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Retention of junior Naval Special Warfare officers

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NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
Monterey, California

THESIS

RETENTION OF JUNIOR NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE OFFICERS

by

Keith B. Davids

September 1998

Thesis Co-Advisors: Alice Crawford
                       Mark J. Eitelberg

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The Commander of the Naval Special Warfare Command (NSWC) has identified junior officer retention within the Naval Special Warfare community as a significant problem. In 1997, the community experienced the highest number of resignations on record, and this trend has continued in 1998. NSWC has taken several steps to identify the cause of recent retention trends, one of which was to provide support for this study. The purpose of this study was to identify the factors that lead to resignation of junior Sea-Air-Land (SEAL) officers. Three data sources were developed specifically for this study: an Active Duty Survey of junior officers serving in SEAL billets, a Resignation Survey of officers who requested resignation in FY98 and FY99, and focused interviews with SEAL officers who recently separated or were awaiting separation from the Navy. The results of the research show that the majority of SEAL officers greatly enjoyed their job. Nevertheless, family separation, improper utilization by operational commanders, minimal chances for conducting combat operations, and the perceived lack of vision of senior SEAL leadership contribute significantly to a service member's decision to leave. Additionally, the study found that pay and marital status did not affect the decision to leave service as long as the service member was satisfied with job-related factors. Once a service member became dissatisfied with the job, pay and marital status were found to play a significant role in the stay/leave decision. The results also suggest that many of the officers departing from service were top performers.

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RETENTION OF JUNIOR NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE OFFICERS

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Submitted in partial fulfillment
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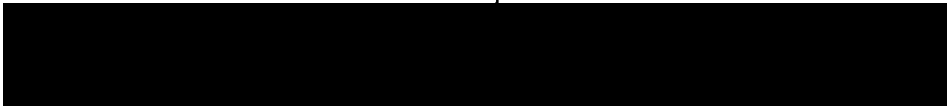
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ABSTRACT

The Commander of the Naval Special Warfare Command (NSWC) has identified junior officer retention within the Naval Special Warfare community as a significant problem. In 1997, the community experienced the highest number of resignations on record, and this trend has continued in 1998. NSWC has taken several steps to identify the cause of recent retention trends, one of which was to provide support for this study. The purpose of this study was to identify the factors that lead to resignation of junior Sea-Air-Land (SEAL) officers. Three data sources were developed specifically for this study: an Active Duty Survey of junior officers serving in SEAL billets, a Resignation Survey of officers who requested resignation in FY98 and FY99, and focused interviews with SEAL officers who recently separated or were awaiting separation from the Navy. The results of the research show that the majority of SEAL officers greatly enjoyed their job. Nevertheless, family separation, improper utilization by operational commanders, minimal chances for conducting combat operations, and the perceived lack of vision of senior SEAL leadership contribute significantly to a service member's decision to leave. Additionally, the study found that pay and marital status did not affect the decision to leave service as long as the service member was satisfied with job-related factors. Once a service member became dissatisfied with the job, pay and marital status were found to play a significant role in the stay/leave decision. The results also suggest that many of the officers departing from service were top performers.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND

Retention of Naval Special Warfare Officers has been identified as a problem by senior Naval Special Warfare leadership. (Richards, 1997) Fiscal year 1997 had the highest level of Sea Air and Land (SEAL) officer resignations on record. For the Naval Special Warfare community to fulfill its assigned mission within the Department of the Navy, it must recruit, train, and retain qualified personnel. As recruiting and training costs rise, it is becoming increasingly important that the community retain qualified officers to maximize its return on investment in human capital.

There are several critical reasons why current retention rates should be of great concern to the Navy. One of these reasons is that, if recent rates are an indicator of future retention, a shortage of Lieutenant Commanders will likely occur over the next few years. At the same time, the SEAL community is faced with a growing number of commitments. An increased emphasis on low intensity conflicts and the recognition of the requirement for a crisis response capability have resulted in an increased demand for special-operations-capable forces. (USSOCOM, 1997)

Additional reasons support the need to retain qualified officers besides simply filling billets. SEAL platoons are continually finding themselves in high-visibility, potentially hostile environments. Recent examples include Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia. Increasing demands placed on SEAL Teams, coupled with the use of new technologically advanced equipment, will require greater expertise on the part of SEAL officers. Advanced weapon systems, the growing threat of terrorism, and the potential proliferation of Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical weapons will require officers to be highly-trained in sophisticated systems. (USSOCOM, 1997)

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B. RETENTION PICTURE

The increase in joint billet requirements that took place in 1987 created a gap between the number of Lieutenant Commanders required and the number existing within the Naval Special Warfare community. In response to this, the community increased the number of officer accessions considerably in 1989 and 1990 to over 60 during each year. In 1990, as the Department of Defense began its force drawdown, the overall number of officer accessions decreased to roughly fifty. Given input from Basic Underwater Demolition/Seal (BUD/S) training of fifty officers a year, a cumulative (CCR) continuation rate (or the product of the annual continuation rates for the desired range of years-of-service) of 79.9 percent is required to meet current requirements. (Campion, 1997) Actual rates are compared with required cumulative continuation rates since 1989 in Figure 1.
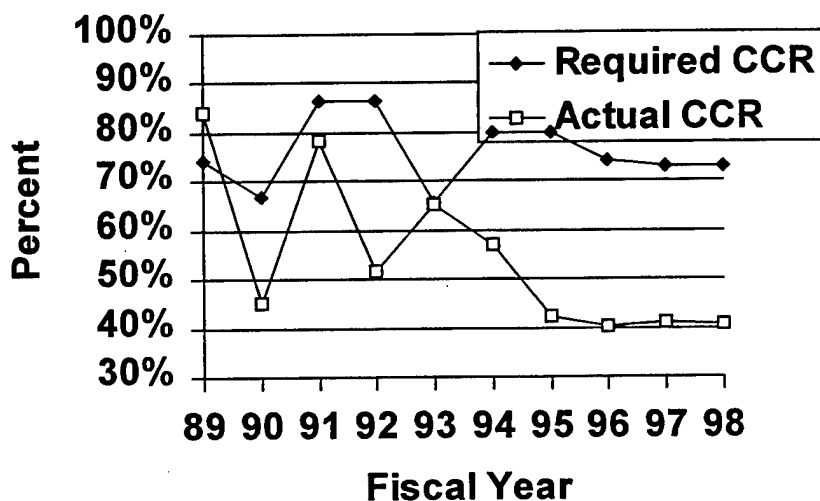
Source: CDR Campion, SEAL Officer Community Manager, 1997.

Figure 1.   Required and Actual Cumulative Continuation Rates For SEAL Officers Since 1989

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To meet current Lieutenant Commander manning requirements, the SEAL community must promote twenty-one officers to O-4 annually. Based on past promotion history (eighty-percent selection rate), that means the community must retain, on average, twenty-six officers in each year-group to the ten-year point. Year-groups 1993 and 1994 currently number in the low twenties. This should be cause for concern, particularly since the 1994 year-group has not yet reached its Minimum Service Requirement (MSR). In Fiscal Year 1997, officer resignations reached thirty-eight--the highest level of SEAL resignations on record. This is a reduction of greater than nineteen percent in the Lieutenant inventory. (Campion, 1997) Current annual accession plans call for twenty resignations per year. For Fiscal Year 1998, the SEAL community has received thirty-eight resignation letters, and already there have been ten letters submitted requesting resignation in 1999. Officer resignation trends since 1990 are shown in Figure 2.

C.   PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research is to identify the factors that have caused the recent decline in SEAL officer retention rates. Using survey and interview data, this research examines factors that may be leading to the recent decline in junior officer retention rates. Information gained from this study can assist policy makers in stemming or reversing current trends.

Figure 2. Officer Resignation Trends Since 1990

Source: CDR Campion, SEAL Officer Community Manager, 1997.

D. SOURCES OF DATA USED IN THE STUDY

Data for the study are derived from three sources. The first source of data is a survey of SEAL officers (O-3 and below) currently serving in SEAL billets. The second source of data is a survey of SEAL officers who have requested resignation from active duty. The third source of data is personal interviews with SEAL officers who have recently (1998) resigned from active duty, or who were awaiting separation at the time of this study.

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The following chapter attempts to provide some background and insight about the SEAL community and explores the question "What type of Person becomes a SEAL?" It also addresses issues regarding the cost of personnel turnover, and the effect excessive turnover can have on both officer quality and recruiting efforts.

Chapter III contains a review of literature and previous studies regarding both civilian and military turnover. In this chapter, the relationships between job satisfaction and turnover, human capital and turnover, performance and turnover, and demographics and retention are examined. The chapter concludes by examining prior military studies on retention.

Chapters IV, V, and VI contain the analysis of the study and examine the results of the Active Duty Survey, The Resignation Survey, and the Resignation Interviews, respectively. The final chapter, chapter VII, contains both conclusions and recommendations for the future.

II. BACKGROUND

A. NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE: A UNIQUE COMMUNITY

The Naval Special Warfare community is characterized by a strong culture that is rooted in a tradition of heroic service. Since its early beginnings, before the commissioning of SEAL Teams, the men who made up the Underwater Demolition Teams where characterized as adventurous and daring. After the official commissioning of the SEAL Teams in 1962 by President Kennedy, SEALs distinguished themselves in the jungles of Vietnam, earning themselves a reputation as deadly effective unconventional warriors. In the Post-Cold War era, the SEAL community has struggled to define its new role within the Department of Defense. As Admiral Cathal "Irish" Flynn, USN (Ret.), the first regular U.S. SEAL Admiral, wrote in the forward of Orr Kelly's book *Brave Men, Dark Waters*:

> Once again, as Orr Kelly aptly expresses it, naval special operations forces must answer the question, "Who are we?" Their predecessor units were created or expanded in wartime, following identification of specific operational needs to which resourceful men readily adapted themselves. In those days there was little in the way of preexisting organizations, material, or career considerations to fetter their adaptability. Now, however, the expansion is taking place within a framework of established organizations and force structures, accompanied by long-range, expensive programs for acquisition of equipment. Unlike their predecessors, today's naval special warriors have the assurance of sustained and adequate resources, but their adaptability is programmatically constrained, and they have neither the actualities of an ongoing conflict nor the received certainties of the Cold War to guide their planning. On balance, it is probably more difficult than ever to determine the niche of operational capabilities that the expanded naval component of the U.S. Special Operations Command should fill, and toward which its development should be directed. (Flynn quoted from Kelly, 1992)

The SEAL community is unique in that it is administratively controlled by the Navy but operationally commanded by the Army. In 1987, Naval Special Warfare Command came under the operational command of the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). This has been the cause of some tension, as the SEAL culture has been forced to amalgamate with those of the Army and Air Force. Despite the organizational change created when Naval Special Warfare was subsumed by the USSOCOM, SEALs still deploy in support of Navy Commanders while deployed on Navy ships and submarines. Working for different chains of command (and frequently for an operational commander without a background in Special Operations) has been identified as the cause of frustration among many SEALs. SEAL officers have repeatedly expressed concern that, while deployed, regardless of operational capability, they unfavorably compete for missions with both the Army Special Forces A-Teams and the Marine Corps Force Reconnaissance Teams. (Based on responses to the Active Duty Surveys and Resignation Interviews collected for this study.)

It is not unusual for a SEAL Lieutenant to be assigned as a Task Unit Commander while deployed in support of an Amphibious Ready Group (ARG), or while deployed to a Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF). While this provides young officers with uniquely challenging roles (for which they are not formally trained), it results in a junior Naval officer having to compete for employment with a Marine Colonel in the case of the ARG, and an Army or Air Force Colonel at a JSOTF. This situation is clearly unique to this community.

B.   OFFICER PIPELINE

The Naval Special Warfare Community has the luxury of choosing its candidates from a large, highly skilled pool of applicants. This suggests that, on average, the quality of an officer who is selected for, and completes, the required training should be higher than that of the average officer within the Navy. If this is true, then the selection rate to Lieutenant Commander should be, on average, greater in the SEAL community than in the rest of the Navy. Past data support this notion. Historical promotion rates for Seal officers have hovered at around 80 percent. In 1996, the "in-zone" (scheduled) selection rate for SEAL officers to Lieutenant Commander was 82.4 percent (28 of 34 eligible officers); but, in 1998 the community was below the average with only 22 out of 34 selected for promotion. There are several possible reasons for this variation. One possibility is that the large number of voluntary resignations in 1998 may have skewed the selection rate. That is, officers seeking voluntary separation are required to inform the selection board of their intentions prior to the board convening; and these officers would not be considered for promotion. A second possibility is that the large variation in annual promotion rates may be largely explained by the small sample size--normally fewer than thirty five.

The first significant obstacle in the community pipeline comes after selection to Lieutenant Commander, when a SEAL officer must screen successfully for Executive Officer (XO). Prior to 1998, the Naval Special Warfare community allowed its XO selection to be conducted predominantly by members from other warfare communities, with at least one Special Warfare officer on the board providing representation. Non-SEAL screening board members cannot be counted on to understand the implications of

the different billets that SEAL officers hold. This implies that some officers may not be rewarded for accepting more challenging assignments. The average percentage of eligible officers who have successfully screened for XO since 1990 is approximately 70 percent.

C. OFFICER TRAINING

Organizational theory suggests that how a person becomes a group member is an important element in determining commitment to the organization (Bolman and Deal, 1991, p. 293). Arguably, SEAL training is the most difficult training in the US military. In a letter to the editor of Proceedings of the U.S. Naval Institute in September 1989, Rear Adm. Irish Flynn and Master Chief Rudolph Boesch commented on the rigorous training:

> We have not found another training course in the armed services that produces men ready to reconnoiter and clear beaches when walls of surf plunge repeatedly in a quarter-mile zone of white water over a reef-studded nearshore. No other course selects those who endure the hours in almost complete darkness during the swimmer delivery vehicle's transit, shuddering constantly as the surrounding water and compressed gas they breathe suck body heat from them, while still ahead loom struggles with claustrophobia and real perils under a ship. Then-much later, when everyone is at the limit of strain and hypothermia - an underwater rendezvous and reentry with a submarine. Compared to the water-associated work, the SEALs' other responsibilities - parachuting, explosive demolition, land operations, close-quarter battle - seem safe, almost carefree endeavors. (Flynn and Boesch, 1989)

By surviving the training each individual has made a sacred declaration: "I want to do this job and I'll give my heart and soul." (Kidder, 1981, p. 63) Perhaps as a result of this, many SEALs articulate their loyalty to the SEAL community first and then to the Navy. Clearly, "want-to-be" SEAL officers put their heart and soul into training or leave the program. Where then does the organization lose this level of commitment?

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As a result of the intense training and unique mission, the SEAL Teams share a strong, cohesive culture. Many of the SEALs surveyed and interviewed in this study felt that it is often this strong, invisible force that gives the SEAL Platoons, and ultimately the community, their drive. Peer pressure was cited as an effective motivator for top performance as were performance appraisals. In a community of such small numbers, an officer establishes his reputation very early in his career--usually during his tour as a platoon commander.

Similar to the Naval Aviation pipeline, a great deal of warfare-specific skill training occurs in the first few years of a SEAL officer's career. In the case of the SEAL officer, this firm-specific training represents a large investment in human capital for the Navy. An officer typically spends at least a year in a training pipeline before he is ever placed in an operational SEAL platoon. Even then, he is not considered deployable and is not Warfare qualified. From the beginning of BUD/S training, it can take more than two years before an officer is in a platoon that is designated an overall rating of C-1: Ready to Deploy. An officer's training continues throughout a platoon work-up and deployment, including advanced schools ranging from High Altitude Low Opening (HALO) Military Free-Fall School to Joint Mission Planning courses. The "bottom line" is that, by the time an officer reaches MSR, he represents a significant investment to the Navy, and his voluntary separation from the Navy at MSR represents a major loss to the organization.

D. WHAT TYPE OF PERSON BECOMES A SEAL?

SEAL officers are often considered different than other Navy officers as a result of the tough screening process and the unique mission requirements of the Special

Operations community. Clearly, a person who selects a career involving strenuous physical activities, and a job description that includes parachuting, diving, the demolition of explosives, as well as a host of other hazardous tasks, may not find the proposition of office work very appealing. A common theme among SEAL officers is their desire to "remain operational." On average, the typical SEAL officer's "operational life" comes to a close near the point where he has completed his MSR. By "operational," most SEAL junior officers are referring to leading SEAL platoons into harm's way. Although there are a number of billets for more senior SEAL officers that are considered "operational," these billets do not meet this definition of operational. If we accept the notion that most SEAL officers are bright, highly motivated risk-takers who display a greater-than-average degree of what might be termed "stick-to-it-iveness," then clearly these officers represent a valuable commodity within the civilian labor market. Perhaps more than in other communities, SEAL officers may be more willing to change careers at a point where they are no longer able to serve in the capacity for which they had originally volunteered.

E.   COST OF PERSONNEL TURNOVER

Included in the cost of personnel turnover are recruiting, educating, and training costs. These costs occur in the form of dollars expended and lost productivity. Loss of productivity occurs while a new officer learns his job and continues until such time as he is as productive as the person whom he replaced. Additionally, the concept of net productivity suggests that the measurement of lost productivity should also consider the loss in productivity of the "trainer" of the new service member who gives up productive time to train the new officer. In dollar terms, the cost of putting an officer through

BUD/S is roughly $40,000, while the average cost of training a SEAL officer up to the five-year point has been estimated at $487,000. (Bernardo, 1998) This training cost does not include any reduction in net productivity due to on-the-job training.

F.   EFFECT ON QUALITY

Most SEAL officer separations are voluntary. This implies that, unlike many civilian organizations, the Navy is not selecting who stays or leaves. To assume the Navy is retaining the top 30-40 percent of its performers would be foolish. In fact, a 1995 study by Bowman on the "Cost-Effectiveness of Service Academies" found that "...the average quality of academy stayers (those who stayed to be considered for promotion to O-4) differ only slightly compared to the leavers (those who self-select out of active duty)." The implications for the Navy are that many top performers may be initiating separation from active duty. The Naval Special Warfare community must be concerned not only with the number of officers who leave, but also with the quality of those departing officers.

G.   EFFECTS ON RECRUITING

The Navy spends a great deal of money annually on its officer recruiting efforts. The Navy competes with the civilian job market and with other branches of the armed services for labor. Officers, by virtue of their educational backgrounds, tend to have a large number of job choices. During the period of job search, the individual will normally attempt to obtain as much information as possible about various job opportunities. Severely low retention rates are considered a symptom of job dissatisfaction. As potential job applicants search for information about Navy life, they will undoubtedly ask people currently in the Navy or those with past Navy experience

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about the job. With retention rates so low, the probability is increased that they encounter a service member who expresses considerable dissatisfaction with Navy life. The potential service member will likely search elsewhere for employment, thereby making recruiting efforts more difficult. While this is particularly ominous for many warfare communities (such as Surface Warfare), the SEAL community currently enjoys the luxury of drawing from a large pool of highly-qualified applicants, allowing that community to be highly-selective. In the short term, therefore, high turnover is not anticipated to adversely affect recruiting. In the long term, low retention caused by job dissatisfaction can be expected to negatively affect recruiting efforts.

H.   TURNOVER AS A SYMPTOM

As previously stated, low junior officer retention rates have been identified as a problem within the Naval Special Warfare community. Junior officer turnover may, however, be a symptom of a greater problem within the community. Organizational theory suggests that high turnover is an indication of a "poor fit" between formal organizational requirements and individual needs (Muchinsky, 1997). Poor retention rates should signal the need for a community evaluation to identify factors that are causing low retention rates.

A commonly held belief is that money can fix personnel retention problems. The apparent shortcoming of this approach is twofold: first, people may not be leaving for monetary reasons; and, second, even if an increase in pay results in greater retention, organizational deficiencies that originally led to poor retention may not be addressed. The exodus of US Air Force pilots in 1998 demonstrates this point. In 1996, approximately six out of ten Air Force pilots accepted a $60,000 bonus to remain in

service for an additional five years. Today, fewer than three out of ten are willing to stay even when offered a bonus of $110,000. (Tampa Tribune, 1998) The Air Force has addressed the pecuniary issues, but not the organizational ones. Naval Special Warfare should learn from the lessons of the Air Force: to effectively manage personnel turnover, senior leadership must address not only the symptoms of a problem, but the underlying causes as well; and money alone may not be the solution to retaining good people.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Upon commissioning, new Ensigns in the Navy agree to remain on active duty for a specified period of time. This commitment of service varies based on occupational specialty and commissioning source, but in the case of SEALs is usually 3-5 years. Once an officer reaches the MSR, he or she may decide to remain in service without any further obligation. For this reason, it is difficult to track officers at their "decision points," since the decision to leave active duty can occur any time after MSR. Enlisted sailors, on the other hand, have more clearly defined reenlistment dates. Perhaps as a result of this, the majority of studies regarding the factors that affect an individual's decision to stay on active duty have focused on enlisted service members.

Turnover, or the separation of employees from an organization, is a common and often useful phenomenon within an organization. As previously discussed, the turnover process helps to ensure a better "fit" between the employee and the organization. The challenge to manpower planners is to manage the turnover process as efficiently as possible. The significant loss that excessive turnover can represent to organizations has provided the impetus for a great deal of research on the topic, both in the civilian and military sectors. Detailed research on the turnover process is by no means new. In 1957, Herzberg, Mausner, Peterson, and Capwell conducted a review of research on job attitudes, including the effect of attitudes on turnover and absenteeism. Since that time, turnover has been the subject of study by many industrial/organizational (I/O) psychologists and labor economists. I/O psychologists have studied a variety of factors and their relationship to turnover to include: job satisfaction, job expectations, work environment, reward systems, realistic job previews, and compensation. Labor

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economists have focused more on the influence of money and labor market variables on the turnover process. The relationship of biographic and demographic characteristics on turnover has been researched as well.

The remainder of this chapter contains a review of past literature regarding the turnover process. Section A explores research regarding the turnover decision process. Section B looks at the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover. Section C explores the economic relationship between investment in human capital and job separation. Section D uncovers past studies regarding the correlation between performance and turnover, also known as the "functionality" of turnover. Section E looks at past research regarding the effect of demographic characteristics on retention. The final section of this Chapter, section F, provides an overview of past studies focused specifically on military retention. The chapter concludes with a Table that summarizes the major findings in turnover research uncovered during this literature review.

A.   JOB TURNOVER

Upon completion of their initial obligation, junior Naval Special Warfare officers are able to choose from competing alternatives for employment. Once MSR has been reached, the military competes with alternative employers for contracting labor services. In economic terms, each employee (SEAL) attempts to maximize his personal well-being or utility. In so doing, each service member compares whether or not the discounted present value of both pecuniary and non-pecuniary benefits is greater for civilian employment than for military employment. If the discounted present value is greater for civilian employment, the service member will initiate a separation from the military. In simplified terms, this means that, if the marginal cost (measured in both monetary and

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psychic costs) of staying in service is greater than the marginal benefit, a service member will quit the military.

Several studies have attempted to model the individual service member's stay/leave decision using the Annualized Cost of Leaving or "ACOL" model. The theory behind the ACOL model is that an individual decides to stay in or leave active service based on the perceived costs and benefits of staying or leaving. The individual will make the decision that maximizes his or her utility, again measured in both pecuniary and non-pecuniary dimensions. Warner and Goldberg (1984) utilized the ACOL model to estimate the reenlistment decisions of Navy enlisted personnel. The results of their study suggest that " sea duty exerts a significant influence on the reenlistment supply functions of Navy enlisted personnel. Additional sea duty serves to both reduce the elasticity of the reenlistment supply function and to shift it leftward." (Warner and Goldberg, 1984) An additional significant finding of the Warner and Goldberg study is that the negative effect of sea duty on first term reenlistment appears to be controlled by bonuses. That is, although sea duty appears to have a negative influence on a service member's decision to reenlist, this negative influence is overcome by monetary compensation in the form of reenlistment bonuses.

B.   JOB SATISFACTION AND TURNOVER

Job satisfaction is viewed as "the affective response to evaluation of a job" and is a function of a person's perception of the job relative to individual values. (Mobley, Horner, and Hollingsworth, 1978) It should be noted that job satisfaction is a present-oriented rather than future-oriented variable. (Mobley et al., 1978) Herzberg et al. (1957) found in a research and opinion review that a common finding of previous studies

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is that job dissatisfaction is directly related to turnover, and the greater the level of dissatisfaction, the greater the likelihood of turnover. Arnold and Feldman (1982) conducted a multivariate analysis of the determinants of turnover. In their study, the authors found that overall job satisfaction is one of the most predictive variables of turnover, and is negatively related to the turnover decision.

According to a review of studies involving overall job satisfaction by Mobley et al. (1978):

> [T]hese studies indicate a negative relationship between overall satisfaction and turnover. It is important to note, however, that the amount of variance accounted for is consistently less than 14%. As noted in subsequent sections, when satisfaction is included in multiple regressions with variables such as intention and commitment, its effect on turnover may become nonsignificant. (Marsh and Mannari, 1977; Mobley, Horner, and Hollingsworth, 1978) (Mobley, 1978)

Attempts have been made to determine the link between job satisfaction and organizational commitment. It is postulated that the greater an individual's satisfaction, the higher the level of his or her commitment to the organization. Conversely, if an individual is dissatisfied, his or her commitment will diminish and, at some point, the individual will initiate an alternative job search. (Herzberg et al., 1957) We have already recognized the tremendous commitment required to endure the basic SEAL training. At some point, then, the organization must be losing this level of commitment, because organizational theory suggests that the greater an individual's commitment, the less likely he or she will be to initiate a separation. (Schultz and Henderson, 1985)

The current increase in voluntary separations among SEAL officers has occurred during a significant military drawdown. According to organizational theory, a "downsizing" that takes place within an organization may be viewed by surviving

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members as a breach in the psychological contract that exists between the worker and the firm. This perceived "breach" weakens the level of commitment the survivors have for their organization. (Muchinski, 1997, p. 289) A study by Wong and McNally (1994) on the effect of the downsizing process on Army officers found a significant decrease in the level of organizational commitment of officers surveyed.

C.   HUMAN CAPITAL AND JOB SEPARATION

The military differs from most civilian firms in that it invests in both general and specific training for its junior-level managers (or officers). An organization will usually be willing to invest in firm-specific training for its employees, because the employees will be learning skills that will increase productivity within the firm, but those gained skills will not increase the individual's productivity with other firms. In theory, firms will be willing to pay a wage up to the point where the marginal productivity of a worker just equals the marginal cost. In fact, in perfect competition, the wage is exactly equal to the marginal revenue product. Payment above this point is a loss to the firm, and payment much below this point will provide incentive for the employee to find work elsewhere. The Navy spends a great deal of money providing junior SEALs with firm-specific training. This is evident through programs such as SEAL Tactical Training (STT), SEAL Junior Officer Training, and a plethora of advanced training schools. During this training period, the Navy is paying its officers a wage above their Marginal Revenue Product (MRP). This represents an initial loss to the Navy. At the completion of the training, however, the MRP of the individual officer should be above that of the wage rate. To capture the training costs and realize a positive return on its investment, the Navy must retain people for some period of time, usually beyond the MSR.

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Studies of large commercial firms that, like the military, hire workers at entry-level positions and then carefully observe those workers for desirable attributes, tend to pay a premium wage. Ehrenberg and Smith (1994) explained this phenomenon:

> Large firms, then, establish "internal labor markets"...; that is they hire workers at entry-level jobs and carefully observe such hard-to-screen attributes as reliability, motivation, and attention to detail. Once having invested time and effort in selecting the best workers for the operation, a large firm finds it costly for such workers to quit. Thus, large firms pay high wages to reduce the probability of quitting because they have substantial firm-specific screening investments in their workers. (Ehrenberg and Smith, 1994, p. 341)

Due to the increase in MRP from the firm-specific skills, the Navy should also be able to pay a greater wage to the individual officer than would a competitor. The amount paid by the Navy above any competing wage would then be a premium to the officer. At first, it may appear that all of the firm-specific training would allow the Navy to pay a wage greater than that of competitors, and therefore largely reduce the risk of turnover. This would be true if all other job characteristics were similar. However, wages are only one element of the equation. Wages must be weighed against a number of competing factors, including working conditions, job satisfaction, and a host of items that, taken together, define a worker's utility.

Theory suggests that, as time spent by a person in an organization increases, the chances of separation decrease. (Ehrenberg and Smith, 1994, p. 45) In the case of junior Special Warfare Officers, they must remain with the Navy until they reach their MSR, so the number of years with the organization in this case is not a relevant predictor of retention probability. After MSR has been reached, studies do support the theory that the longer an individual remains in the Navy (and therefore the greater the Navy's

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investment in human capital), the less likely it is that the individual will initiate a voluntary separation. According to Buddin (1984), "the firm specific human capital hypothesis suggests that job separation is a function of job tenure, individual and firm characteristics, and investments in firm specific human capital."

I/O psychologists have looked at the effect of a Realistic Job Preview (RJP)—that is, an honest portrayal of a job--on turnover. One belief is that a major reason why people quit their jobs is disillusionment. The majority of the research seems to indicate that an RJP has very little if any effect on turnover. Zaharia and Baumeister (1981), and Reilly, Brown, Blood, and Malesta (1981) found that RJPs had no effect on turnover. Although there is considerable information available on SEAL training, the unique job characteristics and secret nature of the job do not allow for a realistic preview of life beyond BUD/S.

Other studies have tried to explain retention by the match between worker and firm. For example, Johnson (1978) and Wilde (1979) looked at an individual's choice to remain with a firm by using a learning or experience model. This model proposes that each job represents a unique set of characteristics, and the only way an individual can determine the true value of a job is through experience. This theory would seem particularly appropriate for the Navy where the effects of family separation and life at sea can only be realized over time. New information gained through experience on the job causes the employee to reevaluate the employment contract.

A second model related to job matching and job separations used by Javonovic (1977), Martenson (1978), and Wilde (1979) is known as the search model. This model says that, when a worker accepts employment, he or she may be uncertain about

alternative job offers. As new information becomes available about alternative employment opportunities, an individual will then reevaluate the employment contract. Job separation results if alternative employment offers greater total returns than does the current job match. In the case of the junior officers, this may have some relevance. During the initial period of commitment, the officers receive considerable general training in middle management skills, which may enhance their civilian employment opportunities. Unlike specific training, the skills acquired through general training are transferable to outside firms. If the general training increases an individual's marginal revenue product at other firms, the wage other firms may be willing to pay increases, thereby making alternative offers more attractive. An abundance of alternative job opportunities promising significant increases in pay may be attracting junior officers away from military service. As SEAL officers leave the Navy and are successful in the civilian labor market, they may serve as a model for others entertaining the stay/leave decision. These cohorts and the continuing strong economy have probably served to enlighten SEAL officers about their potential ease of movement into civilian employment opportunities.

D. WHAT IS THE CORRELATION BETWEEN PERFORMANCE AND TURNOVER?

An analysis of turnover within an organization would not be complete without addressing the functionality of employee turnover. Functionality refers to the quality of the people who are retained as compared with those who leave. Organizational theory suggests that a certain degree of turnover is beneficial, as employees obtain greater information about their job fit. Theoretically, employees with the best job fit will remain,

and the organization will remove others who are not well suited to their job. The problem unique to the military, and particularly the SEAL community, is that by the time service members reach MSR, they must have displayed a good fit or they would have never survived to that point. Recall from a previous discussion that Bowman (1995) found little variation in performance between Naval Academy graduates who stayed to the Lieutenant Commander board and those who did not. In the case of the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) and Officer Candidate School (OCS) graduates, Bowman found that "the average quality of the ROTC, end even more so OCS, graduate leavers is far below that of stayers from these two sources." (Bowman, 1995)

Other studies have indicated a positive performance-turnover relationship. Schwab (1991) studied 259 social science faculty members. His results indicate that, among tenured faculty, higher performers were more likely to leave, but for untenured faculty, low performers had the greatest chance of turnover. A meta-analysis conducted by McEvoy and Cascio in 1987 indicated good performers were less likely to quit an organization than were poor performers.

Conversely, a 1994 meta-analysis by Williams and Livingston examined 56 civilian studies regarding the link between turnover and performance. The results of the meta-analysis "indicated an inverse relationship between performance and voluntary turnover." (Williams and Livingstone, 1994) That is, the better performers were more likely to leave than poor performers. However, they found this inverse relationship to be weaker when rewards were linked to performance.

Some researchers have hypothesized that top and bottom performers are both the most likely to leave an organization, implying a curvilinear relationship between

performance and turnover. The logic is that the bottom performers recognize their "poor fit" with the organization or job and may likewise recognize their limited promotion potential. At the same time, the "middle-of-the-road" performers remain because their opportunities elsewhere tend to be limited. Additionally, it is assumed that the top performers will have a tendency to depart because they enjoy ease of movement into the civilian labor market. This is a particularly interesting notion when one considers where SEALs are headed once they leave the Naval Special Warfare community. Many are accepted to top-ranking business schools such as Harvard, while others are quickly hired with large firms.

Jackofsky, Ferris, and Breckenridge (1986) tested the notion of a curvilinear relationship between performance and turnover. In an effort to study two diverse populations, accountants and truck drivers were chosen as subjects of their study. The authors found a curvilinear, albeit asymmetric, relationship for both populations.

High performance would be expected to increase one's expectancy for rewards while poor performance may result in negative attitudes concerning the intrinsic worth of the job. Marsh and Manari, 1977) The results of a study by Harrison, Virick, and William (1996) on the determinants of the functionality of turnover suggest that the organizational reward system does play a significant role. The authors found that the greater the difference in rewards given to sales representatives who performed well and those who did not perform as well, the greater the positive correlation between staying and performance. That is, in organizations that rewarded great performance, better performers tended to remain with the organization. The basic underlying principle is that the increased reward for better performance results in a greater degree of job satisfaction.

In a system where the best performers are rewarded, poor performers would receive lower job satisfaction and therefore would be more likely to quit. A system that does not reward top performers, however, may have the opposite effect. The best performers may become dissatisfied by the lack of rewards for their efforts and therefore would be more likely to quit.

The reward system within the Navy does not readily allow for better performers to be instantly rewarded. Promotion is virtually automatic through MSR. Pay and benefits are set by law based on time and rank, but not by performance per se. Awarding of medals is often cited as a method to recognize top performers, but the system is commonly viewed as inconsistent, and is often a better reflection of how an officer's boss views the award system rather than individual performance.

What are the implications of these research findings regarding the performance-turnover relationship to the SEAL community? Particular attention should be given not only to *how many* people are getting out (which is currently the case), but also to the *quality* of those people exiting the organization. Based on prior research, and given the current reward system in the Navy, it is feasible to conclude that the SEAL community may be losing many of its top performers.

E. THE EFFECT OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS ON RETENTION

There have been numerous studies on the effect of demographic characteristics on retention behavior in both the civilian and military labor forces. For example, the age of an employee has been shown to play a significant role in his or her retention. Meyer, Beville, Magedanz, and Hackert (1979) found that younger employees had a significantly

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higher turnover rate than did older employees in South Dakota. "Possible explanations for the relationship between quit rates and youth include indecision by younger employees regarding preferred career paths and region of residence, as well as the possible absence of increased family responsibilities and/or financial obligations that may constrain decisions." (Kellough and Osuna, 1995)

The possible effect of race on retention has varied across studies. It is commonly postulated that, due to racial bias, minorities experience a lower degree of job flexibility than others do and, therefore, their ease of movement in the labor market is reduced. According to Holmlond and Lang (1985) and Zax (1989), "some research suggests that racial/ethnical discrimination in labor markets, which has the effect of making job searches more difficult for minorities, also works to deter members of minority groups quitting." Kellough and Osuna, 1995) Despite publicized problems regarding racial tension, the military is considered to be ahead of the civilian labor market with regard to equal opportunity, potentially making it a favorable work environment for minorities. Conversely, in the SEAL community, with few minority role models, the work environment may be less than desirable for minority officers. (As of 30 June 1998, four out of the 93 O-5 and above SEAL officers, and one out of the 29 O-6 and above SEAL officers were minorities).

Marital status is another demographic variable that may have an impact on retention behavior. According to a literature review by Glaser (1996), "research has generally investigated the effects of work on family and not the reverse." There have been a number of military studies, however, on the effects of dependents on turnover. With an increasing percentage of military spouses pursuing a professional career, the

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influence of a spouse on the stay/leave decision of the military member is postulated to be increasing. A 1981 Navy study by Mohr, Holzbach, and Morrison on the role of spouses on the career decisions of junior Surface Warfare Officers found that "officers, in general, felt their wives were supportive of their Navy careers. Wives who worked outside the home were less supportive of a Navy career than those who worked within the home." An additional finding was that wives with jobs where relocation was perceived to be difficult were less supportive of a Navy career for their spouse than were wives in most other jobs. This may be significant in that more married women are participants in the professional work force today than in years past. (Ehrenburg and Smith, 1994, p. 165) While the Navy is currently adopting a policy of "home-basing" for its enlisted members, officers are still required to move frequently. These moves may represent the loss of a substantial income for the spouse not in the service, and therefore may play a significant role in the member's decision to leave active duty. Mohr et al. (1981) also found that "the least favorable aspect of a Navy career, according to the wives, was separations. Pay, benefits, and location changes were viewed as equal, somewhat positive factors.... Wives who found the JO's superior officers helpful in adjusting to a new location tended to be more supportive of a Navy career."

The effect of having children on a service member's decision to remain on active duty is unclear. If family separation is one of the most significant factors influencing an individual's decision to resign, as several past studies have indicated, then having children should have a negative influence on a member's decision to remain in service. The longer an individual remains on active duty, we would expect that, for job security reasons, having children would have a positive effect on an individual's decision to

remain on active duty. Job security used to be considered a major benefit of Navy life, but with the considerable downsizing of the force that has taken place in the past several years, and with the "zero defect" policy, this may no longer be true.

F. ADDITIONAL MILITARY STUDIES ON RETENTION

Cook and Morrison (1983) studied the relationship between career intentions and the professional development of junior Surface Warfare Officers (SWOs). They found that "controlling for time in service, career intentions of junior SWOs were positively related to SWO PQS (Personal Qualification System) progress. In addition, expeditious completion of SWO PQS was positively related to junior SWO performance evaluations (fitness reports)." (Cook and Morrison, 1983) The Cook and Morrison study also looked at the relationship between a person's billet, PQS progress, and career intentions. Significant differences were found between different billets with regard to career intentions. (Cook and Morrison, 1983) A parallel in the SEAL community might be the initial assignment of SEAL officers to SEAL or Seal Delivery Vehicle (SDV) Teams.

In the same study, Cook and Morrison examined the relationship between first sea tour factors and SWO retention. The authors found that an officer's perception of his first tour significantly affected the retention decision. This has interesting implications for the SEAL community. An ongoing problem within the community is the employment of very junior officers (Ensign and LTjg). Some SEAL teams have attempted to place these officers into platoons as a third officer, essentially in charge of nothing, with the sole responsibility of learning the trade. Other teams "stash" their Ensigns in departments to do administrative work. This problem will only be exacerbated if the SEAL community is forced to bring in more junior officers to offset the recent increase in

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voluntary separations. Another significant finding was that "career intent was found to be the single best predictor (of retention), accounting for 25 percent of the variance in the criterion when used by itself." (Cook and Morrison, 1983) Also significant was the finding that "officers receiving a split first assignment were more likely to resign than those not receiving a split assignment." (Cook and Morrison, 1983)

Nakada, Mackin, and Mackie conducted a study for the Navy in 1996 on nuclear officer retention. The study focused on determining the pay elasticity for retention bonuses. Using an ACOL model, this study attempted to quantify the impact of the Nuclear Officer Incentive Pay (NOIP) retention bonus program on ten retention decisions. Separate models were created for both Submariners and Surface Warfare Officers. Results of the study indicated that the pay elasticity for both cohorts was small but significant, suggesting that "pay does matter." The study also found that economic conditions were not an important factor in predicting retention. Specifically, the authors found that "unemployment effects were not particularly strong, and were not significant at the 0.05 level in most cases." (Nakada et al., 1996)

Clearly, nuclear-trained officers and SEAL officers are very different cohorts with different motivations and skill sets. However, because officers in both communities receive intense training and undergo a rigorous screening process, the average unemployment rate may have little impact on the specific labor market for persons in these categories. Additionally, the nuclear-trained officers would be expected to be more financially motivated than their SEAL counterparts.

Nakada (1984) utilized the Cox regression method to analyze survival probabilities of Navy enlisted personnel. His purpose was to provide a "detailed

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description of a new approach taken to estimate force behavior and to provide some preliminary results." Nakada concluded that using the Cox regression model was, in fact, feasible for analyzing survival probabilities. Using the Cox regression, he obtained an estimate of the effect of sea duty on retention and concluded that higher consecutive quarters of sea duty are associated with lower survival rates for single people, but had no significant effect on service members with dependents.

In a 1996 study, Nakada and Boyle attempted to quantify the effect of the Nuclear Officer Incentive Pay program on nuclear officer retention at the end of their minimum service requirement. The authors estimated separate models for submarine and surface warfare nuclear officers. For both groups the retention elasticities with respect to Continuation Pay (variable labeled COPAY) and the Annual Incentive Bonus (AIB) were small but statistically significant. For submarine officers, the results indicated a retention rate elasticity of .11, which means that for a 10 percent increase/decrease in COPAY, a 1.1 percent increase/decrease in the MSR retention rate was estimated. The retention rate elasticity for SWOs was estimated to be .39. For the Annual Incentive Bonus, the elasticities for submariners and SWO were .11 and .48, respectively.

Zinner (1997) analyzed the factors that influenced the retention of male, junior Marine Corps officers within their initial period of obligated service. Using a multivariate logistic regression model, the author found the following characteristics to significantly influence Marine officers' decisions to remain on active duty: commissioning source, occupational specialty, deployment to Operation Desert Shield/ Storm, satisfaction with various intrinsic aspects of life in the Marine Corps, concerns with the force drawdown, whether or not the officer searched for civilian employment in

the last twelve months, whether or not the officer believed that the skills he had acquired in the Marine Corps would be transferable to the civilian market, and the influence on the career decision of the officer's spouse.

In his Master's Thesis on Junior Officer Retention, Robert du Mont attempted to identify factors that lead to the resignation of junior Surface Warfare officers. The author surveyed both active duty and reserve officers to determine differing levels of satisfaction between the two groups. Additionally, he compiled civilian salary data from the reservists to determine the pay differential between the Navy and civilian jobs for former SWOs. From the fleet survey for conventional SWOs, the results indicated quality of family life, working hours, Navy leadership, and potential for command all significant in explaining career decisions. Interestingly, the study found that, on average, junior SWOs experienced a 20 percent pay cut after leaving active duty, but pay returned to its pre-departure level within two to three years. (duMont, 1997)

In summary, there has been extensive research on both civilian and military labor market turnover. Table 3.1 summarizes the major findings of both military and civilian turnover research presented in this chapter.

Table 3.1. A Summary of Major Findings in Turnover Research

Author	Finding
Herzberg, Mausner, Peterson, Capwell (1957)	Relationship exists between turnover and dissatisfaction.
March and Simon (1958)	Turnover largely influenced by satisfaction, desirability of leaving, and ease of movement.
Porter and Steers (1973)	Satisfaction is related to turnover. Major influences on turnover: personal characteristics, job, work environment, and organization.
Price (1977)	Turnover is influenced by dissatisfaction and opportunity to leave.
Mobley (1977)	Dissatisfaction leads to thinking about quitting, intention to search, intention to leave, and actual turnover.
Javonovic (1977), Martenson (1978), Johnson (1978), Wilde (1979)	Examined individual's choice to remain with a firm through the use of a learning/experience/search model. Individuals are able to ascertain the true value of a job only through experience.
Meyer, Beville, Magedanz, and Hackert (1979)	Age found to be a significant variable for turnover, with younger employees having a significantly higher turnover rate than older ones.
Zaharia and Baumeister (1981) / Reilly, Brown, Blood, and Malesta (1981)	Found that a Realistic Job Preview had no significant effect on the turnover decision.
Arnold and Feldman (1982)	Overall job satisfaction was found to be one of the most predictive variables of turnover and was negatively related to turnover.
Mowday, Porter, and Steers (1982)	Turnover model should include variables measuring: job expectations and attitudes; intent to leave; available alternatives. Organizational commitment is a reliable predictor of turnover.
Jackofsky, Ferris, and Breckenridge (1986)	A study of both accountants and truck drivers indicate the existence of a curvilinear relationship between performance and turnover, with both low and high performers more likely to voluntarily separate than average performers..
McEvoy and Cascio (1987)	Meta-analysis indicated good performers were more likely to quit an organization than poor performers.
Schwab (1991)	Among 259 social science faculty members, the higher performing tenured faculty were more likely to leave, while amongst untenured faculty the lower performers were more likely to separate.
Williams and Livingston (1994)	A meta-analysis of 56 civilian studies reported that the analysis indicated an inverse relationship between performance and voluntary turnover.
Glaser (1996)	A literature review concluded that the majority of research has generally investigated the effects of work on family and not the reverse.
Harrison, Virick, and William (1996)	The greater the difference in rewards for sales representatives who performed well and those who did not, the greater the positive correlation between staying and performance.

Table 3.1 (Continued)

Military Research:	
Holzbach, Mohr, and Morrison (1981)	Spousal influence affects career decisions of junior SWO officers. Wives who worked outside the home were less supportive of a Navy career than those who worked at home. According to wives, the least favorable aspect of a Navy career was separations.
Cook and Morrison (1983)	Studied the relationship between career intention and professional development. Significant differences were found between different billets with regard to career intentions. The study also found career intent to be the best single predictor of retention.
Warner and Goldberg (1984)	ACOL model used to predict retention. Additional sea duty causes left shift in reenlistment supply function.
Nakada (1984)	Used the Cox Regression Model to analyze survival probabilities. Findings included that higher consecutive quarters of sea duty are associated with lower survival rates for single people, but had no significant effect on service members with dependents.
Ashcraft (1987)	Sea-duty, perceived probability of finding a civilian job, and satisfaction with extrinsic aspects of military are most important factors in predicting retention intention of junior Naval officers.
Thielmann (1989)	Commissioning source, marital status, occupational specialty, race, intrinsic, and extrinsic factors influence junior Marine officer turnover.
Buddin (1984)	Firm specific human capital model suggests job separation is a function of job tenure, individual and firm characteristics, and investments in firm specific human capital.
Bowman (1995)	Average quality of ROTC and OCS graduate leavers was found to be below that of stayers from the same two sources.
Nakada, Mackin, and Mackie (1996)	Using separate ACOL models for nuclear officers in both the Surface Warfare and Submarine Warfare communities, the authors found the retention elasticities with respect to the Nuclear Officer Incentive Pay (NOIP) retention bonus program were small but significant indicating that "pay does matter".
Nakada, Boyle (1996)	Authors developed a model of retention behavior at MSR and then estimated and validated the model. Like the study mentioned above, the results indicated a small but statistically significant impact on retention, indicating once again that "pay does matter".

Table 3.1 (Continued)

Zinner (1997)	Using a multivariate logistic regression model, the author found the following to significantly influence Marine officers decision to remain on active duty: commissioning source, occupational specialty, deployment to Operation Desert Shield/Storm, satisfaction with various intrinsic aspects of life in the Marine Corps, concerns with the force drawdown, whether or not the officer has searched for civilian employment in the last twelve months, whether or not the officer believed that the skills he had acquired in the Marine Corps would be transferable to the civilian market, and the influence on the career decision of the officer's spouse.
DuMont (1997)	Quality of family life, working hours, Navy leadership, and potential for command all significant in explaining career decisions. On average, junior SWOs were found to experience a 20 percent pay cut after leaving active duty, but pay returned to its pre-departure level within two to three years.

Source: Based on work by Mowday, Porter, and Steers (1982), p. 120, Zinner (1997), p. 28, with additional entries by the author.

The considerable amount of prior research that has been conducted on the turnover process provides us with a point of departure from which we can begin to examine the retention problem that exists within the Naval Special Warfare junior officer ranks.

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. OVERVIEW

This thesis incorporates both quantitative and qualitative data from multiple sources. The first data source is survey questionnaires created by the author and administered to a random sample of junior (O1-O3) SEAL officers serving in SEAL billets during the end of 1997 and the first half of 1998. The Active Duty Survey attempted to capture information on a number of factors, including: service member's satisfaction with aspects of military life, demographic and biographic data, operational experience, and opinions on a variety of issues unique to the SEAL community. An analysis of variance procedure was used to determine if significant differences existed between the means of the responses to satisfaction questions for members with different career intentions. Additionally, a regression analysis was performed to determine the explanatory power of various demographic and attitudinal characteristics on a respondent's intention to leave or remain in service. A more comprehensive description of the methodology and results is provided in the chapter titled "Active Duty Survey."

In addition, a Resignation Survey was administered to SEAL officers who had requested resignation from active duty. A comparison of the Active Duty Survey results with those of the Resignation Survey was undertaken to reveal any differences in levels of satisfaction, demographic variables, and opinions between the two groups. Although the results of the Active Duty Survey are both valuable and interesting, it is the factors that distinguish the "stayers" from the "leavers" that are most germane to a study of retention behavior.

In the course of the research, the author attended an East Coast junior officer conference that examined the cause of the recent increase in SEAL junior officer resignations. The minutes of that conference, and two similar conferences (West Coast and Hawaii), were also incorporated into this thesis. In particular, recurrent themes presented by the junior officers were extracted and used to develop questions for a Resignation Interview. The Resignation Interview represents the final source of data for the study.

Much insight can be gained from surveying the general population of SEAL officers. The most important sources of information for this study of turnover, however, are the attitudes and opinions of officers who have decided to resign. Although the Active Duty Survey attempts to model the effect of certain variables on an officer's stated "career intention," the Resignation Survey and Resignation Interviews enable us to model the effects of select independent variables on the actual decision to quit. Clearly, there may be systematic differences between officers who remain on active duty and those who choose voluntary separation. Unlike the Active Duty and Resignation Surveys, the Resignation Interviews contain predominantly open-ended questions that allow officers to freely discuss topics and relate experiences relevant to their resignation decision. It was hoped that, through the course of interviews, themes would develop to substantiate and better explain the statistical analysis of survey results. A more complete discussion of the methodology is presented in Chapter VII.

V.   ACTIVE DUTY SURVEY

A.   DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS

A survey was conducted of 100 SEAL junior officers. Recall that, for purposes of this study, a junior SEAL officer is defined as an O-1 (Ensign) through 0-3 (Lieutenant). Officers from the East Coast, West Coast, and Hawaii were surveyed. The sample size of 100 may at first appear small; however, it represents approximately 30 percent of the junior SEAL officer population. A copy of the Active Duty Survey questionnaire is included as Appendix A.

The Active Duty Survey was pre-tested on several students at the Naval Postgraduate School to ensure that the questions were straightforward and unambiguous. An East Coast SEAL junior officer conference was used to collect initial survey data and to further test the survey instrument. No major problems with the initial survey were found, but one result of that conference was the addition of several questions to the original survey regarding officer detailing. The initial sample was small (n=32); however, it did provide some valuable information about what amount of variation could be expected for variables of interest. It is worth noting that, despite the small size of the initial sample, the responses of officers in the initial administration of the survey are very similar to those found in the total sample. A frequency distribution of the characteristics of respondents is provided in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1. Frequency Distribution of Survey Respondents, By Selected Characteristics (N = 100)

Characteristic (Name)	Percent
Paygrade	
Ensign	10
Lieutenant Junior Grade	24
Lieutenant	66
Marital Status	
Single	41
Married	56
Divorced	3
Number of Children	
Zero	66
One	18
Two	13
Three or More	3
Commissioning Source	
OCS/AOCS	38
NROTC Scholarship	22
NROTC Non-Scholarship	3
Naval Academy	32
Other (ECP, Seaman-to-Admiral)	5
Graduate Education	
With Master's Degree	5
Without Master's Degree	95
Geographic Location	
East Coast	51
West Coast	42
Hawaii	7

* OCS = Officer Candidate School, AOCS = Aviation Officer Candidate School, NROTC = Naval Reserve Officer Training Center, ECP = Enlisted Commissioning Program.

Based on the sample size and that of the relevant population, these selected characteristics are fairly representative of the population as a whole. Statistically speaking, the reader can be 95 percent confident that the results fall within a plus or minus 10 percent sampling error.

B. PROBLEMS WITH SAMPLING SMALL POPULATIONS

Sampling small populations can be problematic. The required sample size is dependent upon a number of factors, including: the amount of sampling error that can be tolerated, the actual population size, the amount of population variance with regard to the characteristic of interest, and the smallest subgroup within the sample for which estimates are needed. (Salant and Dillman, 1994)

Many of the variables in the Active Duty Survey can be expressed in terms of proportions. For example, several questions require a response of yes or no. To determine the required sample size for variables that can be expressed as a proportion, one must have an idea about the amount of variation that exists within the population with regard to the variables of interest. If no prior knowledge is available, a proportion value of .5 may be used. This, however, will require the sample size to be larger for a given confidence level. (Salant and Dillman, 1994)

The survey incorporates questions that elicit ordinal responses. Examples of these variables include questions that may be answered on a scale ranging from "Very Satisfied" (assigned a numerical value or 1) to "Very Dissatisfied" (a value of 5). For purposes of analysis, an interval scale between the responses was assumed. This scale, known as the Likert scale, is believed to work especially well when the objective is to elicit attitudinal information about a particular variable of interest. (Rea and Parker, 1992, p. 74)

The following formula is used to calculate the sample size for a finite population when variables are expressed in proportions:

$$n = z^2 [p(1-p)N] / z^2 [p(p-1)] + (N-1)C^2 \; [1]$$

Where n = the sample population

z = the Z value for various levels of confidence based on a normal distribution

p = the proportion of occurrence (.5 for purposes of this study)

C = is the confidence interval in terms of proportions

N = true population

Determining sample sizes for interval scale variables is slightly different. However, in most instances a survey administrator can select a sample size based on proportions that are associated with an overall margin of error and level of confidence by using the aforementioned formula. According to Rea and Parker (1992), "this sample size will generally satisfy the most stringent requirement of the interval scale variables."

A sample size of 81, given a target population of 500 and assuming the greatest amount of variation possible (worst possible conditions), is necessary to obtain a 95 percent confidence level that the results fall within a plus or minus ten percent sampling error. This calculation leaves a considerable margin for error, since the relevant officer population is considerably smaller than 500 and the initial survey data suggest that a proportion more forgiving than .5 can be used. As previously noted, the actual sample size was 100, placing the study well within these requirements. The SEAL officer population, including all ranks from O-1 to O-8, numbers approximately 529. The

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[1] For a more detailed description of sample size determination see "Designing and Conducting Survey Research" by Louis M. Rea and Richard A. Parker, 1992.

population of interest to this study does not include officers who have reached the rank of Lieutenant Commander (O-4) or greater, or officers who were awaiting separation from the Navy. This reduces the relevant population to approximately 250 officers.

C.   RESULTS OF THE SATISFACTION SURVEY

The first set of questions requested that respondents "Indicate your satisfaction with the following aspects of the Navy." For purposes of statistical analysis, an interval scale was used, with the following numbers assigned to the possible responses:

1=Very Satisfied, 2=Somewhat Satisfied, 3=Neither, 4=Somewhat Dissatisfied, and 5=Very Dissatisfied.

The aspect with the highest average satisfaction was "Enjoyment of Job." A mean value of 1.98 indicates that, on average, the respondents enjoy what they do. This finding is different from what studies on Surface Warfare retention indicate. (duMont, 1997) Past retention studies of Surface Warfare Junior officers have found that many junior officers do not enjoy the day-to-day activities of their job. This situation may be more closely compared to what is occurring in the naval aviation community, where pilots are leaving despite the possibility that they may still enjoy flying. Interestingly, average satisfaction with "Promotion Opportunities" was the second highest aspect in the survey, but was considerably lower with a mean value of 2.45. "Team Leadership" was a close third, with a mean of 2.50, a bi-modal distribution, and the largest amount of variance of any category in this section (Standard Deviation = 1.28). A complete listing of the mean values and standard deviations to the Satisfaction Survey questions is provided in Appendix B.

The aspect with the lowest average satisfaction was "Amount of Family Separation," with a mean of 3.62. This factor has also been identified as one of the areas causing most dissatisfaction among Surface Warfare Officers in recent retention studies. (duMont, 1997) "Quality of Family Life" was another factor with which people were not satisfied. The factors with the two highest and two lowest mean scores are presented in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2. **Percentage Distribution of SEAL Junior Officer Responses: "Indicate your satisfaction with the following aspects of the Navy"**

Satisfaction With the:	n =	% Very Satisfied (1)	% Somewhat Satisfied (2)	% Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied (3)	% Somewhat Dissatisfied (4)	% Very Dissatisfied (5)
Enjoyment of Job Mean = 1.98	100	36	45	7	9	3
Promotion Opportunities Mean = 2.45	100	15	42	27	15	1
Family Separation Mean = 3.62	100	3	7	35	35	20
Quality of Family Life Mean = 3.34	100	3	19	30	37	11

* Level of satisfaction, based on frequency of response, where "Very Satisfied" = 1, "Somewhat Satisfied" = 2, "Neither" = 3, "Somewhat Dissatisfied" = 4, and "Very Dissatisfied" = 5.

The question, "What are your current career plans?," was included to determine respondents' career intentions. Based on their response, the respondents were classified as one of the following:

Careerist – Serve 20 or more years with my current designator

Transfer – Lateral transfer to a second designator

Undecided – Undecided

Resigner – Keep my designator and resign before 20 years

Recall from the literature review that Cook and Morrison (1983) found career intent to be the single best predictor of retention behavior. This cannot be good news for the SEAL community, since a considerably greater percentage or respondents intend to resign rather than make the service a career. The largest single category is the "Undecided" one. This suggests that a large percentage of officers are still evaluating their career intentions, and may yet be influenced by organizational improvements. A frequency distribution of stated career intentions is provided in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3.   Percentage Distribution of SEAL Junior Officer Responses By Stated Career Intentions

Stated Career Intentions	n =	Percent of Total
Careerist	100	26
Transfer	100	1
Undecided	100	39
Resign	100	34

These categories of career intentions were developed to compare the level of satisfaction with the different factors in the satisfaction survey based on stated career intention. After all, when conducting an analysis of turnover, factors that distinguish "Resigners" from the others are the most useful.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed on the responses to the satisfaction survey using career intention as the independent variable. Recall that an

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interval scale was assumed for purposes of analysis. When conducting an analysis of variance on responses that are assumed to be on an interval scale, but may not be, significant differences might not be detected. Put another way, significant differences would not be detected unless they exist, but even if they do exist, they may go undetected.

The purpose of the ANOVA was to determine if any statistically significant differences existed for the various responses to satisfaction questions for people with different career intentions. The first ANOVA was done on three of the four possible career intention groups. Since only one respondent indicated an intention to "Transfer," he was considered an outlier and not included in this analysis. The one satisfaction question with a statistically significant (p<.05) response is shown in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4. Analysis of Variance of Satisfaction Factors By Career Intentions

Satisfaction with the:	ANOVA p-value	MEAN			
		All Officers	Careerists	Resigners	Undecided
Operational Tempo	0.040914	2.850	2.423077	3.117647	2.897436

Although several responses appeared to differ between the three groups, only "Operational Tempo" proved to be statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level. There are several possible explanations for this result. As previously stated, some of the significance may have been lost by assuming an interval scale for ordinal responses. Second, the largest group, "Undecided," had a lot of variation in their responses, making statistical significance difficult to obtain. Since Table 5.4 contains the results of the ANOVA for three groups, it is not possible from these results to determine

where the significant differences lie. Because of this, further analysis of variance was conducted.

A second ANOVA was performed to determine which, if any, mean values were significantly different for "Careerists" and "Resigners". This analysis revealed several factors that distinguish "stayers" from "leavers". Satisfaction with "Operational Tempo," "Quality of Family Life," and "Family Separation" were all statistically significantly different for the two groups.

Further analysis of variance tests were conducted to determine if significant differences existed between those who were "Careerists" and "Undecided," and between "Resigners" and "Undecided" respondents. "Operational Tempo" was the only factor that distinguished "Careerists" from those who were "Undecided" (p-value = .088). Certainly, in a community where operational tempo is extremely high, we would expect greater satisfaction with this factor to be highly correlated with the career decision. "Job Enjoyment" was the only factor that significantly distinguished (p-value = .808) "Resigners" from "Undecided" respondents. Unsurprisingly, it appears that service members who intend on resigning, on average, enjoy their job less than those who remain unsure of their employment future.

As seen in Table 5.5, the mean values of the "Resigners" are higher (indicating greater dissatisfaction) in all categories than those of the "Careerists." This finding supports the theory that dissatisfaction and the decision to quit are correlated. Interestingly, many factors previously thought to influence the stay/leave decision did not appear significantly different for members intending to stay or go. For example,

satisfaction with "Total Pay" and "Number of Hours at Work" did not appear to be significantly different for the two groups.

Table 5.5. Comparison of Means of Satisfaction Factors by Career Intentions

Satisfaction with the:	p-value	MEAN		
		All Officers	Careerists	Resigners
Total Pay	.453812	2.79	2.615385	2.823529
Promotion Opportunity	.266064	2.45	2.230769	2.50
Operational Tempo	.007595*	2.85	2.423077	3.117647
Command Opportunity	.184348	2.82	2.576923	2.911765
Quality of Family Life	.037146*	3.34	3.038462	3.617647
Number of Hours at Work	.516125	2.9	2.846154	3.00
Amount of Family Separation	.040415*	3.62	3.307692	3.852941
Team/Unit CO Leadership	.44374	2.48	2.346154	2.617647
SEAL Flag Leadership	.135456	2.96	2.730769	3.176471
Postgraduate Education Opportunities	.719014	3.11	3.076923	3.176471
Enjoyment of Job	.127499	1.98	1.807692	2.264706

* Indicates mean value that is significantly different from the other mean, $p < .05$.

D.   ADDITIONAL FINDINGS OF THE ACTIVE DUTY SURVEY

A number of other questions on the active duty survey made use of the Likert scale. For example, several questions asked the respondents how they would rate a particular characteristic, or how strongly they agreed with a particular statement. Again,

a five-point scale was used: Strongly Agree = 1, Somewhat Agree = 2, Neither Agree nor Disagree = 3, Somewhat Agree = 4, and Strongly Disagree = 5.

1.   Leadership Vision

Responses to the statement, "The senior leadership (WARCOM and Group commanders) within the SEAL community have a clearly defined vision," were distributed as shown in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6.   Percentage Distribution of SEAL Junior Officer Responses To the Statement: "The Senior Leadership (WARCOM and Group Commanders) Within the SEAL Community Have a Clearly Defined Vision"

Senior Leadership has a Clear Vision	% Strongly Agree	% Somewhat Agree	% Neither Agree nor Disagree	% Somewhat Disagree	% Strongly Disagree
% of Total	2	13	20	37	28

Strongly Agree = 1, Somewhat Agree = 2, Neither = 3, Somewhat Disagree = 4, and Strongly Disagree = 5

As seen in Table 5.6, 85 percent of the junior officers surveyed do not agree that WARCOM and/or GROUP level leadership has a "clearly defined vision." A number of the officers surveyed indicated that they have had little dealings with WARCOM, and therefore felt they could not respond. This finding may indicate that, although WARCOM and/or the GROUP Commanders may actually have a clear vision, it is not being clearly communicated to middle managers and the operating core of the SEAL Teams. Several respondents indicated that a community newsletter (other than Full Mission Profile), or a Web Page could be used to address Junior Officer's questions regarding roles and missions as well as community vision.

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2. Promotion, Career Path, and Command Potential

Nearly 70 percent of respondents indicated that they were likely to command a SEAL Team or Unit if they remain on active duty. This finding would suggest that the majority of officers surveyed felt they were competitive performers and were not overly concerned about the "zero-defect" mentality that has been thought to weigh heavily on decisions to remain in the service.

When asked if they had a "clearly defined career path," only 36 percent of respondents agreed. Of those, only 5 percent strongly agreed. It appears that most junior officers understand their career progression in so far as they need an Assistant and Platoon Commander tour. Most officers recognized an Operations Officer tour was desirable, but many thought that it was not crucial for advancement. Several officers commented that the Naval Special Warfare Development Group seems to be for "fast-tracking" officers, although they provided examples of officers who were not selected for XO after having gone there.

Questions regarding detailing were added after the first round of surveys was administered, so responses to these questions were skewed toward West Coast officers. Many responses indicated the need for a published billet list that includes information on when jobs are due to become available and a brief description of the job. A large percentage of respondents felt the current detailing process works, but is not fair and needs considerable revision. The perception is that the billet an officer receives is a function of both timing and "who you know." Many comments included words to the effect of, "If you get along with certain people in that office, you'll get good orders, otherwise you're headed to Guam or SDV Team."

In response to the statement, "The most qualified and deserving SEAL officers get ranked high and promote well," 40 percent agreed and slightly over 40 percent disagreed. Once again, we see a bi-modal distribution, with very few junior officers feeling strongly either way, and few responding to neither. It is likely that junior officers use their COs and XOs as a model for answering this question. Since virtually everybody gets promoted to Lieutenant, there are no performance-based promotions prior to selection for Lieutenant Commander. The bi-modal distribution suggests that junior officers feel that about half of the COs and XOs are qualified and most deserving for their position. This would help explain several other findings of the study. Recall that responses to the satisfaction question regarding "Team/Unit CO Leadership" also had a bi-modal distribution. This trend was repeated in the response to the statement, "SEAL Team CO's play an active role in the professional development of their junior officers," where over 50 percent of the responses were either "somewhat agree" or "somewhat disagree."

3. Operational Employment, Utilization, and Work Hours

One survey statement asked the officers to indicate their agreement with the following statement: "I am willing to move geographically to increase my operational opportunities." As seen in Table 5.7, respondents overwhelmingly agreed, with 85 percent reporting they would be willing to move to remain operational.

The fact that 85 percent of the sample is willing to move to remain operational might have implications for the type of officer pipeline or career path that could be designed to retain officers. This finding is considerably different from previous findings

Table 5.7. Percentage Distribution Of SEAL Junior Officer Responses To the Statement: "I Am Willing To Move Geographically To Increase My Operational Opportunities"

Willing to Move to Stay Operational	% Strongly Agree	% Somewhat Agree	% Neither Agree nor Disagree	% Somewhat Disagree	% Strongly Disagree
% of Total	57	28	9	5	1

Strongly Agree = 1, Somewhat Agree = 2, Neither = 3, Somewhat Disagree = 4, and Strongly Disagree = 5

that suggest sea duty can have a negative effect on retention and satisfaction. (Nakada, 1984, Warner and Goldberg, 1984) At first, this might seem at odds with the earlier finding that the greatest cause of dissatisfaction was "Amount of Family Separation." Although family separation is the cause of much dissatisfaction, it is postulated that, for many SEAL officers, spending time in a non-operational job might be equally dissatisfying. It was explained to the author that family separation is an element of "being operational"; but, to the extent that separation can be planned or is for a worthwhile cause, it does not cause dissatisfaction. Once the separation is excessive or perceived not to be for good reason, it becomes a source of dissatisfaction (based on personal interviews conducted for this study).

What would cause the junior officers to perceive that their time spent away from home is *not* worthwhile? The answer to this question is believed to be much different for SEAL officers than for officers from other Navy communities. Most SEALs have indicated the desire to "get in the show," test themselves in combat, or simply do the things for which they have been trained. Being operationally employed in this manner should, therefore, play a significant role in influencing officer perceptions. This was the

motivation behind the survey statement, "Overall, SEALs are properly utilized by operational commanders." The responses to this statement were eye-opening, and may provide insight into why we have witnessed the recent decline in SEAL officer retention. The mean value (using the five-point scale) was 3.83, indicating that respondents tend to disagree that SEALs are properly utilized. Table 5.8. provides the responses by percentage.

Table 5.8. **Percentage Distribution of SEAL Junior Officer Responses To the Statement: "Overall, Seals Are Properly Utilized By Operational Commanders"**

SEALs Properly Utilized by Operational Commanders	% Strongly Agree	% Somewhat Agree	% Neither Agree nor Disagree	% Somewhat Disagree	% Strongly Disagree
% of Total	0	13	20	38	29

Strongly Agree = 1, Somewhat Agree = 2, Neither = 3, Somewhat Disagree = 4, and Strongly Disagree = 5

It is interesting that, of the one hundred respondents, not a single SEAL said he strongly agreed; yet, almost one-third indicated strong disagreement. This problem may be unique to this community. In most warfare specialties, it is the forward-deployed operational commanders who best understand how to employ forces. It may be that, due to the SEALs' unconventional role, most operational commanders are not familiar with how to properly employ them. Several East Coast respondents qualified their response by indicating that European Command (EUCOM) commanders properly utilized them, but Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) commanders did not. This led to the question,

"How satisfied are SEAL officers with various types of deployments?," which is addressed in the next section.

There were several questions on the survey that required a response only from officers intending to resign. One such question asked, "Would the option to remain operational within your community change your mind?" Surprisingly, over two-thirds responded "yes." If it were true that nearly 70 percent of the population planning to resign would choose to stay in service if they could remain "operational," then it is possible that this information could be used to change current retention trends. This further supports the notion of exploring modifications to the officer pipeline and career progression.

The majority of officers surveyed reported to be working between 50-70 hours a week while at their last sea-duty command. Nevertheless, "hours at work" was not found to be a significant predictor of career intention (based on an analysis of variance discussed previously and regression models discussed later in this chapter).

4. Junior Officer Satisfaction with Deployments

As stated previously, many of the active duty surveys contained written remarks in the margins regarding differences between deployments in support of a Special Operations Command and those in support of the Fleet. More specifically, many reflected the fact that SEALs are not properly used when deployed with an ARG. To determine what percentage of officers shared this view of the ARG, and to determine how officers viewed other types of deployments, the survey asked respondents to indicate their satisfaction with the various deployments they had completed. Respondents had three choices: Satisfied, Undecided, or Dissatisfied. The results are shown in Table 5.9.

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Table 5.9.   Percentage Distribution of SEAL Junior Officer Satisfaction With Various Types Of Deployment

Satisfaction with the:	n =	% Satisfied	% Undecided	% Dissatisfied
Special Operations Deployment	62	89	6	5
Amphibious Ready Group Deployment	46	39	7	54
CVBG Deployment (East Coast only)	15	80	20	0

From Table 5.9, it appears that the preferred deployment is as a Special Operations platoon, with 89 percent of those having completed a Special Operations deployment expressing satisfaction with it.   This is not surprising, since Special Operations cruises tend to include exercises with foreign nationals, per diem additions to pay, and forward deployment to a shore base.   Perhaps more significantly, Special Operations platoons work for a commander with special operations experience--typically a SEAL at a deployed Unit, or in the case of a Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF), an Army or Air Force special operations officer.

The ship-based deployment of choice appears to be the CVBG deployment, with 80 percent of the officers satisfied and none dissatisfied.   It should be noted that carrier deployments are conducted on the East Coast only.   Further more, SEAL Team 8 is the only Team on the East Coast to conduct carrier deployments, which explains why the the n value for CVBG Deployment in Table 5.9 is only 15.

Why does a CVBG deployment seem to be so much more satisfying than an ARG?   After all, in both cases of the CVBG and the ARG, SEALs are working for a

Navy Commander without a Special Operations background. First of all, CVBG Platoons deploy with a Task Unit Commander who has completed a tour as an XO, meaning that he is at least a Lieutenant Commander and possibly a full Commander. This also tends to mean that the officer is a "front runner" in his community, having screened successfully for XO. Furthermore, the officer has probably had some staff experience by this point in his career and is comfortable with staff work. Let us compare this to what happens on an ARG deployment. Here, the East and West Coasts differ to some degree. The East Coast has repeatedly sent out Lieutenants as Task Unit Commanders on the ARG. The West Coast has traditionally been better at sending Lieutenant Commanders, but has also deployed Lieutenants in that billet. Comments written in the margins of several surveys alluded to the fact that the ARG Platoons are viewed as second-class citizens. As one officer put it: "Why else would Group Two send us a Lieutenant for a Task Unit Commander who was fired as a platoon commander and has already failed to select for O-4 once? In fact, I think the last several ARG Task Unit Commanders have failed to select. What signal does that send to the platoon? This is not the varsity." Occasionally, the Lieutenant has been properly screened for the job, but according to discussions with several SEAL Team Platoon Commanders and Operations Officers, the most important criteria for selection are "who is available" and "who can we talk into doing it."

There are other distinguishing characteristics between the ARG and CVBG deployments that might help us to understand the previous results. On the carrier, SEALS work for an Admiral (that is, a "decision-maker"), and on the ARG they work for a Captain. On the carrier, the SEAL platoon is the ground force of choice. First of all,

they work directly for an Admiral and second, they have conducted extensive pre-deployment training with the Carrier Airwing assets. Unfortunately, this does not seem to be the case on the ARG. The perception is that SEALs compete (mostly unfavorably) with the Marines for employment. Junior officers commonly believe that the ARG Commodore has difficulty distinguishing differences in the capabilities between the Marine Force Reconnaissance Teams and the SEAL Platoons. Therefore, it is up to the SEAL Lieutenant to challenge the Marine Colonel (Commander Landing Forces) concerning mission employment. Another major difference between the two deployments is that, on the carrier, the SEALs have access to battle-group aircraft, ships, and submarines. On the ARG, the SEALs have 30-foot Rigid Hull Inflatable Boats (RHIBs), but must request airlift from the Marines. All that said, there are a number of SEALs who have had positive ARG experiences. The ARGs have been used for a number of missions in recent years, and SEALs have been able to play a role. Examples include Somalia and Haiti.

The results regarding satisfaction with the various deployments were further broken down and analyzed by coast. It was hypothesized that, because East Coast Special Operations platoons have been working in Bosnia for the past several years, and West Coast platoons have been deploying to Guam, satisfaction would generally be greater on the East Coast. The results support this hypothesis. While 97 percent of East Coast officers surveyed were satisfied with their Special Operations Deployment, 87 percent of West Coast officers were satisfied.

The same analysis was done regarding the ARG deployment. The exact opposite finding was expected for the ARG—that is, greater satisfaction on the West Coast. The reason for this expectation was that the West Coast, on average, sends out more senior officers as Task Unit Commanders to represent the platoons. Additionally, when compared with deploying to Guam (as opposed to Europe on the East Coast), the ARG may not appear so unattractive. Once again, the results support this hypothesis. Over three-fourths of the officers from the East Coast were dissatisfied, while the majority of officers on the West Coast expressed satisfaction with the ARG. The results for both the Special Operations deployment and the ARG deployment broken down by coast are provided in Table 5.10.

Table 5.10. Percentage Distribution of SEAL Junior Officer Satisfaction With CVBG and ARG Deployments By Coast

	East Coast			West Coast		
Satisfaction with deployment:	% Satisfied	% Undecided	% Dissatisfied	% Satisfied	% Undecided	% Dissatisfied
Special Operations	97	0	3	81	14	5
Amphibious Ready Group	23	0	77	61	11	28 ·

5. Satisfaction with Assignments/Billets

Since a junior officer normally completes the Assistant Platoon Commander (AOIC) tour and frequently the Platoon Commander (OIC) tour prior to the Minimum Service Requirement (and therefore before voluntary separation), an analysis was conducted to determine satisfaction with different billets. The effect of dissatisfaction with the AOIC tour with regard to retention is unclear. It may be that the source of

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dissatisfaction was a poor OIC. The lure of commanding a SEAL platoon in the future might offset the temporary dissatisfaction with the assistant tour. Dissatisfaction with an OIC tour, it is postulated, would have considerable influence on the turnover decision. The results indicate that most junior officers are satisfied as both an assistant platoon commander (82 percent) and as a platoon commander (89 percent).

Satisfaction with two other jobs, Training Officer and ARG Task Unit Commander, was also analyzed. Of the officers surveyed who previously held these billets, 49 percent were satisfied with their role as a Training Officer while *no officers* surveyed expressed satisfaction as an ARG Task Unit Commander.

6. Team Morale

Morale of the work force is thought to influence retention behavior in any organization. That is, workers having high morale are generally thought to be more loyal to the organization, and therefore have a lower probability of quitting, whereas low morale is expected to have the opposite effect. (Mowday, Porter, and Steers, 1982) What is it in the SEAL Teams that plays a significant role in raising and lowering morale? The two factors found to have the greatest influence in raising morale at a Team were "Command Leadership" and "Performance of platoon/squad on exercises." Conversely, the two factors having the largest negative influence on morale were "Command Leadership" and "Other." Unfortunately, "Other" provides us with little insight. However, it is interesting that, in both cases, command leadership had the largest single effect on morale, considerably greater than "Amount of time at home" or "Deployment schedule." In response to the question, "How would you describe the overall wardroom morale at your most recent sea duty command?," 47 percent said

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morale was high, 23 percent felt it was neither high nor low, and the remaining 30 percent indicated low morale.

If there is a correlation between retention behavior and geographic location, it is not known. This would be difficult to study, since officers frequently move from coast to coast and even overseas. However, this study did attempt to examine the differences in morale between the East Coast, West Coast, and Hawaii. Overall, morale appears to drop as one moves from east to west. Once again, using a five-point scale: (1 = very high, 2 = somewhat high, 3 = neither, 4 = somewhat low, 5 = very low), the mean scores for the East Coast, West Coast, and Hawaii were 2.647, 2.853, and 4.143, respectively. It should be noted that only seven officers from Hawaii were included in the survey (there is only one Team located there). All respondents from Hawaii indicated that morale was low.

7. Graduate Education

Ninety-five percent of the officers surveyed did not have a Master's degree. Of that 95 percent, 87 percent indicated that they "intend on pursuing graduate education." The mean response to the question regarding Graduate Education in the satisfaction survey examined earlier was 3.11, indicating that, on average, respondents are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the opportunity to obtain a Master's degree. This is not surprising, considering how few SEALs have exposure to graduate education programs. The fact that such a large percentage of SEAL officers intend on pursuing graduate education was not anticipated.

8.   Pay

Two questions on the survey addressed the issue of pay. The first asked, "If you could increase the pay of SEAL officers, which ONE option would you choose?(assuming the total cost to the Navy is the same for each alternative)." The results were almost evenly split between two responses. Forty-eight percent chose "Start a 'SEAL pay' that would pay a monthly amount while on sea duty and shore duty and would begin upon Warfare Qualification." At the same time, 47 percent said, "Pay an annual 'SEAL bonus' in return for a commitment to stay in the Navy for a specified length of time." The Navy is considering implementing this second option for SEAL junior officers meeting certain criteria.

The second question regarding compensation was directed at "Resigners," or officers indicating their intention to resign. The question asked, "If the Navy offered you an annual bonus what is the LEAST amount that would persuade you to remain on active duty?" The responses to the various choices are displayed in Table 5.11.

Table 5.11.   Percentage Distribution of SEAL Junior Officer Responses to the Question "What is the LEAST Amount that Would Persuade you to Remain?"

Annual Amount Required:	% of Responses
No bonus is required to keep me	13
$8,000 per year	5
$12,000 per year	50
$16,000 per year	24
No bonus can convince me to stay	8

The planned "SEAL bonus" is scheduled to be $10,000 per year for a six-year commitment. The majority of officers who intend to resign said that $12,000 would be the least amount that would persuade them to remain in service. It will be interesting to see how the bonus actually affects retention rates. Recall that the largest proportion of officers (39 percent) stated that their intentions were "Undecided." If the bonus is used, its success may be the result of influencing this large group who remain "on the fence" with regard to their career plans. Clearly, this program will come at considerable cost. The "economic rent" involved in such a program would be significant, as 26 percent of the population (Careerists) would have to be paid this bonus, but would have stayed in service regardless of receiving it. The other 39 percent who are undecided would get paid this amount as well, but may have been persuaded to stay with non-pecuniary measures.

E.   A MODEL OF CAREER INTENTIONS BASED ON SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS

A regression model was created to investigate the explanatory power of responses to satisfaction factors on career intention. The initial model included career intentions comprised of three groups ("Careerists," "Undecided," and "Resigners") as the dependent variable.

The first model lacked significant explanatory power ($R^2 = .1208$). It is not surprising that a model of career intentions that lacked biographic and demographic information, and was solely based on satisfiers, had limited explanatory power. None of the satisfaction factors were significant, even at the 90 percent confidence level ($p < .10$). Results of the regression model are shown in Table 5.12.

Table 5.12. Regression of Career Intention by Satisfiers

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	.347523
R Square	.120772
Adjusted R Square	.009606
Standard Error	.774487
Observations	99

ANOVA	df	SS	MS	F	Sig F
Regression	11	7.168264	.651660	1.086407	.3816402
Residual	87	52.185272	.599831		
Total	98	59.353535			

Predictor	Coefficient	Standard Deviation	T	P
Constant	1.013379	.454336	2.230462	.028289
Total Pay	.002735322	.082068	.033330	.9734877
Promotion Opportunity	.037527	.094647	.396493	.6927123
Operational Tempo	.122801	.081296	1.510545	.134528
Opportunity for Command	.043109	.087464	.492886	.623334
Quality of Family Life	.061918	.108344	.571494	.569138
Hours at Work	- .094305	.102756	- .917753	.361285
Family Separation	.112794	.106518	1.058918	.292568
Team/Unit CO Leadership	- .0460525	.073584	- .625847	.533054
Flag Leadership	.066022	.079037	.835338	.405816
Opportunity for Graduate Education	- .033988	.081556	- .416742	.677893
Enjoyment of the Job	.090683	.087317	1.038549	.301892

The lack of statistical significance in the model is at least partially attributed to the large variation in responses by the "Undecided" respondents. To determine if any satisfaction factors explained the career intentions of service members committed to the organization (Stayers) and those planning to leave (Leavers), a second regression model was created. This model included responses from the "Careerists" and "Resigners." This second model contained more explanatory power than the first ($R^2 = .2118$), but was still not very powerful. Once again, none of the factors were significant at the 90 percent confidence level, although satisfaction with "Operational Tempo" was close, with a p-value of .107789. Results of the regression model are shown in Table 5.13.

In both models, three of the coefficients contained signs that were unexpectedly negative: "Number of Hours at Work," "Team/Unit CO Leadership," and "Opportunity for Postgraduate Education." Intuitively, one would think that greater satisfaction with these three factors would increase an individual's probability of being a "Careerist." In the case of "Work Hours," it may be that those who intend on making the Navy a career systematically spend more hours on the job. Members who have the lowest satisfaction with postgraduate opportunities may be the ones who plan to remain in the Navy long enough for that to be a concern. The coefficient for Team/Unit leadership is not understood, but, once again, it was not found to be significant.

Table 5.13. Regression of Career Intention by Satisfiers

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	.46023
R Square	.211812
Adjusted R Square	.031185
Standard Error	.491864
Observations	60

ANOVA	df	SS	MS	F	Sig F
Regression	11	3.120691	.283699	1.17265	.330603
Residual	48	11.61264	.24193		
Total	59	14.73333			

Predictor	Coefficient	Standard Deviation	T	P
Constant	-0.630781	.490319	-1.28647	.20445
Total Pay	.024952	.070012	.356403	.723101
Promotion Opportunity	.029289	.080533	.363693	.717684
Operational Tempo	.119039	.072637	1.63882	.10779
Opportunity for Command	.09533	.072637	1.312413	.195622
Quality of Family Life	.024626	.090384	.272458	.786439
Hours at Work	-.027366	.093729	-.291968	.771569
Family Separation	.087132	.079314	1.098567	.277437
Team/Unit CO Leadership	-.023741	.060437	-.392829	.696185
Flag Leadership	.060186	.065287	.921865	.361209
Opportunity for Graduate Education	-.004206	.067533	-.062285	.950594
Enjoyment of the Job	.017631	.069918	.25217	.801986

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F. A MODEL OF CAREER INTENTIONS BASED ON ACTIVE DUTY SURVEY RESULTS

A linear regression model of career intentions was once again estimated, this time using both demographic and attitudinal data culled from the Active Duty Survey. The dependent variable, Career Intention, was coded as follows:

Careerist = 0

Undecided = 1

Resigner = 2

For purposes of analysis, the distance between career groups was hypothesized to be the same.

The regression model with all of the independent variables was estimated as follows:

$$\text{Career Intention} = \alpha_1 + \beta_2 \text{ Command Potential} + \beta_3 \text{ Marital Status} + \beta_4 \text{ Children} + \beta_5 \text{ ARG Deployment} + \beta_6 \text{ SPECOPS Deployment} + \beta_7 \text{ SDV Deployment} + \beta_8 \text{ Morale} + \beta_9 \text{ Fair Promotion} + \beta_{10} \text{ Vision} + \beta_{11} \text{ Utilized} + \beta_{12} \text{ PRODEV} + \beta_{13} \text{ Commissioning Source}$$

The independent variables, which consisted of both categorical and continuous variables, are discussed below.

1. Command Potential

This variable captures the respondent's perception of his likelihood to eventually command a SEAL Team or Boat Unit. Variables were coded on a one-to five-point scale: Very likely = 1, Somewhat likely = 2, Neither = 3, Somewhat likely = 4, Very likely = 5.

2. Marital Status

This variable was measured on a three-point scale: Single = 0, Married = 1, Divorced = 2.

3. Children

This variable measured the number of children the respondent had and was coded as follows: No children = 0, One child = 1, Two children = 2, Three or more children = 3.

4. ARG Deployment

This variable was used to identify whether or not the respondent had completed an Amphibious Ready Group Deployment. It was coded as either : had not completed an ARG = 0, or had completed an ARG deployment = 1.

5. SpecOps Deployment

Coded similarly to the ARG Deployment variable above, this variable captures whether or not an individual has completed a Special Operations deployment.

6. SDV Deployment

Coded similarly to the ARG and Special Operations Deployment variables above.

7. Morale

This variable captures responses to a question concerning the overall wardroom morale at the respondent's most recent sea duty command. The variable was coded using a five-point scale: Very high = 1, Somewhat high = 2, Neither = 3, Somewhat low = 4, Very low = 5.

8. Fair Promotion

This variable attempts to measure the respondent's level of agreement with the statement, "The most qualified and deserving SEAL officers get ranked high and promote

well." Once again, it is coded on a five-point scale from Strongly Agree = 1 to Strongly Disagree = 5.

9. Vision

Using a five-point scale, this variable measures the respondent's agreement with the fact that WARCOM and Group commanders have a clearly defined vision: Strongly Agree = 0 to Strongly Disagree = 5.

10. UTILIZED

This variable measures the degree to which people agree with the statement, "Overall, SEALs are properly utilized by operational commanders." This variable was coded with the same five-point scale as used above.

11. PRODEV

PRODEV captures the degree to which officers agree with the statement, "SEAL Team COs play an active role in the professional development of their junior officers." This variable was coded the same as Vision and UTILIZED.

12. Commissioning Source

This final explanatory variable relates to the respondent's source of commissioning. If the respondent was a graduate of the Naval Academy, he was coded as 0, otherwise he was assigned a value of 1.

Several of the independent variables were found to be significant at the 90 percent confidence level ($p < .10$). The variable "Children" was found to be negative and significant, indicating that the greater number of children a service member has, the lower the probability of his intention to resign, all other variables held constant. It may be that, once a member has had a child or several children, he may enjoy the medical

benefits and job security associated with life in the service. Interestingly, SDV Deployment was found to be both significant and negative, implying that someone who has completed an SDV deployment is less likely to resign. The beta coefficient of -.3452 means that a person that has completed an SDV deployment is roughly 35 percent more likely to be a "Careerist" than he is to be "Undecided." This finding is surprising in light of the low morale associated with the SDV Team in Hawaii. The input from officers stationed in Hawaii may have been heavily outweighed by the larger number of respondents with East Coast SDV experience. It may also be true that members who have completed a tour with an SDV Team look forward to duty at a SEAL Team, and therefore have more incentive to remain. The last statistically significant variable in the model was PRODEV. The positive coefficient on PRODEV indicates that the greater the service member's disagreement with the belief that SEAL Team COs play an active role in the professional development of junior officers, the greater the probability that the officer's career intention will be to resign. PRODEV was the only variable in the model to be statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence interval, with a p value of .03113.

The regression equation, with all independent variables significant at the .10 level is:

Career Intention = 1.54 - .189Children - .345SDV + .123PRODEV

The regression results from the first model are presented in Table 5.14.

Table 5.14. Regression of Career Intention – Model 1

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	.501124
R Square	.251125
Adjusted R Square	.146631
Standard Error	.718916
Observations	99

ANOVA	df	SS	MS	F	Sig F
Regression	12	14.9052	1.24219	2.40325	0.009852
Residual	86	44.4483	0.516841		
Total	98	59.3535			

Predictor	Coefficient	Standard Deviation	T	P
Intercept	1.54869	0.43657	3.54744	0.00063
Command Potential	- 0.06653	0.07762	- 0.85715	0.39375
Marital Status	- 0.06354	0.14305	- 0.44422	0.65799
Children	- 0.18909	0.11113	- 1.70156	0.09245**
ARG Deployment	0.14562	0.15333	0.94977	0.334889
SpecOps Deployment	- 0.28197	0.17243	- 1.6353	0.10565
SDV Deployment	- 0.34532	0.19972	- 1.7285	0.08748**
Morale	0.06067	0.07229	0.83924	0.40366
Fair Promotion	0.00314	0.07118	0.04412	0.96491
Vision	0.09889	0.07546	1.31064	0.19347
Utilized	0.04821	0.07815	0.61686	0.53896
PRODEV	.12262	.05596	2.19129	0.03113**
Commissioning Source	- 0.13842	.16246	- 0.85204	0.39656

** Indicates significance at the 10% confidence level.

A second model was created in a similiar fashion to the previous one. The only difference between the two models was the coding of the dependent variable. For the second model, the dependent variable was simply coded as: Careerist = 0 or Resigner = 1.

In this model, the "Undecided" responses were removed. The purpose of this model was to examine the explanatory power of the independent variables on an individual's stated intention to either resign or remain in service until retirement. The variables in this model found to be statistically significant at the 10 percent confidence level were once again Children, SpecOps, and SDV. In this model, the variables Children and SDV were found to be even more significant than in the first model, with SDV becoming statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level. The beta coefficient for the SpecOps variable, as that of SDV, was found to be negative. This result is not surprising, based on the overwhelming satisfaction expressed toward the SpecOps cruises. The coefficient of -.463 indicates that someone who has done a SpecOps deployment has a 46 percent greater probability of intending to make the Navy a career than someone who has not completed a SpecOps cruise.

The regression equation, with all independent variables significant at the .10 level is:

Career Intention = 1.35 - .068Children - .463SpecOps - .345SDV

It is worth noting that the variable, ARG Deployment, has a positive coefficient, suggesting that doing an ARG will increase the probability that an individual will plan to resign. However, the results of this model do not indicate a significant difference in that

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probability. This finding may be the result of the small sample size and may warrant further research.

The coefficient for Marital Status was positive in the first model and negative in the second. In neither case was marital status found to be significant. This is interesting information, because the demographic characteristics of the SEAL Teams have changed considerably over past years, with a large percentage of the current officer population being married. It is also worth noting that, being a Naval Academy graduate reduced the probability of resigning, but not significantly so in either model. It is important to remember the basic point that variables may still be important even though they were not found to be significant. The variable, Utilized, for example, was not found to be significant. How operational commanders utilize SEALs may, however, play a significant role in a SEAL's stay/leave decision. Perhaps because both "Careerists" and "Resigners" feel that SEALs are improperly utilized, it has little explanatory power in this model. The regression results from the second model are presented in Table 5.15.

Table 5.15. Regression of Career Intention – Model 2

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.61062
R Square	0.37286
Adjusted R Square	0.21274
Standard Error	0.88677
Observations	60

ANOVA	df	SS	MS	F	Sig F
Regression	12	21.97393	1.83116	2.32863	0.01959
Residual	47	36.95939	0.78637		
Total	59	58.93333			

Predictor	Coefficient	Standard Deviation	T	P
Intercept	1.35443	0.70855	1.91157	0.06204
Command Potential	- 0.03141	0.12154	- 0.25843	0.79720
Marital Status	0.03155	0.23902	0.13202	0.89553
Children	- 0.32936	0.17622	- 1.86892	0.06783**
ARG Deployment	0.22878	0.24326	0.94048	0.35178
SpecOps Deployment	- 0.46314	0.26909	- 1.72114	0.09180**
SDV Deployment	- 0.61375	0.28936	- 2.12107	0.03922**
Morale	0.09644	0.11249	0.85728	0.39564
Fair Promotion	- 0.01579	0.11723	- 0.13473	0.89340
Vision	0.10690	0.11908	0.89773	0.37391
Utilized	0.12764	0.13584	0.93966	0.35219
PRODEV	0.14184	0.09273	1.52971	0.13279
Commissioning Source	- 0.23161	0.27599	- 0.83923	0.40558

** Indicates significance at the 10% confidence level.

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VI. RESIGNATION SURVEY

A. DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS

The Commander of the Naval Special Warfare Command (CNSWC) conducted a survey of officers who had requested resignation in FY 1998. The researcher created the survey instrument on short notice so that it could be sent out with a letter from the CNSWC to the 38 officers who had requested resignation. A copy of the Resignation Survey is included as Appendix C. Only two out of the 38 officers returned the survey. The resignation survey was re-administered by the researcher to officers requesting resignation from the Navy at the end of FY 1998 and in FY 1999. During this second iteration, each officer who was sent a survey received a follow-up phone call by the researcher to ensure that he had successfully received the survey. Of the 15 officers who were contacted, 13 returned the survey, resulting in a total sample size of 15 (13 plus two previously collected).

Although this sample size is extremely small, it represents a large percentage (approximately 76 percent) of the SEAL officers who, at the time of the study, were awaiting separation from the Navy. The researcher was unable to contact the remaining officers.

As mentioned above, the Resignation Survey was created in a short time so that it could replace a questionnaire that was about to be sent out. Although a pre-test of the Resignation Survey was conducted, it was the first step in a learning process and, as a result, was not as complete as the Active Duty Survey. For example, it did not address several issues that proved to be of interest in the Active Duty Survey, including:

respondent's satisfaction with various deployments; and, respondent's beliefs regarding whether or not SEALs were properly utilized by operational commanders. This cannot be changed after the fact. The Resignation Survey did, however, ask two questions that were particularly germane to this study. The first of these two questions was, "What three factors had the greatest impact on your decision to resign?"; and the second was, "What was/is the primary reason you have requested resignation?" A frequency distribution of the respondents' selected characteristics is provided in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1.   Frequency Distribution of Survey Respondents, by Selected Characteristics (n = 15)

Characteristic (Name)	Percent	Number
Paygrade		
Ensign	0	0
Lieutenant Junior Grade	0	0
Lieutenant	100	15
Marital Status		
Single	20	3
Married	80	12
Divorced	0	0
Number of Children		
Zero	66	10
One	27	4
Two	0	0
Three or More	7	1
Commissioning Source		
OCS/AOCS	13	2
NROTC Scholarship	27	4
NROTC Non-Scholarship	0	0
Naval Academy	60	9
Other (ECP, Seaman-to-Admiral)	0	
Graduate Education		
With Master's Degree	7	1
Without Master's Degree	93	14

* OCS = Officer Candidate School, AOCS = Aviation Officer Candidate School, NROTC = Naval Reserve Officer Training Center, ECP = Enlisted Commissioning Program.

The values in Table 6.1 are representative of officers who were awaiting separation from the Navy at the time the survey was conducted. Nevertheless, the reader is cautioned against drawing conclusions based on these characteristics, since the survey sample may not accurately represent the distribution of officers who request a resignation over time. Table 6.1 merely offers a "snapshot" of resigning officers' characteristics at the time of this study.

B.   RESULTS OF THE SATISFACTION SURVEY

Similar to the Active Duty Survey, the first set of questions requested that respondents "Indicate your satisfaction with the following aspects of the Navy." Once again, for purposes of statistical analysis, an interval scale was used, with the following numbers assigned to the possible responses:

1=Very Satisfied, 2=Somewhat Satisfied, 3=Neither, 4=Somewhat Dissatisfied, and 5=Very Dissatisfied

The aspect with the highest average satisfaction was "Promotion Opportunities," with a mean value of 2.26. This indicates that, on average, respondents are somewhat satisfied with their chances for promotion. This finding may suggest that many of the officers who were leaving considered themselves to be top performers and believed their chances for promotion were good. The aspect with the second highest average satisfaction was "Total Pay." If "Total Pay" is one of the greatest sources of satisfaction of officers leaving the SEAL Teams, then the initiative to increase pay may not solve the underlying problems behind the recent increase in voluntary resignations.

The aspect with the lowest average satisfaction was "Quality of Family Life" (Mean value = 3.60). Eighty percent of the officers surveyed were married. It is not unreasonable to assume that "Quality of Family Life" might be of greater importance to someone who is married than to someone who is not. However, "Quality of Family Life" was found to be one of the greatest causes of dissatisfaction in the Active Duty Survey as well.

Satisfaction with "Postgraduate Education" was found to have the second lowest average satisfaction with a mean value of 3.47. The factors with the two highest and two lowest mean scores are presented in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2.   Percentage Distribution of SEAL Junior Officer Responses To the Statement: "Indicate Your Satisfaction with the Following Aspects of the Navy"

Aspect and Level of Satisfaction*	N =	% Very Satisfied (1)	% Somewhat Satisfied (2)	% Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied (3)	% Somewhat Dissatisfied (4)	% Very Dissatisfied (5)
Promotion Opportunity Mean = 2.26	15	20	53	13	7	7
Total Pay Mean = 2.33	15	20	53	7	13	7
Quality of Family Life Mean = 3.60	15	0	13	27	47	13
Postgraduate Education Mean = 3.47	15	7	7	27	52	7

* Mean value for the level of satisfaction, based on frequency of response, where "Very Satisfied" = 1, "Somewhat Satisfied" = 2, "Neither" = 3, "Somewhat Dissatisfied" = 4, and "Very Dissatisfied" = 5. Thus, the lower the value, the higher the satisfaction (Percentage number, mean values are not rounded. % values are).

C. COMPARISON OF THE ACTIVE DUTY AND RESIGNATION SURVEY RESPONSES TO SATISFACTION QUESTIONS

The average values of the responses to satisfaction questions for the Active Duty Survey and the Resignation Survey were compared to determine if there were any glaring differences. Surprisingly, the officers leaving the Navy appeared to be, on average, more satisfied than were their active duty counterparts with the following work-related factors: "Total Pay," "Promotion Opportunity," "Command Opportunity," Numbers of Hours at Work," "Amount of Family Separation," "Team Leadership," and "SEAL Flag Leadership." The aspects that resulted in lower overall satisfaction for officers leaving included "Quality of Family Life," "Postgraduate Education Opportunities," and "Enjoyment of Job." Table 6.3 provides a summary of the comparison of means of satisfaction factors by survey.

Table 6.3. Comparison of the Means of Satisfaction Aspects by Survey

Aspect:	LEVEL OF SATISFACTION*	
	Active Duty Survey	Resignation Survey
Total Pay	2.79	2.33
Promotion Opportunity	2.45	2.67
Operational Tempo	2.85	2.73
Command Opportunity	2.82	2.57
Quality of Family Life	3.34	3.60
Number of Hours at Work	2.90	2.53
Amount of Family Separation	3.62	3.33
Team/Unit CO Leadership	2.48	2.47
SEAL Flag Leadership	2.96	2.60
Postgraduate Education Opportunities	3.11	3.47
Enjoyment of Job	1.98	2.47

* Mean value for the level of satisfaction, based on frequency of response, where "Very Satisfied" = 1, "Somewhat Satisfied" = 2, "Neither" = 3, "Somewhat Dissatisfied" = 4, and "Very Dissatisfied" = 5. Thus, the lower the value, the higher the satisfaction.

D. ADDITIONAL FINDINGS OF THE RESIGNATION SURVEY

1. Community Vision

Responses to the statement, "The senior leadership (WARCOM and Group commanders) within the SEAL community have a clearly defined vision" were distributed as shown in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4. **Percentage Distribution of SEAL Junior Officer Responses to the Statement: "The Senior Leadership (WARCOM and Group Commanders) within the SEAL Community have a Clearly Defined Vision"**

Senior Leadership has a Clear Vision	% Strongly Agree	% Somewhat Agree	% Neither Agree nor Disagree	% Somewhat Disagree	% Strongly Disagree
% of Total	0	7	40	20	33

As seen in Table 6.4, only 7 percent of the junior officers surveyed (one officer) somewhat agreed that WARCOM and/or GROUP level leadership has a "clearly defined vision." At the same time, 15 percent (or 15 people) in the Active Duty Survey agreed.

2. Command Potential

In response to the question, "What do you think your chances would have been to command a Team/Boat Unit if you stayed on active duty?," all of the respondents indicated that they were likely to command a SEAL Team or Unit if they had remained on active duty. In fact, two-thirds indicated their chances were "very likely." Clearly, these officers demonstrate high levels of self-confidence. They may be over-rating their abilities and likelihood of career advancement. If their self-appraisal is accurate, however, one can conclude that some of the SEAL organization's top performers are leaving.

3. Morale

The two factors found to have the greatest influence in raising morale at a Team were "Command Leadership" and "Performance of platoon/squad on exercises." These were the same two factors identified in the Active Duty Survey. The two factors having the largest negative influence on morale were "Command Leadership" and "Deployment Schedule." As in the Active Duty Survey, command leadership had the largest single effect on morale, both in a positive and negative way. However, "Deployment schedule" was cited as frequently as "Command Leadership" to be the single most significant factor in reducing command morale. This finding was different than that found in the Active Duty Survey. Perhaps, the officers who chose to resign were, on average, more frustrated with deployment schedules than were officers who remained in service. In response to the question, "How would you describe the overall wardroom morale at your most recent sea duty command?," only 33 percent said morale was high, 40 percent felt it was neither high nor low, and the remaining 27 percent indicated low morale.

4. Graduate Education

Ninety-three percent of the officers surveyed did not have a Master's degree. Roughly 57 percent of the officers without a Master's degree indicated that they would "finish the Master's degree I had already begun." It is interesting that over half of these officers had already begun graduate-level education prior to leaving the Navy. Recall that "Postgraduate Education" was one of the two greatest sources of dissatisfaction from the responses to satisfaction questions. It may be that officers who have requested resignation are systematically more concerned with graduate education than are other

SEAL officers. Whether this dissatisfaction is *resulting in* the decision to resign, or whether it is the *result of* the resignation decision is not known. It is possible that once an officer decides to leave the Navy, he becomes more concerned with receiving an advanced degree.

5. Pay

"Total Pay" was one of the greatest sources of satisfaction from the satisfaction survey. From this result, it is at least fair to say that pay is probably not a primary source of *dissatisfaction* for the officers surveyed. This finding supports the notion that an increase in pay will do little to dismiss whatever is causing the dissatisfaction of these officers and, therefore, influencing their decision to leave the Navy.

In response to the question, "If the Navy had offered you an annual bonus, what is the LEAST amount that would have persuaded you to remain on active duty?," over 50 percent responded that "no bonus would have convinced me to stay on active duty." Roughly another one-third indicated that an annual bonus of at least $16,000 would have been required to change their decision.

6. Marital Status and Influence of Spouse on Resignation Decision

Eighty percent of the officers surveyed were married. One hypothesis repeatedly given to the researcher for the recent increase in voluntary resignations has been the changing demographics of the SEAL officer corps. More specifically, many within the community believe low retention rates can be attributed to the fact that more officers are married today than in years past. One question on the Resignation Survey asked the married respondents, "how much influence did your spouse have on your decision to

resign?" Possible responses, given in increasing amounts of influence, included "no influence," "some influence," "moderate influence," and "a lot of influence." None of the officers indicated their spouses had "a lot of influence" on their resignation decision, but 75 percent reported their spouse had at least "some influence." In most cases, the officers indicated that wives were supportive of a Navy career if their husbands were enjoying their job.

Of the officers who were married, 58 percent had wives who had full-time jobs, 17 percent had part-time jobs, and the remaining 25 percent had wives who were "homemakers." It may be significant that over half of the officers surveyed had wives with full-time jobs. Having a second source of income (perhaps in some cases greater than that of the husband) would clearly provide an officer with greater freedom to search for civilian employment. If an officer had to move geographically to execute a set of orders that would require his spouse to forfeit her earnings, this would increase considerably the cost of moving, and, therefore, might cause an officer to consider civilian employment.

7. Top Three Reasons

One question on the resignation survey asked respondents to pick from a list "the three factors that had the greatest impact on your decision to resign." The list contained 11 possible options and can be seen in question number 25 in Appendix C. While every option was chosen at least once, two were selected more than the others. Those two reasons were "My future as a SEAL Officer is behind a desk," and "The SEAL community has no clearly defined mission." The first reason refers to the fact that once

an officer reaches his MSR, he faces a future that is comprised of administrative jobs, including tours as an Operations Officer, Executive Officer, a joint staff tour, and other administrative billets.

The second reason cited may relate to the issue discussed in the results of the Active Duty Survey concerning SEALs not being properly utilized by operational commanders. It may be that, in the absence of a clearly defined mission, SEAL officers believe their chances of being operationally employed are slim. This point may require some elaboration. SEALs do have defined missions for which they train. However, it was explained to the researcher that frequently these missions are similar to missions other units conduct and, therefore, there is no single logical choice for a mission. One example of such a mission is Combat Search And Rescue (CSAR). Marine Expeditionary Units (MEU) conduct a similar mission, Tactical Recovery of Aircraft and Personnel (TRAP). On paper, these missions are slightly different, but in practice they appear to be interchangeable. TRAP is generally thought of as consisting of a larger force package than a CSAR mission, because in a TRAP mission, a larger force is required to either recover or destroy a downed aircraft. It was pointed out to the researcher that the O'Grady rescue conducted in Bosnia more closely fit the description of a CSAR, yet it was the Marines (and their TRAP mission) who were chosen to conduct the mission. (SEALs were also on that ARG performing contingency CSAR support.) In this example, it is easy to imagine that the SEALs involved might have asked the questions "Why are we here?" and "What missions are we supporting?"

## 8.	Single Most Significant Reason

In an effort to force respondents to succinctly explain why they had chosen to leave the Navy, a final, open-ended question was asked: "Being as specific as possible, what was/is the primary reason you have requested resignation." Many of the respondents failed to answer this question, perhaps reflecting the fact that making a career decision is a complicated process incorporating many variables. Only one officer was able to express an overwhelming reason why he was leaving the SEALs, and that was "long family separations." All of the remaining officers who responded to the question gave several "primary" reasons. The reasons most commonly cited were "little chance of being employed," "family separation," and "a future career path that lacked the type of challenge" the officers desired.

One officer captured the majority of the reasons (except family separation) cited for resignation:

> Over the past year I have been contemplating my career in the Navy. I spent 4 years at SEAL Team X as an AOIC and OIC of X Platoon, 2 years at a Unit as Assistant Operations, and 1.5 years at SEAL Team X as a platoon OIC. My experience has been rewarding and I truly cannot think of another job that I would rather have had.
>
> During my experience I have enjoyed my time with troops; seeing what type of motivation works with various types of men and trying to achieve my standards without micro-managing each task. The operational accomplishments and failures and the administrative lessons learned have helped me grow as a person. As I continue my career, I do not see the potential areas of growth in responsibility that I would like. From my perspective, a good staff officer is one who does not have any administrative problems. The operational lessons learned and implemented into post platoon commander billets are reflected little in the evaluation and promotion process. A good officer and deployment is an officer and deployment where nobody gets into trouble.

As I step back and analyze the world's political situation, I do not see significant SEAL involvement in any crisis situation in the near future. The world appears to be at peace and the political climate is focused on diplomatic or high technology type solutions during crisis situations. The human element of the conventional SEAL will only be utilized as a last resort and even then, actual readiness and ability seem to have little to do with selection for mission. Although I love conducting SEAL training, I feel the tangible results and the possibility of participating in a real operation are diminishing with time, and the current political infighting and organization offer little encouragement.

At the closing of one of Admiral Richards' letters, he wrote, "if not you then who?" To take my experience and beliefs and engage the community with my personal positive solution is an agenda without support. To focus on good order and discipline, integrity and strict adherence to the chain of command in addition to operational capability are facets that would be painful to implement and not appreciated. I regret that I am part of the problem instead of part of the solution. My personal timing and location to world events can only be controlled by fate. The people and experience in the Naval Special Warfare community will be sorely missed; however, I feel it is time for the challenge of living in the civilian world.

VII. RESIGNATION INTERVIEWS

A.   DATA COLLECTION

This section of the thesis uses in-depth interviews to examine the factors

mentioned by SEAL officers as most responsible for their decision to leave the Navy.

While previous chapters have had a quantitative focus, this chapter is qualitative in

nature. As Mintzberg (1994b, p. 266) notes, "while hard data may inform the intellect, it

is largely soft data that generate wisdom." With the inclusion of "soft data," this thesis

attempts to do both.

The interview sample consisted of 15 SEAL officers, all holding the rank of

Lieutenant. The sample of officers represented various types of experience in terms of

deployments (ARG, CVBG, SPECOPS, and SDV), geographic locations (East/West

Coast, overseas), SEAL Team assignments (SEAL/SDV/SBU), and operational

background (number of platoons/deployments). The researcher recorded the personal

interviews on audiocassette. The interviews were later transcribed for purposes of

analysis.

A trial interview was performed on a SEAL officer who had not requested

resignation to determine both the pertinence and clarity of the questions, and to determine

approximate interview length. Copies of the interview introductory statement and

interview questionnaire are presented in Appendices D and E respectively.

While there was some initial concern by the researcher that respondents might not

want to participate in detailed interviews or discuss personal experiences and opinions,

this was not the case. In fact, most of the SEAL officers were eager to provide input, and

sincerely hoped their input would be of value. The researcher frequently heard comments

such as: "I'm happy to contribute, and I hope my comments are of value to the community. I hope somebody takes the time to read this." In every case, the SEALs interviewed were not bitter with the Naval Special Warfare organization, and, in fact, still felt a part of the "Fraternal Order." The fact that the interviewer was a SEAL helped to establish a rapport with the respondents.

The interview questions were open-ended to allow the subjects to discuss any matter they believed pertinent to the topic. Occasionally, additional questioning was required to clarify or elaborate on responses, not an uncommon procedure when dealing with open-ended questions. It should be noted, however, that great care was taken not to "lead" the respondent in any response.

The respondents interviewed are members of the same cohort described previously in the "Resignation Survey" chapter. Interviewees consisted of officers who had recently (1997/1988) left active duty, and officers who, at the time of the interviews, had submitted letters of resignation for 1999.

B.   DATA ANALYSIS AND THEME DEVELOPMENT

The data were transcribed from the audiocassettes and then analyzed to identify trends and recurrent themes related to the topic of SEAL junior officer retention. Themes were then developed by analyzing recurring issues or topics discussed by the interviewees. These issues or topics needed to be addressed by over 50 percent of the respondents to be considered a theme. A total of twelve themes emerged from the interviews. The themes are presented below with supporting justification. Each justification is reinforced with quotations that exemplify the opinions of the SEALs interviewed.

C. THEME I: OFFICERS BECOME SEALS FOR THE CHALLENGING TRAINING, THE ADVENTURE, AND THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK IN SMALL ELITE TEAMS

1. Theme

All of the officers interviewed were attracted to SEAL Teams for the challenge of undergoing what is considered by many to be the toughest military training in the world. The SEAL Teams, many explained, represented the Navy's elite force and appeared to be more challenging and exciting than any other warfare specialty.

2. Justification

This theme was derived from responses to a question asking respondents why they became SEALs. The SEAL officer community has a long queue of officers and officer candidates trying to "break into" the Naval Special Warfare community. The question was intended to determine the reasons why officers became SEALs, and to see if their expectations on entry were met.

It appears that the SEAL Teams do well attracting and screening the type of person who is well-suited for this type of lifestyle, at least for the first few years of service. It may be true that the type of person who is attracted to service as a SEAL would also be the type of person most likely to leave if his expectations were not met.

One SEAL officer explained his motivation for joining the SEAL Teams:

> From Annapolis I thought it was the biggest challenge offered in the Navy. I knew I was going to pursue a career as an officer and I was looking for whatever was the toughest thing to do and what appealed to me most.

When the same officer was asked if his expectations were met, he responded:

> For a while, yes. Absolutely. The point where I got more and more disillusioned was as I got more and more senior. I got to see XOs more

close up. That's where the division came. As an AOIC I was in heaven. I loved my job. I loved being a SEAL. As I became more senior, I became more disillusioned, and I think that was a function of two things. One, SEAL Team X was better when I was an AOIC, and then it reached the level that SDVT-X is at, or was at when I was there. I had weaker leadership at SDVT-X. Secondly, as I became more senior, I was more exposed to the XOs and senior leadership.

A second officer had this to say about his reasons for choosing the SEAL Teams:

Well, the main reason I became a SEAL is because they do the things I like to do. When I first joined, I was thinking about being a Marine. I wanted to lead troops and work with men. I once did Marine Corps Bulldog, and after that I went out to Mini-BUD/S, and it was much more of a performance baseline as opposed to kind of the regulations of the military. SEALs, you know, believe in mission completion or you fail, as opposed to the Marines where you only have to do (the minimum) ten pushups and all that stuff. I like to be outside and work in that arena, and also it seemed like a hard, tough challenge. I think mini-BUD/S and BUD/S combined was a good experience and was something I was impressed with. I'd say once I got to the Teams, you know, I think as you learn a little bit more and you realize that you're not the secret warrior and stuff, but overall it was pretty close to what I expected.

The fact that the job was physically challenging and provided an opportunity to work in small elite teams held special appeal to some:

I guess, for the challenge and the opportunity to work with small elite teams in a challenging physical environment. Was it what I expected? Yes and no. I think I was somewhat disappointed by the...I guess I thought that it would be a little bit "cooler" than it was for lack of better terms. The challenging aspect was certainly there. I thought it was more challenging in ways that I was not expecting, though, as far as administrative/ leadership challenges to deal with. You know–liberty incidents and all that kind of stuff. So the actual SEAL stuff itself wasn't as challenging as I thought it was going to be, whereas the things surrounding it were more challenging.

When asked if the SEAL Teams had met his expectations, the same officer remarked:

I think for the most part I came into this community kind of looking for a challenge and something I would find rewarding on a daily basis. For awhile it held that, but then you realized that it seems that, as it stands right now, the community is in a state that you're out doing busy work, but you're not doing it for any real reason or goal or focus. There's no focus or direction or opportunities to employ the skills you've been developing, and that's really the main thing.

For many, the opportunity to work in small elite teams was the primary attraction.

One Lieutenant explained:

I became a SEAL because I like the close teamwork-oriented group that all officers were working with when they went through the same training that the enlisted did. Also, the challenging environment and excitement that the SEAL Team offered.

Most officers believed the SEAL Teams represented the best the Navy had

to offer. One such officer explained his attraction to the Teams:

The stated quality of the people, and the fact that it was...I guess you could call it the best of the best. I considered myself that kind of a person, so I guess that was the logical choice.

D. THEME II: OFFICERS FIND THE OPPORTUNITY TO PLAN AND LEAD OPERATIONS AND TRAINING AS THEIR MOST REWARDING EXPERIENCE

1. Theme

For the most part, the interviewees felt that being given the responsibility and freedom to make decisions, and then being able to observe the results of their efforts (be it training exercises, Full Mission Profiles, or actual missions) were the most rewarding parts of being a SEAL officer. Working with people was also reported as a very rewarding part of the job.

2.   Justification

There is a selection process that takes place for SEAL officers. It begins prior to selection for SEAL training–a self-selection. People who choose to undergo SEAL training probably enjoy physically strenuous work, enjoy challenging themselves, and are predisposed to working in teams. Selection again occurs when an officer is selected to attend BUD/S and continues throughout SEAL training. As a result of all this selection, SEAL officers may be more performance-oriented than are other officer groups. It is not unreasonable to assume that strong performers would cherish the opportunity to demonstrate their capabilities, and, after having performed well, would receive considerable satisfaction from their effort and success. It is reasonable to assume that officers who consider themselves strong performers would want the freedom to make decisions and the autonomy to implement those decisions.

Several officers expressed their satisfaction at having accomplished a challenging task. A Lieutenant related two of his most rewarding experiences:

> The two most rewarding experiences were both my OREs (Operational Readiness Exams). The first one was at SDVT-X as the primary navigator for an SDV mission. Actually briefing, planning, running the whole op, which, as an AOIC was kind of unusual. I guess, at a normal SEAL Team you wouldn't get to run an ORE as an AOIC. But, we had to do three OREs at SDVT-X, one for each officer to check that you were a competent navigator so that the other members of the platoon that were involved, you know, throughout the planing and execution process. It was just a challenging and rewarding operation. Even more so was the ORE at SEAL Team ONE, being the platoon OIC and conducting a pretty difficult underwater Draeger, hydro-recon using a new technique, and then going back in and blowing up obstacles. Again leading that whole thing. Planning, executing and watching it come through to fruition successfully–I found that extremely rewarding. We were a test case for the West Coast, so proving that it could be done, should we have to do it, was real rewarding.

An officer who had the opportunity to conduct several real operations

commented:

> Well, I was involved in 12 real world missions in Somalia. I really enjoyed that. I felt like I was a competent operator. I was really comfortable doing the mission planning and going out and doing ops, and I felt like I had a lot of freedom, once we were in the area of operation, to make decisions and put missions together and do what I dreamed of doing. So that would be it I would say. The rest of it, well, it kind of went downhill.

A Lieutenant who liked working with people over all else had this to say:

> I'd say my most rewarding experiences were all during the same positions, and that would be as an SDV Platoon Commander and as SEAL Platoon Commander, and that was watching my guys grow from more than just an individual focus to a team focus. I really enjoyed having them develop into a team. I liked that the most. More than just finishing an FMP or doing a mission or anything like that. I really liked working with the boys.

One Lieutenant who shared that officer's sentiment explained his most

rewarding experience succinctly:

> Taking care of the men. Having them feel like things are worth doing. After each training phase that they felt good about themselves, they felt like SEALs. That's the most rewarding.

Another officer felt that completing tactical training gave him credibility

and was rewarding, but not as much as being in charge:

> Being the officer-in-charge, being able to plan something and make it happen, and then seeing what the results were. Watching young sailors put out for something you're leading and then actually seeing the results, the product, and it being a good product, so to speak. That was very rewarding as a leader.

After an officer completes a tour as a Platoon Commander, the opportunity to plan

and lead operations and training is greatly reduced. Although there are still plenty of

opportunities to plan and lead, they are in a different context. The opportunity to lead

small elite teams, the one thing the interviewers identified as their most rewarding

experience as a SEAL, is no longer available. One officer captured this feeling of most

officers best in his comments:

> I sure would have liked to have done something, but I didn't. And I would
> have hated to have sat on the sidelines and watch another platoon go in.
> Sitting on the sidelines means attached to the command or back at the
> Team as XO or CO being the onshore quarterback. My dream was to
> come in there and do something, and I didn't. That was my biggest wish–
> it never happened.

E. THEME III: OFFICERS BELIEVE THAT THEY WILL NOT BE USED IN MISSIONS FOR WHICH THEY WERE TRAINED

1. Theme

Most officers expressed frustration in believing that they would never be used in

missions for which they were trained. This was a prevalent theme for almost all officers

interviewed. It was cited by many as having a strong influence on their decision to leave

the Navy.

2. Justification

At one BUD/S graduation ceremony, the Captain of the Naval Special Warfare

Center told the graduating class that, by completing the arduous training, they had earned

what he called "the right to be the first to fight." Many officers said they simply did not

believe this was true. Politics, poor marketing skills, operational commanders not

understanding how to use Special Operations Forces (SOF), and the lack of senior SEAL

leadership forward were all commonly cited as reasons SEALs would not be employed.

Other reasons given include the current reluctance to risk human life and the reliance on

technologically advanced weapons for intelligence collection and precision strikes--missions that may have previously required the use of SOF.

One officer explained that he had come into the Teams expecting to be "America's force of choice" for Special Operations. He expressed his disappointment as follows:

> I think everybody is disillusioned. You come in and you're ready to be sneaking around the jungles of Columbia shooting drug warlords and stuff; the fact is we're not doing that. We're conventional. I can accept that. I understand that there is a mission for us out there and I wouldn't want to risk somebody's life for some bullshit no matter what. I'm just a little bit...reality has set in and I'm not so sure that it is something I want to be a part of. I think my third reason is my lack of confidence that SEALs will be utilized in an actual situation. I love training. I love doing the job. I think that...there is no question in my mind that SEALs provide the best product. But I don't necessarily think SEALs will be used. I think we could be the best SEAL Team and I could have the best SEAL platoon, but it doesn't matter. It just means the Army is going to win that battle. If technology isn't going to win the battle the Army is. There are just too many barriers. They're not going to use us, man. That's my belief. You take that not being used, I'm moving out of my operational window. Let's imagine the terrorist thing gets going really good and maybe we could actually get some action. I'm out of my envelope. I'm not going to get to lead anybody to go get Bin Laden. I'm not doing that anymore. Someone else will get to do it, someone younger than me. Perhaps our boys will conduct the really high-speed mission, but no way--the Army's going to get that. The odds are against me getting a real mission and I'm moving out of my window.

A SEAL who had conducted twelve missions in Somalia did not believe he would ever have the opportunity for combat again:

> I was told I was lucky to have twelve real-world missions and that I should count my blessings. That's the feeling I got from sitting in on classified meetings and hearing about how things had not gone our way. My gut feeling was that I was not going to get back and do an operational billet, I was not going to be the man playing a real mission. That definitely affected my decision. My gut feel as I looked toward the future was that I was not going to get back and be in a real-world situation doing a real

mission. In my opinion that's what I was a SEAL to do and if I wasn't going to do that then I should devote my time to my family.

Officers who had completed ARGs generally felt they were playing "second string" to the Marines, and if the chance for action did come, that they would be written out of the plan. As one officer put it:

> I did a MARG and some of the training we did wasn't valuable. I suppose it was the politically correct thing to do, but some stuff just didn't make sense. We cross-trained with the Marines, mostly because we relied on them for all of their assets. In reality, we'd never get their assets if something were to come down. It's all nice to say yes, yes, but deep down you knew that if something went down and the Marines said they'd do it, you were going to get excluded from the whole operation. I told everyone (we would be used) to keep moral up, but I never really felt that we were an option because we never had anyone to go against them or have us included in the pie.

An interviewee who had experience in three different geographic areas of operation believed that it really did not matter which theater a SEAL was in. His chances for combat action would be minimal in any theater:

> I think overall, I've been in Asia and Europe and in Southern Command and I think all theaters nearly do the same. You look back and see what you did in Asia or Europe and that, overall, we're not going to be out there doing the actual combat direct action mission. We're lucky if we get to go recon. There's not one deployment, but I definitely felt useless down in Panama. I mean, I felt like, yea, I am performing the mission of going down and doing JCETs, but other than that, I was just diving, jumping and patrolling for kicks. Which is fine. That's why we do it, 'cause we love this job, but in terms of...do I feel like an integral cog--absolutely not.

Recall, from the findings of the Active Duty Surveys discussed in Chapter V, that satisfaction with deployments varied both by coast and by type of operational commander. In general, SEALs who deployed to Naval Special Warfare Unit 2 believed

they were being utilized, while most others did not. One East Coast SEAL who shared

this view observed:

> The missions we were doing in Bosnia I mean, basically, and I thought we
> were very fortunate in getting them, cause they easily could have gone to a
> Green Beret or Ranger battalion, so I...when we were at Unit 2, I feel we
> were definitely being used. For what little missions there were out there at
> that time period. I felt actually we were fortunate to have what we
> received. I really don't have an axe to grind like those poor guys stuck out
> on a ship. I felt really fortunate.

Another officer who believed that SEALs deploying to Naval Special

Warfare Unit 2 in Germany were being used by their operational commanders-

even Army commanders-had this to say:

> For Unit 2 and those deployments, they're getting work over there.
> They're starting to erase whatever bad memories that the old Army
> Colonels had in there mind, so as those guys go up the ranks they're
> starting to realize that, hey, SEAL Team is synonymous with good team
> and they're starting to get work. The Army Colonels we worked for loved
> us and they employed us. That happened for the last three deployment
> cycles that SEAL Team 2 sent over to Unit 2 for Bosnia.

The West Coast SEALs tended to have a different outlook. For example,

one West Coast officer explained his frustration as follows:

> The feeling that you were never going to get the opportunity to do
> anything for real. I don't want to sound like a war-monger or anything
> like that, but other than OREs, most of the operations are pretty canned
> and boring, even the exercises you go on when you deploy are basically
> training up other countries that are so far behind you that you are not
> bettering yourself at all. I just felt like there were very few opportunities
> to be pushed and challenged in a real kind of way so that was certainly one
> of my frustrations.

Several officers believed the SEAL community needs to do a better job marketing its capabilities. An officer with SDV experience remarked:

> It seems to me it's somewhat foggy and people aren't really sure how to utilize SEALs and I don't know if it's our fault as SEALs. The senior leadership needs to be out there promoting, because you really have to sell Special Warfare to other warfare unit commanders. If they don't know how to use you, then they're not going to use you whether its SUBGROUP 8 or the carrier or whatever. I think its all marketing. I don't think the senior leadership markets themselves. Maybe it's out of the old mystic of being a silent warrior. I don't think the rest of the Navy knows how to use SEALs the way they should be. That's just my opinion.

Some of the officers commented that the SEAL Teams could learn marketing skills from the Marine Corps. One officer felt strongly that the SEAL Team needed to do a better job of marketing or else risk losing future employment:

> My horseshit opinion after 9 ½ years. I don't know if you've had much exposure to the Marine Corps. I've had quite a bit of exposure, especially in the last 2 years. The Marine Corps has a skill that I think we lack. We are good at our jobs, extremely good. We just aren't very good at telling people that. The Marine Corps is extremely good at telling people how good they are, they're just not very good at doing it. I think we've got to figure out how to be a little bit more like the Marine Corps. It kind of sucks. It's kind of staff like. And it's kind of like people like to say, "Hey, we'll just do good and people will recognize us." Well, the times are a little different now. I think we got to do a little bit better at the public affairs, if you will. At selling us, selling ourselves, selling our community, selling SEALS as a whole. And, the Marine Corps, they're phenomenal at it. Unfortunately, they're a mile wide and an inch deep. We are a mile deep and an inch wide. And I've seen it affect us a great deal. Down in Latin America, I saw us lose or come very close to losing, and we still may, Peru. Because, the Marine Corps sold it. They sold their ability. Of their ability, they were lying for the most part. They couldn't do what they said. And they ended up relying on us when it came time. But they're leading the charge, and they're getting the credit. We can sit in the background and say, hey, we know that we're doing all the work and let the Marine Corps get all the credit. Well, that works for so long, but pretty soon you don't get asked to play anymore. I'm not positive that the senior leadership has figured out how to deal with that or that they think they should deal with that. I don't know. I'm not naive. I don't

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know exactly what goes on up there, but I've seen it at the grassroots level, and it isn't working very well at the moment. And who do they put out there? They got a big O-6 out there, and he can sell it big time. And who do we send out there? An O-3 sometimes, an O-4 if you're lucky.

Another officer explained that SEALs need to market themselves better to "get in the show":

It's trying to impress whomever to try and get in the show when the show happens. The Marine Corps does it really well. They are "an ounce of appearance is worth a pound of performance." They do it very, very well. We suck at it.

Some of the interviewees believed that operational commanders have a difficult time knowing when and where to employ SEALs, because SEALs no longer have a "niche role." These officers argued that, because SEALs have so many missions they could be called on to do, that they are no longer the logical choice for any single mission, with the possible exception of traditional UDT and Combat Swimmer operations. A West Coast officer explained:

I think that ... I don't think they know how to properly utilize us a lot of times. They want to use us, but they don't exactly know how or what we're good at, and I don't think we know what we're good at. One of the things I think we need to do is clearly define our role and pick a few things we want to be experts in instead of looking at your FXP-6 requirements and however many, I can't even remember how many blocks you need to get checked off on to be C-1. There's no way any group can be that good at all those different things. If you talk to guys across the board each one spends a bunch of time doing different things. Some guys are real good in the water, some guys are good on land, each platoon ends up with some little niche, but I think you need to stabilize the end product at some point or pick your spots. We no longer are the resident experts on anything really if you think about, and I think that makes it hard for operational commanders to say "Oh, it's this mission, give it to these guys." Instead, it's like, "Well who can we use on this one? We could use these guys or we could use these guys." There's no-we're the best at this-type thing.

F. THEME IV: OFFICERS DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE SEAL COMMUNITY HAS A CLEAR VISION OF THE FUTURE

1. Theme

None of the officers interviewed thought that the SEAL community has a clear vision of where it is headed. Several officers discussed "Vision 2000" and "Quantum Leap," but most felt uncertain about what was developing with these initiatives and were not sure if they were part of a larger plan. Over half of the officers interviewed were concerned that many senior SEALs are reluctant to embrace new technology and to search for the new missions that technology will enable--missions that will make SEALs both relevant and highly desirable assets in the years ahead.

2. Justification

According to Bolman and Deal, in *Reframing Organizations:*

"Around the world, middle managers say that their organizations would thrive if only senior management provided strategy, vision, and 'real leadership.'" (Bolman and Deal, 1991, p. 403) Many of the Lieutenants (the SEAL community's middle managers) interviewed relayed similar thoughts with regard to the SEAL Teams. What exactly that strategy, vision, and leadership should look like, and even what level it should come from, was not commonly agreed upon. This is not surprising. There is frequently much disagreement about what function senior leadership should provide. Many organizational theorists believe that the role of senior leadership is to set direction for an organization. How this occurs is largely a function of organizational configuration. (Roberts, 1998)

Whatever organizational configuration is used, and however an organizational vision is crafted, it should be a shared vision. It was clear during the course of the

interviews that the majority of Lieutenants felt the SEAL community needed a direction and believed the Teams did not have a common vision. Many officers believed there were efforts being made to establish a vision, but expressed no ownership in that vision. One officer wondered how much thought was being given to the future:

> Sure, the Commodore comes and talks to you before you deploy, and has no idea what you guys are doing, and who you are, and understandably so. Those guys are so far removed. I think the Commanding Officer of the Team is the guy who should be still in touch with you. Above that, I don't know. But I often wonder what those guys are thinking about as far as where we are going in the future. I don't know if too many people are thinking about how to employ SEALs ten years from now or what our jobs are going to be. I think there's going to be a drastic change in how warfare is going to be viewed in ten to fifteen years, and all the technology that's coming down. Where we're going to be, and what we are going to be capable of doing. They need to keep their eyes and ears on that.

While a common vision can promote unity of effort, many officers believed that the reason the SEAL community does not have a common vision is because there is little consensus on what the future should be and not much teamwork at the Commander-and-above level. One officer explained:

> Well, I don't think we have any vision. I don't think SEAL Team is a team when you get to the senior echelon. I see no teamwork at the senior echelon. It's like everybody forgets their team foundation when they were junior officers. When they become COs, there's no more team in there. Everyone's more concerned with how they're going to look on a Fitrep or getting promoted to Captain so they can retire as an O-6. That's the feeling I got when I was with the inner workings with Group X. That hurts everyone else. No one wants to focus together on what a vision should be. I mean Vision 2000, in itself, was not the end-all-be-all answer to everything, but it was a step, it was a forward-thinking step. It may not be the right one, but it was the kind of thinking that we needed to have.

G. THEME V: OFFICERS DO NOT USUALLY HAVE MENTORS. THOSE WHO DO FEEL THAT HAVING A MENTOR IS A POSITIVE INFLUENCE TO STAY IN THE NAVY

1. Theme

Surprisingly, very few of the officers interviewed indicated that they had a senior officer who they felt was in the least bit concerned with their career. This was not true for all officers interviewed. The officers who said that they had a "sea-daddy" or mentor felt they were fortunate to have had such a relationship with a more senior officer.

2. Justification

Mentorship has been identified as an extremely effective way of teaching specialized skills. Throughout history, it has been used as a method to teach individuals a special trade. The Great Chinese Fleet used principles of mentorship to instruct their sailors, as did many great European navies. (Levathes, 1994, Cipolla, 1996) The difficulty with adopting a policy of mentoring is that it is inefficient (a mentor can usually instruct only one person at a time) and is time-consuming. Despite these possible drawbacks, the idea of mentoring has been recognized as valuable by many modern-day corporations and other organizations. One of the interviewees, who now works for IBM, explained that "Big Blue" strongly encourages new employees to seek mentors in their departments. In a military organization, it is not appropriate for a junior officer to seek out a "sea-daddy." The senior officer must initiate this type of relationship.

According to interviewees, several Commanding Officers have assumed the role of mentor. Some COs apparently take it upon themselves to mentor several junior officers. Some people call this "mentorship," some simply refer to it as leadership.

Whatever we choose to call it, the results indicate that mentoring tends to be the exception, rather than the norm.

Besides providing guidance, counseling, and acting as a role model, a mentor may also increase an individual's commitment to the organization by making that officer feel like an integral part of the organization.

When asked if he had a mentor, one officer remarked:

> No, and I...that is one of the big factors for me. I've got really no one out there that's looking out for me. My first CO is out. My second CO is still in, but he kind of has the personality, well zero personality, and he's got his own agenda. My third CO is out. My fourth CO is still in but is not one to look out for JOs. My CO, when I was at Four, was great but he is now out. My current CO, I've been deployed his entire reign so I don't really know him. And you look back on the XOs and perhaps now they've risen into a leadership position. I have an old XO I respect, and I guess I could call him if I needed advice. I think they would, but it's almost as if they don't want to because it's my own career. I don't know. There's no basis for it.

An officer who struggled with the decision to leave the service confided that he could have been persuaded to stay in the Navy:

> At a point, I was so close to deciding to stay in. I was borderline. I reckon if I did have a sea-daddy and he was pushing hard for me to stay in, I reckon he could have talked me out of it. I was that close.

One officer felt that senior enlisted personnel often filled the role of mentor:

> I never really did at the Teams, but when I came here to the Academy I met a Commander who I talked with for a very long time, probably over the past year, should I stay in or should I get out. He was a fantastic guy. He is a Naval Flight Officer, though. If I ever had anything close to a sea-daddy, it was probably a chief more than a senior officer. Commander X was a fantastic guy, but I would never speak personally to him. Never anyone who was senior to me. Don't know why. But I did a lot more

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with the chiefs, and learned a lot more from them because of their experience. If I did have one in the Teams I would have to say it was a senior enlisted.

Although the senior enlisted personnel are well suited for providing technical guidance in tactical matters, they are probably not as well suited for counseling officers on their professional development and career planning.

Another officer found career guidance and advice from officers close to his paygrade:

> It was mostly peers. No one who was more than one paygrade ahead of me. Actually, by the time I got out, I was the same paygrade as all of the people I would consider mentors.

Several officers did indicate they had a more senior officer as a mentor. One East Coast SEAL, for example, considered himself to be fortunate:

> Yes I did. It wasn't like the guy put his arm around me and said from here on out I'm going to be your guardian angel or anything. I certainly felt that I could go to my old CO, CDR X, for that. He had me over for dinner and said, "Hey, what's this latest thing I heard you're going to DEVGRU?" He talked to me about my platoon. And I felt that for me, for the other platoon commanders, that was a unique relationship that we had. Most platoon commanders couldn't call up an old CO or even an active one and do that sort of thing. I was fortunate with that one.

H. THEME VI: OPERATIONAL TEMPO AND FAMILY SEPARATION PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THE DECISION TO RESIGN

1. Theme

Almost all officers, whether married or single, suggested that family separation and operational tempo played a significant role in their decision to leave the Navy.

2. Justification

Recall, from the Active Duty Survey, that the majority of SEALs indicated satisfaction with most deployments (except the East Coast ARG). Six months away from home can be difficult, but most officers indicated that, if the time was well spent, it was not cause for separation. Many officers explained that six-month deployments are planned and generally occur once every two years. What appeared to cause more frustration was the considerable time spent away from home training, frequently on short notice. Most acknowledged that, in order to be a SEAL and be proficient in different environments, travel was a necessity. Nobody was sure how to resolve this issue, but many suggested somehow training "smarter." Other suggestions included not deploying for six months. As one officer explained:

> We are not ships. We don't have the same required maintenance cycle that ships do. Why do we deploy for six months? You know the Airforce PJs and Combat Controllers do something like three-month rotations. We should explore some of those options.

Everyone did not agree on a solution to the operational tempo issue, nor did everyone have a proposed solution. Nevertheless, the interviewees agreed that family separation and operational tempo played a substantial role in their decision to leave. One officer responded to a question regarding the amount of influence operational tempo had on his decision to resign:

> Significant. I would say on a scale of 1-10, I would say eight or so. Being top of my peer group...the better you do, the more you're needed and I think I was gone eight months out of the last year, and I wasn't even deploying. I was just...opportunities come up where they need someone who is knowledgeable in such and such, and since I'd worked in that area and done well, I was the logical choice. Because I was very motivated...at work I would say, "yea, send me," it wouldn't be until later,

when I got home, that I realized what it was doing to my family life. So upon reflection, it took me awhile to realize how often I was going and the reason I was. There were several other officers at the team and I would think, "Why didn't they send him?" Well it's because he's completely incompetent, so he's happy working a 9-5 job, has a great family life, and gets the same medal I got. That's the whole equity thing.

Many of the single officers were reluctant to admit operational tempo had any impact on their decision, but most eventually indicated that it was a significant factor.

One single officer observed:

> I'm single. Very little influence-almost none. On the other hand, I've been underway probably out of the last five years, four of those five. My OpTempo (Operational Tempo) is roughly 80 percent lets say. How can you have a wife and a personal life when you're gone that much? On the other hand, I feel that if you're going to be a SEAL, you've got to deploy. So I'm kind of caught on this issue, and I'm not sure how to do both. To be a SEAL, and have your own life. As a JO, I was like, "Hey send me baby." I don't know about you, but that's the attitude I've had the whole time. Now I'm getting in to nine years and you're like shit. If I keep going, I'm going to be like 35, swinging single, looking for some kind of root, which you have none because you've been living out of a Para (Parachute) Bag. That is a concern. The married guys do the same thing and then they have this wreck of a family. Some guys can work it out, but a lot of them don't.

One officer expressed the basic thought conveyed by the majority of the officers interviewed: if one is deployed for a good, purposeful reason, the deployments are worth the time away; if however, there is a perception that one will not be employed, officers begin to question the reason for the family separation. As the officer stated:

> My first inclination is to say not much, but I think when you're gone a lot, travelling a lot, if you're doing something that's rewarding and worthwhile, I don't think most guys have a problem with that. When you're gone just to be gone, and spending time twiddling your thumbs somewhere, then it starts to be a factor because you get frustrated and you're like, "Man I don't mind being away from the wife and family for how many months, whatever, but when I'm just sitting here doing nothing,

then, yea, it is kind of bullshit." I think that's when it starts to be a negative thing and starts to weigh in on your mindset and attitude.

I. THEME VII: SPOUSES TEND TO PLAY A MINOR ROLE IN THE DECISION TO LEAVE SERVICE IF THE OFFICER/HUSBAND IS SATISFIED WITH HIS JOB

1. Theme

This theme was developed based on responses from married respondents to a question regarding the amount of influence a spouse played on the decision to leave the Navy. In many cases, wives were willing to support their husband's decision for a career in the Navy as long as the husband was happy. If the service member was generally dissatisfied with work-related factors, however, then most officers interviewed felt the family separation was not worth it.

2. Justification

Clearly, this theme relates to the previous one. The demographics in both society and the SEAL Teams have changed considerably over the past twenty years. In society, more and more women have entered the labor force in professional roles. At the same time, more SEAL officers are married today than in years past. Perhaps the nomadic "live out of your parachute bag" lifestyle that is appealing to many single officers is not as much so for married officers. Also important is the fact that many wives have a career of their own. In the cases of several of the officers interviewed, the civilian spouse earned more money than the officer did. When these officers' orders required them to move, they were facing a substantial reduction in family income as their spouse would be forced to give up her earnings, at least temporarily.

Although some members of the SEAL community believe that changing demographics are responsible for the recent increase in voluntary resignations, the interviews suggest that the reason is not simply the fact that more officers are married than in years past. Marriage is considered to be important when husbands become dissatisfied or frustrated with their time away from home. In fact, it is fair to assume that married officers would become dissatisfied more easily than single ones. The challenge, then, is to give officers, whether married or single, every reason to believe that their sacrifice is for a good, meaningful cause.

Most officers suggested that their wives were generally supportive of their Navy careers. One officer said his wife played only a small part in his decision to leave, until he viewed his time away as meaningless:

> A small amount. I kind of told her from day one that if I had the opportunity to go to Damneck, that I was going to do that. She kind of agreed with that. She also said that she didn't want me to be a miserable civilian. She wanted to make damn sure I didn't pull the plug and blame it on her. So I was careful not to do that. It comes back to spending time busting your butt, travelling all over, being gone a lot and really not doing a whole lot. That's what made the decision a lot easier. I don't mind spending time away from the family if I'm doing something worthwhile, but when it comes down to wasting time, and I saw that for the next 10 years looking at me in the face, I was like, "I don't think so, I'll go make a little bit more money and have a better life.

Several officers suggested that their wives had almost no influence. One such officer responded:

> One-hundred percent none. She was wonderful about that. She was 110 percent supportive for me to go to DEVGRU or getting out. She was ready to stay in for the long hall. And that's something that kind of pissed me off, to tell you the truth. When X came out, his first comment was, "Well let me tell you, I know why everyone's getting out. It's because ten years ago 30 percent of the officers were married and now its 52 percent

so it's the wives that are making everyone get out." Horseshit. At least for me.

J. THEME VIII: PAY TENDS TO INFLUENCE AN OFFICER'S DECISION TO LEAVE WHEN HE IS INVOLVED IN AN ACTIVE JOB SEARCH

1. Theme

None of the officers interviewed were attracted to the SEAL Teams because of money. Almost all said that dissatisfaction with pay did not cause them to first consider resigning. When other job-related factors caused them frustration, pay did play a role in the service member's decision process, although how much, and what aspects of pay, were different for each individual. For example, some were attracted by high paying jobs now available in the civilian sector, while others were more concerned about their income after retirement. Almost all officers expressed forward-looking behavior, and considered how marketable they would be upon retirement from the Navy.

2. Justification

Recall from the literature review the discussion about how an individual makes career choices. It was suggested that an individual weighs both the pecuniary and non-pecuniary costs of leaving against the perceived benefits of staying. A raise in pay clearly represents an increase in the monetary costs of leaving, and, therefore, would likely provide an incentive for an individual to stay. The difficult question to answer is, "What is driving people away?" Is it dissatisfaction with the pay, or is it dissatisfaction with something else? The responses to interview questions indicate that it is dissatisfaction with the non-pecuniary factors that cause people to re-evaluate their employment decisions. After they have reached this point, they initiate job-search

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activities, which make them more aware of their civilian opportunities. One officer explained:

> Pay was not that big a motivator, but I would say...well I was not that unhappy with my pay in the Navy, but the fact that I knew I could get out and step up into a higher pay scale was a serious thing. You know, I was looking at having to be a LT for a bazillion years; that's what my next significant raise was going to be-LCDR. I could get out and make a lot more money, enjoy stock options-things the Navy cannot do, but civilian companies can do great things for you monetarily. If I had been satisfied with work, I would have been satisfied with the level of pay. Once I became dissatisfied at work, money became more of an issue.

> My brother-he's a year younger than I am. He went to Georgetown and studied international business and went to work for a technologies company in Silicon Valley and is already a multi-millionaire. He was an influence. I was having some hellacious experiences at SDVT-X and my brother came out for Christmas in '95 and basically hit me with a big clue bat. He asked me, "Why are you killing yourself out here and getting nothing when you can get out and have a good family life and be ready for a good retirement when you're 40-something?" That was pretty heavy. I turned my resignation in about a month later.

Many officers said pay was not an influence on their decision whatsoever:

> Pay didn't have any effect on my decision. I think JO's are paid a lot better than they think they are. I'm making more money now than I did in the Teams, but I wasn't complaining about the money that I made. What I was going to do was going to be there no matter what I did.

The officers interviewed were split fairly evenly with regard to their response on how much influence the strong economy of 1998 had on their decision to resign. Some believed that the strong economy, the abundance of available jobs, and the timing with regard to their careers, taken together, did affect their decision. An East Coast officer, for example, observed:

> The strong economy did factor in, to be honest with you because I thought about...I thought well I'd go to Damneck for three years and get out. And

I just thought, man, the economy is so nice right now, this is probably the best time to get out, and I was also at the age where you're not too far behind your peers. The direct pay not so much, but the economy certainly did because I think a lot of people are hiring and that's a better feeling to step out into that, so that had somewhat of a factor.

Many officers were concerned with their long-term income potential, such as retirement and second-career income. An officer who turned down orders to the SEAL Development Group described how pay affected his decision:

> Where the pay affected my decision was through retirement. Probably the number-one reason why I got out. Because...and when it really hit me, I was sitting in as the XO at STX; I was XO for about 45 days. I would go with the CO to CO meetings and the Admiral had a meeting with all COs and XOs on the East Coast. I'm sitting in this room and I'm looking around at everybody and all these guys...a lot of the guys were like, "well I'm getting out at 20." The retirement I would get is dramatically reduced from what even they would get. So I was forward thinking about my family. If I'm going to go out into the mainstream at 45 and start another career, SEAL Team doesn't set me up for anything. Especially at less than 50 percent retirement, I mean that's...it just seemed ludicrous for me to stay in. And I put that question in with the Admiral about, hey, "is there any way of attacking retirement to at least bring it back to 50 percent," and he didn't even answer that question. That was a really big factor for me.

After more questioning, the officer quoted above explained that it was not actually pay that made him think about leaving. It was only <u>after</u> he was considering leaving that pay weighed in on his decision to leave:

> I've been thinking about leaving since 1995. It was not the pay system then. To tell you the truth I really didn't even find out about my decrease in retirement until about a year and a half ago. It was a whole bunch of things. Retirement was probably the straw that broke the camel's back.

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K.   THEME IX: DEPARTING OFFICERS BELIEVE THEY WOULD HAVE EVENTUALLY COMMANDED A TEAM OR UNIT IF THEY HAD STAYED IN SERVICE

1.   Theme

Most officers interviewed believed that their promotion to Lieutenant Commander was virtually "automatic" and that their chance for Command was very good. Most officers reported having "unblemished" records, and although it was not specifically asked of the respondents, about one-half reported to have "broken-out" (been recommended for early promotion under the new fitness report system).

2.   Justification

Some turnover is believed to be healthy in an organization. (Ehrenberg and Smith, 1994) If people who are not well-equipped for a job leave, then they make room for those better suited. The result is a better fit between the organization and the individuals who are employed. (Muchinsky, 1992) This theme was developed from responses to a question that tried to determine if people were leaving due to their "poor fit" with the SEAL Teams. If many of the officers leaving felt that their chances for promotion were slim, then we might assume that they had not excelled at their jobs and that they were not top performers. This addresses the issue of the functionality of turnover. That is, it addresses the question of not only the *number* of people leaving, but also the *quality* of people leaving. The reader may be skeptical at this point as to the honesty of the respondents. Nevertheless, it was clear to the researcher that the interviewees gave their best estimate of their chances for advancement. Many recognized that the opportunities for major command were few, but others felt confident that, if they could avoid trouble, their chances, even for major command, were good.

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One officer rated his chances for command as almost certain:

> I'd say 99 percent. Is promotion equitable? Yes. I think it's almost a fault of the system that it's so equitable. The system leaves little room for judgement. If an officer has one poor fitrep he is finished. I think if I stayed in the Navy that I would have commanded a SEAL Team, just by mere attrition. And making O-4, that's a no-brainer.

An officer who felt promotion was largely a function of not getting in trouble observed:

> I think I would have done fine. I think I did a good enough job of not stepping on myself, that I would have advanced. To me, I think there's something in that. Just not doing bad things is not good enough for me. It seemed like I lost a little bit of the challenge there. It seemed like the people I was seeing advanced to O-4 were just people who kept their nose clean. They weren't your real risk takers or dominating leaders that I looked up to. Do I think promotion is equitable? No I don't. Seems like if you just put your time in you'll make O-4. I saw people who I didn't think should be advanced get advanced.

L. THEME X: OFFICERS TEND TO FEEL FRUSTRATED WITH THE NAVY'S PROMOTION AND REWARD SYSTEM, AND PREFER A SYSTEM THAT IS PERFORMANCE-BASED

1. Theme

Many of the officers expressed some level of frustration with the Navy's promotion and rewards system. Although most officers believed that many excellent officers were being promoted, they expressed concern that some officers were being promoted that should not be.

2. Justification

It is rational to expect that top performers would prefer a reward system that links rewards--be it promotion, pay, awards, or some other form of recognition--to performance. Under the Navy's hierarchical system, this is not always easy. Pay and

promotion are tied to years of service, not performance. Since the majority of officers (historically, around 80 percent in the SEAL officer community) are selected to Lieutenant Commander, it is a long time before performance plays a significant impact on rank or pay. The fact that an officer is a Lieutenant with little hope for promotion for five or more years also caused frustration.

One ex-SEAL officer, who had been out of the service for about 10 months at the time of his interview, expressed concern with the promotion system:

> You know, I was looking at being a Lieutenant for a bazillion years. That's when my next significant pay raise was going to be--Lieutenant Commander. I got out of the Navy last year and I've been promoted twice in my civilian job. That's a good feeling. In the Navy it felt like promotion was never going to come. Do your time. I think for some of the less motivated individuals, I think they just settle into that. They were fine; they were comfortable with that. That wasn't enough for me and I felt I was on the fast track. I felt if I worked hard I could make any rank I wanted, but it was going to happen too slow.

Another officer expressed concern for the way that officer rankings frequently are based on time spent at a command or the specific needs of an officer rather than on performance:

> I've been pretty competitive throughout, so I haven't had a problem with the zero-defect thing, although I don't know if there's a question later about the Fitrep (Fitness Report) system or evaluation system at all or should I address that now because I have a beef with that. Basically, it kind of ties to the zero-defect thing, I guess, but the way things are running now...I was lucky enough to sit on the XO/CO screening board here. It was the first one the SEALs actually ran for themselves and I got to watch that whole process, go down and look at about a million records you know, see what guys had, and how their Fitreps looked and everything. It was pretty educational, but one of the things I kind of saw was how...I always thought that Fitreps were no big deal. You do your job and everything falls into place. The guy says, "well look I have to rank so and so ahead of you because he has been here longer than you and that whole thing, it's no big deal." Well, that stuff does come into play

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and I often wonder, with the way they've written the system now, I understand there's competition and everything, but when guys aren't straight grading you for your performance and they're looking at different things like, "well, this guys at this stage of his career, and what do I need to give him to keep him around," or the things that get tied into an evaluation or Fitrep are somewhat frustrating. It seems like... I guess in an ideal world you do your job and get graded on doing your job and that's...if you did your job better than the next guy then you should be ranked ahead of him, not if he's going on to be Ops Officer or something and needs this Fitrep, or he's two years senior to you and needs to make LCDR, or whatever it is. I guess I'd like to see some of that go away. As far as the zero defect goes, it's somewhat of a reality now that if you have a bad Fitrep or two you are done as far as screening for XO and making LCDR.

M. THEME XI: OFFICERS FEEL THAT THE NAVY'S DETAILING PROCESS IS INEQUITABLE, BUT THIS DOES NOT PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN THEIR DECISION TO LEAVE SERVICE

1. Theme

All of the officers believed the detailing process is in need of revision. Interestingly, most of the officers interviewed either were pleased with the assignments they had, or believed they had benefited from the inequitable system.

2. Justification

The issue of detailing was brought up at each of the three Junior Officers Conferences held in 1997. Many respondents to the Active Duty Surveys (discussed in Chapter V) wrote comments in the margins of the survey regarding the need to fix what was referred to as "the broken detailing process." The results from interviews with the officers leaving the SEAL Teams indicate that, although the detailing process may not be perfect, it is not the cause of the recent increase in junior officer resignations. Although many of the officers believed that detailing relied on "the good old boy network," most officers interviewed still felt that they had benefited from it.

One East Coast SEAL commented on the detailing process:

> I was very fortunate with my detailing. Fair system? (Laughs) No, but I
> was fortunate. You kind of get the feeling; well if you have a good
> rapport with X, well then you can pretty much say you are going where
> you want to go. At least that's the feeling I always had. She was always
> good to me. I never dealt with the last three detailers. It was always X
> that's why I bring her name into it. I don't have a single complaint about
> my detailing, but I don't know how equitable it is.

An East Coast SEAL officer who deals with the detailer regularly remarked about
the workload in the detailing office:

> Man, it's a busy, busy office in that place. I mean X right now I
> think…there hasn't been a detailer for the past month and a half. X is the
> detailer. They gapped the billet. And I'm like, "wow that's a pretty
> important job to gap."

Although the officers felt the detailing system was in need of revision, opinions
regarding the efficiency of the system varied. One officer explained that an officer
simply needed to be pro-active in managing his career, and that detailing had no
influence on his decision to leave the Navy:

> It didn't have any influence on me. You just needed to call ahead and find
> out what was available and just be pro-active. You couldn't call X a week
> before you're supposed to get orders and say, "I want to go to Hawaii."
> You're going to Guam. If you didn't plan ahead, that's where you were
> going. She has stuff to be filled. If you didn't give her a heads up, that's
> where you were going. I didn't have much contact with her, but every
> time I needed something she was always there and always went above and
> beyond what she needed to do. I had no grudge with X. She always
> helped me out. Even after I was getting out, she helped me out. She
> definitely does more than is required.

It is interesting to observe that not everyone thinks the system should be fair.
Some officers feel that, while pay and promotion are not tied to performance, maybe

receiving good billets should be. When asked if he thought the detailing system was equitable, an officer currently stationed overseas responded:

> Is it equitable? No. It's the total good old-boy system. Is that bad? Probably not. If somebody is good, they should get good jobs, so I'm for it--being inequitable. I think the O-4s and O-5s should be more involved and should try and communicate more with each officer. This is tied to the mentor thing. I've never really been spoken to about the career path I was taking. When I think about it, nobody ever said "hey you should go here or here, and this is a good job." No, that has never happened.

A West Coast officer who believed he knew how the system worked shared his insights:

> I knew how the system worked. I knew who buttered the bread. Who to talk to and who not to piss off. Some guys refuse to play the game and they get punished by it. I don't know if its equitable or fair, but that's the reality, so I don't know how you answer that and I think there are some timing issues that end up forcing people into bad deals or good deals. You just get lucky or you don't. You just call on the right day. And so I think it might be better if it were a more formal system where the jobs were posted for everybody to see when they were available, that sort of thing. Seems like there is a hidden jar where all the cool jobs are and if you don't have the key to that, you're going to be looking at the same things all the time. For the most part, I didn't have a problem, but I can see where people might.

N. THEME XII: OFFICERS FEEL THAT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS TO BE IMPROVED

1. Theme

The majority of the officers interviewed expressed concern that, while SEALs do an exceptional job of training enlisted personnel and officers in tactical matters, officer professional development is haphazard and left largely up to the individual. Most believed a more formal system would be beneficial.

2.   Justification

SEAL officers undergo a Junior Officer Training Course sometime after completion of BUD/S training. Professional Development then occurs at the individual Teams where an officer learns through on-the-job training. Most officers explained that, by the time they completed their OIC tour, they had just about figured out what it was they were supposed to be doing, and those who were fortunate enough to have two OIC tours said they were much better prepared for the second one.

One senior Lieutenant explained:

> I'm ready now to be a Platoon Commander. I could be so much more effective than I was three and a half years ago, but that's not what we do with our Lieutenants, or not with our senior Lieutenants.

After the OIC tour, an officer's next big "ticket" is his Operations Officer tour, for which there is no formal training. The officers interviewed who had held the position of Operations Officer explained that this job requires a different skill set than that of Platoon Commander.

A post-Operations officer commented on how his professional development prepared him for the jobs he has held:

> No, I don't think I was given proper preparation for several of the billets I've held. I was Ops Officer at Team X right after I was a Platoon Commander and that was sink or swim big time. That was mach five the whole time...Shit, life's not perfect. You're not going to get a year of training to be Ops Officer. I was able to do it well enough to keep the Team above water. I also saw people who were thrown in there shortly after me who didn't survive. They were relatively inexperienced, which I would say I was, but they didn't have what it took to put in the time or just didn't naturally have the ability to swim. And they flailed and they were replaced.

Other significant jobs a senior Lieutenant might have include Task Unit

Commander positions on ARG staffs or as a SDV Task Unit Commander. There is no

formal training for these jobs, either. Perhaps because of their competitive nature and

their desire to perform well, most SEAL officers seem to do fairly well at these jobs,

despite the lack of formal training.

Several officers believed that Platoon Commanders are generally well trained

tactically, but not professionally. A West Coast officer offered this opinion:

> I don't think we teach junior officers to sell our capability. I think
> professional development in that sense lacks, big time. We send a lot of
> young Platoon Commanders out there who go maybe four years in the
> Teams and all they've done is shot and blown things up and partied with
> the boys. Then they're standing in front of some O-6 on an ARG and are
> expected to know everything about Naval Special Warfare. What we do,
> how we do it, how we plan, what's going on up above as this happens, and
> I think a lot of guys aren't ready for it when they go. That's been my
> experience.

While discussing how he felt about the SEAL officer career path, an officer currently

stationed overseas commented on professional development:

> I think it lacks professional development and I also think we are poor at
> developing our JOs. For example, nobody ever really taught me at all
> throughout my career. Now you know I've stumbled along and I've
> figured it out fine. But to develop the kind of officers we want out in the
> fleet, there needs to be some actual educating, whether its from senior LTs
> or O-4s, but that needs to happen at the lower levels, the STT level. I was
> the Joint Operations Officer for Matador this time for the whole SOC and
> I definitely felt that I didn't have the professional development as an
> officer who can right plans and do the bigger picture stuff with the Army.
> The guys who had been to the Army and Marine Officers Advanced
> Courses, were definitely more prepared and knew what needed to be done,
> therefore they were able to sell their product. I think that has a lot to do
> with the fact that the Marines are able to sell their product better. SEALs
> simply... yes we can figure it out after working on the job and, in general,
> our people are much better, but there's nothing that takes the place of a
> good education.

An officer who said the lack of professional development was a primary reason for his resignation also commented that, if he were able to change one or two things in the Teams, he would focus on improving professional development:

> I don't have a solid plan for professional development. I'd probably start with seeing what the Army has for their officer corps. Something where you could say, Hey I'm going to go to the Naval War College for a year...I'd have language training built in. I would professional development built in. I would have War College and equivalents built in so people can make the transition from a small-scope focus to a big scope. That's where I think we lose a lot. For instance, Group X was such a micro-managing machine because they didn't seem like they had any big focus. The leadership couldn't change their thought. They were focused at times on a damn vehicle and who's going to drive what vehicle, when they should be thinking about how many vehicles a Team should have or things much bigger than focusing on small items.

Respondents also raised a slightly different concern regarding professional development. Most of the officers were concerned that the professional development they believed they would receive in the Navy would not prepare them well for a second, post-retirement career. Even graduate education programs, such as Special Operations in Low Intensity Conflict (SOLIC), offered at the Naval Postgraduate School, was not viewed as significantly enhancing an individual's future marketability. Many respondents suggested that they could have been enticed to stay in the Navy if they would have had the opportunity for professional development that they saw as both relevant and enhancing in their second careers.

O. DISCUSSION

Although it did not warrant discussion as a theme, the researcher found that many of the interviewees felt that the Naval Special Warfare organization was reluctant to embrace technology. Of course, SEALs are trained to rely on personal skills rather than

on "gadgets," which tend to break in the rigors of the surf-zone. However, SEAL Teams have traditionally had equipment like the Satellite Communications (SATCOM) Radios, Laser Designators, Digital Imagery devises, high-speed boats and other items that gave them capabilities unmatched by Marine Force Reconnaissance and Army A-Teams. Clearly, this equipment, while not advanced compared to what is commercially available, was far superior to that of even other elite Special Operations teams. A Lieutenant expressed his view of how "high-tech" the SEAL Teams are:

> The SEAL community is so far behind in the technology it has available to it. You can buy better stuff off the store shelf. It gives you unlimited capabilities to do…. With your GPS and your cell phones and all that stuff we could eliminate tons of stuff you have to carry. With your IFF…there's a lot of stuff out there. There's a lot of stuff out there that's better than what we have. But, where do you stop spending the money? I think what we need is a single vision of where we're going.

A SEAL, who presented some new technology to several senior SEAL Officers, had this to say:

> I briefed some of the stuff I worked on in DC and some of the stuff was fairly technical and out of the realm of most SEALs' world. As I briefed some of the stuff to some of the guys, I got the standard, "I don't need anything but UDTs and a knife because I haven't been stopped yet." Well, that's great but we haven't been in combat since Vietnam except for a few incidents, and I don't know how guys can say that. That was at the Commodore or Captain level. I had someone at the Commodore level say to me, "This fancy stuff is all nice, but nobody can stop me as it stands right now, and until they prove they can, I'm not wasting my money or my time on technology. Kind of blew my mind. It's unbelievable. I found that to be a little bit cave-man-ish.

Several officers said that there is a reluctance to embrace technology because it is new, and it tends to require new skills and possibly even new missions. As one officer who had proposed using computer simulations to plan missions put it:

We still think that writing your PLO on toilet paper in the shithouse is the way to go. That's cool stuff. It's warrior, it's frogman all the way. It just ain't '90s. And it sure isn't 2000, which is coming up real soon. I'm not saying my idea is the greatest in the world. It's going to work if they would finally use it, but just the fact that people balk at anything like that is a sign we're not ready.

P.   SUMMARY

SEALs enjoy the challenge of working in small elite teams, but do not feel they are properly utilized. In fact, because they are unaware of a unifying vision of the future, they see little hope that the situation will improve in the near term. Once these SEAL officers believe they that will not be used, they begin to question if the sacrifices they make (in terms of high operational tempo and family separation) are worth it. These frustrations combine with others, such as dissatisfaction with the reward system and future professional development, to cause the officers to consider civilian employment opportunities. Unfortunately for the Navy, this is occurring at a time when the economy is strong and the opportunities for employment (perhaps at a greater wage) appear abundant.

VIII. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A.   SUMMARY

This thesis examines the reasons for the recent increase in SEAL junior officer voluntary resignations. To accomplish this, several data sources were generated: an Active Duty Survey, a Resignation Survey, and Resignation Interviews.

The Active Duty Survey captured data concerning junior officers' satisfaction with a variety of work-related factors. An analysis of variance was conducted to determine if the mean levels of satisfaction were significantly different for respondents with different career intentions. The study then matched the responses to satisfaction questions with an officer's stated career intention. A regression model was developed to investigate the explanatory power of responses to satisfaction factors on career intention. Two additional linear regression models were estimated using both demographic and attitudinal data culled from the Active Duty Survey.

The Resignation Survey data were compared with those of the Active Duty Survey to determine if there were any differences in responses to survey questions between the two groups.

Resignation interviews were conducted with officers who left the Navy in 1997 or 1998 or were awaiting separation during the 1998-1999 period. Common themes were extracted from the interviews. These themes provided insight into the reasons why the respondents chose to leave the Navy and highlighted opinions on work-related issues.

The results of the Active Duty Survey provided information regarding the level of satisfaction of junior officers serving in SEAL billets with various work-related factors. Of the officers surveyed, 34 percent planned to resign prior to completing 20 years of

service, while 26 percent expected to remain in the Navy for a full career. One officer planned to transfer laterally to another community. The remaining officers (39 percent) were undecided on their career plans. SEAL officers who are "on the fence" are probably the ones that future policies should target to convince them to stay in service. Unfortunately, the officers who have left the service will most likely provide a model for those who are "undecided" about the opportunities that exist in the civilian labor market.

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) conducted on the satisfaction questions indicated that satisfaction with "Operational Tempo," "Quality of Family Life," and "Family Separation" distinguished individuals who plan on making the Navy a career from those who intend to resign. Specifically, the results of the ANOVA indicated that the mean values of the responses to satisfaction questions for these three factors were significantly different at the 95 percent confidence level. Other findings include the fact that 85 percent of the respondents said they did not believe senior leadership has a clearly-defined vision. Also, 85 percent indicated that they would be willing to move geographically to increase their operational opportunities. Of the officers who intend to resign, over two-thirds said they would remain in service if they could remain "operational."

None of the officers who were surveyed strongly agreed (on a scale from 1-5 where "strongly agree" = 1 and "strongly disagree" = 5) that SEALs are properly utilized by operational commanders, and about 13 percent somewhat agreed. The major cause of dissatisfaction and apparent operational misuse seems to come from the East Coast ARG deployment, although frustration with deployments to Guam was also expressed.

Results of the regression analysis using career intention as the dependent variable indicate that officers with children, officers who had completed a tour at an SDV Team, and officers who had completed a Special Operations deployment are more likely than other officers to plan on making the Navy a career. Officers with children may enjoy the benefits or job security the Navy offers. Recall that this analysis was based on *stated* career intentions. What career decision the respondents *actually* make is not yet known. Therefore, an officer with children may, at a later date, find that family separation becomes a more important issue as his children get older. Because the Active Duty Survey analysis relied on an officer's stated career intentions and not actual behavior, the remainder of the study focused on the officers who had actually made the decision to leave the Navy.

The results of the Resignation Survey indicate that, on average, resigning officers are satisfied with their promotion opportunities and with their pay. They are least satisfied with "Quality of Family Life" and "Opportunities for Graduate Education." Similar to the findings of the Active Duty Survey, the officers surveyed disagree that the SEAL community has a clearly defined vision. All of the officers surveyed believed their chances for command were good. Many were enrolled in graduate-level education programs prior to leaving the service. The two most frequently cited reasons for voluntary resignation were "My future as a SEAL is behind a desk," and "The SEAL community has no clearly defined vision."

Twelve themes were identified from responses to the open-ended interview questions used in the Resignation Interview. These themes are summarized below:

THEME I: OFFICERS BECOME SEALS FOR THE CHALLENGING TRAINING, THE ADVENTURE, AND THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK IN SMALL ELITE TEAMS.

THEME II: OFFICERS FIND THE OPPORTUNITY TO PLAN AND LEAD OPERATIONS AND TRAINING AS THEIR MOST REWARDING EXPERIENCE.

THEME III: OFFICERS BELIEVE THAT THEY WILL NOT BE USED IN THE MISSIONS FOR WHICH THEY WERE TRAINED.

THEME IV: OFFICERS DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE SEAL COMMUNITY HAS A CLEAR VISION OF THE FUTURE.

THEME V: OFFICERS DO NOT USUALLY HAVE MENTORS. THOSE WHO DO FEEL THAT HAVING A MENTOR IS A POSITIVE INFLUENCE TO STAY IN THE NAVY.

THEME VI: OPERATIONAL TEMPO AND FAMILY SEPARATION PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THE DECISION TO RESIGN.

THEME VII: SPOUSES TEND TO PLAY A MINOR ROLE IN THE DECISION TO LEAVE SERVICE IF THE OFFICER/HUSBAND IS SATISFIED WITH HIS JOB.

THEME VIII: PAY TENDS TO INFLUENCE AN OFFICER'S DECISION TO LEAVE WHEN HE BECOMES INVOLVED IN AN ACTIVE JOB SEARCH.

THEME IX: DEPARTING OFFICERS BELIEVE THEY WOULD HAVE EVENTUALLY COMMANDED A TEAM OR UNIT IF THEY HAD STAYED IN SERVICE.

THEME X: OFFICERS TEND TO FEEL FRUSTRATED WITH THE NAVY'S PROMOTION AND REWARD SYSTEM, AND PREFER A SYSTEM THAT IS PERFORMANCE-BASED.

THEME XI: OFFICERS FEEL THAT THE NAVY'S DETAILING PROCESS IS INEQUITABLE, BUT THIS DOES NOT PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN THEIR DECISION TO LEAVE SERVICE.

THEME XII: OFFICERS FEEL THAT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS TO BE IMPROVED.

Unquestionably, making a career decision is a difficult and complicated process that incorporates many variables. Despite the fact that every officer interviewed

attributed varying levels of importance to different reasons for leaving, some factors were identified by the majority of respondents to have had a significant influence on the career decision. The two factors mentioned more often than any of the others were family separation and the belief that the officers would not ever be used in a real mission. The majority of officers believed that, if they were not going to be properly used, family separation and high operational tempo were not worth the sacrifice.

A third reason frequently cited was the perceived lack of community vision, which gave officers the impression that the current situation was not going to change in the near future. Officers indicated that they had very much enjoyed their time in the SEAL Teams ("Enjoyment of Job" was the most frequently mentioned satisfier among all of the work-related factors), but had reached a point where they felt they had to find new and different challenges. Officers who become SEALs generally thrive on continual challenge and feedback. These officers often feel the need to test themselves. Many indicated that they did not see their future in the SEAL Teams as challenging or rewarding as in previous years, nor did they see the kind of professional development in their future that would entice them to stay or prepare them for a second career once they retired from the Navy.

Pay and marital status were not found to be related to resigning from the Navy. On the other hand, frustration and/or dissatisfaction with work-related factors such as family separation and the perception that SEALs are not a viable contender for missions were found to prompt an individual to look for a civilian job. Once an officer became aware of other job opportunities, then both pay and an individual's marital status played a role in the stay/leave decision.

It is likely that a large proportion of the officers leaving are top performers. Fitness Report performance data were not collected for the present study; however, historically inflated grades would probably provide little variation among officers. Nevertheless, officers were asked to gauge their own chances of success in gaining a command. The overwhelming majority believed that, had they stayed in the Navy, their chances for at least a team-level command were very good. Other performance indicators included selection for highly sought billets. For example, several of the officers turned down the opportunity to go to the SEAL Development Group, while one officer requesting resignation is currently stationed there. Another officer turned down orders to a Joint Special Operations Command billet.

Another indicator of performance is an officer's reputation. In a relatively small officer community such as the SEALs, an officer's reputation is generally well known. Many of the officers leaving had a solid operational reputation and were highly respected by their peers. The final performance indicator used was an officer's destination when separated from service. Several officers who have since left the Navy are enrolled in business school programs at top universities such as Harvard, Carnegie-Melon, and Georgetown. Others are employed in managerial positions in competitive firms. For example, one officer is at IBM, another is studying for an Electrical Engineering degree while managing a team that engineers advanced medical and surgical devices, while yet another is the project manager for a multi-million dollar development project. The graduate education programs and jobs these officers have chosen may not be perfect indicators of how well the officers performed as a SEAL, but they do suggest high levels of motivation, talent, and determination, which are skills valuable in any profession.

B.   RECOMMENDATIONS

1.   Current Initiatives

The Commander of the Naval Special Warfare Command has addressed many of the issues discussed in this thesis, as outlined in a 19 November, 1997 message to SEAL junior officers. (Richards, 1997) These efforts should continue and information regarding progress should be made available throughout the chain-of-command. At the same time, a feedback mechanism should be established that allows junior and senior officers to offer recommendations regarding these issues without fear of any negative consequence.

2.   Articulate a Vision of the Future

By providing a common vision for the organization, leaders provide a sense of both purpose and direction. A shared vision can help focus individual decision making and channel efforts in a common direction toward a common goal. In the words of the baseball Hall of Fame player and manager, Yogi Berra, "if you do not know where you're heading, you're likely to end up somewhere else." Berra's observation captures the idea that, without a sense of purpose and without a common goal, organizations are basically lost. (Bryson, 1995) A vision can help provide that sense of purpose.

The responsibility of creating vision does not fall solely on senior leadership, but senior leadership is responsible for creating the environment and designing the organization to promote visionary thinking. As a designer, the leader does more than create boxes and lines that represent reporting authority. Peter Senge describes a leader's role with regard to organizational design, "The first task of organizational design concerns designing the governing ideas of purpose, vision, and core values by which

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people will live. Few acts of leadership have a more enduring impact on an organization than building a foundation of purpose and core values." (Senge, 1990, p. 10)

Roberts (1998, p. 26) describes the skills required of a general manager who assumes the roles of designer, teacher, and steward: "To fulfill these roles, the manager has to be skillful in focusing on key organizational questions, structuring and facilitating around those questions, and engendering trust among the key stakeholders so they willingly collaborate in their search for answers that all can support." Putting this in context, this could mean identifying a future direction for the Teams, bringing in stakeholders (including CO's, JO's, operational commanders, etc.) for discussion and problem solving, and creating a system whereby it is everyone's best interest to work toward a common goal as opposed to a personal agenda.

Stakeholders are more likely to take ownership in an organization's outcomes if they have been included in this process. In this way, too, the leader does not espouse "his vision," but rather "our vision." "Vision 2000" and other visionary initiatives have percolated up from the middle management ranks. New ideas that challenge old ways of doing things and old beliefs are vital to a learning organization. Despite all of the great ideas that may come from the operating core or middle management, it is only the more senior leadership that has both the wisdom and frame of reference to best understand how Naval Special Warfare might best support USSOCOM and the theater CINCs. However, it is important for senior leaders to be willing to ask the question, "Is this vision worthy of your commitment?" It is through this continual questioning that the organization will be able to adapt rapidly to a changing environment and organizational learning will occur. Why must the Naval Special Warfare organization value learning? As Eric

Hoffer noted in *The Ordeal of Change* (1963), "In a world of change, the learners shall inherit the Earth; while the learned shall find themselves perfectly suited for a world that no longer exists."

3. Develop a Marketing Strategy

All of the officers interviewed believed the SEAL Teams needed to do a better job marketing their capabilities. The focus of the marketing effort should be directed at the fleet operational commanders. Part of the solution may be having more senior leaders forward to represent the deployed platoons. If more senior officers are deployed forward, great care should be taken to avoid removing some of the autonomy and decision making opportunities that junior officers find so rewarding.

4. Define the Organization's Competitive Advantage

Many of the respondents believed the SEAL Teams no longer have a "niche role" that makes them distinct, with the exception of Underwater Demolition Team (UDT) type missions and combat swimming. The officers believe that because many SEAL capabilities are, at least theoretically, duplicated by other teams (Force Reconnaissance and A-Teams), operational commanders do not have a clear choice on which team to use. If there is no one logical choice for conducting a mission, the decision is then perceived as a political one.

A marketing strategy or plan is the short-term fix. For the future, however, Naval Special Warfare, like any competitive organization, needs to identify its competitive advantage. What are the factors that make the SEAL Teams unique? What is it that only SEALs can provide for operational commanders? What is it that SEALs can provide that will make Naval Special Warfare forces crucial in future conflicts? If conventional units,

because of technology or other enablers, can now accomplish missions that used to be unconventional, then perhaps SEALs should explore other avenues. The SEALs of tomorrow may have unique capabilities that operational commanders may not yet envision.

One thing that clearly sets the SEAL Teams apart from other organizations is the people. Naval Special Warfare selectively recruits and then rigorously trains its people to have special capabilities. This is true today, and it will be true tomorrow.

5.   SEAL Officer Retention Bonus

A SEAL officer retention bonus may increase retention of junior officers; however, the recent increase in junior officer turnover should be viewed as a symptom of other problems. Though pay does not appear to be one of the problems, increased pay may help alleviate the symptom of low retention. In particular, it may have a significant influence on the large percentage of officers who remain undecided on their career intention. It should be remembered that increasing pay would do little to correct the underlying causes of low retention.

6.   Officer Career Path

The officer career path should be re-evaluated. It may be that a revised pipeline could be designed that would both encourage SEAL officers to remain in service longer and improve the combat readiness of the platoons. For example, one possibility might be somehow splitting an AOIC and OIC tour with a tour at SBU or as an assistant Task Unit Commander, thereby providing the officer with some valuable experience and holding the "carrot" of a Platoon Commander tour later in the officer's career progression.

7. Professional Development

Closely related to the officer career path is the issue of professional development. There are two elements of professional development that should be addressed. The first deals with improving the capability of the officer. The second involves using professional development as an enticement to encourage officers to remain in service. The current professional development "system" appears to be somewhat haphazard. Many officers interviewed indicated this results in our officers being less skilled at staff work and marketing skills; skills not considered glamorous, perhaps, but certainly important if SEALs hope to "sell" their capabilities. Even more desirable than staff and marketing skills are those skills that enable an officer to think systematically. More than just recognizing trends or patterns, this capability enables an officer to understand what *causes* those patterns or trends. Instead of responding to symptoms, an officer with this skill is able to address the underlying causes of the behavior. In this way, he is able to influence future events. Presently, there is not a structured professional development system that supports this type of learning.

In order for the promise of professional development to entice people to remain in service, it must somehow provide skills perceived as relevant to a second career. This might include education opportunities other than a National Security Affairs Masters Degree from the Naval Postgraduate School, and might include management and business-related education.

8. Demonstrate Commitment to Deployed Forces

There is a common saying, "If something is worth doing, it is worth doing well." This statement is especially relevant in the case of ARG deployments. If it is important

deploy on an ARG, then SEAL leaders must demonstrate commitment to those deployed forces. This means sending out capable officers with staff experience as Task Unit Commanders. If that tour is used as a tool for the officer to gain staff experience without any prior training, it may be at the expense of that platoon that is in his charge. This operational billet should be desirable, and officers doing a good job at it should be rewarded accordingly. It should not be a "get well" job for a Lieutenant who failed to select for Lieutenant Commander.

9. Mentor Program

Senior officers should adopt or continue to employ some form of mentorship activity. The results of the study indicate that most officers did not feel they had anyone looking out for them. At least one of the officers interviewed was never even called in by a senior officer to discuss his decision to leave. If people really are the Navy's most valuable assets, they should be treated as such or expected to find work elsewhere.

10. Leverage Intellect

Every quarter, students at the Naval Postgraduate School are in search of a thesis topic. With minimal funding, NAVSPECWARCOM could have studies conducted relating to a number of topics, including manpower planning, retention, and information technology management, to name a few. NAVSPECWARCOM should provide the NPS Systems Management Department with a list of research topics it is interested in pursuing.

11. Review Selection Criteria

The criteria used to select SEAL officer trainees may need to be revised. For instance, it is possible that patterns of teamwork and leadership are more important than

academic achievement. To use a stereotypical example, research may show that the captain of the Naval Academy football or wrestling team is more inclined to make the Navy a career than is an honor graduate who has many civilian employment opportunities. The decision to change selection criteria should be made based on the vision of the future. If SEALs are going to be the "Cyber-Warriors" of the twentieth century, then academic performance is the correct criterion to use. If, on the other hand, the skills required of future SEALs will not appreciably change, then teamwork and leadership may be more appropriate criterion.

12.   Innovation Cell

Each service has established groups for purposes of long-range planning and innovation. Although the SEAL community may not have the manpower resources to dedicate to this type of effort, a small group of people could be used to follow the ideas that emerge from the considerable investment that the services are making. For example, the Army has its "Army-After-Next" group and the Navy has its "CNO Strategic Studies Group." Additionally, the Marine Corps is engaged in some innovative activities such as observing how Stock Traders on Wall Street manage information and make decisions under stress. The Marine Corps is also observing Extreme Sporting events (or "X Games") to develop new methods of mobility in urban terrain. By creating networks of information and expertise with these outside innovation cells, Naval Special Warfare might be able to leverage others' investment and exploit ideas that are applicable.

13.   Explore New Deployment and Training Cycles

The high operational tempo that is a reality for SEALs is affecting officer retention. Efforts should be made to reduce time away from home, whenever possible.

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Resigning officers suggested several alternatives to the traditional six-month deployment cycle including three-month overseas rotations, and a four-month cycle that was comprised of four months training, four months deployed, followed by four months at home in local schools or in stand-down. These undeveloped suggestions represent the "out of the box" type thinking that may be required to develop new and better ways of doing business.

14. Use a Systems Model Approach to Analyze Officer Retention

As discussed previously in Chapter II, junior officer turnover may be a symptom of a greater problem within the community. The data collected in this study indicate the possible lack of congruence between several of the design factors (e.g., people, reward system, organizational structure, planning, and information management, etc.) of the Naval Special Warfare organization. A future study using a systems model to analyze officer retention may help determine if, in fact, misalignment exists among the different design factors. A systems model that might support this analysis is provided as Appendix E.

15. Conduct an Analysis to Determine How Value is Added to the SEAL "Product" at Various Stages within the Organization

Most officers interviewed felt that the key product that the SEAL Teams supply operational commanders is a combat-ready SEAL platoon. Although it was not developed as a theme, many of the officers interviewed believed that many senior officers had lost sight of that fact. Considerable concern was expressed that frequently the training and combat readiness of SEAL platoons was not given the priority it deserved, and that many of the time-consuming activities SEAL Teams find themselves involved with do not add to (and often reduce) the combat readiness of the platoons.

If there is agreement that a combat-ready platoon is the product, then the focus of all efforts should be on producing the best product possible. In the business world, this would mean getting rid of steps in the process that do not add value to the product. Frequently, in a military organization it is difficult to measure how value is added at various stages of the "production process." For-profit organizations have the luxury of accounting tools to determine costs and benefits. While the challenge of measuring value added might be more difficult in a military organization, it is certainly no less important. A study to determine where and how much "value" is added at various places within the NSW organization may provide valuable information.

16. Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) Historical Data Files

A historical data file containing biographic and demographic information on SEAL officers over several years was created from data files at the Defense Manpower Data Center, in Monterey, California. This data file could be used to conduct a historical data analysis of SEAL officers.

C. A FINAL WORD

Naval Special Warfare provides the nation with highly trained, rapidly deployable forces that are capable of conducting special operations anywhere in the world. SEALs have been called upon to conduct special operations throughout the spectrum of conflict, both in support of conventional operations and on independent missions. They have been called on because they possess unique skills that can only be acquired by quality people. These are the very same people who took the time to fill out surveys and spend hours with the researcher during interviews. A true strength of this exceptional organization is

the quality and commitment of its people. The officers who had chosen to resign were still willing to assist the organization as best they could and be "part of the solution." Despite their reasons for leaving the service, every officer surveyed or interviewed was proud to be a member of the "Fraternal Order," otherwise known as the SEAL Teams.

APPENDIX A. ACTIVE DUTY SURVEY

1. Indicate your satisfaction with the following aspects of the Navy:

	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Total Pay	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Promotion opportunity	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Operational tempo	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Command opportunity	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Quality of family life	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Number of hours at work	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Amt of family separation	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Team/Unit CO leadership	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
SEAL Flag leadership	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Postgraduate Education	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Enjoyment of Job	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

2. During your most recent sea tour, while in home port, how many hours a week did you work?

( ) less than 40 hrs per week
( ) 41 to 50 hrs per week
( ) 51 to 60 hrs per week
( ) 61 to 70 hrs per week
( ) 71 to 80 hrs per week
( ) more than 80 hrs per week

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3. If you could increase the pay of SEAL officers, which ONE option would you chose? (Assume that the total cost to the Navy is the same for each alternative)

( ) Start a "SEAL pay" that would pay a monthly amount while on sea and shore duty and would begin upon Warfare Qualification.
( ) Pay an annual "SEAL bonus" in return for a commitment to stay in the Navy for a specified length of time.
( ) I would not increase the pay for SEAL officers.
( ) Other (please specify)

4. What are your current career plans? I plan to:

( ) Serve 20 or more years with my current designator
( ) Lateral transfer to a second designator
( ) Keep my designator and resign before 20 years
( ) Undecided

5. If you answered above that you were going to resign before 20 years: Would the option to remain operational within your community change your mind?

( ) Yes, I would stay in the Navy if I could remain operational
( ) No, I would still resign

6. If you answered above (Question 4) that you were going to resign before 20 years: If the Navy offered you an annual bonus, what is the LEAST amount that would persuade you to remain on active duty?

( ) No bonus is necessary to keep me on active duty
( ) $8,000 per year
( ) $12,000 per year
( ) $16,000 per year
( ) No bonus can convince me to stay on active duty

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7. What do you think your chances are to command a Team/Boat Unit if you remain on active duty?

( ) Very likely
( ) Somewhat likely
( ) Neither likely nor unlikely
( ) Somewhat unlikely
( ) Very unlikely

8. What is your current marital status?

( ) Single
( ) Married
( ) Separated
( ) Divorced

9. Is your spouse currently:

( ) N/A, I am not currently married
( ) On active duty in the military
( ) Working fill-time in a civilian job
( ) Working part-time in a civilian job
( ) A homemaker

10. How many children do you have now?

( ) None
( ) One
( ) Two
( ) Three
( ) More than three

11. Which of the following operational jobs have you had? Circle your corresponding level of general satisfaction with each job completed.

( ) Platoon AOIC	Satisfied	Undecided	Dissatisfied
( ) Platoon OIC	Satisfied	Undecided	Dissatisfied
( ) Training Officer	Satisfied	Undecided	Dissatisfied
( ) Operations Officer	Satisfied	Undecided	Dissatisfied
( ) Task Unit Commander (ARG)	Satisfied	Undecided	Dissatisfied
( ) Task Unit Commander (CVBG)	Satisfied	Undecided	Dissatisfied
( ) Task Unit Commander (SDV)	Satisfied	Undecided	Dissatisfied
( ) Other (please specify)	Satisfied	Undecided	Dissatisfied

12. Which of the following deployments have you done? How many (#)? Circle your corresponding level of general satisfaction with each deployment completed.

	(#)			
( ) No deployments	( )	Satisfied	Undecided	Dissatisfied
( ) ARG deployment	( )	Satisfied	Undecided	Dissatisfied
( ) CVBG deployment	( )	Satisfied	Undecided	Dissatisfied
( ) Spec Ops deployment	( )	Satisfied	Undecided	Dissatisfied
( ) SDV deployment	( )	Satisfied	Undecided	Dissatisfied
( ) UNITASS deployment	( )	Satisfied	Undecided	Dissatisfied
( ) Other	( )	Satisfied	Undecided	Dissatisfied

13. Do you currently have a master's degree?

( ) Yes
( ) No

14. If you answered NO to the question above, do you intend on pursuing Graduate Education?

( ) Yes
( ) No

15. How would you describe the overall wardroom morale at your most recent sea duty command?

( ) Very high
( ) Somewhat high
( ) Neither high nor low
( ) Somewhat low
( ) Very low

16. What was the ONE most significant factor in <u>raising</u> your most recent command's morale?

( ) Command leadership
( ) The amount of time at home
( ) Performance of the platoon/squad on exercises
( ) Deployment schedule
( ) Other (please specify)

17. What was the ONE most significant factor in <u>reducing</u> your most recent command's morale?

( ) Command leadership
( ) The amount of time at home
( ) Performance of the platoon/squad on exercises
( ) Deployment schedule
( ) Other (please specify)

18. The most qualified and deserving SEAL officers get ranked high and promote well.

( ) Strongly agree
( ) Somewhat agree
( ) Neither agree nor disagree
( ) Somewhat disagree
( ) Strongly disagree

19. What is your rank?

( ) Ens   ( ) Ltig   ( ) LT   ( ) LCDR

20. How many months has it been since you were last assigned to a Team/Boat Unit?

( ) I am currently assigned to a Team/ Boat Unit.
( ) I was last assigned to a Team _____ months ago.

21. What was your last operational command?

( )   SEAL Team
( )   SDV Team
( )   Special Boat Unit
( )   Other (please specify)

22. The senior leadership (WARCOM and Group commanders) within the SEAL community have a clearly defined vision.

( )   Strongly agree
( )   Somewhat agree
( )   Neither agree nor disagree
( )   Somewhat disagree
( )   Strongly disagree

23. Overall, SEALs are properly utilized by operational commanders.

( )   Strongly agree
( )   Somewhat agree
( )   Neither agree nor disagree
( )   Somewhat disagree
( )   Strongly disagree

24. SEAL Team CO's play an active role in the professional development of their Junior Officers.

( ) Strongly agree
( ) Somewhat agree
( ) Neither agree nor disagree
( ) Somewhat disagree
( ) Strongly disagree

25. As a SEAL officer, I have a clearly defined career path.

( ) Strongly agree
( ) Somewhat agree
( ) Neither agree nor disagree
( ) Somewhat disagree
( ) Strongly disagree

26. I am willing to move geographically to increase my operational opportunities.

( ) Strongly agree
( ) Somewhat agree
( ) Neither agree nor disagree
( ) Somewhat disagree
( ) Strongly disagree

27. What type of commissioning source, did you receive?

( ) OCS or AOCS
( ) NROTC Scholarship
( ) NROTC non-scholarship
( ) Naval Academy
( ) Other

28. In what year were you commissioned?

( ) 1986   ( ) 1991   ( ) 1996
( ) 1987   ( ) 1992   ( ) 1997
( ) 1988   ( ) 1993
( ) 1989   ( ) 1994
( ) 1990   ( ) 1995

29. Do you understand the detailing process (the way in which detailers fill requirements)?

( ) Yes, I have a clear understanding
( ) I somewhat understand the detailing process
( ) I do not understand how detailers fill requirements

30. Given your current understanding of the detailing process, what is your level of satisfaction with it?

( ) Very Satisfied
( ) Somewhat Satisfied
( ) Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied
( ) Somewhat Dissatisfied
( ) Very Dissatisfied

31. How would you improve the process if improvement is needed?

32. Additional Comments:

APPENDIX B. ACTIVE DUTY SATISFACTION SURVEY SUMMARY (n=100)

Aspect:	LEVEL OF SATISFACTION*	
	Mean Value	Standard Deviation
Total Pay	2.79	1.047
Promotion Opportunity	2.45	.957
Operational Tempo	2.85	1.067
Command Opportunity	2.82	1.001
Quality of Family Life	3.34	1.007
Number of Hours at Work	2.90	.926
Amount of Family Separation	3.62	.982
Team/Unit CO Leadership	2.48	.982
SEAL Flag Leadership	2.96	1.127
Postgraduate Education Opportunities	3.11	1.063
Enjoyment of Job	1.98	1.035

* Mean value for the level of satisfaction, based on frequency of response, where "Very Satisfied" = 1, "Somewhat Satisfied" = 2, "Neither" = 3, "Somewhat Dissatisfied" = 4, and "Very Dissatisfied" = 5. Thus, the lower the value, the higher the satisfaction.

APPENDIX C. RESIGNATION SURVEY

1. Indicate your satisfaction with the following aspects of the Navy:

	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Total Pay	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Promotion opportunity	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Operational tempo	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Command opportunity	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Quality of family life	( )	( )	(.)	( )	( )
Number of hours at work	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Amt of family separation	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Team/Unit CO Leadership	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
SEAL Flag leadership	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Postgraduate Educ	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Enjoyment of Job	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

2. During your most recent sea tour, while in home port, how many hours a week did you work?

( )   less than 40 hrs per week
( )   41 to 50 hrs per week
( )   51 to 60 hrs per week
( )   61 to 70 hrs per week
( )   71 to 80 hrs per week
( )   more than 80 hrs per week

3. If you could increase the pay of SEAL officers, which ONE option would you chose? (Assume that the total cost to the Navy is the same for each alternative)

( ) Start a "SEAL pay" that would pay a monthly amount while on sea and shore duty and would begin upon Warfare Qualification.
( ) Pay an annual "SEAL bonus" in return for a commitment to stay in the Navy for a specified length of time.
( ) I would not increase the pay for SEAL officers.
( ) Other (please specify)

4. If the Navy had offered you an annual bonus, what is the LEAST amount that would have persuaded you to remain on active duty?

( ) No bonus would have been necessary to keep me on active duty
( ) $8,000 per year
( ) $12,000 per year
( ) $16,000 per year
( ) No bonus would have convinced me to stay on active duty

5. What do you think your chances would have been to command a Team / Boat Unit if you stayed on active duty?

( ) Very likely
( ) Somewhat likely
( ) Neither likely nor unlikely
( ) Somewhat unlikely
( ) Very unlikely

6. How much influence did your spouse have on your decision to resign?

( ) Not Applicable - I'm not married
( ) No influence
( ) Some influence
( ) Moderate influence
( ) A lot of influence

7. Is your spouse currently:

( ) N/A, I am not currently married
( ) On active duty in the military
( ) Working full-time in a civilian job
( ) Working part-time in a civilian job
( ) A homemaker

8. How many children do you have now?

( ) None
( ) One
( ) Two
( ) Three
( ) More than three

9. Which of the following jobs have you had? Circle your corresponding level of general satisfaction with each job completed.

( ) Platoon AOIC	Satisfied	Undecided	Dissatisfied
( ) Platoon OIC	Satisfied	Undecided	Dissatisfied
( ) Training Officer	Satisfied	Undecided	Dissatisfied
( ) Operations Officer	Satisfied	Undecided	Dissatisfied
( ) Task Unit Commander (ARG)	Satisfied	Undecided	Dissatisfied
( ) Task Unit Commander (CVBG)	Satisfied	Undecided	Dissatisfied
( ) Task Unit Commander (SDV)	Satisfied	Undecided	Dissatisfied
( ) Other (please specify)	Satisfied	Undecided	Dissatisfied

10. Which of the following deployments have you done?

Number of particular type of deployments completed

( ) No deployments   1   2   3   more than three
( ) ARG deployment   1   2   3   more than three
( ) CVBG deployment   1   2   3   more than three
( ) Spec Ops deployment 1   2   3   more than three
( ) SDV deployment   1   2   3   more than three
( ) UNITASS deployment 1   2   3   more than three
( ) Other (please specify)

11. Did any particular deployment have a significant impact on your decision to resign? Comment.

12. Do you currently have a master's degree?
     ( ) No
     ( ) Yes

13. After I leave active duty:

     ( )   I plan on enrolling in a masters program within a year
     ( )   I plan on enrolling in a masters program eventually
     ( )   I have no intention of pursuing post-graduate education
     ( )   I will finish the masters degree that I have already begun
     ( )   I already have a masters degree

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14. How would you describe the overall wardroom morale at your most recent sea duty command?

( ) Very high
( ) Somewhat high
( ) Neither high nor low
( ) Somewhat low
( ) Very low

15. What was the ONE most significant factor in <u>promoting</u> your most recent command's morale?

( ) Command leadership
( ) The amount of time at home
( ) Performance of the platoon/squad on exercises
( ) Deployment schedule
( ) Other (please specify)

16. What was the ONE most significant factor in <u>reducing</u> your most recent command's morale?

( ) Command leadership
( ) The amount of time at home
( ) Performance of the platoon/squad on exercises
( ) Deployment schedule
( ) Other (please specify)

17. The best SEAL officers get ranked high and promote well.

( ) Strongly agree
( ) Somewhat agree
( ) Neither agree nor disagree
( ) Somewhat disagree
( ) Strongly disagree

18. How many months has it been since you were last assigned to a Team/Boat Unit?

( ) I am currently assigned to a Team/Boat Unit.
( ) I was last assigned to a Team _____ months ago.

19. What was your last operational command?

( ) SEAL Team
( ) SDV Team
( ) SpecialBoat Unit
( ) Other (please specify)

20. Had I been able to "stay operational" I would not be submitting my resignation.

( ) Strongly agree
( ) Somewhat agree
( ) Neither agree nor disagree
( ) Somewhat disagree
( ) Strongly disagree

21. The senior leadership (WARCOM and Group commanders) within the SEAL community has clearly defined goals.

( ) Strongly agree
( ) Somewhat agree
( ) Neither agree nor disagree
( ) Somewhat disagree
( ) Strongly disagree

22. I would have been willing to move geographically to extend my operational opportunities.
( ) Strongly agree
( ) Somewhat agree
( ) Neither agree nor disagree
( ) Somewhat disagree
( ) Strongly disagree

23. What type of commissioning source did you receive?

( ) OCS or AOCS
( ) NROTC Scholarship
( ) NROTC non-scholarship
( ) Naval Academy
( ) Other

24. As a SEAL officer, I have a clearly defined career path.

( ) Strongly agree
( ) Somewhat agree
( ) Neither agree nor disagree
( ) Somewhat disagree
( ) Strongly disagree

25. Pick the _three_ factors that had the greatest impact on your decision to resign.

( ) High operational tempo (away from home too much)
( ) My future as a SEAL Officer is behind a desk
( ) The SEAL community has no clearly defined mission
( ) I was forced to spend my time as an OIC/AOIC micromanaging and not leading
( ) Platoon Commander ranking is more a function of platoon liberty incidents than leadership and operational capability
( ) Little opportunity for Post-Graduate education
( ) Currently there is a strong economy and the opportunities for civilian employment are great
( ) Being a SEAL officer is not what I expected it to be

( ) Limited command opportunities
( ) Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) deployment
( ) None of the above reasons had an impact on my decision to resign

26. Being as specific as possible, what was/is the primary reason you have requested resignation?

APPENDIX D. RESIGNATION INTERVIEW INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

My name is LT Keith Davids. I am conducting research for my thesis at the Naval Postgraduate School, with the intention of sharing my findings with the Commander of the Naval Special Warfare Command. As I discussed with you earlier, I'm doing a study on SEAL junior officer retention, and particularly I would like to learn what factors have influenced your decision to request separation from the Navy. During the interview, I will ask you questions about your family, your opinions on several aspects of life as a SEAL, why you are choosing to leave the SEAL Teams, and what your future career intentions are. I want to emphasize that this interview is confidential. Anything I hear today will only be used in the aggregate form. Mention of individual places, names, or commands will be deleted upon transcript of the information to paper. I'd like for you to state for the record that you consent to being recorded. I would like to start the interview with some simple demographic and background data.

APPENDIX E. RESIGNATION INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Career Motivations:

1.   Why did you become a SEAL? Was it what you expected when you joined?

Satisfiers/Dissatisfiers:

2.   What was your most rewarding experience as a SEAL officer. Who was involved? Where did it happen? When did it happen? What made it so rewarding? Please explain.

3.   What were the two or three things about being a SEAL that caused you the greatest dissatisfaction? Please explain.

Community Loyalty and Leadership:

4.   Is the senior (CO/Group/WARCOM) leadership in touch with important community issues?

5.   Did the notion of a "zero defect" mentality affect your decision to leave? Do you feel team COs reasonably support their junior officers? (If not, why not?)

6.   Do you have a mentor or "sea daddy" who has been following and supporting your career? (If not, why not?)

Operational Opportunity:

7.   Do you feel operational commanders properly utilize SEALs? (If not, explain.)

8.   Have any operational deployments significantly influenced your decision to resign? If so, explain.

9.   If you could have remained in an operational billet, would you have still decided to leave the service?

10.   How would you describe the current status of the SEAL Teams in terms of operational employment and future vision?

Professional Development:

11.　How do you feel about the SEAL officer career path? Is it well defined?

12.　Did you receive proper training for the jobs that you have held?

13.　Would the opportunity for graduate education have influenced you to remain in the service?

Promotion:

14.　If you had decided to stay in the Navy, how would you rate your chances for command? Is the promotion system equitable? Please explain.

Family Separation/Operational Tempo:

15.　How much influence did operational tempo and family separation have on your decision to leave the service?

16.　How much influence did your wife/family have on your decision to leave the Navy?

Economy/Pay:

17.　How heavily did pay affect your decision to resign?

18.　Apparently, civilian job opportunities are abundant now. Did this fact influence your decision to leave the Navy?

Detailing:

19.　How do you feel about the detailing process? Is it equitable? Understandable? Did this influence your decision to leave the service?

Future Plans/Reasons for Separation:

20. If you could change **one** thing within the SEAL community to make it a better place to work, what would that be?

21. How long have you been thinking about leaving the service? What are your future plans once you separate from the Navy?

22. In summary, what are the three most important reasons you have requested resignation? Of these three reasons, which has been **most important** in your decision?

Additional comments:

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