DACOWITS 2013 Focus Group Findings

Accession of Women into the Officer Corps & Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault at the Service Academies and Officer Candidate/Training Schools

Presented to the Members of the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS)
20 June 2013

Overview of Presentation

- Research topics
- Method of investigation
- Demographics of study participants
- Results
  - Accession of women into the officer corps
    - Factors influencing officer accession
    - Recruitment of women officers
    - Women in leadership roles
  - Sexual harassment and sexual assault
    - Risk and protective factors
    - Leadership, policies and training
    - Reporting and accountability
- Questions/Discussion

Research Topics

- DACOWITS focus groups explored two main topics in 2013:
  - Accession of women into the officer corps
    - Examine effectiveness of outreach and recruitment of women across officer commissioning sources: Service Academies, OCS/OTS, ROTC programs, and direct appointments
  - Prevention of sexual assault and sexual harassment
    - Review initiatives to combat sexual assault and sexual misconduct (e.g., those contained in the Lackland Report)
    - Specifically examine the effectiveness of sexual assault and sexual harassment prevention efforts at the Service Academies

Method of Investigation

- Focus Groups
  - 51 focus groups in 8 locations
    - 4 Service Academies, 5 OCS/OTS sites
    - (Coast Guard Academy and OCS co-located)
  - Total n = 525
  - Students/candidates and faculty/staff
- Method of data analysis
  - Generate transcripts from each focus group
  - Identify major themes and subthemes within each focus group
  - Determine salient comments across focus group sessions

Demographics of Study Participants

Academy students

		Women N=86	Men N=74	Total N=160
Service	Air Force	28%	31%	29%
	Navy	27%	28%	28%
	Coast Guard	24%	19%	22%
	Army	21%	22%	21%
Class Year	First Class	32%	30%	31%
	Second Class	18%	14%	16%
	Third Class	13%	18%	15%
	Fourth Class	38%	39%	38%
Family Members in Military	Yes	54%	45%	50%
Race and Ethnicity	Non-Hispanic White	68%	65%	67%
	Non-Hispanic Black	2%	7%	4%
	Hispanic	9%	11%	10%
	Other (Non-Hispanic)	21%	18%	19%
Military Career Intention	Planning on Staying In	54%	64%	59%
	Planning on Leaving	20%	15%	18%
	Undecided	25%	22%	24%

Demographics of Study Participants

OCS/OTS students

		Women N=92	Men N=99	Total N=191
Service	Navy	25%	24%	25%
	Marine Corps	22%	20%	21%
	Army	17%	12%	15%
	Air Force	10%	13%	12%
	Coast Guard	8%	10%	9%
	Guard/Reserve	18%	20%	19%
Previously Enlisted	Yes	35%	35%	35%
Family Members in Military	Yes	50%	52%	51%
Race and Ethnicity	Non-Hispanic White	70%	72%	71%
	Non-Hispanic Black	8%	6%	7%
	Hispanic	10%	11%	10%
	Other (Non-Hispanic)	13%	11%	12%
Relationship Status	Married/Partner	28%	30%	29%
	Divorced/Widowed	2%	1%	2%
	Single, with significant other	23%	20%	21%
	Single, no significant other	47%	48%	48%
Military Career Intention	Planning on Staying In	70%	74%	72%
	Planning on Leaving	8%	7%	7%
	Undecided	23%	19%	21%

Demographics of Study Participants

Faculty/Staff

		Women, N=71	Men, N=97	Total, N=168
Service	Air Force	32%	13%	21%
	Army	11%	18%	15%
	Marine Corps	11%	16%	14%
	Navy	13%	14%	14%
	Coast Guard	8%	16%	13%
	Guard/Reserve	3%	5%	4%
	N/A, Civilian	21%	16%	18%
Paygrade	E4-E6	6%	10%	8%
	E7-E9	20%	14%	17%
	O1-O3	32%	48%	42%
	O4 or higher	21%	10%	15%
Years at Academy/OCS	Mean, range	4.59, 0-23	3.1, 0-21	3.7, 0-23
Race and Ethnicity	Non-Hispanic White	76%	70%	73%
	Non-Hispanic Black	8%	15%	13%
	Hispanic	10%	5%	7%
	Other (Non-Hispanic)	6%	9%	8%
Relationship Status	Married/Partner	58%	80%	71%
	Divorced/Widowed	10%	6%	8%
	Single, with significant other	17%	3%	9%
	Single, no significant other	15%	10%	13%

Accession of Women into the Officer Corps

Accession of Women into the Officer Corps: Factors Influencing Officer Accession

- Family and friends with prior service
  - Students, especially women, often mentioned parents and siblings with military service as an influence
  - Grandparents, spouses, and uncles less commonly reported
  - Friends and neighbors also mentioned

- Non-military parents also suggested attending the Academies, but not OCS/OTS

Accession of Women into the Officer Corps: Factors Influencing Officer Accession (cont'd)

- Desire to serve country
- Challenge and discipline of the military lifestyle (more women than men)
- Monetary concerns
- Training and job opportunities
- Career skills gained in the military was a big factor among OCS/OTS candidates
- Job security

Accession of Women into the Officer Corps: Factors Influencing Officer Accession (cont'd)

- "I wanted to do something that had a purpose. Joining the military was on the top of my list. If I can reach out and help more people, that's what I want to do." – *Academy Underclass Woman*
- "The challenge of the academic environment combined with military things. That was appealing to me because I knew if went somewhere else and wasn't challenged I wouldn't be as motivated. I knew I would excel under stress." – *Academy Underclass Woman*
- "Part of it was definitely the fact that it was free. I knew it wouldn't put my parents into debt." – *Academy Upperclass Woman*
- "I joined for leadership roles…There's no other organization in the world like it. The experiences you gain from it cannot be obtained elsewhere." – *OCS/OTS Candidate Woman*
- "I joined…for the experience in the civilian world – leadership, security clearance, military benefits." – *OCS/OTS Candidate Woman*

Accession of Women into the Officer Corps: Factors Influencing Officer Accession (cont'd)

- Most participants considered other Services and commissioning routes
  - Academy students
    - Focused primarily on the Academies, ROTC options as backup
    - Chose Service based on visits to the Academies
  - OCS/OTS candidates
    - Considered several commissioning routes (e.g., ROTC, Academy, direct commission)
    - Chose Service based on 1) willingness of recruiters to assist with OCS/OTS package and 2) variety of jobs offered by each Service
  - Many OCS/OTS candidates had always wanted to join but had not done so earlier in life, for a variety of reasons

Accession of Women into the Officer Corps: Factors Influencing Officer Accession (cont'd)

Gender Differences

- The majority felt the influencing factors were similar
- Both men and women felt that women are sometimes accepted based on gender quotas
  - "It might not be true, but there's sometimes the notion that women are accepted just because they're women and because they need to fill a certain quota." – *Academy Underclass Woman*
- Academies: larger percentage of women recruited for sports
- Some OCS/OTS candidates and Academy faculty/staff noted that many women had prior service

Accession of Women into the Officer Corps: Recruiting Women Officers

Methods for Finding Out

- Little active recruitment for the Academy or OCS/OTS
- Athletics most active area of recruitment for Academies
- Few participants mentioned a representative or student from the Academy visiting high schools
- A few found out about the Academies through internet searches
- Several OCS/OTS candidates and a few Academy students reported a lack of information on the enlisted side

Accession of Women into the Officer Corps: Recruiting Women Officers

Communications While Applying

- Academies
  - Little or no communications from the Academy during the application process
  - Contact by representatives after indicating interest
  - Good experiences with the representatives and summer programs
- OCS/OTS
  - Difficult application process
  - Strong need for active role in completing paperwork and monitoring progress
  - Recruiters unwilling or unknowledgeable on completing officer packets
  - Some positive experiences with recruiters

Accession of Women into the Officer Corps: Recruiting Women Officers

Suggestions for Recruiting More Women

- More women recruiters
  - "I think that the best way to raise awareness would be to talk to other female…officers. The majority are always guys, and it's not the same as talking to a female." – *Academy Upperclass Woman*
  - "I think it would help to have female officers to take people in. Military is a male concept. Having a female in front of you that looks like you would convince you better than a guy talking to you about the infantry." – *OCS/OTS Candidate Man*
- Contact with women cadets
  - "For me it helped seeing, meeting some female cadets and meeting them in a non-military environment. I could see myself being you – you're wearing a dress, not in uniform all the time. I think that would help. It reassured me. I didn't have to turn into a guy to come to the Academy." – *Academy Underclass Woman*

Accession of Women into the Officer Corps: Recruiting Women Officers

Suggestions for Recruiting More Women (cont'd)

- Highlight opportunities that the military offers women
  - "I come from non-military. I had to research and see there were so many different options I could do...People say 'what are you going to do.' I say I can do almost anything - you could be a doctor. A lot were really shocked that those options are available." – *Academy Underclass Woman*
- Better training for recruiters regarding commissioning programs. Faculty/staff expressed the need for recruiters to convey more realistic expectations to recruits.
  - "Recruiters need to do a better job of explaining…People show up and the job is different than what the recruiters told them and they leave. In terms of complaints, it's that recruiters are not getting the right males or females here." – *OCS/OTS Faculty/Staff*

Accession of Women into the Officer Corps: Women in Leadership Roles

- Most say women in leadership roles is important
- Women have a different perspective/leadership style
- Prepares women and men to interact with both genders
- Importance of mentors/role models
- Importance of leadership selected on merit rather than gender
  - Expressed by both genders, but more commonly by men
- Lack of training among enlisted personnel at Academies
- Faculty/staff men uncomfortable with women or feel unable to properly address their concerns.
  - Some relied on referring the women candidates/students to a faculty/staff woman

Accession of Women into the Officer Corps: Women in Leadership Roles (cont'd)

- "You need a role model to look up to, a cross section of officers, you need a representative from every group…I don't see it as a 'plus;' I see it as necessary." – *Academy Upperclass Woman*

- "It's important to have women in leadership roles because you learn how to deal with the opposite sex. It can be intimidating to some. If you have women alongside with you, you learn to get along." – *OCS/OTS Candidate Man*

- "It shouldn't be about males or females in the position; it should be the most qualified candidate. I think it creates a lot of cynicism at the school, especially among the guys, and it can kind of hinder the females. Positions should be given to the person who deserves it the most." – *Academy Upperclass Woman*

Summary: Accession of Women into the Officer Corps

- Accession of Women Officers
  - Influential factors: Family/friends with military background, desire to serve, challenge of the military, monetary benefits, career skills and job opportunities
  - Few gender differences were noted
- Recruiting Women Officers
  - Academy: Positive experiences with recruiters and summer programs
  - OCS/OTS: Difficult to apply, unknowledgeable recruiters, lack of info about commissioning options for prior enlisted
  - Suggestions: More women recruiters, contact with women cadets, highlighting opportunities for women in the military, better recruiter training on OCS/OTS
- Women in Leadership Roles
  - Women in leadership is important: variety of perspectives/leadership styles, mentorship, opportunity to interact with both genders
  - Should be merit-based
  - OCS faculty/staff sometimes uncomfortable with women candidates; lack of training for enlisted personnel at Academies

Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault

Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault
General Overview

- Sexual harassment more common than sexual assault
  - More “intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment” than unwanted sexual advances
  - More common problem at the Academies than OCS/OTS
  - Perception that incidence at Academies similar/lower than civilian colleges, but more scrutinized
  - View that incidence in units/fleet much higher than at OCS/OTS
- Sense that culture changing for the better, but discouraging and harmful lack of progress in many ways
- Optimism that reporting is increasing, while recognizing barriers
- Accountability perceived as high for sexual assault, although outcomes usually unknown

Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault

General Overview (cont'd)

- "I've been a VA (Victim Advocate) for over ten years. I've seen the changes. I've seen the growth for women. I tell the [students] all the time, 'The [Service] you come into today is not the one I came into.' Things have gotten so much better." – *Academy Faculty/Staff*

- "When I told people I was coming here, they asked if I was worried about sexual assault. I said it happens everywhere. No matter where you go to college you have to be very careful. I don't think the culture here is any worse than other places." – *Academy Underclass Woman*

- "This has a huge impact on the credibility of our leadership. If we're not careful and don't do something really soon about this, it'll eat away at the credibility of our Service, and it angers me…that we have to spend so much time on this." – *OCS/OTS Faculty/Staff*

Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault

Risk and Protective Factors

- Particularly at the Academies, sexual harassment is driven by
  - Immaturity and wanting to fit in socially
    - Men joking for camaraderie, showing off, group mentality
    - Women not wanting to be seen as sensitive, “girl you can’t talk around”
  - Sexism in society and military culture
  - No boundaries between work and life
- Counteracting forces: Maturity, immediate correction and education (peer and leader), culture of professionalism and respect, female leaders and mentors

Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault

Risk and Protective Factors (cont'd)

- "A certain level of maturity is expected of you. The conversation you're having should be respectful of another human being. Listening to how you disrespected a female is not something I want to hear about. If you were sitting with a group of Majors, they wouldn't be having these conversations. You need to act the way you're going to be acting once you graduate." – *Academy Upperclass Woman*

- "When we had these strong female role models, there was little sexual harassment. Their ears were open for certain things that males may not be open to." – *OCS/OTS Faculty/Staff*

- "I think also not tolerating any sexual harassment from our peers. As freshman we just do what we're told. [But as upperclassmen, we can] show them that we don't need to tolerate that. If you see upperclassmen doing that you'll be less afraid to do that." – *Academy Underclass Woman*

Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault

Risk and Protective Factors (cont'd)

- Alcohol and sexual assault at the Academies
  - Reduces impulse control, increases vulnerability, reduces bystander intervention, and weakens respect for student leadership
  - Students perceive that strict environment increases alcohol use
- Counteracting forces: Protectiveness of peers, more liberty to release stress outside of the rare weekend, alternate activities

Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault

Risk and Protective Factors (cont'd)

- "We are here for five days of school, every day [there is] practice. You put in a lot of time and effort and don't get a lot in return. Sometimes you don't even have the weekend. If you were to give the weekends – every weekend, you could go off and do your own thing but it wouldn't be the need to have the time of your life. You could go nap or sit in a park because you know you'll be getting that time again in another seven days. If there's no pressure to live it up, you can chill." – *Academy Underclass Man*

- "The guys are like brothers…I feel very comfortable getting drunk with a group of friends because you fully trust that if something were to happen they would take care of me." – *Academy Underclass Woman*

Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault

Risk and Protective Factors

- Recognition that sexual harassment and sexual assault are connected
  - Boundary testing

- Contribution of individual characteristics, makes these problems inevitable
  - Social isolation or clustering of “creeps”

Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault
Leadership

- Zero tolerance, immediate correction
- Serving as a role model
- Creating an environment of respect and empathy
- Engaging with people, having an open door
- Discouraging alcohol use and encouraging safety
- Relying on expertise from SARC
- Some not sure how to instill changes in unit

Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault
Training

- Conducted early and often
- Burdensome, but perceived as improving
- Preference for interactive, realistic training in small groups
- Leadership presence important to reinforce seriousness
- Often gender segregated, but some value in mixed groups
- Bystander intervention and how to respond to reports valued
- Some men scared to interact with women, suggests need for training on how to interact with women, coworkers

Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault
Reporting

- Optimism that it has been increasing
- General feeling that options are well-publicized, support there
  - Each academy has student organizations to foster support, reporting
  - Coaches as trusted reporters, could be restricted if trained
  - Utility and importance of knowing SARCs, Chaplain, etc.
  - Easier if women in chain of command

Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault
Reporting (cont'd)

- Barriers
  - With sexual harassment, prefer to handle at lower levels to keep people from trouble
  - Reputation and repercussions
  - Worry about getting in trouble for alcohol
    - Trust in leaders, system
  - Blame self
  - Some perception that nothing will be done
  - Lack of support for victims

Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault

Accountability

- Sexual assault generally seen as taken care of swiftly, but sexual harassment less so
- Often don't know outcome of cases, no formal means of getting word out
  - Leads to perception that nothing has occurred in many cases
  - Promotion of outcomes as deterrent to others, encourage reporting
- Demoralized by high-profile cases of convictions overturned by command
  - Sense that rules don't apply to high ranking or well connected
- Difficulty of teasing out truth
- Concern for perpetrator or worries about false reports

Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault

Accountability (cont'd)

- "Some commanding officers were pushing back against the desire to take away commanding officers' discretion for sexual assault decisions. They could do that across DoD, they can say this is the recommended punishment, they can say this is what's going to happen, but until the majority of the 300,000 people can say they have seen command hold people accountable for these actions, they won't believe it." – *OCS/OTS Faculty/Staff*
- "I understand protecting the one assaulted, but it still keeps it hushed and quiet. We don't talk about it. I do a lot of counseling with assault victims. They think they are the only ones. They think it's their fault. I wish we could have a support group. We can't do that for privacy." – *Academy Faculty/Staff*
- "When we don't know the result it's hard to have faith in the system. So it's done because of the victim. But at the end you should know about the perpetrator, especially if they are found guilty. You don't see that in the end." – *OCS/OTS Faculty/Staff*

Summary: Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault

- Sexual harassment driven by immaturity, wanting to fit in, sexism in culture, no boundary between work and life.
  - Counteracting forces: Maturity, immediate correction and education (peer and leader), culture of professionalism and respect, female leaders and mentors
- Alcohol contributes to sexual assault at the Academies
- Recognition of link between sexual harassment and sexual assault
- As leaders, students see zero tolerance for sexual harassment, creating an open environment of respect as key
- Training preferred when interactive, realistic and in small groups, when it focuses on what to do instead of what not to do
- Optimism but challenges with reporting
- Promotion of outcomes bolsters perception of accountability, increases reporting and serves as a deterrent

Questions/Discussion

Backup slides:

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Accession of Women into the Officer Corps: Women in Leadership Roles (cont'd)

- Faculty/staff highlighted position as role models, actively strive to mentor.
- While officers generally receive one year of training for the position, enlisted personnel at the Academies expressed a lack of training. Many reported that they were expected to rely on their experiences instead but that those were not adequate preparation for the roles they play.
  - "They [officers] get…[a] master's degree. We apply and go through our Cliff's Notes training to learn the forms in three or six weeks…we really handle the majority of the issues…get the most contact time with cadets for female issues, for balancing pregnancy and deployment. A majority of it falls to us. We've got nothing but experience to give them – no education for us. No certification." – *Academy Faculty/Staff*

Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault

Policies

- Open doors in rooms with mixed gender/non-roommates present
- Dating/fraternization rules
- Locking doors, rules against staying alone
- Battle buddy/Wingman
- Limits on alcohol use
- Pass plan, designated drivers
- Night watches
- Signed statements
- Rules on touching students to correct
- Curb on certain “traditions”

General Comments

- Participants were asked if there were any other issues that affected women in the military
- Main themes included:
  - Women in combat and physical standards
  - Family life challenges
  - Military environment
- Select non-theme findings are also presented

General Comments: Main Themes (cont'd)

- Women in combat and physical standards
  - Support for women in combat roles
    - Many men and women were in favor of opening up previously closed assignments to women
  - Concern about opening combat assignments to women
    - Physical standards
    - Need to have appropriate facilities
  - Complaints about lower fitness standards for women
    - Difficulties in OCS/OTS, some resolved by policy changes

General Comments: Main Themes (cont'd)

- Family life challenges
  - Work-life balance
    - Majority of both men and women agree it is difficult for women to achieve balance of family life and military life
  - Childcare
    - Both men and women agree that childcare was key to mother's success, but was not adequate in the military
  - Pregnancy concerns
    - Women want guidance on timing of pregnancy
    - Lower ratings in year of pregnancy
    - Both men and women resent what they perceive as conveniently timed pregnancies to avoid deployment

General Comments: Main Themes (cont'd)

- Military environment
  - Military treatment of women
    - Need to emphasize women as equals
  - Stereotypes in the military
    - Women across Services report need to work hard to prove themselves to men
    - Men often see women as taking advantage of lower perceived abilities or overcompensating
  - Need for more women leaders
  - Uniform concerns
    - Dissatisfaction with tailoring/fit of uniform
    - Cost

General Comments: Non-Theme Findings

- Need for sex education
- Women and STD testing at the Academies
- Positive views on end of DADT
- Female hair standards
- Sick call and healthcare appointment at Academies
- Being an inexperienced officer to experienced enlisted
- Mismatch between training expectations and unit/fleet environment
- Women in IT fields