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JUNIOR OFFICER RETENTION:
ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

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20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) This is a relatively brief, non-data-based article addressing personnel policies associated with officer retention. It cites, applies, and summarizes the author's theories and research findings associated with his officer career pattern study. Recommendations are included.		

Junior Officer Retention: Another Perspective

by
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December, 1979

Junior Officer Retention: Another Perspective

Retention is a critical and serious problem in the all-volunteer Navy. Retaining junior officers is an important dimension of that problem.

Admiral Hayward, in the current report of the CNO, praises the Navy's "people whose esprit, competence and potential continue to impress all who have an opportunity to observe them in action, manning and supporting the fleet worldwide. I strongly support the view that the quality of our people represents one of our major advantages over the Soviets."¹ Janes Fighting Ships also emphasizes the experience and training (quality) of personnel as a critical factor in our maintaining some superiority over the seas.²

Nevertheless, the Navy has not been able to meet its 1978 retention objectives and estimates for FY 1980 predict an even wider gap between the percentage of officers needed to be retained and those who actually stay.³ Coupled with a projected decline in the number of young men available for military service in the 1980s, this trend becomes even more serious. It is so important that it has led to the debate over whether or not to reinstate the draft which is currently ongoing in Congress.

Before giving up the idea of the all-volunteer force, however, it is important to be clear about what remedies might attract and hold competent people. This article focuses on the requirements necessary to retain junior officers in the U.S. Navy.

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1. Survey of the Literature

A review of the literature, much of it published in U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, reveals that six issues are most frequently associated with junior officers resigning their commissions.

Poor Career Benefits. Frequently, junior officers mention these major reasons for leaving: lack of control over assignments, fewer educational opportunities, especially for postgraduate school, inadequate career counseling, lack of continuous training, no basic allowance for quarters for single officers, poor medical care and no dependent dental care, annual antiinflation pay caps imposed by the President on federal government employees but not observed by other sectors, and the general erosion of such employee benefits as discontinuance of the GI Bill, deteriorating health care, talk about modifying the twenty-year retirement plan, etc.⁴

Family Separations. Few careers demand such extended family separations as the Navy does. The Navy's case is economic; to cross 4500 miles of ocean at thirty knots, for example, requires seventeen days of straight steaming; it makes sense to lengthen deployments. Moreover, the U.S. fleet is only half as large as it was ten years ago. Fewer ships are being built and obsolete warships are being retired, placing extra at-sea requirements on existing ships. Add the manpower shortage and it's been inevitable that shore duty drops to make officers available for sea duty.

However, money is the Navy's problem. Officers see the situation as a personal problem. As one JO put it, "When they [the Army and Air Force] deploy, the whole mob [family] goes with them to reside at an overseas base. We don't do that. Our kids pay a price as human beings."⁵

In a study by the Bureau of Naval Personnel, family moves and separations topped the list of reasons given by resigning officers.⁶ Built-in fragmentation of family life is inherently unappealing. Furthermore, the modern trend

toward husbands and wives both sharing work and parenting means that the pool of women willing to be their children's only real parent is shrinking. There are no signs that this trend will change either, with forty percent of all mothers working now and estimates predicting that two-thirds of America's women will be employed by 1990.⁷ Fewer and fewer people are likely to see Navy life as compatible with modern family life unless the Navy changes.

Loss of Esteem for the CO Role. Many junior officers on their way out report a general loss of respect for some of their commanding officers but, more importantly, a loss of esteem for the CO's very role. They point out that many problems lie beyond his control, yet he is still held responsible-- a scapegoat who receives more and more responsibility with less and less authority and fewer and fewer resources. Thus, he is forced into crisis management, always reacting to directives and constraints from above, his time consumed by instructions, directives, surveys, inspections, statistics, and percentages. Fewer junior officers want to be a CO, which leaves them with few options in a longterm career pattern.

One frequently cited reason is the military's generally bad post-Vietnam image. As one JO author states,

"Congress, and even more so, the executive branch are prime culprits in generating the retention crisis. While the CNO stresses the importance of command (CO) involvement and places the major responsibility at that level, the onus is on him to start pushing up the chain of command, not down. Continual attacks on the stature of our military establishment greatly defrays overall job satisfaction."⁸

The public outside government circles shares this decreased support and respect for the military, thus making the job of commander even more impossible and unfulfilling. Moreover, officers clearly see it as another good reason for getting into a more socially acceptable career.

Perceived "Greener Pastures." Many Naval officers feel they can have an equally interesting civilian career with better employee benefits, fewer

family separations, and better work conditions than the Navy offers, a perception enthusiastically fostered by some civilian recruiters pursuing aviators and nuclear submarine officers in particular. For example, it takes an estimated \$800,000 to train a carrier pilot; U.S. airlines will hire an estimated 1,900 new pilots by 1985, 75 percent of them from the military. Due to age and experience qualifications, the majority of these pilots will have six to ten years experience; in other words, they will be the very officers the military would like to retain. If this loss actually occurs, the Navy will be thirty-eight percent below its pilot retention requirement by 1984.⁹

Similarly, nuclear-trained submarine officers are snapped up by the civilian nuclear energy field, and an estimated two-thirds of the Navy submarine JOs leave.¹⁰ In general, civilian employers perceive--and prize--an officer's managerial experience, and any subspecialty (computer analysis, nuclear engineering, pilot) makes them particularly attractive,

Bad Working Conditions. Many officers call their equipment "obsolete" or "cannibalized." Spare parts for aircraft and ships are hard to come by, yet combat readiness demands dangerous maneuvers almost continuously even in peacetime. They see it as too risky.¹¹ Another problem is unpleasant shipboard quarters considering how long they live at sea.¹² Furthermore, many who would remain in the Navy because it is simply "more challenging and fun" are discouraged when budget cuts eliminate the challenges--flying time or firing a practice missile.¹³ Finally, after six months at sea, they find shore time decimated by the need to spend most of it overhauling obsolete equipment, a further discouragement.¹⁴

Money. Analyzing these reasons from any perspective reveals two inescapable facts. First, almost every reason given for leaving is linked to another one; second, money lies behind most of the dissatisfactions of officers

who are leaving. It's lockstep logic, inevitably resulting in a retention problem: when Congress reduces the Navy budget, though not reducing Navy commitments, new ships will not be built, older ships will not be modernized, spare parts will get scarce, and pay and benefits will suffer. If no juggling can produce new vessels, the Navy has to operate its older ships while retiring even older ships and cannibalizing them for spare parts. With fewer ships available, each unit has to spend more time at sea, fewer command positions are available, living conditions on older ships deteriorate because modernization is too expensive, and family separations stretch out longer and longer. Officers get fed up and leave. The remaining other officers get even less shore time and more duty, their own families feel the pinch, and postgraduate education, upon which promotion may depend, is harder to finish. The spiral is vicious.

2. Some Career Research Applied To The Problem

During 1977-78, the author and his colleagues, investigated U.S. Naval officer career patterns, including factors related to the general retention problem. This report discusses the information and suggests some recommendations.

We conducted a total of 154 interviews lasting forty-five to ninety minutes each. Of those interviewed, 136 subjects also returned questionnaires.

We talked with Naval officers from five different communities: line officers from aviation, subsurface and surface warfare, and staff officers from the civil engineering corps and supply corps. We broke aviators into subgroups: multiengine aircraft, helicopters, attack jets, and fighter jets. Five Navy wives from each of these communities, a total of twenty-five, and their husbands were studied as couples.

The average age of the officers in the sample was 31.6 years. Although 10 percent of the population was single, the rest of the group had been

married an average of 8.08 years and had 1.6 children. About 12 percent had been divorced. Only 19 percent reported that their wives were looking for or had full-time outside-the-home employment.

On the average, they had been in the Navy 9.93 years and included four ensigns, sixteen lieutenant junior grades, sixty-six lieutenants, sixty lieutenant commanders, and eight commanders. About 41 percent of the group queried came from rural backgrounds, 32 percent from urban/suburban, and 16 percent from highly mobile (e.g., military) families. About 4 percent received their college education at prestigious universities, 49 percent at well-reputed institutions (including the U.S. Naval Academy), 22 percent from lesser-known colleges, and 25 percent at little-known institutions.

The research considered retention from a career perspective.¹⁵ What follows are the most important findings in terms of what impacts on keeping competent junior officers in productive pursuit of a career in the U.S. Navy. The findings raise some personnel policy questions to which the Navy must respond if it would maintain a successful all-volunteer force.

a. Issues of Career "Fit." Edgar Schein studied forty-four male alumni of the Sloan School of Management at MIT, both during their time at MIT and ten to twelve years after their graduation. As he probed why they made certain kinds of career decisions, their responses made a pattern which helped explain what happens during the five- to ten-year segment of a career history. Schein postulated that while the early career (one to five years) was a period of mutual study and discovery between employee and employer, midcareer is somewhat different. Between the fifth and tenth year, approximately, one gains a clearer occupational self-concept. Schein labels this self-knowledge the "career anchor."¹⁶

The career anchor "serves to guide, constrain, stabilize and integrate the person's career," says Schein (p. 127). It is "inside the person,

functioning as a set of driving and constraining forces on career decisions and choices" (p. 125). Thus the metaphor of an anchor connotes the composite needs, values, attitudes, and abilities of an individual which tie him to a certain kind of work history or career.

One discovers one's career anchor by coming to understand one's self-perceived needs (based on the tests of real situations and feedback from others), one's self-perceived abilities (based on a variety of work experiences), and one's self-perceived work values and attitudes (based on encounters between the person and the employer's norms and values). It requires real work experience to arrive at such an awareness. Career anchor assessment depends not only on the needs and abilities one originally brings to the work situation but also on the opportunities provided to broaden one's experience and on the quality of feedback from others.

Schein uncovered five major career anchors in the MIT group. Managerial competence is the term he used to designate those with a strong need to get and exercise managerial responsibility. They possess such managerial skills as analyzing problems and handling people, and have the emotional stamina to withstand the pressures of the job. Most of these career types, naturally, wanted work in large organizations.

The technical/functional career anchor characterizes people most concerned with the quality of their work, who want to increase their proficiency continuously, and who view their careers as prolonged refinements in their area of expertise.

Another group was mainly concerned with long-term stability, location in a given area, and job security. They were said to have a security anchor.

Others found it difficult to work in organizations and worked towards personal space--freedom from close supervision and regulations. Schein labeled these as having an autonomy anchor. Individuals with a creativity career anchor

had an overriding need to create something of their own: a new business, product, or service.

For a careerist, identifying one's career anchor helps better identify his long-term contributions, identify his personal criteria for choosing among a variety of jobs and work settings, more accurately define what personal success would be, and more clearly perceive how to organize life and work experiences. The employing organization, recognizing that an individual's anchor becomes more defined as time passes, will get the highest productivity by investing effort and time matching organizational needs with individual interests. In short, each organization must provide multiple career options or be prepared to lose executives during the five- to ten-year segment.

An analysis of the research data related to these concepts as employed with U.S. Naval officers reveals that, in general, most officers have a technical career anchor (36.3 percent) followed closely by those who are managerial in their orientation (33.9 percent). Of the remaining three anchors described above by Schein, only 15.3 percent of the officer population queried would possess a security anchor, while 10.4 percent would be in the creativity category and only 4 percent autonomy.¹⁷

It is interesting to note that aviators, one of the critical officer shortage areas, possessed a very strong preference for the technical anchor (63 percent of the officers were so judged, while only 24 percent were managerial types). Submariners, on the other hand, had an anchor profile split with 36 percent technical, 36 percent managerial and 21 percent security. The Surface Warfare community possessed an unequal number of managerial anchors (62.2 percent compared to 21 percent technical), and the Supply Corps was also comprised mostly of managerial types (56.5 percent v. 22.7 percent security and 14.2 percent technical). Among CEC officers there existed a more balanced career anchor profile: 32.3 percent autonomy, 24 percent technical, 24 percent

security and 16.6 percent managerial. This was the only sub-community where many autonomy anchors could be found.

As this data shows, the Navy is likely to be especially attractive to those with technical and managerial career anchors. It would be well to consider ways to attract and hold these types of officers. Career development policy is at present geared to managerial types, however. Those with technical anchors, like pilots, will likely become highly dissatisfied at that transition. Perhaps dual or multiple career tracks are necessary. Furthermore, since security is a generally high value for many Naval officers, the Navy could strengthen its already strong appeal by improving the job security and benefit package.

The negative implications of the data on career anchors is also important. The Navy will simply have a difficult time accommodating officers with autonomy and creativity career anchors. Large bureaucracies which emphasize loyalty and obedience, both needs of the military, do not normally attract persons who seek settings which foster their creativity or independence. Should the Navy "cut its losses" and concentrate even more (for it is already so oriented) on retaining those who have technical/managerial anchors and motivated to ascend the hierarchy, simply recognizing that other types are not good "fits" and either letting them go or actively weeding them out? Or, should the Navy diversify its career development system to provide attractive opportunities for those with more marginal anchors? If so, will there be enough managerial/technical careerists to fill all the Navy's officer needs? If so, is there a useful place for a wide variety of careerists in the Navy--or can the Navy adapt to integrate such variety efficiently?

These are critical questions for a retention policy. They have implications for recruitment, selection, training and career development. Recommendations are made later in the paper. The important point here is that good

retention policy will somehow focus on the long-term career and will seek to match career options with the anchors of various careerists.

b. Life/Family Development Issues.¹⁸ Most of the officer couples queried felt good about the status of their life and their marriage, at least as good as the American population generally. Nevertheless, U.S. Naval officers and their families face some special stresses which deserve attention.

During the early stages of a career, (typically from ensign to lieutenant junior grade in the Navy setting), the young careerist achieves his major sense of identity through work and by adapting to the organization's demands. This is the matching period: does he want this first job to become a career? The organization, for its part, tries to learn whether the recruit will be an asset: should it encourage him to stay with advancement and attractive assignments? Many careerists and organizations decide--mutually or unilaterally--that they do not have a good career match.

In addition to the normal attrition expected in any organization during this period, the Navy has some special problems. First, the "Navy way" requires a form of work and family life often unlike that of the officer's own parents or other familiar careerists. Not only must the officer work very long hours, he frequently leaves home for extended tours at sea. In the case of a fleet ballistic missile (FBM) submarine officer, for example, the family must adjust to having father home for three months and then away for three months. For other officers, sea tours may last from two weeks to eight months. A tour may be carefully planned or, as in the case of SSN attack submarine crews, it may come without warning. Research on the family difficulties associated with such separations establishes that it causes almost certain stress.

Other careers in American society also demand frequent travel and long hours (the business executive), and on-off work rotations (airline crews). What makes the Navy career model so unique is the frequency of travel, the

extent of away-from-home time (up to a year away), and the fact that except for the FBM officers, one cannot count on extended at-home time to compensate for being away. Often officers just home from a cruise must put in very long hours in port to prepare for the next cruise--and junior officers get more than their share of the dirty work. No wonder some begin to perceive a career pattern which leaves them little time for anything except dedication to the Navy.

Furthermore, marital role adjustments are almost axiomatically difficult during this formative period. The couple must work out when/if he is the patriarch, who will keep the finances, the parenting roles when he is at sea and when he is home, her time at home and away from home, and how this corresponds with his schedule. These are complex and intensive role issues for young couples to resolve.

Another adjustment is the conflict of values between young officer couples and their seniors. Younger wives are more independent, more assertive when their needs are not being met, and less apt to subordinate their needs to their husband's work. Research shows that for many younger persons, self/family development and lifestyle have often replaced work as the primary value (Emery,¹⁹ Rapoport and Rapoport,²⁰ Kanter,²¹ Hall and Hall²²). Younger male careerists are likely to share parenting roles and household tasks with their wives; wives are apt to pursue their own careers. Further, many junior Navy couples do not see promotions necessarily as "success"; rather, they are likely to define career-life success as finding work which corresponds with their personal and family growth cycles, and is varied and interesting, or being a crafts-person and doing something so well that they feel the pleasure of accomplishment and the satisfaction of making a contribution to society.

Any one of these problems may be compounded by a "generation gap" between the struggling JO and his senior officers. Many senior officers, for

instance, proclaim that the fun of being an officer is to be at sea (away from home) "driving" an airplane, ship, or submarine--and find it natural to subordinate everything else to their careers. A "good" Navy wife is a superwoman who manages efficiently while the husband is away but eagerly becomes subordinate when he returns. She does not complain. She entertains well, stays physically attractive, and mixes socially with other wives, especially the wives of her husband's peers and superiors. If she chooses a career of her own, it is to keep herself busy while he is away and to boost family income. (Selling real estate, for example, is ideal because she can choose her own hours and quickly adjust her work to a new environment and the demands of his schedule.)

Thus, many junior officers reported to us that they found their seniors unsympathetic and even hostile to family-oriented values. One surface warfare lieutenant reported that a former commanding officer had given him perfect ratings but with a qualifying footnote: "He could become CNO if he and his wife just learned the Navy team concept." This, said the lieutenant, meant that he was great but that his wife, pursuing her own studies, couldn't cope with all that the CO's wife asked her to do. Similarly, a jet fighter pilot flight instructor exclaimed, "I'm getting out because as I get more senior, they also want to include my wife in more activities and she doesn't want to be in the Navy. She has her own career."

We found that this hostility from senior officers was not just junior imagination. A senior captain in the submarines complained that an executive officer was resigning at fourteen years of service "just because his wife keeps bitching." He clearly felt that she had no right to be dissatisfied. An aviator commanding officer said, "I don't understand the young wives. They're ruining these guys' careers. If they would fall into line, half of my problems would be resolved. They just need to mature beyond all this women's lib crap."

One exception is the juniors whose fathers were also military--especially Navy--officers. They know, for example, that the early period is the hardest and simply adapt. The wives, especially if they have grown up in military families, know how to be active outside the home when their husbands are away and how to be available when their husbands are back. In short, their expectations match the Navy way of life and they develop effective coping mechanisms.

Also, on the positive side, some couples from rural areas and from lower-middle-class backgrounds find that the Navy meets their needs for increased status, good pay, job security, and an opportunity to retire at half of base pay, still relatively young, so they can return "home" to live out their dreams. They also perceive the Navy as an exciting opportunity, otherwise inaccessible, to travel and see the world. The career, providing the husband performs adequately, is quite secure and promises steady promotions and pay increases as well as enviable benefits.

On the other hand, both wives and husbands report that the separations, the heavy work loads and long hours, the uncertain schedules, and the eroding benefits (e.g., the possibility that the twenty-year retirement option may be discontinued and the de facto policy of five percent cost-of-living increases in ten percent inflationary periods) often seem to offset the advantages. Moreover, while moving all around the world may be glamorous for newlyweds, it becomes a disadvantage once the children reach school age.

In short, the four critical problems during the adjustment phase of a Naval officer's early career are: (1) whether he feels that there is a good match between his own aspirations and the Navy's requirements; (2) whether he and his wife have come to terms with the Navy career-family model; (3) whether the wife has accepted the Navy as a way of life where the advantages to the family outweigh the disadvantages and where she sees the Navy as her career too; and (4) whether the young officer couple will accept, or at least not be

discouraged by their senior's values, will willingly comply--at least minimally--but can still be who they are, can eventually change things to their liking, or possibly can see themselves emulating some of the values of successful superiors as they grow older.

Our study showed that the young officers most contented with family life in the Navy were staff officers (CEC, supply) where sea duty and family separations are limited, bachelors, childless couples, or married to a wife with a flexible career; she could work intensely while her husband was away and cut back when he reappeared. Where the spouses had both accepted the Navy model as a way of life (or already knew it from their early family backgrounds), they also seemed more willing to make the Navy a long and productive career.

c. The Role of the Spouse and The Feminist Movement.²³ Midcareer is when the executive wife most typically becomes an active partner in her husband's career. During the early-career phase while he is establishing his technical competence and is heavily involved in work (partly because it meets his own identity needs), the wife is expected mainly to pick up the loose ends at home, not complain, and provide a peaceful refuge from her husband's daily pressures.²⁴ (Younger officers, asked how their wives can be helpful in their career, usually say "by not complaining.")

By late midcareer, however, lieutenant commanders are often in charge of major departments or are executive officers, accomplishing most of their tasks by working with people. To be promoted, they should entertain and be active in Navy social life. Advancement beyond commander depends in large measure on informal criteria ("politics") and on their "team" assets. The wife's role changes at midcareer from unquestioning supporter to social manager. She is largely responsible for creating a family image that will help her husband look like good senior officer material. She should begin to involve herself with other senior officer wives and to entertain. While on occasion she may not

directly help her husband in a given billet, her actions--or lack of them--can certainly hurt his career image.

Our research disclosed some junior officers who perceived their wives' uneasiness with and fear of this new social role. Some wives were pushing to leave--or at least to keep commitments minimal because they didn't want the social-image pressure.

Partly because of the new set of problems confronting officers during midcareer, wives seem to fall into five types as they respond:

Table 1
Types of Navy Wives at Midcareer

<u>Type</u>	<u>Dimensions</u>	<u>Issues</u>	<u>Attitude</u>
Blind Supporters	1. Those who tie lives exclusively to husband's career or see it as a "our" two-person career. 2. Those whose self-interests are not identical but beautifully complement and do not conflict with his career.	How can I help to advance our career?	His happiness is my happiness.
Deferred Gratifiers	1. Some are happy to enjoy the security of Navy life and will develop their own career interests, if any, when their husband retires. 2. Others are somewhat angry at having to delay gratification in their life until they can pursue their own careers (probably when their husband retires) and they are impatient.	How can I help him now so that he (and the benefits from his career) will help me in the future?	I'm willing to wait but at some point it is my turn.

Table 1, contd.

<u>Type</u>	<u>Dimensions</u>	<u>Issues</u>	<u>Attitude</u>
Careerists	<p>1. Those who are willing to put up with the difficulties of the husband's career (probably by subordinating their career to his) but insist on finding their own "nitch" within those constraints.</p> <p>2. Those whose career is as or more important than the marriage. Lots of hostility toward any infringement on her own career plans.</p>	How can I pursue my own career plans irregardless of his?	I have as much right to a career as he does and mine is as important as his.
Accommodators	<p>1. Some view working more as a job which must accommodate to the family demands (the first priority) and plan accordingly.</p> <p>2. Others see working as a longterm career and are essentially opportunistic and flexible. They can de-emphasize their careers, change directions, subordinate or do whatever seems necessary to reach a meaningful balance between work-family.</p>	How can I have meaningful work and still be a good marriage partner and mother?	I need something more than being active in his career and the family (partly because he is away so much and for so long) but my main priority is my marriage and family.
Insiders	<p>1. Navy/military juniors who are accustomed to the lifestyle and have seen military marriages modeled.</p> <p>2. Those who are themselves in the Navy and are pursuing a dual career with their husbands.</p>	How can I use what I already know to make this system work for me (us)?	I can see the long-term aspects of this career and have seen it work for others. By doing my part, I can reap numerous benefits in the present and the future.

Many women fell into the category of deferred gratifiers. However, we uncovered one potential conflict in the interviews: while wives were patiently waiting their turn and expecting much emotional support from their husbands after retirement, the husbands were often preparing to pursue an active second career and did not see themselves as primarily supporting their wife's efforts or expectations. Another problem was that many of these women seemed angry and impatient at having to postpone their goals.

The careerist wives, a small percentage, seemed most at odds with the Navy lifestyle and with their husband's career aspirations. They were most likely to present their mates with ultimatums ("It's the Navy or me!") and seemed prepared to risk their marriages for more independence. Most could not see how they could pursue a viable career of their choice and be part of a system which requires frequent moves, deprives them of their husband's time and help, and demands their support for his career.

As expected, the blind supporters, accommodators, and insiders seemed to be the most ideal companions for Naval officers at this career stage.

Twenty-five wives were interviewed, five from each of the Navy sub-communities studied. Analyzing those interviews and the husbands' perceptions about their wives' attitudes shows that all five categories seem to exist in every Navy community, but that the dominant style seems to vary somewhat by community.

It is not surprising that the most supportive wives are married to men with the most stringent work requirements, the line officers in the surface, sub-surface, and air communities. It is no coincidence either, that these communities where the demands for a supportive family are greatest are also the areas of critical officer shortages.

Some crucial factors affected individual wives in all communities, factors with great impact on midcareer officers' productivity and satisfaction

with the Navy. They are: (1) younger women seem better educated; they want a career at some point in their lives more than women over thirty-five do; (2) inflation and post-Vietnam War cutbacks have made the wife's career an important source of additional income in many families; (3) the women's movement has helped Navy wives seek an identity beyond the home; (4) the midcareer officers themselves seem increasingly willing to change preconceived ideas about their wife's role in his career--to be less threatened by limited support, even to assume that her support should not be a factor in his promotions, and to support her outside-the-home pursuits, for instance, sharing child care so that she can be more active.

Out of the five types of Navy wives, blind supporters, insiders, and accommodators make the best wives for a man who wants success in the Navy. At the same time, social forces are pushing Navy wives towards careers. Even accommodators could become less-than-perfect Navy wives as husbands must become more accommodating themselves; inevitably, the officer himself may reach a point where he will be unwilling to be totally devoted to his own career. Deferred gratifiers will almost certainly become more demanding if this social trend persists, and will discover that the Navy has a very difficult time accommodating careerist wives under its present strictures.

d. Dysfunctions of The Current Retirement System. The Navy, like any large bureaucracy, has its own internal politics, and inevitably, its politicians. To the extent that careerists can meet their personal career needs by playing the political game "correctly", such apparently peripheral aspects of institutional life may actually be crucial to retention.²⁵ As Weber has pointed out, playing politics is a critical dimension of any career success formula.²⁶ In this study, we focused on identifying Naval officers' self-interests to see if there was a good match between these aspirations and the career opportunities open to them in the Navy.

In general, the Navy rewards competent and energetic officers who are willing to work hard for promotions and subordinate their personal and family needs, who have support from their wives and families, who want eventually to become general managers, and who are not choosy about the specific nature of their commands. The standard advice an officer gives on how to get ahead is, "Take whatever billet you receive, work as hard as you can, and get excellent fitness reports." This is the image of perfect congruence which the smart politician will try to create for himself. And most officers, by mid-career, have perfected their images. The Navy, getting exactly what it wants, does not probe beneath the surface.

At the same time, most officers agree that good fitness reports are not enough. One must also get good billets or develop an impressive assignment portfolio. Outstanding performance in difficult and important jobs is also important. Because billets change every two or three years, accomplishments must be concrete, short-term and highly visible. Many officers acknowledged opting for objectives meeting their criteria for a two-year period.

They also pinpointed other ways of playing the political game: they worked to develop a "service reputation"--the image of a competent, energetic, loyal, and team-oriented manager. They also fit into their subcommunity deliberately; pilots cultivated the image of being hard-drinking, hard-working, and courageous, picking social interactions with peers and senior officers as "demonstration" times. Finally, most officers acknowledge needing one or more "sponsors," influential senior officers who can intervene when necessary to help them get good billets, introduce them to influential persons, help them make their service reputation, and even be members of the Selection Board when they come up for promotion.

For example, officers often use autovan telephone lines to keep in touch with their detailer, trying to influence him about their next billet even

when they are overseas. Most officers, from discussions with peers and sponsors, have a very good idea of what is needed next for success. If an officer gets the "wrong" assignment, it is common for a sponsor to call the detailee or another influential person in his behalf and press for a change; many changes are, in fact, negotiated.

The interviewed officers also mentioned the importance of serving in several "high visibility" billets, where they could come into contact with more senior officers. To be on an admiral's staff or in a Washington, D.C., assignment at the right time and place in a career is critical. Entertaining, attending social functions, going to the officers' club for a drink, housing or entertaining out-of-town visitors, are all opportunities for making contacts and becoming known in the community. Having a supportive, bright, attractive spouse with hostess skills is also helpful.

They discussed in some detail how to develop effective sponsor relationships. When one encounters a CO who seems on his way up, the junior officer tries especially hard to get his support and earn his respect, doing favors in exchange for future commitments. If the JO happens to be in Washington, D.C., or Pearl Harbor where senior officers are plentiful, his gambit is to cultivate numerous relationships. Naturally, after the contact has been made, the younger officer will work hard to stay in contact and have a positive relationship with these sponsors across their career.

The Navy itself encourages a JO to be perfectly open about trying for good fitness reports, but the same officer must be somewhat more careful about politicking for "visible" billets, socially scheming to create his service reputation, and developing relationships with sponsors. While most Navy officers--including seniors--recognize the importance of these informal avenues to success, it is considered in bad taste to seek them openly.

Some comparisons with corporate business may be helpful, but in some ways, the Navy's political system is unique, largely because of its twenty-year retirement program. When an officer has invested ten years in the Navy, he is very reluctant, regardless of incompatibilities, to leave and lose the benefits of retiring at the end of twenty years with half of his highest pay plus medical privileges and other important benefits. Our interviews uncovered a surprising number of officers (about nineteen) with ten or more years of experience who were extremely dissatisfied and judged their self-interests as basically mismatched. However, they had all resolved to remain their full twenty years if possible.

One such officer was a surface warfare officer whose real goal was a Ph.D. in management and a junior college teaching position. He worked hard on his detailer for billets near universities. He also read extensively in his field and wrote about relevant aspects of his Naval experiences to demonstrate academic competence by publishing. He was to retire after twenty years as a lieutenant commander, having deliberately chosen jobs during his last seven years that enhanced his second career, not his naval career.

A supply corps lieutenant commander provided another example of incongruity. As he progressed up the ladder, he realized that his wife and family were increasingly important assets in his promotions; but his wife, an avid feminist, despised what she regarded as chauvinism and authoritarianism in the Navy. They struck a compromise. She would attend those functions and perform those services absolutely necessary for his pre-retirement career objectives. He would attend to most of them himself and provide the proper excuses for her. She would also withhold her opinions about the Navy in conversations where they could be used against her husband.

A third example is a submariner who had, with his wife and family, fallen in love with a particular geographic location and wanted to settle there. He

was making career compromises, trying to find a series of assignments which would permit him to serve out his remaining ten years in that area and also trying to convince his detailee that such a plan was in the Navy's interest as well.

A fourth case was an aviator, then a lieutenant commander, who wanted to retire as a commander in five years without leaving San Diego where he had a real estate business. He claimed to already possess holdings worth \$2 million and was studying for his broker's license.

We estimate from the interviews that 23 percent of the 145 officers queried in the ten-to-twenty year range were mainly working on their second career, not for the Navy. Of that sample, 43 percent worked on advancing both their military and second career simultaneously. Another 23 percent did not reveal enough information to make a good subjective judgment about their intentions, and only 12 percent of the officers in the ten-to-twenty year experience range indicated that the Navy was their primary and only career consideration.

As a result, the Navy says that the way to earn promotions is through competence and conformity. However, officers themselves recognize that the informal organization is necessary to achieve the Navy's highest rewards. Thus the importance of looking like "a Navy man" to make the highest rank possible before retirement encourages covert strategies that inevitably will create some situations where the Navy is being exploited for personal ends, even though a good organizational reason to continue a second-career agenda may be an apparent, not a real, conflict.

Our general impressions from conducting the interviews is that some 70 percent of the officers would resign their commissions immediately if retiring with half of base pay at the end of twenty years were not an option. Our guess is that few junior officers would join the Navy or remain, given

the current career benefits, without the twenty-year program. Obviously, this benefit successfully attracts and holds officers for the Navy, which is certainly one of the reasons it was implemented. On the other hand, it fosters long-term careerists who are not really committed to the Navy. While they are not actively injuring the Navy by playing dirty politics, such a career/organizational politics game still inhibits productivity and probably shelters "dead wood" at the middle management ranks out of proportion with corporate business or other organizations. It limits the Navy's own career renewal and development options because minimal performance can become a goal and has a reward at the end of a discrete period of time. Most importantly, it is a negative factor in the overall military goal of combat readiness.

3. Recommendations and Conclusions

a. Issues of Career Fit. Most of the data from the study underscores the fact that three types of careerists are most attracted to and enthusiastic about the Navy as a long-term productive career. These are those with managerial, technical and security career anchors. The technical types, however, often find themselves frustrated because upward mobility in the Navy means adopting a more managerial orientation.

From the Navy's point of view, they seem to also need all three kinds of careerists. They are benefited by some "yes" men whose main objective is job security, even though those with a need to settle (geographic security persons) would not normally be happy in a military career. They certainly require officers prone to command. They also need persons with a technical anchor, given the complexity of the modern Navy. This category of careerists deserve further comment.

It may be important in the future to add a career track for technically anchored persons. This could be similar to what already exists for

physicians in the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, for example. Physicians can reach the rank of Captain by remaining in their specialty. Or, it may be more like the Air Force model where once a subspecialist (e.g., fighter pilot, computer expert) one has the option of advancing up the hierarchy in that speciality.

It is further recommended that the Navy not attempt to attract or spend resources on career development for persons with creativity and autonomy career anchors. In fact, it may make sense to attempt to detect these persons and discourage their longtime association with the Navy.

b. Life/Family Development Issues. The Navy needs to educate its senior officers as to the changing work values of the younger generation, especially to their emphasis on self and family development. Such increased understanding on the part of the CO would help the junior officer to at least feel that his problems were understood and being considered.

More importantly, however, the Navy can no longer expect the same degree of support from the spouse and the children in terms of continuously putting the careerist's work in first place. More shore time, shorter cruises, fewer family interruptions and more flexible scheduling when the careerist is in port, better at-sea scheduling so that planning and expectation setting can be accomplished, fewer moves, more consideration for the spouse's career--all of these are work trends important to the population generally which must also be taken into account by the Navy in future policies.

c. The Role of The Spouse and The Feminist Movement. As a result of the women's movement, there are likely to be fewer "blind supporters" and "deferred gratifier" types of wives in the future. There are likely to be more "careerists". Since the role of Navy officer seems somewhat incompatible with a "careerist" spouse, it may be well to not cater to such a family situation. On the other hand, it will be very important in the future to,

first, be supportive of "accommodator" wives and, second, cease to require the traditional kinds of spousal support typical of what blind supporters and deferred gratifiers were willing to render in the past.

d. The Retirement System. Of great importance in retention seems to be the erosion of benefits--especially the ongoing policy debate about the military retirement program. The recommendations which follow attempt to consider many of the interrelated issues raised above but center on retirement policy. The Navy may ask the following questions in addressing the problems.

1. How can the Navy make the best use of the current retirement policy? Some way of tying retirement benefits, including the option of quitting with benefits after twenty years, should be linked to the performance appraisal of officers. This benefit should be viewed as a reward for meritorious service, not as a right.

2. How can the Navy recruit and retain valuable human resources without this attractive policy? The situation is complicated by the erosion of other career benefits and the lack of career options. If an officer could make periodic decisions about staying or leaving based on current attractions as well as future benefits, the double tendency to psychologically leave years before actually retiring and to defer all career gratification until after retirement would be lessened. The Navy should provide attractive career benefits and options at various career stages to attract and hold good people. The retirement policy should be only one attractive part of a longterm career pattern.

3. What are some reasonable changes to make in the retirement policy? Without enriching the career benefits and options, it would be foolish to change the retirement policy, now one of the main attractions in combatting the current retention problem. With newly improved career

development policies, however, the retirement policy could be lengthened to come after thirty rather than twenty years. Many of those who are second-career oriented might wait six to eight years for such retirement benefits, but not fifteen. This weeding-out device could be coupled with long-term attention to detect plateauing and psychological retirement and negatively reward them so that such officers would not benefit at retirement in the same ways.

4. What about the larger problem of the midcareer plateau and how is this problem similar to it? Some students of organization behavior are currently advocating slowing down career advancement to allow for more stability in organizations. The top of the pyramid is already crowded. Opportunities do not exist for career enhancement at all levels across a long period of time, which may be one of the main reasons for the lack of motivation and the deferred gratification already existing at midcareer. Lengthening the service period before retirement in the Navy would only intensify competition unless the expectations of the promotion "schedule" were relaxed.

A more attractive option would be a more diverse and slower career track. The myriad growth opportunities offered in the early career is largely a factor of insufficient manpower. These opportunities could be spread out and extended into midcareer. Other valuable shore and non-wartime specialty work could be undertaken and rewarded along the way. More attention could be directed to the needs of the careerist's family and a better match could be made (e.g., more stable assignments when the kids are in high school). Numerous options being considered by industry to address this same problem might provide helpful analogies for the Navy.

It is concluded that the officer retention problem is a serious one for the U.S. Navy, both in retaining quantity and quality personnel. The study has elaborated some aspects of career dissatisfaction which could be at the

heart of the problem. What is needed are new career development policies which are creative and fundamental. What is not needed are more cosmetic changes.

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