WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT ARMY FAMILIES

by

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and

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U.S. Army Research Institute for
the Behavioral and Social Sciences

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The Army Family Research Program (AFRP) was conducted by the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences in response to research requirements outlined in the Chief of Staff of the Army's 1983 White Paper, and subsequent Army Family Action Plans. This program has produced over 100 scientific and applied documents and briefings which explore aspects of the relationship between the Army and its constituent families.

This report draws from over 70 scientific manuscripts, primarily from the AFRP, to answer questions often asked about Army families. The authors organize and highlight important research findings on family demography, families and retention, families and readiness, family adaptation, and community support programs. In addition, the policy, program, and leadership implications of the findings are outlined for supervisors, unit commanders, installation commanders, and Department of the Army policy makers. The report is written in a scientifically accurate but nontechnical style, so that a diverse audience of readers might find the material understandable and informative.

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FOREWORD

The U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) conducted the Army Family Research Program (AFRP) in response to requirements outlined in the 1983 White Paper by the Chief of Staff for the Army and in subsequent Army Family Action Plans. The AFRP, sponsored by the U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center (CFSC), explored the demographic characteristics of Army families, family impacts on soldier readiness and retention, adaptation of families to Army life, and families' sense of community and partnership.

AFRP results have been used by the Army staff to help resolve important family and single soldier issues identified in the Army Family Action Plan, and to modify existing Army family policies and programs.

What we discovered about Army families appears in a multitude of ARI reports, journal articles, professional presentations, and briefings. Each of these research reports examined portions of the complex relationship between the Army and its constituent families. This special report provides an integration of this sizable body of research, and supplements it with research conducted by other military and civilian agencies on Army Families. The report is written in a scientifically accurate but nontechnical style, and includes recommendations for family policies, programs, and practices for supervisors, commanders, and policy makers. Our objective is to reach the diverse audience of readers concerned with Army families

EDGAR M. JOHNSON
Director

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WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT ARMY FAMILIES

WHO SHOULD READ THIS REPORT AND WHY

This report draws on research to answer questions that are often asked about Army families. While social scientists might find this report useful as a way to tap into the research, they are not the primary audience for this report. Rather, we aim to provide information that is useful to the broad community of military and civilian personnel interested in Army families, including leaders at all levels.

We organize and highlight important research findings and provide recommendations for policies, programs, and practices derived directly from these findings. These recommendations are divided into those for **SUPERVISORS AND UNIT COMMANDERS** and those for **INSTALLATION COMMANDERS AND POLICY MAKERS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**. Implementation of these policies, programs, and practices should result in greater family adaptation to the Army, increased retention of personnel (especially those who are the best performers), and improved mission readiness.

There is no executive summary in this report because the entire report may be viewed as an executive summary for Army leaders of some of the research reports prepared in the past 10 years, especially those produced as part of the Army Family Research Program of the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences. These reports fill an entire filing cabinet.

Here are a few examples of findings reported here:
- Single parenthood is not a permanent status.
- Much research demonstrates the importance of family issues in personnel retention.
- Spouse support for a soldier staying in the Army affects retention intentions and behavior.
- A single soldier's perception of his/her partner's support for the soldier making a career in the Army has a strong positive effect on the soldier's retention intention.
- Retention is negatively related to separations from family due to duty requirements.
- Individual readiness is affected by some family characteristics (even after accounting for the effects of personal and job-related factors), including the soldier's perception of the degree to which his/her supervisor shows support for soldiers' families.
- Other family characteristics often assumed to affect individual readiness do not have such effects.
- The variable with the strongest impact on unit readiness is soldier perceptions of the amount of support the unit leaders give soldiers and their families.
- Having a family support group has a positive direct effect on unit readiness.
- The ability of the family to adapt to the military way of life is related to the degree to which the military provides formal and informal supports to the family.
- There is a significant relationship between relocation problems experienced and overall family adaptation to the Army.
- The effectiveness of family support groups appears to vary as a result of certain conditions of their environment and functioning.

- Soldiers who use family programs report higher perceptions of leader support for families than soldiers who do not use the programs.
- Army spouse employment programs positively affect spouse labor force participation.

Some recommendations for supervisors and unit commanders are:
- To increase retention of soldiers, create soldier perceptions that you care about families.
- To increase soldiers' readiness, be willing to listen when a soldier has a family problem.
- To increase unit readiness, provide activities in your unit for families.
- To facilitate family adaptation to the Army, institute formal and informal support mechanisms to reduce the stress of separations.
- To increase community support, assure troop awareness of post support services.

A few of the recommendations for installation commanders and policy makers are:
- Ensure that supervisors at all levels are familiar with the recommendations in this report..
- Avoid policies that treat soldiers primarily according to their demographic characteristics.
- To increase soldier retention, provide soldiers with work rewards and excellent quality of life programs (spouse employment, child care, community support).
- To increase soldiers' readiness, evaluate unit leaders and supervisors at least partly on the basis of their success in meeting soldier and family needs.
- To increase unit readiness, provide housing on post for those who desire it.
- To facilitate family adaptation to the Army, minimize separation and relocation.
- To increase community support, provide family member employment assistance programs.

At the front of each chapter (and in the Contents) you will find a list of some of the questions addressed by the chapter. If those questions interest you, read the chapter and examine the figures. Of course, we hope you will find all of the questions important enough to read the entire report.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

> **"The trend to a large standing Army has meant that there are now large numbers of service members and family members."**

- Why do we need to know about Army families?
- What are the trends that have increased attention to military families in the past decade or two?
- What special concerns arise out of very recent events?
- What research is used for this report?

The Army way of life has led to special concerns about soldiers' families and to policy actions to assure a decent quality of life. These concerns and ameliorative actions arise from the Army's moral and social responsibilities; they also contribute to mission readiness and personnel retention. In the best of times, policy makers need information on which to base personnel decisions. In an era of constrained resources and organizational restructuring, it is even more important to have good empirical data on which to base policy and program priorities.

General trends in the Armed Forces and in society have increased military families' impacts and necessitated research and policy attention. In the early 1980s, when the Army began systematic attempts at policy formulation to address the tensions and problems resulting from these trends, there was a lack of relevant theory and research data on which to base action. The past 10-15 years have witnessed an enormous increase in the amount of research and writing about military families. The accumulated knowledge from this research can be used to inform leaders, develop policy, design programs, and facilitate everyday personnel practices in the Army.

The purpose of this report is to provide planners and others with needed information about Army family characteristics, the effects of families on mission readiness and soldier retention, family adaptation to organizational stressors, and the effects of community support programs. This goal is achieved by presenting a systematic review and synthesis of research, primarily that conducted as part of the Army Family Research Program (AFRP) supported by the Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI). Some research performed by the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR), the RAND Corporation, and the U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center (CFSC) is also included. This report summarizes research results and cites reports and publications that serve as examples of sources, rather than providing an exhaustive literature review and synthesis. (The list of references at the end of this report includes only those explicitly cited here; more complete lists of research reports may be obtained from the performing organizations.) Particular emphasis is given to findings that have implications for policies, programs, and practices.

The relationships among family characteristics, their determinants, and their outcomes are complex. Figure 1-1 shows a conceptual schema that is useful for understanding how specific findings fit in the system of relationships. Represented in the figure are several categories of important variables and some of the relationships among variables in these categories. On the left of the figure are general characteristics of the military and of U.S. social structure and

Figure 1-1. Army-Family System Model

```
┌─────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────────┐
│      Military       │      │   Army Family Structure  │
│                     │      │                          │
│ Large standing force│      │  Percentage married      │
│ End of conscription │      │  Minority representation │         ┌──────────────────────┐
│ Technological       │──────▶│  Percentage women        │         │      Retention       │
│   developments      │      │  Civilian wives of       │         │                      │
│ Combat-to-support   │      │    soldiers in labor     │         │  Intention to stay   │
│   ratio             │      │    force                 │         │  Actual retention    │
│ Force structure     │      │  Single parents          │         └──────────────────────┘
└─────────────────────┘      │  Dual military couples   │
         ▲                   └──────────────────────────┘
         │                                ▲
┌─────────────────────┐            ╭──────────────╮
│   Social Structure  │            │    Army      │
│                     │            │  Policies    │
│ Cohort size         │            │  Programs    │
│ Labor force         │            │  Practices   │
│   characteristics   │            ╰──────────────╯
│ Family structure    │                                          ┌──────────────────────┐
│ Economic factors    │                                          │      Readiness       │
└─────────────────────┘                                          │                      │
         ▲                                                        │  Individual readiness│
         │                                                        │  Unit readiness      │
┌─────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────────┐         └──────────────────────┘
│      Culture        │      │   Army Family Culture    │
│                     │      │                          │
│ Social values about │      │ Service members' values  │
│   family and gender │──────▶│   and expectations for   │
│ Attitudes toward    │      │   family life            │
│   work              │      │ Family adaptation to     │
└─────────────────────┘      │   military               │
                             │ Satisfaction of family   │
                             │   needs                  │
                             │ Family well-being        │
                             └──────────────────────────┘
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culture. The boxes in the middle column depict aspects of Army family structure and culture (including family adaptation). The two military outcomes of retention and readiness appear in the boxes on the right. The oval in the center of the diagram represents Army policies, programs, and practices that affect the system's dynamics and which are the focus of recommendations derived from research. In other chapters of this report, as research results focus on particular variables and their relationships, this model can be used to place those findings within the larger system. The next section summarizes some of the dynamics of these relationships, with emphasis on military and social trends affecting Army families.

Trends Affecting Importance of Family Issues

In the past several decades, various trends have combined to increase attention to military families. One that started after World War II is that the Army has moved to a large standing peacetime force. Unlike the mobilization model of military personnel followed in the early part of this century, we maintain a force containing large numbers of uniformed personnel.

The trend to a large standing force has meant that there are now large numbers of service members and family members. There has been a concomitant loss of sense of community (which is parallelled in civilian neighborhoods). The demands of the military life style, such as frequent relocation and separation, coupled with the size of the military community, has created the need to provide formal support services to fulfill various functions. While recent changes in

the world situation and the nature of perceived military threat have led to preoccupation with downsizing the U.S. Armed Forces, we must not lose sight of the fact that the streamlined force will still be much larger than active duty peacetime forces of earlier eras.

Military technology requires high levels of technical training. This has various implications for military personnel, including greater emphasis on retention of trained and experienced personnel. The longer people are retained in the military, the greater the proportion of married service members. Retention of these older, experienced soldiers requires that they be satisfied with Army family life.

Readiness is also affected by family adaptation and family satisfaction with treatment by the Army. Soldiers who are worried about their families because the family is having difficulty and/or whose families are dissatisfied with life in the Army will not perform well on the job. While family problems can always diminish readiness, in deployment situations, soldiers distracted by concerns about families back home can increase risks of injury and death.

Societal changes in family patterns and gender roles have affected military families in profound ways. Most civilian and military wives no longer derive their identities solely from their husbands. Men and women expect their marriages to be more egalitarian and companionate than those of their parents' generation. Women, including those with minor children, are in the labor force in unprecedented proportions. This increased employment is due not only to gender role changes, but also to greater quality of life aspirations and an economy that requires two incomes to meet expectations. Higher divorce rates and changed standards of sexual behavior have led to increased numbers of single parent families.

The changes in the culture and the structure of American families generally have created many changes in the nature of military family life. The demography of military families has changed, with more women, more dual military couples, and more sole parents. The majority of civilian wives of military men are in the labor force.

Military Family Life

Against the backdrop of these trends is the constellation of characteristics of the military lifestyle. While other occupations share some of these characteristics, the Armed Forces are nearly unique in the combination of demands they place on their service members and their families. These aspects of Army life include the risk of injury and death, frequent geographic relocation, family separations, long duty hours and shift work, unpredictability of work hours, residence in foreign countries, and sometimes isolation from the civilian society. The military environment is characterized by masculine norms which place high value on efficiency, hierarchy, dominance, power, and control of emotions. These norms are not always compatible with family life.

Special concerns arise out of recent events. The experiences of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm have heightened awareness of family issues. Media attention during these operations made the American public aware of the changes in military families. The small minority of service members who resisted deployment due to family responsibilities or who deployed leaving unsupervised children raised family policy questions and produced a great fury of activity and legislation. These concerns also focussed attention within the Army on the need for realistic family care plans, as well as for developing policy to deal with the logistics of arranging for families in the event of deployment of large numbers of soldiers.

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The downsizing of the Army has increased the need for information on how to retain high-quality personnel and minimize family distress. We are on uncharted ground with the largest-ever peacetime contraction of military forces recruited as volunteers. Many of these service members had hoped for a career but are now being forced (or enticed) out of service. All these changes have led to the need to know more about how family members relate to the Army and to each other. Recommendations for development of policies, programs, and practices need to be based on in-depth information about the needs of Army personnel and their families.

Attention to Military Families

Before the 1960s there was very little research and policy attention to military families. The 1960s saw the beginning of the provision of formal organizational supports to families with the establishment of Army Community Service. During the past two decades, there has been an enormous increase in research and policy attention to military families. Among the activities in the Army that demonstrate the rise in attention to families in the 1980s are the series of Army Family Symposia, the Army Family White Paper, and the Army Family Action Plans.

Many family programs and services have been developed at various levels in the Army. Formal support services offered by installations include childcare centers, spouse employment programs, relocation information and sponsorship, emergency loans, budget counseling, family counseling, training for parenthood, and workshops on coping with separation and reunion, to name just a few.

Systematic attention to family issues at the unit level is evident in such initiatives as the appointment of rear detachment officers during deployments, activities for families sponsored by units, unit family newsletters, and family support groups.

The burgeoning of all of these programs and practices began taking place before systematic and large-scale efforts at research to identify family needs and to evaluate the programs and practices. Earlier studies tended to be on small, unrepresentative samples. Many were based on clinical populations of service members and their families seeking mental health treatment.

The amount of research on military families grew exponentially during the 1980s and into the 1990s. The more recent research has included small, in-depth, and systematic qualitative investigations as well as complementary surveys of large numbers of service members and their spouses.

The reports from all of this research can fill a library. This report is one attempt at providing a brief overview of some of the findings of the research. It is not intended to be exhaustive nor is it written primarily for researchers. Researchers interested in the technical aspects of the research should go directly to the technical reports cited here. Readers interested in a more comprehensive review of research on military families should consult other sources, including other Army research agencies and the Military Family Resource Center. The goal here is to call special attention to findings with special policy relevance. We provide some recommendations of policies, programs, and practices that the research tells us can be especially beneficial to the Army and the families of its personnel.

The recommendations are divided into two categories according to the organizational level for their implementation. Some are policies or programs that require action by installation commanders and/or the Department of the Army. Others are practices at the unit or supervisory level that research shows have positive outcomes. The significant demonstrated value of these

leadership behaviors calls for their being included in the training of Army leaders at all levels. Leaders should know these good practices, perform them routinely, and encourage the same behaviors in their subordinates who supervise others. Supervisors who exhibit these behaviors should be recognized and rewarded by higher level unit commanders.

The outcomes that concern us are family adaptation, mission readiness, and the retention of high performing soldiers. The research shows that quality of life issues for soldiers and their families, such as soldier satisfaction with various aspects of work and family life in the Army and spouse satisfaction with Army life (and employment opportunities), affect these outcomes.

The Army Family Research Program (AFRP)

The research conducted as part of ARI's AFRP used multiple methodologies, including systematic and exhaustive literature reviews, focus group interviews, analysis of service records, ratings of unit readiness, and supervisory ratings of individual soldiers. But the largest effort, and the cornerstone of much of the analysis, was a survey of individual soldiers and the spouses of married soldiers in the sample.

The sample was selected using a three-stage hierarchical sample design, with geographical areas sampled first, then operational Army units, and then soldiers (and the spouses of married sample soldiers).[27] Sampled soldiers represent all service members of ranks private and above, living within 50 miles of the post, and in units with at least 20 people. Usable questionnaires were completed in 1989 by 11,035 soldiers and 3,277 spouses from 528 units in 34 geographical locations.

The group-administered soldier questionnaire covered such topics as educational and family background, reasons for joining the Army, perceptions of the Army unit's leaders and readiness, comparisons of Army and civilian life, job satisfaction, perceptions of work and family responsibilities, attitudes of friends and family toward the soldier remaining in the Army, retention intentions, spouse's employment preferences and experiences, family composition, childcare arrangements, relocation experiences, and ratings of usefulness of Army programs and services.

The spouse self-administered questionnaire included the following topics: educational and military service background, employment, relocation and separation experiences, attitudes toward the Army and toward soldiers staying in the Army, gender role attitudes, perceptions of soldiers' current duty assignment and leaders' behaviors, comparisons of Army and civilian life, marital satisfaction, childcare arrangements, and ratings of usefulness of Army programs and services.

These surveys, together with the other information collected, much of which can be specifically matched to survey respondents (such as ratings of soldier performance), provide a wealth of data on a large-scale, systematic sample of Army personnel and their families.

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CHAPTER 2: DEMOGRAPHICS OF ARMY FAMILIES

> **"Unlike the bachelor armies of yesteryear, today's personnel are likely to be married."**

- What is the current demographic profile of the Army?
- How has this demographic portrait changed over time (in ways that are related to family issues)?
- What percentage of personnel are married and how does this vary by rank?
- What is the representation of women?
- What is the employment status of spouses?
- What are the implications of demographic factors for retention, readiness, family adaptation, and community support programs?

The ability to plan for meeting the needs of Army personnel and their families requires information about the distribution of personnel on certain "demographic" characteristics. This chapter summarizes some of the available data.

Researchers have noted that "there are relatively few sources of completely accurate demographic information."[55] However, combining the 1989 AFRP survey with other data sources produces a clear picture of the distribution of Army personnel on characteristics important for family issues. For some characteristics, there is no one precise number available, so a range should be used. This chapter highlights only certain aspects of the picture. It also identifies factors that have led to the demographics in order to understand the changes that are likely in the future.

The Married Nature of the Force

Unlike the bachelor armies of yesteryear, today's personnel are likely to be married. Among both enlisted personnel and officers, the higher the rank, the greater the percentage who are married. While most enlisted personnel are not married when they enter service, by the time they reach the rank of sergeant, most are married. This same relationship between rank and marital status was true over 20 years ago. What has changed over time is the composition of the enlisted force, with more career soldiers and fewer first-termers than in the past. The impact of this can be seen in Figure 2-1, which shows data over time (from several sources) on the percentage of enlisted personnel who are married; similar data for officers are shown in Figure 2-2.

A main reason for the increase in the proportion of married personnel has been the emphasis on retention of enlisted personnel beyond the first term. **The longer people stay in the Army, the older they are and the more likely they are to be married and have children.** (Figure 2-3).

It is likely that the military force of the near future will continue to consist primarily of married soldiers. Unless there is a sharp shift away from retention of soldiers beyond the first term and

Figure 2-1. Percentage of Enlisted Personnel Married:
Various Data Sources, 1952-1991
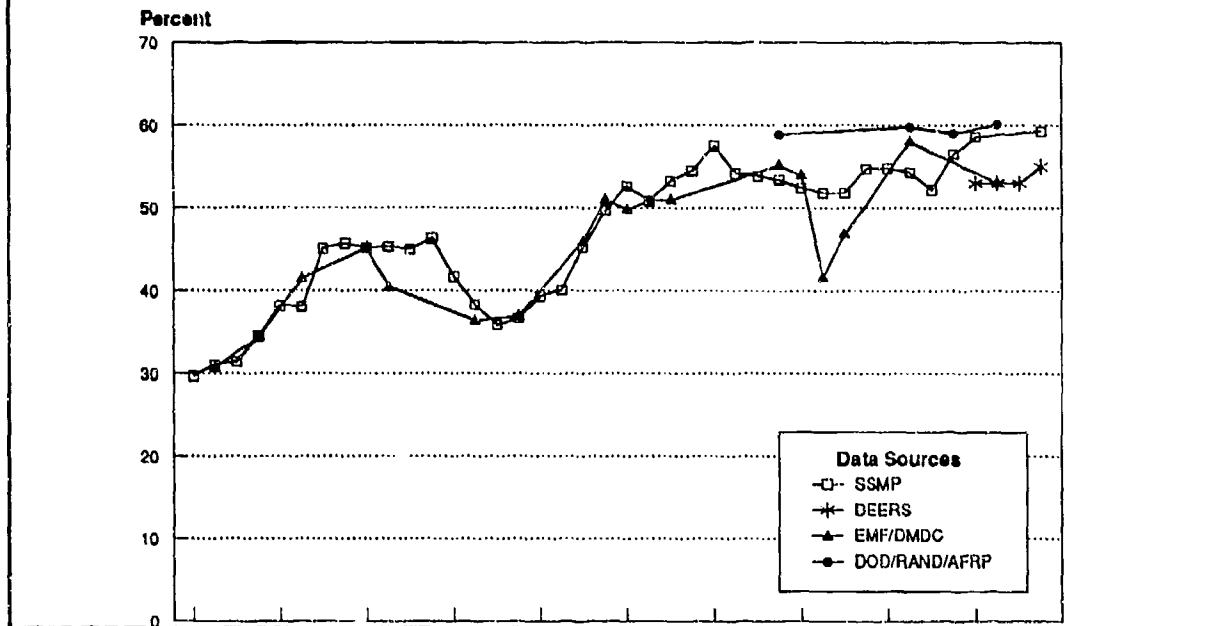
Figure 2-2. Percentage of Officers Married:
Various Data Sources, 1952-1991

Source: Schumm, Bell, and Tran, 1992b

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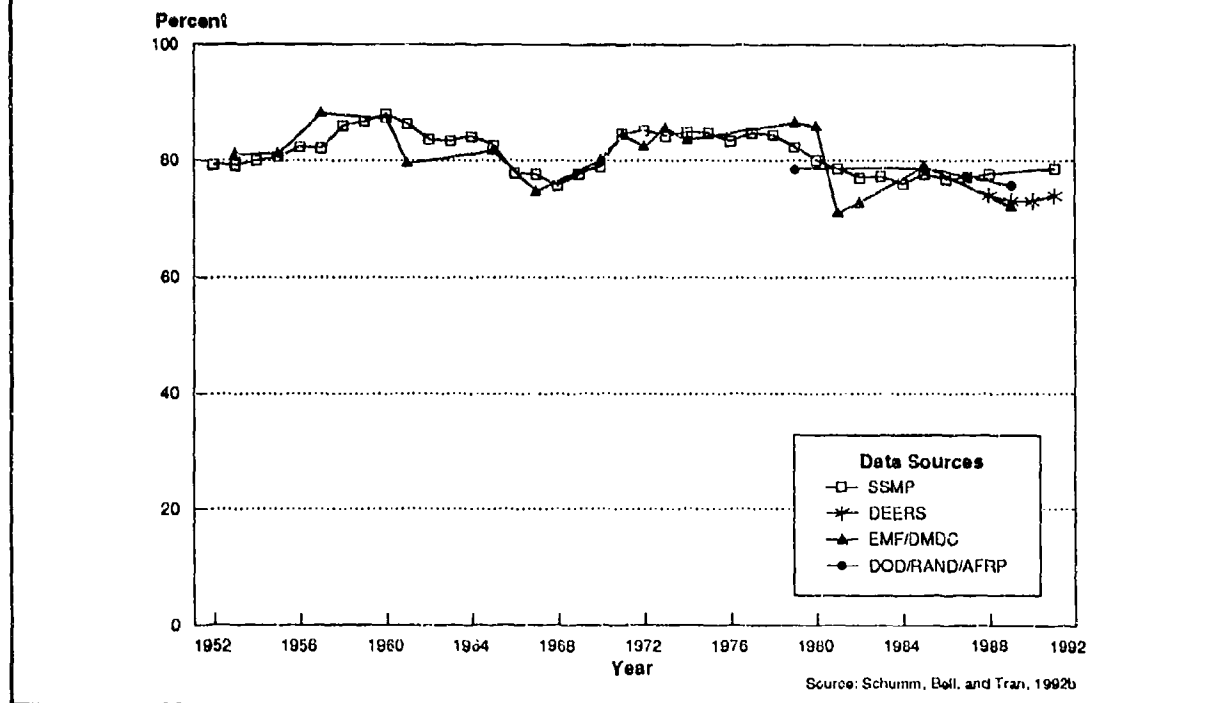
Figure 2-3. Percentage of Army Personnel Married by Gender and Pay Grade
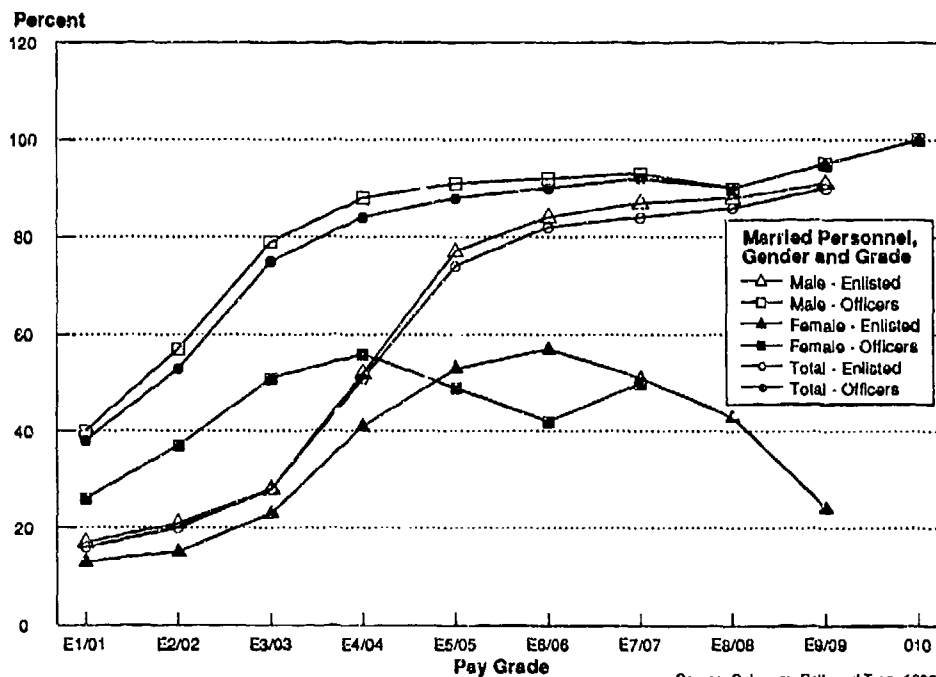
Source: Schumm, Bell, and Tran, 1992b

an emphasis instead on increasing proportions of junior enlisted personnel, such a turnaround is unlikely.

Concerns are sometimes expressed about the purportedly increasing numbers of young married service members and their quality of life and readiness. Reliable trend data are not available and junior enlisted personnel are often underrepresented in surveys. Approximately 2% - 3% of currently married enlisted soldiers are under the age of 20.[55] While this figure is small, these soldiers and their spouses tend to have fewer resources (financial, personal, and social) than older service couples and therefore may require more support from the Army to adapt to military stressors (Chapter 5).

Obviously, the greater the percentage of Army personnel who are married, the greater is the need for policies, programs, and practices to be responsive to family needs -- and the larger the number of people who are served by family programs.

Increasing Representation of Women

The combination of shortages of high-quality male recruits at the outset of the all-volunteer force and changing roles for women in civilian society led to increased numbers of women soldiers. In 1972 fewer than 2% of Army soldiers were women; by 1992 this figure had climbed to about 12%.

In general, family roles have been more central for women and families have been "greedier" for women than for men (in the sense that sacrifices for families were more likely to be expected and considered legitimate). However, social norms are changing in this regard and it is now

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common for women to balance work and family roles. Given the greedy nature of military service with its great control over soldiers' lives,[60,61] it is not surprising to find that women in the Army are less likely to be married and to have children than their male peers (Figure 2-3).[55]

While women soldiers are more likely to get married with increasing rank, women in the three highest enlisted grades are less likely to be married than more junior enlisted women (Figure 2-3). It remains to be seen whether this pattern will continue as women advance in rank who entered service during the time when Army policies were more supportive of families in general and of women in particular. (It was not until the 1970s that policies changed to allow women to remain in service when they became pregnant or to receive dependents' benefits for family members on the same basis as male soldiers.)

The future for women's representation in the Army is uncertain because of force reductions and shifting policies regarding their eligibility for combat positions. As the force is reduced in size, one of the main thrusts for the increased recruitment of women is weakened. However, the social and cultural changes that have led to greater acceptance of military women continue. Further, the demonstrated contributions of women in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm as well as public attention to their sacrifices in participating, reduce the political influence of interest groups seeking to revert to the more exclusionary policies of the past. The most likely trend is for women's percentage to remain about the same or to increase slowly.

Single Parents in the Army

The number of single parents in the Army surely has increased over the past twenty years, though it is difficult to obtain accurate estimates for earlier years. The increase indirectly results from rising divorce rates and increased acceptance of out-of-wedlock births in the U.S., and, more directly, results from policy changes allowing unmarried service members with minor children to remain in service.

Single parenthood is difficult to measure and has at least two major meanings. One is the situation in which a currently unmarried person has custody of at least one minor child (custodial definition). The other is the situation in which the person has financial responsibility for the child as a dependent (legal definition), but the child is living with someone else. The two situations have different implications for Army family issues (such as family adaptation, community support, and readiness), as well as different distributions in the Army generally and different relationships to rank, gender, etc.

As with other demographic characteristics, different data sources produce different figures. The AFRP survey finds 4.4% of Army personnel are single parents by the legal definition, while 2.3% are custodial single parents.[55] Most data sources show that the majority of single parents (using either definition) in the Army are men. However, women are proportionally more likely than men to have custody of their children and the AFRP survey finds that 57% of the custodial single parents are women.

Possibly the most important result of the AFRP research regarding single parenthood is the finding that this is not a permanent status. There are service members who have been single parents in the past who are not currently single parents because they have subsequently married; 6.2% of soldiers have been single parents at some time (compared to 2.3% currently). This figure is higher for more senior people. This finding has obvious implications for policies

affecting the retention of single parents. ... .e proportion of current soldiers who would be lost if single parents had been forcibly discharged is nearly three times the proportion who are currently single parents. This, among other findings (such as those showing that single parenthood is not a good predictor of individual readiness), argues against treating single parents according to this status alone.

Dual Military Couples

The increase in the number of dual military couples (where both husband and wife are in the armed forces) is a direct result of the increase in the number of women in the military. Data for the years 1989 to 1991 show approximately 7 to 10% of all soldiers are in dual military marriages. The percentage of dual military marriages can be calculated in several ways and the method affects the precise figure.[55] Figure 2-4 shows the trends in dual military marriages in the Army over time (as determined from multiple data sources using different calculation methods).

Spouse Employment

A demographic trend with profound impacts on Army family life is the rise in the percentage of spouses who are in the labor force. This figures has increased from about 27% in 1972 to between 60% and 70% in 1992. The reasons for this trend can be found in the social and cultural changes in U.S. society generally. (See Chapter 5 for more discussion of this trend and its implications.)

Single Soldiers

Attention to families often focusses only on service members with spouses and/or children and ignores single soldiers' family concerns. Research shows that many soldiers who have never

Figure 2-4. Percentage of Soldiers in Dual Military Marriages

Source: Schunm. Bell, and Tran. 1992b
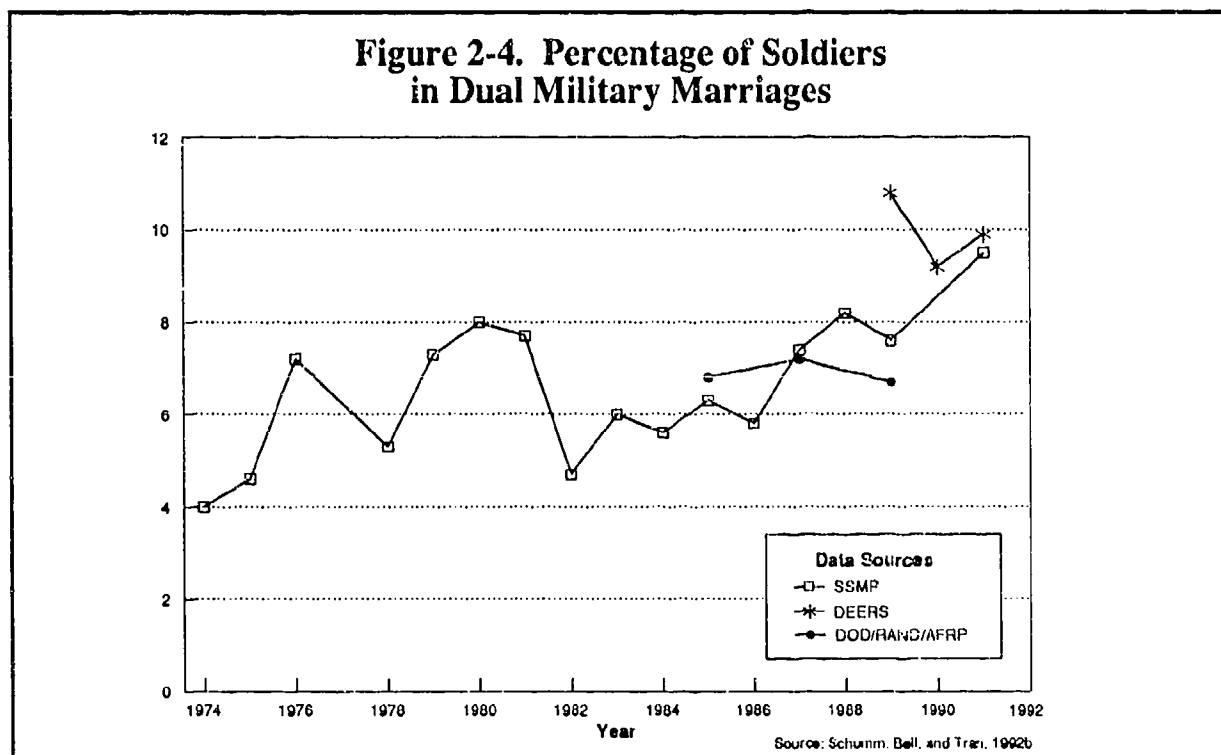
been married have personal relationships that influence their lives and affect their attitudes and behavior, such as their job performance and intentions to remain in the Army.[37]

Implications of Demographic Trends

Some of the implications of demographic trends in Army families are obvious. Others are not so clear, and empirical results often fail to confirm stereotypes and expectations. Throughout the rest of this report, attention is paid to the effects of many of these characteristics and trends. These are not repeated here. A few findings deserve attention here.

The effects of demographic variables on retention, readiness, and family adaptation are covered later in the relevant chapters of this report. In general, soldiers' demographic characteristics (such as gender, race, and marital and parental status) do not predict behavior as well as do their other characteristics (such as age, rank, and education). It would be a mistake to assume that all soldiers in a demographic category (such as women, single parents, dual military couples, or service members with employed spouses) share similar behaviors and performance and to develop policies that treat them all alike.

While policies, programs, and practices should be responsive to potential family needs in order to improve family adaptation and soldier retention, and readiness, many potential personnel policies based solely on demographic status would be ill-advised. For example, a policy of discharging all single parents (which could be opposed on other grounds as well) would result in greater personnel losses than is apparent; research demonstrates that single parenthood is often a temporary status, and many more service members have been in this status in the past than currently are.

Figures 2-5 and 2-6 show some of the recommendations for policies, programs, and practices that can be derived from the research results.

**Figure 2-5. For Supervisors and Unit Commanders:
Policies, Programs, and Practices Related to Soldier Demographics**

- Do not treat soldiers primarily according to their demographic characteristics.

    ✓ Respond to soldiers' needs, resources and behaviors.

- Provide support for soldiers in their family transitions.

    ✓ Recognize that single soldiers have personal relationships (girlfriends, boyfriends) that affect them.

    ✓ Recognize that single parenthood is often a temporary status.

    ✓ Provide reasonable accommodation during stressful family transitions (marriage, parenthood, separation, divorce, bereavement).

    ✓ Provide unit programs and activities for soldiers in various family stages.

    ✓ Know about on-post and off-post support services and programs.

    ✓ Refer soldiers to appropriate support sources and programs (such as pre-marriage counseling, support groups for single parents, financial counseling, etc.).

**Figure 2-6. For Installation Commanders and DA Policy Makers: How to
Develop Policies, Programs, and Practices Related to Soldier Demographics**

- Train leaders at all levels on family demographics and their implications.

- Avoid policies that treat soldiers primarily according to their demographic characteristics.

    ✓ Develop policies and programs that respond to soldiers' needs, resources, and behaviors.

- Provide support services for soldiers regardless of marital and parental status.

    ✓ See other chapters of this report for specific service recommendations.

- Provide support services and accommodations to help with family transitions (marriage, parenthood, separation, divorce, and bereavement).

CHAPTER 3: ARMY FAMILIES AND PERSONNEL RETENTION

> **"Much research...demonstrates clearly the importance of family issues in the retention of Army personnel..."**

- What are the impacts of families and family issues on retention?
- What affects service member satisfaction with Army family life?
- What determines family satisfaction with the military way of life?
- What are the effects of spouse employment on satisfaction and retention?
- How do leadership practices affect retention?
- From the research, what do we know about how to foster retention?

Importance of Retention

Several trends in the military have led to an increased emphasis on retention of career personnel. Rather than having a force consisting primarily of junior enlisted personnel who remain for one tour of duty, the Army has been moving to a career force. While the end of conscription is partially responsible for this trend, so is the increase in technological training required to perform military jobs. The time and cost involved in bringing people to levels of proficiency mean that the services must retain these trained personnel for long enough to realize a return on the investment. The longer people remain, the more likely they are to be married.

The current process of military downsizing has deflected attention away from retention. There may be a tendency for some policy makers in this era of organizational contraction to regard attention to families as less necessary now. But this view is a shortsighted one. There is still a great need to retain qualified personnel. In fact, given the variety of missions that the Army may be called on to perform, there is an even greater need during this period to retain the most able people - especially those with the capability to learn new jobs as their units must respond flexibly to changing mission requirements. Further, the need in the future to accomplish organizational missions with fewer people necessitates policies and programs that assure the continued retention of this downsized career force.

Impact of Family on Retention

There is much research, both qualitative and quantitative, that demonstrates clearly the importance of family issues in the retention of Army personnel, including those who are considered the most able. The most recent research of the AFRP complements and supports findings from earlier studies. While some of the research uses retention intentions and other studies measure actual retention behavior, the two measures are strongly related and, in general, the same factors are demonstrated to affect retention. Summaries of findings are contained in several reviews of research.[20,35] There is remarkable consistency in findings about how family characteristics and spouse attitudes affect retention.

Figure 3-1 displays a model of the variables that affect retention. This figure is derived from the empirical research of the AFRP (which is consistent with earlier research). For simplicity, the figure does not display all of the likely causal relationships.

Most soldiers are single when they join the Army. However, most marry within a few years of entry. In general, married soldiers are more committed to an Army career than single soldiers (especially for males).[24,44] Having children increases retention of male soldiers, but decreases retention of female soldiers. This greater retention of men when they are married and have children is not just due to their being in service longer because this finding holds within years of service and rank categories. For both married and unmarried soldiers, their perceptions of the compatibility of Army and family life affects their intentions to remain for a full career.

As soldiers proceed through their Army careers, job security and retirement benefits become increasingly important in their retention decisions. The negative effects of low levels of personal freedom and the interference of Army work requirements with family activities are tolerated because of the job security provided by the military career and the desire to stay in long enough to be eligible for retirement benefits.[10]

The current downsizing environment has meant a loss of job security and uncertainty regarding continued retirement benefits. Attention must be paid to providing alternative sources of commitment to a military career for future service members. Further, special actions may be required to retain high-performing and experienced personnel who are currently remaining in service, once these people reach eligibility for retirement benefits. Research findings can identify other factors affecting retention that are amenable to policy intervention.

Figure 3-1. Model of Retention

(This model is most applicable to male service members with civilian wives.)
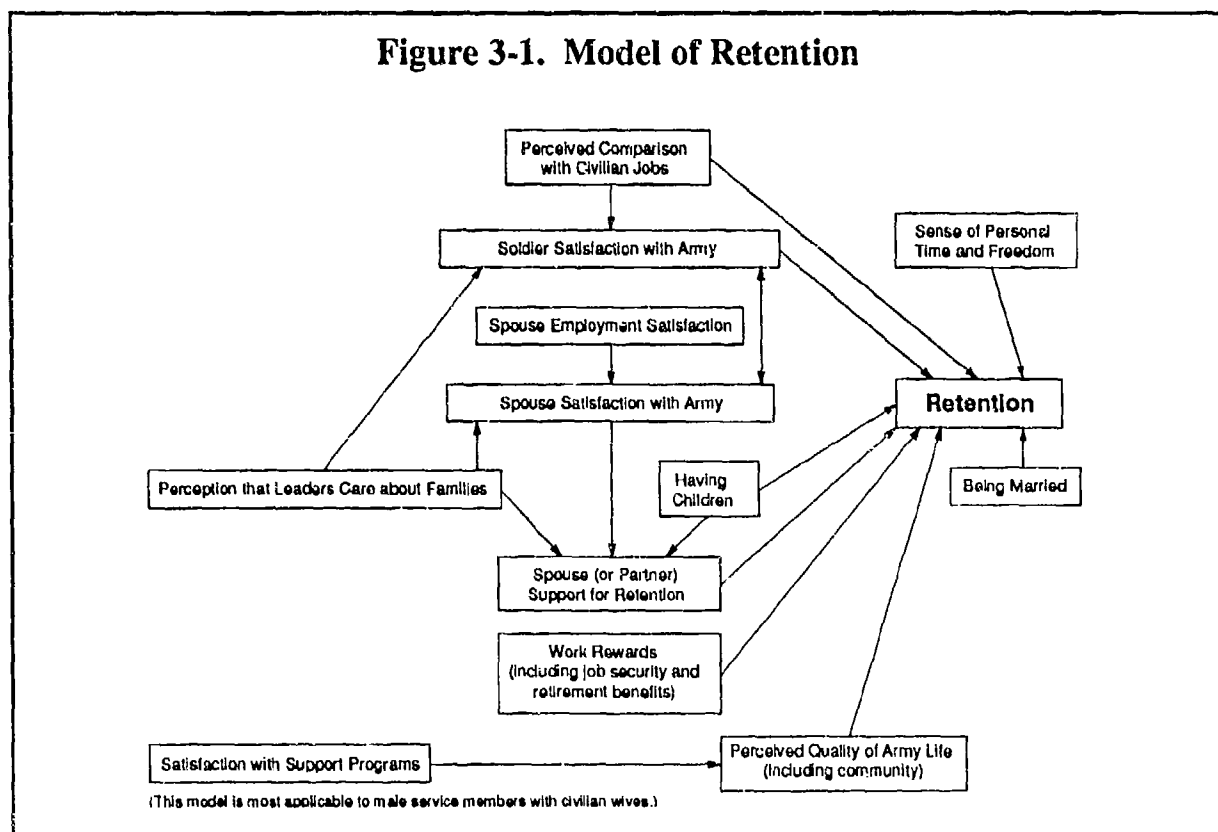
A consistent and strong finding (at least for male soldiers married to civilian women) is that the degree of **spouse support for a soldier staying in the Army affects retention intentions and behavior.** As some AFRP researchers emphasize in their conclusions, "the Army spouse and family are extremely powerful influencing factors in the intention of the soldier to remain for a full career. This study very clearly demonstrates the strong influence Army spouses have on the goals, attitudes and career intentions of soldiers and officers."[24]

There is a reciprocal relationship between soldier attitudes about the Army and spouse attitudes; that is, when service members are happy with their work and satisfied with Army life, their spouses are more likely to be positively disposed to the soldier staying in the Army.[35] However, it is clear that **spouse attitudes have an impact on soldier attitudes and behavior above and beyond the soldiers' initial attitudes. There is even evidence that the spouse's attitude sometimes has more influence on the soldier's actual reenlistment behavior than the soldier's own predilection**[6,34] and that a wife's attitude toward her husband's Army unit sometimes affects his subsequent morale more than his morale affects her subsequent attitude.[47]

An innovative AFRP project focuses on the boyfriend and girlfriend relationships of young single soldiers and the impact of these relationships on several outcomes, including retention intentions.[37] The report also provides comparisons with married soldiers. Never-married (and non-parent) soldiers under 30 years of age are categorized into three groups: "independents" (those with no relationships), "involved" (those with relationships but with little or no discussion of marriage plans), and "committed" (those with relationships and frequent discussion of marriage).

The association between relationship status and retention differs by the soldier's race and gender. For example, for men, the greater the commitment to the relationship, the higher the probability of retention. For women, independents are most likely to intend to remain in the Army; once they have a relationship, the greater the commitment, the higher the likelihood of retention. The most important finding of all is that **a single soldier's perception of his/her partner's support for the soldier making a career in the Army has a strong positive effect on the soldier's retention intention.** This effect is similar to the effect of spouse support on retention of married soldiers.

An interesting research finding is that there is a gender difference in the factors affecting retention of married Air Force personnel. Family variables such as spouse support for a military career affect the retention of married male service members more than married female service members.[43] Social support from their military peers (in the form of having people to confide in) seems to be more important for the retention of military women.

Given the importance of wives' support to male soldiers' retention, it is important to understand what affects this support. The major reasons given by spouses themselves for such support are service member's satisfaction with his or her job, the security of the job, and retirement benefits.[25] This finding, like its counterpart for service members' own attitudes, presages retention difficulties in the future as the current downsizing makes service members and their spouses acutely aware of loss of job security.

Other factors are positively associated with spouse support, including the presence of children, especially if the military is perceived as a good place to raise children.[20,25] **Spouses' support for retention is also strongly affected by the degree to which they perceive that military leaders care about families.**[25] This may be an area that is amenable to action at all

organizational levels, especially when other aspects of the job and career are becoming less attractive (such as the loss of job security).

The degree to which soldiers find rewards in their work has a direct effect on their retention.[24] Included in the measurement of work rewards are soldier ratings of the following: opportunities for advancement, pay, retirement benefits, type of work, treatment by supervisors, opportunities to use abilities, job security, work rules and regulations, opportunity for excitement/adventure, and opportunity to serve the country.

As we shall see in Chapter 4, the degree to which soldiers perceive that their leaders support them and their families contributes positively to readiness. Indeed, soldiers who perceive such support are actually given higher ratings of readiness than those who see their leaders as less supportive. Thus, **the research shows that the same behaviors by leaders that contribute to retention of personnel also contribute to readiness.**

Spouse employment experiences also affect retention decisions, but the relationship is not a simple direct one. Spouse employment is related to spouse satisfaction with the Army.[35,72] Unemployment is clearly associated with spouse dissatisfaction and service members' intent to leave service.[72] In general, it is not whether a spouse is employed or not that is likely to affect support for soldier retention. Rather, what is important is the extent to which the spouse's employment outcomes (whether employed, type of work, pay, etc.) meet his/her expectations.[53]

There is strong evidence that reenlistment decisions should be viewed as being made within the context of the family or household, rather than the individual. Spouse employment figures prominently in such an approach, called the family Annualized Cost of Leaving (ACOL) model.[26] Research using this model shows that a permanent change of station (PCS) move during a year costs a civilian employed spouse on average 10 weeks of work. The family ACOL research suggests that reducing the frequency of PCS moves by increasing the average tour length by 12 months would increase spouse wages by an average of 6% and increase the probability of reenlistment by about 3%.[26]

Spouse employment circumstances are quite different among the spouses of different categories of personnel. Among wives of junior enlisted men, there is a relatively high proportion who want to work but cannot get a job. (This is true of those couples both with and without children.) Among junior officers, the vast majority of wives without children are employed and relatively few without jobs want employment. While fewer junior officers' wives with children than those without children are employed, a larger proportion of mothers (than non-mothers) without jobs actually want to be employed.[24]

It is clear from much research that the satisfaction of spouse employment desires will play an even greater role in future retention of service members. Like their peers married to civilians, the proportion of Army spouses who desire to be employed has been increasing. Unemployment and underemployment of spouses will result in service members leaving service.

Changes in Army missions and structures in the 1990s are likely to affect spouse employment and spouse satisfaction with the military. Since frequent relocation interferes with spouse employment and career progression, the expected greater geographic stability of Army personnel and their families has the potential for improving spouse employment outcomes. However, the research indicates that effects are likely to vary as a function of the characteristics of the location to which personnel are assigned (Chapter 5). Those soldiers in areas of high employment opportunity for their spouses may be satisfied and retained, whereas those "stuck" in areas with

limited spouse employment opportunities may be dissatisfied and want to leave the Army.

Army Life Experience and Retention

Retention is negatively related to separations from family due to duty requirements because service members not accompanied by their spouses are less likely to intend to remain in the Army.[72] Research also demonstrates that, for the spouses of junior soldiers (both officer and enlisted), there is a relationship between how well they feel they handled their last extended separation and their support for an Army career.[16] Thus, retention of junior enlisted personnel and junior officers can be enhanced by reducing the number of extended separations and by helping to ensure a spouse's successful separation experience.

Retention intention is positively related to service members' perceptions of the quality of Army community life (including ratings of its quality as a place for children to grow up, quality of medical care for family members, programs and services for families, quality of community, and opportunity to make good friends).[24] There is also an association between retention and the use of services[19] (although this finding does not account for the effects of respondent's rank).

Retention intention is also strongly positively associated with sense of personal time and freedom (measured with items covering working hours and schedule, personal freedom, and time for personal/family life).[24]

Soldiers who rate their Army jobs high in comparison to civilian jobs are more likely to intend to remain in the Army than those who view civilian jobs more favorably.[24]

Some of the factors that affect retention of high-performing soldiers are different from those that affect retention of soldiers rated lower by their supervisors.[45] **High- performing soldiers are most likely to intend to remain in service when they perceive Army life as providing opportunities for career advancement, service to the country, and excitement and adventure, as well as comparing favorably with civilian life on spouse employment opportunities and quality of life for children.** Once the effects of these dimensions of perceived quality of life in the Army are accounted for, more material job characteristics (such as pay, retirement benefits, and job security) affect the retention of young soldiers at lower performance levels but do not add to the retention of higher performers.

Policy Recommendations

Research on family factors in retention suggests that retention can be improved by certain policies, programs, and practices at various organizational levels. These are shown in Figures 3-2 and 3-3.

Further suggestions on how to accomplish some of these outcomes are contained in other chapters of this report. For example, Figure 3-3 recommends increasing spouse employment satisfaction. Suggestions for how to do this are found in the spouse employment section of Chapter 5 on "Family Adaptation to the Army."

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Figure 3-2. For Supervisors and Unit Commanders:
How to Increase Retention of Soldiers

- Create soldier perceptions that you care about families.
    - ✓ Be willing to listen when a soldier has a family problem.
    - ✓ Show a real interest in the welfare of families.
    - ✓ Allow soldiers time off for urgent family matters, such as medical care.
    - ✓ Allow soldiers time off for non-urgent family matters, such as family activities.
    - ✓ Provide unit activities that include families (and partners of single soldiers).

- Contribute to spouse employment satisfaction.
    - ✓ Inform soldiers and their spouses about spouse employment programs and what they provide.
    - ✓ Inform soldiers and their spouses about available child care.

- Contribute to satisfaction with support programs.
    - ✓ Provide support programs in the unit.
    - ✓ Inform soldiers and their spouses (and partners) about support programs (in the unit and elsewhere).
    - ✓ Encourage and facilitate use of programs.

- Contribute to spouse satisfaction with the Army and spouse (and partner) support for retention.
    - ✓ Communicate with spouses.
    - ✓ Provide avenues for spouses to communicate with you.
    - ✓ Act as an advocate, and information and referral source, for families.

- Contribute to soldiers' work rewards.
    - ✓ Provide opportunities for advancement.
    - ✓ Provide soldiers with satisfying work and opportunities to use their abilities.
    - ✓ Treat soldiers with respect.
    - ✓ Encourage soldier satisfaction with work rules and regulations.
        - Include soldiers in the development of rules.
        - Get feedback about attitudes toward rules.
        - Explain reasons for rules and regulations.

- Contribute to soldiers' sense of freedom and control over personal time.
    - ✓ Avoid call-backs.
    - ✓ Make work hours as predictable as possible.

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Figure 3-3. For Installation Commanders and DA Level Policy Makers: How to Increase Retention of Soldiers

- Ensure that supervisors at all levels are familiar with recommendations in Figure 3-2.

    ✓ Include this information in training of all leaders (officers and NCOs).

- Be a model of the practices recommended in Figure 3-2 in your own leadership.

- Evaluate unit leaders and supervisors at least partly on the basis of their success in meeting soldier and family needs.

- Provide soldiers with work rewards.

    ✓ Provide opportunities for career enhancement.

    ✓ Ensure soldier job security.

    ✓ Provide adequate pay.

    ✓ Provide retirement benefits.

- Provide excellent quality of life programs.

    ✓ Provide spouse employment programs.

    ✓ Provide affordable and high-quality child care.

    ✓ Provide community support programs.

    ✓ Provide family support programs.

        • Provide relocation assistance.

        • Provide family separation support programs.

    ✓ Get feedback from soldiers and families about needs for programs and satisfaction with programs.

    ✓ Assure that soldiers and spouses are informed about programs.

CHAPTER 4: ARMY FAMILIES AND MISSION READINESS

> **"Families have great impact on soldiers' readiness in various ways."**

- How is individual readiness defined and measured?
- How is unit readiness defined and measured?
- What are the impacts of families and family issues on readiness?
- How does spouse employment affect readiness?
- How do leadership practices affect readiness?
- From the research, what do we know about how to foster readiness?

There are many ways to define and measure readiness. In general, readiness is the ability of the Army to carry out its missions. The Army's missions in the 1990s are changing and varied. Unit readiness is the ability of a unit to perform the tasks for which it is organized. Different units have different missions and different job specialties within a unit have different functions. Individual soldiers perform specialized jobs; the same soldier may even perform different tasks depending on the particular unit to which he/she is assigned. While readiness is commonly considered a unit dimension, we can also consider individuals to be "ready" to the extent that they are prepared to perform their jobs, especially during emergency situations. Thus, readiness is a multi-faceted and complex concept.

The relationship between family issues and readiness is one that many members of the Army community assume to exist. Interviews with installation leaders, service providers, and family members show that this belief is widespread.[7] Any Army commander can cite examples from his/her own experience of ways in which soldiers' families have fostered or hindered individual and unit readiness. However, this relationship has rarely been demonstrated empirically, especially in a quantitative way.

One consistent finding from years of experience and research is that a main cause for AWOL or desertion is soldiers leaving to deal with problems "back home" in their families or other personal relationships. (There is also evidence that family concerns increase psychiatric casualty rates.) Since AWOL and desertion rates are generally very low, this finding tells us little about the way in which most soldiers' readiness is affected by their families.

Research using qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviewing and observation has found that families have great impacts on soldiers' readiness in various ways.[29] For example, supportive relationships between soldiers and their spouses are factors in soldiers' presence for duty and deployments and contribute to their desires to do their best work. Deployed soldiers who believe that their spouses can manage in their absence and have support and assistance when they need it are able to concentrate on their mission; soldiers who are worried about their families do not perform up to their capability and are serious threats to unit performance and safety.

Qualitative research also shows that spouses' attitudes and abilities to manage are affected by the climate in the unit on a day-to-day basis. The way supervisors treat soldiers affects the way they behave toward their families; what soldiers tell their spouses about their lives at work affects spouses' attitudes toward the unit and the Army. Families are also affected by unit leaders' attitudes and behavior specifically regarding family issues and activities.

To test the generalizability of these effects using large-scale research methods requires quantitative measures of readiness. While the Army routinely evaluates units' abilities to perform their missions, there are no standard, conventional performance-based measures of readiness that apply to all units. Thus, in order to examine systematically and quantitatively the extent and nature of the impact of family factors on readiness, ARI's Army Family Research Program devoted effort to developing measures of readiness, and distinguished between individual readiness and unit readiness.

Our interest is how family issues affect readiness. There are aspects of both individual and unit readiness that cannot be affected by family issues. For example, a unit's ability to perform its mission is often affected by the quantity and quality of equipment available to the unit; this may be an important component of unit readiness, but it is unlikely to be affected by personnel at all, much less family issues. Similarly, an important dimension in individual readiness is the cognitive ability of the soldier, a variable that is unlikely to be affected by family factors. Thus, the emphasis in this chapter is on those aspects of readiness that have the potential for being affected by family issues or characteristics and examining the results of the research to see what effects are actually demonstrated. Also, we highlight those findings that have implications for policies and practices, especially where findings can be used as a basis on which to foster readiness.

Measures of Individual Readiness

The AFRP research included several types of measures of individual readiness that were analyzed to determine which combinations would measure what Army personnel consider most important, form reliable measures, and be applicable to as many categories of personnel as possible. The process of developing these measures included a review of the literature on military readiness and substantial input from field grade officers and senior NCOs. (A report is available that gives a thorough description of the measures of individual readiness used in the AFRP research.)[48]

The most reliable measure of individual readiness consisted of the average of the first- and second-level supervisory ratings on 12 behaviorally-anchored rating scales. Other measures collected were: the unit commander's rating of the soldier's job performance relative to other soldiers in the unit; soldier self-reports of objectively verifiable performance indicators such as Skill Qualification Test scores and number of awards received; soldier self-ratings of readiness on a series of scales; and soldier's average time within grade before promotion. There were no consistent relationships among the different measures of individual readiness, so the decision was made to use the supervisory ratings in the analysis of the impact of family factors.

The 12 individual readiness ratings (IRR) scales required the supervisor to rate each soldier on 7-point scales. Each scale had a title, a question, and three descriptions of behavior that would apply at different points on the scale (low end, middle, and high end). The title and question for each scale are shown in Figure 4-1.

Figure 4-1. Individual Readiness Rating Items

- COOPERATION/TEAMWORK/ESPRIT DE CORPS
  How ready is each soldier to promote teamwork and esprit de corps?

- EFFORT AND INITIATIVE
  How ready is each soldier to show extra effort and initiative?

- GENERAL SOLDIERING SKILLS
  How ready is each soldier to perform general soldiering tasks?

- INDIVIDUAL DEPLOYABILITY (ARMY TASK/MISSION)
  From an Army task/mission viewpoint, how ready is each soldier to
  be deployed?

- INDIVIDUAL DEPLOYABILITY (PERSONAL/FAMILY)
  From the viewpoint of personal /family problems, how ready is
  each soldier to be deployed?

- JOB DISCIPLINE
  How ready is each soldier to complete jobs in an orderly, timely
  and thorough manner?

- JOB TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS
  How ready is each soldier in terms of specific job technical
  knowledge/skills?

- PERFORMANCE UNDER PRESSURE AND ADVERSE CONDITIONS
  How ready is each soldier to perform effectively under pressure?

- CARE AND CONCERN FOR SUBORDINATES*
  How ready is each supervisor to show concern for subordinates?

- CARE AND CONCERN FOR SUBORDINATES' FAMILIES*
  How ready is each supervisor to show concern for subordinates' families?

- LEADERSHIP OF SUBORDINATES*
  How ready is each supervisor to provide unit leadership?

- MAINTAINING TRAINING STATUS OF SUBORDINATES*
  How ready is each supervisor to make sure subordinates are well trained?

  *Last four items asked only about supervisors.

The results of the systematic, large-scale, quantitative research conducted as part of the AFRP show quite powerfully and dramatically the ways in which family factors do and do not affect the individual readiness of soldiers as rated by their supervisors on the 12 ratings scales presented above.[51] The analysis uses multiple regression so that we are able to see the effects of each variable, even after the effects of other variables have been taken into account.

While many of the results are not surprising, it is important to have empirical verification of "what everyone knows". Further, there are some results that are surprising - and very important.

Figure 4-2 shows the model of the variables that have significant effects on the ratings of individual soldiers by their supervisors. (Variables are phrased to indicate which value is associated with high individual readiness.) As expected, several characteristics of soldiers had positive effects on their readiness: their rank (and variables related to rank), whether they had been selected for promotion to the next rank, and several measures that (in most cases) indicate aspects of personal responsibility (having a current driver's license, having transportation to the unit in an emergency, having enough money in the last 12 months to pay bills, not using budget counseling).

Also as expected, measures of soldiers' perceptions of aspects of the personnel climate in their units and the nature of their work lives affect their individual readiness. Typically, working at night has a negative effect on readiness ratings. The effect of morale is positive: high morale produces high individual readiness. (Part of this effect is indirect, operating through the impact of morale on commitment and satisfaction, which in turn affect readiness.) Ratings of individual readiness are higher for those soldiers who are more satisfied with their work (including the type

Figure 4-2. Model of Individual Readiness

Individual Characteristics
    Rank
    Selected for Promotion
    Personal Responsibility
        Driver's License
        Emergency Transportation
        Low Frequency of Unpaid Bills
        Not Using Budget Counseling

Policies, Programs, Practices
    Supervisor Support for Families
    Spouse Employment Referral Use

Soldier Perceptions of Unit and Work Characteristics
    Unit Morale
    Not Working at Night
    Work Satisfaction
    Soldiering Motivation

Individual Readiness Ratings

of work, opportunities to use their abilities, pay, retirement benefits, job security, treatment by supervisors, and opportunity to serve the country). Readiness is also affected by soldiers' self-reported motivation to be excellent soldiers (including excellence in exhibiting military bearing, leadership, and discipline and courage in battle).

Some **individual** characteristics that might be expected to bear a relationship to readiness do **not** add sufficiently to variation in readiness to remain in the model. These include gender, racial minority status, age, and years of service.

Some **family** characteristics show strong relationships to individual readiness ratings when these are examined in the absence of other information, but these effects **disappear** after accounting for the effects of rank and other individual characteristics. For example, the following variables are positively related to readiness: being currently married, number of dependent children, and spouse support of Army service and career. These variables are also positively related to rank and do not remain in the model of individual readiness once rank and the other individual characteristics noted above are controlled.

However, there are **family characteristics that continue to affect individual readiness** even after accounting for the effects of personal and job-related factors. Of these, the ones that refer to Army policies, programs, and practices (shown in the ellipse in the center of the figure) are: **the soldier's perception of the degree to which his/her supervisor shows support for soldiers' families and whether the soldier's spouse has used employment referrals.** Both of these variables **positively affect individual readiness.** The policy recommendations derived from these findings are shown in Figures 4-3 and 4-4.

Measures of Unit Readiness

A composite measure of unit readiness was developed by AFRP researchers from several different kinds of measures and consisted of a weighted average of 61 separate measures.[49] This composite incorporated the judgments of experienced Army officers and NCOs, as well as the results of statistical analysis on the many measures collected. Composite unit readiness scores were obtained for 507 units. Included in the composite were the ratings of the unit's readiness by four groups of personnel (junior enlisted soldiers in the unit, NCOs in the unit, officers in the unit, and other officers outside the unit) on 12 dimensions (accounting for 48 measurements), ratings of the unit on 10 unit-status dimensions, and the averages of the individual readiness ratings of three groups of unit personnel (junior enlisted personnel, NCOs, and officers) (Figure 4-5).

Impacts of Families and Family Issues on Unit Readiness

A large number of variables were analyzed for their ability to affect the readiness of the unit.[50] All variables were measured at the unit level. For those variables initially measured at the individual level (e.g., on the survey), the mean of all of the respondents from the unit was computed.

The model of unit readiness is shown in Figure 4-6. Some results are not surprising. For example, combat units have higher scores on unit readiness than other units. This may indicate that readiness is given a greater emphasis in combat units.

Contrary to what might be expected to be a negative effect of personnel with children, **the average number of dependent children that unit personnel have is _positively_ related to unit**

Figure 4-3. For Supervisors and Unit Commanders:
How to Increase Soldiers' Readiness

- Be willing to listen when a soldier has a family problem.

- Show a real interest in the welfare of families.

- Allow soldiers time off for family matters, both urgent (such as medical care) and non-urgent (such as family activities).

- Inform soldiers and their spouses about spouse employment programs, especially employment referrals.

- Encourage soldier financial responsibility.

    ✓ Provide preventive personal budget training (such as arranging for Army Community Services sessions for unit personnel).

Figure 4-4. For Installation Commanders and DA Level Policy Makers:
How to Increase Soldiers' Readiness

- Ensure that all supervisors are familiar with recommendations in Figure 4-3.

    ✓ Include this information in training of all leaders (officers and NCOs).

- Be a model of the practices recommended in Figure 4-3 in your own leadership.

- Evaluate unit leaders and supervisors at least partly on the basis of their success in meeting soldier and family needs.

- Provide spouse employment programs, including employment referral.

- Decrease soldier debt.

    ✓ Increase pay and benefits.

    ✓ Provide preventive personal budget training and make it accessible to soldiers.

Figure 4-5. Measures of Unit Readiness

- Unit Readiness Ratings
  - ✓ Cohesion and Teamwork
  - ✓ Meeting Standards
  - ✓ Supplies, Materials and Equipment
  - ✓ Care and Concern for Families
  - ✓ Care and Concern for Soldiers
  - ✓ Leadership
  - ✓ Mission Performance
  - ✓ Personnel Capabilities for Mission Accomplishment
  - ✓ Personnel Deployability
  - ✓ Training Program
  - ✓ Unit Weapons
  - ✓ Vehicles/Transportation (including Aircraft and Armor)

- Unit Status Summary
  - ✓ Average personnel available past six months
  - ✓ Number of deployment/readiness exercises
  - ✓ Number of external general inspections
  - ✓ Average personnel MOS-trained in past six months
  - ✓ Average personnel turnover past six months
  - ✓ Average equipment mission-capable past six months
  - ✓ Average proficiency past six months
  - ✓ Results of last external general inspection
  - ✓ Participation in Field Training Exercises
  - ✓ Participation in Command Post Exercises

- Average Individual Readiness Ratings
  - ✓ Privates, privates first class, and corporals
  - ✓ NCOs in the unit
  - ✓ Officers in the unit

Figure 4-6. Model of Unit Readiness

Figure 4-6. Model of Unit Readiness
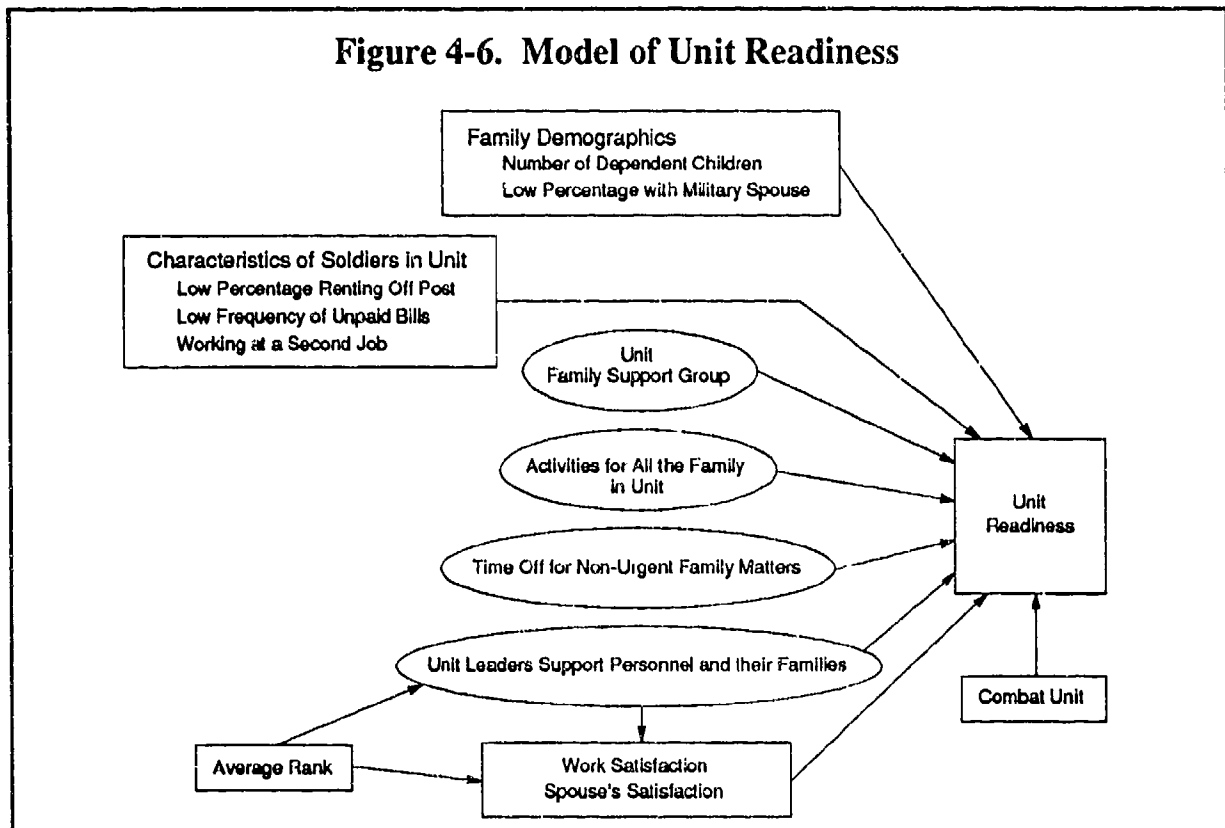
readiness. This may be partly a function of career status, which was not included in the analysis. (While rank is in the model, it is measured on one scale that includes both enlisted personnel and officers). But this finding is evidence that having personnel with children does not decrease readiness.

Both the proportion of personnel married to a military spouse and the proportion renting housing off post are negatively related to unit readiness. (Both of these variables may be a function of the proportion of enlisted personnel in the unit. The proportion of soldiers who are members of dual military couples is higher in support units, which are not seen as being as "ready" as combat units. It is not that soldiers with military spouses are rated lower by supervisors, since this does not affect individual readiness ratings.)

One measure of individual responsibility, the average number of months that unit personnel had unpaid bills, has a strong negative effect on unit readiness. Also negatively related to unit readiness is the proportion of unit personnel who used sponsorship assistance for their last move; the reason for this relationship is unclear (but may be a function of recency of move). On the other hand, the larger the proportion of unit personnel who are working at a second job the higher the unit's readiness.

The average rank of the soldiers in the unit has a positive effect on unit readiness, but it is not a direct effect; rather, it operates primarily through its effect on several variables that directly affect readiness.

These latter variables are especially important, and they include several that are related to families and that are amenable to change via policies and programs. The variable with the

strongest impact on unit readiness is soldier perceptions of the amount of support the unit leaders give soldiers and their families. (The impact is both direct and indirect - through such variables as family and soldier satisfaction). **Having a family support group also has a positive direct effect on unit readiness, as does having activities for family members and supervisors allowing time off from work for non-urgent family matters.**

The average work satisfaction of soldiers in the unit and their spouses' overall satisfaction also have strong direct effects on readiness. Several other variables positively affect unit readiness indirectly through their effects on work satisfaction and spouse satisfaction; these are lack of work stress (for married soldiers), the degree of perceived Army/family fit, the adjustment of the family to relocation, other measures of family strength and adaptation, and lack of alienation.

The policy recommendations that can be derived from the research results are shown in Figures 4-7 and 4-8.

An interesting twist appears in these results and the recommendations they imply. This AFRP research shows that soldier perceptions of supervisors' support for families in the form of allowing time off from work for family matters is associated with higher individual and unit readiness. Other research on the relationship between family variables and readiness has used loss of time from work as an indication of lower readiness - and has found different family variables to be associated with this measure.[13] Another important result of that research is that absence from a no-notice alert is much less likely to be due to family reasons than to not being contacted.

Supervisors should show their support for soldiers and their families. One way they can do this is allowing time off for personal and family matters when possible - and as long as soldiers are doing their jobs. However, to ensure readiness to deploy, leaders should make it clear in advance that soldiers with families will be expected to deploy with their units, especially during mobilizations. And leaders should be sure that soldiers are contacted for alerts.

Commanders can also enhance individual and unit readiness by informing soldiers and their spouses about programs, including employment referral services. (Other programs, including those at the unit level, that contribute to soldier and spouse satisfaction and family adaptation to the Army are discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.)

Thus, the results of recent research clearly demonstrate that there are actions affecting soldiers and their families that can be taken at different organizational levels to improve readiness.

Figure 4-7. For Supervisors and Unit Commanders: How to Increase Unit Readiness

- Demonstrate that you support your personnel and their families.

- Have a unit family support group.

- Provide activities in your unit for families.

- Allow soldiers time off for family matters even when not urgent.

- Find ways to increase your soldiers' satisfaction with their work.

- Do everything you can to increase the satisfaction with Army life felt by the spouses of soldiers in your unit.

- Encourage soldier financial responsibility.

Figure 4-8. For Installation Commanders and DA Level Policy Makers: Policies to Increase Unit Readiness

- Provide housing on post for those who desire it.

- Work to ensure adequate availability.

- Support unit leaders in their efforts to support families (by having a family support group, providing activities for families, allowing soldiers time off for family matters).

- Include in evaluations of supervisors the extent to which their subordinates perceive support for themselves and their families.

- Decrease soldier debt.
  - ✓ Provide preventive budget counseling.
  - ✓ Increase pay and benefits.

CHAPTER 5: FAMILY ADAPTATION TO THE ARMY

> *"The ability of the family to adapt to the military way of life is related to the degree that the military provides formal and informal support to the family."*

- Why should the military be concerned with family adaptation?
- What is considered good family adaptation to the Army?
- What accommodations must the Army make to assure that families adapt to the stresses of deployments like Operations Desert Shield/Storm?
- Is there a relationship between family adaptation to the Army and spouse labor force participation?
- Who are the vulnerable populations?
- What is the relationship between family adaptation and relocation?
- What is the relationship between family adaptation and separation?

The military is a unique organization. The soldier and the family are exposed to "a new way of life" and expectations that may be foreign to them. In addition, many Army families are young and still adjusting to the experience of being a family. The Army and the family are "greedy institutions."[60] Both make heavy demands on the soldier. In the past, the Army focused its research primarily on individual soldier adjustment, good performance, and retention. To what extent does the Army have an obligation to help families adapt to military life?

Family adaptation is a relatively new concept[9,36] and is an outgrowth of changing systems of relationships between work and family roles generally and in the Armed Forces in particular.[61] There have been several variations in the definition.[56] It has been defined as an outcome of the level of fit between families and systems in their environment.[36] However, there are indications that families may be adapting functionally to military demands but not necessarily agreeing that adaptation is in their personal or family's best interest.[36,42] As a consequence of these observations, family adaptation can be viewed as a combination of the family's ability to adapt to work demands from the Army and the ability to maintain satisfaction by meeting their own internal needs.[56]

Family Adaptation Measures

Significant contributions have been made in recent years with respect to the conceptualization and construction of Army family adaptation measures and models.[8,10,31]

Researchers have developed and demonstrated statistical support for a model of the relationships between Army family conditions, family strengths, and family adaptation[42] Their analysis confirms the theoretical and empirical distinctiveness of the concepts family strengths and family adaptation, producing two scales. The family strengths scale indicates a family's ability to cope with demands; the family adaption scale indicates the family's adjustment to organizational demands. Each of these scales indicate high levels of internal reliability. These measures are

used in AFRP analyses to trace how family factors influence family adaptation and how adaptation, in turn, influences soldier readiness and retention.[6]

AFRP scientists note that this research is limited by the fact that 9 out of 10 service members in the sample are men and that the study lacks a spouse or joint family measure of family strength and adaptation. The strength of the research is that the data are from a large probability sample of military service members.

Why is Family Adaptation Important to the Army?

There are at least three major reasons why the Army should be concerned with family adaptation. First, if family adaptation to the military is positive, the soldier should perform responsively to his or her job requirements, and experience higher job morale. There is also an impact on retention.[16,20] Second, service providers need to anticipate problems associated with poor family adaptation and develop programs that target these problems and build family strengths. Third, it costs less in money, commanders' time, and human misery to foster family adaptation than to have to deal with family problems after they occur.

What Affects Family Adaptation?

The ability of the family to adapt to the military way of life is related to the degree that the military provides formal and informal support to the family (as well as to family adaptive resources such as flexibility and spouse education). Army spouses' level of satisfaction with the military as a way of life is positively related to their perception of the service's support for families and help with family problems. This association holds for spouses of enlisted members and officers, whether or not there are children in the household, but is particularly pronounced for officers' spouses with children. This suggests that the level of satisfaction with the military as a way of life felt by officers' spouses with children may be especially affected by military policies and practices that are supportive of family life.[9]

Social support by friends, neighbors, work associates, and Army unit are important factors predicting family adaptation to work organization demands. Additionally, several demographic and family factors are associated with adaptation. In general, the older and more experienced 'he individual or family, the more positive the adaptation is likely to be. Important measures are years of service, pay grade, age, and years of marriage.[25]

Research shows that spouse satisfaction with the Army as a way of life varies with the soldier's career, family life course, and other factors. In 1987, 60% of Army spouses were satisfied with the Army as a way of life, 25% were neutral, and 15% were dissatisfied. Spouses of officers were more likely to be satisfied (72%) than were those married to enlisted personnel (57%).[25]

More recent research finds that male single custodial parents are more stressed than either female single parents, dual military couples, or married couples with civilian spouses. Women in all categories report fewer problems than do men.[12]

Research conducted to examine the role of leadership in creating a supportive environment finds that a reciprocal relationship is expected and viewed as desirable. Families want leaders to reduce family stress, and leaders want families to contribute to the mission.[7]

One way of looking at family adaptation is to consider what has been identified as families' primary concerns. Families are most concerned about those aspects of Army life which affect their ability to function on a day to day basis. Specific issues of concern include medical care,

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housing, child care, work hours, moves, and separations. Exploratory research finds that Army leaders and service providers believe that those experiencing the most difficulty adjusting to Army life include: young, junior enlisted soldiers with families; families with financial and marital problems; families that lack the experience and maturity to cope with their situation; newly married couples who are far away from family and other support systems; and families that have just arrived on post.[36,62]

Frequent relocations, separation, and assignment to an undesired duty station create a variety of stressors that result in impaired family functioning.[69] There are unique features of Army life to which families must adapt.[60,61] Among them are relocation, family separation, danger, and the institutional nature of the Army. Each is worth examining.

Relocation. One of the attractions of military life for many young people has been the opportunity for travel and to live in places they might otherwise never visit. Travel in the military often means relocating. For the married soldier this may include the family as well. Army families are much more likely to relocate than are civilian families and, indeed, they relocate more than any other branch of the military.[30]

One-half of all military members move every 2 years -- and many move more frequently.[40] The 1985 DoD Survey found that Army spouses with 2-4 years of marriage in service reported a median 1.9 family moves. Officer families reported slightly more moves.[30] The scope and cost of organizational relocations are much more extensive in the military than in the civilian sector for the Army, unlike the civilian sector, moves entire families.

Recent research has focused on relocation stress. Several studies find a correlation between the stress of relocation and family adaptation to the Army.[56] Over 10% of enlisted soldiers in the 1985 DoD survey reported that they felt their spouse had serious problems adjusting to relocation.[(69)] In 1987, researchers reported that at least 15% of families experienced severe problems.[18] AFRP researchers found 27% having slight problems and another 26% having serious problems because of relocation.[17] A 1979 DoD survey found that 10% of enlisted personnel and 5% of officers cited relocation problems among the most important reasons for leaving the Army.[69] Among the most common problems associated with relocation are spouse unemployment, finance, and housing.

The percent of military spouses in the labor force has increased significantly in the past 20 years. In 1972, approximately 27% of military wives were in the labor force. Currently, labor force participation is in the 60% - 70% range, with approximately 50% of spouses employed, and the remaining 10% - 20% looking for jobs.[55] Spouse unemployment is higher in the military than in the civilian sector.

Relocation is one of the major factors for spouse unemployment. For some military spouses, frequent "orders" result in their inability to participate fully in the labor force. Military personnel change stations every 2 or 3 years. When military wives are compared with civilian wives, it has been found that they are disadvantaged by length of time on station and by geographic location. The length of time Army households are stationed at the same location is the most statistically significant factor of all of the work outcomes examined, since the longer one is at the same location, the more likely one is to have sought and located a job. Thus, moving has a negative impact on labor force participation at a given point in time.

A change in location in the previous 5 years is found to be a statistically significant and negative predictor of spouse labor force participation.[59] This is especially true for full-time employment, and for the extent to which spouses' skills will be utilized fully. It would follow that career-oriented spouses have even greater difficulty in securing satisfactory employment. Military wives may drop out of the labor market because they are discouraged or because they relocate or because employers are reluctant to hire what may be a temporary employee.[57]

During a given year, labor force participation rates and employment rates are driven by the amount of time a spouse has been at the same location, and by the location of assignments. Wives in households closer to population centers are more likely to be employed than unemployed.[57] Some researchers have noted that the needs of unemployed male civilian spouses require attention.[12]

Frequent moving takes a financial toll on the family. With each move there is an outlay of the soldier's personal finances that is seldom recouped. In the 1989 AFRP survey, the problem of unreimbursed costs of moving is cited by over 43% of the soldiers as a serious problem.[17] More than one-half of the married soldiers with children reported problems with moving, setting up a household, and relocation costs.

Housing ranks among the major stressors for military personnel and their families. Among respondents to the 1987 survey of Army spouses who have made a permanent change of station move, almost half have experienced a delay of at least 3 months before being able to move into permanent housing, and 31% of enlisted soldiers' families report waiting 7 months or more.[25] Families generally feel that housing in Europe is often inadequate. In the 1989 AFRP survey, finding permanent housing quickly is cited by 31% of the soldiers as a problem. They report waiting 5 months or longer.[17]

Research shows that there is a strong link between experience with relocation and adaptation to Army life in general. A secondary analysis of the "1000 Army Families" data collected in 1983 shows that congruency of expectations and actual experiences about life in Europe is a significant predictor of a family's adaptation to Europe.[8] Family adaptation is highest where actual experiences (housing, jobs, schools) are as expected or better.

There is a significant relationship between relocation problems experienced and overall family adaptation to the Army.[17] **The more problems experienced in relocation, the poorer the family's overall adaptation to the Army** (Figure 5.1). Those who have few relocation problems tend to be more highly adapted. (Note that even those whose relocation problems are medium are less likely to have high overall adaptation scores than those with few relocation difficulties.)

The Army has taken actions which have had a positive impact on family adjustment. Among them is the sponsorship program where a designated military member or family is assigned to welcome and provide assistance to a family that is relocating and being assigned to the unit. Another significant change is the fact that commanders are now beginning to allow soldiers time off of the job to re-settle their families after a move.[29] Research has identified this time as crucial to families' adjustment following relocation.

Family Separation Separation from the family is a fact of life for Army personnel. Separations may be as short as an overnight field exercise to a major exercise lasting several weeks; from military courses lasting a few days (short courses) to unaccompanied tours lasting a year or

Figure 5-1. Relationship Between Relocation Problems and Family Adaptation

% Reporting High Family Adaptation

Respondents
- Soldier Data
- Spouse Data

(Data are for married soldiers and their spouses with at least one Permanent Change of Station move.)

Source: Croan, LeVine, & Blankinship, 1991
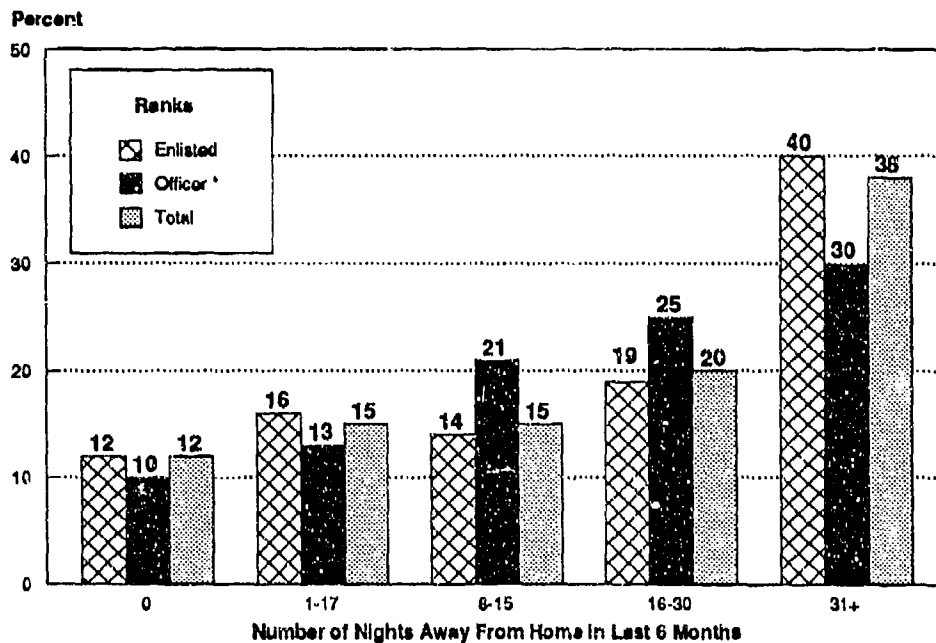
Relocation Problems
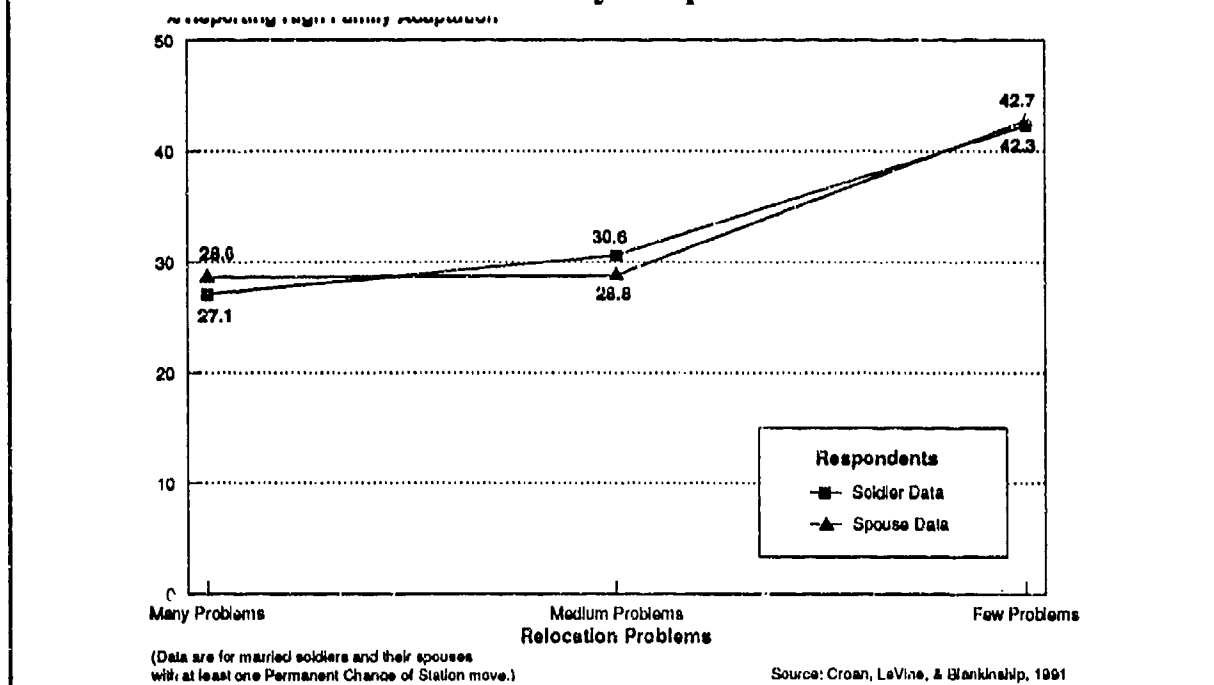
longer. Separations may be voluntary or involuntary (unaccompanied tours). Involuntary separations are usually the result of a decision that accompanied tours are not economically feasible or that conditions mitigate against family living in the area of the assignment. There are several reasons for voluntary separations, among them being a desire for stability in children's schooling and/or the spouse's career. Long-term separations, voluntary or involuntary, are experienced at a higher rate by enlisted families than by officers.[16]

Approximately 90% of married male soldiers who were residing with their spouses were away from home at least one night during a 6-month period (Figure 5-2), and more than one-half (58%) were gone for two weeks or more.[16]

There appear to be six general areas of stress that affect wives during peacetime separations: physical illness and pregnancy; affective conditions (depression, anger, loneliness, tension/irritability, emotional aspects of sex); marital adjustment; practical aspects of maintaining car and home; having to assume sole responsibility for family life and a dual role as parent(s) with respect to children; and making adjustments upon the husband's return.[56] The 1989 AFRP survey finds that 41% of families have at leastb moderate trouble with their children during separations.[16] (Little research has been conducted on how the husbands of female soldiers have fared while their wives are deployed.)

Anxiety over separation is greater in the lower ranks than in the higher ranks. This is true for both soldier and spouse.[16] Researchers have found a significant relationship between family adaptation and separation for all married soldiers. Results show that **soldier/family separations have a negative impact on families' ability to adapt to Army life.**[16]

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Figure 5-2. "Overnight" Separation Activity in Past Six Months

Percent

Ranks
- Enlisted
- Officer *
- Total

Number of Nights Away From Home In Last 6 Months	Enlisted	Officer	Total
0	12	10	12
1-17	16	13	15
8-15	14	21	15
16-30	19	25	20
31+	40	30	36

Number of Nights Away From Home In Last 6 Months

* Includes Warrant Officers.   Source: Coolbaugh & Rosenthal. 1992

Financial problems also result from separations, especially when they are due to unanticipated deployments, as evidenced during Operations Desert Shield/Storm.[3,15] Interviews revealed such problems as increased expenses, inexperience at budgeting, loss of income, and delays in receiving Army pay. Loss of income and delays in receiving Army pay was a major problem for the families of reservists who had been working on commission or were self-employed, when activated. An area of specific concern was telephone credit card bills, especially for those soldiers who were making long distant calls to their families from the Middle East.[67] Other costs noted early in the deployment included the purchase of military gear, storage of personal effects, and added childcare costs. An unanticipated problem was the loss of income from spouse jobs. Many spouses in Europe experienced problems that seemed to be caused by the economic downturn of local areas because the deployed troops were major consumers. In addition, spouses delayed major purchases because they did not know what to plan for.

Adaptation to Danger. Deployment of soldiers into a hostile environment places enormous demands on a family's coping ability. More than one-fourth (29%) of Army spouses say that the possibility their soldier may be involved in combat is a serious problem for them. This is a greater problem for junior officers and lower ranking enlisted personnel.[25]

The stress is exacerbated if a dangerous deployment is actually made. Research indicates that the vast majority of spouses of soldiers deployed to the Persian Gulf for Operations Desert Shield/Storm (90%) believed that they were coping about average or above with their normal daily household tasks. There was a similar finding for those employed outside of the home.

Despite these indications of high-level functioning, a significant number of spouses reported that they were emotionally distressed by factors related to their deployed soldier. Spouses reported being greatly distressed by such conditions as missing their spouse (68%), problems communicating with their spouse (27%), spouse's living condition in the Persian Gulf (54%), concerns for the spouse's safety and well-being (72%), and the uncertainty of the deployment (66%). The combined impact of these factors on spouses as measured by the Hopkins Symptoms Checklist was the feeling of diminished emotional well-being.[70]

Spouse distress over the soldier's well-being and safety, the spouse's inability to predict how long the operation would last, and spouse concern over the soldier's living conditions have been identified as stressors in other research.[2,32,46,63,66] Likewise, difficulties getting reliable information and financial difficulties pose significant problems for some families of deployed soldiers.[63,66] Other research finds relatively few spouses with financial problems.[3]

Various kinds of information play a role in the ability of Army spouses to adapt to combat deployments of their loved ones. Spouses of soldiers deployed to Grenada wanted to know the location of their soldier, whether he made a combat/night jump, how she could communicate with him, and when he would return.[32]

Interviews during Operations Desert Shield/Storm revealed that spouses needed accurate information about the deployed soldier's situation, information on how to cope with daily living during the deployment, and reliable information directly from the deployed soldier.[3,15] They also wanted regular, accurate, and timely information about available services. Spouses frequently received distortions in the news media, rumors, and Army information that appeared out-of-date.[3] The control of rumors was a constant challenge. In addition, accurate information and the rumor control climate at each post affected both spouse and soldier perceptions of the fragility or stability of their marriages during and after the deployment separation.[63] Forty-seven percent of the spouses in the survey accompanying the October 1990 interviews listed communication with the deployed soldier-spouse as at least a moderate problem.[15]

<u>Support Systems</u> As a result of experiences during real-world, small-scale deployments in the 1980s, the Army instituted Family Support Groups (FSG) and the Rear Detachment Commands (RDC). The rear detachment commander is usually a commissioned officer especially designated to provide information and assistance to the families of deployed soldiers. **Both the FSGs and RDCs have proven to be key elements in providing information and social support to separated families,** and they have been quite effective during several deployments for peacekeeping duty in the Sinai.[32,65,68] Indeed, it was the experience of the first Sinai mission that led to the recommendation that such support systems be provided.

The effectiveness of FSGs in helping families adapt appears to vary as a result of certain conditions of their environment and functioning. Although spouse attendance at FSG meetings varies and low turnout causes concern among FSG leaders, surveys focusing on these groups have generally reported positive results. Perceptions of the FSG leaders' ability also vary and there are indications of burnout. Wives often assume leadership positions because of their husband's rank or position instead of their own ability or interest. The other problem has been that a dearth of volunteers results in many FSG leaders becoming overburdened.[5,64]

The coordination and collaboration between unit RDCs and FSGs had positive synergistic effects on spouse adaptation to deployment for Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

Those spouses who felt well-informed by the RDCs and FSGs experienced fewer stressful events during deployment separation.[63]

A well-prepared Army support system promotes positive coping responses, minimizes maternal and child psychological troubles, and maximizes soldier deployability and cohesion in the combat zone. In contrast, in units with inadequate RDCs and FSGs, spouse well-being was no better than in units lacking any unit-level supports.[63]

An effective support system must have the support of command. Unit leadership and a caring climate for families within the unit chain of command have been found to be a crucial precursor of family well-being in both qualitative and survey results.[63]

There are also indications that effectiveness is greatest when the FSGs provide a mechanism for the development of informal supports among families; they are less effective (and even have negative effects on family attitudes and well-being) when they are perceived as run by commanders and their spouses and serving the interests of commanders rather than soldiers and their families.[61,63,68] Indeed, the transformation of informal networks of support called "family support groups" to more formally organized "FSGs" may have lessened their ability to provide affective support to family members trying to cope with stressful circumstances.[61]

FSGs in the reserves required more Army support during deployments than had been afforded them.[3,46,64] Offices needed to be set up in the local Armory and funds for mailing newsletters were required. There was also a need to expand FSG membership to others besides the spouse and children who had close relationships with the service members such as fiances, parents, godparents, and close friends. Throughout the country, civilian organizations such as churches formed support groups that did open their membership to other than immediate family members.

The Army as an Institution Research examining the demands placed on soldiers and families identifies several family stressors that are significant to families' ability to adapt to the military. One such stressor is work unpredictability.[11,22,62,64] As soldiers progress in rank and assume more responsibilities, their hours of work become longer and less predictable; family plans often must be changed. Families whose members are assigned to "field" units are particularly vulnerable. Those soldiers who frequently participate in Field Training Exercises and deployments have longer workdays, and are more frequently called back after the workday is completed.

It is important to distinguish between two types of work demands - long hours of work and unpredictable work (e.g., having to cancel leave or personal plans, or being called back for extra details).[22] It is the latter that may be perceived as unreasonable, and has consistently negative effects on a number of soldier outcomes.[13,22] In particular, having to cancel leave or personal/family plans because of work has negative effects on soldiers' sense of rewards from their Army work, their comparisons between Army and civilian work, the work stress they experience, their satisfaction with the Army as a way of life, and their feelings about the Army.

As soldiers remain in the Army and achieve, they are more able to tolerate these family disruptions. Married soldiers generally report higher levels of satisfaction with the Army, and greater levels of work rewards, than those who are not married. They report greater work stress, however.

Long work hours do not seem to lead to a lower sense of Army work rewards, lower satisfaction with Army life, or less positive feelings about the Army. The relationship of unit type and

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location to soldier work rewards and related outcomes shows generally positive outcomes for soldiers in combat support units, with combat and TDA units tending to fall in between.[22]

Both unit leadership support for families and unit morale consistently show a strong positive relationship to key soldier outcomes, including sense of work rewards and satisfaction with the Army as a way of life.[22] The negative effects associated with military service, such as the length and unpredictability of the Army workday, are sometimes offset by positive perceptions that the Army and its leaders are genuinely concerned about soldiers and their families.[7]

Family Adaptation and Policy Recommendations

Figure 5-3 shows a model of some of the findings concerning family adaptation to the Army. Various recommendations for policies, programs, and practices can be derived from the research. The most important are shown in Figures 5-4 and 5-5. Note that these recommendations are quite consistent with those proposed in earlier chapters concerning retention and readiness.

Figure 5-3. Model of Family Adaptation
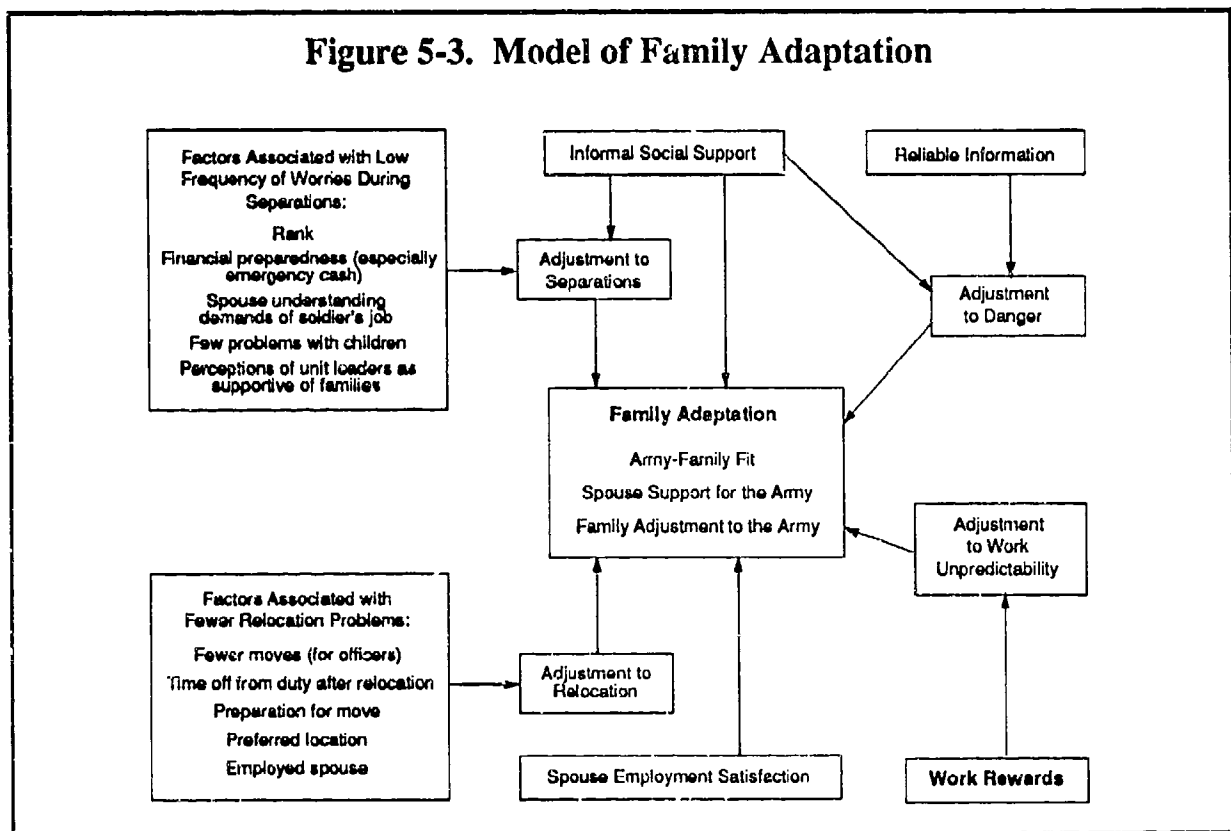
Figure 5-4: For Supervisors and Unit Commanders: How to Facilitate Family Adaptation to the Army

■ Establish a warm climate for families.

■ Minimize the requirement for soldiers to return to work after the duty day.

■ Encourage family support groups and provide full support.

  ✓ Emphasize positive support for voluntary participation.

  ✓ Avoid hierarchical organization.

  ✓ Encourage volunteers regardless of rank.

  ✓ Provide instrumental support (such as information, phone numbers when needed).

■ Inform soldiers and spouses about family programs (including spouse employment and child care).

■ Institute formal and informal support mechanisms to reduce the stress of separations.

  ✓ Provide pre-deployment programs for soldiers and spouses (and other close family and friends).

  ✓ Develop supportive and trained rear detachment commands.

  ✓ Use rear detachment commands and family support groups to keep spouses informed.

■ Institute formal and informal support mechanisms to promote adaptation to relocation.

  ✓ Provide sponsorship service to newly arriving soldiers.

  ✓ Allow newly arriving soldiers time off to get settled.

  ✓ Provide information to soldiers and their families about the location and family services available.

■ Provide formal and informal support to special target groups.

  ✓ Assure support to young families.

  ✓ Facilitate support for male single parents.

**Figure 5-5. For Installation Commanders and DA Level Policy Makers:
How to Facilitate Family Adaptation to the Army**

■ Train leaders at all levels on how to be supportive of families
(see figure 5-4).

■ Develop and maintain policies, programs, and practices to reduce
the stress of separation.

    ✓ Minimize family separation.

    ✓ Develop, maintain, and encourage pre-deployment programs for
families.

    ✓ Provide and train rear detachment commanders.

    ✓ Provide childcare services.

■ Develop and maintain policies, programs, and practices to reduce
the stress of relocation.

    ✓ Minimize relocation.

    ✓ Expand relocation services to soldiers and spouses.

    ✓ Enhance sponsorship programs.

    ✓ Emphasize community support programs that enhance spouse
employment opportunities.

    ✓ Provide childcare services.

■ Provide support to families of Reserve and National Guard units.

■ Target policies and support programs to young families.

■ Target policies and support programs for male single parents.

■ Undertake research to examine issues for civilian husbands of
women soldiers.

CHAPTER 6: COMMUNITY SUPPORT PROGRAMS

> *"...The availability of Army community support services is essential to the well-being of the Army community."*

- Which community support programs are used most frequently by soldiers and spouses?
- Which programs and services do soldiers and spouses perceive as most useful for the Army to provide?
- What are soldier and spouse perceptions of the quality of Army programs and services?
- What are the relationships between use of community support programs and family adaptation and retention?

Background

In the early days of the U.S. Army, support services were limited to those families who marched with the Armies and provided support such as cooking, carrying water, and mending clothes.[4] In later years, the military expanded support services to include all military families. During World War II, the United Services Organization (USO) and the American National Red Cross provided social services to soldiers and their families, while the Army Emergency Relief Agency (AER) provided financial assistance.[6]

Since World War II, the Army's demographics have changed. There has been an increase in the number of Army enlisted personnel who are married as well as an increase in women, single parents, dual military couples, and employed civilian spouses of Army soldiers.[55] These changing family patterns dictated changes in Army support programs. Consequently, The Army Community Service (ACS) was established in 1965.[4] In 1968, the Army established the Youth Activities program.[19] In 1983, following a series of grass roots symposia, the Army Chief of Staff issued a white paper titled "The Army Family," which outlined the philosophy and goals of Army family policy.[71]

In 1984, "The Year of the Family," the Army established the Community and Family Support Center (CFSC), which brought together most "quality of life" and family support programs. Included were the Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) programs that provide recreational activities to personnel and families, child development services, Army Community Service, "family advocacy" (family violence prevention and treatment), financial planning, spouse employment services, youth and education, and the Exceptional Family Member Program.

Types of Programs and Services and Their Use

Today, a large array of support, both "formal" and "informal," is available for soldiers and their families. Formal support systems include concrete services such as schools, leadership systems, utility services, fire and police protection, community mental health, and other community services. "Informal" support systems usually refer to personal relationships such as family members, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and voluntary associations such as civic clubs or churches. These informal support groups are essential for good family functioning. When

individual, family, and community needs are met, the community can be considered as "strong."[41] In a strong community, leaders are perceived to allow community participation in the leaders' decision making process.[41]

Military family support systems play a major role in the life of the soldier and the family.[21,41] The expansiveness of the modern Army's community support is exemplified by the RAND survey, which included more than 65 support programs.[13] Although the military provides many support services for families, the perceived value of services is uneven.[69]

Community support services can be dichotomized into (1) "General Services," designed to be available to and used by all members of the Army community such as libraries and housing locator services, and (2) "Targeted Services," designed to be used by specific groups or by those with specific needs and emergencies such as counseling services.[69] The main difference between the two services is the universality of the underlying needs that drive service use. Targeted Services are expected to have lower use rates.

Utilization rates and associated issues differ between General and Targeted programs.[19,69] Studies have shown that General Services are used proportionately more often by officers than enlisted soldiers and that proportionately more enlisted personnel than officers use intervention programs.

Data were obtained from the AFRP survey question, which asked -- for a list of 39 Army community support programs -- "How useful is it (or would it be) to provide the following programs and services at your current location?" Respondents were also asked "...have (you) ever used these services and programs at your current location?" Generally, soldiers and spouses reported that financial and emergency services were useful for the Army to provide. Emergency food was perceived as most useful by soldiers (62.7%) and spouses (75.8%) followed by emergency loans (61.4% soldiers and 71.3% spouses) and crisis hot lines (60.3% soldiers and 74.3% spouses). One-fifth of Army spouses reported a belief that use of community services could hurt the soldier's career.[19]

Awareness and use of programs is uneven and those at greatest risk for experiencing family problems, junior enlisted families, are least likely to be aware of the plethora of support services available to them. The services of which most families (at least 60% of wives) are likely to be aware are information and referral services, family advocacy, crisis intervention, and financial counseling programs. More use information and referral and financial counseling services than use other ACS programs.[25]

Some researchers advance the notion that "Targeted Services" may carry with it the implications of personal or family problems and may therefore be stigmatized. This line of thinking has been used to explain the difference in utilization rates. However, it fails to recognize that once a target audience is defined there are a host of variables associated with service use. Examples are location, cost, awareness, and the potential impact on one's career. For example, although research on marital enrichment, family clusters, and parent education programs are sparse and much has yet to be done, what is known is that satisfaction among participants in the marital enrichment program is high although participation in that program is low. It is believed that there is a general lack of awareness by families of the existence of such a program on the post.[41] On the other hand, active duty personnel and their families are participating in marriage and family counseling and therapy and the levels of satisfaction with this program are quite high. In research on one Army post, over one-half of families surveyed were aware that marriage and

family counseling services were available at their post.[38] About 8% of the families had received this type of counseling at the time of the survey. Army-wide, 52% percent of those who had participated in the marriage and family counseling felt satisfied with the results.[23]

In examining use rates, it is also important to recognize that not all families are potential users of each service. Further, if all potential users actually desired the service, they could not all be accommodated.

Program Use, Assessments of Program Usefulness, and Positive Outcomes

Program use is positively related to the perception of program usefulness.[19] Generally, the quality of Army family programs and the helpfulness of Army agency staff are highly rated by soldiers and spouses. **Soldiers who use family programs report higher perceptions of leader support for families than soldiers who do not use the programs.**

Utilization by single soldiers Single soldiers, irrespective of their relational status (independent, involved, or committed), found support services a valuable source of support at their current locations.[37] Approximately two-fifths to two-thirds of single soldiers rated the services as "very useful". Several services appeared particularly attractive to males and females in committed relationships: crisis hot lines (65% and 72%, respectively), emergency loan services (66% and 72%, respectively), and emergency long distance phone calls (69% and 72%, respectively). Although nearly one-half or more single soldiers felt that the services examined were "very useful," it did not mean that they had utilized the services. In fact, irrespective of their relationship status, less than 10% of single soldiers had used relocation counseling, crisis hot line, emergency long distance phone calls, and/or pre-marriage counseling. However, a higher proportion of single soldiers (approximately one in five) had used community services (i.e., the directory of community services and information and referral services). Emergency loan services were rated as "very useful" by single soldiers in less serious and committed relationships.

Housing and medical care The availability and quality of housing and medical care is critical for the soldier and his family's adaptation to the Army.[62] Housing and health services contribute substantially to the military benefits package, although housing does not have the "halo" that is accorded to medical care.[69] While Army family housing and troop housing is moderately correlated with career intention among enlisted personnel, housing is not a significant predictor of overall satisfaction for officers.[69] Other research finds that although almost half of enlisted and officers' spouses rate the availability of military housing as at least fair, many more (64% of enlisted wives, 75% of officers' wives) think that civilian housing is much more available.[23]

Several studies look at the perceptions of medical care in the Army as reported by the consumers.[54] Most studies find medical care rated as at least moderate. Some of the major issues concern availability, waiting time in the hospital/clinics, and physician-patient interaction.

Morale, welfare and recreation services (MWR) The Army provides a variety of recreational services under its MWR program. Included are indoor gym activities, bowling, outdoor athletic and recreation activities, arts and crafts, music and theater, library, clubs, and youth activities. The MWR programs are fairly widely known and used by many military personnel. However,

use is sporadic, and civilian services are often preferred.[14] The effects of these services on readiness and retention are unknown.

Employment services **Army spouse employment programs have a significant positive effect on spouse labor force participation.**[59] Army spouses who have a spouse employment program available on post appear more likely to be in the labor force than those who do not. This does not necessarily mean, however, that they are employed. There is still an unmet demand from Army spouses for help in identifying job opportunities, preparing resumes, and getting job referrals.[25,59] (For a detailed discussion of spouse employment and its relationship to family adaptation to the Army, see Chapter 5.)

Financial services Approaches to the delivery of financial counseling services are usually education and individual counseling. Three of four soldiers, and two of three spouses, reported awareness of this service in the 1985 DoD survey.[23] However, there is a lack of controlled research on people who have received financial counseling and on the impact of such services on participants' decisions or behavior.[39] Data on the effectiveness of financial counseling services to individuals or families are largely anecdotal.

Parent education classes Two of the most popular parent education programs are Parent Effectiveness Training (PET) and Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP). In the Army, however, these programs may suffer from lack of widespread participation.[39]

Child Care: Another critical community support activity is child development services. This is a valuable service to employed parents. High-quality child care can contribute to mission readiness. Parents concerned about child care miss more days, arrive late and leave early more often and take off more time during the day.[69] A 1984 Army survey found that more than 61,000 enlisted and 10,000 officer families lost job or duty time or missed an Army-sponsored activity because of difficulty finding child care.[28] Other research found that over a 4- week period, over 10% of a sample of first-term soldiers were absent from duty because of a need to provide home or family care.[52] The importance of child care increases as soldiers with children increase in numbers.[44,54]

The findings on satisfaction with child care are mixed. For example in 1985, the worldwide survey of Army spouses indicated that 66% of the mothers were satisfied with the quality of care and only 19% were dissatisfied.[23] This finding is in contrast to the 1984 survey of MWR programs[14] which did not select for marital or parenting status, and found that satisfaction with Army child care was quite low. Less than one-half of the users reported being very satisfied or satisfied with Army childcare services. In both investigations, however, the lowest levels of satisfaction were expressed with regard to quality of staff and education programs, hours of operation, and capacity of centers.[69] In a study examining the employment status of women, it was noted that childcare services on post appear to have "a moderately positive effect on spouse attitudes toward the military."[58]

Schools Although overseas, Department of Defense Dependent Schools (DoDDS) ranked as the ninth largest public school system. Satisfaction with DoD schools is mixed. Officers evaluate

the schools more negatively than do spouses of enlisted personnel.[25,30] An earlier survey of parents and children in DoDDS found that parents fault DoDDS for inadequate funding and overcrowding, but do not regard drugs or discipline as problems. The level of satisfaction is higher among parents of elementary children and those living in the Pacific or Panama, and is lower among those with high school children, and those living in Germany.[1]

Relocation There is a need for relocation services on Army posts because relocation and separation in the military is a fact of life (see Chapter 5). Relocation services in the military generally lag behind those of the corporate sector. Military personnel and spouses tend to give mixed reviews of the relocation services that are provided them. One study of Army families revealed that fewer than 10 % of the spouses participated in an orientation program.[38] The major problems are that the programs are not well known among family members, that spouses are not strongly encouraged to participate, and that orientation programs are often limited in their assistance to working spouses.

In another study, it was found that although most soldiers and spouses did not use or have available to them many potentially useful relocation services, they generally used the housing location referral services that were available. For all of the relocation assistance services listed in the survey, the overwhelming majority of soldiers and spouses reported that the services were useful for the Army to provide. The largest proportion of soldiers reported that housing location referral (61%) and sponsorship assistance (58%) were very useful, while only 44% reported that relocation counseling was very useful. Almost one-half of the soldiers (47%), and more than one-half of the spouses (53%), reported that they used housing location referrals. About one-fourth of the soldiers and spouses reported that they used sponsorship and community orientation. More than one-third of the spouses (34%) reported that they used the lending closet. On the other hand, very few soldiers and spouses reported that they used spouse career planning, spouse employment skills training, relocation counseling, or budget counseling (though these data do not account for the availability of these programs). Receiving pre- and post-move information appears to reduce significantly the likelihood of experiencing relocation problems.[17]

Separation services It is clear that families undergoing separations believe it is useful for the Army to provide separation-related services to them while their soldier spouse is away, although it is less certain what types of services are required.[16]

Crisis hot-lines and shelters These are two programs that are not well known by families on post and for which there are few data on effectiveness. In the 1985 DoD Survey, fewer than one-third of the respondents indicated awareness of crisis referral services (hot lines included), and fewer than half of those who had used them (46%) were satisfied with the results. Only 31% of the wives of enlisted Army personnel and 20% of the officer's wives were aware of the existence of shelters. Of those who had used these shelters, approximately 50% felt satisfied with their experience.[23,39]

Support services during deployment During Operation Desert Shield/Storm, two of the most effective community supports for families of deployed spouses were the Family Support Group (FSG) and the Rear Detachment Command.[5,64,46,67] Other community support activities

recognized as "unsung heroes" were the professionals and volunteers who staffed the Family Assistance Centers (FAC). Among the agencies represented in the FACs were the Army Community Service, the Red Cross, the Adjutant General, The Inspector General, the Chief of Chaplains, the Directorate of Engineering and Housing, the CHAMPUS Office and the Finance Office.[5]

Community Support, Family Adaptation, and Soldier Retention: There is an association between general program use and family adaptation. Soldiers who make use of programs have higher perceptions of leader support for families than those who do not. A relationship also exists between use of general and targeted programs and retention plans. These findings suggest that family support services and programs are an important vehicle for integrating families into the military environment. However, more research is needed to explore the findings of this preliminary analysis in depth.[19] **Soldiers and spouses alike believe that the availability of Army community support services is essential to the well-being of the Army community.**[22,62] In another study it was found that single-male-parent households are significantly less likely to feel connected to social and community support systems than other families.[12] **The quality of life in military communities, as perceived by soldiers themselves, is an important factor in explaining the differential retention plans of enlisted personnel.**[24]

Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

The extensive military-owned-and-operated family support programs had lead some researchers to refer to the military community as a "company town," and recommend major modifications in the future. They suggest that the 1990s will witness substantial restraints on the nation's defense budget; rather than increasing on-base programs and facilities, the military should provide only those that cannot be offered by the civilian sector.[33] Recommendations such as these should be considered seriously but cautiously as downsizing gains momentum. It is clear that the need for family support services will not diminish in proportion to planned reductions in the force, and it is also clear that more must be done to increase soldiers' and families' awareness of support programs. Awareness of programs, even when they are not used, increases satisfaction with military life and enhances retention.[20]

Figures 6-1 and 6-2 show recommendations for policies, programs, and practices that appear most likely to increase soldier and family satisfaction with community support, and lead to the positive outcomes of felt support, such as family adaptation, readiness, and retention.

**Figure 6-1. For Supervisors and Unit Commanders:
How to Increase Community Support**

- Assure troop awareness of support services on post.
  - ✓ Reach out to junior enlisted families.

- Encourage troops to seek help if needed from support services on post.

- Assure troops and families get pre- and post-movement briefings.

- Provide support and encouragement for family support groups and rear detachment commander.

- Encourage the development of informal support networks among soldiers' spouses.
  - ✓ Provide family activities in the unit.

**Figure 6-2. For Installation Commanders and DA Level Policy Makers:
How to Increase Community Support**

- Launch major efforts to help families become aware of the support services available on Army posts.

- Provide effective mechanisms for community participation.

- Provide strong relocation and referral information services.

- Emphasize the importance of rear detachment commands and family support groups.

- Support family member employment assistance programs.

- Provide support for child development services.
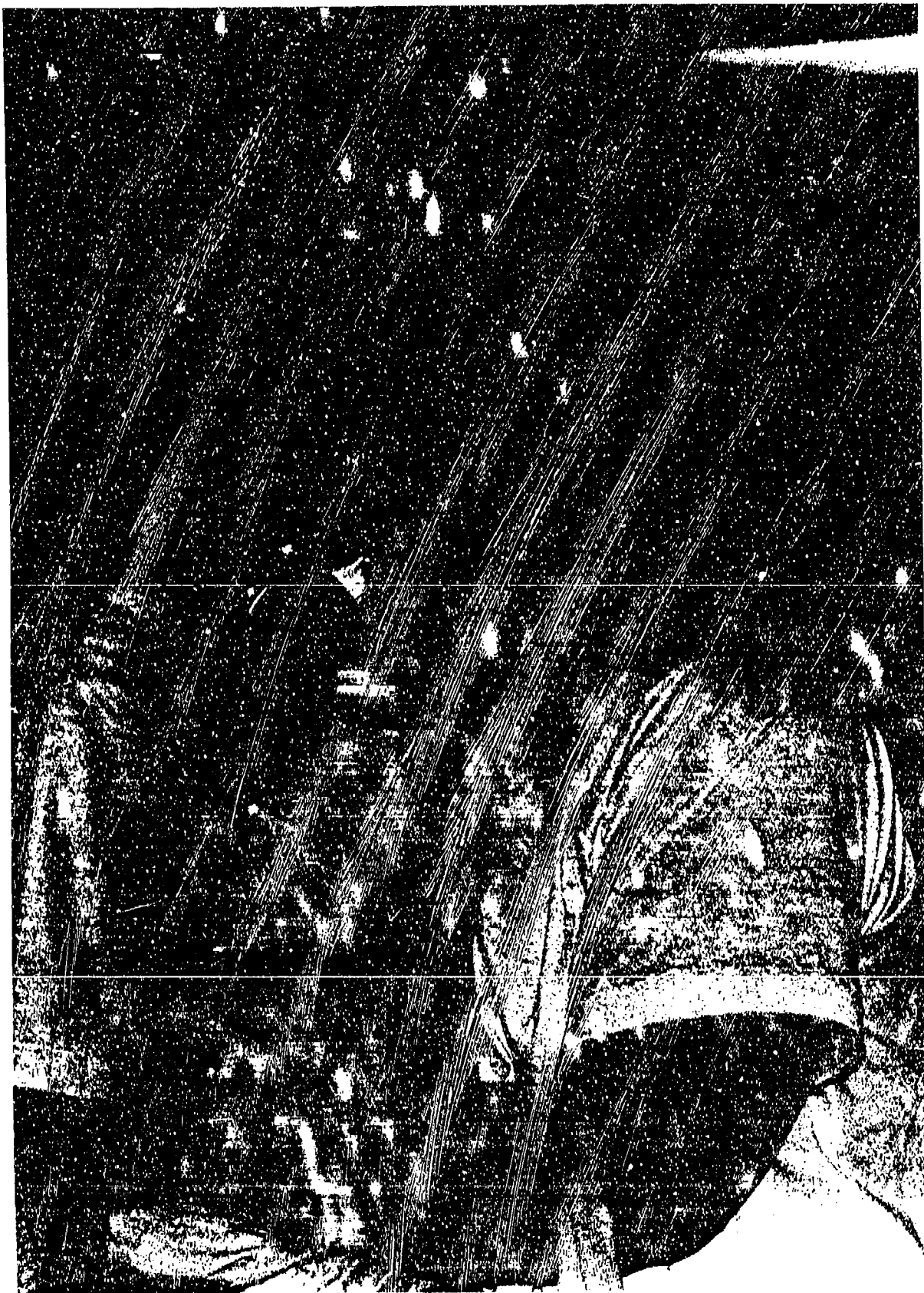
CHAPTER 7: CONTINUING ISSUES

The research efforts of the 1980s and early 1990s have substantially increased our systematic knowledge about Army families. While there are many questions that remain unanswered, much is now known about the demographic characteristics of Army families, how families affect retention of service members and the readiness of soldiers and their units, what constitutes family adaptation to the Army and what fosters or hinders it, and the role of formal and informal community support in Army family life.

The recent transformation in the international security situation is changing the Army in ways that have important implications for families. Although research results on the impacts of these changes are not yet available, the results of research discussed in this report can be used to identify and analyze the issues.

As a result of the diminished threat to the U.S. following the collapse of the U.S.S.R. and the Warsaw Pact, the military is in the process of downsizing. At the same time, military missions are changing rapidly and becoming more diverse. During the 1990s, and into the 21st century, the Army will be called on to perform missions involving peacekeeping, humanitarian aid, and drug interdiction, in addition to being prepared to fight limited wars all over the world. The optimism following the transformation in Eastern Europe was shattered by the war in the Persian Gulf.

The Army will have to perform more varied missions with fewer people. Rather than having a massive force stationed overseas with smaller rapid deployment units stationed in the United States, this downsized Army will be more stabilized in the United States, but a greater proportion of personnel will need to be rapidly deployable. All of this has important implications for personnel retention, readiness, and the organizational demands to which service members and their families must adapt.

Greater mission variability and complexity with a smaller force makes it even more important that the Army retain the most able soldiers. It is a mistake to think that downsizing means that the organization need not attend to the satisfaction of service members and their families. If soldiers and their families are not treated well by their leaders, the organization will lose the very personnel it wants most to keep. Further, research on organizational downsizing demonstrates the importance of organizational efforts to ensure the well-being of "survivors," those who are not forcibly separated. In addition, the organization must provide substitute rewards to counteract the loss of job security, which many soldiers and their spouses have viewed as a major advantage of Army life over civilian employment.

How will the new situation for the Army affect conditions that this report has identified as important for retention, readiness, and family adaptation? A great deal depends on Army policies developed to respond to the situation. Current discussions indicate that it is likely that there will be less frequent PCS relocation of service members and their families and fewer long accompanied tours overseas. At the same time, there may be more frequent separations as service members are sent away from their families for deployment on missions, for unaccompanied tours overseas, and for military training.

The negative effects on family adaptation of relocation described in Chapter 5 will be reduced for many families. For example, we are likely to see a drop in rates of spouse unemployment

and underemployment, although this will vary by location as a function of the local economy. It may also make each relocation more disruptive to the spouse's career, especially for those occupations where longer time in one location fosters advancement. Greater geographic stability is also likely to foster integration into the community, and the development of informal support networks which raise family life satisfaction, and tend to buffer the effects of stress.

The potential for more frequent family separations raises the importance of attention to how separation affects family functioning and the policies, programs, and practices that can help to alleviate the negative effects (Chapter 5). Since greater family separation is likely to be necessitated by missions, separation for other reasons should be kept as short and as infrequent as possible, and attempts should be made to give service members as much control over the timing as possible. Further, attention should be paid to the recommendations throughout this report that specify the policies, programs, and practices that make families feel supported and that help them adapt.

One family issue that was not addressed in this report but that is likely to take on increasing importance in the future is the need for eldercare. While military personnel tend to be young, and therefore less likely to have to care for their parents, the longer that people stay in the Army, the more likely it is that this issue will affect them. Senior military personnel will be the ones with the greatest likelihood of having financial and custodial responsibility for elderly parents. These Army leaders have a very high level of work responsibility; they may need organizational support to help them balance the combined pressures of work and family roles.

Given current demographic and cultural trends, Army personnel in the future are likely to represent the diversity of the U.S. population. That means Army families will include more racial and ethnic minorities, and more service women (some with civilian husbands). Research and policy attention will need to address the similarities and differences among these sub-populations to determine whether policies, programs, and practices developed for families in the past serve their needs equally well.

The research results highlighted in this report and the policies, programs, and practices derived from them do not represent all that is known about Army families. We encourage all readers to learn more about particular findings and areas of research by reading works cited here. We also encourage you to update your knowledge by reading and applying future research reports as they become available. We hope that the conceptual frameworks and findings reported here provide a foundation on which to build further knowledge and policy.

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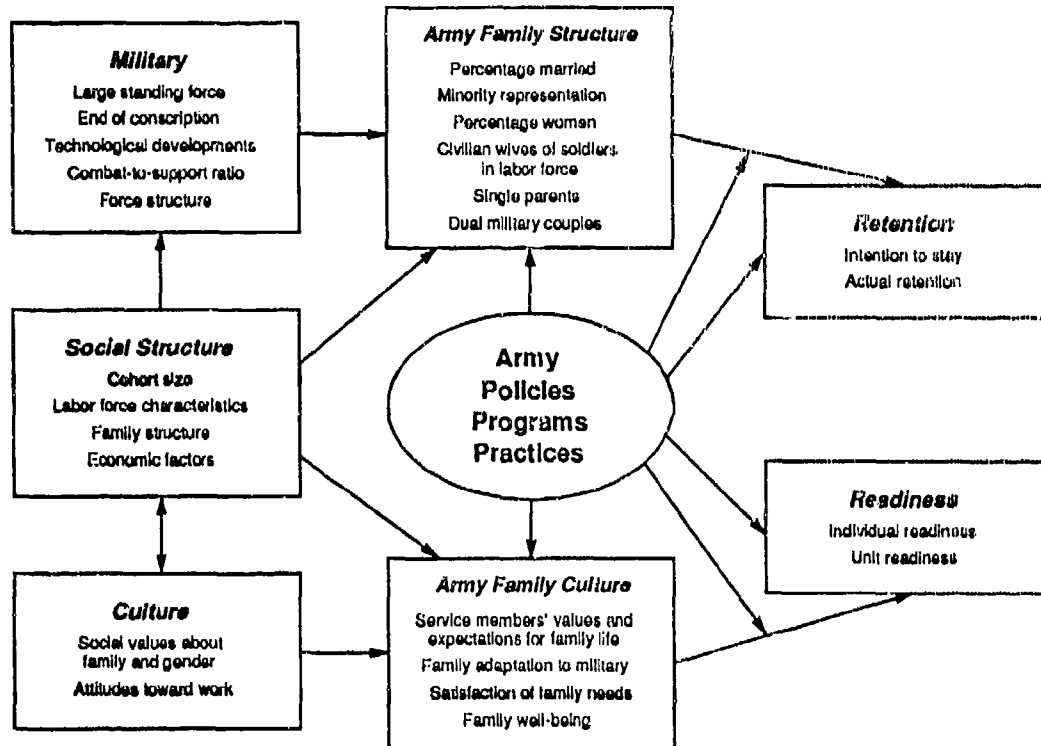
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Appendix

**The Figures From the Text Are Reproduced Here So That
They Can Be Used As Viewgraphs By Readers
Who May Find Them Useful**

Army-Family System Model

Military
Large standing force
End of conscription
Technological developments
Combat-to-support ratio
Force structure

Army Family Structure
Percentage married
Minority representation
Percentage women
Civilian wives of soldiers
in labor force
Single parents
Dual military couples

Retention
Intention to stay
Actual retention

Social Structure
Cohort size
Labor force characteristics
Family structure
Economic factors

Army Policies Programs Practices

Readiness
Individual readiness
Unit readiness

Culture
Social values about
family and gender
Attitudes toward work

Army Family Culture
Service members' values and
expectations for family life
Family adaptation to military
Satisfaction of family needs
Family well-being

Percentage of Enlisted Personnel Married:
Various Data Sources, 1952-1991

Source: Schumm, Bell, and Tran, 1992b

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Percentage of Officers Married:
Various Data Sources, 1952-1991

Percent

Source: Schumm, Bell, and Tran, 1992b

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Percentage of Army Personnel Married
by Gender and Pay Grade

Percent

Legend: Married Personnel, Gender and Grade
- Male - Enlisted
- Male - Officers
- Female - Enlisted
- Female - Officers
- Total - Enlisted
- Total - Officers

X-axis (Pay Grade): E1/01, E2/02, E3/03, E4/04, E5/05, E6/06, E7/07, E8/08, E9/09, O10

Source: Schumm, Bell, and Tran, 1992b

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Percentage of Soldiers
in Dual Military Marriages

Percent

Data Sources
- -□- SSMP
- -*- DEERS
- -●- DOD/RAND/AFRP

Source: Schumm, Boll, and Tran, 1992b

Year

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For Supervisors and Unit Commanders:
Policies, Programs, and Practices Related to Soldier Demographics

- Do not treat soldiers primarily according to their demographic characteristics.

    ✓ Respond to soldiers' needs, resources and behaviors.

- Provide support for soldiers in their family transitions.

    ✓ Recognize that single soldiers have personal relationships (girlfriends, boyfriends) that affect them.

    ✓ Recognize that single parenthood is often a temporary status.

    ✓ Provide reasonable accommodation during stressful family transitions (marriage, parenthood, separation, divorce, bereavement).

    ✓ Provide unit programs and activities for soldiers in various family stages.

    ✓ Know about on-post and off-post support services and programs.

    ✓ Refer soldiers to appropriate support sources and programs (such as pre-marriage counseling, support groups for single parents, financial counseling, etc.).
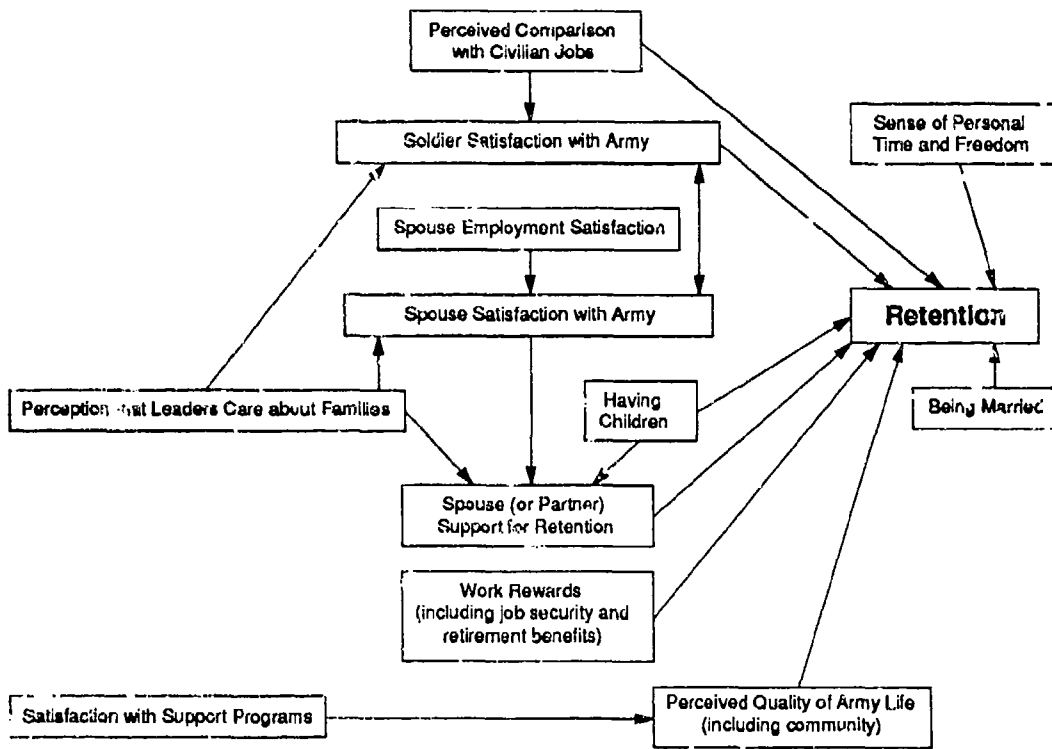
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For Installation Commanders and DA Policy Makers: How to Develop Policies, Programs, and Practices Related to Soldier Demographics

- Train leaders at all levels on family demographics and their implications.

- Avoid policies that treat soldiers primarily according to their demographic characteristics.

    ✓ Develop policies and programs that respond to soldiers' needs, resources, and behaviors.

- Provide support services for soldiers regardless of marital and parental status.

    ✓ See other chapters of this report for specific service recommendations.

- Provide support services and accommodations to help with family transitions (marriage, parenthood, separation, divorce, and bereavement).

Model of Retention

(This model is most applicable to male service members with civilian wives.)

For Supervisors and Unit Commanders:
How to Increase Retention of Soldiers

■ Create soldier perceptions that you care about families.
- ✓ Be willing to listen when a soldier has a family problem.
- ✓ Show a real interest in the welfare of families.
- ✓ Allow soldiers time off for urgent family matters, such as medical care.
- ✓ Allow soldiers time off for non-urgent family matters, such as family activities.
- ✓ Provide unit activities that include families (and partners of single soldiers).

■ Contribute to spouse employment satisfaction.
- ✓ Inform soldiers and their spouses about spouse employment programs and what they provide.
- ✓ Inform soldiers and their spouses about available child care.

■ Contribute to satisfaction with support programs.
- ✓ Provide support programs in the unit.
- ✓ Inform soldiers and their spouses (and partners) about support programs (in the unit and elsewhere).
- ✓ Encourage and facilitate use of programs.

■ Contribute to spouse satisfaction with the Army and spouse (and partner) support for retention.
- ✓ Communicate with spouses.
- ✓ Provide avenues for spouses to communicate with you.
- ✓ Act as an advocate, and information and referral source, for families.

■ Contribute to soldiers' work rewards.
- ✓ Provide opportunities for advancement.
- ✓ Provide soldiers with satisfying work and opportunities to use their abilities.
- ✓ Treat soldiers with respect.
- ✓ Encourage soldier satisfaction with work rules and regulations.
  - • Include soldiers in the development of rules.
  - • Get feedback about attitudes toward rules.
  - • Explain reasons for rules and regulations.

■ Contribute to soldiers' sense of freedom and control over personal time.
- ✓ Avoid call-backs.
- ✓ Make work hours as predictable as possible.

For Installation Commanders and DA Level Policy Makers: How to Increase Retention of Soldiers

- Ensure that supervisors at all levels are familiar with recommendations for supervisors and unit commanders.

  ✓ Include this information in training of all leaders (officers and NCOs).

- Be a model of the practices recommended for supervisors and unit commanders in your own leadership.

- Evaluate unit leaders and supervisors at least partly on the basis of their success in meeting soldier and family needs.

- Provide soldiers with work rewards.

  ✓ Provide opportunities for career enhancement.

  ✓ Ensure soldier job security.

  ✓ Provide adequate pay.

  ✓ Provide retirement benefits.

- Provide excellent quality of life programs.

  ✓ Provide spouse employment programs.

  ✓ Provide affordable and high-quality child care.

  ✓ Provide community support programs.

  ✓ Provide family support programs.

    • Provide relocation assistance.

    • Provide family separation support programs.

  ✓ Get feedback from soldiers and families about needs for programs and satisfaction with programs.

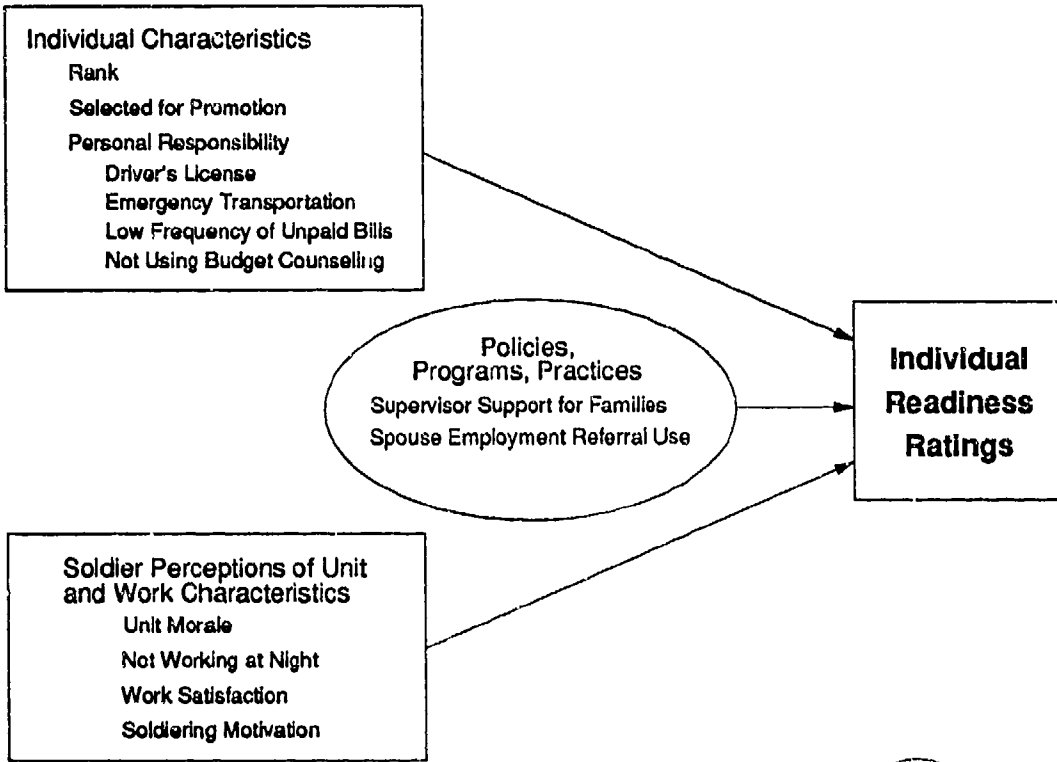 ✓ Assure that soldiers and spouses are informed about programs.

Individual Readiness Rating Items

- COOPERATION/TEAMWORK/ESPRIT DE CORPS
  How ready is each soldier to promote teamwork and esprit de corps?

- EFFORT AND INITIATIVE
  How ready is each soldier to show extra effort and initiative?

- GENERAL SOLDIERING SKILLS
  How ready is each soldier to perform general soldiering tasks?

- INDIVIDUAL DEPLOYABILITY (ARMY TASK/MISSION)
  From an Army task/mission viewpoint, how ready is each soldier to
  be deployed?

- INDIVIDUAL DEPLOYABILITY (PERSONAL/FAMILY)
  From the viewpoint of personal /family problems, how ready is
  each soldier to be deployed?

- JOB DISCIPLINE
  How ready is each soldier to complete jobs in an orderly, timely
  and thorough manner?

- JOB TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS
  How ready is each soldier in terms of specific job technical
  knowledge/skills?

- PERFORMANCE UNDER PRESSURE AND ADVERSE CONDITIONS
  How ready is each soldier to perform effectively under pressure?

- CARE AND CONCERN FOR SUBORDINATES*
  How ready is each supervisor to show concern for subordinates?

- CARE AND CONCERN FOR SUBORDINATES' FAMILIES*
  How ready is each supervisor to show concern for subordinates' families?

- LEADERSHIP OF SUBORDINATES*
  How ready is each supervisor to provide unit leadership?

- MAINTAINING TRAINING STATUS OF SUBORDINATES*
  How ready is each supervisor to make sure subordinates are well trained?

  *Last four items asked only about supervisors.

Model of Individual Readiness


```
Individual Characteristics
    Rank
    Selected for Promotion
    Personal Responsibility
        Driver's License
        Emergency Transportation
        Low Frequency of Unpaid Bills
        Not Using Budget Counselling
```

```
        Policies,
    Programs, Practices
    Supervisor Support for Families
    Spouse Employment Referral Use
```

Individual Readiness Ratings

```
Soldier Perceptions of Unit
and Work Characteristics
    Unit Morale
    Not Working at Night
    Work Satisfaction
    Soldiering Motivation
```

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For Supervisors and Unit Commanders:
How to Increase Soldiers' Readiness

■ Be willing to listen when a soldier has a family problem.

■ Show a real interest in the welfare of families.

■ Allow soldiers time off for family matters, both urgent (such as medical care) and non-urgent (such as family activities).

■ Inform soldiers and their spouses about spouse employment programs, especially employment referrals.

■ Encourage soldier financial responsibility.

  ✓ Provide preventive personal budget training (such as arranging for Army Community Services sessions for unit personnel).

For Installation Commanders and DA Level Policy Makers:
How to Increase Soldiers' Readiness

- Ensure that all supervisors are familiar with recommendations for supersivors and unit commanders.

  - ✓ Include this information in training of all leaders (officers and NCOs).

- Be a model of the practices recommended for supervisors and unit commanders in your own leadership.

- Evaluate unit leaders and supervisors at least partly on the basis of their success in meeting soldier and family needs.

- Provide spouse employment programs, including employment referral.

- Decrease soldier debt.

  - ✓ Increase pay and benefits.

  - ✓ Provide preventive personal budget training and make it accessible to soldiers.
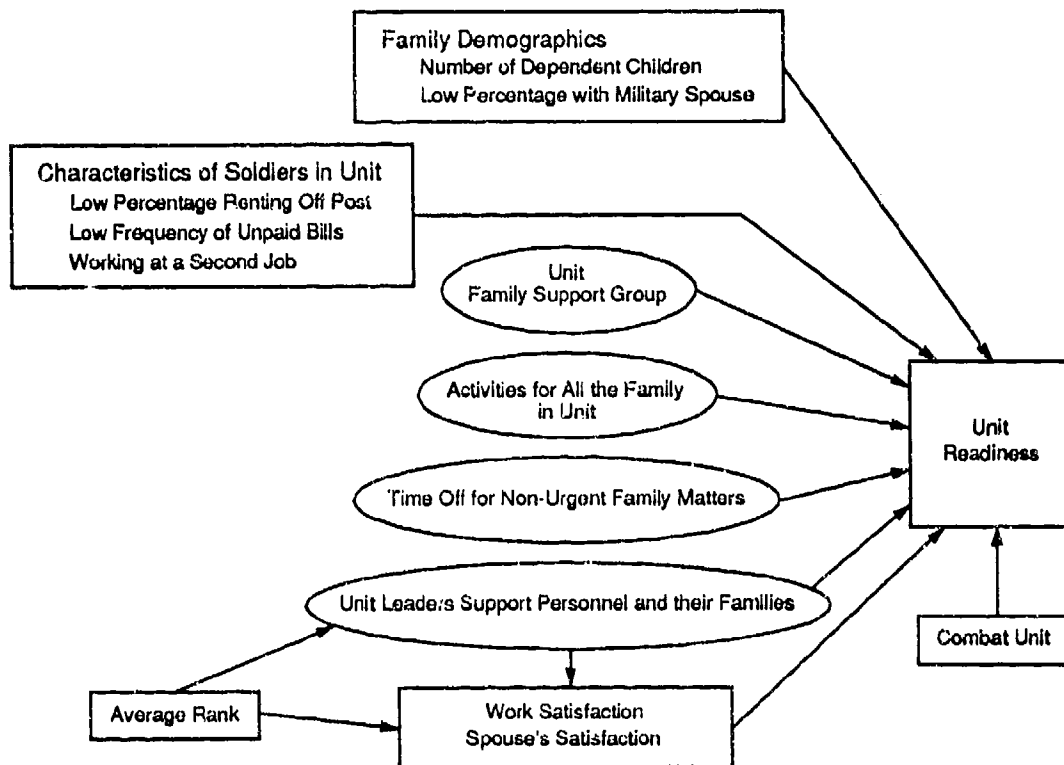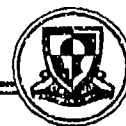
Measures of Unit Readiness

- Unit Readiness Ratings
  - ✓ Cohesion and Teamwork
  - ✓ Meeting Standards
  - ✓ Supplies, Materials and Equipment
  - ✓ Care and Concern for Families
  - ✓ Care and Concern for Soldiers
  - ✓ Leadership
  - ✓ Mission Performance
  - ✓ Personnel Capabilities for Mission Accomplishment
  - ✓ Personnel Deployability
  - ✓ Training Program
  - ✓ Unit Weapons
  - ✓ Vehicles/Transportation (including Aircraft and Armor)

- Unit Status Summary
  - ✓ Average personnel available past six months
  - ✓ Number of deployment/readiness exercises
  - ✓ Number of external general inspections
  - ✓ Average personnel MOS-trained in past six months
  - ✓ Average personnel turnover past six months
  - ✓ Average equipment mission-capable past six months
  - ✓ Average proficiency past six months
  - ✓ Results of last external general inspection
  - ✓ Participation in Field Training Exercises
  - ✓ Participation in Command Post Exercises

- Average Individual Readiness Ratings
  - ✓ Privates, privates first class, and corporals
  - ✓ NCOs in the unit
  - ✓ Officers in the unit

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Model of Unit Readiness

For Supervisors and Unit Commanders:
How to Increase Unit Readiness

- Demonstrate that you support your personnel and their families.

- Have a unit family support group.

- Provide activities in your unit for families.

- Allow soldiers time off for family matters even when not urgent.

- Find ways to increase your soldiers' satisfaction with their work.

- Do everything you can to increase the satisfaction with Army life felt by the spouses of soldiers in your unit.

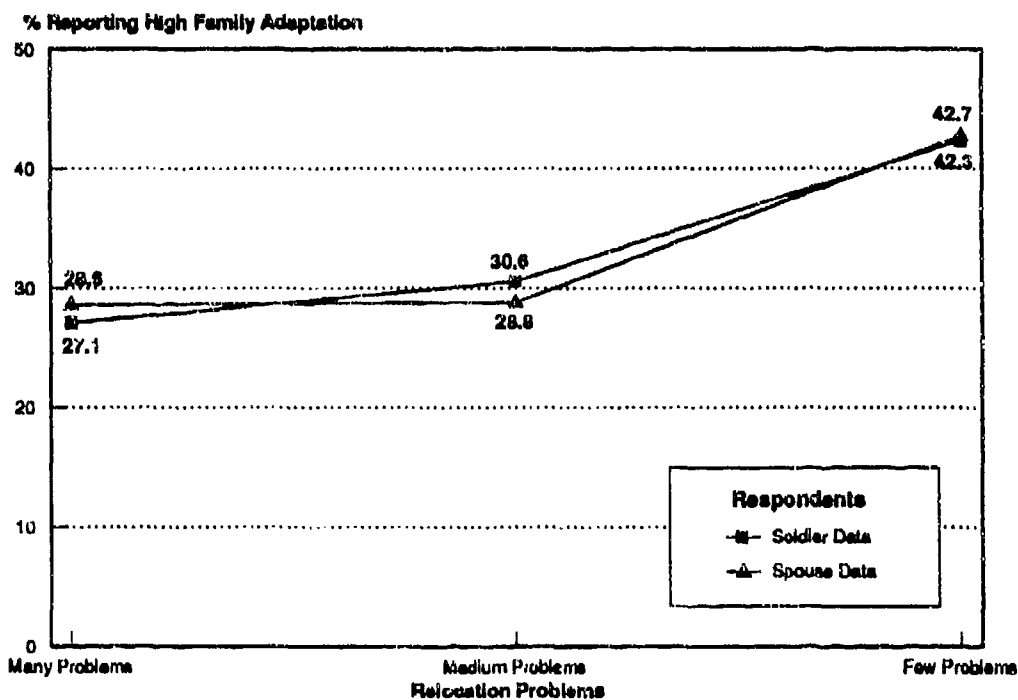- Encourage soldier financial responsibility.

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For Installation Commanders and DA Level Policy Makers:
Policies to Increase Unit Readiness

- Provide housing on post for those who desire it.

- Work to ensure adequate availability.

- Support unit leaders in their efforts to support families (by having a family support group, providing activities for families, allowing soldiers time off for family matters).

- Include in evaluations of supervisors the extent to which their subordinates perceive support for themselves and their families.

- Decrease soldier debt.
    - ✓ Provide preventive budget counseling.
    - ✓ Increase pay and benefits.

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Relationship Between Relocation Problems
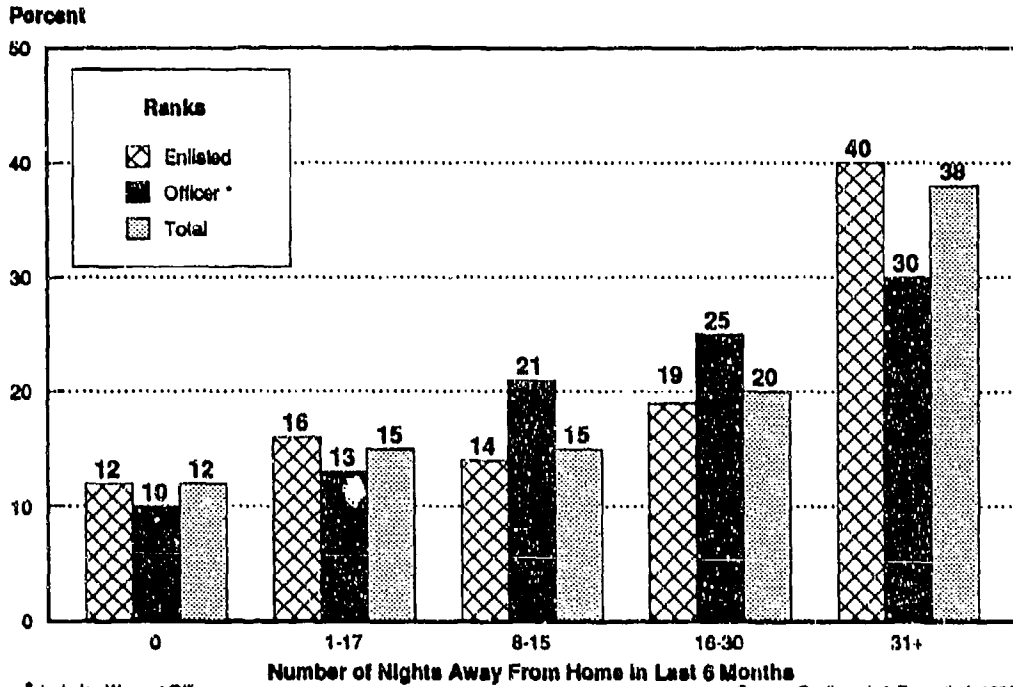# and Family Adaptation

% Reporting High Family Adaptation

(Data are for married soldiers and their spouses
with at least one Permanent Change of Station move.)

Source: Croan, LeVine, & Blankinship, 1991

"Overnight" Separation Activity in Past Six Months

Percent

Ranks
- Enlisted
- Officer *
- Total

Number of Nights Away From Home in Last 6 Months

0: Enlisted 12, Officer 10, Total 12
1-17: Enlisted 16, Officer 13, Total 15
8-15: Enlisted 14, Officer 21, Total 15
16-30: Enlisted 19, Officer 25, Total 20
31+: Enlisted 40, Officer 30, Total 38

* Includes Warrant Officers.

Source: Coolbaugh & Rosenthal, 1992

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Model of Family Adaptation

Factors Associated with Low Frequency of Worries During Separations:

Rank

Financial preparedness (especially emergency cash)

Spouse understanding demands of soldier's job

Few problems with children

Perceptions of unit leaders as supportive of families

Informal Social Support

Reliable Information

Adjustment to Separations

Adjustment to Danger

Family Adaptation

Army-Family Fit

Spouse Support for the Army

Family Adjustment to the Army

Adjustment to Work Unpredictability

Factors Associated with Fewer Relocation Problems:

Fewer moves (for officers)

Time off from duty after relocation

Preparation for move

Preferred location

Employed spouse

Adjustment to Relocation

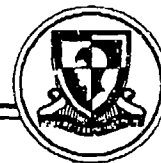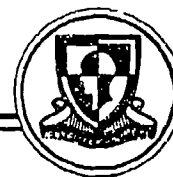**Spouse Employment Satisfaction**

Work Rewards

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For Supervisors and Unit Commanders:
How to Facilitate Family Adaptation to the Army

- Establish a warm climate for families.

- Minimize the requirement for soldiers to return to work after the duty day.

- Encourage family support groups and provide full support.
    - ✓ Emphasize positive support for voluntary participation.
    - ✓ Avoid hierarchical organization.
    - ✓ Encourage volunteers regardless of rank.
    - ✓ Provide instrumental support (such as information, phone numbers when needed).

- Inform soldiers and spouses about family programs (including spouse employment and child care).

- Institute formal and informal support mechanisms to reduce the stress of separations.
    - ✓ Provide pre-deployment programs for soldiers and spouses (and other close family and friends).
    - ✓ Develop supportive and trained rear detachment commands.
    - ✓ Use rear detachment commands and family support groups to keep spouses informed.

- Institute formal and informal support mechanisms to promote adaptation to relocation.
    - ✓ Provide sponsorship service to newly arriving soldiers.
    - ✓ Allow newly arriving soldiers time off to get settled.
    - ✓ Provide information to soldiers and their families about the location and family services available.

- Provide formal and informal support to special target groups.
    - ✓ Assure support to young families.
    - ✓ Facilitate support for male single parents.

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For Installation Commanders and DA Level Policy Makers:
How to Facilitate Family Adaptation to the Army

- Train leaders at all levels on how to be supportive of families (see recommendations fo supervisors and unit commanders).

- Develop and maintain policies, programs, and practices to reduce the stress of separation.
    - ✓ Minimize family separation.
    - ✓ Develop, maintain, and encourage pre-deployment programs for families.
    - ✓ Provide and train rear detachment commanders.
    - ✓ Provide childcare services.

- Develop and maintain policies, programs, and practices to reduce the stress of relocation.
    - ✓ Minimize relocation.
    - ✓ Expand relocation services to soldiers and spouses.
    - ✓ Enhance sponsorship programs.
    - ✓ Emphasize community support programs that enhance spouse employment opportunities.
    - ✓ Provide childcare services.

- Provide support to families of Reserve and National Guard units.

- Target policies and support programs to young families.

- Target policies and support programs for male single parents.

- Undertake research to examine issues for civilian husbands of women soldiers.

For Supervisors and Unit Commanders:
How to Increase Community Support

- Assure troop awareness of support services on post.

    ✓ Reach out to junior enlisted families.

- Encourage troops to seek help if needed from support services on post.

- Assure troops and families get pre- and post-movement briefings.

- Provide support and encouragement for family support groups and rear detachment commander.

- Encourage the development of informal support networks among soldiers' spouses.

    ✓ Provide family activities in the unit.

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For Installation Commanders and DA Policy Makers:
How to Increase Community Support

■ Launch major efforts to help families become aware of the support services available on Army posts.

■ Provide effective mechanisms for community participation.

■ Provide strong relocation and referral information services.

■ Emphasize the importance of rear detachment commands and family support groups.

■ Support family member employment assistance programs.

■ Provide support for child development services.