This study examined factors which influence the female pilot's decision to stay or leave the Air Force. The concepts of turnover and Work-Home Conflict (WHC) were explored as a theoretical foundation. WHC describes the resultant clash of turnover and Work-Home Conflict (WHC) were explored as a pilot's decision to stay or leave the Air Force. The concepts as the work and home/family roles individuals attempt to balance compete for resources. This research used data from a Delphi study of 20 female active-duty U.S. Air Force pilots to provide insight into the turnover decision process of female pilots. This study concluded that WHC and family satisfaction variables should be included in future studies of a larger sample population. Additionally, the research provided information on potential barriers to female pilot retention, such as difficulty balancing career with family life, an ineffective join spouse program and physical separation from family, and suggested new courses of action to remedy the problem.

Results

Research Questions

RQ1: From the female pilot perspective, what influences retention decisions?
RQ2: What are the sources of stress voiced by female pilots?
RQ3: What are the career goals of female pilots?
RQ4: What are the potential barriers to retention and what are recommendations to reduce those barriers?
RQ5: What other employment opportunities draw female pilots from active duty?

Method

This study used a Delphi method to gather and analyze the opinions of subject matter experts throughout the CAF and MAF. Due to time limitations and precedent by similar research projects, only three rounds were employed. The first round of questions was very broad in nature giving the respondents time and space to express their opinion in short answer format. This design was purposeful in order to solicit expert opinions related to the research questions. The second round of questioning aggregated the responses from round one and used ranking/Likert scales to allow the experts to see and evaluate other responses. For the final round, the results of the previous two rounds were aggregated and the experts had an additional opportunity to change their responses if they so decided. This methodology allowed the group to drive toward consensus as determined by the primary researcher. Maj David Caswell was used to determine the level of concordance among respondents.

Summary of 3-Round Method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Round</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Panel Mbrs</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Response required</th>
<th>Researcher Action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1/12/2016</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8 short answer</td>
<td>Survey Monkey</td>
<td>Short answer</td>
<td>content analysis; selected themes</td>
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<tr>
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<td>sent</td>
<td>1/26/2016</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8 questions to rank/Likert score</td>
<td>Spreadsheet</td>
<td>Rank order &amp; Likert</td>
<td>Computed avg &amp; std dev</td>
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<tr>
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<td>sent</td>
<td>2/12/2016</td>
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<td>Rank order &amp; Likert</td>
<td>Computed avg &amp; std dev</td>
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</table>

Internal factors, make you want to leave

Kendall’s W = 0.62; weak agreement/low confidence

- Frustration with excessive bureaucracy
- Lack of stability/control of your life; Constant moving/PCS and not being able to settle down
- Join spouse challenges—AF not suited for mil-to-mil couples; Tough to keep mil-mil together for a PCS
- Lack of acceptance as a female; Unequal treatment/perception thereof
- Lack of resources: administrative personnel, manning, equipment, money
- Lack of stability/control of your life; Constant moving/PCS and not being able to settle down
- Poor job continuity; leadership continuity for strategic focus/direction
- Perceptions of errors within promotion system; AF career emphasis on BPZ sends the wrong message and people bail out early; Frustration with primary duty performance
- Lack of job continuity; leadership continuity for strategic focus/direction
- Join spouse BAH—a large portion of compensation shouldn't be penalized for marriage
- Lack of acceptance as a female; Unequal treatment/perception thereof
- Lack of flexible retirement benefits/programs (401K funds matching etc) prior to 20 years
- Deployments/Long TDYs; Separation from immediate and/or extended family
- Lack of policy flexibility to facilitate family care
- Perceptions of errors within promotion system; AF career emphasis on BPZ sends the wrong message and people bail out early; Frustration with primary duty performance
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Theoretical Contributions

The most significant implication of this research is that it lays a foundation for a larger, qualitative study of the researcher's knowledge, no known empirical study has examined determinants of retention decisions of USAF active duty female pilots. Furthermore, this study is timely in that the target population, female pilots, are under the microscope of senior leaders as they aim to retain minorities. Female pilots as a minority are of particular interest due to the higher chances of promotion within this career field and the associated replacement expense when a pilot leaves the service prior to a full career.

Practical Implications

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