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ARI Research Note 90-23

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# The Army Family Research Program: Second Meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee

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University of Maryland

for

**Contracting Officer's Representative**
**D. Bruce Bell**

**Personnel Utilization Technical Area**
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**Manpower and Personnel Research Laboratory**
**Paul A. Gade, Acting Director**

**May 1990**

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**United States Army**
**Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences**

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# U.S. ARMY 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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UNCLASSIFIED

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE

# REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

*Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188*

| | |
|---|---|
| 1a. REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION<br>Unclassified | 1b. RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS<br>-- |
| 2a. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY<br>--<br>2b. DECLASSIFICATION / DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE<br>-- | 3. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY OF REPORT<br>Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited. |
| 4. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)<br>-- | 5. MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)<br>ARI Research Note 90-23 |
| 6a. NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION<br>Research Triangle Institute<br>6b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable)<br>-- | 7a. NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION<br>U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences |
| 6c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)<br>P.O. Box 12194<br>Research Triangle Park, NC 27709 | 7b. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)<br>5001 Eisenhower Avenue<br>Alexandria, VA 22333-5600 |
| 8a. NAME OF FUNDING / SPONSORING ORGANIZATION U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences<br>8b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable)<br>PERI-R | 9. PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER<br>MDA903-87-C-0540 |
| 8c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)<br>5001 Eisenhower Avenue<br>Alexandria, VA 22333-5600 | 10. SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS<br>PROGRAM ELEMENT NO. 63731A<br>PROJECT NO. 792<br>TASK NO. 242<br>WORK UNIT ACCESSION NO. C2 |

11. TITLE (Include Security Classification)

Army Family Research Program: Second Meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee

12. PERSONAL AUTHOR(S)

Segal, Mady W., Chair, Scientific Advisory Committee and others

| 13a. TYPE OF REPORT | 13b. TIME COVERED | 14. DATE OF REPORT (Year, Month, Day) | 15. PAGE COUNT |
|---|---|---|---|
| Final | FROM 86/11 TO 88/05 | 1990, May | 21 |

16. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION

Contracting Officer's Representative, D. Bruce Bell

Subcontractor: Mady W. Segal, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742

17. COSATI CODES

| FIELD | GROUP | SUB-GROUP |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |

18. SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)

Army family research, Research methods, Readiness, Retention, Family adaptation, Spouse employment. (SDW)

19. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)

This report of the second meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) includes a summary of the committee's comments on the Army Family Research Program's (AFRP) revised Research Plan and individual reports from two members of the committee, Janice Madden and George Levinger. The SAC summary incorporates an overall critique of the Research Plan and specific comments on several major areas. The specific areas of concern to the SAC were the following: (1) setting priorities among research components, (2) testing the research model, (3) developing theory, testable interventions, and practical policy recommendations for readiness, retention, family adaptation, and spouse employment, and (4) balancing the demands for the quantitative and qualitative portions of the research. Keywords.

| | |
|---|---|
| 20. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT<br>☒ UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED ☐ SAME AS RPT. ☐ DTIC USERS | 21. ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION<br>Unclassified |
| 22a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL<br>D. Bruce Bell | 22b. TELEPHONE (Include Area Code) (202) 274-8119<br>22c. OFFICE SYMBOL PERI-RP |

**DD Form 1473, JUN 86** *Previous editions are obsolete.* SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED

THE ARMY FAMILY RESEARCH PROGRAM: SECOND MEETING OF THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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1 May 1988

MEMORANDUM

TO: Paul Gade
ARI Technical Monitor
Army Family Research Program (AFRP) and
AFRP Researchers via Al Cruze, Project Director

FROM: Mady Wechsler Segal *Mady W Segal*
Chair, Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC)

SUBJECT: Second Meeting of the SAC, 27-28 March 1988
Comments on the Research Plan

The following members of the SAC were present for all or part of the meeting:

Richard A. Berk
Ellen Galinsky
George Levinger
Janice Fanning Madden
Charles C. Moskos
Walter R. Schumm
Mady W. Segal

Philip Bobko was not able to attend but provided comments on the research plan both in advance of the meeting and afterward.

## THE ARMY FAMILY RESEARCH PROGRAM: SECOND MEETING OF THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## CRITIQUE OF THE RESEARCH PLAN

### 1. Overall critique

The research plan shows enormous progress since the previous plan. It represents considerable thought, time, energy, and hard work by many talented researchers. Not only is the proposed work described more clearly, but it is also apparent that the project staff has a much clearer sense of what they are going to do and why.

The SAC believes that our input during and after our last meeting contributed to the progress in the research design. We can see overall responsiveness to our previous comments. We hope our comments now will further help to improve on the soundness and usefulness of the research activities.

We want to stress our positive evaluation of most of the work that is being done and underline our sense of the importance of the research. Our criticisms should be interpreted in that light. The negative comments we make are offered in the spirit of constructive critique. They are not intended to convey an overall negative evaluation of the way the research is proceeding.

Note. Page numbers referred to in text refer to Barokas, J. and Croan, J. (1988). The Army Family Research Program: The Army Family.

The overall strategy presented in the Research Plan is a good one. It represents a creative approach to providing the varied information needed to answer the research questions. The combination of large scale survey data at one time point with more intensive work on subsamples over time makes sense.

We are disturbed by four conditions under which our critique is occurring. We hope that explicating these conditions will make the limitations of our advice clear and perhaps improve the conditions under which our future evaluations will be made.

First, we feel like we are running alongside a moving train, perhaps trying to wash it as it goes by! To explain the metaphor, we are being asked to provide advice to improve the research project, but some of the research activities are so far along that our input cannot be used without aborting ongoing projects. If the SAC is to operate most effectively during the remaining work of the project, we should be asked to give feedback in advance as much as possible.

Second, we have not been given all of the information we would need to be able to judge whether the planned work builds on the findings from previous stages of the research. The Research Plan does not provide the review of the literature and other results of developmental activities that serve as the basis for what is planned. In the future, we will need to have available to us at least some of that material. We are not asking for special documents to be prepared for us; rather we are asking to see important working papers, technical reports, and data collection instruments. In some cases, everyone on the SAC will review a document. Most of the time, however, each of us will review a limited subset of the research products. (See #10 below.)

Third, we do not have a clear sense of which researchers are responsible for particular components of the project. While the overall responsibilities are stated, knowing more specific assignments would better enable us both to judge the amount of attention to specific components and to communicate directly with the people doing the work.

Fourth, each of us read the Research Plan on the assumption that the activities described were actually to take place as part of the research. At the meeting we were told that there are not enough resources to conduct all that is proposed. Under this condition, it is impossible for us to conclude whether the sum total of the actual research will answer the research questions and meet Army needs. To tell whether the research as a whole will do this would require knowing what the entire project will actually encompass.

Given the latter condition, some of our comments are specifically intended to address the issue of priorities among planned activities. That is, we suggest places where the work can be streamlined without losing the most valuable information.

Our overall reaction is that this is a very valuable project. It is important and it is ambitious. Indeed, many of the problems with the project stem from its very scope, rather than deriving from any fault on the part of the researchers.

2. Setting Priorities

In our first report, we made the following recommendation:

"We recommend that mechanisms be set up for making judgments regarding priorities among research components. These would involve both carefully constructed criteria as well as coordination among members of the project staff."

We reiterate that now because it still needs to be done. There is a critical need to set priorities among the different research projects and within each project (e.g., among variables to measure). Decision rules must be set for determining priorities and streamlining planned activities. It is not our role to make decisions about priorities. That role belongs to the leaders of the project - and decisive leadership action is required.

A clear organizational structure is needed that specifies who is responsible for particular parts of the research. This would enable the project leaders and others to ensure that particular projects get the attention they deserve.

Here are some criteria that we consider important to include in the decision rules.

Obviously cost must be a factor in making decisions about what to include. We recommend that the project staff develop budgets for projects and subprojects.

Risk is also an important factor. That is, assigning priorities should take into account the probability of useful information, products, etc. Focus on what is amenable to change. If it is costly to measure a variable and it is not critical in theoretical and policy terms, delete it or use simpler, less costly measures of it.

Some emphasis should be placed on deliverables along the way. That is, there should be products of use to the Army in the short run, not just in years 4 and 5 of the project.

Some of the proposed Core Extension projects and their resulting research products only make sense to the extent that strong relationships between certain variables are found in the Core Research survey. For example, there are manuals proposed for unit leaders and installation leaders to provide advice on behaviors that lead to positive effects on family factors (including those that are important to readiness and retention). One way to choose among projects is to focus on those where the relationships are found to be the strongest. For example, if there is not enough variation among installations in critical variables (either criterion variables or proposed predictors), or if there is no evidence to establish relationships between the predictors and the criteria, do not expend resources on products focused on installation practices.

3. The Theory

The models are still too diffuse and complex. They are too grandiose to test at this level. The theory as presented in the plan does not support the models (and cannot because of the complexity of the models).

The models are certainly too complex to test statistically. Attention must be paid to this before data collection in order to avert problems later.

Each box in the conceptual models is still a construct consisting of many variables. We strongly recommend against attempts to develop a single measure of any of these constructs. One important rationale for this recommendation is that some of the variables in a construct can be hypothesized (on the basis of the theory and existing knowledge) to have positive relationships to adjacent constructs in the model, others are expected to have no relationship, and yet others will have negative relationships. Lumping all together will be meaningless.

There is currently a disconnect, a lack of integration, between the theory as presented in the Research Plan and the development of instruments. It may be that what connects the general theory (including the complex models) with the data gathering activities has already been developed. It does not, however, appear in the Plan.

Progress toward solving this problem requires the derivation of more doable, testable hypotheses. Our advice is to simplify and integrate via the specification of hypotheses. Where do we expect *specific relationships* and under what conditions?

We cannot stress too much how important this comment is. We want to underline how significant it is.

The framework on p. 30 can serve as the starting point for the development of a priori propositions about what variables are expected to be related and the conditions (e.g., values of the control variables) under which certain kinds of relationships are expected.

In the simplification and specification of hypotheses, be sure to emphasize variables that are amenable to change by the Army. Pay special attention to what goes on in the construct labelled "Army System & Organization". How are families affected by what the Army does (in areas where "the Army" can potentially change) in ways that impact on retention and readiness? What aspects of "the Army" make a difference in families' experiences? Are the important effects coming from Army-wide policies? from the implementation of those policies at particular levels? Do installation programs make a difference? What are the effects of unit leaders? Which unit leaders and what is it they actually do that makes a difference?

In examining the impact of Army policies, programs, and practices on families, it is extremely important to analyze not only official policies and programs, but also enactment. Prior research on work/family spillover demonstrates the importance of group culture and interpersonal behaviors. For example, worker satisfaction and ability to fulfill work and family roles is directly affected by supervisor's sensitivity to work/family concerns. General research on work/family linkages also shows effects on such measures of productivity as absenteeism and self reports of time not well spent at work. Note the relationship between these issues and Schumm's points about legitimacy and meaningfulness of job requirements and predictors and consequences. (See Schumm's detailed comments, transmitted separately, pp. 3 to 4 and 5 to 6.)

In addition to drawing on knowledge about the work/family intersection in civilian society, it is essential that this project always consider the unique character of the military. Special characteristics of the Army make it different from other societal institutions and work environments and affect soldiers and families in important ways.

Some of the summary of the theory on p. 35 (last few lines) indicates a perspective that needs refinement. Surely, there is more to the importance of the family than immediate context and mere proximity! The family is the locus of much emotional intensity, identification, reflected appraisals about the self, etc. The family is one of the strongest normative reference groups. Much of our social construction of reality occurs in interaction with other family members, who serve as significant others for most people, including soldiers. The majority of American adults derive most of their life satisfaction from their marital relationships (see work of Angus Campbell and others). When marriages go awry, psychological well-being is substantially detrimentally affected. The same is true for relationships with children.

Some of the reason for objections to certain versions of exchange theory have to do with their overemphasis on rational cost-benefit factors and their neglect of culture and the emotional intensity of relationships. These ideas can be incorporated into an exchange framework with care. The reality of people's lives means that families ought not be relegated to just one other competing influence in a rationally deterministic model. Indeed, one of the main purposes of this project is to document the significance of family influences on the Army system.

4. Research Areas

The theory and the research activities are broken down into four areas: Family Adaptation, Family Factors and Retention, Family Factors and Readiness, Spouse Employment.

The two areas of Spouse Employment and Family Factors and Retention are currently the clearest and most precise. They are also less problematic to measure than the other two areas and are more manageable.

Interventions can be designed now in the areas of Spouse Employment and Retention. (See #5 below.)

4a. Family Adaptation

In the analysis of role demands, be sure to give emphasis to the specifics of the ways the organization imposes specific work requirements that are experienced as demanding. What policies have impacts? What is it in the way the policies are enacted, developed, implemented, etc. that causes undue and <u>preventable</u> pressures on families?

4b. Family Factors and Retention

The research should address the relative importance of specific factors in their impact on retention for specific kinds of people. In order to demonstrate whether there is in fact the kind of cost savings from retention that is being claimed, the work on retention should emphasize personnel quality considerations (including expensive training and needed experience) and their relationships to family factors. This would mean showing that with increased retention, the people who stay are at least as good as the people who leave. Show which family-oriented policy and program changes result in increased retention of high quality people. Is there evidence that the people who are leaving because of family issues are high quality people whom it would be beneficial to retain?

There are places in the Research Plan where it is not clear that there are the necessary plans to merge particular data to be able to accomplish this attention to "quality" issues. For example, data on bars to reenlistment need to be merged with retention information (e.g., as described on p. 123).

There is a potential tautology in the retention model. Commitment is hypothesized to affect retention via its effect on retention intentions. On p. 43, commitment is described as including a preference to remain with the organization, which sounds conceptually quite close to intention to remain. The distinction should be clarified and carefully maintained.

4c. Family Factors and Readiness

As in the retention area, there is a potential tautology in the readiness model. There is some confusion between elements in readiness (as a criterion) and predictors of readiness. This appears in both the concepts in the model and the measures being developed. For example, the lists of potential components of the criterion of readiness include "care and concern for families". Care must be taken to assure that such apparent overlap is removed and that predictor and criterion measures are appropriately distinct.

We appreciate the difficulty of measuring hypothetical constructs such as individual or unit readiness. There is certainly no consensus as to the primary components of unit readiness. Indeed, this is an area of much disagreement and conflict in the Army. The results of the workshops are a good beginning in developing measures.

There are components of readiness proposed that the theory and prior existing knowledge would predict are not at all affected by family factors. Families cannot affect such measures of readiness as amount of equipment, supplies, etc. In general, family factors can be hypothesized to influence the "will do" rather than the "can do" components of performance (to use terms from Project A work, which focuses on individual performance).

Our major recommendation is that the model and its hypotheses must clearly spell out where relationships are expected and where they are not. Where no relationships are expected, resources used to measure and test them should be kept to a minimum to free resources for other components.

However, this "minimum" measurement of some readiness components should be greater than zero for credibility in the Army and for contractual reasons, as well as for scientific reasons. Scientifically, provided the existence and strength of relationships are predicted in advance, incorporating the entire domain of components would allow a fuller confirmatory test of the nomological net of relations (both zero and non-zero) between family factors and readiness.

We recommend that the major emphasis should be on measures of individual readiness and on the aggregation of individual measures to capture unit differences in readiness. Family factors are not hypothesized to affect unit readiness directly, only indirectly through individual readiness. Even if there were such a connection between family and unit readiness, it would be extremely difficult to capture - and perhaps not worth the effort at this point.

The relationship between unit and family is likely to work primarily in the opposite causal direction. Unit practices affect family life (as experienced directly by soldiers as well as experienced by family members who in turn affect the soldier), thereby affecting individual readiness. This is in addition to the effects of unit practices directly on individual readiness via unit effects on other aspects of soldiers' affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses. The most productive focus of the research in examining the relationship between the unit and the family would be on this causal direction.

## 4d. Spouse Employment

The discussion of spouse employment makes it seem as if there is a linear relationship expected between the quality of the spouse's job and satisfaction with the Army. At the very least, there is a need to use the fit between the quality of the spouse's job and such other variables as the spouse's job qualifications and aspirations as the predictor.

In evaluating the effects of various interventions on spouse employment, we suggest that programs designed to deal with job search should be the prime focus. (See Appendix 1 for rationale and further discussion.) The effects of job search impediments should be considered in terms of both costs to worker and costs to employers. In order to evaluate properly any intervention, it is important that there be a control group who are not participants in the intervention and that spouses be randomly selected into the treatment and control groups.

## 5. Interventions

Design some interventions now. Field test them earlier than currently planned. Use existing knowledge - both in the military and civilian settings (where appropriate). Do not intervene in areas where little is currently known about potential effects. However, there is enough existing knowledge about many of the relationships in the models to design interventions already.

There are already interventions being conducted by the Army. Keep informed of these and design complementary interventions or the specifics to guide those. Such a piggyback approach, as is being used in connection with other aspects of the project (e.g., with Project A), can be useful and efficient. They can save costs and provide early benefits to the Army.

6. Applicable Ongoing Research

It is crucial that this project be informed by knowledge that already exists and by the results of ongoing research being done by others. Especially useful are the projects at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR) and at Rand.

This comment is especially important with regard to the design of interventions. For example, there are some reliable findings of previous and ongoing research at WRAIR regarding unit leadership practices that affect family adaptation and probably retention.

7. Single Soldiers

There is a need to include the perceptions, experiences, etc. of single soldiers. They should be compared to married soldiers. How do specific Army policies, programs, and practices differentially impact on single vs. married soldiers? How do single and married soldiers compare their relative positions in the Army? What experiences affect these evaluations?

The Research Plan (page 140) states that married respondents will receive an additional questionnaire on family characteristics. Single respondents should receive a questionnaire on family of origin issues and/or girlfriend/boyfriend concerns.

8. Issues of Measurement and Analysis

Our primary comment here is that the Research Plan does not include enough information for us to judge. We look forward to receiving proposed instruments while they are in the process of being developed so that we can have input in their design. We also anticipate that some of us will examine selected products of the projects and that this will better inform us about planned measurements and analyses.

We do know that the data will be overwhelming. They will also be quite costly to analyze. Merely cleaning the survey data and the records data will be expensive.

Potential analysis problems need to be addressed in advance and strategies developed for preventing them or dealing with them.

There will be many judgment calls regarding the analysis. One recommendation of a procedure to ensure some faith in results and conclusions is to have 2 or 3 independent teams of analysts. Each team independently analyzes selected subsets of the data. The results and conclusions of the different teams are then compared. This does not have to be costly. Each team can consist of, for example, an expert analyst working (e.g., for summer salary) along with a graduate student working for a year.

8a. Causality and Other Technical Issues

Now that the Core Research Effort is a one-time survey (rather than being longitudinal), attention has to be paid to the problem of establishing causality.

For example, if the expected relationship between spouse satisfaction with the Army and the soldier's desire to remain in the Army does appear in the results, two explanations are possible. First, as hypothesized, spouse's satisfaction affects soldier's desire. Second, the soldier desires to stay (or leave) and the spouse is aware of that; dissonance reduction processes and social construction of reality processes lead the spouse to be more aware of and to express those cognitions and affects that agree with the soldier's desire.

Here are some strategies for inferring cause and dealing with other technical issues:

Use "Reduced Forms," where possible.

Apply "specification test" for endogeneity, where possible.

Use simultaneous equation methods as a last resort, where possible.

Use "split-half" replications (or "split-sample" methods).

Do sensitivity analyses.

Use outside independent investigators to cross-validate models.

8b. Qualitative Methods

We initially were impressed with the incorporation of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Both types of perspectives and methods are necessary to fully understand the processes involved in the system of interaction between the Army and the families of its personnel. We applauded the use of in-depth interviewing.

In the current Plan, qualitative methods appear in the development of instrumentation for the core survey and in the Core Extension Research projects. We are concerned lest the lack of priority development and the proceeding with the mammoth survey prevent the completion of the qualitative projects that would lend such strength to the project.

9. More specific comments

See also specific comments from Schumm (transmitted separately).

9a. Family Adaptation

On p. 93 (last paragraph), in the discussion of the role of expectations, the literature on realistic job previews is relevant here.

9b. Family Factors and Retention

See Appendix C.

9c. Family Factors and Readiness

In the Readiness model (p. 47), why are Community Characteristics not included? Surely the resources available in the community to the family are major determinants of such aspects of readiness as willingness to deploy and leave one's family behind. Is this construct left out because its component variables are seen as affecting readiness only indirectly via individual and family adaptation?

9d. Spouse Employment

See Appendix A and Appendix B.

9e. Core Research Data

The program inventory and quality assessment questionnaire referred to on p. 128 is not described in enough detail. Important questions include: How will the inventory be developed? What are the "potential barriers" and "program conditions"?

With regard to individual characteristics to be measured (p. 138), be sure to measure how long the person has been at the post.

9f. Technical Issues

Berk provides the following broad suggestions and is available to go over these issues with RTI in depth in early summer. An especially good source of discussions on these is Fromby, Hill, and Johnson, Advanced Econometric Methods, Springer-Verlag, 1983.

It is vital to consider carefully the kind of scale associated with the underlying variables being measured. For example, in economics, utility is only assumed to be ordinal, so there is no point trying to measure it in an interval metric. Similar issues may hold for many variables and measures used here. Statistical procedures must correspond to the level of measurement. Thus, ordinal logistic regression can be used when the dependent variable is ordinal. Or multinomial logistic regression can be used when the dependent variable is only nominal. A number of the proposed analyses will probably have to rely on such procedures.

Even for equal interval variables, there will be truncation problems at the upper and lower bounds (e.g., in a Likert scale). If more than a few cases fall near the boundaries, the usual linear models are inappropriate and often very misleading. Under some assumptions one may employ non-linear functional forms (e.g., a logistic curve) with corrections for heteroscedasticity. Under other assumptions, Tobit models may be appropriate.

It is impossible empirically to distinguish between non-linearity and interaction effects, although there are often important conceptual distinctions. Both imply that causal effects are not constant. Perhaps the best strategy is to decide on the non-linear functional form first, and then go after the interaction effects. The dummy variable strategy suggested in the Plan will probably not do the job.

Serious consideration should be given to various robust methods, given all the likely problems in the data. For example, it might make sense to use M-estimators from time to time as a complement to least squares.

It is vital to employ split sample replication procedures, given all the "fishing" that seems inevitable. Likewise, final models need to be examined for sensitivity to modest specification changes.

Where possible, all of the proposed structural equation analyses should be collapsed into reduced forms. This makes things much simpler when it can be done. If that proves inadequate, simultaneous equation models will be necessary, but only when coupled with specification tests for endogeneity.

And for all multivariate analyses, the usual regression diagnostics are vital.

10. Other

Several SAC members expressed particular desires for the opportunity to review documents, especially instruments being developed. Such review is an important component of our advisory role.

Bobko would like to review the AIT survey. He can, of course, be consulted on various readiness issues.

Galinsky wants to review, in the formative stages, instruments on child care, spouse employment, family support policies, and unit leadership practices. She has already provided some comments on items shown to her during the meeting.

Madden has already reviewed some questions on spouse employment (see Appendix 2) and should continue to be asked to review instruments in this area.

Schumm is primarily interested in reviewing documents related to family adaptation, but would also like to see those on retention and readiness.

Berk is willing to serve as a methodological consultant across the various substantive topics of the project. (He does not, however, consider himself particularly expert in scale construction.)

Levinger is the most reasonable member for review of work on retention decision-making processes. He would also like to review selected materials on family adaptation.

Moskos could be consulted on issues of qualitative methods, single soldiers, military manpower processes, and unit readiness.

Segal is most concerned with integration of the project components and outcomes, in terms of both planning and results (including issues of dissemination and policy impact).

## APPENDIX A

### Report from Spouse Employment Subgroup

by Janice Madden

Many Army installations are in relatively remote locations. Spouses at such locations who are seeking employment find fewer job alternatives than workers in more densely populated areas. Yet, in the last 15 years employment in remote areas has grown faster than in metropolitan areas. The labor force participation rates of women in nonmetropolitan areas have increased faster than the rates for women in metropolitan areas. The evidence suggests that employers are attracted to remote areas where women have been underemployed. It is important to ascertain whether remote areas which include Army bases have also been successful in attracting employers of women. If so, the movement of employers to Army base areas will minimize the employment effects of remote locations. If remote areas including Army bases have lower rates of employment growth than other remote areas, it is necessary to understand why employers find Army spouses less attractive employees.

Another Army policy which adversely affects spouse employment is PCS. Geographic moves result in job turnover and require additional investment in job search for Army spouses. Job turnover is costly to employers/employees who have invested in job training, but not to employers/employees who have not made such investments. (As traditionally female jobs involve less job-specific training than other jobs, Army spouses are expected to be more concentrated in female jobs.) The need to search for a new job more frequently is further complicated because the spouse also does not have access to informal networks at the new location. When over 75% of the U.S. workforce reports that they obtained their present jobs through information provided by friends and relatives, it is especially problematic that Army spouses' job search usually precludes such information sources. Informal networks are valuable both to employers and to job applicants. Employers who are happy with their own workers find that applicants referred by those workers are both better prepared and ultimately more satisfied with the firm than are applicants from other sources. Applicants get more accurate information on the specifics of a job from other workers.

If the project is to proceed with evaluating the effects of various interventions on spouse employment, we suggest that programs designed to deal with job search should be the prime focus. The effects of job search impediments should be considered in terms of both costs to workers and costs to employers of hiring someone who is more difficult to evaluate. In order to properly evaluate any intervention, it is important that there be a control group who are not participants in the intervention <u>and</u> that spouses be <u>randomly</u> selected into the treatment and control groups.

APPENDIX B

Specific Comments on Spouse Employment Questionnaire, Section D

from Janice Madden

1. Be sure to ask mode of transportation if you ask a question on travel time (D-8, p. D-2).
2. The occupation question (D-9, p. D-3), is problematic. A large proportion of respondents will not be able to accurately assign a job to the categories listed. Furthermore, the categories listed show several inconsistencies; for example, engineers (08) and scientists (09) are in different categories, computer operators are listed with technical workers (13) although the U.S. Census codes this as a clerical job, and proprietor or owner (10) is not an occupation but an organizational structure. An owner performs an occupation such as manager, craft, or service.

   Based on rather extensive experience with collecting occupational data, I recommend strongly that an open ended answer be solicited for the occupation question, after providing examples of what an occupation is. It is not too difficult to "key in" the actual answers, alphabetize them, and assign answers to codes using staff who are trained to assign jobs accurately to occupation codes. For purposes of this study, it may become very important to ascertain whether the spouse is in a traditionally female occupation.
3. Soldiers will probably not be able to accurately report on the job search activities of spouses. Therefore, they will not reliably sort themselves between answers 2 and 3 to #D-25, p. D-6.
4. I would ascribe very low priority to a question on why the soldier wants his wife to work (#D-22, p. D-10), I cannot envision how this information can be meaningfully used and it will take time from collecting useful data. Furthermore, it does not anticipate the reaction of a soldier who does not want his spouse to work.

5. Question D-24, D-11 can be shortened. As questions a and c solicit the same information, use only one. Question b is irrelevant for same reason as discussed in item 6 below.
6. Questions soliciting the opinions of soldiers about the behavioral or program relationships that the project is addressing are not likely to yield useful data. Question D-24, p. D-12 asks the soldier about what the Army could do to help his wife find a job. Soldiers do not have any basis on which to answer this question. They do not know what would work.

APPENDIX C

Summary of Retention/Reenlistment Team Discussion (3/29)

by George Levinger

a. What is the purpose of the study? The general aim is to understand family influences and processes in soldiers' decisions about whether or not to reenlist. Both the nature of such processes and their timing is to be investigated.

   The practical aim is to help reenlistment NCOs, company officers, and others to know better what are reenlistees' concerns and when they should be addressed.

b. Who are to be in the sample? The target sample are to be about 400 married enlisted soldiers, in either a 3- or a 4-year term, who qualify for reenlistment, and their spouses. They'll probably be selected from about 80 different units at 4 different installations. Soldiers who feel 90% or more certain (at an early time point) that they either will or will not reenlist will be only a minor component of the sample. Most of the sample members will be soldiers and spouses who feel unsure about their reenlistment decision!

   GL comments: For comparison purposes, it would seem important to include comparable single soldiers in the decision process study. This should not be too difficult and ought to improve our insight into how a spouse affects the soldier's decisions.

   Another thought: In selecting the sample, will it be possible to distinguish between high- and medium-quality personnel? Is there any thought about possible differences among different groups in their decision-making?

c. What concepts and predictions? The research team is considering the usefulness of several theoretical approaches for their project. "Image theory" suggests that people pursue activities and careers that fulfil their self-images--i.e., that those soldiers whose self-concepts best correspond to an Army career will decide to pursue it (seems somewhat circular). Influence tactics models focus on the nature of the influence process whereby intimates negotiate changes. The Fishbein-Ajzen model of planned behavior focuses on general attitudes, specific attitudes about a behavior, subjective norms, and other factors in predicting behavioral intentions. McGrath's time perspective theory suggests that decisions are often put off until at least the halfway point in a given time interval. These approaches and others will be reviewed.

Comments: I found it hard to respond to such conceptual ideas off the cuff during our brief team meeting. To make more careful and creative comments, I'd like to see a draft memo outlining the team's current thinking (together with a brief literature review).

Other ideas and questions are to be obtained from contacting the Army school for reenlistment NCOs in Indianapolis. The faculty from this school may have some insights to convey. Furthermore, the project must build a solid contact with them if its findings are later to be put to practical use. This contact is therefore quite important.

Comments: What are the team's current relations with the Indianapolis training school? What other Army expert informants have been consulted in formulating this study? And what outside suggestions are being pursued here?

d. As elsewhere in the AFRP, the research should focus on factors amenable to change or control. Hypotheses, which need better specification, should emphasize those aspects of the reenlistment process that can be influenced by Army policies and practices, or by the actions of company commanders and reenlistment personnel. Thus ideas for intervention will be the most useful product.

Comment: I endorse these emphases. Ideas for potential interventions, as well as actual experimental trials, will be more useful than mere technical reports.