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A COMPARISON GROUP FOR THE NAVY REPATRIATED PRISONERS OF WAR FR--ETC(U)

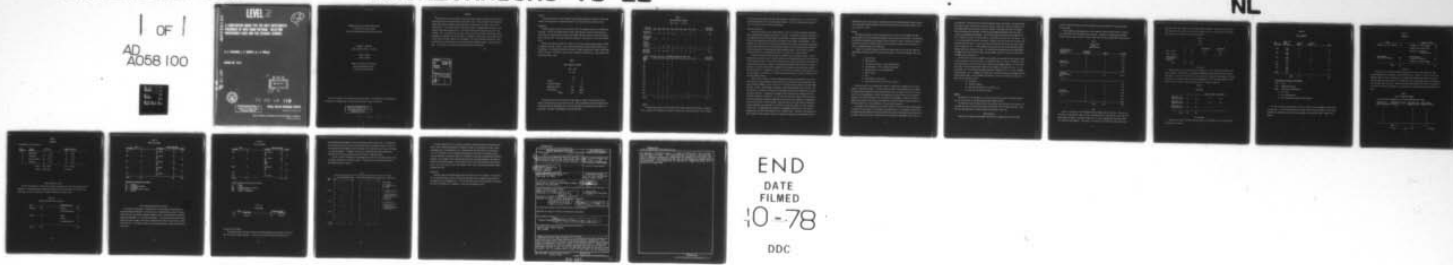
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A COMPARISON GROUP FOR THE NAVY REPATRIATED PRISONERS OF WAR FROM VIETNAM: SELECTION PROCEDURES USED AND THE LESSONS LEARNED

R. C. SPAULDING, L. E. MURPHY, & J. D. PHELAN

REPORT NO. 78-22

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NAVAL MEDICAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COMMAND

BETHESDA, MARYLAND

A Comparison Group for the Navy Repatriated
Prisoners of War from Vietnam:
Selection Procedures Used and the Lessons Learned

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The views presented in this paper are those of the authors. No endorsement by the Department of the Navy or the Department of the Army has been given or should be inferred.

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ABSTRACT

There were 138 U.S. Navy prisoners of war repatriated from North Vietnam and returned to the United States during the period February through April 1973. These individuals had an extensive repatriation physical examination and annual physical examinations since their return to the United States. In 1974 authorization was obtained to select a matched comparison group for the 138 Navy repatriated prisoners of war. This (man for man) match was based on the use of nine variables: viz: (1) casualty date, (2) age, (3) year group, year of entry into the Navy, (4) job designator, (5) education, (6) marital status, (7) number of flight hours, (8) pay grade (rank), and (9) type of aircraft flown at time of shootdown. This report describes the details of the selection process and speculation as to why some invited comparison subjects declined to participate. The selection of a comparison group was effectively accomplished.

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Purpose:

This Technical Report has been prepared to describe the procedures used and the experiences learned in the selection of a comparison group for U.S. Navy repatriated prisoners of war.

Background:

In June and August 1964, the first two Navy Pilots flying combat missions over Vietnam were shot down. The first man escaped from his captors after 82 days of captivity and returned to active duty; the second pilot was shot down on 5 August 1964 and survived as a POW until repatriated in February 1973. The second casualty has remained on active duty as a pilot since repatriation.

During the period 6 June 1964 to 31 January 1973 the Navy suffered 322 men captured, killed, or reported as missing in action. These casualties comprised 315 Naval Aviation Officers and 7 enlisted men. One additional Navy Officer captured in 1966, escaped from his captors after being a POW for 139 days. There were 4 officers and 1 enlisted man released prior to the signing of the cease fire treaty in 1973.

TABLE I

NAVY CASUALTIES VIETNAM

1964 - 1973

N = 322

	<u>No</u>	<u>%</u>
Escaped	2	.5
Pre-Treaty Release	5	1.5
Repatriated (1973)	138	43.0
Not Recovered	<u>177</u>	<u>55.0</u>
TOTALS	322	100.0

The shoot downs occurred in proportion to the number of combat missions that were being flown by the Navy during any given period of time. During the bombing hiatus approximately 1969 to 1971 there were 14 shoot downs and 2 of the 14 individuals were recovered at the time of repatriation. The losses are presented in the following table.

TABLE 2
 NAVY CASUALTIES VIETNAM
 1964 - 1973 N = 322

Year of Casualty	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	Total USN Casualties
Recovered RPWs (1973)	1	24	23	50	15	1	0	1	22	1	138
Pre-treaty Releases & Escaped*	1*		1*	3	1			1			7
Other Casualties (not re-covered)	2	33	64	100	52	6	5	3	52	5	177
Total USN Casualties (by years)	4	57	88	153	68	7	5	5	74	6	322

CASUALTY DATE (month & year) OF RETURNED PRISONERS OF WAR (1973)											Total RPW Casualties
YEARS	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	
MONTH											
Jan				4	2					1	7
Feb		1	3	1							5
Mar			4	1	2						7
Apr		2		3					2		7
May			1	13	4				6		24
Jun		1	4	6	2						13
Jul		2	1	3	1				5		12
Aug	1	4	2	7	1				4		19
Sep		2			3				1		6
Oct		7	5	6							18
Nov		2	1	5		1					9
Dec		3	2	1				1	4		11
TOTAL	1	24	23	50	15	1	0	1	22	1	138

Sample:

Following the cessation of active combat by the United States Military Forces in Southeast Asia in January 1973, 566 American Military Prisoners of War comprising 325 Air Force, 138 Navy,

77 Army and 26 Marine Corps individuals were returned to the United States. All of the 138 Navy repatriated prisoners of war were commissioned officers: 99 pilots, 38 bombardier/navigationers, and 1 limited duty officer (Aviation Maintenance).

Historical Background:

Preliminary planning for the establishment of a facility to monitor the health and adjustment of repatriated prisoners of war began in late 1969. The proposed protocol was submitted by the Commanding Officer of the Navy Medical Neuropsychiatric Research Unit (NMNPRU), San Diego, California and approved by the Chief, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, Navy Department. On 30 November 1971, the Chief, Naval Operations authorized the U.S. Navy to proceed with the proposed plans for the rehabilitation of the repatriated prisoners of war and the Navy Medical Neuropsychiatric Research Unit (renamed the Naval Health Research Center in 1974) issued Instruction 5450.2 which officially established the Center for Prisoner of War Studies (CPWS).

In those early days of planning, the term "RESEARCH" was conspicuously avoided. Since it had been anticipated that many of the RPWs would require prolonged rehabilitative hospitalization, little thought was given to the idea that studies with this group of men might provide answers to valuable research questions. However, as the months passed and the POWs returned, it became evident that no long-term rehabilitative treatment would be necessary and research then became a distinct possibility. The potential lessons to be learned from carefully planned follow-up studies were enormous. The concept of a "comparison group" was therefore seriously considered to enhance the research design.

In March 1974, a proposal to study a POW/Comparison Group was formulated by the Director of CPWS, and was discussed between the professional staffs at CPWS and Naval Aerospace Medical Research Laboratory (NAMRL) as well as with staff at the Naval Aerospace Medical Institute (NAMI), Pensacola, Florida. There emerged a statement of understanding between these facilities. The two facilities in Pensacola, Florida would do the physical examinations and CPWS would maintain and analyze the data. In cooperation with NAMRL, CPWS researchers would prepare articles of scientific interest for publication. On 1 October 1974, the Chief, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, Navy Department, forwarded a memorandum to the Chief of Naval Operations via Commandant, Marine Corps and Chief of Naval Personnel, requesting approval for annual medical examinations of Naval and Marine Corps personnel to be selected as comparison subjects for the returned prisoners of war. The memorandum was approved by the Commandant, Marine Corps, Chief of Naval Personnel and the Chief of Naval Operations on 11 November 1974. Essentially, the research proposal called for these comparison subjects to undergo the same physical examinations provided

the RPWs during their annual physical examination at the Naval Aerospace Medical Research Laboratory and the Naval Aerospace Medical Research Laboratory and the Naval Aerospace Medical Institute, Pensacola, Florida.

Method:

The names of aircraft carriers which operated off the coast of North Vietnam from 1964 through January 1973 and the squadrons deployed on these carriers were identified. The personnel logs (Officer Distribution Control Reports) from each squadron in which an RPW was lost were obtained from the Bureau of Naval Personnel and then screened to develop a pool of aviation officers for matching against the 138 Navy RPWs.

The man for man matches between the Navy repatriated prisoners of war and the comparison group members were made using the following nine variables at the time of the RPWs' date of casualty.

1. Casualty date
2. Age \pm one year
3. Year Group \pm two years (*Year of Commissioning)
4. Job Designator - Pilot or Bombardier/Navigator
5. Education Level - Service Academy/other
6. Marital Status
7. Rank
8. Total Number of Flight Hours
9. Type of Aircraft flown at the time of casualty

The Privacy Act of 1974 required that a number of administrative changes had to be incorporated in the research protocol. The entire research protocol was presented to and reviewed by the Human Protection Committee, Naval Health Research Center, San Diego, California, in accordance with existing Department of Defense and Department of the Navy Instructions, and approval obtained. Each returned prisoner of war and comparison group member, as well as each family member participating in the study, was provided with a detailed Informed Voluntary Consent Form which was signed prior to any examination or interview being conducted.

The selected control subjects and his family received a letter from the Navy Surgeon General inviting them to participate in this program on an annual basis. The individuals that agreed to participate and those whose verified data confirmed that they were good matches were then mailed two forms, along with a letter of appreciation to the comparison group member and his spouse, if

he was married. The first form was the Initial Medical History Form (Duke), a self-administered past medical history form that can be optically scanned, scored, and a narrative computer print-out produced which gives an extensive review of systems. The second, the Recent Life Changes (RCL) form, assists the individual in recalling and documenting important events that have occurred in the preceding twelve months. The five areas covered by the Recent Life Changes form are: (1) health, (2) work, (3) home and family, (4) personal and social, and (5) financial. This is a self-administered form and the individual is asked to check any appropriate item and to subjectively weigh the item on a scale of zero (0) to one hundred (100), as how "the event influenced or effected your life." These completed materials were sent to the Naval Aerospace Medical Research Laboratory, Pensacola, Florida. The scheduling of the examination was accomplished by the NAMRL staff directly with the comparison group member, taking into account the individual's and NAMRL's mutual availability.

Initially three satisfactory comparison group members were selected for each RPW and listed as first, second or third choice matches. On 24 February 1976, the initial 138 letters of invitation were mailed to the first choice match comparison group members/families. An enclosure to the letter of invitation enabled the comparison group members to respond as follows: (1) will participate, (2) I am interested but request additional information, or (3) I am not interested in participating. As of 1 September 1976 there were 121 matched comparison group members who had agreed to participate. During September 1976 additional letters of invitation were mailed to second choice selections to cover:

- (1) non-matches
- (2) incorrect addresses
- (3) those who had declined to participate, and
- (4) those who had failed to respond.

Results:

The findings will be presented on a variable by variable basis which will demonstrate how well the vast majority of the RPWs/Comparison group members matched.

The comparison group individuals ideally were selected from those Navy pilots who were flying combat missions over North Vietnam during the same month that the RPW was shot down. There were also eight additional variables that had to be matched in each case.

Shoot Down Date

There were 110 comparison group members who were flying combat missions from aircraft

carriers located off the coast of North Vietnam during the same month that their matched RPWs were shot down.

Eleven comparison group members were flying combat missions over North Vietnam 1-6 months, (mean 3.45) before their matched RPWs were shot down. There were 17 comparison group members who were flying similar missions 1-17 months (mean 4.59) after their matched RPW's casualty data.

Table 3
Casualty Date
and
Combat Missions

Comparison Group Flying Combat Missions:	Difference in Months	Number	Percent	
Before RPW Casualty Date N = 11	6	2	1.45	
	5	1	0.72	
	4	3	2.18	
	3	1	0.72	
	2	2	1.45	
	1	2	1.45	

Same Month as RPW Casualty Date N = 110	0	110	79.71	

After RPW Casualty Date N = 17	1	3	2.18	
	2	2	1.45	
	3	3	2.18	
	4	6	4.35	
	9	1	0.72	
	12	1	0.72	
	17	1	0.72	
		TOTAL:	138	100%

Age

Twelve, or 9 percent, of the RPW/Comparison Group members were the same age. Sixty-nine, or 50 percent, of the RPWs were older than their selected comparison running mate, ranging from 1-26 months, mean 5.49 months. There were 4 RPWs; 26, 16, 15 and 13 months older than their respective comparison group members. Fifty seven, or 41 percent, of the RPWs were younger than their

selected running mate, ranging from 1-12 months, mean 4.58 months. Therefore, there were only four individuals, 3.8 percent that did not fall within the plus or minus one year differential that had been the standard set for selection purposes.

Table 4

AGE

N = 138

	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Range Months</u>	<u>Mean Months</u>
RPWs - Older -	69	50	1-26	5.49
RPWs - Younger	57	41	1-12	4.45
RPWs/Comparison Group Members - Same Age	12	9	-	-
Total	138	100%		

Year Group

The Year Group is the fiscal year that the individual is first given credit towards a commissioning date. There were 80, or 58 percent RPW/Comparison Group matches that had identical year groups. There was 1 RPW that was 4 years junior to his Comparison Group member, and 2 RPWs that were 3 years senior to their comparison group members. All of the other matches remained within the plus or minus 2 years that had been used for selection purposes.

TABLE 5

YEAR GROUP

	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Range in Years</u>	<u>Mean Years</u>
RPWs Senior to Comparison Group	27	20	1 - 3	1.33
RPWs Junior to Comparison Group	31	22	1 - 4	1.35
RPWs Same as Comparison Group	80	58	-	-
TOTAL	138	100		

Job Designator

There were 107 specific matches made with regard to Job Designator variable, constituting 78 percent of the sample.

TABLE 6

JOB DESIGNATOR

RPW Designator	Comparison Group Designator	Specific Match	Alternate Match	Totals
1310	1310 1320	75	1	76
1320	1320 1325	15	2	17
1315	1315 1310	5	16	21
1317	1310		2	2
1327	1320		1	1
1325	1325 1320	11	9	20
6852	6852	1		1
	Totals	107	31	138

Explanation of Designator Code Numbers

131* = Pilot

132* = Bombardier/Navigator

6852 = LDO (Aviation Maintenance)

* = 0 U.S. Navy

* = 5 U.S. Naval Reserve

* = 7 TAR (Training and Administration Reserves)

The level of education was matched as closely as possible, service academy or other university was used. In the instance where partial college credits had been obtained or a high school diploma only, these levels of education were matched, and placed under "Other" academic backgrounds.

TABLE 7
EDUCATION

RPWs		Comparison Group	
Graduate, U.S. Naval Academy	33	Graduate, U.S. Naval Academy	28
	-	Graduate, Other Universities	4
	-	Graduate, U.S. Merchant Marine Academy	1
Other Academic Educational Background	105	Other Academic Educational Background	100
	-	Graduate, U.S. Naval Academy	5
TOTAL	138		138

Education

The formal years of education completed by the date of casualty were compared for each matched RPW/Comparison Group member and the following found: Seventy-six (76) of the pairs had completed identical years of education; 27 of the RPWs had completed more education than their controls, (mean 2.63 years); and 35 of the comparison group had completed more years of education than the RPWs, (mean 2.86 years). When the two groups were compared, the levels of education did not differ significantly, RPWs mean was 15.46 years and the comparison group had completed 15.50 years.

TABLE 8
LEVEL OF EDUCATION (YEARS)

Level of education compared by paired matches RPW/Comparison Group

Difference in Years of Education	RPW/Comparison Group Identical	RPW greater than Comparison Group	RPW less than Comparison Group
0	76	-	-
1	-	11	6
2	-	0	0
3	-	6	22
4	-	8	7
5	-	2	0
TOTAL	76	27	35
N = 138	Mean	2.36	2.86 years

TABLE 9
EDUCATION

RPW/Comparison Group contrasts.

Years Completed	Degree Awarded	RPW		Comparison Group	
		N	%	N	%
12	High School	3	2.17	14	10.15
14	AA Degree	37	26.81	13	9.42
16	BA or BS Degree	86	62.32	98	71.01
17	MA Degree	12	8.70	13	9.42
Totals:		138	100.00	138	100.00
Mean:		15.46 years		15.50 years	

Rank and Marital Status

The rank or pay grade of a naval officer usually correlates very closely to age and aviation experience. The matches between the RPWs and Comparison Group on pay grade can be seen in the above table, as can the closeness of the man-for-man match on marital status.

TABLE 10
MARITAL STATUS AT TIME OF CASUALTY

RPW	N	COMPARISON GROUP	N
Married	103	Married	102
		Divorced/Separated	1
Single	35	Single	30
		Married	3
		Divorced/Separated	2
Totals	138		138

Table 11
RANK OR PAY GRADE

PAY GRADE	RPW		COMPARISON GROUP		
		N	PAY GRADE	N	TOTALS
05*		17	05 Match	15	17
			04	2	
04*		44	04 Match	41	
			05	1	
			03	2	44
03*		36	03 Match	31	
			04	3	
			02	2	36
02*		37	02 Match	25	
			03	9	
			01	3	37
01*		4	01 Match	2	
			02	2	4
TOTAL		138		138	138

*Explanation of Rank and Pay Grade

- 05 - Commander
- 04 - Lieutenant Commander
- 03 - Lieutenant
- 02 - Lieutenant (Junior Grade)
- 01 - Ensign

Total Flight Hours and Type of Aircraft

The variable, Flight Hours, is questionable as to the accuracy of the flight hours reported because the individuals' flight logs were not made available to CPWS. The total flight hours came from Bureau of Personnel computer records or were supplied by the RPW or Comparison Group member in a screening questionnaire. This variable should correlate with rank and pay grade; however, many factors influence how and when a naval aviator or flight officer may fly -- such things as duty station, budget constraints, health and availability of aircraft.

Table 12
TYPE OF AIRCRAFT

RPWs		COMPARISON GROUP		
AIRCRAFT	N	AIRCRAFT	N	TOTALS
VA*	75	VA Match	63	
		VF	8	
		VFP	4	75
VF*	50	VF Match	29	
		VA	16	
		VFP	3	
		RVAH	1	
		CVW	1	50
RVAH*	10	RVAH Match	4	
		VA	4	
		VF	2	10
CVW*	2	VA	2	2
VPI*	1	VFP Match	1	1
TOTALS	138		138	138

*Identification of various aircraft types

- VA - Attack
- VF - Fighter
- RVAH - Reconnaissance-Attack-Heavy
- CVW - Carrier Air Wing
- VFP - Fighter - Photographic

Table 13
FLIGHT HOURS

RPWs		COMPARISON GROUP	
N	MEAN HOURS	N	Mean Hours
129	2022.04	138	2134.74

Declined to Participate:

The preceding tables show that a majority of the RPWs/Comparison group subjects match very well on the nine variables selected. It was felt that careful attention should be given to

those Comparison Group members that were invited but declined to participate. An attempt was made to examine the reasons given by those who declined. We wished to ascertain if those individuals who selected themselves out of the study could conceivably give a bias to the remaining comparison sample. A frequency count was run to determine which "rank ordered match" selectees declined, their pay grade, and their reasons for nonparticipation.

In order to select 138 Comparison Group members there have been 230 contacts made, and 92 individuals declined for a variety of reasons. The details of why individuals declined to participate are shown in Table 14.

TABLE 14

BREAKDOWN IN THE INDIVIDUALS THAT DECLINED TO PARTICIPATE AS COMPARISON GROUP INDIVIDUALS, FOR ALL REASONS															
SELECT RANK #	PAY GRADE*	REASON FOR NON-PARTICIPATION**						REASON FOR NON-PARTICIPATION Qualified by Individual or Psychiatrist***							
		1	2	3	4	5	Total	1	2	3	4	5	Total		
1	03	2	3	5	-	-	10	03	-	2	3	-	5	10	*CODE PAY GRADE
	04	1	7	5	8	-	21	04	1	6	1	-	13	21	03 - Lieutenant
	05	3	7	-	1	1	12	05	-	8	1	1	2	12	04 - Lieutenant Commander
	06	1	3	1	-	1	6	06	-	3	1	-	2	6	05 - Commander
Sub Totals		7	20	11	9	2	49		1	19	6	1	22	49	06 - Captain
2	03	-	-	2	1	-	3	03	-	-	-	-	3	3	**CODE REASON FOR NON-PARTICIPATION
	04	-	3	9	-	-	12	04	-	2	1	-	9	12	1 Interested but requested additional information
	05	-	2	1	-	-	3	05	-	-	2	-	1	3	2 Do not wish to participate
	06	-	1	2	-	-	3	06	-	-	1	-	2	3	3 Address unknown
Sub Totals		-	6	14	1	-	21		-	2	4	-	15	21	4 No match
3	03	-	-	-	-	-	0	03	-	-	-	-	-	0	***CODE REASON QUALIFIED
	04	-	-	6	-	-	6	04	-	-	-	-	6	6	1 Reasonable explanation
	05	-	2	2	1	-	5	05	-	2	-	-	3	5	2 No explanation
	06	-	-	-	-	-	0	06	-	-	-	-	-	0	3 Apparent rationalization
Sub Totals		-	2	8	1	-	11		-	2	-	-	9	11	4 Alleges wife unwilling
4-7	03	-	-	1	-	-	1	03	-	-	-	-	1	1	5 Not applicable
	04	2	3	1	-	-	6	04	-	4	1	-	1	6	
	05	-	1	-	-	-	1	05	-	-	1	-	-	1	
	06	-	1	-	2	-	3	06	-	1	-	-	2	3	
Sub Totals		2	5	2	2	-	11		-	5	2	-	4	11	
TOTALS		9	33	35	13	2	92		1	28	12	1	50	92	

The table reveals that 33 of the 92, or 43 percent, actually declined to participate and of those 1 had a reasonable explanation, 28 offered no reason, 12 qualified their refusal by what was judged to be a rationalization, and 1 alleged that his wife was unwilling to participate. Fifty, or 57 percent, of those invited and were reported as declined to participate actually could be explained in other ways, namely; 35 invitational letters were returned marked "Addressee Unknown," 13 were judged to be an improper match when their confirmed demographic and combat experience data had been reviewed, and 2 had been invited to participate because of administrative error; 1 was a poor selection, and 1 had a middle initial that did not match the Bureau of Naval Personnel Data Card.

Discussion:

Generally speaking the matched pairs compare favorably on all nine variables. The selection of this comparison group, using an individual-by-individual match as opposed to group matching techniques has been a demanding task. It is believed that the results now obtained in monitoring the health of the RPWs can be compared to a well-selected Comparison Group.

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER 78-22	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO.	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) A Comparison Group for the Navy Repatriated Prisoners of War from Vietnam: Selection Procedures Used and the Lessons Learned.		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED Final Repts
6. AUTHOR(s) Raymond C. Spaulding, Lester E. Murphy James D. Phelan		6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS Naval Health Research Center San Diego, CA. 92152		8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s)
9. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS Naval Medical Research & Development Command Bethesda, Maryland 20014		10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS Proj. No. MF51.524.022-0005 Program Element 62758N
11. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office) Bureau of Medicine and Surgery Department of the Navy Washington, D.C. 20372		12. REPORT DATE June 78
13. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report) Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.		13. NUMBER OF PAGES 14
14. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report) Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.		15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) Unclassified
16. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES Technical Report		15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE
17. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) Control Group, Human Subjects POWs Vietnam		
18. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) There were 138 U.S. Navy prisoners of war repatriated from North Vietnam and returned to the United States during the period February through April 1973. These individuals had an extensive repatriation physical examination and annual physical examinations since their return to the United States. In 1974 authorization was obtained to select a matched comparison group for the 138 Navy repatriated prisoners of war. This man for man match was based on the use of nine variables: viz: (1) casualty date, (2) age, (3) year group, (4) job designator,		

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(5) education, (6) marital status, (7) number of flight hours, (8) pay grade, and (9) type of aircraft. This report describes the details of how the selection of comparison subjects was accomplished by comparing the two groups variable by variable, and hypothesizes why some invited comparison subjects declined to participate. It was shown that the selection of a comparison group can be effectively accomplished.

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