DACOWITS 2015 FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

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

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Rachel Gaddes and Ashley Schaad

Overview of presentation

- Research topics
- Methodology
- Demographics of study participants
- Results
- Questions

Research topics

- DACOWITS focus groups explored four main topics in 2015:
  - Gender integration
  - Career progression of Servicewomen
  - Impact of social media on military Service members
  - Facilitators and barriers to reporting sexual harassment and sexual assault

Methodology

- Focus Groups
  - 67 groups, 11 locations, 713 participants
  - Women (34 groups) and men (33 groups)
  - Junior enlisted (17 groups), senior enlisted (20 groups), officers (30 groups)
- Analysis
  - Verbatim transcripts, mini-survey data
  - Salient themes and subthemes identified by analysts
  - Qualitative analysis software to examine trends among subgroups (e.g., gender, paygrade)
  - Limitations

Demographics of study participants

Gender	Percent
Female	50%
Male	50%

Service	Women	Total (Men and Women)
Coast Guard	23%	22%
Navy	23%	22%
Marine Corps	22%	20%
Army	21%	21%
Air Force	11%	14%
National Guard or Reserves	1%	1%

GENDER INTEGRATION

Preparation

- Preparation varies
  - Modifications to physical spaces (berthing, restrooms, housing) are a major factor
  - Testing to determine appropriate gender-neutral standards

"They're looking at how to standardize testing to get them in…determining the best standards for physical abilities….what they think the best option should be for what the women will need to physically and mentally go through. They are getting a few select women now to go through it." –Senior Enlisted Man

  - Training/discussions for men prior to integration
  - Increased monitoring for sexual harassment and sexual assault

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Preparation and satisfaction

- No preparation is occurring/needed

"We're bringing in females and the only conversation we had was that we now have more officers. I found it to be like most things, when things change [snaps fingers] you just deal with it." –Male Officer

- Leadership support for integration is critical

"Leadership doesn't differentiate in the beginning, I think it will set a better tone for the rest of their career." –Senior Enlisted Woman

- Most men reported gender integration is going smoothly; women's opinions were mixed

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Impact of military culture

- Benefits
  - Discipline
  - Perception that younger Service members are more accepting

"Have I heard females and males say that we aren't equal? …Yes. Do I think it's a lot of our young [Service members] coming in today? I'd say no…I think our younger [Service members] are more adaptive to it." –Senior Enlisted Woman

Impact of military culture

- Challenges
  - Women are viewed stereotypically (job roles, expectations for military service)
  - Belief that women have to work harder than men to earn respect

"Coming in brand new, I have to work harder than a male coming in. 'You're a dude, I already like you.' I'm already a female in a male career field so now I have to work harder than the guy to gain the respect." –Junior Enlisted Woman

  - Pregnancy perceived as inconvenient

Challenges

- Logistical barriers take time to overcome
- Perceived limitations of women (physical, emotional, social)

"In my unit there are some things female [Service members] physically can't do that. A 110 pound ammo can. The females can't do that…We say, 'Don't worry, I'll do it.' In combat, it can't be like that…there's no picking up the slack." –Junior Enlisted Man

- Military culture/unit cohesion in male-only units
- Men perceive a need to protect women

Recommendations for gender integration

- Men and women should have the same job requirements/occupational standards
- Training needed for men and women prior to integration
  - Men need exposure to Servicewomen
  - Women need to know what to expect

"It's not only that they're prepared to meet the demands of the career field, but also be prepared to deal with all the attention. Whether it's negative or…I've had to stop comments before…I tell them, 'They're not dinner meat, they're your co-worker.'" –Senior Enlisted Woman

- Having female leaders in units undergoing integration is necessary

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Selective Service

- Lack of knowledge about what it is, particularly among women
- Differing viewpoints on requiring women to register
  - Require it – it's only fair

"We're hammering for equal rights for everything. You want to be equal, this is what it costs to be equal." –Senior Enlisted Woman

  - Get rid of the Selective Service

"Why don't we just get rid of it? We all volunteered. Why do we need it?" – Female Officer

  - Don't require it – pregnancy/family concerns, societal concerns

CAREER PROGRESSION OF SERVICEWOMEN

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Career goals

- Most believe men and women have the same goals
  - But women's goals often change over time

"Initially the goal and the drive might have been there but that changed because of obstacles they faced or seeing and witnessing the things that didn't seem fair, compared to males." –Senior Enlisted Woman

- Some believe men and women enter the military with different goals

Professional development programs

- Most participants feel men and women have the same opportunities
  - Some Service-related differences

"There is not a gender-specific program. If you are a [Service member], then you act like a [Service member] and you go to school to be a [Service member], not a male or female [Service member]." –Senior Enlisted Man

- Some reported no programs specifically for women, while others described women-specific programs

Leadership opportunities

- Women more likely to separate early – family reasons

"We have young [Service members] and many more females get out rather than staying in the career for the long haul…by choice…for their families or to follow their husbands." –Senior Enlisted Man

- Equality in leadership opportunities
  - Most feel men and women have the same opportunities to reach senior leadership
  - Some believe men have more opportunities than women; this has improved in recent years
- Other factors

Military-civilian differences

- Military generally seen as better than civilian career sector
  - Equality of pay/career progression track
  - Better awareness of sexual harassment/equal opportunities
  - Paid maternity leave and job security

"It is a lot harder to openly discriminate against women in the military because we get a lot more attention…we're protected when we get off maternity leave and are paid for maternity leave" –Female Officer

- Some believe Servicewomen and civilian women face similar challenges
- Some believe the civilian career sector is better

Gender discrimination

- Perception that older males are the most common perpetrators
- Improvements in recent years

"…some of the older ones treated females different, but the younger ones treated you the same. Like old officers treat you with kid gloves." –Female Officer

- Some women are perceived as being too hard on other women

"My [leader] is a female. As an [junior enlisted], I told her I was pregnant. She said the [Service] didn't issue children. I feel as our gender we are hard on each other. That makes it easier for male counterparts to have the advantage." –Senior Enlisted Woman

Gender discrimination

- Subtle discrimination was most common
  - Constant need to prove themselves (women)
  - Given stereotypical female job tasks

"…female [Service members] are also often used because let's face it, women are better organized than male [Service members], and they get pulled to office jobs and they get pulled out of their career progression." –Senior Enlisted Man

  - Miss out on challenging career opportunities by men trying to "protect" them
- Blatant discrimination was less common but reported by some

Recommendations for improving women's career progression

- Focus on preventing women from separating from the Service
  - Most women will choose family over the military
- Increase female mentorship
- Extend maternity leave and length of time prior to deployment

"I say put maternity leave at six months and don't deploy us for a year." –Senior Enlisted Woman

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IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON MILITARY SERVICE MEMBERS

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Current landscape

- Used for personal and professional purposes
- Virtually all see use increasing over time
- Generational differences exist

"…because social media is so prevalent in society and… the younger folks have grown up with it, they don't think twice about it. It's normal and they don't think about…the seriousness of what they're putting out there. You can't pull it back, even if you take it off. They understand but they don't. They're just used to doing it." –Male Officer

- Growing challenge for military

Advantages

- Supports communication with Service members

"Our captain actually made a Twitter account and it was mandatory for us to all follow him… at first we thought it was ridiculous, but…it has helped communication. It's a lot better way for him to communicate... when he posts something, everyone is on their phone anyways, so they just get a little update and we get the news right there." -Junior Enlisted Man

- Allows for official communication to boost morale and update families
- Promotes military efforts to the public
- Facilitates supportive online communities
- Helps Service members stay in touch

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Disadvantages

- Negatively represents the military to the public
- Promotes fraternization (higher-ranking)
- Interferes with formal channels of communication
- Lowers morale (higher-ranking) and distracts from work

"At my old command, you could have cellphones and everyone was always on them. At my new command, you can't have cellphones at all, and it is so great. We get so much more work done." –Female Officer

- Biases first impressions of new unit members

Perceptions of policies and guidelines

- Perception that social media is governed by general conduct policies (e.g., UCMJ)
  - Common beliefs around unacceptable online behavior
  - Varying perceptions on whether/how the military should control social media use
  - Allows for leaders to monitor subordinates in new ways

"You can't stop them from using public sites, but I have the [Service members] in my unit somewhere on my social media…. if they post something questionable, I let them know." –Senior Enlisted Woman

Impact on bullying and harassment

- Varying opinions about whether it is a problem
  - Personal attacks and harassment toward women
  - Derogatory sites and content (women)
  - Behind-the-keyboard bravery
  - Responsibility on the harassed party to prevent and combat bullying
- Varying opinions about the role of the military in addressing the problem
  - Social media as evidence

"I think it is great because it creates a record that we may not have had before. Now if someone is being bullied or harassed through social media, then there is documentation and evidence that can be tied down to the case." –Male Officer

Impact on gender integration

- Can promote integration success stories and raise awareness

"Having it out there and showing men and women working side by side and that it is ok…that everyone is trusted. Social media has potential to be very positive." –Junior Enlisted Man

- Can lead to backlash against integration

"With social media, it is going to be harder to integrate. When someone, specifically a female, fails in a unit, believe that there are 20 phones recording it." –Male Officer

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FACILITATORS AND BARRIERS TO REPORTING SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

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Impact of military culture on reporting

- Changing military culture and policies support reporting

"When I came into the [Service], if you had a problem you just sucked it up. We don't do that anymore. There are so many more resources. You can… talk to someone that is specialized in this." –Senior Enlisted Man

- Military values can encourage reporting
- Changing male-female interactions (mainly men)
- Ultimately, a personal decision to report

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Cultural barriers to reporting

- Perceived consequences of reporting
- Reluctance to report among men (men)
- Unknown outcomes of reporting
- Remote location and small unit size

"People are often hesitant to report it because it will not be taken care of. You never hear what happens to the perpetrator. Why put myself out there? Everyone will know. Even if you are confidential, if you work in a small unit or depend on your friends, people will know about it." – Junior Enlisted Woman

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Training

- Helped to change culture; perceived as excessive by some

"I think all in the military are more aware of sexual harassment due to policy changes, and also commanders are more willing to continuously educate us. Sometimes its too much. [It goes] in one ear and out the other." –Senior Enlisted Woman

- Belief that computer-based training is less effective than in-person
- Too focused on assault; not enough on harassment (women)
- Can cause victims/survivors to relive trauma (women)
- Training on incidents against men is lacking

Comparison between reporting sexual harassment and sexual assault

- Perception that sexual assault has a greater likelihood of being reported
- Sexual harassment can be difficult to identify; definition varies by person

"Sexual assault, at least in my mind, is a hard line, yes or no situation. Where I would say harassment is…certain comments you learn to deal with…and rationalize away." –Junior Enlisted Woman

Comparison between bystander reporting and victim/survivor reporting

- No clear trend suggesting bystanders or victims/survivors report more than the other

"A bystander may not report it because they'll think it's none of their business." –Female Officer

"I think there is a big push right now to get more involvement from the bystanders… it's influencing more people to come out and speak up when you do see something." –Junior Enlisted Man

- Increased emphasis on bystanders in training
- Repercussions for failing to report (men)

Impact of peers on reporting

- Can both encourage and discourage reporting
- Perceived lack of privacy can discourage reporting
- Restricted reporting option is helpful
- Reporting system has flaws
  - Hard to keep reports truly restricted and know who are mandated reporters

"As soon as you get the unrestricted [report] then it spreads like wildfire." –Senior Enlisted Woman

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Impact of chain of command on reporting

- Most said command climate impacts reporting
- Removing command from the reporting process and restricted option encourages reporting

"Now, it is an unbiased party that comes in and does the investigation. That gives confidence to victims. [The] good old boy network has been removed." –Junior Enlisted Man

- Women may be more likely to report to female leaders (women)

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Impact of offender's rank on reporting

- Most believe it is more difficult to report a superior
- Perception that higher-ranking individuals are more credible

"With the rank thing, somebody could think, 'oh, well maybe they aren't going to believe me because I am an E1 and he's an E7 and he's done all this great stuff for the military and I've really done nothing. So, why would anybody believe me?'" –Junior Enlisted Man

Impact of social media on reporting

- Most said it is more likely to discourage than encourage reporting
  - Blackmail, retribution, privacy concerns
- Few said it is a place for victims/survivors to share their experiences and inspire others
- Can be used in positive and negative ways after reporting

"A challenge could be that if a female reports something and people find out, people might attack her Facebook page. Especially if she has pictures of her[self] dressed provocatively, they might say that she asked for it." –Female Officer

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GENERAL COMMENTS

Biggest challenges for women

- Perceptions of men's attitude toward women
  - Stereotypes of women
  - Discriminatory and/or sexist attitudes
  - Physical barriers
- Pregnancy, postpartum, and breastfeeding
- Work/life balance

Recommendations

- Physical fitness standards
  - Fitness expectations
  - Height/weight standards
- Sexual harassment and sexual assault
  - Training
- Deployment and transfers
- Postpartum leave
- Mentorship
- Uniforms

QUESTIONS?

BACKUP SLIDES

Participant demographics: Age

Age	Women	Total (Men and Women)
18-20	6%	3%
21-24	20%	17%
25-29	23%	23%
30-34	19%	20%
35-39	17%	18%
40 or older	15%	18%

Participant demographics: Paygrade

Pay Grade	Women	Total (Men and Women)
E1-E3	8%	5%
E4-E6	37%	37%
E7-E9	14%	15%
WO1-WO5	3%	4%
O1-O3	22%	24%
O4 or higher	15%	15%

Participant demographics: Length of military service

Length of Military Service	Women	Total (Men and Women)
Less than 3 years	17%	12%
3-5 years	19%	19%
6-9 years	16%	16%
10-14 years	23%	21%
15-19 years	18%	21%
20 years or more	8%	12%

Participant demographics: Race and ethnicity

Race	Women	Total (Men and Women)
White	61%	70%
Black	18%	14%
Asian	4%	3%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1%	1%
Other	5%	5%
Multiple Races	10%	8%

Ethnicity	Women	Total (Men and Women)
Hispanic	18%	14%

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Participant demographics: Marital status

Marital Status	Women	Total (Men and Women)
Married	56%	63%
Divorced or legally separated	14%	11%
Single with a partner/significant other	14%	11%
Single with no significant other	16%	14%

Participant demographics: Dependent children living in the home

Dependent Children Living in the Home	Women	Total (Men and Women)
Yes	44%	51%
No	56%	49%

Participant demographics: Gender integrated unit

	Overall		Participants in gender integration focus groups	
Is your unit gender integrated (open to men and women) or currently in the process of integration?	Women	Total (Men and Women)	Women	Total (Men and Women)
Integrated for two or more years	94%	93%	92%	90%
Integrated within the past two years	2%	1%	3%	2%
Currently undergoing integration	2%	3%	4%	4%
Not integrated	1%	3%	1%	3%

Participant demographics: Social media account(s)

	Overall		Participants in social media focus groups	
Do you have a personal account on at least one social media outlet that you access at least once per week?	Women	Total (Men and Women)	Women	Total (Men and Women)
Yes	93%	88%	94%	90%
No	7%	12%	6%	10%