

NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

Monterey, California



THESIS

REENGINEERING THE MARINE CORPS OFFICER PROMOTION PROCESS FOR UNRESTRICTED OFFICERS

by

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March 2001

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503.				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)		2. REPORT DATE March 2002		3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's Thesis
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Reengineering The Marine Corps Officer Promotion Process For Unrestricted Officers			5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR (S) Michael B. Williams and Scott Vasquez				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)			10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.				
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE	
13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words) The Marine Corps manpower system has the responsibility of ensuring that the appropriate numbers of trained and experienced Marines are assigned to commanders to perform their missions. The main concern with the current manpower system is that there are many skills that are critically short while others exceed requirements. The questions that are addressed in this thesis are, "can and should the Marine Corps promotion system be restructured, redesigned, or replaced to fulfill the objective of properly structuring the force," and "what would be the policy implications, unintended consequences, and pros and cons of promoting officers by MOS?" The authors explored the issue by first taking a detailed look at the history, statutory basis, and operation of the Marine Corps officer promotion system. The authors then examined the history, statutory basis, and operations of the officer promotion systems of the Navy, Army and Air Force to understand if their promotion systems were engineered to deal with force structuring concerns. The authors conclude the thesis by discussing why restructuring the Marine Corps officer promotion system would not be the best alternative for the Marine Corps and then give recommendations on how the Marine Corps could better implement a force structuring option.				
14. SUBJECT TERMS Promotion, Manpower Policy Issues, Requirements Determination, Manpower Supply			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 119	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UL	

NSN 7540-01-280-5500

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2-89)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39-18

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**REENGINEERING THE MARINE CORPS OFFICER PROMOTION PROCESS
FOR UNRESTRICTED OFFICERS**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
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MASTER OF SCIENCE IN MANAGEMENT

from the

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ABSTRACT

The Marine Corps manpower system has the responsibility of ensuring that the appropriate numbers of trained and experienced Marines are assigned to commanders to perform their missions. The main concern with the current manpower system is that there are many skills that are critically short while others exceed requirements. The questions that are addressed in this thesis are, “can and should the Marine Corps promotion system be restructured, redesigned, or replaced to fulfill the objective of properly structuring the force,” and “what would be the policy implications, unintended consequences, and pros and cons of promoting officers by MOS?” The authors explored the issue by first taking a detailed look at the history, statutory basis, and operation of the Marine Corps officer promotion system. The authors then examined the history, statutory basis, and operations of the officer promotion systems of the Navy, Army and Air Force to understand if their promotion systems were engineered to deal with force structuring concerns. The authors conclude the thesis by discussing why restructuring the Marine Corps officer promotion system would not be the best alternative for the Marine Corps and then give recommendations on how the Marine Corps could better implement a force structuring option.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to first thank our respective families for their continued patience and support during this project, during our time in graduate school, and throughout our careers. We are also grateful for the education provided by the outstanding faculty and staff at the Naval Postgraduate School. Additionally, we would like to recognize the vital support provided by manpower promotion planners from the Marine Corps, Navy, Army and Air Force. Finally the authors would like to thank our thesis advisors for their insight, guidance, and constructive criticism, which was instrumental in completing this project.

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I. REENGINEERING THE MARINE CORPS PROMOTION SYSTEM

The Marine Corps manpower system has the responsibility of ensuring that the appropriate number of trained and experienced Marines are assigned to commanders to perform their missions. The Marine Corps Officer promotion system is one aspect of the Marine Corps manpower system and is designed to select officers for promotion based on their potential to carry out the duties and responsibilities of the next higher grade.

The Marine Corps promotes individuals on an aggregate basis, and the individuals who are promoted are the best Marine Officers, but they do not necessarily match the requirements needed to support the billet structure as listed in the Authorized Strength Report (ASR) and Grade Adjusted Recapitulation (GAR). The current promotion system is therefore limited in the manner in which it can be utilized to properly structure the organization according to grade and Primary Military Occupational Specialty (PMOS).

A. PROBLEM

The main concern with the current manpower system is that we have many skills that are critically short while others are well over.¹ The promotion system as currently designed only exacerbates this problem because officer promotions are tied to the aggregate vacancies and not the current force structure requirements.

The underlying questions that must be answered in this thesis are, “can and should the Marine Corps promotion system be restructured, redesigned, or replaced to fulfill the objective of properly structuring the force,” and “what would be the policy implications, unintended consequences, and pros and cons of promoting officers by MOS?”

B. METHODOLOGY

The approach to answering the key research question involves documenting the problem, analyzing the promotion process of similar organizations, and recommending solutions.

To document the problem the authors conducted a thorough review of the current Marine Corps promotion process, which included the history and statutory regulations

¹ Wielsma Ronald J. Our Manpower Dilemma. Marine Corps Gazette. Quantico VA. Mar 2001, p. 40.

that effect the process. The authors compared the MOS status report from 1997 to 2001 with the MOS onboard strength reports and the promotion by MOS reports during those same years to determine how well billet vacancies were filled using the “best and most qualified” standard.

The authors interviewed key officers at promotion planning branches of the Navy, Army, and Air Force and reviewed available doctrine to analyze their respective promotion systems for their ability/inability to address force structure requirements. The authors then determined which aspects of their systems could potentially be beneficial for the Marine Corps to implement. Finally, the authors provided recommendations on restructuring the Marine Corps promotion process as well as advantages, disadvantages, and unintended consequences of restructuring the process.

C. THESIS STRUCTURE

This thesis is structured into three phases. The first phase, which is accomplished in chapter one, has three parts. The first part details the manpower context in which the promotion process operates. The second part addresses the question of why the Marine Corps would consider reengineering a promotion system that is statistically successful in achieving its stated goals, and the third part provides a history of previous force-structuring tools that have been employed in the Marine Corps. Upon completion of chapter one the reader will understand why it would be necessary to use the promotion process as a force-structuring tool.

The second phase of the thesis, which is accomplished in chapters two through five, entails an in-depth review of the promotion processes of the four branches of military service. This review will provide the reader a detailed understanding of how the varied promotion processes were framed and how they operate to increase the efficiency of their services. The final phase of this thesis describes the authors’ conclusions about using the promotion process as a force-structuring tool.

D. THE MARINE CORPS MANPOWER PROCESS

To understand the Marine Corps promotion process, it is important to have a general understanding of the Marine Corps manpower process. To elaborate on this process, the authors conducted several interviews with key officers at Marine Corps

Combat Development Command (MCCDC) and Manpower and Reserve Affairs (M&RA).

1. Manpower Objectives

The objective of the manpower process is to provide the appropriate number of trained and experienced Marines to perform the mission of the Corps. Central to the manpower system are three interdependent agencies: Marine Corps Recruiting Command, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, and Manpower and Reserve Affairs.²

The mission of Marine Corps Recruiting Command is to conduct integrated recruiting operations in order to enlist or commission qualified applicants in sufficient quantity and quality to fulfill the requirements of the Marine Corps Total Force Manpower Plan.³

The mission of the Marine Corps Combat Development Command is to develop Marine Corps war-fighting concepts and to determine associated required capabilities in the areas of doctrine, organization, training and education, equipment, and support facilities to enable the Marine Corps to field combat-ready forces; and to participate in and support other major processes of the Combat Development System.⁴

The Total Force Structure Division (TFSD) of Marine Corps Combat Development Command is tasked with determining the appropriate personnel structure for the Marine Corps. An important note is that TFSD is concerned with billets, not the staffing of those billets.⁵

The Manpower and Reserve Affairs Department assists the Commandant by planning, directing, coordinating, and supervising both active and reserve forces.⁶ The Manpower Plans and Policy Division of M&RA is responsible for formulating Marine Corps force manpower plans, including mobilization plans; determining total manpower

² Major J. Grant, Officer Inventory Planner, HQMC. Interview by authors 23 Oct 2001, Quantico, VA.

³ Captain R. Williams, Waivers Officer, Marine Corps Recruiting Command, HQMC. Interview by Captain M. Williams 23 Oct 2001, Quantico, VA.

⁴ Mission of MCCDC. www.mccdc.usmc.mil.

⁵ Major M. Strobl, TFSD, MCCDC. Interview by authors, 24 Oct 2001, Quantico, VA.

⁶ Mission of M&RA. osprey.manpower.usmc.mil/manpower/mi/MRA_OFCT.nsf

needs; preparing plans, policies, programs, and instructions on manpower matters to implement the Commandant's policies and decisions; determining the allocation, distribution and use of all Marine Corps manpower, military and civilian; preparing manpower budget estimates and justification; maintaining liaison with external agencies in manpower matters; and administering and coordinating the overall Marine Corps productivity improvement and total quality leadership efforts.⁷

Together these agencies are responsible for ensuring that the Marine Corps has the proper number of trained personnel to accomplish its mission. How the Marine Corps determines the proper number of trained personnel is a process called Requirements Identification and is an important aspect in understanding the manpower process.

2. The Identification of Requirements

For the Marine Corps to perform its mission, it needs Marines and equipment. The requirement for Marines is developed and expressed in a database called the Table of Manpower Requirements (TMR). The Total Force Structure Division of MCCDC maintains the Table of Manpower Requirements. The TMR prescribes the organizational structure, billet authorizations, and personnel strength for each Marine Corps unit. The TMR also lists the Table of Organization Checklist (T/O) per unit. The Table of Organization provides the billet descriptions, and grade and MOS requirements for each member of the unit. The development of the TMR is based upon actual fleet requirements and is not constrained by fiscal realities. In fiscal year (FY) 2000, there were 154,181 T/O structure spaces in the Marine Corps.⁸

The fiscal constraints are added to the process during the Program Objective Memorandum (POM) stage of the manpower process. The POM process is the resource allocation phase. Congress sets end strength floors and ceilings, and the DOPMA dictates the officer grade distribution, but the officer end-strength is also constrained by what the Marine Corps can afford to buy. In fiscal year 2001, 61 percent of the Marine

⁷ Mission of Manpower Plans and Policy Division. www.osprey.manpower.usmc.mil/manpower/mi/MRA_OFCT.nsf/MP/Manpower+Plans+and+Policy+Division+-+Home

⁸ Major M. Strobl, TFSD, MCCDC. Interview by authors, 24 Oct 2001, Quantico, VA.

Corps budget was programmed for manpower requirements. This meant that the Marine Corps budgeted strength was 172,600.⁹

On the surface it would seem that the budgeted strength of 172,600 was more than enough to cover the 154,181 T/O structure billets. The reason, however, that all billets in the Marine Corps are not filled is because of another manpower constraint called “P2T2,” (Patients, Prisoners, Trainees, and Transients), which is a Department of Defense (DoD) mandated measurement tool that counts against end strength. Patients are Marines who are hospitalized over thirty days. Prisoners are Marines who are incarcerated more than thirty days but less than six months. Trainees include all Marines in entry-level schools or follow-on schools that are in excess of 20 weeks. Transients are Marines who are executing a permanent change of station. In fiscal year 2000, there were an estimated 27,850 Marines in P2T2 status. If you subtract this number from the budgeted strength, the Marine Corps available manning is 144,750 to fill a T/O structure of 154,181.¹⁰

MCCDC is responsible for determining how the units will be manned given the available manning levels. MCCDC accomplishes this task by publishing the Troop List and the Authorized Strength Report (ASR). The Troop List is a macro view of the officer and enlisted structure. It reflects the aggregate number of Marines a particular unit will receive each year of the POM planning horizon (eight years). The ASR is a micro view of the officer and enlisted structure. The ASR breaks the manning level down by grade and MOS.¹¹

The determination of how the manning is apportioned across the various units is determined by type of unit. “Excepted” units are manned and staffed at 100 percent of their T/O; examples are HMX-1 and the Marine Corps Recruiting Command. “Priority” units are manned and staffed at 95 percent of T/O, and these units include Officer Candidate School and the flying squadrons. “Pro-Share” units get what’s left.¹² Figure 1 illustrates how the percentage of manning is applied across the table of organization.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Major J. Grant, Officer Inventory Planner, HQMC. Interview by authors 23 Oct 2001, Quantico, VA.

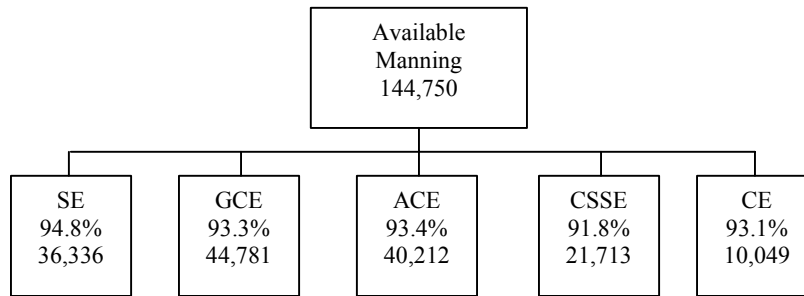


Figure 1. Percentage of Manning Per Organizational Element.

Source: Major J. Grant, Officer Inventory Planner, HQMC.

Note: SE is supporting establishment. GCE is ground combat element. ACE is air combat element. CSSE is combat service support element. CE is command element.

When commanders are faced with the reality that they will not receive all of their T/O structure, and that the Troop List may have only allocated them twenty-eight of thirty required infantry officers, most want the senior billets manned before their junior billets. The TFSD, therefore, runs a complex algorithm when producing the ASR that essentially attempts to “buy” the most senior billets first and then optimizes the other billets. The algorithm will also completely man those billets that have only one T/O allocation in a unit.¹³

3. The Planning Process

Manpower Plans (MP) Division of M&RA has the responsibility of building the future inventory by grade and MOS. If, for example, MCCDC has determined that there is a requirement for twenty-four logistics captains, then new officers must be recruited and trained to staff those billets. Since it takes approximately four years time-in-service for an officer to get promoted to captain, MP must ensure that they send enough Marines from The Basic School (TBS) to the Logistics Officer MOS School in FY 2001 to fill the available billets in FY 2005. If that MOS is critically short, and attrition levels are high, manpower planners may decide to send thirty-four officers to logistics school. This is done considering, of course, the constraint that the Logistics Officer School may not have the staff capacity to handle a large influx of students in a particular year.¹⁴

¹³ Major M. Strobl, TFSD, MCCDC. Interview by authors, 24 Oct 2001, Quantico, VA.

¹⁴ Major J. Grant, Officer Inventory Planner, HQMC. Interview by authors 23 Oct 2001, Quantico, VA.

The number of future billets or ideal inventory is identified in the Grade Adjusted Recapitulation (GAR). The Manpower Management Information System Support Division (MI) of M&RA formulates the GAR. The GAR provides the authorized composition of the inventory by grade and MOS and is used as a target for recruitment, training, and promotion of officer and enlisted Marines. The GAR must take into account the historical attrition rates, promotion rates, and retention rates of the MOS it is attempting to grow, and authorize a large enough cohort to meet future inventory demands. The inputs to the GAR are the ASR, the B-Billet plan, (described below), and the number of Marines who are in P2T2 status; but the GAR is also numerically adjusted to consider statutory and end-strength constraints.¹⁵

The B-Billet plan is completed by the Manpower Plans Division of M&RA. The B-billet plan is the number of non-MOS billets that are attributed to each of the individual MOSs. For instance, 0402 (logistics) Lieutenant Colonels are currently assigned sixty-three B-billets. Of those assignments, thirty-eight were assigned to "free" B-billets. "Free" B-billets are billets that any officer can actually fill. The other twenty-five billets have 0402 as a necessary secondary MOS. An example, is the 0502 (Marine Air Ground Task Force Plans) billet that requires a 0402 who is trained as a 0502. There are also some Special Education Program (SEP) and acquisition billets requiring a 0402 with a SEP or acquisition background. The B-billet plan is currently under review because it does not distribute billets according to a fixed percentage of the structure.¹⁶ Consider the summary output for the 0402 MOS as shown in Table 1.

	LtCol	Major	Captain	Lt
On-Board	150	256	523	269
ASR	82	185	288	251
B-Billets	63	83	61	43
T2P2	9	29	62	13
GAR	154	297	411	307
Percent GAR	97	86	127	88

Table 1. GAR Summary for 0402 Logistics MOS.

Source: Marine Corps Officer MOS Status Report, 10 Sep 2001, and Officer B-Billet Report, 1 Nov 2001

¹⁵ Mr. Brown, Deputy Director, Manpower Management Information System Support Division. Interview by authors 25 Oct 2001. Quantico, VA.

¹⁶ Major J. Grant, Officer Inventory Planner, HQMC. Interview by authors 23 Oct 2001, Quantico, VA.

The reason that the B-billet plan is important is because the GAR plays a key role in determining which MOSs are critically short and should be specifically noted for consideration in the precept that is given to the promotion boards. An MOS is defined as critically short if the onboard strength is less than 85 percent of the GAR. Now consider what Table 1 would have looked like if the B-billet plan assigned B-billets at a fixed proportion, such as 25 percent, of the ASR.

	LtCol	Major	Captain	Lt
On-Board	150	256	523	269
ASR	82	185	288	251
B-Billets	21	46	72	63
T2P2	9	29	62	13
GAR	112	260	422	327
Percent GAR	133	98	123	82

Table 2. Adjusted GAR Summary for 0402 Logistics MOS.

Table 2 illuminates a problem that officer planners are currently trying to rectify. Because of a seemingly arbitrary assignment of B-billets, some MOSs at various grades such as Major are viewed as short and almost critically short, when they would not otherwise be considered as such if they were assigned a fixed proportion of b-billets. It is evident that the converse also holds, some MOSs at various grades such as lieutenant are not given the consideration as being short when perhaps they should be.¹⁷

The reason that this discrepancy occurs is the subject of the B-billet review. The concern is that if the B-billet requirement is a Marine with an MOS of 0402, then the billet should be added to the T/O requirement. Manpower planners can no longer afford to classify billets as non-MOS jobs if the requirement is that a Marine with a particular MOS must fill the billet. Manpower planners are therefore working to properly define the required MOSs that will ensure they are building to the true requirement.¹⁸

4. The Staffing Process

The Total Force Structure Division of MCCDC determines which billets the Marine Corps can afford to man, but the Personnel Management Division (MM) of M&RA staffs those billets. Much of the concern with the manpower process rests with

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

its inability to staff all the billets that MCCDC has determined should be manned. For example, MCCDC might authorize a captain for the logistics officer in an infantry battalion. There are twenty-four infantry battalions in the Marine Corps, so that equates to a requirement of twenty-four captains who are logistics officers. The dilemma for manpower staffers, is what happens when there are not twenty-four captains in the assignable inventory? Manpower and Reserve Affairs may have to assign a captain from a different MOS to the job; gap the billet, in which case the battalion commander would be forced to distribute the duties to captains filling other billets; or M&RA may have to assign a lieutenant to fill the captain's billet.

The latter solution is a central issue for this thesis. In those MOSs that are identified as being critically short, manpower staffers are continually facing the dilemma of placing a junior Marine in a senior billet. The concern with this staffing solution is that when MCCDC determines a requirement for a Marine by grade and MOS, it is not arbitrary. It is actually a reflection of the fleet commander's view that the required Marine has a certain skill set, level of experience and maturity, and has attained a certain position of authority relative to the individuals he or she will be working with. When manpower staffers are forced to "satisfice" on these requirements, they are decreasing the commander's ability to perform the mission. Now it is possible that a junior Marine may, in fact, have the skill set and level of maturity to fill the billet requirement but even if that is the case, there is still the question of authority relative to other Marines.

E. REENGINEERING THE PROMOTION SYSTEM AS A POSSIBLE SOLUTION

The effect of this particular staffing dilemma has caused manpower planners to examine the dynamics of the Marine Corps promotion process. Now admittedly, when viewed as an independent process one must conclude that the Marine Corps promotion system is more than successful in achieving its stated objectives. The number of officers selected for promotion matches the number of projected vacancies and the selection rates demonstrate a fair distribution of opportunities across demographic boundaries. Consider for example the overall selection statistics for promotion to major (O-4) in fiscal year 2001 as listed in Tables 3, 4, and 5:

	Eligible	Selected	Percent Selected
Above Zone	111	23	20.7
In Zone	519	441	85.0
Below Zone	655	3	0.5
Total	1285	467	36.3

Table 3. Selection Statistics for Fiscal Year 2001 Major Selection Board.
Source: HQMC Maradmin 060-00

	Eligible	Selected	Percent Selected
Asian American	4	4	100.0
African American	19	18	94.7
Hispanic	23	17	73.9
American Indian	7	5	71.4
Other	3	1	33.3
Caucasian	448	382	85.3
Total	504	427	84.7

Table 4. Gender/Race/Ethnic Male “In Zone” Statistics for Fiscal Year 2001 Major Selection Board.
Source: HQMC Maradmin 060-00

	Eligible	Selected	Percent Selected
Asian American	0	0	0.0
African American	2	2	100.0
Hispanic	1	1	100.0
American Indian	0	0	0.0
Other	0	0	0.0
Caucasian	12	11	91.7
Total	12	14	93.3

Table 5. Gender/Race/Ethnic Female “In Zone” Statistics for Fiscal Year 2001 Major Selection Board.
Source: HQMC Maradmin 060-00

The main concern with the Marine Corps promotion process is not with the system itself. The concern is how well the promotion process works when considered within the context of the entire manpower system. The Marine Corps manpower system has the responsibility of ensuring that the right Marine gets to the right job, with the right training, at the right time. Since the Marine Corps promotes individuals on an aggregate basis, the individuals who are promoted are the best Marines, but they do not necessarily

have the right skills to fill the right vacancies at the right time. The current promotion system is thereby limited in its ability to affect a manpower system that can't completely staff the officer billets required on the tables of organization (T/Os) by MOS or grade.¹⁹

Amidst growing concern over officer MOS imbalances, manpower analysts began to consider the implications of using the Marine Corps promotion process as a possible force structuring tool. As the next section will illustrate, force structuring is not a new issue with the Marine Corps and the authors began to consider using the promotion process as a force structuring tool by first attempting to understand previous force structuring programs.

F. FORCE-STRUCTURING IN THE MARINE CORPS

The Marine Corps has been struggling with the manpower dilemma for at least 20 years. A 1991 Headquarters Marine Corps decision paper noted that “since the 1977 decision to open ten previously restricted officer Military Occupational Specialties (MOSs) to unrestricted officers, several MOSs have perennially experienced critical shortages of qualified officers. These shortages occurred for several reasons but primarily due to unsupportable grade structures.”²⁰

Figures 2 and 3 give two examples of unsupportable grade structures that the Marine Corps faces today. Figure 2, illustrates the grade structure requirement for MOS 4302, Public Affairs Officer. The reader will note that at the base there is a small requirement for officers in the grade of lieutenant. This requirement nearly doubles at the grade of captain. The problem, of course, is that since there is no lateral entry into the Marine Corps, it is difficult to fill the requirements for the grade of captain when there is not a sufficient requirement for lieutenants who can progress into these billets.

¹⁹ Wielsma Ronald J., Our Manpower Dilemma. Marine Corps Gazette. Quantico VA. Mar 2001. p. 40.

²⁰ HQMC Decision Paper 1040 MPP-32. Lateral Move Incentive Program. 23 September 1991.

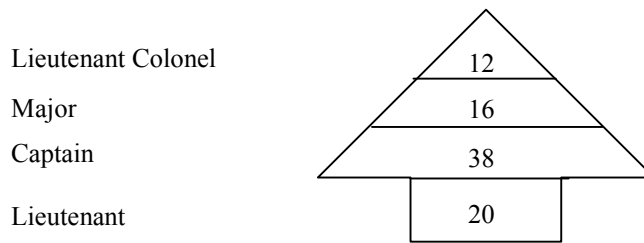


Figure 2. Grade Structure for MOS 4302 Public Affairs Officer.
Source: ASR numbers taken from MOS status report dated 10 Sep 2001.
Provided by Major A. Madril, Officer Promotion Planner, HQMC.²¹

Figure 3 represents the grade structure for MOS 0302 Infantry Officer and depicts the unbalanced grade structure that is created because the number of Infantry Officers that are promoted and retained exceeds the requirement for these officers. A 1994 General Officer Symposium Issue Paper noted that “MOS structures and the high retention rates of ground combat officers have had a detrimental effect on the overall skill balance of the officer force. Currently, 90 percent of ground MOSs are out of balance.”²²

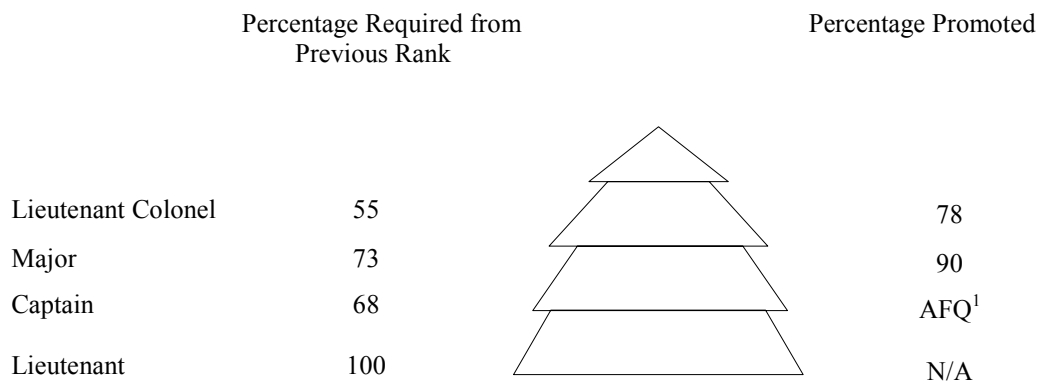


Figure 3. Grade Structure for MOS 0302 Infantry Officer
Source: Requirement numbers taken from MOS status report dated 10 Sep 2001. Provided by Major A. Madril, Officer Promotion Planner, HQMC. Promotion numbers provided by Major G. Branigan, Officer Promotion Planner, HQMC.

¹ AFQ is All Fully Qualified. This is the current selection standard for promotion to captain in the Marine Corps and the promotion rate is currently 99.5%.

²¹ The grade structure depicted in this illustration does not include the grades of colonel and general because a Marine promoted to the grade of colonel is assigned a new MOS which reflects the more generalized nature of their duties.

²² General Officer Symposium. Issue Paper on the Officer Career Transition Program. 24 August 1994. Prepared by Major Mark Noblit.

Prior to 1983, Headquarters Marine Corps addressed the issue of MOS management²³ by authorizing Lateral Movement and Career Broadening Tours. Lateral Movement was a reclassification of officers between MOSs. A Career Broadening Tour was a voluntary tour of duty outside of an officer's primary MOS to a short MOS of an officer's choice. Officers approved for the lateral move received a new primary MOS; however, a career broadening tour only resulted in an additional MOS.²⁴ In order to apply for a lateral move, an officer had to be in an over or balanced MOS and had to request reclassification into an MOS that was listed as being short for his or her grade.²⁵

The problem with the Lateral Movement and Career Broadening programs was that many experienced combat arms officers resisted moving into the technical fields. The fear of being stereotyped, of missing the “good” assignments, and of being left behind by their peers caused many officers to avoid career broadening tours or lateral moves to fields that were not traditional.²⁶

In May 1983, confronted with the reality that the Voluntary Lateral Move program had not provided a sufficient number of officers willing to move into the short fields, Headquarters Marine Corps implemented the Directed Lateral Move program. The Directed Lateral Move program was applicable to reserve officers on active duty and coincided with a decision point called augmentation in which reserve officers applied for a presidential commission in the Marine Corps.^{27,28}

²³ The term “MOS Management” specifically refers to the structuring of personnel assets within an MOS in order to maintain the MOS at its optimal strength of officers and ensure a flow of officers in the MOS from the grade of second lieutenant through the grade of lieutenant colonel. Marine Corps Order (MCO) 1210.8A. MPP-34-gms dated 21 Sep 1982. Lateral Move and Career Broadening Tour Programs for Marine Officers.

²⁴ MCO 1210.8A. MPP-34-gms dated 21 Sep 1982.

²⁵ An “Over MOS” refers to an MOS in which the actual number of officers exceeds the optimal strength that has been established for that particular MOS. In this same context a “Balanced MOS” refers to an MOS in which the actual number of officers is equal to the optimal strength for that particular MOS. A “Short MOS” refers to an MOS in which the actual number of officers is less than the optimal strength that has been established for that particular MOS. MCO 1210.8A. MPP-34-gms dated 21 Sep 1982.

²⁶ Jacobs, Major Roger A. Coping With Creeping Careerism. Marine Corps Gazette. January 1983. pg 42.

²⁷ HQMC Decision Paper 1210 MMOA-3. MOS Assignments for Lieutenants at the Basic School. 30 November 1988.

²⁸ The term “reserve officers” in this context refers to those officers on active duty in the Marine Corps who had not attained a regular commission in the Marine Corps. During this time period officers commissioned from the service academies or the Naval Reserve Officer Training Programs received a regular commission at appointment as Second Lieutenants. Officers recruited after completion of college received a reserve commission. Reserve officers who did not apply or were not augmented were separated from active duty upon completion of their obligated service.

The Reserve officers applying for augmentation who were in overpopulated MOSs were required to submit two choices for a lateral move from a list of underpopulated MOSs as part of their augmentation application. However, the actual augmentation selection process was based on the best-qualified criteria only. Upon completion of the augmentation selection process, the officer retention board would review the records of all selectees who were in over MOSs for possible directed lateral moves.²⁹

The problem with the Directed Lateral Move program was that the pool of reserve officers was inversely related to the retention of regular officers. United States Code 10, Stat 522, limits the size of the regular Marine officer structure to 17,000 officers.³⁰ In 1984, high retention of regular officers resulted in only 367 of the 1,149 applicants being granted augmentation. In 1985 only 114 of the 1,100 applicants received augmentation.³¹

In September 1986, the Commandant of the Marine Corps supplemented the Directed Lateral Move program with the Intended MOS program. The program was applicable to regular and reserve officers and was designed to forestall shortages resulting from excessive attrition in certain MOSs while still allowing maximum exposure of the lieutenants to the combat arms. Officers would not begin their intended MOS until they completed their initial tour and/or were augmented. The intended MOS program commenced with the officers of Basic Class 5-87 (June 1987).³² The first officers were scheduled to receive their intended MOS skill qualifying training commencing in the fall of 1989 but the program was cancelled and replaced by the Additional Primary MOS (APMOS) program prior to any officers training in their intended MOSs.³³

The Additional Primary MOS program was designed for Captains and above. Upon selection for promotion to Captain, Marines would be assigned an additional primary MOS in a field that was traditionally short of officers or in which the

²⁹ Scharfen, Col J.C. USMC (Ret). Views on Manpower: An Interview with LtGen W.R. Maloney, Deputy Chief of Staff, Manpower. Marine Corps Gazette. February 1985. p. 57.

³⁰ Beckwith, Brigadier General Ronald L. Insights on Augmentation. Marine Corps Gazette. December 1986. p. 27.

³¹ Edwards, Major Michael E. Competing for a Regular Commission. Marine Corps Gazette, February 1985. p. 14.

³² HQMC Decision Paper 1210 MMOA-3. MOS Assignments For Lieutenants at the Basic School. 30 November 1988.

³³ Interview by authors with Major J. Grant, Officer Inventory Planner, HQMC.

requirements at the captain and major grades equaled or exceeded the lieutenant requirements.

The initial guidance on the Additional Primary MOS program was that all unrestricted officers would receive an APMOS. Some critically short MOSs such as Adjutant and Intelligence were later omitted. MOSs that were to be assigned as APMOSs were not necessarily short, but ones that could become short in the future. The purpose of the APMOS program was to provide a pool of officers from various MOSs to be available, if the need ever arose to use them.³⁴

The Additional Primary MOS program was not successful because of the timing of the additional primary MOS assignment. Most officers who would have filled an APMOS assignment were already serving in B-billets.³⁵ APMOS selection did not coincide with B-billet planning and assignment execution. Additionally, officers assigned to an APMOS tour would have been unable to return to their PMOS in time for career level schools and/or command time.³⁶

In September of 1991 Headquarters Marine Corps approved a lateral move incentive program to be utilized in conjunction with the officer retention board. The program set aside a number of augmentation vacancies, up to fifty percent per year, for officers in certain overpopulated MOSs who volunteered to change their PMOS to a critically short MOS and for officers who possessed a critically short MOS. These officers had a greater opportunity to be selected for augmentation. Officers who were considered but not selected in the short MOSs would also be considered for the remaining vacancies with the remaining officers and retain their primary MOS.³⁷

In 1994 an issue paper for the General Officer Symposium stated that after more than a decade of experimenting with different programs designed to achieve the correct number of officers in each grade and MOS, no significant progress had been made toward achieving the objective. MOS structures and the high retention rates of ground

³⁴ General Officer Symposium. Issue Paper on the Officer Career Transition Program. 24 August 1994. Prepared by Major Mark Noblit.

³⁵ "B-billets are non-MOS tours of duty in such areas as recruiting or the drill-field.

³⁶ Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps Committee Brief. Career Transition: Forced Lateral Moves. 13 April 1998.

³⁷ Ibid.

combat arms officers had a detrimental effect on the overall skill balance of the officer force and, at the time, 90 percent of non-aviation MOSs were out of balance. While some combat arms MOSs had more than 150 percent of their required field grade officers, some combat support MOSs had less than 50 percent.³⁸

In 1995 the Career Transition, also referred to as “Forced Lateral Move,” program was implemented and replaced the Additional Primary MOS program. Under the program, reserve officers in over MOSs had to list three other MOS choices when submitting their augmentation packages. The Officer Retention Board then selected officers for augmentation into the regular Marine Corps and decided which officers would be allowed to remain in their primary MOS and which officers would be career transitioned into another MOS. Officers selected for career transition would be sent to school for training in their new MOS and then reassigned to a billet in that MOS.³⁹

The Career Transition program provided short MOSs with school-trained, quality officers and infused combat arms experience into the support MOSs, but it was an immensely unpopular program that was perceived as unfair and caused many officers not to apply for augmentation. The fear of being forcibly moved into another MOS often out-weighed an officer’s desire to remain on active duty. Some officers even turned down augmentation when forced to lateral move and then reapplied the following year. The idea was to extend their active duty contract until they were past their fifth year of commissioned service and then they would no longer be eligible for the career transition.⁴⁰

In All Marine Message (ALMAR) 210-98, while noting that a sense of fairness was key to the manpower process, the Commandant of the Marine Corps directed an end to forced lateral moves. One month later ALMAR 236-98 announced the initiation of the Supplementary MOS (SMOS) program.

Under the Supplementary MOS program, company grade officers in an over MOS volunteer to do a three-year tour in a short MOS and upon completion of the tour return

³⁸ General Officer Symposium. Issue Paper on the Officer Career Transition Program. 24 August 1994. Prepared by Major Mark Noblit.

³⁹ Career Transition Task Force working group report. 4 February 1998.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

to their primary MOS. The SMOS tour takes the place of the B-billet tour and an officer would therefore return to his primary career field for career-level school consideration and follow-on primary MOS assignments at the same time as those officers not participating in the program.⁴¹

The benefits of the SMOS program are that it has the potential to balance MOSs in a relatively short time period, and the negative morale issues associated with leaving one's desired MOS are minimized. The drawback to the program is that very few qualified applicants volunteer each year. The program averages fifteen to twenty qualified officers per year and on many occasions applicants are individuals who are from a short or unpopular MOS who are trying to escape from their MOS. The number of applicants is also limited by school seat constraints, especially if another service owns the school. Currently there is little incentive to volunteer for this program.⁴²

G. CONCLUSION

The Marine Corps promotion process is currently not structured to ensure that officers of the desired grades are available to fill the billet vacancies throughout the organization. One could argue that while the system is designed to keep the best Marines, the system is hindering MOS proficiency and experience.

This manpower dilemma and the historical problems that have been encountered in attempting to structure the force have caused manpower analysts at Headquarters Marine Corps to consider innovative and far-reaching force structuring solutions such as reengineering the Marine Corps promotion process. The authors explore these issues beginning with the next chapter, which provides a historical overview and detailed elaboration of the Marine Corps unrestricted officer promotion process.

⁴¹ MCO 1210.9 MPP-30 dated 12 Feb 01. Supplementary MOS (SMOS) Program and Voluntary Lateral Move Program for Marine Corps Officers.

⁴² Grant, Major Joseph. Position Paper MPP-30. Force Shaping Policy Options with Associated Cost and Benefits. 14 Jan 2002.

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II. THE OPERATION OF THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS UNRESTRICTED OFFICER PROMOTION PROCESS

A. PROMOTION PROCESS

The focus of this chapter is the operation of the United States Marine Corps unrestricted officer promotion process. The chapter begins with a historical review of the policies and practices that lead to the current promotion system. This review provides the framework for understanding why the promotion process must continually evolve to meet the demands of the Marine Corps.

The chapter continues with a documentation of the Marine Corps promotion process. The promotion process is an interdependent part of the Marine Corps manpower process and must be viewed in the context of a larger system. To detail how the promotion system works within the manpower system, the authors conducted several interviews with key officers at Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC), and Manpower and Reserve Affairs (M&RA), from 22 October to 26 October 2001. The section of this chapter that is entitled “The Marine Corps Manpower Process,” relates information that was provided by the officers at MCCDC and M&RA.

B. HISTORY AND STATUTORY BASIS

Prior to 1892, promotion by seniority was the generally accepted military practice, as seniority was equated with experience. Problems with a promotion system based solely on seniority, however, had been illuminated for years at every level of the Corps.⁴³ On 3 March 1818, Major Anthony Gale was appointed the fourth Commandant of the Marine Corps. Major Gale was the senior officer, but he was not a man of outstanding ability and he had been, on several occasions, reported for misconduct. The Secretary of the Navy, Smith Thompson, made the appointment despite his grave misgivings over Gale’s notorious record of intemperate conduct. With less than two years as Commandant, Major Gale was court-martialed for disgraceful conduct in the City of Washington.⁴⁴ The seniority based promotion system also resulted in stagnation

⁴³ Clyde H. Metcalf. A History of the United States Marine Corps. New York: A. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1939, p. 82.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

in the officer ranks because there was no system to encourage or require the departure of senior officers and vacancies in the senior grades were infrequent.

The structure of the Marine Corps promotion system changed significantly on 28 July 1892, when promotion to every grade of commissioned officer below the grade of Commandant was made subject to the judgment of an examining board of senior officers.⁴⁵ Under this system, it was expected that officers who were best qualified would be selected for advancement, while those least qualified would be passed over and have to ultimately retire.

At the time, the Marine Corps had never exceeded a total end strength of three thousand and initially it was expected that the new system would force many officers out of the Marine Corps. Instead, America's war with Spain and the consequent expansion of functions of Marines throughout the world resulted in the size of the organization more than tripling in strength. This rapid expansion of the size of the Corps from 1898 to 1916 virtually assured a liberal flow of promotions to all ranks.⁴⁶

The Marine Corps also broadened in its intellectual scope during the early years of the twentieth century. Many of the Corps' officers had been men of limited schooling but the new order required that officers have a liberal education prior to being commissioned. By requiring a formal education for its officers, as well as a system of professional training, the military profession was brought more in line with the learned professions.⁴⁷

Now, although more attention was directed to improving the quality of entering officers and on the professional development of officers, there was still no mechanism to ensure a structured promotion flow or to ensure the high quality of performance through competition for promotion.

⁴⁵ Nalty B. C., Strobbridge T. R., Turnbladh E. T., Gill R. P., Marine Corps Historical Reference Pamphlet. United States Marine Corps Ranks and Grades 1775 – 1969. Historical Division Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, Washington D.C., 1970, p. 6.

⁴⁶ Metcalf, p. 305.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

1. The Act of 29 May 1934

Representative Clark W. Thompson of Texas, a Marine veteran of World War I, articulated the problems with the Marine Corps promotion system in 1934 while lobbying in support of House Resolution 6803, a bill to regulate the distribution, promotion, retirement, and discharge of commissioned officers in the Marine Corps. He stated:

Each officer, as a vacancy occurs, is promoted after prescribed examinations--moral, professional, and physical--but there is no method of promoting only the able, zealous, and efficient officer. The less able can and do qualify for promotion under the obsolete and inefficient requirements of the present laws and must be promoted. Only a few are retired because of physical disability or are eliminated because of moral failure. Only one officer has failed professionally in the last eight years. Colonels are promoted by selection, and only in this grade is there enforced retirement because of failure to be on a promotion or eligible list.

Under the present laws the average rate of promotion is so slow that a junior officer must spend most of his service in the lower grades, and can reach the higher grades only a short time before retirement for age.

Last year there were so few promotions that, in future years at the same rate, it would require fifty-five years to pass through the grade of captain, and twenty-five years to pass through the grade of major.

This bill, if enacted into law, when its provisions become fully effective... will correct the present stagnation of promotion and over-age of commissioned officers of the Marine Corps, and will result in average service in each grade of about seven years, which is what it should be.

Because of the stagnation and lack of promotion in the Marine Corps, 29 percent of the colonels, 98 percent of the lieutenant colonels, 72 percent of the majors, and practically 100 percent of the captains and first lieutenants are now over-age for their respective grades. In ten years without relief, 88 percent of the colonels and 100 percent of all other junior officers now in the corps will be over-age in grade.

The salient measures in Thompson's bill ensured:

- Promotion by selection to the grades of lieutenant colonel, colonel, brigadier general, and major general
- Promotion to captain and major by seniority
- Extension of the selection system to the lower grades should such extension be authorized for the Navy

- Promotion of second lieutenants after three years commissioned service
- Readjustment of grades to conform to the needs of the Marine Corps
- Retirement of non-selected colonels after thirty-five years of active service instead of at fifty-six years of age⁴⁸

The bill passed both houses of Congress and was signed into law by President Roosevelt on 29 May 1934.⁴⁹ The promotion system was modified somewhat by every Congress after 1934, until the Act of 23 June 1938 finally culminated in a common promotion system for both the Marine Corps and Navy.⁵⁰

2. The Act of 23 June 1938

The Act of June 23, 1938, applied the system of promotion by selection to all officers in the naval service. Clearly the old order of promotion by seniority had ended. Stipulations of the Act of 1938 mandated that:

- The authorized total number and distribution in grades for line officers were to be determined by the Secretary of the Navy based on a set formula for distribution and the level of authorized enlisted strength
- No officer was to be a member of two successive selection boards
- All promotions above first lieutenant were to be upon recommendation of a selection board composed of nine senior officers of specified grades. The oath to be administered to the selection board was also specified and proceedings of the board were to be secret.
- A minimum of four years service in grade was required for captains and above before they could become eligible for consideration by a selection board
- The Secretary of the Navy must provide selection boards with information concerning the number of estimated vacancies to be filled, the names of officers eligible for consideration and placed in the promotion zone, the records of the eligible officers in the zone, and the content required in the report of the board
- Eligible officers could invite the attention of a board considering them for promotion to any matter in the eligible officers' records
- Selection of officers would be on a "best fitted" basis except that the Secretary of the Navy could authorize a prescribed percentage to be

⁴⁸ Legislation: Personnel Situation," Marine Corps Gazette, May, 1934, pg. 18. (qtd, in Simanikas, W. C. The U.S. Marine Corps Officer Promotion System: An Assessment of Factors Affecting Promotion to the Field Grades. Thesis. George Washington University, 1966. pp. 24-27.)

⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 27.

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 28.

selected as “fitted” for promotion [“Fitted” selections were later eliminated from law.]

- The duties of selection boards were to include the selection for promotion, in the prescribed numbers authorized by the Secretary of the Navy, of those officers best fitted for promotion among those on the list furnished by the Secretary. The board was also required to designate remaining officers as fitted for promotion within the prescribed limits or, when applicable, to report those officers unsatisfactory in performance of duty in present grade. At least six of the nine members were required to concur in the selection of the best fitted officers.
- Officers failed of selection (passed-over) as best fitted twice in succession were to be retired or discharged dependent on grade attained and years of active commissioned service completed
- The selection board was to further recommend, from among the majors, lieutenant colonels, and colonels twice passed over, those officers to be retained on active duty in grade until completion of twenty-six, twenty-eight, and thirty years of commissioned service. The number to be retained were to be authorized by the Secretary of the Navy to meet the immediate requirements of the Marine Corps.⁵¹

3. The Officer Personnel Act of 1947

The Officer Personnel Act of 1947, with subsequent amendments, mandated another significant change to the Marine Corps promotion system. In the terms of its preamble, the act was intended to serve three purposes:

- Provide in law an adequate number of officers in the proper grades and of the proper ages to meet the needs of the service
- Authorize grade distribution that would provide a sufficiently attractive career so that high caliber people would be attracted to service
- Eliminate the weak officer as early in a career as possible⁵²

The Act was important because it added the concept of “officer distribution” to the promotion process. It imposed statutory ceilings on the number of regular officers on active duty and established a percentage system for distribution of these officers among the various grades on a permanent basis. Officers would move through various grades in cohorts (normally year groups) and be considered for promotion at various points in their

⁵¹ “The Selection Law,” Marine Corps Gazette, March, 1939 p. 34 (qtd. in Simanikas, pp. 30-31).

⁵² Rostker B., Thie H., Lacy J., Kawata J., Purnell S., The Defense Officer Procurement Management Act: A Retrospective Assessment, RAND 1993. p. 91.

careers consistent with norms set in the Act. As in previous legislation, if an officer failed selection for promotion twice, he would either be separated or retired.⁵³

The Act provided a much more effective management system than the Officer Corps had ever known in the past, but it still had a number of shortcomings. It was based upon the assumption that the armed forces would be returned to a small, all-regular force within ten years and it therefore imposed statutory limitations on the number of regular officers in each service. To provide for the transition, it allowed the Secretary of Defense the authority for temporary promotions whenever the number of officers in any regular grade above second lieutenant was less than the number authorized, or whenever, under authority of Congress, the number of regular and reserve officers on active duty was more than the authorized strength of the services.⁵⁴

The Act embraced different approaches to the grade distribution of officers. With respect to permanent grades, the law provided grade-distribution ceilings for the Navy and Marine Corps that were identical to each other, but different from the ceilings authorized for the Army and Air Force. For example, the Act authorized the Army and Air Force to have 8 percent of officers in the grade of colonel whereas the authorization for the Navy and Marine Corps was 6 percent.⁵⁵

Further emphasizing the accent on youth, the Act provided for attainment of the rank of Brigadier General at least by the completion of thirty years commissioned service for those surviving the selection process to that point. It also incorporated an “accelerated promotion plan,” which allowed a selection board to promote up to 5 percent of the total number of authorized selections, if officers below the promotion zone were otherwise eligible (by virtue of minimum required time in grade) and outstandingly qualified.⁵⁶

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ H203-24 Report to accompany S. 1918. Defense Officer Personnel Management Act. Nov 13, 1980.

⁵⁶ “Report on Promotion Bill,” Army and Navy Journal, June 21, 1947, p. 1085. (qtd. in Simanikas, p. 37).

4. The Officer Grade Limitation Act of 1954

In 1954, Congress passed the Officer Grade Limitation Act (OGLA). The OGLA regulated temporary promotions by imposing statutory limitations on the number of regular and reserve officers who could serve in the grades of major and above, and established grade tables for the military and these grade tables provided the maximum grade authority (total number of officers) for the entire officer corps. The OGLA also established a sliding scale based on the range of officer end-strength (excluding medical, dental, general officers and certain others). The following table illustrates the percentage of officers that could occupy a specified grade, given a certain end-strength:

	212,500	313,500
Colonel (O-6)	5.85	5.0
Lieutenant Colonel (O-5)	12.95	11.75

Table 6. Percentage of Officers Allowed in Field Grades According to Designated Endstrength.

Source: Rand National Defense Research Institute⁵⁷

In addition to speeding up the promotion flow, the OGLA stabilized the equality of promotion opportunity across years. It required that promotion opportunity be forecast over at least a five-year period by comparing anticipated vacancies in a particular grade with the number of officers coming into promotion zones during that period. The promotion opportunity given to each year's promotion zone was to be kept essentially the same by varying the number of officers brought into the zone and maintaining the same numerical relationship with vacancies. This would help to prevent major changes in opportunity from year to year.⁵⁸

5. The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act

In 1960, the Department of Defense formed the "Bolte committee" to review the Officer Personnel Act and to recommend changes that would achieve uniformity in the officer career management systems. The recommendations of the Bolte committee were never enacted into law but in 1972, with growing concern that the military still had too

⁵⁷ Rostker B., Thie H., Lacy J., Kawata J., Purnell S., p. 95.

⁵⁸ "Text of Promotion Act," Army and Navy Journal, August 2, 1947, p. 1280.

many senior officers, Congress directed the Secretary of Defense to submit a written report “regarding limitations on the number of officers who may serve in the various commissioned grades...[and] include...such recommendations he deems appropriate for legislation to establish new permanent [grade] limitations.”⁵⁹ The resulting “Report on Officer Grade Limitations” set forth the provisions to be included in a new Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA). DOPMA was ultimately approved in November of 1980.⁶⁰

The specific purpose of DOPMA was to revise the laws that govern the management of commissioned officers serving on active duty in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force below the grade of brigadier general or rear admiral. The bill to enact DOPMA contained five major provisions pertaining to promotion:

- Establish new statutory limitations on the number of officers who may serve in the senior grades below flag rank
- Provide uniform laws for the appointment of regular officers and for the active-duty service of reserve officers
- Provide uniform laws for promotion procedures for officers in the separate services
- Establish common provisions governing career expectations in the various grades
- Establish common mandatory separation and retirement points⁶¹

Under DOPMA, Congress specifies the number of officers allowed in each field grade above O-3. Known as the “Officer Grade Distribution” and published in the DOPMA grade table, the distribution varies as a function of total officer end-strength. Specifically the Marine Corps is allowed to promote 435 new field grade officers for every 2,500 newly commissioned officers. The Navy is allowed 750 field grades for every 3,000 new officers. The Army and Air Force are allowed 1,264 and 1,290 field grades, respectively, for every 5,000 new officers. The constant increment of field-grade

⁵⁹ Rostker B., Thie H., Lacy J., Kawata J., Purnell S., p. 6.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ H203-24 Report to accompany S. 1918. Defense Officer Personnel Management Act. Nov 13, 1980.

officers for equal incremental steps of officer end-strength results in relatively more field grade officers for the Marine Corps because it is a smaller force.⁶²

The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act did away with the temporary promotion system and provided that all officers become regular officers by the time they reach the eleventh year of service or are promoted to the grade of O-4. DOPMA also provided a tenure rule that allowed approximately 50 percent of officers to be appointed regular officers upon commissioning. The problem with this rule was that it made an officer's commissioning source, and not his fleet performance, the determining factor in whether or not he would be allowed continued service. The 1992 National Defense Authorization Act changed this portion of DOPMA and after September 30, 1996 all officers initially began commissioned service as reserve officers.⁶³

The DOPMA system not only provided a standard for career progression for the majority of officers, but it also provided for early and late promotions. It established three promotion zones for consideration: The "above-zone," the "primary-zone," and the "below-zone." Primary-zone officers represent the primary eligible population for consideration by the selection board. These officers have neither failed selection for promotion nor have they been removed from a promotion list. Above-zone officers have been previously considered in the primary zone, and were not selected for promotion. These officers will incur an additional failure of selection if not selected by the selection board.⁶⁴ Below-zone officers are junior to the junior officer in the primary zone. Below-zone officers are eligible for consideration, but if not selected, they will not incur a failure of selection.

The DOPMA also provided specific authority for the service Secretaries to convene selection boards; to establish guidelines for board composition; and to provide for notification to eligible officers of promotion zones and convening dates. It required the service Secretary to specifically furnish information relating to the skill needs of the armed forces, and required that all guidance given to the selection board be consistent

⁶² Rostker B., Thie H., Lacy J., Kawata J., Purnell S., pp. 8-9.

⁶³ Ibid. pp. 11-12.

⁶⁴ Marine Corps Promotion Manual, Volume 1, Officer Promotions. MCO P1400.31B MMPR-1 22 Feb 2000. p. 12.

with provisions that govern the selection and promotion of officers. The Act further provided standard language for the oath to be taken by members of the boards and established board reporting and reviewing procedures.⁶⁵

Additionally, the DOPMA gave authority to the service Secretaries to establish competitive categories for promotion for each service, provided the categories were consistent with guidance from the Secretary of Defense. The separate promotion categories were needed for various groups of officers whose extensive training and experience, and often narrow utilization, made it impossible for them to compete for promotion on an equal footing with other officers having more generalized experience.⁶⁶

6. Title 10, U. S. Code

Congress, by the Act of August 10, 1956, incorporated into Title 10 of the U. S. Code the Officer Personnel Act of 1947, the Reserve Officer Personnel Act of 1954 and the Officer Grade Limitation Act of 1954.⁶⁷ As a result, the DOPMA addressed, revised and updated specific portions of the U.S. Code. Accordingly, Title 10, U. S. Code is the authority for convening promotion selection boards and effecting promotions for commissioned officers. Certain sections of Title 10 are applicable to the Marine Corps and are particularly relevant to this discussion:

Section 523: Limits the authorized end strength of Colonels, Lieutenant Colonels and Majors.

Section 615: Requires that the Secretary of the Navy furnish information to the selection boards concerning the need for officers having particular skills.⁶⁸

Section 616: Mandates that the Secretary establish the number of officers the board may recommend for promotion from the “below zone.”⁶⁹

Section 619: Allows the Secretary of the Navy to preclude from consideration by a selection board an officer with an established

⁶⁵ H203-24 Report to accompany S. 1918. Defense Officer Personnel Management Act. Nov 13, 1980.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Simanikas, p. 46.

⁶⁸ The Marine Corps policy is to identify, in the precepts, those skill areas [military occupational specialties (MOSs)], which are critically short of their requirement. The definition of critically short will be later defined in this paper.

⁶⁹ Such number may not exceed 10 percent of the total number of selections authorized for a competitive category and grade.

separation date that is within 90 days after the date the board convenes.

Section 620: Requires that the Secretary of the Navy maintain a lineal precedence list of all officers serving on active duty in the Marine Corps. This lineal precedence list is the basis for determining when an officer will reach the primary zone for promotion.

Section 623: Requires that the Secretary determine the number of officers in the promotion zone over a five-year period.⁷⁰

The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act continues to be the major piece of legislation that governs the operation of the military promotion processes. In September 1990, the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management and Personnel) asked RAND to review the operations of the DOPMA and to recommend any changes to that legislation. RAND concluded that the future focus should be on how change to the existing system contributes to performance as the ultimate criterion and satisfies intermediate criteria relating to the needs of officer management and officers. In order to conceptualize how the Marine Corps promotion system can best be structured to enhance the efficiency of the Marine Corps, this study will begin with a detailed review of the current Marine Corps Promotion Process.

C. THE OPERATION OF THE CURRENT MARINE CORPS PROMOTION PROCESS

1. Purpose

The purpose of the Marine Corps unrestricted officer promotion process is to select officers for promotion who have the potential to carry out the duties and responsibilities of the next higher grade. Promotions are based upon past performance as indicated in the official military personnel file but are considered to be an incentive to excel in the next higher grade, not a reward for past performance.⁷¹

The Marine Corps Officer promotion process is a critical element of the manpower process. The flow of promotions follows a pyramidal, hierarchical structure

⁷⁰ Legal Information Institute. United States Code: Title 10. www4.law.cornell.edu/uscode/10.

⁷¹ Marine Corps Promotion Manual, Volume 1, Officer Promotions. MCO P1400.31B MMPR-1 22 Feb 2000.

of grade distribution due to smaller requirements for senior officers. This process means that not all of those who enter at the bottom can rise to the narrow top.⁷²

The Commandant of the Marine Corps has divided the Officer Corps into five major promotion categories: Unrestricted Officers, Restricted (Limited Duty Officers), Warrant/Chief Warrant Officers, Active Reservist, and Specialist Officers. Within these categories, officers compete for promotion either on the active-duty list or the reserve active-status list in one of three promotion zones: above-zone, in-zone, and below-zone.⁷³ Above-zone officers have been previously considered but were not selected for promotion by a regularly scheduled board. In-zone (Promotion Zone) refers to those primary eligible officers who have not previously failed selection for promotion. Below-zone officers are junior to the officers in the promotion zone, but if not selected, do not incur a failure of selection marking. Not all boards are authorized to consider below-zone officers.⁷⁴

The promotion board is governed by a legal document from the Secretary of the Navy called a precept. The precept authorizes the selection board to convene and appoints the president, members, and recorders for the board. Within the precept for the selection board the Secretary of the Navy may provide special consideration for items deemed important for consideration. Such guidance, for example, may identify Military Occupational Specialties (MOS) that have a critical skill shortage. An MOS is considered to have a critical skill shortage if it is at less than 85 percent of the ideal inventory for the grade being considered.⁷⁵

Normal factors that are taken into consideration in the Marine Corps promotion process include:

- The aggregate number of billets needed to meet the needs of the Marine Corps
- The estimated number of officers needed to fill vacancies during the period in which it is anticipated that the officers selected for promotion will be promoted

⁷² Major J. Grant, Officer Inventory Planner, HQMC. Interview by authors 23 Oct 2001, Quantico, VA.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

- The number of officers authorized by the Secretary of the Navy to serve in the grade and competitive category under consideration
- The authorized number of officers that the Secretary of the Navy has determined that the selection board may recommend for promotion
- The impact of zone size and selection opportunity on time-in-service promotion flow to the next higher grade⁷⁶

The major focus of the Marine Corps promotion system is the promotion of unrestricted active duty officers. An unrestricted officer is an individual in the grade of second lieutenant or above, who is not designated as a Limited Duty Officer. These officers represent the majority of billets within the Marine Corps and the selection of these officers is an important factor in the success of the organization. All unrestricted officers compete against all other unrestricted officers of the same grade from promotion to captain through major general and each unrestricted officer has the same theoretical opportunity as his contemporaries to attain promotion to the top grades. The selection standard for all eligible officers is best and fully qualified for promotion.⁷⁷

2. The Five-Year Promotion Plan

The annual Marine Corps unrestricted officer promotion process begins when the Commandant of the Marine Corps submits the five-year colonel through captain promotion plan to the Secretary of the Navy for approval. Per Title 10, U.S. Code, the Secretary of the Navy determines the number of officers in the promotion zones over a five-year period. This number of promotions in the plan is intended to provide for equitable promotion opportunities among succeeding groups of officers and an adequate number to meet requirements.⁷⁸ An example of the five-year promotion plan for selection to the grade of colonel follows in Table 7:

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Major G. Branigan, Officer Promotion Planner, HQMC. Interview by authors 23 Oct 2001, Quantico, VA.

FY	Auth Number	Selects	In Zone	Percent Opportunity	Maximum Below Zone Selected	Flow Point
02	621	122	243	50	12	22 years 3
03	621	105	210	50	10	22 years 3
04	621	107	214	50	10	22 years 2
05	621	106	212	50	10	22 years 1
06	621	107	214	50	10	22 years 0

Table 7. Five-Year Officer Promotion Plan for Selection to the Rank of Colonel.

Source: Major A. Madril, Officer Promotion Planner, HQMC, 23 Oct 2001, Quantico, VA

Based on the five-year plan above, the following promotion zones would be authorized:

Senior In Zone

LtCol M. Williams (LCN 0080000)

DOR: 1 February 1996

YCS: 22 years and 4 months

TIG: 4 years and 8 months

Junior In Zone

LtCol B. Roberts (LCN 01274000)

DOR: 1 December 1996

YCS: 21 years and 9 months

TIG: 3 years and 10 months

Junior Eligible Below Zone

LtCol A. Crawford (LCN 01642000)

DOR: 1 October 1997

YCS: 20 years and 5 months

TIG: 3 years and 0 months

For fiscal year 2001, the colonel through captain promotion plan reflected the selection and promotion opportunities listed in Table 8:

	Number to Select	Percentage Opportunity for Selection
Colonel (O-6)	100	50
Lieutenant Colonel (O-5)	288	70
Major (O-4)	475	90
Captain (O-3)	1,177	AFQ ^a

Table 8. Fiscal Year 2001 Promotion Opportunities.

Source: Major A. Madril, Officer Promotion Planner, HQMC, 23 Oct 2001, Quantico, VA.

^aAn AFQ (All Fully Qualified) board authorizes the board members to select up to 100 percent of the eligible population. The eligible population consists of above-zone and in-zone officers.

The number of officers that the Secretary allows a board to recommend for selection is based on the mission of the Marine Corps, the aggregate number of billet vacancies in the corresponding grades, the authorized strength of the Officer Corps, and the authorized grade structure of the Marine Corps.⁷⁹

3. The Precept

To actually convene a selection board, the Secretary of the Navy must issue a legal document called a precept. The precept appoints the president, members, recorders, and administrative personnel for the selection board. The precept reflects information that the Secretary of the Navy deems important for selection of officers to the next higher grade. It also sets the date and location for the selection board. The following information is general guidance that is normally covered in the precept:⁸⁰

- Number of Selections authorized. The board may select for promotion to the grade of (lieutenant colonel), a number of officers which most closely approximates 70 percent of those eligible in-zone officers. Of those officers selected, not more that (10) percent may be selected from below the promotion zone. The board is/is not required to select to the maximum number provided.
- Selection Standard. The board shall carefully consider without prejudice or partiality the record of every eligible officer. The officers selected will be those officers whom a majority of the members of the board consider best qualified for promotion. In addition to the standard of best qualified, the officers recommended for promotion by the board must be fully qualified; that is each officer's qualifications and performance of duty

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Compilation of precepts from Fiscal Years 1997- 2001, provided by Major G. Branigan, Officer Promotion Planner, HQMC. Interviewed by authors 23 Oct 2001, Quantico, VA.

must clearly demonstrate that the officer would be capable of performing the duties normally associated with the next higher grade. This standard applies to all eligible officers, including those above and below-zone.

- Request for Nonselection. Some promotion eligible officers may intend to leave active duty and therefore submit a written request not to be selected for promotion to the board president. Any officer who submits such a request will still be considered for promotion and will incur a failure of selection if not recommended for promotion by the board.
- Marital Status. The marital status of an eligible officer or the employment, educations, or volunteer service of a spouse will not be considered.
- Minority Officers. The board's evaluation of women and minority officers must afford them fair and equitable consideration.
- Limited Duty Officers. The board's evaluation of officers who were formerly limited duty officers must afford them fair and equitable consideration.
- Joint Duty Assignments. The quality of performance of officers who have served in or are serving in joint duty assignments shall be given the same weight as quality of performance in assignments within the Marine Corps.
- Acquisition Specialist. Of particular value to the Marine Corps are officers experienced in the systems acquisition process. Officers who gain experience through acquisition tours provide the Marine Corps acquisition process a unique combination of both operational experience and technical acquisition leadership. The board shall give equal weight to quality of performance by officers in these key billets as is given to quality of performance in primary specialties, including operational and command assignments.⁸¹
- Skill Guidance. Within the board's charter to select those officers who are best and fully qualified, the board shall give due consideration to the needs of the Marine Corps for officers with particular skills. At this time the needs of the Marine Corps reflect a critical shortage (below 85 percent) of officers in the grade of (lieutenant colonel) in the following skill areas:

<u>MOS</u>	<u>SKILL</u>	<u>NUMBER SHORT</u>	<u>PERCENT SHORT OF REQUIREMENT</u>
0202	Intelligence	36	33

⁸¹ Section 1731 of title 10, U.S. Code directs that officers from the Acquisition Corps are expected to be promoted at a rate not less than the rate for all line officers of the same Armed Force. Consequently, the Commandant of the Marine Corps must submit, in the board report, a statistical analysis of the selection rate for acquisition officers in accordance with DODInst 1320.4 and DODInst 1320.14.

Because the Marine Corps promotes unrestricted officers in one by category and not by primary military occupational specialty, there is no quota established for the selection of officers in those primary occupational specialties; however, each board will make every effort to consider the needs of the Marine Corps for officers with these particular skills when determining those best and fully qualified for promotion.

The precept may also include additional guidance on delineating career patterns, professional military education, equal opportunity, joint duty assignments, and consideration of limited duty officers.

A review of the “Colonel through Captain Promotion Plans” from fiscal years 1997 through 2001 revealed that many of the same MOSs were considered critically short in multiple years. The following tables illustrate the trend that was encountered, beginning with Table 9 which shows the MOSs that were critically short from fiscal years 1997 through 2001:

Skill		FY97	FY98	FY99	FY00	FY01
Logistics	9904 ^a	CS	CS	CS	CS	
Ground	9906 ^b	CS				CS
Judge Advocate	9914				CS	CS

Table 9. Critically Short (CS) MOSs For Promotion to Colonel from FY97 To FY01.

Source: Major A. Madril, Officer Promotion Planner, HQMC, 23 Oct 2001, Quantico, VA

^a Unrestricted officers holding a primary MOS from combat service support Occupational Fields 04, 11, 10, 15, 60 or 66 will be assigned an MOS 9904 upon promotion to the grade of colonel.

^b Unrestricted officers holding a primary MOS from Occupational Fields 01, 02, 03, 08, 18, 25, 26, 34, 40, 43, 58, 72, or 73 will be assigned MOS 9906 upon promotion to the grade of colonel

Table 10 illustrates the MOSs that were critically short for promotion to lieutenant colonel from FY97 to FY01.

Skill	MOS	FY97	FY98	FY99	FY00	FY01
Adjutant	0180					CS
Intelligence	0202	CS	CS	CS	CS	CS
Logistics	0402	CS	CS			
Communication Info. Systems	0602		CS	CS	CS	CS
Engineer	1302	CS			CS	CS
Communication	2502	CS	CS			
Signals Intelligence	2602	CS				
Ground Supply	3002					CS
Financial Management	3404	CS				CS
Data Systems	4002	CS				
Public Affairs	4302	CS	CS	CS	CS	CS
Judge Advocate	4402	CS				
Military Police	5803					CS
Aircraft Maintenance	6002	CS	CS	CS		
Aviation Supply	6602		CS			
Pilot VMA AV-8B	7509			CS	CS	CS
Pilot VMFA F/A-18	7523	CS				
Pilot VMAQ/ EA-6B	7543	CS	CS	CS	CS	CS
KC-130 Aircraft Commander	7557	CS	CS	CS	CS	CS

Table 10. Critically ShoRT (CS) MOSs for Promotion to Lieutenant Colonel From FY97 To FY01.

Source: Major A. Madril, Officer Promotion Planner, HQMC, 23 Oct 2001, Quantico, VA

Table 11 illustrates the MOSs that were critically short for promotion to major from FY97 to FY01.

Interestingly enough, the fact that skill guidance was placed in the precept did not guarantee that Marines in that MOS would be promoted at a better rate than Marines whose MOS was not critically short. In fact, as Table 12 reveals, the MOSs that were noted as being critically short often received promotion rates that were less than the aggregate rate for the promotion board.

Skill	MOS	FY97	FY98	FY99	FY00	FY01
Adjutant	0180					CS
Intelligence	0202	CS	CS	CS	CS	CS
Communication Info. Systems	0602		CS	CS	CS	CS
Engineer	1302	CS	CS	CS	CS	CS
Tank and AAV	18XX			CS		
Communication	2502	CS				
Signals Intelligence	2602	CS				
Ground Supply	3002					
Financial Management	3404	CS	CS			CS
Public Affairs	4302	CS		CS		CS
Military Police	5803	CS				
Aircraft Maintenance	6002					CS
Aviation Supply	6602					CS
Air Command and Control	7202	CS				
Pilot VMFA F/A-18	7523					
Pilot VMAQ/ EA-6B	7543	CS	CS			
KC-130 Aircraft Commander	7557	CS	CS			CS
Pilot CH-53 A/D Qualified	7564	CS	CS			
Pilot HMA AH-1	7565	CS	CS			

Table 11. Critically Short (CS) MOSs For Promotion to Major From FY97 to FY01.
Source: Major A. Madril, Officer Promotion Planner, HQMC, 23 Oct 2001, Quantico, VA

	Colonel		LtCol		Major	
	Rrd Rate	CS Rate	Rrd Rate	CS Rate	Rrd Rate	CS Rate
Fiscal Year 97	.45	.42	.66	.7	.77	.75
Fiscal Year 98	.42	.57	.68	.63	.79	.75
Fiscal Year 99	.43	.38	.67	.72	.81	.86
Fiscal Year 00	.44	.54	.67	.64	.84	.9
Fiscal Year 01	.85	.87	.47	.59	.64	.65

Table 12. Critically Short (CS) MOS Promotion Rates Compared To The Board Promotion Rate.

D. CONCLUSION

Promotion opportunity is a manpower management tool to control the flow of officers between grades. While the Marine Corps would prefer to promote all fully qualified officers to the next grade, grade table constraints imposed by law and promotion opportunity/timing guidelines resulting from DOPMA do not permit fully qualified promotions to all grades. The resultant Marine Corps policy is to promote the “best and fully qualified.” The question for Marine leaders now to ponder is what constitutes the “best.” If the Marine Corps needs a Marine with a logistics skill, but promotes a Marine who is an infantry officer, has the promotion system provided the best Marine?

To explore this question, this research examines how the other branches of the military promote their field grade officers. It would be merely an academic point to consider promotions below the grade of major because all services conduct fully qualified boards to the rank of captain. These fully qualified promotion boards select approximately 98 percent of the eligible officers. The next chapter discusses the promotion process used by the United States Navy.

III. THE OPERATION OF THE UNITED STATES NAVY OFFICER PROMOTION PROCESS

This chapter examines the mechanics of the United States Navy officer promotion process. The Navy officer promotion process is particularly relevant to this thesis research because it has been statutorily linked to the Marine Corps promotion process since the Act of 23 June 1938, which mandated a promotion by selection system for both services.⁸² The chapter begins with a historical review of the Navy officer promotion system and details how it evolved into a different system than that currently employed by the United States Marine Corps. The chapter will continue with a detailed analysis of the promotion process of officers in the grades of lieutenant commander, commander, and captain as these grades equate to the field grade officers of the Marine Corps. The information provided to describe the current promotion system reflects knowledge gained by interviews with key officers from the Navy's Military Personnel Plans and Policy Division, as well as lecture material provided by Navy Manpower Analysts at the Naval Postgraduate School. The section on the promotion process includes a short discussion of the Navy's "SPOT" promotion program, which allows for temporary promotions to the grade of lieutenant commander in order to address critical shortages in designated billets.

A. HISTORY AND STATUTORY BASIS

1. Equity, Efficiency and Economy

From the very establishment of the United States Navy, three value premises informed the development process of the officer personnel and promotion systems: equity, efficiency, and economy.⁸³ These value premises were so prevalent in every problem-solving effort of officer personnel that any gap between expected and actual results was measured by the value that a decision maker placed on one or all of them.

Equity meant the protection of rights and prerogatives of individual officers. Officers were widely perceived to have dedicated their lives to the service of their

⁸² Legislation: Personnel Situation," *Marine Corps Gazette*, May, 1934, pg. 18. (qtd, in Simanikas, W. C. *The U.S. Marine Corps Officer Promotion System: An Assessment of Factors Affecting Promotion to the Field Grades*. Thesis. George Washington University, 1966. pp. 24-27.)

⁸³ Chisholm, Donald. *Waiting for Dead Men's Shoes: Origins and Developments of the U.S. Navy's Officer Personnel System 1793-1941*. Stanford University Press. Stanford, CA 2001. pp. 28 – 29.

country and an officer's commission, therefore, carried a status approximating a right. After appointment by the President and approval by the Senate, an officer could hold his commission for life, unless of course, a court of inquiry or court martial found him guilty of misconduct or criminal behavior.⁸⁴

Efficiency referred to what is actually considered "effectiveness" today. With regard to the actions and operations of the Navy, efficiency was understood to mean the ability to bring about desired results in the accomplishment of the Navy mission, while simultaneously minimizing the loss of life and/or material.⁸⁵ For the officer personnel system, efficiency meant recruiting men with the proper mental and physical attributes, educating and training them with the right skills, developing their careers appropriately, and ensuring that the right officers with the right skills were in the right grades and billets at the right time to devise the Navy's strategies and tactics and to man its ships.⁸⁶

Economy meant minimizing aggregate cost--as opposed to maximizing the benefit for a given cost. It underscores the reality that from the earliest Congressional debates, a naval establishment was considered to be a great burden to the treasury. Many preferred not to have a Navy at all, while others desired to have the cheapest Navy possible. Some wanted a Navy only if it could be shown that it was absolutely necessary.⁸⁷

From the establishment of the Navy, there were always a few reform-minded officers for whom efficiency was the only premise worth entertaining as the basis for the officer personnel system. All of the Navy's organizational components, including officer personnel rules and procedures, had to contribute to the Navy's fighting ability or they were useless. Most officers, however, were predisposed to favor equity as the most important value premise in the promotion system. It was difficult, indeed, for an officer to accept the sacrifice of his career for what others judged to be the good of the service,

⁸⁴ Ibid. p. 29.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid. p. 30.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

especially when that individual was not confident that the process was entirely equitable.⁸⁸

2. The Seniority System

Seniority was informally adopted as the most equitable system of promotion because it avoided the pitfalls of political or personal influence and it rewarded those officers who had earned the right of promotion by virtue of their length of service.⁸⁹

The criterion that the seniority system employed was clear and readily measured. It removed the need for competition, jealousy or injured feelings, and reduced the threat of favoritism.

The problem with the seniority system, as articulated in 1801 by Secretary of the Navy Robert Smith, was that a rigid seniority system was incapable of bypassing those who are incapable of rising to a higher level of command and responsibility.⁹⁰ During his eight-year tenure as Secretary of the Navy, Robert Smith would attempt to change the premise of promotion from equity to efficiency.

Secretary Smith's philosophy was that promotion should be made on the basis of merit and experience, and that in the case of individuals with equal merit and experience the most senior in terms of original appointment should be promoted first. Smith successfully implemented a merit system of promotion from midshipman to lieutenant, but due to political considerations was unable to change the seniority system for the higher ranks.⁹¹

Under Secretary Smith, a precedent of promoting individuals for heroic deeds was established. A combat victory promoting the national interest would ensure for the commanding officer of a naval vessel immediate promotion to the next higher grade. In cases wherein a commanding officer was already a captain, his first lieutenant could expect the exemplary promotion.⁹²

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid. p. 29.

⁹⁰ McKee, Christopher. A Gentlemanly and Honorable Profession: The Creation of the U.S. Naval Officer Corps, 1794-1815. Naval Institute Press. Annapolis, MD. p. 275.

⁹¹ Ibid. p. 277.

⁹² Ibid. pp. 298-299.

The concern with Secretary Smith's merit promotion system was that it lacked equity. Master Commandant James Lawrence argued that the promotion of one subordinate officer in a victorious ship, when all of the officers had behaved "with signal but equal brilliance," was detrimental, if not destructive, to morale among the officers who were not promoted.⁹³

Many senior officers were specifically concerned about merit promotions from master commandant to captain. To understand this concern better, it would be helpful to visualize the promotion system in terms of a ladder that is much narrower at the top than at the bottom. Throughout the early years of the Navy the ladder only had four rungs: midshipman, lieutenant, master commandant, and captain.⁹⁴ If a junior officer was promoted to captain a senior officer could not regain his relative seniority, no matter how great a deed he might perform, because captain was the Navy's highest rank.⁹⁵

3. Congressional Intervention

The Navy's understanding and representation of its officer promotion problems reached new levels in the mid 1800s. The Navy had become increasingly complex because of the differentiation in types of ships, organization of squadrons, and the larger shore establishment. Executive orders were now insufficient for the overhaul of the Navy, and legislation would be required to manage many of the personnel and promotion issues.⁹⁶

Congress took little action to deal with officer personnel problems until 1842. Although legislative expertise on naval problems was inadequate, the nation was not at war and many in Congress approached policy issues concerning the Navy with the value premise of economy. Prior to 1842, existing law allowed the president to appoint midshipmen and make promotions when he desired,⁹⁷ but in 1842 Congress sought to fix the number of officers in law to control the cost of the naval establishment.⁹⁸

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid. p 271.

⁹⁵ Ibid. pp. 298-300.

⁹⁶ Chisholm. p 133.

⁹⁷ These appointments were still subject to Senate approval.

⁹⁸ Chisholm. p 135.

On 4 August 1842, President Tyler signed a bill that limited the number of officers in the Navy and effectively implemented a vacancy-driven promotion system. Though some in Congress thought they had effectively dealt with personnel problems, stagnation in the promotion process indicated that they had only exacerbated difficulties with the system and guaranteed more problems for decades to come.⁹⁹

Congress established the Bureau system on 31 August 1842. Then Secretary of the Navy Abel P. Upshur came to the conclusion shortly after taking office in 1841 that the organization and administration of the Navy needed revising. He noted in his first annual report to Congress that the Secretary had to devote so much time to trivialities that he had little time for more important matters. Unfortunately, Secretary Upshur's ideas on how to solve the problems of reorganization were vague. It remained for a young naval officer, Matthew Fontaine Maury, to state the case for reorganization clearly. Maury argued for distributing the work of the Navy Department among a number of bureaus along functional lines and the need of officer specialists to supervise the work of the bureaus.¹⁰⁰ The Bureau system was established with five Bureaus:

- Bureau of the Navy Yards and Docks
- Bureau of Construction, Equipment, and Repair
- Bureau of Provisions and Clothing
- Bureau of Ordinance and Hydrography
- Bureau of Medicine and Surgery.¹⁰¹

Even during the early discussions leading up to the bureau system, there were differences in opinion as to the number of Bureaus needed. Advances in science and technology indicated the need for more specialization than provided. With the outbreak of the Civil War, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles recommended additional Bureaus.

Accordingly, Congress, on 5 July 1862, created eight Bureaus in place of the original five:

- Yards and Docks
- Equipment and Recruiting

⁹⁹ Ibid. pp 185-186.

¹⁰⁰ Furer. p. 196.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. p. 198.

- Navigation
- Ordnance
- Construction and Repair
- Steam Engineering
- Provisions and Clothing
- Medicine and Surgery.¹⁰²

By 1889, all naval personnel matters were being handled by the Bureau of Navigation.¹⁰³

4. The Line and Staff Officer

By 1890 the Navy was faced with the quintessential question of equity, what defines a “naval officer?” The naval officer had been for years embodied by the line officer that handled the navigating, sailing, and fighting. Implicit in that personification was a definition of naval officer that was predicated on the technology that prevailed at the foundation of the Navy: ships powered by wind and sails and whose heavy equipment—anchors, sails, and cannon—were operated by muscle and sweat.

The Navy had subsequently recognized the need for various staff specialists such as surgeons, chaplains, naval constructors, paymasters, mathematicians, and engineers who provided expertise that the line officer did not possess. Initially, these staff officers were not accorded relative rank to line officers, but in an institution where just about everything—pay, housing, position at mess tables, uniform—was determined by rank, to be without it was to be “penniless in the current coin of the naval realm.”¹⁰⁴

The line-staff conflict came to the forefront of promotion problems when the Navy began to adopt the technology of steam power. As ships came to depend on mechanical power the naval engineers, unlike other staff, were integrally involved in operating the ships. Engineers chafed about their inferior standing and unlike the other staff officers, they had the ability to cause trouble for the line officers. The facts of

¹⁰² Ibid. p. 199.

¹⁰³ When World War II broke out, the Bureau had become an agency devoting practically its entire attention to personnel administration, although the Naval Observatory and the Hydrographic Office still came under its cognizance. Shortly thereafter, these were placed under the Chief of Naval Operations and in 1942 the name of the Bureau was changed to the Bureau of Naval Personnel. Five primary elements composed its administrative responsibilities: procurement; training; distribution; performance; and welfare of naval personnel. Furer. p. 265.

¹⁰⁴ Chisholm. p. 421.

separate line and engineer corps, uniforms, pay scales, methods of recruitment, and later, educational curricula, exacerbated the conflict to the point where it eventually spilled over and played itself out in the public press and Congress. Although played out as a conflict between opposing groups, the controversy really concerned how the profession of naval officer would be defined. The Navy was becoming such a complex organization that no generalist officer, no matter how talented, could be expected to adequately perform the specialized tasks required while, conversely, staff officers were increasingly discontent with their relegation to a second-class status, without rank or command authority.¹⁰⁵

While the Navy attempted to reconcile issues of equity among the line and staff, then Secretary of the Navy Hilary A. Herbert attempted to resolve the problem of stagnation in the promotion of line officers. Secretary Herbert's first report to Congress stated "that unless remedies are adopted looking to some system of promotion which will produce a regular flow from the bottom to the top of the list, the consequences, not only to the service, but also to the Government, will soon be nothing less than alarming."¹⁰⁶ Secretary Herbert was interested solely in efficiency, believing that any promotion system should "produce efficient commanding officers, the accomplishment of which necessitates that officers of the line be made to bear the responsibilities of actual command by or before the time they have reached the prime of life; while they are still young enough to accommodate themselves to the demands upon intellect and energy which are made by the assumption of control of a modern man-of-war."¹⁰⁷

Secretary Herbert testified before Congress on 1 March 1894, and outlined a plan to establish a distribution of officers. If annual attrition did not provide promotions according to this plan, the president could accept applications for voluntary retirement from officers in the senior grades. If voluntary retirements did not create the specified vacancies, the secretary would appoint a board of at least five admirals to recommend a number to be retired equal to the vacancies required. Promotion would remain seniority-

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. pp. 435-436.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. p. 409.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

based, contingent upon officers passing professional examinations. “Selection out” was to be used, not to cull inefficient officers, but to facilitate the flow of promotion.¹⁰⁸

Rear Admiral J. G. Walker, the Bureau of Navigation Chief, gave an alternate proposal to Congress a week later. Walker provided that promotion from junior lieutenant on up be accomplished by a form of selection. “Selection up” would be achieved by boards meeting in June and December, comprising five officers senior to the grades from which selections were to be made. Their decisions were to be based upon each officer’s records. Only officers “best fitted in all respects for the duties of the next higher grade, irrespective of seniority” were to be selected. This appears to be the first time the term “best fitted” was used.¹⁰⁹ Walker’s proposal, although not enacted, prefigured changes in the promotion system that would not occur until more than twenty years later, when much investigation and controversy had passed.

5. The Act of 3 March 1899

The Act of 3 March 1899 was the most far-reaching reorganization of officer personnel since the Navy’s inception.¹¹⁰ The purpose of the Act was to “harmonize the differences which justly or unjustly have existed for more than a quarter of a century between the different officer corps; to remedy the present stagnation in the lower grades of the service, by providing a healthy flow of promotion, and to prevent its recurrence...and otherwise increase the efficiency of the Navy.”¹¹¹

Under the terms of the Act, rank was conferred on all staff officers, as determined by their commissioning date and academy standing.¹¹² The Act increased the number of captains and commanders in the Navy and accelerated the promotion of officers to those grades. It provided that when there were less than forty yearly vacancies above lieutenant, twenty of which had to be above lieutenant commander and thirteen above commander, a board of naval officers would create the necessary additional vacancies by selecting officers for transfer to the retired list. This method for ridding the active list of the least fit and insuring a flow of promotions became known as the “plucking” system.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. p. 412.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. p. 463

¹¹¹ House Report No. 1375, 55th Congress, 2nd Session, 19 May 1898, p. 2. (qtd in Chisholm, p. 456).

¹¹² House Record, 17 January 1899. pp. 708-9. (qtd in Chisholm, pp. 459-460).

It worked well as long as there were notoriously unfit officers available for selection-out, but after ten years that type of officer had been pretty well eliminated and officers then had to be plucked who had passable, even good, service records and reputations. This system became so unpopular in the Navy and also in Congress, that it would barely survive the turn of the century.¹¹³

6. The Line Personnel Act of 1916

World War I brought about a massive fleet expansion in the Navy and forced momentous changes in its officer personnel system. Then Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels, who proved to be a great naval reformer, was tasked with generating the qualified personnel—defined in terms of skill and relative youth—essential for commanding the Navy’s modern, growing fleet.¹¹⁴

Secretary Daniels endorsed a paper that had been written in 1912 by Judge Advocate General Ridley Mclean that called for a new system of promotion to “enhance economy, stimulate efficiency, and utilize the most efficient officers in the most responsible positions, and utilize every officer in the position for which his attainments best qualify him.”¹¹⁵

Mclean believed that the existing promotion system gave too much consideration to the welfare of the individual officer and too little to the interest of the government. What was necessary was a deliberate, unprejudiced answer to the question of what form of promotion system would most greatly improve the fighting efficiency of the Navy.¹¹⁶

The Line Personnel Act of 1916 answered the question by providing the pivotal legislation the Navy sought to increase its organizational efficiency. It provided that all promotions to command grade (commander, captain, and rear admiral) would be by selection, and directly tied promotion to attrition. It based staff officer promotions on the

¹¹³ Furer, Julius A. Administration of the Navy Department in World War II. Washington 1959. p. 296.

¹¹⁴ Chisholm. p. 555.

¹¹⁵ McLean Ridley. Promotion by Selection. House Report No.119. p. 4309. (qtd in Chisholm, p. 584).

¹¹⁶ Chisholm. p. 584.

percentage of total line officers, and thereby ensured that they would always be promoted in accordance with the officers of the line.¹¹⁷

7. Promotion by Selection

Promotion by selection was an important provision because it assumed that command grades should be filled by the most competent officers, those “best fitted,” rather than assuming that all that was needed for an officer to be promoted was some threshold level of competence. It also assumed that officers who were more than adequate in the junior grades would not necessarily be competent to the senior grades’ duties. This in turn required that the Navy develop a more complex representation of each grade’s duties and the skills required to perform them.¹¹⁸

Selection boards were convened annually for the selection of line officers, with separate boards consisting of senior officers in the staff corps convened for making selections in those corps. Staff officers became eligible for selection when their running mates in the line had reached that point. Vacancies were filled as they occurred, and in the order of the selectees on the list. If an officer became ineligible before he was actually promoted he could be removed from the list.¹¹⁹

The Act of 23 June 1938, later applied the system of promotion by selection to all officers in the naval service.¹²⁰ The effect of this Act on the promotion system was that beginning in the grade of lieutenant commander, about one of every five officers in each grade would be eliminated. This elimination was necessary to preserve the required distribution of officers and to maintain the proper age levels in each grade.¹²¹

The Act of 23 June 1938 also statutorily linked the promotion systems for the Navy and Marine Corps. Discussion of how the Officer Personnel Act of 1947, the Officer Grade Limitations Act of 1954, and the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act affected the officer promotion processes of the Navy were discussed in Chapter II. The focus of attention in this chapter will, therefore, shift to the operation of the current U. S. Navy promotion process.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. pp. 585-587.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. p. 591.

¹¹⁹ Furer. p. 296.

¹²⁰ “The Selection Law,” Marine Corps Gazette, March, 1939 p. 34 (qtd. in Simanikas, pp. 30-31).

¹²¹ House Report, 1947, p. 1647. (qtd in RAND p. 93).

B. THE CURRENT U. S. NAVY PROMOTION PROCESS

1. Officer Community Structure

The Navy groups its officers into four general categories: unrestricted line; restricted line; staff corps; and limited duty (line and staff)/chief warrant (line and staff).¹²² Within these four categories, the officer structure is divided into twenty communities,¹²³ i.e., groups of officers with related education, training, skills, and experience. Promotions in the Navy are a function of these communities, based on requirements, vacancies, and legal limitations. Community management for officers is conducted by Officer Community Managers (OCMs). Their primary responsibilities are:

- Promotions
- Accessions and Resignations
- Balance between billets and available personnel
- Community Structure (pay grade balance in billets and inventory)
- Career milestones
- Compensation
- Professional development requirements
- Policy Coordination: recruiting, retention, training, DOPMA¹²⁴

Figure 4 illustrates the officer community of the Navy by competitive category and designator:

¹²² Unrestricted Line are officers of the line of the regular Navy and Naval Reserve who are not restricted in the performance of duty. Restricted Line are officers of the line of the regular Navy and Naval Reserve who are restricted in the performance of duty by having been designated for aviation duty, engineering duty, aerospace engineering duty, or special duty. Staff Corps Officers are divided into eight categories in the Navy and Naval Reserve. The eight staff corps categories are medical, dental, medical service judge advocate general, nurse, supply, chaplain, and civil engineer. Limited Duty Officers and Chief Warrant Officers are appointed to occupational and technical fields based on their previous experience. Manual of Navy Officer Manpower and Personnel Classifications, NAVPERS 158391, p. A-2.

¹²³ The words “Community” and “Competitive Category” are used interchangeably throughout this chapter. While it is noted that the common use of the word community in the Navy refers to members in the Unrestricted line, (Aviation Community, Submarine Community, etc.), the Manual of Navy Officer Manpower and Personnel Classifications refers to the twenty groups as competitive categories, while the Bureau of Personnel, (www.bupers.navy.mil/mpt/planning.process.community.management.htm), refers to the groups as communities.

¹²⁴ Community Management for Officers. Bureau of Naval Personnel. www.bupers.navy.mil/mpt/planning.process.community.management.htm.

OFFICER COMMUNITY OVERVIEW
54,110 Total Officers

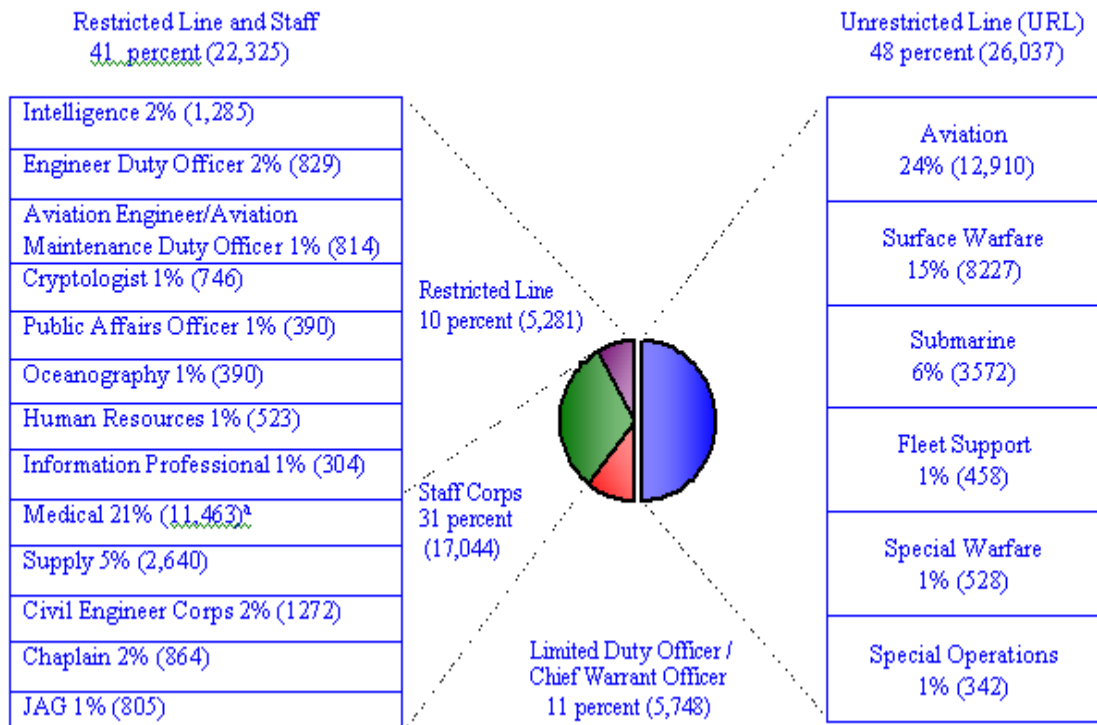


Figure 4. Officer Community Overview.

Source: LCDR Dave Lemek, Officers Plans and Policy, N131F

^a Includes Medical Corps, Dental Corps Nurse Corps, and Medical Service Corps

2. Participants in the Promotion Process

There are two key organizational elements when considering the Navy officer promotion process: Officer Plans and Policy Section, which is designated as Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) N131, and is part of the Military Personnel Plans and Policy Division; and Personnel Progression, Performance, and Security Department, which is, designated PERS-8 and falls under the cognizance of the Commander Navy Personnel Command. The important distinction between the two offices is that Officer Plans and Policy deals with promotion planning and management, whereas PERS-8 convenes promotion boards and implements promotion policy.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ OPNAVINST 5400 Series 4 Oct01. Chart provided by NPS.

To develop this thesis the authors had several discussions with the staff at Officer Plans and Policy. It was clear from these discussions that promotion planning in the Navy is in part a management tool for structuring the Navy and for ensuring that sufficient personnel are available to meet manpower requirements. It was also clear that efficiency was the primary value premise for the promotion system, but that equity had not been abandoned.

3. Promotion Policy

The Department of the Navy (DoN) policy is to meet skill and experience requirements for officers in each grade and competitive category by using a system of competitive selection boards. The promotion system is based on five-year plans designed to meet the following objectives:

- Select numbers of officers to fill projected vacancies to meet authorized strength in each competitive category and grade for the first fiscal year of the plan.
- Ensure reasonable career opportunities in each competitive category
- Attain and maintain an all Regular Force on the active-duty list in the grades of lieutenant commander (O-4) and above.
- Maintain programmed requirements by grade in each competitive category over the latter four fiscal years of the plan while maintaining relatively similar career opportunities.¹²⁶

4. Promotion Opportunity

Department of Defense Instruction 1320.13 establishes the general guidelines that will be applied to promotion plans for each competitive category. It requires a relatively similar opportunity for promotion over a five-year period. Secretary of the Navy Instruction 1420.1A provides the promotion flow point and opportunities for each grade in the Navy. Table 13 illustrates these opportunities and flow points for lieutenant commander (LDCR), commander (CDR), and captain (CAPT). Particular attention should be paid to the promotion opportunity, as it will be a salient point in this discussion.

¹²⁶ SECNAVINST 1420.1A. Promotion and Selective Early Retirement of Commissioned Officers on the Active-Duty Lists of the Navy and Marine Corps, 8 January 1991.

Promotion To Grade	Promotion Opportunity Percentage	Promotion Flow Point in years of active commissioned service
LCDR	70 – 90	9 - 11
CDR	60 – 80	15 - 17
CAPT	40 – 60	21 - 23

Table 13. United States Navy Promotion Opportunity and Flow Points.

Source: SECNAVINST 1420.1A, 8 Jan 1991. p. 4.¹²⁷

Promotion opportunity for the Navy, which is the in-zone “possibility” of selection, is a function of three interdependent factors: the total number of officers in the competitive category; the promotion flow point, which is the number of years of commissioned service experienced before promotion to a higher rank; and the selection rate, which is the percentage of officers authorized to be selected divided by the number of officers in the promotion zone.¹²⁸ Promotion zones are established to meet the separate promotion requirements of each competitive category, and this often results in different flow points and opportunity among the competitive categories.¹²⁹ The percentage of officers that may be recommended for promotion in each competitive category is set forth in the Secretary of the Navy’s Precept.

Table 14 reflects a compilation of the authorized selection percentages of officers in the grades of captain for fiscal year 1998 through fiscal year 2002. The reader will note that with the exception of the medical and dental corps, there were nine occasions in the five-year period that the promotion opportunity for the unrestricted line was less than the promotion opportunity for another community.¹³⁰

This point will be particularly important in Chapter six, when attention is turned toward whether or not any of the promotion systems studied could be applied to the

¹²⁷ Promotion flow point and opportunity for any competitive category may be temporarily set outside these guidelines when necessary to attain or to maintain the authorized grade strength. SECNAVINST 1420.1A. p. 5.

¹²⁸ Hansell R. C. Officer Promotion Opportunity Within the Navy Unrestricted Line 1973 – 1979. Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School. June 1979.

¹²⁹ SECNAVINST 1420.1A 8 Jan 1991. p. 11.

¹³⁰ The Medical Corps and the Dental Corps are not accountable under the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act, and therefore the guidelines for promotion opportunity percentage and promotion flow-point do not apply.

Marine Corps. The Unrestricted Line equates to the Combat Arms specialties of the Marine Corps, and any proposed system that does not examine how changes will affect the “war-fighters” of the Corps will be given little consideration. The basic concern of Marine leaders would be the effect on the Marine Corps war-fighting culture if there was a perceived disparity in the promotion process.

Competitive Category	FY98	FY99	FY00	FY01	FY02
Unrestricted Line	60	50	60	57	57
Engineering Duty Officer	55	55	55	55	55
Aerospace Engineering Duty Officer (Engineering)	50	50	50	50	52
Aerospace Engineering Duty Officer (Maintenance)	N/A	50	50	50	50
Special Duty Officer (Cryptology)	50	N/A	50	50	60
Special Duty Officer (Intelligence)	50	50	50	50	57
Special Duty Officer (Public Affairs)	62	66	50	60	71
Special Duty Officer (Oceanography)	50	50	50	50	45
Limited Duty Officer (Line)	30	30	30	30	43
Civil Engineer Corps	50	50	45	51	55
Chaplain Corps	50	50	50	50	50
Judge Advocate General Corps	60	60	60	60	60
Dental Corps	85	80	75	75	80 ^a
Medical Corps	70	70	70	70	85
Medical Service Corps	50	50	50	55	60
Nurse Corps	50	50	45	45	50
Supply Corps	50	50	50	50	50
Limited Duty Officer (Staff)	N/A	N/A	33	50	N/A

Table 14. Authorized Selection Percentages for Promotion to the Grade of Captain for Fiscal Year 1998 through Fiscal Year 2002.

Source: For fiscal years 1998 – 2000, LCDR D. Lemek, Officer Plans and Policy (N131F)

For fiscal years 2001 – 2002, Secretary of the Navy Precept Convening Promotion Selection Boards to Consider Officers on the Active Duty List of the Navy for Promotion to the Permanent Grade of Captain.

www.bupers.navy.mil/pers8/pers-80/pers-801/pers-801.htm

^aThe precept for this board was not available on the web site, however, the actual selection rate was available and is reflected. Since the board may only recommend the percentage in the precept and is tasked with recommending the percentage that most closely approximates the percentage set forth in the precept, this number should be a good approximation of the SECNAV guidance.

^bItems listed as “N/A” refer to years when no individuals were in the primary zone for promotion and a selection board was not conducted.

Table 15 reflects a compilation of the authorized selection percentages of officers in the grades of commander for fiscal year 1998 through fiscal year 2002. The reader will note that with the exception of the medical and dental corps there were fourteen occasions in the five-year period when the promotion opportunity for the unrestricted line was less than the promotion opportunity for other communities.

Competitive Category	FY98	FY99	FY00	FY01	FY02
Unrestricted Line	70	70	75	70	75
Engineering Duty Officer	70	70	70	70	75
Aerospace Engineering Duty Officer (Engineering)	83	80	80	80	80
Aerospace Engineering Duty Officer (Maintenance)	70	70	70	70	70
Special Duty Officer (Cryptology)	70	70	70	70	70
Special Duty Officer (Intelligence)	70	70	70	70	77
Special Duty Officer (Public Affairs)	85	84	89	80	78
Special Duty Officer (Oceanography)	70	65	65	70	65
Limited Duty Officer (Line)	50	50	50	60	65
Civil Engineer Corps	70	65	70	70	80
Chaplain Corps	50	50	50	55	60
Judge Advocate General Corps	80	80	75	70	70
Dental Corps	BFQ ^a	85	80	80	80
Medical Corps	BFQ ^a	85	80	80	90
Medical Service Corps	70	70	70	70	70
Nurse Corps	70	70	70	70	70
Supply Corps	70	70	70	75	80
Limited Duty Officer (Staff)	50	40	40	40	50

Table 15. Authorized Selection Percentages for Promotion to the Grade of Commander for Fiscal Year 1998 through Fiscal Year 2002.

Source: For fiscal years 1998 – 2000, LCDR D. Lemek, Officer Plans and Policy (N131F)
For fiscal years 2001 – 2002, Secretary of the Navy Precept Convening Promotion Selection Boards to Consider Officers on the Active Duty List of the Navy for Promotion to the Permanent Grade of Captain

www.bupers.navy.mil/pers8/pers-80/pers-801/pers-801.htm

^a BFQ is “best and fully qualified”

Table 16 reflects a compilation of the authorized selection percentages of officers in the grades of lieutenant commander for fiscal year 1998 through fiscal year 2002. The

reader will note that even with the exception of the medical and dental corps there were twenty-four occasions when the promotion opportunity for the unrestricted line was less than the promotion opportunity for another community.

Competitive Category	FY98	FY99	FY00	FY01	FY02
Unrestricted Line	70	70	80	85	90
Engineering Duty Officer	90	90	90	95	90
Aerospace Engineering Duty Officer (Engineering)	90	90	90	90	N/A
Aerospace Engineering Duty Officer (Maintenance)	80	80	80	80	90
Special Duty Officer (Cryptology)	80	80	80	80	85
Special Duty Officer (Intelligence)	80	80	80	80	90
Special Duty Officer (Public Affairs)	83	84	85	85	85
Special Duty Officer (Oceanography)	85	80	80	80	90
Limited Duty Officer (Line)	70	70	70	80	85
Civil Engineer Corps	70	65	70	75 ^a	85
Chaplain Corps	60	60	65	70 ^a	75
Judge Advocate General Corps	85	85	85	80	80
Dental Corps	100	100	100	100	100
Medical Corps	100	100	100	100	100
Medical Service Corps	70	70	70	70 ^a	75
Nurse Corps	80	80	80	80 ^a	85
Supply Corps	75	75	75	75 ^a	80
Limited Duty Officer (Staff)	70	60	70	70 ^a	85

Table 16. Authorized Selection Percentages For Promotion to the Grade of LCDR for Fiscal Year 1998 through Fiscal Year 2002.

Source: For fiscal years 1998 – 2000, LCDR D. Lemek, Officer Plans and Policy (N131F)

For fiscal years 2001 – 2002, Secretary of the Navy Precept Convening Promotion Selection Boards to Consider Officers on the Active Duty List of the Navy for Promotion to the Permanent Grade of Captain.

www.bupers.navy.mil/pers8/pers-80/pers-801/pers-801.htm

^aThe precept for this board was not available on the web site, however, the actual selection rate was available and is reflected. Since the board may only recommend the percentage in the precept and is tasked with recommending the percentage that most closely approximates the percentage set forth in the precept, this number should be a good approximation of the SECNAV guidance.

When asked about differences in promotion opportunity, promotion planners from Officer Plans and Policy noted that Navy instructions call only for a “relatively similar promotion opportunity” and that it was acceptable for members of different competitive

categories to have promotion opportunities on different ends of the promotion opportunity spectrum, but that every attempt was made to ensure that across competitive categories promotion opportunity remained within the variance outlined in the Department of Defense and Secretary of the Navy guidelines. They further stated that the goal of the promotion system is the efficiency of the Navy; but that prior to any argument of inequity based on promotion opportunities, individuals must have a full understanding of how promotion opportunities influence the size of the promotion zone.¹³¹

5. Promotion Zones

Promotion Zones in the Navy are determined by taking the number of authorized promotions per competitive category and dividing that number by the promotion opportunity percentage. Since the number of promotions by competitive category is fixed, based on vacancies, a higher promotion opportunity percentage results in a smaller zone, while a lower opportunity results in a larger zone. Composition of the zone is determined by lineal seniority and is independent of year grouping. Consider the individuals in Table 17 with an 1140 designator. The individuals may have the same promotion date but the individual who has a high lineal standing has a high opportunity to be selected for promotion in fiscal year 2003, while the individual who is in that same competitive category with a low lineal standing will have to wait an additional year to reach the zone.

¹³¹ Video Teleconference Conducted with Commander T. McMahon and LCDR D. Plans and Policy on 4 Dec 2001.

57%	59%	60%	DESIGNATOR	NAME	Command	Start Date
3	3	3	1110	TOP OF ZONE		
3	3	3	1110	SMITH, JOHN JAMES		
3	3	3	1310	SMITH, JOHN JAMES	VF-14	9912
3	3	3	1140	WILLIAMS, MICHAEL		
3	3	4	1320	THOMAS, GEORGE	SWATSLANT	9912
3	3	4	1310	SMITH, JOHN JAMES	VFA-15	0001
3	3	4	1310	SMITH, JOHN JAMES		
3	3	4	1310	SMITH, JOHN JAMES	VT-7	0103
3	3	4	1110	SMITH, JOHN JAMES		
3	3	4	1310	SMITH, JOHN JAMES	HT-8	0009
3	3	4	1320	VASQUEZ, SCOTT		
3	4	4	1320	ROBERTS, BENJAMIN		
3	4	4	1320	SMITH, JOHN JAMES		
3	4	4	1310	SMITH, JOHN JAMES		
3	4	4	1110	SMITH, JOHN JAMES		
3	4	4	1110	SMITH, JOHN JAMES		
3	4	4	1110	SMITH, JOHN JAMES		
3	4	4	1110	SMITH, JOHN JAMES		
3	4	4	1320	SMITH, JOHN JAMES	VS-30	0008
3	4	4	1320	SMITH, JOHN JAMES	VAQ-135	9906
3	4	4	1320	SMITH, JOHN JAMES		
3	4	4	1310	SMITH, JOHN JAMES	VFA-192	0002
3	4	4	1310	SMITH, JOHN JAMES	VP-5	9906
3	4	4	1310	SMITH, JOHN JAMES	HC-4	9806
3	4	4	1310	SMITH, JOHN JAMES	VC-8	9808
3	4	4	1320	HATCH, WILLIAM		
4	4	4	1140	CRAWFORD, ALICE		
4	4	4	1320	SMITH, JOHN JAMES	VAQ-142	9807
4	4	4	1320	SMITH, JOHN JAMES	VAQ-137	9809
4	4	4	1310	SMITH, JOHN JAMES	VT-35	9910

Table 17. Illustration for Determining Zone Sizes.
Source: LCDR D. Lemek, Officer Plans and Policy. (N131F)

6. Promotion Flow Point

The promotion flow point is the average years of service when an officer is promoted (paid) to the next higher grade. Promotions are made in the order in which the names of officers appear on the promotion list for each competitive category according to a standard phasing plan. Five percent of officers are promoted each month for the first five months and 15 percent of officers are promoted in the final four months of the fiscal year. Promotions of officers from one competitive category are effected regardless of the relative seniority of officers of the same grade in other categories.

The reason the phasing plan is important is that it ensures that the flow point for actual promotions are still relatively similar. Consider again the individuals with the 1140 designator in Table 16, and specifically consider the zone with a 60 percent opportunity. Michael Williams is at the bottom of the promotion zone and his promotion will be effected on 1 September 2003. Alice Crawford will not be selected until the next promotion board but because she is at the top of the zone her promotion will be effected 1

October 2004. The reality is that although Alice Crawford has had to wait an additional year to find out if she will be selected for promotion, if she is promoted her flow point is still relatively similar to her counterparts in her community.

Table 18 illustrates how the promotion opportunity translates to a promotion flow point in the given communities. It also offers evidence that promotion planners can adjust promotion opportunities while providing relative equity across competitive categories. Although there are several occasions when communities are promoted faster than the “war-fighting” community there is no indication of glaring inconsistencies among communities.

Competitive Category	Captain		Commander		LCMDR	
	Opnt.	Flow Pt.	Opnt.	Flow Pt.	Opnt.	Flow Pt.
Unrestricted Line	57	21 - 07	75	15 - 06	90	10 - 02
Engineering Duty Officer	55	21 - 09	75	15 - 10	95	9 - 09
Aerospace Engineering Duty Officer (Engineering)	52	21 - 02	80	15 - 04	N/A	N/A
Aerospace Engineering Duty Officer (Maintenance)	50	21 - 08	70	16 - 01	80	9 - 00
Special Duty Officer (Cryptology)	57	21 - 01	75	15 - 05	87	10 - 08
Special Duty Officer (Intelligence)	57	21 - 01	77	15 - 07	90	9 - 00
Special Duty Officer (Public Affairs)	71	20 - 07	78	14 - 09	85	9 - 08
Special Duty Officer (Oceanography)	45	22 - 02	65	16 - 02	95	9 - 00
Limited Duty Officer (Line)	43	22 - 10	65	15 - 09	85	9 - 08
Civil Engineer Corps	55	20 - 11	80	15 - 08	80	9 - 10
Chaplain Corps	50	22 - 03	60	16 - 11	75	10 - 10
Judge Advocate General Corps	60	21 - 01	70	16 - 06	80	10 - 07
Dental Corps	75	23 - 01	80	16 - 05	100	9 - 03
Medical Corps	80	21 - 07	85	16 - 06	100	10 - 00
Medical Service Corps	60	20 - 10	70	16 - 05	75	10 - 06
Nurse Corps	50	23 - 00	70	15 - 07	85	10 - 00
Supply Corps	50	21 - 04	80	15 - 00	80	9 - 11
Limited Duty Officer (Staff)	N/A	N/A	50	16 - 04	85	10 - 03

Table 18. Promotion Percent Opportunity and Flow Point in Years and Months.
Source: LCDR D. Lemek, Officer Plans and Policy (N131F)

7. Temporary (Spot) Promotion of Officers

Title 10 United States Code authorizes the temporary (spot) promotion of certain line lieutenants to the grade of lieutenant commander under regulations prescribed by the Secretary of the Navy, when those officers have a skill in which the Navy is critically short and when they are serving in a position (billet) designated to be held by a lieutenant commander. Unrestricted line officers on the active duty list and limited duty officers in the surface duty and submarine duty designators who possess the skills required for lieutenant commander billets as engineer officers, engineering department principal assistants, engineering material officers in afloat units, and other staff engineering billets that directly support fleet engineering readiness are eligible.¹³²

To be considered for a spot promotion, officers must have served two years in grade by the date the selection board meets to consider the officer for promotion. They must be serving in, or ordered to, one of the 325 billets that are designated for spot promotion by the Secretary of the Navy and must have at least one year remaining to serve in a qualifying billet following the date of the commanding officer's recommendation for spot promotion.¹³³

Officers selected for spot promotion are appointed to the temporary grade of lieutenant commander effective on the date they report to the qualifying billet or the date of Senate confirmation of the appointment, whichever is later, and is the effective date for entitlement to pay and allowances. Appointments remain in effect until termination of appointment due to:

- An officer's promotion to the permanent grade of lieutenant commander
- A modification of orders that terminates eligibility
- Commencement of process for release from active duty¹³⁴

The importance of spot promotions are that they can effectively increase the percentage of the unrestricted line that are promoted, particularly when the individual who takes the spot promotion would not otherwise be in a promotion zone.

¹³² SECNAVINST 1421.3H. TEMPORARY (SPOT) PROMOTION OF OFFICERS. 14 May 1997.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

C. CONCLUSION

The biggest difference between the promotion systems of the Navy and the Marine Corps is not with the mechanics of the systems. In fact, with the exception of the Navy's spot promotion program, the manner in the Navy promotes its unrestricted line is in essence a mirror image of the Marine Corps promotion system. The underlying differences in the systems reside in the dichotomy of thought as to the purpose of the promotion system.

The Navy decided at the turn of the century that an effective promotion system must serve both the organization and the individual and that the promotion system must carry a portion of the responsibility for determining force structure. They sought a system that ensured that adequate numbers of officers were available to fill vacated positions throughout the Navy.

The literature clearly demonstrates that the Navy chose efficiency of the organization over equity of the individual. The Marine Corps has not made such a decision with its promotion system. The charter of every selection board for the Marine Corps is to choose the "best and fully qualified," while giving due consideration to the needs of the Marine Corps. If the purpose behind the Marine Corps system was to change to give more consideration to force-structuring then perhaps the standard would be to choose the "best fitted and most fully qualified."

The Navy has been successful in developing a dynamic promotion system, which has evolved to meet the needs for the organization. The real question is whether or not the Navy is similar enough to the Marine Corps for the promotion system to work in the Marine Corps? That will be a question answered in a later chapter, after analysis of the promotion system of the United States Air Force.

IV. THE OPERATION OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY PROMOTION PROCESS

The objective of this chapter is to explain the United States Army officer promotion process. The Army promotion process is an important aspect of the Army's Officer Personnel Management System (OPMS). The chapter will describe the OPMS and provide a historical perspective of the Officer Personnel Management System. The chapter will then discuss how the OPMS has been restructured to adapt to the changing military strategies of the post cold war.

A. THE OFFICER PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The Army's OPMS is responsible for managing officer personnel to fill billet requirements with the right person at the right time while fostering an environment conducive to advancement and equal opportunity.¹³⁵ The OPMS is regulated by the U.S. Total Army Personnel Command (PERSCOM), Officer Personnel Management Directorate (OPMD), and the U.S. Army Reserve Personnel Command (AR-PERSCOM). Collectively, these three entities work together to ensure that the OPMS does the following:

- Access and designate officers in the right numbers and with the right skills to satisfy current and projected Army requirements
- Develop the professional capacities of officers through planned schooling and sequential, progressive assignments
- Assign officers to meet Army requirements
- Separate officers to meet individual and Army needs¹³⁶

To better understand the Army's current promotion system, which is one of several components of the OPMS, a brief history of the OPMS is provided.

B. OPMS HISTORY

The Army officer corps underwent a significant expansion as a result of World War II. The initial strength of 17,563 officers in 1940 grew to 835,400 officers in 1945. There was not much officer management during this time; the emphasis was essentially

¹³⁵ Commissioned Officer Development and Career Management, Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-3, 1998, p. 1.

¹³⁶ Ibid. p. 2.

to identify and commission officers, provide them minimum essential training, and then send them off to war. By 1948, demobilization had reduced the Army officer corps to 64,000.¹³⁷

To support the Korean War, officer strength nearly doubled to a peak of 133,900 in 1952. However, postwar demobilization quickly reduced the officer corps to near prewar levels when a large number of officers left the Army. During this period, development for the officer corps was again limited to that which directly supported the war effort.¹³⁸

Flexibility in meeting officer increases to support the Vietnam War was limited by the decision not to mobilize the reserve component. Officer Candidate School became the major source of junior officers, partly because of the draft, and partly because the antiwar movements on many campuses caused several Reserve Officer Training Corp (ROTC) programs to be reduced in scope or terminated.¹³⁹

There was general recognition by Congress, DoD, and the military services during the Vietnam era that major changes to officer personnel management were required, which ultimately led to the DOPMA. The Army, however, took interim action; it recognized the need to improve internal officer management and conducted a major study—the *Officer Personnel Management System (OPMS) of 1971*.¹⁴⁰

The purpose of the study was to develop a “new concept of officer personnel management”¹⁴¹ that would “establish the professional and personal standards and goals required for the officer corps of the modern volunteer Army.”¹⁴² The guiding philosophy of OPMS was to:

¹³⁷ George R. Iverson, “Officer Personnel Management: ‘A Historical Perspective.’” Defense Technical Information Center, May 1978, pg. iii. (qtd. in Harry Thie et al., Future Career Management Systems for U.S. Military Officers, pg. 268. www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR470/mr470.appd.pdf).

¹³⁸ Harry Thie et al., Future Career Management Systems for U.S. Military Officers, p. 268, www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR470/mr470.appd.pdf.

¹³⁹ Headquarters, Department of the Army, “Army Historical Summary, 1 July 1972 to 30 June 1973,” p. 33. (qtd. in Thie et al., p. 268).

¹⁴⁰ Thie et al., p. 269.

¹⁴¹ Department of the Army, “Officer Personnel Management System,” 1971, p. 1. (qtd in Thie et al., p. 269).

¹⁴² Ibid. p. A-1.

- Improve the professional climate of the officer corps
- Identify early and develop carefully officers most qualified for command
- Allow for specialization in some technical areas without undue restriction on promotion and schooling opportunities
- Provide a satisfying career for that large segment of the officer corps who are neither commanders nor specialists.¹⁴³

The changes resulting from this study began to shape Army officer management as early as 1972. From 1972 to 1974, the Army implemented a centralized command selection process, designated command tours, and mandated primary and secondary specialties for officers.¹⁴⁴

After the DOPMA was passed in 1981, the Army Chief of Staff directed a study on the DOPMA's effect on the OPMS. In order to meet the DOPMA requirements, additional changes were made to the OPMS from 1983 to 1985, which included single branch development,¹⁴⁵ functional areas not related to any branch, multiple career tracks, and a revised officer classification system.¹⁴⁶

After the Cold War, members of Congress and leaders in the DoD began to question the effectiveness of the military career management system, which had been shaped by the military strategies of the Cold War; not the turbulent period that followed. In June of 1996, General Dennis J. Reimer, Chief of Staff of the Army stated, "It's now time to take a holistic view of the OPMS processes and systems as we know them today." At that time, the Army created the OPMS XXI Task Force, to "review and revise the personnel management system as necessary to ensure its viability for meeting future challenges."¹⁴⁷

C. OPMS XXI TASK FORCE

The OPMS XXI is the result of the task force-recommended changes to the OPMS. With the future strategic environment in mind, changes were required to meet the following criteria:

¹⁴³ Future Career Management Systems for U.S. Military Officers, MR-470-OSD, 1994, p. 269.

¹⁴⁴ *OPMS XXI: What Does it Mean for Your Future?* 1997, p. 1

¹⁴⁵ A branch is an occupational category, like Infantry, Artillery, Finance, etc.

¹⁴⁶ *OPMS XXI: What Does it Mean for Your Future?* 1997, p. 1.

¹⁴⁷ Commissioned Officer Development and Career Management, Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-3, 1998, p. 7.

- Enhance the Army's warfighting capability
- Provide all officers with a reasonable opportunity for success
- Balance grades and skills at the field-grade level¹⁴⁸

The following information provides a synopsis of the task force methodology and findings as written in *The Officer Personnel Management System XXI Study of 1997*.

1. Career Issues

During their year-long study, the task force conducted a survey, which indicated that officers were concerned about career issues such as security, competitive assignments, "zero defects" mentality related to fitness reports, high operational tempo, quality-of-life compensation, and too many career requirements with too little time to meet them. The survey also noted the impression that officers on the "command track" (those with a warfighting background) were favored by promotion boards over officers with technical and skill-related backgrounds.¹⁴⁹ Survey results showed concern over high officer turnover between jobs, and a lack of experience in functional areas.¹⁵⁰

The task force attributed these concerns to three manpower issues, which were closely examined: disparities between officer authorizations and inventory, officer authorization changes driven by changes in law or policy over the past decade, and chronic structure-inventory mismatches caused by the way the Army accesses officers and distributes them to the branches.¹⁵¹ The task force noted that these three factors resulted in the organizational problems of inventory mismatches, billet shortages in the operational units, inverted pyramid structures, and burdensome officer development requirements.¹⁵²

2. Inventory Mismatches

The Army had an excess of company-grade officers even after the numbers were deducted for trainees, transients, holdees, and students (TTHS). This is similar to what the Marine Corps calls P2T2, prisoners, patients, trainees and transients. The Army was short of 3,500 field-grade officers after considering TTHS. As a result, company-grade

¹⁴⁸ Officer Personnel Management System XXI Study, 1997, p. xi.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, pp. 4-5.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

officers, most of which were not branch-qualified, filled those vacant field-grade billets.¹⁵³ This problem is commonly referred to as upward substitution and usually means that an under-experienced officer is filling a billet requiring a higher-ranked officer.¹⁵⁴

3. Billet Shortages in Operational Units

Exacerbating upward substitution was the increase in Joint and DoD field-grade billets that started in 1988,¹⁵⁵ as well as the passage of Title XI Active Component/Reserve Component (Title XI AC/RC). Title XI AC/RC is a congressionally mandated program developed to ensure that the reserve component is being trained in the same manner as the active component.¹⁵⁶ Since Joint/DoD and Title XI AC/RC billets need to be filled at or near 100 percent, operational units with lower fill priorities suffer from billet vacancies.

The resultant dilemma of these policies is that majors who have minimum branch-qualifying experience, which is usually about one to two years in their functional areas, are taken out of operational units to fill the Joint/DoD and Title XI AC/RC billets. This hindered officers' experience levels and posed problems for unit cohesion.¹⁵⁷

4. Inverted Pyramid Structures

Grade pyramidal structures are usually broad-based and narrow at the top. The problem that Army manpower planners faced is that not all career fields had a normal pyramidal structure. Table 19 provides the distribution differences between various job categories. It illustrates that the combat arms field required more officers at the company grade level than at the field grade level. This is in stark contrast to the branch-immaterial field, which required more field grade officers than company grade officers.

¹⁵³ A branch qualified officer is one who is mentally and physically able to perform a variety of assignments in his/her current branch and is well-rounded as a leader. The officer must typically serve in his/her respective branch for a minimum amount of time, which varies between one and two years.

¹⁵⁴ Officer Personnel Management System XXI Study, 1997, pp. 4-6.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ TRADOC Regulation 351-18, *The Army School System*, 1999, p. 31.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. pp. 4-7.

	Company	Field
	Grade	Grade
Combat Arms	54	31
Combat Support	21	17
Combat Service Support	16	18
Branch-Immaterial	9	34

Table 19. Distribution Percentage of Army Officers in 1996.
Source. OPMS XXI Task Force Study, 1997

To compensate for a lack of field grade billets, field grade officers in the combat arms field were normally used to bolster shortages in the other fields.¹⁵⁸ The first OPMS (1971) was “challenged to design an officer management system to accommodate an Army structure in which some branches and career fields had inverted authorization pyramids,”¹⁵⁹ which resulted in the Army accessing 57 percent into combat arms when less than 25 percent of the colonel billets required combat arms officers. The solution was for all officers to have two specialties—a primary combat arms specialty into which they were accessed and in which they served their early assignments, and a secondary specialty that was selected after several years of service.¹⁶⁰ The goal was that by the eleventh or twelfth year of service each officer would be “branch qualified” in both specialties and be flexible in job assignments based on the Army’s needs.

The Army’s dual-track system, which closely resembled the Marine Corps Supplementary MOS program, failed to work according to plan.¹⁶¹ Before choosing a secondary specialty, officers would look at promotion results in that specialty. Career patterns of promoted officers were studied to identify the type of assignments that were prevalent. If certain types of assignment (duty with the reserves, recruiting assignments, ROTC duty, teaching at service schools, etc.) were common among selected officers, the type of assignment was considered “career enhancing” and selected. The converse was

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. pp. 4-9.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Department of the Army, “OPMS Study Group Report,” op. cit. p. vi, (qtd in. Thie, p. 274).

¹⁶¹ Officer Personnel Management System XXI Study, 1997, pp. 4-14.

also true. This behavior enhanced the perception of ticket punching and of careerists whose behavior was focused on self-aggrandizement rather than service to the Army.¹⁶²

Another problem was that the Army still wanted “generalists” with broad experience under the dual-track system, but at the same time required each officer to achieve a higher level of competency in two specialties. With longer assignments and more overseas tours, it was difficult for officers to remain qualified in both specialties, attend appropriate military schools, obtain an advanced degree, and meet other requirements.¹⁶³ The Army, recognizing this situation, introduced primacy, which allows officers to emphasize career development in one area. Typically, however, officers would change primacy from an entry branch to a functional area in mid-career when a branch-related assignment became less likely.¹⁶⁴

5. Burdensome Officer Development Requirements

Officer development requirements were a burden to many officers seeking to get promoted. In the combat arms field especially, getting all the “checks in the boxes” for promotion was difficult.¹⁶⁵ Because there were so many officers trying to get their command time and branch-qualifying time, the time they did get was divided into smaller pieces. Essentially more officers got less of everything.¹⁶⁶ As previously mentioned, majors with the minimum branch-qualifying time were eligible to fill the Joint/DoD and Title XI billets. In order to fill these high priority billets, the Army had to decrease minimum branch-qualifying times, thereby causing officers to move in and out of billets more rapidly. The problem, of course, is that minimized branch-qualifying time was not conducive to increasing the Army’s warfighting capabilities.¹⁶⁷

D. OPMS XXI

This new OPMS, titled “OPMS XXI,” entailed several changes to the officer management system, specifically it:

- Grouped branches and functional areas into four distinct career fields
- Established a career field designation process

¹⁶² Thie et al., p. 278.

¹⁶³ Ibid. p. 273.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Officer Personnel Management System XXI Study, 1997, pp. 4-10.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. pp. 4-12.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. pp. 4-13.

- Assigned majors and above to one career field
- Established a career field-based promotion system
- Established a command selection system which prioritizes officers in the Operations Career Field¹⁶⁸

The primary change in OPMS XXI was a new career field-based officer development and management system for field grade officers.¹⁶⁹ The career field-based system recognizes that all jobs are not alike and are now regarded differently in the promotion process. The system also recognizes that some officers are better suited for certain jobs than others based on skills, background and education. A unique characteristic of the career field-based system is that upon a captain's selection to major, his/her record is forwarded to a career field designation board, where his/her career field will be assigned based upon various criteria, such as demonstrated performance, undergraduate or graduate training, technical or unique expertise, military experience or training, in-depth understanding of a foreign culture, and consideration of the officer as a whole person.¹⁷⁰ Two key elements in the designation process are the officer's preference and the rater's input on the officer's evaluation report. Table 20 illustrates the new career fields according to OPMS XXI.

Operations (OP): 69 percent ^a	Operations Support (OS): 14 percent
Sixteen Basic Branches ^b	Foreign Area Officer
Psychological Operations and Civil Affairs	Army Acquisition Corps
Multifunctional Logistician	
Information Operations (IO): 7 percent	Institutional Support (IS): 10 percent
Information Systems Engineer	Human Resource Management
Strategic Intelligence	Comptroller
Space Operations	U.S. Military Academy Instructor
Public Affairs	Operations Research and
Information Systems Management	Systems Analysis
Simulation Operations	Strategic Force Development
	Nuclear Research and Operations
	Strategic Plans and Policy

Table 20. OPMS XXI Career Fields.

Source: OPMS XXI Task Force Study, 1997

^a Percent of total Army Competitive Category

^b Infantry, Armor, Artillery, Adjutant, Engineer, Signal, Quartermaster, Special Forces, Transportation, Intelligence, Military Police, Medical, Finance, Aviation, Ordnance and Air Defense

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 7.

¹⁶⁹ Commissioned Officer Development and Career Management, Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-3, 1998, p. 6.

¹⁷⁰ Officer Personnel Management System XXI Study, 1997, pp. 5-4.

The Army competitive category is now divided under OPMS XXI. Under the old competitive category, combat arms officers would compete for promotions against officers in other fields like Public Affairs, Comptroller and Information Systems Management.¹⁷¹ Now promotions are based within a career field. For example, officers in the Operations career field will only compete against other officers in the Operations field.

Since command time is important for promotion yet difficult for all officers to attain, the OPMS XXI has designated command selection for officers in the Operation career field only. The intended advantage to the OPMS XXI is that more command time will be available for those in the Operations field and consequently those officers in the other career fields can spend more time developing their skill and experience levels in their specialties.¹⁷²

Just as importantly, the lack of command time will not hinder those officers in the other three career fields. Whereas in the past, promotion to colonel was highly unlikely unless battalion command had been obtained, now the Operations Support, Information Operations, and Institutional Support career fields will enjoy the same likelihood for promotion to colonel as the Operations field will enjoy.¹⁷³ The disadvantage to the Operations career field is that because colonel promotions will be evenly distributed across all the career fields, the Operations field will experience fewer promotion opportunities to colonel than what the operational occupations were previously accustomed to.¹⁷⁴ Despite career field changes in the Army Competitive Category, the actual selection board process will remain the same.

E. CENTRALIZED PROMOTION SELECTION BOARD PROCESS

The officer promotion selection system is governed by procedures based on statute (Title 10, United States Code), Army Regulation (AR 600-8-29, Officer Promotions), and policy established by the Secretary of the Army and the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel. The selection system is closely monitored and managed because

¹⁷¹ *OPMS XXI and the AMEDD*, p. 2.

¹⁷² Army Link News, *5,000 Must Choose Careers Now Under OPMS XXI*, 1998.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin, *The Impact of OPMS XXI on MI Officers*, 1997.

of the far-reaching effects that the selection process has on the mission of the Army, and the professional development, morale and well-being of the officer corps.¹⁷⁵

Though the Army Competitive Category is divided into four career fields, there remains only one annual selection board. The centralized selection process has been in place since the end of the Vietnam War. It is considered by many to be a fair system that carries out board guidance well.¹⁷⁶ Surveys performed by the task force studying the OPMS in 1997, showed that 80 percent of the respondents agreed that the promotion boards select the officers with the best records.¹⁷⁷

The basic concept of the promotion selection system is to select for promotion those officers who have demonstrated that they possess the professional and moral qualifications, integrity, physical fitness, and ability required to successfully perform the duties expected of an officer in the next higher grade. Promotion is not intended to be a reward for long, honorable service in the present grade, but is based on overall demonstrated performance and potential abilities.¹⁷⁸

Promotion selection is conducted fairly and equitably by boards composed of mature, experienced, senior officers. Each board consists of different members, and women and minority members are routinely appointed. A typical board is presided over by a general officer and consists of 18-21 officers in a grade senior to that of those being considered for promotion. The board membership reviews the entire performance portion of the official record of every officer being considered for promotion. Selection boards recommend those officers, who in the collective judgment of the board, are the best qualified for promotion.¹⁷⁹

F. PROMOTION CULTURE SHIFT

Though the promotion selection process is perceived to be fair by most officers, the career field based system has caused concern for many officers: the Army's "muddy

¹⁷⁵ Army Regulation 600-8-29, Headquarters, Department of the Army, 1994, p. 2.

¹⁷⁶ Officer Personnel Management System XXI Study, 1997, pp. 3-8.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Commissioned Officer Development and Career Management, Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-3, 1998, p. 22.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

boots” culture is being replaced with a technology-dominated culture.¹⁸⁰ The “muddy boots” culture is characterized by basic soldiering, almost synonymous with the Marine Corps’ “Every Marine a rifleman.” The technology-dominated sub-culture allows officers to stovepipe in a specific skill at the expense of general warfighting skills.

The “muddy boots” culture was supported by the dual-track system because it allowed the Army to retain a surplus of combat arms officers.¹⁸¹ Under this system, an infantry officer, for example, could maintain his primary “track” of infantry, while delving in and out of an alternate “track,” which was usually a branch that was lacking manpower. The infantry officer would most likely try to spend more time in his primary branch of infantry to improve his promotion potential.

Career-field designation can be perceived as a step away from “muddy boots” in that once an officer is promoted to major, the officer is locked in to one of the four career fields.¹⁸² No longer would an infantry officer who was redesignated out of the combat arms be allowed to go back to his primary branch. However, career-field advocates claim that the “muddy boots” culture is instilled in officers during their first 10 years of service before promotion to major.¹⁸³ This is the time when they have more exposure to leading troops, gaining branch-qualification, and operational experience. Additionally, the field grade billets in the three non-operational career fields will still be predominantly filled by the over-abundance of officers from the Operations career field, and specifically from the four combat arms branches.¹⁸⁴ Thus, even the specialist fields will be filled predominantly by those who have been indoctrinated in the “muddy boots” culture.

G. SUMMARY

The OPMS XXI has taken measures to develop its warfighting capability to adapt to emerging technological changes in the future. By recognizing the differences between warfighters and specialists, cultural changes may develop. Because promotion opportunities are to improve for non-operational career fields, those officers might perform at higher levels since more time will be afforded for skill development. On the

¹⁸⁰ Officer Personnel Management System XXI Study, 1997, p. vi.

¹⁸¹ Ibid. pp. 4-14.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. p. vi.

other hand, operational career fields might feel more slighted than specialists whose less “well-rounded” performance records are guaranteed opportunities for promotion by virtue of their career field. If such a system were adopted by the Marine Corps, this could be a major concern because any perceived imbalance in promotion equity, could hinder the cohesion of the Marine Corps and team building might suffer in the long run. Successful recruiting over the past decade shows that individuals are attracted to the war-fighting culture of the Marine Corps. For this reason, an impact to the Marine Corps’ culture may be greater than an impact to the cultures of the other services. This idea will be addressed again in the final chapter. The next chapter will describe the operation of the United States Air Force promotion process.

V. THE OPERATION OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE OFFICER PROMOTION PROCESS

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the Air Force officer promotion process. The Air Force and Marine Corps promotion systems are similar in that they both have a “best qualified” promotion standard, and the Air Force’s large competitive promotion category for the Line of the Air Force closely parallels the Marine Corps aggregate promotion System. The promotion histories of the two services are also similar in that certain war-fighting occupations, such as the Corps combat arms officers and the Air Force’s pilots, have fared better in promotions than other support fields.

The chapter begins with a historical review of the Air Force officer promotion system and continues with a detailed description of the current promotion system. The chapter concludes by highlighting similarities and differences between the Air Force and Marine Corps systems.

Several names identifying the Air Force in this chapter will be used, so for the sake of clarity, the following Air Force lineage is provided:

1926 – Birth of the United States Army Air Corps

1941 – United States Army Air Corps re-designated the United States Army Air Force

1947 – United States Army Air Force reestablished as the United States Air Force

A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1. The Army Air Corps

In 1926, the Army officially recognized aviation as a military specialty and created the Army Air Corps.¹⁸⁵ Army Corps were created when a certain function or specialty reached a sufficient size and importance. Corps enjoyed the benefits of autonomy and the loyalty of their personnel. Officers were actually commissioned into the corps of their specialty and not the Army. The Air Corps was created under laws that required all general officers and flying unit commanders to be rated pilots and pilots to

¹⁸⁵ Mitchell, Vance O. Air Force Officers Personnel Policy Development 1944-1974. Air Force History and Museums Program, United States Air Force. Washington DC, 1996. p. 1.

compose at least 90 percent of the Air Corps.¹⁸⁶ The downside for the Army Air Corps was that rank distribution and promotion opportunity were not comparable to the rest of the Army, a ground-oriented service.¹⁸⁷

Between the years of 1926 and 1941, promotions were slow and based on seniority and years of service.¹⁸⁸ The Air Corps did not have a proportional share of colonels and generals and in the mid-1930s, only 12 percent of the Air Corps officers were field-grade, while the overall Army average was 40 percent. Also, Attempts at gaining a separate promotion list for the Air Corps were futile. This, in part, motivated the Air Corps to seek complete autonomy from the Army.¹⁸⁹

Since pilots composed the Air Corps, other Army branches conducted almost all officer support functions, up until 1941. For example, the Army Signal Corps handled communications and the Army Ordnance Corps handled bombs.¹⁹⁰ The arrangement between the Chief of the Air Corps and the other Army Corps' commanders became difficult due to the constant demand for support personnel, especially during a time of war. In order for the Air Corps to work properly with adequate support personnel, the Air Corps had to grow its own support structure.¹⁹¹ This was a key factor in the Air Corps argument for autonomy and in June of 1941, the Army Air Corps was changed to the Army Air Force, which meant that it had equal status with the Army Ground Forces and Army Service Forces.¹⁹²

2. The Army Air Force

The Army Air Force faced the challenge of acquiring and producing officers with various skills, flying and non-flying, to completely support itself without the assistance of other Army Corps.¹⁹³ To meet this challenge, those statutes requiring 90 percent of the officers to be pilots were suspended and the Army Air Force opened new commissioning

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. p. 20.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 21.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid. p. 2.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

programs to meet the officer manpower needs.¹⁹⁴ Despite these programs, however, the Army Air Force would still have to rely on other Army Corps to meet various shortfalls for years to come.¹⁹⁵

General of the Army, Henry H. Arnold, Commanding General of the Army Air Forces from 1942 to 1946 envisioned an Air Force that was an independent military service, completely separate from the Army. He also envisioned a technologically advanced Air Force that would be a key player in future wars. In a staff meeting on January 12, 1945, he shared his vision:

Regulations limiting the responsibilities and career possibilities of non-rated personnel must be changed. Every opportunity must be given to skills and abilities needed for a well rounded organization if the United States is to maintain its air leadership.¹⁹⁶

Up to the time of his vision, the pilot had always been regarded as the epitome of heroism and professionalism. General Arnold's vision to accept non-rated officers as equals and to allow them the same opportunities for advancement as rated officers challenged the Air Force culture.¹⁹⁷ It also required Air Force planners to agree upon what the correct balance of rated and non-rated officers should be.

In November of 1945, the Army Air Force established a 70:30 ratio of rated and non-rated officers.¹⁹⁸ This ratio allowed a 20 percent surplus of rated officers, which would be used to give rated officers broader experiences in non-rated billets. Since many pilots had little experience outside of flying, cross-training was viewed as establishing a well-rounded officer.¹⁹⁹ The surplus of pilots was also considered important to meet the demands of a future mobilization. In case of a mobilization, it was far easier to replace a non-rated billet with a reservist than it was to create a well-trained pilot.²⁰⁰ There were however, problems with the 70:30 ratio.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. p. 8.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. p. 9.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. p. 11.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. p. 33.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. p. 32.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

With so many surplus pilots, flight hours became a scarce resource and minimum proficiency levels were difficult to attain. Some officers did whatever they could to meet the minimum requirements and in 1945 when a B-25 bomber crashed into the Empire State Building the media uncovered the practice of officers claiming flight hours while simply being passengers.²⁰¹

Congress had a problem with the 70:30 ratio because flight pay seemed unnecessary for rated officers serving in non-rated billets. Also, there were simply too many pilots per aircraft, a ratio of five pilots to each plane.²⁰² This seemed an unnecessary expense for Congress and by 1947 it began substantially cutting the Army Air Force budget on account of a bloated rated officer population.²⁰³

Not wanting Congress to come up with any more solutions to Army Air Force problems, the Army Air Force officially dropped the 70:30 ratio, although its manpower practices continued to indicate that 70:30 was the Army Air Force guideline.

Interestingly enough, although the Army Air Force was attempting to balance its service between rated and non-rated officers, it did exactly the opposite by creating more rated officers than it really needed, which would latter make equity difficult for future non-rated officers.

Regarding promotions, pre-World War II promotions were seniority based and contributed to officer professionalism problems. Because promotions were so few and far between, many officers felt little incentive to work hard or advance themselves as professional officers. This was evident in the lack of good leadership during World War II.²⁰⁴

During World War II many senior officers were forced to retire while promising young officers were given early promotions. By 1946 it was obvious that the Army Air Force needed to develop an officer management system that would attract qualified officers and respond to national needs. This new system was addressed in the Officer

²⁰¹ Ibid. p. 34.

²⁰² Ibid. p. 35.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid. p. 41.

Personnel Act (OPA) of 1947, which mandated promotion by selection to the next grade at mandated points of a career.²⁰⁵

In August 1947 the OPA became law but its emphasis on a competitive up-or-out promotion system did little to reduce the Army Air Force officer population. The unforeseen problem with OPA was that 95 percent of the Army Air Force's line officers had fewer than five years of commissioned service.²⁰⁶

The Army Air Force then considered the possibility of dividing their force into four "sub-forces:"

- (1) Flying
- (2) Guided Missiles
- (3) Antiaircraft
- (4) Technical and service

This division could have helped with the management of personnel and their career patterns; however, the Army Air Force did not want to evolve into an organization with different loyalties as it had experienced in the Army's corps system.²⁰⁷

3. The Air Force is Established

The Army Air Force gained its autonomy and became the Air Force on 18 September 1947. The Air Force created a promotion category for the Line of the Air Force, which excluded only chaplains, doctors, and lawyers.²⁰⁸ The various career fields in the Line of the Air Force were as follows:

- Aeronautical Engineering
- Electrical Engineering
- Automotive and Armament
- Construction
- Personnel Administration
- Supply and Procurement
- Information

²⁰⁵ Ibid. p. 42.

²⁰⁶ Description of Officer Career Management Systems, p. 246.

²⁰⁷ Ibid. p. 21.

²⁰⁸ Ibid. p. 23.

- Flying
- Non-flying Tactical

The career fields were supposed to be different from the corps system in that officers would be commissioned into the Air Force and not their respective career fields. Loyalty to the Air Force was an important issue, having recently experienced loyalty problems as a part of the Army. Promotions within the same category were intended to help unify the Air Force and build camaraderie.²⁰⁹ However, it appears as if a history of buildups, draw downs, pilot-bias, and changing technology kept the Air Force distracted in its attempts at camaraderie building.

The Air Force used a best-qualified promotion system from 1947 to 1951 but then reverted to an all fully qualified promotion system to major and lieutenant colonel, since a large number World War II officers were approaching promotions to these ranks. Under the best-qualified system, many of the World War II officers would not have been selected for promotion. The Air Force was able to switch to a fully qualified promotion system because the Korean War diverted the country's attention from OPA and decreasing officer ranks.²¹⁰ The officers who benefited the most from the fully qualified system were those who entered at the end of World War II.²¹¹

By 1958, the Officer Grade Limitation Act (OGLA) restrictions required the Air Force to again resume a best-qualified promotion system to reduce officer numbers, though the only officers who weren't allowed to continue on in the Air Force were those who were clearly substandard.²¹² Those who were considered fully qualified but not selected for promotion were still allowed the opportunity to serve until retirement.²¹³ The up-or-out system was really only applied to those who had already reached retirement age, which is a significant indicator of the Air Force's efforts to take care of its officers, namely pilots, at the expense of their officer management system.

²⁰⁹ Mitchell p. 25.

²¹⁰ Ibid. p. 148.

²¹¹ Ibid. p. 249.

²¹² Ibid. p. 250.

²¹³ Ibid.

Just as a large contingent of officers, also referred to as a “hump,” resulted from the World War II buildup, another occurred during the Korean War.²¹⁴ In 1954, over 40,000 officers had less than three years of service and 60,000 had between eight and twelve years of service, which was in conflict with steady-state manpower models.²¹⁵

The OGLA limits would have required the Air Force to involuntarily separate about 1,700 officers but the Air Force, concerned with possible retention problems down the road, sought OGLA relief in 1958 to increase the number of its majors by 5,000. Though only 3,000 were approved, this fixed the problem until the Air Force needed the same relief for its lieutenant colonels in 1961 and its colonels several years later.²¹⁶

The biggest problem that these humps caused was that Air Force promotion phase points lagged behind those of the other services. Until the DOPMA, the Air Force fought many battles with Congress to provide grade relief and the authorizations needed to get its officers promoted on a more equal basis with the other services.²¹⁷ These legal battles used up valuable resources and gave reason for the Air Force and congress to distrust each other’s objectives.²¹⁸

Between the years of 1963 and 1972, the Air Force saw a pilot increase of 267 percent.²¹⁹ This was similar to the World War II and Korean War build-ups in that the post-war reductions created turmoil for promotion planners. Between 1973 and 1974, pilot accession was cut by almost 50 percent. Afterwards, a low-morale problem existed in the Air Force known as the “captain’s revolt” of 1977 through 1979. This period marked the lowest voluntary retention of Air Force officers in its history.²²⁰

In 1978, President Carter began what has been referred to as the “Reagan Buildup,” by increasing pilot accession rates. This was a result of tensions in various parts of the world like, North Korea, Czechoslovakia, Afghanistan, Iran, the Middle East, South and Central America, China, Taiwan, and other places. However, this gradual

²¹⁴ Ibid. p. 264.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid. p. 266.

²¹⁸ Thie, et al. Future Career Management Systems for U.S. Military Officers. RAND 1994. p. 245.

²¹⁹ Ibid. p. 239.

²²⁰ Ibid.

buildup was followed by the post-Cold War drawdown, which significantly reduced pilot production again.²²¹

Because the Air Force experienced several large buildups and did not involuntarily separate enough officers during draw downs, the promotion system simply could not promote enough people to keep pace with the other services.²²²

Throughout the Air Force's history, a perception has existed that aviators are more important to the service than non-rated officers. The numbers of general officers who are aviators as opposed to those who are non-rated officers supports this perception.²²³ This perception is an important point and its applicability to today's Air Force will be addressed later in this chapter.

Currently, the Air Force uses a best-qualified promotion system, which was helped along by the OGLA as it made centralization and standardization of promotion procedures possible.²²⁴ The problems with the OGLA were identified by the Air Force and proposed changes were adopted into the DOPMA. The next portion of this chapter identifies the current Air Force promotion process.

B. THE CURRENT U.S. AIR FORCE PROMOTION PROCESS

1. Officer Community Structure

The Air Force groups its officers into eight competitive categories for promotion purposes: Line of the Air Force (LAF); Judge Advocate General (JAG); Chaplain (CHAP); Medical Service Corps (MSC); Biomedical Service Corps (BSC); Dental Corps (DC); and Nurse Corps (NC). Table 21 illustrates the numeric composition of the Air Force.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Thie, et al. Future Career Management Systems for U.S. Military Officers. RAND 1994. p. 263.

²²³ Ibid. p. 251.

²²⁴ Ibid. p. 267.

Competitive Category	Population Number	Percentage of Population
Line	51,684	80
Nurse	3,703	6
Medical / Medical Service Corps	3,350	5
Biomedical	2,389	4
Judge Advocate	1,266	2
Dental	960	2
Chaplain	589	1

Table 21. United States Air Force Population.
Source: Air Force Personnel Center Website, Dec 2001

Of the 51,684 line officers about 12,000 are pilots, which is significantly different from the 70:30 ratio after World War II. The others are composed primarily of support officers, navigators, anti-ballistic missile systems officers and non-rated operation officers.²²⁵ The majority of Air Force officers, 81 percent, are in a competitive category called the Line of the Air Force. The other 19 percent of officers form seven competitive categories relative to their specialized education.²²⁶ One point that was made clear when viewing the historical promotion demographics on the eight competitive categories is that the specialized categories were created to ensure that these specialists maintained a minimum promotion opportunity consistent with the Line of the Air Force, and not simply to enhance their promotion opportunity.

The Line of the Air Force has about 40 different technical specialties, which have also been referred to as “tribes.” Job communities have been described as tribes because officers are more likely to identify with their technical specialty than they are to simply being an Air Force officer.²²⁷ This is a sharp contrast to the Marine Corps, where officers identify with the Marine Corps before they identify with their occupational specialty.

2. Purpose of the Promotion Process

The Air Force Personnel Center, located in Randolph Texas, is the home of the Officer Promotions Management Section. Their mission is to ensure that a sufficient

²²⁵ Air Force Personnel Website.

²²⁶ Major C. Huguley. Chief, Officer Promotion Management Section, HQ AFPC. Interview by authors 28 Jan 2002.

²²⁷ Developing Aerospace Leaders, John T. Correll, Air Force Magazine, December 2001, p. 1.

number of qualified personnel are available to carry out mission objectives.²²⁸ For the promotion system, their specific objectives are:

- To ensure the best qualified are selected to promotion
- To provide stable, consistent, and visible progression
- To accelerate progression for exceptional performers²²⁹

3. Selection Standard and Criteria

Central selection boards are convened to consider active duty officers for promotion in the respective grades of captain through major general. The requirement for these selection boards is that they recommend only those officers whose records, when compared with those of other eligible officers, reflect the greatest potential to serve successfully in the next higher grade. All selection boards, use the best qualified method of selection.²³⁰

The most distinct difference between the Marine Corps and Air Force promotion systems is the Air Force's use of Senior Raters. A Senior Rater is an officer in the grade of colonel or above, usually a wing commander, who completes promotion recommendations on all officers under his command who are eligible for consideration for promotion. The senior rater gives a recommendation to "definitely promote," "promote," or "not promote" based on an officer's cumulative record. The number of officers who can be given a "definitely promote" recommendation is limited to a fraction less than the fraction who will be promoted. Although the "definitely promote" recommendation is not a guarantee for promotion, statistical data show that the promotion opportunity for these individuals centered around 98 percent.²³¹

4. Promotion Planning

Promotion Planning is the mechanism that commences the Air Force promotion process. The Air Force personnel staff with approval through the Secretary of the Air Force prepares and updates a five-year promotion planning model. This model takes into

²²⁸ Major Bob LaBrutta, Chief of officer promotions, HQ AFPC, PowerPoint presentation, p. 5.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Air Force Pamphlet 36-2506. You and Your Promotions – The Air Force Officer Promotion Program. 1 September 1997.

²³¹ Hosek, S. et al. Minority and Gender Differences in Officer Career Progression. RAND 2001. p. 114.

account the projected gains/losses to Air Force officer manning along with the projected needs in each grades.²³²

The planning mechanisms in the Air Force promotion process demonstrate their ability to adjust for changes in the aggregate structure but not in any particular fields. For example if the Air Force needs fewer or more officers they may:

- Increase or decrease promotion opportunity for a particular board
- Adjust the eligible population by splitting or combining year groups
- Slow down or accelerate “pin-on” times
- Skip a promotion year or hold two boards in one year²³³

Since none of these planning mechanisms are designed to alleviate imbalances in particular specialty they would not, by Marine Corps standards, necessarily meet the definition of a force-structuring tool. The Secretary of the Air Force’s Memorandum of Instruction, which provides promotion guidance to the selection board, does identify skill shortages but does not mandate that these skill shortages receive any preference for promotion.

The most important factor in promotion selection of an Air Force officer is job performance. This is identified to be the most important factor in the other services as well. A well-rounded, whole person concept is used during the selection process. An officer’s record must reflect sound performance in his/her career field, a variety of jobs, exposure to different difficulty levels of jobs, leadership potential, and educational advancement.²³⁴

5. Selection Rates

Tables 22 and 23 illustrate that officers within the Line of the Air Force category have fared very differently on promotion boards for the primary zone:

²³² Labrutta. p. 3.

²³³ Ibid. p. 6.

²³⁴ Labrutta. p. 24.

Line of the Air Force Component	FY 97	FY 98	FY99	FY00
Pilots	72.1	72.3	70	67.9
Navigators	59	54.6	57.3	55.7
Non-Rated Operations	57.7	60.7	59.5	64.3
Mission Support	61	60.7	66.2	65.7

Table 22. Authorized Selection Percentages for Promotion to the Grade of Lieutenant Colonel for Fiscal Year 1997 through Fiscal Year 2000.

Source: Air Force Personnel Center, Website, Dec 2001.

Line of the Air Force Component	FY 97	FY 98	FY99	FY00
Pilots	45.7	45.8	48.8	49.5
Navigators	36.2	36.7	38.8	39.6
Non-Rated Operations	39.7	35.1	39.1	43.5
Mission Support	41.6	41.1	39.6	45.1

Table 23. Authorized Selection Percentages for Promotion to the Grade of Colonel for Fiscal Year 1997 through Fiscal Year 2000.

Source: Air Force Personnel Center, Website, Dec 2001.

The tables show that pilots have fared much better on promotion boards than any of the other occupational fields. This phenomenon can be mostly attributed to the Secretary of the Air Force's memorandum that indicates that the Air Force has had an enormous pilot shortage for the past several years and it is projected to continue past the year 2010.²³⁵ The reader will also note that with the exception of navigators, non-rated officers currently experience higher selection rates than they did in 1997. If the pilot shortage continues, it is likely that the non-rated officer selection rates will continue to rise as non-rated officers fill billets previously filled by pilots.

6. Promotion Opportunity

Promotion opportunity in the Air Force is the approximate percentage of officers in an accession year group that a central selection board will select for promotion to the next higher grade in any of the three promotion zones. The DOPMA's minimum opportunities are 80 percent to major, 70 percent to lieutenant colonel, and 50 percent to colonel. The Air Force, in 2001 has had opportunities that reflect 90 percent to major, 75 percent to lieutenant colonel and 55 percent to colonel.²³⁶ Promotion opportunities are

²³⁵ The Air Force Pilot Shortage: A Crisis for Operational Units?, William W. Taylor, S. Craig Moore, C. Robert Roll, Jr. RAND 2000, p. 1.

²³⁶ Labrutta, p. 9.

generally held constant to ensure consistent quality of selects, fairness and predictable promotion likelihoods.²³⁷

C. CONCLUSION

The greatest similarity between the Air Force and Marine Corps promotion systems is that the Line of the Air Force closely resembles the Marine Corps unrestricted officer community and holds a preponderance of the officer population. Another similarity is that within these competitive categories, field-grade officers are promoted on a best –and-fully qualified basis and well-rounded officers usually do better than those who have been stove-piped in specific technical specialties.

Because of the current pilot shortage in the Air Force, many pilots are limited on their time outside of the cockpit. Though many pilots lack the well-rounded career paths, the Air Force cannot afford to select fewer pilots for promotion.

The greatest difference between the two services is simply in their cultures. Because the Air Force has focused so much on technology, officers continue to identify with their weapons systems before they identify with the Air Force as a whole. This should be a caveat to the Marine Corps when considering changing the current promotion system to one that recognizes different skills.

An interesting note is that even though the Air Force has a fairly equitable Line of the Air Force promotion category, the culture has a major cohesion problem simply because of its various specialty communities.²³⁸ It appears that the more a service concentrates on technical specialties, the harder it is to form a cohesive organization.

The next chapter will explain the authors' conclusions about whether or not the Marine Corps should change its current officer promotion process to an MOS based system.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Edward C. Mann III, Thunder and Lightning: Desert Storm and the Airpower Debates, Air University Press, April 1995, pp. 163-164.

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VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions about whether or not the Marine Corps should modify its promotion system so that Marine Officers are promoted according to MOS vacancies instead of aggregate vacancies are based upon an understanding of the statutory restrictions on implementing an MOS-based system as well as an understanding of the costs and benefits of instigating the system.

After discussion of the statutory provisions that would effect implementation of a promotion by MOS system, the authors discuss the role of value premises on a promotion system and contend that no force structuring tool in the Marine Corps will be successful until the value premise for the Marine Corps manpower system is changed.

A. PROMOTION BY MOS

Establishing a policy of selecting officers for promotion by Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) will be a difficult option for the Marine Corps from a statutory perspective. Title 10, United States Code, permits the creation of separate competitive categories for warrant officers but requires that competitive categories for officers be established by the Secretary of each military department, under regulations prescribed by the Secretary of Defense.

Department of Defense Directive 1320.12, "Commissioned Officer Promotion Program," states that the Secretaries of the military departments shall establish competitive categories as required to manage, in relation to the requirements of the officer category concerned, the career development and promotion of certain groups of officers whose specialized education, training, or experience, and often relatively narrow utilization, make separate career management desirable.

Secretary of the Navy Instruction 1400.1A, which governs officer competitive categories for active-duty members of the Navy and Marine Corps, states that a separate competitive category will be considered only when the following criteria are met:

- The specialized education, training, or experience and often relatively narrow utilization of a group of officers makes it impossible for them to

compete for promotion on an equitable basis with other officers having more generalized experience.

- It is necessary to protect a substantial investment in education, training, or experience by ensuring equitable promotion opportunity when that education, training, or experience will be utilized within a relatively narrow career field.
- The specialized community can be managed as a separate career field in such a manner as to ensure the most efficient use of unique resources in the various officer grades.
- The specialized community will be large enough to sustain a career force in the grades, 0-4 through 0-6, generally within the promotion guidelines of the Secretary of the Navy Instruction on promotion and selective early retirement of commissioned officers on the active-duty list of the Navy and Marine Corps.²³⁹

It is not a forgone conclusion that MOSs in the Marine Corps would meet the standard of “specialized education, training, or experience,” and even if it were, it would still be difficult to argue that Marine officers in any MOS have such a “narrow utilization” that it becomes impossible for them to compete for promotion on an equitable basis.

The reader should first understand that every Marine officer, regardless of MOS, must complete The Basic School, has a theoretical opportunity at command, and can apply for a variety of b-billet tours. Then the reader should note, as Table 24 illustrates, that with very few exceptions, the five-year promotion averages for selection to the grade of major demonstrate a distribution of promotions that is consistent with Department of Defense guidelines. The standard for promotion to major is a 70 to 90 percent promotion opportunity range, and a relatively similar promotion opportunity.²⁴⁰ Applying this standard as the definition of equity makes it inherently difficult to contend that it has been impossible for any MOS to compete for promotion on an equitable basis.

²³⁹ Secretary of the Navy Instruction 1400.1A. Officer Competitive Categories for the Active Duty List of the Navy and Marine Corps. 26 July 1990.

²⁴⁰ Department of Defense Directive 1320.12. Commissioned Officer Promotion Program. 3 June 1987.

MOS	Percent Selected	MOS	Percent Selected
0180	79.02	6604	N/A ¹
0202	85.12	7208	79.82
0206	N/A ¹	7210	84.73
0302	91.74	7220	95.83
0402	89.76	7509	79.93
0602	90.75	7521	N/A ¹
0802	90.24	7523	76.70
1302	90.96	7525	87.88
1802	92.34	7543	58.90
1803	87.62	7556	42.23
3002	81.22	7557	59.04
3404	86.30	7562	79.35
4302	77.00	7563	68.68
4402	78.70	7564	70.65
5803	81.86	7565	80.00
6002	84.84	7566	80.70
6602	90.00	7588	74.88

Table 24. Average of Five-Year USMC Major Selection Rates.

Source: Major G. Branigan, Officer Promotion Planner, HQMC

¹ This MOS has not existed for five years.

Notwithstanding the concerns of the current language in creating the competitive categories, if the Secretary of the Navy were to determine that the technical training of the varied MOSs meets the Department of Defense requirement for separate competitive categories, and the Marine Corps was given the flexibility of separate promotion requirements as a force structuring tool, the Marine Corps could, in the long run, develop the ability to provide a more efficient fill of officer billets. However, other manpower processes would have to be completed to ensure that the system worked in an efficient, yet equitable manner.

The first necessary prerequisite to adjusting the Marine Corps promotion system would be a verification of authorized billet requirements and a concrete decision on how b-billets would be distributed per MOS. Equity would mandate that b-billets be distributed at a fixed proportion of MOS strength so as not to allow any particular MOS from arbitrarily increasing its end-strength and consequently its promotion opportunities.

The short-run implication of implementing an MOS-based system in accordance with Department of Defense Instruction 1320.12 must be noted before that decision could

be reached. It is DoD policy to provide relatively similar promotion opportunities over a five-year period in each grade and competitive category. Table 25 provides the fiscal year 2002 primary military occupational specialty (PMOS) demographics for the major selection board. The table illustrates how each MOS would have been affected in a promotion by MOS system, if the Department of Defense guidance for an 80 percent promotion opportunity with a variance of 10 percent on either side had been utilized. The reader will note that applying a “relatively similar” promotion opportunity only nets eighteen promotion opportunities for the Marine Corps to utilize in structuring the force.

Table 26 provides the fiscal year 2002 PMOS demographics for the lieutenant colonel selection board. This table illustrates how Marines in these MOSs would have been affected, given a promotion by MOS system, if the Department of Defense guidance for a 70 percent promotion opportunity with a variance of 10 percent on either side had been utilized. The reader will note that applying a “relatively similar” promotion opportunity, means that the Marine Corps would have had to redistribute eighteen promotions from Marines who were selected to Marines in MOSs whose promotion rates did not meet the promotion opportunity guidance. Interestingly, seven of those promotions would be to Marines whose MOSs were precepted on the board and yet were still under-selected.

MOS	Eligible	Selected	Percent Selected	Promotions Gained / Loss
0180	8	8	100	-1
0202	29	26	89.7	
0206	3	3	100	
0302	89	87	97.8	-9
0402	49	47	95.9	-3
0602	44	42	95.5	-3
0802	41	39	95.1	-2
1302	21	20	95.2	-1
1802	8	7	87.5	
1803	7	5	71.4	+1
3002	21	21	100	-2
3404	12	12	100	-2
4302	5	5	100	-1
4402	11	9	81.8	
5803	6	5	83.3	
6002	12	11	91.7	-1
6602	5	5	100	-1
6604	0	0	0	
7208	16	15	93.8	-1
7210	8	6	75	+1
7220	5	5	100	-1
7509	25	23	92	-1
7521	0	0	0	
7523	48	36	75	+2
7525	17	15	88.2	
7543	3	1	33.3	+2
7556	5	2	40	+2
7557	13	8	61.5	+2
7562	67	54	80.6	
7563	21	15	71.4	
7564	9	6	66.7	+1
7565	42	36	85.7	
7566	30	25	83.3	
7588	9	7	77.8	

Table 25. Fiscal Year 2002 USMC Major Selection Statistics Adjusted to Provide
“Relatively Similar” Promotion Opportunity.

Source: Major G. Branigan, Officer Promotion Planner, HQMC

MOS	Eligible	Selected	Percent Selected	Promotions Gained/ Loss
0180	11	5	45.5	+2
0202	18	8	44.4	+3
0302	72	56	77.8	
0402	34	18	52.9	+3
0602	29	14	48.3	+4
0802	31	24	77.4	
1302	10	5	50.0	+1
1802	9	5	55.6	+1
1803	2	1	50.0	
3002	22	15	68.2	
3404	11	8	72.7	
4302	1	0	0	
4402	18	13	72.2	
5803	7	4	57.1	+1
6002	10	5	50	+1
6602	4	3	75	
7202	16	12	75	
7509	11	7	63.6	
7523	17	13	76.5	
7525	4	3	75.0	
7532	2	2	100	
7543	3	2	66.7	
7557	6	3	50.0	+1
7562	30	21	70.0	
7563	6	3	50.0	+1
7564	6	3	50.0	+1
7565	8	8	100	-2
7566	13	10	76.9	
7588	9	5	55.6	+1

Table 26. Fiscal Year 2002 USMC Lieutenant Colonel Selection Statistics Adjusted To Provide “Relatively Similar” Promotion Opportunity.
Source: Major G. Branigan, Officer Promotion Planner, HQMC

The concern, of course, is that even with this small number of adjustments, an unfair advantage is created in which a less qualified officer from a short MOS may gain a promotion over a better qualified officer from a healthy MOS. To mitigate this concern, the Marine Corps has the option of redefining what it means to have a “qualified officer.”

The current Marine Corps standard of “best and fully qualified” carries that denotation that officers are selected for promotion based on their potential to carry out the duties and responsibilities of the next higher grade.¹⁸⁶ This definition underscores the notion that the duties of a Marine officer are directly tied to his/her rank and not to

¹⁸⁶ MCO P1400.31B Marine Corps Promotion Manual, Volume 1, Officer Promotions. 22 Feb 2000.

his/her military occupation. The change to a “best and fully qualified per MOS system,” or more appropriately called a “best fitted” system would implicitly mean that the duties of a Marine officer are tied to his/her MOS and that the most qualified officer, given billet vacancies, is the officer whose level of experience and training best prepares him/her to assume the responsibilities of officers that have vacated the grade and billets in question.

The benefit of a promotion by MOS system is that it would be easier to compare fitness report evaluations and separate the top performing officers from the average performing officers. Under the current system it is difficult to equate an officer’s outstanding performance as an infantry officer with another officer’s outstanding performance as a finance officer. If the records of two supply officers were compared, especially by a senior Marine in the supply field, it would be easier to assess what had been required of the officer, how he or she performed, and which officer was best prepared for the increased responsibilities of the next higher grade. A promotion by MOS system also provides a more balanced approach to meeting all MOS requirements by ensuring that the force is grade shaped at every promotion point.

The cost to the Marine Corps in applying a promotion by MOS system would be the perception that the Marine Corps values skill development over leadership development. This cultural concern was a major consideration in the Army’s restructured officer management system. In fact, many Army officers are still worried that the Army will eventually lose its war-fighting ethos in place of a “techno-geek” culture dominated by specialists.²⁴¹ Also recall from chapter four that the Army developed different career fields so that officers could concentrate more on their specialized fields and not just on being a well-rounded line officer. Unless the Marine Corps were to decide that certain MOSs should be considered specialist fields, it should probably not separate MOSs from the line category.

It is probably clear by this point that the authors do not favor a promotion by MOS system. The long-term benefits of the MOS based promotion system would not outweigh the immediate concerns over disparity in promotions, and the negative side

²⁴¹ Officer Personnel Management System XXI Study, 1997, p. vi.

effects of officers becoming too focused on their technical specialties. To appreciate what the authors would recommend, the reader must first understand how value premises effect a promotion system.

B. THE VALUE PREMISE

One of the most important tenets of any promotion process is its underlying objective, which is also referred to as the value premise. Table 27 shows the value premises for the promotion systems of the four military branches:

Marine Corps	Navy	Army	Air Force
Equity based on best and fully qualified	<i>Efficiency</i> based on best and fully qualified	<i>Efficiency</i> based on best and fully qualified	Equity based on best and fully qualified

Table 27. Promotion Value Premise Comparison among the Four Services.

The Marine Corps and Air Force promotion systems are considered to be equity based because they combine the majority of their officers into one competitive line category. Within that large category, promotions are generally made without regard to military occupational specialty, although MOS shortages are addressed in a precept or memorandum of instruction (MOI) to the promotion board. The precepts and MOIs, however, have been inconsequential in affecting selection results. It seems that members of promotion boards are against giving special consideration to an officer by virtue of his/her MOS, as this practice does not fully uphold the tenets of a best and fully qualified model. The Marine Corps has, in response, strengthened its precept language in the last two years and more strongly encouraged the board to give consideration to critically short MOSs. Time is needed, however, to determine the effectiveness of this stronger precept language.

The Navy and Army have promotion systems that emphasize efficiency in meeting manpower requirements. The Army, which has recently divided its unrestricted officer competitive category into four career fields, is considered an efficiency-based system. Officers reaching the selection point for promotion to major have their records forwarded to a career field designation board where they are assigned a career field based upon various criteria, such as demonstrated performance, educational background,

technical or unique expertise, military experience or training, in-depth understanding of a foreign culture, and consideration of the officer as a whole person.²⁴² When selected into one of the fields, the officer continues to be promoted within that career field.

By creating career field designations, the Army is able to move officers, once promoted to major, into occupations with shortages of officers, specific skills, or both. This program is similar to the Marine Corps' 1995 career transition (forced lateral moves) program, with the notable exception that the Army's career field designation doesn't cause a lateral move until the selection point to major, whereas in the Marine Corps most lateral moves happened while the officer was either a first lieutenant or a junior captain. The timing of the lateral move is an important issue because of its effect on retention. At the lieutenant or captain level an officer has only made a three to four year career investment as opposed to a nine to ten year career investment that a senior captain has made upon reaching the selection point to major.

The Navy is considered an efficiency-based system because of its system of eighteen competitive categories in which officers with related education, training, skills, and experience are promoted based on requirements, vacancies, and legal limitations. The Navy also uses temporary (spot) promotions to advance certain line lieutenants to the grade of lieutenant commander under regulations prescribed by the Secretary of the Navy, when those officers have a skill in which the Navy is critically short and when they are serving in a position (billet) designated to be held by a lieutenant commander. The Navy also closely adheres to its promotion board precepts, which address shortages and encourages greater consideration of officers in those short fields.

The Navy has proven that an efficiency based system does not necessarily equate to an unfair or inequitable promotion system. It does seem to equate by definition, however, to a system in which shortages can be more quickly addressed.

The reason that force structuring in the Marine Corps has continually failed over the past twenty-five years is that its value premise emphasizes individual needs over organizational needs. As evidence, recall that in ALMAR 210-98, then Commandant General Krulak ended the forced lateral move program, while noting that many officers

²⁴² Officer Personnel Management System XXI Study, 1997, pp. 5-4.

felt that it contradicted his Commandant's Planning Guidance which stated "that a sense of fairness was key to our manpower processes."

Maintaining an equity-based system benefits Marines, but the organization must understand that the grade and MOS imbalances will continue in the Marine Corps until the value premise is changed. The manner in which it is changed, however, cannot replicate the normal top-down approach to policy making.

The force structuring solution that manpower planners must implement begins with a Corps-wide understanding of the problem that faces the Marine Corps. Marines must fully appreciate the dilemma that planners are confronted with and the options available so that they can have viable input for a force structuring option. The authors recommend Marine Corps-wide working groups in conjunction with the annual manpower monitors visits to the various commands, so that feedback can be generated from the fleet. The goal is to implement a system that Marines would view as necessary and thereby support. If Marines support the program, the force-structuring battle is already won.

In summary, the authors conclude that based on the statutory considerations, and lack of short-run results from transitioning to an MOS based promotion system, it is not in the best interest of the Marine Corps to modify its promotion system. Manpower planners should focus their attention on how to best change the value premise of the organization and then explore options that will also address short-run concerns.

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