AD-A265 747

A Comparison of High- and Low-Impact Reports of Investigation on Adjudicators' Decision Making: A Pilot Study

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93-13216

Defense Personnel Security Research Center
99 Pacific Street, Building 455-E
Monterey, CA 93940-2481

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No 0704 0188

1a REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED	1b RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS
2a SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY	3 DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF REPORT
2b DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE	
4 PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S) PERS-93--002	5 MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)
6a NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION Defense Personnel Security Research Center (PERSEREC) 6b OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable)	7a NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION
6c ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) 99 Pacific St., Bldg. 455-E Monterey, CA 93940-2481	7b ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)
8a NAME OF FUNDING/SPONSORING ORGANIZATION Defense Personnel Security Research Center 8b OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable)	9 PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER
8c ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) 99 Pacific St., Bldg. 455-E Monterey, CA 93940-2481	10 SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS PROGRAM ELEMENT NO / PROJECT NO / TASK NO / WORK UNIT ACCESSION NO

11 TITLE (Include Security Classification)
A Comparison of High and Low-Impact Reports of Investigation on Adjudicators' Decision Making: A Pilot Study

12 PERSONAL AUTHOR(S)
James E. Suchan

13a TYPE OF REPORT	13b TIME COVERED	14 DATE OF REPORT (Year, Month, Day)	15 PAGE COUNT
Technical	FROM _____ TO _____	January 1993	51

16 SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION

17 COSATI CODES		
FIELD	GROUP	SUB-GROUP

18 SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)
Written communications; decision-making processes; organizational norms; DIS special agents; personnel security adjudcation; social construction and outside-the-

19 ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)

This report examines the effect of style of written communication on personnel security determinations. Forty senior adjudicators from four sites reviewed two cases containing significant derogatory information. The results indicate that format of the ROI did not affect the overall adjudication determination, but site-specific processes in reaching the decision were evident. A discussion is presented of outside-the-document factors that may affect readers' processing of written communications.

20 DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT ☒ UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED ☐ SAME AS RPT ☐ DTIC USERS	21 ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED
22a NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL ROGER P. DENK, Director	22b TELEPHONE (Include Area Code) (408) 656-2448 22c OFFICE SYMBOL

DD Form 1473, JUN 86 Previous editions are obsolete SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE

S/N 0102-LF-014-6603

PERS-TR-92-008 JUNE 1992

A COMPARISON OF HIGH- AND LOW-IMPACT REPORTS OF INVESTIGATION ON ADJUDICATORS' DECISION MAKING: A PILOT STUDY

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DRAFT

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Preface

The report of investigation (ROI) is central to the clearance process. It documents the background investigation and is the primary material for determining security eligibility. Given its importance, PERSEREC has carried on a research effort that examines the ROI as the medium of communication between investigators and adjudicators.

Our major focus in this project has been the organization of case material and how it affects adjudicators' processing of information. From the outset we have presumed that a uniform format for the ROI will promote consistency in adjudication.

The following report presents the results of an experimental test of different formats of ROIs on adjudicator decisions. The report is one part of a two-volume piece. The second volume (LaViolette & Suchan, 1993) analyzes the attitudes of adjudicators towards the author of ROIs. We suggest the reports be read together.

The reports are of interest on a number of levels. At a primary level the studies show there is consistency in the final adjudicative decisions reached by different agencies in the Department of Defense regardless of the writing style of the ROI.

At a secondary level the studies show that adjudicative organizations reach these consistent decisions through varied and distinctive processes. Each facility has a recognizable way of cognitively processing the ROI. Furthermore, these studies show that the ROI is the vehicle that connects the investigation and adjudication communities and the written style of the ROI influences the attitudes and opinions of adjudicators. In this sense the ROI conveys the competence and skill of the investigator.

The exciting part of this research for PERSEREC is that these studies have used the ROI as a diagnostic probe and have afforded a view of the internal workings of the adjudication process. We hope you find them stimulating.

Roger P. Denk
Director

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PERS-TR-93-002 JANUARY 1993

A COMPARISON OF HIGH- AND LOW-IMPACT REPORTS OF INVESTIGATION ON ADJUDICATORS' DECISION MAKING: A PILOT STUDY

James E. Suchan

Summary

Background and Problem

PERSEREC research has shown that personnel security adjudicators prefer that Reports of Investigation (ROI) containing significant derogatory information be written more clearly. Clearer reports should make it easier for adjudicators to make sound, consistent adjudication decisions because the raters will find it easier to sort, classify, and integrate complex derogatory information.

A substantial body of literature exists that defines in a prescriptive manner the organizational, document design, and stylistic features that make writing clear. This literature indicates that readers should more easily read and understand documents that contain organizational features such as internal previews and clear transitional tags; document design characteristics such as strategic use of lists, bullets, headings, subheadings, and white space; and stylistic traits such as active verbs, clauses in subject-verb-object word order, and right-branching modifiers. A composite of these features is commonly called a *high-impact* style.

However, most of this clear-writing research has been conducted in laboratory rather than field settings. As a result, researchers have not determined whether features outside the document or text, such as the organization's expectations of how its members should write, reader expectations created from past reports, and organizational metaphors affect readers' ability to process documents efficiently and accurately.

Furthermore, research subjects have responded better to relatively short documents (1 page) than to longer, more complex documents. Finally, research has not linked clear writing with improved task completion such as improved decision making. Consequently, no well-developed body of literature exists which shows that more clearly written ROIs will help adjudicators make consistent, high-quality adjudication decisions.

Objectives

This project's primary objective was to determine whether adjudicators assessed ROIs written in a high-impact style differently from the same ROIs written in the current low-impact style. If there was a difference, the report assessed if adjudicators make better quality decisions when reading the high-impact or low-impact ROIs.

We examined the effect of adjudication *site*, in particular whether adjudicators at various central adjudication sites assessed differently the high- and low-impact ROIs. Furthermore, we determined if adjudication site affected the degree to which adjudicators' decisions conformed to those of their superiors. Finally, we examined whether adjudicators at different sites made similar determinations.

Approach

Forty senior adjudicators (GS 11-13) from four adjudication sites reviewed two cases, code-named Czarnek and Rokitka, each containing significant derogatory information. These adjudicators were randomly divided into two groups. We counterbalanced the case presentation order so that one group adjudicated a revised, high-impact version of the Czarnek case and the original, low-impact version of the Rokitka case, while the second group assessed a low-impact version of the Czarnek case and a high-impact version of the Rokitka case. After assessing each case, adjudicators completed a four-part questionnaire regarding type of decision, adjudication criteria, and other factors.

The "correct" adjudication decision was determined by six supervisory adjudicators. These adjudication decisions served as our measure of decision quality. All six adjudicators strongly agreed that the subjects in both cases should be granted clearance. This agreement shows that regardless of site the two cases ultimately would receive the same determination.

Results

The results contradict previous laboratory research that clear writing, as exemplified by the high-impact style, helps readers to more effectively process documents. The data show there are no statistically significant differences in decision outcome between the high- and low-impact ROIs. Also, high-impact ROIs did not result in decisions that more closely matched those of supervisory adjudicators, except at the Army adjudication site. In short, the high-impact ROIs did not help adjudicators make better quality decisions.

However, when case treatment was excluded, there were statistically significant differences between sites in adjudicators' decision outcomes, particularly at the Army

Central Clearance Facility and to a lesser extent at the Navy Central Adjudication Facility. These results suggest that site-specific, outside-the-document factors such as adjudication site norms, interpretations of the site's organizational goals, and responses to its dominant images and metaphors affect journey-level adjudicators' assessment of ROIs. Furthermore, adjudicators may use different outside-the-document factors, place dissimilar weights on shared factors, or construct or interpret them uniquely.

These differences may cause adjudicators to have singular ways of operationalizing outside-the-document factors; in fact, they may reflect or even help define fundamental cultural differences between adjudication sites. Also, the compilation of these factors may represent the whole-person approach adjudicators often refer to when describing how they assess derogatory information. Since the outside-the-document factors that define this approach and the weights given to them may vary among sites, journey-level adjudicators at each site may construct, interpret, and put in practice differently the whole-person approach, causing differences in adjudication decisions.

Managerial Implications and Recommendations

These results have several important implications for Department of Defense (DoD) adjudication managers. Although all supervisory-level supervisors reached the same decision for both cases, the different decisions by journey-level adjudicators at each test site raise questions about how individual adjudicators interpret the assessment criteria. The cause of these adjudicative differences seems rooted in different interpretations of the whole-person approach. DoD managers need to better understand how this approach is put in practice at their own and other adjudication sites. To gain this understanding, an organizational culture assessment should be conducted at each site to determine adjudicators' perceptions of their role in the adjudicative process, the site-specific decision-making norms that have developed, and the organizational stories about the whole-person approach that exist.

Furthermore, the fact that the high-impact case treatments had no effect on decision quality may not hold true for other communication media. Currently, adjudicators read ROIs on paper. Paper allows adjudicators to move quickly and non-sequentially through a ROI and to use a range of information classification strategies such as margin notes, information tagging with stick-on notes, and underlining and highlighting. Experienced adjudicators have developed sophisticated strategies to help them better understand the current difficult-to-read ROIs.

However, in several years, adjudicators will be reading ROIs on CRT screens. The CRT software may not be flexible enough to allow adjudicators to deploy the information classification strategies they currently use to untangle complex ROIs. Consequently, a similar study should be conducted using CRT screens to determine if the high-impact treatment affects decision making in the CRT environment.

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Introduction

Two PERSEREC reports indicate that personnel security adjudicators are not satisfied with the way information is presented in Reports of Investigation (ROIs) and that they desire more clearly written ROIs. Haag, Schroyer and Crawford (1989) found that adjudicators had difficulty locating and extracting information from narrative segments of ROIs. The adjudicators hoped that the ROI could be formatted to parallel and support the adjudication decision-making process.

Suchan (1989a) discovered that adjudicators had difficulty sorting and classifying information in narrative sections of ROIs containing a significant amount of derogatory information. The adjudicators often had to reread report sections, take extensive notes, and underline and use arrows to combine and classify derogatory information so as to create the information patterns necessary for them to apply adjudication criteria. The following report characteristics caused this difficulty:

1. Poor document design: "wall-to-wall" prose with few paragraph breaks, no headings or lists, no use of bold print, underlining, or other word or phrase highlighting devices

2. Lack of internal previews at the beginning of long derogatory information sections that would provide a quick overview of the major sections that were to come

3. Long, convoluted sentences that strained short-term memory

4. Passive verbs that sometimes made it difficult to determine who was the agent of a particular action

5. Lack of old information/new information patterns to create coherence between sentences, paragraphs, and report sections

From examining 120 ROIs, Suchan also found that the features listed above typified the current style of ROIs containing derogatory information. Furthermore, field observations of adjudicators assessing cases revealed that these stylistic features made it difficult for adjudicators to see patterns and relationships among issues. This difficulty could affect adjudicators' ability to determine the severity of derogatory information, to assess whether there are mitigating factors, and to make an informed adjudication decision. Consequently, it is important to determine if changes in document design, organization, and style will help adjudicators make consistent adjudication decisions that match those of their superiors.

Factors that are inside the document, such as organization, style, and document design, may not be the only elements that affect how adjudicators process ROIs. Outside-the-document factors including adjudicators' experience with similar documents; the expectation of the organization, central adjudication site, and adjudication work team of how ROIs should be written, and adjudicators' personal values and beliefs may play an important role in how adjudicators process ROI information and adjudicate a case. These external factors, which may actually undermine communication efficiency, largely define perceived communication effectiveness. To fully understand how adjudicators assess ROIs, we must consider the interplay between inside- and outside-the-document factors.

Report Purposes

The purposes listed below define the scope of this report. They are grouped into three categories: inside-the-document adjudication factors, outside-the-document factors, and adjudication consistency.

Inside-the-Document Factors

Inside-the-document factors reflect the specific changes in ROI organization, document design, and style that should make the ROI more efficient to read. We have called these factors a high impact style and ROIs written in this style high-impact treatments. Because of the high-impact style, report readability, report comprehension, and adjudication decision-making should improve.

Current research suggests that inside-the-document factors alone lead to documents that are easier to read and to use (Redish, 1989; Redish, Battison, & Gold, 1985; Suchan, 1989b). Consequently, this report will determine if:

1. Adjudicators assess cases written in a "high-impact" style differently from the same cases written in a "low-impact" style, the style field agents currently use.

2. Adjudicators make decisions that conform to their supervisors' assessment of the cases when reading the high- or low-impact treatments of the cases.

3. Adjudicators at various adjudication sites assess differently the high- and low-impact treatments of the cases.

Outside-the-Document Factors

Outside-the-document factors refer to variables external to ROIs that may affect how adjudicators read and assess ROIs. Examples include the organization's expectations of how the ROIs should be written, readers' expectations created by their experience with past reports, and dominant organizational metaphors. There has been little research in the business and management communication literature to support whether these factors significantly affect document readability and use.
Consequently, this report will determine

1. If outside-the-text factors affect adjudicator report assessment and decision making

2. How pervasive is this effect

3. The extent to which these factors define an organizational culture that indirectly affects how adjudicators assess ROIs.

Adjudication Consistency

Although the study primarily focuses on the effect that two different stylistic treatments have on decision quality, the data also enable us to assess adjudicators' decision consistency with their superiors and with other adjudication sites. Consequently, if we disregard case treatment, we can determine whether:

1. Adjudicators' case assessments are consistent with their superiors'

2. Adjudicators at different centralized adjudication facilities assess the same cases alike

Report Organization

The report is organized in the following manner:

1. Research Design: This section explains the ROI selection process, ROI content, the ways the ROIs were manipulated to vary ROI treatment, the types of adjudicators selected to read the ROIs, the instruments used to capture the data, the testing procedure, the method used to determine the correct adjudication decision, and the study's limitations.

2. Case Treatment and Adjudication Decision Relationship Results: This section presents the data by treatment, by case, and by central adjudication site.

3. Analysis of Case Treatment/Adjudication Decision Results: The relative effects of inside- and outside-the-text factors are assessed here. Two frameworks—cognitive/structural and social constructionist—are used to analyze the data in terms of inside- and outside-the-text factors.

4. Consistency of Adjudication Results: Data are reported to determine if there is consistency in adjudication results across adjudication facilities. Report treatment is eliminated from these data.

5. Analysis of Adjudication Consistency Results: Social constructionist theory is used as a framework to assess these results.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations for Further Research

Research Design

Case Selection

We examined earlier PERSEREC research on analysis of issue cases to ensure adjudicators assessed "representative" cases containing typical kinds of derogatory information. Wiskoff and Fitz (1991) found that adjudicators dealt with an average of 1.7 issues per issue case and assessed cases with multiple issues 46.3% of the time. Consequently, we chose cases that contained two issues.

We also focused on issues adjudicators most frequently encountered. Research (Lewis, Koucheravy & Carney, 1989; Wiskoff & Fitz, 1991) shows that adjudicators most often dealt with Financial, Drugs/Alcohol, and Emotional/Mental issues; we combined drugs and alcohol because they were one of the most frequent double-issue combinations.

Cases containing double issues and containing combinations of Financial, Drugs/Alcohol, or Emotional/Mental derogatory information were requested from the Personnel Investigation Center (PIC). PIC sent fifty-six micro-fiche cases that met these criteria. All cases were carefully read. Two cases were chosen that best met the multiple issue and issue frequency criteria. And just as importantly, these cases reflected the document design, organizational, and stylistic characteristics typical of ROIs containing derogatory information (Suchan, 1989a).

Case Content

The two cases selected are called Czarnek and Rokitka, pseudonyms. Below is a brief overview of each case.

Czarnek. This 24 year-old male is applying for a Top Secret clearance required for a security guard position. The case's derogatory information is contained in developed reference interviews, a subject interview, a subject statement, and various military service reports. The major derogatory information includes

- falsification of his PSQ
- aberrant behavior (lying, personal threats, and insubordination) resulting in an honorable discharge from the military after only 5 weeks in service
- personal and on-the-job dishonesty
- minor criminal conduct resulting in loss of employment

- minor financial matters

The major adjudication issues in this 31-page case appear to be mental/emotional disorders and financial irresponsibility.

Rokitka. This 49 year-old female is applying for a Top Secret clearance which is necessary for her to work as a computer programmer. The derogatory information listed below was revealed in reference interviews, developed reference interviews, a subject interview, subject and reference statements, and hospital and rehabilitation center records.

- alcohol/drug abuse: use of marijuana, cocaine, and barbiturates
- criminal conduct: use of cocaine on the job
- falsification of PSQ

Rokitka voluntarily checked herself into a drug/alcohol rehabilitation program, continues to receive counselling through group therapy sessions, has not had an alcohol problem or has used drugs for over 3 years, and has indicated she has no intention of using drugs again.

The major issues in this 23-page case appear to be drugs/alcohol and emotional/ mental. This case had less derogatory information than the Czarnek case and appeared to be easier to adjudicate.

Case Treatment

These two cases were revised using document design, organizational, and stylistic strategies that research has demonstrated leads to improved comprehension (Duffy, 1985; Redish, 1989; Seigel, 1978; Selzer, 1983; Suchan, 1989b). Only material that field agents had written was revised. Information contained in subjects' and references' statements, medical assessments, and military reports remained as originally written. Also, great care was taken during revision to guarantee the content of the original cases was not changed. Two experienced field agents reviewed the revised cases and noted that though the cases "looked" different, there were no differences in content.

A thorough literature review was conducted to document that each of the independent variables used in revising the low-impact ROIs improved comprehension.

In the revised cases, the following independent variables were manipulated:

1. Paragraph Length: Paragraphs were no longer than 3-4 sentences; one sentence paragraphs were used to emphasize important information (Felker, Redish, Peterson, 1985).

2. Headings and Subheadings: Major headings and subheadings were used to telegraph major sections of derogatory information (Redish, 1989).

3. Lists and Bullets: These graphic aids highlighted significant information, broke out statistical information, and laid out complicated chronological sequences (Benson, 1985; Rubens, 1986).

4. Internal Previews: At the beginning of long derogatory sections, an internal preview was used to provide a quick overview of the major points that were to come in that section. The language in the preview mirrored the language in the major headings (Redish, Battison, Gold, 1985).

5. Clauses in Subject-Verb-Object Order: Subjects, verbs, and objects within clauses were kept as close to each other as possible to avoid strain on short-term memory (Fodor & Garrett, 1967).

6. Modifier Strings Right Branched: Long strings of modifying information were placed to the right of the object (right branching) versus before the subject (left branching). Research has shown that right branching of information enables readers to read faster and remember more easily information (Haviland & Clark, 1974; Miller & Isard, 1964).

7. Active Verbs: When appropriate, passive verbs were changed to active verbs to make clear the agent of a particular action (Mirel, 1988; Selzer, 1983).

8. Explicit Transitional Tags: Clear transitional tags, often left out in narrative report writing, were added to make it easier for readers to quickly grasp relationships between ideas and sections of reports (Guillemette, 1987).

As indicated earlier, the revised cases are called "high-impact" and the originals "low-impact." Appendix A contains representative sections from the original (low-impact) and the revised (high-impact) ROIs.

This research on document design and style creates the expectation that adjudicators should have less difficulty assessing high-impact ROIs than their low-impact counterparts for the following reasons:

1. The more readable document design, organization, and style of the high-impact treatments should have made these ROIs easier for adjudicators to read and comprehend.

2. The headings, lists, and internal previews in the high-impact ROIs should enable adjudicators to quickly spot derogatory information, assess which derogatory information is important, determine when a particular segment of derogatory information has ended and another segment has begun, and easily classify the relative importance of that information. The result should be better information retention, improved ability to map information onto a decision template, and greater ease in applying adjudication criteria to case information. These three improvements should result in better quality adjudication decisions.

3. Headings, subheadings, and internal previews provide information redundancy which should not only improve information retention but also should result in better decision quality. Information redundancy should make derogatory information classification and its application to adjudication criteria easier, hence improving decision making.

Sample

Forty senior adjudicators (GS 11-GS 13) from four major central adjudication sites participated in the study. Adjudication supervisors at each site chose the participants based on work load and availability. The number of adjudicators from each site is listed below:

• Directorate for Industrial Security Clearance Review (DISCR) at Columbus	12
• Navy Central Adjudication Facility (CAF)	12
• Army Central Clearance Facility (CCF)	12
• Air Force Security Clearance Office (AFSCO)	4

A high caseload backup prevented AFSCO from allowing more adjudicators to participate.

Thirty-one female (31) and nine (9) male adjudicators read the cases. Average age was 45, and average years of adjudication experience was 13. The typical adjudicator had spent slightly more than 6 years at the adjudication site.

Testing Procedure

The adjudicators completed the study on site where they were divided randomly into two groups, with each group adjudicating two cases.

- Group I (six adjudicators at each site except for AFSCO) received a high impact treatment of the Czarnek case and a low impact treatment of the Rokitka case.

- Group II received a low impact treatment of the Czarnek case and a high impact treatment of the Rokitka case.

This counterbalanced 2 X 2 design ensured that each adjudicator responded to a different case written in the typical, low-impact style and the revised high-impact style and that order of presentation would not influence the results.

At each adjudication site, the adjudicators assessed the cases in a large room. To guarantee that all adjudicators were given the same instructions, the researcher read a prepared script that explained the following:

- the purpose of the exercise

- the materials (cases and questionnaires)

- the process they were to use in assessing the cases and completing the questionnaires

All directions were reiterated on a cover sheet and in different segments of the test instrument. Adjudicators were also told they could use whatever materials they needed to help them assess the cases.

Content of Questionnaire

Adjudicators were asked to complete a questionnaire after adjudicating each case. The first questionnaire contained three parts:

- Part I contained seven open-ended questions, requesting information about the adjudication decision, the rationale for the decision, the adjudication criteria applied, the mitigating criteria applied, the need for more information, and the perceived need to send a Letter of Intent (LOI), a document informing the candidate of an intent to deny clearance.

- Part II contained 23 questions about the readability of the case, the ease in finding derogatory information, the quality of field agents' writing, and so on. A five-point Likert scale was used to capture these perceptions.

- Part III examined adjudicators' perceptions or feelings toward the field agents who wrote the ROI. Fifteen semantic differential items on a five-point scale were used to capture these data.

The second questionnaire, completed after the second case was adjudicated, was identical to the first except it contained an additional part that asked adjudicators which case was easier to read, required less rereading, increased confidence in the competence of field agents, and so on. There were 10 case preference questions of this type.

This report focuses on the results from Part I of the questionnaire; Part II and III results will be described in subsequent reports.

Quality of Adjudication Decision

To determine the correct adjudication decision, we protocol-analyzed six adjudication supervisors (GS 13 and GS 14)—two each from the Army, Navy, and DISCR central adjudication sites. At each site, the 2 X 2 research design previously described was used.

All six adjudication supervisors would have granted clearance for *both* cases. This agreement was our measure of decision quality.

Coding Techniques

Part I qualitative responses were cataloged, classified, and translated into quantitative measures to allow for statistical analysis. For example, adjudication decision was divided into categories such as *grant*, *deny*, and *need more information*.

Limitations

Sample size limits some of the analysis. Specifically, we had a relatively small sample (n=20) when we assessed the relationship between case treatment and decision outcome for each case, and a smaller sample (n=6) when we compared case treatment and decision type within adjudication sites. Consequently, the data in these report sections was interpreted with care. Also, the small samples made it difficult to obtain statistically significant results.

Also, at each site the study was conducted in a large room so as to guarantee the integrity of the research design. We wanted to make sure all adjudicators received the same directions from the same person, clearly understood their tasks, and began their tasks at the same time so we could accurately measure decision time (this data will be reported in a subsequent report). However, this environment did not replicate actual workplace conditions. Adjudicators work in busy offices where numerous distractions and frequent interruptions can make reading long ROIs difficult.

Relationship Between Case Treatment and Adjudication Decision Results

This segment reports the results of our analysis of the relationship between ROI writing style and adjudication decision (*grant*, *deny*, or *need more information*). The data describing this relationship are divided into three sections:

1. results from both cases combined
2. results from the Czarnek and Rokitka cases
3. results from the Army central adjudication site

Results From Combined Cases

Table 1 shows that ROI style does not have a statistically significant effect on decision outcome when the results from both cases are combined. The high-impact style marginally improved decision outcome.

TABLE 1

Case Adjudication Decisions by Treatment: Both Cases

	High Impact (HI)	Low Impact (LI)
GRANT	25 63%	20 50%
DENY	5 12%	7 17%
NEED MORE INFO	10 25%	14 33%

The data in Table 1 indicate that variation in style caused only minor differences in decision outcome: 63% of the adjudicators reading the high-impact case treatments decided to grant clearance, and 50% who read the low-impact treatments decided to grant. Furthermore, there are only small differences between ROI style in the *deny* and *need more information* categories. Twelve percent reading the high-impact cases denied

clearance, and 17% who read the low-impact treatment denied. Finally, 25% of the high-impact case respondents requested more information, compared with 33% of the low-impact case respondents who felt they needed more information.

If we disregard style and combine the *deny* and *need more information* categories, we find that 44% of adjudicators *initially* decided not to grant clearance. In other words, almost half of the adjudicators made initial decisions that varied from their superiors'.

The next two sections report the relationship between ROI style and decision type for each case.

Czarnek Case: Relationship Between Treatment and Decision Quality

Adjudication results from the falsification and aberrant behavior issues in the Czarnek case indicate that ROI style had no effect on decision outcome. This case was more complex than Rokitka; consequently, we believed that if the high-impact treatment was going to influence decision outcome, the effect would likely be seen in Czarnek. Table 2 shows the adjudication results in response to both styles are almost identical.

TABLE 2

Czarnek Case Adjudication Decision

	HI	LI
GRANT	8 40%	8 40%
DENY	4 20%	5 25%
NEED MORE INFO	8 40%	7 35%

Aside from the similar response to both treatments, what is striking is that 60% of the decision responses, regardless of ROI style, vary from those of adjudicators' supervisors.

Rokitka Case: Relationship Between Treatment and Decision Quality

Table 3 shows that ROI style of the alcohol and drug issues in the Rokitka case did not have a statistically significant effect on decision outcome.

TABLE 3

Rokitka Case Adjudication Decision

	HI	LI
GRANT	17 85%	12 60%
DENY	1 5%	2 10%
NEED MORE INFO	2 10%	6 30%

While there is not a significant statistical difference, the high-impact style caused decisions that were more in line with those of adjudicators' supervisors: 85% of high-impact Rokitka respondents decided to grant, and 60% of the low-impact case respondents granted clearance. Only 10% of the high-impact treatment respondents required more information compared with 30% of the low-impact treatment respondents.

Summary

One purpose of this research was to determine whether adjudicators would assess high-impact case treatments differently from their low-impact counterparts. The data in Tables 1-3 show that there is no statistically significant relationship between ROI style and decision outcome. However, the data from the Rokitka case (Table 3) suggest that the high-impact treatment tends to improve decision quality.

Central Adjudication Site and Case Treatment

We next examined data from the Army, DISCR, and Navy central adjudication sites to determine if there was a relationship between ROI style and adjudication outcome at any of these three sites. AFSCO data are not included because of small sample size.

Army

Table 4 shows the relationship at Army CCF between ROI style and adjudication decision for both cases.

TABLE 4

Relationship Between Treatment and Adjudication Decision
for Both Cases at Army CCF

	HI	LI
GRANT	4 33%	0 0%
DENY	1 8%	3 25%
NEED MORE INFO	7 58%	9 75%

Although only approaching statistical significance (p .07), the high-impact treatments did result in decisions more in agreement with those of adjudicators' superiors. Specifically, 33% of adjudicators reading the high-impact treatments granted clearance; none of the adjudicators responding to the low-impact treatments granted. Only 8% who read the high-impact treatments denied, while 25% who read the low-impact treatments denied. Finally, 58% who read the high-impact treatments requested more information as compared to 75% who read the low-impact treatments.

The next two sections divide the data in Table 4 by examining the relationship between ROI style and adjudication decision for each case. Our assessment of this data is tentative because of the very small sample (n=6) for each treatment.

Czarnek Case: Relationship Between Treatment and Adjudication Decision. Table 5 shows that at the Army site ROI style had no effect on adjudication decision. In fact, the adjudication results in response to both styles are almost identical.

TABLE 5

Czarnek Case: Relationship Between Treatment
and Adjudication Decision at Army CCF

	HI	LI
GRANT	0 0%	0 0%
DENY	0 0%	1 17%
NEED MORE INFO	6 100%	5 83%

Interestingly, none of the Army adjudicators' decisions matches those of supervisory adjudicators. Almost all of the Army adjudicators (92%) believed they needed more information to adjudicate the issues in this case.

Rokitka Case: Relationship Between Treatment and Adjudication Decision. In contrast to the Czarnek results, Table 6 shows that at Army ROI style did have a statistically significant effect (p=.05) on how the alcohol and drug issues in the Rokitka case were adjudicated. Also, adjudicators who read the high-impact Rokitka case made decisions more in agreement with those of supervisory adjudicators than adjudicators who read the low-impact treatment.

TABLE 6

Rokitka Case: Relationship Between Treatment
and Adjudication Decision at Army CCF

	HI	LI
GRANT	4 67%	0 0%
DENY	1 17%	2 33%
NEED MORE INFO	1 17%	4 67%

Table 6 shows that 67% of adjudicators reading the high-impact ROI granted clearance; none who read the low-impact version granted. Only 17% who read the high-impact ROI needed more information to adjudicate the case, while 67% who responded to the low-impact version requested more information.

DISCR and Navy

DISCR and Navy data are presented in Appendix B and Appendix C respectively because the results are similar and offer no further insight about the relationship between style and decision outcome. A brief summary of these results is provided below.

When results from both cases were combined, ROI style had no effect on DISCR adjudicators' decision outcomes. In fact, DISCR adjudicators assessed both cases virtually the same regardless of ROI style, and their adjudication decisions were almost identical to their superiors'.

At Navy CAF there is no relationship between ROI style and adjudication decision when results from both cases were combined. Furthermore, neither the Czarnek nor the Rokitka data revealed a significant relationship between style and decision outcome. Finally, adjudicators' determination for the Rokitka case closely matched (92% agreement) that of their supervisors; however, for the Czarnek case, adjudicators agreed with their supervisors' determinations less than half the time (42%).

Summary

Three important facts emerge from the central adjudication site data. First, except for Army, there is no relationship at these sites between ROI style and adjudication decision. Secondly, at Army the ROI style affected the decision outcome only for the Rokitka case. Finally, the high-impact Rokitka treatment results in decisions at the Army facility more in agreement with those of senior adjudicators.

Discussion of Treatment-adjudication Decision Results

Previous research (Suchan, 1989a) has shown that readers better comprehend information in high-impact than low-impact documents. Better information comprehension should lead to better task completion. Specifically, adjudicators reading the high-impact ROIs should make decisions that more frequently matched those of their superiors. Except for Army adjudicators' response to the Rokitka case, that did not happen. In fact, as we have demonstrated, there is a large degree of similarity in adjudicators' decision responses to both ROI styles when we compare:

1. the combined decision responses to both the high-impact and low-impact ROIs (Table 1)

2. the high- and low-impact ROIs of the Czarnek case (Table 2)

3. the high- and low-impact ROIs of the Rokitka case when the Army data are factored out (Table 3)

4. the central adjudication sites' responses to both cases except, once again, for the Army's response to the Rokitka case. (Tables 4 and 5 and Appendixes B and C)

Although some of these non-findings may be attributed to small sample size and the difficulty of achieving differences in decision outcome (the dependent variable), we believe more fundamental reasons explain why such counter-intuitive results occurred.

Cognitive/Structural Framework: Meaning Is Inside the Text

The literature that supported the variables used to create the high-impact case treatments and the information-processing model implicitly represented by these variables represents a structural/cognitive information processing framework. This framework is based on the assumption that organization of information and syntax of sentences (structural factors) solely determine how readers process and comprehend (*e.g.*, cognition) documents. In other words, this framework contends that information readers process resides solely *inside* the text or the document.

Within this model or framework the reader's *mind* is seen as a central operating unit or a computer motherboard that processes the input provided by the document. Consequently, strategies that make the document more readable and comprehensible, such as the independent variables used in this study, define effective writing because they help the central operating unit (*i.e.*, the mind) to function more efficiently, thus enabling the unit's memory bank to retain and retrieve the information it needs to make decisions.

If adjudicators can easily retrieve information from ROIs, then they should have little difficulty applying adjudication criteria to cases' derogatory information. The result should be quality adjudication decisions. Consequently, reports that are efficient for adjudicators to read (the high-impact treatments) should yield better quality decisions than those that tax readers' information processing capabilities (the low-impact treatments).

This cognitive/structural model of information processing has great appeal and credibility because it uses metaphors—the brain as a computer or data processing unit—that are current and that trigger respect due to the human-like associations attributed to computers. However, this cognitive approach may be an overly mechanistic way of looking at the relationship between the document design, organization, and style of a document (the ROI), the reader (the adjudicator), and the use of the document (decision making). This approach has as an implicit assumption that information flows through a conduit or channel between writers and readers (Axley, 1984). Consequently, if field agents have mastered a set of information *conveying* skills, they will be able to produce a document that, once placed in the conduit, *transfers* accurately information to an adjudicator. The adjudicator will then *extract* the information from the conduit, accurately decipher it, and make the appropriate adjudication decision based solely on the information the field agent has conveyed (the italicized metaphors reflect the dominance of the conduit metaphor in this process). If indeed this were the case, adjudicators who read the high-impact treatments would make different and better decisions from those reading the low-impact ones because the high-impact treatments more efficiently transferred derogatory information to the adjudicator.

Social Constructionist Framework: Meaning also Resides Outside the Text

A different way of viewing the relationship between ROIs and adjudicators is suggested in the work of social constructionist theoreticians such as Bruffee (1986), Dillon (1981), Hirsch (1987), and Rorty (1979). Hirsch and Dillon believe that the meaning of a document is impossible to determine from only the words on the page. They stress that to make sense of a document readers *always* go beyond the document, relying not only on the text itself but also on their personal values, beliefs, and prejudices (*i.e.*, their individualistic responses to the document's content); their experience with similar documents; the language norms of their organization, department, or work team; and a variety of other *outside-the-text* factors. Consequently, the meaning of a ROI resides not entirely in the ROI itself, but is *constructed* or *created* in the minds of the adjudicators through the interplay of the ROI and a complex array of factors adjudicators bring to the job. In all likelihood, it was these outside-the text factors that contributed to adjudicators assessing information in the high and low impact ROIs in similar ways.

It is difficult to determine which specific outside-the-text factors may have mitigated any information processing advantages of the high-impact treatments. However, we can make several reasonable speculations based on our knowledge of experienced

adjudicators' information classification strategies, the organizations' language norms, and the adjudicators' expectations of ROI organization, style, and design.

It appears that the vast amount of experience with similar cases that these adjudicators brought to their reading of ROIs may counterbalance the advantages of the high-impact treatment. As Hirsch (1987) indicates, readers use extensive prior knowledge to create information patterns that help them make sense of a document. Over time this knowledge creates an information processing pattern that enables readers to key on information central to their task and ignore information they perceive to be inconsequential. In all likelihood, this study's adjudicators used their own information processing patterns when reading the low-impact treatments. These *internal* patterns may be similar to the *external* information processing patterns created in the high-impact treatment through the various document design, organizational and stylistic variables. Consequently, there would be little difference in decision response between the two treatments.

Another outside-the-text factor is the uniqueness of the high-impact treatments. These treatments looked and seemed different from their low-impact counterparts. Adjudicators could have viewed this novel style as an organizational intervention that changed the relationship between field agent and adjudicator. Initially, the high-impact style may make it appear that field agents have a new, more active role in the security assessment process that impinges on the adjudicator's job.

Unlike the high-impact treatments, the low-impact ones represent a long-established tradition of narrative report writing characterized by long paragraphs, lack of internal previews, lack of headings, lists, bold print, and so on. The experienced adjudicators used in this study expect information to be presented in this way. Because the high-impact treatments violated the narrative report tradition and thus adjudicators' expectations of how information should be presented, adjudicators may have been focusing on the atypical way derogatory information was presented rather than on the content of the information. Consequently, deflection of interest from content in the high-impact treatment cases may have subverted any information processing advantages the high-impact treatment may have given adjudicators.

Anecdotal information gathered from adjudicators after they had served as research subjects supports this notion that the high-impact style violated their expectations. Adjudicators at Navy CAF and particularly at the Army site stated that they did not like the high-impact style for the following reasons:

1. the high-impact style made it appear as if the field agents were adjudicating the case.

2. the style was not what they expected; it "threw them off."

3. the high-impact style did not represent the way "things are done around here." It violated organizational and group norms.

4. the high-impact treatments were written by "outsiders." Field agents do not write that way.

In short, the high-impact style violated the organizations' language norms. Therefore, before this style could have an impact on information processing and decision quality, it must be carefully integrated into the adjudicator environment.

Explanation of Conflicting Army Data

Social constructionist theory and adjudication communities' language norms well explain the lack of difference in adjudication decision because of ROI style. However, the Rokitka high-impact treatment results at Army, as shown in Table 6, muddy this explanation: adjudicators who read the high-impact ROI not only made decisions different from their counterparts reading the low-impact Rokitka ROI but their decisions were also more in line with those of their superiors.

We believe that inside-the-text factors, that is the stylistic features of the high-impact Rokitka ROI, did not cause the Army differences in decision type due to ROI style and the high correlation between adjudicators' and their superiors' decisions. If inside-the-text factors affected decision type, we would have seen a similar relationship between ROI style and decision type in the Rokitka case at other adjudication sites. Furthermore, since the Rokitka case's drug and alcohol issues were less complex than the Czarnek case's aberrant behavior and falsification issues, Rokitka was relatively easy to adjudicate. Consequently, we expected less difference between ROI style and adjudication decision for Rokitka than Czarnek. If ROI style (*i.e.*, inside-the-document factors) did affect decision making, we believed we would see that effect magnified in the Czarnek results because the complexity and density of information in this case should enable the high-impact ROI to have a significant competitive advantage over its low-impact counterpart. However, as the data show, Czarnek ROI style had no effect on decision type. Consequently, if ROI style, or inside-the-text factors, had no effect on decision type for the more complex Czarnek case, they should have no effect on the less complex Rokitka case.

We believe that outside-the-document information-processing dynamics caused the different decision responses. Further, these dynamics are driven by unique Army adjudication facility norms.

The next sections examine differences in decision making among the central adjudication sites and begin to paint a clearer picture of the outside-the-document factors that contribute to Army's uniqueness.

Relationship Between Adjudication Site and Decision Type

Table 7 shows there is a statistically significant relationship (p=.01) between adjudication site and adjudication decision. In this table, we have combined the adjudication decisions from both cases and both treatments and, once again, have excluded AFSCO responses because of small sample size.

TABLE 7

Adjudication Decision by Agency Site: Both Cases

	ARMY	DISCR	NAVY
GRANT	4 17%	21 88%	16 67%
DENY	4 17%	1 4%	4 17%
NEED MORE INFO	16 67%	2 8%	4 17%

The data show that Army *initially* makes different adjudication decisions compared to DISCR and Navy. This difference is very noticeable in Army adjudicators' requests for additional information to make a determination. As Table 7 shows, 67% of the Army adjudicators requested more information to adjudicate the cases, while only 8% of DISCR and 17% of Navy adjudicators required more information.

Army's requests for additional information affect their decision to grant clearance rates. Only 17% of Army adjudicators decided to grant, while 88% of DISCR and 67% of Navy adjudicators granted clearance.

These decision-to-grant data also can be used to determine the degree of decision agreement between adjudicators and their supervisors. As indicated earlier, *all* supervisory adjudicators would have granted clearance for both cases. Only 17% of Army adjudicators' decisions *initially* matched those of their supervisors. In contrast, DISCR adjudicators' decisions agreed with their supervisors' 88% of the time and Navy adjudicators agreed with their supervisors 67%. Army adjudicators' need for additional information (67%) caused the large difference in decision-agreement percentages.

Finally, it is important to examine the denial rates. We would expect very low denial rates and negligible differences in rates between adjudication sites. These expectations are reasonable because these cases contain derogatory information that is not severe and are thus unlikely to be denied clearance; also, only about 1% of candidates are denied clearance. DISCR's recommendation to deny rate is 4%, while both Navy's and Army's rate is 17%. Although the difference between DISCR's and Navy and Army's recommendation to deny rate may seem small, they are worth noting because they involve two cases that do not contain severe derogatory information. If cases of this type receive second-level review, senior adjudicators may become burdened with cases that do not require their expertise.

Table 8 shows the relationship between central adjudication site and adjudication decision for the Czarnek case. Again AFSCO data are not included because of small sample size.

TABLE 8

Czarnek: Adjudication Decision by Agency Site

	ARMY	DISCR	NAVY
GRANT	0 0%	10 83%	5 42%
DENY	1 8%	1 8%	4 33%
NEED MORE INFO	11 92%	1 8%	3 25%

A chi-square test of significance shows that for this case there is a statistically significant relationship ($p=.01$) between adjudication site and adjudication decision. The differences in percentages in each category help clarify this relationship.

Regardless of case treatment, none of the Army adjudicators granted clearance, while 83% of DISCR and only 42% of Navy adjudicators granted. These figures also show that at one extreme none of the Army adjudicators *initially* agreed with the decision of their supervisors, while at the other almost all (10 of 12 or 84%) of DISCR adjudicators' decisions matched their supervisors'. At Navy CAF there was also a difference between supervisors' and adjudicators' decisions. Only 42% of Navy adjudicators' decisions matched those of their superiors.

At Army almost all of the decision difference is captured in the *need more information* category: 92% of the Army adjudicators wanted more information to adjudicate the case, while only 8% of DISCR and 25% of Navy adjudicators requested more information. At Navy CAF, the decision differences with supervisory adjudicators are spread almost equally between the *deny* (33%) and *need more information* (25%) categories. What is noteworthy is the relatively large number of Navy adjudicators who recommended denial of clearance.

Finally, we examined the Rokitka case to determine if there is a statistically significant relationship between adjudication site and adjudication decision. Table 9 shows that there is a statistically significant relationship (p=.01) between adjudication site and decision.

TABLE 9

Rokitka: Adjudication Decision by Agency Site

	ARMY	DISCR	NAVY
GRANT	4 33%	11 92%	11 92%
DENY	3 25%	0 0%	0 0%
NEED MORE INFO	5 42%	1 8%	1 8%

As with the Czarnek case, the Army adjudicators assessed the Rokitka case differently from their counterparts at the other two sites and the adjudication supervisors. One third of Army adjudicators granted clearance, while 92% of the DISCR and Navy adjudicators granted. Both Navy and DISCR adjudicators' decisions closely matched those of the adjudication supervisors. The eight Army adjudicators not initially granting clearance distributed their decisions almost equally in the *deny* and *need more information* categories. As the data in Table 9 show, 42% of Army adjudicators requested more information. Rather surprisingly, 25% recommended to deny clearance. This percentage is surprising because adjudication supervisors perceived the case to be easy to adjudicate, and none of the adjudicators at the other two sites recommended denial.

The data show that Army journey-level adjudicators initially assessed each case differently from their counterparts at other adjudication sites. The Army adjudicators appear to be extremely conservative, requiring more information than their Navy and DISCR colleagues before willing to make a determination. The next section accounts for this difference, using social construction theory.

Discussion of Adjudication Site Differences

Social constructionist theorists argue that knowledge, or in this case the application of adjudication guidelines to cases, exists neither in an individual or a small group of individuals (*e.g.*, policymakers) nor in the environment (codes or rules and regulations as to how to use information), but rather within a community of peers. Bruffee (1986) states that these communities interpret and use what ostensibly may seem like the same knowledge applied to the same circumstance in very different ways. What causes these differences are the community's values, its "character," its perceptions as to how it relates to other similar knowledge communities, its interpretation and responses to events occurring in the external environment that affect the community, and the strategies it uses to remain intact, to guarantee its survival, and to assert its uniqueness.

There are, of course, adjudication guidelines as well as DoD organizational and central adjudication site norms and values that control individual and knowledge community variation and help provide commonality as to how adjudicators "reconstruct" ROIs and make decisions. However, the data in the previous section on adjudication site and decision quality suggest that these formal and informal control systems may not be strong enough to guarantee that outside-the-text factors do not cause significant differences in adjudication decisions.

From a social constructionist perspective, the different central adjudication sites can be seen as unique knowledge communities or cultural milieux. Although their similar tasks, their use of similar adjudication guidelines, and their belief in the importance and relevance of their work bind these communities, significant differences may exist in how their journey-level adjudicators perceive and make sense of derogatory information in the ROIs because of the communal factors discussed above. These different and evolving sense-making schemes may represent singular ways adjudication sites conceptualize, interpret, and assess narrative information provided in ROIs. And, as was indicated earlier, this different "reading" or "construction" of an ROI may be caused primarily by "outside-the document" factors such as community members'

- storehouse of prior knowledge about security
- unique attitudes toward and interpretation of that knowledge
- perceptions of what makes their adjudication site unique
- reactions toward specific derogatory issues
- perceived role in the security process

rather than inside-the-document factors such as the ROI's document design, organization, and style. In short, the Army journey-level adjudicators initially may interpret the same

cases differently from their Navy and DISCR colleagues because they have what Smith (1978) calls a different theory of the world (in this case, the security world) in their communal consciousness.

In many respects, we are arguing that the Army adjudication site (perhaps other sites as well) may have a different organizational culture—a unique kind of shared understanding of the adjudication experience—that affects adjudicative behavior. We are also suggesting that the whole-person approach is derived from adjudication site culture and personifies to varying degrees an important element of that culture. Although difficult to define precisely, the "whole-person approach" can be characterized as a good faith assessment of a constellation of factors—many of which are difficult to quantify and whose interdependencies are not accounted for in the standard 5200.2R adjudication criteria—that may explain or mitigate significant derogatory information. Adjudication sites that have unique cultures may conceptualize and put in practice the whole-person approach differently from other facilities, resulting in journey-level adjudicators making different determinations to similar cases.

Determining the specific components of Army adjudication site culture that cause its adjudicators to be very cautious before granting clearance is outside the scope of this study. Furthermore, this study did not attempt to "unpack" (*e.g.*, deconstruct) the Army's, or other adjudication sites,' understanding and application of the whole-person approach and to understand this approach as a subcategory or personification of the site's culture. However, this study's findings that journey-level adjudicators at different sites assess the same case differently and the cause of this difference may be outside-the-document factors indicate that research is needed to understand the unique cultural factors that cause adjudicators to make different sense of the same kind of derogatory information. Furthermore, since the conception and application of the whole-person approach may be an important embodiment of adjudication site culture, research needs to be conducted so that DoD executives and adjudication site directors better understand the effect, if any, this approach has on security determinations at central adjudication sites.

Conclusions

This research was motivated by adjudicators' request for improved, more readable ROIs. Changing the document design, organization, and style of the ROIs to make them more readable could be justified if the revised reports helped adjudicators make decisions consistent with those of supervisory adjudicators. That was not the case, except for the Army adjudicators' responses to the Rokitka case.

This study's results counter the common-sense notion that inside-the-text factors, that is improvements in the document design, organization, and style of ROIs, will lead to better comprehension and easier classification and mapping of derogatory information. This improved information processing should ultimately result in high quality adjudication decisions that match those of supervisory adjudicators. What follows is a summary of the study's most significant empirical results:

1. There is no statistically significant difference between case treatment and adjudication decision when both cases are combined, or when the Czarnek and Rokitka cases are examined separately.

2. Since in general there are no statistically significant differences between treatment and decision, the high-impact treatment does not result in adjudicators making decisions that better conform to their superiors' assessment of the cases.

3. There was little difference between treatment and adjudication decision at the three central adjudication sites. Only Army adjudicators assessed the high-impact Rokitka case differently from its low-impact version. Also, the high-impact treatment yielded decision results that better matched those of supervisory adjudicators than the low-impact treatment.

When we exclude case treatment from the analysis and only examine whether adjudicators make decisions consistent with those of their counterparts at other adjudication sites and with their supervisors, we discovered the following:

1. There is a statistically significant relationship between adjudication site and adjudication decision. Journey-level adjudicators at Army assessed cases differently from their Navy and DISCR colleagues.

2. For both the Czarnek and the Rokitka cases, there are marked differences between the Army's adjudication decisions and the two other adjudication sites tested. Army journey-level adjudicators consistently request more information before they believe they can adequately adjudicate the cases. Also, for the Rokitka case 25% of the Army adjudicators decided to deny clearance, while none of the adjudicators at the other two sites decided to deny.

3. Navy adjudicators responding to the Czarnek case had relatively high denial rates (33%) compared to the other adjudication sites (8%).

4. Army adjudication decisions, regardless of case, varied significantly from those of their supervisors. Also, Navy adjudicators' assessment of the Czarnek case varied from supervisory adjudicators' assessment. DISCR adjudicators' assessments consistently matched those of supervisory adjudicators.

The data indicate that outside-the-text factors influence the way adjudicators assess cases. Changes in inside-the-text factors had only minimal impact on decision quality.

The effect of outside-the-text factors on decision making suggests that adjudicators do more than extract derogatory information from the ROI, classify and categorize it, and then apply the standard 5200.2R adjudication criteria to that information to make a determination. If that were the sole process adjudicators used, then the high-impact case treatments should have enabled adjudicators to make better quality decisions than their low-impact versions.

The outside-the text factors that influenced the way adjudicators constructed these cases may partially represent the whole-person approach adjudicators often refer to when describing how they assess derogatory information. This whole-person criterion may represent a composite of the outside-the-text factors that affect decision making. Also, this approach may help define adjudication site culture and enable adjudication sites to differentiate themselves from each other.

Interestingly, the whole-person approach gives adjudicators a significant amount of autonomy and flexibility in applying adjudication criteria and determining if mitigating factors exist. The drawback, though, may be significant decision variance among journey-level adjudicators at different adjudication sites to similar cases.

Clearly, the whole-person concept or metaphor clashes with the specificity of the adjudication criteria and the implicit mechanical application of these criteria to derogatory information. In other words, there seems to be two different organizational metaphors operating at the adjudication sites: the whole-person approach, which represents autonomous and flexible decision making based on individual interpretation, and the more mechanistic approach characterized by careful application of specific adjudication criteria to case information, which is based on adherence to institutional guidelines. These approaches exist simultaneously within each adjudicator and at each adjudication site. However, at a particular site one approach or metaphor may dominate the other. Indeed, the strong belief in and adherence to the whole-person approach may be an important factor that defines the culture of an adjudication site and contributes to its perception of its own uniqueness.

Recommendations for Further Research

This research raises a number of interesting questions that relate to both inside- and outside-the-document factors.

1. **Would case treatment affect decision outcome if adjudicators read cases on a CRT screen?**

CRT screens represent a medium significantly different from paper. Paper allows readers to move quickly and non-sequentially from page to page, to make notes in the margins, to highlight, to underline. and to use a range of other information classification strategies. CRT screens may not allow adjudicators to use these tactics. Consequently, adjudicators may not be able to use in the CRT media environment the information-processing strategies they have devised to adapt to the current non-reader-friendly low-impact style. If adjudicators are going to read ROIs on CRT screens, then research needs to be conducted on the effect that field agents' current writing habits have on adjudicators' reading and decision making processes in this unique environment.

2. **Would inexperienced adjudicators derive advantages from reading high-impact case treatments?**

All adjudicators used in this study were experienced. These adjudicators have already devised effective strategies to read, comprehend, and classify information in low-impact ROIs. However, this may not be true of new adjudicators. High-impact ROIs may enable these fledgling adjudicators to process ROIs quickly and efficiently, thus creating improved job performance and positive job perceptions. These positive job perceptions may result in lower turnover due to decreased agency transfers.

3. **Would similar results be found at other central adjudication sites?**

If a similar study were conducted at other central adjudication sites, OSD would have a better idea of the degree of consistency in decision making across sites. Furthermore, the high-impact treatments may have an effect on decision quality at these sites.

4. **What is unique about Army and Navy central adjudication site culture, particularly in its perception and application of the whole-person approach, that causes journey-level adjudicators to assess cases differently from their counterparts at other sites? Do other central adjudication facilities have unique cultures and thus different applications of the whole-person approach that affect the adjudication process?**

Although almost all adjudicators state they use the whole-person approach when assessing derogatory information, we know very little about how adjudicators and adjudication sites perceive, conceptualize, and operationalize this approach. Organizational cultural differences among sites may cause adjudicators to operationalize the whole-person approach in very different ways. Consequently, research needs to be done to determine how the different adjudication sites construct the whole-person approach and put it into practice.

Furthermore, adjudication site consolidation may require merging sites having very different cultures. Different adjudication site cultures may cause facilities to view the adjudication process differently (whole person versus a more mechanized approach, for example) and thus adjudicate differently. To guarantee that consolidation proceeds smoothly and adjudication consistency is maintained, OSD should be aware of cultural similarities and differences among sites. For example, special attention may need to be given to understanding Army's unique adjudication environment before it could be effectively integrated into a comprehensive centralized adjudication facility. Likewise, consolidation efforts should be sensitive to cultural differences caused by facility size, geographic location, workforce makeup, organizational structure, communication patterns, and a number of other variables.

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List of Appendixes

A. Example of Low-impact Subject Interview

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C. Relationship Between Treatment and Adjudication Decision at DISCR Central Adjudication

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APPENDIX A

EXAMPLE OF LOW-IMPACT

SUBJECT INTERVIEW

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SUBJECT INTERVIEW

18. An interview of SUBJECT was conducted on 03 Feb 88 as part of a Background Investigation. This interview required two hours and twenty minutes.

SUBJECT explained the reason for his brief term in the USAF as an E-3, Basic Airman as follows: SUBJECT had joined the Air Force and was attending Basic Military Training School at Lackland AFB, TX in Jan 82. In Feb 82 (his PSQ states Jun 82 but this is a typographical error) he received an honorable discharge because he was "unable to adapt to military life". SUBJECT stated that at one point in time he made a comment to somebody like "Boy, I'd like to kill him" referring to Staff Sgt Genicky because he felt Staff Sgt. Genicky singled him out and picked on him more than other students. SUBJECT added that he did not intend this comment literally; it was just the kind of thing a person blurts out when he is aggravated by someone. However, SUBJECT made this comment to another student while they were cleaning the bathroom and the other student (NFI) went and told a supervisor. The next thing SUBJECT knew, two squad leaders came and took SUBJECT to a room in the basementby himself. SUBJECT was required to stay in this room for one day. SUBJECT stated that he was not put in solitary confinement. SUBJECT believes this was a scare tactic by the USAF and if so, SUBJECT added that it worked. SUBJECT was only 18 years old and he said he was really scared by the experience. After one day SUBJECT was given psychological evaluation tests. He couldn't understand why,but he was told it was normal procedure. SUBJECT could not understand how an off-hand comment like the one he made could be taken so seriously or cause so much trouble, but pleading his case did not seem to help. SUBJECT was accused of making a verbal threat. SUBJECT does not know the specific results of the tests but he knows he did not pass them. SUBJECT vaguely remembers some very weird questions on the test like "Do you have sex with your mother?" or "Would you have sex with an animal?". SUBJECT thought the questions were disgusting but he answered them honestly and does not know why he failed. AFter the testing results, SUBJECT spent one week at a Rest and Recuperation Facility on base. He explained the facility as a connection point between military and civilian likfe where people stayed before getting out of the service. While at this facility, SUBJECT performed clerical and "busy work" tasks. While there, SUBJECT appealed the decision concerning his release, but the supervisors told him he was unable to adapt and would be honorably discharged. SUBJECT attributes the entire experience to immaturity and feels this helped him grow up.

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SUBJECT provided clarification regarding his residences as follows: From 1974 to Jun 84 SUBJECT resided at 208 Sycamore Rd., Millersville, MD. From Jun 84 to Aug 84 SUBJECT resided in a cabin while working with the Sandy Grove Bible Conference, Morning Cheer Ministries, Northeast, MD and from Aug 84 to Oct 84 SUBJECT resided at 208 Sycamore Rd., Millersville, MD. From Oct 84 to Jan 85 SUBJECT resided in Glen Burnie, MD (NFI) with a friend named Richard Lee. Lee is presently a NSA employee in California (NFI). From Jan 85 to Jun 85 and from Aug 85 to Aug 86 SUBJECT resided at 6511 Princess Garden Parkway (Washington Bible College), Lanham, MD. During the Summer 85 (Jun to Aug), SUBJECT resided in a dorm at the Living Waters Bible Conference in Danforth, ME. Since Aug 86 SUBJECT has resided at 1015 Drexelgate Drive, Largo, MD. However, from Jun to Aug 87 SUBJECT resided at Children's Haven, Inc., Douglass, ME, as reflected on his PSQ. SUBJECT stated that his PSQ does not reflect all of this information concerning his residences and employments only because he had a hard time remembering this information. SUBJECT feels that his life prior to Washington Bible College (WBC) was insignificant, therefore he has almost blocked his memory of his activities and whereabouts prior to Aug 83.

While discussing SUBJECT's employment history, SUBJECT provided the following information: From approximately Jun 82 to Aug 83 SUBJECT did not have a steady full-time job. During this period, SUBJECT spent his time traveling and enjoying himself, enjoying the freedom of being out of High School. Throughout this period his parents supported him financially. He made three separate trips during this period either visiting relatives or sightseeing. One trip was to Colorado, one to Florida and the third to the New England States. Each trip was about one week in length. SUBJECT added that there were brief periods during this time that he did work. He was employed at the Holiday Inn, Annapolis, MD for approximately two months beginning Feb82. For two weeks he was a traveling magazine salesman (NFI). From Aug 82 to Apr 83 he worked at Howard Johnson's, Millersville, MD. SUBJECT again explained that his memory of his activities prior to Aug 83 are jumbled and sparse. From Aug to Nov 83 SUBJECT worked at Jaspers Restaurant, Greenbelt, MD and at Duff's Smorgasboard, Lanham, MD. SUBJECT became a full time student in Aug 83 and attending college while working two jobs was too much for SUBJECT to handle, so he terminated his employments. As explained earlier, during the Summer 84 SUBJECT was at a bible conference in Maryland, and during the Summer 85 he attended a bible conference in Maine. From Aug 85 to Jun 86 SUBJECT worked at Red Lobster, Lanham, MD. SUBJECT explained that he quit this job becxause he knew he was going to be fired. His position at Red Lobster was "leading host."

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and in Jun 86 on one particular night a new assistant manager was in training. The new employee thought she knew about the restaurant business and tried to tell SUBJECT how to perform his duties. SUBJECT lashed back at this new employee and told her he knew his job. He expressed this opinion in front of the customers, and his supervisor (Linda) the dining room manager heard him and said she was going to fire him. SUBJECT decided to quit instead. SUBJECT thinks that his supervisor was having a bad night and decided to pick on him. From Jun to Aug 86 SUBJECT worked part-time at Curly's Garage Restaurant, Greenbelt, MD. He worked at Curly's in the evening and during the day he was a lifeguard at the WBC swimming pool. From Sep to Dec 86 SUBJECT was physically working in Crownsville, Md and worked on the grounds of the mental hospital there, but his work was not affiliated with the hospital. In Dec 86 SUBJECT worked for Woodward and Lothrop, Landover, MD for approximately one month. From Mar 87 to May 87 SUBJECT was a teacher and a maintenance worker at Capitol Christian Academy, Largo, MD. From Aug to Oct 87 SUBJECT worked as a Security Guard for Landover Mall, Landover, MD. SUBJECT added that one night in Oct 87 as he patrolled the mall, a maintenance man working there said he observed SUBJECT taking some coins from one of the fountains in the mall. SUBJECT denies the entire incident, but the maintenance man informed securi v and SUBJECT was told he was going to be put on temporary leave pending an investigation of the incident. The amount taken from the fountain was determined to be approximately $1.00 and since SUBJECT thought the entire incident was ridiculous, he quit the job. From Oct 87 to the present, SUBJECT has been employed at Domino's Pizza, New Carrollton, MD. SUBJECT says his hours are very sporadic, and he works anywhere from a couple times a week to a couple times a month, depending on his college schedule. (SUBJECT entered Bowie State College, Bowie, MD in Aug 87 and he is working towards a Masters Degree in Counseling Psychology).

While discussing SUBJECT's membership in organizations, SUBJECT stated that since Nov 86 he has been a member of the College and Career Club at Riverdale Baptist Church, Riverdale, MD. The club's activities include bible studies and social activities. SUBJECT failed to list this organization on his PSQ because he did not think about it when filling out his PSQ.

While discussing SUBJECT's mental and emotional background, SUBJECT volunteered that when he was a child he was very hyperactive and always felt picked on by other children. In addition, everything he tried worked for

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awhile and then fell apart. (This reflected later in his life, too, during his periods of sporadic employment). When he was 11 or 12 he went to a Neurologist and family friend, Dr. Crosby in Lutherville, MD (NFI). He was told that when he was born the brain cells in his head did not completely connect, causing the hyperactivity. SUBJECT took medication for this (NFI) for approximately 2 years, stopping when he was 13 years old because the condition had been corrected through the medication. SUBJECT has not had a problem with hyperactivity since he was 13. SUBJECT also volunteered that when he was 14 his mother tried to commit suicide, but this did not cause any psychological problems for SUBJECT.

While discussing foreign travel, SUBJECT disclosed the following: Between 1979 and 1980 he took a vacation with his family to Canada for approximately one week. They visited Toronto, Ottowa and Ontario. In 1982 SUBJECT took a four day vacation by himself to Nassau, Bahamas. In the Summer 85 he made a leisure day trip to New Brunswick, Canada, and in Mar 87 while he was vacationing in California, he went into Tijuana, Mexico just to go over the boarder and sightsee. This was a one day excursion. SUBJECT is planning a trip to the Bahamas in May 88 for vacation, but he is not sure who his traveling companion will be. This foreign travel is not listed on SUBJECT's PSQ because he said he was thinking that travel "abroad" meant travel to Europe.

While discussing SUBJECT's financial situation, SUBJECT stated that he has had two problems in the past with credit accounts. In the Summer 87 SUBJECT was about 4 months behind on his Mobil account with a balance of $165.00. The reason SUBJECT was behind was that his schedule at that time was very hectic with graduation from college and other activities. SUBJECT received a notice from a law office in Kansas City, Missouri (NFI) concerning this account and he paid it right away. His card privileges were reinstated and no further action was taken. SUBJECT has an account with Sears Department Store, which he paid on his own until Feb 87. He turned the payments over to his father, because he didn't think his parents were doing enough for him while he was in school. His dad agreed to pay, but made only a couple of payments. In the meantime, SUBJECT continued to charge on the account and the balance reached $700.00. In Sep 87 Sears contacted SUBJECT regarding this account and a payment plan has been arranged of $27.00 monthly, which SUBJECT has paid faithfully since Sep 87.

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APPENDIX B

EXAMPLE OF HIGH-IMPACT

SUBJECT INTERVIEW

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SUBJECT INTERVIEW

Subject interview was conducted on 03 Feb 88 as part of a background investigation. The interview, which lasted 2 hours and 20 minutes, focused on the following: the SUBJECT'S difficulty in adopting to United States Air Force life, PSQ form clarification, and his emotional and financial difficulties.

DIFFICULTY IN ADAPTING TO MILITARY LIFE

SUBJECT received an honorable discharge from the Basic Military Training School at Lackland AFB, TX in Feb. 82 after less than one month of training because he was "unable to adopt to military life." SUBJECT gave the following details about his discharge.

Threatening Comments. SUBJECT stated that once he commented to someone, "Boy, I'd like to kill him (Staff Sgt. Genicky)." He said this because he felt Genicky had singled him out and picked on him more than the other students. SUBJECT added he didn't literally mean this comment;it was just something a person blurts out when he is aggravated with someone.

However, SUBJECT made the same threatening comment about Staff Sgt. Genicky to another student (NFI). This student told the supervisor about the comment. Next, two squad leaders came and took SUBJECT to a basement room where he was required to stay by himself for a day. SUBJECT stated he was not put in solitary confinement. He believed that this was an USAF scare tactic. Since he was only 18 years old when this happened, he was scared by the experience and believed the tactic worked.

Psychological Testing. The day after this incident the SUBJECT was given psychological evaluation tests. He didn't know why he was given these tests, but he was told it was normal procedure. SUBJECT did not understand how an off-hand remark like the one he made about Staff Sgt. Genicky could be taken so seriously or cause so much trouble. Pleading his case did not help. Despite his explanations, SUBJECT was accused of making a verbal threat.

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SUBJECT did not know the specific results of the tests. But he does know that he did not pass them. SUBJECT remembers some weird test questions such as "Do you have sex with your mother?" or "Would you have sex with an animal?". He thought the questions were disgusting, but he answered them honestly. However, he does not know why he failed the test.

After the tests were evaluated, SUBJECT spent one week at a Rest and Recuperation Facility on base. He explained the facility was a connection point between military and civilian life where people stayed before getting out of the service. SUBJECT performed clerical and "busy work" tasks while at this facility.

SUBJECT appealed his discharge. However, his supervisor told him he was unable to adapt to military life and would be honorably discharged. SUBJECT feels that his immaturity caused the incident and believes the experience helped him "grow up."

PSQ CLARIFICATIONS

SUBJECT stated that his PSQ is not complete and accurate about his former residences, places of employment, and memberships because he had a hard time remembering this information. Furthermore, he feels that his life prior to Washington Bible College (WBC) was insignificant. Consequently, he has almost blocked his memory of his activities and whereabouts prior to Aug. 83.

Listed below are the SUBJECT'S clarifications about his residences:

* From 1974 to June 1984, he resided at 208 Sycamore road, Millersville, MD.

* From June 84 to Aug. 84 he resided in a cabin while working for the Sandy Grove Bible Conference, Morning Cheer Ministries, Northeast, MD.

* From Aug. 84 to Oct. 84 he lived at 208 Sycamore Road, Millersville, MD.

* From Oct. 84 to Jan. 85 he lived in Glen Burnie, MD (NFI) with a friend named Richard Lee who is currently a NSA employee in California (NFI)

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CZARNEK, STEPHEN/SECURITY GUARD, ALLIED SECURITY

* From Jan 85 to June 85 and from Aug. 85 to Aug. 86 he lived at 6511 Princess Garden Parkway (Washington Bible College), Lanham, MD.

* June 85 to Aug 85 he lived in a dorm at the Living Waters Bible Conference in Danforth, ME.

* From Aug. 86 to present, except for summer of 87, he lived at 1015 Drexelgate Drive, Largo, Md.

* From June 87 to Aug. 87 he lived at Children's Haven, Inc., Douglass, ME, as reflected on his PSQ.

CLARIFICATION OF EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

SUBJECT stated that from approximately June 82 to Aug. 83 he did not have a full time job. During this time he traveled and enjoyed himself, taking advantage of the freedom of being out of high school. During this time his parents financially supported him.

SUBJECT made three separate week-long trips--to Colorado, Florida, and New England--during this time to visit relatives or to sightsee.

During this time, SUBJECT did work for brief periods. Listed below are the places of employment to the best of the SUBJECT'S recollection. He claimed that his memory of his activities prior to Aug. 83 are jumbled and sparse.

* Approximately Feb. 82 to April 82, Holiday Inn, Annapolis, MD.

* Two weeks in the Winter of 82 as a traveling salesman (NFI)

* Aug. 82 to April 83, Howard Johnson's, Millersville, MD.

* Aug. 83 to Nov. 83, worked both at Jaspers Restaurant, Greenbelt, MD and Duff's Smorgasbord, Lanham, MD. SUBJECT quit both jobs because he was attending college at the time.

* Summer 84, Bible Conference in Maryland

* Summer 85, Bible Conference in Maine

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CZARNEK, STEPHEN/SECURITY GUARD, ALLIED SECURITY

* Aug. 85 to June 86, Red Lobster, Lanham, MD.

SUBJECT explained he quit his job as a "leading host" at Red Lobster because he knew he was going to be fired. He provided the following circumstances to explain why he quit.

One night in June, 1986, a new assistant manager was in training. This new assistant manager thought she knew the restaurant business and thus told the SUBJECT how to perform his duties. SUBJECT lashed back at the new assistant manager and told her he knew his job. This exchange occurred in front of customers and was overheard by his supervisor (Linda), the dining room manager. She said that she was going to fire the SUBJECT, but he decided to quit instead.

SUBJECT believes that his supervisor was having a bad night and decided to pick on him.

* June 86 to Aug. 86 worked two jobs--Curly's Garage Restaurant, Greenbelt, MD and WBC swimming pool.

* Sept 86 to Dec 86, Anne Arundel County Juvenile Services and Palmer Family, Inc (Christian Organization), Crownsville, MD, as counselor for troubled teenagers.

* Dec. 86 to Jan.87, Woodward and Lothrop, Landover, MD

* Mar. 87 to May 87, Capitol Christian Academy, Largo, MD, teacher and maintenance worker.

* Aug. 87 to Oct. 87, Landover Mall, Landover, MD, security guard.

SUBJECT added the following details to explain why he quit the security guard job. He said that one night in Oct 87 a maintenance man observed him taking coins from one of the mall fountains. The maintenance man informed security, and the SUBJECT was told he was going to placed on temporary leave pending an investigation of the incident.

Approximately one dollar was taken from the fountain. SUBJECT quit the job because he thought the entire incident was ridiculous. The SUBJECT denies that he took money from the mall fountain.

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CZARNEK, STEPHEN/SECURITY GUARD, ALLIED SECURITY

From Oct. 87 to the present, SUBJECT has been employed by Domino's Pizza, New Carrollton, MD. He stated that his hours are sporadic--he works several times a week to several times a month, depending on his college schedule.

SUBJECT entered Bowie State College, Bowie, MD, in Aug. 87 where he is working towards a Masters Degree in Counseling Psychology.

CLARIFICATION OF MEMBERSHIPS IN ORGANIZATIONS

SUBJECT stated that since Nov. 86 he has been a member of the College and Career Club at Riverdale Baptist Church, Riverdale, MD. He failed to list this organizations on his PSQ because he forgot about it. The club's activities include Bible studies and social activities.

MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL BACKGROUND

SUBJECT stated that when he was child he was very hyperactive and always felt picked on by other children. Also, everything he tried worked well for a while and then "fell apart." He felt this pattern repeated itself later in life, during his periods of sporadic employment.

When SUBJECT was 11 or 12, he saw a Neurologist and family friend, Dr. Crosby, in Lutherville, MD (NFI)for his hyperactivity. Dr. Crosby told him that when he was born the brain cells in his head did not entirely connect, causing the hyperactivity. SUBJECT took medication (NFI) for this condition for about two years. He stopped taking the medication when he was 13 because the hyperactivity had been corrected through medication. SUBJECT has not had a problem with hyperactivity since he was 13.

SUBJECT also stated that his mother tried to commit suicide when he was 14. This incident did not cause him any psychological problems.

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FOREIGN TRAVEL

The following foreign travel was not listed on the SUBJECT'S PSQ because he thought that travel "abroad" meant travel to Europe.

* 1979-1980, one week family vacation to Canada.

* 1982, four day vacation by himself to Nassau, Bahamas

* 1985, summer, day trip to New Brunswick, Canada

* 1987, day trip to Tijuana, MX while vacationing in California

SUBJECT is planning a vacation trip to the Bahamas in May, 1988; he is not sure who his traveling companion will be.

FINANCIAL SITUATION

SUBJECT stated that he had two problems in the past with credit cards.

He was four months behind on his Mobil account, owing a balance of $165.00. He was behind because of a hectic schedule caused by college graduation and other activities. He received a notice from a Kansas City, MO law office (NFI) about this past due account. He paid it immediately. Mobil reinstated his credit card privileges and took no further action.

SUBJECT also had an account with Sears Dept. Store, which he paid on his own until Feb. 87. He then turned payments over to his father because he didn't believe his parents were doing enough for him while he was in school. His father agreed to do so; however, he made only several payments.

SUBJECT continued to charge on the account and the balance reached $700.00. In Sept. 87 Sears contacted SUBJECT about this account. Sears and the SUBJECT arranged a payment plan of $27.00 monthly. SUBJECT has made payments faithfully since Sept. 87.

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APPENDIX C

Relationship Between Treatment and Adjudication Decision
at DISCR Central Adjudication

	HI	LI
GRANT	10 83%	11 92%
DENY	0 0%	1 8%
NEED MORE INFO	2 17%	0 0%

APPENDIX D

Relationship Between Treatment and Adjudication Decision at Navy CAF

TABLE 1

Relationship Between Treatment and Adiudication Decision for Both Cases at Navy CAF

	HI	LI
GRANT	8 67%	8 67%
DENY	3 25%	1 8%
NEED MORE INFO	1 8%	3 25%

TABLE 2

Czarnek Case: Relationship Between Treatment and Adjudication Decision at Navy CAF

	HI	LI
GRANT	2 33%	3 50%
DENY	3 50%	1 17%
MORE INFO	1 17%	2 33%

TABLE 3

Rokitka Case: Relationship Between Treatment and Adjudication Decision at Navy CAF

	HI	LI
GRANT	6 100%	5 83%
DENY	0 0%	0 0%
MORE INFO	0 0%	1 17%