



UNIVERSITY OF PORTSMOUTH

MSc Leadership and Management:
Investigative Project

Preserve the Reserves:

An Investigation into what influences the
Royal Air Force Reservists' decision
to stay or leave the organisation

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Date of Submission: 26th November 2013
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Student Number: UP677661
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Signed statement of originality: *This project is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MSc in Leadership and Management. I, the undersigned, declare that this project report is my own original work. Where I have taken ideas and or wording from another source, this is explicitly referenced in the text.*

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UNIVERSITY OF PORTSMOUTH BUSINESS SCHOOL

Investigative Project:
MSc Leadership and Management:

ABSTRACT

Title: Preserve the Reserves: An Investigation into what influences the Royal Air Force Reservists' decision to stay or leave the organisation

Author: Squadron Leader [REDACTED] (Retired)

Tutor: [REDACTED]

Year of Submission: 2013

Summary of the research:

With an average yearly loss of personnel greater than the numbers being recruited, the RAF Reserves organisation faces a challenge in meeting the Government's recommendation to significantly increase the number of its trained personnel. Through the use of focus groups and one-to-one interviews this qualitative piece of research adopts the subjectivist approach in order to better understand the 'world' of the Reservist. In so doing, this research tries to articulate the perceptions of the Part-Time Voluntary Reserve (PTVR) personnel, comprehends their *transmigrant* life-style and acknowledges the multifaceted needs of the individuals.

In a comparison with other research relating to the retention of military Reservists in the UK, USA, Australia, Israel, France and Sweden, this study finds that the issues and underlying causes of poor retention in the RAF Reserves reflect many of those previously identified in other forces. Whilst acknowledging the importance of extrinsic factors such as pay and training-bounties, this study supports other findings that it is predominantly the more intrinsic factors that are more likely to sway participants' decisions to stay or leave. Furthermore, this study found that in addition to Herzberg's *hygiene factors* many of the so-called *motivational factors* were also having a demotivating effect on personnel.

Based on the findings in this study, this research concludes that there remains an apparent insufficient and uncoordinated endeavour by the RAF to understand and address the issues of poor retention of RAF PTVR personnel, and suggests recommendations on how the problem of retention might be tackled.

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GLOSSARY

| | |
|--------|--|
| ACT | Annual Camp Training |
| CCS | Common Core Skills |
| CO | Commanding Officer |
| EE | Employee Engagement |
| FP | Force Protection |
| FTRS | Full-Time Reserve Service |
| HQ-OPT | Head-Quarters (Air) Occupational Psychology Team |
| IDF | Israel Defence Force |
| IT | Information Technology |
| JNCO | Junior Non-Commissioned Officer |
| JPA | Joint Personnel Administration |
| MOD | Ministry of Defence |
| MT | Mechanical Transport |
| NCO | Non-Commissioned Officer |
| Off | Officer |
| OR | Other Ranks |
| PTVR | Part-Time Volunteer Reserve |
| RAF | Royal Air Force |
| RAFR | Royal Air Force Reserves |
| RAFFT | Royal Air Force Fitness Test |
| RAuxAF | Royal Auxiliary Air Force |
| RN | Royal Navy |
| SaBRE | Support for Britain's Reservists and Employers |
| SDSR | Strategic Defence and Security Review |
| SNCO | Senior Non-Commissioned Officer |
| TA | Territorial Army |

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Each year the Royal Air Force (RAF) spends millions of pounds recruiting and training RAF Reserve personnel. Each year, on average, an equivalent number of individuals, sometimes more, leave the organisation. With a Government requirement to significantly increase the overall trained strength of the RAF Reserve personnel, the organisation has a need to better understand the factors which might influence the individuals' decision to stay or leave.

1.2 RATIONALE FOR RESEARCH

At the time of undertaking this research, recruitment of Reserve personnel was one of the RAF's top priorities; against its target trained strength of 1,860, by 31 March 2016, the organisation was only 51% manned (██████████ 2012).

During the three year period April 2010 – March 2013 the RAF spent over £3M on marketing related activities in order to stimulate greater enrolment for the RAF Reserves. During this same period a total of 750 personnel were recruited; however, 843 personnel left the RAF Reserves¹. The average loss equates to 21% of the total workforce, per year. Although the outflow of personnel is reducing, the net balance of individuals recruited/retained over the three year period was -93. With such a major impact on resources and with little understanding within the organisation as to why so many personnel chose to leave the RAF Reserves, it is difficult to plan and implement any effective retention measures.

It was against this backdrop that this exploratory research project set out to investigate the issues underpinning the Part-time Volunteer Reserve (PTVR) individual's decision to leave the force.

1.3 ARMED FORCES - RESERVES

The UK has three armed forces: the Royal Navy (including the Royal Marines), the British Army, and the RAF. Each has a Reserves Service the largest of which is the Territorial Army

¹ Source: Data obtained from RAF Recruitment and Selection, RAF Cranwell, as at 31 December 2012.

(TA), at around 38,500 personnel (Dandeker et al, 2011). By comparison the RAF Reserves has a trained strength of just 948² (██████████ 2012).

Following the outcome of the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) in 2010, the Prime Minister commissioned a separate review of the Reserve Forces entitled *Future Reserves 2020: The independent commission to review the United Kingdom's Reserve Forces*, and known as 'FR20'. One of the recommendations of the commission is that the trained strength of RAF Reserves should be increased to 1,800 by the year 2015 (FR20). In August 2012 the RAF established an 'FR20 Implementation team' to 'provide leadership, commitment and strategic direction to the [seven] projects (Fig 1); oversee management of linkage and dependencies between the projects; and report progress upwards to the Programme Management Office' (RAF, HQ Air, 2013a). The aim of the Implementation Team was to 'increase the RAuxAF trained strength to 1800 by the end of FY 15/16' (RAF, HQ Air, 2013b).

| Ser | RAF FR20 Project Management Board Plan | Timeframe | |
|-----|---|-----------|--------|
| 1 | Establish RAF 'Future Reserves' Implementation Team | - | Aug 12 |
| 2 | Establish Six New Reserve Squadrons | Oct 12 | Apr 16 |
| 3 | Re-Role Three Reserve Squadrons | Apr 13 | Apr 16 |
| 4 | Establishment Re-Organisation & Strength | Jul 12 | Mar 13 |
| 5 | Finance | - | Jul 12 |
| 6 | Recruiting & Training | Apr 13 | Apr 16 |
| 7 | Transfer 200 Regular Posts to FTRS | Apr 13 | Mar 16 |

Fig 1 (Source: RAF HQ Air, July 2013a)

1.4 RAF PART-TIME VOLUNTEER RESERVE (PTVR)

The term 'RAF Reserves' is slightly confusing as it consists of two essential elements: first, the Royal Air Force Reserves (RAFR), which comprises of Sponsored Reserves and Full-Time Reserve Service (FTRS) personnel; and second the Royal Auxiliary Air Force (RAuxAF), which

² As at 1 April 2012

comprises predominantly of personnel who give up their weekends to train and who are employed on a Part-Time Volunteer Reserve (PTVR) commitment (██████████ 2010).

PTVRs are allocated to one of twenty-two squadrons around the UK, principally against Medical, Force Protection, Logistics, Intelligence, Media roles and Flight Operations tasks. A few of these roles require PTVR personnel to be professionally qualified or experienced on enlistment, such as medical, aircrew and media; although the majority of personnel are trained by the squadrons. It is this larger PTVR force that has a significant annual outflow of personnel and on which this research project is entirely focused.

1.5 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The RAF Reserves organisation faces the challenge of increasing its trained strength due primarily to the significant number of PTVR personnel leaving the force. As with other Reserve Forces around the world, addressing retention is considered key and a better understanding of the perceptions of the individuals concerned is vital to the planning and decision making process. The **aim of this research project** therefore is:

To better understand the factors influencing the RAF Reservists' decision to stay or leave the Service.

It has been said by military personnel that 'no one joins the armed forces to get rich'. Whilst financial reward is a powerful incentive is this the key to retention? Many authors would argue that retention is influenced by factors other than money. Smith (2001, p. 12), for example, finds in his own survey that 'although money is important, the work environment, the individual supervisor, and the quality of the job are the most important determinants in creating a productive work environment.' Are these factors equally true of RAF Reservists?

The PTVR individual is, by definition, a part-time member of the armed forces. He/she may have a civilian career, may even be a manager themselves. Does this hybrid Serviceperson/civilian have expectations or needs from their civilian world that are not being

fulfilled in the Military? When the individual joined the RAF Reserves he/she would have been driven by a particular motivation; has that motivation changed, and if so, how and why? What internal and external pressures influence the individual and might cause him/her to decide to leave?

The Reservists are employed to undertake one of a number of different roles within the Service. They operate from a specific squadron and these squadrons are geographically dispersed around the UK. Do the locations of the squadrons or the roles undertaken have any bearing on retention? Does the rank of the reservist, whether he/she is an officer, a non-commissioned officer (NCO) or an airman, have any correlation with retention? The first objective of this study is therefore:

- a) **To examine possible correlations between PTVR individuals and their perceptions of the organisation, with particular regard to their role, geographical location and rank.**

There are many reasons cited in the civilian environment for poor retention and many different management approaches to help address them; but are these equally applicable within the Armed Forces where the environment is far from a traditional 9-5 workplace and more of a 'way of life'? More importantly, are these reasons equally valid in the Reserves where the individual is both half-civilian and half-military? With little existing internal research on which to base the answers to these questions the second objective is to:

- b) **Compare and contrast the possible causes of retention issues between RAF Reservists and those studied in other military organisations.**

Through a better understanding of the issues and concerns held by PTVR personnel it is envisaged that the outcome of this research will:

- c) **Identify recommendations on how to improve retention issues amongst RAF Reserve personnel and/or areas for further research.**

1.6 PROJECT STRUCTURE

The next chapter looks at the issue of retention as discussed in academic literature and also in other research in military forces both in the UK and around the world. In Chapter 3 the

author explains the methods used for data capture; the themes explored amongst the participants and the rationale for the choice of themes. The author then discusses the results before finally presenting the conclusions and recommendations from this research.

1.7 VALUE OF THE RESEARCH

The findings from this project will help inform the development of an RAF Reserves policy and strategy on retention. As the first piece of qualitative research conducted specifically with RAF PTVR personnel, these findings will also provide a unique insight into the perceptions of RAF Reservists and thus help to contribute towards the wider debate on military retention.

CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Academics from different fields of research including leadership, organisational management, human resources, social science and psychology have considered numerous aspects of retention and their findings have developed over the years. Various studies relating to the retention of personnel in Armed Forces around the world have been conducted. This chapter considers many of these key theories and findings.

2.2 ACADEMIC LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of causes that potentially influence employees to decide to leave an organisation were outlined by Bevan in 1991 (cited by Evans, 2001, p. 111) as 'job, organisation, or its culture or values not meeting expectations; inadequate induction or further training; lack of intrinsic job satisfaction or motivation; lack of career development or perceived unfairness of promotion decisions; management style; flexible working arrangements [including work-life balance]; and pay and benefits'. This was amplified by Branham (2005, p. 29) who also included: 'insufficient opportunities for growth/advancement; feeling devalued and unrecognised; and a loss of trust and confidence in senior leaders'. These are key aspects worthy of further consideration.

2.2.1 Culture, Role and Expectations

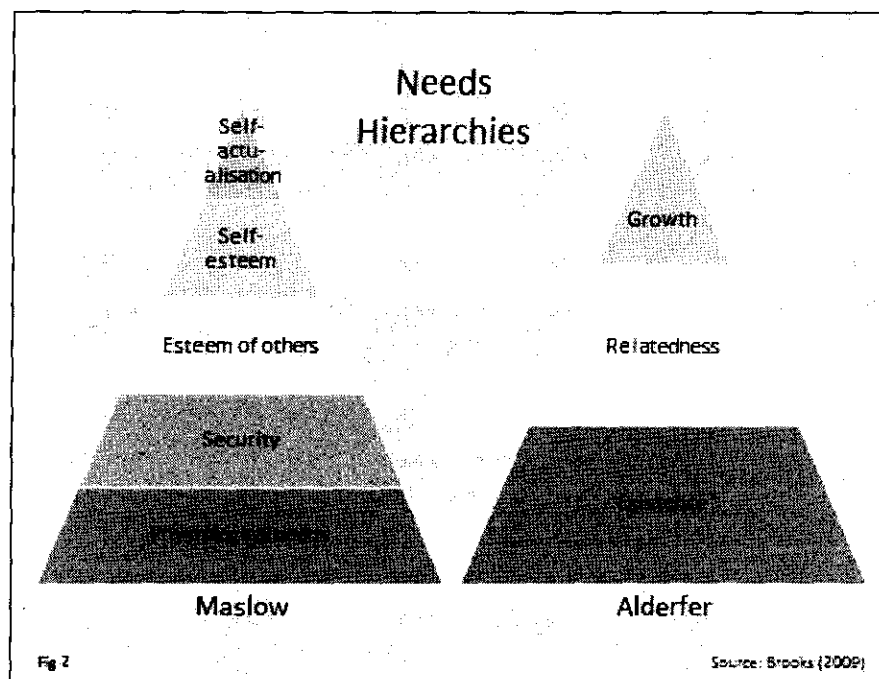
The organisational culture, the role of the employee, and the individual's expectations may all be closely inter-linked. Handy (cited by Brooks, 2009, p. 266) identified four types of organisational culture based on the structural design of power, role, task and people.

Regardless of the type of structural design on which an organisational culture is based they all have one resource in common, employees. It makes sense therefore, 'if you want to retain people, to encourage them to develop their roles in directions that will bring them satisfaction while also meeting the organisation's objectives' (Taylor, 2002, p. 132).

2.2.2 Individual's Needs, Motivation and Job Satisfaction

Despite the fact that certain aspects will weigh more highly in the minds of employees than others (Torrington et al, 2008) it was suggested by Grigg et al (2008) that the retention decision is based on whether or not the employee's needs are being met.

One of the most frequently cited *needs* theories is Maslow's Needs Hierarchy (Grigg et al, 2008) in which, in 1943, Maslow suggested that individuals had five increasing levels of 'need' ranging from the physiological or basic needs through to self-actualisation or self-fulfilment. Trying to adapt this theory to a workplace environment was problematic, as 'Maslow did not intend this theory to be a managerial or organisational tool' (Brooks, 2009, p. 89). In 1972, however, Alderfer adapted Maslow's approach to the workplace and proposed a three category model of needs (as cited by Brooks, 2009, p. 89): *Existence*, basic survival needs; *Relatedness*, including social interaction and respect of and recognition from others; and *Growth*, self-fulfilment, autonomy and success (Fig 2).



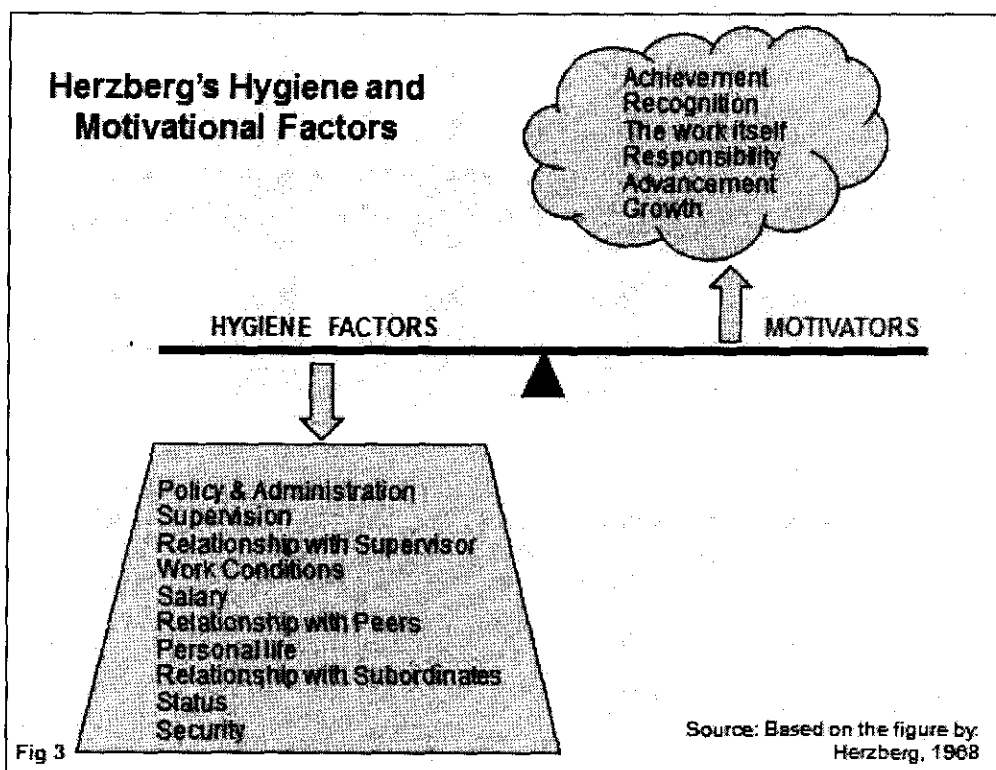
The advantage of Alderfer's model over Maslow's is that it recognised that different levels of 'need' might be triggered at the same time. This model is perhaps more appropriate in an environment such as the RAF Reserves where an individual might, for example, desire respect and recognition for their service to their country whilst simultaneously looking for an opportunity to lead or to demonstrate their potential in a way that might not be possible in their civilian life.

These 'needs' therefore appear significant as motivation has been closely associated with the attainment of the individual's needs and was most notably discussed by Herzberg in his 1968 article '*One more time: How do you motivate employees?*' In his article Herzberg discussed nine separate motivational myths and argued why they were ineffective as methods of motivation either from an unproductive physical or psychological aspect (Herzberg, 1968). Some of these so-called forms of 'motivation' can still be seen in use today, for example cash incentives or authorised time-off work for activities such as 'team-building', which, according to Herzberg (1968) resulted in less time at the work place rather than more motivated staff.

Drucker (1977) described how Henry Ford 'almost entirely' resolved a staff turnover problem in 1912/13 by paying his workers a salary 2-3 times the average hourly wage. It would seem logical that there is a link between extrinsic rewards and retention; after all, cash incentives are still used today, for evidence we only have to look at the London financial sector. But this commonly held view 'is not an accurate one, in practice things are a great deal more complicated' (Taylor, 2002, p. 93).

Herzberg claimed that the factors involved in producing job satisfaction and motivation, *motivation factors*, were different to those factors that resulted in job dissatisfaction, *hygiene factors*, and stressed that they were not opposites (Herzberg, 1968), Fig 3. This observation is important when defining the organisation's methodology for improving retention. Many organisations undertake employee surveys and, based on their findings, develop their retention action plans. But great care should be taken in interpreting these

push and *pull factors* (Torrington et al, 2008); for example, a company might score high on employee feedback regarding 'responsibility' and 'advancement', the *motivation* factors, but still have retention issues because their *hygiene* or dissatisfaction factors score high, or higher, in areas such as 'company policy' or 'poor supervision'. Improving an employee's opportunity for greater responsibility will not counter their dissatisfaction of poor supervision. However, 'an attempt to motivate employees by manipulating their motivator factors is just the beginning' (Herzberg, 1968, p. 124).



In 1964 Vroom's Valence-Instrumentality-Expectancy (VIE) theory assumed that 'people's behaviours results from choices amongst alternatives, and these choices (behaviours) are systematically related to psychological processes, particular perceptions and the formation of beliefs and attitudes' (Pinder, 1984). In the VIE theory Valence is the outcome, such as promotion; Instrumentality are the instruments that are believed by the individual to have an effect on the Outcome, and thus achieve the Valence (for example: professionalism and conscientiousness result in positive annual appraisals which in turn results in promotion);

and Expectancy relates to the strength of a person's belief about whether or not the outcome is possible (Pinder, 1984). Vroom's theory was taken further by Porter & Lawler (as cited by Pinder, 1984, p. 99) who argued that performance and satisfaction may or may not be related depending on other factors such as the level of performance the individual believes they have attained and also the corresponding intrinsic or extrinsic rewards.

Hackman and Oldham (cited by Brooks, 2009, p. 105) argued that 'a well-designed job may enhance employee motivation' and that this motivation increases when the individuals critical psychological states are achieved, which are encouraged by: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback from the job (cited by Brooks, 2009, p. 105). Later, Evans (2001) acknowledged that research had not been able to prove a close relationship between a lack of job satisfaction and the propensity to leave. However, in citing Robbins (1993) and Bevan (1991), Evans argued that there was a close relationship between 'motivation and the satisfaction of people's needs, through the content and variety in their jobs, and their decision to stay or leave' (Evans, 2001, p. 141). In order to address employees' propensity to leave, therefore, the organisation might need to review the individual's working environment because 'the design of jobs, so as to provide intrinsic satisfaction, assumes some importance in retention' (Evans, 2001, p. 141).

In a more recent study, 'drawing on self-determination and work characteristics theories', Galletta (2011, p. 1) claimed that 'job autonomy was positively related to both intrinsic motivation and affective commitment'. Although the study acknowledged several limitations it claimed that 'employees intrinsically motivated towards their own work, develop a sense of identification and attachment to their organization that in turn was negatively related to turnover intention' (Galletta, 2011, p. 12). This supports the 'employee engagement' approach discussed later.

2.2.3 Management Style and Career Development

Whilst this particular research will focus on factors that influence RAF Reservists' decisions to stay or leave, it is important to acknowledge at this stage that appropriate recruitment,

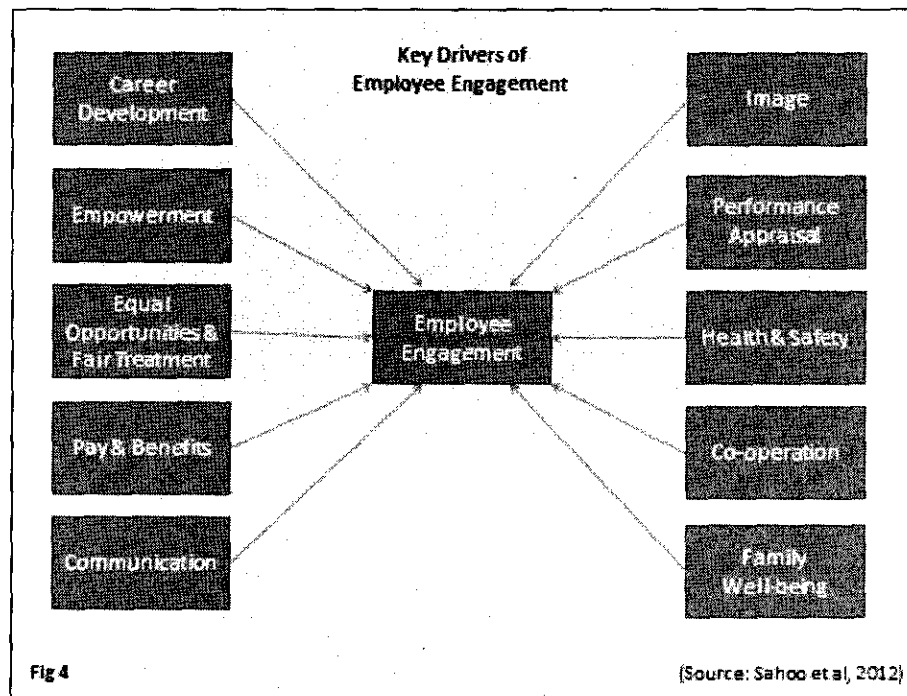
selection and induction training at the beginning of the employment process is vital in order to mitigate potential personnel losses at a later date (Evans, 2001; Taylor, 2002). Once appropriate employees have been recruited, it is vital that they are managed effectively.

The provision of training can be expensive and could be a contentious subject leading to the concern that that if personnel are trained-up then they might seek better employment elsewhere. A large-scale study undertaken by Green et al (cited by Taylor, 2002, p. 117), however, found that the provision of staff training had little noticeable impact on the outflow of employees with findings showing that 19% of respondents felt more likely to seek another job compared to 18% of respondents who would be less likely. The more holistic approach might suggest that if the training is appropriate and leads to an opportunity for achievement and growth then it is likely to promote job satisfaction.

Underpinning the above is the notion that there is a close link between job satisfaction and motivation, and between that of parity and fair treatment; the latter being a factor of employee engagement discussed below. 'If an individual perceives that the overall outputs he or she receives from the organisation (e.g. pay, recognition) in return for a particular input (e.g. hours, qualifications) are equal to, or exceed, those received by colleagues in the company or peers elsewhere, then they will view the situation as equitable or even favourable; the opposite effect leads to under-reward inequity' (Brooks, 2009, p. 97).

2.2.4 Employee Engagement

It is generally accepted that Employee-Engagement (EE) is far more than job satisfaction, motivation or employee commitment. Cook (2008) suggests that engagement can be summed up by how positively the employee *thinks* and *feels* about the organization and it is 'characterized by employees being prepared to go above and beyond what is expected of them ... EE is more a psychological contract than a physical one' (Cook, 2008, p. 13). Sahoo cites the conceptualization of EE by Kahn (1990) in which importance is given to 'three aspects: physical, cognitive and emotional' (Sahoo et al, 2012, p. 95), and suggests that there are ten key drivers to EE (Fig 4).



Cook maintains that with 'engagement', employers move away from the traditional HR approach 'where employees are seen as a cost and need to be controlled and rewarded' to where employees are viewed as 'assets that need to be nurtured and developed' (Cook, 2008, p. 34). Furthermore, a study by Watson Wyatt Worldwide found that firms that 'involved their employees effectively were 4.5 times more likely to report high levels of employee engagement than firms that communicate less effectively and they were also 20 per cent more likely to report lower turnover rates than their peers' (cited by Cook, 2008, p. 60).

In summary, the individual's decision to stay or leave is influenced by the way they think and feel about the organisation. This is related to the employee's needs and in turn the organisation's satisfaction of those needs through the effective use, or not, of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards to motivate. Training, fairness and job enrichment lead to psychological growth, which is encapsulated in Kahn's theory of employee engagement.

2.3 MILITARY LITERATURE REVIEW

The theories of need, motivation, job enrichment and employee engagement have developed over recent decades. Meanwhile, employers such as the Armed Forces have long wrestled with the problems of staff retention. This section will look at retention issues studied in other military Reserve Forces in the world; at retention studies in the British Armed Forces; and review recent key studies relating specifically to the retention of RAF Reserves personnel.

2.3.1 Reserve Forces in the World

In their study of US Army Reservists, Burrell et al (2003) believed that if spouses did not identify with the military community in some fashion 'then they will be less likely to support their soldiers' retention' in the service (Burrell et al, 2003, p. 23). This factor was also recognised by Dandeker et al (2011) who noted that Reservist families may be less supportive and understanding of military life, including the need for deployment, than their regular counterparts. This issue of a lack of support may also extend to their civilian employers as the Reservist tries to balance their military/civilian commitments (Dandeker, 2011).

Griffith, on the other hand, looked at the recruitment and retention of Reserve soldiers of the US National Guard and found that recruitment and retention would likely benefit if 'the appeal for Reserve military service should also include intangible aspects of military service, such as patriotism, service to country, camaraderie, and so forth' (Griffith, 2008, p. 253). These findings resonate with the emotional drivers discussed in section 2.2.

In a study into the role and contribution of Swedish Reserve officers, Danielsson et al (2011, p. 295) found them to be 'well-educated people who often had a high position in their civilian professional life'. However, it was concluded that 'in spite of these qualifications, the services of Swedish Reserve officers were not used to any great extent in the Armed Forces. In Sweden, fewer than 200 Reserve officers take part in Armed Forces' activities every year from a total of 9,553 (Danielsson et al, 2011, p. 295). This was similar to the French

Reservists who 'rarely participate in overseas operations and resent not being fully integrated in the French military' (Weber, 2011, p. 335). The French have two Reserve types, 'operational' and the 'citizen'. The citizen Reserves are primarily used for PR and communications leaving the operational Reserves to 'focus on the operational tasks and work with the active forces' (Weber, 2011, p. 327). In 2007, of the 6,191 French Reservists that left the service, 63 per cent were of their own accord citing conflicts with private or profession life, inadequate pay, insufficient work and unattractive tasks (Weber, 2011, p. 332).

Using secondary data sources and cases related to the 'Israel Defence Forces (IDF), the U.S. military and the Armed Forces of Western Europe, Lomsky-Feder et al (2008) suggest a theoretical model where Reservists could be likened to the *transmigrants*, 'conceptualizing Reserve forces as being betwixt and between the civilian and military worlds thus illuminating how Reserves constantly travel, mediate, and sometimes create critical perspectives between the military and wider civilian society' (Lomsky-Feder et al, 2008, p. 594). In their study they explored 'four sets of concerns: the conceptualization of Reserves soldiers as transmigrants; the kinds of tensions and negotiations that develop between Regulars and Reserves; the implicit or "psychological contract" struck between Reservists and the military; and, using the case of Israel, the distinctive organizational and cultural dynamics characterizing Reserve service' (Lomsky-Feder et al, 2008, p. 595). They concluded that this framework allows one to 'examine different patterns of motivation, cohesion, political commitment, and awareness' (Lomsky-Feder et al, 2008, p. 609).

In the Australian Defence Force Reserves meanwhile, Smith et al (2011) described the development of the force structure, from the Citizen Military Forces in 1903 to the success of the recent tri-service High Readiness Reserve (HRR). The study recognised the "transmigrant" nature of the Reserves and the valuable skills Reservists brought to the force particularly in trades of expertise such as intelligence and medical. The study acknowledged the long-term retention problem and the Reservist's need for greater 'psychological integration' with Regulars noting how 'Army Reservists ranked the opportunity to be

deployed as part of a Reservist team within a Regular unit as the strongest incentive for volunteering for the HRR' (Smith et al, 2011, p. 307). Smith found that despite the challenge of 'juggling civilian employment with Reserve commitments, most Reservists appeared to welcome a greater, rather than a token, obligation to serve; concluding that 'there is a viable and meaningful role for the Reserves provided that the Australian Defence Force and the government are prepared to devote sufficient effort to them and to assign them appropriate tasks' (Smith et al, 2011, p. 301).

Whilst the majority of these findings relate to Army Reserve personnel, it would appear that there are retention related characteristics common to many Reservists regardless of their nationality; most notably welfare, the opportunity to serve, camaraderie, working with Regulars, and psychological integration.

2.3.2 British Forces Retention

At the turn of the 21st Century three studies were conducted into retention in the British Forces: ██████████ (1998) looked at two financial incentive schemes operated by the Army in the 1990s whilst ██████████ (1999) and ██████████ (2001) studied retention within the Regular RAF. ██████████ (1998) argued that the 'Financial Retention Incentive' failed to retain officers that were committed to leaving but recognised that it may have had some limited success with those wavering in their decision to stay or leave. Whereas the 'Reengagement Bonus' scheme was shown to be 'cost effective' and therefore deemed successful.

██████████ 1999 study explored attitude towards retention using existing qualitative data. He concluded that 'there was no one main reason why personnel left' the Regular RAF but recognised that a number of major influences existed including 'dissatisfaction with career, promotion and job, low morale and dissatisfaction with changes to Service life' (██████████ 1999, p. 93). Similar findings to those of ██████████ were reported by ██████████ (2001), in his retention study of RAF Engineer Officers.

2.3.3 RAF Reserves

More recently, three studies were conducted specifically in relation to the RAF Reserves by [REDACTED] (2010), [REDACTED] et al (2011) and [REDACTED] (2012).

2.3.3.1 Management Consultancy Services ([REDACTED] 2010).

An internal management consultancy study into *Recruitment, Training and Retention of RAF Reservists* was undertaken in 2009. Although, the findings of the report focused heavily on recruitment and training, the study examined RAF Reserves retention issues via a 'workshop' and concluded that it was 'difficult to identify any one factor' that resulted in poor retention but suggested 34 possible reasons ([REDACTED] 2010). Of the 34 reasons cited, 5 were categorised as external push-out factors and 29 as internal push-out factors (Appendix 1). The study 'believed that understanding the motivation of Reservists was essential if initiatives to address concerns on retention were to be formulated' ([REDACTED] 2010, p. 26) and one of the key recommendations of the study was to introduce a biennial RAF Reserves Attitude Survey ([REDACTED] 2010).

2.3.3.2 Reserve Air Force's Continuous Attitude Survey (CAS) ([REDACTED] et al, 2011).

In a separate qualitative survey, the majority of RAF Reservists were found to be satisfied with all aspects of Reservist membership; although it was acknowledged that the level of satisfaction was lower in the PTVR than in other elements of the RAF Reserves ([REDACTED] et al, 2011). What was not so evident, however, was the attitude of those 27.5% of respondents who were not intending to renew the Reserve obligations the following year. The attitudinal survey findings revealed that 71% were satisfied with the quality of leadership; 66% were satisfied with 'management - communication of general information'; and 43% were satisfied with overall career management ([REDACTED] et al, 2011). This lack of dissatisfaction with Reservist Service was reflected in the Royal Navy (RN) Reserves where 30% of those respondents who plan to leave the RN Reserves in the next 12 months cite poor management and leadership as their motivation ([REDACTED], 2012). As managing expectations, leadership & direction, communication and performance management are key factors in combating poor retention (Smith, 2001) and with approximately 20% of the RAF

Reserves trained strength leaving the service every year, a better understanding of the perceptions of these areas may merit further investigation.

2.3.3.3 Churn Analysis (██████████, 2012).

An analysis of RAF Reserve personnel outflow was undertaken using information from the RAF Reserves CAS (discussed above), source data from monthly statistical returns, discharge registers and personal files provided by the Commanding Officers (COs) of the individual Reserve Squadrons. Some COs also undertook exit interviews with their personnel and these findings informed their feedback. The analysis identified a number of reasons for personnel leaving such as employer concerns, family concerns and other commitments (██████████ 2012); however, the most commonly recorded reason for personnel leaving, at 17%, was 'reason not known'. Two explanations were suggested for this particular response: first, due to the volunteer nature of the organisation individuals may have decided that the Reserves was 'not for them' and failed to return, thus no reason was identified; second, and "more likely", was that this reason was used as a "catch-all" due to insufficient categories on the exit form or where squadron COs had failed to conduct leaving interviews (██████████ 2012).

2.4 SUMMARY

As the academic literature above shows, the factors that motivate individuals and in turn influence their decisions as to whether to leave or stay in a job are complex; not surprisingly as 'motivation stems from *desire* and desire lies in the realm of the unconscious' (Jackson et al, 2007, p. 188). 'Clearly, what motivates people differs between individuals, is related to and influenced by context, and is both culturally dependent and ever changing' (Brooks, 2009, p. 107).

Different types of organisational cultural and how employees are viewed within the culture can impact on the individual's sense of belonging and their job satisfaction. Taylor (2002) argues that to retain people their roles need to be developed, which Herzberg (1968) claims might be achieved through 'Job Enrichment', but for this to be implemented effectively it

would require proficient line-management as 'supervisory relationships are unique levers that deeply impact employees' stay/leave decisions' (Finnegan, 2009, p. 13).

From the internal literature it can be seen that, in addition to the motivational and hygiene factors mentioned previously, other more unique contributors might influence retention of military personnel from family support to operational deployments. Internal studies have tended to focus predominantly on the findings from previous surveys in order to try and identify the underlying factors. Quantitative data is informative but arguably even more so when used in conjunction with qualitative data.

Peter Drucker once said that 'management is about human beings [...] to make their strengths effective and their weaknesses irrelevant' (Edersheim, 2007, p. 157). If retention is about human beings rather than management techniques, then a better understanding of the perceptions of the individuals is considered vital.

CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

This chapter looks at the epistemology and ontology of the research, the strategy, method and design. It also discusses the ethical review, reliability and validity. In this study epistemology and ontology are defined as:

Ontology: 'Branch of philosophy that studies the nature of reality or being' (Saunders et al, 2009, p. 597).

Epistemology: Having established what is 'real', then epistemology is the 'branch of philosophy that studies the nature of knowledge and what constitutes acceptable knowledge in the field of study' (Saunders et al, 2009, p. 591).

3.1 EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND ONTOLOGICAL VIEWPOINTS

To date, research regarding the retention issues of RAF Reserves personnel has been grounded predominantly in the objectivist approach. This ontological standpoint is perhaps not surprising given the hierarchical nature of the military and the formal structured processes by which the organisation conforms. From an epistemological perspective it has also tended to adopt a positivist approach with an emphasis on 'quantifiable observations that lend themselves to statistical analysis' (Saunders et al, 2009, p. 114) resulting in 'law-like generalisation' (Saunders et al, 2009).

Reserve personnel, however, have been described as 'transmigrant' (Lomsky-Feder et al, 2008), floating back and forth between both their civilian and military worlds. In order to better understand the RAF PTVR personnel and their motives for staying or leaving, this research adopts the interpretivism philosophy recognising the need to understand that Reservists, like all humans, are different and that their actions are interdependent with the social world(s) around them. Ontologically, this subjectivist approach recognises that 'people perceive different situations in varying ways as a consequence of their own view of the world' (Saunders et al, 2009, p. 111) and this research aims is to 'better understand this

world so that we can comprehend their motives, actions and intentions' (Saunders et al, 2009, p. 111).

3.2 RESEARCH STRATEGY

This exploratory research investigates the perceptions of RAF PTVR personnel with regard to issues relating to retention and to compare and contrast these issues with those of other organisations. Furthermore, this research adopts an inductive, rather than deductive, approach in order to better understand the environment of the Reservist and thus gain 'an understanding of the meanings humans [Reservists] attach to events' (Saunders et al, 2009, p. 127). Both primary and secondary data was used to inform this research.

3.2.1 Primary Data

Originally the primary data was to be sourced from ex-PTVR personnel; however, there were some concerns regarding the release of the individual's contact details, which were held by individual squadrons, due to the data protection act. Furthermore, the contact details had been rarely updated since departure; consequently, there was some risk regarding the 'contactable' size of the population.

The primary data is therefore obtained from serving PTVR personnel through focus groups, one-to-one interviews, observation, and email comments. The observations and comments of squadron COs and FTRS personnel have also been incorporated where appropriate.

The PTVR personnel operate on RAF Reserves squadrons throughout the UK from Morayshire in the North of Scotland to Middlesex in the Home Counties. There are a total of twenty-one squadrons and collectively they perform a variety of roles from Doctors and Chaplains to Chefs and RAF Regiment Gunners. The RAF PTVR force is staffed by personnel of all ranks from Airmen to Squadron Leader. An explanation of the various Reserve squadrons and the rank structure for the RAF Reserves is provided at Appendices 2 and 3.

3.2.2 Secondary Data

The secondary data comprises internal research by ██████ 2010; Dandeker et al, 2011; ██████ et al, 2011; and ██████ 2012 and external research of other Reserve forces from the US, Israel, Australia, France and Sweden (Burrell et al, 2003 and Griffiths, 2008; Lomsky-Feder et al, 2008; Smith et al, 2011; Weber, 2011; and Danielsson et al, 2011; respectively). It also draws on the theories of motivational need, such as Alderfer; differentiating between intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors described by Herzberg; and reflecting on Kahn's concept of employee engagement.

3.3 RESEARCH METHOD

This research adopts a multi-method qualitative approach using focus groups, one-to-one interviews and email comments.

3.3.1 Focus Groups

The primary research consisted of semi-structured face-to-face focus groups, with each group consisting of 4-8 participants. The individual focus groups comprised of similar/same rank personnel in order to promote discussion amongst peers but different ranks were selected for different groups in order to compare and contrast the perceptions of: Leading Aircraftsman/woman and Senior Aircraftsman/woman (Other Ranks (ORs)); Lance-Corporal and substantive Corporal (JNCO); Sergeant and Flight Sergeant (SNCO); and Officers (Off). A total of 43 PTVR respondents participated in focus groups or one-to-one interviews. The 43 respondents interviewed were aged between 19 years and 57 years; a breakdown of the statistical information regarding the respondents is provided below.

| RESPONDENTS | Male | | Female | |
|--|-----------------------|-----|--------|-----|
| | Number of respondents | 35 | | 8 |
| Average age of respondent | 37.6 | | 39.6 | |
| Average time served (years) | 8 | | 6.5 | |
| Time Served (years) | Min | Max | Min | Max |
| | 0.75 | 28 | 1 | 13 |
| Respondent's age at time of research (years) | 21 | 50 | 27 | 36 |

Table 3-1

Five of the focus groups comprised of ORs, reflecting the high proportion of ORs within the organisation and, anecdotally³, the most prevalent rank for retention problems.

There were a number of constraints affecting when and where the focus groups could be conducted. As 'part-time' personnel the Reservist has a civilian life Monday-Friday. Their opportunity to meet and train is therefore restricted to weekends and possibly an Annual Camp Training (ACT). The number of training weekends that each squadron holds is, on average, 1-2 per month and many of the squadrons train over the same weekend periods. Furthermore, the Reserve squadrons are geographically dispersed around the UK. Due to the travelling time involved, this limited both the number of focus groups that could be held and the particular squadrons that could be visited by the researcher in any one weekend.

Internal written approval for this research was provided by the Assistant Chief of Staff Reserves (Appendix 4), in addition, all of the individual squadron commanders were approached to seek their permission to host a focus group. Whilst the majority of the squadrons were supportive of the research and many agreed to host a focus group, there were a number of squadrons that did not confirm access and two squadrons had no PTVR personnel on their unit. The focus groups were therefore selected based on agreed access, available weekends, differentiation of role, rank and geographical location. The selected squadrons were then requested to seek volunteers of a nominated rank. Finally, one of the four Reserve squadrons that had recently had its role changed was also selected as a comparison. The final mix is depicted, in alphabetical order, at table 3-2.

³ Whilst retention amongst ORs was frequently described as the most significant issue no supporting data could be located to confirm or deny this statement.

| Squadron Role | Rank | Geographical Location |
|--------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Flight Ops | | Buckinghamshire |
| Intelligence | Other Ranks | Cambridgeshire |
| Media & PR | JNCOs | Middlesex |
| Medical | SNCOs | Norfolk |
| Movements | Officers | Oxfordshire |
| Regiment | | Scotland |
| A recently re-Rolled Sqn | | Suffolk |

Table 3-2

Whilst Reservists are paid for the days they attend the squadron, their attendance is purely voluntary. Consequently, a sample group by rank on any given squadron on any given training weekend could not be guaranteed. The focus group members were therefore invited to participate from the limited personnel available on the day. On one occasion, insufficient JNCOs were available so ORs were interviewed instead and on two other occasions, the participants were selected at random from a large pool of volunteers.

Due to the senior military rank of the researcher and the disparity in rank with some of the participants, the researcher wore civilian clothes, used first names only and no mention was made of the researcher's rank. In order to reduce the participants' anxiety the focus groups were conducted in quiet facilities within the familiar surroundings of the squadron's training area.

3.3.2 One-to-One Interviews

One squadron which was due to host a focus group cancelled its training weekend at short notice due to operational commitments. Squadron insights were later provided via a one-to-one interview with a member of that squadron. Three other interviews were conducted with PTVR squadron support staff and Commanding Officers (COs).

3.3.3 Email

A bespoke email address was created and all focus group and one-to-one participants were provided with the details. Whilst this allowed participants to provide feedback, its primary

use was to enable individuals to forward other comments that may have occurred to them at a later date, following the discussion groups. The participants were also encouraged to pass the email address to fellow Reservists on the squadron and were advised that any comments sent would be treated in the strictest of confidence. Six emails were received along with unsolicited emails from squadron COs.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

From the internal secondary data, a number of possible retention issues were identified including poor communication, leadership, career management and mental health as well as changes to Service life and lack of family support. From the literature review described above, possible explanations for the causes and effects of poor retention were noted and subsequently the initial themes for the semi-structured focus group discussion guide emerged.

As the template developed it was shared with the RAF's Headquarters Occupational Psychology Team (HQ-OPT) and tested in a pilot focus group with FTRS personnel. Following feedback from HQ-OPT and the findings from the pilot test, the template was then refined to focus on four key themes: motivation for joining; issues that might influence their decision to stay; issues that might influence the decision to leave; and how valued and supported PTVR personnel felt. The discussion guide was further refined during the course of the primary research phase, as new insights became evident, and a copy of the guide is provided at Appendix 5.

3.5 ETHICAL REVIEW AND DATA MANAGEMENT

Prior to each of the focus groups and one-to-one interviews, all participants were provided with an information sheet (Appendix 6); given a verbal brief, in accordance with the approved Ethics Form (Appendix 7); and provided their written consent to participate. A blank copy of the consent form can be found at Appendix 8. The focus groups were recorded using an audio recording device and the moderator's hand-written notes.

The audio recordings were transcribed via a professional typing agency from whom a signed confidentiality agreement was first obtained (Appendix 9). The transcripts were then meticulously checked and compared to the audio tape, by the researcher, and amended where necessary. Based on the moderator's hand-written notes, the transcripts were then amended to incorporate significant observations reflecting group interaction, body language and emotions. To protect the confidentiality and the anonymity of the participants the comments were then cleansed of personal, squadron and role specific details prior to being coded.

A computer aided qualitative data analysis software programme (NVivo10) was used to facilitate 'data entry, data storage, coding, search and retrieval' (Wilson, 2003). Re-listening to the audio-recording, whilst coding, proved extremely useful in ensuring that the coded comments were not taken out of context. From the subsequent analysis of the data the implications and findings were drawn.

3.6 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

As this study was designed to understand the perceptions of *transmigrant* PTVR personnel at a given moment in time and within a unique and continually evolving organisation, the reliability of the data might be a potential issue of some concern. However, an attempt to ensure that it could be 'replicated by other researchers would not be realistic or feasible without undermining the strength of this type of research' (Saunders et al, 2009). That said every effort has been made to mitigate potential bias and ensure transparency.

A number of steps were taken in order to mitigate *participant bias* (Saunders et al, 2009), where personnel might be overly loyal or critical of the squadron/organisation. All participants were questioned on factors that both influenced their decisions to stay as well as leave the organisation. Furthermore, in the focus groups, verbal and/or non-verbal indication was sought from other participants to confirm general consensus of key issues.

Possible interviewer-bias was also a consideration. Despite considerable previous interviewing experience, a review of the audio recordings following each focus group enabled the moderator to further refine the question technique during the research phase. Care was also taken to ensure that key phrases were correctly understood by clarifying terminology with the participants as necessary.

As a result of detailed planning and preparation prior to the focus groups, the moderator was quickly able to build a rapport, develop trust and instil confidence in the participants. Each focus group began with the least contentious theme, 'motivation for joining', which helped the participants to quickly relax into the focus group and initiate group discussions, speaking frankly and, at times, passionately about their experiences and concerns.

Opinions were sought from a variety of RAF PTVR personnel; those performing different roles, personnel from different geographical locations, and Reservists of different ranks. Data from at least three different squadrons or sources was used (*'triangulation'*, Saunders et al 2009; Barbour, 2013) to further ensure the validity of the information. Moreover, when specific issues were raised by the participants the researcher tried to elicit examples to help corroborate the statements.

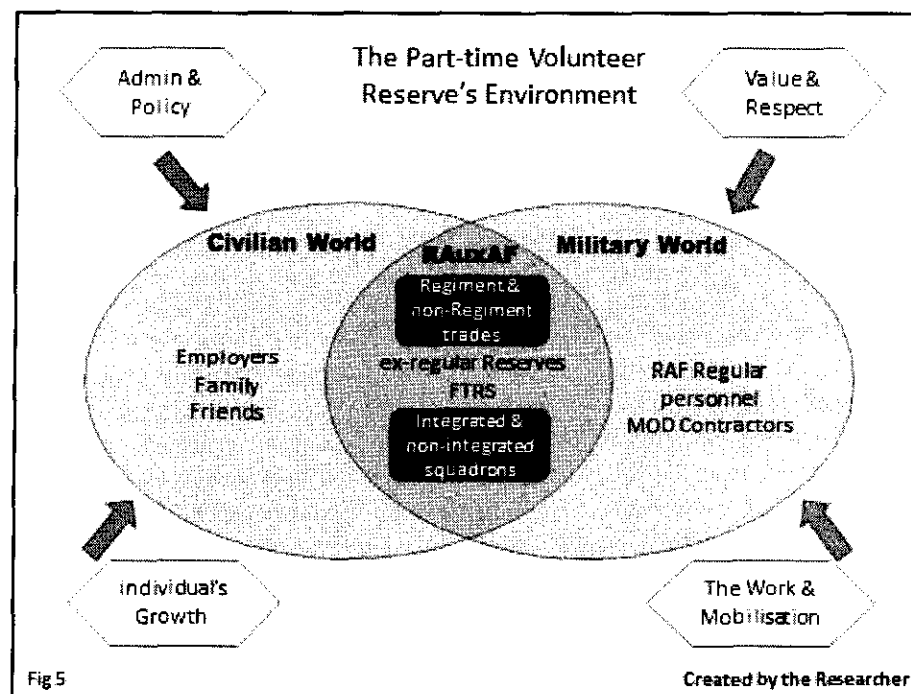
Finally, the draft findings from this research were shared with a number of participants from each individual rank group. The positive feedback they provided has further helped to validate the data.

CHAPTER 4 – FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The research objectives were to examine correlations between different Part-Time Volunteer Reserve (PTVR) individuals and their perceptions of the organisation in order to better understand the factors which might influence their decision to leave the Service; and then to compare and contrast the possible causes of retention issues with other military organisations.

As in all things, however, context is essential and the perceptions of the participants in this research were influenced by three interrelating environments: the Military World, including Regular RAF personnel, civilian contractors and some squadron support staff; the Royal Auxiliary Air Force (RAuxAF), including ex-Regular PTVR and squadron Full-time Reserve Service (FTRS) personnel; and the Civilian World, including employers, family and friends (Fig 5).



Within these environments there was also a significant disparity in the way some Reserve squadrons were integrated with their Regular counterparts. The perceptions of participants from the better integrated squadrons were considerably more positive in certain areas. Furthermore, there was also a marked difference between the mind-sets of personnel from RAF Regiment and non-Regiment squadrons especially with regard to the importance placed on certain priorities; for example, operational deployments verses adventurous training. Acknowledging these diverse contextual backgrounds is important in order to better appreciate the significance and impact of these findings.

The focus group discussions gave rise to 1,990 coded comments on no fewer than 100 different issues. The findings in this research only consist of issues that were raised by at least three different focus groups with 77% of the issues having been raised by five or more different groups. These issues were then grouped into 4 general themes (table 4-1).

| Themes | Key Issues |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Admn & Policy | Designed for Regulars |
| | Pay & Rewards |
| | Recruitment |
| | Communication |
| Value & Respect | Leadership & Line-management |
| | Annual Appraisals |
| | Parity |
| | Welfare Support |
| The Work & Mobilisation | Squadron Life |
| | Integration |
| | Mobilisation |
| | Civilian Employment |
| | Support |
| Growth | Responsibility |
| | Advancement |
| | Training |

TABLE 4-1

Each of these themes is discussed below. In each of the sections a table containing further supporting evidence is provided in the form of quotes by participants. To protect the individual's anonymity participants are referred to by gender and rank only; for example

comments by a female junior non-commissioned officer (JNCO) are referenced as 'F-JNCO' or a male officer as 'M-Off'.

4.2 ADMIN AND POLICY

The "bureaucracy in the background" was the root cause of much frustration amongst PTVR personnel ranging from policy designed for Regular personnel to poor communication.

| Admin & Policy |
|---|
| <p><i>"it's like medal ceremonies ... you're allowed two people ... and I had to pick between my four children, which other one would come with my husband ..." [F-SNCO] ... "And they're not hard to resolve...it's bureaucracy for the sake of it" [M-SNCO]</i></p> <p><i>"my signing back on again for five years has been an absolute nightmare to organise. They didn't send me the paperwork in time, they didn't tell me what medical I was supposed to book ... if you can't be bothered to organise simple paperwork to keep me on the Squadron, why do I care about even being on the Squadron"[F-OR]</i></p> |

Table 4-2

4.2.1 Designed for Regulars

It has been acknowledged that 'Reserves are different to Regular personnel' and that whilst 'some processes can be mirrored, many cannot' (FR20, 2011, p. 34). However, the perception held by the vast majority of all ranks and trades was that the processes of the RAF were structured "one hundred per cent" for Regulars rather than Reservists. Moreover, many participants in this research felt that the current system tended "to be actively 'process obsessed'".

| Designed for Regular Personnel |
|--|
| <p><i>"processes which are designed for Regulars probably don't work for people who aren't here all the time" [M-OR]</i></p> |
| <p><i>"He did the [*trade*] Course, passed it with flying colours, absolute top of the class, but he didn't do the pre-selection interview for the Course ... they're now gonna send him to see if he's got the aptitude to do the course he's already passed! ... that is the reason that he's leaving". [F-OR]</i></p> |
| <p><i>"Got a guy ... booked himself onto the CCS. A week before he was due to go ... got a letter saying 'Due to the Defence cuts we are prioritising Regular Service personnel'. The Regiment Flight [*here*] said 'all he's gotta do is pick up his respirator [*from his station*], bring it here, we'll do the two days, job done'. He went to Stores to get his respirator, they said 'No we can't issue you with a respirator unless you're doing the training here'. [*Pause*] That could cost that man fifteen hundred quid [*bounty*], then how keen is he likely to be to stay in the Reserves?" [M-Off]</i></p> |
| <p><i>"The admin associated with [*pre-deployment*] the three days of walking round base to tick a box to say you've been to the library where you're never gonna go ... and 'hand it your photocopier!', yeah, that made me laugh" [M-OR]</i></p> |

Table 4-3

4.2.2. Pay and Reward

Although the Government's recent white paper listed 'pay and training bounty' amongst the best incentives to attend training (MOD, 2013, p. 31) this research better supported the findings of Griffith (2008) that intrinsically motivated soldiers of the US National Guard 'were more likely to plan to remain in military service' than extrinsically motivated personnel. Although PTVR personnel "wouldn't do it for nothing" the vast majority felt it was not a key motivational factor effecting retention, instead placing "camaraderie" at the top. The administration of pay however was an emotive subject, especially when it was "totally messed up" during mobilisation causing "massive stress".

Whilst the annual training bounty was generally felt to be worthwhile, albeit in need of updating, the Government have proposed other extrinsic rewards such as introducing a 'paid annual leave entitlement and pension benefits for training days' (MOD, 2013, p 32).

| Pay & Rewards |
|---|
| <p>[*the Bounty*] <i>"represented something like two month's pay of the national average wage ... in 1997 I got £1576 ... and what do we get now? ...£1600 ... 15 years later!"</i> [M-SNCO]</p> <p><i>"could easily make double just by doing overtime at work"</i> [M-JNCO]</p> <p><i>"The whole payroll thing of it, it's not really explained to you very well. They're not very supportive when it doesn't go to plan. It's almost again it's like it's your problem, you sort it out and you have to chase constantly don't you if something goes wrong ... I know people that have left because of it."</i> [F-OR]</p> |

Table 4-4

4.2.3 Recruitment

It is argued that recruitment and selection needs to be appropriate in order to mitigate future outflow (Evans, 2001; Taylor, 2002) and should be perceived as an act of 'fairness' (Cook, 2008). Within the RAF Reserves, recruitment/selection was felt to be an area of some concern.

Some participants, mainly Officers, felt that the recruitment/selection system was being circumvented at times; failed to recognise previous military experience; or risked becoming too biased toward FTRS recruitment. Others, mainly ORs, cited individuals leaving because it was *"mis-sold"* to them, whilst others still felt that individuals were allowed to join despite poor fitness, medical or aptitude levels. This latter issue might explain, in part, the failure of almost 10% of Reserve personnel to complete Phase 1 or 2 training⁴ (██████ 2012). In comparison, retaining personnel after initial service was a challenge for the French Reserves, with some of the reasons for leaving being cited as 'inadequate pay (33%)', 'not enough work (16.5%)' or assigned 'unattractive tasks (15%)' (Weber, 2011). These latter issues were common to RAF Reservists and are discussed later.

⁴ During the period 1 April 2008 - 31 March 2012.

| Recruitment |
|---|
| <p><i>"One of the guys that was there was the second highest member of [*named company*], so he was seriously, I mean, probably six-figure salary, right ... he was the loveliest guy you've ever met in your life, but he couldn't concentrate for more than 10 or 20 seconds so what we were paying him to be there for four months, because his salary has to be matched, and at the end of the day he did [*menial tasks*] ... that was all he was capable or trusted of doing ... but that to me is a recruitment thing" [F-OR].</i></p> <p><i>The boss is bringing in another ex-regular ... outside of the recruitment process. With no sign of my long-promised promotion ... I may still just pack it in" [M-Officer 1]</i></p> <p><i>"I am even happy to come back as a Flight Lieutenant ... I just want to get back as a reservist as quickly and painlessly as possible so that I can continue to serve in some respect. Surely the current process is aimed at civilians with no prior service? I served for 32 years ... [M-Officer 2]</i></p> <p><i>"the danger that the scramble to build the numbers and the incentive package which former regulars are being offered, will at best hack off the long serving "real oggies" and at worst turn the RAuxAF into an organisation exclusively for ex-regulars" [M-Officer 3]</i></p> |

Table 4-5

4.2.4 Communication

The perception of many Reservists was that RAF communication was generally poor. Of particular note, and supporting the findings by ██████████ et al (2011), was IT/JPA⁵. This was considered to be "so complicated" with such inadequate training provision that it was felt to be ineffective. Internally, and generally amongst the non-integrated squadrons, it was felt that most Regular personnel "don't know we exist". At squadron level, routine information was generally perceived to be satisfactory compared to the passage of timely information from higher authority, especially regarding important issues such as deployment. This latter issue may be alleviated if the Government's new proposed policy is implemented to provide at least three months' notice of mobilisation to RAF Reservists; albeit, for the infantry styled RAF Regiment personnel this will lack parity with the Army Reservists' nine month notice period (MOD, 2013 p. 51).

The Government's new proposed policy also aims to 'establish strategic personnel

⁵ JPA (Joint Personnel Administration) - the military's computer system for administrative functions such as pay, leave, annual appraisals etc.

relationships with major employer organisations' (MOD, 2013, p. 41). However, the perception of the Reservists was that whilst the organisation's communication with "big employers" was "effective at high level" it was felt that "at manager level it's non-existent".

The most critical communication comments, however, came from a squadron whose current role was being changed. The lack of any consultation resulted in the "perception from the troops" of "feeling undervalued".

| Communication |
|---|
| <p><u>Higher Authority</u> <i>"we're [*supposed to be*] mobilising in June and we still haven't been told [*dated end of April*] ... I'd have to give my house up as well when I go". [M-OR]</i></p> |
| <p><u>Re-Roll Squadron</u> <i>"he's known about this for two years, right, and we only found out, what, a couple of months ago" and "no one's ever explained who come to this decision and why" [M-JNCO]</i></p> |

Table 4-6

4.3 VALUE AND RESPECT

All focus groups had respondents that expressed strong sentiments on the issue of respect. The more positive comments originated from participants who had experiences of working with Regular personnel and the opportunity to "prove" themselves. This compares with the Australian Reserve Forces experience where the 'culture of denigration of the Reserve' was addressed mainly through 'more prominent and meaningful roles, their higher quality training, and their successful performance on operations alongside regulars' (Smith et al, 2011, p. 310).

In contrast, the majority of PTVR participants expressed feelings of being "undervalued" by Regular personnel; although, this feeling was not so noticeable "on a squadron level" with the exception of some ex-Regular squadron admin staff. This was more akin to the Swedish Reserves force's persistent problem of respect with Reserve officers' feeling of being 'treated like second-class military personnel and being underestimated by the regulars and not seen as 'proper' officers' (Danielsson et al, 2011 P. 296). It is also reflective of TA

personnel in 2003, where negative aspects of organizational culture were reported as the prime reasons for wishing to leave the military (Dandeker et al, 2009).

| Value & Respect |
|--|
| <i>"... the surprise on her face when she found out that we were manning the det ... she gave me the impression that all of a sudden she respected me a little bit more" [M-OR]</i> |
| <i>"the Flight Sergeant [*Regular*] turned round, 'the Auxiliary biffs are here'. Yeah, and it wasn't a light hearted endearment was it?" [M-SNCO]</i> |
| <i>"A station Warrant Officer asked who they were ... he pretended to wipe his backside with a piece of paper throwing it on the floor saying 'that's what I think of Reservists'. She left the Reserves a short while later". [M-SNCO]</i> |
| <i>"down at MOD ... I was making the point that...we really need to be doing more on the retention side and he said 'well what are the bars to retention' and I was telling him ... and a Group Captain who was within earshot said 'Stop Whinging'" (M-Off)</i> |

Table 4-7

Ultimately, this lack of respect seemed to undermine self-esteem: *"walking around with a stripe or two on, knowing that actually it's not really worth anything"*. Individuals, particularly ORs and JNCOs, reported playing the *"grey man"* because they *"don't want to stand out"* due to the *"stigma"* associated with being a Reservist.

The three key contributing factors to feeling undervalued were: leadership and annual appraisals; parity with Regular personnel; and welfare considerations.

4.3.1 Leadership, Line-management and Annual Appraisals

Leadership at squadron level was generally felt to be satisfactory and compared to the Australian Reservists⁶, where *"well-led"* units were significantly more likely to volunteer for a longer commitment (Smith et al, 2011). However, all ranks of the RAF Reserves felt that the leadership from higher authority was a source of some frustration.

⁶ A 2002 study of the Australian Army reservists.

Unlike leadership, line-management and supervision were a concern across all ranks. Feelings expressed ranged from 'ad hoc' to the perception that they "*haven't had the manpower on the Squadron to be able to do it*" despite the evidence that good support from supervisors 'has a positive relationship with employee engagement' (May et al, 2004, cited by Sahoo et al, 2012, p. 96). Low numbers of personnel on roll, inconsistent individual attendance and personnel mobilised for up to 12 months, disrupted structured line-management systems. Individuals also felt they were ill-afforded the management support needed to fulfil their supervisory role effectively. At times this in turn impacted on the annual appraisal system resulting in the "*ridiculous*" situation where report writers were writing annual appraisals on subordinates they seldom saw.

Given that fair job appraisals are closely linked to employee's job satisfaction (Locke and Henne, 1986, cited by Sahoo et al, 2012) and underpins the psychological contractual expectations personnel they have of their employers (Sahoo et al, 2012), it is perhaps unsurprising that recipients expressed feelings of inequality and unfairness with the current reporting process.

| Leadership, Line-Management & Annual Appraisals |
|---|
| <p><u>Leadership</u> <i>"there's just a massive lack of awareness at Command ...I think they forget that we are Volunteers, basically" [M-JNCO].</i></p> |
| <p><u>Supervision</u> <i>"I'm not saying 'it's not there', I'm saying it's unstructured ...it was inconsistent" [M-SNCO]</i></p> <p><i>"it was me doing literally all the work ... they [*senior leadership*] didn't think twice" [M-JNCO]</i></p> <p><i>"we don't see each other"; "she forgot that she was actually mentoring me" [F-SNCO]</i></p> |
| <p><u>Annual Appraisals</u> <i>"you've gotta get these 12 done and no you couldn't come off the training to do them..." [M-SNCO]</i></p> <p><i>"just because they're an NCO that gives them an opportunity to do an SJAR but they haven't worked with the person" [M-OR]</i></p> <p><i>"this is ridiculous, we should not be writing full SJARs on people we see a few days a year" [M-SNCO].</i></p> <p><i>"My SJAR was about that long, [*with finger & thumb indicates approximately 1"] this guy said: 'I don't really know you any more, you haven't been here ... I was like, 'Well, I was away [*Mobilized*] for a year for a start'". [M-JNCO]</i></p> <p><i>"..deemed that we will follow the whole SJAR format, even though we only see these people potentially for six days a year" [M-SNCO]</i></p> |

Table 4-8

4.3.2 Parity with Regular Personnel

"Would a Regular get penalised in his SJAR the same way?" was a sentiment reflective of the feelings of inequality expressed by all ranks. Whilst the Government aims to 'deliver greater parity and comparability between Regular and Reserve service' (MOD, 2013, p. 27) the fact remains that 'being rated as second class weekend-warriors is likely to lead to tensions and misunderstandings, with a potential to affect job satisfaction and retention' (Dandeker et al, 2011, p. 349).

The feeling of disparity with Regular personnel extended to numerous other areas including

equipment and use of amenities. One of the examples cited, on three different squadrons, was the lack of medical support for injuries caused whilst on duty, such as basic training or undergoing the RAF fitness test. This particular disparity was also highlighted in the Government's white paper as being 'against the principle of the future Whole Force' and it was recommended that 'timely physiotherapy and rehabilitation support to Reservists injured in training' should be provided in future (MOD, 2013, p. 38).

| Parity with Regular Personnel |
|--|
| <i>"There's a bit of them and us [*Regulars & Reserves*]" [F-OR]</i> |
| <i>"Reserves do not get the same consideration as the regulars when it comes to having equipment and kit renewed and replaced, this can be demoralising" [M-JNCO]</i> |
| <i>"We're paying Mess bills ...we can't use the facilities ...it's like twenty five quid a month ...we've worked really hard to get to where we've got to ... we should be entitled to use those facilities that we're paying for". [M-SNCO]</i> |
| <i>"we're not entitled to military doctors, physiotherapists or anything ... just abandoned" [M-OR]</i> |

Table 4-9

4.3.3 Welfare

The perception regarding the provision of welfare support varied considerably depending on the context. Participants rated welfare support as "six" out of ten for day-to-day management but "zero" out of ten during/post mobilisation. The latter was generally attributed to poor administration or a lack of resources: "we don't have the staff to have any kind of welfare commitment". Whilst RAF Reserve personnel are not prevented from accessing the welfare support facilities of their Regular counterparts, the British Army Reserves, in comparison, have recruited 45 dedicated welfare officers with a further 31 to be recruited in 2013 (MOD, 2013, p. 28).

Decompression⁷ was designed for Regular personnel returning to a peacetime military environment. However, for PTVR personnel who "all live so far away" from military bases and military-minded colleagues, decompression did not help address the feeling of a sense

⁷ Decompression involves a unit spending around 36 hours together between leaving the combat zone and going home. This gives them the chance to think and talk about their experiences if they want to. This provides relaxation time for troops who would otherwise travel from an operational theatre to home in a matter of hours' (Military Mental Health, 2011).

of abandonment. Similarly, the RN rated post-mobilisation decompression with a 'net satisfaction' of just 33% (██████ 2012).

Furthermore, families are more likely to be engaged with the organisation, and cope better with separation, when employers consider and support the employees' families (Burrell et al, 2003; Spera, 2008; and Sahoo et al, 2012). With the perception that RAF Reservists' families were generally ignored or shown little respect/empathy, perhaps greater family support is required because 'the most important factors in retention are satisfaction with reserve duty and spouses' attitudes toward reserve participation' (Kirby et al, 2000, p. 259).

| Welfare |
|--|
| <p><u>Decompression</u> <i>"Going from a civvy job into the Military, going on deployment, then going back and have to readjust into your civvy life again ... it's not an easy thing to do and you get absolutely no support whatsoever". [M-JNCO]</i></p> <p><i>"It's horrible going back to work ... that's the low bit...you know you can't really talk to anyone about it cos no matter what you say to them no one actually understands."</i> [M-JNCO]</p> |
| <p><u>Family Support</u> <i>"they phoned his wife, invited her to a meal and then nobody picked her up from the main gate to let her in..." [M-OR]</i></p> <p><i>"the only time that my wife was contacted was when they tried to extend [*my tour length whilst I was mobilised*]" [M-OR]</i></p> |

Table 4-10

4.4 WORK AND MOBILISATION

The contrasting environments of the Reservist between their civilian world, their life on a squadron and being mobilised on operations highlighted areas of mixed issues.

4.4.1 Squadron Life

Camaraderie was universally prized by all ranks and trades and was felt to be the single biggest motivational factor. This compares with the RN Reserves, where 90% of the population surveyed positively rated 'comradeship and team working' (██████ 2012), and supports the argument that such intangible aspects of military life 'benefit recruitment and retention' (Griffith, 2008, p. 253).

It was believed the historical reputation of being a 'Gentleman's Club' was unjust and yet persisted amongst many Regular personnel; as implied in a ITV documentary where the former British Forces Commander stated that the TA 'don't have the same comradeship, they don't live together, they don't work together ... and therefore they can't achieve the same level of cohesion and same standards on military operations' (Haywood, 2013). Although, participants of all ranks acknowledged that *"there is a long way to go"* it was generally agreed that *"it's getting a lot better"*.

| Squadron Life |
|---|
| <p><u>Comradeship</u> <i>"but when they drop off [*leave*] it's because maybe they're valuing the training above the camp comradeship and that won't keep you warm for long, it'll keep you warm for about five years and then you've gotta have the comradeship and the training close behind otherwise you won't just keep coming here on a wet December morning, you know, when you've finished work...you've just had a 13 hour day, a drive here for three hours, get in bed for four hours, not slept and get up and march outside for two hours in the rain". [M-SNCO]</i></p> <p><i>"when I joined it was a drinking club, we'd get the football out, told old war stories" [M-SNCO]</i></p> |
| <p><u>Reputation</u> <i>"it's professional now" [M-SNCO]</i></p> <p><i>"we've got to pass exactly the same qualifications as Regulars" [M-SNCO]</i></p> |

Table 4-11

Many squadrons, mainly Regiment but not exclusively, also valued the *"disciplined environment"*; whilst both ORs and JNCOs felt that *"the military is not the most business minded organisation"*, causing frustrations due to perceived inefficiencies.

4.4.2 Integration

'Integration' had two perspectives: the integration of RAF Reservists within the Regular RAF during training, tasking and mobilisation; and also 'reintegration' of Reservists back on to the squadron following a period of mobilisation. Some squadrons felt they were integrated well and *"part of"* the RAF Regular organisation during frequent assignments and mobilisations, most notably in the medical and intelligence trades. This integration indicated a greater sense of pride, job-satisfaction and self-esteem. This was reflected in the new proposal for

the British Army Reserves where, from 2015, 'units will be paired with regular units' enabling 'the sustained delivery of high quality training to reservists and the development of fully integrated capabilities' (MOD, 2013, p. 18). On the other hand, in PTVR trades where integration was less developed, the feeling was more akin to bias; even when working with Regulars, participants sometimes felt they were distrusted and given inappropriate duties. This treatment might be influenced in part by the RAF Regulars' belief that 'the importation of more civilian management knowledge and values by Reservists may actually weaken the institutional side of the military' (Lomsky-Feder et al, 2008, p. 604).

The need for reintegration, following lengthy periods of mobilisation, seemed to be somewhat neglected by the organisation. Reservists are given post-deployment leave, similar to their Regular counterparts. Unlike Regular personnel who continue to live in the military environment, however, Reservists return to their 'civilian' world, and they, their family and friends 'may be unprepared for the changes each has made brought about by the adjustment and experiences from the deployment' (Dandeker et al, 2011, p. 352). Participants felt isolated and excluded from the military environment during the readjustment period causing feelings of deflation and loneliness. The situation was possibly exacerbated by squadrons that failed to be proactive in reintegrating personnel.

| Integration |
|--|
| <p><u>With Regulars</u> <i>"the Regulars accept us for what we are and we are a team and we're part of them and they realise that they can't get by without us" [F-SNCO].</i></p> <p><i>"we're paraded and treated as Auxiliaries until we were up to scratch and then integrated" [M-INCO]</i></p> |
| <p><u>Distrusted</u> <i>"... the [*Regular*] Squadron would not let me touch any of the computer systems ... the job that I was supposed to be there for ... I ended up doing security ... I wasn't happy." [M-OR]</i></p> <p>Cont ...</p> |

Table 4-12

| Integration (Cont...) |
|---|
| <p>Reintegration</p> <p><i>"I kept saying to my husband, cos I cried a lot ... don't think I'm not glad to be home, it's just an anti-climax in a way" [F-SNCO]</i></p> <p><i>"you're like 'I've given so much time to the Squadron I want my life back', cos I felt a bit like that when I came back, but then I left it a couple of months and then I was like oh actually I miss the stuff ... so I came back. But I think it would be quite easy to just forget to come in for a weekend and then one month turns into two turns into three turns into four and then you're like I'm not sure I can quite face going back now... I don't think I came in two months after I was mobilised and I don't think anyone on the Squadron even rang me to say 'hello'" [F-OR]</i></p> <p><i>"for a lot of us there wasn't the closure. You'd had all of the build-up to the event and you deployed with all of your guys and on your way home y'know, due to flight availability, you'd six hours notice to move and then you deploy individually back. You get back to UK, nobody from your Squadron to meet you ...I pitched up at my Squadron, there was nobody there, 'oh yeah are you such and such', yeah, 'oh come back tomorrow' and it's just like...is this it?' [M-SNCO]</i></p> |

Table 4-12

4.4.3 Mobilisation

As with the Australian Reservists, who ranked the opportunity to be deployed within a regular unit as the strongest incentive for volunteering (Smith et al, 2011), mobilisation or *"doing it for real"* was a considerable motivational factor for participants; seen as the culmination of years of training it was more important to many than *"promotion"* and *"pay"* and second only to camaraderie. This primary function of being deployed also enhances their sense of worth, value and respect as observed in the US National Guard where *'training, deploying and returning together'* was a key factor in addressing the *'Dad's Army'* image (Haywood, 2013).

RAF Reservists from all trades, but most notably the RAF Regiment, felt that *"at the end of the day we are all here to deploy"*. However, there were three notable caveats. First it was felt, from both a personal and employer's perspective, that deployments had to be for operational tasks and not for *"backfilling"* Regular personnel deployed overseas; reflecting the findings of the US Reservists' where willingness to be mobilised is reliant on *'meaningful service'* as well as respect for serving and substantial nonmaterial incentives' (Lomsky-Feder et al, 2008, p. 605). Whilst the Government's recent white paper *'identified the need for the*

Reserves to have meaningful roles' (MOD, 2013, p. 17), it still remains unclear how much of this will be operational deployments and how much will be UK based cover for deployed Regular personnel. Second, it was felt that the tasks needed to be appropriate to their training and commensurate with their rank to avoid feelings of being undervalued. Finally, the duration of the deployment was a significant factor but varied depending on trade. Some participants felt that "it needs to be longer" describing "short tours more frequent" as "more upheaval more of the time". This was most noticeable with Regiment personnel who had to return to the UK earlier than their Regular counterparts fuelling the sense of disparity. Others felt that too much mobilisation might have a negative impact on training; "if we don't have the numbers you can't do the training". Other trades, including those who were better integrated, were more amenable to shorter deployments.

| Mobilisation |
|---|
| <p><u>For Operational Tasks</u></p> <p>"if I can't deploy and use my skills as [*trade*] I won't stay" [M-OR]</p> <p>"I employ Reservists, and obviously I'm one myself, and ... if he came to me and said 'I'm gonna be working on HMS Raleigh or whatever for a year', no bloody chance cos I've gotta, backfill your job" [M-JNCO]</p> |
| <p><u>Appropriate to Training & Commensurate with Rank</u></p> <p>"they had him packing tents for six weeks" [M-OR]</p> <p>"It's this whole thing of constantly proving yourself every time you're with new Regular [*trade*], you have to prove yourself to them before they'll treat you as another [*tradesman*]." [F-OR]</p> <p>"being told now as Lance Jacks/Corporals, your chance of going away is pretty much zero [*because the RAF only uses PTVR as ORs*]" . [M-JNCO]</p> |

Table 4-13

4.4.4 Civilian Employment

At times, poor administration and communication placed the Reservist in a difficult position with their civilian employers confirming the MOD's findings that many employers 'commented adversely on the administrative burden of claiming support' (MOD, 2013, p. 43). Interestingly, participants rarely mentioned 'Support for Britain's Reservists and Employers' (SaBRE), corroborating the findings by ██████████ et al (2011, p. 5) that 'many PTVR were unaware of the activities of the organisation'.

The Reservists relationship with their employer had a significant impact on their ability to commit and their motivation. Whilst *“some employers are better than others”* it was felt that their level of knowledge and understanding varied considerably. It was felt that *“if civilian employers knew a lot more about the Reserves”* they would be more likely to be supportive, substantiating the findings by the MOD (2013).

For participants employed in an *“education background”* or from a small *“six-man outfit”* being able to attend *“a training course”* during *“term-time”* or two weeks for *“ACT⁸”* was a *“massive issue”* and *“one of the single most important reasons why I would leave because my civilian employer does not give me extra leave”*. Therefore, and as found with the Australian Reserves (Smith et al, 2011), leave provision by some employers was a significant concern although, in Britain, this might be alleviated slightly by the Government’s recent proposal to award ‘one day’s paid leave for every ten training days completed’ (MOD, 2013, p. 31).

A more significant issue which created additional pressures on individuals, albeit more prevalent with NCOs, was the effect Reserve service had on their civilian career. Again this was supported by UK findings where 46% of Reservists reported being disadvantaged in the civilian workplace compared to the 40% who had not (MOD, 2013, p. 53), and in other forces such as the Israeli Reserve Army (Ben-Dor et al, 2002). Whereas in France the ‘rights of Reservists concerning civilian employment are guaranteed by law’ (Weber, 2011, p. 333), Britain has yet to gather the necessary evidence before considering any ‘additional measures’ (MOD, 2013 p. 41).

⁸ Annual Camp Training

| Civilian Employment |
|---|
| <p><u>Employers - MOD Administration</u></p> <p><i>"she didn't realise things like the company get paid when we are absent" [F-SNCO]</i></p> <p><i>"My employer did try to claim it and had struggled to get it because they kept sending the forms back as not incomplete or whatever and they had to prove that they'd employed another [*person*] and they kept coming to me and saying 'still haven't had any money from your Squadron' ... that's not my fault." [F-SNCO]</i></p> <p><u>Impact on Civilian Career</u></p> <p><i>"... there's a lip service that's saying 'good training, good management ... You've got the coaching, leadership and management' but actually in terms of what benefit did this give my civilian job? Nothing. [M-SNCO]</i></p> <p><i>"Does being a Reservist promote my civilian career? No. Does it inhibit my civilian career? Yes. ... Have I been refused promotion because I do this? Yes. Unofficially, no, but they've said 'this job's coming up, if you leave the Reserves you can have it'". [M-SNCO]</i></p> <p><i>"I suffered a promotion for going to Afghan and I missed out big time because I was meant to get promoted and I basically got pulled in and says 'right you either go away or you become a Manager, that's your choice'" [M-JNCO]</i></p> |

Table 4-14

4.4.5 Support

'Perceived organizational support is valued as an assurance that assistance will be available from the organization when it is needed to carry out one's job effectively and to deal with stressful situations' (Rhoades et al, 2002 cited by Sahoo et al, 2012, p. 99). However, the single most emotive theme commented on by participants of all focus groups was a "lack of support". Whilst this included support from external services such as IT maintenance, local facilities and squadron support staff it was predominantly the lack of support from the Regular RAF that was the cause of greatest angst.

The general perception, amongst all ranks, was that RAF bases operate to provide support for Regular personnel only and "the Station's not geared up for Auxiliaries, for weekend working". PTVR personnel reported having no access during their working weekends to: "Supply" Flight, for clothing; Mechanical transport ("MT") section, to obtain an airfield driving permit; the "medical centre", for pre-mobilisation medicals; Passes and Permits office, to obtain a "vehicle pass" allowing them to bring their car onto the base. There was no weekend provision to undertake their annual Common Core Skills ("CCS") training or for

supervised RAF “*Fitness Tests*”, both of which are prerequisites for their annual training bounty. Furthermore, PTVR personnel felt they were expected to use their civilian holiday entitlement to access such facilities Monday-Friday. Comparing this lack of ‘Regular’ support, with the commitment that they felt PTVR personnel demonstrated, strengthened the Reservists’ feelings of unfairness and being undervalued.

| Support |
|--|
| <p><u>External Support</u> “[*IT maintenance work*] done at the weekends which is when we need our access to it” [F-OR]</p> |
| <p><u>Local Facilities</u> “you go to the shop at half past seven at night and it’s shut...cos it shuts on five on Saturday” [M-OR]</p> |
| <p><u>Squadron Admin Support</u> “they won’t go out of their way for you” [F-OR]</p> |
| <p><u>Regular RAF</u> “I’d had two fitness tests cancelled by the Air Force ... I’ve run out of leave ... you’re just gonna have to wait til next calendar year – ‘you can’t do that’, well provide me with a fitness test on a Saturday then – ‘well we can’t do that”. [M-OR]</p> <p>“we work hard for the Royal Air Force, but I don’t think we’re given enough support really.” [M-Off]</p> |
| <p><u>Commitment</u> “There’s no way they’d [*Regulars*] conceive leaving work on a Friday ... work all weekend and then go back to work on a Monday”. [F-OR]</p> |

Table 4-15

4.5 GROWTH

Participants discussed numerous ‘growth’ issues including additional responsibilities, advancement, training and learning new skills, which overlapped other themes such as value and respect.

4.5.1 Responsibility

Responsibility was very important to Reservists. A minority of trades, generally from the more integrated squadrons, felt that “*the RAF is good in that it sees you in your role rather than your rank*”. Conversely, many Reservists of different ranks felt that their civilian

experience *"should be reflected inside the organisation"* especially in trades were *"we do this stuff for a living"*.

Individuals articulated the provision of responsibility in different ways. The level of responsibility bestowed on Reservists however differed considerably between squadron-life, mobilisation and reintegration following mobilisation. This fluctuation of perceived responsibility was inter-linked to decompression, feeling undervalued and advancement, and the motivation of individuals. The amount of responsibility bestowed on individuals was perceived to be dependent on the quality of supervision and the constraint of administrative processes.

| Responsibility |
|--|
| <p><u>Perceptions of Provision</u> <i>"what is missing in my Reserves career I think is the opportunity for leadership" [M-Off]</i></p> <p><i>"you're kind of given a little bit of freedom of thought" [M-JNCO]</i></p> |
| <p><u>Bestowed</u> <i>"opinions don't really count for anything ... all your opinions now are made by a Flight Commander who probably, say if you're 40, is now half your age." [M-JNCO]</i></p> <p><i>"Depends on the Team Leader at the time" [M-OR]</i></p> <p><i>"Now it's dramatically increased. It took going out there to get that responsibility. At the same time it took me going out there to realise that I actually knew what I was doing" [M-OR]</i></p> |
| <p><u>On Squadron</u> <i>"no accountability ... strange because in a civvy organisation you have quite a lot" [M-OR]</i></p> |
| <p><u>When Mobilised</u> <i>"it would almost be ridiculous amounts of responsibility" [F-OR]</i></p> |
| <p><u>Reintegration</u> <i>"to maybe do something on a Saturday ... the step down's massive" [M-OR]</i></p> |

Table 4-16

4.5.2 Advancement

In the US and France, 'promotion and career prospects' were found to motivate Reservists (Griffith, 2008; Weber, 2011). In the RAF Reserves, however, with reduced 'prospects for promotion and command opportunity' (FR20, 2011, p. 6), advancement was an issue. Some Reserve officers were of the opinion that "*the majority of the Squadron's personnel*" did not desire "*extra responsibility that promotion would bring*". Whilst this opinion was supported by a few individuals, five different focus groups cited '*lack of promotion opportunities*' as a key consideration for leaving.

It was felt that the promotion system not only needed to be fair, but also perceived to be fair. A system that was influenced by "*which [*Mason's*] lodge you belonged to*" or where the line-management tried to "*push people through as Corporals ... [*because*] we don't have enough*" resulted in the perception held by some participants that the process was "*... shady*".

For promotion to be truly prized, it was felt that the rank needed to be recognised and respected by the RAF as a whole. The Reserves' use of the RAF Regular promotion process was not without comment. As with Swedish Reserve officers who criticised the Armed Forces' making insufficient use of their competence, education or knowledge (Danielsson et al, 2011), participants felt that the system showed little regard for "*transferable skills*" or previous "*military experience*". Furthermore, many junior ranks felt that the appraisal system was a "*drawn out process*" and, at times, unfair.

The rigid use of policy designed for Regular personnel, also had an adverse impact on the advancement of Reservists who had experience or qualifications that were atypical of their Regular counterparts (see table 4-17). Generally, it was felt that the current structure was "*inclined to waste individuals who are ready for promotion*" and the policy needed to be "*blended*" to recognise the Reservists' unique qualities.

| Advancement |
|---|
| "I've been held back. I mean in civvy street I manage, thirteen direct staff, £300,000 a month turnover, look after a massive acreage of real estate and they do not take that into consideration" [M-OR] |
| "He was hoping to be able to use his previous twelve plus years in the Forces to push him up through the ranks a bit quicker and it never occurred, that never happened" [M-OR] |
| "Silly things like I'm a student paramedic at the Ambulance Service but because I'm a Lance Corporal I can't go on the First Aid Instructors course ... you have to be a Substantive Corporal. They can't even make me an Acting Corporal just to go on the two week course... to do it and it's stupid ... I can't get on the team medics course now because I'm a Lance Corporal ... you've got to be an LAC, SAC" [M-JNCO] |

Table 4-17

4.5.3 Training

Training was valued by all ranks being described as a *"massive positive"*. However, the perception of the standard and quality of the training varied considerably by trade and training course.

Whilst high praise was made at squadron level for those *"trying to make it more realistic"*, many Reservists were concerned with 'skill-fade' due to lack of frequent practice. Furthermore, there appeared to be a correlation between the standard of squadron training and the number of squadron attendees, and was felt to be reflective of the quality of *"the dedicated training team"*.

The perception of the quality of the training courses⁹ was far more positive amongst participants where courses had been designed or amended specifically for Reservists and not *"adapted from the Regular course without any consideration"*. This issue may however be addressed if improvements are made to 'the level of accreditation available to Reservists completing trade courses' (MOD, 2013, p. 47).

By far, the most frequent criticism of training was *'inefficient use of time'* and many Reservists voiced the sentiment that *"I will only leave if I feel my time is being wasted"*. This

⁹ Phase 1, Phase 2 and further training.

ranged from “left standing around for two hours” to the process time to attend courses and echoed the US Reserves who were ‘wary of time wasted on unnecessary activities’ (Lomsky-Feder et al, 2008, P. 605).

| Training |
|--|
| <p><u>Practice</u> <i>“we need to do the basic skills over and over again so they become embedded ... you’ll do a weekend of [*skills*] ... won’t do it for a year and they’ll expect you to remember it” [F-OR]</i></p> |
| <p><u>Standard of Training</u> <i>“they make up things, training wise, just to get the day done basically because not enough people turn up for the training” [M-OR]</i></p> <p><i>“more varied ... not the same old stuff every weekend ... which is quite noticeable in our figures that turn up ... we have 20...25...30 guys turn up every weekend” [M-INCO]</i></p> |
| <p><u>Course Design</u> <i>“Our basic trade course ... that we’ve begun is geared for Reservists and the way it’s structured they’ve actually thought about it and it works” [M-OR]</i></p> |
| <p><i>“[*Phase 2*] ...a non-accredited course ... my belief is it’s been going through the process for at least the last six or seven years and because it’s a combination of a multitude of courses, it’s aimed for the Regulars, there is this missing Reservist factor in there, it’s completely and utterly...it’s not fit for purpose” [M-OR]</i></p> <p><i>“they call it Phase Three but it doesn't consist of anything most of the time” [F-OR]</i></p> |
| <p><u>Use of Time</u> <i>“Most of the course for the Regulars are one week Monday to Friday which doesn't fit ... the requirements we have for bounty ... at least eight day block which if you do a five day course you need a training weekend either end so ...some people make work...they turn up [*at weekends*] and they sit around looking busy.” [M-OR]</i></p> <p><i>“it took me two years from saying 'yes' [*to join*] to completing phase 2 training” [M-OR]</i></p> <p><i>“we’re playing here at the weekend ...we are not learning any specific skills” [M-OR]</i></p> <p><i>“weekends are precious and I don't wanna come here and spend my time drinking tea” [F-OR]</i></p> |

Table 4-18

4.6 SUMMARY

The overwhelming majority of the PTVR participants appeared to be highly motivated, conscientious and committed towards Reserve service. However, many were quick to cite

adverse issues which had a negative influence on their perception of the organisation. Furthermore, many of the issues cited appeared to be negatively interrelated. By way of example, there appears to be an association in the cluster of issues between supervision, appraisals and promotion (Fig 6). Moreover, each issue is not restricted to a single cluster and may have numerous other interrelationships; an obvious example might be the negative impact that 'poor promotional prospects' has on growth and individual needs. Further examples (Fig 7) show a relationship between growth, manpower and training; and (Fig 8) between policy, parity and recognition.

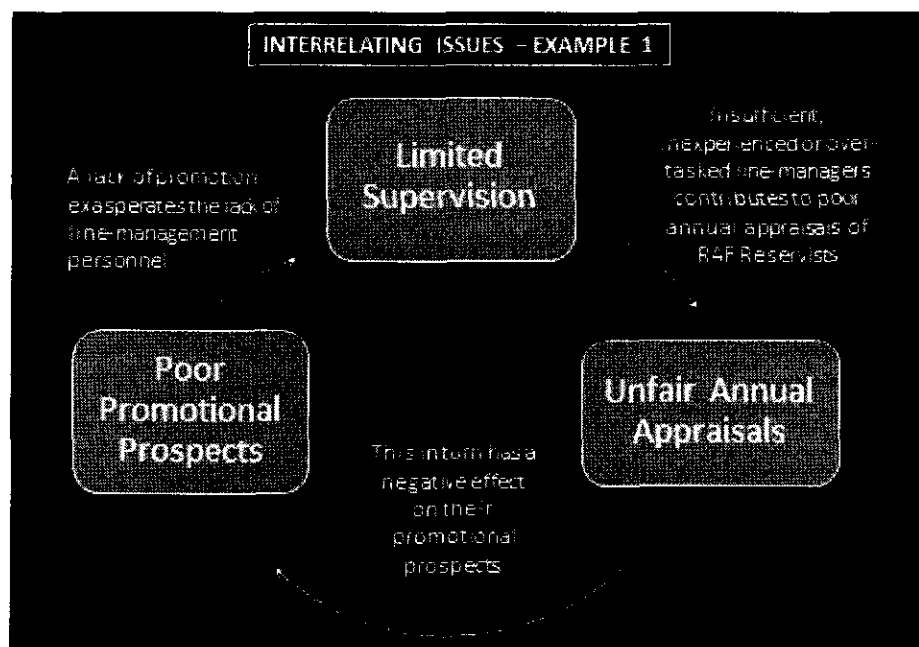


Fig 6

(Created by the Researcher)

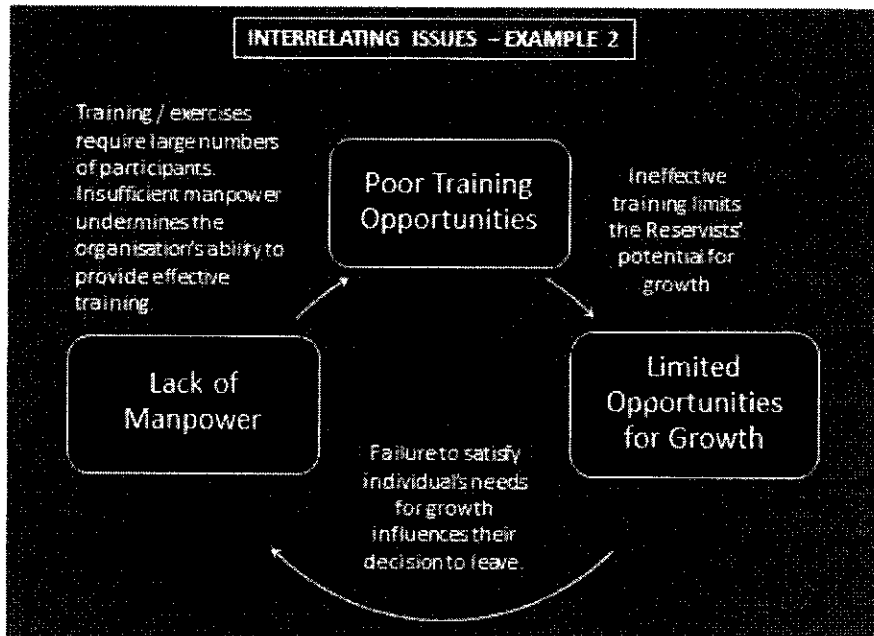


Fig 7

(Created by the Researcher)

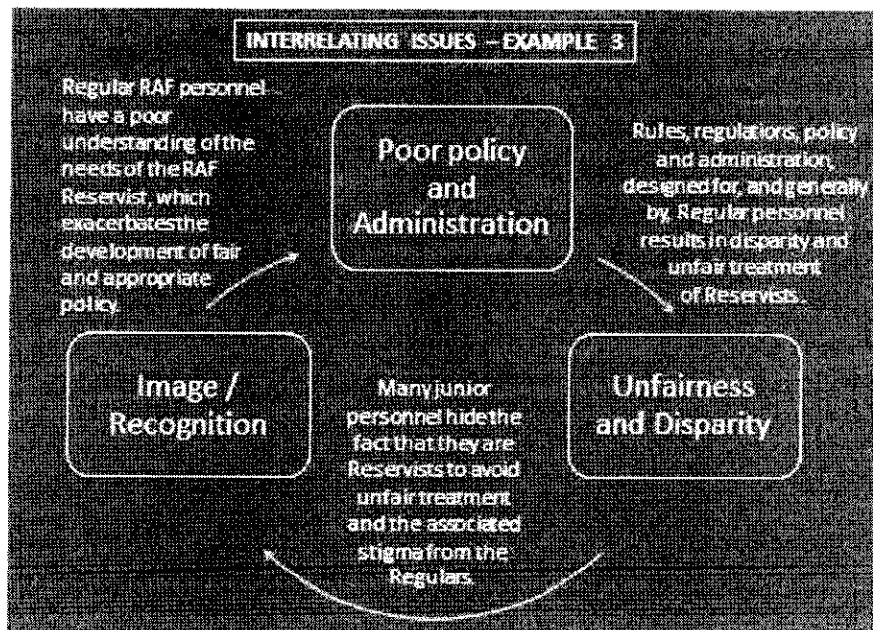


Fig 8

(Created by the Researcher)

Individually, each issue was of concern to the Reservists but when the issues are viewed as part of interrelating clusters their significance arguably becomes more profound.

CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSION

5.1 OVERVIEW

This research set out to better understand the factors influencing the RAF Reservists' decision to stay or leave the Service by: examining possible correlations between RAF Reservists and their perceptions of the organisation; comparing the findings with other military Reserve forces around the world; and identifying recommendations on how to improve retention.

5.2 PTVR: PERCEPTIONS AND CORRELATIONS

The interrelating environments (Fig 5) of the RAF Reservist requires them to live a 'transmigrant' lifestyle and as such this research supports the findings of Lomsky-Feder et al (2008, p. 607) that the Reservists' context 'cannot be examined with the same kind of analytical frameworks one applies to Regular service'. Moreover, the RAF Reservist perceives their military world to be predominantly based on the RAF 'Regular' culture, where policies, processes, appraisals, rewards, working-hours and training are generally designed for and regulated by Regular or ex-Regular personnel. Due to the fundamental differences between the transmigrant Reservist and the Regular, this structure leads to the perception of unfairness, inequality and feeling undervalued.

Although extrinsic factors such as pay, training-bounty and AT were considered important by PTVRs, it would appear from this research that it was predominantly the more intrinsic factors such as camaraderie, respect, feeling valued and the opportunity to serve that were more likely to sway participants' decisions to stay or leave. This research therefore supports the findings of others (Evans, 2001; Griffith, 2008; Sahoo, 2012) that intrinsic, rather than extrinsic, rewards appear to have a greater influence on motivation, and therefore mitigating the Reservists' desire to leave.

There was no single issue that appeared to be unique to any one trade or geographical location; albeit, the infantry style of the RAF Regiment Reservist appeared to have slightly different perception to those of non-Regiment trades on particular issues such as operational tour lengths and the importance of fitness. Some issues were perceived to be of greater concern to ORs and JNCOs, such as 'unfair selection' and also 'poor reintegration' following operational tours. The benefit of closer integration with Regular personnel was most noticeable in the Intelligence and Medical squadrons, where closer-working practices had been developed, compared to other trades. Common themes were however apparent across all ranks, trades and geographical locations such as camaraderie, lack of recognition and the lack of support from the Regular RAF. The correlation between the effect on feeling valued/respected and the level of integration between the Reservist and the Regular was, however, striking across the organisation.

5.3 PTVR AND OTHER MILITARY ORGANISATIONS

In the main, both the positive and negative perceptions of the PTVRs in this research correspond with those of other Reserve forces around the world. Similar to the French, RAF Reservists do not appreciate 'unattractive tasks' (Weber, 2011), especially 'backfilling' for Regular personnel who are deployed on operations. Instead RAF Reservists achieve a greater sense of value by providing a 'service to the country', especially through operational use as found with the US National Guard, the Swedish and the Australian Reserve forces. The psychological contract between the MOD/Regular RAF and the Reservists was deemed by the researcher to be one of the underlying causes of poor retention and reflects the issues found with the Israeli and Australian Reserves. Of particular note was the lack of support to RAF Reservists' spouses and family, especially during overseas detachments. This was a significant factor for the US Army Reserves and was also identified as a key driver for employee engagement. Overall, this research supports the findings by Smith et al that the key strategy for retention is to 'improve training, leadership, career management, information about policies and procedures, and flexibility of service together with greater opportunities to serve on operations' (Smith et al, 2011, p. 315).

5.4 ISSUES AND CAUSES

When the Reservists' issues and concerns are clustered (as shown in examples Fig 6-8), and viewed more holistically, the greater underlying 'causes' of retention become more visible as does the correlation with the theories of Herzberg, Alderfer and Vroom, discussed in Chapter 2. Although many of the hygiene factors (Fig 3), described by Herzberg (1968), had a negative influence on RAF Reservists' perceptions of the organisation as one might expect, it was surprising to note the negative impact resulting from so-called 'motivational factors', such as 'recognition', 'achievement', the 'work itself' and 'growth'. These factors were somewhat dependent on time served, trade and the rank of the individual, although no specific evidence was found to suggest they were dependent on geographical location. With such negative perceptions, caused by both hygiene and motivational factors, these findings support the conclusion that RAF Reservists are viewed by management more like 'costs' rather than 'assets' as cautioned by Cook (2008).

5.5 DEDUCTION

The findings of this research suggest that an individual's decision to stay or leave an organisation is influenced by the satisfaction of their individual needs, their level of motivation and their cultural environment. It may be reflected in their level of employee engagement, which is more than job satisfaction and motivation, and tends to be stimulated by intrinsic rather than extrinsic factors. The province of addressing poor retention lies in the management's understanding of, and their ability to fulfil, the employees' motivational and individual needs whilst simultaneously maintaining harmony with the organisation's strategic objectives.

Previous quantitative research into poor retention of personnel in the British military (██████████, 1998; ██████████ 1999; ██████████ 2001) and the RAF Reserves (██████████ 2012) proved inconclusive. Yet, a greater understanding of the Reservists' needs; the underlying causes of poor retention in the workplace; and better management practices regarding

retention, motivation, job-satisfaction and employee engagement have been recognised and documented around the world for many years. In a workshop in 2009, [REDACTED] identified '34 possible reasons' why RAF Reservists might leave the organisation [REDACTED] 2010, p. 24). Of these, over 75% were restated amongst the 100+ issues cited by participants in this research. As at July 2013, the RAF's own 'FR20 Implementation team' did not have a specific programme or action-plan dedicated to tackle RAF Reserves retention (Fig 1). It is therefore concluded that there remains an apparent insufficient and uncoordinated endeavour by the RAF to understand and address the issues of poor retention.

From Herzberg's motivational factors to the key drivers of Employee Engagement, managers enjoy better staff retention when they address the, generally intrinsic, causes of dissatisfaction. Attempting to address retention by focusing on the surface issues rather than the causes of the issues is arguably both inefficient and ineffective. It is the conclusion of this research therefore that tackling poor retention of RAF Reserves personnel needs to stem from addressing the underlying themes of administration and policy; value and respect; work and mobilisation; and growth.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

Individuals will always leave the RAF Reserves due to unavoidable circumstances such as age, ill-health or relocation. However, based on the findings of this research the following recommendations are designed to help address the poor retention of personnel who might otherwise remain in the Service.

To implement effective and long-term improvements to poor retention of RAF Reserves, it is recommended: that a programme should be developed leading to an institutional attitude-change by the RAF towards PTVR personnel; that there should be the development of a strategic project specifically designed to address the underlying causes of retention (Table 4-1); and that these plans should be communicated widely in order to convey the senior management's resolve to address the problem. As it will take time to achieve a cultural shift within the Armed Forces (MOD, 2013); 'there is no one policy that can address retention'

(Pledger, 2000, p. 42); and there has been an apparent lack of coordinated direction to address RAF Reserves retention since the Government's recommendation to increase the trained strength of the RAuxAF in 2010, it is further recommended that a specific team be established with sole responsibility to tackle the retention problems.

The assumption that Reservists are expected to adopt the 'core views and the culture that reigns within the military leads to the Reservists being compared to the Regulars, with the inevitable result of them not making the grade' (Danielsson et al, 2011 P. 296). Their jobs therefore 'need to be designed so that employees experience meaning, significance, variety, autonomy, feedback, and challenge in their roles' (Albrecht, 2010, p. 13). They need to be afforded the respect and recognition commensurate with their commitment, experience and proficiencies. It is therefore recommended that a review should be undertaken of existing policy and procedures, regarding annual appraisals, support, integration with Regular personnel, and welfare in order to better meet the needs of the Reservists and address the current disparity. When implementing the above, it is further recommended that the RAF addresses not only the hygiene factors, such as supervision and internal relationships, but also its motivational factors such as recognition, achievement and growth.

Finally, this research was restricted to serving personnel only. Therefore before any generalisations are made from these findings, it is recommended that further research be undertaken of Reservists that have already left the Service and also of suspected high-risk subgroups, such as those leaving during initial training.

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APPENDIX 1**MANAGEMENT CONSULTANCY SERVICES (RAF)**

The RAF Management Consultancy Services workshop produced 34 possible reasons why RAF Reserve personnel might leave the Service:

| External - Push Out |
|---|
| Family Issues |
| Employment Issues |
| Change of Location |
| Bad Publicity/Press |
| Negative PR from Afghanistan |
| Internal - Push Out |
| Strict 'jobs worth' rules from the book |
| Lack of kit to train with |
| JPA pay |
| Broken promises |
| Bad management |
| No career management (ie FP Trades) |
| Lack of promotion courses |
| Lack of opportunities |
| Lack of trade training |
| Has anyone ever asked? |
| Post operations tour training |
| Poor promotion prospects |
| Post operation 'come down' |
| Poorly organised training |
| Lack of funding |
| Broken training pipeline |
| Perceived discrimination |
| Training pipeline (poor) |
| RAFFT Failure |
| Frustrated by training delays |
| SNCOs not used on operations |
| Overuse on operations |
| Failure to meet expectations |
| Publicity |
| Overseas v mobilisation backfill |
| JPA access |
| Been there, done that |
| Societal changes |
| Demographics |

2010)

APPENDIX 2**RAF RESERVE SQUADRONS**

There are twenty-one RAF Reserves squadrons throughout the UK. No. 611 Squadron was only formed in 2012 and at the time of the research had no PTVR personnel. Furthermore, No. 622 Squadron only recruited qualified pilots and was therefore atypical of squadrons employing PTVR personnel. The remaining squadrons can be categories by the various roles they perform:

Police

A large proportion, but not all, of the Reservists on No. 3 (RAuxAF) Police Squadron are ex-RAF Police, ex-Royal Military Police or civilian police officers. The squadron is an expeditionary arm of the Regular RAF Police and they are primarily used to support No 1 (Tactical) Police Squadron.

RAF Regiment

There are seven RAF Regiment squadrons throughout the UK. The RAF Regiment (Regular and Reserves) are a close-knit team that train as a formed unit and are the only role that is restricted to male personnel only. The squadrons are manned by RAF Regiment Gunners (airmen) and Regiment Officers and are trained to provide ground defence to prevent attacks on airfields and keep the flight pathways clear.

No. 603 squadron (Edinburgh) is staffed by both RAF Regiment and RAF Police personnel.

Intelligence

There are three RAF Reserve Intelligence squadrons. The Reservists analyse different forms of intelligence and provide briefings in order to support RAF Squadrons and Joint Headquarters in both the UK and overseas.

Logistics Support

No. 504 squadron provides appropriately qualified Chefs, Drivers and Suppliers to augment the expeditionary element of the RAF's Logistics Wing. The Reservists also provide support to main RAF bases and RAF exercises in order to release Regular personnel for contingency operations.

HQ Augmentation

No. 600 Squadron provides trained personnel in five specific areas: Personnel Support; Information Communications and Technology; Flight Operations; Medical and Medical Support; and Intelligence. They work in support of RAF and Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ) worldwide.

Flight Operations

No. 602 Squadron provides personnel in support of Air Traffic management and reinforces tactical Air Traffic Control teams and Intelligence Support in a deployable role.

Medical

The medical squadrons provide: medical support to the Armed Forces in times of conflict or war and to civilian populations in the event of a major disaster; they also provide trained personnel for operational readiness in support of RAF requirements for aeromedical evacuation in times of conflict or crisis. No. 612 Squadron provides eleven different medical roles from registered nurse to biomedical scientist whilst No. 4626 Squadron comprises of medical personnel and chefs in order to facilitate ground-based patient care and aeromedical flights.

Helicopter Support

No. 606 Squadron consists of thirteen different Reservists roles in order to provide reinforcement for the Support Helicopter Force within the Joint Helicopter Command. These roles include logistics drivers, suppliers, flight operations staff, engineering and RAF Regiment personnel.

Movements

No. 4624 Squadron responsible for accepting, preparing and loading cargo and passengers for travel on RAF Air Transport, coalition and charter aircraft. Their squadron comprises of logistics movers and movements staff.

Media & PR

The Officers of No. 7644 Squadron provide Media Operations Support for both the RAF and NATO forces around the world in times of war and peace.

Source: RAF Website (2013a)

APPENDIX 3

RAF RESERVES RANK STRUCTURE

The rank structure for the RAF Reserves is as follows:

Non-Commissioned Ranks

Leading Aircraftman/Aircraftwoman
Senior Aircraftman/Aircraftwoman
Lance Corporal (RAF Regiment only)
Corporal
Sergeant
Flight Sergeant
Warrant Officer

Commissioned Ranks

Pilot Officer
Flying Officer
Flight Lieutenant
Squadron Leader

Source: RAF Website (2013b)

APPENDIX 4

LETTER OF APPROVAL

From Group Captain [REDACTED]
Assistant Chief of Staff Reserves



Headquarters Air Command

Room 21 Gladiator Block
Royal Air Force
HIGH WYCOMBE
Buckinghamshire
HP14 4UE

Tel:
Fax:
Email:
DII:



Squadron Leader [REDACTED]

19 March 2013

PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT A RESEARCH PROJECT AS PART OF MSC LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT COURSE WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF PORTSMOUTH BUSINESS SCHOOL

Dear [REDACTED]

Further to your letter dated 9 March 2013, regarding the above. I am pleased to grant permission for you to carry out your research project 'Retention of the RAF Reserves personnel', as described in your outline research proposal provided.

May I wish you all the very best in your forthcoming studies.

Yours aye



[REDACTED]
Gp Capt
ACOS Reserves

APPENDIX 5

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

INTRODUCTION [10min]

Information Sheets – Consent Form Read & Completed?

Thank you all for volunteering.

Background

Royal Auxiliary Air Force has approx. strength of 1100 people.

It needs to increase to 1800 by the year 2020.

The organisation currently recruits approximately 300 people a year

It also loses approximately 300 people a year - In effect – standing still.

HQ Reserves tasked to develop an Action Plan to address retention.

Only data available is survey information: Attitudinal surveys and Exit surveys.

They do not have any qualitative data.

Purpose

To understand how PTVR personnel think and feel about the organisation.

How your experiences might influence your decisions to stay-in or leave the organisation.

Those findings will then be fed back to inform the HQ Reserves' Retention Action Plan.

Me

Background about me: Portsmouth University research, CIM, RAF.

Confidentiality

Everything said treated in the strictest of confidence

Ethical code of conduct: Portsmouth University and Chartered Institute of Marketing

Everything that is recorded (audio/notes) destroyed on completion of research

At the end an email address for afterthoughts (anything you don't want included / something else to add) or any comments your colleagues wish to submit (*In Strictest Confidence*)

Anonymity

Anonymity, all findings structured so no one / squadron will be personally identifiable.

Session

Aim - General themes across different trades/ranks.

Session 60 and 90 minutes.

Group discussion but if note taking – still listening.

Any questions at this stage?

Motivation for Joining [5 min] What made you want to join the Reserves in the first place?

What Expectations? Were they met? If not, why not?

Attitudes [40mins] (SEE AIDE-MÉMOIRE ON LAST PAGE for thoughts/prompts)

1 - STAYING IN (15min)

2 – LEAVING (15min)

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>What things influence your decision to 'STAY IN' the Reserves? <i>Any others Factors discussed, apart from Aide-memoire? If so, What & Why?</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why are these issues so important? • What does the Organisation do? Examples? | <p>What things might influence your decision to 'LEAVE' the Reserves? <i>Any others Factors discussed, apart from Aide-memoire? If so, What & Why?</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why are these issues so important? • What does the Organisation do? Examples? |
| <p>What are the advantages of being both Civilian and military? What are the dis-advantages? How important are these? What impact does it have?</p> <p>Do you think Reservists have any 'civilian expectations' in the military? <i>(eg Management methods, standards, communication)</i> Like what? How influential do you think that is?</p> <p>How much responsibility or accountability do you have in your role? <i>Examples? Effect?</i> How important is it? Why?</p> | <p>"Why do you think individuals have left the Sqn or Reserves in the past?" "Can you give me an example?" "What do the others think?" "Any other thoughts"</p> <p>Why do you think people transfer to the TA or Navy Reserves?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">[Re-role Sqn ONLY]</p> <p>How do you feel about the re-role of the Sqn? What effect? In what way? Examples?</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">How VALUED & ... SUPPORTED are you made to feel? (5min) How? Examples?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Has anyone been deployed yet ? (5min) What do you think are the <i>pro's</i> and <i>con's</i> of being deployed? Overseas or UK? Thoughts [before, during, after]? How did family feel [before, during after]? External pressures? How has it made you feel about the Organisation?</p> | |

Conclusion (5-10min)

Before we finish, is there anything you want to add?

[False Finish]

END

Reiterate the Aim: **MAJOR THEMES** regarding perceptions that might influence individuals to stay or leave.

Reminder – **Confidentiality & Anonymity**

If you do think of anything else, or if anyone on the Sqn wants to send me any comments (**strictest of confidence**) relating to issues that might influence their decision to stay or leave then I'm happy to receive them.

Comments, **along with your Rank, Gender & Sqn** to focusgroup2020@aol.co.uk

Thank you for your time - it's been extremely useful.

AIDE-MEMOIRE List of possible FACTORS: (Prompts, Thoughts...)

| PULL | PUSH |
|--|---|
| Achievement Sense of Purpose Task completion (start-end) Important? | Admin/Policy Savings Measures SDSR, FR20 Management Accountability Leadership Information/Communication: IT / JPA |
| Responsibility Empowerment Autonomy (Freedom, Independence) Important? Accountability Heard & Believed | |
| the Work itself Is it what you expected? How did you know? Why not? Sense of Worth How does role/section fit into the wider org? Task Significance | Supervision Feedback Mentoring (valuable? Necessary? Important?) Fairness Discipline |
| Recognition Valued Trust & Respect (Both Ways) | Relationship: Superiors, Peers*, Subordinates Teamwork |
| Promotion / Advancement Opportunities Fairness | Work Conditions* Investment Standards Trust |
| Learning/Development/Growth Training: Opportunities, Value, Effectiveness, Relevance, Access to, Initiative / Creativity: Opportunities, importance? Variety – new skills Phase 1 & 2 Trg | Salary Financial Package Pay, Bounty, Expenses, Incremental system |
| | Personal Life* Unemployment Family Life – their thoughts on you being in the Reserves Work Life – Employers (What do they really think?) Unemployment (relevant?) Medical Issues – Post Deployment (Be careful of Ethics) Access / opportunity to gym – relevant? |
| | Status* Respect? Pride? (why, How) |
| Job Security* Relevant? | |

*For Reserves, these could be Pull factors

APPENDIX 6**INFORMATION SHEET****Background**

The purpose of this research is to better understand the perceptions of individuals serving within the RAF Reserves with particular reference to issues that might affect retention. Although this research project is specifically for the University of Portsmouth the anonymized findings may be of interest to the RAF. RAF Reserves personnel are invited to participate. The focus group will be conducted between April and June 2013 (inclusive) and the research project will be completed no later than 30 November 2013.

Your Role

The research takes the format of a focus group (a group discussion) in which you all discuss topics that are designed to enable the researcher to develop an understanding of your perceptions, thoughts and opinions within the RAF Reserves. The information will be obtained during a single group discussion lasting no longer than 90mins.

Your Rights & Implication

Your participation in this research is purely voluntary. You have the right to decline to answer any question or set of questions and you may leave the group at any time without giving a reason.

Every endeavour will be made to avoid invading the privacy of the participants or causing embarrassment or distress; however, due to the nature of the research the interviewer may at times be required to probe certain subjects in order to better understand the causes of behaviour.

The focus group will be recorded through the use of an audio-recorder and the researcher's hand-written notes; however, throughout the interview you will retain control over the right to have responses recorded.

Confidentiality

All steps will be taken to protect the anonymity of individual participants in any reports produced, unless express permission to the contrary has been provided by the participant concerned.

Every endeavour will be made to ensure that any quotes cited in the final publication will be worded in such a way as to safeguard the participant's identity.

Data Collected

Any personal data collected:

- Will be used for the specific purposes of this research.
- Will not be shared with any third parties without the participant's express permission.
- Will be maintained securely until being destroyed.
- Will be destroyed on completion of the research project, if not before.

The findings of this research will be made available to Portsmouth University and, subject to obtaining approval from the MOD, may be made available for public release.

Point of Contact

Should you wish to contact the researcher ([REDACTED]) at a later date you can do so through the University of Portsmouth's senior administrator on 023 9284 4032 or at the following address:

University of Portsmouth - Postgraduate Centre
Portsmouth Business School
Richmond Building, Portland Street
Portsmouth, PO1 3DE

APPENDIX 7**Ethics Approval Form - Students**

This form should be completed by the student and passed to the supervisor prior to a review of the possible ethical implications of the proposed dissertation or project.

No primary data collection can be undertaken before the supervisor has approved the plan.

If, following review of this form, amendments to the proposals are agreed to be necessary, the student should provide the supervisor with an amended version for endorsement.

The final signed and dated version of this form must be handed in with the dissertation. Failure to provide a signed and dated form on hand-in will be treated as if the dissertation itself was not submitted.

1. What are the objectives of the dissertation / research project?

The AIM of this research project is:

To better understand the factors influencing the RAF Reservists' decision to stay or leave the Service.

The objectives are:

- a. **To examine possible correlations between PTVR individuals and their perceptions of the organisation, with particular regard to their various role, geographical location and rank.**
 - b. **Compare and contrast the possible causes of retention issues between RAF Reservists and those studied in other military organisations.**
 - c. **Identify recommendations on how to improve retention issues amongst RAF Reserve personnel and/or areas for further research.**
2. Does the research involve *NHS patients, resources or staff*? **NO.**
If YES, it is likely that full ethical review must be obtained from the NHS process before the research can start.
3. Do you intend to collect *primary data* from human subjects or data that are identifiable with individuals? (This includes, for example, questionnaires and interviews.) **YES**
If you do not intend to collect such primary data then please go to question 14.
If you do intend to collect such primary data then please respond to ALL the questions 4 through 13. If you feel a question does not apply then please respond with n/a (for not applicable).

4. What is the *purpose* of the primary data in the dissertation / research project?

The RAF Reserves organisation has a trained strength of 932 personnel and a requirement to achieve 1,800 by the year 2015. During the three year period April 2010-March 2013 a total of 750 personnel were recruited but 843 personnel left. On average over 20% of the workforce leave on an annual basis. The only data currently available to explain this loss is based on attitude surveys and exit questionnaires. The purpose of this research is to better understand the *perceptions* of the RAF Reserve personnel with regard to factors affecting their decisions to stay or leave. Subject to the data obtained during the focus groups, confirmation interviews may also be required with management personnel.

5. What is/are the *survey population(s)*?

The population for the focus groups will consist of part-time volunteer Reserve (PTVR) individuals of different ranks, in various roles and at various geographical locations around the UK. The one-to-one interviews, if conducted, will consist of either PTVR individuals or members of the management team.

6. How big is the *sample* for each of the survey populations and how was this sample arrived at?

There will be approximately nine focus groups, on different squadrons, and each of the focus groups will consist of 4-8 individuals. There may also be a requirement to conduct individual interviews; should this be the case then the number of interviews will not exceed nine.

Whilst the intention would be to hold focus groups on each of the squadrons that perform different roles, the sample size has been determined by a number of factors. There are a total of 19 Reserve squadrons that employ PTVR personnel. Each squadron only meets on certain weekends in a month and the number of personnel that attend these training weekends is irregular. The Squadrons are geographically located between the North of Scotland and London and as far east as Norfolk. It is anticipated that it will not be possible to visit all of the squadrons either due to their conflicting training dates or a lack of squadron permission for access. The sample has therefore been determined by accessibility to the squadrons and availability of both PTVR personnel and researcher's capacity to physically attend the squadrons.

7. How will respondents be *selected and recruited*?

Focus Groups: The individuals will be informed of the purpose of the focus group by their line-management and volunteers will be invited to participate. All volunteers will be invited to complete the consent form (Appendix 8).

Individual Interviews: The interviewees are likely to consist of members of the focus groups, or the squadron generally, who have indicated a desire to speak alone. Alternatively, the interviewees may consist of members of the squadron/HQ management team if it is considered necessary to substantiate information provided during the focus

groups. Should the latter be the case then great care will be taken to protect the identity of the relevant focus group member(s).

What steps are proposed to ensure that the requirements of *informed consent* will be met for those taking part in the research? If an Information Sheet for participants is to be used, please attach it to this form. If not, please explain how you will be able to demonstrate that informed consent has been gained from participants.

Prior to the start of all focus groups the participants will be given an 'information sheet' (based on Saunders et al, p. 191) and provided with a verbal summary of its contents. A copy of this information sheet is attached (Appendix 6). Those individuals that agreed to participate in the focus group or interview will be requested to complete a 'Consent Form', which also seeks the participant's permission to be recorded during the focus group via audio and hand-written notes. A copy of the consent form is attached (based on the example by Saunders et al, 2009, p. 192). Only those individuals that fully complete the consent form will participate in the focus group or interview.

8. How will *data* be *collected* from each of the sample groups?

Initially, secondary data will be collected. Primary data will then be collected from semi-structured focus groups using audio-recording and hand-written notes.

9. How will *data* be *stored* and what will happen to the data at the end of the research?

All primary data including, audio-recordings, hand-written notes, researcher's diary etc will be stored securely at all times.

All surplus data will be retained for no longer than absolutely necessary and will be securely destroyed on completion of the research project, if not before.

10. How will *confidentiality* be assured for respondents?

Every endeavour will be made to ensure that the confidentiality of the participants is protected. Information that might aid in the identification of individuals will only be shared with the tutors of the University of Portsmouth, if required. Information that might breach the confidentiality of the participants will not be released to any other parties unless the express prior permission of the participant has been obtained.

11. What steps are proposed to safeguard the *anonymity* of the respondents?

The names of the participants will not be sought nor recorded, except on the consent from. Furthermore, the reports will be meticulously written to ensure that anonymity is further protected from inadvertent identity; for example, referring to a particular appointment on a particular squadron which could then only refer to one person.

12. Are there any *risks* (physical or other, including reputational) *to respondents* that may result from taking part in this research? **YES.**

If YES, please specify and state what measures are proposed to deal with these risks.

The potential risks envisaged with this research projects are primarily that of embarrassment / upset to the respondents that could ensue regarding some of the issues that may be discussed. Great care will be taken to remain sensitive to the feelings of the respondents and, if necessary, reminding them of their participation rights.

There are also potential risks involving the use of audio-recording equipment. This might cause some unease with the respondents and there is a potential risk involving storage of data. Respondents will be informed that they have the right to have the recording switched off, both in the information sheet and also verbally reminded during the focus group should the need arise. The recordings will be securely managed and deleted at the earliest possible opportunity.

13. Are there any *risks* (physical or other, including reputational) *to the researcher or to the University* that may result from conducting this research? **YES.**

If YES, please specify and state what measures are proposed to manage these risks.¹⁰

Any breach of ethics, confidence or integrity during this research project could risk damaging the reputation of the RAF and/or that of the University of Portsmouth. Furthermore, as a member of the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) such indiscretion could also jeopardise the reputation of the CIM and the researcher. A conscientious approach to adhere to the code of ethics will be adopted throughout this entire project in order to mitigate such risks.

14. Will any *data* be *obtained from a company or other organisation*. **YES / NO** (please circle) For example, information provided by an employer or its employees.

If NO, then please go to question 18.

Yes – This study is likely to include MOD Published and unpublished information.

15. What steps are proposed to ensure that the requirements of *informed consent* will be met for that organisation? How will *confidentiality* be assured for the organisation?

Formal written approval to undertake this research has been obtained from the organisation (copy attached). In addition approval from each of the individual squadron Commanding Officers will be obtained before a focus group is conducted with his/her personnel.

Finally, depending on the sensitivity of the information contained in the final report, the document will either be unrestricted or caveated and treated in confidence.

¹⁰ Risk evaluation should take account of the broad liberty of expression provided by the principle of academic freedom. The university's conduct with respect to academic freedom is set out in section 9.2 of the Articles of Government and its commitment to academic freedom is in section 1.2 of the Strategic Plan 2004-2008.

16. Does the organisation have its own ethics procedure relating to the research you intend to carry out? **YES.**

If YES, the University will require written evidence from the organisation that they have approved the research.

The MOD has its own Research & Ethic Committee (MODREC); however, written approval is not required from MODREC as "this research falls outside the scope specified by MOD JSP 536: *Ethical Conduct and Scrutiny in MOD Research Involving Human Participants*, under points 6a and 6b"; although I will be using focus groups and possibly interviews as part of my research the identification of the individuals will not be possible (email from [REDACTED] 2013).

17. Will the proposed research involve any of the following (please put a \checkmark next to 'yes' or 'no'; consult your supervisor if you are unsure):

- | | | | | |
|---|-----|--------------------------|----|-------------------------------------|
| • Vulnerable groups (e.g. children) ? | YES | <input type="checkbox"/> | NO | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| • Particularly sensitive topics ? | YES | <input type="checkbox"/> | NO | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| • Access to respondents via 'gatekeepers' ? | YES | <input type="checkbox"/> | NO | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| • Use of deception ? | YES | <input type="checkbox"/> | NO | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| • Access to confidential personal data ? | YES | <input type="checkbox"/> | NO | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| • Psychological stress, anxiety etc ? | YES | <input type="checkbox"/> | NO | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| • Intrusive interventions ? | YES | <input type="checkbox"/> | NO | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

18. Are there any other ethical issues that may arise from the proposed research?

NO

Please print the name of:

I/We grant Ethical Approval

Student [REDACTED] supervisor [REDACTED]

Signed:

(student) _____ (supervisor) _____

Date 6 APRIL 2013 Date 6 APRIL 2013

APPENDIX 8

CONSENT FORM

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Title of the Research Project: | RAF Reserves Personnel: Motivation & Retention |
| Name and position of researcher: | [REDACTED] MSc student, Portsmouth University |

1. Rank Age Sex Time Served
-

2. If asked, how likely would you be to reapply to stay in the RAF Reserves? (**tick one box**)

| | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Very Unlikely | Unlikely | Likely | Very Likely |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please

initial box

- 3. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above research project and I had the opportunity to ask questions.
- 4. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.
- 5. I agree to take part in the focus group/interview.
- 6. I agree to the audio-recording and the taking of notes during the focus group/interview.
- 7. I agree to the use of anonymized quotes in the final report.

| |
|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |

Name of participant:

Date:

Signature:

.....

Researcher:

Date:

Signature:

[REDACTED]

APPENDIX 9

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

The parties have agreed to provide each other with information which they consider to be confidential in nature (the "Confidential Information") to facilitate the transcription of focus group audio files (the "Purpose").

IT IS AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

1. In consideration of each of the parties disclosing to the other Confidential Information for the Purpose the parties hereby undertake that they shall:
 - I. Not communicate, disclose or make available all or any part of the Confidential Information to any third party;
 - II. Not directly or indirectly use, or permit others to use, the Confidential Information other than for the Purpose;
 - III. Not make any announcement or disclosure in connection with the Confidential Information or the Purpose without the prior written consent of the other party.
2. The obligations of confidentiality and non-use will not apply with respect to any of the following:
 - I. Information which is generally available to the public at the date of this agreement;
 - II. Information already known to the party at the time of disclosure;
 - III. Information which is subsequently disclosed by third parties having no obligations of confidentiality;
 - IV. Information which is or becomes generally available to the public in printed publications in general circulation in the United Kingdom through no act or default on the part of the parties or their agents, employees or professional advisers.
3. Without prejudice to the generality of clause 2 information shall not be deemed to be generally available to the public by reason that it is known to only a few of those people to whom it may be of commercial interest and a combination of two or more parts of the Confidential Information shall not be deemed to be generally available to the public by reason only of each separate part being so available.
4. The parties shall each ensure that all measure necessary are taken to secure the confidentiality of the other party's Confidential Information including but not limited to:

- I. Keeping separate all Confidential Information and all information generated based on the Confidential Information from all other documents and records;
 - II. Keeping all documents and any other material bearing or incorporating any of the Confidential Information at the party's usual place of business in the United Kingdom;
 - III. Not using, reproducing, transforming or storing any of the Confidential Information in an externally accessible computer or electronic information retrieval system, not transmitting it in any form or by any means whatsoever outside the party's usual pace of business and not copying all or any part of the Confidential Information without the prior written consent of the Company and then only to the extent that the same is required for the Purpose;
 - IV. Allowing access to the Confidential Information only to those employees and/or to the professional advisers who have reasonable need to see or use it for the Purpose and informing each of the said employees and professional advisers of the confidential nature of the Confidential Information and of the obligations in respect of the Confidential Information and ensuring such employees and professional advisers comply with the confidentiality and non-disclosure obligations contained in this agreement;
 - V. Obtaining from employees having access to the Confidential Information their undertakings to maintain the same as confidential and taking such steps as may be reasonably desirable to enforce such obligations;
 - VI. Delivering all documents and other materials in the possession, custody or control of the party, its agents, employees or professional advisers that bear or incorporate any part of the Confidential Information of the other party.
5. The failure by either party to enforce at any time any one or more of the terms or conditions of this agreement shall not be a waiver of them or of the right at any time subsequently to enforce all terms and conditions of this agreement.
 6. The parties agree that damages might not be a sufficient remedy to any breach of the terms of this agreement and that as a result injunctive or other equitable relief may be obtained in respect of any breach or anticipated breach.
 7. All rights in the Confidential Information are reserved by the party to which it belongs and no rights or obligations other than those expressly set out in this agreement are granted or to be implied from this agreement. In particular no licence is granted directly or indirectly by this agreement relating to any invention, discovery, patent, copyright or other industrial or intellectual property right now or in the future held, made, obtained or licensable by either party.

8. The rights, duties and obligations of the parties and the validity, interpretation, performance and legal effect of this agreement shall be governed and determined by the law of England the parties hereby submit to the non-exclusive jurisdiction of the English Courts.

AGREED by the parties:

SIGNED by _____

Name (print) _____

Position _____

Authorised signatory

For and on behalf of _____

Date (Day / Month / Year) ____ / ____ / ____

SIGNED by _____

Name (print) _____

Position _____

Authorised signatory

For and on behalf of _____

Date (Day / Month / Year) ____ / ____ / ____

A signed copy of this form was secured prior to research.