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LEISURE TIME PROBLEMS AND LIVABILITY

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single components may undermine a generally positive overall rating akin to the burr under the saddle. Unresolved in many studies was clarification between the quality of life (a goal) compared to a quality of life (a single experience)--essentially the difference between what is and what should be.

"A life of 20 years may be of a higher quality than a life of 60, but only because there is more of something in the short life than in the long one, not more years but more something. What is that something? Find that one right thing and you find out how to raise the quality of life, just as you raise the quality of a frankfurter by adding more meat." (Kivy, 1973, p. 249).

A prior study (Caldwell 1977) relating livability to work and housing at air force bases identified the major components and the perception framework ingredients used to judge and evaluate it. It focused on work and housing environments and analyzed a variety of influences. Job livability required a feeling that one was doing something that they did well, that it was worthwhile, that it provided satisfaction and for which they received recognition. Housing livability required at least adequate shelter, warmth, safety, minimal conveniences, access to work, shopping and services in a friendly neighborhood that generates satisfaction and pride. This study extends that work by concentrating on leisure time, its component parts and the problems associated with it.

COMMITTED AND DISCRETIONARY LEISURE TIME

Leisure time, as distinct from sleeping and working time, has two main components: committed and discretionary time.

Committed time includes that period spent in commuting, personal, social

and operational routines and maintenance chores. These include house, yard, and vehicular maintenance, cooking and eating time, travelling to and from work, health and personal hygiene obligations. Some of these commitments take place daily, weekly or at irregular intervals.

With increased affluence have come more acquisitions, vehicles, equipment and appliances whose maintenance draws heavily on committed time. What remains after committed time is subtracted from leisure time is discretionary time wherein individuals engage in activities or pursuits to meet personal wants or desires for one's own satisfaction. A major portion of discretionary time is used in some type of recreation, formal or informal, as a participant or observer, remotely by film, radio or television or in watching live action. Some is inactive or passive participation with high or low skills done seasonally or throughout the year, indoors or outdoors, as an individual or group activity, as a single time or repetitive type of experience, in a cooperative or competitive environment with positive or negative orientation and varying degrees of satisfaction.

In practice some pleasurable types of committed time can be equally viewed as discretionary time. Time spent in basic food preparation would generally fit the former category yet gourmet cooking would fit the latter. The same differences appear between reading or writing assigned homework compared to reading or writing for pleasure or shopping for daily necessities compared to shopping for recreation goods or fashion clothing. What one does during discretionary time periods reflects personalities, socio-economic and educational backgrounds, peer group activities, prior skills acquired and regional environmental differences in the individual's background.

Shopping in the BX's and Commissaries is a routine committed time chore for some; a pleasant regular recreational and social ritual for

others. The more pleasant the shopping experiences, the more positive its role in enhancing the livability of a base experience. Recent efforts to cluster base shopping with other services and amenities while sharing a common parking area reflect an awareness of the interconnection of a design concept, leisure time and livability.

Discretionary time, once identified mainly with upper classes in society, has become a valued and cherished part of life for almost all segments of society in the economically advanced portions of the world. It is closely identified with a shorter work day, large blocks of free time in the evenings, weekends, special holidays and paid vacations.

For some, maybe most people, leisure time provides reduced stress with fewer routine daily encounters in the work environment. The AFMIG surveys showed that the greatest dissatisfactions centered around work-- 16% for Officers and 19% for Airmen (see appendix). Management psychologist Harry Levinson (N.Y. Times, Dec. 8, 1978) reports that most employees eventually get sick of their jobs and that most work is repetitive, routinized and boring. He recommends that managers should help employees accept the realities of their job limitations.

Akin to job stresses there are also differences that relate to where military people live. Although all military families have a number of common bonds, off-base families prefer a life style with more privacy, an open atmosphere, minimal operational restrictions, opportunity for home ownership, and no constraints on their choice of housing. On-base families preferred to reside on military installations for reasons of safety, convenience and financial savings (Blochberger 1970).

There are special stress problems experienced by American military families in non-English overseas environments. These include difficulties in making friends, a feeling of uninvolvedness, segmentation and a loss of

stability as a result of the transient living situation, cramped and insufficient military housing (Bower 1967). Additional problems developed with the decreased purchasing power of the dollar in relation to other currencies and the increased rents charged for local housing.

Other conflicts derived from the ascendance of the occupational value system over the earlier institutional model (C. Moskos 1977). Related to it are conflicts in regard to servicewives' traditional roles and those of contemporary liberated women. This situation is further complicated by the increasing percentage of women in the Air Force, including some married to non-military spouses, and the absence of an expected role for the military husband.

Potential stresses arise in almost every segment of life--work, housing, regulations and outmoded traditions. Even more discretionary time is not without stress. For some persons anxiety levels increase with the anticipation of spending excessive time alone in a room or apartment or in facing the emptiness of an evening, weekend or vacation period without friends, family or pleasant activities. Where there are domestic problems or conflicts with spouses or partners, children, neighbors, relatives or expected chores, then discretionary leisure time can appear less desirable than even some of the work time.

Having more discretionary time available also provides more opportunity for low self esteem or inflexible individuals to dwell on their personal problems and difficulties. One way has termed these individuals "as hung up on their hang-ups". When a group of like individuals cluster, it can lead to negative contagion and larger scale more problems.

All people periodically need periods of discretionary time for privacy to rest, resolve problems and take care of personal needs. The military has recognized and responded to it by moving from the open barracks to the

dormitory system, private quarters for some and the opportunity for many to live off the base. Individuals living in dormitories and requiring additional privacy may be permitted personal stereo and TV sets and other conveniences.

These findings have been inserted to illustrate some secondary impacts of changes in a system. The main portion of this study deals with presenting a heirarchy of positive and negative discretionary time alternatives, an analysis of the role and causes of boredom which produces major personal and group problems during leisure time periods, and the role of regional differences, the concept of substitutability and the role of minimum skill levels to insure participation.

BOREDOM

As a temporary, transient phenomena it is ubiquitous and a normal ingredient of emotional behavior. We have all experienced the unpleasurable emptiness of boredom but as a rule have been able to utilize it for discovering and initiating activities to attain a measure of satisfaction and thus end to that boredom.

There is a more devastating latent boredom whose victims are rarely aware of their difficulty and rarely complain of boredom. Specifically concealed under a misleading calm, the symptoms are an aimlessness, depression and resignation, a sense of being worthless, a lack of incentive, incapable of experiencing joy or zest and time seems to stand still. This latent boredom may reveal itself by its victim's frenzied attempts at escape by a never ending need of every changing stimuli, an incessant craving for fun, novelties, gadgets, food, drugs, liquor, sex and rapid changes in the environment. Soothing, calming advice as well as sedation or stimulation by chemical means prove, as a rule, ineffective because the flaw in the patient's psychic balance appears to depend upon factors inherent in the

environment, the organization and the society and thus beyond his/her immediate reach and control.

Latent boredom can be induced by isolation from the external world and by exposure to repetitious activities or tasks without patterned or perceptual stimulation. This leads to a deterioration of performance and a decrease in mental alertness or the ability to concentrate on a given task. Here the mind wanders to starry thoughts and fantasies that seem preferable and bring pleasure. The displeasure for the task at hand grows into feelings of hatred, hostility, aggressiveness or violence with everyone even associated with the task (Goetzl).

The increase in boredom, particularly in western civilization, is partly a result of the growing conflict between man, his institutions and progress. With technological advances there is an intoxicating sense of independence and self sufficiency concurrent with a growing feeling of loneliness and fear of separation from supportive security gestures, loss of self esteem, not knowing who he/she is or why or where he/she is going.

Some can overcome boredom by devotion to their work but for many, work may intensify the problems because of repeated failures, frustrations or from a sense of meaningless routines. For people who are happy in their work and leisure, the two seem to be intertwined. Bartlett states that the four day week and flextime are not solutions if the work is dull and time off is only an escape (in Goetzl).

There is some normal physiologically based boredom systems extending from infancy to adulthood and expressed by tapping fingers, changing positions, gestures, body movement, eating, scratching, sucking, chewing and smoking. The January 1, 1979 Louis Harris poll showed that the top leisure time activity of Americans is eating, with 54% reporting that they ate frequently in their moments of relaxation and another 30% saying that they occasionally

indulge in eating to occupy their time.

It would be quite unbearable if one were expected to sit quietly at a desk all day where the only sanctioned muscular activities were the micro muscular activities of reading, reading, reading, some writing, turning a page from time to time and perhaps taking notes. Some sedentary activities are physiologically boring for people who are basically active and whose bodies and minds are insulated from natural stressors such that the adaptive talents are not called into play. For these people boredom may initiate challenge seeking behavior during work or leisure time.

Boredom tends to be a widespread youth response that shows up commonly in the classrooms despite the subject matter or teacher. For some it can be offset if the teacher presents the material in a meaningful perspective. For others there is chronic boredom or disinterest as a deliberately chosen posture or response which Dehlinger attributes as stemming from a self dislike.

Young people are often disappointed by the outcome of their first efforts at participation at a new activity. A series of repeated early failures may generate apathy or protective boredom as an opiate that confers temporary immunity from the frustration. Dehlinger maintains that this can be corrected by breaking one of the causal links in the vicious circle. Forced involvement can lead to accomplishments that boost the self image. However, coercion, he warns, also tends to arouse student antipathy and produces a refusal to participate genuinely.

Boredom also appears in intergeneration situations wherein youth tend to become alienated from society. Impatiently they seek to change prevailing values to make civilization relevant and responsive to their needs. If they fail they may tend to "drop out" to avoid the daily conflict. Others may resort to revolution, mass violence, human property destruction

and some activist participation to offset their frustrations. They may view new movements and primitive responses as means to regain self esteem. The intergeneration situation is intensified because "tolerance to boredom tends to increase with age" (Bowman).

Corrective approaches to boredom have long been known. The Hindus focused on play which they identified as uniting work and leisure. Play is active work, freely chosen, with rules and total commitment. The early Greeks believed that ease of life engenders boredom and that unless otherwise assuaged that boredom leads in the end to violence. Anthropologists suggest that "in a state of nature, the primitive human organism must have existed almost constantly at the edge of exhaustion" with no time for boredom. Now high technology equipment, easy work and routine leisure creates or intensified problems. Recommended changes to alleviate boredom include an interruption of routines at work, home, leisure time activities, including commuting patterns, a broadening of interests and involvements, and the engagement in strenuous physical activity. For others there are great benefits derived from maintaining a regular personal journal or from candid discussions with friends.

REGIONAL DIFFERENCES

We are frequently reminded that 1 out of 5 American families move each year. The resultant perception is one of on-going mobility and a rootless society. Mobility is undoubtedly higher for military families. Every move has a number of different disruptive factors--leaving a familiar environment to a new and strange environment. It takes time and energy to make new friends, establish work and play routines, acquire the special knowledge equipment and skills to achieve more satisfaction from a new environment.

Additionally, individuals from metropolitan or inner city backgrounds

face enormous personal and societal transfer problems if moved to remote bases or those near smaller towns with homogenous populations. The entire gamut of leisure time activities is also changed from the urban, highly structured or neighborhood culture support system to the personal, outdoors oriented and to unfamiliar neighborhoods. In these circumstances a sense of alienation is not unusual. Similar interregional frustrations can apply in sun-belt to snow-belt transfers, forest to desert shifts, coastal to inland shifts, etc. Moving to overseas posts produce different problems but these are more frequently related to cross cultural conditions, language barriers, limited activities for the spouse and children, the limited availability of adequate housing and the relative buying power of the dollar against local currencies.

Finding new uses of leisure time and developing new skills to maximize the pleasure of the experience are basic to successful transitions.

SUBSTITUTIBILITY AND SKILL LEVELS

Many leisure time activities reflect specific environments, seasons, and cultural variations. When less flexible individuals are moved to completely new environments wherein they cannot pursue their accustomed activities, they are easily irritated, frustrated, alienated and bored.

One problem is identifying some activity in the new local environment that would provide a comparable recreational experience. If the desired participant activity is not available, there may be regression to lower order spectator behavior or even to one of the negative behaviors. From this base, it is possible to compile a table of somewhat comparable recreational activities that require comparable skills, provide similar challenges and experiences.

TABLE I - RECREATIONAL SUBSTITUTES

swimming → ocean → lake → pool
surfing → downhill skiing → hang gliding
sailboating → gliding → horseback riding
scuba diving → parachute falls → rapelling → rock climbing
viewing ocean wildlife → inland wildlife
ocean fishing → stream and lake fishing
beachcombing → rock hounding → cave visits
viewing waves → sand dunes → mountains → vegetation
Universals movies → museums → hikes → sunbathing → reading

The table is only suggestive and not inclusive. Recognition of available substitute experiences and activities can set the stage for positive acceptance.

However, each new activity requires some specialized skills to achieve a sense of adequate mastery that will insure continuation of positive acceptance during the transfer process. Thus some training for skill enhancement is highly desirable, especially for personnel and dependents making major environmental changes. Successes amongst peer groups in the transitional period.

The teaching of new leisure time skills can be justified on several bases including more leisure time, more possible activities, longer seasons for traditional pursuits by the introduction of more indoor and controlled environments (tennis, pools, tracks). All activities require initial skills from bird watching through dancing or car repair. Early failures sap interest but peer successes provide positive reinforcement. For each activity there are minimal skill requirement thresholds to insure enjoyment while a sense of confidence and competence is established.

Participation in new leisure time activities depends upon (1) accessibility--physical, distance (time) and psychological (building a positive

receptive framework to the notion of participation); (2) motivation--social and individual; (3) facilities; (4) required and acquired skill levels; (5) self image; (6) marital status (interests of spouse and children).

DISCRETIONARY TIME OPTIONS

There is no one best approach to provide facilities or opportunities for the use of discretionary time. Some differences reflect personality types. The compensatory approach consists of using this time to do different things, perhaps those that are the opposite of daily work related routines. In this reference the sedentary office worker might engage in scuba diving, hang gliding, mountain climbing or demanding physical sports. The 'familiarity' personality savors security, comfort and low stress environments. This individual prefers home improvement hobbies, family activities and when travelling would opt for camper trailers or mobile homes high in familiar amenities. The 'personal community' attitude would emphasize values, ideas, motivations and behavior of early external influences and current associates. This extremely motivated individual is always seeking to conform and seek acceptance by appropriate behavior.

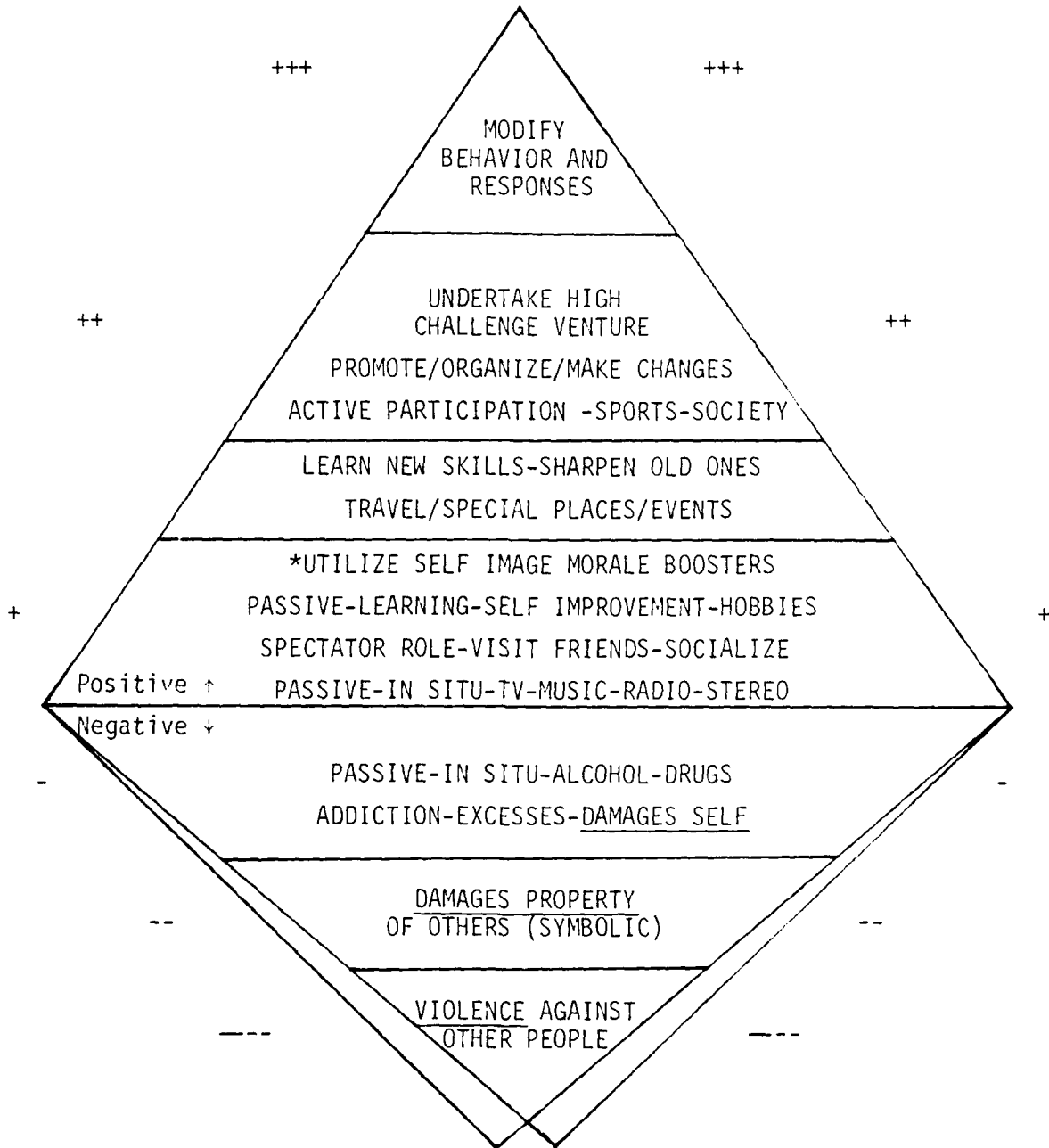
Despite these different approaches, the way an individual spends his/her discretionary time or disposable income reflects what he/she thinks is important at that particular time.

To get a broad spectrum grasp of alternate behavior a diamond shaped modified Maslow-Brightbill diagram was created to illustrate various degrees of positive and negative response. Underlying the model are the assumptions that participation and active roles, mental and physical, are preferable to passive and inactive roles. Many people escape boredom in a passive way watching TV, listening to radio, tapes or a stereo. A common negative response might include excessive drinking, eating or smoking which is self

damaging. More positive responses include a series of self image morale boosters, self improvement and skill development approaches plus active participation in sports, hobbies or social activities. The model focuses on an important component in discretionary time alternative.

LEISURE TIME BOREDOM RESPONSE OPTIONS

A HEIRARCHAL MODEL



*Purchase new book, record, tape, T-shirt, hairdo, special food or restaurant, hike, jog, sing, make key phone call, write letter to a friend, or reread something that makes you feel better

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Each base or installation is perceived in terms of the livability of its physical as well as its social and cultural livability. Some of the judgements are based on preconceived attitudes; others are based on peer group hearsay before arrival and the remainder are formed in the first few weeks after arrival. The experiences of AF personnel, their spouses and families during the first few weeks at a new installation are important influences on attitude formation concerning the base and the service. This is more important for first and second termers than for more seasoned service people.

All major shifts require the development of new friends and friendships for each family member and the need to prove oneself anew. What happens in the discretionary time periods, the speed and nature of acceptance levels, coping with frustrations, and degrees of alienation in the new environment can lead to positive or negative responses.

Different patterns are discernible that vary with the prior length of service, education, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, marital status, and whether individuals live on or off a base.

Satisfactory, meaningful work and secure, adequate housing with accepting friendly neighbors are positive attributes of each new base experience but it is equally important that individuals and families have or develop positive self images. When success or failure is encountered in any area, including discretionary time experiences, there is a corresponding increase or drop in self esteem. One's behavior will be altered by the nature of one's self image (Wicklund 1979). Frustration alienation, and a sense of inferiority can lead to aggression or a withdrawal from social participation.

There is a positive relationship between acceptance of self and

acceptance of others. Potential problem sources that produce low esteem attitudes are failures, shame, guilt, real or presumed handicaps including weight, height, physique, skin coloration or complexion, health, beauty, speech problems, domestic problems, limited interpersonal skills, and educational achievement or abilities.

For some the explanation is boredom but boredom is not a cause, just a symptom. It is also used as a device for procrastination. Expressed boredom has a negative contagious quality. Fortunately many people get bored with boredom. What one person regards as boredom another may view as an opportunity or a challenge. Responses to boredom can be categorized as fitting into a negative or positive hierarchy. The negative progression proceeds from self damage, through vandalism and property damage to violence to others. Conversely the positive boredom responses move from passive to active roles, involve new ventures, skills and activities, physical and mental, with social and private aspects that culminate in changed behavior and responses.

With proper sensitivity to the behavioral hierarchy, it is possible to push, direct or motivate personnel into positive behavior responses with provisions for more socialization and converting "viewers into doers". Conventional base leisure time facilities are only partially successful. On deciding on new leisure time facilities and opportunities, each must meet specific base needs geared to the nature of the personnel, where they live, what is available in adjacent communities and the ease of access to same. Several caveats are suggested as further guidelines.

- (1) Recognize the needs of the people who live off base, married or single, as well as those who live on the base.
- (2) Favor facilities likely to be used by large segments of the population for day and night use, many hours per week and a large portion of the year over those that cater to a small segment of the population, that consume considerable space with high maintenance costs.

- (3) In areas with long winters, focus on indoor activities but not to the exclusion of numerous winter sports opportunities.
- (4) Insure that facilities be made available weekends and evenings and on holidays, all of which are high stress periods for many individuals.
- (5) Favor facilities that encourage socialization and a sense of community.
- (6) Evaluate proposed facilities and operations in regard to their possible impact on work productivity.
- (7) Recognize that individuals reared in diverse environments may be largely unfamiliar with regional recreational activities and that the teaching of new recreational skills to competence levels is necessary. This opportunity should be extended to spouses and children to build a sense of community.
- (8) Recognize that there are many locally available discretionary time pursuits that can be used as a satisfactory recreational experience surrogate for activities not locally available.

Finally, if leisure time is a threat to society it is not because there is too much of it but because we have not learned how to use it constructively and creatively.

APPENDIX A - Summary of AFMIG - Quality of Air Force Life Surveys

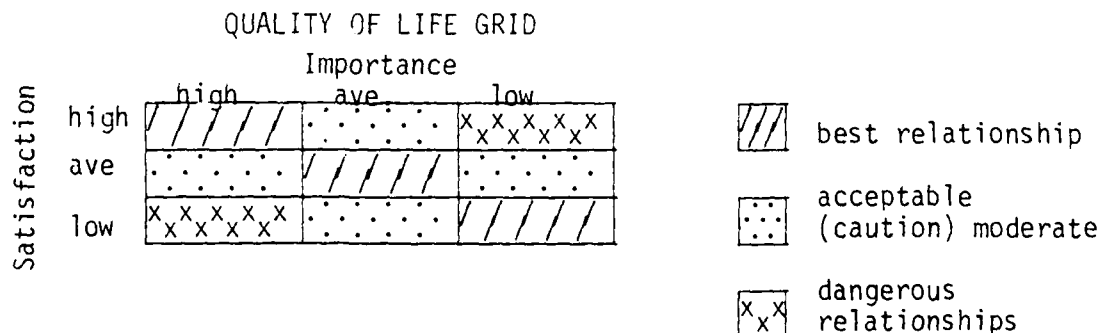
The Air Force has been concerned with the "Quality of Air Force Life" and has attempted a variety of approaches to identify, assess and even quantify different components. This summary encompasses three to four different surveys over some four years by AFMIG at Norton AFB, CA. The foreward to the 1975 survey noted that the Chief of Staff of the Air Force established a special study group to address the topic with the underlying theme "to make a good service better". Specific survey forms were designed for different groups including active duty military, spouses and civilian employees. Some questionnaires focused on the use and degree of satisfaction with facilities and services available, the existing policies and programs, and individual attitudes towards the Air Force as an institution, personal finances, economic and personal problems related to military moves, jobs and the use of free time. Anonymity was assured and maintained but enough other data was collected to provide possible correlations with major commands, rank, education, sex, marital status, cultural backgrounds and length of time in service. Some questions were asked in ways that favored some responses, always a danger in questionnaires, and other questions searched for other facts quite removed from quality of life concerns (i.e. "What type of 1974 Federal Income Tax form did you file?"). Some questions were to be answered by five to six Likert preferences or agreement-disagreement categories, some by selecting specific choices and several times in the 31 page questionnaire forms space was provided and individual comments substituted that expressed elaborations or feelings on subjects considered important. These studies were made on a random basis.

A later approach used a sample size of almost 11,000 of all grades with results weighted by grade to reflect the total Air Force composition and the data included the number of years of service, major commands, race,

sex, marital status, etc. This survey, also done by AFMIG, focused on the perceived quality of life in the Air Force based on the following nine factors:

1. ECONOMIC SECURITY - satisfy basic needs, maintain acceptable standard of living.
2. ECONOMIC SECURITY - guaranteed employment, fringe benefits to self-family.
3. FREE TIME - variety of activities; amount, use, scheduling of free time, alone or in voluntary association with others.
4. WORK - personally meaningful, pride in effort, satisfaction, recognition for effort and accomplishment.
5. LEADERSHIP/SUPERVISION - reflect my interests and that of AF, approachable and helpful.
6. EQUITY - fairness in promotions, job/assignment selection, equal opportunity.
7. PERSONAL GROWTH - opportunities to further potential by education, training opportunities.
8. PERSONAL STANDING - treated with respect, dignity, full status.
9. HEALTH - physical-mental health care systems, available for self and dependents, quality, quantity.

These nine components were measured two ways: the degree of its importance to the individual and the degree of satisfaction the individual is experiencing in his/her present life situation. Numerical indicators were developed for each of the nine areas in terms of their relative importance and satisfaction and then a grid (matrix) was prepared for each area in terms of importance and satisfaction.



Areas of interest are those of high importance and low satisfaction (danger), high importance and moderate satisfaction (caution), areas of high importance and high satisfaction (ideal) and areas of low importance and high satisfaction (misallocation of resources).

Findings - For the nine areas none had over one-half of 1% of the sample with a rating of low importance and high satisfaction. The general approach was excellent and should be pursued though modified to insure a clearer grasp of all elements by each individual completing the questionnaire. In only three factors (health, work and economic security) were more than 30% of the total sample satisfied. Ninety percent of the replies regarded health as highly important (highest value) but only 64% rated free time as important. Airmen regarded health as important more frequently than officers who placed their top importance on work.

The greatest dissatisfactions centered around work for 16% of the officers and 19% of the airmen. In terms of the Economic Standard, the officers (37%) reported high satisfaction compared to 15% of the airmen. Yet in terms of Economic Security, the satisfaction percentages for officers and airmen were about the same.

Additional exploratory perceptual questions were asked on different scales (immediate supervisor to Air Force wide concerns) and value systems (importance of components of job satisfaction). The top rating was a sense of achievement for all grades by better than 2 to 1 compared to challenging work and recognition for the work. Other opinions were gathered on the appropriateness of the work done and the grade assigned, perceptions of NCO's, their role, status and prestige, financial problems, part-time jobs, working spouses (38-40% E1-0 and 26% of officers), average 37%. The main reason for the working spouse was to make ends meet (for E1-E6 70% but only for 34% of the officers).

One of the interesting findings in the survey indirectly concerned a regional livability factor. The question was "If a job were available for me at a base of my choice, I would be willing to pay my own moving expenses to get there."

	<u>OFFICERS</u>				<u>AIRMEN</u>		
	Agree	Undecided	Disagree		Agree	Undecided	Disagree
05, 06	15%	12%	73%	E7, E8, E9	28%	15%	57%
04	18%	17%	65%	E5, E6	38%	19%	43%
03	23%	19%	59%	E4	44%	21%	35%
01, 02	31%	21%	48%	E1, E2, E3	55%	19%	26%

The willingness to pay for one's own move to a desirable place decreases as rank increases. It is partially attributable to the increase in possessions, family size, etc. that occur with increasing rank. It is also obvious that airmen are more willing to pay their own expenses than are officers. It shows a high degree of willingness to pay for moves to places they desire to live/work. The newer and younger the personnel, the greater the willingness. This is recurring theme of regional and local preferences that is manifest in several different types of AF studies.

Closely tied to livability perception are two key questions dealing with the base a community.

An Air Force Base is a Desirable Place to Live

	Officers	E1-E4	E5-E9	A11
Disagree	35%	52%	39%	44%
Undecided	19%	27%	18%	22%
Agree	46%	21%	44%	34%

An Air Force Base is a Community. The People on it Usually Care About One Another and Get Involved in Base Activities Outside Work.

	Officers	E1-E4	E5-E9	A11
Disagree	21%	40%	38%	38%
Undecided	22%	32%	20%	26%
Agree	58%	28%	42%	36%

One must be aware that many of the E1 through E4's are required to live in dormitories though many might prefer to live off base. There appears to be a high positive correlation between the years of service and agreement with this last statement; as people remain longer in the service, their attitudes toward the base as a community become more positive.

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