Abstract

Purpose – The US military depends on women to meet recruiting goals, but women participate at lower rates than men. Theorists suggest that military and family policies affect women’s lower participation. Research has confirmed the impact of policy changes on women’s military service during specific time periods. The purpose of this paper is to examine how and when military policies affecting women developed over the course of history, exploring two related hypotheses: first, when women’s military participation is vital, policies affecting their military and family roles punctuate in tandem, and second, cultural values impact policy solutions to reconcile women’s roles.

Design/methodology/approach – Punctuated equilibrium and a women’s military participation theory informed the hypotheses. US Census and Defense Department data were used to identify periods of service when women’s military participation was vital. Historical policies were mapped and analyzed to identify policy patterns and themes affecting women’s military participation 1895–2015.

Findings – Evidence supports both hypotheses. When women are needed during wartimes, policies simultaneously encourage their service and regulate their family roles. However, policies evolved from separating servicewomen’s roles prior to the 1970s (e.g. prohibiting motherhood), to supporting their families (e.g. maternity leave) – a shift precipitated by sweeping changes in broader society and the military’s change from the draft to an All-Volunteer Force.

Originality/value – Findings elucidate the link between military and family policies affecting US women’s military participation and retention. Results may inform policy advocacy aimed at optimizing the US Department of Defense’s diversity efforts.

Keywords Women, Retention, Family, Military, Policy evaluation, History, Gender diversity, Combat

The US military has continuously struggled to retain servicewomen (Department of Defense, 2014; Holm, 1992; Segal, 1978). This challenge has intensified in recent years, as the USA has engaged in war on multiple fronts, and the pool of men voluntarily entering the military is insufficient to meet active duty recruiting targets (Department of Defense, 2018; DiSilverio, 2003). Fortunately, history offers a possible solution. Past studies have found that policy changes can positively influence women’s military retention (Segal, 1978). For example, shortly before the start of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF) in 1973, a Department of Defense (DoD) Task Force studying women’s higher attrition found that the Air Force reduced women’s attrition rates from 48 percent in 1960 to 26 percent in 1972 by enacting policy changes such as loosening marriage restrictions (Holm, 1992). Although those policy changes moderately improved women’s participation, women remain woefully underrepresented in the military (Department of Defense, 2018). For example, women currently make up more than 50 percent of the potential military recruitment pool, but only 20 percent of new active duty recruits, and women comprise less than 15 percent of the active duty force (Department of Defense, 2018; Foster and Vince, 2009; Military Leadership Diversity Committee, 2011).

Theorists have suggested that different types of policies have negatively impacted women’s military service rates. Some postulate that policies prohibiting women from serving in all military roles (e.g. direct combat roles) relegated servicewomen to second-class citizen status, thereby negatively impacting women’s willingness to serve (Harris, 2014). Others argue that servicewomen’s lower recruitment and retention rates compared to their male counterparts are linked to women’s desires to start a family, and women’s beliefs that
military careers and motherhood are incompatible (Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services, 2004; DiSilverio, 2003). In fact, evidence suggests that women's family and military roles are closely linked. For example, women who marry, become pregnant and have children leave the military at higher rates than single servicewomen (DiSilverio, 2003; Pierce, 1998). Some postulate that many women would like to remain in the military, but leave because they perceive that military policies do not support women's roles as mothers (DiSilverio, 2003). Such perceptions are grounded in historical policy realities.

Oddly, although increasing women's military participation is a DoD priority (Department of Defense, 2012), and research shows that policy changes can affect women's military retention, a comprehensive historical examination of policy development specific to servicewomen has not been published. Filling that gap, this paper examines the evolution of such policies – both those affecting women's permitted military roles and servicewomen's family roles – using punctuated equilibrium theory and Segal's (1995) theory of factors affecting women's military participation. This theoretically driven study elucidates how and when policies related to women's military and family roles have developed from the 1890s to present day, highlighting how historical policy patterns have changed and how they might continue to evolve in the future.

Guiding theories

Punctuated equilibrium as a theoretical guide for explaining military policy changes

Punctuated equilibrium theory posits that policy making remains stable for long periods of time until disrupted by short bursts of change, called policy punctuations (True et al., 1999). A required ingredient for policy punctuation is macro-political agenda access (i.e. Congress and/or the President actively considers the policy issue). Policy images, meaning the information and emotive appeals driving calls for change and policy solutions, and crises (e.g. natural disasters, terrorist attacks) may propel an issue onto the political agenda. When a problem ascends to the macro-political agenda, policy advocacy groups may frame the problem differently to support their preferred policy solutions. The accepted policy frame determines how a policy area is understood, evaluated and defined. When a single policy frame becomes institutionalized, also referred to as a policy monopoly, that frame may be challenged by shifting policy efforts to a new venue (e.g. from Congress to the Supreme Court).

Naturally, the crisis of war propels military strategies onto the macro-political agenda. Both national security concerns and citizens' engagement lead military and political leaders to focus sharply on winning the war at hand as quickly as possible, thereby overcoming the macro-political system's limited focus and agenda space (Simon, 1957; True et al., 1999). Every time military efficiency breaks onto the macro-political agenda, policies related to those qualified to serve and in what roles may be reconsidered as a means to maximize war-fighting capabilities.

Punctuated equilibrium theory also helps to explain how policies evolve between wars. True et al. (1999) acknowledge that, outside of the macro-political spotlight, small policy changes may occur slowly – a process called incrementalism – and policy stasis can occur in response to a fall from the macro-political agenda or negative feedback (i.e. information or influences reinforcing the status quo). Based on this, it is likely that during times of national peace, military policies develop incrementally or stagnate completely.

It is probable that these general military policy punctuation patterns also emerge in evolving policies regulating women's military roles. In fact, in 1956, personnel expert Dr Eli Ginzberg explained to the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS), “The increasing participation of women in the labor force does not take place on an even, slow moving pace, but rather through a series of breakthroughs” (Holm, 1992, p. 22).
Segal’s theory of factors affecting women’s military participation

Segal’s (1995) theory of factors affecting women’s military participation also informed this paper’s hypotheses and methods. Segal’s theory helps explain when policies regulating women’s military roles might punctuate (i.e. result in major changes). Her theory also highlights specific societal factors that may influence women’s military participation.

To develop her theory, Segal (1995) examined research and case examples on women’s military participation in 20 countries over the previous 250 years. Her findings revealed that a critical factor influencing women’s military participation was a society’s need for military personnel. This suggests that during wartimes, when nations face national security crises, women’s military participation increases. For example, during the Second World War, a number of European countries, including France and the UK, drafted women (Segal, 1995). Ongoing national security needs might also affect women’s military participation. For example, in Israel nearly all citizens are conscripted for military service when they reach adulthood (Central Intelligence Agency, 2019).

Segal (1995) further theorized that, in the absence of war, a nation’s cultural views regarding gender equality most heavily influence women’s military participation. Her research found that cultural norms regarding women’s expected family roles directly influenced women’s military involvement. More specifically, women’s delayed first marriages, later age at first child birth, mothering fewer children and fewer socially expected family responsibilities were related to women’s increased military participation. Thus, shifting societal and cultural views regarding gender equality, family norms, women’s expected work and family roles and related policy changes impact women’s military participation.

Historical context

As punctuated equilibrium and Segal’s theory suggest, historically US women’s military role advancements have coincided with times when the nation faced a shortage of qualified military men – particularly during wartimes (Murdock et al., 2006). Prior to the Second World War, women primarily served in nursing roles, though thousands of women performed typing, clerical and transportation duties (Segal, 1978). Given this, the majority of policy changes impacting women’s service prior to the 1970s centered on military nursing – a role considered “traditional” for women at the time. More recent policy changes, such as amendments to combat exemptions, have focused on women’s progression into direct combat – roles often described by historians as “non-traditional” for women.

The military’s views, policies and support for service members’ families also evolved over time, though at different paces for men and women. From the Revolutionary War’s start until the Second World War, the majority of soldiers were unmarried and childless (Skaine, 1999). In the case of soldiers who were married, no policies regulated spouses’ connections with the military; however, commanders often discouraged service members’ families from engaging with the military system or involving themselves with members’ careers (Manos, 1993). As soldiering roles were viewed as separate from family roles, service members were not provided compensation to care for family members. Over time, practices and policies evolved to the point of acknowledging and then responding to the military family’s needs (Segal and Segal, 2004). Support for servicemen’s families developed earlier than for servicewomen’s, as women were often prohibited from marrying or having children while serving. Such family restrictions led to challenges in retaining servicewomen, and have evolved over time to induce more women to serve.

US women’s military service history can be briefly explained by considering their roles during each wartime era, recognizing that women of color experienced additional policy limitations not fully captured in this history or in these analyses. During the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, women served as civilian nurses, cooks, seamstresses, spies,
Although women were not permitted to serve in the military, some women disguised themselves as men in order to take on fighting roles (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2011). As each war ended, female volunteers and contract workers were released, and the all-male military force was reduced to minimal staffing (Segal and Segal, 2004). This pattern of recruiting (and sometimes conscripting) men to wage war while women assisted in non-military statuses, and then demobilizing the majority of the force following war, persisted for nearly two centuries.

During the first major conflict after the Civil War, the Spanish–American War in 1898, a typhoid epidemic prompted Congress to authorize the appointment of Dr Anita Newcomb McGee as the first female Acting Assistant Surgeon General (Holm, 1992). McGee recruited and directed more than 1,500 female contract nurses during the war and went on to draft legislation creating the all-female, auxiliary Army Nurse Corps (Reeves, 1996).

When the US entered the first World War in 1917, Army and Navy Nurse Corps women were called to active duty, and for the first time the Navy enlisted women to perform military administrative duties (Morden, 1990). Approximately 35,000 women served (Women in Military Service for America Memorial, 2018). After the war, the Army Reorganization Act granted nurses limited military rank recognition, but the Naval Reserve Act restricted future Navy enlisted service to only male citizens (Holm, 1992).

The next great conflict, the Second World War, greatly impacted Americans. Over 6m people voluntarily served, and another 11.5m men were drafted (National World War II Museum, 2014). The all-female Nurse Corps expanded recruitment efforts, and each military branch established a women’s corps. In total, about 400,000 women served, and women’s roles again expanded beyond nursing, this time pushing past clerical positions into firmly established male duties, including engineers and pilots (Holm, 1992). After the war, the women’s corps continued, but the 1948 Army Integration Act capped women’s representation at 2 percent of the force, and formally limited women’s combat and family roles.

The Korean War followed, but the women’s corps remained small to the point of insignificance (Mitchell, 1998). The total female force peaked at 47,800 (less than 1 percent of the force), and only about 1,000 women deployed to the war theater (Women in Military Service for America Memorial, 2018). Efforts to recruit more women to serve failed as the broader society resisted women’s workplace integration and viewed the feminine ideal as domestic and maternal (Mitchell, 1998; Women in Military Service for America Memorial, 2018). The trend of shifting women back to more “traditional” roles such as nursing continued into the Vietnam War. Of the 7,400 women who served in theater during Vietnam, 83 percent were nurses and 70 percent of all enlisted women were assigned administrative support roles (compared to 50 percent in the Second World War) (Mitchell, 1998). Although the feminist movement gained momentum in the USA in the 1960s (e.g. women gained access to birth control, Congress passed the Equal Pay Act), the military resisted the movement by eliminating servicewomen’s weapons training, limiting jobs and promotions open to women and often requiring servicewomen to wear uniform skirts and heels, even in combat zones (Women in Military Service for America Memorial, 2018).

The 1970s particularly deserve attention. In 1973, after nearly a decade of the unpopular Vietnam War, the USA overhauled its military structure, shifting from a draft-and-release military to an AVF. The shift to the AVF led to an eventual reliance on female recruits to meet military recruiting goals (Janowitz and Moskos, 1979). Within two years of the switch to the AVF, the Vietnam War ended. Although the nation did not enter another prolonged war for decades, significant policy changes ensued (e.g. equalizing women’s enlistment standards with men’s).

It can be argued that many of these military policy changes were prompted by the major cultural shift the USA was undergoing at the time, as more women entered the
civilian workforce. In 1972, Congress passed Title IX of the Education Amendments, which banned sex discrimination in schools, followed by the Equal Credit Opportunity Act of 1974, which prohibited discrimination in consumer credit practices, and the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978, which banned employment discrimination against pregnant women. In 1972, the US House of Representatives and Senate also passed the Equal Rights Amendment, a proposed Constitutional amendment that prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex. Over the next decade, every state legislature considered the amendment, but only 35 states ratified it – three states shy of the required three-fourths needed to add the amendment to the Constitution. Additionally, US Supreme Court (SCOTUS) rulings in the 1970s caused punctuations that expanded women’s rights (Robinson, 2014). For example, SCOTUS ruled in favor of pregnant women’s rights to work (Cleveland Board of Education v. LaFleur, 1974), and established “intermediate scrutiny” for sexual discrimination cases (Craig v. Boren, 1976).

After the shift to the AVF, the nation engaged in only short conflicts (e.g. Grenada, Libya, and Panama in the 1980s). At the close of the 1980s, to address the military branches’ inconsistent combat restriction definitions, the DoD implemented the “risk rule.” The rule excluded women from direct combat positions and prohibited women from serving in non-combat units “at risk” of exposure to direct combat, hostile fire or capture. As the rule was uniformly applied across branches, 30,000 more jobs were effectively opened to women (Kamarck, 2016). By the time the USA entered the first Gulf War in 1990, women served under the “risk rule” in new positions closer to combat. Of the 40,000 women who deployed, 33,000 performed key combat support functions, such as pilots, truck drivers, prisoner of war facility managers, security police and artillery managers (Murdock et al., 2006). After the war, Congress lifted air and naval combat restrictions, and Secretary of Defense Les Aspen rescinded the risk rule, effectively opening thousands more positions to women.

Throughout Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF), women served with ongoing combat exclusions; however, from 2001 to 2004, more women died by hostile action than in any war in US history (Women in Military Service for America Memorial, 2018). In 2007, the RAND Corporation reported that combat exclusion policies were unclear and inconsistently employed (Harrell et al., 2007), but this brought no change in military policy. In 2012, five servicewomen filed suit against the Pentagon for discrimination based on the combat exclusions (Hegar v. Hagel, 2012). The next year the DoD expressed intent to repeal all combat exclusions, and in December 2015, Secretary of Defense Ash Carter announced that all military positions would be opened to women.

Hypotheses and methods
This brief history of policies and practices impacting servicewomen’s military roles highlights significant policy evolution from the Revolutionary War to now. This study integrated punctuated equilibrium theory with Segal’s (1995) theory of factors affecting women’s military participation to examine the history and current state of policies affecting servicewomen’s military and family roles. Specifically, it examined two primary hypotheses:

H1. When women’s military participation is vital, policies expanding women’s military roles and policies affecting women’s family roles punctuate in tandem.

H1a. Policies expanding women’s military roles punctuate during wartimes when women’s participation is vital (and stagnate or contract between wars or when women are not utilized).

H1b. Policies affecting servicewomen’s family roles punctuate during wartimes when women’s military participation is vital (and stagnate between wars or when women are not utilized).
H2. Cultural values impact policy solutions to reconcile servicewomen’s military and family roles.

Several methods were used to evaluate these hypotheses. First, citizens’ military participation rates and women’s representation in the military were graphed over the course of US history to identify periods when women’s rates of military participation peaked, grew incrementally or stagnated. Specifically, data from historical US censuses and DoD active duty staffing authorizations were used to graph the proportion of citizens serving on active duty from 1895, the first year for which these data were available, to 2013, the last year for which data were available at the time of the analysis (Department of Defense, 2014; Segal and Segal, 2004; US Census, 2013). Reports on DoD gender breakdowns were used to graph the proportion of active duty service members who were women during the same timeframe (Manning, 2013; Women in Military Service for America Memorial, 2018). Labels were added to the graph to identify periods of national security crises (e.g. wars) when military participation by both citizens in general and women were expected to increase. Women’s service was assessed as “vital” when both citizens’ and women’s participation rates simultaneously increased.

Second, policy change timelines were created for pre-AVF and post-AVF periods, as AVF implementation dramatically changed the methods used to enlist service members. Both timelines focused on policies regulating US women’s military roles (mapped above each timeline) and US servicewomen’s family roles (mapped below each timeline) to identify periods of policy punctuations, incrementalization and stasis. Policies mapped included those initiated by each of the four major venues that affect the military: the President of the USA, also military Commander in Chief, who issues Executive Orders; Congress, which authorizes and manages war, military benefits, defense spending and personnel authorizations; service branch (e.g. Army, Navy) leaders, whose focuses and goals influence service-level policy interpretations and changes; and the US Supreme Court, which can direct DoD-wide policy change in its rulings when legal clashes arise between service members or other citizens and military policies. Each timeline was examined to ascertain the extent to which changes in policies impacting women’s permitted military roles occurred in tandem with policies affecting servicewomen’s family roles. Next, comparisons between the military participation rate graph and each policy change timeline were used to determine whether women’s rates of military participation punctuate (spike) at the same time that policies affecting their military and family roles punctuate (proliferate).

The final analytical strategy involved examining policy solutions regarding women’s military service and servicewomen’s family roles during different eras (e.g. pre-AVF when at war, during relative peace, post-AVF). More specifically, societal values were reviewed alongside military policy changes during different eras to elucidate the degree to which the societal values and military changes were congruent.

H1: Do policy changes affecting women’s military and family roles occur in tandem?

Pre-AVF participation and policies

Figure 1 depicts census data, highlighting periods when US residents’ active duty military participation peaked. Prior to the AVF, those peaks occurred during the Spanish–American War, the first World War, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and especially the Second World War. Also readily identifiable in Figure 1 are periods when women’s military representation rates (i.e. the proportions of active duty service members who were women) spiked. Prior to the AVF, peaks occurred during the Spanish–American War, the first World War, the Second World War and the Vietnam War. Based on the graph, those periods were assessed as times when women’s military service was vital to overcome the national security crisis at hand.
Examining citizen’s and women military participation rates together prior to the AVF, the largest spike in both was during the Second World War, suggesting that during this period, women’s service was most vital. Based on the hypothesis, it was expected that a sea of policy change regarding women’s military service simultaneously occurred. Reflecting this, Figure 2 depicts pre-AVF policy changes impacting women’s military and family roles, illustrating periods of policy punctuation and stasis. Figure 2 highlights at a glance how military and family policies punctuated in tandem, as hypothesized.

Table I provides additional details regarding policies graphed on the timeline. As predicted, given the sharp rise in citizens’ military participation and women’s military representation, the Second World War proved the largest punctuation in policies impacting women’s military roles, such as the development of the Women’s Corps and servicewomen’s advancement into “non-traditional” roles, but also produced a multitude of policies prohibiting or restricting servicewomen’s marriage, pregnancy and motherhood (Holm, 1992; Treadwell, 1954). In contrast, during the Korean War when citizens’ service increased but women’s active duty representation did not, neither policies impacting women’s military roles nor servicewomen’s family roles changed significantly. The Secretary of Defense did establish the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Service (DACOWITS) aimed at improving the military’s recruitment of women after the DoD failed to meet female recruiting targets; however, President Truman took a decidedly different course of action in signing Executive Order 10240, granting services permission to discharge women who became pregnant. The Executive Order did not result in a significant change to practices, as service branches were already separating pregnant women (Morden, 1990). Thus, while policy changes occurred during the Korean War, they were superficial. During this wartime, when women’s participation was not vital, meaningful policy change regarding women’s military and family roles stagnated.

As hypothesized, during the pre-AVF period, policy changes impacting women’s military roles were accompanied by policies affecting servicewomen’s family roles. When women’s service was deemed vital (e.g. the Second World War), policies simultaneously sought to expand their military roles and limit permitted family roles. For example, during the Second World War era when women served at higher rates than any previous point in history,
policies abounded to control servicewomen’s family structures (e.g. prohibiting married women and mothers from serving), though marriage prohibitions were relaxed when manpower shortages arose.

**Post-AVF participation and policies**

While citizen’s military participation rates remained elevated and women’s participation increased during the final years of the Vietnam War, the confluence of the war and the transition to the AVF in 1973 makes it difficult to disentangle the effects of war-related policy changes (e.g. lowering men’s enlistment standards rather than attempting to recruit more qualified women, discharging pregnant women, developing all-male nursing units to limit female nurses’ combat exposure) from AVF-related policy changes (e.g. equalizing women’s military enlistment standards with men’s, expanding servicewomen’s freedoms to parent). This picture becomes clearer post-AVF and post-Vietnam. Figure 1 reveals a slight overall decline in citizens serving, and a steep increase in women’s representation on active duty since the AVF’s start. Women’s participation, which was below 2 percent in the 1970s, grew rapidly following the AVF and stabilized at just under 15 percent around 2010. Post-AVF, the proportion of citizens serving and women’s military representation did not spike during conflicts, but the growing reliance on women’s service to meet staffing goals suggests that women’s participation was and remains vital. In short, as the nation transitioned to the AVF, women became permanent assets, and therefore vital, in most military operations whether or not the nation was at war.

Figure 3 shows that the policy stasis occurred in similar fashions both pre- and post-AVF. That is, policy changes stagnated between wars. Post-AVF policies, however, did not
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Era</th>
<th>Military Role Policies</th>
<th>Effects</th>
<th>Family Policies</th>
<th>Effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revolutionary War</td>
<td>Women prohibited from serving in the military</td>
<td>Women served as civilians in needed positions: nurses, cooks, seamstresses, laundresses. Women disguised selves as men to serve</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Some wives and mothers followed their husbands/sons to war and served</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil War</td>
<td>1861 Secretary of War appointed Dorothea Lynde Dix as superintendent of women nurses for Union Army. Congress authorized women to serve as paid contract nurses at rate of 1 female/2 male nurses</td>
<td>Women served as civilians in needed positions: spies, seamstresses, couriers, laundresses, cooks. 6,000 female nurses served the Union army. Women disguised selves as men to serve</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Dix developed selection criteria: Aged over 30 years, plain-looking, wear plain brown or black dresses, willingness to work. No formal training required. 30-year minimum age likely excluded women with young families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish–American War</td>
<td>Congress authorized Army to appoint Dr Anita Newcomb McGee as acting assistant surgeon general to recruit and direct nurses. 1901 Army Reorganization Bill, Sect 19, created the auxiliary Army Nurse Corps. 1908 Navy created Navy Nurse Corps.</td>
<td>More than 1500 women served. Nurse Corps was auxiliary (no equal pay, rank, medical or retirement benefits, funding or manpower minimums). Positions limited to 100 active duty nurses</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Nurses required to be formally trained, aged 30-50-years, healthy, with good moral character. Family status was not a consideration. 30-year minimum age likely excluded women with young families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World War I</td>
<td>Capitalizing on the language of the 1916 Naval Act, which permitted the draft of &quot;persons,&quot; for the first time the Navy enlisted women to perform admin duties. 1920 the Army Reorganization Act granted military nurses the status of officers with &quot;relative rank&quot; to O-4. After the war, Congress revised Naval Reserve Act, limiting service to males.</td>
<td>Approximately 49,000 total women served, mostly as nurses but also in administrative positions. Amended Naval Reserve Act required Congressional approval for future recruitment of non-nurse women</td>
<td>1917 Congress raised pay for military men whether or not they had families, and extended privileges to Army family members. Most service policies prohibited married, pregnant women, mothers’ service</td>
<td>Military women were assumed to require benefits and compensation only for themselves, as they were not permitted to have families. Nurses who married or became pregnant while serving were dishonorably discharged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World War II</td>
<td>1941 A compromise bill created the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC). The auxiliary corps was transformed</td>
<td>Women did not receive equal pay, rank or rights. More than 150,000 women served in the</td>
<td>Selective Training and Services Act of 1940: Initially men with dependents could be deferred</td>
<td>Draft deferments for men with dependents decreased as the war intensified and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table I.* Pre-AVF policies impacting servicewomen’s military and family roles and associated effects by Era (continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Era</th>
<th>Military Role Policies</th>
<th>Effects</th>
<th>Family Policies</th>
<th>Effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World War</td>
<td>Women discharged from draft.Congress passed the Servicemen's Dependents Allowance Act</td>
<td>WAAC/WAC, 100,000 WAVES, 23,000 Women Marines, 14,000 Navy Nurse Corps</td>
<td>from draft.</td>
<td>manpower needs increased. Women's enlistment standards and behavioral expectations were higher than men's. Some married women served; some women who elected to marry were involuntarily discharged. Policies by service branch varied widely on marriage permissions. No custodial mothers of children younger than 18 years were permitted to serve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941-1948</td>
<td>women's roles expanded to non-traditional (e.g. pilots, mechanics, truck drivers, gunnery teachers, cryptographers, air traffic controllers). WASP were civil service female pilots (no military status). 1,074 served. Women not permitted to command men. The 1948 Integration Act capped women's representation at 2% of the force, prohibited women from combat aircraft, established a promotion ceiling of O-6, and prohibited women from serving on most Navy vessels</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean War</td>
<td>Women continued to serve in separate components. 1951 Secretary of Defense established the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) hoping to improve women's recruitment</td>
<td>Women's components were small to the point of insignificance. Attempts to recruit more women failed. Total female force during the Korean War peaked at 47,800 (less than 1% of the total force)</td>
<td>In 1951, President Truman signed E.O. 10240, granting services permission to discharge women who became pregnant, gave birth, or parented more than 30 days/year through adoption or marriage</td>
<td>Although the E.O. permitted, services exercised it as a mandate. Women who became stepparents could apply for waivers, but had to prove they could manage military and parenting demands</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table I. (continued)
Vietnam War 1965 the Navy Nurse Corps began permitting male nurses to serve. 1966 the Army established all-male nursing units to serve closest to the front lines. 1967 P.L. 90-130 removed rank ceilings, expanded mid-level female officer positions, and repealed the “2% cap.” 1968, the first women’s component personnel increase in 15 years allotted 6,500 additional female positions. 1972 the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) opened admissions to Army and Navy women Of those who served, over 7,400 were women, 83% of whom were nurses. Female nurses were kept away from the front lines. The majority (70%) of enlisted women were assigned administrative support roles. Rather than efforts to increase servicewomen’s recruitment and retention, the DoD lowered men’s aptitude requirements

Facing lawsuits and public backlash for pregnancy discharge policies, in 1971 an unofficial “policy of waivers” began, allowing pregnant women to continue military service on a case-by-case basis

Despite the pregnancy waiver policy, the military continued to face a 6% loss of enlisted servicewomen (approximately 3,000 troops annually) due to pregnancy and parenthood

Table I.

Figure 3. Post-All-Volunteer Force policy change timeline: patterns in policies impacting servicewomen’s military and family roles
punctuate to the same degree as pre-AVF. Instead, policies appear to follow a pattern of incrementalization or stasis. This may reflect the changing nature of the military, as citizens’ military involvement ceased to spike during wartimes post-AVF (i.e. fewer citizens impacted may have impaired ascent to the macro-political agenda). It might also be that the policy changes enacted during the transition to the AVF, as well as cultural shifts experienced at the same time, created such lasting changes (e.g. dissolving most overtly discriminatory policies impacting women’s military and family roles) that vast policy changes were unnecessary after the transition. Another possible explanation is that, until Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF), the USA did not engage in lengthy wars that challenged status quo policies. This latter explanation may help clarify how and why after nearly a decade into OEF/OIF, as evidence of problematic combat and family policies mounted, major changes in policies impacting women’s combat and family roles ensued incrementally. For example, the DoD has slowly broadened women’s permitted combat roles (e.g. expanded service to submarines, lifted colocation combat restrictions, removed the ground combat exclusion), and each service branch has gradually developed policies supporting parenthood (e.g. breastfeeding, longer post-partum deployment deferments). Table II provides additional details regarding policies graphed on the timeline.

Taken together: pre- and post-AVF participation and policies
During the post-AVF era, women’s representation continued to rise, making women’s service increasingly more vital. Policy changes were less pronounced than in the pre-AVF era, but consistent with the pre-AVF era, changes occurred during wartimes, and policies simultaneously addressed women’s military and family roles. Thus, review of the pre- and post-AVF policy timelines finds support for H1: Policies affecting women’s military roles and policies affecting servicewomen’s family roles have occurred in tandem. However, the substance of policy changes pre- and post-AVF differ dramatically. Prior to the AVF, accepted policy solutions consistently reconciled women’s military and family roles by separating those roles and making them largely incompatible with each other. That is, as women’s military roles expanded, policies limited servicewomen’s permitted family roles by prohibiting marriage and motherhood. At the start of the AVF, venue changes from the military to the courts resulted in policies supporting servicewomen’s equal dependent benefits and pregnant women and new mothers’ rights to serve. Without the military draft, the DoD was forced to consider anew how to recruit and retain top talent, including women. These changes resulted in lasting policy solutions. Specifically, rather than continue the pre-AVF policy monopoly which separated women’s military and family roles, post-AVF policy solutions consistently seek to balance the demands of military and family life so that women (and men) can better manage both roles’ demands.

H2: Changes in society’s cultural values impact military policy change
To evaluate this hypothesis, different eras were examined to explore the congruency between US cultural values and military policy changes. Eras included one war when women’s participation was vital (the Second World War, as informed by census and women’s military participation rates in Figure 1), one war when women’s participation was not vital (Korean War per Figure 1), a period of relative peace pre-AVF (late 1950s – late 1960s when women’s military participation was not vital and the USA was not at war), and changes since the AVF began (when women’s participation was vital during peacetimes and war).

The Second World War: US cultural values and military policy change
Women’s workforce participation was vital during the Second World War, leading to society’s changing views regarding civilian women serving in “non-traditional” roles
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Era</th>
<th>Military role policies</th>
<th>Effects</th>
<th>Family policies</th>
<th>Effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AVF Transition</td>
<td>1973 transition from draft/volunteer force to the AVF. 1974 Original Goldberg (v Tarr) case filed to argue all-male draft unconstitutional (stalls in court in 1975 as draft ceases). Women’s enlistment and promotion requirements equalized with men’s. 1975 President Gerald Ford signed Public Law 94-106 which required military service academies to accept female candidates no later than 1976. 1978 Combat exclusion policy developed</td>
<td>The number and quality of male recruits deteriorated. The success of the AVF depended on female volunteers. 1978 combat exclusion policy prohibited women from serving in positions which engaged enemy with weapons, were exposed to direct fire, or had high capture probability.</td>
<td>Frontiero v Richardson (411 US 677), SCOTUS found it unconstitutional to require servicewomen to prove their spouses’ financial dependence in order to receive housing pay and medical benefits. 1975 the DoD ordered all branches to amend rules to cease mandatory pregnancy discharges. 1976 in Crawford v Cushman the Marines pregnancy discharge policy was ruled unconstitutional. 1985 in MacK v Rumsfeld, US District Court in Buffalo upheld Army and Air Force policies denying single parents’ enlistments. 1989 Military Child Care Act passes</td>
<td>Married and mothering women were permitted to enlist. Some pregnant women voluntarily continued military service – for the first time new mothers served. Some pregnant women sought voluntary separation upon pregnancy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>1981 After President Carter reinstated the draft in 1980, Rostker v. Goldberg elevated to SCOTUS, who rules that the male-only draft registration was constitutional based women’s exclusions from combat. 1989 DoD implements the “risk rule”</td>
<td>Women served in new military roles (e.g. pilots, military police) in Grenada, Libya, and Panama. Some served with “all risk and no reward,” as combat medals were not authorized for individuals restricted from (but assigned to) combat service. Risk rule opens 30,000 new positions to women.</td>
<td>Given women’s higher rates of single parenthood, the ruling disproportionately impacted women seeking to enter the military. Affordable, high quality childcare made available to all military members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulf War</td>
<td>1991 Congress repealed law banning women from flying in combat. 1992 Presidential Commission recommended continuing combat restrictions. Congress repealed provision banning women from serving on combat ships. 1994 Secretary of Defense Les Aspen rescinded the risk rule.</td>
<td>Thousands of new positions opened to women. Sole remaining exemptions were direct ground combat and collocation with direct combat units.</td>
<td>1991 P.L 102-25, included a stipulation that the DoD establish a post-partum deployment deferment policy. Several bills limiting deployment of single and dual-military parents considered; none passed</td>
<td>Although the House bill recommended a six month post-partum deferment policy, the DoD established a four month post-partum and post-adoption deployment deferment policy which persisted for the next 15 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table II. Post-AVF policies impacting servicewomen’s military and family roles and associated effects.
in the workforce. After the war, civilian women were encouraged to return to their domestic duties so that drafted men could return to their civilian workforce positions. The review of military policy changes during this period reveals that servicewomen faced similar changing expectations. Although their permitted roles expanded widely, and military nurses were eventually granted equal pay and rank, servicewomen who fulfilled less “traditional” roles were largely ignored following the war, as their contributions were often viewed as a threat to men serving (e.g. that women might take over jobs men desired) (Reeves, 1996). As the Second World War came to a close, President Truman proved somewhat ahead of the broader culture on the social issue of racial equality, issuing Executive Order 9981 in 1948 mandating the military’s racial desegregation (in comparison, Brown v. Board of Education was not decided until 1950). However, reflecting views of the broader society, he regressed on the issue of women’s equality in the military, signing a bill to create women’s reserve forces, but limiting women’s military representation to no more than 2 percent of the total force. In short, societal and military changes during this wartime period occurred in near lockstep, as both viewed women’s expanded roles as necessary during the crisis, but not desirable as a lasting norm. Consistent with this, women who were married or had children were severely limited from serving in the military during the war and after, as family and military roles continued to be deemed incompatible.

Korean war: US cultural values and military policy change

As the 1950s began and the US entered the Korean War, the media (i.e. newspapers, books, films and print advertisements) continued to depict dramatic dichotomies in gender roles. The advent of television reinforced these dichotomies, showing women wearing pearls and heels cleaning, cooking and caring for children while men worked long hours and handled “masculine” chores, like lawn mowing. These depictions likely contributed to the military’s struggle to recruit women. Military recruitment pamphlets also reinforced these values, promising that “particular care is taken to see that jobs do not involve a type of duty that violates our concept of proper employment for sisters and girlfriends. In the military
transport field, for example, women do not drive heavy trucks” (Women in Military Service for America Memorial, 2018). Again, policy themes during this war appear consistent with societal values. In line with the broader cultural mindset, military policies that restricted women’s rights to marry and mother persisted.

Pre-AVF relative peace: US cultural values and military policy change
Despite the relative peace and growing feminist movement in the 1960s, military policies of the 1950s continued into the next decade, and servicewomen remained relegated primarily to “traditional” roles. In fact, when civilian women who were trained in “non-traditional” fields, such as engine repair, enlisted in the military, they were retrained for jobs the military deemed “women’s work.” Further, the Army ceased training women in “non-traditional” military skills, including weapons familiarization courses (Women in Military Service for America Memorial, 2018). These changes highlight how unnecessary women’s combat service was viewed during this pre-AVF peacetime. Eventually, as the broader society’s views toward equality intensified, the military came under increased pressure from those outside its ranks to expand opportunities for servicewomen. In 1967, Congress responded by heightening promotion ceilings for servicewomen and removing the 2 percent cap on women’s military representation. In sum, during this pre-AVF period of relative peace, it appears that the military was initially somewhat out of step with the broader society, proving more a laggard than a leader in gender equality, though it eventually succumbed to societal pressures. Consistent with this, policies continued to separate women’s military and family roles by, for example, limiting mothers’ service and discharging women who became pregnant (Women in Military Service for America Memorial, 2018).

Post-AVF war and peace: US cultural values and military policy change
The switch to an all-volunteer military occurred during an era of enormous societal change, especially with regard to women’s roles and place in society. As women were entering the civilian labor force at unprecedented rates, the DoD was also experiencing an organizational shift as it depended on women to meet AVF staffing needs. Although the Equal Rights Amendment did not specifically mention the military, military leaders anticipated its passage and preemptively reviewed and revised personnel policies. Those revisions improved women’s career opportunities in “non-traditional” fields by, for example, accepting female candidates into the Reserve Officer Training Corps in 1972, and reinstating weapons training for women (Women in Military Service for America Memorial, 2018). Although some of this change is directly attributable to the switch to the AVF, the broader societal calls for women’s equal treatment, including the ERA, were likely stronger influences. Venue changes to the courts also capitalized on cultural shifts toward equality. Court rulings, which were increasingly supportive of women’s rights at the time, led to servicewomen’s equal access to dependent benefits (Frontiero v. Richardson, 1973) and assurance they could not legally be discharged on the grounds of pregnancy (Crawford v. Cushman, 1976). Thus, broader cultural changes during the 1970s forced a shift in policy solutions from separating to integrating servicewomen’s military and family roles.

Still, cultural and policy changes in the 1970s did not result in servicewomen’s full equality, as thousands of military positions particularly combat roles – remained closed to women. In fact, military policies still seem to be catching up with value shifts in the broader society. For example, in the last two decades, women began out-earning their husbands and assuming top level positions at higher rates than ever before and more men are staying at home to care for their children (Cauchon, 2013). But during the first several years of OEF/OIF, instead of recognizing women’s proven combat service, the DoD continued policies that
restricted women’s ground combat service. Again, a venue change helped force the DoD’s hand, effectively toppling the last stronghold of male military dominance. In Hegar v. Hagel (2012), five servicewomen filed a discrimination lawsuit based on the combat exclusions. These women and other advocates leveraged the prevailing societal values by championing a policy frame that centered on women’s proven combat service. Further, they capitalized on the macro-political agenda access afforded during the wartime, emphasizing combat commanders’ needs to choose the best serviceperson for the job—not eliminating mission-needed talent based on gender. This frame gained momentum, and eventually effectively propelled the US military to open all positions to women who qualify for them.

As policies continue to develop to integrate women into all combat roles, themes of gender neutrality—another emerging societal value—abound. For example, advocates and DoD insiders are pushing for gender-neutral physical standards for newly opened combat positions. This frame of gender neutrality seems to be bleeding into newly forming family policies, as the DoD has expanded career intermission programs to allow male and female service members to take breaks in service to pursue family or personal goals. Further, as millennial men are opting for more egalitarian relationships at higher rates than past generations (Pedulla and Thebaud, 2015), Congress passed legislation affording military men access to parental leave.

Influenced by societal values, policies expanding women’s military roles and encouraging them to serve in the military are occurring in tandem with policies supporting motherhood. Further, reflecting US young adults’ family priorities, policies are expanding to support fatherhood as well. As we evaluate each era, it appears that societal values drive military policy changes as they relate to servicewomen’s roles more rapidly during wartimes, but even during times of relative peace, societal pressures eventually instigate military policy change.

Discussion and conclusion
This study highlights patterns in policy content and timing that can inspire advocacy and inform policy change. Examination of census data and timing resulted in support for H1—when women’s military participation is vital, policies expanding women’s military roles and policies affecting women’s family roles punctuate in tandem. Specifically, Figure 1 highlighted periods in which women’s military service was vital by identifying wartimes when US civilians’ military participation and the proportion of service members who were women simultaneously spiked. Further, Figures 2 and 3 illustrated that policies expanding women’s military roles punctuated during wartimes when women’s participation was vital, and stagnated (or contracted women’s roles) between wars. Figures 2 and 3 also affirmed that military policies affecting women’s military roles changed in tandem with policies affecting servicewomen’s family roles, regardless of whether women’s service was vital. General review of policy themes revealed that the emphases of policies changed dramatically after the switch to the AVF.

Delving into that policy theme change, H2 sought to explore the degree to which cultural values drive military policy change related to servicewomen’s permitted work and family roles. Four different eras were examined to explore the degree of congruence between cultural values and military policy changes. Findings suggest that the policy monopoly prior to the AVF, when women’s roles in society were primarily as homemakers, separated women’s military and family roles. After women’s roles in society expanded more fully into the workplace and the AVF was instituted, the policy monopoly changed to balance and integrate servicewomen’s work and family roles. The continued cultural shift toward more egalitarian relationships between men and women at home and in the workforce may further influence immediate and long-term policy solutions impacting military men and women.
Limitations

This study sought to comprehensively evaluate historical policy changes affecting US servicewomen. It is limited by its unusually large scope (1890s to present day) and its broad brush examination of cultural values and policy changes. This work is intended to serve as an anchor for continued research on how and when policies affecting service members and their families occur, and how those changes affect US peoples' and their families' willingness to serve in the military.

Implications for future policy advocacy

As millennial men are prioritizing family more than past generations (Pedulla and Thebaud, 2015), many civilian organizations are attempting to attract talent by offering more family-friendly work environments. Given current engagement in wars, ongoing national security threats suggesting peacetime is not impending, military retention challenges and DoD diversity goals, military leaders have suggested intents to do the same. For example, in 2016, the DoD extended all service branches’ minimum permitted parental leave lengths, and expanded on-base childcare availability to 14 h per day (Ferdinando, 2016). Then in 2018, prompted by the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), the Air Force and Navy updated parental leave policies to allow 3–6 weeks of non-chargeable leave for new military mothers or fathers (in addition to convalescent leave previously available to birthing mothers) (Air Force Public Affairs, 2018; Chief of Naval Personnel Public Affairs, 2018).

In regards to women’s military roles, another expansion may be impending. Decades ago in Rostker v. Goldberg (1981) the plaintiff argued that the requirement that all 18–26 year-old males register for the selective service was discriminatory. Selective service registration is essentially a draft list to be used should the AVF require additional personnel during a crisis. At the time, the Supreme Court ruled that the all-male draft registration was constitutional because men and women were not “similarly situated” given that women were not permitted to serve in combat. Thus, women continued to be excluded from selective service registration. The expansion of women into increasingly more combat roles and the current societal values and policy themes around gender neutrality suggest that women might now be deemed similarly situated to men. Given this, the full repeal of combat exclusions may prove the catalyst to re-challenge the constitutionality of the all-male selective service registration. In fact, in 2016 Representatives Duncan Hunter and Ryan Zinke (both military veterans who opposed women entering combat roles) introduced the Draft America’s Daughters Act of 2016 to force conversation on the issue (Tritten, 2016). Though Representatives Hunter and Zinke voted against it, the amendment passed the Senate Armed Services Committee. While not included in the final version of the NDAA, the amendment incited interest and legislators called for a review of the entire selective service system. In 2017, after reviewing the system and related arguments, the Pentagon recommended that women be required to sign up for the draft (Scarborough, 2017). While no such action has been initiated to-date, the Pentagon’s recommendation may soon be acted upon, as a district court judge recently ruled the male-only draft to be unconstitutional (National Coalition for Men v. Selective Service System, 2019).

These impending and potential future policy changes reflect ongoing reconciliation of women’s and men’s military and family roles. As women’s military service opportunities have nearly equalized with men’s from a policy perspective, changes in family policy are likely to continue during wartimes (when military families’ welfare is most likely to ascend to the macro-political agenda) and benefit both men and women. Venue changes may also spark military policy evolution should the military’s policies lag behind societal expectations. Advocacy groups interested in military women’s wellness, their representation and retention, and/or military family supports may employ punctuated equilibrium theory and the theory of factors impacting women’s military participation to guide their efforts. In addition, past and
current military and family policy patterns and recent policy solutions/trends might help to frame and target related advocacy efforts. Specific strategies might include framing gender equality as a means to enhance military effectiveness (e.g. developing gender-neutral job standards so that the most qualified service members can serve effectively in critical positions regardless of gender) and retention (e.g. expanding initiatives to reduce work-family conflict for military mothers and fathers, improving support for service members in dual-military marriages, expanding career broadening and other temporary career off-ramp options, improving flexibility to transfer from active duty to reserve status, developing effective mentoring programs and improving personnel/talent management systems). Introducing these types of policy recommendations during or immediately following wartimes might produce significant and lasting policy changes. Such changes could not only enhance military men’s, women’s and their families’ work/life balance, but also improve service members’ military preparedness, thereby strengthening the US military.

References


Hegar v. Hagel (2012), Case No. C 12-06005 EMC.


Further reading

Corresponding author
Erika Lee King can be contacted at: erikalee123@yahoo.com

For instructions on how to order reprints of this article, please visit our website: www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm
Or contact us for further details: permissions@emeraldinsight.com