

Art of War Papers

Retaining Talent: Lessons from Australia, Norway, and Sister Services



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The cover photo is courtesy of DIVIDS, *Re-enlistment on top of Monrovia*. Corporal Ashley Dotson, far right, carpenter for the Headquarter and Headquarters Company, 62nd Engineer Battalion, 36th Engineer Brigade, recites the re-enlistment oath given by Captain Ashley Towns, the company commander, during a ceremony held on top of a building overlooking Monrovia, Liberia, 23 December 2014. (U.S. Army photo by Captain Eric Hudson.) Photo courtesy of DIVIDS – Images, taken 23 December 2014 by Captain Eric Hudson, 7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment. Photo ID: 1709263; VIRIN: 141223-A-AN514022; accessed 23 May 2022. Source: DIVIDS - Images - Re-enlistment on top of Monrovia [Image 3 of 6] (dvidshub.net).

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the US Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)



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Program Description

The Command and General Staff College (CGSC) Art of War Scholar's program offers a small number of competitively select officers a chance to participate in intensive, graduate level seminars and in-depth personal research that focuses primarily on understanding strategy and operational art through modern military history. The purpose of the program is to produce officers with critical thinking skills and an advanced understanding of the art of warfighting. These abilities are honed by reading, researching, thinking, debating and writing about complex issues across the full spectrum of modern warfare, from the lessons of the Russo-Japanese war through continuing operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, while looking ahead to the twenty-first century evolution of the art of war.

Abstract

Women play a critical role in the defense of the United States as members of the military. As women have joined the workplace in increasing numbers, they do not remain in the US Army at the same rate as their male counterparts. The US Army is unable to capitalize on the full extent of the US population to recruit and retain its most valuable weapon: the American soldier.

This study used a qualitative research methodology to analyze four other armed services to understand what efforts they have made towards retaining diverse populations. Using the US Coast Guard, the US Air Force, the Australian Defence Force, and the Norwegian Armed Forces, this study seeks to understand what policies the US Army could adopt to better retain female officers. This analysis found that adopting policies which allow for increased work flexibility helps to retain women and aligning physical fitness standards with deployment policies further retains women. One of the key findings is that the US Army must seek to understand what drives women retention and then share best practice across the joint force.

Acknowledgments

As I considered what to write about, I wanted to do something that would benefit the US Army. Looking around, I saw opportunities to learn from our sister services and other nations on how the US Army thinks about personnel issues and particularly, retention. This research led me to my personal introspection on being a female US soldier. Without the support of many people, I would not have had the opportunity or the knowledge to embark upon this view. First, to my parents and sister. Thank you for your love, support, and inspiration. Mom and Dad, for better or worse, you started me down this path.

Next, to Dr. Ruth Beitler, who once called me up and started the conversation by saying, “Now, just listen and don’t say no yet.” When she asked me to co-author a book written about women in the military from around the world—I could never have imagined where it would take me (or how much work I would put into it). Thank you for entrusting me with this project and for helping me narrow this topic down.

I would be remiss if I didn’t thank my thesis committee, Dr. Jack Kem, Ms. Guerrero, and Ms. Karambelas for your early morning meetings, great suggestions, and ultimately your patience with me. Also, for continuing to assist and encourage, even from afar and in a virtual reality.

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Chapter 1

How Should the US Army Think about Retaining Junior Female Officers?

People are always my #1 priority: Our Army's people are our greatest strength and our most important weapon system. Our people are our Soldiers, Family members, Department of the Army Civilians, and Soldiers for Life (retirees, and veterans). We must take care of our people and treat each other with dignity and respect. It is our people who will deliver on our readiness, modernization, and reform efforts.

—General James C. McConville, *Initial Message to the Army Team*

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the Defense Department spends approximately one-quarter of its total budget on military personnel costs. These costs include everything from recruiting, to healthcare, to education, to training, and finally to retention. Retaining qualified officers is particularly important for two reasons. First, the initial investment in an officer is generally high. Keeping officers in uniform is more cost effective than retraining new recruits. Second, retaining the best officers, instead of the best of what's left, remains integral to the readiness of the force and the ability to fight and win the nation's wars. The US Army often uses a passive strategy for retention, expecting that the officers who remain are the best fit to serve. This assumption may not be valid and it is worth studying how other services consider retention, particularly of their female officers.

The US Army should identify best retention practices from other services. The US Coast Guard (USCG), the US Air Force (USAF), the Australian Defence Forces (ADF), and the Norwegian Armed Forces (NAF) have modified their retention strategies to retain higher numbers of minority populations, including women. This study specifically focuses on female officers and how the US Army may consider incentives to persuade them to remain on active duty. In doing so, this study investigated other organizations that think very differently about retention. It provided specific recommendations about adapting current retention practices to maintain the high standards of readiness in the US Army. Once again, should the US Army consider adopting specific policies, including career flexibility, fitness testing, and others geared towards women that will help to retain trained and talented officers for the next five years?

The Problem

Women make up 50 percent of the nation's population, but just under 20 percent of the US military's total force and about 18 percent of the US Army.¹ A few statistics about rank: In 1972, women comprised just one percent of the colonels; by 2018, they made up ten percent of the colonels and over 11 percent of the general officers in the Army.² At higher ranks, the US Army is unrepresentative of the United States population. The results of the most recent battalion commander boards show that women represent only eight percent of the commanders selected across five branches; just two years ago, women made up 15 percent of the commanders to be in engineer, aviation, military police, chemical corps, and air defense artillery.³ While these results require additional study to draw meaningful conclusions from them, the authors note that women may get out of the service before they become eligible to be commanders, leading to a "pernicious cycle where women get out because they see few women above them selected for command."⁴

A recent government accountability office report noted that while DoD officials have often stated that "recruiting and retaining female service members is important in order to more accurately reflect the nation's population," there is still token representation of women among senior leadership.⁵ This report found that the overall percentage of female service members on active duty increased between 2004 and 2018 from 15.1 percent to 16.5 percent.⁶ Women are, on the whole, more likely to separate from the service even though the gap between male and female officers has recently narrowed slightly. Finally, the report identified that DoD needed to develop plans that included "goals, performance measures, or timeframes to guide and monitor current or future efforts to recruit and retain active duty service members."⁷ With its inability to retain diverse populations, the US Army will remain unable to harness the power of the diversity of the United States. The US Army continues to cite the power of diverse teams, but has made few concrete steps toward retaining the members of those teams.

When the draft ended in 1973, women made up just two percent of the enlisted ranks of the military and eight percent of the officer ranks due to service caps placed by lawmakers. Though Congress removed these caps, women still comprise about 16 percent of the enlisted ranks across all four services and 18 percent of the officer corps.⁸ In both the US Navy and US Air Force, about one in five service members is a woman. In the Army, that number is about one in six and in the US Marines, the number is about one in 20.⁹ While those numbers speak to an increase in total num-

bers of women, the services all report that there is a gap in the number of men versus women who choose to stay on active duty beyond their initial active duty service obligation.

A 2009 military leadership diversity commission noted this problem in the US Army, suggesting that the gap appears between the third and fifth years of service and continues until the tenth year of service. (See Figure 1.1) The US Coast Guard, US Air Force, and US Navy all note a similar disparity. The high-3 retirement system allows officers to retire upon completion of 20 years of active service, making the ten year mark an ideal time for service members and their families to make career choices. With the introduction of the blended retirement system, this gap may grow larger, even after the initial 10-year mark, as service members may no longer feel vested.

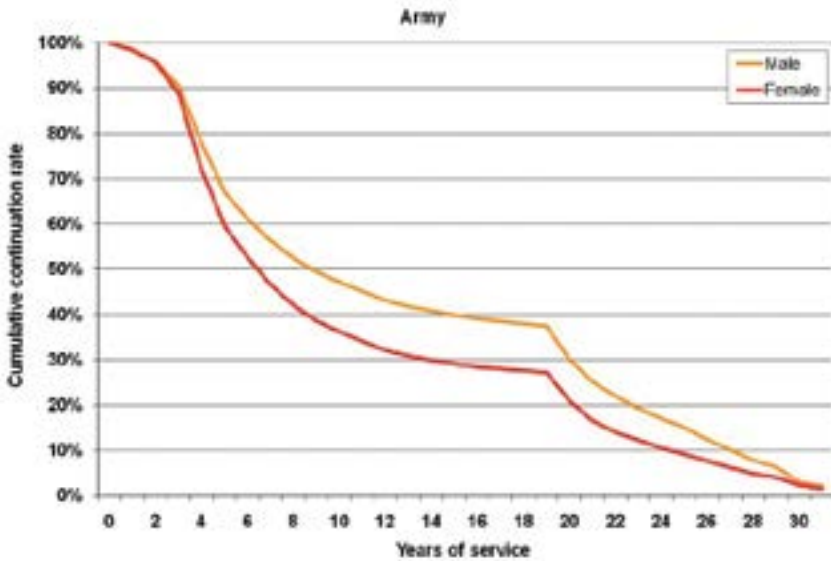


Figure 1.1. Cumulative Continuation Rates for Men and Women in the US Army, FY 2000-FY 2008.

Source: Military Leadership Diversity Commission, *Officer Retention Rates Across the Services by Gender and Race/Ethnicity*, Issue Paper 2 (Arlington, VA: Military Leadership Diversity Commission, 2010), 3, accessed 1 November 2019, <https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=716147>.

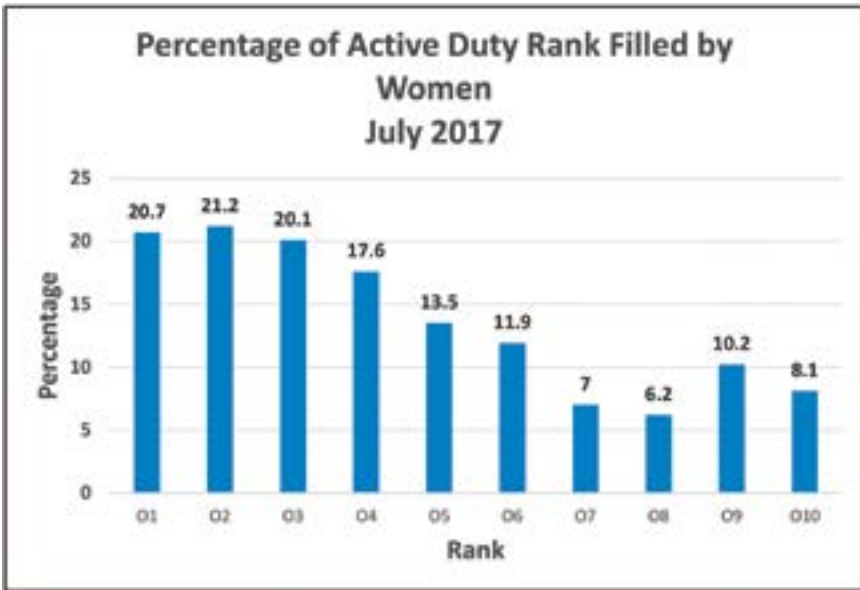


Figure 1.2. Percentage of Active Duty Rank Filled by Women.

Source: Created by author; Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services, “2017 Annual Report” (Insight Policy Research, Arlington, VA, 2017), 20, accessed 2 August 2019, https://dacowits.defense.gov/Portals/48/Documents/Reports/2017/Annual%20Report/DACOWITS%202017%20Annual%20Report_FINAL.PDF?ver=2018-02-28-222504-937.

The Department of Defense (DoD) does not routinely aggregate data about why service members leave the military, though a 2011 military leadership diversity commission report noted that the services acknowledged that men and women continued in their service at different rates.¹⁰ According to a DoD report mandated in the 2000 National Defense Authorization Act, the main reasons women leave the military are difficulties balancing work and family, disability, physical condition (not disability), retirement, end of contract, and unsatisfactory performance.¹¹ According to similar research conducted by Blue Star Families, women most often leave due to family concerns, the pressures of dual-military policies, child-care issues, and frequent moves that destabilize care plans. Women also report that cultural issues impede their continued service; those cultural issues may include issues of perceived unfair treatment and sexual assault, harassment, and sexism in the military or the issues could include quality of life and work-life balance concerns.¹²

Blue Star Families found that service members who fall into the millennial generation, that is those born between 1981 and 1996, increasingly want to have both spouses able to gain and maintain meaningful employment.¹³ Frequent relocations preclude this from happening for two reasons. The first is that many jobs are not portable. The second is that childcare is incredibly difficult for many families to obtain; on-post childcare facilities may have months-long waiting lists.¹⁴

Data on civilian sector retention is lacking, but statistics show that civilian organizations may similarly lack female representation at the highest levels of leadership. They face “push” and “pull” factors. Push factors are those such as disparities in promotion potential, leading them to leave the service. Pull factors are those such as work-life balance concerns, which will pull them from their professional aspirations. These pull factors are like the ones facing women in the military.

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, women currently make up 47 percent of the total labor force. The total labor force is the part of the population that is working or actively looking for work, though it excludes active duty members of the US Armed Forces.¹⁵ The labor force participation rate is the percentage of the population that is either working or actively looking for work, an important metric that shows who wants to work.¹⁶ As of 2018, women between the ages of 20 and 24 participated in the civilian labor force at a rate of 69 percent. Women between 25 and 54 participated at 75 percent. Even in the years between 25 and 34, the years where women are most likely to leave the military, women participate in the civilian labor force at a rate of 75.9 percent.¹⁷ Women continue to participate in the civilian labor force at high rates, despite push and pull factors that are sometimes blamed for military retention issues.

Though it may be easy to speculate on this difference of representation, the question remains: Are there ways to make military service, particularly US Army service, more compatible and therefore conducive to the continued service of female officers? The question of how to retain qualified personnel within the service is particularly important for several reasons. Diversity in thinking is important to the success of teams. A 2015 report from McKinsey found that companies that place an emphasis on diverse leadership are more successful and more profitable.¹⁸ The report notes that it is not the gender or ethnic diversity itself that is most important, but that the company *focuses* on diverse leadership which makes the company more successful. Rock and Grant note that diverse teams are smarter, with an emphasis on facts, understanding how those facts fit into an overall decision, and an innovative attitude that allow teams to question

assumptions.¹⁹ Even research done by the Congressional Research Service and the US Army suggests that diversity is a source of strength.

Congressional Research Service found that diversity in the military leads to two major factors: cohesion and effectiveness. Most research shows that shared experiences contribute to cohesion and that this is a “stronger predictor of group performance than social cohesion.”²⁰ In other words, individuals in a unit do not need to look the same to succeed, but rather must have shared the same experiences. Kamarck also finds that racial and gender diversity leads to “better creative problem solving, innovation, and improved decision-making.”²¹

Former Secretary of the Army Eric K. Fanning noted how the diverse missions that America requires of its Army will also require that the US Army include “the broadest possible spectrum of ideas, perspectives, and experiences.”²² He continued by saying that the US Army must pull from America’s best to create teams of people who are ready to stand together to fight and win the nation’s wars. Though some may denounce diversity, citing historical issues of the Austro-Hungarian Army as being too diverse, most literature supports the idea that diversity is a source of strength for problem-solving.

In addition to building a diverse workforce, the US Army must maintain that same diverse population. Unlike civilian employment opportunities, it is far more difficult for women to leave the military workforce for several years and return to active duty, though there are a few programs that allow for it. It is also increasingly difficult to find men and women who want to serve and are qualified to serve in the military. The US Army has expanded recruiting efforts to new locations and with an increased emphasis on the use of technology to encourage those who may otherwise not be inclined.

Recent research indicates that many young people are unable to serve in the military. McMahon and Bernard suggest that of the 34 million 17-to-24-year-olds in the United States, 71 percent cannot serve in the military due to educational factors, health issues, or criminal records.²³ Bicklser and Nolan suggest that of those qualified to serve, far fewer are inclined to join the service. With the growth of the military projected in the 2018 National Defense Authorization Act, the military services are considering how best to expand their recruiting pool to fill the ranks with talented soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines. While enticing young people to serve is one aspect of the problem, retaining those qualified and trained by the military will continue to be a problem, particularly in many technical specialties.

The US Army has recognized this retention problem, identifying it as one of the five core functions of talent management. Talent management is a way of managing human capital, “a deliberate and coordinated process that aligns systematic planning of the right number and type of people to meet current and future US Army needs with integrated implementation so that majority of those people are optimally employed.”²⁴

Since the US military has opened all roles to those individuals who qualify, it has become increasingly clear that women do not join the military at the same rate as men and that many women opt out of the military prior to their retirement, at higher rates than their male counterparts. Warfare has often been the domain of men, with views on masculinity and gender often confining women to support roles. While countries drafted men into service, women could volunteer or serve in separate women’s organizations and so opportunity and policy limited their official participation.²⁵ Often forbidden from combat roles, militaries were implicitly denying women the right to promotion. Though most militaries did not go so far as to say that women who did not serve in combat may not earn promotions, the men who sit on promotion boards often believe that without combat, an officer should not earn rank.

While the US Army’s focus has increasingly shifted to large scale combat operations, brute force is less likely to be the way the US Army will fight and win wars, given the increased emphasis on cyber, intelligence, and other technological advantages. Reports suggest that women are overrepresented in medical, administrative, and logistical fields and underrepresented in warfighting fields (including infantry, armor, and artillery).²⁶ Women make up 4.94 percent of the officers engaged in tactical operations in the US Army and 16.65 percent of engineering and maintenance, both classifications that may see women engaged in warfighting fields.²⁷ Within healthcare and administration fields, they make up 38 percent and 33 percent, respectively, far over-representing the true population of women in the US Army.²⁸ This data is subject to change in the upcoming years; the lifting of the combat exclusion ban in 2013 as well as the opening of all occupational specialties in 2016 may see women shift in large numbers from traditional fields.²⁹

The US Army must consider how to recruit and retain the most talented soldiers and officers. Recently, the US Army adopted a talent management model to better place talent within the force while at the same time it has instituted a new retirement system. While the military has made some significant progress towards adapting policies that encourage women to continue serving, including the doubling and standardization of maternity leave for new mothers as well as training more women to serve as

recruiters, these programs may not be enough to keep the right population of female officers on active duty. The US Army's *Talent Management Concept of Operations for Force 2025 and Beyond* notes that retention must include several subordinate functions, including: pay, benefits, and retirement, quality of life programs, performance management, assessments and evaluations, promotions, release and transition, and individual career planning efforts.³⁰

Some reports suggest that women continue to leave the US Army at higher rates than men. Other countries are specifically addressing retention of female officers. What can the US Army learn and apply to retain a diverse population of officers? Should the US Army adapt techniques from other nations and sister services to increase retention, specifically of female officers? This study examines policies for adoption that can help to improve the retention of female officers.

Primary Research Question

The primary research question seeks to understand if the US Army could adopt policies to make elements of military service more compatible with continued service for diverse populations. The primary research question is: Should the US Army adopt specific policies, including career flexibility, fitness testing, and other policies geared towards women that will help to retain trained and talented officers for the next five years?

Secondary Research Questions

These questions will help to create an understanding of why women leave the US Army as well as how the US Army already retentions diverse populations. Additionally, these questions will examine how other military forces are using personnel policies to successfully drive retention.

1. Why do servicewomen voluntarily leave the US Army?
2. What is the US Army doing to retain soldiers?
3. What is the Department of Defense already doing to retain women?
4. What are other countries doing to retain women?

This study answers questions 1 and 2 in the literature review chapter 2, and questions 3 and 4 in the analysis chapter 4. This study answers the primary research question in the data analysis and recommendations chapter. Finally, this study provides recommendations and possible resources for additional research in chapter 5.

Limitations

Though the goal of this study is to provide policy recommendations for consideration, there are several limitations. Each branch of the military has unique missions that drive their recruitment and retention policies. Additionally, these policies are relatively new and may not work in the long-term, or may cause second and third order effects that are not immediately visible. A list of limitations follows.

1. This study covers a limited time range and many of these retention techniques may not prove fruitful for the long term.
2. Ultimately, these are not exact comparisons. Other branches of the Department of Defense have different pressures as well as different missions.
3. Norway and Australia have different requirements for their militaries and are much smaller militaries.
4. A key limitation is the small amount of time available for this study and the methods chosen. With just ten months and an inability to conduct representative samples of surveys, this study resourcefully uses available data to make recommendations.

Delimitations

Research involves delimitations, or those issues which are outside the scope of a study. Although the research included here is to determine how the US Army can better retain women, this study passes no value judgements on the roles that women can and should serve in the military. This study does not examine when and how women should serve, but takes it as settled fact that women can serve in any specialty or unit that they earn admission to. This research does not specifically examine transgender soldiers. While this study explicitly focuses on retention efforts for female officers, these efforts will likely encourage other members of the military to continue service. This study does not consider the effects of culture and examines policies only. Another validity challenge is that these are relatively new tactics and may not ultimately lead to increased retention. This study will not examine upcoming changes, such as the effects of the blended retirement system or the US Army combat fitness test, but leaves those as possible avenues for future research. Finally, this research only considers those women who have left voluntarily, rather than those who may have left due to non-promotion or adverse action.

Assumptions

Researchers often make certain assumptions to continue gaining an understanding of the situation. The researcher does not know that these are true, but believes them to be true. Finally, without making these assumptions, the research cannot continue.

1. Retaining trained officers is necessary for the US Army to effectively fight and win the nation's wars; it should study how to entice more qualified, talented, and diverse officers to remain in its ranks.
2. Retaining more qualified, talented female officers than the US Army currently has will remain important to maintaining a trained and ready force to fight and win the nation's wars.
3. Ultimately, women join the US Army for a variety of reasons. Not everyone can or should be convinced to stay in the military long term and this will not change. This study is specifically concerned with those who get out because they perceive that their roles outside of the military are incompatible with their role in the military.

Key Terms

To best understand the research presented here, this study includes a list of key terms and their definitions. These are commonly used terms that are often unique to the US Army or the military more broadly.

Active Duty Service Obligation: a specific period of active duty in the active US Army that an officer must serve before becoming eligible for voluntary separation or retirement.³¹

Blended Retirement System: a retirement system where retired pay after twenty or more years is calculated at two percent—times the number of years served—times the last three months of basic pay. This system also allows for matching contributions to a service members' Thrift Savings Plan; the government contributes one percent of base pay automatically to the Thrift Savings Plan and will match that up to an additional four percent. This retirement system also offers continuation pay at mid-career in return for additional service commitment.³²

High-3: a retirement program that calculates a retired pay formula based on the last thirty-six months of active duty military; service members are eligible for this at twenty years. The formula is 2.5 percent times years of service, times the High-3 average.³³

Maternity Convalescent Leave: A six-week convalescent period for a military member immediately following pregnancy and childbirth. Ma-

ternity convalescent leave, as with any convalescent leave, is non-chargeable. It will begin on the first full day after the date of discharge or release from a hospital (or similar facility) following childbirth.³⁴

Primary Caregiver: The parent with the primary responsibility for caring for a child (in most cases the nonmilitary parent) in the case of a qualifying birth event or adoption. In some cases, the covered military member, including an unmarried non-birthparent with proof of parentage, may identify as the primary caregiver. Such cases may include, but are not limited to, situations where the covered member is the birthparent, or dual military couples where one member of the couple is designated as the primary caregiver, the unavailability or incapacity of the birthparent if the birthparent is not a military member, the death of one parent, or other circumstances where the covered military member must act as primary caregiver.³⁵

Primary Caregiver Leave (US Army): leave granted to covered soldiers who meet the definition of, and are designated, as primary caregivers in conjunction with qualifying birth events or adoptions. This leave is six weeks of non-chargeable leave and must be taken within one year of the qualifying birth event or adoption. Soldiers must identify which of the parents is the primary caregiver.³⁶

Retention: the rate at which military personnel voluntarily choose to stay in the military after their obligated term of service has ended (as determined by their enlistment contract.)³⁷

Secondary Caregiver: The parent who is not designated as the primary caregiver. Secondary caregiver leave may be approved for an unmarried, non-birthparent if that soldier's parentage of the child is established in accordance with criteria prescribed by the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System.³⁸

Secondary Caregiver Leave (US Army): Leave granted to covered soldiers who meet the definition of and are designated as secondary caregivers. This leave is 21 days of non-chargeable leave but must be taken in only one increment.³⁹

Stop Loss: A force management program that involuntarily extends or retains active duty enlisted service members beyond their established separation date. Officers do not have established separation dates and so can serve for indefinite periods, this program can also apply to those who have an approved retirement or resignation date.⁴⁰

Summary

This chapter introduced the importance of military retention as well as provided a basis of understanding for this study. The primary research

question for this study is “Should the US Army consider adopting specific policies, including career flexibility, fitness testing, and others that are geared towards women to help retain trained and talented officers for the next five years?” Chapter 2 will include a literature review of why female officers leave the US Army as well as what it is already doing to retain officers. Chapter 3 will lay out a methodology for examining other policies for consideration while chapter 4 will analyze these possibilities. Chapter 5 will offer recommendations as well as possibilities for future study, given the limitations of this study.

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Chapter 2

What is the US Army Doing to Retain Officers?

But the traditions and rules that have strengthened the US military over the last 250 years can, at times, make recruitment and retention difficult.

—Ash Carter, *What I Learned from Transforming the US Military's Approach to Talent*

Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to understand why service-women leave the US Army, how it is attempting to retain these officers, and also focus on how it is retaining women. Though there will be some similarities across the spectrum of reasons, women face other societal, cultural, and familial pressures that may warrant special considerations in how the US Army seeks to retain them. The US Army does not know why women are leaving the it, beyond some very broad ideas, because it does not collect aggregated data on retention decisions. Additionally, the US Army has only tried a few targeted retention programs, while focusing on quantity. Ultimately, this literature review will help to understand the primary research question of whether the US Army should adopt policies including career flexibility, fitness testing, and other policies geared towards women that will help to retain trained and talented officers for the next five years.

The DoD, including the United States Air Force, Army, Navy, Marines, and Coast Guard, have all identified that there is a gap in retention for women. This gap varies by service type but occurs between four and ten years of their actual service. Many current military members still fall under the “High-3” retirement system, “a noncontributory, defined benefit plan which guarantees a specific monthly payment after twenty or more years of service.”¹ This system serves as a significant incentive to remain in the military beyond ten years: many service members believe that after ten years, the extra time required to retire was worth the time already served. All those personnel entering the military after 1 January 2018 will fall under the new blended retirement system.

Why Are Soldiers Leaving?

Data suggest’s that officers leave the US Army for different reasons based on gender. Kane found that officers are leaving the US Army because of repeated deployments, failed personnel policies, and career manage-

ment issues that make leaving the military more attractive.² Reports from RAND suggest that gender bias and discrimination, weight standards, sexual harassment and assault, workload and resource issues, promotion policies, assignments, family issues, and pregnancy and breastfeeding concerns are among the most frequent reasons why women leave the military.³ More recent research suggests that women often leave because of family concerns, the pressures of military assignment policies, childcare issues, frequent moves, and gender issues.

To recruit and retain qualified personnel, the military must present itself as an attractive alternative to a civilian job while overcoming the inherent risks that military service presents. While this specifically identifies why recruits join the military, soldiers will make retention decisions based on their opportunities elsewhere.⁴ These opportunities will often extend to their families. Can their spouses be gainfully employed while they continue to serve in the military? Retention is much more than simply providing bonuses to soldiers and officers, it depends on family pressures as much as job satisfaction.

Since the beginning of the all-volunteer force, the US Army has become more diverse in many ways, including the familial makeup of those who serve. Binkin and Segal both note the increase in the number of married service members.⁵ US Army data from 2016 notes that 53 percent of the female officers are married, as are 71 percent of the male officers. Additionally, just five percent of married male soldiers are in dual military marriages, while 37 percent of married female soldiers are in dual military marriages. The number of dual military couples has more than doubled since 1985, from 41,000 to 84,533 in 2016.⁶ Some women also cite the difficulty in balancing two military careers or balancing a spouse with a civilian career. The US Army has a policy that assists with dual assignments if both members are in the US Army. This policy does not account for marriages across two services nor does it provide support to service members who have spouses with careers.

The number of single parents has also increased from 31,000 to 55,360 in that same length of time. Patten and Parker also found that women were more likely to be single parents than men.⁷ Single parents may have additional stressors to meet educational and training requirements for promotion as well as childcare issues that may drive them out of the military, ultimately without support. Additionally, the culture of readiness wherein soldiers are expected to work long hours with little notice and the expectation of 24/7 availability may prove stressful to soldiers who struggle to find balance in their personal and professional lives.

Many women cite physical and emotional changes that come along with having children. Women are predominantly impacted by changes in their bodies associated with pregnancy, breastfeeding, and childcare. Many of these changes are physical and emotional, though the restrictions placed on women often, in turn, have significant repercussions with assignment policies and promotion potential. A 2001 report on the issues for military women in deployment suggests that women's mindsets often change after pregnancy; they often become the primary caregivers to children.⁸ This data may be colored by cultural expectations that drive women to become the primary caregivers, though it remains of importance. In addition, service policies lack standardization and women often feel as though they cannot maintain height and weight standards based on changes in their body after pregnancy.⁹

In addition to the aforementioned policies, many women cite a desire to have additional control over their careers and the need for flexibility. This flexibility may mean adjustments in daily work hours, assignments, or the ability to take sabbaticals. The ability to work differing hours based on the needs of the service member, for example: appointments, routine activities, or childcare is often noted as important. Additionally, the officer timelines that mandate holding certain jobs to demonstrate promotion potential often requires service members to choose between a family and a career. Finally, the ability to take time off from the force, without major career issues, remains a key concern.

What is the US Army Doing to Retain Soldiers?

To keep trained and ready soldiers in the US Army, it continues to offer retention bonuses, which most people believe are a sure-fire way to keep people in the US Army, as well as reducing the online and repetitive training required of soldiers.¹⁰ Currently, the US Army offers few targeted incentive programs to officers, though past programs have been used prior to commissioning as well as bonuses.

The pre-commissioning program, the officer career satisfaction program, allows cadets to agree to serve an additional three years on active duty to receive the branch or post of their choice or the opportunity to attend graduate school.¹¹ A more targeted program, this program asked cadets to make a choice about continued service, even before they have ever been in the US Army. Wardynski, Lyle, and Colarusso claim that the program created "a more agile, satisfied, and educated officer corps" but the question remains whether it attracted a diverse population.¹² This program is still offered to cadets prior to commissioning.

In 2007, the US Army offered a “menu of incentives” to incentivize captains (those between year groups 1999 to 2005) to stay on active duty.¹³ These incentives included cash up to \$35,000, a choice of post, a choice of branch, or a choice of school. Officers who chose the cash option agreed to serve a non-concurrent active duty service obligation of three years. Officers who chose fully funded graduate school or defense language school agreed to spend an additional three days on active duty for every one day spent in school. In 2007, about sixty-seven percent of the officers eligible (or 12,000 of 17,700 captains) participated in this incentive program.¹⁴ The clear majority, 94 percent, took the critical skills retention bonus, the monetary option.

This program was not particularly targeted: it was generally based on rank with the cash option amount varying by branch. It made no distinction between military officers with talent, those who were planning to stay in regardless of incentives, and those who may have served the US Army best by leaving the force. In 2010, Wardynski, Lyle, and Colarusso found that the retention of “sufficient rather than optimally performing officers.” may negatively impact the state of the officer corps.¹⁵ They also noted that such a program that made little distinction based on talent would instead harm the officer corps stripping “away the US Army’s ability to screen, vet, and cull for talent.”¹⁶ The US Army no longer offers this program.

In a House Armed Service Committee Hearing, Lieutenant General Thomas Seamands, the Deputy Army Chief of Staff for Personnel, cited the graduation of women from US Army Ranger School as well as the assumption of company command roles in infantry units as helpful recruiting and retention strategies. He noted that the US Army is very excited at the prospect of women succeeding in the most demanding of jobs and that “as we see these role models come out and successfully lead...I think you’ll see increased females across formations.”¹⁷ Seamands noted that after the restrictions were lifted on women serving in previously closed roles, the US Army transferred more than a thousand women into infantry, field artillery, and armor.¹⁸ While having women in leadership roles across the force will likely help recruit and retain additional officers and soldiers, this is a passive strategy. A Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services report criticized the assumption that women would stay in at greater rates simply due to their ability to join in certain career fields, calling for additional measures to retain officers.

The US Army also experimented with programs that provide flexibility to service members. In 2014, the US Army ran a pilot program called the career intermission pilot program allowing service members to leave the military for up to three years to “allow soldiers to pursue personal

or professional growth while providing a mechanism for their seamless return to active duty.”¹⁹ The career intermission pilot program allowed 20 officers and 20 soldiers annually to move to the reserves. Those who participate must serve two months on active duty for every month spent in the career intermission pilot program. Individuals earned 2/32nd of their base pay, and further retained leave balances and medical and dental care while in the program. Officers who participated had their rank adjusted to account for time spent in the career intermission pilot program. This program, initially piloted by the US Navy because they noted that many female officers were leaving the military, seems to have some merit.

Theoretically, this program allows officers to take time off to have children or to care for families, which may have benefited women who wanted to have a family but did not want to deal with the stigma of pregnancy or the difficulties of returning to the force so quickly after having a birth. In the first three years of the program, 37 soldiers applied with just 13 participating.²⁰ In 2017, the US Army expanded eligibility for the program. Still soldiers were selected based on past performance and future potential, and had to further demonstrate a need for the career break.²¹ Reports remain mixed on this initiative and many soldiers appeared disheartened by the length of time the program requires for repayment. It is also possible that this program has not been well publicized and the low acceptance numbers may dissuade many from applying.

Former Secretary of Defense Ash Carter found that the DoD’s traditions and rules made recruitment and retention difficult. Under his tenure, he and his team worked to create ways to allow people to maintain their affiliation to the military with “off-ramps” and “on-ramps.”²² Under this program, service members were able to work outside of the Pentagon “to help us think differently and imbue our staff with ideas and practices from outside the ranks.”²³ He also noted that retention will continue to be a challenge as people have families and want to balance their commitments to family with commitments to service. To relieve some of the burden on service members, during his time as Secretary of Defense, he “expanded paid maternity and paternity leave,” to twelve weeks and three weeks.²⁴ Though this program has now shifted to primary and secondary caregiver roles, this was an important step.

He also noted that every DoD facility now has a mother’s room for nursing, creating 3,600 rooms during this process. While this is a step forward for the military, a 2010 memorandum for heads of executive departments and agencies entitled “Nursing Mothers in Federal Employment” had already recommended that federal agencies “take immediate action to make arrangements to provide a place, other than a bathroom, that is

shielded from view and free from intrusion...for employees to express breast milk,” meaning the military was catching up to a federal endorsement already in place.²⁵

Carter’s initiatives also included making childcare more accessible with 14 hours per day available across the force to allow parents increased flexibility. In a Congressional Research Service Report from 2018, Karmarck noted that DoD runs the largest “employer-sponsored childcare program, serving approximately 200,000 children” in the system.²⁶ Unfortunately, these expanded hours do not yet apply to all childcare facilities and may not be enough for shift workers. When the personnel heads from each of the services testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee in early 2019, they noted the continued issue with accessible childcare across the joint force.²⁷ These services are part of the quality of life benefits that the military defines as part of the total compensation package for military personnel. These benefits help to support retention efforts, though many military advocacy groups note that expanded access and operating hours would be helpful to increase retention.²⁸ In testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee in February, Admiral Burke, the Chief of Naval Personnel, noted that childcare is a key part of readiness, not simply for women, but for all service members.²⁹

A US military study from 1987 highlights that up to twenty percent of the enlisted and twenty percent of the officer force had missed job and duty time because of a lack of adequate childcare.³⁰ The military also competes with civilian sector employers, who are often able to offer more family friendly policies and benefits, making affordable childcare an essential part of a compensation package or allowing parents the flexibility to find quality childcare. Military families often require different types of childcare than their civilian counterparts: the frequent moves mean that families may not have extended networks of family and friends to rely on nearby and service members frequently work hours that civilian childcare providers may not accommodate, such as shift work, extended hours, and overnight shifts.

There are still reported shortages across the military for childcare with service chiefs testifying in May 2019 that military families can wait as long as six months before they find availability in on post childcare.³¹ Lieutenant General Seamands noted that wait times can be “nominal” but some posts, especially in Hawaii, may have wait times for over 100 days or more.³² US Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel, and Services, Lieutenant General Brian Kelly, contradicted his statement, noting that at Joint-Bases Langley-Eustis and Elmendorf-Richardson, childcare waits can be up to 140 days long, with very few off-post options

available.³³ A 2015 Demand Accommodations Rate metric found that DoD was filling 78 percent of its childcare demand, with priority going to single parents and dual military parents, making it difficult for members with employed civilian spouses to receive childcare on post. A military compensation commission found that of the 10,979 children waiting for on-post childcare, typically more highly valued than off-post childcare, 73 percent of those spaces were for children three and younger.³⁴

Women are more likely than men to report that they are leaving for family concerns. In addition to childcare issues, these concerns may involve spousal employment. The military operates on a model that pushes soldiers to move frequently, making it hard for family members to establish themselves in the civilian workforce. To help with this, the FY2020 National Defense Authorization Act provided for expanded childcare licensing and certification assistance, following the FY2018 National Defense Authorization Act which provided a pilot program to allow spouses reimbursement for up to \$500 for relicensing fees. The FY2020 National Defense Authorization Act allows for up to \$1,000 per move with authorities for up to five years. DoD plans to study this effort to ascertain whether the benefits outweigh the costs.³⁵

Overall, the US Army has attempted a variety of options to increase retention, but women continue to leave the military at higher rates than men. Women often cite a need for flexibility and difficulties in balancing professional and personal obligations. The US military has responded by offering several limited programs, but childcare and flexibility in day to day work remain key issues.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the relevant literature to establish what the military is already doing to retain officers, particularly female officers. This literature review illustrates what policies the US Army can adopt, enticing women to stay on active duty for longer periods, even in the face of societal and familial pressures, by making aspects of military life more compatible with continued service. In chapter 3, a detailed understanding of the methodology used will be presented as well as evaluation criteria for each of the listed policies. Additionally, chapter 3 will discuss the cases and policies chosen, allowing this study to present policies for the US Army to adopt.

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Chapter 3

Research Methodology

Introduction

Chapter 2 provides an overview about the available literature on why service women voluntarily leave the US Army and what the US Army is doing to retain soldiers. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodology applied in chapter 4, including the process used to answer the primary question: Should the US Army consider adopting specific policies, including career flexibility, fitness testing, and other policies geared towards women that will help to retain trained and talented officers for the next five years?

This question cannot be answered without understanding the secondary questions:

1. Why do servicewomen voluntarily leave the US Army?
2. What is the US Army doing to retain soldiers?
3. What is the Department of Defense already doing to retain women?
4. What are other countries doing to retain women?

Purpose of this Research

The purpose of this exploratory study is to determine what other services within DoD and other militaries have implemented to retain women. Ultimately, this study will provide recommendations that the US Army can adopt to retain women more effectively and also provide recommendations for further study. The United States must continually adapt to a changing threat landscape, while maintaining a focus on the recruiting and retention of its most lethal weapon system: the American soldier. The goal of this study is how to maintain the most effective fighting force while leveraging all parts of the population. Given the need for more effective talent management, the United States Army should take cues from other available examples.

Qualitative Research

The qualitative research methodology used as part of this study is explained in this chapter. Qualitative research was selected as the primary means for three reasons. Importantly, this is the best way to gain a thorough understanding of what other services and nations are doing to recruit and retain women in their militaries. Additionally, this study will specifically consider militaries that share common characteristics with the

US Army, rather than looking across the spectrum of possibilities. Finally, the US Army does not have a comprehensive database that identifies why service members leave the US Army prior to retirement.

Merriam lays out four characteristics of qualitative research: “that the focus is on process, understanding, and meaning; that the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; the process is inductive; and the product is richly descriptive.”¹ The focus of this study is to provide an understanding of how other services and other militaries are making constructive policy changes to recruit and retain women. Each military has tried to understand what motivates and drives women to join the military and then stay in the military, when faced with many other competing demands. This study seeks to establish an understanding of how other militaries are incentivizing women to stay in uniform.

The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. In this case, the researcher attempted to remain unbiased by consulting a variety of legitimate sources that provided a wide range of perspectives on the ways that other militaries are retaining women. Using qualitative research presents a challenge to interpret the collected data fairly, thus ensuring that the case study results are unbiased. The researcher primarily used document analysis.

Many of the sources and documents used for this study were from government websites, scholarly (peer-reviewed) journals, and other news websites. Government documents include national security documents, military regulations, and statements made by government officials. When necessary, the researcher judged the reliability of information available on the internet through an understanding of the author, data of information, and type of publication used.² Even using reliable sources, the researcher continued to identify and monitor the possible biases of the government documents, new sources, and academic sources to understand how they may have shaped the collection and interpretation of data.³

The researcher continued to use data to help “build concepts, hypotheses or theories,” rather than selectively including data supporting previously held ideas of how militaries retain women.⁴ Finally, a qualitative study provides a richly descriptive understanding of the phenomenon being studied. In this case, each military service chose policies to assist with retention and many of these policies may work in some capacity for the US Army, though each may require some tailoring to be applicable.

Approach

The researcher conducted a qualitative study to understand what policy options the US Army could consider to increase female officer re-

tention. In the first step, the researcher identified and defined the primary research question by finding a gap in the literature and a possible set of solutions. After identifying a research question, the researcher conducted a thorough literature review to understand why female officers leave the US Army and how the US Army has thought about retention. The scope of this literature review provided answers to the secondary research questions. The third step of this process involved selecting cases to study and identifying a range of possible policy options for the US Army to consider. After identifying those cases, the researcher developed an evaluation model.

The study uses a set of evaluation criteria with research as available to judge whether the US Army could adopt these policies and if they are likely to work. The author identifies which policies the US Army should consider testing to retain female officers. Finally, the researcher provides a series of recommendations about whether policies could be adopted, adopted with modifications, or considered for future adoption. This allowed the researcher to judge each policy against the available data using a standard set of measures.

Evaluation Criteria

To evaluate possible options for selection by the US Army, this study establishes criterion for examining the effectiveness of possible policies, the cost-benefit of possible policies, and whether policies are generally affordable. The author also ranks each policy to determine if this is a good option, a better substitute, or a best possibility for each of these criteria.

When examining effectiveness, this principle specifically looks to determine if a proposed policy would likely help retention efforts, particularly of female officers. It will judge if a policy would not hurt retention efforts, would slightly help retention efforts, or would significantly help retention efforts. One caveat is necessary to this: though the researcher is using data from other nations and other services, these policies are often recent developments and may seem to provide a short-term bump in retention and may not prove to be effective over time. Additionally, these policies, when implemented, may not always produce the intended effects in a specific population. Therefore, the researcher often used judgement to determine which policies will be effective.

A cost-benefit analysis attempts to understand the costs, both monetary and otherwise, of implementing a policy, while balancing those costs with benefits. The researcher specifically seeks to understand the other issues that may arise with some of these concerns. Policies identified as “good” will have initial implementation issues and trade-offs. A policy that is “better” may cause some initial issues, but these will be resolvable.

Ideally, policies identified as “best” will have no major second order effects. These will be judged on available data and may end up being estimates of effects, rather than true data-backed judgments.

Finally, this study examines the affordability of these cost proposals. This category will specifically examine monetary cost. A “good” option will see a significant cost increase. The next category, a “better option” will see a slight increase in cost. Finally, a best option will see no more cost than current programs. Many policies may require additional training, doctrine, or personnel to fully implement. Some will merely require changes as to how the military conducts business. Very few options will be cost free, though some may be more cost effective than others.

Taken together, the researcher will then provide a ranking score based on the three criterion and her judgment of where each policy may fit into the US Army. Given a lack of concrete data, these judgements will be based on as much data as possible from other nations and other services. A table laying out the previous discussion follows.

	Good	Better	Best
Effective	Does not hurt retention efforts	Slightly Helps retention efforts	Significantly helps retention efforts
Cost-Benefit	Will cause initial issues	May cause initial issues	No major second order effects
Affordable	Significant cost increase	Slight increase in cost	No more cost than current programs

Figure 3.1. Evaluation Criteria.

Source: Created by author to help judge options for implementation.

Cross Case and Within Case Methodology

This study uses case study and cross-case comparisons providing “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system.”⁵ A case study is using “intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study is—at least in part—to shed light on a larger class of cases.”⁶ A cross-case method incorporates several cases.⁷ Examining cases in depth and then comparing them allows this study to provide meaningful recommendations to the US Army.

This study specifically considers a few factors within each case as well as comparing cases to the other cases. The factors are interesting as-

pects of retention that “inform the judgements and decisions of practitioners or policymakers...in such a way that sufficient data are collected for the researcher to be able...to explore significant features of the case.”⁸ Dul and Hak note that a comparative case study is one that uses data from two or more instances to achieve the research objective.⁹ Importantly, case study methodology investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, with the understanding that “there will be many more variables of interest than data points.”¹⁰ The aim of a case study should be to generalize, though this may not always be feasible.

While there are some inherent biases and issues with case studies, the context dependent knowledge of each case may prove valuable to the US Army as it considers ways of adapting to different recruiting methods. Ultimately, this research examines what other countries have done to retain women; some of these methods may be more valuable to the US Army than others. The importance lays in identifying and continuing to consider new ways of retention.

Case Study Selection

To provide depth, this study uses four case studies, two from sister services and two from other nations. Both the US Air Force and US Coast Guard have considered how the services must adapt to retain qualified officers, specifically women. The US Coast Guard and US Air Force remain invested in keeping trained individuals in the force and have both recently commissioned studies to understand how and why women leave the military voluntarily. This study uses the efforts that they have made or those they are considering as part of the analysis and recommendations sections.

With almost 200 countries in the world, there were no shortages of possible cases for consideration. Of those, women serve in some form or fashion in most of the militaries. Far fewer militaries think specifically about the need to retain women, as opposed to retention in general. Both Australia and Norway have identified the need to retain more women than the services currently have, so they provided additional case studies for this manuscript. The ADF and NAF provide an understanding of how other militaries are specifically thinking about retaining women.

There are some issues with using different services; the culture of each is significantly different. The US Air Force culture emphasizes machines and technology, while the US Coast Guard is a hybrid military service. While it falls under the Department of Homeland Security for day-to-day operations, in the event of war, the Department of the Navy takes control. Thus, it trains knowing that it may act as a military service. The stresses of each service may vary from the US Army. Each service is made

up of young men and women, recruited from across the United States to serve and defend the nation. While different services may appeal to different members of the population, those who join want to serve.

Data Collection

In qualitative research, there are three major forms of data analysis: interviews, observations, or content and document analysis.¹¹ In this research, the primary form of qualitative research is document analysis and secondary research. The researcher was able to use academic studies as well as government research to provide context for previously disparate research efforts. It remains important that a researcher does not simply rely on previous research without applying a new lens. The primary and secondary research questions provide the divergent point from previous research.

A combination of literature from the Combined Arms Research library, the United States Military Academy library, and the internet all provided a wide range of information to help answer the primary and secondary research questions. In addition, government documents from the Australian and Norwegian governments proved invaluable in conducting this research.

Summary

This chapter describes the methodology used during this research and forms the basis for the analysis conducted in the next chapters. The primary form of research was document analysis using comparative case studies. The next chapter, chapter 4, examines four case studies to answer the primary and secondary research questions.

Notes

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9. Jan Dul and Tony Hak, *Case Study Methodology in Business Research* (Burlington, VT: Elsevier, 2008), 4.
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Chapter 4

Data Presentation and Analysis: Case Studies

We want our Army to look like our nation, and to reflect what's best of our citizens.

—Thomas C. Seamands, Testimony before Subcommittee
on Military Personnel

Introduction

Chapter 2 provided an understanding of the current state of US Army retention for this study. Chapter 3 introduced and described the research methodology used in this study to answer the research questions. The primary research question is: Should the US Army consider adopting specific policies, including career flexibility, fitness testing, and other policies geared towards women that will help to retain trained and talented officers for the next five years? The purpose of this chapter is to analyze and understand the research gathered, then provide answers to the primary and secondary research questions.

Summary of Literature Review

The second chapter introduced a literature review that examined why female officers leave the US Army and how the US Army thinks about retention. Many women leaving the military often cite work-life imbalance and quality of life concerns. The lack of flexibility in a military lifestyle means that officers face a choice between professional and familial responsibilities. Additionally, childcare services may be limited, further pressuring officers who are struggling to balance work obligations with personal goals. Women also cite the struggle to balance professional career gates with having children.

The US Army has tried several measures to increase retention. The first allowed cadets to agree to additional service time prior to their commissioning. Another incentive offered to junior captains was a bonus paid in the form of additional schooling or a monetary incentive. This was available to all junior captains in certain year groups. Some officers were eligible for larger bonuses, based on their service specialty. Additionally, the US Army opened all jobs to women, which was thought to be helpful in increasing retention numbers. The US Army also lengthened and standardized caregiver leave policies. The military further offered a career intermission program allowing service members to take three years off to pursue personal interests. The intermission program proved less effective,

likely due to a combined lack of knowledge about the program and the reluctance of many officers to apply for the opportunity to participate.

US Coast Guard

The US Coast Guard is both a uniformed service and a key component of the US Department of Homeland Security. By law, the US Coast Guard transfers to the Department of Navy in wartime and many of the functions are militaristic in nature. Like other military services, the women maintain high physical readiness standards and may deploy as part of their roles. These deployments may create stress and strain on those serving in the US Coast Guard by requiring them to be away from family.

Women first joined the Women's Reserve of the US Coast Guard in 1949, then transferred to the active duty US Coast Guard in 1973, when Congress officially abolished the Women's Reserve. An initial experiment with a female-only recruit company ended after just one class; after that, all recruit companies for basic training were mixed gender. In 1976 women began to serve in all aviation roles and by 1978, the commandant of the US Coast Guard opened all roles to women. Importantly, the US Coast Guard codified this equality in 1983, when the service established its policy on women in combat, noting that "the men and women on our vessels are trained and function as a team. Removal of women during wartime would degrade operational readiness while replacement personnel are trained and acquire experience."¹

In a study encompassing 2005-2016, the US Coast Guard found that women leave the guard at higher rates than men. The gap for active duty women, enlisted personnel, and warrant officers is 8.7 percent at four years of service and grows to 12.3 percent at ten years. This gap remains steady at 19 years, suggesting that there may be something that occurs between the four and ten year mark that the US Coast Guard could do to prevent the sudden exit of females at enlisted and warrant ranks. Active duty officers in the US Coast Guard show similar attrition rates between men and women. The gap between men and women is 5.6 percent at five years and grows to 12.6 percent at ten years. The difference between ten years and 19 years is just 0.3 percent, again suggesting that the gap stabilizes and that retention efforts should focus on the period between four and ten years. This study does not consider the new blended retirement system, which may allow for many service members to leave, even after they have completed ten or more years of service.²

The 2019 State of the United States Coast Guard address by Admiral Karl Schultz noted that the key to US Coast Guard success remains the diverse workforce and that readiness is a top priority. He stated that child-

care affordability, affordable housing, and the talent management initiative are among his top priorities.³ He also highlighted the need to study what drives minorities to leave the service, noting that the service had commissioned a women’s retention study and further planned to conduct analysis on other underrepresented minorities.

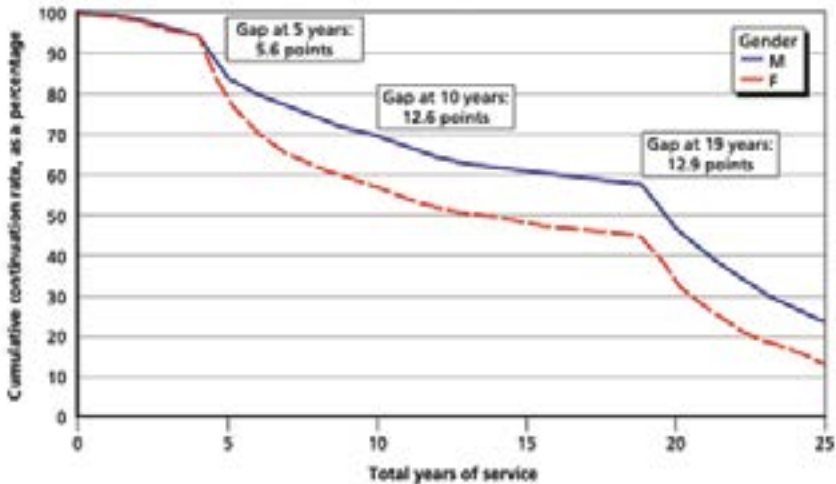


Figure 4.1. Cumulative Continuation Rates by Gender for Active-Duty Commissioned Officers, Fiscal Years 2005-2016.

Source: Kimberly Curry Hall, Kirsten M. Keller, David Schulker, Sarah Weiland, Katherine L. Kidder, and Nelson Lim, *Improving Gender Diversity in the US Coast Guard* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2019), x, accessed 20 August 2019, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2770.html.

Surge Staffing

As part of his state of the coast guard address, Admiral Schultz announced that a new policy allowing for surge staffing from the US Coast Guard Reserve would help backfill units while service members are on “convalescent and caregiver leave” so that new parents could focus on their families, rather than worry about the impacts of their absence. In this policy, a member of the reserve force serves on active duty while replacing a member of the team who is out for maternity leave, allowing the organization to remain fully operational.⁴ Both men and women serving as primary or secondary caregivers who take non-chargeable leave for more

than 41 days are eligible for this program; of note, this program provides for prenatal leave (30 days), maternity convalescent leave (42 days), and primary caregiver leave (42 days).⁵

This policy specifically works in cases where a woman may not be able to continue working in certain specialties after reaching a certain period in her pregnancy. For instance, in the US Army, women are not allowed to go to the range or the field after 20 weeks' gestation. For a woman who is pregnant and part of an infantry squad, her backfill may replace her as soon as she can no longer perform her required duties as part of her squad. Of note, a resourceful program like this could also apply to all soldiers who need extended convalescent leave or personal leave to care for aging family members but do not meet the established threshold for the career intermission pilot program.

Surge Staffing Evaluation

A program like this “convalescent and caregiver leave,” would be unlikely to hurt retention efforts and may actually assist in bolstering retention efforts for both men and women. The individuals who join the military often feel as though they are a valued part of a team; few soldiers want to let their team down. As a result, this program is likely to bolster retention efforts. This program will not only benefit the soldiers and officers who are pregnant, but also could benefit those reservists who want to spend a short period of time on active duty. This could be while they are transitioning from one job to another or as they decide whether to apply to be on active duty full time; thus allowing soldiers to test drive their chosen career. This “convalescent and caregiver leave” program could also apply to service members who adopt children, allowing them to take advantage of primary or secondary caregiver leave. The US Coast Guard program offers up to 120 days of active duty time and a similar program in the US Army may even be slightly longer, given restrictions on field duty. This program will likely require additional regulations and training to understand the permeability between the active duty and reserve force. Therefore, this “convalescent and caregiver leave” program will cause initial issues, though adequate regulations and training will help to assuage many of these difficulties.

Finally, the program is likely to cause a slight increase in cost as officers transition from active duty to the reserves and back. Many of these costs are largely accounted for, simply as part of personnel efforts. The surge staffing in the US Coast Guard required central funding, a commitment that the US Army needs to make for this program to apply.⁶ A program like this one may provide true flexibility, allowing reservists to serve

their annual training in a substantive manner while also allowing active duty service members the flexibility to take the extended leave needed after the birth or adoption of a child. Overall, this policy, if applied to the US Army, would likely increase retention efforts and could ultimately have much greater retention effects. If this program allows for temporary backfills at both the lowest levels and the staff levels, then it could provide one way of creating a better work-life balance, for both men and women. An initial evaluation table follows.

	Good	Better	Best
Effective		Slightly Helps retention efforts	
Cost-Benefit	Will cause initial issues		
Affordable		Slight increase in cost	

Figure 4.2. Surge Staffing Evaluation Criteria.

Source: Created by author.

Body Weight Standards

In addition to permeability across components, Admiral Schultz announced that the US Coast Guard would revise weight standards that affect women disproportionately. In August 2019, the service piloted a new one-year program that will “assess fitness based on abdominal circumference rather than a height-and weight ratio.”⁷ With this change, the US Coast Guard allows for testing through a maximum allowable weight standard, a body fat assessment, or an abdominal circumference standard. If members fail to meet those standards but are deemed healthy by medical professionals, then they may take a physical fitness test to prove their fitness level.⁸

Body Weight Standards Evaluation

This policy would likely help retention efforts across the force. Though the US Coast Guard continues to pilot this effort, the US Air Force has used a similar program for years. According to US Air Force standards, service members are evaluated by abdominal circumference measurements, which provides a body composition score instead of the body

mass index. If they fail this abdominal circumference test, then the chain of command administers a body mass index test. Finally, if airmen fail the body mass index screen, the service uses a body fat analysis. All of this allows for increased flexibility in how service members are evaluated for fitness standards.

Physical fitness, particularly after pregnancy, continues to be a stressor for women. Additionally, the height/weight standards are often perceived to be unfair, with a negative bias against women, particularly those who have more athletic builds. A program that considers different body types, rather than relying on a set standard body type, would likely benefit retention efforts.

The US Army's physical fitness assessment shift to the US Army combat fitness test, is a test that requires increased muscle mass, moves away from a standard screening chart, and emphasizes a more personalized estimate of "health," this may prove beneficial. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that a height-weight measurement can help to identify a soldier's body mass index, but recognizes that athletes often have higher body mass index numbers due to their increased muscularity.⁹ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also notes that waist circumference can help to estimate a potential disease risk but that health care providers should use this measurement combined with a series of appropriate health assessments to determine the soldier's true level of risk.¹⁰ As a result, the cost-benefit is that there will likely be some initial issues, as commanders and healthcare providers adjust to differing levels of responsibility. Additionally, there may be some long-term issues, if healthcare providers fail to adequately screen soldiers for underlying health conditions. All service members conduct a periodic health assessment annually; this would be an appropriate time to discuss the subsequent health risks of high body mass index with soldiers. Should the need arise, healthcare providers can work with commanders and officers to develop a plan of action. Finally, this program is affordable for the average commander and requires less effort. In the long term, this may cause additional issues with height and weight and obesity concerns, though these issues may be dealt with through established health care programs, instead of through the chain of command.

Temporary Separations Program

The US Coast Guard offers a program under the temporary separations program. This temporary separations program allows service members to take a temporary leave of absence from the US Coast Guard for several reasons, including the birth or adoption of a child. Specifically,

this part of the program is the separation for care of newborn children program. Male and female service members may request this temporary separation but will return to active duty after a period of affiliation with the US Coast Guard Reserve; this affiliation allows for an easier transition back to active duty. This program requires a separation period of at least six months and at most up to two years.

	Good	Better	Best
Effective			Significantly helps retention efforts
Cost-Benefit		May cause initial issues	
Affordable			No more cost than current programs

Figure 4.3. Body Weight Standards Evaluation Criteria.

Source: Created by author.

Of note, this temporary separation program provides a way for service members to separate from the force and then focus on “personal interests/issues they might be precluded from performing by remaining on active duty.”¹¹ Like the surge staffing program, US Coast Guard officers may leave active duty for a period of time to deal with issues affecting their lives. This program allows for a longer period of temporary separation than the surge staffing program, promising officers who use the program the opportunity to return to active duty at their current rank and grade, but with their date of rank adjusted. Service members may only use the temporary separations program once in their career and officers must have additionally served for at least their initial commitment on active duty. Officers must also be in good standing; approval is contingent on the needs of the service. These stipulations may stop many officers from pursuing this option.

Temporary Separations Program Evaluation

The temporary separations program, and specifically the care of newborn child program, may offer increased flexibility for periods of up to one year. This program permits service members to adjust to changing life circumstances, including the birth or adoption of a child. This program will not hurt retention efforts and will likely help retention efforts, though

additional study on the efficacy of the program is required. In the US Coast Guard the approval authority for this program is the commander of the US Coast Guard personnel service center.

A program like this in the US Army would likely cause initial issues. The career intermission pilot program, discussed in the literature review, has not been fully used in the US Army, so a temporary separations program would require educating the force and providing clear standards of who may be eligible to use the program. The US Army could publish clear guidance, detailing what grades and which specialties can participate in this program, which would create the flexibility to retain additional officers, including those who do not have children, and allowing them to pursue short-term personal interests. These short-term personal interests can be assisting aging family members, pursuing in-person civilian educational opportunities, or recovering from physical and mental trauma. If implemented with proper standards and increased education, this program could be useful to retention, offering service members the opportunity to adapt to changing personal circumstances.

Finally, this program may require a slight increase in cost, as service members transition from active duty to reserve duty and vice versa. This cost may be worthwhile, as service members who are in demanding and technical specialties may elect to remain on active duty longer if they have the temporary flexibility to leave active duty when necessary. Overall, if used in conjunction with the existing career intermission pilot program, this temporary separations program will allow service members to have additional flexibility in their careers and will likely keep them in uniform longer.

The US Coast Guard continues to consider how best to retain women on active duty. The previous section identified three policies and examined each to determine whether it may be an effective, beneficial, and affordable program. Overall, shifting from strictly a body-weight based standard for physical fitness standards is likely to be beneficial to retention efforts. The US Army should consider this policy, in conjunction with health care providers. Surge staffing, which allows reserve personnel to transition to the active force by temporarily replacing active duty service members, will likely have a beneficial effect on retention, though it may prove complicated to manage. A more robust temporary separations program may also prove beneficial to the US Army. Previous experiences with the career intermission pilot program shows that service members did not understand the program or the requirements to participation in the pilot effort. The US Army may need to consider creating a temporary separations branch to fully implement surge staffing or a temporary separations program; both

may offer increased flexibility to women in the military. Instead of adopting one of these policies outright, the US Army should consider permeability across the active, reserve, and US National Guard forces, which would allow service members the ability to transition more easily by supporting their needs and retaining them in uniform longer.

	Good	Better	Best
Effective		Slightly helps retention efforts	
Cost-Benefit		May cause initial issues	
Affordable		Slight increase in cost	

Figure 4.4. Temporary Separations Program Evaluation Criteria.

Source: Created by author.

US Air Force

The US Air Force allowed women to join in July 1948, though they served as part of the US Women’s Air Force until 1976, when the US Women’s Air Force disbanded. A 1973 Supreme Court decision decided that women in the military were entitled to the same benefits as their male peers. This was established when US Air Force Lieutenant Sharon Frontiero brought a lawsuit alleging that she was denied housing and medical allowances that were due to her husband because of her military service. This decision was an important one for equality in the military, as previously women had to prove that their husbands were dependent on them for over half of their income, making service while married a more difficult prospect.

Women first entered pilot training in 1976, though remained banned from fighter pilot training until 1993.¹² After 1993, the US military’s policy on women changed and they were eligible for assignment to any unit which they had qualified for but they would remain “excluded from units below the brigade level whose primary mission is to engage in direct ground combat.”¹³ The first women to qualify as pilots to fly the F-15E graduated from flight training in 1994, though several others before them would likely have chosen to fly fighter aircraft had they been allowed to do so.

Now, women serve throughout the US Air Force, making up over 20 percent of the force. Just under 22 percent of officers are women, including 806 female pilots, 347 navigators, and 233 air battle managers. Women remain underrepresented at the highest ranks of leadership and US Air Force officials have noted that women leave the service at higher rates than their male counterparts. Because of this, RAND Corporation conducted a study in 2018, attempting to understand what factors cause women to leave active duty and how the US Air Force can adjust policy to drive female retention. The study found that work-life balance and meeting family commitments were among the top reasons why women left the service after their initial or work-based commitments were over, but prior to retirement.¹⁴ The report found that rigid career timelines drove many women to leave the US Air Force. This report also identified gaps in continuation rates that were significant and how women in both rated and non-rated specialties left the US Air Force at higher rates than their male peers. Rated specialties include pilot, navigator, combat systems officers, and air battle manager; all other specialties are non-rated.¹⁵

Two policies that the US Air Force adopted are examined in the following pages. In conjunction with the DoD directive to allow for twelve weeks of maternity leave in 2016, the US Air Force further allowed postpartum women to delay physical fitness testing for up to one year after the birth of a child.¹⁶ The US Air Force is also considering the possibility of expanding child care options to accommodate shift workers, dual military families, and others who often need child care outside of traditional child development center hours. This policy would mirror one already in place at several US Air Force installations.

Fitness Testing

The US Air Force allows postpartum service members one year from the date of their child's birth before they have to take a physical fitness test and meet appropriate physical standards, including height and weight standards. The current US Air Force physical fitness assessment includes a 1.5 mile timed run, one minute of pushups, one minute of timed sit-ups, and an abdominal circumference measurement. Airmen must take this on an annual or semi-annual basis depending on the score earned; better scores require this testing to be conducted annually. Prior to 2015, postpartum women were required to take this test by the "end of the calendar month that occurs 180 days after delivery."¹⁷

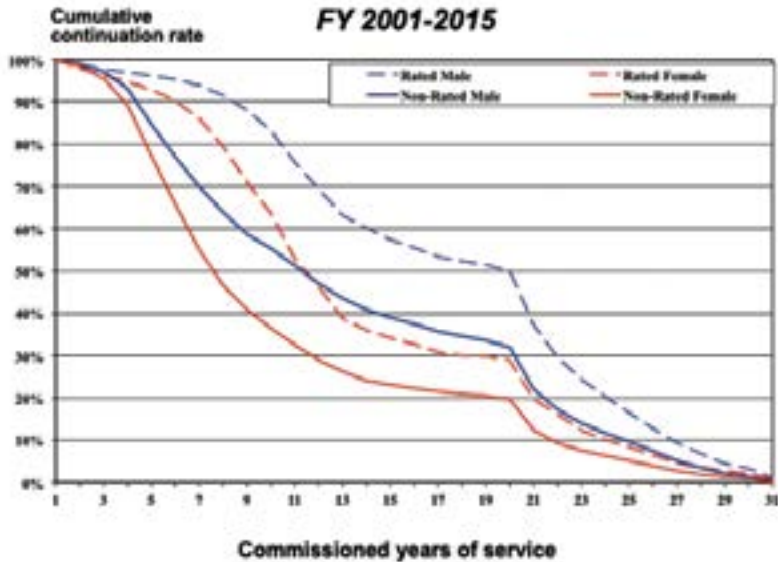


Figure 4.5. Cumulative Continuation Rates by Gender for Rated and Non-rated US Air Force Officers.

Source: Kristen M. Keller, Kimberly Curry Hall, Miriam Matthews, Leslie Adrienne Payne, Lisa Saum-Manning, Douglas Yeung, David Schulker, Stefan Zavislan, and Nelson Lim, *Addressing Barriers to Female Officer Retention in the Air Force* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018), viii, accessed 20 August 2019, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2073.html.

As part of the US Air Force’s Diversity and Inclusion initiative in 2015, the service expanded the physical fitness testing exemption from six months after birth to 12 months after birth, including any pregnancy that lasted over 20 weeks.¹⁸ While the US Air Force may have adopted this policy because of diversity and inclusion initiatives, earlier research suggests that US Air Force women do not achieve pre-pregnancy fitness standards at the six-month mark and that there “was a significantly lower pass rate at six-months postpartum compared to the pre-pregnancy timeframe.”¹⁹ This study also noted that women may have difficulty reaching minimum fitness standards, contributing to “feelings of being overwhelmed and stress on the part of the individual, but also can result in more time away from the duty section in order to do additional training.”²⁰ Results from this study noted that women “showed significant difference for the abdominal circumference, 1.5 mile timed run, and pushups component measurements between the pre-pregnancy and postpartum time frame.”²¹ The researchers

found that this data aligned with previous studies in the US Army as well as in civilian populations. Additionally, the researchers found that only 73 women (68 percent) completed all components of the physical fitness test after pregnancy; previously, 98 women (92 percent) completed all aspects before pregnancy.²² The researchers note that limitations of this study include that this study may not be fully generalizable to other military services. They recommend that the military branches continue to “explore active duty women’s physiologic changes during and after childbirth” while also understanding that a reasonable extension of the testing period would be for nine to 12 months after birth.²³

A follow-up study examined the live experience of USAF women preparing for the fitness assessment and found that many women were able to succeed in passing their fitness assessments, but that those who performed the best had also received support from their chain of command and families.²⁴ A 2014 study suggested that postpartum women may be at risk for mental and physical illness and have also been “shown to have decreased functionality during the first three months postpartum.”²⁵

Fitness Testing Evaluation

Author’s note: this study was finished in June 2020; by March of 2021, the US Army had changed its policy for individual soldiers who had given birth, providing them with an extra six months to take and pass their physical fitness test, as well as meet their height and weight standards. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many others have appreciated this change. The new policy puts the US Army in alignment with the US Navy, the US Air Force, and the US Marine Corps. While initial reports suggest that this change has not caused issues with readiness, promotion, or culture in US Army units; Table 4.6. notes that this change may cause initial issues. The author believes that additional time must pass before a true understanding of readiness, promotion, and culture can be assessed.

Extending the time that women have after childbirth to take and pass a US Army fitness test helps retention of female officers in the US Army. Studies from the US Air Force and civilian institutions suggest that women do not achieve pre-pregnancy fitness standards in the first six months after giving birth. The US Army is shifting from the US Army physical fitness test to the US Army combat fitness test. This shift will require soldiers to move from a physical test of two minutes of pushups, two minutes of sit-ups, and a timed two mile run to a six-event physical test including a three-repetition maximum deadlift, a standing power throw, a two-minute time hand-release pushup, a sprint-drag-carry, a leg tuck, and a timed two mile run. Additionally, the US Army physical fitness test primarily assess-

es muscular and aerobic endurance, while the US Army combat fitness test more strongly aligns with combat readiness.²⁶ The new events are arguably both more intensive to train for as well as more difficult to conduct fully while pregnant—requiring muscular strength, muscular endurance, power, speed, agility, cardio endurance, balance, flexibility, coordination, and reaction time. Therefore, extending the timeframe for physical fitness testing from six months to 12 months will help retention by allowing post-partum women additional time to adjust to their new realities and train their bodies for these varied tasks.

This extra time to train and allow women to reach pre-pregnancy physical fitness standards will be an effective way to keep women in uniform when combined with the legislation that allows for post-partum women to defer deployments for up to one year after childbirth. While many women will continue to struggle with work-life balance, this extra time will allow a gradual recovery while adjusting to the significant changes in their lives and their bodies. While this change may cause some initial issues, as commanders may need to readjust their expectations for women’s physical fitness after childbirth, an extended time frame for testing should come with no increase in cost to the US Army. It may also decrease healthcare costs, if women are allowed to recondition their bodies gradually, rather than simply rushing back to physical training when their bodies may not be ready so soon after giving birth. The US Army combat fitness test is designed to change the culture of fitness in the US Army, while increasing soldier lethality and reducing attrition rates; allowing for extra time to recover from a physically traumatic event is in alignment with the US Army goals for the US Army combat fitness test.²⁷

	Good	Better	Best
Effective			Significantly helps retention efforts
Cost-Benefit		May cause initial issues	
Affordable			No increase in cost

Figure 4.6. Fitness Testing Evaluation Criteria.

Source: Created by author.

Expanded Child Care Options

Many US Air Force officers work abnormal hours due to flying duties, shift work, and other guard duties. One of the most highly cited reasons why officers leave the US Air Force is difficulty balancing work-life concerns; the need for childcare and long-waiting lists for placement at childcare facilities only exacerbates this problem.²⁸ In 2016, Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter announced changes to the child development centers operating hours from a minimum of 12 hours to 14 hours; unfortunately this change was not fully implemented and still fails to account for shift workers, overnight workers, and other work schedules.²⁹ The RAND Corporation found that many women in the US Air Force were disappointed that the hours of the child development centers did not align with their work schedules and their work hours.

Currently, the US Air Force provides several programs for non-traditional childcare hours. Officers working more than 50 hours a week who are already using their allocated full-time childcare may use childcare through the extended duty care program, where providers offer evening and weekend childcare. Specifically designed for mission related duty, extended duty days, temporary shift changes, rapid mobilization, deployment, and short notice temporary duty assignments; this program can provide much needed support to families working non-traditional hours.

Families assigned to Malmstrom, Minot, and F.E. Warren US Air Force installations where active duty members guard missile sites for 24-hour periods or longer and who do not have anyone else available to provide childcare, may use the missile care program. This program allows for overnight, weekend, and holiday childcare in homes, but this program remains limited in scope.

All the services allow for family care centers; childcare centers run out of a private home. Often run by military spouses, these also offer flexible night and weekend hours, though they provide less flexibility for the staff of these facilities. Licensing and establishment of these centers may take anywhere from two to nine months, limiting their usefulness if a provider is suddenly subject to a short-notice move with a service member. These centers do provide a lower-cost option to DoD.

Additionally, DoD announced that beginning on 1 June 2020, military families would receive higher priority in childcare programs, even at the expense of DoD civilians who already use the childcare.³⁰ While this will assist with moving children off the waitlist for care, it does not help expand access to childcare for the actual hours that are required. It additionally introduces a level of disparity into the system; those families

who now no longer take priority have just over 90 days to make other arrangements. Many of the families affected are DoD civilians. While the US military considers the whole force, to include active and reserve components and the civilian workforce which plays a key role, this initiative may not treat all members as vital parts of the team.³¹

Expanded Child Care Options Evaluation

Increased and flexible childcare hours will help with retention; but the startup cost of these initiatives may make many policymakers hesitant to attempt these options. Without creative solutions to these pressing problems, the US Army will continue to lose qualified female officers. A RAND Corporation study using survey data from 2014 notes that “nearly all of the problems cited with childcare focused on day care.”³² Long wait times for admission and unsatisfactory operating hours remain thorny issues for officers trying to balance a career with a family. Sims et al notes that the US Army soldiers and officers interviewed often focused on being self-sufficient and resilient, even while often describing the “stressful reality of a ‘24-hour Army’ where shift work was often required and workloads were high.”³³ Soldiers noted that shift work and early training requirements often make it “difficult to drop off and pick up their children from childcare because child development centers do not offer care 24 hours a day.”³⁴ Child development centers need to match the ‘24-hour Army’ workday.

Expanded childcare hours that officers are aware of and can apply for will be effective at helping retention efforts. Expanding the family child care programs, making certifications more streamlined, and opening additional facilities, will help officers while providing high quality childcare in smaller settings. Knowing that children are well cared for allows service members to perform at higher standards. Expansion of on-post childcare services will also cause initial issues and will cost significantly more than keeping the standards of care as they are.

One installation in the US Army, Fort Jackson, SC, has a 24-hour childcare center. With a staff of about 150 officials, the installation childcare center allows for drill sergeants and others who work nontraditional hours to place their children in overnight care if needed.³⁵ This childcare center could be used as a model at other US Army installations. While childcare will remain an expensive proposition, inaccessible childcare will create greater problems, including increased absent workers, increased turnover, less stability in the workforce, and less satisfied workers.³⁶ One possible option is to transfer the burden of overnight shifts to unmarried and childless officers. A shift like this will detrimentally create inequalities

in the service, and will further expand the perceived special treatment that many claim married officers receive.

	Good	Better	Best
Effective			Significantly helps retention efforts
Cost-Benefit	Will cause initial issues		
Affordable	Significant increase in cost		

Figure 4.7. Expanded Childcare Hours Evaluation Criteria.

Source: Created by author.

The US Air Force has identified that work-life concerns, particularly the ability to balance fitness testing after birth and childcare accessibility are two ways to keep female officers in uniform. Delaying fitness testing for up to one year after birth while keeping in alignment with deployment requirements is a relatively low-cost policy that would allow women to ease back more gradually into fitness while still balancing other concerns in the months after childbirth. While childcare will remain an issue, expanding care availability is an option that will also keep more female officers in uniform. Expanding the number of hours available as well as 24-hour facilities, combined with expanded family childcare centers will help to alleviate the burden associated with maintaining a full-time job and caring for children. Next, an international force is examined for addressing women’s equality.

Australia

Women volunteered to serve as part of the Australian Nursing Service to support the men fighting in the Boer Wars in South Africa between 1899-1902. They volunteered to serve with the First and Second Australian Imperial Forces, supporting the British in both World War I and World War II. In contrast, US women served in separate women’s corps until the mid-1980’s when women could officially join the integrated United States Army, Navy and Air Force; women may now serve in any job that they qualify for. In 2011, when Defense Minister Stephen Smith noted that it was about being able to put the best people on the line regardless of their gender and that all soldiers would compete based on abilities, public

reactions were mixed. Initial fears that opening all roles to women would weaken the standards in combat specialties like mine disposal diver, air force defense guard, and frontline infantry and artillery positions—were overstated because of a historical reluctance to allow women into the roles.³⁷

Initially the Australian Defense Association, a security think tank in Australia, countered the differences between sexes in muscle distribution, centers of gravity, and rate of recovery from physical exertion that would likely make women more vulnerable in combat.³⁸ Recent publications from the Australian Defense Association suggest that while operational standards should not be lowered to encourage participation by women, there are no physiological, emotional, or “insurmountable teamwork” barriers to employing women.³⁹

While the ADF maintains a focus on equality, Australian society has often stumbled in this effort. Many senators within the Australian Parliament claim that sexism remains endemic in the political culture.⁴⁰ Recently, several members of Parliament have left Parliament, claiming that the job, requiring a posting to remote Canberra, is incompatible with family life. While the ADF has made many strides in closing the gender divide, there are still issues within the services.

According to the most recent *Women in the ADF Report 2017-2018*, women make up 17.9 percent of the ADF, up from 14.4 percent in 2013.⁴¹ Much like the American military, women serve in the Australian Air Force and Australian Navy at greater numbers than in the Australian Army. The Australian Air Force has 22.1 percent women, while the Australian Navy has 21.5 percent women. The ADF has 14.3 percent women.⁴² Each of the services has set a target goal for women by 2023: 25 percent for the Australian Air Force and Australian Navy and 15 percent in the Australian Army.⁴³ Additionally, in 2017, 31.5 percent of new recruits were women, the highest percentage recruited among NATO and partner allies.⁴⁴ The ADF notes that while women separate from the ADF at similar rates to men, they are still serving for less time than men.⁴⁵

The annual *Women in the ADF Report* notes that women and men cite the ability to make a career change while still young enough as the top reason why both groups leave.⁴⁶ Women are more likely to leave for family related reasons than men; the second and third most common reasons for women to leave are impact of job demands on family and personal life and a desire for less separation from family. Men cite better career prospects in civilian life and limited opportunities in their present qualification as their second and third reasons for leaving. This data implies that women are more likely to be affected by balancing work and family commitments,

like what many female US Army officers suggest as their primary reasons for leaving.⁴⁷

Women in Australia struggle to balance having children with the career gates of the military. One member of an Australian focus group commented that she planned her conception timeline to make sure that she could attend the Australian Command and Staff College so as not to fall behind in her career timeline and to remain competitive for senior military ranks.⁴⁸ Other women spoke of the fact that they would have more career flexibility in non-technical support roles, including administration, human resources, and logistics or that while all specialties were open to them, some required passage through an old boy's club to make it.⁴⁹

This study examines three measures that the ADF is using to retain female officers. First, it will examine the annual report that the ADF uses to track and understand trends in female service. This study will also examine flexible work arrangements, including home-based work and alternative location work arrangements. Finally, the author will seek to understand the total workforce model, an initiative that allows for increased permeability across service components. While the ADF has several other initiatives, including increased recruiting efforts and projects to onboard female officers, those are primarily concerned with entrance into the service. Choosing the right men and women to serve is important and may prove vital to increased retention, though these initiatives are outside the scope of this study.

Annual Report

In 2013, as part of ongoing efforts to understand the experience of women in the ADF, the service first published what would become an annual report, *Women in the ADF*. Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Elizabeth Broderick, found that the services were generally unaware of widespread tensions in the service and recommended that an annual information report specifically include the following details: rate at which women participate, their experiences, access to flexible work schedules, and sexual harassment and abuse.⁵⁰ The report tracks “trends regarding women’s employment and experience, identify areas of concern, and highlight successful initiatives across the three Services.”⁵¹

These annual reports use data collected by the services to understand and identify the demographics of who serves in what specialties and for what length of time. Additionally, it tracks the number of male and female service members who take parental leave (both paid and unpaid) as well as those who take career breaks. Importantly, this report uses data collected as part of the ADF-wide *YourSay* survey, a survey that allows service

members to answer questions about their job satisfaction. Additionally, this report collects and aggregates information from the ADF exit survey, allowing for an understanding about what drives service members to leave the service. Finally, this report functions as a means for the different services to share their best practices and the perceived benefits of those practices. A report like this may not directly impact retention, but it will help to shed light on an understanding of who serves, who leaves, and why they depart.

Though early reports provide mostly data, the most recent reports also provide actionable steps that the services are taking to recruit and retain women as well as measuring success against key performance indicators.⁵² The reports also include benchmarks that determine what “success” is for each of the key indicators. A recent report example follows, “what success looks like for retention.”

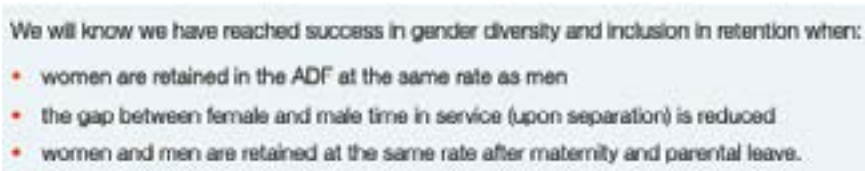


Figure 4.8. Example of Achievable Measures used in the *Women in the ADF* Report to Identify Barriers to Women’s Continued Service in the Military. *Source:* Department of Defence, *Women in the ADF Report 2017-2018* (Canberra, Australia: Department of Defence, 2019), 28.

Annual Report Evaluation

Using an annual report that aggregates data about women’s experiences across the US Army will not necessarily help retention efforts. The data collected can influence policy by allowing decision makers to understand what drives retention and which policy levers may increase retention efforts. Of note, at least two previous studies on retention recommend that the services implement surveys to understand why and identify how retention is different for men and women.⁵³ An annual report from NATO on gender perspectives in each of its member and partner countries notes that DoD identified the need to collect data on retention efforts, though these surveys have yet to be distributed.⁵⁴

In this case, the measure will not directly impact retention efforts. An understanding of what causes women to leave the US Army, what works

for retention and recruiting, and what does not work has no major second order effects. The program will require additional data collection and analysis but should ultimately assist in recruiting and retention efforts, a significant focus for the US Army, particularly as the number one weapon system remains the American soldier. Additionally, a DoD wide annual report allows the services to share best practices, develop an understanding of the unique challenges that each service has, and work side by side to overcome those issues; standardizing personnel policies throughout the joint force may prove beneficial for retention.

	Good	Better	Best
Effective	Does not hurt retention efforts		
Cost-Benefit			No major second order effects
Affordable		Slight increase in cost	

Figure 4.9. Annual Report Evaluation Criteria.

Source: Created by author.

Flexible Work Arrangements

The Australian Human Rights Commission Review of 2012 notes that many women—and some men—were practicing informal flexible work arrangements that allow parents to be present for important events in their children’s lives. This review also notes that while informal arrangements could help individual members to stay in the military, formalized agreements would allow members to be certain of their ability to attend key events.⁵⁵ Acknowledging the stress and strain of serving in the ADF, the Australian Government’s Department of Defence offers several flexible work arrangements, including home located work, variable working hours, alternate located work and remote overseas work. These options offer flexibility to “enhance the longer-term retention of all defence members.”⁵⁶ Under these four arrangements, service members continue to work a set number of hours, although the timing and location may be different.⁵⁷ Both the service member and the approving authority must agree to any arrangements and there are certain jobs and positions which may not be conducive to many of these arrangements.

Home located work is appropriate for telework operations, where a service member completes work “at a specified location outside of their normal workplace.”⁵⁸ This arrangement may be temporary or used regularly. Theoretically, a program like this could allow a service member to move closer to family for a period, while remaining employed.

The variable work hours program allows service members to “vary their start and finish times” to suit their needs. This may be for a one-time arrangement or used as part of an ongoing arrangement.⁵⁹ This option allows service members to work a set number of hours within a given period, rather than making sure that members are present and accounted for during “normal” duty hours. Again, this program would not be appropriate for all specialties and not during field exercises, but would provide some flexibility for garrison-based activities.

Alternate location work allows members to work from places other than their home of residence.⁶⁰ Finally, remote overseas work allows members to work in their ADF position while residing overseas. This would allow service members to accompany a partner overseas to keep a family together.

While flexible work options are often used to help parents balance out the demands of jobs and families, the ADF also allows it “to reduce the burden of long commutes, to pursue personal interests or study, or to care for aging parents.”⁶¹ The ADF cautions that not all jobs allow for these flexible work arrangements, though supervisors “are to accommodate flexible work arrangements, except when genuine operational priorities exist.”⁶²

The Australia research council conducted a study, finding that the “members’ perceptions of and access to flexible work remain an issue.”⁶³ Initial efforts at flexible work arrangements were often conducted in an informal manner, with some able to take advantage of these tools, and others were forbidden. This report found that changes in family structures, social roles, an increasingly knowledgeable and expert workforce, with greater numbers of dual-earner couples and sole parents, along with the rapid expansion of information technology; all increase the demand and the need for more flexible work arrangements.⁶⁴ Most of the members interviewed for the study noted that they desired to remain a full-time active member, but need to have some control over their lives. This control may be to pick up children at school, to participate in sport, or work from home to supervise home repairs.⁶⁵ The researchers note that both men and women used flexible work arrangements and both benefitted from the increased flexibility. Finally, the study found that flexible work arrangements are not a minority interest and subsequently will benefit all members.⁶⁶

Flexible Work Arrangements Evaluation

The US Army could implement flexible work arrangements to allow female officers better personal control over their day to day work schedules. Of note, while this program may benefit female officers, for maximum use, it must be applied to all members as available based on the needs of the US Army and the role that each service member fills. Though the traditional military work day begins at 0900 and ends at 1700, typically after a morning group physical training session, additional flexibility would benefit all soldiers, particularly if it is formalized through ongoing arrangements, where both the soldiers or officers and their supervisors understand the terms and conditions as well as the standards of required work. In addition, programs like alternate work location or remote overseas work that allow for temporary home work from a different location, could allow dual military couples the ability to move together, while one of them continues to work for their last unit of assignment from the new location. Not meant as a permanent solution, an arrangement like this could allow flexibility during a stressful relocation cycle. It also may provide service members the opportunity to temporarily relocate for educational, familial, or other personal opportunities.

Flexible work arrangements, such as telework and work from home options are currently in use due to the worldwide pandemic declared 11 March 2020. While the current situation has shifted many US Army officers to a telework status, a more controlled option, during a normal work period would help retention efforts. Within weeks of the declaration of the pandemic, the Pentagon introduced a commercial virtual remote environment, a cloud-based web service to allow for videoconferencing and collaboration.⁶⁷ While there have been issues with this rollout, including security, the current crisis has shown that it is possible for this flexibility to remain within the military.

Variable work arrangements are those that allow for officers to work a set number of hours within a prescribed period. If implemented, these could help retention efforts by allowing for later starts or earlier departures on a routine basis. The biggest issue when adopting these arrangements is the need for a cultural mindset shift from supervisors who assume that workers are not working if they are not physically present.

The current situation indicates that implementation of telework and variable work hour options would cause some initial issues with appropriate access as well as an understanding from the chain of command about expectations during flexible work arrangements. With proper planning and updates to information technology, both work from home options and vari-

able work hours could easily allow officers, particularly female officers, to have additional flexibility. The Australians found that flexible work arrangements do not contribute to the gendered divide of responsibilities if all members have equal access, based on type of job and current operational requirements. Access and flexibility will remain key to the success of an initiative like this. Not every job will be eligible for a program like this, but with a mindset shift, more officers could benefit from a program that allows for a telework or variable work hours program.

In response to the pandemic, Defense Department Chief Information Officer Dana Deasy notes that “we are creating a much more robust, enhanced teleworking capability.”⁶⁸ The capability to work remotely is not the problem. Adopting these capabilities will require a sustained commitment to flexibility which could immensely benefit retention statistics if people understand that their personal priorities may be able to take center stage when necessary.

Finally, there will be a slight increase in cost associated with this transition. First, to be able to understand the varied arrangements, the US Army will need additional regulations and a process to apply for these options. Second, the US Army may need to provide additional information technology infrastructure, though after the current situation subsides, this may already be in place. Overall, having additional day to day flexibility will only assist in retention efforts.

	Good	Better	Best
Effective			Significantly helps retention efforts
Cost-Benefit		May cause initial issues	
Affordable		Slight increase in cost	

Figure 4.10. Flexible Work Arrangements Evaluation Criteria.

Source: Created by author.

Total Workforce Model

Originally designed as Project Suakin to allow members of the ADF Reserve easier entrance to active duty to allow for their skills to be properly employed, the plan evolved to allow ADF members the flexibility to move between Regular Army and Reserve Army components. This evo-

lution also led to a rebranding and the program is now the total workforce model. The Australian military wanted to allow members to make decisions about their current job needs and desires, while still retaining critical skills and trades in the military. A survey of 10,000 ADF members found that active duty members wanted additional flexibility and reservists wanted more opportunities to serve.

Total workforce model has two major components that distinguish it from previous options. One is a secure online portal that allows employees, both current and those who have left the organization, the opportunity to indicate their availability and see what openings the organization may have available. The second major component is a work force model that offers “a sliding scale of employee commitment to the organization.”⁶⁹ This scale ranges from full time service to reserve service, wherein members serve for a set number of days a month, to reserve members who provide a contingent capability at short notice, to those who indicate a desire to serve, and finally to those who may be called upon if needed, but have no obligation to serve. These options allow service members to choose options depending on their life circumstances, but also allows the service to know who has volunteered for service and at what level.

Both parts of the total workforce model help to formalize the possible manners of service, while allowing for an open marketplace of information. This open marketplace allows for more choice and provides a central repository of information about open positions. The shift to total workforce model requires more “seamless internal transfer arrangements and simplified personnel management processes more accepting of flexibility.”⁷⁰

Total Workforce Model Evaluation

A plan like the total workforce model could benefit female officers, allowing them to temporarily change to the reserve force or even allowing them to join the Individual Ready Reserve for a period, while still maintaining a formal affiliation with the military. In addition, having a central repository of information for officers interested in rejoining the military would be helpful. In response to the pandemic, several thousand soldiers received emails that asked for volunteers. A central repository would provide easier information distribution and allow those individuals interested in volunteering to see the list of options available.

A total workforce model would likely help retention efforts by granting officers the flexibility to leave the active duty force for a period and then return when they are ready. While it would likely cause some additional issues as: regulations are developed, issues of pay, promotion, and

schooling are identified, and solutions are developed and codified; a plan like this could provide service members the opportunity to be soldiers for life, even if that necessitates previously unheard-of breaks in service. Codifying and demystifying the process of transferring from one component to another will be another key benefit of this program. Adoption of this plan will require a cultural shift in how the US Army thinks of service by allowing for additional flexibility when needed by service members. This plan will likely be affordable with no more cost than current programs.

	Good	Better	Best
Effective		Slightly Helps retention efforts	
Cost-Benefit		May cause initial issues	
Affordable			No more cost than current programs

Figure 4.11. Total Workforce Model Evaluation Criteria.

Source: Created by author.

The Australian Defence Force continues to pilot innovative policies that mirror many civilian corporations which keeps service members who are affiliated with the military in the force. These pilot programs are based on annual data collection. The annual report on *Women in the ADF* has helped the Defence Department to understand what is driving women to leave the military. Additionally, the cultural shift allows innovative work hours and workforce models to be created which continues to allow for increased flexibility, enticing officers to stay in the military. Next, another international force is examined for female retention.

Norway

In many ways, Norway presents a strange contrast; the Norwegian Armed Forces (NAF) have made significant progress in recruiting women, but less progress in retaining them. The country claims that a variety of initiatives will help to recruit and retain women, even though these well-touted initiatives seem to fall flat. These programs are still worth examining; it is likely that they may provide options for increasing female officer retention. Norway is the only country in the study that relies on conscription; the military also opened all roles to women in 1985, well

before it was considered by any other service. Women have rarely served in combat roles in appreciable numbers.⁷¹

As of 2012, Norway's military was 12.4 percent women; its stated goal was to be at 25 percent by 2025 though it is unlikely to achieve that.⁷² This increase remains significant: in 2000, women represented just 3.2 percent in the Norwegian military.⁷³ Norway had the third largest increase in women in the ranks between 2016 and 2017, from 9.5 percent to 11.6 percent. Women apply to military academies, colleges, and other educational institutions at a rate of 23 percent, indicating that they want to serve in greater numbers than they presently can.⁷⁴ Norway also boasts one of the highest rates of successful recruitment of women into the armed forces for NATO member countries, at a rate of 24 percent.⁷⁵

Women also participate in public and political life in high numbers and men and women more equitably share family duties.⁷⁶ The NAF does not reflect Norwegian society and a 2014 report by the Norwegian Defense Research establishment noted that 13 percent of female soldiers left the military, compared to less than eight percent of male soldiers.⁷⁷

The Norwegian Defense Department identified three major challenges in retention of women. The first is that the military may be considered a "springboard to other careers."⁷⁸ Women often consider family relationships as more important than their careers. Finally, the masculine culture of the military may discourage women from staying in the service through retirement.⁷⁹

Norway uses a selective service system, in which candidates for service register and the armed forces select their desired candidates. This system first included women in 2016, when 32.7 percent of the 10,000 conscripts were women.⁸⁰ Women have served in the military without restrictions since 1985; women have successfully been able to serve in any unit that they can earn admission to as well as attend any school.⁸¹ Women served abroad in peacekeeping operations in Lebanon as part of the United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon starting in 1978, where they shared the same dangerous working conditions with the Norwegian men and other peacekeepers.⁸² They were able to engage the women of the local population in constructive ways, opening additional lines of communication with the public. Obradovic identifies Norway as a "soft core conscript force" with a conscript ratio between 50 and 60 percent.⁸³

In order to increase the number of women in the force, Norway has reportedly considered and adopted 200 measures, including a "network of potential female applicants, creating differentiated admissions requirements within various functions and roles, more nuanced requirements for

jobs, awareness raising, mentoring for female military staff with leadership potential, research, improved family policies, and promotion of the military that appeals to both sexes.”⁸⁴ Norway continues to attempt to increase the number of females in the military to sustain a ready force while “reinforcing Norwegian interests in promoting gender equality and peace abroad.”⁸⁵

This study will consider three of these measures, including mixed lodging, thought to cut down on sexual harassment and assault, single gender training programs, notably the *Jegertroppen*, thought to be successful at bringing and retaining recruits longer, and ensuring that women hold leadership positions in the Norwegian military. While women may not necessarily serve in uniform in these top ranks, the NAF believes that their presence will allow for better decision-making and encourage female soldiers and officers to remain in the ranks longer.

Mixed Lodging

When countries considered opening combat roles and units to women, critics often note that this will open the militaries to the problems associated with relationships between men and women that cause men to protect women at the expense of the mission. Instilling cohesive feelings of being part of a family group in small units may help to counter these problems. Norway’s experience remains mixed.

A 2014 study by the Norwegian Research Defence Establishment “showed that unisex dormitories helped combat sexual harassment thanks to a phenomenon of “de-genderization.”⁸⁶ Most research suggests that “sharp distinctions and less understanding between men and women will ensue if female soldiers live in their own barracks or serve in their own platoons.”⁸⁷ Because of this research, the NAF instituted a policy whereby men and women share lodging. A series of interviews in 2014 suggests that mixed rooms were responsible for the “good relationship that existed between the men and women” at one of the border guard stations.⁸⁸

As a result, the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment conducted additional fieldwork whereby a researcher lived in a gender-mixed room. Researchers noted that most men seem to favor the gender mixed rooms because it forces other men to behave better, suggesting that the issues of gender and the military may be limited to less than half of the male population.⁸⁹ Additionally, both men and women interviewed believe that rooms with all women saw higher instances of conflict and “drama,” while the women who lived with men often referred to their bunkmates as brothers.

In follow-on studies, conscripted soldiers were randomly assigned to gender-mixed and gender uniform rooms and surveyed before and after basic training. One of the findings from this research suggests that men were often more accepting of women as leaders after this exposure. The study had flaws, with the inability to provide a control group of women who lived in single gender rooms, but researchers noted that when men and women live together, they often look beyond initial gender roles and that men discriminated against women less.

A medical unit in Norway experienced significant issues even with gender mixed lodging. By the end of training at the medical unit, there were more women than men, a rarity for military units. Women often conducted maintenance on the medical equipment, while the men worked on vehicles, essentially breaking down into what one interviewee called “boy toys and girl toys.”⁹⁰ Often done for expediency and timeliness, it also suggested that men and women were comfortable with different skills and tend to gravitate towards those comfort zones.

The men in this unit reported that mixed gender rooms created additional stress for them, bringing drama into the rooms, increasing sexual tensions, and heightening awareness of the cleanliness of rooms. This platoon saw increased issues of men signaling which women were not up to the standard (as dictated, enforced, and designed by the men in the platoon).⁹¹ This unit also saw women who withdrew from primarily male tasks, because they were made to feel as though they were a burden to the unit. In this way, the men “confirmed the traditional idea that women, and particularly the smallest ones, were unfit for military service and that they themselves were better leaders and medics than the women.”⁹² Overall, mixed gender rooms have mixed results. The best studies have noted that leaders must play a role in making these successful with “a genuine open-door policy...and enforce a policy of prohibiting sexual relations between conscripts (any couples that form must be separated) and banning alcohol.”⁹³

Mixed Lodging Evaluation

Mixed lodging has had mixed results in local studies conducted in Norway. Mixed lodging is unlikely to hurt retention efforts, especially if leadership remains involved and alert to any issues, real or imagined. In the long term, mixed lodging may break down barriers, showing that all soldiers deserve respect and dignity regardless of gender. These mixed rooms may also allow for both sexes to understand that each soldier has strengths and weaknesses, better exposing “the other” to each person.

Mixed lodging will cause some initial issues. This initiative requires a cultural shift and will likely raise many issues as it begins. Ultimately, an all-volunteer force must remain attractive, not only to prospective recruits, but also to their families, who play a large role in recruiting and later, retention. The policy requires no more cost than current programs at installations with rooms that currently accommodate four or more people. This is unlikely to apply to most officers as most of them are not housed in barracks, except during initial training. This could apply during pre-commissioning programs. Overall, this policy will unlikely change retention of female officers in large numbers.

	Good	Better	Best
Effective	Does not hurt retention efforts		
Cost-Benefit	Will cause initial issues		
Affordable			No more cost than current programs

Figure 4.12. Mixed Lodging Evaluation Criteria.

Source: Created by author.

Single Gender Training Programs

While Norway opened combat roles to women in 1985, women remained banned from special operations forces, until 2014, when the new Hunter Troop was established. The *Jegertroppen*, a relatively new Special Operations pilot program, gives women the opportunity to conduct training in a single gender training program, allowing them to ultimately join the Special Operations community.⁹⁴ Developed to assist commanders in Afghanistan to engage the female population, the program also allows women to compete for previously closed units.

Norway’s Special Operations community announced that women would be allowed to “blossom and compete on their own premises and not compete with the boys” because of this program.⁹⁵ Additionally, separating training did not allow for a gendered division of labor to begin, as in the Norwegian Medical Battalion, discussed in the previous section.

Women took responsibility for all the tasks, including those which women had previously avoided.⁹⁶

The women going through the training also noted that they instinctively stepped back when they experienced the mixed-gender training with another Special Operations platoon, this one full of men. An instructor for the two gender segregated platoons notes that separate training allowed for both platoons to develop skills in what were traditional “female” and “male” roles.⁹⁷ In the case of military training, the NAF found that there were some benefits to separate training. This training was most valuable because both platoons received equal access and training, rather than one group having better equipment and training opportunities.

Single Gender Training Program Evaluation

The US Army could adopt single gender training programs, particularly for special operations and officer basic training. It would be unrealistic to use this program for other commissioning sources such as military academies and Reserve Officers’ Training Corps as the military programs are embedded within institutions of higher learning. The US military already has some experience with single-gender basic training as both the US Air Force and US Marine Corps conduct single gender training. The US Air Force saw some mixing of genders during physical conditioning, but the US Marine Corps keeps the two training programs separate.⁹⁸ Each of the services that conducted mixed training concluded that the women performed at or higher than the standards; a US Army study noted that the men in all male training units performed lower than in integrated units, though the data from the study was from a limited sample.⁹⁹

While the services considered the efficacy of single-gender basic combat training, single gender training has rarely been used deliberately, with one exception. Both the US Army and the US Marine Corps used female engagement teams in Afghanistan and Iraq. The training that the women experienced may provide some additional information in deciding whether this would help female retention; much of the analysis conducted focused on the efficacy of the teams in combat, rather than on retention. Additionally, Rohwerder found that there was a lack of standardization during female engagement team “assessment, selection, training, integration, and employment procedures,” largely reflective of the desire to push trained soldiers to support operations as quickly as possible.¹⁰⁰

The US Army could consider the cost-benefit of having single-gender platoons in certain training events, to push men and women out of stereotypical gender roles; this course of action may be considered a step backwards for the military and may cause some initial issues. It may be

detrimental to platoons that remain mixed gender to have fewer diverse trainers.

The US Army could implement this program with a slight increase in cost. Single gender platoons would require single gender trainers for maximum effect. In addition, this training plan would require that enough single gender soldiers attend training at the same time; this may prove detrimental to female officers if they are forced to wait until enough women are ready for a certain training event. Before making a final assessment, this training should be subjected to further scrutiny.

	Good	Better	Best
Effective	Does not hurt retention efforts		
Cost-Benefit		May cause initial issues	
Affordable		Slight increase in cost	

Figure 4.13. Single Gender Training Program Evaluation Criteria.
Source: Created by author.

Employing Women at High Levels of Leadership

The Norwegian military claims that by employing women at the highest levels of civilian and military leadership, they are inherently making policies that will better support women and encourage retention. Four of the last five defense ministers were women; also, there are several positions at the Ministry of Defence, the Norwegian Defence University College, and on the Defence Staff that work on integrating gender perspectives into operations.¹⁰¹ Additionally, Norway uses gender advisors and considers the topic in pre-deployment training and exercises, even including a gender annex in national planning directives.¹⁰²

Obradovic found that there is little observable relationship between the percentages of women in legislatures or ministerial positions and their level of gender inclusiveness.¹⁰³ She notes that when labor participation of women is strong, then gender inclusiveness in the military is also strong.¹⁰⁴ Other studies have found that there remains “a high level of gender equality domestically and in the labor market, level of education, and low unemployment rates” in Norway.¹⁰⁵ Even so, with women at senior levels of

government, the retention of females in Norway still remains lower than males.

Norway committed to the implementation of UNSCR 1325 with a National Action Plan in 2006. Additionally, the country used the Soria Moria Declaration in 2007 to further affirm its commitment to gender equality.¹⁰⁶ The Soria Moria Declaration “pledged to incorporate the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women into the Human Rights Act” and was a key governing document of the second Stoltenberg government.¹⁰⁷ Yet, even with the increased political will and increased number of senior leaders across the Defence establishment who are women, Norway continues to have issues with retaining women.

Employing Women at High Levels of Leadership Evaluation

The US Army would have a difficult time implementing this option due to the way that civilian leaders of the military are selected. Were a woman to be selected for the Secretary of the Army role, this option would not hurt retention efforts. It may help to have a secretary who struggled to balance her career with family, particularly with both spouses working outside the home.

This initiative, if done without regard for qualifications and simply to meet a gender quota, will likely cause initial issues. The US military prides itself on selection based on merit. A woman has never held the position of secretary of defense or the secretary of the army. If an appropriately qualified woman is chosen, this should cause no issues. Qualifications are a matter of prior experience as well as education and often interpreted by the president who appoints the official. Finally, this will cost no more than current programs.

Though this program may not be the most effective given the US system, diversity and inclusion efforts should make sure that junior members of a profession see that there are officials “at the top” who look like them. This effort involves different levels of bureaucracy and may not be something that the US Army can necessarily affect to retain more women in its ranks. Overall this option should be considered a passive strategy, rather than one that the US Army can pursue to drive retention in the short term.

Norway’s commitment to the retention of women in the military remains high, though the execution appears uneven. Using mixed gender rooms to encourage additional exposure to the opposite sex may have long term retention effects, as cultural norms shift, though it is unclear if this will be the case. The single-gender training platoons, particularly for combat training, may be an avenue worth exploring; it will require enough trainers and trainees to be fully effective. Finally, the US Army should

have the long-term goal of increasing women in the highest levels of leadership, though this will remain a relatively passive strategy.

	Good	Better	Best
Effective	Does not hurt retention efforts		
Cost-Benefit	Will cause initial issues		
Affordable			No more cost than current programs

Figure 4.14. Employing Women at High Levels of Leadership Evaluation Criteria.

Source: Created by author.

Answer to Primary Research Question

This chapter considered the primary research question: Should the US Army consider adopting specific policies, including career flexibility, fitness testing, and other policies geared towards women that will help to retain trained and talented officers for the next five years? Yes, the US Army should adopt several policies, but with caveats. Though each of the options discussed previously are feasible ones for trial and adoption, the US Army could adopt several policies that would provide relatively quick wins. These are going to be options that can be adopted with minimal impact to operations. Other policies may require additional planning and support before being attempted.

Author’s Note: *Within a year after the completion of this study, the US Army changed its policy and now allows service members who gave birth to have a full year to return to physical fitness standards. Very few issues have been reported as of October 2021 with this additional healing and preparation time.*

Summary

This chapter presented the data and analysis of four separate case studies for consideration of how the US Army can retain higher numbers of female officers. It used qualitative analysis and evaluation criteria to present each policy as well as how that policy may be applied to the US

Army. The next chapter will focus on recommendations for policies as well as for possible future research.

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Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations for Adoption

Introduction

This study examines the primary research question of: Should the US Army consider adopting specific policies, including career flexibility, fitness testing, and other policies geared towards women that will help to retain trained and talented officers for the next five years? The answer is yes, with caveats, the US Army should adopt some policies to retain trained female officers for the next five years and consider adopting more policies.

Conclusions

This study considered 11 policies for possible adoption by the US Army, finding that four of them are appropriate for immediate adoption. These policies will bring the US Army into alignment with other services, the US Coast Guard and the US Air Force.

The US Army should consider adopting a new way to measure body fat, in conjunction with health care providers, rather than continuing to tie promotion and work performance to this metric. In addition to this body weight standard revision, the US Army should push fitness testing back for postpartum women, in alignment with military deployment standards. The US Army adopted this recommendation in March 2021 and few issues have been reported with it.

Additionally, the US Army should pilot a program like the US Coast Guard's program of surge staffing. The US Army already uses a similar system to allow officers to apply for worldwide augmentation. Finally, the US Army should immediately begin to collect data on why service members leave the military as well as collect data to fill an annual report on women in the US Army. Understanding what causes soldiers to leave the military can allow the military to adapt and then retain additional personnel. Without an understanding of what drives retention decisions each year, the military will struggle to make policy decisions that will best influence retention decisions.

Implications of Conclusions

The US Army lacks data on why women leave the military at higher rates than men. Various organizations collect data about retention, but the US Army has not adopted policies specifically calibrated towards retaining higher numbers of women. This ultimately translates into a lack of readiness for the US Army; the US Army wants to retain the best talent, not

just the best of what’s left. New initiatives to standardize policies make it possible for women to thrive on active duty with children; initiatives such as standardizing leave policies and providing mother’s rooms are useful. Opening all branches to women, allowing them to serve where they can meet physical and mental standards, will also prove to be helpful. Officers want additional flexibility to allow them to work as valued members of the team, without leaving gaps as they manage personal and professional needs. They also want to be able to make choices about spending shorter periods of time in reserve status, rather than the required three years.

	Good	Better	Best	Adopt	Adopt with modifications	Consider for long term
USCG: Surge Staffing	X	xx		x	x	
USCG: Body Weight Standards		x	xx	x		
USCG: Temporary Separations		xxx			x	
USAF: Fitness Testing		x	xx	x		
USAF: Expanded Childcare	Xx	x			x	
ADF: Annual Report	X	x	x	x		
ADF: Flexible Work Arrangements		xx	x		x	
ADF: Total Workforce Model		xx	x		x	
NAF: Mixed Gender Lodging	Xx		x			x
NAF: Single Sex Training Program	X	xx			x	
NAF: Women at high levels of leadership	Xx		x			x

Figure 5.1. Options for Implementation.

Source: Created by Author.

The current health emergency of the pandemic provides an opportunity to introduce additional tracking and reporting procedures that will help to understand what drives retention decisions, not just for the military, but broken down by rank, branch, and gender. This provides ample opportunity for the continued shift from an industrial age bureaucracy to one that is more agile, flexible, and a better employer for all service members.

Recommendations for Decision Makers

The US Army should consider modifying and adopting several policies. Both the US Coast Guard and ADF have programs in place to allow for easier movement between components of the armed forces. The US Army should work towards the same. The US Army should also pilot expanded access to childcare, including 24-hour care options for military posts with large shift work populations. In the light of recent pandemic events, the US Army has proven that flexible work options, including telework, variable work hours, and split shifts are both possible and beneficial. The US Army should consider permanently codifying and adopting these programs to allow greater flexibility for all service members. The policy for flexible work options and the ability of officers to move from the active to the reserve force may require a cultural shift. These programs are designed to offer flexibility and entice officers to stay in uniform longer. Finally, as the US Army continues to recruit and retain women interested in combat arms and special operations training, the service could consider piloting single-gender platoon training but should study previously conducted training to understand the problems associated with this type of training.

In the long term, the US Army could consider two policies. The first is mixed gender lodging. The results from Norway are inconclusive and this policy may require additional study. The second policy is increasing the number of women in high leadership roles. While this policy may have some efficacy, it may be worth considering how the US Army can accomplish this.

The US Army has several options to consider adopting which will increase retention. While these may often benefit women in the US Army, it is more likely that these options will contribute to better balance opportunities for everyone throughout the entire armed forces, regardless of gender, resulting in higher retention of all US Army soldiers.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study looked at a wide variety of programs across the US Coast Guard, US Air Force, the Australian Defence Force, and the Norwegian

Armed Forces with consideration for adoption. As a result, many programs were ignored. These may offer recommendations for future research.

Women in the US Army, the US Air Force, and the ADF have all reported that their careers have been put on hold for pregnancies, which includes disenrollment from academic and training programs. Women in the US Air Force note that they often felt as though they had to program their pregnancies into their careers, because they were unable to attend schooling while pregnant, something that both officers in the US Army and ADF have also reported. Further research is needed to identify and seek to understand what the impetus for these restrictions are and whether they can be lifted to accommodate officers who want to balance families and educational opportunities.

Additionally, other countries are realizing that they must recruit and retain women to have a viable national defense force. These countries include Germany and Japan as well as Canada. The US Army should continue to look to new initiatives that other nations use.

One topic that specifically delimited from this study is the effect of culture on women's decisions whether to depart or stay in the US Army. Another study may focus on how to adapt military culture away from the long-hours-equals-productivity model. Very few officers join the military to shirk work. The culture of the US Army remains focused on the idea of working harder and longer which often hampers individuals who have other personal obligations. Another study should consider the effects of evolving societal norms around childcare and domestic responsibilities and how those impact women's retention decisions.

While this study is focused on and discusses female officers, it is likely that many of these options will also benefit the male officers who serve. Additionally, to embrace the effect of a generation—that of being a millennial—may be worth consideration of future research.

Ultimately, anything that the US Army considers as action should be supported by regular data collection and reporting. Both the US Coast Guard and US Air Force have identified gaps in retention and outsourced work to help identify and understand why female officers are leaving the force. The US Army could conduct similar studies to allow for better consideration at what drives retention.

Parting Thoughts

The US Army has a unique opportunity to consider how to best adapt personnel policies to support retention right now. Given the current pandemic and the work adaptations, the US Army should consider how to capitalize on the new capabilities that telework has created. The pandemic

of 2020 is a defining point in world history and much of American society will look different because of it. This is the time that the US Army can truly abandon the industrial era personnel model and adapt to an information age personnel model with targeted retention strategies and initiatives focused on providing flexibility to the workforce. This change can only start with a clear understanding of what the force believes will be necessary to affect real change and then a commitment to actually making those changes. It will require a cultural shift to maintain this change: the easy answer will be to revert to the old way of doing things. The US Army must capitalize on this redefinition to remain Army Strong and ready to fight and win the nation's wars. By adapting to an information age personnel model with targeted retention strategies and initiatives focused on providing flexibility to the workforce, the US Army can use this as an opportunity to affect real, substantive, and permanent change.

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