

## A Sustainable Military Career: An Integrated Approach

by

Lieutenant Colonel Bryan J. Chivers  
United States Army

Under the Direction of:  
Dr. Stephen Gerras



United States Army War College  
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### Abstract

It is not surprising that the major factor influencing the career decisions of married soldiers who leave the Army is not salary or lack of opportunities for advancement but rather an inability to balance the demands of work and family. Conceptually, a balanced lifestyle makes sense to most people, but in actuality, balance is an inaccurate and unhealthy paradigm for thinking about and understanding how professional military lives intersect with personal lives. In reality, the too often espoused paradigm or concept of balance is unattainable and contributes to Army service member attrition which affects retention and overall readiness. The evolving character of military families and the military workforce necessitate a change in how the Army, its leaders, and service members and their families approach their respective commitments. This research project asserts that an integrated approach to accomplishing both family and work obligations will better sustain both the individual and his or her family during a rewarding yet challenging military lifestyle, and ultimately yield positive outcomes for military professionals, their organizations, and society.

## **A Sustainable Military Career: An Integrated Approach**

Our most valued assets, indeed, the Nation's most valued assets, are our Soldiers and our solemn commitment must always be to never send them into harm's way untrained, poorly lead, undermanned, or with less than the best equipment we can provide. Readiness is #1, and there is no other #1.

—General Mark Milley<sup>1</sup>

Readiness, specifically military readiness, is implicit to national security professionals. As stated by the Chief of Staff of the Army, General Mark Milley, in the 2017 Posture Statement, it is his number one priority. General Milley listed manning, equipping, training, and leader development as components that significantly contribute to readiness and will posture the United States (U.S.) Army to fight and win the Nation's wars if and when required.<sup>2</sup> The 2017 *Posture Statement* explicitly acknowledges that *people* are the Army's most precious resource and recruiting and retaining the very best in a competitive market is absolutely imperative. Of significance, General Milley's statement recognizes that military families are also an important subgroup who contribute to readiness.<sup>3</sup>

The Army's concept of family and the families of service members in particular, has evolved over the years. Family members now outnumber service members. Once considered a liability, the family is now seen as an asset, and over the past 30 years the Army has significantly evolved its institutional, organizational, intrapersonal, and individual approaches to understanding and supporting military families to improve readiness. Despite these recent positive trends, both family and workforce dynamics have significantly changed. The traditional nuclear family with a working male soldier husband, a civilian stay-at-home wife, and any dependent children, is no longer the dominant family concept.<sup>4</sup> Contemporary military families are incredibly diverse, and like

American society, there are a number of arrangements on military installations that can be recognized as family relationships. Workforce dynamics in the military are as equally diverse as its families. Today's military force is young, highly-educated, married, dual-income, has children, and is a blend of three generations.<sup>5</sup> Family and work are still the most dominant domains in most service members' lives; however, military professionals must recognize that these domains have drastically changed over the years.

Unfortunately, what has not changed is the number of simultaneous stressors perceived by service members trying to meet the demands of these two domains in an attempt to excel at both. This stress typically manifests itself on the family as well as the service member. To reduce stress, many senior leaders and official Army programs espouse maintaining *balance* between work and family. However, disproportionate time requirements leveled by the organization, and a lack of personal control by the service member, too often end in frustration and resentment from all parties. The resultant image is a large scale with the Army on one side held up by the soldier, and the family on the other side held up by the spouse, trying to achieve balance.<sup>6</sup>

Conceptually, a balanced lifestyle makes sense to most people, but in actuality, balance is an inaccurate and unhealthy paradigm for thinking about and understanding how professional military lives intersect with personal lives. In reality, the too often espoused paradigm or concept of balance is unattainable and contributes to Army service member attrition which affects retention and overall readiness. The evolving character of military families and the military workforce necessitate a change in how the Army, its leaders, and service members and their families approach their respective commitments. This research project asserts that an integrated approach to

accomplishing both family and work obligations will better sustain both the individual and his or her family during a rewarding yet challenging military lifestyle, and ultimately yield positive outcomes for military professionals, their organizations, and society.

### History of the Army Family

A 2014 study conducted by The Research and Outreach Laboratory at the University of Minnesota states that “Across cultures and history, families are among the most enduring institutions in the world.”<sup>7</sup> To understand how families impact service member and military readiness, it is important to review the history of military families, and in particular, how military leaders and ultimately Congress, perceived the families of those who either volunteered or were conscripted to serve in peace and in war.

Families have always been associated with the U.S. military.<sup>8</sup> As the military of the young republic evolved from a rag-tag militia to what is now the most dominant force in the world, the military’s concept of family also evolved from “studied neglect, through ambivalent and selective inclusion of families in the military community, to a sense that the development of a family philosophy is an institutional imperative.”<sup>9</sup>

From 1776 through the mid-1800s, the Army more or less considered the families of service members a hindrance. While formal Army regulations did not make reference to families, commanders were given authority over “camp followers” who accompanied soldiers as the Army conducted security operations out west, thus the first mentioning of the family as an entity. While most military families were left to fend for themselves, there was an unofficial military code among the officer corps that resulted in the officers taking care of their own.<sup>10</sup>

By the late 1800s, Congress recognized that the Army had an obligation to provide for the basic needs of families such as housing, medical care, and rations-in-

kind, yet a glaring double standard existed between officers and enlisted.<sup>11</sup> In 1913, Army regulations explicitly discouraged marriage for the sake of efficiency and through 1942, draftees could be married, but enlistees could not.<sup>12</sup> Eventually, the officer code of taking care of their own resulted in the establishment of the *Army Emergency Relief Fund*, a nonprofit organization designed to assist soldiers and their families who were unable to adjust to military life or who were simply in need of financial assistance.<sup>13</sup> The Army Emergency Relief fund was the first formal program established to take care of service members and families.

During the decade immediately following World War II, the Army made very little improvement to either soldier or family well-being. The 1952 *Wickenden Study* determined that a lack of basic social services throughout the Army negatively impacted retention and resulted in some expensive and ineffective family and soldier support programs. In 1957, Congress passed the *Serviceman's and Veteran's Survivor Act* in order to provide for the family members of deceased service members.<sup>14</sup>

By 1960 family members outnumbered uniformed Army personnel. Department of State reports of countless welfare services provided to Army family members spurred the Army to develop an initial Family Service Program. By 1965, in response to growing service member and family needs during combat operations in the Dominican Republic and Vietnam, the Department of the Army established the Army Community Service (ACS) Program.<sup>15</sup> In 1966, the Department of Defense (DOD) created the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Uniformed Services (CHAMPUS) to ensure quality medical care for family members who were living away from military medical facilities establishing the first "direct, planned, formalized action for family support."<sup>16</sup>

By the early 1970s, the Army's position towards families had clearly evolved beyond neglect and selective inclusion. "The advent of the All-Volunteer Force caused the Army's leaders to address military personnel policies from a new perspective, especially with respect to the enlisted ranks. With the growth of young enlisted families, leaders began to recognize that the Army recruits individuals but retains families."<sup>17</sup> Between 1972 and 1979, Congressional decisions to enact the Survivor's Benefit Program and garnish pay for child support and alimony, coupled with a Supreme Court ruling recognizing the spouses of female service members as dependents, both helped elevate military family importance and status.<sup>18</sup> At the culmination of a series of family symposiums, Army Chief of Staff, General John Wickham, published White Paper 1983, *The Army Family*, outlining the Army's institutional obligation to articulate an inclusive family philosophy.<sup>19</sup> In his opening memorandum to the White Paper, General Wickham explicitly recognized the "interdependence" between the family and the unit *through* the service member. As equally important, the Army acknowledged the potential work and family conflict due to the "natural tension between groups to which people belong which leads to competition for time, commitment and other resources."<sup>20</sup> Unfortunately, few Army programs and a continued philosophy to *balance* these demands have not remedied the growing natural tensions between military work and families nor improved the Chief of Staff's number one priority—readiness.

### Readiness

Readiness measures the ability of a unit to accomplish the wartime missions it was organized, designed for, or assigned to do. Army readiness measures "the degree to which a unit has achieved prescribed levels of fill for personnel and equipment, the operational readiness status of available equipment, and the training proficiency status

of the unit.”<sup>21</sup> Broadly stated, readiness is made up of three categories (people, equipment, and training), central of which are the people.

Naturally, when Army commanders officially measure the readiness of their personnel for Unit Status Reporting (USR) purposes, they are primarily concerned with the unit’s assigned service members and not the families of service members. While the Army does not require formal family readiness reporting, Army leaders recognize that family readiness contributes to individual and unit readiness. To that end, the DOD defines military family readiness as:

The state of being prepared to effectively navigate the challenges of daily living experienced in the unique context of military service. Ready individuals and families are knowledgeable about the potential challenges they may face; equipped with the skills to competently function in the face of such challenges; aware of the supportive resources available to them; and make use of the skills and supports in managing such challenges.<sup>22</sup>

Stated more succinctly, family readiness is a family’s ability to “acclimate to the military life cycle.”<sup>23</sup> While not explicitly used in the DOD definition, stress—the nonspecific response of the body to any demand—is the consequence of these challenges.<sup>24</sup> Not surprisingly, service members typically perceive the most stress at the nexus of work and family.

In every profession there is inherent risk and all jobs impose distinctive stressors on the family. The Army defines a stressor as any stimulus or event that requires an individual to adjust or adapt in some way—emotionally, physiologically, or behaviorally.<sup>25</sup> Common demands of Army life that cause the most stress for families include: deployment and other family separations; risk of injury or death; frequent relocation; behavioral expectations; long and unpredictable hours; and foreign residence.<sup>26</sup> These demands in and of themselves are not unique to the military lifestyle.

Professionals employed in the mining industry work in environments with higher than average potential for injury or death. Foreign Service professionals live overseas, often in impoverished countries, and at times during a crisis or war. While less risky than the previous examples, professionals in the manufacturing industry are subjected to shift work that disrupts normal family patterns and schedules. What *is* unique about the military lifestyle is that military families regularly experience many of these demands, and occasionally all of them, at the same time.<sup>27</sup>

It is not surprising that the “major factor influencing the career decisions of married soldiers who leave the Army is not salary or lack of opportunities for advancement but rather an inability to balance the demands of work and family.”<sup>28</sup> Family and work are two primary life domains where service members derive a great deal of satisfaction.<sup>29</sup> These domains however, are “greedy” institutions and individually tend to dominate all aspects of an individual service member’s life.<sup>30</sup> Juggling the demands of work and family have always been difficult; nevertheless, recent changes in three specific areas have made fulfilling work and family obligations, particularly in a military lifestyle, even harder, necessitating a more contemporary and nuanced approach than attempting to balance the two domains. These areas include a changed concept of the military family, a more diverse military workforce, and generational differences across the military with respect to family values, attitudes, and beliefs.

### A Changed Concept of the Military Family

Like their non-military counterparts, military families have considerably changed over the last 30-40 years. The major factors influencing current family dynamics are both societal and generational. Understanding how different generations and society view family—the roles of the father and the mother, work and careers, and the much

broader category of success—is important in accepting the challenges military service members and their families face and also in determining what roles military leadership and the larger Army organization must play in order to ensure individual, family, and unit readiness.

Without a doubt, societal changes have had the most profound impact on both work and family, and consequently, the concept of family. The most influential societal phenomena have been, and arguably still are, the evolution of women gender roles. The other phenomena altering the contemporary concept of families are higher divorce rates and more liberal standards of sexual behavior.<sup>31</sup> While the former clearly alters a woman's role as wife and mother and increases the domestic requirements on the husband and father, the latter more fundamentally changes the conceptual structure of what was once considered a typical family. Contemporary families now come in a variety of configurations. While traditional families are prevalent, the number of single-parent families continues to rise, as well as dual-income and dual-military families. Societal changes continue to transform the concept of family and place significantly different demands on family members and the work force.

Societal influences are not the only stimulus altering family dynamics. Generational differences and “changes in cultural values, attitudes, and beliefs concerning family life and work commitment” also impact work and family relationships in the military.<sup>32</sup> Presently, the Army is made up of three distinctly different generations: Baby Boomer, Generation X, and the Millennial. Researchers argue that the different environments of these generations shaped service member's attitudes and beliefs

differently. Consequently, service members place different values and priorities on work and family and are motivated to excel in these areas for different reasons.

The Baby Boomer generation makes up nearly 9% of the entire military population. Predominately shaped by the post-Vietnam War era years, “Boomers” are idealistic and individualistic and frequently champion social causes.<sup>33</sup> Most Baby Boomers feel “they need to know themselves better,” are driven by the acquisition of material possessions and thus tend to be workaholics, and are fairly passive media consumers.<sup>34</sup>

A much larger subgroup of the military, “Gen Xers” make up nearly 45% of the active duty military population.<sup>35</sup> Cynical and independent, Gen Xers are “shaped by divorce, recession, commercial hype, and morally suspicious social leaders.”<sup>36</sup> This generation can be self-reliant; however, overall work patterns are fairly diverse. Gen Xers tend to selectively consume media.

Lastly, Millennials make up nearly 46% of the military.<sup>37</sup> Optimistic and interdependent, Millennials are very close to their parents and extended families and tend to join large organizations in search of teamwork and risk protection.<sup>38</sup> Millennials are incredibly service-oriented, often undertaking social enterprises and seeking non-profit work, but their number one goal is to achieve balance between work and life. Millennials possess a general sense of urgency, particularly when attempting to achieve responsibility, and they voraciously consume various sources of media.<sup>39</sup>

Like societal fluctuations, generational predispositions will continue to influence work and life dynamics, and like non-military families, military families will adjust and adapt. No longer dominated by the traditional family concept of a working father and a

stay-at-home mother who takes care of the domestic chores and children, today's military families are incredibly diverse and include "extended families, reconstituted families, multicultural and multiethnic families, single-parent families, single soldier in committed relationships, dual-career families, and combinations of these."<sup>40</sup> In the 2009 *Quadrennial Quality of Life Review* census, half of the active duty Army force was 26 years old or younger, and over 55% of the service members were married.<sup>41</sup> Across the Department of Defense, military personnel tend to get married much younger than their civilian equivalents; consequently, they tend to start families and have children earlier in life. While family members make up almost 58% of the active duty Army population, nearly 43% of Army service members have children and 56% report having some type of family responsibilities.<sup>42</sup> Similar to the phenomena across America, 60% of military families have both parents that work or report that the non-military spouse is actively seeking employment outside the home.<sup>43</sup> Naturally, today's military families have different needs. Coupled with the unique nature with which the military places demands on the service member, there is an increased "potential for conflict between work and family in the military at all levels" necessitating a different approach to meeting the demands of both work and family.<sup>44</sup>

#### Current Paradigm—A Balanced Approach

In his 1956 book titled *The Organization Man*, William Whyte described the "absorption of men into work life" and concluded that the "conflict between the organization and the individual [is] inevitable and normal, requiring continuous realignment on the part of both the organization and the individual, not just the individual alone."<sup>45</sup> Broadening Whyte's organizational man theory, Gary Bowen considered the "organizational family" and perceived the conflict and interdependence between work

and the family. Bowen concluded that “as men and women attempt to balance work and family demands, strain is seen as inevitable because of limited individual time and energy” and in order for the individual to successfully perform both work and family roles well, “continuous adjustments will be required from the individual, the family system, and the employing organization.”<sup>46</sup>

Most military personnel are challenged to accomplish their roles as a spouse, parent, and service member. Unfortunately, many individuals are unsuccessful at simultaneously succeeding in these endeavors mostly because they lack the skills required for such a tenuous act, but also because they are taught to follow a faulty paradigm that is neither achievable nor healthy, but one that is nonetheless espoused across the DOD. Assuming that a service member is fortunate enough to receive counseling from their supervisor, and the supervisor actually is concerned about the individual’s family, it is very likely that the supervisor encourages the subordinate to strive for “balance” between work (the military) and the service member’s family. However, in most cases the supervisor will not, or is unable to, provide a concept for achieving this balance, and the subordinate is left to accomplish a difficult task without the proper framework.

The balanced approach is the most commonly used paradigm when navigating the treacherous waters between an individual’s personal life and their professional life.<sup>47</sup> While there are a number of variations, the balanced model assumes that life (the sum of an individual’s personal life and their professional life) is a zero-sum game and time is how the individual keeps score.<sup>48</sup> Time devoted on professional responsibilities is not available to accomplish personal obligations and vice versa; therefore, tradeoffs and

compromises are the path to a balanced life. The appealing rationality with the balanced paradigm is that there is a finite amount of time in a given day (1,440 minutes) and individuals must choose wisely on how to spend that time because “each minute can really only be occupied with one task or activity.”<sup>49</sup> The balanced approach works if two conditions exist. First, individuals must possess exceptional time management skills in order to apportion their life into equal parts. Second, individuals must establish solid boundaries in order to keep aspects of their personal and professional lives from bleeding over into the other, upsetting the delicate balance they are trying to achieve. The balanced approach makes individuals prone to either-or thinking and consequently offers limited options for successfully managing personal and professional obligations simultaneously.

Regularly encouraged but rarely understood, the balanced approach does not work for military personnel. Depending on mission requirements, the military can demand work at any time and “requirements to work beyond usual duty hours, especially when they are imposed without notice, can interfere with family members’ time together.”<sup>50</sup> Clearly stated, service members, particularly junior service members, cannot establish solid barriers or control their time as required by a balanced approach which results in personal or professional aspects of their lives spilling over into the other. In this regard, the intersection of personal and professional lives increases the potential for conflict between a service member and their work and family, which often results in individual resentment towards their family or the military, family resentment towards the military or service member, or military resentment towards the service member or the service member’s family, or potentially all these situations

simultaneously. Service members who attempt a balanced approach can become frustrated with their inability to control the situation, eventually grow disenfranchised with the military, and if they do not make the decision to leave the service altogether, both service member morale and performance degrades, ultimately lowering unit readiness. A balanced approach to managing personal and professional lives does not work for military personnel. Because a military lifestyle prevents an individual from establishing boundaries or controlling their time with any degree of certainty, service members need to approach family and work obligations much differently. By integrating aspects of their personal and professional lives, service members will not have to make as many choices or prioritize family and work to the degree required in a balanced approach, and will realize there are more options to leading a sustainable, healthy, and fulfilling lifestyle which results in improved individual, family, and unit readiness.

#### An Integrated Approach

Simultaneously managing a service member's personal and professional lives successfully is incredibly challenging because both work and families are "greedy institutions" that "seek exclusive and undivided loyalty and . . . attempt to reduce the claims of competing roles and status positions on those they wish to encompass within their boundaries."<sup>51</sup> However, proponents of an integrated approach assert that the artificial boundaries individuals erect to separate their personal and professional lives (as required by a balance approach) actually do more harm than good.<sup>52</sup> In fact, recent research shows that an individual can actually benefit from participation in multiple life roles.<sup>53</sup> In other words, the positive effects of working in the military (e.g., serving in a capacity greater than themselves) can actually spill over into other facets of their life and enhance an individual's role as a spouse and parent and vice versa. By integrating

complimentary aspects of a service member's personal and professional lives, individuals can generate synergy between their work and family and actually enhance their overall quality of life.<sup>54</sup> Regardless of the approach, time will always be a limiting factor. But unlike the balanced approach where an individual establishes boundaries to prevent aspects of their personal and professional lives from inadvertently upsetting the delicate work/family equilibrium, an integrated approach actually requires the service member to blur the lines between work and family while persistently looking for win-win situations that blend the two facets together. Rather than struggling to keep work and family *apart*, an integrated approach advocates bringing the service member's personal and professional lives *together*, and in this regard, neither work nor family are viewed as competitors for the service member's time, thereby avoiding conflict between the three entities.<sup>55</sup> Like executing any plan, implementing an integrated approach is easier said than done. While much of the burden for sustaining an individual military career falls squarely on the service member and their family, the complimentary component that results in or impacts unit readiness lies both at the unit and organizational leadership levels of the military. Therefore, establishing an integrated approach that enables service members to meet their personal and professional obligations, improves unit readiness, and results in a sustainable military career will require a cultural change throughout the military.

### Culture Change

It's been a very long time since we've had a general officer commit suicide, and it's worth looking at and seeing if there's anything we're not recognizing that we're not getting at. This is something we need to do force-wide. We've been deploying, repeatedly, the Army for 15 years. We need to understand how it's affecting our soldiers and their families.<sup>56</sup>

The relatively easy part of changing a culture is understanding the current culture and its origins, concluding that the culture needs to change, and identifying key behavioral dimensions that need realignment. Developing and implementing a strategy that *sustains* change is what is problematic for leaders. John Kotter's Eight-Stage Process of Creating Major Change is an excellent framework to develop strategy and transform how the military currently approaches achieving a sustainable military career, enabling service members to meet their personal and professional obligations, and improve overall unit readiness.

Developing a sense of urgency is the first stage to creating major change in an organization. It is also the hardest. In organizations where significant change is needed, complacency is usually high and urgency is low.<sup>57</sup> While there are multiple sources of complacency, with regards to adopting an integrated approach to achieving a sustainable military career and improving unit readiness, three sources throughout the military absolutely contribute to a high complacency, low urgency culture. First, there is an absence of a major visible crisis; second, there are too many visible subliminal messages of a perceived "balanced" military; and third, due to the military's high power distance structure, there is a low-candor, low-confrontation culture among service members.<sup>58</sup>

The current operational tempo of the military has decreased considerably compared to when service members were deploying at unprecedented rates during the height of the Global War on Terror. While current unit readiness reporting efforts are becoming more objective, overall unit readiness is not a huge issue, and by and large, the military is meeting all their global security requirements. Furthermore, senior military

leaders are increasingly accepting one-year assignments that require them to move to new locations without their families indicating that voluntary separations are acceptable across the force and with families. Officers in the ranks of Colonel and Brigadier General serve as Chiefs of Staff, Division Operations Officers, and Assistant Division Commanders across the world for as short as a year at a time before moving on to their next 12-month job without anyone questioning what the separation does to the officer or the officer's family. Lastly, these senior leaders are mentoring junior service members on taking care of soldiers and families while their own families are sacrificed in the name of service. Most egregious, junior service members recognize these incidents and advice as poor examples of work and family balance, but fail to question either the intent or the act. Clearly, there is no sense of urgency with regard to integrating personal and professional lives and increasing readiness in the military.

However, recent statistics indicate individual and family readiness issues throughout the force. Most notably, service member suicides across the military increased during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, spiked in 2012, and still remain 20% to 25% higher than civilian suicide rates of similar ages and genders.<sup>59</sup> This phenomenon includes service members who never even deployed to combat. In July 2016, Major General John Rossi committed suicide just before taking command of the U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command. The first Army General Officer suicide in decades, Major General Rossi's death, combined with a rash of senior leader misconduct incidents across the force, sparked the Army to conduct a mental health review of the general officer corps to see if "there's something new or that has developed because something's changed."<sup>60</sup> Lastly, in findings focused on Army

families' well-being, only 50% of the military spouses surveyed stated that they were satisfied with their quality of life in the military.<sup>61</sup> This is a significant retention and readiness indicator as recent studies show that "the variable with the greatest effect on a soldier's commitment to the Army was his wife's commitment to the Army."<sup>62</sup>

"The All-Volunteer Force was not designed for the current security environment of protracted low-level conflict, nor was it designed for the modern service member who is better educated, married with children, and living in an increasingly diverse and inclusive society."<sup>63</sup> To create a sense of urgency, the military must highlight and refocus efforts to reduce the suicide crisis across the force, discourage one-year assignments that separate families and reduce the number of senior leaders who, by doing so, promote this recent practice. Lastly, encourage candid, frank discussions from junior service members, particularly leaders directly responsible for the welfare of young service members and new families, who recognize out of balance lifestyles, and encourage them to enquire about integrated alternatives that keep families together and allow service members to serve. Beneath the surface, changing generational, workforce, and family dynamics across the military are negatively impacting individual and unit readiness.

Creating the guiding coalition is the second step to establishing a culture in the military that integrates both personal and professional lives and improves overall readiness. Select individuals must have high credibility, exceptional leadership skills, and possess an understanding of changing family, workforce, cultural, and generational dynamics.<sup>64</sup> Much like the Army's efforts to make a cultural shift towards resiliency in 2013, all services must enlist senior personnel experts, surgeon generals, and

operations officers in order to better understand how an integrated approach positively impacts individual, family, and unit readiness and synchronize service initiatives.<sup>65</sup> More importantly, command teams from Division-level down to Company Command with position power, expertise, credibility, and leadership who can create trust and develop common goals must be informed of the trip falls to the balanced approach and educated on the benefits of an integrated approach. “The resulting guiding coalition will have the capacity to make needed change happen despite all forces of inertia” and the potential to anchor an integrated approach in the military culture.<sup>66</sup>

In the third stage, the guiding coalition must develop a vision and strategy for integrating service member’s personal and professional lives, creating sustainable military careers, and improving readiness. This is not a hasty process and should take multiple iterations. An integrated vision to achieving a sustainable military career and improve readiness should clearly depict a direction for the future, focus service member efforts, provide flexibility that adapts to innovation as well as change, and simple enough to convey in less the five minutes.<sup>67</sup> A vision statement for creating an integrated philosophy in the military is: *Integrating Service Members and Families—Sustaining Families and Careers While Improving Readiness.*

The fourth stage is conveying the integrated approach vision. Leaders must broadly communicate the vision through multiple mediums and forums as frequently as possible. However, the most important task in this stage is to ensure the guiding coalition leads by example. When leaders lead by example, their behavior conveys more than any amount of messaging.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, leaders at all levels have to demonstrate in both word and deed that families are as important as service member’s

careers and unit readiness. First, all services must formally educate their service members. Commissioning sources, basic training programs, and continuing professional military education must teach individual service members how to integrate their personal and professional lives. Second, commanders and leaders at all levels must develop informal professional development programs that build upon formal programs and provide specific examples on how to best implement an integrated approach. Third, all leaders have to practice what they preach. When superiors show that they value their own family and are implementing an integrated approach to achieving a sustainable military career in their own lives, subordinates not only learn by their example, but they realize that the leaders are in fact genuine and they are truly concerned about their subordinate's families and careers. This builds trust throughout the force, and when service members and families trust their leaders, subordinates will communicate an integrated approach throughout the force at the lowest levels.

The fifth stage is empowering service members and families for broad-based action. In this stage leaders have to remove obstacles that prevent service members from achieving the vision. Obstacles include organizational barriers, lack of training, internal systems that are incompatible with an integrated approach, and supervisors who disempower subordinates.<sup>69</sup>

There are a number of organizational barriers in the current military culture that are not conducive to an integrated work-family approach. Two barriers that are not aligned with an integrated approach are how military leaders measure service member work performance, and the general lack of community among service and family members, their assigned military units, and the greater civilian society.

Too often, military leaders measure subordinate performance based on the amount of time the subordinate physically spends at work or how much time the subordinate puts into a specific project or job. This type of performance measure forces service members to choose between work and family. There are definitely times when service members have to be at work to simply lead their small unit or when their presence reduces accidental risk during training, but there are other times when service members are still effective leaders when they are not present or their presence truly is not required. “If we insist on judging (and compensating) [service members] by the amount of time they spend behind their desk, in the shop, or in the office instead of the amount of value they provide, we are likely rewarding the wrong behaviors.”<sup>70</sup> This type of performance measure is not conducive with an integrated approach to sustaining either families or careers or improving unit readiness.

The second most prevalent barrier that prevents individuals and the services from achieving an integrated approach to sustainable military careers and improved unit readiness is the general lack of community among service and family members, their assigned military units, and the greater civilian society. While a service member’s spouse is often the primary source of support, it is frequently argued that a service member’s “sense of military identity is most directly related to close associations and identifications at the level of the service member’s working group.”<sup>71</sup> By linking military families to the service member’s small unit, both organizations can create a psychological sense of community characterized by “interdependence, shared responsibility, face-to-face relationships, and commonly shared goals” that are the foundation of community development and are “directly linked to the overall well-being

and life satisfaction of service members and their families, and indirectly linked to the performance of military units.”<sup>72</sup> A military that consists of an all-volunteer force requires “a work environment that is satisfying, yet not in excessive conflict with personal or family life.”<sup>73</sup> Therefore, the military can reduce the amount of stress it places on its service members and families by reducing the number of times it relocates individuals during a military career, thereby creating more stability within its families and small units. Consequently, more stability in one place will also facilitate better service member and family integration within the surrounding civilian population further cultivating a sense of community.

Training leaders, service members, and families is also critical for empowerment and broad-based action. One change to the current military culture that would better integrate work and families and sustain unit readiness, is modifying service member and leader attitudes towards alternate work arrangements. In an effort to “weave both professional development and the importance of family needs in developing the careers and lives of . . . Sailors” and retain talent, the U.S. Navy piloted a number of initiatives, “including paternity and adoptive leave, a one year deferment of sea duty for new mothers, the Career Intermission Pilot Program and telework programs.”<sup>74</sup> Commonly referred to as *work flexibility*, alternate work arrangements are increasingly called for in today’s workplace to help mitigate the conflicting demands of work and family. Unfortunately, in work environments that require leadership, management, technical skills, and organizational practice or rehearsals that improve unit functioning, alternate work arrangements may not be completely possible. However, inculcating a flexible work culture, and where practical, exercising alternate work arrangements have the

potential to provide different work options that help integrate work and family, retain talent, and improve overall unit readiness.

Cultural norms and values also shape how service members use their benefits, particularly, leave. While the DOD has significantly changed its leave policies, all services slightly differ in the administration of their respective leave programs. However, “adoption of family-supportive policies may be ineffective when a negative informal culture keeps employees from using the programs” such as paternity leave.<sup>75</sup> Multiple studies determined that men were unlikely to take paternity leave due to an unsympathetic attitude from their boss or coworkers.<sup>76</sup> More surprisingly however, only 62% of fathers worldwide who were eligible for paternity leave took it.<sup>77</sup> While societal norms are changing, service members need to understand leave policies in order to take advantage of opportunities to better integrate work and family and tear down informal negative culture norms. More importantly, military leaders have the responsibility to create and sustain a supportive culture that facilitates work and family integration, retains talent, and improves readiness.

Empowering service members for broad-based action also requires aligning systems to the vision. By establishing three priorities for work-family policy: Parenting is a Priority; Flexibility is the Key; and Demand for Integration, the DOD could more holistically develop a work-family strategy that would align current military systems and achieve the vision of *Integrating Service Members and Families—Sustaining Families and Careers While Improving Readiness*.<sup>78</sup>

“Soldiers who believe their leaders show care and concern for families have a higher commitment to the Army;” therefore, dealing with troublesome supervisors who

do not believe in an integrated approach to sustaining families and careers and improving readiness is critical to empowering service members for broad-based action.<sup>79</sup> The best solution for dealing with supervisors who cannot or will not be a part of the solution is honest dialogue.<sup>80</sup> It is important to confront these individuals as soon as possible so as not to discourage or disempower other service members from taking broad-based action.<sup>81</sup> In a study of work-family conflict and synergy, supervisor support for families was the strongest predictor of work-family synergy for every generational group.<sup>82</sup> Dealing with supervisors who undercut necessary transformation is absolutely imperative to changing the culture of an organization.

Generating short-term wins is the sixth stage. Short terms wins are important to integrating personal and professional aspects of military life and improving unit readiness because they: provide evidence that individual and unit sacrifices are worth the effort; help convince hesitant or non-believers who would likely interfere with change efforts; help refine the vision; keep leaders informed; and build momentum.<sup>83</sup> Nevertheless, good short-term wins have three characteristics. First, short-term wins are very visible and large groups of people can see that they are real.<sup>84</sup> Second, they are unambiguous and there is little argument over the call.<sup>85</sup> Third, it is clear that the short-term win is directly related to the change effort.<sup>86</sup> Policy initiatives that possess short-term characteristics include: a career intermission pilot program that allows service members to transfer to the Reserve component while maintaining benefits and promotion eligibility in exchange for extending their service obligation; telework programs that permit eligible military and civilian personnel to work from remote locations; options that allow service members to choose monetary bonuses, geographic

stability, or jobs of choice that accommodate individual and family needs while still satisfying mission requirements.<sup>87</sup> These initiatives would go a long way to changing the military's current work-family culture and facilitating an integrated approach to sustaining families and careers and improving unit readiness.

The seventh stage to changing culture in an organization is consolidating gains and producing more change. After what is perceived as sufficient time for change to occur, leaders frequently make the mistake of relaxing the pressure and decreasing the level of urgency during a significant transformation. Rather, leaders must maintain the pressure and look for more opportunities to change while maintaining clarity of vision.<sup>88</sup> Additional policy initiatives include: part-time work for part-time pay; two-year deferment for new reservists for individual augmentee assignments; and compressed work week schedules.<sup>89</sup>

The final stage of developing an integrated approach to sustaining military families and careers and improving readiness is anchoring the new approaches in the culture. As Dr. Kotter states, "Culture changes only after you have successfully altered people's actions, after the new behavior produces some group benefit for a period of time, and after people see the connection between the new actions and the performance improvement."<sup>90</sup> In short, change only occurs when group norms and values are altered. Not surprisingly, new approaches only become part of a culture when the approaches are successful and are recognized as clearly superior to the old procedures.<sup>91</sup> Regularly talking about the legitimacy of an integrated approach and how it positively impacts unit readiness will help validate these new practices. Likewise,

changing out personnel who are not on onboard with the integrated vision is also an approach that will help anchor change in the current culture.

### Conclusion

The traditional nuclear family is no longer the dominant family concept in the military. Contemporary military families are incredibly diverse, and like American society, there are a number of arrangements on military installations that can be recognized as family relationships. Military personnel tend to get married much younger than their civilian equivalents; consequently, they tend to start families and have children earlier in life. Like the changed concept of family, today's military force is young, highly-educated, married, dual-income, has children, and is a blend of three distinctly different generations who each place different values and priorities on work and family and are motivated to excel in these areas for different reasons.

Most military personnel are challenged to accomplish their roles as a spouse, parent, and service member, and unfortunately, many individuals are unable to successfully manage these endeavors simultaneously because they lack the skills required for such a tenuous act. Sadly, and not surprising, the major factor influencing the career decisions of married soldiers who leave the Army is an inability to balance the demands of work and family, thus creating retention and readiness issues across the force.

The frequently espoused balanced approach to managing personal and professional lives does not work for military personnel because a military lifestyle prevents an individual from establishing boundaries or controlling their time with any degree of certainty. The balanced approach makes individuals prone to either-or thinking and consequently offers limited options for successfully managing personal and

professional obligations simultaneously. Conversely, an integrated approach requires the service member to blur the lines between work and family while persistently looking for win-win situations that blend the two facets together. Rather than struggle to keep work and family apart, an integrated approach advocates bringing the service member's personal and professional lives together, and in this regard, neither work nor family are viewed as competitors for the service member's time, thereby avoiding conflict.

Establishing an integrated approach that enables service members to meet their personal and professional obligations, results in a sustainable military career, and improves unit readiness, will however, require a cultural change throughout the Army. Many senior leaders will argue that there is an absence of a major visible crisis and that there are numerous signs of a perceived "balanced" Army, unfortunately, recent statistics indicate readiness issues throughout the force.

Over 241 years of Army culture has shaped how the organization, senior leaders, service members, and families approach personal and professional obligations in a military lifestyle. John Kotter's Eight-Stage Process of Creating Major Change is an excellent framework to develop strategy and transform how the Army integrates work and family that enables service members to meet their personal and professional commitments, sustains military careers, and improves overall Army readiness.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Mark A. Milley, "39th Chief of Staff Initial Message to the Army," September 1, 2015, [https://www.army.mil/article/154803/39th\\_Chief\\_of\\_Staff\\_Initial\\_Message\\_to\\_the\\_Army/](https://www.army.mil/article/154803/39th_Chief_of_Staff_Initial_Message_to_the_Army/) (accessed March 6, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Mark A. Milley, *2017 Posture Statement of the United States Army*, Posture Statement presented to the 114<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess. (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, 2016), 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>4</sup> Bradford Booth, Mady Wechsler Segal, and D. Bruce Bell, *What We Know About Army Families: 2007 Update* (Middletown, PA: ICF International, 2007), 3.

<sup>5</sup> Jane B. Burke, *2nd Quadrennial Quality of Life Review* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, January 2009), 1-15.

<sup>6</sup> Alicia M. Chivers, “Army Life—Survive or Thrive,” blog entry posted 2014. This statement was taken from my wife’s personal blog that is not published and therefore, there is no link available. With respect to families and work-life integration, she has a dual perspective on the subject. Having served as an active duty Army officer for nearly 11 years, a spouse to an active duty service member, and a mother of five children under the age of 10, she sees this particular situation from multiple angles.

<sup>7</sup> Lynne M. Borden, *Supporting the Healthy Development of Strong Families* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, February 2015), 1.

<sup>8</sup> John A. Wickham, *The Army Family*, White Paper 1983 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, August, 1983) 1.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-4.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 1. Our stated philosophy is—“A partnership exists between the Army and Army Families. The Army’s unique missions, concept of service and lifestyle of its members—all affect the nature of this partnership. Towards the goal of building a strong partnership, the Army remains committed to assuring adequate support to families in order to promote wellness; to develop a sense of community; and to strengthen the mutually reinforcing bonds between the Army and its families.”

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *Unit Status Reporting*, Army Regulation 220-1 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, December 19, 2006), 1.

<sup>22</sup> Borden, *Supporting the Healthy Development of Strong Families*, 14.

<sup>23</sup> Lynne M. Borden, *Strong Family Functioning* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, May 2014), 12-13.

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *Aeromedical Training for Flight Personnel*, Training Circular 3-04.93 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, August 31, 2009), 3-1.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Booth, *What We Know About Army Families*, 25-27.

<sup>27</sup> Lolita M. Burrell, "The Impact of Military Lifestyle Demands on Well-Being, Army, and Family Outcomes," *Armed Forces & Society* 33, no. 1 (October 2006): 44.

<sup>28</sup> Booth, *What We Know About Army Families: 2007 Update*, 5.

<sup>29</sup> Mady W. Segal, "The Nature of Work and Family Linkages: A Theoretical Perspective," in *The Organizational Family: Work and Family Linkages in the U.S. Military*, ed. Gary L. Bowen and Dennis K. Orthner (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1989), 16.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>31</sup> Segal, "The Nature of Work and Family Linkages: A Theoretical Perspective," 5.

<sup>32</sup> Booth, *What We Know About Army Families*, 4.

<sup>33</sup> Burke, 2nd Quadrennial Quality of Life Review, 15.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Booth, *What We Know About Army Families*, 3.

<sup>41</sup> Burke, 2nd Quadrennial Quality of Life Review, 11-12.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 12-13.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 11-13.

<sup>44</sup> Segal, "The Nature of Work and Family Linkages," 6.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., ix.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., x.

<sup>47</sup> Eryc Eyl, "Work vs. Life: Balance, Integration and Alignment," *The Huffington Post*, November 10, 2016, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/eryc-eyl/work-vs-life-balance-integration-and-alignment\\_b\\_8506482.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/eryc-eyl/work-vs-life-balance-integration-and-alignment_b_8506482.html) (accessed November 3, 2016).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Segal, "The Nature of Work and Family Linkages," 21.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>52</sup> Eyl, "Work vs. Life: Balance, Integration and Alignment."

<sup>53</sup> Nicholas J. Beutell, "Work-Family Conflict and Work-Family Synergy for Generation X, Baby Boomers, and Matures: Generational Differences, Predictors, and Satisfaction Outcomes," *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 23, no. 5 (2008): 507.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 508.

<sup>55</sup> Jennifer M. McFadyen, "Examining the Impacts of Workplace Supports: Work-Family Fit and Satisfaction in the U.S. Military," *Family Relations* 54, no. 1 (January 2005): 134.

<sup>56</sup> Meghann Myers, "Army Report: Self-Doubt and Sleep Deprivation Led to 2-Star's Suicide," *Army Times Online*, January 11, 2017, <https://www.armytimes.com/articles/army-report-self-doubt-and-sleep-deprivation-led-to-2-stars-suicide> (accessed March 6, 2017). Army Secretary Eric Fanning comments on the health of the Army General Officer population after the suicide of MG John Rossi.

<sup>57</sup> John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 1996), 36.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>59</sup> Gregg Zoroya, "Experts Worry High Military Suicide Rates are 'New Normal'," *USA Today Online*, June 12, 2016, , <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2016/06/12/military-suicide-rates/85287518/> (accessed February 17, 2017).

<sup>60</sup> Myers, "Army Report: Self-Doubt and Sleep Deprivation Led to 2-Star's Suicide."

<sup>61</sup> Booth, *What We Know About Army Families*, 85.

<sup>62</sup> McFadyen, "Examining the Impacts of Workplace Supports," 134.

<sup>63</sup> “2016 Blue Star Families Military Family Lifestyle Survey,” 2016, linked from the *Blue Star Families Home Page*, <https://bluestarfam.org/survey/> (accessed March 7, 2017).

<sup>64</sup> Kotter, *Leading Change*, 66.

<sup>65</sup> Jacqueline M. Hames, “Army to Stand up New Resiliency Directorate,” October 22, 2013, linked from *The United States Army Home Page* at “Soldiers Live,” [https://www.army.mil/article/113627/Army\\_to\\_stand\\_up\\_new\\_Resiliency\\_Directorate/](https://www.army.mil/article/113627/Army_to_stand_up_new_Resiliency_Directorate/) (accessed February 17, 2017).

<sup>66</sup> Kotter, *Leading Change*, 65-66.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 76-81.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>70</sup> Ty Kiisel, “Work-Life Balance’ Should Be ‘Work-Life Integration’,” *Forbes Online*, July 16, 2013, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/tykiisel/2013/07/16/work-life-balance-maybe-we-should-recognize-its-really-work-life-integration/#3acf3c5f34fb> (accessed November 3, 2016).

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Bowen, *The Organization Family: Work and Family Linkages in the U.S. Military*, 168.

<sup>74</sup> W. Scott Mishley, “Navy Initiatives Focus on Work-Life Balance for Sailors,” June 17, 2011, linked from *The United States Navy Home Page* at “Diversity Directorate Public Affairs,” [http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story\\_id=61071](http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=61071) (accessed February 27, 2017).

<sup>75</sup> Marianne A. Ferber and Brigid O’Farrell, *Work and Family: Policies for a Changing Work Force* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press), 140.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>77</sup> Brad Harrington et al., “The New Dad: Take Your Leave,” 2014, [http://www.thenewdad.org/yahoo\\_site\\_admin/assets/docs/BCCWF\\_The\\_New\\_Dad\\_2014\\_FINA.L.157170735.pdf](http://www.thenewdad.org/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/BCCWF_The_New_Dad_2014_FINA.L.157170735.pdf) (accessed March 7, 2017), 26.

<sup>78</sup> Shelley Macdermid Wadsworth and Kenona Southwell, “Military Families: Extreme Work and Extreme ‘Work-Family,’” 2010, [http://workplaceflexibility.org/images/uploads/program\\_papers/wadsworth\\_-\\_military\\_families.pdf](http://workplaceflexibility.org/images/uploads/program_papers/wadsworth_-_military_families.pdf) (accessed March 17, 2017), 10.

<sup>79</sup> Booth, *What We Know About Army Families*, 126.

<sup>80</sup> Kotter, *Leading Change*, 113-114.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>82</sup> Beutell, "Work-Family Conflict and Work-Family Synergy," 519.

<sup>83</sup> Kotter, *Leading Change*, 123.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> Wadsworth, *Military Families: Extreme Work and Extreme 'Work-Family,'* 12.

<sup>88</sup> Kotter, *Leading Change*, 143.

<sup>89</sup> Wadsworth, *Military Families: Extreme Work and Extreme 'Work-Family,'* 12.

<sup>90</sup> Kotter, *Leading Change*, 156.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.