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MEASURING THE IMPACT OF MILITARY FAMILY PROGRAMS ON THE ARMY

BY

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many soldiers and families to suffer needlessly. In recent years, the Army has come to recognize the importance of the Army family and to acknowledge its obligation. Toward that end, programs such as Family Advocacy, Family Child Care, Sponsorship, Exceptional Family Member Program and the Army Community Service now receive the attention of the Army through leadership and financial support. The basic question is whether or not the Army is getting its money's worth from these programs. Are the benefits worth the cost? To determine the effectiveness of Military Family Programs, data was gathered using a literature search, the development and employment of a questionnaire, and personal interviews with Army Officers at the United States Army War College. The research for this project unequivocally indicated that Military Family Programs are on the whole very positive and so serve to enhance family wellness, unit readiness, and soldier retention.

USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

MEASURING THE IMPACT OF MILITARY FAMILY PROGRAMS ON THE ARMY

An Individual Study

by

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PREFACE

This Individual Study Project was researched and written for the Military Family Program of the U. S. War College. The scope, methodology, and area of research were outlined by the author based on personal and professional experience and interest. This research paper is designed to objectively report on the Army's efforts in promoting Military Family Programs. Limited analysis and conclusions were made without the existing policy or guidance. The assistance of the United States Army War College students were a major factor in the completion of this project.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	11
PREFACE	111
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem	3
Changing Family Needs.	4
II. HOW WE GOT TO THIS POINT	9
Old Assumptions Underlying	
Family Support Programs	9
New Assumptions Underlying	
Family Support Programs	10
III. FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS EXTERNAL	
TO THE SERVICEMAN'S UNIT.	13
Family Advocacy Program.	13
Exceptional Family Member Program.	14
Army Sponsorship Program	15
Family Child	15
Army Community Service	16
IV. ANALYSIS OF DATA COLLECTION.	20
Impact on Readiness.	20
Impact on Retention.	21
Unit Level Family Support Programs	22
V. CONCLUSIONS.	25
VI. RECOMMENDATIONS.	27
BIBLIOGRAPHY	28

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In recent years the Army has come to realize the significant role the military family plays when an assessment is made of the Army's capabilities to prepare and to be able to win on the next battlefield. This realization lead to a formalized policy. The Chief of Staff of the Army, General John A. Wickham, Jr. stated in his 1983 White Paper:

Since the Army's strength lies in its people, the human goal undergirds the other Army goals and realizations of full potential. A crucial component of the Human Goal is our objective of fostering wholesome lives for our families and communities.¹

General Wickham goes on to elaborate on the Army position by stating the Army's philosophy.

A partnership exists between the Army and Army Families. The Army's unique missions, concepts of service and life and life styles of its members--all affect the nature of his partnership. Towards the goals of building a strong partnership, the Army remains committed to assuring adequate support to families in order to promote wellness; to develop a sense of community; and to strengthen the mutually reinforcing bonds between the Army and its families.²

Dr. Kathy Akerlund recently pointed out in her book on the military family that:

Research has shown that the military member who has a family unhappy with the military is also going to be unhappy with the military and therefore, will not make it a career. If there is not help or recourse for help, the service member is going to become a civilian.³

In the 1983-84 Green Book, the army's Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Lt. Gen Robert M. Elton wrote an article entitled, "We Recruit Soldiers and Retain Families." In that article General Elton states that:

Army goals have become management tools for the planning and programming necessary to move the Army into the future in the most effective way, balancing constrained resources and readiness requirements. Because the Army is people oriented, the "human goal" forms the underpinnings for other Army goals and the realization of their full potential in terms of readiness. A crucial component of the human goal is our objective of fostering wholesome families and communities. It is unconceivable to think about the Total Force without considering the Army families.

General Elton further stated:

The Army will never have all the resources it needs. Therefore, we must balance our dollars spent on family programs with those spent to discharge our moral responsibility to give soldiers the equipment, training and leadership they need to have the best chance for survival, from family perspective, and success, from societal perspective, on the battlefield. This is why we have targeted "wellness" and "sense of community" as major thrusts of our efforts.

Needless to say, the Army has devoted significant resources toward the concept of "Family Wellness" and much work still needs to be done if we are to achieve the type of Army envisioned by the Chief of Staff of the Army, General John A. Wickham. As a result of Army Family symposia of 1980, 1981, and 1982, Army leadership and family representatives were able to develop a list of family needs. Included on that list of needs were better health care, improved sponsorship, improved support of child care facilities, and the centralization of activities which support family programs. These symposia were the catalyst for a much needed Army philosophy.

A brief look at the history of our military reveals that the quality of family life of members of the military was a private matter. The Old Army expression "If the Army wanted you to have a family, you would have

been issued one", was very much in vogue. It was your business to take care of your family and not an Army concern. However, today, that attitude has changed. Geographic mobility, changing family structure and recognition by the Army that competition between family and organizational needs can be destructive to both parties. The Army has come to the realization that it can not divorce itself from family issues and that family issues are very much organizational issues.

Why do we need Military Family Programs? A quick review of the evolution of the relationship between the family and the Army shows that until 1942, Army regulations prohibited the enlistment or reenlistment of men with wives and small children. The need for manpower caused a change in this policy. In 1942, the Army Emergency Relief (AER) was founded and had as its purpose the collection and administration of funds to assist soldiers and family members who were in need. The slogan that we hear today, "The Army takes care of its own", was adapted by the Army Emergency Relief. The AER performed magnificently during WWII and the years following, but by 1960, the demographics of the Army began to change dramatically. Family members now outnumbered uniform personnel by nearly two to one.⁶ A new organization came into existence. The Army Community Service (ACS) was created as an organization to formally administer to the issues affecting the military family.⁷ The next major family oriented program was the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Uniformed Services (CAMPUS) created in 1966. For the first time, the military had a program specifically designed to provide adequate medical and health related care for military families stationed at locations away from military treatment facilities.⁸

In the early 1970's the Army moved into a new era. The All Volunteer Force came into existence and with it came a renewed commitment by the Army leadership to relook all of the family issues identified earlier and to promise to pay particular attention to the enlisted rank. During the years following the start of the All Volunteer Force, the demographics of the active force went through another dramatic change. Today, the Active Force consists of approximately 782,000 soldiers: 13 percent officers and 87 percent enlisted. 94 percent of the enlisted corps is between the ages of 21 and 25. The majority of career soldiers are married. There are just over one million family members which increases the total population of the Army by one and a half times. Children account for about one-third (630,000) and about one-third (384,000) are spouses. Figure 1 shows the percentage of Army active duty soldiers who are married.⁹

The family life cycle provides another view of the Army family. Family needs and developmental stages changes as a family goes through each stage. These stages raise different issues for providing family services and for developing personnel policy. For example, our enlisted force will probably be more concerned with child care centers and sponsorship, which officers will be more concerned with the Exceptional Family Member Program and Army Family Advocacy Program.¹⁰ (See Figure 2).

It is obvious that the Army has devoted a tremendous amount of resources on family development over the past few years. However, there remain questions in the minds of many as to the effectiveness of these programs and their contributions to unit readiness, esprit de corps, and retention. There are those who feel that the Army is becoming a welfare

oriented organization which no longer relies on the unit to administer to family issues. Does the chain of command have a role in this equation? Are programs like Sponsorship, Family Advocacy, and Army Community Service serving as combat multipliers? The following chapters will attempt to answer questions, draw conclusions and make recommendations regarding these programs.

ACTIVE FORCE MARTIAL CONTENT

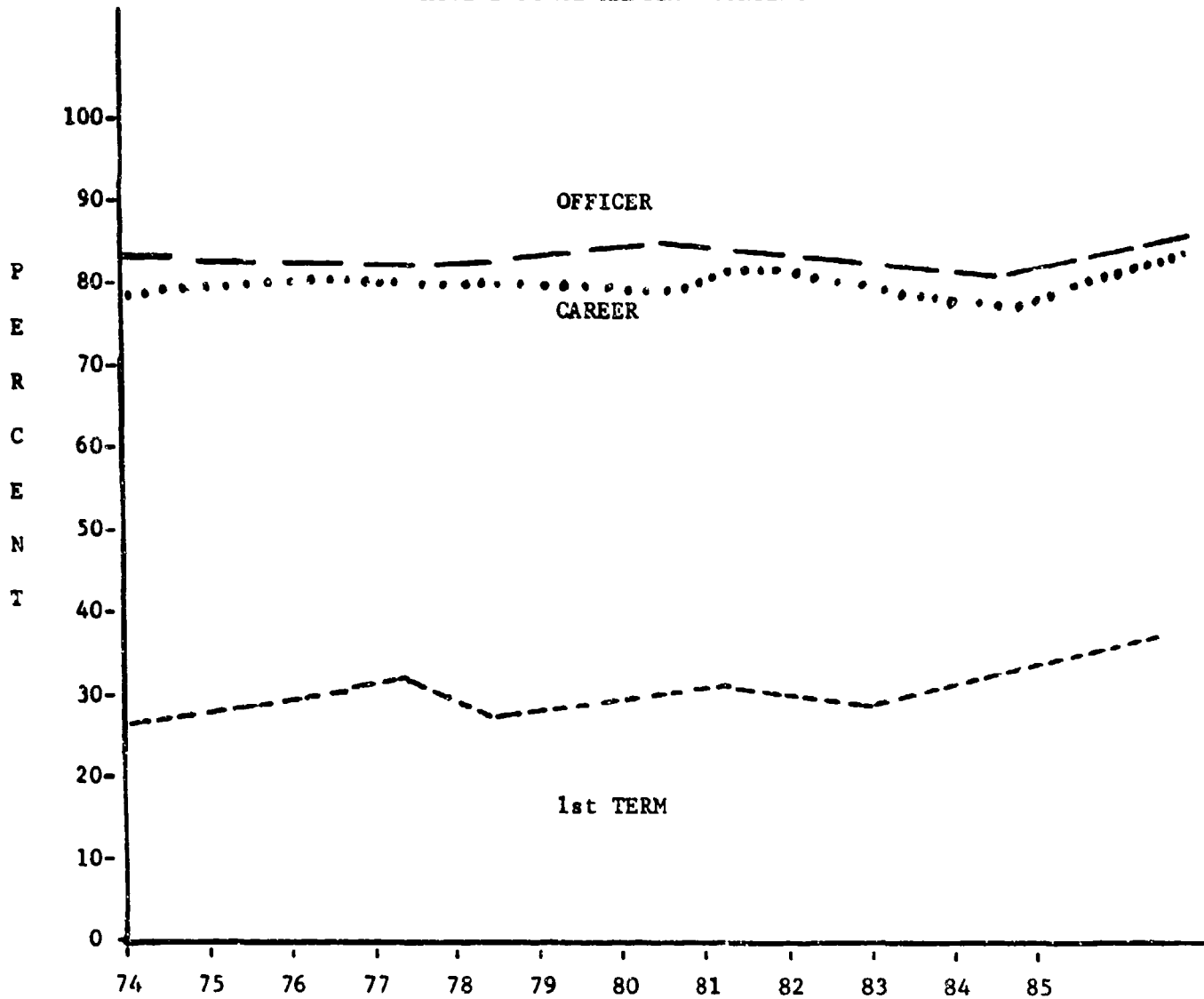


FIGURE 1

Source: White Paper 1983
The Army Family

A FAMILY LIFE CYCLE MODEL

PRE-FAMILY OR SINGLE	COUPLE W/O CHILDREN	COUPLE W/SMALL CHILDREN	COUPLE W/TEENS	COUPLE CHILDREN GONE	COUPLE RETIREMENT
36.3%	16.6%	37.5%	9.3%	0.2%	
17 24	18 30	20 35	36 50	51 59	60

FIGURE 2

Source: White Paper 1983
The Army Family

CHAPTER I

ENDNOTES

1. General John A Wickham, Jr., White Paper 1983, The Army Family, 15 Aug 1983.
2. Ibid.
3. F. D. Hayes, The Soldier and His Family, 19-20 May 1978, p., 14.
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9. Wickham, Op Cit., pp. 5
10. Wickham, Op Cit., pp. 7

CHAPTER II

No systematic, comprehensive effort has been made to study the host of assumptions, issues and policies of the military system that impinges on the lives of families of career-motivated service members, including both officer and enlisted personnel from all branches of the service. The following assumptions rooted in the historical development of the military have been influential in determining Army Policy.¹

The primary mission of the military is the defense of the United States. Family concerns and needs are subordinate to this mission.²

The military profession is far more than a job; it is a way of life in which both service members and their families are expected to accept willingly such inherent stresses as extended family separations and frequent relocations.³

The tradition of the military to "care for its own" means providing programs and benefits for family members are a reflection of the military's interest in them, but these benefits should not be considered guaranteed rights.⁴

Relative to civilian standards, military pay such as allowances, and benefits are fair, generous and conducive to a comfortable standard of living for the family. The unique financial demands of military life such as losses due to forced relocation, do not need to be calculated in the salary and benefits formula for service member.⁵

Except in extreme cases, family influences are not significant factors in the recruitment, health, performance and retention of military career personnel.⁶

It is improper for the family to challenge the military system on policy issues. Any data needed to formulate and evaluate policy affecting the service member or the military family are readily available to policy makers and are taken into account when making or changing policy.⁷

Family problems are outside the domain of military policy. If they occur, they can and should be handled within the family unit, using limited help from existing military

and community resources when necessary. Difficulties within the family, particularly deviant behaviour of the spouse or children, reflect negatively on the service member.

Two social institutions, the military and the family compete for the same resource, the serviceman. In the long run, the family wins.

Lieutenant General Robert Elton, Army Chief of Staff for Personnel summed up this view by stating that:

We acknowledge that the Army as an institution, has a moral and ethical obligation to those who serve and to their families. Service members and their families also have an obligation to the Army. Our mutual obligation binds us in a unique partnership and forces us to be brutally honest with one another.¹⁰

In view of this policy statement, it is necessary for a re-evaluation and re-defining of the previously listed assumptions.

- . The health and stability of service members and their families are vital to the accomplishment of the primary military missions of national defense.¹¹
- . The implementation of military policies and the realization of desired goals are greatly facilitated if families needs and the projected impact of specific policies on families become integral parts of the decision-making process.¹²
- . To attain and maintain a high level of personnel effectiveness, military policies regarding the recruiting, health performance, and retention of service members must reflect a positive emphasis on the supportive role of the family.
- . Policies regarding pay scales, allowance, and benefits must take into account the financial and psychosocial hardships of military life and their impact on family members.¹³
- . Military sponsored medical, financial, and social service programs and benefits must be considered guaranteed rights of the service member's family in partial compensation for the stresses inherent in military life.¹⁴
- . To the greatest extent possible, family considerations should be incorporated into personnel policies regarding duty assignment, relocation, separating and career planning.¹⁵

- . Family problems are not outside the domain of military policy. If they occur, they can and should be handled within the family unit, using help from existing military and community resources when necessary.¹⁶
- . Family problems are not outside the domain of military policy. Coordinated within the military system and effective linkages to civilian resources must be mobilized to offer appropriate prevention and treatment programs for family problems.¹⁷
- . Family members have the right and responsibility to challenge, seek clarification of and attempt to change policies that they feel undermine family stability.¹⁸
- . Systematic investigations of the functioning, problems and needs of the military family are the responsibility of the policy-makers. Knowledge derived from such studies is an essential component of policy-making and policy review process.¹⁹

Traditional military assumptions must be revised in light of the changing role of the military family and its impact on such highly visible programs like recruiting, retention and family wellness.

CHAPTER II

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5. Ibid., p. 48.
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CHAPTER III

FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS EXTERNAL TO THE SERVICEMAN'S ORGANIZATION

As previously stated in Chapters I and II, the Army is firmly committed to enhancing the quality of life for Army families. The Army's quality of life programs directly affect the Army's ability to man the force and improve near-term readiness. The Army targeted over 1/2 billion dollars to family support programs in 1984 and 1985.¹

THE ARMY FAMILY ADVOCACY PROGRAM

For years family violence was known to exist in the military yet very little was done to remedy this tragic problem. The Army's position regarding family violence was generally based on a lack of information and on a lack of qualified professionals trained to deal with the problem. The establishment of a family advocacy program in the U.S. military, designed to respond to family violence has paralleled growing public concern of increased child and spouse maltreatment, amid doubts that strategies and resources for coping with these problems are adequate. It is a fact that such abuse poses a serious threat to family life and, within the military community, compromises preparedness by reducing the readiness and performance of individual soldiers.² At first the medical aspects of child maltreatment were the primary concern. Intervention was restricted largely to the immediate medical needs of the abused and administrative punitive action against the abuser. However, today the program addresses child abuse,

neglect and spouse abuse to include prevention, education, awareness, identification, reporting, and treatment. Services includes counseling, shelter/protection and mandated counseling for abusive service members.³ From a societal standpoint, the Army has taken the lead in recognizing and effectively educating its leadership and providing trained personnel.

THE EXCEPTIONAL FAMILY MEMBER PROGRAM

Another major accomplishment has been the care of exceptional family members. It did not happen over night. For years the Army knew that servicemen had family members who required special attention, but resources and the administrative infrastructure were inadequate to deal with the problem. At this point, I think its fair to say that the Army lost soldiers and families as a result of a lack of support in this area. In recent years the Army has made tremendous gains with this program. Today the program provides comprehensive social support for exceptional family members having special educational and medical needs. Services are provided on a daily basis and include: information/referral placement, respite care, advocacy, child find activities, and recreational and cultural programs.⁴ The program is computerized and it enables soldiers to inform MILPERCEN of their special family member needs in order to be considered in the assignment process. The goal of the Army is to assign soldiers and their families where the needs of the Army can be satisfied and the special facilities and services needed by the exceptional family member are available.⁵

THE ARMY SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM:

A much needed revitalization of the Army's sponsorship program occurred in 1985. For years lip service was given to one of the most important of Army Family Programs. There is nothing more traumatic to a family than moving to a new assignment and upon arrival, find themselves with little or no support from their new organization. This is particularly difficult on families who are posted to overseas assignments. The Army recognized the problem and its impact on family wellness and retention. The new program expands the concept of sponsorship and addresses many new areas. Previously, the program included almost all service members, whether married or not. The only exceptions are soldiers transferring to a new unit on the same post or when soldiers are initially assigned for basic or advanced individual training. This new program goes a step further in scope with the inclusions of out-sponsorship, increased training for sponsors, and recognition for sponsors who do exceptional jobs.⁶ Needless to say, the impact of this new program on soldiers and family members has been tremendous. It has added credence to the Army expression, "The Army takes care of its own."

FAMILY CHILD CARE

A recent demographic study shows that of the total number of family members, 630,000 are children. Of course, this same study shows that the size of Army families varies according to rank and time in service (see figure 3).⁷ The role of the military spouse has changed in recent years. As with families in the civilian populations, the number of Army spouses working outside the home is increasing. The military spouse's job contributes approximately 33 percent of the family's income (see figure 4).

To meet the demand for child care, the Army programmed 14 new child care centers for construction in 1984 and 1985.⁸ Clearly the Army recognized that this family support problem needed improving in order to meet the demands for child care and serve as an enhancement to soldiers remaining on active duty.

ARMY COMMUNITY SERVICE

For the new military family or the old established family, the Army Community Service is a place when responsive service is provided to families assigned to an installation. The services provided include but are not limited to the following:

1. Consumer Affairs. Budget counseling, debt liquidation, consumer information and consumer education classes.⁹

2. Information and referral services. Information on all social services in this area that are available for the variety of problems experienced by military families, service directories, outreach programs, and baby sitting list.¹⁰

3. Relocation services. Welcome packets, lending closets, welcome centers, and worldwide post library.¹¹

4. Special Services to Children and Families. Special training and programs for teenagers -- e.g., baby sitting training, hire a teen program, and party aid programs.¹²

NUMBER OF CHILDREN

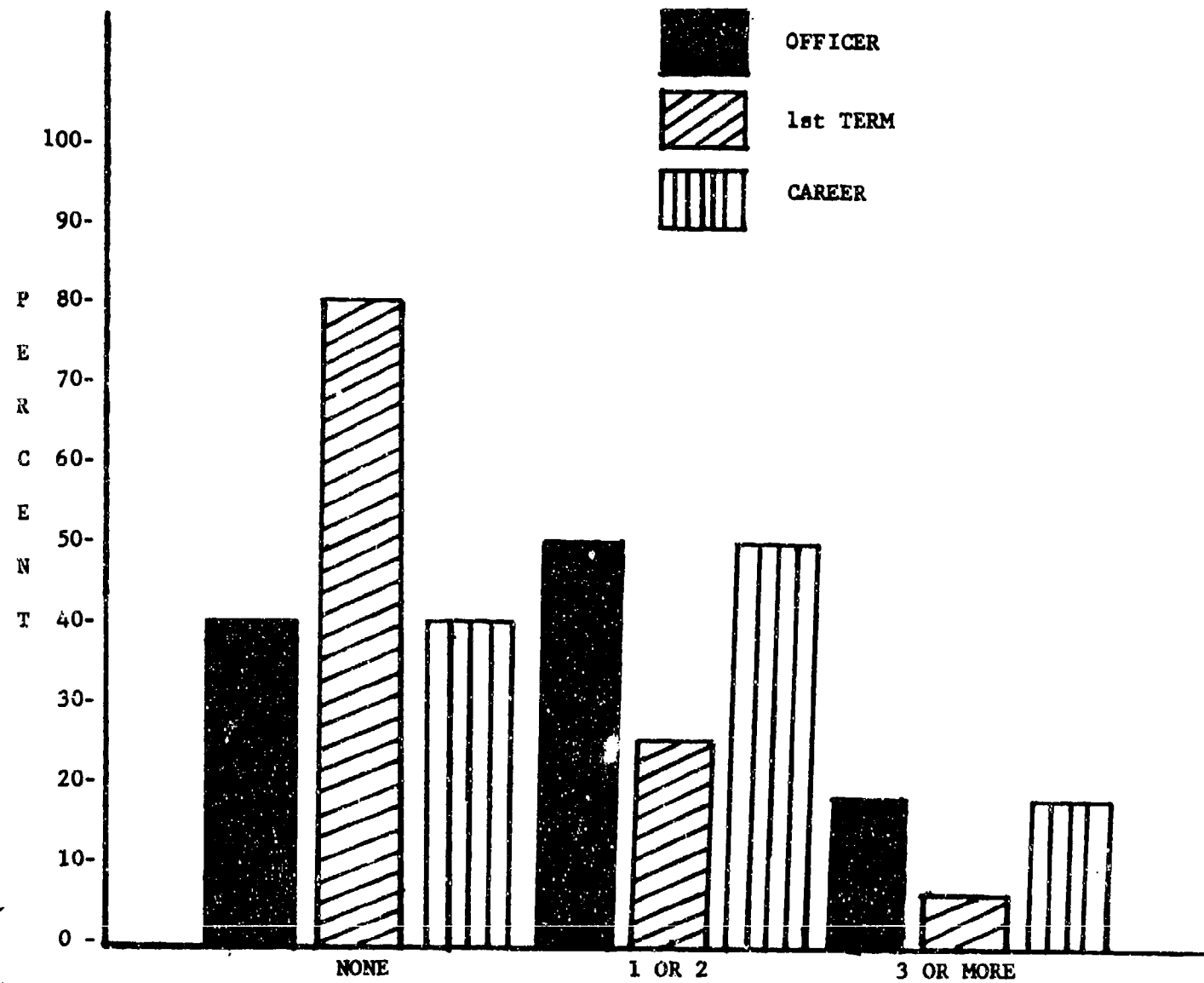


FIGURE 3

Source: White Paper 1983
The Army Family

PERCENTAGE OF SPOUCES CURRENTLY WORKING

	<u>Officer</u>	<u>Enlisted</u>
Not Working	57%	53%
Working Full Time	30%	33%
Working Part Time	12%	12%
Working Both	1%	2%

FIGURE 4

Source: White Paper 1983
The Army Family

CHAPTER III

ENDNOTES

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3. Ibid., p. 584.
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5. Family Recruitment Program, CARLISLE BARRACKS, 1 Aug. 1986, p. 26.
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7. Wickham, op. cit., p. 5.
8. Ibid., p. 17.

CHAPTER IV

In Chapter III specific Family Support Programs were discussed. In this chapter these same programs will be discussed but will be viewed in the context of the analysis of the survey results.

UNIT READINESS

As previously stated in Chapter II, the Army's leadership reached the conclusion that an effective network of Family Support Programs will serve to enhance preparedness by increasing the readiness and performance of the individual soldiers and units. The soldier is more likely to be an effective member of a unit, i.e., fire team, squad, platoon, etc. The survey respondents were asked if they thought Military Family Programs contributed to unit readiness. The data indicates that 40.5 percent strongly agreed and 51 percent agreed. Less than 1 percent strongly disagreed that these type programs have a positive impact on unit readiness.

Another area closely related to readiness is unit deployment on training exercises and the problems related to routinely having to send soldiers back to garrison to attend to family problems. Units often deploy hundreds of miles to participate in training exercises that improve combat readiness and it is essential that all soldiers are available, particularly key leaders, if training objectives are to be attained. Individual and collective training objectives can't be fully realized if unit commanders have to return soldiers to garrison because there are not established Family Support Programs in place to meet family needs. Of the former troop

commanders who responded on the survey, 45.6 percent stated that they had to routinely send soldiers back to garrison from training sites in order for them to attend family concerns. Ninety three percent felt that soldier who deployed for training knowing that his family had a problem was a less productive soldier in the field. These percentages are significant when you consider the training time loss and the total impact on combat readiness.

RETENTION

Regarding the question of soldier retention, I think Lieutenant General Robert Elton, Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel put the issue in perspective when he stated:

We can recruit top quality soldiers, arm them with the latest, most sophisticated weapons, train and lead them well, and offer them every kind of support needed for victory on the battlefield. But if the military families are "turned off" by Army life, then the very soldiers we are trying so hard to retain will look for opportunities elsewhere.

The Army is currently recruiting top soldiers into the service. Last year, over 93 percent of our new recruits had earned a high school diploma compared to about 75 percent of the general youth population. As we place emphasis on the recruiting and retention of first term soldiers, we must continue to retain our career soldiers.

Again, the focus is on the fact that the Army recruits soldiers and retains families. This is particularly important now that the majority of the soldiers manning the Total Force are married and their concerns and needs must be met if we are to maintain an Army of Excellence.

In responding to the services provided by ACS, 55 percent indicated that this program is definitely a retention incentive while 25 percent indicated that this program had no favorable impact on soldiers retention.

The Army's Sponsorship Program was another survey question and the respondents were asked to comment on the importance of this program. The results were overwhelmingly positive. Seventy-three percent indicated that the Sponsorship Program is definitely a retention factor with less than 10 percent indicating that it's not an incentive. The remaining 17 percent were undecided.

Regarding the availability of a Family Child Care Program and its impact on retention, 80 percent of those surveyed indicated that this program is definitely a retention incentive. Almost 10 percent felt that it was probably not an incentive to stay, 9.2 percent were undecided and less than 1 percent felt it was not an incentive.

UNIT LEVEL FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS

The quality of life for a soldier and his family can be greatly enriched at the unit level with the establishment of a Family Support Group. This group can serve to compliment and augment the services provided by outside agencies or organizations. The "pay-offs" include enhanced soldier morale, retention, and well adjusted families.

Sometimes, because of lack of knowledge of activities and assistance available to family members, social isolation can result. Finances, health, living conditions, transportation, language barriers, and day-to-

day management concerns can cause unnecessary problems for the soldier, his family, and the unit. In emergency situations, there should be a system operating so that help and assistance can readily be available. By knowing others within the unit and forming friendships, these situations can often be alleviated without outside assistance. Lengthy deployments for training exercises or actual contingencies necessitate the need for family preparedness--especially in the area of powers of attorney, wills, and financial responsibility. The need for soldiers to return to garrison due to family problems can be greatly alleviated.² An improved unit training environment and enhanced operational readiness can be the by-product of such a program. Eighty-eight percent of those surveyed agreed that there is a need for such a program at battalion level and below.

CHAPTER IV

ENDNOTES

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CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to measure the impact of Military Family Programs on the Army. Toward that end, conclusions from the foregoing chapters have been drawn and are as follows.

1. Taking care of the family is an organizational imperative.
2. Sound policies concerning the military family improve service member performance, provide effective recruitment and retention incentives, promote necessary family stability, and facilitate overall mission accomplishment of the service system.
3. "Wellness" and a sense of community must continue to be a major thrust of the Army's efforts.
4. The changing role of the military spouse will continue to have a profound impact on the military family.
5. A shortage of funds can jeopardize the best of plans.
6. There is general agreement among the Army's leadership that Military Family Programs are vital and that they must be properly resourced.
7. Military families are partners in the Total Force and that partnership must not be broken.
8. Soldiers can't perform effectively if distracted by overwhelming personal or family concerns.

9. Military Family Programs increase the ability of the Army family to function in the absence of the soldier, thereby minimizing requirements for the soldier to return prematurely from training exercises or contingencies operations.

10. Military Family Programs promote a positive attitude toward the Army--"The Army does take care of its own."

11. Family Support Programs at the unit level provides essential social services which enhance unit readiness and

CHAPTER VI

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research gathered for this study, the Army is giving serious attention to the "Wellness" of military families. The focus of this attention is on Military Family Programs that enhance readiness, act as retention incentives and serve as combat multipliers. In order to keep these programs on the right tract, the following recommendations are provided:

1. Give priority to resource requirements in major command budgets requests so that they can be fought for in the program and budget process.
2. Make every effort to continue to upgrade Child Care Facilities.
3. Continue Army Family Symposia in an effort to keep the issues on the front burner.
4. Medical support for family members was not addressed in this study but a significant number of questionnaire respondents listed it as an area of great disappointment and dissatisfaction. As a response to this criticism, it is recommended that the Army continue with innovative approaches such as the Family Practice Program. It is further recommended that the Army continue to increase the number of Army physicians needed to provide health care to soldier and family members.

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