Family Factors and Retention: First Annual In Process Review

Research Triangle Institute

for

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Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences

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Research Triangle Institute

Technical review by

Arthur C. F. Gilbert

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**Title:** Family Factors and Retention: First Annual In Process Review

**Author:** Research Triangle Institute

**Abstract:**

This report presents a series of briefing slides on research issues, activities, and plans concerning the retention research area of the Army Family Research Program (AFRP). The report discusses policy questions, research questions, the retention conceptual model, activities and findings to date, and planned activities and concludes with a summary of outstanding issues.

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### Abstract Security Classification

Unclassified
# FAMILY FACTORS AND RETENTION: FIRST ANNUAL IN PROCESS REVIEW

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Introduction

The Army Family Research Program (AFRP) is a long-range program of integrated research activities designed to answer key policy questions about Army families and the Army mission. Mandated by the White Paper 1983: The Army Family (Chief of Staff, U.S. Army) and subsequently by The Army Family Action Plan I (Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, U.S. Army, 1984), the objective of the research is to support the Army Family Action Plan through research products that will (1) determine the demographic characteristics of Army families, (2) identify positive motivators and negative detractors to soldiers remaining in the Army, (3) develop pilot programs to improve family adaptation to Army life, and (4) increase operational readiness.

This report presents a series of briefing slides which document the progress of the research on family factors and retention during the first year of the research program. It consists of briefing slides on research issues, activities, findings during the first year, and concludes with research activities planned for the future.
### FAMILY FACTORS AND RETENTION

#### POLICY QUESTIONS

- How can the Army positively influence retention decisions in support of overall force management policy?

- How can the Army retain high performing soldiers who possess critical skills?

- How do family policies, programs, and practices affect retention decisions?
FAMILY FACTORS AND RETENTION

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- WHAT IS THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF VARIOUS FACTORS IN THE RETENTION DECISION?

- HOW ARE RETENTION DECISIONS ACTUALLY MADE?

- WHAT ARE SPECIFIC RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN RETENTION BEHAVIOR AND FAMILY PROGRAM USE, SATISFACTION, AND QUALITY?

- ARE RETENTION DECISIONS IN ARMY RESERVES AND ARMY NATIONAL GUARD AFFECTED BY SAME FACTORS AS THOSE IN ACTIVE ARMY?
FAMILY FACTORS AND RETENTION

CONCEPTUAL MODEL/FRAMEWORK

- OUTCOME RESEARCH GUIDED BY FAMILY ACOL

- PROCESS RESEARCH GUIDED BY STAGED DECISION MAKING MODEL

- RESEARCH STREAMS COMBINED IN OUT YEARS
FAMILY FACTORS AND RETENTION

ACTIVITIES TO DATE

- DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES
  - LITERATURE REVIEW
- SECONDARY DATA ANALYSES - EARLY PRODUCT REPORTS
  FAMILY FACTORS AND RETENTION INTENTIONS
  FAMILY STATUS AND RETENTION
  ROTATION EXPERIENCE AND RETENTION
  DUAL CAREER EXPERIENCE
- FAMILY ACOL THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT
- SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS
  FT. KNOX
  FT. ORD
  USAREUR
- COMPLEMENTARY RESEARCH
  - IRR TPU ATTRITEE PROJECT
  - TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO FT. BRAGG TRANSITION MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
FAMILY FACTORS AND RETENTION

PRINCIPAL FINDINGS

• LITERATURE REVIEW
  - MAJOR DETERMINANTS: PAY AND BENEFITS, JOB SATISFACTION
  - ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT, SPOUSE SUPPORT
  - LIMITED EFFECT OF PROGRAM AND COMMUNITY VARIABLES
  - DETERMINANTS VARY BY STAGE OF CAREER AND FAMILY LIFE COURSE

• SECONDARY ANALYSES—IMPORTANT DETERMINANTS OF RETENTION INTENTION
  - MARITAL STATUS
  - CURRENT JOB SATISFACTION
  - ENVIRONMENT FOR FAMILIES
  - LIMITED PROGRAM EFFECTS
WHAT DOES 1985 DOD SURVEY TELL US ABOUT ARMY RETENTION?

- FAMILY AND FAMILY PROGRAM FACTORS
- MILITARY JOB AND CAREER FACTORS
- MILITARY ENVIRONMENT
VARIABLES USED IN THE ANALYSIS

- INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY VARIABLES
  CHILDREN
  ENVIRONMENT FOR FAMILIES
  RACE/ETHNICITY
  SEX

- FAMILY PROGRAM VARIABLES
  YOUTH/ADOLESCENT PROGRAM
  CHILD CARE PROGRAM
  RECREATION PROGRAM

- MILITARY JOB AND CAREER VARIABLES
  ENLISTMENT TERM
  PAYGRADE
  CURRENT JOB SATISFACTION
  PROMOTION OPPORTUNITIES

- MILITARY ENVIRONMENT VARIABLES
  PERSONAL FREEDOM
  OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE COUNTRY
  LOCATION
WHAT IS EFFECT OF MARITAL STATUS ON REENLISTMENT INTENTION?

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<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Reenlistment Intention</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>56%</td>
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</table>
HOW DOES MILITARY JOB AFFECT REENLISTMENT?

Current Job Satisfaction

Reenlistment Intention

Single
Dissatisfied
Satisfied

28%
36%

Married
Dissatisfied
Satisfied

52%
60%
HOW DO FAMILY-RELATED FACTORS AFFECT REENLISTMENT?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>34%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>58%</td>
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</table>

Environment for Families

0  | 100%  
Reenlistment Intention
HOW DOES SATISFACTION WITH FAMILY PROGRAMS AFFECT REENLISTMENT?

- Single
  - Dissatisfied: 32%
  - Satisfied: 34%

- Married
  - Dissatisfied: 56%
  - Satisfied: 58%

Recreation Programs

Reenlistment Intention

0 - 100%
FAMILY FACTORS AND RETENTION

PRINCIPAL FINDINGS (PAGE 2)

• FAMILY AFLG MODEL HAS BEEN EXTENDED TO INCLUDE:
  FAMILY AS DECISION MAKING UNIT
  MEMBERS MILITARY PAY (RETIREMENT) AND ALTERNATIVE
    CIVILIAN EARNINGS OPPORTUNITIES
  EFFECTS OF MILITARY LIFE ON NON-MEMBER SPOUSE EARNINGS
  NON-PECUNIARY FACTORS
FAMILY FACTORS AND RETENTION

PRINCIPAL FINDINGS (PAGE 3)

- **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS**
  
  INITIAL IMPRESSIONS OF ARMY ARE IMPORTANT
  MANY RETENTION DECISIONS MADE PRIOR TO ETS-90
  REENLISTMENT NCOs RELY ON SPOUSE SUPPORT
  ENTRY THROUGH RESERVES OR NATIONAL GUARD MAY BE IMPORTANT
  OPPORTUNITY FOR POSITIVE INFLUENCE ON RETENTION DECISION
  Varies with years of service
  FAMILY PROGRAMS ARE IMPORTANT FACTOR, ESPECIALLY HOUSING
  AND CHILD CARE
  SOLDIERS APPRECIATE REALISTIC INFORMATION TO HELP ASSURE
  THAT EXPERIENCE MATCHES EXPECTATION
### FAMILY FACTORS AND RETENTION

#### CURRENT KNOWLEDGE GAPS

- **Restriction of secondary analyses to retention intentions**
- **Limited measures of family program and community variables**
- **Incomplete understanding of relationships between changes in family status and retention decisions**
- **Inadequate basis for estimating non-member spouse alternative earnings**
- **Incomplete treatment of attitudinal/affective variables in ACOL framework**
- **Limited development of staged decision making process model**
- **Incomplete understanding of retention decision process for members at various stages in FLC and SCC**
- **Limited understanding of role of unique factors in retention decision process for members in key MOS groups**
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<td>FY88/Q1-FY89/Q2</td>
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<td>EXTEND ACOF FRAMEWORK</td>
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<tr>
<td>- FAMILY LIFE CYCLE</td>
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<td>- ATTITUINAL VARIABLES</td>
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<td>TASK 4 RESULTS TO ESTIMATE SPOUSE EARNINGS</td>
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<td>REVIEW/REVISE MODEL OF COUPLE RETENTION DECISION</td>
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<td>MAKING PROCESS</td>
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<tr>
<td>COLLECT INFORMATION (INTENSIVE INTERVIEWS) ON DECISION</td>
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<td>MAKING PROCESS</td>
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<td>SELECT KEY MOS GROUPS AND DEVELOP RESEARCH DESIGN FOR</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANALYZING THEIR RETENTION DECISION PROCESS</td>
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<th>AUDIENCE</th>
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<tr>
<td>Early Product Reports</td>
<td>FY 87/Q4-88/Q2</td>
<td>Results of literature reviews, secondary analyses, exploratory discussions</td>
<td>Summary of &quot;what we know&quot; to user community; preliminary hypotheses/measures to project team</td>
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<tr>
<td>IRR TPU Attritae Report</td>
<td>FY 88/Q3</td>
<td>Analysis of factors affecting TPU attrition</td>
<td>DCSPER's USAR Personnel Research Strategy</td>
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<td>TR 7: Policy/Program Report</td>
<td>FY 90/Q4</td>
<td>Relative importance of various Army family policies, programs, and practices in retention of soldiers</td>
<td>CFSC, DCSPER, other Army staff; refined hypotheses for project team</td>
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<td>FY 91/Q2</td>
<td>Description of Army family career decision making process</td>
<td>Installation-level reenlistment NCOs, USAREC, DCSPER, TRADOC schools</td>
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<td>TR 9: Stayer/Leaver Report</td>
<td>FY 92/Q1</td>
<td>Demographic factors that differentiate stayers and leavers</td>
<td>DCSPER, CFSC, refined hypotheses for project team</td>
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<td>TR 10: Modelling Report</td>
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<td>Results of empirical estimation of conceptual models that trace out the relationships between family and non-family variables related to soldier retention</td>
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<tr>
<td>AUDIENCE</td>
<td>CFSC, MACOMS CHIEF OF STAFF, DCSPER</td>
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<td>CONGRUENCE OF RETENTION PRACTICES AND FORCE MANAGEMENT POLICY</td>
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<td>TR8: DECISION MAKING REPORT</td>
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<tr>
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<td>USAREC, MACOMS</td>
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FAMILY FACTORS AND RETENTION

OUTSTANDING ISSUES REQUIRING ARI/ARMY INPUT

- FORMATION OF ARMY STEERING COMMITTEE
- ACCESS TO FORCE MANAGEMENT POLICY PLANNING
- EXTENT OF INVOLVEMENT WITH TRANSITION MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
- IDENTIFICATION OF KEY MOS GROUPS
- IDENTIFICATION OF RETENTION ISSUES FOR RESERVES
References
