

Investigating Z-Grams

GRADES 3-8



Overview

This activity is geared toward participants in grades 6-12. The estimated amount of time to deliver this lesson is 75 minutes.

In 1970, Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt Jr. became Chief of Naval Ops and was determined to improve the retention of Navy sailors. Zumwalt committed to increasing equity in the Navy across color and gender lines and worked closely with Commander Will Norman, Head of CNO Advisory Committee on Race Relations and Minority Affairs. Zumwalt wrote messages sent directly to the fleet, nicknamed “Z-Grams,” which addressed policy goals and changes implemented to fight discrimination in the Navy.

In this lesson, participants will look through three Z-grams to determine what informed his decisions and their impact. The lesson will culminate with participants making their own Z-grams for a social issue they are passionate about within their own school.



Objective

Participants will be able to identify the rationale for each Z-gram they read and share how each Z-gram might impact personnel in serving in the Navy.



Materials

- Z-gram Document Sheets
- Photographs of Sailors on *Intrepid* and 1967 Demonstration



Inquiry

Ask participants to answer the questions:

- What are some social issues you hear in the news?
- How do these issues impact your school or community?



Investigation

Let participants know that you will discuss how different social issues were addressed by a Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), or the professional head of the U.S Navy by the name of Admiral Zumwalt.

- What might lead someone to leave their position in the Navy?
- What are some reasons you might want to leave a group, club, or job?

Zumwalt Addressing “Demeaning or Abrasive Regulations”

Show the image of a crowd at the National Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam direct action demonstration and a photograph of sailors on the *USS Intrepid*.

- Why might these people be gathering?
- How does the hair and clothing of the anti-war protesters differ from the Navy officers in this photograph from around the same time?

Share title of Z-57: Elimination of demeaning or abrasive regulations.

- What might this Z-gram address?
- Why might this be important to personnel?

Have participants read the Excerpt from Z-57: Elimination of demeaning or abrasive regulations. This Z-Gram addressed several regulations that seemed overbearing to several personnel including uniform regulations, grooming regulations and even relates to motorcycle ownership.

- What is Zumwalt’s rationale for writing this Z-gram?
- How might this Z-gram impact personnel serving in the Navy?

Divide participants in half. Have one half of participants read Z-Gram 66 and the other half read Z-Gram 116. They can also answer the questions on their document sheets. Have participants pair up with a partner who read the other Z-gram and answer the following questions:

- What is Zumwalt's rationale for writing this Z-gram?
- How might this Z-gram impact personnel serving in the Navy?



Activity

Make your own Z-gram

Have participants make their own Z-gram to address an issue within their school or community. If they were in charge, what would they implement to make a change?

- What makes you think this is an issue that need to be addressed?
- Who will you talk to that will be impacted by your Z-gram?
- How will you know your orders are being carried out?
- Who can assist you in carrying out these orders?

Investigate More Z-grams

Have participants read through [three more Z-grams](#). Identify Zumwalt's rationale for writing those Z-grams and how they might impact Navy personnel serving at that time.



Lesson Connection

For more content on policies impacting service, see our lesson: **Investigating Timeline of U.S. Federal and U.S. Navy Policy Impacting Service and Citizenship.**



Background

The Chief of Naval Operations is appointed by the President, with the advice and consent of the Senate, for a four-year term. The CNO is a four star admiral who serves as military advisor and deputy to the secretary of the Navy. Elmo Russell Zumwalt Jr. was born in San Francisco, California. He was appointed to the U.S. Naval Academy in 1939 and graduated in 1942, a year early, due to World War II. Over the course of his career, he commanded USS Tills, USS Arnold J. Isbell, USS Dewey, Cruiser-Destroyer Flotilla Seven, and Naval Forces, Vietnam. President Richard M. Nixon nominated him as CNO, and he took office on July 1, 1970 at the age of 49, making him the youngest officer to hold that title at that time.

One of the major challenges Admiral Zumwalt was faced with was addressing retention, especially as personnel left in large numbers toward the end of the Vietnam War. The end of the draft also added to this issue, since a driving factor for Navy enlistment around this period was avoiding other branches.

Admiral Zumwalt saw several personnel matters being responsible for the drop in numbers, and to articulate his position on the changes he planned, he implemented a series of naval messages sent directly to the fleet which were given the moniker "Z-grams." The first Z-gram was released the day he took office. Several followed, with the first 92 released in his first year in office. Zumwalt released a total of 121 Z-grams addressing a wide scope of issues. In this lesson, we will take a look at three. The first Z-gram will be looked at as a whole group and the next two will be divided amongst participants to determine their rationale and potential impact.



Additional Resources/References

For list of Z-grams:

<https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/z/list-z-grams.html>

President's Task Force on Women's Rights and Responsibilities report: "A Matter of Simple Justice."

<https://cdn.nixonlibrary.org/01/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/04151713/A-Matter-of-Simple-Justice-The-Report-of-the-President%E2%80%99s-Task-Force-on-Women%E2%80%99s-Rights-and-Responsibilities-April-1970.pdf>



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Documents and Images



Large crowd at a National Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam direct action demonstration, Washington, D.C.

Credit: The Library of Congress



Officers on the Flight Deck

Credit: Collection of the Intrepid Museum. Gift of the family of Capt. Bruce W. Keller. P2020.14



Lieutenant Commander William S. Norman and Admiral Elmo Zumwalt in June 1971

Credit: National Archives and Records Administration

INVESTIGATION: Z-GRAMS

Z-Gram 57: Elimination of demeaning or abrasive regulations

Context: When Zumwalt became CNO, The United States was involved in an unpopular war. In 1972, President Nixon announced that the draft would end and the Pentagon would reintroduce an all-volunteer force in 1973. In order to fill spots in the military, the Armed forces would have to convince recruits that joining the military was worthwhile.

Excerpt from Z-Gram 57: Elimination of demeaning or abrasive regulations

A. It appears that my predecessor's guidance in may on the subject of haircuts, beards and sideburns is insufficiently understood and, for this reason, i want to restate what i believed to be explicit: in the case of haircuts, sideburns, and contemporary clothing styles, my view is that we must learn to adapt to changing fashions. I will not countenance the rights or privileges of any officers or enlisted men being abrogated in any way because they choose to grow sideburns or neatly trimmed beards or moustaches or because preferences in neat clothing styles are at variance with the taste of their seniors nor will i countenance any personnel being in any way penalized during the time they are growing beards, moustaches, or sideburns.

Countenance- support

Abrogate- take away

Variance- the state of being different

By looking at the title, what might this Z-gram address?

What is Zumwalt's rationale for writing this Z-gram?

How might this Z-gram impact personnel serving in the Navy?

Z-Gram Packet One:

Context:

Racial tensions in the United States in 1970 were high as Black Americans became frustrated with economic conditions not improving despite advancements in civil rights (including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin). The Navy faced challenges recruiting Black servicemembers due to the history of Black personnel being categorically put into positions of servitude in the 1940s and beyond.

Look at the photograph on the right. Tommie Smith (center) and John Carlos (right) were gold and bronze medalists in the 200-meter run at the 1968 Olympic Game. During the national anthem, they stand with heads lowered and black-gloved fists raised in the black power salute to protest against unfair treatment of Blacks in the United States. The Black Power Movement of the 1960s and 1970s was a political and social movement whose advocates believed in racial pride, self-sufficiency and equality for all people of Black and African descent.



Photo Title: Olympic Medalists Giving Black Power Sign, 1968

Credit: National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; acquired through the generosity of David C. Ward. https://npg.si.edu/object/npg_NPG.2017.69

What might the goal be of protesting at an Olympic game?

How might advocates Black Power movement view the Navy in early 1970?

Z-Gram 66: Equal Opportunity in the Navy

1. The purpose of this NAVOP is to express my wholehearted support of the policies on equal opportunity strongly reaffirmed by the secretary of the Navy in ALNAV 51, to express my general guidance for implementation of these policies, and to direct implementation of a few of the actions we can take immediately.
2. Last month, Secretary Chafee and I, along with other senior officials of the navy department, met on one occasion with representative Black navy officers and their wives and later with a representative group of Black enlisted men and their wives. Prior to these meetings, I was convinced that, compared with the civilian community, we had relatively few racial problems in the Navy. However, after exploring the matter in some depth with these two groups, I have discovered that I was wrong--we do have problems, and it is my intention and that of secretary chafee to take prompt steps toward their solution.
3. What struck me more than anything else was the depth of feeling of our Black personnel that there is significant discrimination in the Navy. Prior to these meetings, I sincerely believed that I was philosophically prepared to understand the problems of our Black navymen and their families, and until we discussed them at length, I did not realize the extent and deep significance of many of these matters.
4. There are two keys to the problem. First, we must open up new avenues of communication with not only our Black personnel, but also with all minority groups in the Navy so that we may learn what and where the areas of friction are. Second, all of us in the Navy must develop a far greater sensitivity to the problems of all our minority groups so that we may more effectively go about solving them. Our meetings here in Washington were a beginning, but no more than that. much remains to be done.
5. For example, i am particularly distressed by the numerous examples of discrimination Black navy families still experience in attempting to locate housing for their families. This situation and others like it are indicative in some cases of less than full teamwork being brought to bear by the whole Navy team on behalf of some of our members and failure to use existing authority and directives to enforce their rights {SECNAV INST 5350.12}. In some places housing personnel are tacitly contributing to discrimination in housing.
6. Secretary Chafee and I have asked our staffs to begin work with other members of the Navy department to make an in-depth investigation of this problem and present to us within 60 days proposals which will help alleviate the most acute housing problems. Meanwhile, there are many things that can be acted upon immediately. therefore, by 15 January 1971 i expect action to be taken as follows:
 - A. Every base, station and aircraft squadron commander and ship commanding officer shall appoint an aware minority group officer or senior petty officer as his special assistant for minority affairs. this officer or petty officer should have direct access to the commander/commanding officer and will. be consulted on all matters involving minority personnel. excepting those commands already having minority- affairs officer billets, the initial assignment will be on a concurrent duty basis. {I carefully weighed this item with my desire, as

expressed in ref a, to reduce collateral duty assignments. However, after discussing this with several Black officers I became convinced that they would in fact, cherish this as a collateral duty.}

B. All shore based commanders shall ensure that a minority group wife is included in the navy wives ombudsman concept set forth in Ref B.

C. The programs already begun by COMNAVSUPSYSCOM To ensure that the special needs of minority groups are recognized and provided for shall be expedited, namely:

{1} Suitable cosmetics and other products for Black personnel and their dependents will be stocked in navy exchanges.

{2} Ship's stores will stock Black grooming aids.

{3} Every base and station, will employ, as soon as possible, at least one qualified Black barber/beautician in major barber and beauty shops, and will work toward the goal of having sufficient barbers/beauticians qualified in hair care for black personnel to provide service for all black patrons.

{4} All major commissaries shall stock foods and produce frequently requested by minority groups. As a minimum, specific recommendations should be solicited from minority personnel and their families and acted upon by local commissary managers.

D. Special services officers which deal in discount tickets for various entertainment programs. will also obtain discount tickets to events of special interest to minority groups whenever such tickets are available.

E. A representative selection of books, magazines and records by and about Black Americans will be made available in navy libraries, wardrooms, clubs and other reading areas.

Any of the above which can't be accomplished within the time specified above will be reported via chain of command together with a summary of circumstances preventing timely implementation.

7. in order that i may reach a more complete understanding of the problems experienced by our minority personnel, in addition to secnav/opnav/bupers team visits i am directing my special assistant for minority affairs, LCDR Norman, to visit major naval activities within conus to meet with individual commanding officers and with minority military personnel and their dependents. By learning in depth what our problems are, I believe we will be in a better position to work toward guaranteeing equal opportunity and treatment for all of our navy people.

8. This is the first of my reports to you on minority affairs. Secretary Chafee and I will be looking into all areas of minority affairs and will be issuing further reports as our problems become more clear and their solutions become more apparent. It is evident that we need to maximize our efforts to improve the lot of our minority navymen. I am convinced that there is no place in our navy for insensitivity. We are determined that we shall do better. meanwhile, we are counting on your support to help seek out and eliminate those demeaning areas of discrimination that plague our minority shipmates. ours must be a navy family that recognizes no artificial barriers of race, color or religion. there is no Black navy, no white navy--just one navy-- the United States Navy.

E. R. Zumwalt, JR., Admiral, U. S. Navy,
Chief Of Naval Operations.

By looking at the title, what might this Z-gram address?

What is Zumwalt's rationale for writing this Z-gram?

How might this Z-gram impact personnel serving in the Navy?

Z-Gram Packet Two:

Context:

In April 1970, the President Nixon's Task Force on Women's Rights and Responsibilities issued their seminal report "A Matter of Simple Justice." In addition, on August 8, 1969, President Nixon issued Executive Order 11478—Equal Employment Opportunity in the Federal Government, prohibiting discrimination and mandating equal opportunity in federal service.

Read page (iii) of "A Matter of Simple Justice."

What are women asking of the President in this document?

What might "equal rights" look like for women in the Navy?

Z-Gram 116: EQUAL RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN THE NAVY

1. There has been much discussion and debate with respect to equal opportunity for women in our country over the past few years. My position with respect to women in the navy is that they have historically played a significant role in the accomplishment of our naval mission. However, I believe we can do far more than we have in the past in according women's equal opportunity to contribute their extensive talents and to achieve full professional status. Moreover, the imminence of an all volunteer force has heightened the importance of women as a vital personnel resource. I foresee that in the near future we may very well have authority to utilize officer and enlisted women on board ships. In view of this possibility we must be in a position to utilize women's talents to help us achieve the size navy we need under an all volunteer force environment and still maintain the sea shore rotation goals for all naval personnel towards which we have been working. To this end the secretary of the navy and I have established a task force to look at all laws, regulations and policies that must be changed in order to eliminate any disadvantages to women resulting from either legal or attitudinal restrictions.

2. As another step toward ensuring that women in the Navy will have equal opportunity to contribute their talents and background to accomplishment of our missions, we are taking the following actions:

a. In addition to the enlisted ratings that have recently been opened, authorize limited entry of enlisted women into all ratings.

b. The ultimate goal, assignment of women to ships at sea, will be timed to coincide with full implementation of pending legislation. As an immediate step, a limited number of officers and enlisted women are being assigned to the ship's company of USS Sanctuary as a pilot program. This program will provide valuable planning information regarding the prospective increased utilization of women at sea.

c. Pending formal changes to Navy regulations suspend restrictions regarding women succeeding to command ashore and assign them accordingly.

d. Accept applications from women officers for the chaplain and civil engineer corps, thereby opening all staff corps to women.

e. Expand assignment of technically qualified unrestricted line women to restricted line billets and, at the time of legislative authorization, permit them to request designator changes

f. Offer various paths of progression to flag rank within the technical, managerial spectrum in essentially the same manner as we are contemplating for male officers.

g. Assign the detailing of unrestricted women officers to their cognizant grade detailers.

h. Increase opportunity for women's professional growth by:

{1} eliminating the pattern of assigning women exclusively to certain billets, and

{2} assigning qualified women to the full spectrum of challenging billets, including those of briefers, aides, detailers, placement/rating control officers, attaches, service college faculty members, executive assistants, special assistants to CNO, MAAGS/missions, senior enlisted advisors, pep, etc.

i. Equalize selection criteria for naval training by:

{1} opening midshipmen programs to women at all NROTC campuses effective in fy-74,
and

{2} considering women for selection to joint colleges {national war college/industrial
college of the armed forces}.

3. Finally, I enjoin all commanding officers and others in positions of authority to actively reflect the spirit and intent of this message in their own command regulations, policies and actions. specifically, i expect each commanding officer to:

- a. Initiate similar equalization actions in matters within their purview to ensure that women are accorded full trust and responsibility to function in their assigned position or specialty.
- b. Be guided by standards of duty, performance and discipline which are truly equitable for both women and men.

4. In summary, we all must actively work together in order that we may more equitably include women in our one-navy concept.

E. R. Zumwalt, JR., Admiral, U. S. Navy,
Chief Of Naval Operations.

Imminence- approaching

Enjoin- instruct

Purview- range of influence

Equitably- fairly and impartially

By looking at the title, what might this Z-gram address?

What is Zumwalt's rationale for writing this Z-gram?

How might this Z-gram impact personnel serving in the Navy?