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Realistic Job Previews for a Sample of Navy and Marine Corps Occupations: Development of Prototypes

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**Realistic Job Previews for a Sample of Navy and Marine Corps Occupations:
Development of Prototypes**

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FOREWORD

This research developed prototypic realistic job previews (RJPs) for a sample of entry-level Navy and Marine Corps occupations. The research reported here is expected to benefit the recruiting branches of the Navy and Marine Corps as well as the research community. In addition to their use in recruiting, RJPs such as those produced in this effort have potential for a number of other uses (e.g., at schools, job fairs, armed forces exhibits, and in stand-alone systems at shopping malls, etc.).

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SUMMARY

Problem

Despite indications of their effectiveness in reducing worker attrition, realistic job previews (RJPs) have not been used by the military services in the enlistment process. Steadily increasing advertising, recruitment, and processing costs impel the investigation of various means to counter attrition attributable to unrealistic expectations on the part of job applicants. RJPs for military occupations have yet to be made available, a fact which precludes any evaluation of their effectiveness in the military recruiting context.

Objective

The objective of this effort was to develop prototype RJPs for a sample of entry-level Navy and Marine Corps occupations.

Approach

Jobs were selected based on recommendations of Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps and the Navy Recruiting Command. Videotaping was accomplished at several locations. The method of development included:

- Job analysis via interviews with incumbents and supervisors along with study of relevant printed materials and/or existing video-based materials.
- Videotaped interviews with job incumbents.
- Videotaping of actual task performance.
- Incorporation of file footage (in some cases).
- Compilation and editing, with voice-over narration added where necessary.

Results

Prototype RJPs were produced for the following Navy and Marine Corps jobs: (1) (USN) Photographer's Mate, Health Care Occupations, and Hospital Corpsman; and (2) (USMC) Bandsman, Clarinetist, and Infantry. Each was recorded on 3/4" U-Matic videocassette, and all are approximately 5 minutes in length.

Conclusions

RJPs such as those produced in this effort are not limited to use at recruiting stations, but could be used at schools, job fairs, armed forces exhibits, and in stand-alone systems at shopping malls, etc.

Future research should address:

1. Development of RJP's for additional jobs and job fields, to achieve a sufficiently representative and comprehensive sample of jobs.
2. Evaluation of alternative delivery mechanisms, stand-alone, and computer-allied.
3. Investigation of additional formats for the RJP videos.
4. Evaluation of the use of RJP's in the recruiting situation.
5. Investigation of additional (non-recruiting) uses for military RJP's.

CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
Problem	1
Objective	1
Background	1
Rationale and Content of RJP	1
Research on the RJP	2
APPROACH	5
RESULTS	7
Navy Occupations	7
Health Care Occupations	7
Hospital Corpsman	8
Photographer's Mate	8
Marine Corps Occupations	8
Bandsman	8
Clarinetist	8
Infantry	8
CONCLUSIONS	9
REFERENCES	11
DISTRIBUTION LIST	13

INTRODUCTION

Problem

Despite indications of their effectiveness in reducing worker attrition (Premack & Wanous, 1985), realistic job previews (RJPs) have not been used by the military services in the enlistment process. Steadily increasing advertising, recruitment, and personnel processing costs impel the investigation of various means to counter attrition that is attributable to unrealistic expectations on the part of job applicants. RJPs for military occupations have yet to be made available for research, a fact which precludes any evaluation of their effectiveness in the military recruiting context.

Objective

The objective of this effort was to develop prototype RJPs for a sample of entry-level Navy and Marine Corps occupations.

Background

Rationale and Content of RJPs

The RJP is designed as a recruitment procedure that increases the percentage of newly hired recruits who "survive" (i.e., do not quit) during a specified period (e.g., the first 6 to 12 months on a new job).

The theory underlying the RJP can be summarized as follows. Job candidates who are given the RJP have more realistic expectations than those who are recruited by the more traditional method of "selling" the organization to the recruit. As a result of these more realistic expectations, the "RJP recruit": (1) is better able to make an effective choice of whether to accept or reject a job offer, (2) feels a greater commitment to a job choice since it was based on more complete information provided by the organization, and (3) is better able to cope with the stresses of a new job because the RJP has "inoculated" expectations (i.e., there are fewer surprises and disappointments) (Premack & Wanous, 1985; Wanous, 1980).

Although a variety of media can be used to present them, RJPs have one common element--the accurate depiction of the most important factors influencing a newcomer's decision to remain on the job. Prime targets for inclusion in the RJP are those aspects of the work itself and the working environment, which newcomers identify as their most surprising and disappointing discoveries after beginning a new job.

However, just because a particular job factor is very important to most employees does not necessarily mean it should be included in the RJP. For example, pay is important, but expectations about pay may be more realistic than other important job facets (e.g., supervision, working conditions, or promotions), because most organizations advertise pay rates and openly discuss pay with job candidates. Thus, job factors included in the RJP should be "important," but they should also be those that job candidates frequently misperceive.

Research on the RJP

The first known experimental study of the RJP was conducted in the life insurance industry by the late Joseph Weitz (1956). However, RJPs did not become popular until over 20 years later. The review of the literature for the present effort found a total of 38 experiments that have been conducted between 1956 through 1987. Of these 38, 25 were done in the decade of the 1980s (with 2 in the 1950s, 5 in the 1960s, and 6 in the 1970s). This relatively recent popularity can probably be traced to two reviews (Wanous 1977, 1980), which called attention to the importance and potential of the RJP as a research topic.

The 38 experimental studies of RJPs can be organized into three groups: (1) those conducted in the military (N = 7), (2) those conducted in private industry (N = 19), and (3) those conducted in simulated organizations, college classrooms, or in lab studies (N = 12). Because the present RJP effort was in the military context, more attention will be paid to the military studies than those in the other two categories.

The three groups of RJP experiments differ rather widely. The military RJP research mostly (5 of 7 studies) concerns preparing new recruits for basic training. As a result of this concern, the military studies administer the RJP after an individual has joined a particular branch of the service. In contrast, almost all of the private industry studies administer the RJP prior to taking a job in an organization, and the main concern is to try to increase the "job survival" rate for newcomers.

The laboratory studies are different from both the military and private industry groups. Their concern is with the psychological dynamics triggered by an RJP. Because the subjects in lab studies do not join real organizations, the timing of the RJP (pre- vs. post-entry) is not particularly relevant, nor is job survival a meaningful criterion. Rather, the lab studies typically assess the impact of the RJPs on the attitudes of the subjects.

RJPs in Private Industry. A total of 19 studies were found in this sector of the economy. Of these, 16 were service occupations and only 3 were in manufacturing. In terms of the "level" in an organization, most are at the low paid, entry level. The types of jobs are as follows: life insurance agents (4), telephone operators (4), bank tellers (2), manufacturing (3), super market check-out clerk (1), hospital technician (1), gas station attendant (1), teacher (1), police officer (1), and nurse (1).

RJPs in Laboratory Research. The typical objective of most of the 12 laboratory studies was to try to explain why the RJP has effects on job survival and certain job attitudes. The typical study tries to measure the variables thought to explain why an RJP increases job survival by increasing: (1) the congruence of expectations and work experiences, (2) one's trust of the organization, (3) one's commitment to the organization, and (4) one's job satisfaction. (See Wanous, 1980, for a discussion of all these hypothesized psychological mechanisms.)

Military Studies of the RJP. Two studies were conducted at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point (Ilgen & Seely, 1974; Macedonia, 1969). Both used the same design (i.e., a booklet that realistically depicted life as a cadet was mailed to half of an entering class in advance of their arrival at the academy). The "survival" rates after 1 year were significantly greater for those receiving the RJP booklet in both cases: (1) in the Macedonia study, the difference was 91.3

percent survival rate vs. 86.1 percent ($p < .01$); and (2) in the Ilgen and Seely study, the difference was 94 percent vs. 88.5 percent ($p < .05$).

Five studies reported efforts directed at the basic training experience (Datel & Lifrak, 1969; Githens & Zalinski, 1983; Horner, Mobley, & Meglino, 1979; Lockman, 1980; Meglino, DeNisi, Youngblood, Williams, Johnson, Randolph, & Laughlin, 1983; Meglino, DeNisi, Youngblood, & Williams, in press).

Datel and Lifrak edited an existing Army training film to make it more "realistic" and compared it to an existing film they considered to have understated the severity of basic training at Fort Dix. Their efforts were only partially successful. While they were able to increase the recruits' level of expected stress (as intended), the experienced levels of distress midway through training were not lowered as a result of their "stress induction."

Lockman (1980) reported two studies of RJP videotapes designed to reduce recruit attrition during Navy basic training at San Diego and Great Lakes. No statistically significant results were found in either study: (1) survival rates were 91.6 percent for the RJP vs. 91.1 percent for the control group at San Diego, (2) at Great Lakes, the RJP survival rate was 86.0 percent vs. 86.4 percent for the control group.

Horner, Mobley, and Meglino (1979) used a videotaped RJP for Marine Corps recruits at Parris Island. They consistently found higher job survival for the RJP recruits than for control group recruits at 3, 6, and 12 months (e.g., at 1 year the RJP survival rate was 77.6% vs. 66.9%, $p < .01$).

Githens and Zalinski (1983) used the same RJP as Horner et al., but tried to replicate the results at the San Diego Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD). In addition to the RJP, they tested the effects of a stress coping film. No statistically significant differences in survival rates were found (88.4% for the RJP, 90.1% for stress/coping, and 88.9% for the control group).

The most recent military study by Meglino et al. (1983; in press) was conducted for the Army at Ft. Jackson, and again focused on attrition in basic training. Two RJPs were developed: (1) the "enhancement" RJP was designed to raise expectations in areas where they were typically too low, and (2) the "reduction" RJP was designed to do the opposite. The effects of these two RJPs were assessed separately and in combination, and compared to a control group. The combination of both types of RJPs was more effective than either one alone (survival rate of 97.5% vs. 92.2% for controls, $p < .05$).

An Additional Consideration in Military Studies. The results of research in the private sector have been more encouraging than that of RJP studies in the military. The most likely explanation is that the typical research design calls for presentation of the RJP prior to one's entry into an organization. Thus, it is possible for people to self-select "out" of the job situation. In a review and meta-analysis of 20 RJP studies, Premack and Wanous (1985) found that RJPs do result in a lower rate of job offer acceptance. Because this possibility was eliminated in the military studies, the effect of the RJP on attrition has probably been diluted to some extent.

Another reason why military RJPs appear to be less successful than those in private industry is restriction-in-range in the criterion. Uniformly higher job survival rates result in a more serious measurement problem. The typical survival rate in basic training is over 80 percent, frequently higher. Because "survival" is a dichotomous variable, when the underlying distribution departs from a 50-50 split, restriction-in-range results, and this attenuates the strength of one's findings. The job survival rates in private industry are not as high (Wanous & Colella, in press), and, thus, the results are not as attenuated.

When using dichotomous criteria such as job "survival," results should be corrected for such restrictions-in-range (see Wanous & Premack, 1987 for an example and a formula).

One way to place the results from military RJPs in context with those from private industry is to consider the meta-analytic results (Premack & Wanous, 1985) already published, which were mostly from private industry (only 3 of 20 were from the military). The utility analysis shown in that review (Premack & Wanous, 1985, p. 716) clearly indicates that the effectiveness of RJPs decreases as the basic rate of job survival increases.

The overall job survival rates were calculated for six military studies which reported them (Datel & Lifrak, 1969 did not). The job survival rates were 88.3 percent for RJP recruits (N = 7, 915) and 85.9 percent for control group recruits (N = 5, 185). This statistically significant 2.4 percentage point increase represents a job survival rate that is 2.8 percent higher for RJP recruits compared to controls.

While this increase may appear to be low, and lower than results in the private sector, it must be remembered that the inherently high rates of job survival (through recruit training) already found in the military prevent the RJP from making larger differences. At lower basic job survival rates, as typically found in the low level service jobs so frequently studied in private industry, larger gains have been realized. Thus, the military situation is a classic example of ceiling effect attenuating results.

Nevertheless, the overall results for RJPs in the military are encouraging. Both studies at West Point found significantly greater survival among first year cadets. In the four studies where survival rates were assessed for basic training recruits, two studies found significantly positive results while the other two found no differences. Thus, attrition was reduced in four of six studies.

To date, the use of RJPs in the pre-enlistment phase has not been evaluated. Moreover, job analysis-based RJPs have not been developed for military jobs. Although the recruiting services have in the past used films, filmstrips, and printed materials as quasi job previews, they do not qualify as RJPs. Likewise, the video segments used in Army recruiting on the Joint Optical Information Network (JOIN) system are more advertising-based and directed at sales effectiveness and thus do not meet the criteria of RJPs.

Therefore, a need remains for job analysis-based RJPs to be administered to job seekers before enlistment, and for a critical analysis of their effects on attrition (and perhaps on job satisfaction). Development of suitable prototypes for such use was the purpose of this effort.

APPROACH

Based on the arguments of Popovich and Wanous (1982) and the research evidence to date (Premack & Wanous, 1985), video cassettes were the medium of choice for the present RJP project. In recognition of the time constraints inherent in military recruiting (Baker, in review), brevity of the RJP was mandatory.

Although longer video presentations would certainly allow more job content to be exposed for applicant consideration, lengthy presentations would find little hope for eventual adoption in a recruiting-oriented vocational guidance system. Therefore, a range of 5 to 10 minutes was imposed on the RJP prototypes.

Jobs were chosen based on recommendations by Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps and the Navy Recruiting Command. Although the RJP produced in this effort were intended to be only prototypes, efforts were made to select jobs such that the Navy and Marine Corps might find the products useful in their various recruiting endeavors.

Also, the decision was made to produce the RJP prototype on two levels: the job field (USMC occupational field (OF), USN rating group) and the specific job (USMC military occupational specialty (MOS), USN rating). One of the MOS would be drawn from the OF, one of the ratings from the rating group.

Current recruiting practice of both services mandates discussion at recruiting stations of only one of these levels (the job field). Nevertheless, future policy change could create a need for the other level. Variations in treatment of the content and format of these two levels will be discussed in the Results section. Thus, the final selection of the RJP topics was:

Navy	Marine Corps
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Health Care Occupations<ul style="list-style-type: none">•• Hospital Corpsman <hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•• Photographer's Mate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bandsman<ul style="list-style-type: none">•• Clarinetist <hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Infantry

RJPs in use at recruiting stations, or elsewhere, would need to include considerable information in order to be effective, or, they would need to be allied with other means of presentation of occupational and lifestyle information (interviews, printed materials, computerized occupational information systems, etc.). The latter case is considered most probable if RJP become operational.

Consequently, the products of this effort avoided lengthy presentations of occupational information. Only the Navy Health Care Occupations RJP discusses such information at all. Rather, most of the RJP portray a job incumbent similar in age to that of the typical military job applicant, a person with whom the applicant can readily identify. The RJP would require other means being available for dissemination of more traditional job information (e.g., computerized occupational information systems).

Methods similar to those used previously in developing RJPs for Naval Shipyard apprentice applicants (Wanous & Baker, 1987) were once again employed here. These included:

- Job analysis via interviews with incumbents and supervisors along with study of relevant printed materials and/or existing video-based materials.
- Videotaped interviews with job incumbents.
- Videotaping of actual task performance.
- Incorporation of file footage (in some cases).
- Compilation and editing, with voice-over narration added where necessary.

Videotaping took place at the following locations:

- School of Infantry, Camp Pendleton, CA (USMC Infantry).
- United States Marine Corps Band, Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, CA (USMC Bandsman, Clarinetist).
- Navy Regional Dental Center, Naval Station, San Diego, CA (USN Health Care Occupations).
- Navy Regional Medical Hospital, Naval Air Station, Miramar Branch Dispensary, San Diego, CA (USN Health Care Occupations, Hospital Corpsman).
- Naval Air Station Photography Lab, Miramar, CA (USN Photographer's Mate).

The content validity of the RJPs was achieved by following a procedure designed to yield areas of convergent opinion from job incumbents. Two fundamental criteria were used to elicit opinion from those who were interviewed: (1) what aspects of the job do new recruits typically misperceive, and (2) of the areas where misperceptions exist, which ones are the most important.

Interview procedures prior to videotaping were as follows. The officer in charge of a unit selected personnel (job incumbents) who he or she believed were representative (N = 10 to 12). These persons were then interviewed in small groups, and detailed notes were taken. When there were differences in pay grade, only those of the same pay grade were interviewed together in order to stimulate candor.

During the interviews, careful attention was paid to those speaking because one (or two) were to be selected to act as the (incumbent) narrator for the RJPs. The criteria for making the choice were obvious: poise, articulate, grammatical speech, no thick accents, physical appearance, and a "stage presence."

Following the group interviews, the person selected as the narrator was re-interviewed on camera for approximately 20 minutes. The questions asked were based on the notes previously taken. Although the narrator expressed things in his or her own words, each was coached

sufficiently to ensure that what was said reflected the consensus of the interviews. Actually, relatively little coaching was needed because the narrator had already been through the group interview and usually remembered quite well the consensus views.

Subsequent to the taping of the narrator interviews, sufficient videotape was shot showing the various work areas and actual duties or tasks being performed.

Voice-over narration was accomplished at the Navy Personnel Research and Development Center. Information for the voice-over narration in the Navy Health Care occupations (which did not use incumbent narration) was drawn from the Military Occupation and Training Data (Defense Manpower Data Center, 1988) and the *Military Career Guide* (Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (FM&P), 1988). Voice-over head-ins and tailers for the other RJPs were scripted to be appropriate to the subject and format.

In the final editing, the incumbent narrators' words were coordinated with relevant task performance and work environment scenes in order to add visual impact to that which was being said. Each RJP was edited to approximately 5 minutes viewing time. All were recorded on 3/4" U-Matic videocassette.

RESULTS

Prototype RJPs were produced for the following Navy and Marine Corps jobs: (1) (USN) Photographer's Mate, Health Care Occupations, and Hospital Corpsman; and (2) (USMC) Bandsman, Clarinetist, and Infantry. Each was recorded on 3/4" U-Matic videocassette and all are approximately 5 minutes in length.

Navy Occupations

Health Care Occupations

This RJP does not use job incumbent narration. Instead, the voice-over provides information on the rating group (e.g., typical occupations) and notes that the group includes two ratings, the Hospital Corpsman and the Dental Technician).

The Hospital Corpsman rating is then discussed, with information on representative duties, occupational specialties, working conditions, and the approximate number of men and women currently serving in the rating. During the narration, the video portion presents scenes of Hospital Corpsmen performing a variety of duties and tasks. File footage was used to show Hospital Corpsmen in a combat role.

Thereafter, the dental Technician rating was presented, with the same type of information being the subject of the narration. The video portion depicted dental technicians performing a variety of representative tasks.

Hospital Corpsman

This RJP used an incumbent narrator. Work duties discussed and shown included physical exams, injections, lab work, paperwork, being in the field with the Marines, working in the supply room, doing x-rays, and working at a computer terminal. Major satisfactions discussed included rewarding work and helping others, feeling important because of the responsibility involved (may be sole medical person on a smaller ship), and working with people. Major frustrations discussed included long hours of work, being "on call," going out to sea for a long time, and the stress associated with life-and-death situations.

Photographer's Mate

In this RJP, an incumbent discusses work duties while they are portrayed visually. These included printing and processing, quality control, front desk, portrait photos, preventive maintenance, cleaning one's area, and going out to sea. Major satisfactions discussed included working with people, working in a clean environment, being able to see the results of one's efforts, civilians are familiar with the work, and being the expert "in charge" when shooting pictures. Major frustrations discussed included customers who are in a hurry and want procedures deviated from, those who try to "pull rank" to get jobs done faster, daily clean up, doing preventive maintenance, and going out to sea for long periods of time. Added footage depicted ships at sea and a ship's homecoming.

Marine Corps Occupations

Bandsman

This occupational field-level RJP utilizes several job incumbents discussing the job of Bandsman. Work duties shown and discussed included practicing, marching, doing the recruit graduation ceremony, physical training, Marine Corps basic training ("boot camp"), cleaning up, and getting the uniform ready. Major satisfactions discussed included pride at being in an elite group, and feeling good performing for some appreciative groups. Major frustrations included being a newcomer, learning to march, the monotonous schedules, and working on weekends.

Clarinetist

A job incumbent discusses major duties of the clarinetist as the video portion shows them: practicing, physical training, USMC basic training, and marching. Major satisfactions discussed included challenging march music, and social atmosphere in which to meet others of the same age and who have similar interests. Major frustrations included doing physical training and getting through basic training or "boot camp" (most clarinet players are women).

Infantry

Two job incumbents discuss the infantry in this RJP. Major activities discussed and shown included being in the field, being in the classroom, physical training, and opportunities to develop leadership skills. Major satisfactions discussed included pride as a Marine, the challenge of the job, and the chance to work with weapons systems. Major frustrations discussed included going on long

marches, the food, and not being able to be in the field more often. File footage depicting combat training was inserted where appropriate.

The Navy and Marine Corps RJP's were demonstrated at and delivered to the Navy Recruiting Command and Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, respectively.

CONCLUSIONS

Obviously, RJP's such as those produced in this effort are not limited to use at recruiting stations, but could be used at schools, job fairs, armed forces exhibits, and in stand-alone systems at shopping malls, etc.

Future research should address:

1. Development of RJP's for additional jobs and job fields, to achieve a sufficiently representative and comprehensive sample of jobs.
2. Evaluation of alternative delivery mechanisms, stand-alone, and computer-allied.
3. Investigation of additional formats for the RJP videos.
4. Evaluation of the use of RJP's in the recruiting situation.
5. Investigation of additional (non-recruiting) uses for military RJP's.

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