to discuss directly the attitudes and intents of themselves and their associates in utilizing the selection procedure.

On the basis of the responses given by these supervisors, it was concluded that there is a difference in aims between the originators of the present selection program and the users. A logical consequence of the CPRN2 program is that the selecting official would be presented, at least in many cases, with a larger pool of candidates from which to choose first-line supervisors. The assumption is that better talent will often be located outside of the group with whom the selecting official has familiarity and direct experience on the job. The majority of reports indicated, however, that from 85-95% of first-line supervisors are drawn from the immediate work group over which they serve.

As mentioned in the discussion of area of consideration, it was reported that, in the majority of cases, the selecting official has made his choice for first-line supervision before the selection procedures are begun. In those cases, the selection procedure can scarcely be regarded as competitive. When such an a priori decision is made by the selecting official, the formal selection procedure is viewed as a considerable waste of time, energy, and money. It becomes an expensive hindrance rather than a help in selection. As discussed in the next section, this typical pre-decision of the selecting official is perhaps the major factor in determining the attitudes of non-supervisory personnel toward the selection procedure.

Some supervisors, it was felt, are favorable toward CPRN2, even when they have made their decision in selection before selection procedures are initiated. Only a few selecting officials admitted that the possibility that they will be favorably impressed with a previously unknown candidate is very slight. A relatively large number, on the other hand, view CPRN2 as a "rubber stamp" for their choice. When an error in selection occurs, the supervisor tends to feel that he did not err alone, and his anxiety over making a wrong choice is diminished.

In one blue-collar installation, an evaluation of CPRN2 was approached personally and affectively. The selecting official believes that "his own" are best qualified for promotion, so that it is from among these that his choice will be made. The "Merit Placement and Promotion Program" was viewed as a personal threat to the supervisor's authority and as questioning his ability to make good judgments. In one white-collar installation, CPRN2 was viewed by the second-line supervisors as mainly ritualistic. It was suggested, however, that CPRN2 is potentially valuable, if employed primarily where the supervisor feels that his immediate work group does not have suitable talent for the position.

The attitudes of the typical non-supervisory employee are not thought to be favorable toward the selection program. These employees are considered somewhat suspicious of the selection program in the belief that most decisions are made without regard to information gathered under CPRN2.

The reports indicate that frequently a potential candidate is hesitant to file an application for promotion since he does not believe that the supervisory position is genuinely vacant or that the selection process is not truly competitive. From past experience, he believes that a priori decisions are often made and that selection is primarily from the immediate work group. This attitude of the potential candidate is alleged to be the cause of a certain amount of hostility toward the Personnel Office, which is perceived as announcing competitive vacancies either out of ignorance or out of an attempt to put a competitive glow on an obviously non-competitive situation.

In summary, while the intent of the current selection procedure is to expand the supply of well qualified candidates, the pool of candidates is in practice somewhat limited by self-selection of those who do not even apply for the reasons discussed above.

CONCLUSIONS

There are two relatively distinct careers for those who are considered for promotion to first-line supervision. Some candidates are likely to stay at the first-line level, others are expected to advance to higher levels as they mature.

Present procedures for selecting first-line supervisors fail in the announced purpose of CPRN2 of promoting those who have potential for future growth. The present emphasis, particularly on the part of the selecting supervisor, is on finding someone in the work unit who can handle the job, with little regard for his future potential or for the capabilities of candidates from other units.

As employees grow, their talents should be brought to the attention of selecting supervisors with such emphasis that the supervisor will give genuine consideration to their candidacy. Sufficient records of training, performance ratings, and personal data should be maintained so that the selecting supervisor is in a position to evaluate each candidate.

The selection of supervisors who are likely to advance no further than the first or second level of supervisor is apparently not so much of a problem, but no firm statement can be made because direct evidence is lacking. However, the general practice of selecting employees with relevant experience in the work group they will supervise takes advantage, albeit informally, of long-term observation and evaluation, and often of tryouts on the job. It appears, therefore, that the more fruitful area for improvement lies with the high potential people who are often blocked by the accident of their initial assignment and their subsequent lack of opportunity to get the necessary breadth of training and experience.

PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT

The local personnel executives are the keys to success of the selection program. No matter what reasons be behind the statements of the interviewees that the selection procedures were working almost perfectly, this attitude foretells difficulties in upgrading the selection procedures. Until personnel officials are willing to verbalize some discontent with the status quo, they can be expected to show little enthusiasm for change. The satisfaction with existing procedures expressed by personnel executives (and to some extent by second-level supervisors) may not be warranted. Their expressed feeling is that enough talented people are recruited for Civil Service to make an adequate pool from which the best candidates are almost certain to be selected for supervisory positions. This attitude stands in sharp contrast to feelings often expressed in other organizations that they have difficulty attracting, keeping, and promoting qualified people. Seminars, local participation in research projects, advanced education and other techniques may be necessary to encourage a more critical attitude, resulting in higher standards.

Typically, the personnel executives interviewed were more sophisticated in the pertinent Army regulations than in personnel management. It is recommended that they receive additional training through government sponsored training programs, as well as through university courses, where feasible.

The personnel executives, once they are trained, can then train the selecting supervisors and panel members in interviewing, rating, counseling, and other skills necessary for identifying, promoting, and training the best people.

The need for closer liaison between the local personnel officers and the Office of Civilian Personnel became most apparent in the discussion of CPRN2. The formal tryouts on the jobs recommended in the procedure are never used. The personnel managers expressed the most naive notions about validity. Records essential to improving the program, including research test scores from earlier studies, are destroyed. Such anomalies may be reduced by closer contact between headquarters and local staff.

Increased technical sophistication on the part of the personnel managers, and appreciation of the practical problems in administering a program on the part of the policy makers can result from conferences, joint planning sessions, and continual contact.

MISCELLANY

During the course of the study, the investigators noted that certain improvements could be made within the existing CPRN2 procedures. Definition of supervisory positions is not systematic nor consistent. There are gray areas separating first-line foremen from lead men and straw

bosses on the one hand and from second-line supervisors on the other. The selection of supervisors of professionals demands methods different from those used to select supervisors of Wage Board and clerical workers. Classification of supervisory positions is essential for the application of different procedures to types of situations. A definition of supervision will be most useful if it includes the means for distinguishing among noticeably different kinds of work. The major distinction between Classification Act and Wage Board positions merits re-examination to find out if using a larger number of groups may lead to more homogeneous performance to be predicted.

Stated job requirements are a source of some difficulty. In some installations, they are so broad that candidates do not know whether they are qualified, and in others they are so narrowly written as to exclude acceptable candidates. A more uniform and accurate method of stating job requirements would help by encouraging the qualified and discouraging the unqualified.

Repeated consideration of the same candidates causes a drain on the time of those who are concerned. Automatic consideration, and the willingness of some people to apply for any position, tend to get the procedure out of control as the same candidates appear and reappear before the panels. Improved screening of the obviously unqualified would benefit everyone. If given a more accurate statement of the job requirements, many unqualified employees might eliminate themselves.

In summary, the effort was undertaken to identify factors which account for variation in effectiveness of selection of first-line supervisors across locations or time-frames. This effort was thwarted by the lack of insight on the part of civilian personnel office representatives and second-line supervisors into less-than-optimal selection of first-line supervisors. However, a number of recommendations are proposed, including further training of the civilian personnel office representatives.

APPENDIX

Outline of Interview Topics

Research Center for Industrial Behavior
NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

Outline for Part B

Problem: Selection of First Line Supervisors

Note: Separate reports, in similar form, are to be made for Wage Board and Classification Act Personnel.

Procedure: Round Table Discussion with:
I Personnel Department Personnel
II Second Line Supervisors with Recent Experience in Selecting First Line Supervisors

I DISCUSSION TOPICS FOR PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT

Description of the Job

Extent of Diversity or Homogeneity of Jobs in Organization
Distinguish First Line Supervisor from Lead Men, Working Foremen, Supervisors of Professionals

Nature of Organization

Size

Change in Size

Expanding
Stable
Contracting

Movement

Number fired: reasons
Number quit: reasons
Transfers

Promotions

Number promoted each year into supervisory positions
Number of supervisors out of position into next level

Role of Military at Level under Consideration

Stability

Frequency of reorganization
Extent to which source is Administrative
Extent to which source is Technical
Type of mission of installation

Average Grade Level of Incumbents

Atmosphere

Extent to which systematic selection procedures were used
Attitude of installation population toward above
Endorsement of higher levels

Labor Pool in Community

Size of Community

Educational Level

Racial Mixture

Travel Conditions

Competing Employers

General Economic Conditions

Recruiting

Pool from Which Supervisors are Drawn

Source of Candidates

Promotion

- 1) Immediate work group under vacant position
 - 2) Different work group in same area (under peer(s) of vacant position)
 - 3) Installation wide source (employees in other departments; inter-departmental)
 - 4) Different locations; inter-installational
 - 5) Outside organizations; inter-organizational
- Transfer (Items 2,3,4,5)

Priority of Needs: Favored or Unfavored Mission within Organization

Selection Ratio of Supervisors

Age

Sex

Experience

Average time in grade

Indication of capacity

Education

Special Training

Technical

Supervisory training

Criterion of Success

Career (Stay at same supervisory level) versus Development (advancement to higher supervisory level)

Evaluate supervisor's attitude in terms of his impact on his work group

Ratings of performance

Current Selection Procedures

CPR E-2 (see attached outline)

Seniority--merit

Amount of Choice Open to Supervisor

Opportunity to use good procedures

Effects of Additional Selection Machinery

Suggestions for Improvements

Our Own Assessment and Proposals

II TOPICS FOR ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION WITH SECOND LINE SUPERVISORS WITH RECENT EXPERIENCE WITH THE SELECTION PROCESS

- 1) How Did The Selection Process Work?
- 2) Make Same Decision Again Or Select Differently.
- 3) Discuss Rejected Candidates And Why They Were Rejected.

Supplement: Part B

CPR N-2

Purpose: Improve Selection of First Line Supervisors

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1) What are the current selection procedures used in this installation?
(Follow CPR N-2 Outline closely)
 - a. Interviews
 - b. Tryout assignments on the job
 - c. Evaluation of supervisory potential or performance
 - d. Instruments as in CPR N-2
- 2) What variations currently exist in the procedure?
- 3) How well do you think the present procedure works?
- 4) To what extent are you able to obtain the kind of people you want by current procedure?
- 5) How practical do you feel the current procedure is, especially from the standpoint of convenience and cost?
- 6) How fair do you think the procedure is to the candidates?
- 7) How do you think the candidates feel about it?
- 8) What modifications in the procedure would you suggest for improving its efficiency?
- 9) What is the greatest advantage of the current procedure?
- 10) What is the greatest fault of the current procedure?
- 11) What data do you have which might indicate the effectiveness of the current selection procedure?
 - a. Tests
 - b. Ratings and comments used for prediction
 - c. Measures of performance after promotion
 - d. Tenure
 - e. Other personnel records