Recommendations for Enhancing U.S. Army Company Grade Officer Career Continuance

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCING U.S. ARMY COMPANY GRADE OFFICER CAREER CONTINUANCE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research Requirement:

This report summarizes research carried out pursuant to the United States Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Science's (ARI's) Contract # DASW01-03-D-0016-0024, under the auspices of its Personnel Assessment Research Unit (PARU). In order for the Army to have an appropriate number of senior-level officers in the future, it is important that a minimum proportion of officers choose to remain in the Regular Army after the required Active Duty Service Obligation (ADSO) or to stay in active service until eligible to retire. In response to the need to improve retention among enlisted Soldiers and company grade officers, ARI instituted a research program entitled "Strategies to Enhance Retention" (also known as "STAY"). The officer portion of the STAY program sought, over a three-year period, to develop means of improving the continuance of the Army's company grade officers. One purpose of the officer portion of STAY was to recommend, develop, and empirically evaluate interventions for improving the continuance of company grade commissioned officers. An overriding model of officer retention and 29 potential interventions were identified, and three of the interventions were chosen to be developed and evaluated during this three-year period. The purpose of this report is to make final recommendations for steps that can be taken in the future to enhance company grade officer career continuance, based on what we have learned over the course of the officer portion of the STAY project.

Procedure:

To develop our recommendations, we reviewed prior work products of the project. These included notes and reports summarizing focus groups and interviews, along with PDRI technical reports. The technical reports describe the preliminary and final models of company grade officer continuance, the potential interventions considered for development, and the evaluation of the three "best bet" interventions that we developed (counseling training, officer retention resource website, and alumni video). Based on reviews of these products and the considerable subject matter expertise we accumulated over the course of the project, we developed a set of recommendations for future work that can further the goal of increasing company grade officer career continuance.

We organized our recommendations for future initiatives in terms of the major factors identified in focus groups and interviews as influencing retention, either positively or negatively. We also categorized each intervention in terms of a model that distinguishes interventions as being (a) direct vs. indirect, and (b) unit-level vs. systemic. Within the description of each recommended initiative we discuss the nature of the intervention, the reasons the intervention should improve retention and issues that may limit the effectiveness or feasibility of the intervention. Key steps in developing proposed interventions are outlined.

We also include recommendations that are specific to each of the three interventions developed for the STAY project, as well as for the officer career continuance model.

Findings:

There are many interventions that could potentially enhance the continuance of company-grade officers. The majority involve indirectly attempting to influence officers' retention decisions through increasing their affective commitment to the Army. Interventions that could be implemented both at the unit-level and Army-wide were identified.

Utilization and Dissemination of Findings:

We recommend that the findings of this report be utilized to drive decisions about future initiatives to increase company-grade officer retention. By summarizing major factors that negatively and positively influence company grade officer retention, the report provides a succinct overview of causes of separation. The proposed interventions outline key next steps that may be taken to meet the Army's need to retain quality company grade officers. The most important recommendations on which to follow through immediately are those that (a) can have an immediate and long-lasting impact on the career continuance behavior of officers with the most potential for being outstanding leaders at the Battalion Commander level in the future, (b) take the interventions that have already been developed to the next level, and (c) allow for more complete testing of the officer career continuance model.

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Introduction

To fulfill its missions, the United States (U.S.) Army must meet its personnel needs. Individuals who have developed or can develop the qualities needed for high job performance and organizational effectiveness are needed to join the Army and stay with the Army for significant periods of time. Through the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) and United States Military Academy (USMA) scholarship programs, the Army heavily invests in the development and commissioning of high quality company grade officers. When officers leave early in their careers, the Army does not receive a satisfactory return on this investment. Of greater concern, lower than desired retention rates can leave the Army shorthanded and hamper its ability to fulfill missions. In order for the Army to have an appropriate number of higher-level officers in the future, it is important that a minimum proportion of officers choose to remain in the Regular Army after the required Active Duty Service Obligation (ADSO) or to stay in active service until retirement.

Multiple factors likely contribute to decisions to leave the Army, including individual difference factors, the changing nature of the military organization and its missions, reduction in the career fields available to officers due to conversion of some military functions to the civilian workforce, economic factors, societal changes with respect to work-family goals and responsibilities, and the high activity levels and stresses associated with America's ongoing global war on terrorism. Problems retaining officers may become an even greater risk to Army effectiveness as the Army expands and moves toward a future force of officers who must have and maintain strong levels of motivation and capabilities for service performance. The Army needs practices and prevention strategies that address the full complexity of the retention issue.

In response to the need to improve retention among enlisted Soldiers and company grade officers, the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) instituted a research program entitled "Strategies to Enhance Retention" (code named "STAY"). The officer portion of the STAY program sought, over a three-year period, to improve the continuance of the Army's company grade officers. In this program, "company grade officers" are commissioned officers (principally, Lieutenants and Captains) in their first obligation who are part of the Regular Army, Army Reserves, and National Guard.

One purpose of the officer portion of STAY was to recommend, develop, and empirically evaluate interventions for improving the continuance of company grade commissioned officers. Based on literature review and numerous interviews and focus groups, we identified 29 potential interventions and three of these interventions were chosen to be developed and evaluated during this three-year period. In addition, we developed and refined a model of company grade officer career continuance, based on literature review and empirical analysis. In this report, we summarize what we have learned and make final recommendations for steps that can be taken in the future to enhance company grade officer career continuance based on knowledge gained over the course of the officer portion of the STAY project.

Sources of Information

We drew on a number of sources of information to formulate the recommendations included in this report. These information sources include (a) focus groups and interviews on Army

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posts, (b) interviews with other Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), (c) literature review, (d) our "best bet" intervention evaluation studies, (e) our model of company grade officer career continuance, and (f) special meetings with senior officer panels. Each of these information sources is described below.

Focus Groups and Interviews on Post

A series of focus groups with company grade officers and interviews with field grade officers (primarily brigade and battalion commanders) were conducted at Fort Bragg, Fort Hood, Fort Riley, and Fort Lewis during the spring and summer of 2006. These meetings were focused on likely causes for officers leaving the Army following their first ADSO and possible interventions that might lead to increased retention rates. We conducted many other focus groups and interviews as part of the development and evaluation of the best bet interventions, and information obtained in these sessions also informed our recommendations. For example, we met with (a) MAJs attending the Command and General Staff College School of Advanced Military Studies (CGSC SAMS) course at Fort Leavenworth; (b) Colonels (COLs) attending the Army War College (AWC); and many Lieutenants (LTs) and CPTs at Fort Carson, Fort Hood, Fort Riley, Fort Lewis, Fort Benning, Fort Gordon, and Fort Leonard Wood.

Interviews with Other Subject Matter Experts

A series of interviews were conducted with SMEs in one or more areas relevant to the career cycle of officers. These included (a) heads of specific programs at Human Resources Command (HRC), (b) former officers at HRC and elsewhere in the Army, (c) representatives from the Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis (OEMA), (d) government representatives engaged in relevant joint programs with the Army or Department of Defense (DoD), (e) an expert at the Strategic Studies Institute, (f) SMEs with experience as career managers, and (g) representatives of organizations devoted to improving the lot of military families and spouses. Some of these experts had conflicting views reflecting honest differences in opinion about the sources of problems or the viability of solutions.

Literature Review

The interviews were supplemented by select readings of books, articles, technical reports, Army Field Manuals, and websites devoted to one or more topics relevant to Army officer retention.

Intervention Evaluation Studies

One purpose of the officer portion of STAY was to recommend, develop, and empirically evaluate interventions for improving the continuance of junior commissioned officers. After receiving input from dozens of junior and senior officers in focus groups and interviews, we identified three interventions that were practical and had potential for short-term impact. They were (a) retention counseling training for company and battalion commanders, (b) a website devoted to issues relevant to company grade officer retention, and (c) a video featuring interviews with former officers to present their perspective. The development and evaluation of each of these interventions is described in a separate research note for each intervention (Hezlett, Johnson, & Babin, 2010; Johnson et al., 2011; Mael, Alonso, Johnson, & Babin,

2010). Over the course of developing and evaluating each of these interventions, we learned a great deal about factors influencing officer retention and how these interventions could be improved to better enhance career continuance.

Model of Company Grade Officer Career Continuance

On the basis of focus groups with company grade officers, interviews with field grade officers, interviews with other SMEs in one or more areas relevant to the career cycle of officers, and literature review, Personnel Decisions Research Institutes (PDRI) research scientists and their colleagues developed a preliminary model of officer retention (Schneider, Johnson, Cullen, Weiss, Ilgen, & Borman, 2006). Following further literature review, data collection, empirical evaluation, and SME review, this model was revised and refined to create the final model (Schneider, Johnson, Cochran, Hezlett, Foldes, & Ervin, 2011). Development, testing, and refinement of this model suggested a number of potential avenues for increasing officer career continuance.

Special Meetings with Senior Officer Panels

We convened three panels of senior officers with interest in and knowledge of officer retention issues at various time during the project. These officers ranged from CPT to COL and represented areas such as G-1, the Officer Retention Branch at HRC, the Officer Personnel Management System (OPMS) Task Force at HRC, and current and former Battalion Commanders. In November 2006, we created a Retention Strategies Working Group (RSWG) to help evaluate potential interventions and offer opinions on which interventions we should attempt to implement and evaluate for this project. In July 2007, we reconvened the RSWG, with a somewhat different mix of officers, to get their opinions on the progress we had made on the chosen interventions and how we could obtain resources to evaluate them. In February 2009, we convened a panel to provide feedback on the final officer career continuance model. During each of these meetings, participants provided helpful information and suggestions that have informed our recommendations.

Organization of This Report

This report is organized into six sections. First, we present an overview of what we learned in our focus groups and interviews about factors that influence officer retention decisions. Second, we describe the organizing system we used for presenting our recommendations. Third, we present a large number of recommendations for how the Army can improve officer career continuance by targeting factors that influence continuance decisions. These recommendations are based on what we have learned throughout the entirety of the officer STAY project. Fourth, we present recommendations that are specific to the three interventions that we developed and evaluated as part of this project. These recommendations are suggestions for how these interventions should be taken to the next level to have a greater impact in the future. Fifth, we present recommendations that are specific to the further testing and refinement of the officer career continuance model. Finally, we close with a summary and parting thoughts.

Factors Influencing Officer Retention Decisions

In this section, we summarize the results of our on-post interviews and focus groups conducted near the beginning of the STAY project. One purpose of these interviews and focus groups was to get first-hand reports from officers regarding factors that positively and negatively influence their decisions to continue in the Army past their first ADSO. Officers mentioned many different factors, and we have distilled their responses into the most often cited factors.

Most-Cited Factors That Negatively Influence Retention Decisions

Family Strains

Several factors make it challenging for people to spend time with family members, creating individual and family stress.

- *High Optempo.* The one-year deployments take people away from their families, and the 18-month (at most) reset periods do not allow sufficient recovery time and time with family. Time away from one's children is particularly challenging, with officers perceiving they are missing years of their children's lives. The strain of being separated from family is exacerbated by repeated deployment cycles. Although dissatisfaction with the frequency of deployment was cited more often, the duration of deployments also was criticized. Uneven distribution of deployments across bases is seen as unfair. Both the time away during the deployment and the busy tempo when in garrison are problematic.

- *Family Dissatisfaction.* Officers will leave the Army if they feel their spouses and children are not happy. Families either have to adjust to the stress of repeated moves, or deal with being separated from their Army spouse. The career opportunities of officers' spouses can be limited. The family health care system is seen as lacking quality and there is a lack of adequate day care. Post locations that are inferior in terms of medical care, housing, and deployment cycles are clearly a source of dissatisfaction, leaving officers feeling that their families are not cared for.

- *Long Hours and Lack of Predictability.* Officers often have to stay long hours on post, even if they have no work to do, restricting the time they have to spend with their families. Officers cite an inability to plan personal or family activities because they are unable to predict short-term and long-term commitments. Lack of information prevents vacation planning or visits home before deployment. Uncertainty about training schedules frequently makes it necessary to cancel weekend or evening plans. Significant family tension results.

Frustration with Work

A related issue stems from the volume of tasks officers are asked to complete while in garrison, without any clear sense of priority. Work perceived as relatively less important consumes large amounts of time that officers believe should be spent training troops. Jobs that

are not challenging, perceived as meaningless, or otherwise fail to meet expectations have a negative impact on retention, particularly if they are officers' first positions. People in staff positions may have a difficult time seeing how their jobs contribute, undermining their sense of accomplishment. Dealing with day-to-day bureaucracy during deployment (e.g., getting approval for missions) and dwelling (e.g., delays in receiving directives) is frustrating and stressful. There is a sense that demands are coming from many quarters without coordination and communication, and officers are left with an almost impossible task to accommodate all of them. Some officers feel they do not have the resources (e.g., time, equipment/supplies) to get their jobs done and are frustrated that they lack up-to-date equipment for training. Long hours and time pressure not only contribute to family strains, but also create high levels of stress, burnout, and frustration. Even social events are perceived as burdensome because they take away from private family time.

Lack of Career Development and Opportunities

A common concern is that there is no systematic planning to achieve individuals' career and personal goals. Development opportunities are not realized due to short-term demands and a lack of attention on the part of leadership to the needs and interests of individuals. Officers can be constrained to stay in branches, units, or roles that do not fit their interests and career paths can be unclear. Limited opportunities discourage officers from staying. Officers leave if they cannot get company command early enough in their careers, are not eligible for the training or graduate school options they desire, or find themselves in positions that they perceive will not allow them to be promoted. Lack of mentoring, counseling, and attention to career progression from senior leadership leaves officers feeling they are not valued by the Army. Some officers perceive they have to fight to receive training and are often told to learn things on their own, leaving them feeling unprepared for their jobs. There seems to be significant concern that mission is being emphasized too heavily at the cost of the individual Soldier, and a more balanced perspective should be sought.

Competing Civilian Opportunities

Officers research civilian jobs and will leave if they perceive there are better opportunities in the private sector. Salary was the aspect of civilian jobs most frequently cited as a factor influencing officers' decision to leave the Army. Officers perceive that there are no financial incentives to stay and that they are being paid too little for the hours they work. Many officers believe that in civilian jobs they would work fewer hours, earn more, have more predictable schedules, and have more opportunity to spend time with their families, particularly on weekends. People feel their skills, particularly their leadership experience, are in high demand in the private sector.

Dissatisfaction with Leadership

Command climate affects officers' satisfaction with Army life. Specific frustrations include leaders who do not respect their time, micro-manage, make poor decisions, do not tolerate mistakes, fail to treat officers as adults, or are abusive. Personality conflicts can lead to a poor evaluation, which can kill a career and discourage individuals from staying in the Army.

Empty Promises

Officers are promised opportunities and new assignments if they remain in the Army, and these promises are not consistently kept. This creates strong negative reactions, as do stop-loss orders given after permission to leave.

Most-Cited Factors that Positively Influence Retention Decisions

Security and Benefits

The Army is consistently seen as providing job security, steady pay, and financial stability. Many officers believe that this level of security is not always present in private-sector jobs. Educational opportunities stand out as the most attractive benefit the Army offers. Benefits such as early retirement, pensions, health care, leave time, housing, and low cost-of-living are perceived as clear advantages of military life. The opportunity to travel is seen by some as an appealing aspect of the Army.

Supportive Leadership

Officers cite effective leadership, particularly in their initial assignments, as an important determinant of a desire to make a career of the Army. Having senior leaders who provide mentoring and care about career development encourages officers to stay. Good leaders both respect their Soldiers' judgment and capabilities and inspire respect from their Soldiers. Officers seek role models and their retention decisions are positively influenced by senior leaders who appear to be enjoying their careers with the Army. Leaders who take care of their Soldiers, take an interest in their professional and personal lives, provide feedback, are tolerant of mistakes, create a positive work environment, and offer counseling are seen as effective.

Camaraderie

The shared experience of working closely and meeting challenges with others, as well as the general Army environment, create a strong social bond that positively impacts retention. Peers who enjoy their work have a positive influence on the outlook of others.

Meaningful Work

Many cite the opportunity to do meaningful, satisfying, and fun work as a reason to stay in the Army. Officers enjoy the experience of leading Soldiers, being responsible for training troops, molding a team, and influencing others. Many cite deployments to Iraq as their most rewarding times in the Army, because of the focus on mission and the opportunity to do what they were trained to do. The other side of the coin is that officers in staff assignments are bored and unchallenged, and this contributes to a propensity to leave the Army. Some officers see the Army as a unique place to have an impact on society and be part of something bigger than oneself.

Identification with Army

For some officers, being a member of the Army is a key part of their identity. They take pride in the Army and want to give back to it. Just as people are willing to stay with their families when things get tough, officers with a strong Army identification are willing to put up with the negative aspects of being in the Army because they consider it a part of them.

Patriotism/Sense of Duty to Country

Officers cite patriotism as a key factor for staying in the Army. Serving with the Army is seen as an honorable and respectable position. Many officers see their service as more of a "calling" than a career.

Organizing Structure

Rather than just presenting a list of recommendations, we believe it is helpful to have an organizing system that will help to classify recommendations for heuristic purposes. Therefore, the recommendations are organized in terms of the factors we identified in the previous section as influencing officers' continuance decisions. This includes both factors that negatively influence retention and factors that positively influence retention. At times, positive and negative factors are opposite sides of the same coin, so we combined them where appropriate.

In addition to the organizing structure based on factors that influence retention, we note the classification of each recommendation in terms of whether it is (a) directed at influencing continuance or affective commitment, and (b) unit-level vs. systemic. This is adapted from the model of potential STAY interventions presented by Mael, Quintela, and Johnson (2006). This structure is briefly described below.

Continuance Versus Affective Commitment

At one level, interventions could be differentiated between efforts focused on influencing continuance commitment and efforts focused on influencing affective commitment. These aspects of organizational commitment are proximal causes of career continuance in our process model of officer retention (Schneider et al., 2011). *Continuance commitment* refers to an organization member's perception of the costs or benefits associated with leaving the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997). This includes perceptions of structural constraints holding the person in the position, such as sunk costs or benefits that would be lost if departing the organization. Efforts that seek to impact the officer's continuance commitment are those that are directed specifically at influencing the individual's decision process and involve making a case for staying versus other alternatives. Within this domain, efforts may be divided into three types:

- *Convince the individual why to stay.* This includes making the case for direct personal or professional benefits of continuing as an Army officer, such as describing the invaluable skills gained as an Army officer (e.g., managing large numbers of troops, material, and large budgets) and how the attainment of these skills would put one in a position to be in great demand in the civilian workplace at the end of 20+ years in the Army.

- *Convince the individual why not to leave.* This involves pointing out the losses entailed by leaving before retirement, such as displaying value of secondary financial benefits that would be lost by leaving (e.g., healthcare, pension). Another way is to make officers aware of former officers who regret having left prematurely.

- *Direct incentives tied to retention rather than convincing officer to want to stay.* Examples would be offering monetary incentives to officers such as those provided to enlisted Soldiers, and providing officers with the opportunity to attend desired graduate schooling as a quid pro quo for staying.

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Affective commitment is attachment based upon how much an organization member wants to remain with the organization because he or she enjoys being a part of it, because the organization's values are consistent with the member's values, or because the member sees his or her needs as being met by membership in the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Efforts seeking to increase affective commitment to the Army would focus on changing the conditions under which the officer is working and living so that an officer wants to stay in that role or so impediments to remaining are removed.

Within the affective commitment domain, some of the interventions are designed to improve the officer's career and experience of work (e.g., chances for promotion, preferred branch and assignments, preferred leaders). Other interventions are designed to address distractors that interfere with one's career as an officer. These could include scheduling issues that impinge on family life, problems with spousal employment, and post-related problems that are not work- or career-related. These interventions fit into three types:

- *Intervene in work situations for the individual.* An example would be to improve systems allowing company grade officers to get desired assignments or setting up new policies and structures for trading and learning about assignments.

- *Intervene in work situations at the group level.* Examples would include improving brigade command climate or increasing commander effectiveness in ways that will promote retention.

- *Intervene in non-work situations.* An example might be providing counseling or job-seeking assistance to an officer's spouse or to address systemic issues such as employment options on or near post or brigade-wide policies regarding training on weekends.

Unit-Level versus Systemic Changes

Another dimension upon which interventions can be differentiated from a practical perspective would be the degree of control that a unit (e.g., brigade or battalion) would have over its implementation. At one end of the spectrum are policies or budgetary changes that must be made by Congress or the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel (G1) and that affect the whole Army. These would include changes in deployment cycles, changes in family-related policies such as tax incentives for companies hiring Army spouses, or providing children of officers with in-state college tuition rates. Although broad, systemic changes of this nature may be most effective in the long run, they may be hard to implement in a timely fashion. The reason is that they have implications beyond retention and could be seen as adversely affecting the Army or the national economy from the perspective of general officers or legislators. By contrast, localized efforts to improve battalion culture/climate or improve working hours and family life for company grade officers could be implemented with less required permission or fund allocation from higher-level military or civilian authorities.

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Recommendations Based on Factors Influencing Retention

In this section, we summarize our recommendations for future initiatives to address the challenge of retaining quality company grade officers. The initiatives range in detail and scope, but each represents an attempt to target an area that has been identified as a primary factor influencing officer retention decisions. Some recommendations specify interventions that merit testing. Others outline ideas we believe are worth additional research, development, and evaluation. Table 1 summarizes each recommendation and where it fits in our organizing structure with respect to factors influencing retention and the type of intervention (focused on influencing continuance vs. affective commitment and systemic vs. unit level).

High OPTEMPO

A number of current and former officers expressed the view that the length of deployments to Iraq and elsewhere, multiple deployments without sufficient dwell time between them, and the operational tempo (OPTEMPO) and unpredictability of work schedules between deployments are significant, if not primary, reasons for early career departures. Others have argued that a side effect of Force Stabilization and other policies has been inequity in deployments across company grade officers and posts and unevenness in deciding who is sent to one or more deployments. While they acknowledge the argument for sending experienced Soldiers into a difficult theater, they feel that the Army has overreacted and not made good use of the available Soldiers and officers, overusing some while underutilizing and frustrating others who want to be contributing to the war effort. They note that retention is lower in units that have deployed multiple times to Iraq. Others argue that the frequency and duration of deployments has derailed and harmed the civilian careers of some reservists, thereby harming morale and retention in the reserve units themselves. Calls for equality or fairness in deployments, or shorter deployment cycles similar to those in other services such as the Marines, are decisions made at high levels of the Army with consideration of many concerns, primarily national security. It is unrealistic to expect that policies regarding deployment would be changed rapidly. Given the negative impact that the failure to retain qualified company grade officers may have on the Army's ability to fulfill its mission, however, it is prudent to investigate changes in policy that may reduce some of the strain of repeated deployment without compromising national security. We suggest three potential changes to evaluate.

Shorter Deployments

Among company grade officers, there is interest in adopting other services' shorter deployment times, recognizing that this will result in more frequent deployments. Deployments of one year and more are seen as too long, especially when pre-deployment training and mandatory maintenance upon return are taken into account. The discrepancy between the Army's deployment cycles and those of other services may foster perceptions of being treated unjustly. Research on organizational justice has linked perceptions of distributive and procedural injustice to decreased job satisfaction, reduced organizational commitment, and greater organizational withdrawal (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001; Gilliland & Chan, 2001). These relationships are consistent with our model of company grade officer retention (Schneider et al., 2006, 2011).

Table 1.
Summary of Recommendations

Factor Influencing Retention	Recommended Initiative	Type of Intervention	
		Commitment Type	Level
High OPTEMPO	Shorter deployments	Affective	Systemic
	Greater deployment control	Affective	Systemic
	Flexible pre- or post-deployment policies	Affective	Systemic
Family Satisfaction	Modify child care	Affective	Systemic
	Alternative work sites for spouses	Affective	Systemic
	Deployment-related support for families	Affective	Systemic
Hours and Predictability	Promote flexibility	Affective	Unit
	Promote predictability	Affective	Unit
Frustration with Work	Improve prioritization	Affective	Systemic
	Ensure work is meaningful	Affective	Unit
	Job switching	Affective	Systemic
Career Development and Opportunities	Develop alternate forms of career support	Affective	Systemic or Unit
	Augment branch websites	Affective	Systemic
	Career management training	Affective	Unit
Competing Civilian Opportunities	Cost-benefit analysis	Continuance	Systemic or Unit
	Realistic civilian job previews	Continuance	Systemic
	Making former officers available to current officers	Affective	Systemic or Unit
Leadership	Leader rotation	Affective	Systemic
	Evaluate impact of poor evaluation	Affective	Systemic
	Leader training	Affective	Systemic or Unit
Empty Promises	Realistic job preview	Affective	Systemic
	Interactional justice training	Affective	Unit
Identification with the Army/Patriotism	Selection for retention	Affective	Systemic
	Expand the recruiting base	Neither	Systemic

Several kinds of information should be used to inform the decision to shorten deployment times. In addition to analyzing the impact of shorter deployment times on meeting manpower demands, the impact of shorter deployment times on retention should be more thoroughly investigated. Although officers we spoke to believed shorter deployments would enhance retention, it is possible that officers' expectations are incorrect. It is conceivable that shorter deployments may prove to be more disruptive than officers anticipate. Additional insight into the accuracy of officers' perceptions could be gained through qualitative and quantitative comparisons of their reactions to deployment with those of company grade officers in services whose deployment times are shorter. In addition, input should be sought from officers

potentially participating in shorter, more frequent deployment cycles on how the change in policy should be implemented. To the extent that they are fair, consistent, and sensitive to the needs of officers and their families, the procedures used to introduce a change in deployment time policy may help enhance officers' perceptions of organizational support. Perceived organizational support encourages retention. Shorter deployment cycles could potentially be piloted with a small number of Army units. A pilot evaluation of a reduction in deployment times would be a unit-level intervention requiring some Army-level accommodations. Adoption of shorter deployment times Army-wide would be a system-wide intervention to enhance retention that is focused on influencing affective commitment.

Greater Deployment Control

Many officers, especially those with families, want a greater degree of predictability and dependable scheduling for family life. Families need as much predictability as can be given in the high OPTEMPO environment. Officers have expressed dissatisfaction with being tasked at the last minute to military transition teams, which may task people at random, without asking for volunteers, and which do not take into account an officer's family circumstances. Some officers have left the Army after being deployed at a particularly difficult time for their family members, such as shortly after the birth of a child. When feasible, increasing predictability by giving officers a say in the timing of their deployment or tasking to transition teams is likely to improve retention, by decreasing family strain, increasing perceptions of procedural fairness, and enhancing perceptions of Army support.

Predictability could be increased by asking for volunteers to serve on transition teams or giving officers a limited opportunity to defer deployment. The latter approach could be modeled on the civilian jury system, where citizens in many jurisdictions are permitted to postpone and re-schedule their call to jury duty a limited number of times. This would make it easier for officers with military spouses to coordinate their schedules and permit officers to address unusual, acute family circumstances (e.g., a sick parent, a pregnant wife) before deploying. Officers whose requests to defer deployment were approved could be required to commit to additional service time to ensure deferrals could be used to postpone, but not avoid, deployments. Key issues to investigate include (a) officers' perceptions of reasonable reasons to request a postponement, (b) the amount of additional service time that would be seen as a fair exchange for a postponement, (c) the expected number of postponements, (d) the impact of postponements on meeting manpower needs, (e) the anticipated impact of postponement on unit morale, (f) the logistical support needed to manage a postponement system, and (g) the effect on an officer if a postponement request was denied. The implementation of a deployment postponement and re-scheduling system would be a system-wide intervention focused on influencing affective commitment.

Flexible Pre- or Post-Deployment Policies

Pre-deployment training and post-deployment stabilization contributes to the effective duration of deployment time. One suggestion made by officers is to allow them to choose whether they want time off before or after deployments. Flexibility in when time is taken off post-deployment also might be welcomed. Some officers indicated a preference for having time off several weeks after returning from deployment. Developing a better understanding of

officers' preferences for pre- and post-deployment policies would clarify (a) the popularity of different pre- and post-deployment practices, (b) the potential impact of pre- and post-deployment policy change on retention, and (c) the possible impact of changes in policy on manpower. This information could be used to develop policies that better meet officers' needs. A menu of options may be one approach to maximizing the preferences of most officers, but the feasibility of such a menu would need thorough evaluation. Providing more flexible pre- and post-deployment options may enhance officers' perceptions of the extent to which the Army values them, reduce family strains, increase commitment, and decrease retention problems. Changes in pre- and post-deployment policies are an indirect retention intervention that would most likely be system-wide.

Family Satisfaction

Many officers cite family issues as the reason for their leaving the Army early. It is likely that a number of these officers use family as an excuse rather than stating that they are leaving because of career disappointment or a difficult commander. Nevertheless, a significant percentage of officers do leave because of family stresses, child needs, or spouse dissatisfaction. There are a number of possible ways family dissatisfaction could be addressed.

Modify Child Care

Problems with child care can contribute to family dissatisfaction. In the focus groups we conducted, officers raised a variety of concerns about child care. Some officers were dissatisfied with the availability or expense of child care; others found it challenging to identify child care options and finalize arrangements in advance of transferring to a new post. Standardizing the rates for Army child care was recommended; rates based on rank were perceived as unfair. Although some officers suggested 24-hour care should be offered by the Army, senior officers noted that this could work against promoting work-family balance. Having to pick up one's child by 1800 was a nice reason to have to leave work. On the other hand, senior officers recognized that some people feel they must pay someone else to pick up their children so they can stay late to avoid being discriminated against in performance reviews.

The diversity of child care problems and proposed solutions highlight the scope and complexity of the issue. Additional investigation is recommended to further diagnose the causes and consequences of child care problems. Solutions based on a thorough understanding of how and when daycare contributes to family dissatisfaction are more likely to diminish family strain, improve evaluations of the Army context, increase commitment, and promote retention. Key areas to investigate include (a) the procedures company grade officers use to locate suitable child care, (b) the features of "best bet" resources for locating child care (e.g., post websites) that could be promoted Army-wide, (c) the percentage of company grade officers who are dissatisfied with child care, (d) the features of child care that put the most strain on families (e.g., hours, rates), (e) the features of child care desired by officers, (f) the anticipated consequences of changes in Army child care services, and (g) barriers to implementing changes. Although we did not hear specific comments about the quality of child care in our focus groups, it would be worthwhile to investigate officers' opinions in this area. If an officer's children are spending long hours in child care, knowing that they are in a stimulating environment that fosters learning and development could lessen the negative impact of relying on Army child

care services. Potential interventions may target individuals (e.g., provide guides on how to find alternative child care options), posts (e.g., standardize alternative and Army child care information included on websites), or the Army as a whole (e.g., eliminate rank as the basis of child care rates).

Alternative Work Sites for Spouses

During our meetings with officers, there was a consistent call for better options for spouse employment. Notable change over the past decades that must be factored into officer retention decisions is the change in Army spouse careers. A higher percentage of officers' spouses have advanced education and careers that they wish to maintain. However, both the limited career opportunities in the areas surrounding certain posts and the problems associated with frequent moves can be disruptive to careers. It has also been reported that local employers have been known to lowball military spouses because of the spouses' limited mobility and because of the surplus of spouses available for a limited number of local jobs. Although military spouses have preference over civilians in access to Federal jobs, so do retirees and veterans competing for those jobs.

Policies that would help spouses find and maintain portable jobs that could be retained despite moves could alleviate financial and family stress and make the decision to stay with the military more appealing to both the officer and the family. Although working from home is an option for some spouses and some jobs, some employers are leery of that arrangement. Conversely, some spouses specifically want to be in a work environment that is distinct from the home. This is especially true if the spouse's home is on post. In fact, surveys of military spouses have shown that the primary reason for wanting to work is not financial but is rather the self-esteem gained from having a separate identity that is achieved by a job and career. Thus, the Army should consider developing alternative work sites near or on posts to provide spouses with the resources to be able to telecommute for a range of employers who are elsewhere, yet do so outside the distractions of their home.

Although individual corporations have set up offices on or near posts for specific types of work (e.g., call centers), a multi-firm site would allow for a wider range of jobs and employers to use military spouses in the social atmosphere of a workplace. Our interviews and focus groups with both current and former officers confirm that this idea would be attractive and could sway some families to stay in the Army.

The alternative work site idea actually has a precedent. In the early 1990s, the General Services Administration (GSA) developed an alternative work site in Hagerstown, Maryland whereby government employees from multiple agencies could work out of the same office in Hagerstown rather than enduring a long daily commute to Washington, DC. Hagerstown was only the first of what are now 15 similar sites in the metropolitan Washington area.

GSA also spearheaded the Spouse Telework Employment Program (STEP), a partnership of GSA and five federal agencies (the Departments of State, Defense, Labor, Homeland Security - Coast Guard, and National Guard Bureau) to improve spouse access to remote training and telework opportunities within the private sector. These agencies are developing a pilot program called Jobs Without Borders to connect 50 military and Foreign Service spouses with private

sector telework (http://www.vba.va.gov/survivors/DOLspouseinfo.doc). The set-up of the pilot program was completed in 2003-2004 and it may still be worthwhile to investigate application of the idea at a specific base. Given that military spouses often lose job opportunities because they cannot predict if and when they will have to relocate, the ability to maintain a portable career could greatly enhance the employability of spouses and reduce pressure on the officer to leave the Army. The alternative work site idea is a systems approach that stresses employment continuity and feasibility for multiple individuals across professions and employers.

During the course of the project we discussed further support for such a program with organizations within and outside the Army that are dedicated to spouse employment and Army family welfare. For example, we have had enthusiastic communications with the Kansas Department of Commerce division located in the vicinity of Fort Riley, Kansas; and Heartland Works, Inc., a private non-profit company promoting economic growth in Northeast Kansas through a variety of workforce services and solutions, regarding placing a pilot alternative work site program in Fort Riley. Both of these entities view such a program as an enhancement for the region. Similarly, the Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) office at Fort Sill expressed interest. We view Fort Sill as being a valuable testbed for this important effort. Alternative work sites are a systemic intervention focused on influencing affective commitment.

Deployment-Related Support for Families

Deployments can be a stressful time for families, so it is not surprising that they are a major source of family dissatisfaction. Lombard and Lombard (1997) offered several suggestions for dealing with issues facing military families during a deployment. These include the following:

- Create formal support groups to teach specific coping skills.

- Conduct outreach to combat social isolation in neighborhoods to make sure that families in need obtain the necessary social support.

- Make sure that young families and reserve/national guard families don't "fall through the cracks" in terms of exposure to social support programs, because they most likely have limited experience with Army-related coping.

- Bring children into the process (e.g., to meetings) to allow them to express their feelings.

- Help families obtain tools and resources necessary to function without a deployed family member.

- Often, the reunion may be more stressful than the actual separation during deployments. Many active-duty members expect their families to be just as they were before they were deployed. Lombard and Lombard recommend having family members write letters detailing daily activities to lessen the surprise of any major or minor family changes.

Training programs should be created for individuals selected to lead these support groups for families to ensure that they have the skills necessary to be effective. In the past, spouses of deployed Soldiers volunteered for this. It has recently been reported, however, that in the

present military climate these volunteers are burning out due to the stress created by this type of activity (USA Today, January 15, 2008). As such, counselors should be hired and trained.

Support should also be provided to officers returning from deployments so that they can become reintegrated into the family unit as smoothly as possible. Some issues include the following:

- Traumatic events must be addressed not only to benefit the Soldier, but also to benefit the Soldier's relationship with his or her spouse. Research has shown that relationships can be significantly affected by trauma symptoms (Goff, Crow, Reisbig, & Hamilton, 2007) that can be difficult to process and talk about.

- Challenges in reconnecting with children, and sharing child-rearing duties which formerly were borne solely by the spouse.

- Changes in the spouse due to the spouse's increased independence as a result of having to function on his/her own, as well as deployment-related strain on the spouse resulting in depression, anxiety, or increased alcohol or substance abuse.

- Reestablishment of trust and intimacy with spouse (e.g., concerns over having grown apart, issues of fidelity).

- The need to get used to a different, less structured and efficient routine within the family unit as opposed to the routine experienced while deployed.

Hours and Predictability

Many officers would like a more predictable schedule that facilitates spending time with family members when they are on dwell time. This is especially important for those with working wives and children in day care or school. Commanders' explicit policies and unspoken expectations can convey to company grade officers that they need to work long hours or be at their desks even when not needed. Concern was expressed in our interviews that some commanders set a tone that requires staying late at the job even when there is not enough to be done. This is both disruptive to families and increases company grade officers' role frustration. Improved commander awareness of the climate that he or she is setting and clearer messages to subordinates could help officers reliably schedule personal and family time. The following sections present a variety of policies that could contribute to (a) making work time more flexible, and (b) making family time more predictable.

Promote Flexibility

- Allow for flexible hours that enable officers to meet external needs (e.g., seeing children off to school to allow a spouse to get to work on time).

- Allow officers who live close to post and who could come to post on short notice to work from home (telecommuting) for a certain amount of time or certain times during

the week. This would of course be subject to conditions that the work at home not hamper or compromise mission completion.

- Release officers from Physical Training (PT) one morning a week.

- Eliminate disparities in the way time off is handled for Soldiers and Officers. Examples of disparities include:

    o Making a concerted effort to release Soldiers by 1630 every day, but having officers stay until 2000 or 2100 for unessential tasks.

    o Not enforcing for officers the Army family time on Fridays at 1500.

    o Giving enlisted Soldiers, but not officers, time to settle in at specific posts.

Promote Predictability

- Establish and communicate a policy that anyone can leave for the day at a certain time (e.g., 1700) if their work is done.

- Stipulating that a certain night each week is set aside for family and off limits for extra work (except for emergencies).

- Cessation of training on weekends, a practice that is already in place for some units.

- "Lock" the training calendar further in advance, so that officers do not have to cancel planned personal and family events when changes are made at the last minute.

- Make "mandatory fun days" be held during duty time so that it does not come at the expense of time a family needs to itself.

- Have a 4-day weekend once a month.

These suggestions require flexibility that may run against the grain of a commander's perception of military life. The proposals would have to be adopted by the commander in a way that is consistent with his/her philosophy in order to be carried out without hidden contradictory messages or negative consequences for the company grade officers. Moreover, some commanders may favor "hard chargers" who will make family considerations secondary to their career ambitions. Therefore, any retention interventions targeted at family considerations will have to gain buy-in from commanders so that they do not contradict commander views on esprit de corps and hardiness. Company grade officers will deeply resent empty promises of support for family time.

Implementation of these types of interventions will most likely need to accommodate the different work demands of different units, as well as the style and philosophies of different commanders. Specific actions taken to promote a family-friendly culture are likely to vary by unit. Army-wide support of family-friendly policies, however, is likely to make this intervention more broadly adopted by individual commanders and more successful. Ways of helping

commanders establish and promote family-friendly initiatives for their units include training, counseling, and knowledge sharing. Providing commanders with a menu of ideas for promoting a family-friendly culture, tools for developing a plan to implement the ideas they select, and counseling, advice, or coaching as they implement the plan can facilitate desired changes. Approaches to further refining and developing the list of ideas for promoting family-friendly policies include (a) reviewing the practices of "best places to work" organizations, (b) meeting with commanders who are recognized as successfully balancing mission and family needs to identify best practices and collect success stories, (c) having officers rate potential family friendly policies, (d) working with commanders to identify and address barriers to potential policies, (e) developing a toolkit to support commanders' implementation of a more family-friendly culture, and (f) conducting a "proof of concept" study to evaluate and hone the toolkit.

Frustration with Work

In the focus groups we conducted with company grade officers and the interviews and panels we had with senior commanders, we learned that company grade officers experience diverse kinds of frustrations with work. In some cases, the volume of work is overwhelming. There is a sense that demands are coming from many quarters without coordination and communication, and company grade officers are left with an almost impossible task to accommodate all of them. Long hours and time pressure create high levels of stress, burnout, and frustration. People in staff positions may have a difficult time seeing how their jobs contribute, undermining their sense of accomplishment. Interventions are needed to address the distinct causes of frustration with work.

Improve Prioritization

Concern was expressed in our interviews that some commanders do not put enough focus on clarifying priorities for their subordinates. Officers perceive a need for better direction and greater prioritization of tasks from senior leadership. Taskings that come down from above are all given equal urgency, even when they are about mission-irrelevant issues. A variety of approaches might be used to improve prioritization. These include:

- Providing additional training to commanders on how to prioritize. A variation of the in-basket technique, which is used to train or test leaders in their own personal time management, prioritization, and delegation of authority (Brannick, Michaels, & Baker, 1989), could be adapted for military commanders to allow them to understand the way they expect their subordinates to use their time.

- Reviewing, evaluating, and updating existing training programs on prioritization. Some company grade officers we spoke with believed that leaders already receive some type of prioritization training. Given the concerns company grade officers raised about prioritization, a review of the content and design of existing training seems in order. One potential idea for important content to include was made by company grade officers: It would be helpful for leaders to receive training on how to balance the twin objectives of attending to the mission and caring for Soldiers. It also may be helpful to add a module focused on helping leaders apply the prioritization knowledge and skills they gained in training on the job. Previous research on transfer of training has

suggested goal-setting and self-management training can promote the maintenance and generalization of newly gained skills (Gist, Stevens, & Bavetta, 1990; Richman-Hirsch, 2001)

- Providing coaching to commanders to support the transfer of prioritization knowledge and skills to the job. Theory and research suggest that support from others is a pivotal component of leadership development (McCauley & Hezlett, 2001) and transfer of training (Campbell & Kuncel, 2001; Machin, 2002). Although research in this area has tended to focus on supervisors, it seems clear that coaches outside the chain of command could provide advice and support that would improve leaders' prioritization of tasks for their subordinates. Preliminary research on executive coaching suggests that coaching is viewed positively by participants and facilitates leader development (Hollenbeck, 2002). A coaching program focused specifically on prioritization could be developed, with leaders who are recognized as prioritization experts serving as coaches. Alternatively, prioritization could be addressed as part of a broader initiative to support development through coaching. Serving as a coach could be a special reward or assignment for demonstrating excellence in leadership. Career paths would need to be adjusted to accommodate this role and ensure it enhanced and did not delay promotion opportunities.

- Training and coaching will probably have little effect unless there are changes in the reward system. Currently, the reward system is built such that officers are rewarded when all tasks are completed, not when subordinates are happy. Adjustments could be made to the reward system so that priorities are recognized in that as well. Leaders could be rewarded for doing a good job of appropriately prioritizing tasks for subordinates rather than considering all tasks to be equally important.

Efforts to improve leaders' prioritization are targeted at influencing affective commitment. They are likely to require systemic action.

Ensure Work is Meaningful

Jobs that are not challenging, perceived as meaningless, or otherwise fail to meet expectations have a negative impact on retention. On the other hand, the opportunity to do meaningful, satisfying, and fun work is a frequently cited reason to stay in the Army. Many officers would like their jobs to be more challenging and less menial. Our interviews with company grade officers and field grade commanders revealed that the proliferation of staff positions has led to a "PowerPoint culture." Boredom has led many officers to pour their capabilities into making fancy PowerPoint slides as a way to excel or be creative.

We recommend studying how to redesign staff assignments. Jobs are more satisfying to the extent that they (a) use a variety of skills, (b) allow completion of a task from start to finish, (c) allow for autonomous decision making, (d) provide feedback about performance, and (e) involve tasks that have meaning or importance (Hackman & Oldham, 1975, 1976). Research indicates that individuals who view their job as contributing meaningfully to others are more satisfied with their jobs (Judge, Parker, Colbert, Heller, & Ilies, 2001). Higher job satisfaction is

linked to reduced turnover. A key question to address is how to design staff assignments to ensure that they fulfill officers' desire to serve their country.

A starting point for this intervention would be to identify the key characteristics of staff assignments where a relatively high proportion of officers were satisfied with their jobs and interested in staying with the Army. Recently collected Survey of Officer Careers (SOC) or Sample Survey of Military Personnel (SSMP) data could be analyzed to identify staff assignments to scrutinize. Then job analysis techniques could be used to develop a better understanding of the characteristics of the most desirable and satisfying assignments. Because the majority of officers serve in staff roles, the importance of this initiative should not be underestimated. For many officers, a long Army career involves being satisfied serving in multiple staff roles. Attempts to ensure work is meaningful are indirect retention interventions. Changes could be unit-level, with separate initiatives targeted at each branch. It is possible that a successful pilot organizational intervention in job enhancement in a brigade could serve as a model for other units.

Job Switching

What has been recommended by officers at all grades is that, similar to the Navy, company grade officers should be allowed to use a type of online "chat room" whereby officers who are presented with personally undesirable assignment choices could try to find a better option and try to trade with someone who would prefer *their* assignment. Especially for those officers who had a disappointing first assignment, a better second assignment may make the difference between staying and leaving. For others, the ability to change branches and learn certain skills may be the deciding factor. We recommend studying how this system is implemented in the Navy and studying its positive and possible negative effects when applied to the Army. Issues such as the practicalities of trading among officers with different dates for next assignments and how such trades would be received within the Force Stabilization doctrine must be addressed. This would be a systemic level intervention that is focused on influencing affective commitment.

Career Development and Opportunities

For many officers, whether or not to make a career of the military is an ongoing process that is dependent on Army experiences. A central factor contributing to the decision process is the extent to which an officer perceives that progress is being made in his or her military career. From this perspective, it would appear essential that each company grade officer be provided with the tools to generate a personal development plan, one that would allow them to set goals, determine how to achieve those goals in a realistic timetable, monitor their progress, and if needed, determine how to get unstuck if they find themselves in what appears to be a dead end. Optimally, support from others should be available to help officers implement these plans (McCauley & Hezlett, 2001).

In principle, these tools and resources are in place. An officer sits down with his/her immediate supervisor every 90 days to assess progress and get counseling. A Junior Officer Development Support Form (JODSF) is completed. DA-PAM 600-3 lays out for each person, by branch and other criteria, what they need to do for career development. However, quarterly

feedback and counseling sessions are not always held. As a result, some officers receive only annual written feedback. In addition, some company grade officers are reluctant to discuss their career plans with their supervisors, especially if they are considering leaving the Army as one option. In some brigade cultures, simply voicing the possibility of leaving can set one apart from peers. Although a commander may say that he/she is able to be non-judgmental about an officer who is considering leaving, the company grade officers do not always share the same confidence in their commanders. Alternative tools and resources could significantly enhance officers' satisfaction with career development.

Develop Alternate Forms of Career Support

It has been suggested that officers have someone outside their chain of command that they could speak with about their career plans; someone with whom they could share their doubts without any repercussions to their reputations. Although the Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP) technically provides this service to officers, even the ACAP managers are aware that there is stigma attached to doing so. Thus, unlike enlisted Soldiers, officers typically do not come to the ACAP offices unless they have already decided definitively to leave. We recommend an intervention that creates one or more alternative sources of career development support for company grade officers. The following potential sources vary in terms of breadth and depth of support they are likely to offer:

- Mentoring traditionally has been defined as a one-on-one, professional relationship between a more experienced, senior individual and a more junior, less experienced one that is focused on promoting the professional development of the latter (Noe, Greenberger, & Wang, 2002). Mentoring functions are key characteristics that distinguish mentoring from other work relationships, such as supervisor-subordinate relationships, role models, and other developmental relationships. These functions include career and psychosocial support (Kram, 1985). Historically, mentoring relationships evolved "naturally" as the more senior mentor and the more junior protégé got to know each other. In order to promote the benefits that are associated with mentoring, organizations have begun formal mentoring initiatives that directly or indirectly pair potential mentors and protégés (Allen, Eby, & Lentz, 2006; Wanberg, Welsh, & Hezlett, 2003). Favorable outcomes that have been linked to mentoring include greater career satisfaction, more career success, and reduced turnover (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004; Payne & Huffman, 2005). We recommend that diverse methods of promoting mentoring in the Army be investigated as potential means of reducing company grade officer turnover by improving career development, career satisfaction, and perceived organizational support. As the most powerful developmental relationship, mentoring has greater potential than other sources of support for career development.

  One example of a potential program to promote mentoring is the development of an online mentor network. One of the interventions that the RSWG thought would be feasible and effective was providing a career counseling option outside the chain of command. In addition, the majors at CGSC SAMS noted that someone else must be able to step in and provide counseling to company grade officers if a Commanding Officer (CO) does not provide counseling or cannot relate well to the officer. One

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major expressed his frustration at wanting to mentor other African-American officers but being unable to find any to mentor. The same issue may be salient for women or representatives of other demographic groups. It seems that there are company grade officers in need of counseling and higher-ranking officers who would like to provide counseling, but they are unable to find each other. The purpose of an online mentor network would be to have a place for potential mentors who are seeking protégés to post their contact information and the kind of person they are looking for. A company grade officer seeking a mentor could browse through the list to see if there is a fit. If not, he or she could post his or her own contact information so potential mentors could determine if the officer is a fit as a protégé.

- An alternative to creating programs that promote mentoring would be a counseling system featuring individuals whose full-time role was to counsel company grade officers on career-related issues. Career counselors are available for enlisted Soldiers but not specifically for officers. Counselors would need to be viewed as both somewhat impartial (not mandated to try to influence the officer to stay) and able to keep strict confidences on behalf of the inquiring officer. To be successful, counselors would need strong interpersonal skills and knowledge of the career paths and career development opportunities that are relevant for the diverse kinds of officers who serve in the units they support.

- Another similar idea would be to have a retention officer present at all posts (as is current practice for enlisted Soldiers) or within each brigade. The individual officer would be obligated to meet with the retention officer to discuss retention issues at a given transitioning point (e.g., before Captains Career Course). In this way, the company grade officer could speak with someone without any apprehension of being stigmatized by his/her immediate supervisor. Currently, the CO, Brigade Executive Officer (XO), Brigade S1, or Deputy Commander is expected to play this role, but the reality is most are not doing it and the complexity of the environment is increasing to an extent that a full-time retention officer may be necessary. Some officers to whom we spoke recommended that retention officers be part of the brigade and not someone from HRC, because they felt there is an "us vs. them" perception that exists among the brigades with respect to HRC. Some expressed concern that there would not be enough for a full-time retention officer to do at the brigade level, but others thought that there would be plenty of other things a retention officer could do to help enhance retention rates. First, it would be imperative that the retention officer have considerable information at his/her fingertips, such as available assignments, posts, and career options. Staying on top of this type of information could take considerable time. Another suggestion was to have the retention officer help the CO create a climate that enhances retention, perhaps by laying the groundwork for implementing some of the recommendations in this report. A final suggestion was to create a retention/diversity officer. One Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) mentioned that research shows that minority and female officers are less likely to get the kinds of counseling that helps officers continue in their career, so this type of combined role may make sense.

- Peer knowledge sharing is another potential mechanism for providing officers with career-related support. Although relatively little research has been dedicated to understanding peer mentoring, findings suggest that peers can be a useful source of advice and support. One or more websites could be created to facilitate the transfer of career-related knowledge between peers. Officers could post questions, ask for advice, and share solutions with officers at the same grade. Websites enabling knowledge sharing among peers with common interests are already used by officers (e.g., s1net, companycommander.com). The value of supporting and promoting the use of additional websites targeted at career-related issues should be examined. It was not possible to include discussion boards or knowledge (document) posting features on the officer retention website that was evaluated as part of STAY (Hezlett et al., 2010). It would be informative to collect additional data on the extent to which peer knowledge sharing about careers has a positive impact on retention. One disadvantage of this approach to providing career-related support is that not all information shared by peers will be accurate.

- During the data gathering portion of the STAY alumni video intervention evaluation study (Mael et al., 2010), it became evident that USMA has a strong alumni association that enabled them to get buy-in from their members and participation in the study. This alumni association is a good source of networking and support for current officers. By contrast, numerous ROTCs were contacted and their ability to marshal involvement was very limited. The primary reasons appeared to be (a) lack of access to current email addresses or contact information, (b) lack of an ongoing civilian presence at the ROTC offices that would maintain continuity across successive regimes of military Professors of Military Science (PMS), and (c) lack of motivation by the PMS cadre to maintain contact with alumni. This indicated an underlying weakness in the connection that ROTCs have with their alumni. We tried to make contact with Cadet Command and urge them to start a centrally managed ROTC-wide alumni association, patterned after the USMA alumni association, to foster networking and provide other benefits to those who have been commissioned through the ROTC program. Although we talked to a number of peripherally involved persons, we did not have the opportunity to make the case to senior leaders. This should perhaps be pursued by those within the system.

These interventions could be at the systemic or unit level. They would focus primarily on influencing affective commitment, but could also have the effect of increasing continuance commitment.

Augment Branch Websites

One of the most challenging aspects of developing the website that was evaluated as part of the officer portion of STAY (Hezlett et al., 2010) was finding career-related information. Compared to other topics, relatively little information about career opportunities was readily available on-line. The quality and accessibility of information varied across branch websites. We heavily relied upon Army Pamphlet 600-3 which is intended to be a professional development guide for all commissioned officers. This document provides descriptions of each branch, states the key characteristics required by officers in the branch, and describes typical

career development life cycles and developmental opportunities by grade for each branch. Officers with good internet access who know what they are looking for may be able to find and download this valuable guide. However, as a static document, the pamphlet is not an ideal tool for helping officers transform an awareness of possible career paths into a specific, actionable career plan. A resource that enables officers to find, apply for, and participate in courses and assignments that are aligned with their career goals would facilitate officers' efforts to manage their own careers.

We recommend investigating the feasibility of standardizing and augmenting the career-related information that is provided on branch websites. Websites can be easily and regularly updated with information about new courses and assignments. The information can be organized to make the potential connection between opportunities and possible career paths clear. One possible starting point for this initiative would be to use protocol analysis to understand officers' perceptions of existing resources. Officers would be asked to spend a designated amount of time using their branch website and the officer retention website to work on planning their career development. As they worked, officers would be asked to share their thoughts. This approach would generate rich information about the advantages and limitations of existing resources. Officers also could be asked how they would improve on these resources. The information collected could be used to outline the features that should be included on branch websites to facilitate self-guided career management. The resources needed to create websites with these features could be estimated. This indirect intervention to enhance retention could then be evaluated in one branch. The results of the evaluation would guide decision-making about broader implementation. This is a systemic-level intervention focused on influencing affective commitment.

Career Management Training

Some company grade officers talked about the importance of career management but lamented the fact that they did not receive any formal guidance on how to manage their careers when they entered the Army. They are often told "if you don't manage your career, someone will do it for you." But how do they do it? It would be helpful to have a course of training for newly commissioned officers to help them understand how to manage their careers. This would include such things as becoming familiar with the Officer Record Brief (ORB), HRC and other organizations that can help them with their careers, learning about career paths for different branches, learning how to find out about and obtain desired assignments, and finding out who to talk to about career-related issues. This is a unit-level intervention focused on influencing affective commitment.

Competing Civilian Opportunities

The option of leaving the Army to pursue civilian opportunities may be suggested by family members, civilian friends, former colleagues in the military, and corporate recruiters (headhunters) who target company grade officers and try to make the case for leaving. When we asked officers about their perceptions of civilian jobs, they said that they believed that in civilian jobs they would work fewer hours, earn more, have more predictable schedules, and have more opportunity to spend time with their families, particularly on weekends. Other perceived positive features of civilian roles over Army roles would be having only one boss to

report to, being provided with the tools to advance to the next level, and a faster track for promotion for exceptional individuals. Many officers perceived that they are being paid too little for the hours they work and that there are no financial incentives to stay in the Army. Although the current economic problems faced by the United States may make the job security of Army life more salient and appealing, taking additional steps to show officers the financial benefits of Army careers may be worthwhile. The job security and benefits associated with the Army was one of the most-cited reasons for desiring to stay in the Army.

Cost-Benefit Analysis

The website intervention we developed and evaluated as part of the officer portion of the STAY initiative highlighted the numerous benefits offered by the Army (Hezlett et al., 2010). In addition, realistic, side-by-side comparisons were created to show the similarities and differences between sample Army roles and comparable civilian jobs. The comparisons represented a number of different branches and included tangible and intangible job features to help broaden the framework officers used to make cost-benefit comparisons across military and civilian opportunities. These comparisons were viewed favorably in initial pilot testing and the website's greatest influence appeared to be on officers' perceptions of pay and benefits. However, a limitation of the information presented on the website was that it emphasized the short-term, rather than long-term, benefits of remaining in the Army. Conventional wisdom from the officers we spoke with is that it is unlikely that officers that leave after 20+ years catch up financially with their peers who left earlier to work in the civilian sector. We recommend additional investigation of the potential to influence officers' decisions to stay with the Army by making information about the long-term financial outcomes of an Army career more accessible.

Three areas of inquiry stand out. First, the long-term payout of retiring after 20 years in the Army should be estimated. One senior commander we spoke with stated that if left untouched for 20 years, retiring from the Army was worth $2.2 million. Further investigation of this claim is needed to determine if it is accurate under current and projected economic conditions, as well as to whom it applies. Second, the long-term tax advantages associated with being in the Army could be estimated. Over time, it may be apparent that the tax advantages associated with military pay cancel out perceived advantages in civilian salaries. Third, an economic analysis of whether an officer leaving the Army after 20 years can catch up to earlier-leaving peers in terms of salary or job level could be performed. The perception is that upon leaving the Army, LTCs and MAJs will be behind peers who left earlier. This view may be incorrect, particularly if those retiring from the Army obtain government positions and are on the General Schedule (GS). To the extent that this perception is not empirically true, it should be tested and clarified. For example, officers with similar expertise who left after three to five years and those who left after twenty years would need to be compared for five to ten years in terms of their salaries and position stature. This analysis will be complicated by the fact that not all twenty-year retirees will aspire to work full time at a high level. Other approaches to conceptualizing the long-term financial outcomes of an Army career also may merit investigation.

In each case, a cost-benefit analysis would involve determining if the pertinent long-term financial estimates already have been performed and, if they have not, conducting them. If the long-term estimates make a convincing case to stay in the Army or counter perceptions that encourage officers to leave, different methods of disseminating the estimates should be

identified and evaluated. Qualitative methods would then be used to pilot test officers' perceptions and reactions to different presentation methods. A proof of concept study would be executed to evaluate the impact of promising methods of presenting cost-benefit analysis information on officers' continuance commitment, thoughts of staying, and career intentions. A cost-benefit analysis is an attempt to influence officers' continuance commitment. It could be introduced at the unit level or system-wide.

Realistic Civilian Job Previews

Conversations with officers reveal that some perceptions they have of civilian jobs are probably overly optimistic. Many civilian jobs require individuals to work long hours, including weekends, and do not provide significant opportunities for career development or advancement. Providing officers with more realistic information may help counter their "grass is greener" perceptions of civilian jobs.

Realistic Job Previews (RJPs) are typically recruitment-related interventions that convey job information to job applicants (Breaugh and Billings, 1988). By conveying job information that is accurate and credible, RJPs give applicants realistic expectations about the jobs they are applying for. Attrition is subsequently decreased by discouraging applicants from accepting jobs that do not meet their goals, as well as minimizing the unmet expectations experienced by new hires. In this application, the RJP concept would be used to transform officers' romanticized views of civilian jobs into more realistic ones. For many officers, this would likely make civilian opportunities less appealing.

As mentioned previously, the website intervention we developed and evaluated as part of the officer portion of STAY included comparisons for a number of civilian and military roles on diverse criteria (Hezlett et al., 2010). Although at least one of these comparisons should have been relevant to officers in most branches, the civilian jobs included obviously could not be tailored to specific officers' interests, skills, or potential opportunities. An alternate approach that would in essence create customized RJPs for each officer would be a tool designed to help officers "get the facts" about civilian jobs. The tool could help officers (a) determine what aspects of jobs were most important to them, (b) frame questions designed to elicit information about those aspects of jobs, and (c) use the information gathered to compare Army and civilian careers. To be credible, the tool would need to include job features on which Army careers may not necessarily shine, such as working conditions and pay. However, the tool could be organized to highlight factors officers cite as reasons to stay with the Army, including camaraderie and the opportunity to serve. Implementing the concept of an RJP through a self-guided tool may help minimize the potential credibility problems that are likely to arise if an Army representative attempts to provide a realistic view of civilian jobs. The officers we talked to in focus groups were highly skeptical of information presented by the Army. They emphasized the importance of presenting credible information objectively so that it is not seen as "propaganda."

The information gathered throughout the officer portion of the STAY project, along with knowledge of the job satisfaction literature, could be used to draft a self-guided RJP tool. The tool should be refined with input from company grade officers and then evaluated in a longitudinal, proof of concept study. This intervention is an attempt to influence officers'

retention by increasing their continuance commitment. The initial evaluation of the RJP tool would be a unit-level intervention. Successful outcomes could lead to an Army-wide roll-out.

Making Former Officers Available to Current Officers

The focus groups and surveys conducted as part of the evaluation of the former officer video (Mael et al., 2010) revealed that a significant portion of the officers who viewed the video wanted to have direct contact with former officers to hear their perspective. It was clear that some of the officers in the focus groups were either (a) making assumptions about how they would adapt to the private sector, or (b) getting advice from sources of questionable credibility. Speaking to carefully vetted former officers seems like a viable way to make company grade officers consider their perspective before forming an intention to leave. In addition, speaking to those who left and came back may have even more value. A significant portion of company grade officers who felt that a video was insufficient to affect their decision processes still felt that talking directly with someone and establishing a relationship with a former officer as a mentor would be worthwhile. One area of concern that has been expressed is that former officers may be disgruntled and would attempt to convince officers to leave the Army. After speaking to over 70 former officers as part of this project, however, we saw no evidence that these former officers were interested in harming the Army and weaning people away. This would be a systemic-level intervention focused on increasing affective commitment.

Leadership

Effective leadership is an important determinant of a desire to make a career of the Army, whereas bad experiences with a commander feed into an officer's decision to depart the Army. Force Stabilization doctrine has made it harder to leave a commander with whom one has a bad relationship. One focus group participant commented, "It is easier to deal with a bad first assignment than a bad first leader." Specific frustrations include leaders who micro-manage, make poor decisions, fail to treat officers as adults, or are abusive. Good leaders are seen as taking care of officers and putting themselves in their shoes. They are approachable, flexible, calm, and give feedback about how to improve performance. Leaders who are tolerant of mistakes and could create a positive work environment are seen as effective. Several kinds of interventions may help foster the positive impact of supportive leadership and/or ameliorate the negative impact that dissatisfaction with leadership may have on retention.

Leader Rotation

One way to combat the effects of dissatisfaction with leadership is exposing officers to one or more effective leaders. This would make company grade officers, particularly LTs, aware that initial experiences with a poor leader are not necessarily representative of what their future interactions with Army leaders will be like. Officers cite effective leadership as an important determinant of making a career of the Army. Some officers are inspired by seeing talented leaders stay when they could have pursued many other opportunities. Although having a great leader in one's first assignment is likely to have the most positive effect on retention, other kinds of access to good leaders may encourage quality officers who are uncommitted to stay. There are a number of ways company grade officers could have the opportunity to observe or interact with effective leaders. These include:

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- Rotating leaders who have been identified as high-performing through positions that have significant contact with company grade officers, particularly new LTs. A challenge to implementing this idea is the need to provide stability to units and offer time for officers to adjust.

- Implementing a job rotation system in which new LTs move through a series of assignments or shadow different leaders early in their careers. This kind of system also has the potential advantage of exposing company grade officers to different branches or roles within a branch before they are placed. The challenge of this approach will be to work out logistics that provide sufficient exposure to different jobs without being excessively burdensome to the participating officers or disruptive to the units involved.

- Creating a formal mentoring program that makes it possible for company grade officers to get to know, ask questions, and receive advice from more senior officers who are recognized as excellent. Throughout the STAY project, company grade officers have expressed interest in mentoring. In general, officers feel that mentoring is very important and is not done enough. This concept was discussed earlier in the report as a potential intervention for improving career development. An advantage of this approach would be that it would give company grade officers direct contact with effective leaders, potentially without requiring changes in how officers are tasked. Key issues to consider are how the mentors are selected, who is eligible to be a mentee, whether the program focuses on face-to-face relationship with officers at the same location or "e-mentoring," and what tools, training, resources, and guidelines are needed to facilitate the success of the program.

- Developing videos that expose LTs to effective Army leaders. The videos could focus on leaders discussing their leadership philosophies and give examples of how they interact with the subordinates, or feature company grade officers sharing their own stories of how they have been inspired by good leaders. The feasibility of developing videos that speak to company grade officers has been demonstrated by the alumni video created as part of the STAY initiative (Mael et al., 2010). A key issue that would need to be evaluated before this approach is adopted is the relative credibility of the sources. In addition, care would need to be taken to ensure that the video did not create unrealistic expectations that were later seen as a commitment or promise broken by the Army. Finally, the potential impact of a video on retention would need to be compared with other alternatives. A video intervention is likely to be more feasible to implement, but would certainly have less impact than actually working with an effective leader.

We recommend collecting additional information from company grade officers and more senior commanders to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches to countering dissatisfaction with leadership during early career experiences. The relative impact of the different approaches on retention should be part of this evaluation. Interventions designed to address dissatisfaction with leadership are intended to improve retention through affective commitment. Initial testing of such interventions could be conducted at the unit-level, but full implementation will likely be a system-wide endeavor.

Evaluate the Impact of a Poor Evaluation

A commander with whom a company grade officer has friction is probably more likely to give a negative performance review. It is currently unclear how negative performance reviews affect officers' careers and what role they play in retention. Some officers we spoke with thought a poor review was a "kiss of death" for an Army career. Others commented that one bad Officer Evaluation Report (OER) will not affect promotion because there is a high conversion rate from LT to CPT. Poor performance appraisals can be appealed to the Appeals and Corrections Branch without the supervisor's knowledge and overturned. However, even if a poor OER is overturned, receipt of a poor review may discourage officers from staying with the Army. Further investigation of the impact of OER on retention is recommended.

Several issues merit exploration. First, the scope of the problem should be examined. How frequently do bad reviews occur and how often are they deserved? This could be evaluated by scrutinizing the link between a company grade officer receiving a poor rating and his or her subordinates' behaviors (e.g., poor performance by the subordinates, exiting the unit or Army). Officers who receive a bad rating when their subordinates are contributing to the Army's mission probably have been evaluated unfairly. Second, the relationship between receiving a poor rating and retention should be studied. When a poor rating is an accurate indication of poor leadership, turnover is functional. On the other hand, the loss of a skilled officer receiving an inaccurate, bad review is dysfunctional. If the frequency of inaccurate bad reviews is closely connected to the departure of talented individuals, action should be taken to improve the review and appeal process. Third, how the appeal procedure is viewed and used by officers merits investigation. Are officers aware of this option and is it seen as worth pursuing? To the extent that appeals are seen as onerous, some officers may simply leave rather than seek to address what is perceived as an unfair evaluation. Finally, it would be valuable to know what impact a bad review actually has on a company grade officer's career. How heavily is a single poor review weighted by promotion boards? Are commanders reluctant to give opportunities to an officer who has received a poor review from another commander? Are there kinds of mistakes that company grade officers can make, recover from, and continue on to have successful careers? If so, what actions can officers who have received a bad review take in order to repair and recover from their mistakes?

Developing a better understanding of the scope and impact of bad reviews that are a result of poor leadership, rather than the poor performance of officers, will provide insight into whether interventions in this area are needed to reduce attrition. This type of intervention would be focused on improving affective commitment and would be a systemic attempt to improve retention.

Leader Training

Our retention counseling training intervention for commanders (Johnson et al., 2011) demonstrated that training focused on counseling company grade officers can have a significant impact on their retention-related attitudes. Beyond counseling, however, there are other types of training that can help leaders create a culture that encourages retention. Although Army leaders get a great deal of training already, our discussions with senior officers indicated that several

types of training that could help leaders retain their best officers is currently missing or not emphasized enough. These include the following:

- During a review of our model of officer career continuance (Schneider et al., 2011), senior officers on the panel suggested that learning about different aspects of the model and how they interact to influence retention should be parts of all training (e.g., pre-command course, leader development courses). For example, commanders should know how officer perceptions of the organizational context can be influenced for the better, and how they can be an important source of social support for both peers and subordinates.

- Leaders need to be trained on how to recognize high-potential officers as we face a paradigm shift from retaining a large quantity of officers to retaining the highest quality officers. Recognizing high-potential officers includes (a) distinguishing high-potential from high-performing, (b) recognizing people different from themselves (e.g., females, minorities) that are high-potential, (c) understanding what attributes will be most important in the future (e.g., "agile and adaptive"), and (d) understanding that first impressions are frequently wrong.

- Leaders need training in understanding differences between generations. For older officers, the tactics that worked on them will likely not work on the next generation of officers.

Leader training interventions could be evaluated at the unit level before implementing them Army-wide. They would be focused on influencing affective commitment but could also influence continuance commitment.

Empty Promises

Officers have strong negative reactions when their expectations for Army life are not met. Perceptions that the Army has failed to keep promises or commitments are particularly detrimental to retention efforts. Some officers perceive that they are promised opportunities and new assignments if they remain in the Army, and these promises are not consistently kept. Other possible examples of empty promises include reneging on bonuses, changing of policies, and failing to pay officers while in school. A subtle, but more pervasive, way in which the Army may violate officers' expectations is by creating false expectations about command opportunities and career success.

For many officers, self-assessment of achievement and success is defined by holding a mission command position. Most officers expect to be engaged in mission command work when they join the Army. However, 60 percent of officers in the Army hold staff positions, which are perceived by some as "bad" assignments. Officers who hold these positions may be disappointed and become frustrated by them. Former high-ranking officers that we spoke with believe that the Army has done a poor job of defining success. They believe company grade officers are over-coached to use limited definitions of a successful career or that they are misled during the recruiting process about their prospects for command positions.

This problem is exacerbated by the fact that the Army has been bringing in more LTs than are needed (somewhere between 125 to 140 percent of need) in order to address a shortage of CPTs and MAJs. Former high-ranking officers that we spoke with believed that only a minority of LTs have jobs that are worthwhile, and that for most, their assignments are not aligned with their expectations. Officers perceive that there is a lack of platoon leadership opportunities. Even those that are getting command roles have seen their commands truncated (to as little as eight to nine months) in order to give more officers opportunities. Thus, LTs become frustrated and unhappy and are often deciding or planning to leave as early as two to three years into their Army careers.

We propose two interventions designed to reduce retention problems caused by unmet expectations. First, we outline a plan to help officers have more realistic expectations about their command and career opportunities in the Army. Second, we recommend an intervention that seeks to minimize the retention-related consequences of situations when it becomes necessary for the Army to break commitments it has made to individual officers.

Realistic Job Preview

Just as the civilian RJP discussed previously can provide a more realistic perspective on civilian jobs, an RJP for the job of Army company grade officer would inoculate many LTs and CPTs from disappointment. RJPs are typically recruitment-related interventions that convey job information that is accurate, is perceived as credible, and supports accurate decision making by applicants (Breaugh and Billings, 1988). RJPs are typically used to try to reduce attrition and its associated training costs. The general consensus, based upon several meta-analyses, is that RJPs do work and can usually be expected to have at least a modest impact on reducing attrition (McEvoy & Cascio, 1985; Premack & Wanous, 1985).

Traditional RJPs are given before the individual joins the organization. We propose that the Army share a more realistic view of the diverse roles filled by officers soon after commissioning. West Point offers a job shadowing program, but it is not clear if this provides a good preview of Army life. Because Army culture changes across assignments, it may be difficult to have one representative RJP. However, officers we spoke with did think there were key themes that cut across specific roles and that these themes should be made clear to new officers. These themes include (a) the job is not 9 to 5, (b) they should have a clear idea of what they want to accomplish in the Army, and (c) they are expected to show initiative. We also recommend that newly commissioned officers should be alerted to the fact that they may not get a leadership role for several years, but will eventually contribute meaningfully to the Army's mission. Building on officers' patriotism and sense of duty (one of the factors seen as positively influencing retention decisions), the RJP could emphasize that there are many different ways in the Army that officers can successfully serve their country.

To develop an RJP, the following steps are recommended: (a) distill key features of effective RJPs from the literature, (b) work with senior commanders and HRC to identify realistic information and concepts to include in the RJP, (c) have company grade officers rate the credibility and accuracy of different potential RJP formats (e.g., a letter, a conversation, a video) and sources (e.g., an instructor, a commanding officer, a branch manager), (d) draft and pilot several RJP approaches, and (e) conduct a longitudinal proof of concept study contrasting

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the influence of alternate RJPs and a no-RJP condition on retention. In constructing an RJP, care must be taken not to exacerbate the very problem it is meant to address. Reassurances that officers in all roles perform highly meaningful, challenging, and rewarding work may feel like an empty promise to LTs whose initial assignments do not seem interesting or important. To succeed, a RJP must be realistic and credible.

There is evidence that potential employees with realistic assessments of what their jobs will entail are less likely to become frustrated or disillusioned. The difference in this application is that the RJP would be delivered to officers well after having made their decision to become an officer. However, by challenging inflated expectations about what one's first assignment will be, the RJP would still serve to lessen disappointment and any sense of betrayal or dishonesty on the part of the Army (Meglino, Ravlin, & DeNisi, 2000). This intervention would be an attempt to influence affective commitment to the Army. It should be systemic in nature.

Interactional Justice Training

At times, promises or commitments to company grade officers may be broken. Individual leaders may accidentally or intentionally create expectations that are later not met. At the Army level, promises to officers may not be fulfilled when policy changes are required to meet mission objectives. Company grade officers who believe that the Army has failed to deliver the outcomes it has promised to them are likely to feel that have been treated unfairly.

Organizational justice research has demonstrated that information and social sensitivity play key roles in how individuals react to organizational policy changes that negatively affect them (Colquitt et al., 2001; Gilliland & Chan, 2001). Counter to what many people believe, greater communication about such changes is beneficial. Explaining the need for detrimental changes and sincerely expressing remorse to those affected decreases negative reactions to the changes. Treating people with courtesy, dignity, and respect also helps individuals rebound from unjust outcomes and procedures.

Studies have found that training leaders to provide appropriate information and treat their subordinates with respect is an effective means of addressing organizational injustice. Individuals whose leaders have participated in interactional justice training experience less stress, have better performance, and are less likely to leave their organizations than individuals whose leaders have not been trained (Greenberg, 2006; Skarlicki & Latham, 1996). Therefore, we recommend that interactional justice training be evaluated as a potential intervention for reducing company grade officer turnover.

Key steps in this initiative include (a) drafting learning objectives; (b) determining what grade of officers constitute the best population of trainees; (c) gaining buy-in from commanders to test the training in their units; (d) conducting a review of the literature, consulting with justice experts, and gathering input from officers to elaborate the content of the training; (e) applying training design principles to develop the training program; (f) creating a training module that promotes the transfer of gained skills; and (g) conducting a thorough evaluation of the training, including its influence on thoughts of staying, career intentions, and, ideally, retention. This initiative is an approach to improving affective commitment that can be implemented at the unit level.

For some officers, being a member of the Army is a key part of their identity. They take pride in the Army and want to give back to it. Just as people are willing to stay with their families when things get tough, officers with a strong Army identification are willing to put up with the negative aspects of being in the Army because they consider it a part of them. Similarly, many officers cite patriotism as a key factor for staying in the Army. Serving with the Army is seen as an honorable and respectable position. Many officers see their service as more of a "calling" than a career. These are not the kinds of things that an intervention can change in a person, although the former officer video was an attempt to remind officers of these factors that may have already been in them. We do have two recommendations that could enhance the probability that officers entering the Army will have a strong Army identification and sense of patriotism: (a) selection, and (b) recruiting.

Selection for Retention

The focus of this report has been to suggest interventions to maximize retention among the wide range of officers who have chosen to join the Army. This involves understanding and improving experiences within the Army that make it more likely that an officer will decide to continue for 20+ years. A very different approach would be to focus efforts on selection by identifying the personal or group characteristics of those who would likely make a career of the Army versus those who would leave after three to five years, and to extend preference during selection to those likely to stay.

One way to approach this would be to select individuals most likely to stay. This would involve measuring the initial commitment, aptitudes, skills, personality tendencies, biographical data, and experiences that predated enrolling in USMA, ROTC, or Officer Candidate School (OCS). These data could be used to screen applicants prior to admission or the granting of scholarships in order to attempt to increase retention, primarily by giving more preference to those who are highly likely to continue past their first ADSO. Although it could take years to adequately validate selection measures based on propensity to stay past the first ADSO, the Army must consider who will be the leaders of the future so it is reasonable to select people who are likely to still be around in the future. ARI is currently doing research on selecting candidates for ROTC scholarships based partially on their likelihood of making the Army a career. This is a systemic intervention designed primarily to increase the number of officers who are likely to have high affective commitment.

Expanding the Recruiting Base

A number of officers expressed concern that the Army has reduced their expectations as a result of retention concerns and the current war, and that the quality of company grade officers has declined since Desert Storm. It would appear that solving the retention problem would in part allow the Army to address this problem and be more discriminating. To the extent the problem is driven by recruiting problems and lack of interest in the general populace, however, it will not be possible to improve selection criteria or ratios.

Discussions with the former officers revealed that many working in certain regions or professions frequently interacted with Americans who knew nothing about the Army, the military, or the current war efforts. These former officers felt that they were often looked upon as oddities. Their comments reiterated that the Army does not have a visible presence in the Northeast corridor of the United States and that many civilians in the Boston-New York-Philadelphia corridor have never spoken to a member of the Army. The closing of various installations (such as Fort Devens in Massachusetts) and the lack of ROTC programs in that region contribute to this lack of interaction. Roth-Douquet & Schaeffer (2006) lament the gap between the intellectual elites of the country and the armed services. A study briefed to the G1 pointed out that it is difficult to recruit minority officers from some regions via ROTC when there is no ROTC presence in prime cities such as Chicago, Los Angeles, Dallas, and San Antonio.

It should be noted that originally there were two primary objectives of having military training on campus (Neiberg, 2000). One was to ensure that civilian values would enter the military via college graduates, and that a wider pool of applicants would enter the military, so that US military leadership would not be dominated by any regional, familial, or sociological castes. The other objective was to expose college students to the vital role and the challenges of the US military, rather than sheltering them or even censoring their ability to interact with members of the military. Yet at present, only 19.9 percent of colleges and universities offer ROTC, up from 6 percent in 2000, but still low. Army ROTC, the largest ROTC program, had 28,470 students enrolled nationally in the fall of 2000, which is one-sixth the number of those enrolled in the mid-1960s. By limiting the pool of students exposed to ROTC or to the option of joining ROTC, both the Army and society suffer.

Improved access to college campuses would help recruiting and selection ratios and would likely improve retention. Efforts by Congress to make government funding contingent on allowing ROTC access to campus should be monitored. Independent efforts to support ROTC at Harvard (http://advocatesforrotc.org/harvard/index.html), where the program is not formally sanctioned, should be studied and copied. In principle, efforts to expand ROTC to more campuses could increase the applicant pool of officer candidates, improving the quality of company grade officers, and potentially leading to a more committed and more successful cadre of company grade officers. However, budgetary discretion regarding ROTC resides at a relatively high level in the government.

In addition, many officers noted that the placement of Army installations in remote areas (in contrast to the Navy and Air Force) is a disincentive. Thus, we believe the Army needs to find creative ways to be more visible in key population areas, especially those that contain influential members of the media, the business community, and the professions. This would be a systemic intervention designed to increase the pool of potential officers rather than to increase a particular kind of commitment.

Recommendations Specific to the Project STAY Interventions

One purpose of the officer portion of STAY was to recommend, develop, and empirically evaluate interventions for improving the continuance of company grade commissioned officers. After receiving input from dozens of junior and senior officers in focus groups and interviews, we identified three interventions that were practical and had potential for short-term impact. They were (a) retention counseling training for company and battalion commanders (Johnson et al., 2011), (b) a website devoted to issues relevant to company grade officer retention (Hezlett et al., 2010), and (c) a video featuring interviews with former officers to present their perspective (Mael et al., 2010). In this section, we present recommendations for next steps specific to each of these interventions. For more information on these interventions, please refer to the ARI research note describing the development and evaluation of each.

Retention Counseling Training

We developed and evaluated a retention counseling training program targeted at influencing factors identified as important to company grade officers' retention decisions. Training was given to Company Commanders, Battalion Commanders, XOs, and S3s in four brigades. The impact of training was evaluated by administering pre- and post-surveys (four months after training) to company grade officers under the trainees' command. Trainee feedback was used to revise the training program. Hierarchical regression analyses controlling for Time 1 satisfaction demonstrated that both the quantity and rated quality of counseling were related to Time 2 satisfaction levels on many factors believed to have the strongest connection to career continuance. We found a significant increase in intention to stay in the Army from Time 1 to Time 2 among those who received counseling from someone we trained. The training focused on the importance of conducting informal counseling in addition to formal counseling, and results showed that both types of counseling interact to influence variables such as career satisfaction, leadership satisfaction, and morale. The evaluation assessment, verbal feedback obtained from training participants, and the results of the trainee reaction survey suggested several recommendations.

First, we recommend that some form of formal counseling training be provided to commanding officers, to ensure that the officers under their command receive the appropriate counseling and accurate information that is relevant to their decision about whether to stay or leave the Army. Throughout this evaluation, from initial workshops and interviews investigating the reasons officers stay or leave the Army, through the meetings with SMEs to develop the training program, it was reported that one of the primary factors influencing the decision to stay or leave is the extent to which an officer receives effective counseling on this topic from his/her commanding officer. During the delivery of the training program, there were large numbers of officers who reported that they stayed beyond their first obligation almost entirely because their commanding officer had spoken with them, usually informally, about how important it was to the Army for them to stay and helped them plan a career that they perceived as rewarding. Although that reporting was anecdotal, our evaluation provides strong support for the theory that introducing the kind of counseling training that was developed for this intervention will indeed have a positive impact on the variables that influence intention to stay in the Army.

The particular form and focus that this training should take is less clear. We agree with the recommendations made by numerous trainees that some kind of counseling training should be provided early in an officer's career, with periodic retraining of the important counseling strategies. If instituted as early as the Basic Leadership course, this could be a training of the core counseling strategies presented in the training manual we developed, along with examples of effective and ineffective behaviors. We believe this could potentially be wrapped into (and add considerable value to) the current training in leadership skills. Then, at later points in an officer's career (e.g., Captains' Career Course and potentially even later in the Commander's Course), this training might better take the form of leader/mentorship guidance, with exercises to remind officers of the general principles involved and opportunities provided to practice them and obtain feedback on their performance, perhaps drawing from one or several of the role plays developed for this training program. One key to the success of this training will be embedding an awareness of how critically important the various counseling strategies and behaviors are to the retention decision-making process, even if the training program is not labeled as such.

We recommend that the results of the evaluation demonstrate the effectiveness of counseling training be incorporated into future training. Given the limited amount of time available for training, we focused more on motivating commanders to do the counseling than on teaching knowledge and skills. Some commanders may not believe that having a few meaningful informal conversations with their subordinate officers will have any influence on their attitudes or career decisions, but the results clearly demonstrate otherwise. In a brief evaluation period of only four months, the quality and quantity of counseling by commanders who had been trained with this program had a demonstrable effect on company grade officers' attitudes that are highly relevant to retention. Having hard data to back up this point should help future trainees to see the value of effective counseling.

Regardless of precisely how and where this training is implemented, we believe there are three main "lessons" that are critical to include. First, the focus of the training should not be solely on retention counseling; it should be broader, to include basic mentoring and career and family counseling, because that is at the heart of the most effective "retention" counseling. Second, training should strongly emphasize that the most effective counseling relies on the majority of it being performed informally, as opportunities to talk with officers present themselves or by creating those opportunities (e.g., suggesting lunch or a run). As the evaluation showed, the combination of formal and informal counseling has the greatest positive impact, but the informal counseling provides a critical role in ensuring that the formal counseling will be productive. Finally, the Army must be seen as endorsing the importance of this kind of training, or it simply will not happen. Whether this is done by implementing some kind of more or less formal progress reporting, or simply by making this training a part of several larger training initiatives (thus achieving importance by virtue of repetition), there needs to be what we heard described as a "culture shift" in the Army, to increase the motivation levels for commanding officers to take the time to perform this incredibly important function.

Company Grade Officer Retention Website

We developed and evaluated a website targeted at influencing key factors previously identified as important to company grade officers' retention decisions. Information collected from a series of focus groups conducted with officers guided the development of the website.

We used a pre-test post-test control group design to evaluate the impact of having the opportunity to use the website. Officers in the treatment condition participated in group sessions featuring an orientation to the website. They subsequently had the opportunity to use the website for about two months. Officers in the control group attended sessions where they participated in a structured group discussion of retention. Officers in both groups completed pre-surveys before the treatment was implemented and were invited to complete post-surveys two months later. After controlling for pre-survey scores and variables on which the treatment and control groups initially differed significantly, no statistically significant differences were observed between the control and treatment groups. However, officers in the treatment condition who visited the website after the orientation subsequently had more favorable perceptions of their pay and benefits than those who did not.

Results of the evaluation suggested that a retention website such as the one we designed can have a positive impact on the retention-related attitudes and intentions of at least some company grade officers. Because of the small sample sizes and limited amount of time available, we recommend a larger-scale evaluation study for this intervention that introduces more officers to the website and allows them to access it over a longer period of time than two months (six months would be a more appropriate interval). We recommend adding more features to the website (e.g., discussion groups, mentor network, additional civilian job comparisons, knowledge posting) and making it widely available. The website rollout will require a publicity campaign to make officers aware of its existence both initially and to remind them later. After the website has been available for six months to a year, an evaluation study could be conducted by adding website-specific questions to the SOC. Questions would include (a) how many times have you visited the website, (b) what features of the website have you used, (c) satisfaction with different website features, and (d) how has each feature impacted relevant attitudes. Results would help determine if the website should continue to be maintained and updated.

One of the most frequent requests from focus group participants was for the website to support finding career-related information so officers could quickly find up-to-date opportunities for new assignments and training. Unfortunately, it was very difficult to find this kind of information and it was impossible to maintain current postings during our brief evaluation. Relatively little information about career opportunities was readily available on-line and the quality and accessibility of information varied across branch websites. A resource that enables officers to find, apply for, and participate in courses and assignments that are aligned with their career goals would facilitate officers' efforts to manage their own careers.

We recommend investigating the feasibility of standardizing and augmenting the career-related information that is provided on branch websites. A website can be regularly updated with information about new courses and assignments if there is a designated person assigned to maintain it. The information can be organized to make the potential connection between opportunities and possible career paths clear. One possible starting point for this initiative would be to use protocol analysis to understand officers' perceptions of existing resources. Officers would be asked to spend a designated amount of time using their branch website and the officer retention website to work on planning their career development. As they worked, officers would be asked to share their thoughts. This approach would generate rich information about the advantages and limitations of existing resources. Officers also could be asked how they would improve on these resources. The information collected could be used to outline the

features that should be included on branch websites to facilitate self-guided career management. The resources needed to create websites with these features could be estimated. This indirect intervention to enhance retention could then be evaluated in one branch. The results of the evaluation would guide decision-making about broader implementation.

Former Officer Video

The purpose of this research was to develop and evaluate a video featuring interviews with former officers to present their perspective on what aspects of the Army they miss in civilian life. We conducted focus groups with 155 current company grade officers to evaluate the ability of the video to influence career decisions and intentions toward staying in the Army. Between 15-29% of participants agreed with various post-viewing survey questions about the video changing different attitudes they had about the Army (e.g., appreciate aspects of being an officer that were taken for granted, more convinced they made the right choice by joining the Army), and over 45% said that the video helped clarify for them the unique benefits of being an officer.

A consensus emerged during our focus groups that the video could be effective to spur conversation about whether it would be a smart idea to leave the Army, provided it was shown at the right time and in the right setting. All felt that there were opportune times at which decisions were made and that that was when it would be most relevant. Based on these results, we do not recommend showing the video in a classroom setting, especially if shown at the wrong career stage. Rather, we recommend showing it on an individual basis by a commander, although not necessarily viewed by them together. Ideally, the video would be watched by the company grade officer as a springboard to a discussion with the commander. Alternatively, many officers and almost all spouses felt it should be seen by a couple together or even by a few couples together (up to six couples) with a discussion facilitator. This would enable the husbands and wives to open communication on a difficult issue - whether there would be negative repercussions for/by the officer if they left for the family's sake or negative repercussions for/by the spouse and family if they did not leave. These officers and spouses felt that the video could spur discussion in a way that simply sitting down to talk could not.

We recommend testing the efficacy of the video more fully by studying its impact on company grade officers who are in decision range and who see it as part of a more comprehensive discussion with their commanders. Because this is the recommended use of the video, it should have a bigger influence on retention decisions under these circumstances than in the classroom setting in which our focus groups took place.

The utility of the video concept for other purposes such as recruiting has yet to be tested, as is the use of the concept with other types of participants. We recommend exploring the possibility of developing similar videos that are aimed at certain types of officers. For example, videos could be made that are branch-specific, such that the former officers in the video were all in the same branch during their service time. This would make the video more relevant to current officers who are in the same branch as those in the video, and would likely have a more personal and powerful impact on these officers.

The desire of current officers to communicate with former ones for guidance remains unabated. As we mentioned earlier, it would be useful to create a pilot program in which former

officers volunteer to speak to current officers about civilian life. Many of the former officers we interviewed stated that they would be willing to participate in a program in which they could speak with current company grade officers seeking an outside sounding board or mentor.

Recommendations Specific to the Model of Officer Career Continuance

We developed a dynamic model of company grade officer career continuance that is designed to inform future interventions intended to retain company grade officers, as well as to inform future research to enhance understanding of the retention process. Both a taxonomic model and a process model were developed, with the taxonomic model defining the constructs included in the process model. At the broadest level, these constructs include (a) person variables; (b) context; (c) perceived context; (d) context evaluation; (e) health; (f) commitment; (g) retention cognitions (including thoughts of leaving and intentions to leave); (h) critical events; (i) coping effectiveness; (j) social support; (k) various moderators (e.g., time, communication, perceived economic constraint); and (l) the retention decision. The process model specifies relationships between constructs. A number of moderator variables were hypothesized, which are especially important for suggesting interventions to increase retention. Those moderator variables are consistent with interventions implemented as part of project STAY, as well as the other recommendations made in this report. We conducted an initial evaluation of the model using (a) data obtained from existing officer surveys and tracking databases, and (b) evaluations of the interventions implemented as part of this project. We found empirical support for several hypotheses derived from the model.

The following are suggestions for future research and development that emerge from our model:

- Much, though not all, of the empirical support for relationships specified in the model is based on cross-sectional research that does not permit causal inference. As such, future research should include designs that permit causal inference (e.g., longitudinal designs, training designs that include matched control groups). Given the importance of time in our model, longitudinal designs would be especially informative. Such designs would ideally include multi-wave data collection to better understand how key retention-related variables change over time, and what triggers those changes.

  Khoo, West, Wu, and Kwok (2006) describe several interesting and relevant longitudinal methods. One such method, growth curve modeling, may be especially interesting and appropriate for our purposes. According to Knoo et al., "[i]n longitudinal studies with three or more measurement waves, growth curve modeling can provide an understanding of individual change... researchers may study individual growth trajectories and relate variations in the growth trajectories to covariates that vary between individuals" (p. 309). It may be worthwhile to attempt to formulate a taxonomy of growth trajectories, and see if there are common causes that could realistically be modified. It would also be interesting to note the relative contribution to variance in the dependent variable by various between-person covariates suggested by the model.

- Additional exploration of some of the constructs specified in the model would be useful (e.g., burnout, social support, coping effectiveness). This would likely provide opportunities for development of new and better measures of those constructs and, as such, more sensitive tests of relationships specified in the model.

- Many of the relationships specified in this model are based on previous empirical research, but it would be useful to conduct research that establishes more precisely the form of those relationships (e.g., linear, nonlinear; unidirectional, bidirectional).

- Although we have made a very good start, many of the mediators and moderators of relationships proposed in our model have likely not yet been identified, and of those we have identified, some have not yet been investigated empirically.

- If feasible, multilevel research designs should be considered. Such research might, for example, pinpoint levels at which to intervene most effectively (e.g., individual, squad, platoon, company, battalion), and might yield additional moderators either within or across variable levels (e.g., battalion climate might moderate the relationship between two individual-level variables, suggesting that measurement and modification of battalion climate should be part of an intervention to enhance retention).

- Qualitative and quantitative research should be combined to enhance understanding of the meaning behind quantitative results. We did, of course, do qualitative research as part of this project in the form of focus groups and interviews. There are a variety of other specific methods of collecting and analyzing qualitative data (Madill & Gough, 2008), however, that could also be profitably utilized. Tying this into a previous suggestion, some of these qualitative methods (e.g., diary studies) might be particularly appropriate for longitudinal designs. Another qualitative research method, narrative analysis (Murray, 2003), would provide an interesting way to understand the meaning of certain constructs for officers. Given that most people prefer stories over statistical data, supplementation of rigorous quantitative research with rigorous and rich qualitative research may serve as a useful way of igniting interest in utilizing guidelines and interventions designed to enhance officer continuance.

One narrative technique, the episodic interview, seems especially interesting. The idea is that the interviewer has a structured series of topics and seeks detailed narrative accounts about the participants' experiences with these topics. In general, people prefer stories and narratives to dry statistics. As such, narratives might be well received and put meat on the bones of paths specified by structural equation models or effect sizes generated by interventions. They could be used to (a) generate realistic previews that could be used to formulate stress inoculation interventions; (b) suggest ways of overcoming difficulties; (c) contrast positive and negative, or adaptive and maladaptive, ways of experiencing hassles and critical events; (d) provide a phenomenology of the Army experience associated with various model variables that would be informative and useful; (e) provide the basis for video-based training; (f) suggest new constructs, not in the literature, for incorporation into the retention model; and/or (g) suggest content for new interventions. There are, of course, many other methods that could be used. For example, we could develop a semi-structured interview designed specifically to explain arrows connecting constructs in a way that would be more accessible to officers as well as scientifically

illuminating. Interview "topics" would thus be relationships between different constructs.

- We recommend doing additional qualitative research to identify more comprehensively the range of critical events. Perhaps some events could be identified from archival materials, such as exit interview notes, if those are available. These could then be supplemented by other qualitative research techniques in which we would seek to identify additional critical events, and to discern the different meanings that officers ascribe to those events. We could also look for themes, using qualitative data analysis methods (e.g., content analysis).

- It would be informative and useful to scale critical events in terms of their intensity and valence. This would, for example, give us a sense of the extent to which individuals agree that certain events are always good or always bad, as well as identify those events that officers can experience very differently. It would also give us a sense of how acute various critical events are, and whether there is agreement regarding that judgment.

- It would be useful to obtain retrospective narratives on critical events experienced by officers to learn whether some critical events are accompanied by a "sleeper effect," whereby outcomes are not detectable for some period of time after the event has occurred. (Retrospective accounts might be an interesting surrogate, though certainly not a substitute, for longitudinal research.)

- Formulation of a taxonomy of critical events would be useful as a guide to future research. As a starting point, it would be interesting to investigate the dimensions along which critical events vary (and/or the categories into which they can be classified).

- Another interesting angle on critical event research would be identification of instances where you get a "reverse shock effect." In other words, instead of focusing on critical events that jar officers into thinking about leaving, investigate critical events that tend to "shock" officers who fully intend to leave into thinking about staying.

- A number of research questions specifically dealing with stress and strain variables and their management (i.e., coping) would be useful to investigate, given the pervasiveness of both acute and chronic stress in Army life:

  - What is the prevalence and severity of various stress and strain variables specified in our model (e.g., burnout)?

  - How might recovery from burnout and other psychological strains be accelerated?

  - What leader behaviors influence the extent to which employees appraise stressful job demands as being challenges or hindrances?

- How long do coping and stress management training interventions work before participants revert to baseline?

- Related to the previous question, how frequently are "booster shot" interventions required to prevent reversion to baseline, and what should be the content and duration of those "booster shot" training interventions?

- Are there stages of burnout, qualitatively distinct from one another, that can be identified or is burnout best thought of as a continuous variable? This would have implications for both diagnosis and treatment.

- What are the correlations between different kinds of deployment-related experience and various psychological and physical health variables?

- Emotional labor, or suppressing negative emotions to display a positive attitude (a significant aspect of Army life), is a common precursor to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007). What buffers the relationship between emotional labor and these two burnout dimensions?

- To what extent can officers deal with, or even overcome, burnout by reappraising their stressors as potential gains (e.g., challenges) rather than losses?

- If this sort of reframing is possible, what is the best approach for changing the way stressors are appraised? For example, perhaps -- with the right kind of supervisory support -- officers may come to perceive ambiguous role expectations as opportunities to carry out their own initiatives rather than as restrictions on their actions (Lee & Ashforth, 1996).

- Consider developing a taxonomy of social support that would, among other things, include function (e.g., instrumental, emotional, informational), source (e.g., supervisor, peer, spouse, other family member, friend), and nature of stressor as experienced by officers. Perhaps develop a measure based on this taxonomy.

- To what extent do officers accurately perceive and utilize the social support that is available to them?

- Consider creating training designed to teach officers to cultivate, and effectively use, their social support networks.

- Consider creating training designed to teach officers to provide social support more effectively. For example, information may be required for certain kinds of problems, and more emotion-based social support (e.g., empathizing) may be required for other kinds of problems.

- What weakens and strengthens existing social support network ties?

- Consider investigating the extent to which new telecommunication technologies can enhance social support for deployed Soldiers (e.g., to what extent would increasing video-based telephonic communication with family members or friends reduce strain).

- Some aspects of social network analysis (e.g., Zohar & Tenne-Gazit, 2008) might be usefully applied to better understand and intervene in the retention process. For example:

  - How are shared retention-related cognitions (e.g., perceived context) formed?

  - How do the structure and function of social ties (a) between leaders and unit members, and (b) among unit members, affect the emergence of specific types of unit variables important to retention (e.g., morale, norms, climate)?

  - How can leaders best intervene to prevent the emergence of maladaptive shared cognitions?

  - How can leaders best intervene to encourage the emergence of adaptive shared cognitions?

We have developed a leading edge model of company grade officer retention that generates many ideas for interventions and future research. What we have mentioned is just a sampling of possible research questions that could be addressed. Because we were only able to empirically test a few hypotheses suggested by the model, we highly recommend conducting a future study in which existing data are explored more fully as to their usefulness for testing additional hypotheses. In addition, we recommend that new data be collected for the specific purpose of testing the key paths in the model. The best research starts with a theory and then a study is designed to test hypotheses that come out of that theory. We were only able to test very specific hypotheses with our intervention evaluation studies, and the archival databases that were available to us did not measure many of the key concepts in the model. Although our model is based on solid theoretical reasoning and past research, it must be tested more completely for it to maximize its usefulness as a tool for (a) understanding the officer career continuance decision process, and (b) designing interventions to enhance officer retention.

Conclusions

The goal of this report is to outline future action steps for increasing company grade officer retention. It draws on prior work completed for the officer portion of the STAY program, which sought, over a three-year period, to improve the continuance of the Army's company grade officers. Our recommendations for future initiatives build on (a) focus groups and interviews on Army posts, (b) interviews with other subject matter experts, (c) literature review, (d) the preliminary and final models of company grade officer continuance, (e) the results of the evaluation of three interventions developed to enhance continuance, and (f) special expert panel meetings.

We organized our recommendations around the major factors that were identified in focus groups and interviews as positively or negatively influencing officer retention. For each recommendation, we discussed the nature of the initiative, the reasons the initiative should improve retention, and issues that may limit the effectiveness or feasibility of the initiative. Key steps in developing proposed interventions are outlined. Each intervention was categorized according to the model of interventions as (a) directed at influencing continuance commitment or affective commitment, and (b) unit-level or systemic.

Looking across the recommendations, several themes emerged. First, the majority of initiatives outline ways of intervening in work or non-work situations in order to enhance or prevent the erosion of officers' affective commitment to the Army. Second, these interventions targeted at influencing affective commitment generally can be grouped into two broad categories. The first category includes interventions that reduce or limit negative factors that decrease officers' intentions to stay with the Army. Examples include promoting a family-friendly culture to decrease family dissatisfaction, and improving leaders' prioritization to diminish officers' frustration with work. The second category involves interventions that attempt to restrict or counter the impact of negative factors. They do not directly improve officers' experiences, but instead limit the damage caused by negative factors. Examples include implementing interactional justice training to ameliorate officers' reactions to broken promises and using leader rotation to help officers see that negative experiences with poor leaders early in their Army careers are unlikely to be good indicators of later interactions with leadership. Finally, there are diverse approaches that may be used to enhance officers' continuance. Some of these require broad policy changes, others may be implemented by individual units or branches.

Some of the proposed interventions may address multiple sources of officer dissatisfaction. For example, improving prioritization may help make officers' work more satisfying and reduce work-life conflict, enhancing family satisfaction. Developing alternate forms of career support, such as mentoring, may improve officers' satisfaction with their career development and offset the consequences of dissatisfaction with leadership. The scope of each interventions' effect should be taken into consideration when deciding on the next steps to take to enhance the continuance of company grade officers.

For some officers, direct persuasion and a clearer picture of the advantages of staying in the Army through retirement will suffice. A subset of officers enters the Army with no intention to stay longer than the minimum required to repay obligations. This group never viewed

themselves as career officers and will be mostly immune to any direct interventions to improve their retention. For a few, retention initiatives may improve their Army experiences to the point that they re-think their career intentions. For many officers, however, leaving after the first ADSO, or prior to twenty years, is not simply a question of civilian life being more appealing. Leaving the Army prematurely is a disappointment that signifies the short-circuiting of a dream vocation. These officers' experiences in the Army have eroded their affective and in some cases normative commitment to the Army. These experiences, along with competing civilian job opportunities, drive these officers to (in many cases, reluctantly) leave the Army. The interventions focusing on affective commitment that we have recommended in this report should help improve the retention of this group of officers, either through promoting positive experiences, diminishing negative experiences, or by limiting the impact of negative experiences.

We recommend that the findings of this report be utilized to drive decisions about future initiatives to increase company-grade officer retention. By summarizing major factors that negatively and positively influence company grade officer retention, the report provides a succinct overview of causes of separation. The proposed interventions outline key next steps that may be taken to meet the Army's need to retain quality company grade officers. Ultimately, two questions should be asked about each recommendation: (1) whether following through on the recommendation will ultimately enhance retention, and (2) whether the recommended change can be implemented successfully and realistically. These considerations will need to be balanced when deciding which recommendations should be pursued.

Another important factor that must be considered when choosing which recommendations to pursue is the paradigm shift that is currently taking place in the area of company grade officer retention. When we began this project in 2006, the goal was to encourage as many qualified captains as possible to remain in the Army past their first ADSO. The Army was worried about having enough captains and majors to fulfill its missions and to bridge the gap between the end of the first ADSO and the point at which most officers choose to remain in the Army until retirement. Since then, the problem has changed from having too few captains to having too many. With the new Captain's Menu of Incentives and the poor U.S. economy, fewer officers are leaving the Army than were expected. From 2007 to 2010, the Army expected to lose about 8,000 officers. As of February 2009, only 2,000 have left. Faced with the possibility of being overstrengthed at Captain, the goal has changed to keeping the high-performing and high-potential Captains and weeding out the bad ones. "High potential" refers to officers that are expected to be outstanding leaders at the Battalion Commander level in the future.

This paradigm shift does not affect the importance of following through on our recommendations, but it does affect how the recommendations should be prioritized. The need for retaining officers is still present; it is only who should be retained that has been narrowed somewhat. It is still the best officers that are most attractive to civilian employers, so conditions must change so the best officers are encouraged to remain. When prioritizing recommendations, therefore, the most important are those that are most likely to influence the best officers to stay rather than those that are most likely to influence the most officers to stay. The problem is identifying who are the most high-potential officers and identifying what influences their retention decisions the most.

One way of identifying the most effective interventions for high-potential officers is to use our career continuance model to formulate hypotheses about which links may be moderated by individual differences in performance and/or potential. For example, high-performing officers may have a stronger relationship between perceived organizational support and affective commitment. This would suggest that interventions designed to enhance organizational support would have a differential effect on enhancing the commitment of high-performing officers vs. low-performing officers. It may also be that performance influences the impact certain types of critical events have on thoughts of staying/leaving. This would suggest that an intervention that helps high-performing officers get through those specific critical events without forming an intention to leave would be very valuable.

We believe further testing of our model of career continuance is the best way to begin answering these questions about how to retain the best officers without retaining too many lower performing officers. Understanding the relationships in the model and identifying relevant moderator variables will allow us to design interventions that target the people the Army wants to retain before they reach the decision point, when it might be too late.

In summary, we see the most important recommendations on which to follow through immediately are those that (a) can have an immediate and long-lasting impact on the career continuance behavior of officers with the most potential for being outstanding leaders at the Battalion Commander level in the future, (b) take the interventions that have already been developed to the next level, and (c) allow for more complete testing of the officer career continuance model.

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