RETAINING TALENT: LESSONS FROM AUSTRALIA, NORWAY, AND SISTER SERVICES

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by

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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 always remain in the U.S. Army at the same rate as their male counterparts. The U.S. Army is unable to capitalize on the full extent of the U.S. population to recruit and retain its most valuable weapon: the American soldier.

This study utilized a qualitative research methodology to analyze four other armed services to understand what efforts they have made towards retaining diverse populations. Using the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Air Force, the Australian Defence Force, and the Norwegian Armed Forces, this thesis seeks to understand what policies the U.S. Army could adopt to better retain female officers. This analysis found that adopting policies that allow for increased work flexibility will help to retain women and that adopting policies dealing with physical fitness standards, to bring them in alignment with deployment policies, will also help to retain women. One of the key findings suggests that the U.S. Army must seek to understand what drives retention decisions and should work across the joint force to share best practices.

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ABSTRACT

RETAINING TALENT: LESSONS FROM AUSTRALIA, NORWAY, AND SISTER SERVICES, by MAJ Sarah M. Gerstein, 110 pages.

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 always remain in the U.S. Army at the same rate as their male counterparts. The U.S. Army is unable to capitalize on the full extent of the U.S. population to recruit and retain its most valuable weapon: the American soldier.

This study utilized a qualitative research methodology to analyze four other armed services to understand what efforts they have made towards retaining diverse populations. Using the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Air Force, the Australian Defence Force, and the Norwegian Armed Forces, this thesis seeks to understand what policies the U.S. Army could adopt to better retain female officers. This analysis found that adopting policies that allow for increased work flexibility will help to retain women and that adopting policies dealing with physical fitness standards, to bring them in alignment with deployment policies, will also help to retain women. One of the key findings suggests that the U.S. Army must seek to understand what drives retention decisions and should work across the joint force to share best practices.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As I considered what to write about, I wanted to do something that would help the U.S. Army. Looking around, I saw opportunities to learn from our sister services and other nations on how we think about personnel issues and particularly, retention. Without the support of many people, I would not have had the opportunity or the knowledge to embark upon this. 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 on women in the military 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 trusting me with that and for helping me narrow this topic down.

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Thank you all for making me better than I was before.

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ACRONYMS

ACFT	Army Combat Fitness Test
ADF	Australian Defence Force
ADSO	Active Duty Service Obligation
APFT	Army Physical Fitness Test
BMI	Body Mass Index
BRS	Blended Retirement System
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CIPP	Career Intermission Pilot Program
CRS	Congressional Research Service
DACOWITS	Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services
DoD	Department of Defense (U.S.)
FWA	Flexible Work Arrangements
NAF	Norwegian Armed Forces
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDAA	National Defense Authorization Act
USAF	United States Air Force
USCG	United States Coast Guard

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> 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 U.S. 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 female officers.

The U.S. Army should identify best retention practices from other services. The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), the U.S. 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 thesis will specifically focus on female officers and how the U.S. Army may consider incentivizing

them to remain on active duty. In doing so, this thesis investigated other organizations that think very differently about retention to provide specific recommendations to adapt current retention practices to maintain high standards of readiness in the U.S. Army. Should the U.S. 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 U.S. military's total force and about 18 percent of the Army (Manning 2019, 38). 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 (Manning 2019, 38). At higher ranks, the U.S. Army is unrepresentative of the United States. The selection results from the latest battalion commander boards show that women represented just eight percent of the selected commanders 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 (Atwell et al. 2020). While these results require additional study to draw meaningful conclusions from them, the authors note that women may get out 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…" (Atwell et al. 2020). With its inability to retain diverse populations, the U.S. Army will remain unable to harness the power of the diversity of the United States. The Army continues to cite the power of diverse teams, though 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 (Reynolds and Shendruk 2018). In both the Navy and Air Force, about one in five servicemembers is a woman. In the Army, that number is about one in six and in the Marines, the number is about one in 20 (Reynolds and Shendruk 2018). While those numbers speak to an increase in total numbers 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 (ADSO) is complete.

A 2009 Military Leadership Diversity Commission noted this problem in the U.S. 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) The Coast Guard, Air Force, and 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 servicemembers and their families to make career choices. With the introduction of the Blended Retirement System (BRS), this gap may grow larger, even after the initial 10-year mark, as servicemembers may no longer feel vested.

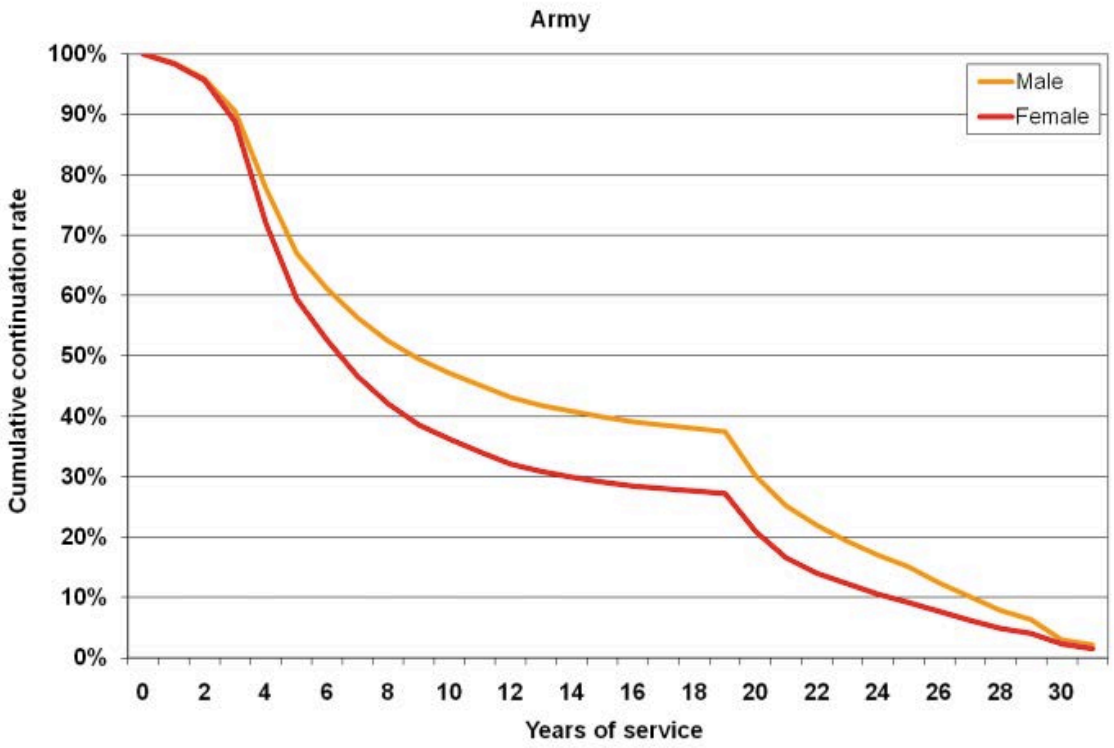

Figure 1. Cumulative Continuation Rates for Men and Women in the Army, Fiscal Years 2000-2008

Source: Military Leadership Diversity Commission 2010, 3.

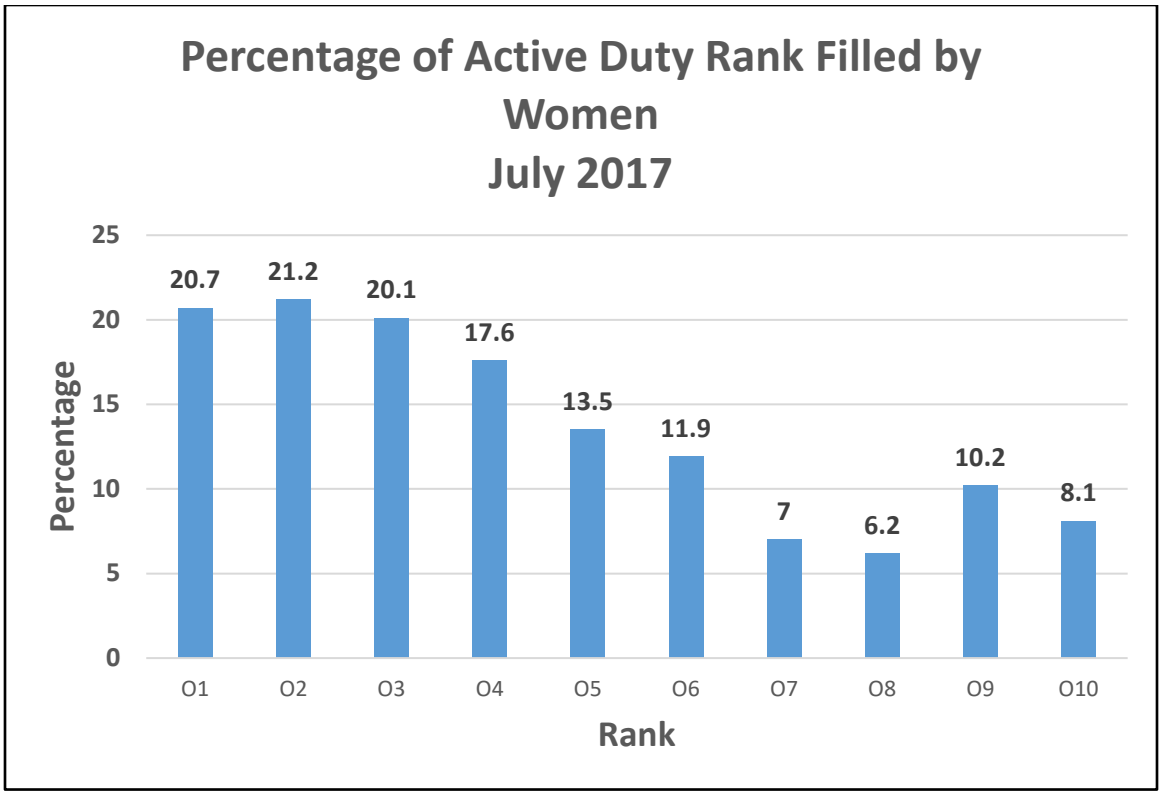

Figure 2. Percentage of Active Duty Rank Filled by Women

Source: Created by author based on data from Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services Staff and Insight Policy Research 2017, 20.

The Department of Defense (DoD) does not routinely aggregate data about why servicemembers 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 (Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services Staff and Insight Policy Research 2017, 21). According to a DoD report mandated in the 2000 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), 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 (NATO 2017, 258). According to similar research conducted by Blue Star Families,

women most often leave due to family concerns, the pressures of dual-military policies, childcare 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 (Blue Star Families 2018, 43).

Blue Star Families found that servicemembers 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 (Blue Star Families 2018, 16). 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 (Blue Star Families 2018a, 6).

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 ones facing women in the military.

According to the U.S. 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 U.S. Armed Forces (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2018). 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 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2018). 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 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2019). 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 Army service, more compatible with 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 (Hunt, Layton, and Prince 2015, 3). 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 that makes a 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 (Rock and Grant 2016). Even research done by the Congressional Research Service (CRS) and the U.S. Army suggests that diversity is a source of strength.

CRS found that diversity in the military is important 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…" (U.S. Library of Congress CRS 2019, 4). In other words, individuals in a unit do not need to look the same to succeed, but rather must have shared experiences. Kamarck also finds that racial and gender diversity leads to "better creative problem solving, innovation, and improved decision-making…" (U.S. Library of Congress CRS 2019, 4).

Former Secretary of the Army Eric K. Fanning noted that the diverse missions that America requires of its Army will also require that the Army include "the broadest possible spectrum of ideas, perspectives, and experiences" (Fanning 2016). He continued by saying that the U.S. 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 U.S. Army must maintain that 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 U.S. 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 (McMahon and Bernard 2019). Bicklser and Nolan suggest that of those qualified to serve, far fewer are inclined to service. With the growth of the military projected in the 2018 NDAA, 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 trained by the military will continue to be a problem, particularly in many technical specialties.

The U.S. 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 Army needs with integrated implementation so that majority of those people are optimally employed" (U.S. Army Combined Arms Center 2015, 11).

As the U.S. military has opened all roles to all individuals who qualify, it has become increasingly clear that women do not join the military at the same rate as men and that many opt out of the military prior to 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 (Sasson-Levy 2011, 393). 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 sat on promotion boards often believed that without combat, an officer should not earn rank.

While the Army's focus has increasingly shifted to large scale combat operations, brute force is less likely to be the way the Army fights and wins 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) (Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, Personnel, and Readiness 2016, Table B-28). Women make up 4.94 percent of the officers engaged in tactical operations in the U.S. Army and 16.65 percent of engineering and maintenance, both classifications that may see women engaged in warfighting fields (Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, Personnel, and Readiness 2016, Table B-28). Within healthcare and administration fields, they make up 38 percent and 33 percent, respectively, far overrepresenting the true population of women in the Army (Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, Personnel, and Readiness 2016, Table B-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 (U.S. Library of Congress CRS 2016, 1).

The Army must consider how to recruit and retain the most talented soldiers and officers. Recently, the Army adopted a talent management model to better place talent within the force while at the same time 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 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 (U.S Army Combined Arms Center 2015, 16).

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

Primary Research Question

The primary research question seeks to understand if there are possible policies that the U.S. Army could adopt to make elements of military service more compatible with continued service for diverse populations. The primary research question is:

Should the U.S. 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

This question necessarily drives a series of secondary questions to explore the topic. These questions will help to drive an understanding of why women leave the Army as well as how the Army already considers retention efforts. Additionally, these questions will examine how other forces are using personnel policies to drive retention.

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

This thesis will answer Questions 1 and 2 in the literature review (Chapter 2). It will answer Questions 3 and 4 in the analysis chapter (Chapter 4). This thesis will answer the primary research question in the data analysis and recommendations chapter. Finally, this thesis will provide recommendations and possible outlets for additional research in Chapter 5.

Limitations

Though the goal of this study is to provide possible 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 DoD have different pressures as well as different missions.
3. Norway and Australia have different requirements for their militaries and are smaller militaries.
4. A key limitation is the timeframe of the thesis and the methods chosen. With just ten months and an inability to conduct representative samples of surveys, this thesis used data available to make recommendations.

Delimitations

Research necessarily involves delimitations, or those issues which are outside the scope of a study. Although the research included here is to determine how the Army can better retain women, this thesis passes no value judgements on the roles that women can and should serve in the military. This thesis 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 can earn admission into. This research does not specifically examine transgender soldiers. While this thesis explicitly focuses on retention efforts for female officers, these efforts will likely encourage other members of the military to continue service. This thesis will not consider the effects of culture and will examine policies only. Another possible challenge to validity is that these are relatively new tactics and may not ultimately lead to increased retention. This thesis will not examine upcoming changes, such as the effects of the BRS or the Army Combat Fitness Test, but will leave those as possible avenues for future research. Finally, this will only consider women who have left voluntarily, rather than those who may have left due to non-promotion or adverse action.

Assumptions

Researchers often need to make certain assumptions to continue to gain 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 Army to effectively fight and win the nation's wars; the Army should study how to entice more qualified, talented, and diverse officers to remain in the Army.
2. Retaining more qualified, talented female officers than the U.S. Army currently is will remain important to having a trained ready force to fight and win the nation's wars.
3. Ultimately, women join the 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 thesis is specifically concerned with those who get out because they perceive that their roles outside the military are incompatible with their roles in the military.

Key Terms

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

Active Duty Service Obligation (ADSO): a specific period of active duty in the Active Army that an officer must serve before becoming eligible for voluntary separation or retirement (HQDA 2017, 16)

Blended Retirement System (BRS): 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 servicemembers' Thrift Savings Plan; the government contributes to your TSP one percent of base pay automatically and will match that up to an additional four percent matching. This retirement system also offers continuation pay at mid-career in return for additional service commitments (Office of Financial Readiness 2017).

High-3: a retirement program that calculates a retired pay formula based on the last thirty-six months of active duty military; servicemembers are eligible for this at twenty years. The formula is 2.5 percent times years of service, times the High-3 average. (U.S. Library of Congress CRS 2011, 4)

Maternity Convalescent Leave: A six-week convalescent period for a military member immediately following pregnancy and childbirth. Maternity 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 (Esper 2019, 3).

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, 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 (Esper 2019, Enclosure 1-2).

Primary Caregiver Leave (U.S. 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 qualifying birth event or adoption. Soldiers must identify which of the parents is the primary caregiver (Esper 2019, 4).

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.) (U.S. Library of Congress CRS 2020a, 4)

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 Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (Esper 2019, Enclosure 1-2).

Secondary Caregiver Leave (U.S. 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 (Esper 2019, 4).

Stop Loss: A force management program that involuntarily extends or retains active duty enlisted servicemembers beyond their established separation date. Officers do not have establish separation dates and so can serve for indefinite periods though this program can apply to those who have an approved retirement or resignation date. (U.S. Library of Congress CRS 2009, 2)

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the importance of military retention as well as provided a basis of understanding for the plan for this thesis. The primary research question for this thesis is "should the U.S. 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?" Chapter 2 will include a literature review of why female officers leave the Army as well as what the Army 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.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

> But the traditions and rules that have strengthened the U.S. military over the last 250 years can, at times, make recruitment and retention difficult.
>
> —Ash Carter, *What I Learned from Transforming the U.S. Military's Approach to Talent*

Chapter Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to understand why servicewomen leave the Army and how the Army is attempting to retain officers, with a 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 Army seeks to retain them. The U.S. Army does not know why women are leaving the Army, beyond very broad ideas because it does not collect aggregated data on retention decisions. Additionally, the Army has not tried very many targeted retention programs, instead focusing on quantity. Ultimately, this literature review will help to understand the primary research question of whether the U.S. 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 Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marines, and the Coast Guard have all identified that there is a gap in retention for women. This gap varies by service but appears between four and ten years of 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" (U.S. Library of Congress CRS 2011, i). This system served as a significant incentive to remaining in the military beyond ten years: many servicemembers believed 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 BRS.

Why Are Soldiers Leaving?

Data suggest that officers leave the Army for different reasons based on gender. Kane found that officers are leaving the Army because of repeated deployments, failed personnel policies, and career management issues that make leaving the military more attractive (Kane 2011, 17). 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 women leave the military (Hall et al. 2019, xv-xvi). 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, a military must present itself as an attractive alternative to a civilian job while overcoming the inherent risks that military service presents. While this specifically considers why recruits join the military, soldiers will make retention decisions based on their opportunities elsewhere (Asch and Warner 2018, 87). 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 and depends on family pressures as much as job satisfaction.

Since the beginning of the all-volunteer force, the Army has become more diverse in many ways, including the familial makeup of those who serve. Binkin and Segal and Segal both note the increase in the number of married servicemembers (Binkin 1993; Segal and Segal 2004). U.S. Army data from 2016 noted 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 (U.S. Library of Congress CRS 2018, 1). Some women also cite the difficultly in balancing two military careers or balancing a spouse with a civilian career. The Army has a policy that assists with dual assignments if both members are in the U.S. Army. This policy, however, does not account for marriages across two services nor does it provide support to servicemembers 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 (Patten and Parker 2011, 6). 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, 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 issues for military women in deployment suggested that women's mindsets often change after pregnancy; they often become the primary caregivers to children (Ritchie 2001, 1035). 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 (Hall et al. 2019).

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

What is the Army Doing to Retain Soldiers?

To keep trained and ready soldiers in the Army, the Army continues to offer retention bonuses, which most people believe are a sure-fire way to keep people in the Army, as well as reducing the online and repetitive training required of soldiers (U.S.

House 2019). Currently, the Army offers few targeted incentive programs to officers, though has used programs prior to commissioning as well as bonuses in the past.

The pre-commissioning program, the Officer Career Satisfaction Programs (OCSP), allows cadets to agree to serve an additional three years on active duty for the branch or post of their choice or the opportunity to attend graduate school (Wardynski, Lyle and Colarusso 2010, 28). A more targeted program, this program asked cadets to make a choice about continued service, even before they have been in the 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 (Wardynski, Lyle and Colarusso 2010, 30). This program is still offered to cadets prior to commissioning.

In 2007, the Army offered a "menu of incentives" to incentivize Captains (those between Year Groups 1999 to 2005) to stay on active duty (Human Resources Command PAO 2008). 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 ADSO 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 (Human Resources Command PAO 2008). The clear majority, 94 percent, took the Critical Skills Retention Bonus (CSRB), 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 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 (Wardynski, Lyle and Colarusso 2010, v). They also noted that a program that made little distinction based on talent would harm the officer corps striping "away the Army's ability to screen, vet, and cull for talent…" (Wardynski, Lyle and Colarusso 2010, vi). The 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 U.S. 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 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" (U.S. House 2019). Seamands noted that after the restrictions on women serving in previously closed roles were lifted, the Army had transferred more than a thousand women into infantry, field artillery, and armor (U.S. House 2019). 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 Advisor Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) 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 U.S. Army also experimented with programs that would provide flexibility to servicemembers. In 2014, the Army ran a pilot program called the Career Intermission Pilot Program (CIPP) allowing servicemembers 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" (Speer 2017). The CIPP 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 CIPP. Individuals earned 2/32nd of their base pay, while retaining 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 CIPP. This program, initially piloted by the U.S. Navy because they noted that many female officers were leaving the military, seems to have some merit.

Theoretically, this program allowed officers to take time off to have children or 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 have birth. In the first three years of the program, 37 soldiers applied with just 13 participating (Maucione 2017). In 2017, the U.S. Army expanded eligibility for the program. Still selected based on past performance and future potential, soldiers had to demonstrate a need for the career break (Panzino 2017). Reports remain mixed on this initiative and many soldiers appear disheartened by the length of time the program seems to require. 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" (Carter 2017). Under this program, servicemembers 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" (Carter 2017). 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 servicemembers, during his time as Secretary of Defense, he "expanded paid maternity and paternity leave," to twelve weeks and three weeks (Carter 2017). 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 "should 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 (Berry 2010).

Carter's initiatives also included making childcare more accessible with 14 hours of available across the force to allow parents increased flexibility. In a CRS Report from 2018, Kamarck noted that DoD runs the largest "employer-sponsored childcare program, serving approximately 200,000 children" in the system (U.S. Library of Congress CRS 2018, Summary). Unfortunately, these expanded hours do not yet apply to all child care 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 (U.S. Senate 2019, 44). 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 increased retention (U.S. Library of Congress CRS 2018, 2). 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 servicemembers (U.S. Senate 2019, 44).

A U.S. 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 (U.S. Library of Congress CRS 2018, 2). 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 and servicemembers frequently work hours that civilian childcare providers may not accommodate, such as shift work, extended hours, and overnight shifts.

However, 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 (Sisk 2019a). LTG Seamands noted that wait times can be “nominal” though some posts, especially in Hawaii, may have wait

times for over 100 days or more (Sisk 2019a). Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel, and Services, LTG 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 few off-post options available (Sisk 2019a). A 2015 Demand Accommodations Rate metric found that DoD was filling 78 percent of its demand, with priority going to single parents and dual military parents, making it difficult for members who have children with employed civilian spouses to receive care 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 (Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission 2015, 156).

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. To help with this, the FY2020 NDAA provided for expanded licensing and certification assistance, following the FY2018 NDAA which provided a pilot program to allow spouses reimbursement for up to $500 for relicensing fees. The FY2020 NDAA allows for up $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 (National Military Family Association 2019).

Overall, the U.S. 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 U.S. military has responded by offering several limited programs, but childcare and flexibility in day to day work remain issues.

Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed the relevant literature to establish what the military is already doing to retain officers, particularly female officers. This literature review will help to understand what policies the U.S. Army may be able to adopt to entice women to stay on active duty for longer, 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 possible policies. Additionally, Chapter 3 will discuss the cases and policies chosen. This will allow the thesis to present possible policies for the U.S. Army to adopt.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter Introduction

Chapter 2 provided an overview on the available literature on why servicewomen voluntarily leave the Army and what the 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 U.S. 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 an understanding of the secondary questions:

1. Why do servicewomen voluntarily leave the Army?
2. What is the Army doing to retain soldiers?
3. What is the DoD 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 thesis will provide possible recommendations that the U.S. Army can adopt to retain women more effectively as well as provide recommendations for further study. The United States must continue to adapt to a changing threat landscape, while continuing to maintain a focus on 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 thesis 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 to their militaries. Additionally, this thesis will specifically consider militaries that share common characteristics with the U.S. Army, rather than looking across the spectrum of possibilities. Finally, the U.S. Army does not have a comprehensive database that identifies why servicemembers leave prior to the 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" (Merriam 2009, 14). The focus of this thesis 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 stay in the military, when faced with many other competing demands. This thesis will seek 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 may present a challenge to interpreting the data collected and ensuring that the results of the case study are unbiased. The researcher primarily used document analysis.

Many of the sources and documents used during the research of this thesis are from government websites, scholarly (peer-reviewed) journals, and other news websites. Government documents included 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 (Hewson, Vogeland and Laurent 2003, 16). 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 (Merriam 2009, 15)

The researcher continued to use data to help "build concepts, hypotheses or theories," rather than selectively including data as it supported previously held ideas of how militaries retain women (Merriam 2009, 15). Finally, a qualitative study provided a richly descriptive understanding of the phenomenon being studied. In this case, each military service has chosen policies to assist with retention and many of these may work in some capacity for the U.S. Army, though may require some tailoring to be applicable.

Approach

The researcher will conduct a qualitative study to understand what policy options the U.S. Army could consider to increase female officer retention. 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 Army and how the U.S. Army has thought about retention. The scope of this literature review helped to answer the secondary research questions. The third step of this process involved selecting cases to study and identify a range of possible policy options for the U.S. Army to consider. After identifying those cases, the researcher developed an evaluation model.

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

Evaluation Criteria

To evaluate possible options for selection by the U.S. Army, this thesis will establish criterion examining the effectiveness of possible policies, the cost-benefit of possible policies, and whether policies are generally affordable. The author will also rank 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 will specifically look 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, though may not prove to be effective over time. Additionally, these policies, if implemented, may not always produce the intended effects in a specific population. Therefore, the researcher often used judgement to determine what policies would be effective.

A cost-benefit analysis will attempt to understand the costs, both monetary and otherwise, of implementing a policy, while balancing those costs with benefits. The researcher will specifically look to understand the other issues that may arise with some of these issues. 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 thesis will examine 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 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 U.S. Army. Given a lack of concrete data, these judgements will be based on as much data is as possible from other nations and other services. A table laying out the previous discussion follows.

Table 1. Evaluation Criteria

	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

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

Cross Case and Within Case Methodology

This thesis will use case study and cross-case comparisons providing "an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (Merriam 2009, 40). 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" (Gerring 2007, 20). A cross-case method incorporates several cases (Gerring 2007, 21). Examining cases in depth and comparing them may allow this thesis to provide meaningful recommendations to the U.S. Army.

This thesis will specifically consider a few factors within each specific case as well as compare cases to the other cases. The factors are those interesting aspects of retention to "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" (Bassey 1999, 58). Dul and Hak note that a comparative case study is one that uses data from two or more instances to achieve the research objective (Dul and Hak 2008, 4). 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" (Dul and Hak 2008, 5). 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 more valuable to the U.S. Army as it considers ways to adapt to different recruiting methods. Ultimately, this research is examining what other countries have done to retain women; some of these methods may be more valuable to the U.S. Army than others. The importance lays in identifying and continuing to consider new ways of retention.

Case Study Selection

To provide depth, this thesis will use four case studies, two from sister services and two from other nations. Both the USAF and USCG have considered how the services must adapt to retain qualified officers, specifically women. USCG and USAF remain invested in keeping trained individuals in the force and both have recently commissioned studies to understand how and why women leave the military voluntarily. As such, this thesis will use efforts they have made or those that 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. However, far fewer militaries are thinking specifically about the need to retain

women (as opposed to retention more generally). Both Australia and Norway have identified the need to retain more women than the services currently are and so provide additional case studies for this thesis. The ADF and NAF will 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 Air Force culture emphasizes machines and technology, while the 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 Army. However, each of the services 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 (Merriam 2009, 23). 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 to 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 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.

Chapter Summary

This chapter described 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.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

> 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

Chapter Introduction

Chapter 2 provided an understanding of the current state of Army retention for the thesis. Chapter 3 introduced and described the research methodology that this thesis will use to answer the research questions. The primary research question is: Should the U.S. 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 to provide answers to the primary and secondary research questions.

Summary of Literature Review

The second chapter introduced a literature review examining why female officers leave the U.S. Army and how the U.S. Army thinks about retention. Many women leaving the military cite work-life balance 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 struggling to balance work obligations with personal goals. Women also cite the struggle to balance professional career gates with having children.

The U.S. Army has tried several measures to increase retention. The first allowed cadets to agree to additional service prior to commissioning. Another incentive was a bonus paid to junior captains in the form of additional schooling or a monetary incentive. It was available to all junior captains in certain year groups. Some officers were eligible for larger bonuses, based on their specialty. Additionally, the U.S. Army opened all jobs to women, thought to be helpful in increasing retention numbers. The U.S. Army also lengthened and standardized caregiver leave policies. The military also offered a career intermission program that would allow servicemembers to take three years off to pursue personal interests. However, the program has proven less effective, likely due to a lack of knowledge about the program and a reluctance of many officers to apply for the opportunity.

U.S. Coast Guard

The USCG is both a uniformed service and a key component of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. By law, the 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 stress and strain those serving in the Coast Guard, requiring them to be away from family.

Women first joined the Women's Reserve of the USCG in 1949 and transferred to the active duty 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. Women began to serve in all aviation roles in 1976 and by 1978, the Commandant of the Coast

Guard opened all roles to women. Importantly, the 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" (U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office 2019).

In a study encompassing 2005-2016, the Coast Guard found that women leave the Coast Guard at higher rates than men. The gap for active duty enlisted personnel and warrant officers is 8.7 percent at four years of service and grows to 12.3 percent at 10 years. This gap remains steady at 19 years, suggesting that there may be something that occurs between four and 10 years that the Coast Guard could do to prevent the sudden decrease in females at enlisted and warrant ranks. Active duty officers in the 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 10 years. The difference between 10 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. However, this study does not consider the new BRS, which may allow for many servicemembers to leave, even after they have completed ten or more years of service (Hall et al. 2019).

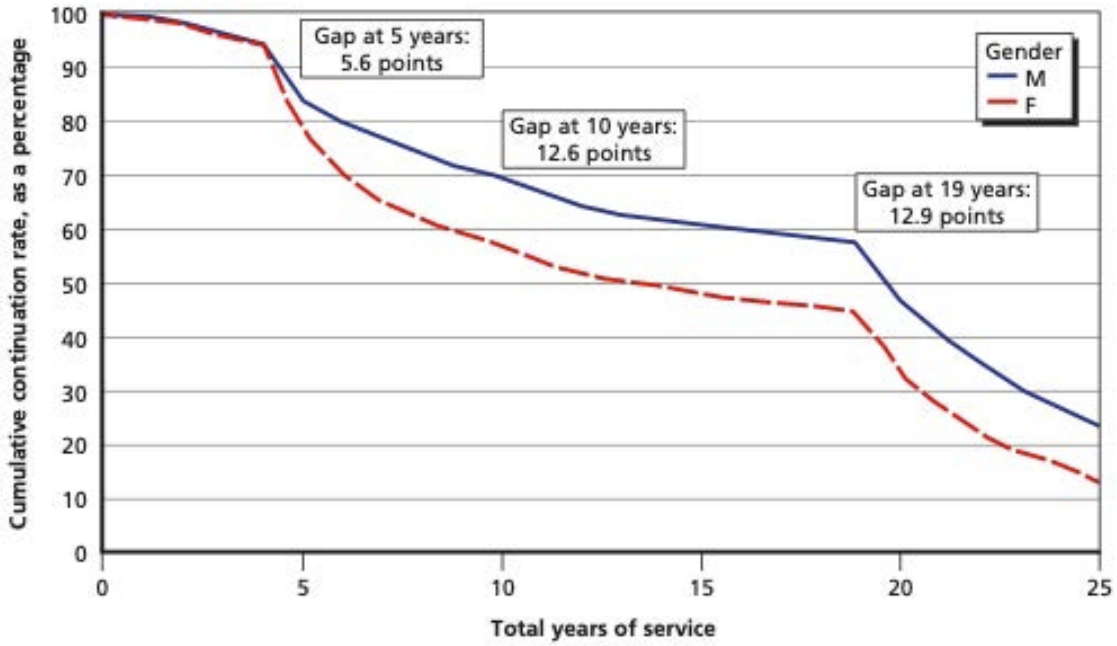

Figure 3. Cumulative Continuation Rates by Gender for Active-Duty Commissioned Officers, Fiscal Years 2005-2016

Source: Hall, Keller, Schulker, Weilant, Kidder, and Lim 2019, x.

The 2019 State of the United States Coast Guard address by Admiral Karl Schultz noted that the key to Coast Guard success remains the diverse workforce and that readiness is a top priority. He stated that childcare affordability, affordable housing, and talent management initiative are among his top priorities (Schultz 2019, 12). 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 planned to conduct analysis on other underrepresented minorities.

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 Coast Guard Reserve would help

backfill units while servicemembers are on “convalescent and caregiver leaver” so that new parents could worry about their families, rather than the impacts of their absence. In this policy, a member of the reserve force serves on active duty, replacing a member of the team who is out for maternity leave, allowing the organization to remain fully operational (Schultz 2019, 13). Both men and women serving as primary or secondary caregivers who take nonchargeable 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) (Lutton 2019).

This policy would specifically work in cases where women may not be able to work in certain specialties after a certain period in her pregnancy. For instance, in the 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 as part of this squad. Of note, a program like this could apply to all soldiers who need extended convalescent leave or to care for aging family members but do not meet the established threshold for the CIPP.

Surge Staffing Evaluation

A program like this would be unlikely to hurt retention efforts and may assist in retention efforts for both men and women. The individuals who join the military will 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 slightly help retention efforts. This program will not only benefit the soldiers and officers who are pregnant, but also could benefit reservists who want to spend a short period on active duty. This could be while they transition from one job to another or as they decide whether to apply to be on active duty

more full time, allowing soldiers to test drive their chosen career. This program could also apply to servicemembers who adopt children, allowing them to take advantage of primary or secondary caregiver leave. The Coast Guard program offers up to 120 days of active duty time and a similar program in the Army may be slightly longer, given restrictions on field duty. However, this program will likely require additional regulations and training to understand the permeability between the active duty and reserve force. Therefore, this program will cause initial issues, though adequate regulations and training will help to assuage many of these issues.

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 Coast Guard also required central funding, a commitment that the U.S. Army would need to make for this to apply (Lutton 2019). A program like this one may provide true flexibility, allowing for reservists to serve their annual training in a substantive manner while allowing active duty servicemembers the flexibility to take the extended leave needed after the birth or adoption of a child. Overall, this policy, if applied to the Army, would likely slightly increase retention efforts though could ultimately have much greater retention effects. If this program allowed for temporary backfills at both the lowest levels and the staff levels, it could provide one way to allow for a better work life balance, for both men and women. An initial evaluation table follows.

Table 2. Surge Staffing Evaluation Criteria

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

Source: Created by author.

Body Weight Standards

In addition to permeability across components, Admiral Schultz announced that the 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," (Sisk 2019). With this change, the 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, they may take a physical fitness test to prove their fitness (Headquarters, Department of the United States Coast Guard 2019).

Body Weight Standards Evaluation

This policy would likely help retention efforts across the force. Though the Coast Guard continues to pilot this effort, the Air Force has used a similar program for years. According to Air Force Standards, servicemembers are evaluated by abdominal circumference measurements, which provides a body composition score instead of the Body Mass Index (BMI). If they fail this abdominal circumference test, then the chain of

command administers a BMI test. Finally, if airmen fail the BMI screen, the service uses a body fat analysis, allowing for increased flexibility in how servicemembers 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 considered different body types, rather than relying on a set standard, would likely slightly help to significantly help retention efforts.

Given the shift in the Army's physical fitness assessment to the Army Combat Fitness Test, a test that will require increased muscle mass, a shift away from a standard screening chart with an emphasis on a more personalized estimate of "health" may prove beneficial. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) notes that a height weight measurement can help to identify a soldier's BMI, but that athletes often have higher BMI numbers due to the increased muscularity (Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity 2017). The CDC also notes that waist circumference can help to estimate a potential disease risk but that health care providers should use this measurement and a series of appropriate health assessments to determine a soldier's level of risk (Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity 2017). As a result, the cost-benefit of this 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. However, all servicemembers conduct a periodic health assessment annually; this would be an appropriate time to discuss health risks of high

BMI with soldiers. Should the need arise, a healthcare provider can work with a commander and officer to develop a plan of action. Finally, this program would be affordable for the average commander and require less effort; in the long term, this may cause additional issues with height and weight and obesity issues, though these issues may again be dealt with through already established health programs, instead of through the chain of command.

Table 3. Body Weight Standards Evaluation Criteria

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

Source: Created by author.

Temporary Separations Program

The Coast Guard offers a program under the Temporary Separation Program. This temporary separation program allows for servicemembers to take a temporary leave of absence from the Coast Guard for several reasons, including for the birth or adoption of a child. Specifically, this part of the program is the Separation for Care of Newborn Children (CNC) program. Male and female servicemembers may request this temporary separation but return to active duty after a period of affiliation with the Coast Guard Reserve; this affiliation allows for an easier transition back to active duty. This program allows for a period of separation of at least six months and up to two years.

Of note, this temporary separation program provides for servicemembers to separate to focus on "…personal interests/issues they might be precluded from performing by remaining on active duty…" (Commandant, Department of United States Coast Guard 2018, 1-1). Like the surge staffing program, Coast Guard officers may leave active duty for a 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, with date of rank adjusted. Servicemembers may only use temporary separation once in their career and officers must have served for at least their initial commitment on active duty. Officers must also be in good standing and 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 up to one year for servicemembers to adjust to changing life circumstances, including the birth or adoption of a child. This program will not hurt retention efforts and will likely slight help retention efforts, though additional study on the efficacy of the program is required. In the Coast Guard, the approval authority for this program is the Commander of the Coast Guard Personnel Service Center.

A program like this in the U.S. Army would likely cause initial issues; the CIPP, discussed in the literature review, has not fully been used in the U.S. 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 U.S. Army could publish clear guidance, detailing what grades and what specialties may participate in this program, allowing for additional flexibility to retain additional officers, including those who do not have children, to pursue short-term personal interests. These short-term personal interests may be assisting aging family members, in-person civilian educational opportunities, or recovery from physical and mental trauma. If implemented with proper standards and increased education, this program could be useful to retention, offering servicemembers the opportunity to adapt to changing personal circumstances.

Finally, this program may require a slight increase in cost, as servicemembers transition from active duty to reserve duty and vice versa. However, this cost may be a worthwhile one, as servicemembers in demanding and technical specialties may elect to remain on active duty longer if they have temporary flexibility to leave active duty. Overall, this program is one that, if used in conjunction with the existing CIPP, will allow for servicemembers to have additional flexibility in their careers and will likely keep them in uniform longer.

Table 4. Temporary Separations Program Evaluation Criteria

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

Source: Created by author.

The USCG continues to consider how best to retain women on active duty. The previous section identified three policies and examined each in term to determine whether it may be an effective, beneficial, and affordable program. Overall, shifting from a strictly body-weight based standard for physical fitness standards is likely to be beneficial to retention efforts. The U.S. Army should consider this policy, in conjunction with health care providers. Surge staffing, that is allowing reserve personnel to transition to the active force to temporarily replace active duty servicemembers, will likely have a beneficial effect on retention, though may prove complicated to manage. A more robust Temporary Separations Program may also prove beneficial to the U.S. Army. Previous experiences with the CIPP showed that the force did not understand the program or requirements to participation in the pilot. The U.S. Army may need to consider a temporary separations branch to fully implement a surge staffing or a temporary separations program though both may offer increased flexibility to women in the military. Instead of adopting one of these policies outright, the U.S. Army may consider permeability across the active, reserve, and National Guard force to allow servicemembers to transition more easily to support their needs and retain them in uniform longer.

U.S. Air Force

The USAF allowed women to join in July 1948, though they served as part of the Women's Air Force (WAF) until 1976, when the WAF disbanded. A 1973 Supreme Court decision decided that women in the military were entitled to the same benefits as their male peers, when Air Force Lieutenant Sharon Frontiero brought a suit alleging that she was denied housing and medical allowances that were due to her husband as a result

of her service. This decision was an important one for equality in the military, as women had to previously 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 (Air Force Personnel Center 2020). After 1993, the U.S. military's policy was that women were eligible for assignment to any unit that they were qualified for but that they would remain "excluded from units below the brigade level whose primary mission is to engage in direct ground combat…" (U.S. Library of Congress CRS 2016, 6). The first women to qualify to fly the F-15E graduated from flight training in 1994, though several others would likely have chosen to fly fighter aircraft had they been allowed to choose them.

Now, women serve throughout the Air Force, making up just 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. However, women remain underrepresented at the highest ranks of leadership and Air Force officials have noted that women leave at higher rates than their male counterparts. Because of this, RAND Corporation conducted a study in 2018, attempting to understand what factors caused women to leave and how the Air Force could use policy to drive female retention. The study found that work-life balance and meeting family commitments were among the top reasons why women left after their initial or work-based commitments were over, but prior to retirement (Keller et al. 2018, 5). The report found that rigid career timelines drove many women to leave the Air Force. This report identified that gaps in continuation rates were significant and that women in rated and non-rated specialties both left the 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 (Keller et al. 2018, vii).

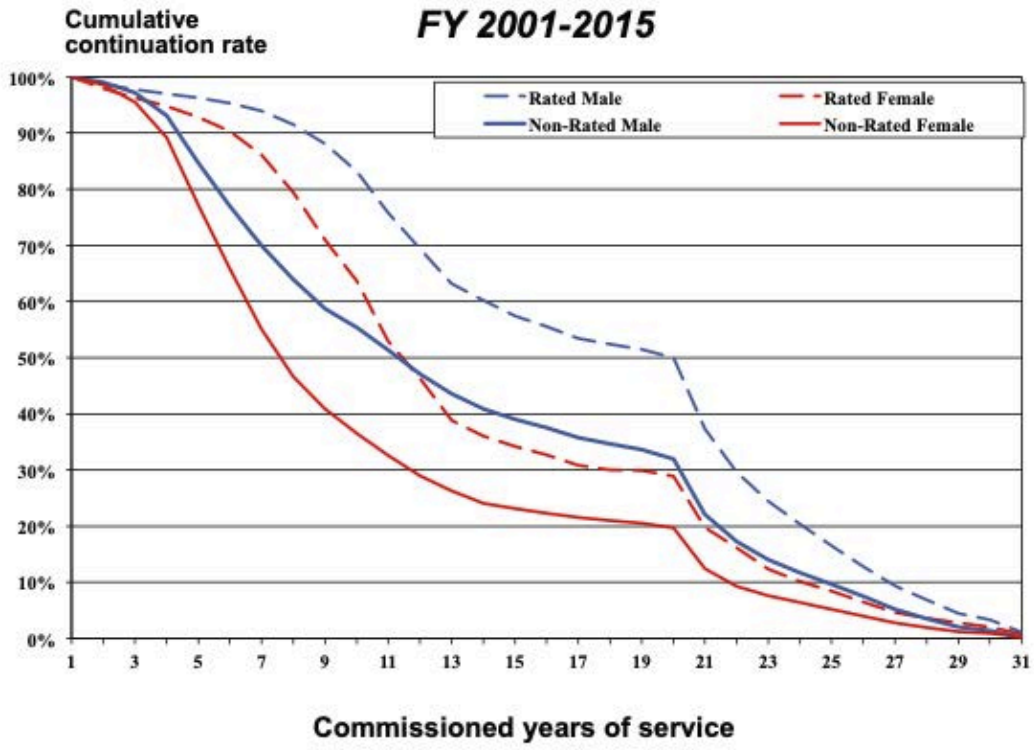

Figure 4. Cumulative Continuation Rates by Gender for Rated and Nonrated Air Force Officers

Source: Keller, Hall, Matthews, Payne, Saum-Manning, Yeung, Schulker, Zavislan, and Lim 2018, viii.

Two policies that the Air Force adopted are considered in the following pages. In conjunction with the DoD directive to allow for twelve weeks of maternity leave in 2016, the Air Force allowed for postpartum women to delay physical fitness testing for one year after the birth of a child. The Air Force is also considering the possibility of expanded child care options to accommodate shift workers, dual military families, and others who

often need care outside of traditional Child Development Center hours. This policy would mirror one already in place at several Air Force installations.

Fitness Testing

The Air Force allows its postpartum servicemembers one year from the date of their child's birth to take a physical fitness test and meet appropriate physical standards, including height and weight standards. The current Air Force physical fitness assessment includes a 1.5 timed run, one minute of timed 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 allow for 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" (Armitage and Smart 2012, 1519).

As part of the Air Force's Diversity and Inclusion initiative in 2015, the service expanded the exemption from physical fitness testing from six months after birth to 12 months after birth, including any pregnancy that lasted over 20 weeks (Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs 2015). While the Air Force may have adopted this policy because of diversity and inclusion initiatives, earlier research suggested that 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" (Armitage and Smart 2012, 1519). 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…"

(Armitage and Smart 2012, 1520). 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" (Armitage and Smart 2012, 1521). The researchers found that this data aligned with previous studies in the U.S. Army as well as in civilian populations. Additionally, the researchers found that only 73 women (68%) completed all components of the physical fitness test after pregnancy; previously, 98 women (92%) completed all aspects (Armitage and Smart 2012, 1522). The researchers noted that the limitations of this study included that this study may not be fully generalizable to other military services. They recommended that the military branches must continue to "explore active duty women's physiologic changes during and after childbirth" while understanding that a reasonable extension of a testing period would be for nine to 12 months after birth (Armitage and Smart 2012, 1522).

A follow-up study examined the lived experience of USAF women preparing for the fitness assessment found that many women were able to succeed in passing their fitness assessments, but that those who performed best received support from their chain of command and families (Armitage et al. 2014, 771). 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…" (Armitage et al. 2014, 767).

Fitness Testing Evaluation

Extending the timeframe that women have after childbirth to take and pass an Army fitness test will help retention of female officers in the U.S. Army. Studies from the

Air Force and civilian institutions suggest that women do not achieve pre-pregnancy fitness standards in the first six months after giving birth. The Army is shifting from the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) to the Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT). This shift will require soldiers to move from two minutes of pushups, two minutes of sit-ups, and a timed two mile run to a six-event 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 APFT primarily assessing muscular and aerobic endurance, while the ACFT more strongly aligns with combat readiness (U.S. Army n.d.). 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 postpartum 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 that will consider 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 U.S. Army. It may also decrease healthcare costs, if women are allowed to recondition their bodies

more gradually, rather than simply rushing back to physical training that their bodies may not be ready for so soon after giving birth. The ACFT is designed to change the culture of fitness in the 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 Army goals for the ACFT (U.S. Army n.d.).

Table 5. Fitness Testing Evaluation Criteria

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

Source: Created by author.

Expanded Child Care Options

Many 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 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 (Keller et al 2018, 16). In 2016, Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter announced changes to the child development centers from a minimum of 12 hours to 14 hours; however, this change was not fully implemented and still fails to account for shift workers, overnight workers, and other work schedules (U.S. Library of Congress CRS 2018, 22). The RAND Corporation

found that many women in the Air Force were unsatisfied that the hours of the Child Development Centers did not align with schedules and their work hours.

Currently, the Air Force provides several programs for non-traditional child care 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, this program can provide some needed support to families working non-traditional hours.

Families assigned to Malmstrom, Minot, and F.E. Warren Air Force installations where active duty members guard missile sites for 24-hour periods or longer 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. However, this program remains limited in scope.

All the services allow for family care centers, child care centers run out of a private home. Often run by military spouses, these also offer flexible night and weekend hours, though provide less flexibility for the staff of these facilities. Licensing and establishment of these may take anywhere from two to nine months, limiting the usefulness if a provider is suddenly subject to a short-notice move with a servicemember. However, these 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 (Jowers 2020). While this will assist with moving children

off the waitlist for care, it does not help expand access to childcare for the hours 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 U.S. military considers the whole force, to include active and reserve components and the civilian workforce that plays a key role, this initiative may not treat all members as vital parts of the team (Esper 2020).

Expanded Child Care Options Evaluation

Increased and flexible childcare hours will help with retention; however, the initial cost of these initiatives may make many policymakers hesitant to attempt these options. Without creative solutions to these pressing problems, the U.S. 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 ..." (Sims et al. 2018, xviii). Long wait times and operating hours remain thorny issues for officers trying to balance a career with a family. Sims et al noted that the U.S. Army soldiers and officers interviewed often focused on being self-sufficient and resilient, though often described the "stressful reality of a '24-hour Army' where shift work was often required and workloads were high." (Sims et al. 2018, 25). Soldiers noted that shift work and early training requirements often make if "difficult to drop off and pick up their children from childcare because child development centers do not offer care 24 hours a day…" (Sims et al. 2018, 42).

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 and

provide high quality childcare in smaller settings. Knowing that children are well cared for will allow servicemembers to perform to higher standards. However, expansion of on-post childcare services will also cause initial issues and will cost significantly more than keeping standards of care as they are.

One installation in the U.S. 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 (Novelly 2019). This childcare center could be used as a model at other 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 (Child Care Aware of America 2017, 4). One possible option is to shift the burden of overnight shifts to unmarried and childless officers. A shift like this, however, will create inequalities in the service, and will serve to further expand the perceived special treatment that many claim that married officers receive.

Table 6. Expanded Child Care Hours Evaluation Criteria

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

Source: Created by author.

The 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, 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 child care centers will help to alleviate the burden associated with maintaining a full-time job and caring for children.

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. Serving in separate women's corps until the mid-1980's when women could officially join the integrated 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 putting the best people on the line regardless of sex 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 (Topping 2011).

Initially, the Australian Defense Association, a security think tank in Australia countered with 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 (Topping 2011). 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 (Australia Defence Association 2019).

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 (Mao 2019). 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 (Department of Defence 2019, vi). Much like the American military, women serve in the Air Force and Navy at greater numbers than in the Army. The Australian Air Force has 22.1 percent women, while the Navy has 21.5 percent women. The Army has 14.3 percent women (Department of Defence 2019, 2). Each of the services has set a target goal for women by 2023: 25 percent for the Air Force and Navy and 15 percent in the Army (Department of Defence 2019, 2). Additionally, in 2017, 31.5 percent of new recruits were women, the highest percentage recruited among NATO and partner allies (NATO 2017, 20). However, the

ADF notes that while women separate from the ADF at similar rates to men, they are still serving for less time than men (Department of Defence 2019, 35).

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 (Department of Defence 2019, 29). However, 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 careers prospect 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 U.S. Army officers suggest as their primary reasons for leaving (Department of Defence 2019, 29).

Women in Australia struggle to balance having children and 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 (ACSC) so as not to fall behind in her career timeline and to remain competitive for senior military ranks (Australian Human Rights Commission 2012, 147). 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 (Australian Human Rights Commission 2012, 173).

This thesis will examine 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 thesis 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 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 thesis.

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 informational report include the rate at which women participate, their experiences, access to flexible work, and sexual harassment and abuse (Department of Defence 2014, 1). The report tracks "trends regarding women's employment and experience, identify areas of concern and highlight successful initiatives across the three Services" (Department of Defence 2014, 1).

These annual reports use data collected by the services to understand who serves in what specialties and for what length of time. Additionally, it tracks the number of male and female servicemembers 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 servicemembers to answer questions

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

Though early reports provided mostly data, the most recent reports also provide actionable steps that services are taking to recruit and retain women as well as a way to measure success against key performance indicators (Department of Defence 2019, 6). The reports also include benchmarks that determine what "success" is for each of the key indicators. A recent report example of what success looks like for retention follows.

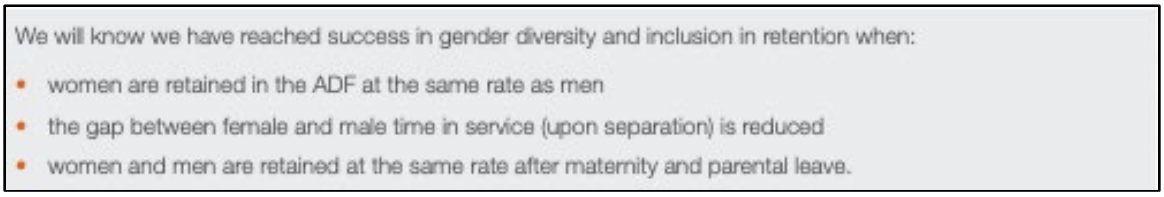

Figure 5. Example of Achievable Measures Used in the *Women in the ADF* Report to Identify Barriers to Women's Continued Service in the Military

Source: Department of Defence 2019, 28.

Annual Report Evaluation

Using an annual report that aggregates data about women's experiences across the U.S. Army will not necessarily be an effective way to help retention efforts. However, the data collected will inform policy decisions, allowing decisionmakers to understand what drives retention and which policy levers may be used to increase retention efforts. Of

note, at least two previous studies on retention have recommended that services implement surveys to understand why retention is different for men and women (Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services Staff and Insight Policy Research 2017, iv). 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 not yet been distributed (NATO 2017, 258).

In this case, this measure will not directly impact retention efforts. An understanding of what causes women to leave the Army, what works for retention and recruiting, and what does not will have no major second order effects. This program will require additional data collection and analysis, though should ultimately assist in recruiting and retention efforts, a significant focus for the U.S. Army, particularly as the number one weapon system remains the American soldier. Additionally, a DoD wide annual report will allow for services to share best practices, develop an understanding of the unique challenges that each service has, and work to overcome those; standardizing some personnel policies throughout the joint force may prove beneficial for retention.

Table 7. Annual Report Evaluation Criteria

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

Source: Created by author.

Flexible Work Arrangements

The Australian Human Rights Commission Review of 2012 noted that many women – and some men – were practicing informal flexible work arrangements (FWA) that allowed parents to be present for important events in their children's lives. This review also noted that while informal arrangements could help individual members to stay in the military, formalized agreements would help members to be certain of their ability to attend events (Australian Human Rights Commission 2012, 32). Acknowledging the stresses and strains of serving in the ADF, the Australian Government's Department of Defence offers several FWA, including Home Located Work (HLW), Variable Working Hours (VWH), Alternate Located Work (ALW) and Remove Overseas Work (ROW). These options offer flexibility to "enhance the longer-term retention of all Defence members…" (Department of Defence 2012, AL1). Under these four arrangements, servicemembers continue to work a set number of hours, though the timing and location may be different (Department of Defence 2019a, 2). Both the servicemember and the approving authority must agree to any arrangements and there are certain jobs and positions which may not lend themselves to many of these arrangements.

Home Located Work is appropriate for telework operations, where a servicemember completes work "at a specified location outside of their normal workplace" (Department of Defence 2019a, 2). This arrangement may be temporary or used regularly. Theoretically, a program like this could allow a servicemember to move closer to family for a period, while remaining employed.

The Variable Work Hours program allows servicemembers 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 (Department of Defence 2019a, 2). This option allows servicemembers 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 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 (Department of Defence 2019a, 5). Finally, Remote Overseas Work allows members to work in their ADF position while residing overseas. This would allow servicemembers 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" (Department of Defence 2019a, 8). The ADF cautions that not all jobs allow for these FWA, though supervisors "are to accommodate FWA, except when genuine operational priorities exist…" (Department of Defence 2019a, 3).

The Australia Research Council conducted a study, finding that the "members' perceptions of and access to flexible work remain an issue…" (Cathcart et al. 2014, 56). Initial efforts at flexible work arrangements were often conducted in an informal manner, with some able to take advantage of these tools, and others 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 increased the demand and the need for more flexible work arrangements (Cathcart et al. 2014, 57). Most of the members interviewed

for the study noted that they desired to remain a full-time active member, but needed to have some control over their lives. This control may have been to pick up children at school, to participate in sport, or work from home to supervise home repairs (Cathcart et al. 2014, 64). The researchers noted that both men and women used FWAs and benefitted from the increased flexibility. Finally, the study found that FWAs are not a minority interest and will benefit all members (Cathcart et al. 2014, 66).

Flexible Work Arrangements Evaluation

The U.S. Army could implement FWA to allow female officers better 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 needs of the Army and the role that each servicemember 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 formalized through ongoing arrangements, where both the soldier or officer and their supervisor understood the terms and conditions as well as the standards of work required. In addition, a program like Alternate Work Location or Remote Overseas Work that allowed for temporary home work from a different location could allow dual military couples the ability to move together, while one of them worked for their last unit of assignment at a new location. Not meant as a permanent solution, an arrangement like this could allow for some flexibility during a stressful relocation cycle. It also may provide servicemembers 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 U.S. Army officers to a telework status, a more controlled option, during a normal work period would slightly help or significantly 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 (Tucker 2020). While there have been issues with this rollout, including security ones, the current crisis has shown that it is possible for this flexibility in the military.

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

The current situation indicates that implementation of telework and variable work hours 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. However, with proper planning and updates to information technology, both work from home options and variable work hours could easily allow for officers, particularly female officers, to have additional flexibility. The Australians found that flexible work arrangements do not contribute to 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 allowed for a telework or variable work hours program.

In response to the pandemic, Defense Department Chief Information Officer Dana Deasy noted that "we are creating a much more robust, enhanced teleworking capability…" (Tucker 2020). The capability to work remotely is not the problem. Adopting these capabilities will require a sustained commitment to flexibility and 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 U.S. Army will need additional regulations and a process to apply for these options. Second, the U.S. 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.

Table 8. Flexible Work Arrangements Evaluation Criteria

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

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 and Reserve components. This evolution also led to a rebranding and the program is now the Total Workforce Model (TWM). 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.

TWM 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…" (Dennett 2016). 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 servicemembers to choose options depending on their life circumstances, but also allows the service to know who has volunteered for service and at what level.

The two parts of TWM helped 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

TWM required more “seamless internal transfer arrangements and simplified personnel management processes more accepting of flexibility…” (Department of Defence 2016, 4).

Total Workforce Model Evaluation

A plan like the TWM could benefit female officers, allowing them to temporarily change to the reserve force or even allowing them to join the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) 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 allow for easier information distribution and would allow for individuals interested in volunteering to see the list of options available.

A TWM would likely help retention efforts by granting officers the flexibility to leave the active duty force for a period and return when ready. While it would likely cause some additional issues as regulations were developed and issues of pay, promotion, and schooling were identified and solutions developed and codified, a plan like this could provide servicemembers 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 would be another key benefit of a model like this one. Adoption of this plan would require a cultural shift in how the U.S. Army thinks of service, allowing for additional flexibility when needed. This model would likely be affordable with no more cost than current programs.

Table 9. Total Workforce Model Evaluation Criteria

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

Source: Created by author.

The ADF continues to pilot innovative policies that mirror many civilian corporations to keep servicemembers affiliated with the military. These pilot programs are informed by annual data collection. Their use of an 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 behind allowing for innovative work hours and workforce models continues to allow for increased flexibility, enticing officers to stay in the military.

Norway

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

women in 1985, well before any other services considered. Women rarely served in combat roles in appreciable numbers (Steder and Rones 2019, 54).

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 (Dharmapuri 2013, 15). This increase remains significant: in 2000, women represented just 3.2 percent in the Norwegian military (Obradovic 2014, 53). 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 can (NATO 2017, 19). Norway also boasts one of the highest rates of successful recruitment for women into the armed forces for NATO member countries, at a rate of 24 percent (NATO 2017, 20).

Women also participate in public and political life in high numbers (Schjølset 2010, 4) and men and women more equitably share family duties. However, the NAF does not reflect Norwegian society and a 2014 report by the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment noted that 13 percent of female soldiers left the military, compared to less than eight percent of male soldiers (Braw 2017, 3).

The Norwegian Defence Department identified three major challenges in retention of women. The first is that the military may be considered a "springboard to other careers" (Dharmapuri 2013, 15). 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 (Dharmapuri 2013, 15).

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 (Børresen, Shaking and Rein 2019). However, women have served in the military without restrictions since 1985; women have been able to serve in any unit that they can earn admission to as well as attend any school (Børresen, Shaking and Rein 2019). 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 (Karamé 2001, 87). 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 (Obradovic 2014, 66).

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," (Dharmapuri 2013, 17). 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…" (Schjølset 2010a, 14)

This thesis will consider three of these measures, including mixed lodging, thought to cut down on sexual harassment and assault, single sex 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 for longer.

Mixed Lodging

When countries considered opening combat roles and units to women, critics often noted that this would 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 family feelings in small units may help to counter these. 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" (The Straits Times 2016). 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…" (Rones 2017, 1). Because of this research, the NAF instituted a policy whereby men and women share lodging. A series of interviews in 2014 suggested that mixed rooms were responsible for the "good relationship that existed between the men and women" at one of the border guard stations (Rones 2017, 4).

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 seemed to favor the gender mixed rooms because it forced 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 (Rones 2017, 4). Additionally, both men and women

interviewed believed 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. This research suggested 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 lived together, they often looked beyond initial gender roles and that men discriminated against women less.

However, 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 still 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" (Rones 2017, 12). Often done for expediency and timeliness, it also suggested that men and women were comfortable with different skills and tended 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) (Rones 2017, 18). 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…" (Rones 2017, 18). 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" (Blondin 2016, 13).

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 will require 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 will require no more cost than current programs at certain installations with rooms that accommodate four or more people. However, this is unlikely to apply to most officers as most of them are not housed in barracks, except during initial training. However, this could apply during pre-commissioning programs. Overall, this policy will be unlikely to change retention of female officers in large numbers.

Table 10. Mixed Lodging Evaluation Criteria

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

Source: Created by author.

Single Sex 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 sex training program, allowing them to ultimately join the Special Operations community (Braw 2017, 1). 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 (Rones 2017, 19). 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 (Rones 2017, 20).

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 noted that separate training allowed for both platoons to develop skills in what were traditional "female" and "male" roles (Rones 2017, 20). In the case of military training, the NAF found that there were some benefits to separate training. However, this training was most valuable because both platoons received equal access and training, rather than one group having better equipment and training opportunities.

Single Sex Training Program Evaluation

The U.S. Army could adopt single sex 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 U.S. military already has some experience with single-gender basic training as both the Air Force and Marine Corps conducted single gender training. The Air Force saw some mixing of genders during physical conditioning, but the Marine Corps keeps the two training programs separate (U.S Senate 1997, 3). Each of the services that conducted mixed training concluded that women performed at or higher standards; an Army study noted that men in all male training units performed lower than in integrated units, though the data from the study was from a limited sample (U.S Senate 1997, 4).

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 U.S. Army and the U.S. 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 (Rohwerder 2015, 2).

The U.S. Army could consider the cost-benefit of having single-sex 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 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 trainees attended training at the same time; this may prove to be 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 subject to further scrutiny.

Table 11. Single Sex Training Program Evaluation Criteria

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

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 and there are several positions at the Ministry of Defence, the Norwegian Defence University College, and on the Defence Staff that work on integration of gender perspectives into operations (NATO 2017, 203). Additionally, Norway uses gender advisors and considers the topic in pre-deployment training and exercises, even including a gender annex in national planning directives (NATO 2017, 207).

Obradovic finds that there is little observable relationship between the percentages of women in legislatures or ministerial positions and their level of gender inclusiveness (Obradovic 2014, 68). However, she notes that when labor participation of women is strong, gender inclusiveness in the military is also strong (Obradovic 2014, 69). 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 (Schjølset 2010a, 40). Even with women at senior levels of government, the retention of females in Norway 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 (Schjølset 2010a, 31). 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 (Hellum 2013, 599). Even

with the increased political will and increased number of senior leaders across the Defence establishment that are women, Norway continues to have issues with retaining women.

Employing Women at High Levels of Leadership Evaluation

The U.S. Army would have a difficult time implementing this option due to the way that civilian leaders of the military are selected. However, 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 a 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 U.S. 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 would cost no more than current programs.

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

Table 12. Employing Women at High Levels of Leadership Evaluation Criteria

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

Source: Created by author.

Norway's commitment to retention of women in the military remains high, though 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-sex training platoons, particularly for combat training, may be an avenue worth exploring, though will require enough trainers and trainees to be fully effective. Finally, the U.S. Army should have a long-term goal of increasing women in the highest levels of leadership, though this will remain a relatively passive strategy.

Answer to Primary Research Question

This chapter considered the primary research question: Should the U.S. 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 U.S. Army should adopt several policies, but with caveats. Though each of the options discussed previously are feasible ones for trial and adoption, the Army could adopt several policies that would provide relatively quick wins. These are

generally going to be options that could adopted with a minimal impact to operations. Other policies may require additional planning and support before attempted.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the data and analysis of four separate case studies for consideration of how the U.S. 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 U.S. Army. The next chapter will focus on recommendations for policies as well as for possible future research.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter Introduction

This thesis examined the primary research question of: Should the U.S. 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 to the primary research question is yes, with caveats, the U.S. Army should adopt some policies to retain trained female officers for the next five years and consider adopting others.

Conclusions

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

The U.S. 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 U.S. Army should push fitness testing back for postpartum women, in alignment with deployability standards. Additionally, the U.S. Army should pilot a program like the USCG program of surge staffing. The U.S. Army already uses a similar system to allow officers to apply for worldwide augmentation. Finally, the U.S. Army should immediately begin to collect data on why servicemembers leave the military as well as collect data to feed an annual report on women in the Army. Understanding what causes

soldiers to leave the military can allow the military to adapt to retain additional personnel. Without an understanding of what drives retention decisions each year, the military will struggle to make policy decisions to best influence retention decisions.

Table 13. Options for Implementation

	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

Source: Created by author.

Implications of Conclusions

The U.S. Army is lacking data on why women leave the military at higher rates than men. Various organizations collect data about retention, but the U.S. Army has not adopted policies specifically calibrated towards retaining higher numbers of women. This will ultimately translate into a lack of readiness for the U.S. Army; the U.S. Army wants to retain the best, not just the best of what's left. New initiatives to standardize policies, making it possible for women to thrive on active duty with children, 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 likely 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 that may involve spending shorter periods of time in reserve status, rather than three years.

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

Recommendations for Decision Makers

The U.S. Army should consider modifying and adopting several policies. Both the USCG and ADF have programs in place to allow for easier movement between components of the armed forces. The U.S. Army should work towards the same. The U.S. 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 events, the U.S. Army has proven that flexible work options, including telework, variable work hours, and split shifts are possible. The U.S. Army should consider codifying and adopting these programs to allow for greater flexibility for all servicemembers. The policies for flexible work options and the ability of officers to move from the active to the reserve force may require a cultural shift. However, these programs are designed to offer flexibility and entice officers to stay in uniform longer. Finally, as the U.S. Army continues to recruit and retain women interested in combat arms and special operations training, the service could consider piloting a single-gender platoon training, but should study previously conducted training to understand the problems associated with the training.

The U.S. Army could consider two policies in the long term. 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 numbers of women in leadership roles. While this policy may have some efficacy, it may be worth considering how to accomplish this.

The U.S. Army has options to consider adopting to increase retention. While these may often benefit women in the army, it is more than likely that these will help to contribute to better balance throughout the force.

Recommendations for Future Research

This thesis attempted to look at a wide variety of programs across the USCG, USAF, the ADF, and the NAF for consideration for adoption. As a result, many programs were ignored. Some of these may offer recommendations for future research.

Women in the U.S. Army, the USAF, and the ADF have all reported that their careers have been put on hold for pregnancies, with disenrollment from academic and training programs. Women in the Air Force noted that they often felt as though they had to program pregnancies into their careers, because they were unable to attend schooling while pregnant, something that both officers in the U.S. Army and ADF have also reported. Further research should 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 U.S. Army should continue to look to new initiatives that other nations use.

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

While this thesis discussed female officers, it is likely that many of the options will also benefit the male officers who serve. Additionally, the effect of generation – that of being a millennial – may be worth considering for future research.

Ultimately, anything that the U.S. Army considers should be informed by regular data collection and reporting. Both the USCG and USAF have identified gaps in retention and outsourced work to understand why female officers are leaving. The U.S. Army could conduct a similar study to allow it to better consider what drives retention.

Parting Thoughts

The U.S. 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 U.S. Army should consider how to capitalize on the new capabilities that telework has opened. 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 U.S. 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 that change. It will require a cultural shift to maintain this change: the easy answer will be to revert to the old way of doing things. However, the U.S. Army must capitalize on this redefinition to remain Army Strong and ready to fight and win the nation's wars. The Army should use this as an opportunity to affect real, substantive change.

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