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**NAVAL  
POSTGRADUATE  
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**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

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**MBA PROFESSIONAL REPORT**

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**AN ANALYSIS OF FACTORS  
AFFECTING AFFILIATION IN THE  
MARINE CORPS RESERVES**

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**By: Benny Volkmann,  
Adam Shapiro, and  
Jason Barnes**

**December 2014**

**Advisors: Marco DiRenzo,  
Kathryn Aten**

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**AN ANALYSIS OF FACTORS AFFECTING AFFILIATION IN THE MARINE  
CORPS RESERVES**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION**

from the

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# **AN ANALYSIS OF FACTORS AFFECTING AFFILIATION IN THE MARINE CORPS RESERVES**

## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study is to examine key factors in Marine Corps Reserve turnover in order to better understand reservists' decisions to affiliate in the United States Marine Corps. Across the Marine Force Reserve there are communities, occupational fields, and grades with persistent manning shortfalls in non-obligor populations. Non-obligor reservists are those who serve at their own discretion, with each individual reservist having well-developed rationale and reasons for affiliating with a reserve unit. Monetary incentives are the primary stimulus employed to prompt reservists to affiliate and fill billets in units where there are persistent shortfalls.

Money has had a positive impact, but the utilization of monetary incentives is not based upon a deep understanding of the reservists' underlying motivations. This study explores individual non-obligor reservist motivations and rationales for affiliating to provide initial insights and a framework for future research. This study conducted a conceptual review of academic and military literature and six semi-structured telephone interviews in order to develop a predictive conceptual model of USMCR affiliation, allowing for more efficient targeting of retention methods and the development of non-monetary incentives.



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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Active Commitment
AC	Active Component
AR	Active Reserve
ASL	Active Status List
CC	Continuance Commitment
DODI	Department of Defense Instruction
DON	Department of the Navy
FFM	Five Factors Model
FMCR	Fleet Marine Corps Reserves
FY	Fiscal Year
GAO	Government Accounting Office
HQ	Headquarters
IMA	Individual Marine Augmentee
IRR	Individual Ready Reserves
JB-R	Job Resource Model
LMX	Leader-Member Exchange
MARDIV	Marine Division
MARFORRES	Marine Force Reserves
MAW	Marine Air Wing
MCCDC	Marine Corps Combat Development Center
MEF	Marine Expeditionary Force



MLG	Marine Logistics Group
MOBCOMM	Marine Corps Mobilization Command
MOS	Military Occupational Specialty
MSO	Military Service Obligation
NC	Normative Commitment
NDAA	National Defense Authorization Act
OPTEMPO	Operational Tempo
PERSTEMPO	Personnel Tempo
P&R	Personnel and Readiness
RSAL	Reserve Active Status List
QOL	Quality of Life
RC	Reserve Component
R&FM	Readiness and Force Management
RSU	Reserve Support Unit
SELRES	Select Reserve
SMCR	Select Marine Corps Reserve
SSB	Special Separation Benefits
SP	Separations Pay
VSI	Volunteer Separation Incentive

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# **I. INTRODUCTION**

## **A. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this study is to examine key factors in Marine Corps Reserve turnover in order to better understand reservists' decisions to affiliate in the United States Marine Corps. A deeper understanding of how motivations, rationales, and individual preferences affect the decision to affiliate can significantly improve methods of incentivizing service members. By understanding motivations and rationales, there is the potential to save the military both time and financial resources. Furthermore, through exploring turnover with regard to job embeddedness, career competencies and career development factors, we can target more effective affiliation.

## **B. BACKGROUND**

The Total Forces concept includes a Total Force in Readiness consisting of ready Active Component (AC) and RC forces. "The Reserve Component (RC) of the Total Force is organized, administered, trained, and equipped under the direction of the Commandant of the Marine Corps" (Department of the Navy, DON, 2009, p. 4). The purpose of the Marine Corps Reserve, established in 1916, is to be a "ready, relevant and responsive force" (U.S. Marine Corps Force Reserve, 2014, p. 1) and according to Marine Corps Order (MCO) 1001R.1K, to provide the means for rapid augmentation and expansion of the Marine Corps during a national emergency. The ability to seamlessly augment the active force is the dominant theme of Total Force planning, training, and administration (Department of the Navy, DON, 2009, p. 3).

During the cold war, Reserve Forces were viewed as a strategic reserve to be mobilized only in case of emergent need (Department of the Navy, DON, 2009). Since the early 1990s, the concept of a strategic reserve was replaced with a total force concept due to the necessity of meeting manpower requirements in the last two decades (Department of the Navy, DON, 2009). The Marine Corps Reserve provides essential strength for warfighting, civil defense, and at times operational relief to the active components providing critical force application requirements in support of national

defense. Marine Corps Reserves also fill a critical role in supporting augmentation in peacetime for logistical support and maintenance of critical assets. Additionally, they are often called upon to provide civil–military response serving our communities in times of disaster relief and humanitarian aid (Department of the Navy, DON, 2009).

### C. MARINE CORPS RESERVE FORCE STRUCTURE

Serving as the largest command in the Marine Corps with end strength in 2013 of 39,600 (Department of Defense Appropriations Bill, 2014), The Marine Force Reserve (MARFORRES) is structured to mirror an active duty Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) (Figure 1). The command structure consists of major subordinate commands such as, a force headquarters group (HQ), infantry division (MarDiv), Marine Air Wing (MAW), Marine Logistics Group (MLG) and Mobilization Command (MOBCOMM).

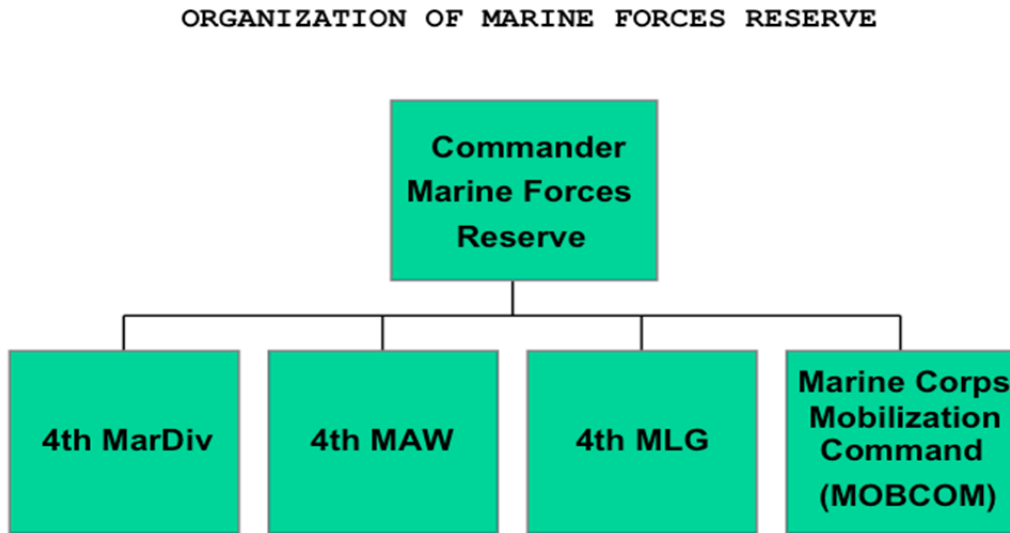


Figure 1. Organization of the Marine Corps Reserve (from Department of the Navy, 2009)

#### 1. Command Structure

MARFORRES is comprised of seven major Regional Supporting Units (RSU) that facilitate annual training and mobilization. There are currently one hundred and eighty-three Select Marine Corps Reserve (SMCR) units throughout the United States

and Puerto Rico (U.S. Marine Corps Force Reserve, 2014). MARFORRES HQ unit is located in New Orleans, Louisiana. Each major command is broken down into lower-level commands and subdivided into subunits containing company-sized elements. This allows individual Marines Reserves localized support for training, administrative and reporting requirements.

**2. Reserve Force Demographics**

In March of 2014, the Marine Corps Ready Reserve end strength was 104,307 Marines (U.S. Marine Corps Force Reserve, 2014). Figure 2 breaks down reserve end strength by Reserve Component (RC).

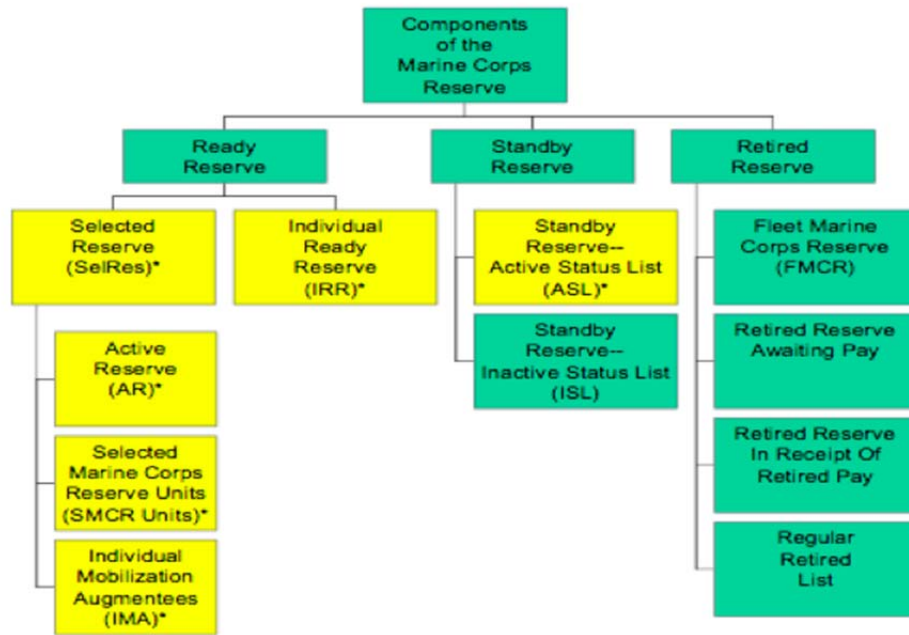
*Marine Corps end strength 104,307			
SMCR	AR	IMA	IRR
31,552	2,222	2,892	67,641
*Numbers are approximation as of April 2014			

Figure 2. Break down of Marine Corps Reserve End Strength (after U.S. Marine Corps Force Reserve, 2014)

**D. RESERVE COMPONENTS**

The Reserve component (RC) is composed of both Reserve and Guard forces. The Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force Reserves each consist of three specific categories: Ready Reserve, Standby Reserve, and Retired Reserve (Figure 3). Marines can serve in the reserves as obligors, those having a signed commitment for a specific period of service, or as non-obligors who serve at their own discretion (Armed Forces Reserve Act, 1952).

## COMPONENTS OF THE MARINE CORPS RESERVE



Note: Components highlighted in yellow (\*) are elements of the RASL.

Figure 3. Components of the Marine Corps Reserve  
(from Department of the Navy, 2009)

### 1. Ready Reserves

Ready Reserve Marines are subject to active duty recall in case of emergency or time of war, or when otherwise authorized by law (Department of the Navy, DON, 2009). The Ready Reserves is further broken down into two categories Selected Reserves (SelRes) and the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR).

#### a. Selected Reserve

The SelRes is often integrated within the Marine Corps active component. SelRes consists of three units: Individual Mobilization Augmentees (IMA), members serving on Active Reserve, and SCMR Units (SMCR Units include the 4th Marine Division (4th MarDiv), 4th Marine Logistics Group (4th MLG), 4th Marine Aircraft Wing (4th MAW), and Force level units of MARFORRES (Department of the Navy, DON, 2009).

The SELRES is composed of those units and individuals designated by their respective Services...[and] as so essential to initial wartime missions

that they have priority for training, equipment, and personnel over all other Reserve elements. Reserve unit members are assigned against RC force structure, IMAs are assigned to, and trained for, AC organizations or Selective Service System or Federal Emergency Management Agency billets...[and] who support the recruiting, organizing, training, instructing, and administration of the RCs. (Assistant Secretary of Defense (R&FM), 2014, p. v)

***b. Individual Ready Reserves***

Marines in the Individual Ready Reserves (IRR) are post-active duty commitment and those that are no longer affiliated with Select Marine Corps Reserves (SMCR). They are not obligated to participate in military activities or training unless specifically called upon to support mission requirements (Department of the Navy, DON, 2009).

**2. Retired Reserves**

There are three types of Retired Reserves: Fleet Marine Corps Reserve, Retired Reserve awaiting pay, and Retired Reserve in receipt of pay (Department of the Navy, DON, 2009).

***a. Fleet Marine Corps Reserve***

The Fleet Marine Corps Reserve is made up of enlisted personnel that have completed 20 years of service but no more than 30 years. At the service members request they will be retained and receive retainer pay up their 30th year in which they will be transferred to the retired list (Department of the Navy, DON, 2009).

***b. Retired Reserve Awaiting Pay***

This category is made of eligible Reserve Marines who have completed at least 20 years of satisfactory service, and have requested a transfer to the Retired Reserve with pay. Retirement pay for these individuals begins, if applied for, at age 60 (Department of the Navy, DON, 2009).



*c. Retired Reserve in Receipt of Pay*

This category consists of those that have retired after 20 years of service, are at least 60 years old, and have applied for and receiving retirement pay (Department of the Navy, DON, 2009).

**3. Standby Reserves**

The Standby Reserve is comprised of Marines who are not in the Ready or Retired Reserve and who can be recalled to active duty in the nations defense. It is made up of the Standby reserve Active–Status List and Standby Reserve Inactive–Status List (Department of the Navy, DON, 2009).

*a. Standby Reserve Active–Status List Reserve*

Marines in this category are in an active status for purposes of promotion and are eligible to participate in reserve training programs for retirement point credit only. Marines in this category are currently on a hardship leave of absence and are not eligible for pay. They may be ordered to active duty in time of war or national emergency. Department of Defense Instruction (DODI) 1235.09 states:

When performing duty for purposes of individual skill training, Service members are entitled to retirement points and are not authorized pay or allowances. Duty performed...[and] will not be performed in an imminent danger area...[and] A member of the ASL may be ordered to active duty in time of war or national emergency...[and] A member of the ASL in receipt of separation pay (SP) or the special separation benefits (SSB) or voluntary separation incentive (VSI), will not have those benefits affected by their status in the Standby Reserve.

A Service member receiving SP, VSI, or SSB benefits and designated as a key employee who changes civilian employment status and is no longer designated as a key employee will be retained in the Standby Reserve or transferred to the Ready Reserve, as appropriate, to fulfill the service obligation incurred based on receipt of SSB, VSI, or SP. A member of the ASL may be considered for promotion and promoted if selected. (Department of Defense, 2014, pp.7–8)

*b. Standby Reserve Inactive–Status List.*

This category consists of Reserve Officers that have met all their service obligations but desire to maintain reserve affiliation. They are not counted towards end

strength nor do they participate in training. They do not receive pay, benefits, or retirement credits (Department of the Navy, 2009).

#### **E. RESERVE ENTRY**

Enlistees must serve a total of eight years unless otherwise extended or discharged. This requirement is called the Military Service Obligation (MSO). Stipulating any part of service not served on active duty will have to be served in the RC (National Defense Authorization Act, 2010). Direct reserve entry is achieved through recruitment and contract commitment. Once the Marine has successfully completed recruit training and Military Occupational Specialties (MOS) training, they become a Marine reservist. The Marine then attends drill one weekend a month and two weeks each summer to maintain full-drill status. The following are reserve enlistment term contracts:

- The first six (6) years are spent in a drilling status with the last two (2) in the IRR. Those who wish to participate in the Post-9/11 GI Bill must choose this program.
- The first five (5) years are spent in a drilling status and the last three (3) will be as an IRR member.
- The first four (4) years are spent in a drilling status and the remaining four (4) in the IRR (U.S. Marine Corps, 2014)

#### **F. RESERVE END STRENGTH REQUIREMENTS**

End strength is the number of service members in a particular service at the end of the Fiscal Year (FY), 30 September. Annually, Congress mandates active and reserve end strength through the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). For FY 2013 the mandated requirement was 39,600 (National Defense Authorization Act, 2013). It has remained at this level since the beginning of FY 2004. In practice, Congress allows a max deviation of 3 percent above or below mandated levels (National Defense Authorization Act, 2008). With a 3-percent deviation of manpower levels, the Marine Corps was provided flexibility in achieving mandated manpower with a floor of 38,412 and ceiling of 40,788 in FY 2013 (National Defense Authorization Act, 2013).

## **G. RETENTION / TURNOVER INCENTIVES**

The 2005 National Defense Authorization Act authorized SelRes to increase bonus maximums. In 2006, Marine Corps began offering larger lump sum reenlistment bonus payments to prior service SMCR unit Marines. The goal was to recruit and retain critical MOSs across the Marine Corps Reserve to maintain a savvy and experienced reserve force.

Reservists' decisions to discontinue affiliation are akin to organizational turnover. Extensive research on turnover has shown that reasons for leaving one's organizations are widely varied and extend beyond simply monetary factors and considerations. It has been more than 50 years since March and Simon (1958) offered their seminal work on voluntary turnover. Suggesting that turnover is a function of both the desirability of movement and the ease of movement, March and Simon's (1958) assertion has spawned countless efforts to elaborate upon the psychological processes that lead to voluntary departure from organizations. Most theories claim that low levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment trigger an individual's desire to leave an employer (Shore & Martin, 1989).

Whereas the traditional notions on turnover focus on job satisfaction and monetary incentives, a boundary-less era has emerged as individuals now place increased emphasis on personally driven career paths forged within numerous divisions, locations, companies, and industries (Sullivan, 1999). As such, the new psychological contract suggests that organizational commitment may no longer be as relevant, and that opportunities to develop career competencies, not job satisfaction, may be the primary driver of turnover (DiRenzo & Greenhaus, 2011)

As such researchers suggest further exploration of career/occupational development factors such as employability, (DiRenzo & Greenhaus, 2011) more nuanced approaches to commitment (Lee, Carswell, & Allen, 2000), and a deeper understanding of job embeddedness (Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, & Eberly, 2008). Job embeddedness is the fit between a person's job and other important facets of life, the links or ties an individual has with co-workers and work activities, and the personal sacrifices that would need to

be made if an individual were to leave or remain in his or her position. Additionally, there may be other external factors such as the operational tempo and deployments affecting turnover in the military that evolved since Holtom et al. researched turnover and retention in 2008.

## **H. PROJECT STRUCTURE**

The project structure is highlighted throughout the next sections. We will cover the research objectives, state the research question, and provide the scope and limitations of the research and the methodologies. Finally, we will cover the organization of the project.

### **1. Objectives of the Research**

The objection of this research is to identify and analyze key factors that influence an individual decision to affiliate in the Marine Corps Reserves, such as job satisfaction, monetary and non-monetary incentives, and career / occupational development factors..

### **2. Research Questions**

This research explores the questions, “Why do Marine Corps reservists’ choose to leave their organization?” Specifically, this study focuses on identifying what factors are influencing reservists’ decisions to separate. Additionally, the study identifies and explores pre-existing plans to exit service at a pre-defined period and the potential of monetary or non–monetary incentives impact decisions to affiliate.

### **3. Scope and Limitations**

The purpose of this study was to identify and conduct an exploratory analysis of factors that cause Marine Corps reservists to separate. This study provides a basis for future research and a better understating of the drivers of reservist affiliation and turnover and makes broad based recommendations applicable to the organization.

#### **4. Methodology**

This study includes a review of literature on turnover, organizational commitment, embeddedness and career development. The review identifies factors likely to influence reservists' decision to continue affiliation and provides the basis for a predictive conceptual model specific to Marine Corps Reserves (motivators and rationale). Semi-structured interviews with six Marine Corps reservists provide data further elaborating the model.

#### **5. Organization of Project**

Chapter I: Introduction. The introduction provides a background and general outline of the purpose of the study with the description of the research and research questions that were answered. Chapter II: Research Methods. This chapter discusses the purpose and scope of the semi-structured interviews. Chapter III: Literature review. This chapter discusses civilian turnover and retention additionally it examines the issues on retention in the military specifically addressing key factors influencing Marine Corps reservists' decisions to affiliate. Chapter IV: Findings and exploratory analysis. This chapter presents the results of the interviews, summarizes key findings, and synthesizes overarching themes derived from the interviews. Chapter V: Conclusions and Recommendations. This chapter presents the conceptual model, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for future research.

## **II. RESEARCH METHODS**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

This exploratory study is conceptual literature review and thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews. First we reviewed the academic literature relating to turnover for relevant concepts and frameworks. We then reviewed military specific work in which the academic material was applied to military contexts. Once a firm grasp was established over the relevant existing materials, face-to-face interviews were conducted in an effort to better understand which of the identified frameworks were most relevant to the service members and to ensure the current models were applicable to the study. Based on the interview results, we hypothesize the most relevant factors to a reservist's decision to affiliate or cease affiliation. The predictive model and hypotheses will guide future research.

### **B. DESIGN OF THE STUDY**

A conceptual review of academic and military literature was conducted in three categories; academic literature before and after 2007 and military literature related to active and reserve affiliation. The literature provided a framework for categorizing the material. We then compared academic and military literature to identify emergent themes. Lastly, we conducted interviews and drew on the literature review and analysis of interview data to develop a predictive conceptual model of USMCR affiliation.

#### **1. Academic Literature Review (before 2007)**

Holtom et al. (2008) provided a fully encompassing and thorough review of the academic literature through 2007. As such, their review served as the source for the literature we cover up to that date. From this review, we selected those articles most relevant to Reservist affiliation and turnover.

#### **2. Academic Literature Review (after 2007)**

While Holtom et al. (2008) have been widely cited as a full collection of academic materials through 2007, there is no such compilation resource for 2008 to the

present. Our team conducted a thorough analysis of articles produced since 2008, in order to summarize recent relevant work.

We began this review with academic searches conducted on EBSCO and PROQUEST. Given the vast number of journals in circulation, our team narrowed the search to abstracts and utilized the following search terms: affiliation and turnover. We focused our research on the following respected journals: *Academy of Management Journal*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Journal of Management*, *Organizational Behavior*, *Vocational Behavior*, *Personnel Psychology*, *Academy of Management Review*, *Human Resource Management*, *Administrative Science Quarterly* and *Organizational Behavior & Human Decision Process*. This focus narrowed our review of academic articles subsequent to 2008 to ten articles that best fit the scope of this study.

### **3. Military Literature Review**

Following our review of Holtom et al. (2008) and the work done since his publication, we then turned to a review of military specific literature that has been produced which related to reservist affiliation and turnover. Our team utilized search engines EBSCO, PROQUEST, and Google Scholar. We further consulted topical experts to ensure that nothing of substance was omitted. The date range was left open and the focus was on key words military turnover, and affiliation using the abstract specific search function. We focused our research on the following respected journals: *Military Psychology*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Armed Forces and Society*, *Personnel Psychology*, *Armed Forces and Society*, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *Human Resource Management*, and *Academy of Management Journal* and *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*. This focus narrowed our review to ten articles that best fit the scope of this study and focus on affiliation and military turnover.

### **4. Data Collection and Analysis**

We grouped the academic and military literature into the six categories listed below. This grouping allowed us to cross-reference the materials and identify patterns, consistencies, and deviations:

- Individual Differences
- Attitudes
- Job and Organizational Characteristics
- Alternatives and Gateways
- Person-Context interface
- Quality of Life

## **5. Theme Comparison and Conceptual Model**

We identified the most prevalent themes within the academic and military literatures. We discuss differences and similarities between the two literatures. We expound upon and synthesize three overarching themes found throughout the research process. Lastly, we draw upon learned themes to develop a conceptual model.

## **6. Interview**

As this was an initial step in a larger study, we conducted six semi-structured, exploratory, telephone interviews.. Analysis of the interview data allowed us to assess and elaborate on the findings of the literature review and provided a basis for a predictive conceptual model. Each interview was recorded and transcribed in order to document relevant information and to allow for the most inclusive review of all data gathered.



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### **III. LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **A. ACADEMIC CATEGORIES**

Early models of turnover focus on the basic premise that job dissatisfaction is a primary cause of turnover. Over time, research has focused on more predictors and causes of those predictors, as well as branching out from individual to organizational variables. More recent analyses of turnover show that it is a complex process with multiple indicators and outcomes (Holtom et al., 2008). We critically review prior research to understand major trends in retention research focusing on individual differences, job and organizational characteristics, attitudes, alternatives and gateways, person–context interface and quality of life.

##### **1. Individual Differences**

Several individual factors can operate independently to directly affect or indirectly influence an individual’s decision to leave an organization. March and Simon’s pioneering general theory of organizational equilibrium (1958) emphasized that individual differences in biodata such as tenure, gender, and age were key factors in the individual’s perceived ease of leaving the organization. More recent research found that personality factors such as self–confidence and decisiveness combined with biodata are negatively related to turnover (Barrick & Zimmerman, 2005). Moreover, negative emotions and poor self–concept is likely to result in higher intentions to leave and actual turnover (Pelled & Xin, 1999; Thoresen, Kaplan, & Barsky, 2003).

Maertz and Campion (2004) modeled the turnover process by applying eight turnover motive forces (affective, calculative, contractual, behavioral, alternative, normative, moral, and constituent) to four turnover decision types (impulsive, comparison, preplanned and conditional), concluding that different motive forces provoke different groups of quitters. Furthermore, they suggested those who quit with no job alternative, impulsively quit with greater negative affect than those with job alternatives. Additionally, impulsivity moderates the relationship between turnover

intentions and actual turnover (Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, & Meglino, 1979). Other research on personality constructs use the five factor model (FFM) as a basis.

Conscientiousness and emotional stability are two personality dimensions of the FFM, which are negatively correlated and useful predictors of voluntary turnover (Barrick & Mount, 1996). Conscientious employees are more responsible, reliable, and more likely to be involved in and committed to the organization and therefore less likely to leave the organization voluntarily. Similarly, research has also demonstrated that individuals who have lower emotional stability (i.e., negative views of life) are more disposed to absenteeism, intentions to quit, and eventually quit. By adding agreeableness to the personality dimensions research has found that it reflects a more “functional personality”, which is even more critical than previously recognized for the explanation of employee effectiveness, particularly withdrawal behaviors (Li, Barrick, Zimmerman, & Chiaburu, 2014).

## **2. Job and Organizational Characteristics**

With early research linking turnover to job satisfaction, much research has focused on the precursors to job characteristics tied to job satisfaction. Stinson and Johnson (1977) reported that employees who experience low routineness (e.g., greater variety in everyday work) are shown to be less likely to lose interest in their job. Equally, employees with low routineness are likely to be more satisfied and less likely to turnover (Wright & Davis 2003; Price & Mueller, 1986).

How leaders develop different quality relationships with their employees is the basis of the Leader–Member Exchange (LMX). The quality of the leader–member relationship predicted employee turnover (Graen, Liden, & Hoel, 1982). Additionally, established mentoring relationships reduced protégés’ turnover intentions (Viator & Scandura, 1991). Recently research has found that the effects of individual perceived LMX quality are contingent upon a group's overall variability (i.e., LMX differentiation) and employees' similarity with their coworkers (i.e., LMX relational separation) (Harris, Li, & Kirkman, 2014).

More specifically, when group differentiation or employees' relational separation is high, the effects on organizational commitment behavior and turnover intentions are weaker (Harris et al., 2014). Similarly, extroversion had an effect on LMX that could predict turnover relationship during new employee development (Bauer, Erdogan, Liden, & Wayne, 2006). Employees who have low quality relationships and who are low in sociability are likely to leave, whereas those with low leader–member relationships but high in sociability are not. It was also found that employees' perceptions of participation in decision–making and support from supervisors are negatively related to withdrawal behaviors (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001).

The Job Demand-Resource model (JB-R) predicts that (high or unfavorable) job demands (physical, social, or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical or mental effort) are primarily and positively related to exhaustion. Job resources (physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that are functional in achieving work goals, reduce job demands at the associated physiological and psychological costs, or stimulate personal growth and development) are primarily and negatively related to disengagement from work and withdrawal behavior (Demerouti, et al., 2001).

When demands are high, specifically when workload, emotional demands, and work–home conflicts are elevated it becomes difficult for employees to allocate their attention and energy efficiently because they have to engage in greater activation and/or effort and this, in turn, negatively affects their performance... [Furthermore, when job resources are high] specifically social support, autonomy and professional development... [extra–role performance increases] benefiting the organization as a whole. (Demerouti et al., 2001, pp. 99–100)

Burnout, a byproduct of “emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment” (Maslach, 1982, p. 141), has been linked to work stressors such as workload and role issues leading to withdrawal behaviors and ultimately turnover (Demerouti et al., 2001).

### **3. Attitudes**

Employee attitudes about organizational change can impact job satisfaction, leading to withdrawal behaviors. Change acceptance is positively related to job satisfaction and negatively related to work irritation and turnover intentions (Wanberg & Banas, 2000). Furthermore, low change acceptance and high work irritation predicted actual turnover. In 1977, Mobley identified a comprehensive process that linked job dissatisfaction to actual turnover behavior through withdrawal cognitions (e.g., thoughts of quitting, expected utility of withdrawal) and job-search behaviors such as job searching and evaluating alternatives. Later the withdrawal process was expanded to tie job and labor market perceptions to withdrawal cognitions and job-search behavior (Mobley et al., 1979).

From Mobley et al.'s 1977 model, Hom, Griffeth, and Sellaro (1984) proposed an alternative model that suggests two decision paths once employees think about quitting, intend to quit, and evaluate the utility in quitting. Employees either undertake a job search and compare the alternatives to their current job, or directly resign. Price and Mueller (1981,1986) developed a structural model that identified the causes of job satisfaction and intent to leave with organizational commitment as a mediator between the two variables. Some of the causes of job dissatisfaction leading to turnover include participation and distributive justice.

### **4. Alternatives and Gateways**

Lee and Mitchell (1994) proposed an unfolding model that suggests five decision paths to show that turnover decisions are not always the result of accumulated job dissatisfaction and may sometimes occur without much deliberation. The model also incorporates shock (a positive or negative jarring event) that triggers the psychological analysis involved in quitting a job. Path 1 originates with a shock, rather than accumulated dissatisfaction, that leads to the execution of preplanned quitting plan with little rational deliberation. Paths 2 and 3 are triggered by an image violation, with reconsideration of attachment to the organization (Path 2) and a comparison of the current job with to alternatives (Path 3). Paths 4a and 4b are initiated by accumulated

dissatisfaction, with the employee leaving with (Path 4b) or without (Path 4b) searching for alternatives. Test results showed the unfolding model revealed 91 percent of the sample population appeared to follow one of the five paths (Lee, Mitchell, Holtom, & McDaniel, 1999). Furthermore, precipitating events (shocks) are the more often the immediate cause of turnover than job dissatisfaction (Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, & Inderrieden, 2005).

Individuals compare their current employment situation to other potential opportunities in the job market in a variety of ways. The amount of pay inequality within an organization's pay system predicted turnover among employees such that turnover was lower at organizations with more compressed pay structures (Pfeffer & Davis-Black, 1992). Likewise, the difference between actual changes in wages compared to the expected changes in wages at other jobs influenced turnover (Bartol & Martin, 1998).

Griffeth, Steel, Allen and Bryan (2005) developed the Employment Opportunity Index, a valuable five-dimensional scale for job market cognitions that explained turnover variance beyond job satisfaction by looking at ease and desirability of movement, networking, crystallization of alternatives, and mobility. DiRenzo and Greenhaus (2011) argue that labor market instability encourages employees to assess and enhance their employability, which dynamically influences the processes of the job search and voluntary turnover.

## **5. Person-Context Interface**

Employees with low person-organization fit (individual values did not match with organization's values) were more likely to turnover after 20 months (O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991). Turnover research also incorporates additional variables that consider the employee's relationships with their environment. Gustafson and Mumford (1995) investigated the person-environment fit described as the influence of personal style, and the fit between personal style and environmental constraints and opportunities, on job performance, job withdrawal, and job satisfaction. Discriminate analyses demonstrated that personal style predicted differential job outcomes—job performance, job satisfaction, and job withdrawal—both across the organization and within particular environments.

Additionally, personal styles characterized as “Non-Anxious Strivers” (high achievement motivation, high job involvement, high internal locus of control, high self-esteem, and low anxiety) and “Comfortable Non-Strivers” (low rigidity, high self-esteem, high internal locus of control, and low anxiety, in interaction with only average levels of job involvement and achievement motivation) both consistently predicted high job satisfaction (Gustafson & Mumford, 1995).

Holtom et al. (2008) suggest that an employee’s perception of procedural, interactional and distributive justice is critical in understanding satisfaction and job commitment to include an employee’s response to job alternatives and withdrawal behaviors. Furthermore, noteworthy and sequential links between procedural and interactional justice influenced employee commitment, which subsequently led to decreases in turnover (Simons & Roberson, 2003).

Job embeddedness is the fit between a person’s job and other important facets of life; the ties an individual has with co-workers and work activities, and material or psychological sacrifices should an individual leave the organization (Allen & Shanock, 2012). Early experiences of socialization may be particularly important for creating relationship ties that help make new employees more committed to the organization (Allen & Shanock, 2012). Over time, socialization tactics related positively to employees’ perceived organizational support and job embeddedness, which is positively related to commitment and negatively to turnover. Additionally, coworkers’ job embeddedness and job search behaviors play critical roles in explaining why people quit their jobs (Felps, Mitchell, Herman, Lee, Holtom, & Harman, 2009). Lastly, McPherson, Popielarz, and Drobnic (1992) found a negative correlation between an individual’s ties to the organization’s social network and turnover.

## **6. Quality of Life**

Researchers also look beyond job satisfaction and organization factors to focus on physical and mental well-being as well as balancing work and family. Wright and Bonnett (2007) found psychological well-being moderated the job satisfaction

relationship with a negative satisfaction-turnover correlation. The satisfaction-turnover relationship appeared non-significant for those with high personal well being.

Holtom et al. (2008) identified two types of stressors: hindrance and challenge. Hindrance stressors such as organizational politics, hassles, situational constraints, role conflict, and role overload led to lower job satisfaction, lower organizational commitment, more withdrawal behaviors, higher turnover intentions and higher turnover. On the contrary, challenge stressors (e.g., time urgency, pressure to complete tasks) displayed positive effects on job attitudes and negative effects on withdrawal cognitions resulting in decreased turnover (Podsakoff, LePine, & LePine, 2007).

Job insecurity as a job stressor brings negative job-related reactions and also negatively affects psychological and physical health (Cheng & Chen, 2008). Furthermore, emotional exhaustion and job insecurity are positively related to turnover intentions. Lastly, work-family balance affects job anxiety and turnover intentions and are a predictor of voluntary turnover (Jackson, Schwab, & Schuler, 1986; Ashford, Lee, & Bobko, 1989).

## **B. MILITARY CATEGORIES**

The purpose of segregating military categories is to summarize the research that has been conducted on factors relevant to military turnover. Although, civilian academic research will be cited within this section, it is only to develop a deeper understanding of how academic research applies to military turnover. To better understand the issues of turnover among military personnel, it is useful to explore the same six broad categories that align with our academic literature review. These are individual differences, job and organizational characteristics, attitudes, alternatives and gateways, person-context interface and quality of life.

### **1. Individual Differences**

In the military, the decision to reenlist or separate takes place well before the end of the servicemember's contract obligation, alluding to a more systematic decision-making process (Steel & Ovalle, 1984). That is, members of the military are likely to



form planned decisions relatively early in their careers. When military personnel make the decision to serve they commit themselves to multiyear contract obligations (Hom, Katerberg, & Hulin, 1979), thus predicting turnover decisions in the military becomes more transparent (Knapp, McCloy, & DiFazio 1993). Supporting this argument, Knapp et al. (1993) found that there is a strong relationship between turnover intentions and actual turnover in the military. In other words, those who take more time to plan decisions are more dedicated to those decisions and are more likely to leave the organization.

Meyer and Allen (1991, 1997) introduced organizational commitment in three components. The three components are Affective Commitment (AC), Continuance Commitment (CC), and Normative Commitment (NC). AC is closely related to attachment theory (affective bond) as it identifies an emotional attachment or identification with military service. CC signifies the opportunity costs associated with leaving the military. Additionally, CC also highlights some personal sacrifices that are made by choosing not to affiliate.

Finally, NC refers to a soldier's allegiance and/or moral duty to stay with the military (Gade, 2003). According to Lytell and Drasgow (2009), the commitment of service members was a significant variable in turnover rates. Allen (2003) noted that once satisfaction is established it plays a critical role in AC development, however, once founded, affective commitment has a tremendous influence on satisfaction. Distinct features of responsibility within the military make the measure of commitment more appropriate because of “the physical risks, lengthy time commitments, and separations from home may require a strong commitment to the military in order for [attrition] to be avoided” (Lytell & Drasgow, 2009, p.347). Gade, Tiggler and Schumm (2003) “demonstrated with an Army sample that high levels of both affective and continuance commitment resulted in the highest retention intentions” (as cited in Lankamer & Ervin, 2008, p. 222).

## **2. Job and Organizational Characteristics**

Unavoidable turnover can be costly to the Department of Defense, “considering the scale of the investments made in the recruitment, selection, classification, [retention]

and training of personnel” (Sumer, 2004, p. 3J–1). Therefore, identifying individual and organizational related factors contributing to voluntary turnover is crucial. Organizational characteristics, such as pay (Cable & Judge, 1994), industry (Cable & Graham, 2000) and size (Barber, Wesson, Roberson, & Taylor, 1999), play a tremendous role in the job selection process (Task Group HFM–107, 2007). The military lends some other unique organizational characteristics like PERSTEMPO (re-location) and OPTEMPO (deployments) that greatly influence a member's decision to stay (Dunn & Marrow, 2002). Certain characteristics such as pay, health, promotional opportunities and educational benefits have been acknowledged as factors leading to organizational commitment. Research on military affiliation has long focused on financial and educational benefits. For example, Hansen (2000) revealed pay raises have been found to be a useful measure in influencing re-affiliation decisions. Research has indicated that bonuses are extremely effective in keeping military personnel (Lakhani, 1988).

Hosek, Antel, and Peterson (1989) found that the prospect of receiving more education whether through training, private education or other educational means influenced first-termers decision to remain in military after a period of thirty-six months. Similarly, research has shown that by refining certain benefits, particularly education, the Army witnessed a dramatic increase in the quality and quantity of enlistment applications (Tannen, 1987). Routines, job scope and job demands also influence decisions to affiliate.

In 2004, Sanchez, Bray, Vincus and Bann conducted a study on predictors of job satisfaction among U.S. military personnel. Job demands (work related pressures) were identified as the leading predictor of job satisfaction among military members, indicating that high job pressures were the cause of low levels of job satisfaction. Bliese and Castro (2000) conducted a survey of 1,786 junior enlisted soldiers; they found that job assignment and workload contributed to the increased likelihood of mental strain, therefore, impacting decisions to affiliate.

### **3. Attitudes**

Values shape the job attitudes and satisfaction of military members (Task Group HFM–107, 2007). Job attitudes have always been included amongst essential precursors

of voluntary turnover. Early turnover research was directed at individual characteristics such as job attitudes as satisfaction and commitment. Follow-on research gave way to the decision-making process that significantly increased the complexity of these models. The following section will highlight military job related attitudes specifically withdrawal behaviors, cognitions and job satisfaction.

Work withdrawal combines poor task performance and behaviors that attempt to physiologically disengage from work related tasks. Organization adaptation theories suggest that dissatisfied employees will participate in an assortment of work withdrawal behaviors ultimately leading to turnover. Due to service obligations withdrawal behaviors seem to convey themselves more in the military than civilian organizations (Weiss, MacDemid, Strauss, Kurek, Le, & Robbins, n.d.).

Mobley et al. (1979) suggested that employment contracts would keep an employee within the organization, consequently manifesting an increase in alternative withdrawal behaviors as a statement of dissatisfaction with their current predicament. This translation also significantly impacts military personnel, as those who have made the decision to leave at an early stage will possibly exhibit these behaviors throughout the life of their contract.

Shown previously in the academic turnover literature, job-related attitudes such as job satisfaction are treated as an essential element in the employee's evaluation process. With a lack of a conceptual framework capturing military turnover Knapp et al. (1993), examined satisfaction, reenlistment intentions, and performance as predictors of military attrition. They stated, “in comparison to civilian research on satisfaction and intention to quit, the correlation between satisfaction and intention to reenlist is on the low side” (Knapp et al., 1993, p. 18).

- Other findings suggest that as a result of military contractual obligations, satisfaction has a weaker influence on withdrawal cognitions and actual turnover (Carsten & Spector, 1987). It appears that the timing of the dissatisfaction is critical to the effect on re-affiliation. In a Department of Defense (1999) survey, the preliminary results showed “more military personnel are satisfied with their way of life (about 50 percent) than are dissatisfied (about 29 percent)[and] Officers have markedly higher

satisfaction rates than enlisted personnel...[and], satisfaction tends to increase with seniority.” (Rabkin, 2000, p. 1)

Farkas and Terrick (1989) discovered that job satisfaction in the Navy, after accession had no statistical significance on re-affiliation intentions. Clearly supporting the assertion that job satisfaction in the military has weaker ties than its civilian counterpart. Likewise, Motowidlo and Lawton (1984) asserted that the decision making process involved in re-enlistment had no connection from satisfaction to turnover intentions among service members.

Carsten and Spector (1987) conducted a study on unemployment, job satisfaction and turnover. They concluded that the likelihood of turnover decreased with time, particularly when tied to job satisfaction, they also noted that such a decrease was more evident in military samples. This is indicated by the correlations  $-.24$  and  $-.84$  between the length of turnover data collected and job satisfaction turnover in civilian and military samples (Carsten and Spector, 1987). Additionally, dissatisfaction had a weaker tie with thoughts of quitting in military samples (Hom, Caranikas-Walker, Prussia, & Griffeth, 1992).

Furthermore, the study revealed that quit intentions and withdrawal behaviors had a closer relationship within those samples. Additionally, Hom et al. (1992) claimed that dissatisfaction potentially has less influence on military withdrawal cognitions. Although there are mixed outcomes, the preliminary findings of the 1999 survey of active duty members claim, “satisfaction and intent to stay in the military are strongly linked” (Rabkin, 2000). He went on to say, “about 73 percent of satisfied personnel indicated that they are likely to stay in the military; in contrast, only 20 percent of dissatisfied personnel indicated they are likely to stay” (Rabkin, 2000, p. 1).

Horn and Hulin (1981) hypothesized that junior enlisted likely formulate withdrawal decisions early in their careers (predefined departures) and often at induction into service. Additionally, Farkas and Tetrick (1989) showed that once these cognitions have been solidified they prove somewhat resistant to satisfying work experiences. Finally, military service obligations may delay dissatisfied service members from

deserting further weakening the relation between dissatisfaction and withdrawal cognitions (Hom et al., 1992).

#### **4. Alternatives and Gateways**

Hulin et al. (1985) found that military withdrawal was shaped far less than civilian withdrawal when an individual was faced with work alternatives and job pursuit decisions. Blair and Phillips (1983) stressed that institutional time, economic circumstance and geographic constraint can impede service members job search, forcing them to locate employment only after they have left the service. Moreover, job availability changes over time as marketable skills increase due to training and experience increasing self-confidence and self-efficacy (Weiss et al., n.d.).

Wage compensation is a function of one's grade, military tenure, and frequency of participation (reserves). Military compensation has seen a gradual increase for all military personnel since 2001 (Congressional Budget Office, 2007). In addition, different kinds of bonuses and compensation such as, educational compensation, flight pay, hazardous duty pay, family separations pay, basic allowance for subsistence and housing allowance are used to gap differences in military and civilian compensation.

Bartol and Martin (1998) found that the difference between actual fluctuations in earnings compared to anticipated changes in wages at other jobs affected turnover. It is important to note that decision to participate in the reserves somewhat parallels that of “moonlighting” since reservists maintain quality of life with civilian jobs (Lakhani & Fugita, 1993). The Government Accounting Office (1991) conducted a study and showed that the probability of reserve attrition weighed heavily on private wage increases and consequently attrition fell with increases in reserve compensation. Likewise, an analysis of the United States Marine Corps Retention Survey (1999) showed that military pay was the foremost reason Marines chose to leave the military (Kocher & Thomas, 2000).

As explained in the academic literature review, the Unfolding Model (Lee & Mitchell 1994; Lee et al., 1999) suggests that shocks act as kick-starters to jolt a logical thought process. Unanticipated life events (positive or negative) cause turnover consistently more often than job dissatisfaction. Changes in life events (shocks) play a

role in turnover in every organization. It is more prominent in military cultures due to their way of life. Whether shocks are expected or unexpected, they are heavily correlated to dissatisfaction and reduced commitment in the military (Holt, Rehg, Lin, & Miller, 2007). While the Unfolding Model has exhibited promise in academic research, its use on military turnover has been limited. Holt et al. (2007) attempted to replicate this model using a questionnaire of 184 Air Force Officers that had voluntarily left the service to see if they followed one of the distinct paths that the unfolding model entails. The reasoning behind this study is two-fold; according to the General Accounting Office [GAO] (2000) officer retention rates has created a problem with organizational manpower requirements and costs associated with turnover.

Civilians have the ability to leave a job immediately when life events happen while military officers due to contractual obligations have far limited options. Holt et al. (2007) suggest that officers may choose to leave their particular service based on a mixture of jarring events and pre-existing exit plans. At the end of their military service obligation officers reevaluate the relationship they have within their organization based on experienced shocks (positive, neutral or negative) and scripts. Holt et al. (2007) found that 62 percent (113 of 182) of respondents had experienced some shock (positive, neutral or negative) prior to separating from the Air Force. Furthermore, 69 participants (38 percent) acted upon a pre-existing plan, and a staggering 152 (83 percent) experienced an image violation. Image violation was measured on how an individual's professional and personal values had aligned with that of the organization (Air Force). Holt et al. (2007) continues reporting that 151 (83 percent) experienced low job satisfaction and 94 percent of respondents assessed civilian job opportunities prior to separation.

While Lee et al. (1999) provide a useful framework for military turnover, Holt et al. (2007) point out that using the models original form, 47 percent of the Air Force officer's decisions were captured. Furthermore, with a little tweaking the model was able to capture an additional 36 percent of respondents. It is important to note that the Holt et al. (2007) study suggests their modification to the Unfolding Model highlights the importance of pre existing conditions, which traditionally have been overlooked. This

allows leaders to better focus intervention efforts towards those officers who have previously been thought of as a “hopeless cause” (Holt et al., 2007, p. 45).

## **5. Person–Context Interface**

Military life has unique challenges and the degree to which servicemembers respond to those challenges are shaped by their own experiences and how they balance demands and opportunities presented. If the situation allows servicemembers to balance their skills and abilities to satisfy their needs then there is a good person-setting fit. Person-environment fit (P–E) should be heavily involved in understanding the military turnover process because it compares deeply held individual and organizational characteristics. Positive outcomes are derived from an increase in P–E fit this translates to increased job fulfillment in turn increasing satisfaction, which translates to motivation, morale, job performance, commitment, and ultimately retention.

There seems to be more substantial support of personality and organizational congruence as an important indicator of military turnover. Westerman and Cyr (2004) believe that there are two types of P–E fit that are applicable to military alliance. Personality attributes and person-organization fit or value congruence. Puente (2004) explains that values are critical in understanding association. He goes on by saying values are deeply rooted within an individual, and those values guide our behaviors both directly and indirectly through our attitudes. Furthermore, by considering these values we can begin to shape differences and create a mutual acceptance, which develops more of a tolerance for diversity. Allowing us to mold stronger person-organization value congruence (Puente, 2004).

“Moral or patriotic [motivations often encourage] enlistment in today's all-volunteer armed forces” (Hom et al., 1992, p. 894), and consequently reenlistment choices could have little to do with attitudes concerning particular job obligations (Hom et al., 1992). This assumption is based on the premise that military service is more of a calling than occupational orientation (Segal, Blair, Lengermann, & Thompson, 1983). Therefore, re-enlistments are likely to have more to do with personal feelings and values rather than with attitudes (Hom et al., 1992).

Leadership is paramount in today's military service for improving motivation, performance, morale and enhancing general acclimatization of service members. Leader-member exchange or person-supervisor fit is extremely relevant in the military turnover process (Britt, Davison, Bliese, & Castro, 2004). Bliese and Castro (2000) found that when support from leadership was high, physiological stress (due to increased workloads) was moderated. Equally, Britt et al. (2004) showed through empirical evidence that management support acted as a barrier against stress conceived through military service. Subsequently, alleviating particular stressors that cause job dissatisfaction.

## **6. Quality of Life**

Quality of Life (QOL) is difficult to quantify, there are a multitude of issues that can be associated in regard to affiliation and retention including demographics, socio-economic conditions, and life domains. To remain competitive in the labor market, the U.S. military has created various personnel programs in an effort to meet the quality of life needs of its service members (Hindelang, Schwin, & Farmer, 2004; Kerce, 1995). A 2004 survey conducted by the U.S. Defense Department on active-duty and reserve members showed that 14 percent of their respondents had a decreased desire to stay due to operational tempo (training and deployments) affecting quality of life (U.S. Defense Department, 2005).

Quality of life perceptions define an individual's sensitivity to several life domains from work to leisure, health, relationships (significant others, children and extended family) and standard of living (Kerce, 1995; Dowden, 2000). Kerce (1995) also found that quality of life variables contributed 10 percent–20 percent of the variance in service member's decision to leave the military. Quality of life impacts the wellbeing of a service member and weighs heavily on decisions to affiliate. Subsequently, Brackley (2003) conducted a survey among British Airmen that indicated that family stability was the principal issue causing them to go, especially with those that had accrued over six years of service. Personnel also reported that other critical factors that influence quality of life decisions are operational commitments, workload, extra duties and housing accommodations.



## **C. DISCUSSION**

There are similarities in findings regarding drivers of turnover between the academic and military literature such as job satisfaction, leader-member exchange, person-environment fit and positive or negative events described in the unfolding model. There are some distinct differences that are brought forth by the uniqueness of military service. While similarities exist in issues such as life domains, military turnover research has shown that QOL perceptions have a tremendous impact in decisions to affiliate in the military. Furthermore, operational tempo and military deployments increase the uniqueness of military turnover studies.

### **1. Quality of Life Perceptions**

A comprehensive study was conducted using surveys to gauge the perceived QOL in the United States Marines Corps. The analysis utilized a life domain framework, examining areas such as marital status, number of children, time for leisure or recreation, standards of living, relationships/friendships, separation, health and perceptions of progress towards personal goals.

#### *a. Life Domains*

Over the last 20 years, the Marine Corps conducted three QOL surveys: 1993, 1998 and most recently in 2002. “Overall, the Marine Corps appears to be maintaining satisfaction levels within the ranges reported in 1993 and 1998 in the important domains. The Active Duty Marine group is satisfied with 10 of 11 domains. Only in the Income and Standard of Living domain did they indicate being somewhat dissatisfied, as shown in the past two studies” (Marine Corps Combat Development Center, MCCDC, 2002, p. 3). Additionally, spouses surveyed were satisfied in 9 of 10 life domains with the least satisfaction being in the separation life domain. Separation subsequently has an impact on a family’s desire to remain within the Marine Corps.

QOL perceptions have an impact on performance, readiness and overall retention. The study showed the biggest positive influence on retention was the self-domain consisting of a Lickert Scale measuring satisfaction of oneself. The largest negative

impact on retention was income and standards of living, which had close to 50 percent of all responses in the negative region (MCCDC, 2002). Perceptions of the job domain showed that although jobs were not necessarily the strongest influence on global QOL, “the job domain was the only domain that was a significant factor for both single Marines, married Marines without children, and married Marines with children”(Kerce, 1995, p. 11). The job was the most important factor in their QOL. Furthermore, job domain had a statistical significance in job satisfaction, which has shown to be a major influencer on turnover. Kerce (1995) points out that the proportion of those satisfied with their QOL to those that are unsatisfied with their QOL is two to one. The majority of the unsatisfied were ranks between E-2 to E-4, accounting for 43 percent of the negative scores. Additionally, officers seemed to be the most satisfied with their QOL; however, even among the officers 15 percent had negative perceptions of QOL. Finally, it is clear from Kerce (1995) study that higher reported QOL is correlated with higher intentions to remain within the Marine Corps.

## **2. Operational Tempo and Deployments**

Military deployments are distinct differences between military and civilian turnover. The relationship between deployments and retention is extremely complex. To understand the complexity of deployments researchers developed a theoretical model that shows the effect deployments have on retention. The model showed, in general, service members that were in their first enlistment and had at least one deployment had a higher reenlistment rate than those who never deployed. Moreover, “reenlistment in the Navy and Marine Corps tended to increase with the number of deployments” (Fricker, Hosek, & Totten, 1993, p. 2).

Fricker, (2002) found deployments also had a positive effect on officer retention. Interestingly, they also found “for any given number of deployments, members with dependents typically had a higher reenlistment probability. Also, their reenlistment increased with the number of deployments, and it did so to a greater extent than for personnel without dependents” (Fricker et al., 1993, p. 3). QOL survey indicated two opposing forces on retention. It showed that while deployments had a positive effect on

retention, the QOL survey covering the life domain showed spouses were least satisfied with separation. This points to an even greater complexity to understanding forces influencing military turnover.

## **IV. FINDINGS AND EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Chapter IV presents our findings from, all semi-structured exploratory interviews in relation to the six primary areas of research found in academic and military literature discussed in Chapter III. The categories presented in Chapter IV are predictive, we present these findings in a particular order so as to better reflect the relationships among concepts and constructs and their impact on affiliation. Appendices A–F portray the complete list of comments, categorized under each area of research. Within each section below, we highlight a few of the comments that are representative of common and important notions expressed by the interviewees. We then synthesize the data to identify three emergent themes that are most pertinent to the USMCR context. In Chapter V, we incorporate these three themes into a predictive conceptual model of affiliation decisions in the USMCR. We intentionally exclude personal identifiers from the quotes below in order to preserve the anonymity of the research subjects.

#### **1. Individual Differences**

The literature highlighted an assortment of individual factors that function independently to primarily effect or secondarily influence a person's decision to leave an organization. Evident throughout the interview process was that some people inherently enjoy being Marines, which lends itself to a negative relationship with turnover. The interviews did not quantify how much each individual values being a Marine, or how much an individual's identity is tied to being a Marine. However, we did see that the value placed on being a Marine had an indirect influence on behaviors in ways that motivate and inspire by providing meaning and challenge. The examples below illustrate this point.

“There’s also, of course, the intangible side [of why he continues to affiliate], the pride, the honor that goes with service.”

“I think the guys that stayed just liked being Marines.”

The corresponding comments are noted in Appendix A. Our analysis suggests that a sense of pride derived from being a Marine likely increases organizational commitment, and contributes to a decrease in turnover. Hence, the degree to which a Marine identifies as a member of the legendary fighting force likely has an important influence on continued affiliation. That is, pride in service, has a critical effect on why Marines stay, and the degree to which the sense of pride was fulfilled varied among individuals.

## **2. Attitudes**

All comments reflecting Attitudes are presented in Appendix B. In Chapter III the literature displayed a strong negative relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Our analysis suggests that reservists who separated consistently conveyed attitudes of decreasing contentment on factors such as job satisfaction, decreasing enjoyment, and burnout. Throughout the interviews, we discovered decreasing levels of enjoyment and increased feelings of burnout, which appear to diminish job satisfaction and contribute to turnover.

“I was just getting kind of burned out on it [reserves]. I wasn’t having a whole lot of fun anymore.”

“That extra two years on the back end of the four years, you know, it wore on you a little bit.”

“It gets to the point where once your buddies leave that you were in there first with and then the new guys start coming in and then you start picking up a stripe here and there, it kind of loses the fun factor a little bit.”

“As long as it’s fun I’ll stay there [current reserve unit]. You know, as soon as it gets to the point where you’re miserable being there, you just get out and have your weekends free again.”

We also found that inter- and intra-unit relationships have a significant impact on a reservist’s decisions to affiliate. Relationships within the USMCR were important to all the interviewed participants. Our analysis suggests that the *intra*-unit relationships, in particular, strongly contribute to enjoyment and job satisfaction.

“Well, I’m with a group of my buddies today, I’ll stick around. But if it’s all fresh faces, I don’t know if I’ll stay around with them.”

“It’s kind of just meeting different people, you know, that you wouldn’t have—I wouldn’t have met otherwise. It’s networking with other people.”

The interviews also indicated there was regular contact outside of the drill environment to maintain intra-unit personal relationships. The interviews suggest these intra-unit relationships positively contributed to work enjoyment, and when Marines social interactions were fulfilling the Marines job satisfaction, job involvement, and performance increased. Subsequently, developing better communication with one another led to improved unit cohesion and a supportive working environment. In distinct contrast, our analysis suggests that poor *inter*-unit relationships (between USMCR and the I & I staff) create a toxic environment and have strong adverse effects on job satisfaction. Because these inter-unit relationships correspond to the relationship between the individual and organizational representatives, they will be discussed further in Section 4, categorized under Person-Context Interface.

Our research suggests the USMCR should find ways to foster stronger intra-unit relationships, which seem to help foster cohesion among USMCR members and subsequently increase feelings of enjoyment while also decreasing burnout. In Sections 3 and 4, we will present some of the primary predictors of these two attitudes (enjoyment and burnout) and the individual differences (pride in identifying as a Marine) that have been discussed in the preceding sections. That is, we will discuss the major causes behind the increase in burnout, the decrease in enjoyment, and some potential reasons why a sense of pride is not being entirely fulfilled for some member of the USMCR.

### **3. Job and Organizational Characteristics**

The comments reflecting job and organizational characteristics are presented in Appendix A. The previous section revealed enjoyment and burnout are primary contributors to turnover. Furthermore, the interviews implied that certain job and organizational characteristics are driving these attitudes. Specifically, these characteristics relate to job demands and the meaning or task significance members associate with the demands.

*a. Job Demands*

The interviews established a distinct relationship between excessive job demands and decreases in enjoyment and increases in burnout. The interviews portrayed that job demands seemed to have a prevailing and predominant impact on all categories from attitudes to quality of life, and everything from military promotions to educational requirements. Job demands signify aspects of the job that require sustained physical, mental or emotional effort, and therefore are associated with certain physiological and/or psychological costs, such as exhaustion and burnout (Demerouti et al., 2001). The literature review in Chapter III points out that when there is an increase in job demands without a corresponding increase in job resources, burnout occurs and often leads to turnover. This is particularly true when job resources such as social or organizational aspects of the working environment are limited. The interviewees pointed out how social resources such as limited coworkers support (I&I staff) increased job demands and had a negative impact on enjoyment and relationships within the reserve-working environment.

“You know, I don’t know how many times I reached out to [DET] commanders or to some of the staff NCOs at various locations and asked them to do something for me on the FMCR side, just to hear, “Hey, sir, I’m swamped.”

“There’s no way I can get to this but “Okay, well, we’ll try to work on it, but I’m going to have to get some I&I [Inspection and Instruction] support.” You reach out to the I&I and they’re like, “Nope. Sorry. We can’t help you. We’re too busy.”

“It becomes burdensome [no support from I&I staff]. We [FMCR] just got done doing all the planning. We [FMCR] supported the 14th Marines for a fire ex this summer and just the planning going into that was extreme. You know, I was probably pulling, I don’t know, on average maybe, at a guess, maybe 16 to 20 hours a week doing planning stuff; everything from shopping lists for, you know, miscellaneous parts, to trying to get spare parts order, to trying to get all of our rosters cleaned up, to trying to get travel arrangements set up for all the different DETs. The I&I are engaged on all this, but there’s no one coordinating it. The planning piece is firmly on the FMCR side.”

Furthermore, the interviewees stressed that the current reserve environment has limited opportunities for promotion within the local units. Therefore, for a Marine to

progress in the reserves they have to be willing to travel for drill weekends, further increasing the job demands.

“As you advance in rank, either enlisted or as an officer, you better be ready to travel. Your local opportunities as a reservist begin to dwindle the higher you go up in rank, so you really better be getting—you know, pack your bags because you’re going to be traveling if you want to stay in.”

Lastly, it is clear from the interviews that limited job resources amplify the strain of increased job demands and influence disengagement. The literature indicates increases in job demands increase work exhaustion but not necessarily disengagement (Demerouti et al., 2001). Disengagement comes from the perception of limited job resources such as social and organizational support, which can help individuals cope with excessive workload. The interviews suggested though, that these resources are severely lacking. Excessive job demands such as increases in weekly workloads, increased responsibilities trickling down from the I&I, and more difficult operational time constraints are gradually drowning out the enjoyment of service reservists and elevating feeling of burnout and exhaustion, consequently resulting in reduced affiliation and greater incidences of turnover.

***b. Meaning / Task Significance***

As noted in the individual differences section the notion of pride directly or indirectly influenced a Marines decision to affiliate. As one Marine explained, “I didn't have a career in mind but I wanted to do something that was meaningful.” Meaning (purpose) or task significance is tied directly to entering military service and it plays a vital role in the individual’s continued commitment to affiliate. An observation by one of the interviewees draws more attention to meaning and how it influenced him to join.

“Go into the military and go fight the terrorists, you know, so that was probably the most influencing”.

“I think there’s still kind of an allure and I have talked to a lot of Marines who are straight up disappointed that they haven’t gotten to go, you know—and I’m using air quotes here, “do anything”.”



As in both the civilian workforce and reserve military components, the meaning that members find in their work is critical to their job satisfaction and decision to affiliate. Many members we spoke with chose to affiliate in the first place out of a desire to be a part of something larger than themselves. This can manifest itself as a desire to deploy and take part in the war effort, or to a lesser extent, participate in quality military training exercises that allow the reservists to feel that they are spending their time in a worthy cause. Taken together, we have labeled this generally *meaningful service*. This, above other factors, was a significant influencer when it came to reservists' decisions to affiliate. Many expressed a desire to deploy while others were content with quality training stateside. Regardless, all desired a meaning from their participation. This creates a significant challenge for reserve retention today. Not only are deployments winding down, but funding is also being reduced. As the Department of Defense is further constrained fiscally, the reserves are going to continue to feel the effects. Those we spoke with expressed frustration at a lack of quality training due to a perceived lack of funding.

“The chances to go do things are kind of important. Some guys like to go on the annual training thing and maybe do two and sometimes even three a year, now we're just stuck with just one and you can't go on any more because there is no money.”

With decreasing deployments for all of the military and especially the reserves, and a reduction in training budgets, finding meaningful military service in the reserves will continue to be more and more difficult. Once the Marines complete their education or find the opportunities for meaningful service lacking, they often choose to pursue meaning outside the USMCR. We will discuss these issues in greater depth in section 6: Alternatives and Gateways.

#### **4. Person–Context interface**

All comments reflecting person-context interface are presented in Appendix D. Previously, we discussed how intra-unit relationships positively impact enjoyment and satisfaction. In this section, we discuss how inter-unit relationships, more specifically relationships with the I&I staff, currently have severe negative effects on enjoyment. The literature describes person-environment interface as the fit between personal desires,

working environment and work relationships, and how they impact job performance, job withdrawal, and job satisfaction. Our analysis suggests a common and alarming lack of fit with respect to the degree of respect reservists desire and expect in the workplace. Specifically, we discovered that interviewees felt as if they were not receiving a warranted amount of respect from the I&I staff and this lack of respect was an important factor in their decision to leave the reserves.

“Relationship between the I&I and the reserves was absolutely toxic.”

“There was no teamwork!”

“The I&I side had a lot of underlying animosity. They consider the reservists to be less of Marines than they are.”

“...if I had felt like I got the respect that I rated as a staff sergeant in the Marines, the experience that I had and everything, I’d probably keep going.”

Marines expect to be treated a certain way and the lifestyle is demanding by design. Reservists who choose the USMCR over other options understand and desire this. What seems to turn them away from the USMCR is perceived person-to-person disrespect. The reservists felt the I&I staff treated them with low levels of respect, creating low levels of interactional justice, and ultimately negatively influencing their job satisfaction and commitment as found by Simons and Roberson (2003).

“I just felt like we weren’t shown the respect that was due for the experience level that our Marines had.”

“The NCOs, weren’t being given the opportunity to be NCOs and I think that was a big selling point in people leaving.”

“There are some on the staff who kind of look down on your reservists. I think that after some of the I&I have been there at their units for a few years, usually those opinions turn around to some degree”

“I think a lot of the guys when they affiliate with an I&I unit, or an I&I staff, their initial impression sometimes is that the reservists are kind of a little less worthy.”

This is a difficult topic. Given the culture of the Marine Corp and expectations of Marines, there may be a tendency to dismiss these concerns as whining on the part of the reservists. We believe, that to do so, will seriously hinder the Marine Corps' ability to increase affiliation of some of its most exceptional members. This was a difficult topic for the interviewees to discuss because they clearly were experiencing an internal struggle between the "suck it up" mentality that all Marines possess and their desire to give honest feedback in an effort to make the program better for the USMCR.

## **5. Quality of Life**

All comments reflecting quality of life are presented in Appendix E. As mentioned earlier under the description of job characteristics, it appears that the negative impact of increasing job demands may also be spilling over into the other areas of the reservists' lives as well. As one interviewee explained, "It was taking up a lot of my time away from both my family and my career."

In particular, the interviewees mentioned that excessive demands and inflexible monthly reserve schedules adversely affect functioning in both the family and career domains.

"No kidding, real world stuff is going to fail if you don't do all this extra work. That stress level has been a big negative point."

The interviewees felt they were not receiving the proper backing to enable the juggling of their civilian career and balancing of family concerns with the rising job demands in the reserves. Our analysis found increasing demands competing for their time in the reservist, family, and career domains. Additionally, some interviewees felt added challenge stressors of believing exercises would fail or the unit would suffer if they did not sacrifice family or career time in order to complete reservist duty requirements.

### ***a. Family***

A common theme expressed throughout the interviews was that reserve job demands increased work-family conflict. Work related demands such as rosters, PowerPoint's and planning drill weekends created a role conflict at home. One Marine

expressed his frustration with scheduling requirements, “There’s always something. You know, you’re family wants to do something or your kid has something, it’s always on a drill weekend and it just gets old.”

Work outside of the drill weekend was required to accomplish all the tasks necessary for drilling. The job demands external of the drill weekend altered family roles and increased family stress. External demands limited resources such as time and energy from home demands, which eventually led to burnout. The service member becomes unable to fulfill the role within the family, which leads to family conflict and a role imbalance. Additionally, the interviewees indicated that scheduled drills made it difficult to attend desirable activities such as family birthdays and special occasions. This was seen as some interviewees indicated wanting to spend more time with their families as a reason they chose to leave the reserves.

#### ***b. Career***

The interviewees explained that increased workloads in the reserves negatively impacted their civilian career domain.

“You know in the reserves, the mantra of the reserve thing being a one weekend a month duty... as soon as you’re promoted a little bit and get into leadership responsibilities... it really takes up a lot more time throughout the week in addition to... your regular job.”

It was evident that job demands associated with more senior positions in the reserves led to increased workloads and additional responsibilities outside of drill weekends. For example, many reservists received military-related phone calls and emails throughout the day while working in their civilian workplace. Additionally, we found that the reservists’ progression in their civilian careers was negatively affected when the reservists focused on the job demands of the reserves.

### **6. Alternatives and Gateways**

All comments reflecting alternatives and gateways are presented in Appendix C. Alternatives are potential opportunities in the job market and gateways represent stepping-stones to further job availability as new skills, education, experience, and

training are obtained. Reservists have a unique relationship with alternatives and gateways. The career outside of the reserves provides the reservist a gateway that is not normally seen in civilian turnover. In many respects, reservists' often indicated that their civilian career benefited from leadership experience and training received in the reserves as mentioned in the career section of quality of life. Additionally, the education benefits provided by the military (both college and service training) increase reservists' employability and increase the alternatives and gateways outside of the reserves. So logically we categorized alternatives and gateways into two groups: education and civilian careers growth.

“Well, with the reserves and what really attracted me about it was you're not tied down to it, if you will, to the extent that you can go to school and you can have another career and you can really find your niche in the world.”

“I will say about the reserves is all of those guys have, in general, you know, in aggregate, have a lot higher level of practical life experience and education.”

“In my experience, a lot of them joined for a lot of the same reasons I think that I did. They like the idea of getting some college money, they like the idea of being part of the Marine Corps, but, at the same time, being able to pursue school or civilian career.”

On the other side, reservists indicated that the leadership experiences and training they received from Marine Corps enhanced their civilian careers. Beyond the increased employability provided by the Marine Corps, however, we found that the increasing job demands of the reserves had the potential to negatively affect their civilian career. This conflict leads to a predicament requiring a decision on whether to focus time and energy on their career or the reserves. Our analysis suggests the dilemma a reservist feels when they have to choose between their civilian and military profession leads to disengagement of the least prominent opportunity; their military profession. This notion is discussed further in the following section, and we will discuss some possible avenues the USMCR can take to improve the quality of life in the family and career domains in Chapter V.

**a. Education**

Initially, many reservists join in order to pursue a college education. These reservists, we suggest, are among the most difficult to retain. For non-obligors in particular, it is easy to leave once the decision has been made due to the relative ease of movement with no significant barriers to exit.

“Oh, yeah. Absolutely. It takes a day to go to the CO, 1st sergeant and everybody and get checked out, give your gear, you know. The tough part is that day of getting all your stuff turned back in, but as soon as that’s done, man, there’s nothing.”

Marine seeking an education enter service with a specific purpose; to earn a degree in exchange for their service to the USMCR. The interesting paradox is that the educational incentive, which attracts them to the reserves in the first place, is critical to their ability to move forward with their civilian careers and reduce their reliance on the military.

“Guys graduating from college finish up their contract and, I mean, they’ve got their full-time jobs, you know, laid out, so they just leave the Marine Corps Reserves behind.”

The educational incentive eventually provides a gateway to a career outside of the reserves.

**b. Civilian Careers Growth**

As the interviewees advanced in their civilian career they were no longer relying on the reserves to pay for college or provide additional income, instead they leveraged on established jobs as their primary source of income. Our analysis suggests that a reservist’s quality of life was not affected throughout college or early on in their civilian career. However, the interviewees suggested a negative impact of reserve duty as they progressed in their civilian careers.

“They were getting out of college and they got jobs... they didn’t need the paycheck anymore and they didn’t want to balance the reserves with their new careers.”

Beyond the alternatives available in their civilian careers, the skills and training provided by the military allowed reservists to seek careers outside of their immediate career path. It was apparent throughout the interviews that the reserves offer a different perspective on alternatives and gateways as the reasons for joining the reserves are sometimes those very reasons providing alternative choices and gateways to further development outside the Marine Corps. The opportunities provided in the reserves in both the educational realm and meaningful military service eventually make the Marines more employable and thereby increase their career opportunities outside of the reserves. This is a difficult balance to tackle; in Chapter V, we will discuss some possible avenues the USMCR can take.

## **7. Incentives**

All comments reflecting incentives are presented in Appendix F. The incentives category was not covered in the literature review, but the interviewee responses regarding retention bonuses and incentives are particularly salient given the purpose and scope of the study. The interviewees indicated that money was not a major factor in their decision to stay in the USMCR, as the pay received from the reserves is not the primary source of income as suggested in the previous section. Some interviewees questioned the effectiveness of financial incentives to retain reservists, expressing that many of the reservists who accepted the financial incentives were planning to affiliate regardless. Moreover, some subjects interviewed questioned the quality of the personnel retained using monetary incentives. As noted by one CO:

“The Marine Corps could try monetary reimbursement like paying to keep people in, but I think you, at some point, you incentivize the wrong people to stay in these units.”

This notion was echoed by other Marines, whose comments highlight the limited value of financial incentives as a retention tool, while further highlighting the importance of the non-monetary factors we have discussed throughout this chapter:

“So it’s definitely not a financial thing. I mean, to stay in the reserves you’ve just really got to want to be there, and that’s the bottom line, because there’s really no financial benefits or health care benefits. There’s really nothing other than just wanting to be there.”

“I didn’t need the money, you know. I had a decent job, so I wasn’t relying on that paycheck. It was more something I wanted to do to have fun and the fun was kind of going away.”

Our analysis suggests that using monetary incentives has little effect on the underlying cause of reserve turnover. This is largely in part due to a reservists’ primary source of income is not the reserves, but that of an established civilian career. Moreover, as indicated above, the interviewed reservists did not join the reserves for money, they joined the reserves because of perceived opportunities provided, the relationships with other Marines, and the pride engendered through service.

## **B. THEMATIC ANALYSIS**

Analysis of the interviews revealed three major areas that influenced member’s decisions to affiliate or turnover. Each area contains parts and pieces of the theories developed in the academic literature. We have drawn from these frameworks to develop a model pertinent to the USMCR based on three primary drivers of affiliation decisions. The three categories found contributing to turnover in the USMCR are: (1) Relationships; (2) Opportunities; and (3) Role conflict. Each will be discussed below, and subsequently presented in our conceptual model.

We found that many stressors such as having a civilian career, raising a family, potential promotion opportunities and educational intentions have a notable pull effect on a reservist’s military career. This pull effect is translated into a significant increase in job demands, which affects individual relationships, opportunities (for career enhancement or meaningful experience), and role conflict (stressors that constantly impact time and leisure), which all have an effect on USMCR turnover.

### **1. Relationships**

As reflected in the Attitudes and Person-Context sections previously presented, our analysis found that relationships impact turnover in two distinct ways. Both the intra-unit relationships developed between reservists within a specific reserve unit (Unit Cohesion) and the inter-unit relationships between the reservists and active duty service members (I&I Staff) impacted the affiliation intentions of the reservists.



*a. Intra-Unit Relationships*

There seems to be several reasons why unit cohesion and like variables relate to turnover. Unit cohesion is a distinct indicator of unit performance. Additionally, it fosters morale and motivation within the unit. Positive intra-unit relationships may have a positive influence on continued affiliation.

“One of the coolest things about it is you were able to get to know guys and their families and hang out with them, go to drill, and then, like I said, now that we’re out there’s a good group of us that still get together regularly and able to see each other just because we live, you know, we live close by.”

“You know, the best part about being in the reserves, like anybody else, was the dudes that I met there and the times we spent in the field”.

Similarly, it appears evident that turnover within a unit can indirectly affect unit cohesion and negatively influence desires to stay in the reserves. We found a potential “domino effect” in that once one Marine in a group left the reserves, the others began to follow suit and left too.

“You know, I guess that’s another—one of the factors that might have kept me in was if a lot of those other guys would have stayed in too.”

Our analysis of the interviews also suggest, that leadership has an impact on unit cohesion. Leaders are responsible to facilitate their interactions not only with those among their peers but their subordinates as well. Leaders, especially the I&I staff are responsible for fostering organizational cohesion; they become the link between the reserve Marine and their unit that is supposed to build pride and support. However, it was evident that this crucial step was missing.

“You may have an I&I who just doesn’t want to support the reserves and that trickles down to his command climate.”

“The NCOs, weren’t being given the opportunity to be NCOs and I think that was a big selling point in people leaving.”

***b. Inter-Unit Relationships***

Negative aspects of relationships also proved impactful on affiliation decisions. The reality is that poor relationships in the reserves are detrimental to the work environment and after time, this can wear down even the most persistent. We heard multiple examples from reserve leadership (Officer and NCO) of poor reserve and I&I Staff relations.

“You’ve got educated guys who want to be there, but the respect level for them was terrible, that was kind of about the end when you just get sick of going, “You know, man. I don’t need this. I can go get treated like this in real life and make money at it.”

Much of this can be characterized as a lack of interactional justice or perception on the part of the reservists that they did not receive the respect they were due from their active duty counterparts and I&I Staff.

“The active duty guys just—they treated the reservists like shit “

“You know, if I had felt like I got the respect that I rated as a staff sergeant in the Marines, the experience that I had and everything, I’d probably keep going.”

“These guys are assholes,”[I&I staff] and the I&I guys are saying—the active duty component saying, “The reserves are incompetent.”

Additionally, there were concerns over procedural justice issues as well, specifically as to increasing job demands on the reservist side due to a lack of action on the part of the I&I Staff. This issue was compounded due to a lack of identifiable redress system where these concerns may be addressed.

“The I&I are basically—the message they’re getting from their leadership is that their job is to enable, but it’s the reserve folks to basically to provide the information, format it [and] make sure it’s all correct, submit it, or whatever. If you want it proofread or you want somebody else to provide input or ideas, you know, you can call your I&I, but the actual work of getting stuff done is on the FMCR side, yeah, and they’re pretty direct about it.”

## **2. Opportunities**

As reflected in the job and organizational characteristics section previously presented, our analysis discovered that opportunities to do something meaningful impact turnover in the reserves. Serving in the reserves provides opportunities that carry significant influence on both a members' decision to affiliate in the first place and also in determining if they will continue to do so.

We identified four categories of opportunities that reservists we spoke with valued, each of the four categories falls under two main sections: human capital development and military experience. Human capital development is broken down into two categories: the opportunity for higher education and the opportunity to progress in their reservist military hierarchy. The two categories under military experience are the opportunity to contribute to the war effort and the opportunity for military training.

“Start with giving the Marines opportunities to develop themselves and go out and do their jobs and do something that has meaning.”

### ***a. Human Capital Development***

#### **(1) Education**

As discussed in the alternatives and gateways section offering education incentives to reservists creates an incentive paradox in which individuals join the reserves to get an education and subsequently once achieved, education makes a career more attractive outside of the reserves. Education or its continuance while also being able to concurrently serve in the military was highlighted as an important consideration as to why many of the reservists we spoke with joined in the first place. While they seemed to indicate similar desires and goals as those that join the active duty components, what set them apart was a stronger desire to remain locally based and allowed them to continue with the lives established in their home areas. This factor creates a unique and challenging retention issue, as their level of commitment from day one is typically less than that of an active duty member (that typically sets those personal aspirations aside to fully commit to service). The education aspect of the reserves also creates a clear event from which a natural self-reflection takes place. It would be atypical to not reflect on and

expect changes in one's lifestyle and choices as he moves from college student to graduate.

“Hey, I joined the reserves and I'll be able to go to school, I'll get paid for some of this. This is awesome. And I'll get to go do some cool shit every once in a while.”

## (2) Reservist Career Progression

Some interviewees discussed the importance of an opportunity to progress within the reserve career and military in general. Many of the Marines felt restricted by the limited opportunities available in the reserves, more specifically the opportunities to advance in the USMCR without transferring reserve units. From what we found Marines usually join the reserves because it offers them an option to stay in the local area throughout the year, even though most Marines look forward to deployments and training out of the local area.

“I didn't want to transfer or I didn't want to fly somewhere to go to drill, so I tried to transfer to the intelligence unit, but they weren't taking staff NCOs at the time. I was in the artillery unit and I couldn't do Intel and I couldn't do artillery and I didn't want to fly anywhere so I was getting out.”

Additionally, some interviewees pointed out that reservists cannot match the performance of their active duty counterparts simply because they only train in the reserves for a comparatively short period of time compared to their active duty counterparts.

“MOS's in the Marine Corps reserves, you get to a certain point where you have your job and then you have an active duty counterpart that's doing pretty much the same job, you're not ever going to be the top guy in your field.”

Reservists need to feel they have an opportunity to progress within the military structure. We believe the perceived lack of those opportunities contributed to dissatisfaction with the USMCR that likely will negatively impact affiliation.

***b. Military Experience***

**(1) War**

As discussed above, the desire to find meaning and significance is often materialized in a desire to deploy. For some however, the deployment or contribution to the war effort is in itself, the end state and not merely a path to finding meaning or significance.

“I knew there was going to be a war and I didn’t want to miss it, so I joined the reserves so I could keep going to college and eventually—my original plan was I still wanted to be an officer, so I joined the reserves so I wouldn’t miss the war and I didn’t.”

“No one’s deploying or anything. I mean, that’s the game and that’s... kind of want to go experience that.”

Those that desire to go to war find decreasing opportunities to do so.

“Opportunities [deploying] are drying up. You’re not seeing as many open opportunities. Those opportunities aren’t necessarily as in demand as they were, you know, five or six years ago”

While Unit Level reserve deployments seem unlikely in the current security and political environment, there remain opportunities for Individual Augmentation (I/A) overseas service and this is an area where proper management of reservist desires may positively impact affiliation decisions. It is important to be cognizant of this affiliation driver as many of the subjects we spoke with expressed at least some desire to deploy and be part of the war, and a lack of this opportunity in particular was a powerful indicator of decisions to no longer affiliate.

“I think they are still joining with the possibility of going to war and then, you know, they get three years into it and then it just shuts off and it’s like, “My motivations gone. What am I doing here?”

## (2) Military Training and Development

An additional opportunity often discussed by interview participants closely related to the core mission of the reserves to stand ready and capable for their nations call, is quality training within their MOS and also for the development of personal skills and attributes that would retain value outside the military. A perceived lack of funding was a consistent theme that was discussed as impactful to affiliation.

“I kind of see guys, that want to go do things and then we’re lacking the money for it, so they’re not getting what they expected, so it kind of impacts them negatively.”

This perceived unavailability of funding for training was not only poor for morale in its own right, but for those who took the reservist mission seriously, negatively impacted their satisfaction due to their own lack of fulfilling that mission. Without the quality training that the reserves had grown accustomed, they felt that they would not be able to properly complete their MOS duties and responsibilities, which left them personally unfulfilled.

“You guys are giving us new gear, but you’re not giving us any training on how to use it, so it’s pressuring when you tell me, hey, set up the, you know, high performance [wave phone] network. Well, I don’t know how to use the damn radio that uses it, so how do you expect me to use that?”

During our interviews we discovered significant importance placed on opportunities. As discussed, these opportunities differed across participants, but a theme did emerge; the opportunities that had initially drawn these reservists to service were in decline. The diminishing opportunities result from a myriad of factors, many of which are beyond the control of the USMCR and the DOD at large, but opportunities do exist to capitalize on these finding once their impacts on incentives are understood.

## 3. Role Conflict

As reflected in the Quality of Life section previously presented, a common theme of the interviews was the conflicts between the reserves, career, and family domains. Katz and Kahn (1966) defined role conflict as the occurrence of two or more role

expectations simultaneously, such that compliance with one role expectation would make compliance with the other more difficult. Role conflict is created between the expectations of the individuals as reservists, as members of their family, and in their career roles. The reservists interviewed found themselves conflicted in choosing which role to devote their time. They experienced scheduling conflicts with other activities during drill weekends as well as the reserve job demands outside of the USMCR drill weekends.

“It [Reserve duty] was taking up a lot of my time away from both my family and my career.”

We found that over time as Marines rise the ranks the time required to complete their military commitments was no longer one weekend a month and two weeks per year. Role conflicts increased as reservists became more established in their civilian careers and family roles. Furthermore, reservists in more senior positions experienced increasing job demands and additional responsibilities in both their civilian and career roles that increased the role conflict between family, career and reserves. Feedback from officers and NCOs reported the common occurrence of working hours outside of drill in order to prepare for drill weekends and complete required administrative duties.

“It kind of starts and then when you get into an NCO billet you start getting more responsibilities that take time at home. And then when I was a platoon sergeant it was like never ending. I mean, it was probably ten hours a week or more of time at home, easily ten hours a week.”

The subjects who left the reserves reported an improved quality of life in the career domain caused by the elimination of the role conflict with the reserves. Subjects who reported spending more time in the role of reservist rather than career reported a less favorable quality of life in the career domain.

“It [the reserves] definitely affected my civilian career. I feel like I spent too much time making my Marine Corps career the focus of my efforts in my life in general and I regret it.”

Some interviewees reported negative effects of role conflict in the family domain with neutral or negative support from spouses to remain in the reserves. The reservists who left also reported a feeling that the previously tolerable drill weekend scheduling

conflicts with family events gradually degraded quality of life in the family domain over time.

“There’s always something. You know, you’re family wants to do something or your kid has something, it’s always on a drill weekend and it just gets old.”

Furthermore, interviewees in units with manpower shortages reported experiencing increased work stressors created by increased workloads that led to increased role conflict. Our analysis indicated that for some interviewees, the increased job demands and role conflict subsequently resulted in burnout and emotional exhaustion, ultimately leading to turnover.

“...it’s getting harder and harder just because you get emails and phone calls throughout the day at your civilian job saying, ‘Hey, you need to do this stuff today for the Marine Corps.’ That gets hard.”

We earlier reported that while strong unit cohesion and meaningful service can increase affiliation, the increase in job demands with advancement in rank and increased role conflict tended to have a greater impact on turnover decisions. Additionally, some interviewees considered the requirements for increased travel needed to advance in the reserves. Those who decided to stay in the reserves without advancement frequently cited a preference to drill in the local area rather than increase in role conflict with family and career due to the additional travel time and time away from family and civilian careers. In the end the interviews portrayed that relationships, opportunities and role conflict all were antecedents that increased job demands, which positively impacted turnover. Below is a quote from an interview that sums up the internal dilemma reservists are faced with today.

“I enjoy it. I really do. I love working with some of these Marines. I mean, some of these guys, it’s hard to describe just what amazing people they are and, you know, you want to be there and you want to support them. You don’t want to be the weak link that gives up. I’m actually at a point right now in my own career where I’m trying to decide how much longer can I do this. If we were back to kind of the way we did it 10, 15, 20 years ago where the I&I handled a lot of it [administrative]... we would do some planning or whatever the week before, but otherwise we showed up and things were pretty much ready for us. That’s pretty easy to support. But with the amount of time it is taking right now, you know, week by week, I



don't know how much longer I can support that and I'm actually trying to figure that out for myself right now, how much longer should I stay in and how much longer do I—you know, before I have to kind of cut and run and just say that I'm not going to be able to support this anymore?"

## **V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Chapter IV presented our findings from all semi-structured exploratory interviews and synthesized these findings into three emergent themes (Relationships, Opportunities, and Role Conflict) that appear to drive affiliation and turnover decisions. This chapter incorporates these three themes into a predictive conceptual model of affiliation decisions in the USMCR. This chapter also provides conclusions and recommendations on ways to increase affiliation in the Marine Corps Reserves. Finally we will conclude with limitations and areas for future research.

### **B. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Based on the thematic analysis conducted in Chapter IV, we propose a predictive model (Figure 4) of affiliation decisions in the USMCR, with the three primary areas of relationships, opportunities, and role conflict serving as the central explanatory mechanisms in the process. As reflected in Figure 4, these themes/constructs are influenced by job demands, which are rising due to promotions and contextual factors such as reduced manpower and financial constraints. Additionally, the three themes have indirect effects on USMCR affiliation through important factors noted in the literature-organizational justice, meaning, and quality of life. In the sections that follow we discuss these relationships in greater detail.

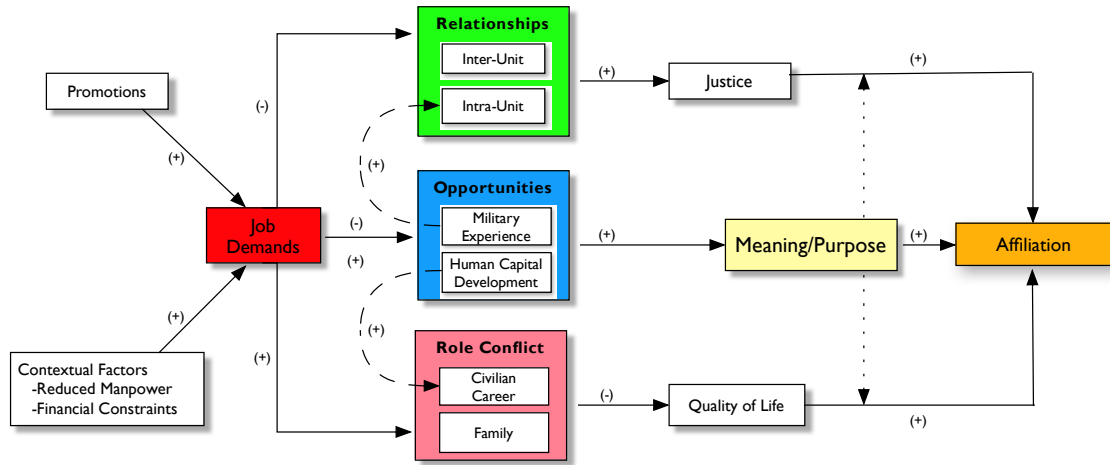


Figure 4. Authors' Conceptual Model

### 1. Promotions and Contextual Factors on Rising Job Demands

As noted in Figure 4, our findings indicate a sharp rise in job demands that arise from promotions and contextual factors, such as reduced manpower and financial constraints. Not surprisingly, promotions, whether in a reservist military or civilian career, are accompanied with increased responsibilities. As reservists are promoted within the military, they face additional obligations such as planning, leadership, accountability and mission accomplishment that translate to increased job demands. As noted in the model, the increases in responsibility and workload have ripple effects that impact each of the primary themes developed from our interviews.

Similarly, two important contextual factors are increasing the demands placed on reservists as well. Budgetary constraints and a reduced need for operational units around the world have significantly reduced manpower requirements throughout the services. A reduction in manpower in both the I&I staff and reserve units have led to an increase in job demands and workload. When units are undermanned, the tasking to complete operational planning, training, and administration remains and unit leaders made up of officers and NCOs take it upon themselves to complete the work during their personal time. Our interviews suggested that the I&I staff was faced with higher headquarter tasking in addition to supporting the reserve units. In some cases the I&I staff did not

have the manpower to support dual roles, which reduces the manpower to support the reserve units, shifting even more responsibilities and demands to the reserve units. Moreover, the current fiscal environment has left units with readiness, training, and planning requirements, but no funding to complete the requirements. Our findings imply that deployments for training and formal military training were postponed or cancelled due to a lack of funding. As with reductions in manpower, our findings indicate that financial constriction is limiting opportunities for quality training and meaningful experiences in the Reserves and shifting the job functions of reservists to less interesting and fulfilling work. Ultimately, as will be discussed in greater detail below, the impact of reduced manpower accompanied by increasing peacetime responsibilities for the I&I (e.g., parades and events) and fewer financial resources trickles down through job demands to adversely impact the three key drivers of affiliation decisions in the USMCR.

## **2. The Role of Increased Job Demands on Relationships, Opportunities and Role Conflict**

As seen in Figure 4, job demands impacts all three emergent themes: relationships, opportunities and role conflict. The increases in job demands degrade intra and inter-unit relationships. As job demands increase for the reservists, the reliance on the I&I staff also increase. Furthermore, as I&I staff tasking increases, the supportive role they once occupied becomes displaced and shifts to the reserve unit. This shift in responsibilities, fractures inter-unit relations, as reservists perceive the I&I staff as delegating I&I responsibilities down to the reserve unit. Additionally, as reservists are promoted and gain responsibilities over their peers, they find themselves spending more time on their additional responsibilities rather than building relationships with other Marines within their unit who are now their subordinates. This takes away from the enjoyment that Marines once felt on drill weekends or annual training as intra-unit relationships begin to take a backseat to job demands. As such, the rise in job demands has deleterious effects on not only inter-unit relations with the I&I, but also on intra-unit relations thereby reducing unit-level cohesion..

Also noted in the model, it appears that job demands can be both positively and negatively related to opportunities. In the thematic analysis section of Chapter IV, we

discussed two notable sections of opportunities— military experience and human capital development. Job demands affect military experience in multiple ways, specifically, military training and development. As administrative tasks, that were once reserved for I&I staff, transfer on to the reserve units, less and less time is allotted for quality training and military development. This not only significantly impacts opportunities but also meaning and purpose. As the opportunity for personal development and growth decrease, the Marines' satisfaction decreases as well. Reservists rely heavily on training and development to further their core military skills and lack thereof decreases fulfillment, as they are unable to complete mission requirements. At the same time though, increased job demands that accompany promotions and elevated administrative tasks can serve to facilitate a reservist's human capital growth. That is, increased job demands may help reserves develop skills and competencies that are transferrable to their civilian careers, providing them with greater leverage in the labor market. While generally it is positive to advance the skills of reservists, we will discuss later the inherent paradox this creates which may spark greater turnover.

Job demands also relate to the role conflict experienced by reservists in the career and family domains. Our analysis suggests reservists were torn between choosing between their civilian careers or the Marines, or time with their family or the reserves, or both. The increase in job demands due to promotions or under manning within the reserve unit or the I&I staff required reservists to sacrifice time in their career or family domains in order to meet the needs of the reserve unit. These additional duties broadened role conflicts, limiting the degree to which reservists can be effective and successful in all roles.

Finally, some interesting associations among the themes should be noted as well. These relationships are reflected by the two dotted lines in Figure 4, which illustrate that military experience can enhance intra-unit relationships, while human capital development can positively influence the civilian career. Significant military experience such as field training and deployments has a positive impact on intra-unit relationships, further highlighting its critical role in the reserve experience and affiliation decisions. These shared experiences and hardships during training increase camaraderie, which

leads to an increase in performance, which has a positive impact on affiliation. Additionally, as previously noted, human capital development through educational, technical and leadership skills gained in the military often leads to additional opportunities and potential in the civilian sector. Hence, opportunities to develop human capital may, over time, lead to greater role conflict by helping to enhance one's civilian career.

### **3. The Impact of Relationships, Opportunities, and Role Conflict on Affiliation through Organizational Justice, Quality of Life, and Meaning**

As noted in Figure 4, each of the three themes that emerged from our analysis ultimately impact affiliation decisions through constructs that are prominent in the literature. Our analysis suggests that relationships impact perceptions of organizational justice, opportunities enable a sense of meaning and purpose, and role conflict contributes to quality of life, each of which in turn affect turnover. We expand on these relationships in the following sections.

#### ***a. Organizational Justice***

Our model suggests that the relationships within and between units impact the perceptions of organizational justice that affect affiliation in the USMCR. More specifically, reservists' comments related to three forms of organizational justice: interactional, procedural, and distributive. The relations between reservists and active duty service members (such as the I&I staff) concerned interactional justice. Reservists often possess training, qualifications and experience that is different from that obtained by their active duty counterparts. These qualifications, while often not directly employed in their reserve duty, can be enhancing to military units as they are asked to partake in duty outside their designated Military Occupational Specialty (MOS). For example, some of those we interviewed were deployed to support OIF in a security role that was not in line with their Artillery training. Their civilian experience in many ways contributed as much or more to their success when compared to their reserve military training. These civilian skills and abilities, while valuable to the Nation's military, are not recognized in

the reservists' service. Furthermore, it is difficult for a reserve civilian professional to tolerate disrespect from a younger and less experienced active duty member. This issue appears to fall into a category typically avoided due to its difficulty in finding any solution, which is a leadership issue. We believe that better leadership on the active duty side (I&I Staff) will result in more continued affiliation on the reserve side.

When inter-unit relations with the I&I staff soured, the reservists interviewed expressed concerns about procedural justice. Frustrated with the inter-unit working relationships, the reservists were unaware of any expressed or understood avenues of redress. This presented a difficult dilemma for reservists as job demands increased and tensions grew as the reservists became frustrated leading to thoughts of leaving the service. Over time decreasing satisfaction among procedural justice created a toxic working environment, shattering unit cohesion, which eventually led to increased turnover. We realize that articulated trepidations about procedural justice may be localized; nevertheless, we believe quality leadership on the part of both the I&I staff and reserve units would go along way to solving this concern.

Our interviews suggested fairly little effects associated with distributive justice. This is due to the fact that financial incentives apparently play very little role in a reservist's satisfaction with or desire to be in the reserves. Educational benefits were shown to be very important, but monetary compensation seemingly plays a minimal role in continued affiliation. As we will discuss later in our conclusions, the USMCR can likely engender greater feelings of distributive justice by providing greater financial resources through indirect means that can reduce job demands and/or increase opportunities for military experience and training.

Lastly, we recommend that the Marine Corps look to educate leaders to further their knowledge on how to lead and manage with the goal of increasing personal and organizational effectiveness in an environment of constrained resources. Furthermore, we recommend the leadership of the reserve unit follow up on concerns when they perceive the I&I staff is unwilling or unable to support the reserve unit. Lastly, the reserve and active duty staffs should try to take advantage of the technical and professional skills that reservists bring to their reserve unit in addition to their MOS skillset.

***b. Quality of Life***

As shown in Figure 4, our model indicates that role conflict negatively impacts a reservist's quality of life. As previously shown in the literature review, quality of life not only influences retention but also performance and readiness. General feelings of well-being decreased when reservists felt their reservist-family roles or reservist-career roles were unbalanced. The decreased feelings of well-being were spawned by the realization that the Marines were not able to find a level of engagement that left them satisfied in their roles as a reservist, employee, and/or family member. For example, some reservists who spent more time in their reservist role were unsatisfied in their role as an employee or family member. Alternatively, reservists who spent more time in their role as a family member or employee were not satisfied with the amount of time dedicated to or their performance as a reservist. Other reservists found the job demands overwhelming and were unable to find a balance in which they were satisfied with their roles in the reservist, career and family domains. The dissatisfaction led to decreased feelings of well-being and ultimately in the choice to stop affiliating.

We suggest the USMCR promote instruction on time management in order to help reservists find a balance between family, career and reserves. In order to understand work expectations the Marine Corps can do their part in educating new reservists and their families on what to expect as a reservists. Additionally, we suggest the USMCR find ways to mitigate role conflict with role facilitation by finding activities or training that reservists can do that improve their career and family roles. For example, formal leadership training could enhance both the reserve and career domains. Furthermore, incorporating families in a regular or annual drill weekend to help spouses and children understand the job of the reservist could provide role facilitation in the family and reserve domains while enjoying time spent together.

***c. Meaning and Purpose***

Opportunities for military experience play an important role in fulfilling a sense of meaning, as seen in Figure 4. As the U.S. began its transition from a decade of engagement in two conflicts and other operations around the globe, the task significance



sought by many who joined post 9/11 has become more and more elusive. While the troop drawdowns have limited the deployments of many active units, the reserve units have reduced deployments at an increased rate when compared to active duty units. The resulting decline in combat deployments has reduced the incentive for those who joined to fight and be a part of something larger than themselves. This combined with decreasing overseas military operations has created an increasingly challenging recruitment and retention environment that other categories addressed herein can address. While there is little that can be done to alter world affairs or national interests from within the recruiting world, the recognition that these conditions exist and impact affiliation decisions is an important factor to be aware of and consider in crafting incentive programs and understanding individual decisions and overall trends in affiliation.

A reservist's quest for meaning and task significance need not only be determined by deployments. There are certainly other manners in which they may find what they are looking for within the service, despite a lack of deployments. As discussed in Chapter IV, there is a certain pride that is common in military service and especially so for those that chose the Marine Corps as their branch of service. Beyond pride, there is at its core, the basic mission of the reservist; to stand ready for the nation's call. This means they are well-trained, well-equipped, and confident in their abilities to conduct operations in their Military Occupational Specialty (MOS). The decreasing opportunities for USMCR units to achieve this standard of readiness has negatively impacted affiliation. The US has been withdrawing militarily from the world stage in Iraq and Afghanistan for the past four years. With the closing of the Iraq campaign and the reduction of forces in Afghanistan, there are simply less military members deploying around the world to engage our nation's enemies. While the opportunities to deploy may be decreasing, reservists can still find meaning in the opportunities to prepare and train for future conflicts.

Additionally, it should be noted that meaning and purpose tended to be the most influential variable in a Marines decision to stay in the reserves. So much so, that it created a moderating effect on both quality of life and organizational justice (reflected by the dotted lines stemming from Meaning in the model). Simply stated, when sense of

purpose is sufficiently strong it overwhelmed negative experiences associated with justice and quality of life to an extent where the interviewees chose to remain in the reserves despite the issues stated in this chapter. This powerful mitigating effect is a tremendous insight for leaders to ponder, which is that above all things Marines need to feel inspired and they need to feel that their effort is contributing to something larger than themselves.

We suggest the USMCR find ways to help reservists continue to find meaning in their service, especially for those who joined to be “a part of something”. With the current operational tempo of reservists declining, we recommend the USMCR focus on the importance of the reservists’ readiness to ensure that reservists maintain a sense of meaning. Therefore we recommend leaders consider how cutting funds for training and exercises degrades the meaning and task significance of being able to respond to our nation’s call.

#### **4. Paradoxes**

We know from the literature that increased employability drives turnover decisions, unless, meaningful work prevents them from doing so. Throughout our analysis we found two paradoxes in the reserves which help engender affiliation, while simultaneously being key means to developing a reservist’s employability, and thereby inadvertently also driving turnover.

##### ***a. Education***

The first paradox is the college education that initially attracts many reservists ends up being a key factor in their reason to leave the USMCR. The college education increases their employability and thus increases their alternatives and gateways. Once the college education is completed and the reservist starts a civilian career, they find themselves no longer reliant on the USMCR for the educational benefit. Furthermore, the civilian career starts to become the primary source of income and provides more tangible benefits over the reserves. Hence, the education afforded by enrollment in the Reserves ultimately enables the reservist to develop a career, which in turn engenders conflict between the reserve and the career role. Moreover, the financial resources gained as a

result of this education minimize the importance of the compensation provided by the USMCR.

We suggest the USMCR consider offering advanced education benefits in order to entice reservists to continue affiliation after completing the college degree. Continuing education may provide the necessary opportunity for human capital development in areas such as leadership or management. Thus education could be a method to provide and opportunity that serves as a role facilitator between the reserves and career domains.

***b. Promotion***

The other paradox is related to how individuals who tend to strive for promotion tend to perform better than their peers. However, promotion is the very thing that increases job demands and subsequently impacts the three emergent themes and leads to burnout. Furthermore, a reservist gets promoted they gain valuable skills, leadership, responsibility, and experience, all of which make him or her more employable. As discussed with education above, the greater employability that may result from these promotions can in fact serve to facilitate growth in the civilian career, which increasingly diminishes the importance and value of being in the Reserves.

In addition to these issues some reservists voiced concern about the need to travel once promoted, subsequently decreasing quality of life. Many of the reservists experiencing role conflict were not content with spending less time on the reserves in order to achieve a work-life balance. They set high personal performance standards for themselves and would not be satisfied with sub-standard performance. They chose to walk away rather than stay committed to the reserves and balance their career or family roles with substandard performance in the reserves. As a result, many Marines interviewed saw the additional travel as more of a burden. Reservists typically join because they not only enjoy the benefits of education and opportunities but also because they live and work in the areas they are most familiar with, their hometown. Traveling due to promotion only further increases job demands and role conflict leading to burnout.

The increased job demands and increased employability are not separable from promotion. Therefore we suggest the USMCR consider allowing reservists to maintain

their rank and be able to decline promotion if their performance remains acceptable. Furthermore, we suggest the USMCR look at alternatives for promotion without requiring additional travel. For example, consider consolidating drill weekend travel requirements into one week per quarter instead of one weekend per month.

### **C. CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

In conclusion, the semi-structured interviews provided an exploratory insight to key factors of Marine Corps Reserve turnover and affiliation. Utilizing the literature and transcripts from the interviews we developed a predictive conceptual model that included three emergent themes—relationships, opportunities and role conflict. We discovered that job demands influenced by promotions and contextual factors such as reduced manpower and financial constraints impacted all three emergent themes.

We discussed how the job demands have a negative impact on relations within the reserve unit and with the I&I staff, both a positive and negative relationship with opportunities, and positive relationship with role conflict. We propose that relationships are positively related to organizational justice, and opportunities are positively related to meaning and purpose. Lastly, role conflict is related negatively to quality of life. Justice, meaning/purpose, and quality of life are all positively related to affiliation. Furthermore, our findings suggest that within relationships and opportunities, military experience opportunities are positively related to intra-unit relations. Additionally, we suggest that human capital development opportunities are positively related to role conflict in the civilian career domain.

#### **1. The Role of Financial Incentives**

It should be noted that financial incentives are not in the model because the analysis indicated that these are ineffective and perhaps counterproductive. We found little evidence that monetary bonuses contributed to affiliation. Should further study confirm our findings, we recommend the USMCR fund military training (instead of retention bonuses) to increase military experience opportunities since financial incentives did not seem to be a major factor. Although, some interviewees perceived a lack of

distributive justice as bonuses were paid to personnel who they considered not to be top performers. The majority of those interviewed appeared not to be influenced by financial incentives at all, indicating that bonuses will not impact distributive justice. Other times we saw bonuses accepted by reservists who were going to stay in the reserves anyways. We believe that in order to increase distributive justice, compensation should go towards enhancing military experience and training, as opposed retention bonuses, as experience and meaning were much more highly valued. This inherently increases unit cohesion, therefore creating more enjoyment, which was shown in the interviews as a more dominating incentive to monetary compensation.

We believe that reservists with higher human capital will have greater options (alternatives/gateways) in the civilian sector, which includes more pay as well. Hence, financial incentives will be least effective on this group, while likely most effective on those reservists in lower paying civilian jobs who typically have less human capital. Hence, the USMCR needs to consider whom exactly they are trying to retain. Ultimately, because reservists have much higher earning potential in their civilian jobs, financial incentives will only be effective for those with limited career options. While we recognize that the use of monetary incentives can be positive, our analysis indicates bonuses provide limited results, and fiscal resources could have a stronger effect if devoted to more indirect retention tools such as creating more meaningful experiences and training exercises. Additionally, the Marine Corps may be able to decrease turnover within the reserves by selecting individuals who strongly value being in the Marines, or whose values closely align with those of the Marines. Another option would be to focus training efforts on increasing individual identification with the Marines, through greater socialization practices, or creating other ways to help foster a feeling of identity and the value of identifying oneself as a Marine.

## **2. Limitations and Future Research**

The exploratory findings of this analysis could prove useful for maintaining affiliation levels in the USMCR, however more research needs to be done to understand if the themes found actually affect affiliation rates on a much larger scale. Our study was

limited, with a small sample size, used qualitative data, and interviewed mostly reserves who chose to stop affiliating. There is much work that has to be done in order to improve or test the practical validity of the models presented in this project. The decision to affiliate in the Marine Corps Reserves is a complex choice. The model developed here lays the groundwork for exploring the primary factors that influence Marine reservists to continue their commitment to stay past the end of their initial military obligation. We recommend future studies to collect quantitative data through survey collection and empirical analysis of the suggested relationships.

Additionally, while we found many applicable theories in the academic literature on turnover, reservists have a great deal in common with volunteers, as their role does not often significantly contribute to their livelihood. As a result, we recommend a similar literature review and application be conducted in the research regarding commitment to volunteer and extramural organizations.

Furthermore, we have suggested that meaning may mitigate the impact of lack of organizational justice and low quality of life on affiliation. But, there may be an alternative perspective as well. It seems plausible that changing personal values that occur over time (such as greater importance of family resulting from marriage or becoming a parent) may precipitate reduced feelings of meaning and purpose. Hence, although we suggest that meaningfulness will constrain the effect of role-conflict on turnover, it may be the case that meaningfulness will inevitably wane as other life roles become increasingly more important. To better understand this dynamic, further research needs to be done on how changing values affect the attitudes and behaviors that influence turnover. Last, this predictive conceptual model stands as a first step in understanding the key influences on affiliation in the reserves; however, much work stills needs to be done. While we recognize there are many factors that influence a Marine's decision to stay in the reserves, we believe this model serves as a launching pad for further research not only in the Marine Corps reserves but other services as well.

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## APPENDIX A. JOB AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

**Below are anonymous quotes from the semi-structured interviews:**

“It’s a sense of pride.”

“I knew there was going to be a war and I didn’t want to miss it, so I joined the reserves so I could keep going to college and eventually—my original plan was I still wanted to be an officer, so I joined the reserves so I wouldn’t miss the war and I didn’t.”

“There’s also, of course, the intangible side, the pride, the honor that goes with service.”

“I think they are still joining with the possibility of going to war and then, you know, they get three years into it and then it just shuts off and it’s like, “My motivations gone. What am I doing here?”

On Joining: “I didn’t have a career in mind but I wanted to do something that was meaningful.”

“Go into the military and go fight the terrorists, you know, so that was probably the most influencing.”

CO comment on why Marines stayed: “I think the guys that stayed just liked being Marines.”

“Why do I want to sign up for another three years to keep going to Guernsey, Wyoming?”

“Transitioning to reserves from active duty: I was working as an engineer at the time and I was just bored. I was really bored. I was bored out of my mind. I think, yeah, I think I just kind of after deploying and all that stuff I had a hard time transitioning into just the real world I guess.”

I think the mentality, “Hey, I joined the reserves and I’ll be able to go to school, I’ll get paid for some of this. This is awesome. And I’ll get to go do some cool shit every once in a while.” And then these guys get in and it’s like, “Oh, I’m going up to Guernsey to freeze my ass off again.”

“We are in a war period now and opportunities are drawing up. You’re not seeing as many open opportunities. Those opportunities aren’t necessarily as in demand as they were, you know, five or six years ago.”

“Also one of the big things though is that there’s just that you’re never going to be—my job would not have changed. I was the headquarters platoon—platoon sergeant and I would have been for the next ten years.”



“As you advance in rank, either enlisted or as an officer, you better be ready to travel. Your local opportunities as a reservist begin to dwindle the higher you go up in rank, so you really better be getting—you know, pack your bags because you’re going to be traveling if you want to stay in.”

“You guys are giving us new gear, but you’re not giving us any training on how to use it, so it’s pressuring when you tell me, hey, set up the, you know, high performance [wave phone] network. Well, I don’t know how to use the damn radio that uses it, so how do you expect me to use that?”

“The chances to go do things are kind of important. Some guys like to go on the annual training thing and maybe do two and sometimes even three a year, now we’re just stuck with just one and you can’t go on any more because there is no money.”

“You know, I don’t know how many times I reached out to [DET] commanders or to some of the staff NCOs at various locations and asked them to do something for me on the FMCR side, just to hear, “Hey, sir, I’m swamped.”

“Start with giving the Marines opportunities to develop themselves and go out and do their jobs and do something that has meaning.”

“Each one of our companies is running light, and certainly our officer billets are largely going unfilled.”

“No one’s deploying or anything. I mean, that’s the game and that’s... kind of want to go experience that.”

Perceptions on staffing: “Staff NCOs —light as well. It varies from site to site, but overall I would say that the overall impression is that their light.”

“I’ve got to decide whether or not I’m going to stay in the reserves and it kind of depends on where I’m at with my unit...what other opportunities are out there.”

“The officers and especially like the platoon sergeants, I mean, they were always dealing with personnel issues throughout the months, just like they would in a regular active units and they didn’t get paid for that.”

“I didn’t want to transfer or I didn’t want to fly somewhere to go to drill, so I tried to transfer to the intelligence unit, but they weren’t taking staff NCOs at the time. I was in the artillery unit and I couldn’t do Intel and I couldn’t do artillery and I didn’t want to fly anywhere so I was getting out.”

“I kind of see guys, that want to go do things and then we’re lacking the money for it, so they’re not getting what they expected, so it kind of impacts them negatively.”

“I think there’s still kind of an allure and I have talked to a lot of Marines who are straight up disappointed that they haven’t gotten to go, you know—and I’m using air quotes here, do anything.”

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## APPENDIX B. ATTITUDES

**Below are anonymous quotes from the semi-structured interviews:**

“Had about enough of it, it wore me a little bit.”

Talking about a six-year contract. “That extra two years on the back end of the four years, you know, it wore on you a little bit.”

“About ten percent of the time actually doing my job that I signed up to do and the other times, getting a medical or dental, or just paperwork, or just class, just annual things that have to be done. Everything that the active duty side has to do, it’s crammed into two days a month and it’s kind of a pain in the ass.”

On why he transferred to the IRR: “was just getting kind of burned out on it. I wasn’t having a whole lot of fun anymore.”

“As long as it’s fun I’ll stay there. You know, as soon as it gets—as soon as they—it gets to the point where you’re miserable being there, you know, you just get out and have your weekends free again.”

So I just figured, you know, I was getting bored doing the same thing and I’d been in for ten years, so I said, “Forget it.”

“It started getting boring. I was doing the same thing over and over again and a new I&I staff was starting to show up and I just didn’t feel like, you know, reprovng myself again to a bunch of guys, so I figure it was a good time to go.”

“I didn’t need the money, you know. I had a decent job, so I wasn’t relying on that paycheck. It was more something I wanted to do to have fun and the fun was kind of going away.”

“It gets to the point where once your buddies leave that you were in there first with and then the new guys start coming in and then you start picking up a stripe here and there, it kind of loses the fun factor a little bit.”

“Well, I’m with a group of my buddies today, I’ll stick around. But if it’s all fresh faces, I don’t know if I’ll stay around with them.”

“You know, the best part about being in the reserves, like anybody else, was the dudes that I met there and the times we spent in the field”.

“You know, one of the factors that might have kept me in was if a lot of those other guys would have stayed in too.”

“It’s kind of just meeting different people, you know, that you wouldn’t have—I wouldn’t have met otherwise. It’s networking with other people.”

“One of the coolest things about it is you were able to get to know guys and their families and hang out with them, go to drill, and then, like I said, now that we’re out there’s a good group of us that still get together regularly and able to see each other just because we live, you know, we live close by.

## APPENDIX C. ALTERNATIVES AND GATEWAYS

**Below are anonymous quotes from the semi-structured interviews:**

CO on reserve Marines: “I will say about the reserves is all of those guys have, in general, you know, in aggregate, have a lot higher level of practical life experience and education.”

“Guys graduating from college finish up their contract and, I mean, they’ve got their full-time jobs, you know, laid out, so they just leave the Marine Corps Reserves behind.”

“In my experience, a lot of them joined for a lot of the same reasons I think that I did. They like the idea of getting some college money, they like the idea of being part of the Marine Corps, but, at the same time, being able to pursue school or civilian career.”

“Well, with the reserves and what really attracted me about it was you’re not tied down to it, if you will, to the extent that you can go to school and you can have another career and you can really find your niche in the world.”

“In fact, that’s what I really liked about the reserves, because I still got to do what I wanted to do with the Marines and get that training and get that experience, but also I was able to kind of find out what I wanted to do basically for the rest of my life.”

“I think the primary reason I went reserve initially as opposed to active was I wanted to go to college.”

“Easy to Separate - Oh, yeah. Absolutely. It takes a day to go to the CO, 1st sergeant and everybody and get checked out, give your gear, you know. The tough part is that day of getting all your stuff turned back in, but as soon as that’s done, man, there’s nothing.”

CO perspective on why Marines got out: “A lot of it was that they were getting out of college and they got jobs and they didn’t want to try to balance—they didn’t need the paycheck anymore and they didn’t want to balance the reserves with their, you know, with their new careers.”

“I originally wanted to be active duty, but I knew if I was to go active I would put school off and, you know, I wouldn’t get back into it. Yeah, that’s actually when I found out about the reserves.”

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## APPENDIX D. PERSON-CONTEXT INTERFACE

### Below are anonymous quotes from the semi-structured interviews:

“I think a lot of the guys when they affiliate with an I&I unit, or an I&I staff, their initial impression sometimes is that the reservists are kind of a little less worthy.”

“There are some on the staff who kind of look down on your reservists. I think that after some of the I&I have been there at their units for a few years, usually those opinions turn around to some degree.”

“MOS’s in the Marine Corps reserves, you get to a certain point where you have your job and then you have an active duty counterpart that’s doing pretty much the same job, you’re not ever going to be the top guy in your field.”

“As a reservist you will never —actually have any authority.”

“You know, they treat us like kids, even though most of us are in college.”

“You’ve got educated guys who want to be there, but the respect level for them was terrible, that was kind of about the end when you just get sick of going, “You know, man. I don’t need this. I can go get treated like this in real life and make money at it.”

“These guys are assholes,” and the I&I guys saying, “The reserves are incompetent.”

On I&I staff: “You know, we’ve got a really smart group of guys, but they just belittle and kind of disrespect a little bit.”

“The NCOs weren’t being given the opportunity to be NCOs and I think that was a big selling point in people leaving.”

Between I&I staff and Reservists: “There was no teamwork!”

“It appears to me the I&I staff also has a lot on their plate. You know, they have a daytime job as well in terms of, every day there are funerals, every day there are engagements that they’re supposed to go off to, or some senator wants the Marines as a backdrop for some event.”

“It becomes burdensome. We just got done doing all the planning. We supported the 14th Marines for a fire ex this summer and just the planning going into that was extreme. You know, I was probably pulling, I don’t know, on average maybe, at a guess, maybe 16 to 20 hours a week doing planning stuff; everything from shopping lists for, you know, miscellaneous parts, to trying to get spare parts order, to trying to get all of our rosters cleaned up, to trying to get travel arrangements set up for all the different DETs. The I&I



is engaged on all this, but there's no one coordinating it. The planning piece is firmly on the FMCR side."

CO comments on keeping Marines in the reserves: "I think if the reserves are going to be effective, you know, really sorting out roles and responsibilities between the INI staff, the active duty side, and the reservists, and managing those relationships so that they're collaborative and, you know, there is the right level of mentorship and cooperation, and then, you know, just treating people the way that you would want to be treated, that's what's going to keep the good guys there."

"The I&I are basically—the message they're getting from their leadership is that their job is to enable, but it's to the reserve folks to basically to provide the information, format it, you know, make sure it's all correct, submit it, or whatever. If you want it proofread or you want somebody else to provide input or ideas, you know, you can call your I&I, but the actual work of getting stuff done is on the FMCR side, yeah, and they're pretty direct about it. You know, like I said, that's coming from their leadership."

"There's no way I can get to this but "Okay, well, we'll try to work on it, but I'm going to have to get some I&I support." You reach out to the I&I and they're like, "Nope. Sorry. We can't help you. We're too busy."

"Because I&I swaps out every three years, I just didn't feel like proving myself to another I&I staff, I didn't have to prove it again to another, you know, gunny who was going to show up and call us all shit bagger reservists."

Reservist's feelings on I&I staff: "We felt like a burden to them"

"We went through a couple of I&I staff's there that did not have the best interests of the reservists in mind."

I&I and lack of Respect: "It's about the individuals. If you want to keep good people around, you've got to treat them right."

"We had a really—we had a tough command. We had the CO and first sergeant were—they were a little tough to work for, so that in addition was a factor in me wanting to say, "You know, man, it's about that time."

"Relationship between the I&I and the reserves was absolutely toxic."

"The active duty guys just—they treated the reservists like shit "

"You may have an I&I who just doesn't want to support the reserves and that trickles down to his command climate."

“You know, if I had felt like I got the respect that I rated as a staff sergeant in the Marines, the experience that I had and everything, I’d probably keep going.”

“The I&I side, had a lot of underlying animosity they consider the reservists to be less of Marines than they are.”

“I just felt like we weren’t shown the respect that was due for the experience level that our Marines had.”

“The reserves and I&I get detached from each other and they butt heads and, you know, they don’t see eye to eye.”

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## APPENDIX E. QUALITY OF LIFE

### **Below are anonymous quotes from the semi-structured interviews:**

“Drill becomes so much of a burden at that point, you know, that when family stuff is coming up and everything, you finally go, “Okay, I can—I’ve done my time. I can be done with it, you know.”

“It was like pulling teeth for them to let me go to my own wedding.”

“My first enlistment was up and it was actually quite a point of contention between me and my wife of me reenlisting.”

“You know, my wife was—I wouldn’t say she was pushing me out, but she certainly didn’t put up a fight for me to stay in either.”

“I had a daughter in March and so a lot of focus was on the family, that helped seal the deal of influencing me to get out.”

“There’s always something. You know, you’re family wants to do something or your kid has something, it’s always on a drill weekend and it just gets old.”

“So, you know, if there would have been a little more flexibility, you know, with being there and just that they would kind of respect our time as much as we respect being there.”

“It was taking up a lot of my time away from both my family and my career.”

“I didn’t want to travel, because that was the biggest thing for me was for me to be here for my family and my career.”

“Everyone that I’ve ever talked to that’s gotten out... usually their reasons are that they want to get on with their civilian career or they’re just about to get married, or they recently got married and they had a kid, so they want to devote more time to family issues or school or work or whatever.”

“It kind of starts and then when you get into an NCO billet you start getting more responsibilities that take time at home. And then when I was a platoon sergeant it was like never ending. I mean, it was probably ten hours a week or more of time at home, easily ten hours a week.”

“Throughout the month we had a lot to do, we handle a lot of our administrative functions throughout the month. The planning side, we were on in conferences with the

I&I and on drill weekends. Nowadays, we tend to do a lot of the planning via telecons and scheduled telecons, like at night, during the month.”

“If you’re relying on a guy or gal whose got commitments, maybe working 60, 70, 80 hours a week or whatever at their civilian job, stuff just doesn’t get done. You miss deadlines and before any exercise you’ve got a certain amount of time before you have to put in.”

“On getting out of the reserves: The other thing is that I had a full-time job and I, you know, moved into a management position in 2011, so my job became a lot more demanding.”

“Affected civilian Career”

“I had like 25 or 30 fit reps to write and I had 25 reviews to write for my regular job, and they all hit at the same time...It was just brutal. It was actually brutal.”

“I’m seeing more and more of a need for work done outside of the drill weekend But I guess, for me lately I’m seeing over the last couple of years a bigger and bigger demand for that, especially with the Marine Corps Reserve where we’re really needing that time out of people where we’re putting more and more administrative load onto the reserve staff and it’s getting harder and harder just because you get emails and phone calls throughout the day at your civilian job saying, “Hey, you need to be this stuff today for the Marine Corps.” That gets hard.”

“It definitely affected my civilian career. I feel like I spent too much time making my Marine Corps career the focus of my efforts in my life in general and I regret it.”

“If I was in right now, there’s no way I could do it. My civilian job is different and I’m just too busy. I really couldn’t be in right now. It wouldn’t work.”

“Then I’m still filling out after action reports and personnel rosters and all the different kinds of paperwork that’s associated with being a platoon sergeant, as well as I’m catching up with my career side.”

CO on Drill weekends: “All the reserve guys would echo this sentiment, every time that there is something cool going on a weekend, it’s drill weekend.”

“No kidding, real world stuff is going to fail if you don’t do all this extra work. That stress level has been a big negative point.”

“They would plan these drills at the worst time and you thought it was like a joke or like a conspiracy against you.”

“You know in the reserves, the mantra of the reserve thing being a one weekend a month duty...as soon as you’re promoted a little bit and get into leadership responsibilities...it really takes up a lot more time throughout the week in addition to your regular job.”

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## APPENDIX F. INCENTIVES TO STAY

### **Below are anonymous quotes from the semi-structured interviews:**

On Joining: “I didn't have a career in mind but I wanted to do something that was meaningful.”

“They were offering a bonus at that time too, so that certainly played a little bit of part into it, but it was more me wanting to stay in and really finish what I started.”

“In my case, like you said, we didn't do this to get a pat on the back and I also didn't join the Marine Corps to make money either. So the money issue was always kind of a bonus for me.”

CO on incentives: “The Marine Corps could try monetary reimbursement like paying to keep people in, but I think you, at some point, incentivize the wrong people to stay in these units.”

“I think it varies for everybody, you know, but there is some financial incentive. You know, you do get paid for your drill weekends and your two week Annual Trainings.”

“If you wanted to get a bonus and stuff, you had to talk with the career planner to see what was available, but he was in Los Angeles.”

“If you show a little bit of hesitation of getting out ... I've seen them make guys go sit down with the reenlistment guy, and, you know, go through the options. Sometimes that happens, but for the majority of folks the command doesn't really care at that point. If you're ready to go, you're ready to go.”

On bonuses: “Usually not much, you know, maybe a couple of thousand bucks or something like that, so there was a small incentive I guess from that end.”

“So it's definitely not a financial thing. I mean, to stay in the reserves you've just really got to want to be there, and that's the bottom line, because there's really no financial benefits or health care benefits. There's really nothing other than just wanting to be there.”

“Benefits had nothing to do with me going in”.

“Well, I remember there was a bonus for like five or ten grand and I was really wanting to get it, but the career planner like sat on my paperwork for a while for something. I don't remember exactly the circumstances, but I remember being pretty angry with him.”



“I don’t think I’ve ever really heard any of them tell me that they’ve done it just for the money or some other benefit.”

“I think ultimately it really comes down to if you’re going to motivate an individual to stay in the reserves and you want to keep the good people...Stop offering these once in a while bonuses and start offering opportunities for Marines to grow.”

“For staying in... He just really loves being there, so reenlisting for him, I think he even got a little bit of a bonus, but reenlisting for him was a no-brainer.”

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