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U.S. Army Research Institute  
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Research Report 1556

# Family Impacts on the Retention of Military Personnel

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University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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Family factors contributing to retention decisions include spouse support for the military member, spouse employment, family life cycle, family economics, and the family career decision process.

Policymakers and Army commanders can use the findings in this report to guide their decisions concerning the family programs most likely to enhance retention. This report will also be of value in deriving hypotheses for the Army Family Research Program.

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**Research Report 1556**

# **Family Impacts on the Retention of Military Personnel**

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## FOREWORD

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The Army Family Research Program (AFRP) is a 5-year integrated research program started in November 1986 in response to research mandated by the CSA White Paper, 1983: The Army Family and subsequently by The Army Family Action Plans (1984-1989). The research supports the Army Family Action Plans through research products that will (1) determine the demographic characteristics of Army families, (2) identify positive motivators and negative detractors to soldiers remaining in the Army, (3) develop pilot programs to improve family adaptation to Army life, and (4) increase operational readiness.

The research is being conducted by the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) with assistance from Research Triangle Institute, Caliber Associates, HumRRO, and the University of North Carolina. It is funded by Army research and development funds set aside for this purpose under Management Decision Package (1U6S).

This report summarizes the research findings from the Army Family Research Program on the relationship of family factors to retention. These findings were presented to Army and DoD program managers and policymakers at the DoD Family Research Review Conference at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland, in February 1990. Their comments and the requests for additional copies of the presentation indicate they found the information useful for their programs.



EDGAR M. JOHNSON  
Technical Director

# FAMILY IMPACTS ON THE RETENTION OF MILITARY PERSONNEL

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### Requirement:

To support The Army Family Action Plans (1984-1989) by summarizing the relationship of family factors to retention in order to provide new information on the retention decision to military leaders and policymakers and to generate hypotheses to be evaluated in the Army Family Research Program (AFRP).

### Procedure:

Findings were summarized from the different AFRP investigations, which consisted of (1) extensive reviews of the military and civilian family and retention literature; (2) secondary analyses of the 1985 DoD Soldier and Spouse Surveys and the 1983 One Thousand Families in Europe Survey; (3) primary analysis of the 1988 Annual Survey of Army Families; and (4) new data collected on Army single parents, dual-military couples, and other Army families in the United States and Europe.

### Findings:

Family factors contributing to retention decisions include spouse support for the military member, spouse employment, family life cycle, family economics, and the family career decision process.

### Utilization of Findings:

Policymakers and Army commanders can use the findings in this report to guide their decisions concerning the family programs that are most likely to enhance retention. This report will also be of value in deriving hypotheses for the Army Family Research Program.

# FAMILY IMPACTS ON THE RETENTION OF MILITARY PERSONNEL

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# FAMILY IMPACTS ON THE RETENTION OF MILITARY PERSONNEL

## Introduction

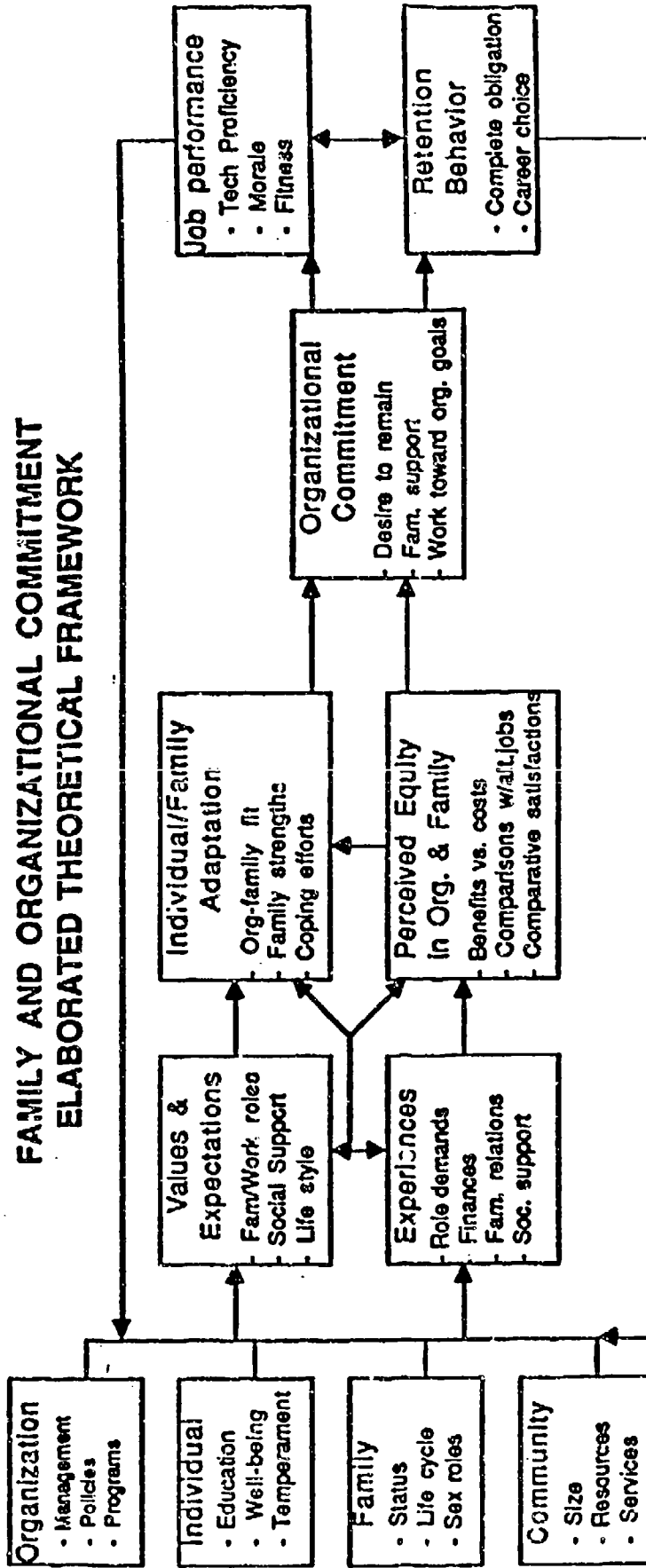
The potential contribution of family factors to the retention decisions of military personnel has become an increasingly common question. The belief that service members not only take the views of their spouses and children into account when they decide whether to remain in or leave the service but that family members play an important role in this decision is now more often espoused by policy makers and researchers alike. Family members are no longer viewed as passive recipients of the benefits and stresses associated with life in the armed services; instead, they are seen as active co-participants in the military lifestyle by sharing the demands and the satisfactions that are part of working and living in the armed services, and as such, are participants in the soldier career process.

The Army Family Research Program (AFRP) has given significant attention to the hypothesized linkage between family factors and retention decisions. AFRP is a five-year integrated research program of the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) and is sponsored by the U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center. In part, this research program is an outgrowth of the military family research that has been conducted in all the armed services for the past decade as well as a response to the research mandates of the Chief of Staff of the Army (1983).

Prior to the mid-1970's, very little research attention was devoted to military families and no retention prediction models included family variables (Etheridge, 1989). Most of the research at that time concentrated on the work environment or on pay and benefits as the primary predictors of retention decisions (Lakhani, 1988; Orthner & Pittman, 1986). In addition, some prediction models of career decision-making proposed that economic comparability between military and civilian jobs affected retention, but these models did not take into account family factors or perceptions of quality of life (Black, Warner, & Arnold, 1985). This situation changed significantly during the 1980's as more and more research focused attention on the needs and concerns of military families and their potential impacts on military personnel behavior and attitudes, including retention and attrition.

The AFRP attempted from the outset to develop a comprehensive, predictive model of the family, community and work environment factors that play a role in retention and performance related behaviors. This model is shown in Figure 1. The model was based on principles of exchange and systems theories and attempted to provide a more complete explanation of the factors that predict career decision-making in the military (Bowen, 1989; Orthner & Scanzoni, 1988). Briefly stated, the model hypothesizes that the retention decisions of married personnel are influenced by satisfactions derived from both the work and family environments, the level of adaptation of the family to the military, and the perceived comparability of the military to its civilian alternatives. These factors are influenced by characteristics of the work, community and family environments, spouse employment, and awareness of civilian alternatives.

**Figure 1**  
**FAMILY AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT**  
**ELABORATED THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**



In order to test the components of this model, previous research and behavioral science theories have been examined for their applicability to military occupational decision-making. This has led to a more comprehensive theory-grounded approach to developing knowledge about family and retention linkages, instead of relying on isolated and limited investigations in which family variables are either the primary focus or in which there are too few family variables to accurately estimate their effects.

This report summarizes the findings from the research conducted thus far by the AFRP team. This research was undertaken for two purposes: to provide new information on retention decisions to military leaders and policy-makers and to provide hypotheses and measures for the AFRP field survey that was conducted in 1989. The methods employed included extensive reviews of the military and civilian family and retention literature; secondary analyses of the 1985 DoD Soldier and Spouse Surveys and the 1983 One Thousand Families in Europe Survey; primary analysis of the 1988 Annual Survey of Army Families; and new data collected on Army single parents, dual-military couples, and focus groups of Army personnel and families in the continental United States (CONUS) CONUS and in Europe. When research outside AFRP is helpful in explaining findings, references to that research are also included.

### Findings

The findings from the AFRP research on family factors and retention are organized around the following topic areas: the contribution of spouse support, spouse employment, family life cycle, family economics, to retention decisions and the career decision process, support programs and services.

#### Contributions of Spouse Support

One of the most consistent findings in the research is the positive and significant relationship between spouse support and the retention intentions and behavior of armed forces personnel (Bowen, 1989; Etheridge, 1989; Pittman & Orthner, 1988). In every investigation that has been conducted, the retention of service members is higher among those with spouses who support their decision to stay in the service compared to those with spouses who do not. So strong is this relationship that it often outweighs other more instrumental factors such as pay, allotments and other benefits.

It should be noted, however, that the relationship between spouse support and retention decisions is likely to be reciprocal. That is, the more the service member is satisfied with his or her job, and with the quality of life in the armed forces, the more likely it is that the spouse perceives this satisfaction and supports the service member's career and commitments (Bowen, 1989; Lakhani, 1988). In addition, the level of agreement in career plans between spouses tends to be higher among officer couples than among enlisted couples (Griffith, Stewart, & Cato, 1988). This suggests that officer families may communicate more about these decisions and that their spouses' level of mutual influence may be higher than is true for enlisted families. Still, the contribution of spouse support to career decision-making is high for both groups.

There are several factors that are particularly important in encouraging spouse support for personnel retention. First of all, the presence of children tends to encourage spouse support and reenlistment, especially if there is a perception that the quality of life for children in the armed services is good (Etheridge, 1989; Griffith et al., 1988). In fact, one of the most consistent findings over the past decade has been the significant relationship between beliefs that children are likely to suffer in the military and decisions to leave the armed forces (Etheridge, 1989; Orthner, 1980).

The belief that military leaders care about the needs of families is also strongly associated with increased levels of spouse support (Griffith et al., 1988; Pittman & Orthner, 1988). In a recent investigation at an Army training installation, this was one of the most important factors predicting spouse support for an Army career (Orthner, Brody, Hill, Pais, Orthner, & Covi, 1985).

The quality of the marital relationship itself is related to spouse support (Lakhani, 1988; Pittman & Orthner, 1989), probably because service members are more likely to take into account the views of their spouses when their relationships are satisfactory and strong. An investigation comparing the impacts of marital satisfaction on the career decisions of active duty men and women found that higher quality marriages are more likely to positively impact on the career decisions of husbands, but that higher quality relationships also benefit wives by improving the fit between personal and organizational goals (Pittman & Orthner, 1989). In addition, service members are more likely to consider the views of spouses who are accompanying them than of those spouses who are not accompanying them at their current assignment (Griffith et al., 1988). Spouse support is also higher when the spouse has had military experience, either as a child or former service member. This is especially true for spouses of officers and NCOs.

Some factors tend to discourage spouse support for the service member's military career. As noted above, one of the most important is the perception that the environment is not a good place for rearing children (Etheridge, 1989; Griffith et al., 1988). This belief strongly decreases spouse support. The absence of children also tends to decrease spouse support, probably because these spouses are more independent and are more concerned about their own careers and lifestyle alternatives. In addition, many of the military benefits, such as housing, medical care and family services, may have less impact on these childless marriages.

Among military women, husband support is not a strong predictor of retention, even though wife support tends to be a fairly strong predictor for military men (Teplitzky, 1988). Likewise, the retention of military women is negatively affected by their intention to have children, especially when having children is important to them. This relationship probably indicates that some women anticipate having problems balancing their work and family roles, and this discourages them from remaining in the armed forces.

When spouses themselves are asked why they want service members to stay

beyond their current obligation, three reasons are most frequently cited: the service members satisfaction with his or her job, the security and stability of that job, and the retirement pay and benefits (Griffith et al., 1988). Infrequently mentioned are factors such as current pay and allowances, the opportunity to serve their country or the opportunity to travel. These findings suggest that, in addition to quality of life and family well-being, spouse support is indeed influenced by the economic rewards provided by the military to the service member and family. Perceptions of job satisfaction and economic stability are deemed important by spouses, as is the anticipated family security that can come from future retirement benefits.

### Contributions of Spouse Employment

The potential contribution of spouse employment to the retention decisions of married military personnel is becoming increasingly evident. The majority of military spouses are now in the labor market, either employed or looking for work (Griffith et al., 1988). This can increase their influence over the military career decision process, especially as more service families depend on second incomes to enhance their standard of living and quality of life.

AFRP research on spouse employment and its impacts on the retention decision indicates that spouse employment currently has potentially mixed consequences. Although they are in the minority today, younger spouses who do not want to be employed are most likely to support their spouse's military career (Griffith et al., 1988). Spouse employment by itself is not related to spouse support for a military career but it is related to satisfaction with the Army. The spouses who are most dissatisfied and who are likely to encourage the service member to leave the military are those who are unemployed and looking for work (Wood, 1988). These spouses are the most discouraged with military life and their spouses receive the greatest pressure to leave the armed services, irrespective of whether they are in the continental United States (CONUS) or outside the continental United States (OCONUS).

Participation in volunteer activities can serve as a substitute for work involvement among some spouses and enhance spouse support. As such, volunteer activities promote the social integration of spouses within the military community. In fact, volunteer participation is positively related to career support among the spouses of junior enlisted personnel and company grade officers (Griffith et al., 1988). It should be noted, however, that officer spouses are particularly sensitive to perceptions of their own career progress; if they are more dependent on a work career than a volunteer career for their sense of personal satisfaction, they are more likely to discourage their spouse from making a career in the armed forces.

The potential contribution of spouse employment to military career progression has become so significant that examination has been given within the AFRP to revising the dominant Annualized Cost of Leaving (ACOL) model for predicting military retention behavior. This analysis suggests that the current ACOL components of pay and alternative civilian earnings may be insufficient by themselves for explaining retention trends at the present time (Hogan, in preparation). It is necessary to include in the equation the

effect of the non-military spouse's earnings and the cost associated with that person's earnings in a military environment vis-a-vis an alternative civilian environment.

The potential impact of the revised ACOL model was simulated through analysis of the 1985 DoD data. That analysis indicated that spouse unemployment currently results in a 35 percent decrease in retention intentions among Army enlisted personnel (Wood, 1988). Furthermore, Hogan (in preparation) predict that when the wife's earnings potential is limited by her husband's military career, her satisfaction with the military will decline and her support for his career will diminish. These data and analyses suggest that spouse employment needs to be more strongly considered by military policy makers in reviewing retention enhancing initiatives.

### Contributions of Family Economics

The contribution of family economic well-being has also been examined in AFRP research and continues to be of interest in comprehensive models of retention decisions. Economics clearly plays a role in defining quality of life, both for service members and their spouses. In addition, economic forces can encourage spouse employment, as well as periodic reviews of civilian employment alternatives, factors which are increasingly being included in retention prediction models.

Research on the impact of pay and allowances on retention decisions offers mixed results. By itself, basic pay is a modest inducement to retention and a simulation of its impact found that a wage change of \$1,000 only increases retention by one percent (Wood, 1988). Likewise, satisfaction with current pay and allowances does not appear to be a significant predictor of either spouse support or service member retention when compared with other family and life style factors (Etheridge, 1989).

Economic inducements are, however, more important in some career and family life cycle stages than in others. For example, the belief that the family may be financially better off if the member is in a civilian job is a significant predictor of reenlistment intentions among first term enlisted personnel and their spouses (Dunteman, Bray, Wood, Griffith, & Ostrove, 1987). During the second enlistment term, however, the contribution of pay and benefits as well as civilian alternatives plays a less important role in retention decisions. At that time many more factors are taken into account by service members and their spouses when considering a military career. As marriage, children and other obligations increase, the career decision becomes more complex and pay and benefits have less significant weight in the decision process.

Among dual military couples, pay and benefits are also important predictors of retention intentions (Lakhani, 1988; Teplitzky, 1988). Research on these couples indicates that they are much more pragmatic in the factors that they take into account in making a career decision. This may be caused by the mutual career orientation of both the husband and wife and the fact that they may see one or both military careers being interrupted if they should decide to have children. From the data analyzed to date, it would appear that it is the woman in the relationship that is the most sensitive to the

civilian-military pay comparability issue and the most likely to encourage separation from the service if pay is perceived to be inadequate (Teplitzky, 1988).

### Contributions of Support Programs and Services

The contribution of military support programs and services to the retention decisions of personnel and families has been proposed but the data to support this are still inadequate. Attempts to define a direct relationship between the use of or satisfaction with community support services and retention decisions have thus far proven to be unsuccessful (Griffith et al., 1988; Orthner & Pittman, 1986). However, there are significant indirect relationships between community program variables and retention related outcomes, suggesting that investments in support programs are having positive impacts.

Recent improvements in the quality of support services for families have begun to produce modest but significant retention results. In an investigation of retention differences at installations with high and low quality family support programs, significantly higher retention rates were found at installations with better quality programs (Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, 1989). Even more dramatic, requests for tour extensions were greater at those installations with better quality programs, indicating that quality of life is associated with improved program quality.

Program awareness and satisfaction with support programs also has a significant indirect effect on retention. Active duty personnel and spouses who are more aware of family support services are more likely to believe that the military is responsive to family needs and to want to stay in the service (Orthner & Pittman, 1986). While use of support programs does not necessarily improve retention plans or behavior, satisfaction with these programs (whether used or not) is associated with satisfaction with the quality of life in the military, which is related to retention (Etheridge, 1989).

The research to date suggests that while community support programs overall may have a modest influence on retention, selected programs may influence retention substantially among some families (Orthner, Early-Adams, & Pollack, 1988). For example, programs that enhance employment among spouses who are currently unemployed appear likely to have substantial, demonstrated impacts on retention, as the simulation models that have been developed suggest (Wood, 1988). Likewise, programs that enhance the awareness of community support services or increase the strength of informal support networks within a military community are also likely to have positive effects on retention (Bowen, 1989; Etheridge, 1989). Programs that improve relocation and separation experiences and foster positive family adaptation to the military lifestyle are the most likely to result in higher military career support on the part of spouses and higher retention of personnel (Griffith et al., 1988). These findings suggest that community support programs and services should not always be treated as a package in their effects on retention but must be examined separately in order to determine their consequences for retention among selected family populations.

## Contributions of Family Life Cycle

It is important to understand the family life cycle, as well as the career life cycle, when examining the influence of family variables on retention decisions. AFRP research suggests the factors individuals take into account in making a career decision vary significantly across the family and career life cycles. Single persons, for example, are much more heavily influenced by job and economic factors in making their career decisions even though satisfaction with the military environment, personal freedom and the opportunity to serve one's country do play a significant part (Dunteman et al., 1987). Dual-military, childless couples tend to be similarly pragmatic in their approach to retention decisions, giving more weight to job and economic factors (Teplitzky, 1988).

With marriage and children come more complications and obligations. The factors that a military member and his or her spouse must take into account increase substantially and the importance of the "fit" between the military and family life styles becomes much more significant (Bowen, 1989). Thus, the potential impact of children, spouse employment, programs and services, and community support networks increases substantially and begins to outweigh the job and economic factors that so dominated the considerations of those in earlier stages of the life cycle. Interestingly, while marriage and parenthood tend to increase retention for both officer and enlisted male personnel, having children early in the military career reduces retention in comparison to those who wait longer before having children (Rakoff & Doherty, 1989). Among active duty women, having children tends to lower retention rates, probably because of the increased work and family conflicts and the limiting effects of children on some career enhancing assignments (Pittman & Orthner, 1989).

It would appear from the research that family life cycle serves as an important condition in determining the relationship between family variables and retention decisions. As marital and parental obligations increase, there are more opportunities for conflicts to emerge between work and family demands. Unless these conflicts can be managed, the "fit" between military and family environments will diminish and stress will increase both on the job and at home. The earlier in the career that these conflicting demands emerge, the more likely the spouse will discourage retention and the less likely the service member will remain in the military. It is apparent from the research to date that failure to seriously take into account the family life cycle will result in inadequate explanations of the relationship between family variables and military retention decisions.

## The Family Career Decision Process

Much of the research that has been conducted suggests that the retention decision is the consequence of a variety of different factors. What this research has not done is to explore the processes through which this decision is made. Several of the AFRP investigations, however, suggest that family factors are not as independent as was once believed (Orthner & Scanlon, 1988). Instead, the family and work related factors are intertwined in a much more interdependent manner than has previously been hypothesized. This



suggests that family decision-making is best represented by the unfolding of a set of mutually influencing conditions, making it difficult to separate out independent and dependent factors or variables.

Several researchers have proposed that a decision process model is indeed a better picture of how family factors impact ultimately on the retention decision. Orthner and Scanzoni (1988), refer to this as "maximum joint interests", Bowen (1989) as "reciprocal effects", Lakhani (1988) as "family welfare," and Hogan (in preparation) as "the Family ACOL". Each of these researchers base their hypotheses upon current investigations and data that is generated by couples rather than the perceptions of individuals alone. What emerges is a much more complicated but probably more accurate picture of the career decision-making process, even though research specifically examining that process itself has not been conducted at this time.

Preliminary findings from the AFRP survey confirm the potential importance of understanding joint career decision-making. When asked how they had made or were making the decision to stay in or leave the Army, the majority (67 percent) of the soldiers indicated that they and their spouses made or will make the decision together. Most of the remainder (26 percent) considered or will consider their spouses point of view in making the decision. These data suggest that career decisions cannot be examined solely from the soldier's point of view but must also take the family's needs and concerns into account.

#### Implications for Military Policy

Based on the research reviewed and conducted by the AFRP, there are several policy areas which are most likely to result in positive retention outcomes for military personnel. First of all, policies that support greater opportunities for spouse employment would appear to produce substantial dividends in retention, especially among those who are currently looking for work or anticipate looking for work in the future. Spouse unemployment in the military is much higher than in the civilian work force and unemployed spouses are the most likely to support their spouse's separation from the armed forces. Spouse employment trends do not appear to be abating so the pressure for a work environment that permits job and career continuity and progression for spouses is likely to increase.

Current programs that emphasize spouse employment training, job referrals and military spouse work priorities should be continued and expanded to the greatest extent possible. It is important for these programs to emphasize the placement of spouses in jobs that meet career goals, not just work that fills time or pays reasonable wages. In addition, policies that stabilize families in locations for longer periods of time are more likely to result in job continuity for spouses and increase their support for the service member and his or her military career. At the present time, short tour lengths inhibit job continuity and force spouses to replace jobs more frequently. This discourages career progression and forces many spouses to take lower paying jobs than their work experiences would normally allow. The underemployment that results from this is particularly discouraging to spouses and results in dissatisfaction with military service and increases pressure on the service member to leave.

A second set of policies that will enhance family support for retention is related to family relocation and separation support. Family relocations and separations are stressful for many families and often discourage family support for the military, especially among those who are unprepared for deployments and extended separations. Programs that enhance family adaptation during separations are more likely to increase family support and positive perceptions of military leadership, two keys to enhancing spouse support for military careers. These programs should include: pre-deployment briefings; pre-deployment family time, whenever possible; family status reports during deployments, especially when risks are higher; inexpensive communication with the service member; and preparation for reunion for service members and families.

Relocation stress is also related to family disorganization and lower retention support. The need for quality relocation assistance is one of the most commonly documented findings but the inadequacy of this assistance is also widespread. Besides supporting service families financially, it is very important for accurate information to be given to families as early as possible before the move. The accuracy of this information is as important as its timeliness. Much more emphasis also needs to be given to sponsorship programs for all personnel, not just officers; improvements in housing location assistance; job referrals for spouses; personal or frequent orientation programs; and more leave time for personnel whose families are also moving, especially if they do not accompany them on the move.

A third set of policies that are likely to increase retention are programs and services directed at children and youth. One of the strongest predictors of spouse career support and retention intentions is the perception that the military environment is a good place to rear children. The stronger this perception, the greater the likelihood that retention can be enhanced. Programs that provide quality child care, after school programs, youth recreation and child and youth development are likely to enhance the retention of service members. Most importantly, these programs may have the biggest impact on the higher performing personnel, especially mid-career personnel and officers for whom the needs and concerns of children are often of utmost importance.

Investments in higher quality support programs are also important. Mediocre programs do not reflect well on military leaders and detract from the quality of life in a community. It would be better for the military to offer fewer, better quality services that indicate concern for families and offer good solutions to needs than to provide a smorgasbord of inadequate programs and services that only partially fill these needs. Careful consideration must be given to maintaining quality programs during this time of budget constraints. Maintaining quality is likely to be better than maintaining quantity in programs, as long as a basic threshold of critical services are continued.

A fourth set of policies should be directed towards the overall strengthening of military families. Policies which enhance the perception that military permits better family relationships are likely to result in more military commitments, especially among many of the younger men and women who

have expectations for more shared family experiences. Research has shown that marital and parental satisfaction is related to career support and retention. Unit and installation programs and policies that support family activities are likely to pay positive dividends. Furthermore, policies that support the development of informal family support networks are also likely to support this objective. This includes community and neighborhood development strategies, programs that build support networks, and recreational programs that bring families together. If these policies are coupled with longer tour lengths, this will provide greater family stability and a more competitive military posture with the job and lifestyle opportunities that may be available to military members on the other side of the fence.

#### Implications for Research

It should be noted that much of the research that has been conducted thus far is still exploratory. Retention research is limited for three primary reasons: some of the samples selected are small or nonrepresentative; much of the research does not include information on both husbands and wives from the same marriages; and almost none of the investigations contain adequate information on the full range of work, family, and community related variables that potentially impact on retention. Thus, the weight of the evidence suggests that family variables do contribute significantly to retention but how this occurs and how this process can be encouraged to support future retention objectives is still largely unknown.

An important strategy that needs to be employed is research on the retention career decision process. This research would focus on the factors that different couples take into account and how these factors change over time. More intensive investigation than has been undertaken thus far is needed and it will require both qualitative and quantitative research in order to uncover all of the variables and decision-making strategies that are being used.

A second line of research should focus on the retention of high performing military personnel. It is increasingly apparent the armed forces should be more concerned about the retention of high performing personnel than with the retention of all personnel. This means that future research needs to focus on family and retention variables as well as personnel performance measures. Fortunately, the AFRP field investigation will provide this kind of information, perhaps for the first time. This should help define the specific retention related factors that are most taken into account by those persons judged by their supervisors to be of the caliber that the armed services wishes to retain.

Future research also needs to focus on a sufficient number of family and non-family variables so that multivariate statistical analyses can more effectively weigh the relative contribution of several competing factors to retention. Ideally, these investigations should be theoretically and empirically driven in order to include the variables that are most important in predicting retention behavior. In addition, this research should be longitudinal in order to examine the effects of changes in family and work

circumstances and their consequences for career decision-making and personnel retention.

Finally, future research should examine the consequences of specific program interventions on families and the retention of military personnel. It has been aptly demonstrated that measures of program satisfaction and use do not adequately predict retention related outcomes. These global program measures are too crude and do not take into account the specific program activities, their use, the overlapping nature of community support programs and the effectiveness of these programs in meeting family and military personnel needs. Without more detailed analyses, it is unlikely that current research can go much further in informing military policy makers and program personnel as to how to tailor their programs in order to enhance larger military objectives, such as retention and readiness. Previous research is certainly inadequate. More targeted investigations of specific programs are needed in order to measure adequately program effects.

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