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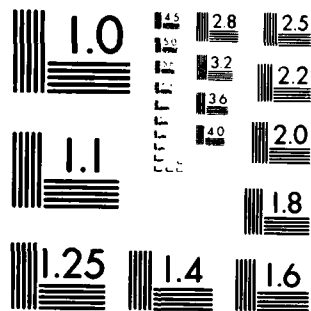NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS 1963 A

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THESIS

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN THE NAVY:
THE SPECIALISTS' VIEWPOINT

by

Martin Gus Lorberg III

June 1980

Thesis Advisor: P. N. Butler

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Human Resource Management in the Navy:
The Specialists' Viewpoint

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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3

ABSTRACT

This study focussed on the perceptions of the Navy's Human Resource Management Specialists (HRMSs) toward their coworkers and the Human Resources Management (HRM) program. Thirty HRMSs from all the HRM centers and detachments were interviewed using an open ended interview guide. The data were analyzed by using the methodologies of Dunham & Smith, McCall & Simmons, Schatzman & Strauss, and Webb's "Triangulation" technique.

The data indicated perceptions of an improved image in the fleet. Concern was varied about top level support, marketing for the HRM program, the possibility of a future voluntary HRM cycle, and the emphasis currently being placed on certain HRM programs. The HRMS was perceived as improving in quality, yet some thought more stringent entry criteria were needed. The need for warfare specialists and HRMSs with previous experience was also expressed. Recommendations are offered for improving the image of the Navy's HRM program based on the data.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

5

I. INTRODUCTION

A. FOCUS

This study is concerned with determining the perceptions of Human Resource Management specialists toward their jobs and coworkers. Specifically, are Human Resource Management specialists' image of the current HRM program the same as their image of what the HRM program should be?

An interview guide was developed for this purpose and administered to Human Resource Management specialists in various Human Resource Management Centers (HRMCs) and Detachments (HRMDs). The questions were open ended and based on similar questions in a previous study of fleet Naval Officers' image of the HRM program [Mixner, 1978]. Other questions were based on the author's experience tour of duty at an HRMD.

The author's personal experience in the HRM program at the Naval Postgraduate School provided the initiative for this paper. It was here that the author became aware of an attitude of resistance toward the HRM program among fellow officers. While on the practical experience tour, the author also observed resistance to one aspect of the HRM program, survey guided development.

B. PURPOSE

It is the purpose of this thesis to identify areas of concern in the HRM program as perceived by the Human Resource

Management Specialists (HRMSs). If we assume that the HRMSs
have the experience and the knowledge necessary for recom-
mending intelligent policy guidance for the HRM program, then
specific directions for improvement of the image of the Navy's
HRM program could be ascertained. The author has done this
in the last chapter of this study by qualitatively measuring
the difference between the HRMS's present or "as is" attitude
toward the HRM program and the future or "should be" attitude
toward the HRM program.

C. BACKGROUND

The last two decades have witnessed social and technolog-
ical changes which far overshadow both the amount and rate
of changes at any other time in history. One result of these
social forces has been an increased awareness of the worth
of the individual. The Navy, as an extension of the larger
society, has been similarly affected by the dynamics of
changing attitudes in society.

Forces for change in the Navy have come from external
and internal sources. Declining resources and increased
demands for efficiency under the "all volunteer" concept can
be seen as external requirements. At the same time, the
Department of Defense's Human Goals Credo of 1969 began
several internally generated programs to counter racial in-
cidents and other social disturbances during the early 1970's.

Change became a necessity. However, the Navy, like other large organizations, feared disruptive changes which might threaten its mission. The application of behavioral science in organizational settings was seen as a way to assist Navy commands with orderly change. The chosen means of bringing about that change was "organizational development" (OD). The Navy's first OD effort was initiated in 1971 under Admiral Zumwalt with the establishment of the Human Relations Project Office. Presently, organizational development in the Navy is called the Human Resource Management (HRM) program. HRM now incorporates the once separate programs of command development, equal opportunity, drug and alcohol education, and overseas diplomacy. Individual counseling and assistance problems in drug and alcohol abuse are also handled by various centers, which together with the HRM effort, make up what is known as the Human Resource Management Support System. The Human Resource Management component of that system can be viewed in Appendix B.

By instruction, fleet units are to receive HRM activities every 18 to 24 months, normally via a survey guided development effort (SGD). This effort culminates in a week long problem solving and action planning session known as the Human Resource Availability week (HRAV). Out of this planning activity comes the Command Action Plan (CAP) and Affirmative Action Plan (AAP) for approaching command and equal opportunity problems respectively. Many HRM centers and

detachments are not operating strictly by this instruction however. Instead they are offering voluntary services to fleet units in many different areas. There is a possibility that all HRM centers and detachments will be operating as a voluntary service in the future.

The metamorphosis of the HRM program has not been a smooth transition. The program's image has suffered from the belief of some that the program is solely involved with the early equal opportunity oriented "upwards" seminars. These seminars were given in response to a crisis of racial incidents aboard Navy vessels in the early 1970's. They left a bad impression on many due to their perceived unmilitary approach.

Presently, resistance by fleet personnel to the HRM program is offset by mandated requirements for participation in HRM activities. Considering the possibility of a voluntary HRM cycle, it becomes paramount that the resistance to the HRM program by fleet members be reduced and the image of the HRM program improved.

II. METHODOLOGY

The literature in the social sciences concerning data gathering is replete with researchers arguing for the advantages of one form over another. Out of this debate has grown a research method that supports the use of multiple methods. This research tactic has been described as convergent validation or, what Webb [et al., 1966] has called "triangulation."

The term triangulation has its roots in navigation strategy. Just as the navigator can get a more accurate idea of his whereabouts using two or more lines of position, the researcher can improve the accuracy of his/her judgments by collecting different kinds of data bearing on the same phenomenon [Jick, 1979].

The basic assumption of triangulation lies in the hope that a weakness, or potential for bias, in one method will be offset by a strength of another [Jick, 1979]. Any variance found between results of a trait by two or more independent methods would be a variance of the trait and not the method. This convergence between two or more methods is labeled by Denzin (1978) as the "between (or across) methods" type, and represents the most popular use of triangulation [Jick, 1979].

This "between-method" triangulation tests the degree of external validity and is designed for convergent validation [Jick, 1979]. This research design was used in the present study.

A. DATA GATHERING

Three separate methods of data gathering were used in the study; field observations as a participant observer at an HRMD, intensive interviewing with an interview guide, and document analysis (when it offered a specific insight to a perceived issue).

The materials for the field observation portion of this study were collected over a one month period while the author was attached to an HRMD as part of his graduate school training. Perceptions of events were initially jotted down as they occurred. In the evenings, jotted notes were smoothed into field journal entries. In addition, the recollection and smoothing of notes was greatly facilitated by another student who accompanied the author on the field experience.

As an observer at the HRMD the author was both a complete participant and participant-as-observer. McCall and Simmons (1969) define the complete participant as one whose true identity and purpose in field research are not known to those whom he observes. Although the identity was known, thus alleviating the problem of role-pretense, the purpose of the author's visit was not known as one of researcher. Indeed, it was the field experience that first sparked the author's interest in the subject of this paper.

For the most part, however, the author's role more closely resembled that of participant-as-observer. McCall Simmons (1969) state that in this role, both field worker

and informant are aware that theirs is a field relationship. As such, the greatest problem faced by the author was one of "going native." McCall and Simmons (1969) state that this happens when the field worker over-identifies with the informant and starts to lose his research perspective. This was compounded by the fact that this researcher would most likely someday find himself employed in a job very similar to that of the informant's.

An open ended interview was formulated (see Appendix A) for the gathering of further qualitative data. Using Mixner's (1978) study and field observations as a framework, questions were written for the purpose of eliciting the HRM specialists' perceptions concerning the "as is" and "should be" state of the Navy's HRM program and HRM specialist.

Since the author had little knowledge of what the responses might reveal, an unstructured interview format was used. Lofland (1976) describes this kind of format as intensive interviewing with an interview guide. Lofland (1976) goes on to state:

> Its object is to find out what kinds of things are happening, rather than to determine the frequency of pre-determined kinds of things that the researcher already believes can happen.

Given the relative autonomy of the Navy's HRM centers and detachments [Bishop & Gaskin, 1979], it was decided that some personnel from all the HRM centers and detachments be interviewed. The structure of the Navy's HRM system and their geographic location can be viewed in Appendix B.

12

Due to the wide geographical area involved, telephone interviews were decided upon. The military's world-wide AUTOVON telephone network was utilized. Calls were placed during low usage times for the majority of AUTOVON users (located in the continental U.S.) whenever feasible. Therefore, the success of "holding a line" and clarity of reception were greatly enhanced.

Due to the author's knowledge of the formal categories of team leader and team member among the ranks of the HRM specialists, a sampling procedure for interviewees of the sort described by McCall and Simmons (1969) as quota sampling was utilized.

This quota sampling involved essentially two facets. First, senior officers in the positions of Commanding Officer, Executive Officer, or Operations Officer, in the case of HRM centers, and Officer-in-Charge, Assistant Officer-in-Charge, or Operations Officer, in the case of HRM detachments, were interviewed. It was felt that their positions gave them a vantage point for an overall perspective of their programs. In addition, if not already team leaders, they would have close working relationships with their team leaders and may voice their team leaders' joint concerns.

The second facet involved interviewing an enlisted member at each of the centers and detachments for his/her individual perspective. These individuals were not stratified by rank since, in the vast majority of cases, they

were all in the chief petty officer category structure. This subgroup was comprised of both team members and team leaders.

Randomness of sampling was increased in that an enlisted team member/leader was requested on initial call up. In only two of the cases, the individuals broke off the interview after learning of its purpose. Therefore, the randomness of the quota sample was assumed.

In three of the HRM center and detachment locations another officer was interviewed. In addition, an enlisted team member from HRMC Washington was not interviewed since there were none available.

Out of a total of approximately 380 possible respondents 30 interviews were collected. This number is within the number typically found in other qualitative interviewing studies. According to Lofland (1971), other studies of this type normally use between 20 to 50 interviews. This seemingly small number is due to the enormous amount of material that is generated. Breadth is sacrificed for depth.

Document analysis consisted of both official and un-official reports and articles which shed light on certain issues developed in the analysis of the field journal and interview data. Although the views contained in such lit-erary works is often partisan or merely official views, those imparted by informants may be no less partisan or official and they often are important data in themselves [McCall & Simmons, 1969].

14

B. ANALYSIS

In approaching the problems involved in analyzing inter-
view data, a three step problem solving design presented by
Butler (1979) was used. These steps address obstacles to
overcome in planning the analysis of qualitative data. They
are 1.) mass of data, 2.) categories, and 3.) bias.

First, the problems faced by the analysis of a large
mass of data was handled in the following manner. The tele-
phone interviews were conducted over a one month period and
averaged twenty minutes each. During the interviews, rough
notes were made on copies of the interview form (Appendix A).
The interviews were tape recorded with the permission of
the respondents in all cases. Later, the rough notes were
smoothed to direct quotes via the recordings.

After the interviewing was completed, the smoothed notes
were transposed to long sheets of legal pad by question
response. Coded by number for cross reference with the
smooth notes, this allowed for initial analysis by question.

The next step involved the generation of rough categories
and the concurrent classification of general leaning of
response (i.e., bad, good, improving, etc.). The first
generation of categories allowed the combination of responses
due to the similarity of certain responses and their justifi-
cations. Responses from questions two and three and ques-
tions seven and eight were combined in this manner.

The responses were coded by HRM center or detachment so that any bias by locality might be easily discerned. Finally, the question response sheets were coded such that they could be laid side by side for a horizontal look at an individual's set of responses for trends toward individual types as positive, negative, etc.

In analyzing the verbal data attention was directed at learning about the respondents' operational and modal realities. As expressed by Schatz and Strauss (1973):

> Specifically, what the listener is after are the expressed "is's" and "because's" of his subjects. The "is" reveals their designations of the things, people and events—the objectified content of these people's reality. The "because" reveals the presumed relations among all the designations, the why's and wherefore's, the causes, processes, and reason—in short, the very logic of their thinking about the content of their reality.

The second problem to overcome was the categorization of data. The first phase of analysis, that of content analysis, involved the categorization of responses. As related by Dunham and Smith (1979), this involves placing comments in categories that grow out of the analysis. This is a form of differential analysis.

The second phase of the analysis, that of integrative analysis, was conducted for underlying themes of individuals' perceptions [Dunham & Smith, 1979]. This was accomplished by reviewing responses by individual, vice by question, or category.

The third, and final step as presented by Butler (1979) was bias. The author suspected three possible forms of bias. The first was concerned with the interview guide itself. The bias of the research instrument was reduced by the standardization of presentation which allowed for content comparability. The second bias dealt with the author's personal biases. The bias of the researcher was probably most seriously accentuated by "going native" as a participant observer. While analyzing data, the most objective stance was attempted by the author. The third bias considered was that of the respondents. The bias of the respondents in the form of ulterior motives, or vested interests, could not be determined directly, and was proposed under specific responses when its presence was suspected.

When analyzing the field notes, retrospective reworking proved to be the major source of data. Retrospective reworking is a process by which the researcher recalls certain peripheral events while studying his field notes. In this manner, significant aspects of the event may appear that were previously omitted [McCall & Simmons, 1969].

The goal of the qualitative analysis was probably best expressed by Lofland (1971):

> The qualitative analyst seeks to provide an explicit rendering of the structure, order, and patterns found among a set of participants.

17

III. FINDINGS

This chapter is organized by interview question results
with subsequent discussion of field observations and document
analysis where applicable. Occasionally, interviewees'
responses under one question were transferred to a more ap-
plicable question when the author thought it was warranted.

Question one: What is your experience with the Navy's HRM
                program?

The only analysis considered for this question was one
of determining time as an HRM specialist and if the indi-
vidual was ever a user of HRM services prior to becoming a
HRM specialist. On average, the respondents had spent 28.6
months in the program and approximately 50% had been prior
users of HRM services.

Question two & three: How do you feel HRM is perceived in
                        the fleet? Why do you think these
                        perceptions are so?

These questions were analyzed jointly as their responses
considerably overlapped.

In the vast majority of cases, the responses pointed to
mixed perceptions of the HRM program which were improving.
The subgroups in which the mixed perceptions were most
frequently reported to occur were by: 1.) Commanding
Officer/Executive Officer, 2.) Command levels, 3.) Community
(surface, subsurface, and aviation), and 4.) HRM programs.

Those who mentioned the Commanding Officer/Executive
Officer level of perceptions stated that the most important
factor in perceptions was past experience with the program
and they pointed to the importance of commitment from the
top of the organization in an organizational development
venture.

Respondents who viewed perceptions of their program via
command levels tended to state that: 1.) the staff level
were unknowledgeable about the HRM program, 2.) the upper
command level (CO/XO) were the most knowledgeable, 3.) the
middle management level were the most resistant, and 4.) the
lower levels were the most unknowledgeable.

Interviewees who saw the division of opinions about the
HRM program occurring by community tended to cite the over-
committed surface Navy with its lack of time for HRM activi-
ties. They portrayed the subsurface community with its high
priority for manning as possibly having less interest in
conserving its human resources. The aviation community was
perceived as having a basic maintenance approach to HRM,
utilizing the Human Resource Availability Week for upgrading
of its Command Action Plan.

Those who thought the perceptions varied by HRM program
tended to report that equal opportunity, phase II, and women
in the Navy workshops were at times received as phony or
plastic. Drug and alcohol abuse workshops were felt to be
received with mixed responses. Leadership and management

skills workshops and survey guided development were reported
to be received positively in the fleet if they resulted in
a good Command Action Plan or Affirmative Action Plan.

Some reasons given for the improvement in the perception
of the HRM program were:

The Commanding Officers see a benefit in using the HRM
programs.

Commanding Officers who have had a successful HRM inter-
vention advertise their successes with other Commanding
Officers.

HRM is offering more practical products to client
commands.

The commands know its their program, dealing with their
needs.

The education of officers concerning HRM at PCO/PXO
school and the Naval Postgraduate School.

The most often cited reason for negative perceptions
of the HRM program dealt with past experiences with the
program, specifically poor perceptions concerning the equal
opportunity upwards awareness seminar and equal opportunity
phase II programs. Explanations for the poor perceptions
noted deficiencies in the instructures' motivations and the
mandated approach of the program.

Some other reported reasons for a negative attitude
toward the HRM program included:

The burden it places on already overcommitted surface
units.

Little marketing being done for HRM programs.

Lack of immediate results in HRM OD ventures.

Lack of top level exposure to HRM programs.

The HRM specialist was credited with improving perceptions of the HRM program by doing a better job of analyzing survey data and providing feedback due to their training at Memphis and their increased specialization. However, the HRM specialist is sometimes, although not as much as in the past, perceived as an "escape artist," trying to get out of his/her warfare specialty for shore duty.

Some of the comments in answer to these questions follow;

> "Varies tremendously depending on client command and previous experience that that command and those people in that command have had with the system."

> "Changing from Phase I image.... now more to client needs. At the present time it's gaining a great deal of credibility. I think it's now being perceived as a positive force for change in the fleet."

> "A very, very poor experience in race relations in the Phase I and even some of the Phase II evolutions. Some people had some very bad experiences with it as I did."

> "Most commands in the Navy see value in what we do and would like to take advantage of it, but they just can't because of meeting commitments and doing what their main function is comes first. We realize that too."

When the responses were analyzed by area there appeared to be a tendency for respondents to answer in a similar manner. This observation, given the sample size, of course would be based on conjecture alone.

The field experience data generally supported these perceptions. There was an overall feeling of mixed perceptions

to their programs as related by the HRM specialists. These perceptions were driven for the most part by good or bad past experiences. Phase I and II problems and bias were frequently mentioned as stumbling blocks.

However, an incident involving the initial meeting and subsequent surveying of a submarine crew failed to support the beforementioned comment concerning submarine community disinterest with the program. HRM specialists in charge of the intervention stated that they felt the submarine Commanding Officer was interested and committed to the process.

Document analysis was found to be equally supportive of these perceptions. Forbes (1977) mentioned an early problem with the utilization of non-career identified consultants. He also pointed to the resistance to the HRM program by the middle management and supervisory ranks due to their perceived disassociation with ownership in the program. More recently, an analysis of the HRM program done by Bishop and Gaskin (1979) has recommended that major marketing efforts at all levels should be initiated to improve the image of the program. They also stated that higher priority events can detract from the impact the HRM program has on a command.

Question four: Are fleet personnel aware of HRM program successes?

There wasn't as much of a concensus on this question as upon the last two questions. The responses varied from no,

or the majority is not aware, to yes, or the majority is aware. Surprisingly, an analysis by detachment, center, and fleet failed to turn up any regional trends in answering this question.

In the previous questions, respondents sometimes replied that perceptions varied by rank and their subsequent knowledge level. In like manner, the interviewees sometimes linked rank and their knowledge levels of the HRM program with awareness of HRM program successes. The Immediate Senior in Command (ISIC) level and staff officer level along with very junior enlisted and junior officers were reported to be the most unknowledgeable. Generally, however, the higher up the chain of command to the Commanding Officer level, the more knowledge about HRM successes.

An often cited reason for their belief that fleet personnel were aware of HRM program successes was the observation that their clients were coming to them for business and their workshops were filled.

The mixed perceptions seemed to be caused by the lack of public relations about services Navy wide. Therefore, the only personnel who had any knowledge about successes were those who had experienced one.

Among the insights stated for a lack of awareness of HRM successes were:

> CO/XOs have limited knowledge of HRM concepts and cant' judge its success.

> HRM results aren't very quantifiable.

A self-fulfilling prophecy of negative perceptions about the HRM program prevents them from obtaining successes.

A lack of credit given to HRM for program successes by COs because doing so would be admitting that HRM had helped them.

Some of the comments obtained from this question were:

"Sailors are very aware here. We don't have to knock on doors for business. They come to us. We're booked one month to six weeks in advance."

"It's being gradually implemented and they're becoming aware of it. People are starting to realize that it's a slow process with benefits down the road."

"Generally no, unless they've been involved in one of their own."

"Not overall, there's very little 'PR' Navy wide about services."

The field observations, while not extensive in this area, did point to a perceived lack of advertising about the HRM program.

Question five: What would a success or failure of the HRM cycle be in your opinion?

A success was judged quite often to be some sort of measurable improvement, i.e., better retention, climate, or fewer problem areas. Other measures of success included:

CO's report on the HRM activity

Meeting the needs of the command

99% command involvement

Return business for HRM services

Identifying the issues culminating in a good command action plan

The opinions of a failure ranged from "no such thing" to "the cycle is a failure." In general, however, a failure was reported as:

> No commitment for change

> Closed doors (not accepting HRM services) or treating it as something that has to be done

> Not meeting the needs of the command by command or joint assessment

> Poor mission effectiveness

Some of the comments evoked by this question included:

Success-

> "Follow-on activities is our best measure of success."

> "Measurable improvement in readiness, retention, morale, and most importantly, however unmeasurable, combat effectiveness."

Failure-

> "A lot of experience here. CO gives lip service, CAP in waste basket, AAP in drawer, no feedback, sometimes we don't even get through initial meeting."

> "Can't say you would have failure as long as you have support of CO."

Participant observation seemed to suggest a tendency for success to be measured by improvements in readiness, problems, and the command's ability to take care of itself. While some considered a failure to be closed doors, others seemed to consider closed doors to be more of a neutral event.

Although the HRM program has had difficulty in determining a quantifiable measure of success, it has been shown to have some impact on non-judicial punishment [Crawford and

Thomas, 1975], operational performance [Mumford, 1976], and reenlistment rates [Drexler and Bowers, 1978]. On a more pessimestic note, although we crave a numerical verification of what we are doing, it may be impossible to prove that what OD consultants are doing is effective [Pfeiffer and Jones, 1976].

Question six: What quality of people are being assigned to the HRM effort? What quality were assigned in the past?

This question tended to evoke immediate confident responses from the most positive end of the spectrum to the most negative. While it might be said that the remarks leaned more toward the good and improving side of the issue, it would be purely conjecture as there were several negative and dis-improving comments.

Factors that have led to an improvement in the quality of HRMSs were reported as:

Emphasis in detailing

More career oriented HRMSs

More highly skilled or educated HRMSs

Less "escape artists" from the fleet

More HRMSs with experience either in command at sea or with the HRM program previously

More well rounded HRMSs in the field of management techniques vice just equal opportunity

Reasons noted for a decline of quality of HRMSs were:

No emphasis in detailing

More junior people are being assigned as HRMSs with a lower experience level

Lack of measurable criteria for selection as instructors at HRMS school

Less warfare specialists are being assigned as HRMSs with a subsequent loss of credibility

Lack of a career enhancing atmosphere in HRM

Some of the comments elicited by this question follow:

"Greatest amounts of progress we've made since I've been in the program. I think that now we're assigning, both officer and enlisted, professional people who have academic credentials and an honest interest in performing this as a readiness mission."

"It varies pretty widely...we're getting a pretty good shake of people."

"Good, but less talented than we've had in the past... general decline in quality."

"Absolutely terrible. There's just no other way to describe it. People who are assigned to us are required to be in the top 50%....and that's no where near the caliber of people we need."

As a participant observer, the general concensus among the HRMSs concerning this perception could not be assertained. However, some felt that the quality of the HRMS had improved, while others thought that it was at least being maintained.

Bishop and Gaskin's (1979) report on the HRM system mentioned the lack of career enhancement noted by unrestricted line officers toward the HRM program and recommended a change in qualifications criteria for HRMSs to improve their credibility. Both of these issues were brought out by the interviewees.

It should be noted that the responses to this question could have drawn out biases for any number of self serving reasons. However, the convergence with issues identified by a previous report seems to support the credibility of at least some of the respondent's comments.

An interesting, although highly subjective, analysis of the comments by detachment or center, seemed to point to common perceptions about the quality of HRMSs in approximately 50% of the cases, be it good, bad, or average. In addition, the direction of response (positive or negative) in most of those locations tended to be in the same direction as the response to question two concerning the perception of HRM in the fleet. In other words, it appeared, in some cases at least, that when an interviewee viewed other's perceptions of HRM as positive or negative, he/she viewed the quality of HRMSs in like manner, and that these feelings tended to be shared by the detachment or center.

The most obvious surmise about the above analysis is that some detachments/centers are perceiving that they are getting good people who increase the credibility of the program in the fleet, while other detachments/centers are getting only bad people, who hurt the fleet's perception of the HRM program. In the hope that such a dynamic is not at work, some other possibilities seem more viable.

The climate in the center or detachment might be a factor in the interviewee's perceptions. That is, a good

command climate might cause the HRMS to feel more positive about his/her abilities and be able to project that image to the client commands, who might then perceive the program in a more positive light.

Another possibility could assert that the dynamic of a self-fulfilling prophecy is at work in some HRM commands. If a HRMS believes that the fleet perceives the HRM program or him/her in a negative manner, then the HRMS might begin to believe it and fulfill that role.

Question seven: What programs or efforts should be included in an HRM effort?

Question eight: What kinds of programs or efforts should not be part of the HRM system?

These questions were analysed together as the responses tended to overlap.

Many respondents interpreted the above questions in a specific intervention context rather than from a total program approach to the HRM system. The majority of responses therefore dealt with whatever effort was necessary to meet the client command's needs.

Among those efforts cited as useful, if needed by the client command were:

Equal opportunity and affirmative action planning

Drug/alcohol abuse workshops

Leadership and management workshops

Survey guided development

Assessment work (via interviewing)

Crisis interventions

Women at sea workshops

More community involvement, i.e., parent effectiveness training

Retention workshops

Ombudsman programs

Rape prevention workshops

Command action planning

Deployment programs

Organizational development

Goal setting

Team building

Workgroup problem solving

Overseas duty support programs

The general concensus was best expressed by the following statement:

> "Anything that relates to making organizations more effective that we can do, utilizing behavior science, is relevant."

Although many interviewees responded "none" to question eight, some respondents noted the following as areas that HRM should attempt to stay away from:

Utilization in an investigators role (IG context)

Grievances

Drug/alcohol and equal opportunity (make them adjunct programs)

All forms of individual counseling in the areas of alcohol/drug abuse and retention (utilize the HRMSs and career counselors)

Comments from this question included:

"Anything not directed to what that command needs, can afford, and what it's ready for."

"Those (programs) not coming from increased funding or support. Dilutes what we're supposed to be doing in the first place."

Two observations regarding these questions were high-lighted by the author's field experience and confirmed by the interview data. The first concerns the overseas duty support program. This program was perceived by some to be "dying a natural death," with virtually no requests from fleet units for its services and little to no concern within the HRM structure for its continuation.

The second issue involves the equal opportunity program. While a couple of interviewees thought it should be made an adjunct program, more responses tended toward modifying it to make it more realistic. Some respondents wanted to place renewed emphasis in actions to counter racism and cited their observations of increased racist activities. One interviewee thought that a phase III equal opportunity program might be necessary.

Considering the role that the early equal opportunity programs were reported to have played in the current nega-tive perception profile of HRM, it appears that the problems with the early equal opportunity programs were not a result

of having an equal opportunity program, but were somehow caused in its delivery.

Question nine: How will the coming voluntary HRM cycle affect the Navy's HRM effort?

This question elicited the most evenly distributed across the board responses of any of the questions asked. An analysis by location hinted at a similarity of responses. An analysis by individual and area with question two (fleet perceptions of HRM) failed to turn up any discernable patterns of responses. The hypothesis behind such an analysis was that if HRM was thought to be perceived badly in one's area, then that individual might be concerned with a voluntary HRAV cycle. A possible explanation may lie in one respondent's view that a voluntary cycle would lead to a higher satisfaction level for the HRMS as he/she would be working with organizations who would want to use the HRM services.

Among those locations reporting that their operations were already voluntary (approximately 30% of the locations), the general feeling may have leaned more to the encouragement of a voluntary cycle. However, such an observation would be very tenuous at best.

Many who responded favorably to a move to a voluntary cycle qualified their response with the need to market HRM in their local areas. Others thought that such a move could lead to a better "fit" in the client's schedule.

The most frequently reported concern was that the good organization would ask for help and get better while the poorer units would not. The thought being that those units who needed help would perceive themselves to be overly burdened with their own crisis management of too many other commitments. Others thought that it would appear to be a backing off of top level commitment to the HRM program.

Some responses to question nine follow:

> "Very positively here...will effect each HRMC & HRMD differently depending on marketing skills."

> "It is now. If done properly (advertising) - no problem."

> "Not sure. Based on past 6-8 month significant increase in volunteer work (then) voluntary HRM is the way to go."

> "The expectation will be the command that won't (participate) due to operational commitments."

> "Very dumb to go to that. People who need it won't get it because they're busy and it's (asking for help) an ego buster."

Question ten: Is there anything else you'd like to add concerning the past or future of HRM in the Navy?

Most of the ending comments were upbeat and positive about the importance and future of HRM in the Navy. Several suggestions for improving the HRM program were elicited.

Some thought that HRMSs should be a voluntary position and that back-to-back tours were necessary to increase the HRMS's performance level. Others thought that the billet of HRMS should not be voluntary and that three years was

the maximum amount of time one should spend as an HRMS, otherwise he/she loses touch with the Navy. Not surprisingly, such comments normally mirrored the experience of the HRMS making the comment.

Other concerns and recommendations follow:

A continuing need for commitment to the HRM program from top level commands and commanders

An improved instruction for the utilization of the independent duty HRMS

Increased funding for travel for HRM activities

Emphasis on equal opportunity

Integration with the LMET program

Increased marketing of HRM services

Some of the comments generated by this question follow:

"(HRM is) here to stay. There is a real need for it given the high attrition rates."

"Most effective to have a HRM individual at the command level. Human Resource Officer is now a collateral duty. Should be more like a maintenance 3M manager...full time job."

"More emphasis should be placed on it from ISICs and type commanders. More emphasis on scheduling of HRAV so that no other inspections interfere."

"I'm offended by the lack of emphasis in the Navy in equal opportunity, especially the lack of understanding of institutional racism...Personal racism and sexism is on the rise...more advanced on the east coast."

IV. DISCUSSION

The findings seem to imply that the HRM specialists' "as is" perceptions of their program and their coworkers are not always the same as their "should be" perceptions. There was a leaning toward an improving image profile of HRM with the fleet, however, several areas of the program appeared to warrant change from the specialists' perspective.

The reported lack of knowledge about HRM at the staff and ISIC level could have negative implications for the HRM program. There may be a lack of importance attached to the scheduling of HRM activities, as these command levels play a large role in the scheduling of operational units. In addition, a commanding officer of an operational unit may not be motivated to participate fully in an HRM activity if he/she perceives his/her superior to feel less than positively inclined toward the HRM program.

The resistance to the HRM program reported in the middle management is an additional concern since these individuals are the operational leaders of tomorrow.

A possible inference from the data might suggest that a voluntary HRM cycle could result in a lessening of the HRM activities in the surface and subsurface communities due to commitment levels and manning levels respectfully. In addition there may be no medium for units to ascertain the

advantages of the HRM program, although some schools are presently disseminating information about HRM prior to individual's sea duty tours.

Perceptions of HRM might vary by locale for any number of reasons, i.e., type of community mix served, number of clients, etc. If the fleets' perceptions of the HRM program vary by locality, then a voluntary HRM effort may be less successful in some areas than in others.

A further implication of the data might infer that if the HRM specialist feels that a failure of HRM activities is "closed doors" and a voluntary HRM cycle leads to an increase of "closed doors" situations, then the HRM specialist may feel more negative about his/her self image, thus reducing his/her effectiveness. However, another possible supposition might ascertain that the HRM specialist's self image may become more positive as his/her satisfaction level increases with more responsive and willing clients.

An additional concern regarding the possibility of a voluntary HRM cycle was the often stated outcome that good units would ask for help (HRM services) and get better while poorer units would not request assistance and subsequently lose more of their organizational effectiveness. Another implication might be the perception among commanding officers that the HRM program no longer has the backing of top level commands, thereby reducing its importance from their point of view.

In assessing the quality of HRM specialists, several implications were manifested. While the quality of HRM specialists appears to be improving, there still seems to be a question of whether the assignment criteria for becoming an HRM specialist is adequate given the skills he/she must master. A possible result of assigning less than adequate personnel to the HRM program would be to lower the image of the HRM program with a subsequent loss of credibility.

The same dynamics may be at work in the assignment of fewer warfare specialists to HRM billets, possibly causing a loss of credibility in the perceptions of their client commands. However, an equally disturbing implication might involve the lowering of professional abilities of HRM specialists due to a lack of return assignments to HRM billets. These two situations, the assignment of more warfare specialists and HRM specialists with previous HRM experience to HRM billets, aren't qualities that the same individual normally possesses. This is due to the operational time lost in one's professional development as a warfare specialist if one takes return assignments in HRM. Of course, this perception is applicable only in what is currently considered a normal career path.

A possible consequence of the death of the overseas diplomacy program might be a lack of knowledge of foreign cultures and mannerisms by the fleet sailors. This could result in a perceived lack of respect for foreign customs

and lead to a degradation of the American image overseas.

Regarding the concern expressed by HRM specialists about the current state of equal opportunity in the Navy, one might surmise that without a new equal opportunity program the Navy could be setting the stage for some of the same type of racial problems it faced in the past. This is an especially grave point considering the recent unrest displayed in areas of the civilian sector. An equally important consideration to having an equal opportunity program seems to be the method of its delivery. A possible implication in this regard, is that an equal opportunity program similar to those of the past could drive more resistance and negativism to the HRM program in general.

Reduced funding for travel for HRM activities may be perceived as a backing off of top level support. Many detachments utilize travel funds in working with commands. Without the funds, many commands would be alienated from receiving HRM services.

CDR Frank L. Mixner's (1978) study addressed the attitude of the U.S. Naval Officer toward HRM and specified areas in which to work for improvement of this attitude. Utilizing an approach based on consistency theory of attitude change, he developed a survey questionnaire and distributed it to naval officer students at the Naval Postgraduate School. The questionnaire asked for the degree that specific adjectives described the HRM specialist and HRM program.

He found that the adjectives describing the HRM special-ist that needed the most improvement from the naval officers' viewpoint were: respected, practical, productive, competent, and professional. In addition, he recommended that high performers be assigned to HRM billets and that HRM special-ists be promoted with their peers [Mixner, 1978].

The present study found that the quality of HRM specialists seems to be improving. This was especially significant con-sidering the number of comments generated that pointed to an improvement in the quality of HRM specialists over a time frame that was generally something less than two years. However, perceptions of a lack of emphasis in detailing HRM specialists and lack of a career enhancing atmosphere as a HRM specialist are still present in the fleet.

The adjectives respected and professional may have been a reflection on the lack of warfare specialists assigned as a HRM specialist. This credibility gap seems to still be present, at least to some degree.

The adjectives practical and productive could have been a reflection on the difficulty in determining a successful HRM activity, its lack of immediate results, its non-quantifiable nature, and the lack of knowledge about HRM programs, due to the absence of a marketing mechanism.

Mixner (1978) also found that adjectives describing the HRM program that needed the most improvement were: effective, successful, efficient, productive and practical. He

recommended that people be informed of HRM program successes, that the program be more responsive to fleet needs, and that additional emphasis be placed on education at the required HRM courses.

The present study found that there is still a problem in informing fleet members of HRM successes. This is due, in part, to the problem of determining a successful HRM venture and the absence of a fleet wide marketing mechanism. In addition, the confidentiality of the HRM data doesn't allow for dissemination of successful interventions. The psyche of some commanding officers may also prevent them from admitting that HRM had helped them.

There was a tendency among the interviewees to state that progress had been made in becoming more responsive to fleet needs and credit for improving perceptions of the HRM program was given to the required HRM courses at PCO/PXO school and the Naval Postgraduate School's HRM curriculum.

An interesting observation in analyzing Mixner's (1978) findings with the current study involved Mixner's participants. The student population at the Naval Postgraduate School is largely composed of middle management personnel. This population was determined to be the most resistant to the HRM program by the present study. A possible implication of this finding is that any possible recommendations for improvement of the HRM program be geared to the middle management level.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Specific recommendations include the following:

1. Arrange for HRM interventions with staff and ISIC
   level commands or at least provide some form of
   presentation workshop to familiarize these levels
   with HRM activities.

2. Initiate a participative approach to the advent of a
   voluntary HRM cycle, whereby HRM centers and de-
   tachments are allowed to implement the move on a
   time table either determined by them or in some
   joint fashion with higher commands.

3. Initiate a major marketing effort of HRM activities
   supported and disseminated from the highest echelons
   of the Navy utilizing commanding officers' testimon-
   ials of successful HRM efforts (when authorized by
   those commanding officers).

4. Increase the education of the middle management
   level of the Navy in HRM theory and practices.

5. Ascertain more restrictive criteria for assignment
   for duty as an HRM specialist.

6. Provide an HRM specialist assignment policy of some
   mix of warfare specialists along with a specialized
   cadre of HRM specialist professionals with more than
   one tour in HRM.

7. Introduce a promotion policy to insure that the deserving HRM specialist professional is advanced in rank with his/her peer group.

8. Place a renewed emphasis in the overseas duty support program. This might be best accomplished in unison with a mandated HRM visit prior to deployments for the purpose of introducing management techniques that may be of interest to commanding officers planning a deployment to increase their overseas operations.

9. The consideration of a new action to counter racism program, paying special attention to its phraseology, approach, and delivery.

10. Separate HRM travel funds from other travel funds when cuts in funding are made. This is necessary due to the importance of assisting all fleet units in increasing their effectiveness as organizations.

While the HRM program has made improvements in its image, there still seem to be many areas of concern that warrant attention.

This study has shown the qualitative interviewing technique to be helpful, not only in identifying perceptions, but in providing supporting and explanatory comments concerning those perceptions as well. When coupled with other data gathering methods, as in triangulation, the data becomes a more valid tool for the policy maker.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Preliminary data: Who _____/Rank_____

Where _____

Time/Date_____

I'm Lieutenant Gus Lorberg. I'm a student in the Human
Resource Management curriculum at the Naval Postgraduate
School in Monterey, California. I'm conducting telephone
interviews concerning the Human Resource Management Program
in the Navy as part of my thesis research. I'd like to talk
to you for about fifteen minutes if this is a convenient time
for you.

My thesis is about the Navy's Human Resource Management
Program, and how it is understood in the fleet. I also hope
to make recommendations that will affect the future of the
Navy's program.

I want to assure you that whatever you say is strictly
confidential. I'm not interested in identifying you person-
ally. Nor am I going to quote you personally. I will sum-
marize the opinions I get when I have completed interviewing.
Do you have any questions about the nature of our talks? Do
you have any objections to the tape recording of this inter-
view for purposes of analysis?

1. What is your experience with the Navy's HRM program?

2. How do you feel HRM is perceived in the fleet?

3. Why do you think these perceptions are so?

4. Are fleet personnel aware of HRM program successes?

5. What would a success or failure of the HRM Cycle be in your opinion?

6. What quality of people are being assigned to the HRM effort? What quality were assigned in the past?

7. What programs or efforts should be included in an HRM effort?

8. What kinds of programs or efforts should not be a part of the HRM system?

9. How will the coming voluntary HRM cycle affect the Navy's
    HRM effort?

10. Is there anything else you'd like to add concerning the
    past or future of HRM in the Navy?

APPENDIX B

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

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                        Chief of Naval Operations
                                OP-01
                                OP-15
                                  |
        ┌─────────────────────────┼─────────────────────────┐
   CINCLANTFLT                CINCPACFLT                 CINCUSNAVEUR
        |                         |                           |
   HRMC NORFOLK          HRMC PEARL   HRMC SAN DIEGO      HRMC LONDON      HRMC WASHINGTON
        |                    |              |                  |
   HRMD NEW LONDON      HRMD SUBIC     HRMD ALAMEDA       HRMD ROTA
   HRMD CHARLESTON      HRMD YOKO                         HRMD NAPLES
   HRMD MAYPORT         HRMD WHIDBEY
```
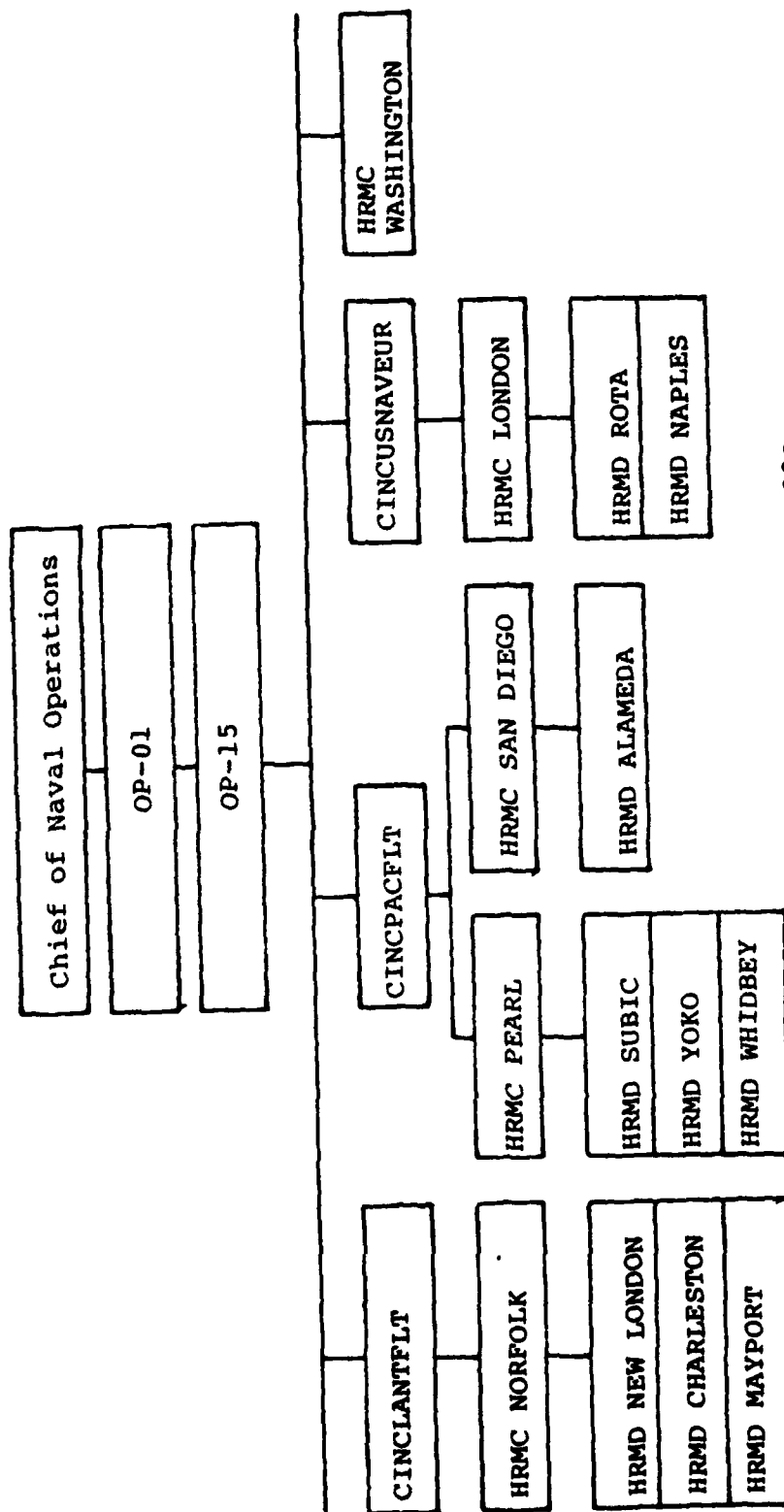
TOTAL POPULATION 380

SAMPLE SIZE   30

46

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