

DACOWITS

Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services



2016 Focus Report



2016 Focus Group Report

Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS)



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Executive Summary

This summary outlines the findings from the 2016 Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) focus groups. DACOWITS collected qualitative data during visits to 14 installations—representing all four DoD Service branches (Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, Navy) and the Coast Guard—from April to May 2016. During the focus groups held at these sites, the Committee addressed four topics:

1. Gender integration
2. Strategic communication
3. Mentorship
4. Chaplain Corps

Chapters 2–6 list the questions asked for each topic and summarize the responses for each topic.

Gender Integration

How much experience have focus group participants had with recent gender integration efforts?

Focus group participants had very little experience with recent gender integration efforts; recent gender integration efforts were not a salient topic for most participants. A large majority (89 percent) came from units that had been integrated for at least 2 years, and most individuals reported having minimal or no personal experience with recent gender integration efforts. Participants noted that people from newly opened specialties, and from the Services that housed those specialties, would have more experiences to report.

What changes have Service members noticed since the Secretary of Defense’s decision to open all previously closed units and positions to women?

Most participants had not noticed significant changes in their units or Services since the Secretary of Defense’s December 3, 2015, decision to open all units and positions to women. Individuals from a handful of focus groups noticed new or more frequent training to prepare for gender integration, particularly from one Service that had launched integration-specific training for leaders.

What insights could be shared by leaders and trainers who are helping to implement gender integration changes?

DACOWITS spoke to a small number of focus group participants serving as leaders and trainers for newly integrated units. Many of their comments mirrored findings from the other focus groups, but they offered some additional insights on gender integration progress. They perceived mixed interest among women about the newly opened positions: Some leaders and trainers perceived considerable interest—especially about being part of a historic effort—whereas others felt interest was limited. They went on to list reasons that women might hesitate to join newly integrated units or positions, including the timing of openings, one’s age, and one’s level of experience in a current occupational specialty (e.g., women further along in their careers may be hesitant to leave those fields and lose their occupation-specific credibility). Leaders and trainers also had mixed perceptions of the support they received to implement gender integration plans; some felt they were receiving a satisfactory amount of support,

whereas others wanted more information from their leaders and wanted to talk to peers who had experienced gender integration firsthand.

How are Services communicating with their members about gender integration?

Focus group participants reported limited communication about gender integration from official military sources and described general confusion on the topic among Service members. Most heard about the Secretary of Defense's announcement to open all units and positions to women from nonmilitary sources, such as civilian news outlets or social media. Official military communications about gender integration were limited, and many participants were frustrated by the lack of information from official sources—though some individuals working in already integrated units felt the news did not pertain to them as much as those not in integrated units, which may explain the lack of official communication.

Any official military communications on gender integration were provided to participants in informal or unofficial briefs by their chains of command or through official military documents or e-mails. Participants indicated they received official communications on the topic only after they had already heard the news elsewhere; because of this lag, they often turned to civilian media and social media first. A few participants also mentioned hearing about the initiative through unofficial Service-related publications (e.g., the Army Times). Small numbers of participants reported receiving secondhand communications from official military sources (e.g., a forwarded DoD e-mail) or from face-to-face discussions with commanders.

What are Service members' preferences for communication regarding gender integration?

Though participants reported receiving most of their gender integration news from unofficial sources, most felt official military sources (e.g., websites with the domain extension .mil, messages from commanding officers) were preferable and more trustworthy modes of communication. Most participants reported being bombarded by gender integration rumors and wanting clarification from official sources—however, few had seen or looked for their Services' official gender integration plans. When asked where they would go to find information about these plans, participants mentioned turning to search engines, official military portals, or e-mails they had received, but reported mixed satisfaction with these methods.

Are Service members aware of the differences between physical fitness standards and occupational standards?

Although focus group participants seldom specified whether they were speaking about physical fitness or occupational standards during focus groups, most said they were aware of the differences between the two types of standards. Furthermore, most had positive or neutral opinions about the new gender-neutral occupational standards. Though not directly asked about their feelings regarding the phrase "gender-neutral standards," most said they disliked that phrase and preferred "standards."

How do Service members obtain information about physical fitness standards and gender-neutral occupational standards, and what information are they receiving?

Most participants had limited information about physical fitness and gender-neutral occupational standards, and most of the information they had was from rumors or

unofficial sources. No participants said they heard directly from their commands or Services about the new gender-neutral occupational standards. Instead, most participants described hearing rumors about these new standards from social media or peers. Some had heard that the occupational and physical fitness standards would be lowered to accommodate female Service members, whereas others had heard that standards would not change but were skeptical about this assertion. A few participants said they had heard about the military creating different levels or tiers of physical fitness and occupational standards.

What challenges and barriers might hinder gender integration?

Focus group participants generally saw integration as a challenging task and spent the bulk of their time in the gender integration focus groups discussing perceived or actual gender integration barriers. Commonly mentioned barriers included meeting physical fitness and occupational standards, pregnancy, adapting facilities and coordinating logistics, women being underrepresented in their new units or occupational specialties, and gender dynamics and their impact on men and women's interactions. Many of these reported barriers echo findings from past DACOWITS focus groups.¹

What factors might help gender integration succeed?

Though not explicitly asked for their ideas on how to aid gender integration, focus group participants offered several suggestions. Participants thought leaders had the potential to further gender integration efforts (though, conversely, resistant leaders could

hinder efforts). Some participants provided examples of women being valued for their unique perspectives and capabilities, doing work men were unable to do or offering unique insights that men may not have considered. Finally, in many focus groups, participants felt that gender integration simply needed to be accepted and implemented to succeed and thought potential challenges might not be as daunting as anticipated. Several participants commented positively on their personal experiences with integration or working with a Service member of another gender, illustrating that success was possible.

Strategic Communication

What are the ways by which commands communicate?

In today's military, technology serves as an important facilitator for communication within units. Participants mentioned text messaging and e-mail with similar frequency as methods their commands used for communication. These methods were highly preferred by participants for their ability to reach many Service members at once and for their ease of use. Despite the frequent use of these communication methods, Service members also expressed a preference for face-to-face communication, including both formal addresses from leaders in formation and less formal discussions such as meetings with senior Service members and supervisors.

How does communication affect unit dynamics?

Participants expressed both positive and negative effects of communication on the dynamics of a unit. Many participants said that a lack of communication could create frustration both within units and throughout the chain of command, and Service members of all ranks reported frustration with not

¹ Previous DACOWITS reports are available online at <http://dacowits.defense.gov>

receiving enough clear, direct communication. This could cause Service members to rely on rumors or misinformation until they receive official communication, if such communication comes. However, clear, open, and timely communication could alleviate some of these potential problems. Furthermore, many Service members suggested that informal communication and bonding activities within units could create more open lines of communication, as well as increased familiarity and camaraderie within units, and could ultimately increase morale.

How does communication differ by generation?

Many senior Service members explained that one of the major differences in communication styles and preferences between generations is that younger generations serving in the military want to know “why”—they are more interested than older Service members in the reasoning behind commands before they follow orders. Another generational difference in communication preferences is that younger Service members prefer text messaging to other communication methods. Senior Service members recognized that junior Service members are often engaged with their cell phones and have embraced text messaging within units. Finally, there is a generational difference in use of social media platforms for communication. Though some senior Service members said that they might not be as enthusiastic about social media as more junior Service members, they ultimately see the value in using social media as a communication method.

What types of communication are most effective?

E-mail was mentioned frequently as one of the most effective communication methods

because everyone has access. However, participants mentioned a few important caveats about e-mail’s effectiveness—some Service members cannot access their e-mail regularly while at work, making it difficult to communicate about urgent issues through e-mail, and many participants said they are overwhelmed with e-mails and could overlook critical messages. Service members of all ranks felt that e-mail is most effective if followed up with face-to-face communication. Many participants said that text messaging is most effective for fast, broad communication. In particular, text messaging is helpful when units are spread out over a large geographic area and messages need to be relayed quickly.

What recommendations do Service members have for improving internal communication?

Most participants reported wanting more face-to-face communication. Service members wanted the opportunity to meet with their commanders to ask questions and form connections outside of an electronic format. Participants recognized that face-to-face discussions are more time consuming than electronic exchanges but still desired such personalized communication. Many participants also mentioned wanting improved top-down communication from commanders. Finally, Service members of all ranks recommended fewer training sessions, slide presentations, and other passive communication. Participants felt these were a poor substitute for clear communication of official military policies. Most participants said that they do not learn from training or presentations, and the high number of training sessions and presentations forces Service members to complete them quickly without much consideration of the information.

Mentorship

Do participants have experience as mentors and protégés?

Nearly half of focus group participants indicated they were being mentored by a Service member, and a third had a Service member as a mentor in the past. Eighty-one percent of the participants who were asked about mentoring others said they had mentored someone else. More than half of focus group participants reported they had participated in a Service- or unit-sponsored mentorship program at some point during their military careers. For all three of these categories, experiences differed by Service and pay grade group but did not differ significantly by gender.

How do Service members define mentorship?

Career guidance was the most commonly reported service offered by mentors, though a sizable portion of the participants indicated that mentors could provide personal guidance as well. Views on mentorship differed by generation; several senior Service members expressed frustration that junior Service members seemed less likely to seek mentors and were perhaps averse to the types of relationships and interactions mentor-protégé pairs had in previous generations. In contrast, some junior Service members seemed to confuse leadership and role models with mentorship. Communication methods for mentorship interactions were discussed as well; some participants indicated that older generations prefer in-person communication, whereas younger generations use electronic communication channels for much of their mentorship interactions.

What makes for a good mentor-protégé relationship?

In describing the relationship between mentors and protégés, participants believed each relationship is different and Service members tend to have different mentors to address varying needs. A large number of participants indicated they had more than one mentor. Some participants mentioned they had different mentors for professional issues versus personal issues and that each mentor serves a specific function at a given time in a person's career. For some participants, mentorship was seen as a temporary arrangement to obtain answers to questions or learn from another person's actions rather than a way to establish a lasting mentoring relationship.

How should mentors and protégés differ?

Several participants explained that mentors are generally more knowledgeable or experienced than their protégés and tend to have faced challenges similar to those that the protégé is facing or will face. In terms of pay grade and age, some participants indicated that mentors should be older and/or of a higher pay grade, whereas others believed age and pay grade are not as relevant as knowledge and experience. The type of guidance being provided often influenced whether the age or pay grade of the mentor mattered. Participants similarly varied in their preference for mentors from the same or different career fields. Regarding gender, several participants indicated personality, interest in helping others, and fit with the protégé was more important than the gender of the mentor. However, in the following cases, some participants believed gender made a difference:

- ▶ For personal issues, same-gender mentors were preferred.
- ▶ For gender-specific career guidance, some women preferred female mentors.
- ▶ For a different perspective, other-gender mentors were beneficial.
- ▶ To avoid the perception of fraternization, some participants preferred same-gender mentors.

What are the characteristics of a good or bad mentor?

Participants described a good mentor as trustworthy, willing to serve as a mentor, compatible with the protégé, committed and caring, available, willing to listen, honest, and unselfish. Conversely, participants defined a bad mentor as selfish, untrustworthy, unwilling or uninterested in mentoring, dishonest, not willing to listen, and incompatible. Participants further defined bad mentors as hypocritical, demanding or directive, giving bad advice, having a bad attitude, being disgruntled with the Service, and emotional.

What are the characteristics of a good protégé?

Participants generally were unable to describe a bad protégé; however, they defined a good protégé as motivated to seek a mentor and strive for self-improvement, as well as receptive to the guidance provided by the mentor, even if that guidance takes the form of constructive criticism.

What are Service members' preferences for mentorship programs?

Participants overwhelmingly preferred not to participate in formal mentorship programs. In this context, formal mentorship programs were described as those in which mentors

and protégés are matched in some systematic fashion, such as by matching junior and senior Service members within the same unit, rather than allowing relationships to develop naturally. Despite the general negativity toward formal mentorship programs, however, some participants described potential benefits of institutionalizing some program aspects that could lead to successful mentoring relationships forming in a more organic fashion. These included providing Service members a foundational understanding of what mentorship is and why it is important and creating a way for Service members with similar interests or career paths to come together in an informal setting that would encourage the development of mentoring relationships.

Chaplains

Do participants have experience with chaplains?

Nearly half (48 percent) of participants in the chaplaincy focus groups indicated that they had sought services, whether religious or otherwise, from a military chaplain at some point during their military careers. Furthermore, 73 percent knew who the chaplains were for their units and 57 percent had one-on-one experience with chaplains in either their current or previous commands. Twenty-one percent indicated they had experience with female chaplains.

What is the role of the military chaplain?

Most participants indicated that the role of the military chaplain is to serve as a counselor. Some participants also felt that chaplains are responsible for the spiritual well-being of the military. Chaplains were also described as mental health resources, confidants, mentors, resources for

commanders, and coordinators for Service member and family events.

Do chaplains provide only religious counsel?

Several participants mentioned that whereas chaplains are able to provide religious counsel if desired, they also can provide advice and counsel outside of the religious context, making them more approachable. Participants said that Service members would decline to talk with chaplains mainly to avoid religious discussions, though some officers and senior enlisted participants said that explaining that chaplains can perform nonreligious counseling had proved successful in encouraging Service members to see chaplains when needed.

What unique benefits do chaplains provide?

Most participants indicated that they would seek counsel from chaplains because of the guarantee of confidentiality. Some indicated that Service members talked to chaplains to bypass formal counseling avenues because of that assurance of confidentiality and the fact that speaking with chaplains cannot damage a security clearance application in the same way some participants believed seeking mental health counseling might. Participants also described how chaplains influence morale; chaplains are there when Service members need someone to talk to, and they can help the command gauge the unit's pulse and morale.

How do participants perceive female chaplains?

Several participants indicated that female chaplains generally are viewed as similar to male chaplains. When perceived differences were mentioned, they related to Service members' religious backgrounds or the tendency mentioned by a few participants to see female chaplains as more motherly or compassionate.

In what situations is a chaplain of a certain gender preferred?

Participants discussed some situations where male or female chaplains were preferred, but many of the participants reiterated that the gender of the chaplain was unimportant to them. Most participants cited personal and gender-related issues for which chaplains of a certain gender were preferred. Some participants preferred a same-gender chaplain for discussing personal issues, some participants indicated that female chaplains are preferable to advise in situations involving sexual harassment or sexual assault, and a few participants said they preferred male chaplains for religious reasons.

Should there be more female chaplains?

Most participants were indifferent concerning the gender of chaplains. Participants specifically noted that gender did not matter as long as the chaplain was qualified, met the right standards, and performed the job well.

What role should chaplains play in gender integration?

Most participants felt that the chaplain's role should not change in light of gender integration efforts. Participants said chaplains should continue to counsel Service members who simply need to talk to someone; for example, women who are adjusting to being in newly integrated units.

Chapter 1. Introduction and Methods

This report outlines the findings from the 2016 Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) focus groups. Chapter 1 provides the introduction and methods, which consist of an overview of the focus groups, the characteristics of the focus group participants, and the analysis approach. Chapters 2 through 6 present the findings on gender integration, strategic communication, mentorship, chaplains, and general focus group comments, respectively.

A. Focus Group Overview

DACOWITS collected qualitative data during site visits to 14 military installations²—representing all four DoD Service branches—(Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, Navy) and the Coast Guard—from April to May 2016 (see Appendix A). During the focus groups at these sites, the Committee addressed four topics:

1. Gender integration
2. Strategic communication
3. Mentorship
4. Chaplain Corps

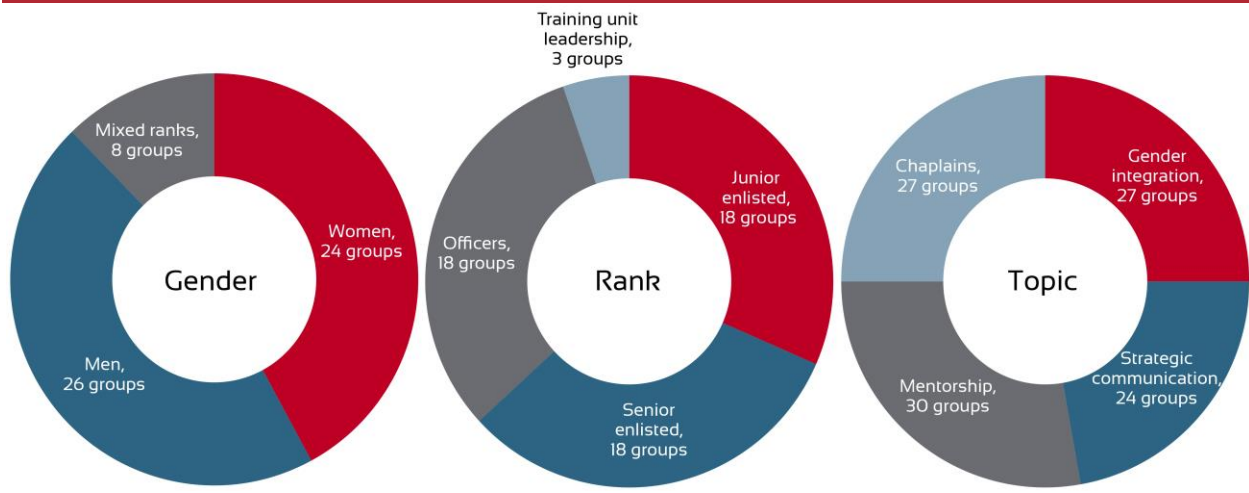
In partnership with researchers from Insight Policy Research (Insight) and ICF International (ICF), the Committee developed a series of focus group protocols (see Appendix B); each protocol consisted of either one or two topic modules to ensure each study topic was addressed by each Service, gender, and pay grade group. Protocols with two topic modules were used for 90-minute focus groups; protocols with one topic module were used for 45-minute focus groups. Committee members facilitated focus group discussions to elicit and assess views, attitudes, and experiences of Service members on study topics. The Committee also distributed mini-surveys to participants to determine the demographic composition of groups (see Appendix C). All data collection instruments were approved by ICF's Institutional Review Board, with concurrence from DoD's office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, to ensure the protection of human subjects.

In 2016, DACOWITS conducted 57 focus groups. Of the 57 groups, 24 were conducted with men, 26 were conducted with women, and seven were comprised of participants of both genders. Eighteen groups were conducted with junior enlisted participants (E1–E5), 18 groups were held with senior enlisted participants (E6–E9), 18 were conducted with officers, and three were held with participants of mixed ranks. In total, there were 545 participants, with an average of 10 participants per session. The gender integration module was used in 27 groups; the strategic communication module was used in 24 groups; the mentorship module was used in 30 groups; and the Chaplain Corps module was used in 27 groups.³ Each installation was responsible for recruiting focus group participants from the demographic categories provided by DACOWITS (see Figure 1.1).

² Fort Lewis, McChord AFB, NAVSTA Kitsap, Coast Guard District Thirteen, Coast Guard Sector Puget Sound, SUBASE New London, USCG Academy, NECC Little Creek, Fort Lee, MCAS New River, Camp Lejeune, Cherry Point, Pope Field, and Fort Bragg. The focus group protocols were pretested at Andrews AFB.

³ Of the 27 gender integration focus groups, three were conducted exclusively with leaders and trainers.

Figure 1.1. Focus Group Breakdown



B. Focus Group Participant Characteristics

The research team analyzed the qualitative data from the focus groups and compiled a demographic profile of the focus group participants using responses from the mini-surveys (see Table 1.1). Approximately half of participants were men (45 percent) and half were women (55 percent). Four Services—the Air Force (21 percent), the Army (26 percent), the Marine Corps (22 percent), and the Navy (21 percent)—were nearly equally represented, with fewer participants from the Coast Guard (11 percent). Participants ranged widely in age; about three-quarters of participants were aged 25–39, whereas younger and older participants composed smaller proportions of the group: ages 18–20, 5 percent; ages 21–24, 14 percent; ages 25–29, 24 percent; ages 30–34, 23 percent; ages 35–39, 21 percent; and age 40 or older, 13 percent.

Enlisted Service members represented slightly more than half of focus group participants: Service members with pay grades E4–E6 made up the largest proportion of participants (42 percent), followed by those with pay grades E7–E9 (17 percent) and E1–E3 (6 percent). The largest subset of officers was composed of those with pay grades O1–O3 (24 percent), followed by those with O4 or higher pay grades (8 percent) and those with WO1–WO5 pay grades (3 percent).

Focus group participants had varying tenure in the Military Services, with relatively equal distribution across all categories. The least represented groups were those with 20 or more years of service (11 percent), with the remaining tenures nearly equally represented: less than 3 years, 16 percent; 3–5 years, 19 percent; 6–9 years, 21 percent; 10–14 years, 16 percent; and 15–19 years, 17 percent.

A majority of participants identified racially as White (65 percent); smaller proportions identified as Black (17 percent), multiple races (7 percent), other (5 percent), Asian (3 percent), and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (1 percent). Regarding ethnicity, 12 percent of participants identified as Hispanic.

Subsequent chapters in this report provide the results for the topic-specific mini-survey questions.

Table 1.1. Focus Group Participant Demographics

Participant Characteristic	Women		Total (Men and Women)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Gender				
Male	N/A	N/A	243	45%
Female	N/A	N/A	299	55%
Total	N/A	N/A	542	100%
Missing	N/A	N/A	3	N/A
Service Branch*				
Air Force	57	19%	116	21%
Army	69	23%	139	26%
Coast Guard	57	19%	58	11%
Marine Corps	56	19%	118	22%
Navy	60	20%	114	21%
Total	299	100%	545	100%
National Guard or Reserves				
Yes	6	2%	9	2%
No	291	98%	532	98%
Total	297	100%	541	100%
Missing	2	N/A	4	N/A
Age				
18–20	15	5%	25	5%
21–24	41	14%	76	14%
25–29	71	24%	130	24%
30–34	63	21%	125	23%
35–39	63	21%	115	21%
40 or older	45	15%	71	13%
Total	298	100%	542	100%
Missing	1	N/A	3	N/A
Pay Grade*				
E1–E3	19	7%	33	6%
E4–E6	120	40%	230	42%
E7–E9	56	19%	92	17%
WO1–WO5	10	3%	17	3%
O1–O3	68	23%	129	24%
O4 or higher	26	9%	42	8%
Total	299	100%	543	100%
Missing	0	N/A	2	N/A
Length of Military Service*				
Less than 3 years	53	18%	88	17%
3–5 years	36	12%	72	14%
6–9 years	56	19%	109	21%
10–14 years	47	16%	93	18%

Participant Characteristic	Women		Total (Men and Women)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
15–19 years	62	21%	108	20%
20 years or more	37	13%	57	11%
Total	291	100%	527	100%
Missing	8	N/A	18	N/A
Race*				
White	186	62%	354	65%
Black	58	19%	93	17%
Asian	12	4%	16	3%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	4	1%	5	1%
Other	14	5%	32	6%
Multiple races	24	8%	39	7%
Total	299	100%	539	100%
Missing	1	N/A	6	N/A
Hispanic				
Yes	35	12%	65	12%
No	264	88%	478	88%
Total	299	100%	543	100%
Missing	0	N/A	2	N/A

* Percentages do not sum to 100 due to rounding.

C. Analysis

The focus group analysis process involved several systematic steps. During each focus group, Insight and ICF staff recorded verbatim discussions between focus group participants and Committee facilitators; the research team clarified and redacted the transcripts. Next, the team identified themes and subthemes by reviewing all transcripts for a given focus group topic and noting common responses that arose. Once the themes were identified, the data were entered into qualitative analysis software (NVivo and Atlas.ti), and the transcripts were coded by themes. This allowed the research team to explore whether certain responses were more common among subgroups (e.g., gender, pay grade, Military Service). Unless otherwise specified, focus group themes were common across pay grades, Military Services, and genders. Throughout the subsequent chapters, quotes were chosen from hundreds of illustrative examples to exemplify the findings.

Strengths and Limitations of Focus Groups as a Methodology

Focus groups are a key tool in gauging perceptions and assessing Service members' knowledge, attitudes, and opinions. In contrast with survey research (e.g., the DACOWITS mini-survey), which gathers information on the numbers or proportions of respondents who answer particular questions in a certain way, focus group research gathers neither information on concurrence across all respondents nor information that is generalizable to a larger population. The recruiting of participants cannot be replicated, identical questions cannot be asked in each group, and the results of one group cannot be compared precisely with other groups. Despite these limitations, the results are still useful—they can add greatly to an existing body of knowledge on a topic, or they can serve as a first step toward developing a more statistical study of a new topic.

The small sample size means the groups might not represent the larger population accurately, though this can sometimes be beneficial if the desire is to obtain data from underrepresented groups that might not be represented statistically through surveys and other means. Group discussions can be difficult to steer and control, and many subjects are addressed during each discussion—so, at times, not all questions are asked in all groups, and not all participants are able to answer each question.

To give a rough indication of the frequency with which a particular theme was mentioned, the research team uses several key terms and phrases throughout the report; for example, to indicate descending levels of frequency, the report uses terms such as “many” (theme came up in more than five focus groups), “several,” “some,” “a few,” and “a couple” (theme came up in two focus groups). When comparing multiple responses for a given question, the report uses phrases such as “nearly all of the participants who respond to this question . . .” or “the most commonly mentioned theme . . .” to give a rough sense of the proportion of participants who expressed a given opinion rather than phrases with a fixed meaning that imply every participant provided a response. It is important to keep in mind that the purpose of focus groups is to obtain rich detail on a topic rather than to achieve precise measurement of the frequency and type of responses.

Chapter 2. Gender Integration

DACOWITS has followed gender integration efforts by the Military Services closely for many years, conducting annual focus groups on the topic since 2011. The 2016 focus groups provided a unique opportunity for DACOWITS to speak with Service members about a recent historical decision to encourage and support integration. On December 3, 2015, Secretary of Defense Ash Carter announced that all previously closed units and positions in the military would be opened to women (hereafter referred to as “the decision to open all units and positions to women”). Following the announcement, DACOWITS spoke to Service members to learn about their experiences with and perceptions of this initiative to achieve full gender integration of the military.

The Committee conducted 27 focus groups on gender integration. Three were composed of leaders responsible for directing gender integration efforts and training recruits in newly integrated occupational specialties—these groups followed a separate focus group protocol designed to capture leaders’ perspectives on these issues. The protocol that guided the remaining 24 group discussions consisted of two sections; the first section focused on successful gender integration, and the second examined strategic communication surrounding gender integration.

Topics covered during the discussion were as follows:

- ▶ Experience With Gender Integration
- ▶ Changes Observed as a Result of Gender Integration
- ▶ Insights From Leaders and Trainers
- ▶ Communication Related to Gender Integration
- ▶ Awareness of Physical Fitness Standards Versus Occupational Standards
- ▶ Perceived Challenges to Gender Integration
- ▶ Perceived Facilitators to Gender Integration

This chapter details findings from focus group discussions on gender integration. Many findings mirror those from previous years’ examinations of this topic; for additional information, please see DACOWITS reports from prior years.⁴

A. Experience With Gender Integration

To obtain quantifiable data on participants’ experiences with gender integration, DACOWITS asked about these experiences in the mini-survey. Moderators also explored those experiences during the focus group discussion, asking about participants’ experiences in units into which women were being integrated for the first time.

1. Few Participants Were in Recently Integrated Units

Table 2.1 illustrates how the majority of focus group participants (89 percent) came from units that had been integrated for at least 2 years. Their relative lack of experience with the most recent gender

⁴ Previous DACOWITS reports are available online at <http://dacowits.defense.gov>

integration efforts may have affected their responses to the focus group questions; however, even if they were not in newly integrated units, participants offered many thoughts and opinions about the topic.

Table 2.1. Experience With Recently Integrated Units Among Participants in Gender Integration Focus Groups

Experience With Integration	Women		Total (Men and Women)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Unit integrated for 2 or more years	115	94%	200	89%
Unit integrated within past 2 years	4	3%	8	4%
Unit undergoing integration	4	3%	10	4%
Unit not integrated	0	0%	7	3%

As expected, recent experience with gender integration was more prevalent among leaders and trainers, though even among this group, only 17 percent indicated they were in units that had integrated within the past 2 years or were undergoing integration. Section C presents results from the discussion with this group.

2. Experience With and Salience of Gender Integration Varied

Participants’ experiences with recent gender integration efforts varied by occupational specialty and Service. Many participants indicated that gender integration topics would be more salient to individuals from newly integrated specialties and those Services that housed those specialties.

a. Relevance of Gender Integration to Participants Differed by Occupational Specialty

When describing Service members most likely to be affected by recent gender integration efforts, participants often mentioned occupational specialty and explained that certain previously closed specialties might be more resistant to gender integration.

“I assume the communities most affected by [gender integration] are going through those steps [of making changes].”

—Male Officer

“It will take some time for them to accept women in [recently integrated specialty]. Everything else, I think they are more open, but [this particular specialty] is a lot older and more a home for the male community, so maybe that’s why there is a bigger issue.”

—Senior Enlisted Woman

“We are all educated and we are all open to the concept [of gender integration], but if you look at other ranks and [occupational specialties] they have a different view. In my . . . unit, my issue was there was a lot of [individuals from a male-dominated specialty] . . . , and I had to make sure my females were taken care of.”

—Male Officer

b. Relevance of Gender Integration to Participants Differed by Service

Participants also noted that certain Services would be more affected than others by the recent gender integration changes. One Service in particular seemed largely unaffected by recent gender integration changes since nearly all of its units and specialties had been integrated for many years.

"I think there's a lot of excitement from the communities who are closer to it. My friend in [another Service] is excited about it, but it doesn't translate to [my Service]. I don't hear anything about it. But if you're closer to it, you're more excited about it."

—Female Officer

"It would be different if you asked [individuals from another Service] who had to work with women . . . on the battlefield. For us, it's been integrated for so long that it's been the cultural norm."

—Senior Enlisted Man

B. Changes Observed as a Result of Gender Integration

After asking participants to share their general experiences with gender integration, DACOWITS asked them to describe any early signs of progress or change related to integration.

1. Most Participants Had Minimal or No Personal Experience With Gender Integration

When asked about changes in their units or Services since the decision to open all units and positions to women, most participants reported no or minimal changes. They often responded to this question with silence, or by simply shaking their heads to indicate “no,” possibly because the focus groups took place only a few months after the decision was announced—in April and May 2016—and because most participants came from integrated units. Participants from many of the groups, particularly enlisted groups, went on to explain that because their units were integrated, they would not expect to see any changes.

"In terms of actual careers open to us now, it's no change. We've been integrated since forever."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

"I haven't seen many changes yet because most [occupational specialties] on this base were integrated already."

—Senior Enlisted Man

"I can't really name any changes I'd expect off the bat. Where I'm from, it doesn't matter your gender—in my unit, it's just another body in a chair."

—Junior Enlisted Man

A few participants added that it would take time for previously male-only units to notice changes since women would have to make their way through often-lengthy training pipelines before joining these units.

"Nobody is shocked it's happening, but the exact timeline hasn't been put out because the first female either hasn't passed or started the pipeline to get to our unit. So, when she starts or completes it is when she shows up [and that has not happened yet]."

—Junior Enlisted Man

2. Few Participants Noticed Training Modifications

Though most participants did not report any changes resulting from gender integration efforts, individuals from a handful of focus groups noticed new or more frequent training to prepare for gender integration. Many of these comments came from members of one Service that had launched integration-specific training just prior to the focus groups.

"They are requiring leadership to send units to integration training. I think all units are required to do this."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

"Next week, I'm going to [installation] to do a training on how to integrate. [It's a] train-the-trainer type deal. . . . It's coming out pretty fast."

—Female Officer

"I'm going down to a integration seminar [to] get more training. . . . The training is going to come down to train the trainer. It already came out, and they are shoving it . . . down [our] throats."

—Male Officer

A couple of focus group participants also noticed an increased focus on transgender issues, though this was not a common theme; all of those participants were from the same installation, which had recently worked with a number of transgender individuals.

"They're worried about the whole transgender thing, if anything. . . . The focus is off the women because that's a lot easier to deal with than transgender [Service members]."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

"Years ago, we had four or five people transitioning [to another gender], and we [met] with the medical folks on what we need to do, or how to do it, and how to deal with the situation appropriately."

—Female Officer

C. Insights From Leaders and Trainers

Results in this section draw from conversations with focus group participants in the three focus groups held with leaders and trainers working with newly integrated units. Many of their comments mirror findings from the other 2016 focus groups on this topic. The quotes in this section are attributed to trainers only, but participants in this group consisted of leaders and instructors as well as trainers who were recruited because they were likely to be at the front lines of the military's gender integration efforts. This section describes additional comments that were unique to these participants.

1. Mixed Interest Was Perceived Among Women About Newly Integrated Units and Positions

There was no consistent sentiment among participants on women's interest in newly integrated roles; some individuals felt there was substantial interest, whereas others reported limited interest.

"As far as interest level, it's been 5 years now [since new positions started opening for women], and there was a lot of interest at first, and there was a lot of press about it, but . . . now that it's gone through, it's not this new shiny object anymore. [Women] see what the women have done, and they don't want that and the pressure that puts on us."

—Female Trainer

"If you get [Service members] fresh from the pipeline, the majority don't want to do a lateral move . . . but there are some."

—Male Trainer

a. Factors That Were Perceived to Influence Women's Interest in Newly Opened Units and Positions

Some leaders and trainers who felt that women had limited interest in exploring newly opened units and positions suggested potential reasons why women who might be interested in those opportunities would be reluctant to pursue them—for example, the number of openings for a position of interest; types and timings of openings; one's age; and one's experience level in a current occupational specialty.

Historic Significance of Gender Integration

Some leaders and trainers explained that for women like them, interest in newly opened units and positions could be due to their desire to be part of something historic and important.

"I specifically came to [occupational specialty] school because I wanted to come here to help [integrate females]. . . . [I said,] 'I want this job. Can I have this job? We want more females to be mentors for the young ladies.'"

—Female Trainer

"I'm a career counselor; I came here to specifically help out."

—Female Trainer

"When I first came here, we had a female instructor who went through the course, took the test, and got certified, and she can teach, and for 2 years she did that. She [became the] first female instructor."

—Female Trainer

Numbers, Types, and Timing of Openings

"There was a huge interest, but it was specific: 'We only want this rate, this rate, or this rate.'"

—Female Trainer

Age and Experience in Current Occupational Specialty

"I have a [junior enlisted woman] that is fully wanting to go into [a newly opened combat position]. . . . That is her motive and plan."

—Male Trainer

"I personally volunteered to go to the [newly opened] unit. I only had one other [instructor in a newly opened field] say if she was younger, she would volunteer. I don't have any [occupational specialty] credibility in that sense, so I can go [without damaging my career]. I'm the only one I know of who is interested."

—Female Trainer

"Part of what is being conveyed as a lack of interest may be related to not wanting to lose [career field] credibility and may not be gender related. I'm a supply guy, so . . . to do combat-related stuff, I would not be very good at that. . . . I wouldn't have that [career field] credibility. I wouldn't know what I was doing. In a combat [occupational specialty], that would be even more detrimental than in other [career fields]. Most [Service members] observe that, and that may be part of the reason the interest is isolated."

—Male Trainer

"I think while at the school, I've had one female say if she had been younger, she would [have done] it."

—Female Trainer

2. Mixed Support to Implement Gender Integration Was Perceived

Participants from the three trainer focus groups had mixed perceptions of the support they had received to implement gender integration plans. Some participants felt they had received adequate support, whereas others pointed out challenges they had faced, including insufficient communication from leaders and the desire to learn from others who had experienced gender integration themselves.

"I'm not getting anything for my senior leadership to promote this to senior leaders. It seems to be geared to newer, younger [Service members]. There's nothing coming from above. . . . I would expect them to share that with me."

—Male Trainer

Whereas broadcasting achievements of newly integrated units may be one way some commands show support, participants from one focus group pointed out that protecting Service members' privacy could be another way to demonstrate support. This relates to participants' concerns regarding perceived special treatment of women (see Section E on barriers to gender integration).

"Part of the leadership thought is they're trying to protect us from being paraded like show ponies. . . . There are calls that are like, 'We want to see female [Service members],' and our command works hard to not make us feel that way because they don't want us to feel specially treated."

—Female Officer Trainer

D. Communication Related to Gender Integration

This section outlines participants' opinions of communication surrounding gender integration; it discusses the information sources they relied on and trusted, their perceptions of official military communications on the issue, and their experiences seeking information on their Services' gender integration plans. Focus group participants were asked how they first heard of the decision to open all units and positions to women. Participants sought information from a range of sources, from civilian news media to social media to military communications.

1. Many Participants Heard Gender Integration Announcement From Civilian News Sources or Social Media Rather Than Official Military Sources

Respondents across all pay grades, age groups, and Services reported first hearing about the decision to open all closed units and positions from civilian news media or social media. Participants also reported turning to social media first for their news instead of looking at official sources, given their belief that there was a lag between breaking news and information provided through official channels of communication.

"The Internet was where I first saw [the news], and it came up later in our unit."

—Junior Enlisted Man

"[I first saw it] in the news then in the [unit meetings]."

—Senior Enlisted Man

a. Many Participants Sought Gender Integration News From Civilian News Sources and Social Media Before Official Military Sources

Similarly, participants often consulted civilian media and social media for news on gender integration before researching official sources or communications from the military.

"I've seen more articles from Facebook about what's going on in [my Service] than from my own command."

—Junior Enlisted Woman

"I tried to [go to official sources] first but didn't find anything. I took a week and really researched everything, and there wasn't anything there."

—Female Officer

“After Google, I’d go to a .mil [website]. The [Service] doesn’t have a comprehensive program for having all this in one place.”

—Male Officer

2. Participants Were Frustrated by Lack of Official Military Communication About Gender Integration

Few participants mentioned hearing about gender integration from official military communications and sources. Many participants said they trusted only official communications on this issue and were frustrated by the lack of information that was available. Of the small number of participants who received official communications about the decision to open all units and positions to women, their sources ranged from in-person communication with commanders to talking with peers to official documents to service-related publications. Some participants in already integrated units felt the news was not relevant to them.

a. Many Participants Had Not Received Any Information From Commands About Gender Integration

Participants were dissatisfied with the amount of information they received regarding gender integration. Most participants also mentioned how face-to-face communication would be the most effective way for this information to be shared down the chain of command.

“There might have been some senior personnel [on] the officer side and command level that knew it was in the works and that it would get pushed down, but hearing about it from my civilian spouse . . . , it loses a bit of its punch. Like when they were going to rescind ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,’ there was a lot of awareness and training. . . . The issue for me is that they didn’t address female positions in combat arms in a similar fashion. . . . There is no guidance.”

—Senior Enlisted Man

“I didn’t know if it wasn’t well advertised . . . , but it wasn’t that big of a discussion.”

—Female Officer

“Nothing from the chain of command—our [senior enlisted leader] saying . . . , ‘They have a plan.’ I just haven’t heard it.”

—Junior Enlisted Man

b. Participants Received Official Military Communications About Gender Integration From a Variety of Sources

Only a few participants reported hearing about gender integration through official military sources or their commands. Some participants were informed through military-related sources, such as informal briefs or gossip from peers; some mentioned military-related publications.

Face-to-Face Communication With Commanders

Several participants heard about gender integration first from face-to-face communication with their commanders. Some commanders brought their junior Service members together to discuss the changes. Most participants agreed that face-to-face communication was the most effective way to inform their units about gender integration.

"[Our] commander called us all in for a huddle and briefed us on the possible integration."

—Male Trainer

"Every morning, [we have] a team meeting. The commander and [senior enlisted leader] will have a few words. That's where most info is passed."

—Senior Enlisted Man

"I get my guys into formation, and I pass information that way so they can ask questions if they need to, and they know I have office hours where they can talk to me. If there is a female coming in . . . , I get my guys in formation, and we talk about it."

—Male Officer

"My [unit] commander talked with us about female integration. He sat us all down and talked about it. It was positive. It was effective."

—Male Officer

Informal Conversations With Peers

A few participants heard about the decision to open all units and positions to women through informal conversations with peers.

"There was never an official thing put down through chain of command, but as more people heard, we talked about it with each other."

—Junior Enlisted Man

"[Noncommissioned officers] come to the office every day and start [talking], and the conversation comes up about females in [a newly opened position]. . . . The [commanding officer] comes and puts in his two cents, and the [senior enlisted leader] will come down, and that's where the discussion is held about actual positions."

—Male Officer

"Our [commanding officer] just kind of walked in and said females are allowed in [a newly opened position] and walked out. . . . [It's] more like a word-of-mouth kind of thing."

—Junior Enlisted Woman

Official Documents or E-Mails

Several participants reported hearing about the decision to open all units and positions to women from official military documents or e-mails. Most of the participants who reported hearing the news this way were senior enlisted or officers.

"They sent out a unit-wide e-mail, mass notification, as soon as the decision was made. The [commanding officer] put in his comments about it."

—Male Trainer

“That might have been a [unit] thing. I remember e-mail traffic when force integration came out. Just an e-mail: ‘Here is how it will work.’ That was it.”

—Female Trainer

Service-Related Publications

Participants across the Services mentioned hearing the news from Service-related publications (e.g., the Military Times). Most participants who mentioned these publications were also quick to add that they felt they could not always trust news and information from these sources.

“I heard that they were opening all of the combat through the [Service] Times.”

—Senior Enlisted Woman

“For me, it was social media and then the [Service] Times. . . . That was honest to me that it was news.”

—Male Officer

“The [Service] Times has a page. That’s where I heard about it from. They dropped an article on their social media page.”

—Junior Enlisted Woman

c. Many Participants in Units That Were Already Gender Integrated Felt News Did Not Pertain to Them

Participants already working in gender-integrated units felt that the decision to open all units and positions to women did not affect them or their unit cohesion and did not change their current work environments.

“I am already in an integrated unit. I have had experience with [newly opened position], but units that aren’t integrated, we don’t pay attention [to them]. There’s not a lot of planning and thinking about it.”

—Senior Enlisted Woman

“One thing to consider on the [occupational specialty] side, females have been in that community for a while, so it didn’t really affect us. For [our occupational specialty] it had no bearing whatsoever on us.”

—Male Officer

“Here in the [occupational specialty integrated many years ago] . . . , I don’t see a reason to push [the issue]. I haven’t seen anything that would change for us.”

—Junior Enlisted Man

3. Participants Trusted Some Communication Methods More Than Others for Gender Integration News

Most participants felt that information from official military sources, such as websites with the domain extension .mil and in-person communication or messages from commanding officers, could be trusted.

The least trusted sources were social media, news media, gossip, and military-related publications (e.g., the Military Times).

a. Participants Trusted Official Military Communications Most

Participants across all Services and pay grades agreed that official military communications were the most credible information sources. Many participants did not believe what they heard about gender integration until they received word of it in an official communication with an official signature.

"Unless it's on paper in front of me or on [a .mil website], then I won't believe it. . . . It's there or it's not, it is or it isn't."

—Junior Enlisted Woman

"Even if you get an e-mail [attachment] that's typed, your commander may not have gotten that information from an official source. I'd rather see a signed memo."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

"Some senior leaders did a good job explaining . . . [the initiative and] the 'why.' They didn't look at the political [aspects] but talked about operational capabilities with females moving around [covertly]."

—Male Officer

"[I trust] a DoD emblem if it's coming into my [Service] e-mail; I'm not going to get spammed, it will be the military or DoD e-mailing me."

—Junior Enlisted Man

b. Most Participants Were Inundated With Misinformation About Gender Integration

Most participants mentioned that rumors on social and news media and among Service members in their units had created a lot of misinformation and propagated false or negative stereotypes about gender integration plans.

"I'd rather not talk about it until it happens. We have a way of spreading rumors, and people have a way of getting anxious. I wish everyone would just not talk about things until they happen."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

"The least reliable would be the [Service] Times. [My junior Service members] come to the shop and then tell me to read this. I say ball that up, throw it out, and wait for what the [Service] tells you."

—Female Officer

"For me, it's the gossip, especially among my people. I don't trust it more, but I listen to it. It's the perception, and I might need to change it, but I have a lot of women working under me, so it might be different."

—Female Officer

"[I trust] something that is an official document, because you see stuff online from [satirical military blog] . . . , and it's all rumors. Until it comes out through an official message, I don't believe any of that!"

—Junior Enlisted Man

c. Few Participants Had Seen or Sought Their Services' Gender Integration Plans

Each Service released its gender integration plans a few months before the DACOWITS focus groups were held, but when asked whether they had looked for their respective Services' plans, only a few participants said they had seen or looked for this information. For the few that sought this information, they first used online searches and then looked for search results from official military sources. Some in one Service also used their Service's online portal.

"I'd start with Google—it will pull up the most. If I'm looking for a [Service Instruction document], I start with Google. I will also check the [Service] portal. Google is a jumping-off point for me. I scroll down and find a .mil and .org site to find what is true versus [what is in the civilian news]."

—Senior Enlisted Man

E. Awareness of Physical Fitness Standards Versus Occupational Standards

Participants were asked if they were aware of any differences between physical fitness standards and occupational standards. They also discussed what, if any, official and unofficial communication they received from their Services or commands about gender-neutral occupational standards. As illustrated throughout this section, participants often did not distinguish between physical fitness and occupational standards in their answers, instead referring to both simply as "standards." However, participants demonstrated some knowledge of the differences between the two when probed.

1. Most Participants Acknowledged Differences Between Physical Fitness and Occupational Standards

During the focus groups, Service members were asked to indicate by a hand count if they were aware of differences between physical fitness standards and occupational standards; according to the hand count, most (85 percent) of the 115 participants recognized the differences. Given the conversational nature of focus groups, in some cases, the topic came up before participants were asked to address it, and respondents were briefed with the definition before answering the question, which may have influenced their answers. In reviewing how participants discussed standards, they often referred to physical fitness and occupational standards interchangeably, indicating that their understanding of the differences between the two was more limited than indicated by the hand count. When asked to describe the differences, participants explained that physical fitness standards measured overall health, whereas occupational standards differed by jobs.

"For each job, you'll have a standard. . . . [For example], you must lift 50 lbs. It doesn't say that you must be a female or male. It's pretty much what they do as a civilian."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

“My occupation requires little or no physical activity. [Infantry] obviously have a phenomenal difference from what each of us [in this focus group of participants with non-Infantry specialties] do. Their occupational standard is well beyond us. . . . Those are two completely different standards. . . . Each [specialty] has a different occupational standard for physical fitness.”

—Junior Enlisted Man

a. Participants Held Positive or Neutral Opinions About Gender-Neutral Occupational Standards

Participants saw the value of having gender-neutral occupational standards to ensure that military jobs are carried out effectively among all Service members.

“As long as you have one set of standards to do that job . . . Nobody wants to be singled out and to know that the only reason they are in that job is because [the standards] have been lowered. Set a standard and hold them to that.”

—Male Officer

“As a female medic, our standards are always the same. . . . [Skeptics about gender integration] only use that [expletive] comment, ‘How will a woman drag a man out of combat in full gear?’ But that [already] is our standard. We have to be able to drag someone who weighs a minimum of 180 pounds 500 feet.”

—Senior Enlisted Woman

“It shouldn't matter, gender. Everyone who comes into my job should be able to calibrate a torque wrench. But, when you're talking about jobs where the whole job is about how physically fit you are, if women meet those standards, they will be well integrated.”

—Senior Enlisted Woman

2. Participants Received a Variety of Communication on Physical Fitness and Occupational Standards

Participants discussed the types of communication, if any, that they received from official military sources about physical fitness standards and gender-neutral occupational standards. Though not directly asked to do so, participants also shared their hesitancy in using the phrase “gender-neutral” to describe new occupational standards.

a. Participants Had Not Received Any Official Communications About Gender-Neutral Occupational Standards

Though some participants might have heard information about gender-neutral occupational standards from military sources, none of the participants said they had heard about these standards directly from their commands or Services.

“I read that on the military.com source. I haven't heard anything else more reputable. I haven't heard commanders say that, though.”

—Junior Enlisted Man

"I heard about different levels of PT [physical training] specific for jobs. I did hear about that. . . . It was all over the front page [of newspapers]. We are just waiting until that changes. It's just one of those things where they are thinking about it and we are on standby just waiting."

—Junior Enlisted Woman

b. Most Participants Were Overwhelmed With Misinformation About Gender-Neutral Occupational Standards

Most of the communication that Service members heard about gender-neutral occupational standards came through rumors from social media or peer-to-peer communication.

"The problem is the rumors in the media and social media—that's where you start to see stuff. A lot is people venting and going off the wall with it and exaggerating, and all those people believe it."

—Male Trainer

"Again, it's just sitting around talking with peers, not leadership. . . . When you see [the validation of current physical standards and the opening of positions to women] happening together, you have to go, 'Are they related?'"

—Male Officer

c. Most Participants Disliked the Phrase "Gender-Neutral"

When discussing gender-neutral standards, most participants expressed a dislike of the phrase "gender-neutral," instead preferring the blanket term of "standards."

"It should be [an occupational specialty] standard, not a gender standard."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

3. Participants Heard a Range of Information Pertaining to New Occupational Standards

When asked what they had heard about the newly validated occupational standards, some participants said they had heard rumors that standards would be lowered, whereas others heard they would stay the same.

a. Some Participants Had Heard Allegations of Lowered or Modified Physical Fitness and Occupational Standards

Some participants reported hearing rumors of Services lowering standards for women or allowing female Service members more attempts at passing physical and occupational fitness tests. These participants expressed concern about female Service members' competency in newly integrated positions should standards be changed. For some participants, even if they believed standards would not change, they were concerned that enforcement of standards could change.

"I've heard that for women, a lot of [units] are being more lenient and more forgiving if they don't [perform a task] properly because they are trying to integrate women. . . . A male in the same situation would not be given that chance."

—Junior Enlisted Woman

"It does a disservice to women. . . . You will have that guy thinking, 'The only reason she's here is because the standards were lowered. If they were higher, she wouldn't be here.'"

—Senior Enlisted Man

b. Some Participants Were Skeptical About Assurances That Physical Fitness Standards and Occupational Standards Would Not Change

Some participants heard that physical fitness and occupational standards would not be changed, but lacking official information, these participants had doubts.

"We heard on the news that they will not lower the standards and women didn't meet the standards. They didn't go into the mechanics of the evaluation. It was just the broad stroke of it."

—Male Officer

"Everybody says the standards aren't going to change, but from experience, I don't believe it until I see it with my own eyes."

—Junior Enlisted Man

c. A Few Participants Had Heard Allegations Regarding a Tiered System of Physical Fitness and Occupational Standards

A few participants from one Service said they heard the military was developing a tiered system of physical fitness and occupational standards. One participant heard of this change from a leader, but others heard only rumors.

"They were changing [standards] to make it more Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3, that's the only thing they told me. I got that information from my leadership. . . . I wanted to see if the tier thing was right, but what I saw, it was only [for] people initially coming in, not people in [the Service] right now."

—Junior Enlisted Man

"I heard something, but it's not official. They are rating it off of how much physical activity you need for your [occupational specialty] . . . , but I didn't find anything concrete on it."

—Junior Enlisted Man

F. Perceived Challenges to Gender Integration

Although DACOWITS moderators asked focus group participants about several different aspects of gender integration, participants had the most to say about perceived or actual integration barriers. In general, they saw integration as a challenging task that could raise both personal and institutional barriers. Many of these challenges were mentioned by participants in DACOWITS focus groups in previous years.

1. Meeting Physical Fitness and Occupational Standards

Participants spontaneously introduced the subject of physical fitness or occupational standards in a large majority of focus groups. They described several ways that standards or rumors about standards might create integration challenges.

a. Participants Were Concerned About Allegations of Lower Physical Fitness and Occupational Standards for Women

The most commonly cited concern regarding gender integration was that physical fitness or occupational standards had been or would be lowered inappropriately for women.

"A big fear [in my occupational specialty] is that the standards will lower . . . , that the focus will be on integration rather than holding the standards."

—Male Officer

"When they were integrating, they were like 'Standards are going to go low,' and I've heard men in our unit talk about [physical fitness] standards, and they are jealous, like, 'The females have low standards and I want that.'"

—Junior Enlisted Woman

"I heard the biggest complaint is that they changed standards so women could pass. I don't know if that's true or not."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

b. Participants Questioned Ability of Women to Meet Physical Fitness and Occupational Standards

Some participants, both men and women, anticipated that female Service members would struggle to meet physical fitness or occupational standards. In particular, some perceived that women were unlikely to meet the occupational standards in newly integrated positions. For a few participants, their concerns were about younger generations of Service members meeting the standards.

"If you have a 6'2", 200-pound male, how can you expect the same from a 5'3", 130-pound female?"

—Junior Enlisted Woman

"It's not that women can't meet the standards, but the new generation [isn't] meeting the standards. I'm very concerned by the [Service members] we are getting now."

—Male Officer

2. Participants Perceived Pregnancy as a Barrier to Gender Integration

Many participants described pregnancy as a potential gender integration barrier. This included both individuals who personally saw pregnancy as a barrier and individuals who described others' negative perceptions of pregnancy. Concerns included the temporary loss or limitation of women serving in critical positions and the perception by some that women might use pregnancy as an excuse to evade certain duties.

“Especially when you are a female that has children and gets pregnant, [people think] you will use that as an excuse to get out of everything. I proved them wrong by going into labor at work on my due date. I was there every day doing the job of three people while I was pregnant, so they couldn’t say anything to me.”

—Junior Enlisted Woman

“You can’t rate a male having a child the same as female having a child. . . . When it comes to pregnancy and deployment, there are a lot of difficulties there.”

—Male Officer

“I think lack of education [is a barrier]. When we get females that are integrated and they end up pregnant . . . , [some] male soldiers don’t know how to work with pregnant females.”

—Female Officer

“If people get pregnant, we can’t absorb that loss. So what [should we do]? . . . Tell women that [they] can’t get pregnant? That doesn’t seem fair. . . .”

—Junior Enlisted Man

3. Participants Sometimes Perceived Adapting Facilities and Coordinating Logistics as Difficult

In many focus groups, participants discussed the need to adapt facilities (e.g., berthing, restrooms) and coordinate logistics to accommodate women, a finding DACOWITS has reported in the past. Some participants were perplexed by the concern over facilities and offered their personal experiences in successfully accommodating women, whereas many others perceived facilities and logistics as major structural issues that would take time to address. The 2015 DACOWITS focus group report describes similar findings, with Service members noting that efforts to upgrade facilities were delaying integration plans.

“Us being deployed, we occasionally had women coming down, and you had to change bathroom schedules, shower schedules, have guards posted for latrine and bathroom . . .”

—Junior Enlisted Man

“They would talk about bathrooms [being a problem], and I am like, ‘Really?! That’s what you’re worried about? Put a sign on the door.’ If that’s the biggest concern, this should be easier. . . .”

—Female Officer

“[Barriers include] lodging, bathrooms. Only one showering area—now you have to find a place where a woman can shower by herself.”

—Senior Enlisted Woman

“When we deployed . . . , there were no male and female areas. We had to set up a screen for [women] to sleep in so they’re away from the gentlemen. While it’s not a big thing, there is something else that we could have been doing. . . . It was an hour and a half of us stacking boxes and hanging curtains.”

—Junior Enlisted Man

In a few focus groups, participants commented on logistics related to women’s hygiene.

“We have hard enough time keeping up with hygiene [at the installation]—going out for weeks at a time when you’re in combat [would be even harder].”

—Senior Enlisted Woman

“You hear [about women] having to go shower and males sucking it up and [using] baby wipes.”

—Senior Enlisted Man

4. Participants Felt Women Could Face Challenges Related to Underrepresentation in the Military

Participants in most groups raised several concerns specific to women being underrepresented in the military, many of which mirror findings from previous DACOWITS research.

a. Participants Felt That Being the Only Woman or One of Only a Few Women in a Unit Could Be Isolating

One of the most frequently mentioned barriers related to underrepresentation was the isolation that could result from being the only woman, or one of the only women, in a unit.

“In my line of work, we have [a female] once in a blue moon . . . , and they don’t usually stick around. For someone coming in, they feel alone and don’t have a mentor and don’t fit into the culture; [there is] no one to talk to on a personal level because of that gender norm of male-to-male relationships.”

—Male Officer

“I’ve always been the only female at the shop, always been outnumbered [by men]. . . . For the gentlemen there, it was awkward for them. They said they’d never been around a female. I said, ‘You’ve never had a mother, wife, sister?’”

—Senior Enlisted Woman

“There are girls that are out there who could last without other girls, but if you need somebody to talk to about girl stuff, and you don’t have anybody else but guys, that’s also a barrier.”

—Junior Enlisted Woman

“There’s no [female] leadership [in certain occupational specialties]. . . . They have no one to look up to. There’s no officer, it’s just them. I understand there are going to be barriers for men, but that’s the barrier females are going to face. It’s just them against the world, basically.”

—Senior Enlisted Man

b. Female Participants in Majority-Male Units Felt the Need to Prove Themselves Regularly

Focus group participants commonly pointed out the need for women to prove themselves constantly in male-dominated specialties. Many described situations where women initially were met with resistance and then gained acceptance after proving themselves to their peers. There was a certain pressure for women to be not just good, but exemplary. Senior enlisted and officer groups were especially likely to mention this issue.

“[There are] women who have to do more to be looked at as equal to a man. I see that as a reality.”

—Senior Enlisted Man

“The [forward operating base] said, ‘Don’t send us females, we don’t want females,’ and then they sent me and two [other] females [there on] a 15-month deployment. Within 48 hours, they had a different tune. When they met me and my [female Service members], they had no issues. . . . It has to do with seeing us in action and knowing our personalities.”

—Senior Enlisted Woman

“I believe we have to be careful and be sure we are all very educated, and the demographic [i.e., the kinds of women] going into these [integrating] units has to be well chosen. . . . It’s a heavy burden for a young female [Service member] to bear. . . . The institution is putting the responsibility on us.”

—Female Officer

“You have to earn that respect. . . . I am the minority, but I passed everyone up and that drives me even further. . . . It just drives you more and more.”

—Senior Enlisted Woman

c. Participants Feared Special Treatment for Women Could Hinder Gender Integration

Many participants were concerned that women integrating into previously male-only units would receive special treatment or acknowledgement for their efforts, causing friction with their male counterparts. Many of the women noted their desire to be treated just like any other Service member.

“When we were billeting males, there were E6s and below who were six to a room. Females, no matter what rank, they stayed in the same building that the generals and colonels were in, and they were billeted two to a room. It seems childish, but there is separation. . . . That’s one example of a certain consideration we give to females that other [Service members] see as [women getting] special treatment.”

—Male Officer

"We get treated differently, and that creates animosity. I did the same thing [as my male counterparts], so why am I being treated differently? I think we should make it the same across the board."

—Female Trainer

"I think one of the things that comes up is that I want to do my job and not be [expletive] special because I'm female."

—Female Officer

d. Participants Perceived Some Women as Troublemakers Impeding Gender Integration Progress

In many focus groups, participants touched on the idea of a female Service member whose attitude or performance could "ruin it for everyone else," hindering progress for other servicewomen. Some highlighted examples of such "troublemakers" they had known, whereas others spoke of such female Service members in more abstract terms (for example, describing warnings they had received to not be "one of THOSE women"). This was more common among senior enlisted and officer groups.

"There will always be the few females messing things up for the ones that do it right."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

"Some females keep that stereotype running. They don't know their job. . . . They don't even know how to tighten a lug nut. . . . We have some awesome females who are highly capable, but what worries me is a female coming in [who is] not qualified, and that makes us . . . have more things to fight to keep going."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

"It depends on the female's attitude. If you have a disgruntled [Service member], you won't send them any place. If they have a 'can do' attitude and go the extra mile, then we don't have issues. There's always the 'what if' factor with the females."

—Senior Enlisted Man

e. A Few Participants Were Concerned That Women Would Be Coerced Into Newly Opened Units and Positions

A few participants, mainly within one focus group, worried that Services would force women into positions or units because of a desire or requirement to integrate. They did not feel these women would succeed. They also noted that this would be less of an issue for special operators and any occupational specialty that has standards and selection processes unique to the career field.

"I am not a huge advocate of opening [certain previously closed units and positions] to women. . . . I believe the women who can do it should have the opportunity, but we will have more women forced into it who fail, and that would derail the unit."

—Female Officer

f. Participants Felt Competition Among Women Sometimes Hindered Gender Integration Success

Rivalry among women was a theme raised by enlisted women participants in a couple of focus groups. They felt that such competition might limit the success of gender integration.

"It's going to be a battle between the alpha female[s]. If you work in the same shop with a female, you want to be [better than her], but if you get into [a newly opened unit], you will have to work together."

—Junior Enlisted Woman

"One of the biggest things I see is females against females. We dog each other more than males do. We do it to ourselves. It's not always the men."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

5. Participants Perceived That Gender Dynamics Sometimes Impeded Gender Integration

DACOWITS focus group participants felt gender dynamics could hinder integration, a sentiment expressed by past focus groups as well. Past participants discussed a number of related barriers to integration, including men's "innate" desire to protect women; increased sexual harassment, sexual assault, and fraternization; and traditional masculine and feminine roles. This section outlines similar themes raised by participants in 2016.

a. Participants Perceived That Interactions Between Men and Women Could Be Problematic

Many focus group participants said that interactions between men and women in integrated units could prove challenging. These included worries about men instinctually protecting women, or men and women becoming romantically involved.

"It's the way we raise our males in Western civilization. That's why integrating will have difficulty. She can . . . do what the male can do, and do it better even, but he will at some point still want to step in front of her. . . ."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

"I was raised that males were supposed to protect females. I think that that's something that is in a lot of people's heads. . . ."

—Junior Enlisted Man

"We call it a brotherhood. Obviously, it's all we've ever had to call it. I think the way of thinking of that is it's your brothers in arms. That fundamentally changes when you bring in a female. Guys will be protective of females."

—Male Officer

b. Participants Perceived Overt Sexism or Bias

Whereas some of the barriers discussed by focus group participants were not overtly or blatantly sexist, participants gave examples of clear sexism and bias.

"What's been going on are assumptions and unspoken expectations. It puts [women] in a box."

—Senior Enlisted Man

"If a woman is hanging out with a man for too long, [people think] they are doing something [inappropriate]. If she is pretty and getting promoted quick, that is a male stereotype and perception."

—Senior Enlisted Man

"My [leader], when I volunteered [for a gender integration effort], he made very derogatory comments toward me and the . . . initiative."

—Female Officer

"I think all men in the military think women in the military need good looks to get by. . . . You have to prove them wrong."

—Junior Enlisted Woman

c. Many Participants Feared Accusations of Sexual Harassment

Many focus group participants said Service members feared interacting with those of another gender because of the potential for sexual harassment accusations—men, in particular, were afraid to interact with women. Participants saw this as a barrier to integration, preventing women and men from forming close working relationships—including mentoring relationships—and preventing men from effectively supervising women.

"For the most part, [men] are scared of offending us. . . . We have so much [sexual harassment] training that they are scared to do anything with us. . . ."

—Junior Enlisted Woman

"The [sexual harassment and sexual assault prevention program] pendulum has swung so far that there are people manipulating the system, and it makes males fearful of having women [in their units]."

—Female Officer

"You have [male leaders] who have not had to work with females or lead a female, and this goes back to making them aware and giving training. The only thing that we have is [sexual harassment and sexual assault training], and . . . the prevailing mindset is that you have to walk on eggshells, or you'll get the book thrown at you."

—Senior Enlisted Man

d. Participants Feared Resistance to Gender Integration Could Damage Unit Cohesion

In some focus groups, participants discussed ways that gender integration could negatively affect unit cohesion and indicated that general resistance to change could hinder success.

"What I've experienced is that you may be allowed [into newly integrated units and positions], but you won't be liked. You're allowed, but [the men] don't want you. Even though it briefs well, the [Service members] aren't used to it, and it's not always a 'want to have' [situation]."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

"I think there will be some kind of psychological pressure from people in our units who haven't integrated who basically are just not wanting to change, like, 'This is the way we have done it 40 years; why change it now?' That might be an obstacle some females will face."

—Junior Enlisted Man

G. Perceived Facilitators to Gender Integration

Though participants were not explicitly asked what factors might help gender integration efforts succeed, they offered several ideas.

1. Participants Felt That Leadership and Older Service Members Had the Potential to Support Gender Integration

Participants in several focus groups felt that leaders and older generations of Service members could help—or hinder—gender integration. Some participants mentioned personal experiences with leaders who advocated gender integration.

"We have senior leaders in [our Service] right now who have trouble with every kind of integration. . . . It will take people like you and me to correct it, right then and there when it happens."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

"You may encounter others with attitudes against integration, but I don't think it's a problem in today's [military] because we have it stressed by our leadership, so it's not going to be a problem."

—Junior Enlisted Man

"It's not so much getting junior ranks to accept it. . . . Getting the leadership to back it is the issue. When you say how long it'll take, it'll take however long to get [to senior enlisted Service members] who have those blinders on."

—Female Trainer

"My recommendation would be for it to come straight from the top. It doesn't have to be the general, but at least O6 or above, to push it down to lower-level commanders, because if they know their bosses endorse gender integration to the fullest and won't tolerate negativity and endorse a positive command climate, it will make it easier for people like me in that unit that this commander endorses it."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

2. Participants Valued Female Perspectives and Capabilities

Participants from a few officer and senior enlisted groups provided specific examples of ways that women added value to units by doing things that men could not do or offering valuable alternative perspectives.

“There was this one guy on my platoon who had a lot of spunk and fight, but when we went into Iraq, we [had the protective equipment necessary for a certain situation only in a size small], so he couldn't get into it. A female could do what he couldn't do. . . . There are females who went to [take care of the situation when] it wasn't safe for him to do that.”

—Male Officer

“They brought me in in certain areas [that a male leader] screwed up. . . . [I] did protocol stuff that the [leadership] was really grateful for. A woman's touch . . . I brought more of a professional way of thinking.”

—Senior Enlisted Woman

“We had females come in, and it was like an untapped resource.”

—Male Officer

3. Participants Recommended Minimal Management of the Gender Integration Process

In many focus groups, participants expressed the belief that integration is something that must simply be accepted: Regardless of personal opinions, it is happening, and Service members must help it happen. Some participants pointed out that challenges may not be as bad as anticipated, and noted how the military has been through other kinds of integration before.

“Now that women can serve in all positions . . . , you're in the military, it's just how it is. You don't have a choice. If a unit presents real barriers, they'll get knocked down pretty quick. We need to be following the orders. You gotta do it.”

—Junior Enlisted Man

“The only way to break that [bias against integration] is through experience and seeing it happen. . . . It has to be done to be believed. There's no magic switch.”

—Female Trainer

“If they can't adjust to an environment where women are being integrated, they need to be in another environment and not in the [military]. . . . It's happening whether they want it or not.”

—Junior Enlisted Woman

“[Gender integration is] the same thing as many years ago with the integration of African-Americans. . . . The military led the way before society did. They allowed women to serve in the military before they could work in all-male jobs in society. Even when the rest of the country was not allowing marriage of gay[s] and lesbians, and the [military said], ‘You know what? No more “Don't Ask Don't Tell.”’ The military has been key in leading the way for aspects of society that have been considered taboo along the way.”

—Senior Enlisted Woman

Several participants commented positively on their own personal experiences with gender integration and the ways in which women were simply treated as “any other Service member.”

"If you have a female officer who isn't meeting your standard, then you have a [Service member] that isn't meeting your standard. We want to be treated the same, and we don't want to be different or special."

—Female Officer

"My experience has been positive overall. In [my field, most people] are professional, and [integration is] not an issue."

—Male Officer

"I haven't had any negative experiences. . . . I was the only enlisted female . . . , and everybody treated everybody with respect, so there [weren't] many issues. I was the only female with the men, and I thought that I was going to be an oddball out, and I wasn't, and I had junior men teaching me how to do everything."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

Chapter 3. Strategic Communication

In 2016, DACOWITS pursued a new line of study: strategic communication. The Committee was interested in better understanding Service members' perceptions of communication within their units, Services, and across DoD as a whole. Whereas many of the strategic communication discussions were couched within the larger topic of gender integration, the focus groups aimed to assess Service member experiences with internal unit communication in a general sense and to evaluate the effectiveness of various communication channels.

The Committee conducted 24 focus groups on strategic communication. The protocol that guided the discussion covered the following topics:

- ▶ Communication Methods Used by Commands
- ▶ Effects of Communication on Morale, Cohesion, and Pride
- ▶ Differences in Communication by Generation
- ▶ Perceived Differences in Effectiveness of Communication Methods
- ▶ Recommendations for Improved Communication

This chapter details findings from focus group discussions on strategic communication.

A. Communication Methods Used by Commands

Participants were asked about the types of communication their commands used and which methods they preferred.

1. Participants Preferred Text Messaging, E-Mail, and Face-to-Face Communication

In general, participants relied on text messaging, e-mail, and in-person communication to share information among members of their commands. Talking, texting, e-mailing, and face-to-face communication were the most common communication methods cited. Phone and social media were mentioned less frequently.



"I can send 30 people a text message and they will all get it as opposed to calling 30 people and wasting that time . . . , and you can check text messages in a meeting."

—Junior Enlisted Man

"I prefer [small in-person meetings] because if we are in formation, they go on and on, but [in those smaller meetings], they are like, 'This is what we are doing; this is the information.'"

—Junior Enlisted Woman

"I prefer e-mail more. It's easy to refer back. A lot of times, I'll double up and make sure to send an e-mail."

—Male Officer

B. Effects of Communication on Morale, Cohesion, and Pride

When asked how communication might affect the dynamics of a unit, participants discussed how lack of communication could negatively affect relationships between senior and junior Service members. Conversely, open communication and efforts by Service members to learn to know others in their units can improve unit cohesion.

1. Lack of Communication Created Resentment and Frustration

Junior Service members expressed annoyance with poor communication coming from their leaders, and leaders found it challenging to communicate openly and frequently enough to meet the needs of their team members.

"I think it kind of degrades cohesion. [In] our platoon we all talk to each other, but with [the larger unit], we are constantly getting last-minute messages from them, and that builds resentment that they are not giving us information so we can do our job. . . . They need to actually give us the information."

—Junior Enlisted Man

"It's a huge impact on morale. In our unit, it's been a challenge for us. It's still consistently brought up as a challenge. There's not enough communication. I don't know what the breakdown is of things. . . . We have commander's calls, Facebook, face-to-face, but we get complaints that it's still not enough."

—Female Officer

"The biggest thing I hear from younger [Service members] is that they don't find things out. From going to staff meetings, if we don't go back to tell our [units], they don't hear about it. That's the biggest gripe I hear is that they don't know about anything."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

2. Informal Communication Improved Morale, Was Perceived to Give a Unit "Personality"

Both junior and senior Service members spoke favorably about how open lines of communication can affect morale within units. Participants liked informal communication and felt it could foster camaraderie.

"I can tell you my [Service members], even the youngest, like text messages and are gamers, but they still expect their squad leader to talk to them, and I make sure I address the formation and talk to them. At least in my organization, [Service members] expect their [noncommissioned officer] should know them, and that person will not get to know them unless [they talk to them]."

—Female Officer

"If I don't talk to my [Service members] they don't care. If I drag them out of their barracks and we do fun stuff, that's pride in the unit. . . . If you don't talk to your [Service members, they could think] 'Who the hell are you?'—just the guy that sits in the chair and yells at them."

—Junior Enlisted Man

"If you don't have a commander who gets in front of the [Service members] frequently—enough to give a personality to the unit they can associate with—nobody want to listen to that."

—Female Officer

C. Differences in Communication by Generation

When asked about how communication may differ by generation, participants mentioned differences in media preferences and in the volume of information anticipated by different generations.

1. Younger Service Members Preferred to Understand Rationale Behind Orders

Senior participants described a difference in the way junior Service members respond to orders from commanders: they believed junior Service members wanted to hear the rationale and reasoning behind commands, whereas more senior Service members were used to obeying orders from commanders without asking questions.

"10–15 years ago, when someone told us what we needed to do, we made it happen. This is the generation of 'why.' . . . [Service members are not motivated] because they are not being told why. They are not being told why they are doing different things. Time is precious to them. They don't have the mentality that this is their life."

—Senior Enlisted Man

"[Younger Service members ask,] 'Why? Why am I doing it?' . . . [The reason] doesn't matter. Just do it. You need to give them a little background not a full legal summary."

—Female Officer

2. Younger Service Members Preferred Text Messaging and Social Media

Participants of all ages shared their belief that text messaging was preferred among more junior Service members.

"If we are talking communication, text is most effective. We have group texts, and at the command level, they [junior Service members] are all texting."

—Male Officer

Senior participants described junior Service members' preference for using social media. Despite the different levels of interest in social media between younger and older Service members, leaders saw value in using social media as a communication tool.

"Here's why I fight for social media. It's important because you can see what [Service members] beneath you—what's important to them. If they have family issues, I immediately know about it. Their wife posted something, and then tomorrow when they come into work and they are being different, I know about it. . . . Social media has its place. Obviously, you have people that read the headlines and not the full link. Social media has its issues, but [it] is the most direct access to [Service members], to an issue. I hear about news first on social media. Then I can search it out, but when big news happens, it's first on Twitter."

—Senior Enlisted Man

"With Facebook, [junior Service members] can reach out and get [instant gratification]. . . . When they ask me a question and ask me something, then I'll be able to respond a little bit faster—instead of saying, 'Hey, I'll respond later' I can say, 'I can take 5 minutes now' which makes them feel better."

—Female Officer

D. Perceived Differences in Effectiveness of Communication Methods

Participants were asked to describe their opinions about the most and least effective communication methods. They spoke most often about e-mail, text messaging, and face-to-face communication—and shared both the pros and cons of each.

1. Face-to-Face Communication Was Perceived as Most Effective but Difficult Given the Time Burden

Participants felt that face-to-face communication was the most effective communication method. However, many participants mentioned that carving out time for face-to-face communication could be difficult.

"Face-to-face is best because you know what you are saying is coming across and can't be misinterpreted like in an e-mail or text. My boss tells me face-to-face."

—Male Officer

"[Face-to-face communication] would be helpful, but we're on so many different schedules. But I think it would be beneficial. . . ."

—Junior Enlisted Man

2. E-Mail Was Perceived as Most Effective if Followed Up With Face-to-Face Communication

Many Service members liked that e-mail provides a written record of communication. However, many participants, particularly senior Service members, said that following up on an e-mail with face-to-face communication could improve e-mail's effectiveness.

"I've personally seen leadership [communicate] by e-mail, and they'll sit at their desk, and there will never be another face-to-face. What I like to do to communicate is send an e-mail to provide in written form to reference it, and then you have that face-to-face to clarify. . . . A lot [of meaning] can get lost in Facebook and e-mail."

—Female Officer

"It has to be dual modes: e-mail and in person. If it's an e-mail, it's easy to transmit to another day. Our formation is unique in that we are dispersed across five States, so our supporting battalions rely on digital media traffic as well as by phone call. That is what we as a command team try to do. Not just send e-mail but [also] have dialogue to make sure the message is received and is understood. Today's generation loses a lot with what e-mail and text is about versus actual human interaction."

—Male Officer

"Maybe if there was like an all hands e-mail of some sort, but not all [occupations] are on their e-mail every day. . . . I'm admin, but there are a lot of [Service members] that are mechanics, [so I ask], 'Do at least one of you check your e-mails every day?' That could spark a conversation."

—Junior Enlisted Woman

3. Text Messaging Was Perceived as Most Effective for Immediate Communication

Many Service members said that text messaging is the most effective for time-sensitive or pressing issues because of the ease with which it is possible to reach many people quickly, some of whom may be spread out over a wide area, making face-to-face communication difficult.

"You have them in formation and have whole [units], and that's when you talk to them. Now, I have [Service members] all over the place, so I can't talk to them all, and I have to do mass text. I do it out of necessity."

—Senior Enlisted Man

"You can hit 100 people with one message. I guess you can conference call, but it's hard to get everyone together at one time. Trying to get the word out at one time is hard."

—Junior Enlisted Woman

"If it's ASAP, then text messaging [is best]."

—Female Officer

4. E-Mail's Effectiveness Was Perceived as Limited Because of Volume of E-Mail and Lack of Access to E-Mail at Work

Despite e-mail's popularity and ubiquity, many Service members spoke about its limited effectiveness. Service members said they received a high volume of e-mail and could not always discern which messages were most important. Moreover, participants in some occupations did not have access to e-mail at work and could check e-mail during only certain times of the day.

"I think the most used is oftentimes the most ineffective. . . . People use [e-mail] to put the monkey on your back, so it's on you to respond. But you have 100 e-mails that require action, and you don't get to them in the depth you need."

—Female Officer

"[My workers] are out [repairing] downed power lines. It's a challenge to communicate. [My workers] don't get to check e-mail until 1600 because they're out with work orders in the field."

—Female Officer

"Since [we started using e-mail], it's been [hard] getting information out to people correctly. You have to filter out—is it affecting me or is it not. Let's go back to old school with commander's calls. . . . Now, it's just a mass of e-mail, from 20–30 e-mails a day. You have to figure out what is important and what is not. I could waste my day reading e-mails or do something worth my time. It's information overload I think, personally."

—Senior Enlisted Man

E. Recommendations for Improved Communication

After discussing preferences for and effectiveness of different communication methods, participants suggested how to improve communications in their units and Services.

1. Top-Down and Face-to-Face Communication Was Preferred

One of the most widely recommended improvements was for more top-down communication; that is, for high-ranking leaders and officials to openly communicate official military information with lower ranking Service members rather than having Service members hear about new changes from unofficial sources. Many participants also wanted more face-to-face communication to promote “buy in” of military policy.

"If [communication is] face-to-face, there is going to be a lot more pride and more buy-in. If everyone sees the buy-in from above, it's going to be integrated."

—Male Officer

"[We need] more sit-downs face-to-face. [Junior Service members] don't read those mass e-mails. Even smaller groups—town halls. A lot of [junior Service members] are zoning out or playing on their phones too. [If a message came from the commanding officer/leader of the unit], it would sink in better."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

2. Presentations and Other Passive Communication Methods Were Considered Excessive and Unwanted

Similarly, many Service members were very vocal in their dislike of passive forms of communication—for example, training sessions and slide presentations. Service members said they felt overwhelmed by the number of training sessions and felt that they were poor substitutes for personal communication, especially regarding important messages.

“When a leader I respect addresses a formation, you listen. Mandatory training is not effective.”

—Female Officer

“Equip leaders with factual information and empower them to share it [personally], not just [via slides]. Communicating to leadership and giving them charge.”

—Male Officer

“The first couple times, [training is] effective—you get your basis of knowledge—but then it’s the same thing over and over again. I’ve seen the information that’s there. I know who to talk to and call.”

—Junior Enlisted Man

Chapter 4. Mentorship

Concerns surrounding mentorship or the lack thereof have been voiced by participants in DACOWITS focus groups every year since 2011. Several past participants discussed the need for mentors to enhance career progression and facilitate the gender integration process; in particular, several women have highlighted the need for more female mentors. To enhance its understanding of this issue, the Committee chose to examine mentorship in the 2016 focus groups. The Committee asked participants about their experiences with mentorship; perceptions of mentorship and differences in perception by generation; characteristics of good versus bad mentors and protégés; preferences based on gender; preferences for formal versus informal mentoring relationships; and suggestions for an ideal mentorship program for the current generation of Service members. DACOWITS conducted 30 focus groups on the topic of mentorship.

In reviewing the findings presented in this chapter, it is important to realize that responses to some of the questions asked in this section likely are based on participants' experiences with mentorship programs—or lack thereof—in their respective Services. Based on participant responses to the questions asked in this section, it appears that two of the installations DACOWITS visited likely had formal, mandatory mentorship programs in place at the time of the focus groups—though it was not clear whether they were Service-level or unit-level programs. Although both programs assigned mentors to Service members upon their joining a new unit, participants from one Service reacted negatively to this practice, whereas participants from the other Service seemed to respond favorably to the program.

This chapter discusses focus group findings on the topic of mentorship and is organized into the following sections:

- ▶ Experience With Mentorship
- ▶ Definition of Mentorship
- ▶ Characteristics of the Mentor-Protégé Relationship
- ▶ Mentor-Protégé Pairings
- ▶ Characteristics of Mentors
- ▶ Characteristics of Protégés
- ▶ Preferences Related to Mentorship Programs

A. Experience With Mentorship

Nearly half (49 percent) of the 288 participants in the mentorship focus groups indicated they were being mentored by a Service member, and an additional 34 percent reported they had been mentored by a Service member in the past even if they did not have such a mentor at present. However, 16 percent had never had a Service member as a mentor. These figures varied significantly by Service; the difference in the percentage of participants who had never been mentored by a Service member ranged from a low of 5 percent to a high of 28 percent (see Table 4.1). Pay grade also was associated with differences in mentorship experiences. A larger proportion of senior enlisted participants indicated they were being or had been mentored by a Service member (7 percent of senior enlisted participants, compared with 17 percent of officers and 27 percent of junior enlisted participants, reported they had never had a Service member as a mentor). Gender made a slight difference concerning whether participants reported they were being or had been mentored by a Service member, with a larger

proportion of women than men indicating they formerly had a Service member as a mentor; however, the difference between the genders concerning those who reported never being mentored by a Service member was minimal (18 percent of women versus 14 percent of men). Because the question asked specifically about Service members as mentors, it is possible that some of the variance was caused by participants who were being or had been mentored by retired—rather than active—Service members.

Table 4.1. Experience With Service Member Mentorship Among Participants in Mentorship Focus Groups

Service	Do you have, or have you ever had, a Service member mentor you?					
	I have a Service member as a mentor		I do not have a Service member as a mentor, but I have had one in the past		I have never had a Service member as a mentor	
	Number	Percent (Within the Service)	Number	Percent (Within the Service)	Number	Percent (Within the Service)
Air Force	37	63%	19	32%	3	5%
Army	25	40%	23	37%	15	24%
Coast Guard	18	31%	24	41%	16	28%
Marine Corps	33	58%	19	33%	5	9%
Navy	29	58%	13	26%	8	16%

Participants were also asked if they had ever participated in mentorship programs sponsored by their Services or units; 51 percent said they had. Responses to this question also varied by Service, from a low of 27 percent to a high of 74 percent (see Table 4.2). A comparison of the data in Table 4.1 to the data in Table 4.2 shows participation in a mentorship program did not necessarily correlate to having a Service member as a mentor. Participation in a unit- or Service-sponsored mentorship program varied by pay grade, though this difference may be exaggerated by the fact that older Service members had longer careers and, therefore, potentially more opportunity for mentorship. In total, 65 percent of senior enlisted participants had participated in a sponsored mentorship program, compared with 46 percent of officers and 39 percent of junior enlisted participants. However, there were no real differences by gender; 52 percent of men and 49 percent of women reported participating in a Service- or unit-sponsored mentorship program.

Table 4.2. Experience With Service- or Unit-Sponsored Mentorship Programs Among Participants in Mentorship Focus Groups

Service	Have you ever participated in a mentorship program sponsored by your Service or unit?	
	Yes	
	Number	Percent
Air Force	16	27%
Army	22	35%
Coast Guard	29	50%
Marine Corps	41	72%
Navy	37	74%

During the focus groups, participants were also asked about their experiences serving as a mentor to someone else. Of the 200 participants who responded to the question, 81 percent indicated they had served as a mentor at some point during their careers. Responses to questions on experiences as a

mentor were similar to those for questions on experiences as a protégé; experience as a mentor varied somewhat by Service, from a low of 71 percent for participants from the Coast Guard to a high of 93 percent for participants from the Army. Roughly three-quarters of participants in the other three Services had experience as a mentor: Air Force, 78 percent; Navy, 79 percent; and Marine Corps, 83 percent. Not surprisingly, this varied by pay grade group, with 70 percent of junior enlisted participants, 76 percent of officers, and 94 percent of senior enlisted participants indicating they had served as a mentor. Gender was not a significant variant here; 85 percent of men and 81 percent of women reported experience serving as a mentor.

B. Definition of Mentorship

The first question in this section of the focus group protocol asked participants what they thought about when they heard the term mentorship; the goal of asking this question was to understand how participants defined the concept. Participants' understanding of mentorship often varied, as did their expectations for who should serve as mentors. Unless indicated, definitions of mentorship were similar among both male and female participants.

1. Mentorship Was Perceived as Being All About Guidance

Whereas the definition of mentorship varied somewhat by Service, most participants felt that mentorship was about guidance. Career guidance was the most common type of support mentioned, though guidance on personal issues was reported by some participants as another function of mentorship.

"A mentor's main purpose is to coach and guide and get someone on the right path to do what is best for their life and career, and your job as a mentor is to help them on that path."

—Senior Enlisted Man

"Personal growth, someone helping you in every aspect of your life basically . . . , not just professional[ly]."

—Junior Enlisted Man

"They give you advice on what you should do careerwise, personal things. They should always be someone who I can talk to about school, where I want my career to go."

—Junior Enlisted Woman

"A good mentor is not just professional guidance but your personal guidance as well. It helps with your success overall as human beings because it has an impact on all of us."

—Male Officer

2. Mentors Were Perceived as Being Different Than Sponsors

Participants were asked if a mentor is the same thing as a sponsor, and nearly all participants indicated the two roles are different, though a few mentioned that a sponsor could become a mentor. A sponsor was defined as someone who is temporarily assigned to help a Service member who is new to a unit become familiar with the locale and the unit, whereas mentorship could be more of a lasting relationship.

"In my view, a sponsor is there to get you on your initial setup, like where things are, but that's it. It doesn't exceed beyond that. Once your check sheet is done, it's on to the next person."

—Male Officer

"Mentorship is a commitment, where sponsorship is a task."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

"Sponsors don't have the care factor. They just show up and [say], 'Here's what you need to do.'"

—Senior Enlisted Woman

3. Ideas About Mentorship Varied by Generation

When asked if the idea of mentorship differed by generation, senior enlisted participants and officers were quick to respond with their perceptions of how junior Service members differed in their definitions of and attitudes toward mentorship. Junior enlisted participants were less likely to report generational differences in response to this specific question; however, their responses during other sections of the discussion highlighted differences in their understanding of mentorship compared with that of senior enlisted and officer participants.

a. Younger Service Members Were Less Likely to Seek Mentors

Several senior enlisted and officer participants believed that junior Service members were less likely to seek mentoring relationships. In some instances, there was a feeling that the current generation of Service members was averse to the types of relationships and interactions mentor-protégé pairs had in previous generations. A few participants appreciated formal mentorship programs as a way to ensure that the current generation receives mentorship.

"There is a generational gap. . . . People aren't seeking mentors. . . . We have to do something because people aren't going in the right direction. We just don't have that figured out yet."

—Senior Enlisted Man

"They are used to video games and want to be left alone to do their own thing."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

"Now, [mentorship] is all on the computer. Now, it is a program that you register for. . . . Before that, we worked together. I work for you, we talk in the [cafeteria], or whatever, and this is just our relationship—it wasn't as much formalized as a thing that happens."

—Senior Enlisted Man

b. Younger Service Members Had an Expanded View of Who Could Be a Mentor

A few participants indicated that younger generations have a different view than older generations of who can serve as mentors. As discussed in Section C, younger Service members are more concerned with experience than rank when seeking a mentor. One junior enlisted member provided an example: A younger Service member might benefit more from the mentorship of Service members from the same

generation if older Service members do not share the same knowledge of or experience with recent technology.

"My former [executive officer] is my mentor; the world is flat now. You can talk to whoever you want whenever you want [without concern for maintaining communications within the command structure]."

—Male Officer

"With generations, you are going to have different issues and problems that come up. . . . [Service members] nowadays are completely different: there was no Internet, social media, the type of war going on then and now, so there is no way to [have the same perspective] because they didn't have the same experience."

—Junior Enlisted Man

c. Younger Service Members Confused Mentorship With Leadership and Role Models

A few participants described a mentor as someone who a protégé admired but who did not have a formal mentoring relationship with the protégé. The Service member emulated characteristics of the mentor without initiating any kind of formal mentoring relationship. Other participants described more formal mentoring relationships; some participants described leaders as mentors. This overlap between mentorship and leadership was particularly common among junior enlisted men.

"For me, it's someone that doesn't know they are my mentor. I want that super unbiased opinion—see how they handle the situation I'm in . . . and then ask why they approached it that way. Looking up to somebody like that without them knowing I'm watching."

—Junior Enlisted Man

"When [you] reach a certain rank, [mentoring] should be in your job title. I would expect them to ask me what I want to do and [to] trust them if they reach out to you."

—Female Officer

"Someone you look up to—I haven't had a lot [of people like that] in my case, but someone you can use as an example. Someone that you want to mold your career to or [view] as your mentor even though they may not . . . [formally mentor] you."

—Junior Enlisted Man

d. Older Service Members Preferred In-Person Communication, Younger Service Members Preferred Electronic Communication

Several participants also pointed out that the tools used to communicate within the mentoring relationship are different for younger generations compared with older generations. Electronic communication is much more common, and often preferred, among junior Service members compared with senior Service members.

"Things are more text messaging than face-to-face. They would rather text."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

“The way you communicate is different: more texting and social media. With my mentors, for the last 18 years, we call each other, check in every couple of months. . . . It was more of a personal conversation. The younger generation responds to social media.”

—Senior Enlisted Woman

C. Characteristics of the Mentor-Protégé Relationship

In describing the relationship between mentors and protégés, participants discussed the fact that each relationship is different and Service members tend to have different mentors to address different needs.

1. Most Participants Had More Than One Mentor

A large number of participants indicated they were being mentored by more than one person. Some participants mentioned they had different mentors for professional issues versus personal issues. In other instances, mentors served specific purposes for short timeframes, such as providing guidance on how to perform a specific job task. In the latter case, mentorship tended to be more about having questions answered or learning from another person’s actions rather than establishing a traditional mentoring relationship.

“You see them for different reasons. I have some who I go to for pay grade and professional advice, and others give more personal guidance. . . . You have to pick a person for you and what you go to them for.”

—Female Officer

“I believe that I have many different mentors because I want to go to different subject matter experts. For finances I have someone, for family I have another, for personal things I have another.”

—Junior Enlisted Woman

“It is not just one person; you can have several mentors and diversity in there. If there is this person, and I admire him for the way he speaks or has a command presence, then there is this person I look up to for his operational experience.”

—Senior Enlisted Man

“It’s not good to just have one. You tend to be like that person and you could become them. Having multiple mentors, you can pull what you like and dislike from each.”

—Junior Enlisted Man

2. Every Mentoring Relationship Was Different

Participants were asked if the roles are the same in every mentor-protégé relationship, and participants responded with a resounding “no.” This finding is related to the tendency of Service members to have more than one mentor. Each mentoring relationship is different because each serves a different function for the parties involved.

“Sometimes you work for or with them, and sometimes it’s a friendship who becomes a mentor. Some of my most successful mentors are other officers who have given me a bigger picture of the [Service].”

—Female Officer

“At the more junior level, you don’t realize you are being mentored. . . . The person pulling you aside is mentoring you, even though we don’t call it that. No one pulls me aside now; I have to seek it out. It changes.”

—Female Officer

“It depends on what you are [seeking]. . . . If you are going to someone with more experience, it might be a leadership-based mentorship, which is different from your technical job. You might seek someone with a higher rank. What you are getting mentored on depends on who you might seek out.”

—Male Officer

“It can be technical versus leadership based. A technical mentor doesn’t need to see things the same way as long as I am progressing and learning my trade. The leadership piece is more dependent on that relationship and clicking.”

—Female Officer

D. Mentor-Protégé Pairings

Participants were asked what makes someone a good or a bad mentor, including how they are similar to or different from the protégé. This section outlines the major findings related to the ways in which mentors and protégés differ and the impact those differences could have on the mentoring relationship.

1. Mentors Had More Knowledge and Experience Than Protégés

Several participants indicated that mentors generally have more knowledge and experience than those they mentor. Mentors also tend to have faced challenges similar to those their protégés are likely to face.

“When I think of what they do for me, I think of it like taking you under their wing. Usually, for me, it’s someone who has similar aspiration or used to have the same aspirations I have now, walking you through how to get where they are. . . . They set you up on goals.”

—Junior Enlisted Man

“[It’s] learning from people who have been through it before you.”

—Male Officer

“They should have walked a similar path to someone they are mentoring.”

—Senior Enlisted Woman

2. Mentors Varied in Pay Grade and Age

Some participants expressed that mentors generally are senior to protégés in pay grade or age. However, other participants indicated a more senior protégé could benefit from a junior mentor with more knowledge in a particular area. Senior-to-junior mentoring relationships were mentioned primarily in relation to overall career progression or career success, whereas junior-to-senior mentoring relationships were cited in situations when a junior mentor might have more experience with a particular aspect of a more senior protégé's job tasks. Peer-to-peer relationships were mentioned most commonly in relation to seeking guidance for personal matters.

"Someone to look up to like a big brother . . . For me, I was fortunate to have a senior enlisted in my career who took me under their wing. I still keep in contact with that [mentor] to this day."

—Male Officer

"It is experienced based. Sometimes that [person] is higher ranking, but not necessarily."

—Female Officer

"Most important, there is life experiences. Age and gender don't matter. It's what they are experienced at."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

"It depends on the advice you're asking for. I'm not gonna ask [another focus group participant of similar rank] for job advice, but [maybe about] an argument with my mom. . . . Experience-wise, things should be different. If we came out of school at the same time, you might want someone who has been in a lot longer [to advise you]."

—Junior Enlisted Woman

3. Mentors and Protégés Were in the Same and Different Career Fields

Participants varied in their preferences concerning whether the mentor should be in the same career field as the protégé. Mentors in the same career fields were seen as beneficial for career-specific guidance, whereas mentors from other career fields could help protégés view their situations from new perspectives—results that mirrored past focus group findings.

"The ones in my career field are different than ones outside my career field. Their buy-in is more from looking into my world. Those in my field are looking at it from our eyes as [members of the same occupational specialty]. It's good to get the perspective of others."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

"[Mentors are] sounding boards. They're also folks who have been there, maybe, and can give you a path. Not necessarily the path you choose, but they provide a vision. Not stuck in your career field—someone with a strategic outlook to see beyond the current state."

—Female Officer

4. Mentor Gender Usually Was Not a Concern

a. Mentor Gender Usually Was Irrelevant

Several participants indicated that the gender of the mentor is not as important as other characteristics such as personality, interest in helping others, and fit with the protégé.

"A mentor is a mentor. Male or female, as long as you have a good basic [understanding of how to mentor and to provide] communication and learning by example, I don't think it would be any different."

—Junior Enlisted Man

"It's really up to who you want to help you. I've had mentors who are male and female, and the male, you get perspective of their view, whereas if it's the same gender, you are getting the perspective you are seeing. So maybe have one of each so you are seeing both views."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

b. Mentor Gender Was Sometimes Relevant

Whereas most participants recognized that gender generally does not matter in a mentoring relationship, several suggested that it does matter in certain instances.

Same-Gender Mentors Were Preferred for Personal Issues

Some participants indicated there were some personal matters they would feel more comfortable talking about with a person of the same gender.

"On a personal level, [gender] does matter; on a professional level, it doesn't matter, because if you are my mentor, [then] you know the job. If it's personal, like, 'Hey man, [I'm having some trouble with my wife],' then that would be awkward with a female."

—Junior Enlisted Man

"It depends. If you are talking about the job, then [gender does not matter], but with family stuff, a guy might not understand."

—Female Officer

Female Mentors Were Preferred by Women for Career Guidance

Some of the female participants indicated they found female mentors to be helpful for career-related matters because the protégé would be able to relate to experiences the mentor has had. Although this finding was part of the impetus for studying the topic of mentorship, it was not a primary finding from this discussion.

"[Gender] does matter on some stuff. I'm always looking for that flag woman who had a career path and a family like me who I could potentially [view as an example] that it is possible to do it. . . . At some level, you want to see yourself in that person."

—Female Officer

“Sometimes [gender] does matter, sometimes it doesn't. You've chosen to pick out females to talk to them and see how they are doing. It is the same [as] when I went to the [Service] Academy, [where] . . . there are very few females in a school with a ton of males. . . . It is about learning how you want to act and how you want to be. For that, you need someone like you.”

—Female Officer

“Right after I had my baby last year, my male mentor, who was also my supervisor at the end of my pregnancy and when I was pumping at work, he didn't want to talk about [issues related to pregnancy and childbirth]. But my female mentor came to the space and stuff, and I got to know her. She's also my supervisor too. So, I found that having female mentors, sometimes they will side with you more if you need help with something. Sometimes, the males . . . can't see that perspective.”

—Junior Enlisted Woman

c. Other-Gender Mentors Offered a Different Perspective

In contrast, a couple of participants indicated having a mentor of another gender is beneficial because it provides greater perspective.

“I think it's also helpful because at some point, you will have peers outside of the [Service], and it's going to be a lot more females outside, so it gives you that broad scope of experience to be more successful.”

—Senior Enlisted Man

d. Some Participants Feared the Perception of Fraternization in Other-Gender Mentoring Relationships

A few participants expressed concerns that other-gender mentoring relationships might be misconstrued as a fraternization violation. This concern was voiced most commonly among officers.

“If someone is of the opposite sex, now there is that risk of what [people think] happens when I close the [office] door. . . . The mentor/mentee relationships isn't always within the line, so now it's [perceived as] fraternization. . . . [Also, mentoring only during work] doesn't make a good mentor. You need to be able to go outside of work for issues that come up.”

—Male Officer

“The mentorship program led to [fraternization] issues. It became a question . . . if they were spending time together. . . . We had a female with a male officer [mentor], and his wife accused them of doing stuff, and that was awkward. She was an enlisted mentor, and she made sure they had the paperwork. That makes it hard to have a mentorship.”

—Female Officer

E. Characteristics of Mentors

Participants were asked to discuss what makes a person a good or a bad mentor.

1. Characteristics of a Good Mentor

Participants most frequently described good mentors as trustworthy, willing, compatible, committed, available, a good listener, unselfish, and caring.



a. Trustworthy

“A mentorship program creates opportunities for that personal relationship for a mentee, but it is a bond that can only happen with that trust. You have to feel comfortable discussing with that mentee or mentor.”

—Senior Enlisted Man

“The biggest part of the mentor-mentee relationship is mutual respect to never say questions are stupid. It is hard to build if you don't have that one-on-one relationship.”

—Male Officer

“Confidentiality . . . I don't want them to turn around to their friend or coworker or someone [else] they're mentoring and put my business out there. I think that's a big thing with mentors: that I can trust someone to hold the things in my life personal.”

—Junior Enlisted Woman

b. Willing

“Someone who cares about you personally and not just what they are going to get out of you, work related . . .”

—Junior Enlisted Man

“You have to show that you are willing to help them and be compassionate for them.”

—Senior Enlisted Woman

“[A good mentor is] someone who genuinely wants to help, not just your [leader] and their [leader] is telling them, ‘Go talk to your [Service members].’ You can tell when someone just does it because the [Service] wants them to do it. They should want to sit and talk to you.”

—Junior Enlisted Woman

c. Compatible

“It depends individually on the person. What makes a good mentor for me is different from others. For me, it is something that I would want to strive for in life. I would have to feel the same way as them. I think I’d have to click with that person. If we have different morals or if one believes something that I don’t believe in, I won’t link with that person as well as I would with someone along the same lines as me.”

—Male Officer

“I was mentored horribly. I always try to [be a good mentor to protégés]—usually females. If you have a connection with them, you can do that.”

—Female Officer

d. Committed and Caring

“Knowledge as well as a general care for your well-being . . . [They] make sure that you are reaching the goals that you set out to achieve.”

—Junior Enlisted Man

“It’s just not, ‘Hey, I’m your mentor today,’ but looking further down the road, checking up on them. I have [Service members] out of the [Service] and am mentoring them in the civilian world. You have to care for the person.”

—Senior Enlisted Man

“When they look at what your perspective is . . . They have to take the time to figure out what’s best for you.”

—Female Officer

e. Available

“I think it should be mandatory for [a] supervisor to . . . be available. It ain’t about them. It’s the people they are training to replace them—the ones they are growing and developing. I’m trying to build a force that will replace me the best I can. I was taught from an early age to teach better than you were taught. You always can take away good or bad. Take the tidbits and give it to them.”

—Senior Enlisted Woman

"For me, I've had opportunities to mentor a few, to be available. It's so important that I am available to be accountable to them, especially when they come to us through programming or they selected you. Availability and accountability."

—Female Officer

"They have to be available and approachable, which goes along with that."

—Senior Enlisted Man

f. Willing to Listen

"Somebody you can go to and they are active listening. Maybe just to lay down what you got and give you advice on where you are trying to get. Sometimes, the mentees have everything they need, they just need support."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

"Communication—instead of someone telling you what to do, talking to you about what [you] do—being a good listener."

—Junior Enlisted Woman

g. Honest

"Someone who gives you open, honest feedback—not sugar coated . . ."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

"A mentor should not be providing emotional advice, but a mentor should be very direct and say, 'What you are doing is wrong,' and are not going to tell you [just] what you want to hear."

—Male Officer

h. Unselfish

"Genuine . . . They want to better somebody else. They are not doing it for personal gain but wanting to see the other person succeed and grow."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

"The worst thing possible is when someone wants to be my mentor. I have to want you, not you want me. A good mentor doesn't have any buy in or outcome to what they are telling you. They are not trying to write you up. What you say is held in confidentiality."

—Female Officer

2. Characteristics of a Bad Mentor

When asked about the characteristics of a bad mentor, participants used terms that contrast with those ascribed to good mentors; they most frequently described bad mentors as hypocritical, selfish, demanding, untrustworthy, unwilling to mentor or uninterested in mentoring, dishonest, not listening, and having an incompatible personality. Other terms used to describe bad mentors follow in the order of frequency of mention.



a. Hypocritical

"It is about personal conduct. I've seen people do some things that I don't want to emulate or follow. It doesn't matter, I see how you act on a personal level, and I've seen things you've done, and I won't follow you or seek you out even if you are the subject matter expert of X, Y, or Z."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

"[When they tell you to] 'Do as I say, not as I do.'"

—Senior Enlisted Woman

b. Demanding or Directive

"You have to be careful who you choose to ask for what. Depending on who that person is, you have to be careful when you don't take their advice. A good mentor is someone who gives you advice and lets you choose, and a bad one is someone who molds you like them."

—Female Officer

"If there is not that connection there, if it's strictly work-related or they are trying to push their views on you, it can come across negatively. You shy away from them. If they are open about everything, you tend to connect better."

—Junior Enlisted Man

c. Bad Advice

"Some people early in their career give bad advice, and you have no idea it is bad advice. They really want to give you leadership advice, but down the road, you realize that you shouldn't have listened to them."

—Female Officer

d. Bad Attitude or Disgruntled With the Service

“When I think of bad mentor, I think of someone who is disgruntled, like someone retiring in the next year, not happy with the military. . . . Bitterness rolls downhill. Negativity rubs off.”

—Junior Enlisted Man

“If they do not have a good attitude, [the relationship] isn’t approachable, or they don’t give you good advice or feedback.”

—Senior Enlisted Woman

e. Emotional

“[When they] . . . put their personal feelings into work . . . [when there are] emotions attached to it . . .”

—Junior Enlisted Man

F. Characteristics of Protégés

Participants were also asked about characteristics that make one a good or bad protégé. Participants tended to agree on a few essential characteristics of good protégés—motivation to seek out a mentor and work on self-improvement, and receptivity to take the mentor’s guidance and apply it.

1. Motivation

“The motivation is on the mentee to want to seek it out. . . . If the person can see an example they can connect with and there is a person they can see a connection in, and they show the drive, they will be naturally drawn to follow that person.”

—Senior Enlisted Man

“Someone who actually wants to learn . . .”

—Junior Enlisted Man

“There has to be that desire of a young person or the person with less wisdom to go and find that mentor.”

—Female Officer

“Someone who is looking to get better, and someone who is looking to put in the hard work to be successful . . .”

—Male Officer

2. Receptivity

“Willing to take the advice given to you . . . When I first got here, I got a lot of financial advice, and now I think I should have listened.”

—Junior Enlisted Man

“Open to hear what [mentors] say . . . You don't have to do or agree, but you can at least look into it.”

—Male Officer

“Initiative . . . You can always feed them, but if they don't come back to you, I'm done.”

—Senior Enlisted Woman

“Ability to retain what they are learning . . . That's also part of it, as [a protégé]—being able to absorb [information].”

—Senior Enlisted Man

G. Preferences Related to Mentorship Programs

The last section of the mentorship protocol asked participants to envision a mentorship program for the current generation of Service members. However, a large number of the participants had difficulty with this because they did not believe the Services should have any sort of formal mentorship programs. In the context of this discussion, most participants seemed to be defining a formal mentorship program as one in which mentors and protégés are matched in some systematic fashion, such as by matching junior and senior Service members within the same unit rather than allowing mentoring relationships to develop organically through self-selection. Participants frequently expressed distaste for mandatory mentor-protégé assignments throughout the entire discussion on mentorship.

1. Participants Were Dissatisfied With Formal Mentorship Programs

Several participants described experiences in formal mentorship programs sponsored at the Service or unit levels. Though the programs differed, the mandatory nature of the programs left a bad taste in many participants' mouths.

“The first thing that came to mind was a forced program. . . . The [Service] likes to push mentorship and push into that relationship, but it needs to be the person that needs that mentoring and someone who seeks that out of their career and their life rather than saying you will go to that program.”

—Female Officer

“[In my last unit], we had a forced mentorship program, and it was not successful. You as the mentor would sign off on the form, and the mentee would say, ‘Yes, we met every 2 weeks,’ but do you think we did that? No. . . . I think that the [Service] needs to outsource [mentoring] to the civilian world.”

—Male Officer

“My [unit] has tried to do a mentorship program. The [Service] jumped on it. People would volunteer to do it and do an online training. You have to get approved to get into it, and get approved all the way up, and then hope someone picks you. Why can't someone just ask me to share my experience? Then you have to check that someone's feelings don't get hurt. Can't I just be a female setting an example for a female? The [Service] made it hard. They made it really difficult to be a mentor. There is no connection. These people don't know me. I'm filling out a survey, I'm sharing my strong suits, which I don't even know if I'm identifying correctly, and it is almost as if you are picking your best

person to be your child's father—it is like a dating profile. The process is very [impersonal]. . . . The process now is hard. No one wants to do it. . . . It is a lot of work. They made it really hard for people who want to be mentors, and we all want it."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

"They lost me with the whole program. It will die. When they made it an actual instruction, it crossed the line for me. It loses the uniqueness of it by making it an instruction [that] you have to follow."

—Senior Enlisted Man

2. Participants Who Were Not Part of a Formal Mentorship Program Feared That Formalizing Informal Mentorship Would Be Detrimental

"I hate how formal they try to make mentoring somebody. It's not a 'by the book' thing."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

"I think it would be hard to match up someone without knowing them. I couldn't say, 'Person, match up with this person,' without knowing their personality. Maybe . . . someone can hold small meetings to mentor a small group, and hopefully, after some group meetings, people can break off. I think it's hard to say you can group them by females or by rank."

—Junior Enlisted Woman

"Formal anything turns into people not wanting to listen. You gravitate toward those you look up to, like-minded career or life goals. If you told me my [chain of command] or someone else would be my mentors—if they're not on the same path, I won't take it [seriously]—I'll get advice and understanding instructions for doing my job, but that's not the mentor role."

—Junior Enlisted Man

3. Participants Felt That Formalizing Some Aspects of Mentorship Could Be Beneficial

Despite the general negativity toward formal mentorship programs, some participants recognized the benefit of institutionalizing some aspects that could lead to successful mentoring relationships forming in a more organic fashion.

a. Participants Felt Service Members Would Benefit From Experience With and Understanding of Mentorship

A few participants, particularly those in senior pay grades, believed Service members could benefit from receiving a foundation in what mentorship is and why it is important as a way to encourage Service members to seek out mentors that are a good fit for their careers and personal goals and interests.

"I think giving the people the skills to mentor is great, and training, but forcing people to meet every 2 weeks is troublesome."

—Male Officer

b. Participants Felt That Compelling Those With Similar Interests or Career Paths to Network Would Be an Informal Way to Foster Mentorship

The second suggestion from participants was for Services to find ways to ensure that individuals with similar interests or career paths come together—for example, through mandatory attendance at a conference or a recurring meeting of Service members in a particular career field. This was seen as a way to foster the development of mentoring relationships without assigning mentors.

“When you open [Service member mentorship networking] to civilians . . . Some were prior Service and some were successful in their civilian life, and I thought that was a good program where the audience could see someone in that group, and it gave them opportunity to develop an informal relationship.”

—Senior Enlisted Woman

“I miss the society or club stuff where you can have a gender thing or career field thing where you have people getting together with commonalities . . . [who then] will hopefully make connections and make their own relationships.”

—Female Officer

Chapter 5. Chaplains

In 2016, DACOWITS examined the Chaplain Corps, including roles of the military chaplain, perceptions about female chaplains, and roles of chaplains in gender integration. The Committee last examined this topic in 2006 and desired to learn if the number of and perceptions about female chaplains had changed in the 10 years following that examination.⁵ To guide the discussion, the Committee provided the following description of chaplains to participants: “Chaplains are the religious leaders of the military, but they also serve nonreligious roles as well. The chaplain’s responsibilities include everything from performing religious rites and conducting worship services to providing confidential counseling and advising commanders on religious, spiritual, and moral matters.” DACOWITS conducted 27 focus groups on the topic of chaplains.

This chapter discusses focus group findings on the Chaplain Corps and is organized into the following sections:

- ▶ Experience With Chaplains
- ▶ Perceived Roles of Chaplains
- ▶ Nonreligious Counsel by Chaplains
- ▶ Unique Benefits Provided by Chaplains
- ▶ Perceptions of Female Chaplains
- ▶ Preferences Related to Chaplain Gender
- ▶ Opinions on the Number of Female Chaplains
- ▶ Chaplains and Gender Integration

A. Experience With Chaplains

Nearly half (48 percent) of the 255 focus group participants indicated they had sought services, whether religious or otherwise, from a military chaplain at some point during their military careers. Table 5.1 shows that Service members’ experience with chaplains varied some by Service, from a low of 42 percent in the Navy to a high of 54 percent in the Marine Corps. Pay grade also influenced participants’ responses, with senior enlisted participants (53 percent) and officers (54 percent) being more likely than junior enlisted participants (36 percent) to have sought services from a chaplain. It is possible that increased likelihood of seeking out chaplain services could be associated with longer length of time serving in the military, though this difference might also be related to life experiences or the increased responsibilities held by Service members in senior pay grades.

⁵ The 2006 DACOWITS report is available at <http://dacowits.defense.gov/Reports-Meetings/>

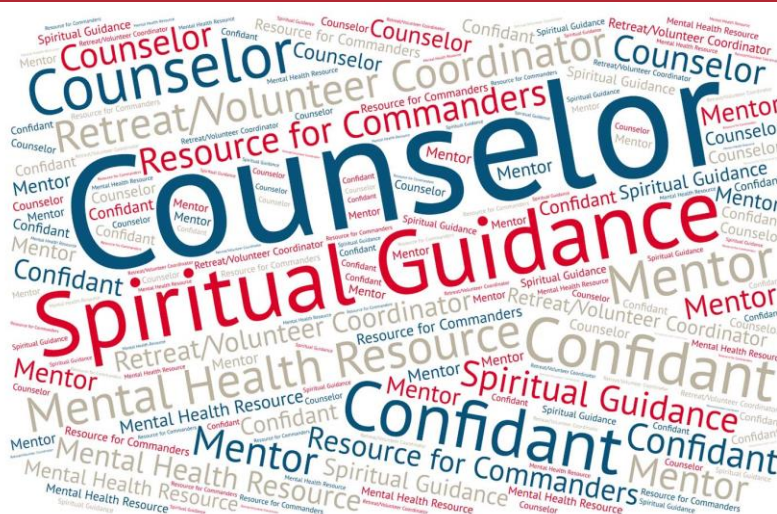
Table 5.1. Experience With Seeking Services From a Military Chaplain Among Participants in Chaplaincy Focus Groups

Service	Yes	
	Number	Percent
Air Force	52	45%
Army	62	45%
Coast Guard	27	47%
Marine Corps	64	54%
Navy	47	42%

During focus groups, participants were asked to indicate by a hand count if they had the following kinds of experience with chaplains: (1) were familiar with the chaplains in their units, (2) had one-on-one experience with chaplains in either current or previous commands, and (3) had experience with female chaplains. Of the participants who responded to this question, 73 percent knew who the chaplains were for their units, and 57 percent had one-on-one experience with chaplains in current or previous commands. A higher number of participants cited experience with chaplains in the hand count (57 percent) than in the mini-survey (48 percent). There are two possible causes for this discrepancy. First, participants were provided with the definition of a chaplain during focus groups but not on the mini-survey. Second, focus group participants were asked about experience with chaplains in current or previous commands, whereas the mini-survey asked about such experience at any time during one’s military career. Of participants who responded to this question during focus groups, 21 percent indicated they had experience with female chaplains.

B. Perceived Roles of Chaplains

Prior to being read the definition of a military chaplain, participants were asked to describe the roles that chaplains play. Many described chaplains as counselors first but added that they could serve in religious and morale-boosting roles as well. Service members suggested that chaplains could provide counsel in a number of roles: a mental health counselor, a confidante, a mentor, and a resource for commanders.



Sections B.1–B.6 list the roles of chaplains in the order of frequency with which they were mentioned by participants.

1. Counselor

When asked why Service members would seek services from a chaplain, most participants indicated that they talked to chaplains for counseling or advice. They gave various reasons for needing counsel, including marriage, mental health, or other personal issues.

“They are more of a human symbol of trust. He’s a chaplain and automatically gives you a feeling that you can talk to them. If people are going through financial issues, they have programs where you can go buy food for family, which also gives a level of trust for your family.”

—Junior Enlisted Man

“They’re generally recognized as a counseling perspective for non-work-related issues. Chaplains are trained and capable of counseling for things across the gamut. Emotional, family, relationships, work stressors that [affect] nonwork environments; chaplains are trained in that.”

—Male Officer

2. Spiritual Provider

Participants said that chaplains are responsible for the spiritual well-being of Service members.

“They are responsible for the spiritual well-being of people. In my interactions, most are very good touching on the spiritual side even if you are not the same religion as them. It is not focused on the black and whites of religion, and they are good about reaching across different faiths. That is their area of responsibility.”

—Male Officer

“They find out what your religion is and tie it to your faith. They do a great job . . . of not proselytizing.”

—Senior Enlisted Man

3. Mental Health Resource

Participants indicated that chaplains often serve in behavioral health capacities for Service members who need mental health services but desire the confidentiality that health care providers cannot offer.

“From my experience from the medical side, they become force multipliers for behavioral health, especially during initial training—the chaplain will be the first person the [Service member] will confide in. . . . [I see them as] invaluable in the behavioral health side for soldiers dealing with emotional issues. Their counseling skills are invaluable; they are good at interacting with people.”

—Male Officer

"The [Service] uses them as counselors; they aren't really as religious here. They aren't allowed to truly be real leaders, so the [Service] uses them as counselors. When we had suicides, the chaplains were called. They give light Sunday services. They are there for people to talk to and are more accessible than mental health staff."

—Female Officer

4. Confidant

Participants noted that chaplains often served as sounding boards for Service members; some cited chaplains as confidential resources.

"I don't practice religion. . . . For me, having the chaplain there, I don't care the denomination, they are a sounding board. In situations where we have kids and [Service members] who are on the edge of whatever is bad in their life, and knowing we had a chaplain there—the term chaplain tends to calm people just a little bit."

—Senior Enlisted Man

"That was the only person I could talk to about some instances going on. . . . That kept the gossip chain from going off. They became an advisor—almost a legal advisor."

—Female Officer

5. Mentor

Several participants indicated chaplains sometimes serve as mentors.

"If you just have something to get off your chest . . . I've gotten more mentorship from a chaplain than anything else. Maybe it's more life advice."

—Male Officer

6. Resource for Commanders

Several participants indicated chaplains serve a valuable role for commanders as a resource for their Service members. A few senior enlisted participants and officers suggested that chaplains could point Service members to additional resources outside of the familiarity of unit leaders.

"There are times, especially when deployed, especially if [it is the] first deployment away from momma or daddy or husband or wife or kids. . . . Say spouse has a bad day, that means [Service member] is now having a bad day, and now [Service member] is threatening suicide or whatever. At that point, I would then take him to the chaplain. . . . [The chaplain] was much better at bringing a [Service member] to focus on himself and less on external problems and making that [Service member] realize there are bigger things."

—Senior Enlisted Man

"I personally have never really had to use them for myself, but reaching out to them to deal with issues my [Service members] may be going through is a resource for me."

—Junior Enlisted Man

7. Coordinator for Service Member and Family Events

A less commonly mentioned role of the chaplain was coordinator for volunteer activities and retreats for Service members and their families.

"They ran the [Service member welfare] program. It's not just religious . . . more [like] events for the command to relieve stress. They organize community service and are the liaison between the [Service] and real world."

—Junior Enlisted Man

C. Nonreligious Counsel by Chaplains

Despite the religious affiliations of chaplains, participants indicated chaplains often provide nonreligious services and counsel. However, some participants noted that Service members were hesitant to seek services from a chaplain because they anticipated a discussion about personal religious beliefs. A few participants explained that this hesitancy often could be overcome, however, by correcting the misperception that chaplains provide only religious services.

1. Chaplains Can Provide Counsel Outside of Religion

Several participants mentioned that whereas chaplains are able to provide religious counsel if desired, they also can provide advice and counsel outside of the religious context, making them more approachable.

"Most [Service members] don't want to talk about religious belief. . . . If you [have] a personal issue . . . , they'll say go talk to the chaplain. . . . Usually, it's not about religion but about a personal issue."

—Junior Enlisted Man

"Chaplains have a unique perspective of counseling. They are both military and spiritual. A counselor may only have the counselor perspective, or a mentor may only have the military perspective. Every chaplain is good at keeping religion out of it if need be, but maintaining the spiritual aspect is huge. I recommend others to go for unique perspectives on the human psyche."

—Male Officer

2. Reluctance to Discuss Religion Was Primary Reason for Not Seeking Chaplain Counsel

Participants reported that reluctance to engage in a discussion about religion was the main reason Service members avoided seeking counsel from chaplains. In particular, senior Service members reported they had seen junior Service members avoid chaplain counsel for this reason.

"I think the biggest reason they don't want to talk to a chaplain is they don't want to be proselytized. If you're atheist or Jewish, they will talk to [you] about Jesus. There were stories in the [Service] with that happening a lot—they will get a sermon or a 'come to Jesus' talk."

—Senior Enlisted Man

“The only reason you’ll ever have anybody say ‘no’ [to chaplain services] is that they are thinking of them as religion. [I tell Service members], ‘He won’t bring up Jesus unless you do.’ It’s few and far between. When it does pop up, you say they are guidance counselors [rather than religious leaders], and that solves it.”

—Senior Enlisted Man

D. Unique Benefits Provided by Chaplains

Participants described several ways that chaplains can benefit units, including their ability to provide counseling services that are unique from other military counseling options.

1. Confidentiality

Participants generally agreed that chaplains were confidential sources, which is the main reason participants indicated Service members would want to talk to a chaplain.

“I’ve always found chaplains to be approachable. They want to help. They have a lot of sympathy for what we go through. They’re around, they’re embedded in your unit, but they still have an outside perspective. That 100-percent nondisclosure is important, huge.”

—Male Officer

“Anything that won’t be repeated. Stresses at home. If you talk to someone about something, it could go up the chain of command, but not with chaplains or chaplain’s assistants.”

—Junior Enlisted Woman

2. Alternative to Formal Counseling Avenues

Some participants indicated that there are stigmas associated with seeking mental health services and that Service members will seek counsel from a chaplain to ensure confidentiality. A few participants mentioned this was important specifically for occupational specialties that require Service members to maintain a security clearance.

“[Service members talk to chaplains about] marriage counseling, sexual assault, depression, problems at work—anything that keeps them off the mental health radar.”

—Female Officer

“With our community, given its [military intelligence], for a while, no one went to mental health because they got their clearance revoked. It is a perception that if you see them [mental health counselors], then you can’t get a clearance. I was a security commander, and when some were being assessed, you suspended their access, and they couldn’t do their job when they are being evaluated for mental health. People do not go. The chaplains for them ended up being a resource. There’s no note, and they don’t have to say they talked to you.”

—Female Officer

3. Influence on Morale

Participants were asked to discuss how, if at all, chaplains influence or support Service members, commanders, and the overall command climate. Most participants indicated that chaplains have the most influence on Service members' morale.

"I see them as evaluating [unit morale], and the [commanding officer] asks them about the morale. I think that [chaplains provide commanding officers] guidance."

—Male Officer

"[Chaplains provide a] morale boost to give you a lifeline or a glimpse of the fact that there is someone else [to listen to you]."

—Junior Enlisted Man

4. Resource for Commanders

In some cases, participants noted that chaplains serve as the link between the Service member and the command and as a resource for commanders.

"They are a gateway to an officer, especially for enlisted folks. You don't necessarily go to the [general officer], but you can go outside of the chain of command if you go to the chaplain. It is a neutral ground, a way to self-check and also bring up things that need to be addressed. If you see [something] going on and it is bothering you, [the chaplain is someone to go to]."

—Senior Enlisted Man

"A chaplain is a trusted agent. Chaplains get out there and get to know the [Service members], and the chaplain in turn helps me [as the unit leader] see the tenor and understand where the morale is in the unit. . . . My office is right by [the chaplain's], so I can see who is coming in and out more often. [The chaplain is a] useful barometer."

—Female Officer

E. Perceptions of Female Chaplains

When asked about their perceptions of female chaplains, female chaplains were generally viewed the same as male chaplains.

"The chaplain I had was personable, and it didn't matter if they were a male or a female because anyone who had that connection, they talked to."

—Junior Enlisted Woman

Some participants noted that some Service members might view male and female chaplains differently because of religious background.

"I grew up Catholic, but do consider myself not religious. From that background, religious figures tend to be male, at least in the church I grew up in, there are no females. It is just a priest and that is how it is in the Catholic Church. That is what I knew, that could affect how someone could interact with a female chaplain."

—Male Officer

"I was raised Roman Catholic, so our church leaders were all male. Other than having [nuns] in classrooms in Catholic schools, my first perception of chaplains is male. Maybe others have that experience."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

A few participants said that female chaplains could be perceived as more motherly and compassionate.

"I would probably perceive a female chaplain as more or having propensity to be more compassionate."

—Junior Enlisted Woman

F. Preferences Related to Chaplain Gender

Participants were asked to identify situations where a Service member might prefer to consult a chaplain of a particular gender.

1. Many Participants Felt Indifferent About Chaplain Gender

Several participants were indifferent to chaplain gender. A few of these participants indicated that they perceived the personality of the chaplain as more important than the gender.

"Personal connection . . . If I personally connect with male over female, then I will go to a male and vice versa. It has nothing to do with gender."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

"Personally, I've never thought about it. It's about personality; it honestly has nothing to do with gender. It's about if you can trust them or you don't. I've never seen a female chaplain, but I think it would be the same. If you're willing to talk to a chaplain, it doesn't matter."

—Junior Enlisted Woman

2. Preferences Related to Gender of Chaplain Stemmed From Type of Counsel Sought or Service Member's Religious Beliefs

Some participants indicated that preferences regarding the gender of the chaplain were personal and depended on the Service member who was seeking counsel and the type of counsel being sought.

a. Same-Gender Chaplains Were Preferred for Personal Issues

"It was a lot easier for me to go to a chaplain that is a female. For husband problems or something like that, or finding lumps in your breast, you can talk to her about it. I think there should be two chaplains, a male and a female. You have that option instead of [being told], 'This is your chaplain.' You can go to different units, but sometimes it's easier to walk down the hall and say, 'I need to talk to you.'"

—Junior Enlisted Woman

"If you want a female's opinions, you might ask them what they think or what they would do. You'd want someone who can relate to you."

—Female Officer

"It's like your parents. You can talk to your dad and mom about everything, but [for] some stuff, you talk to your dad. . . ."

—Senior Enlisted Man

b. Female Chaplains Were Preferred for Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault Issues

"I have a little bit of experience being a SARC [Sexual Assault Response Coordinator] here with sexual assaults. You have some [Service members] that only feel comfortable talking to a female. We do, as SARCs, give them the choice to talk to chaplain versus going off base or to mental health. A lot don't feel comfortable being closed in a room with the male."

—Female Officer

"Sexual harassment and assault . . . discrimination because you are female . . ."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

c. Male Chaplains Were Preferred for Religious Reasons

"I am Catholic, and I would say I wouldn't feel comfortable going to a female. I mean, that's my religion. But also the utility of a chaplain in the [Service]—technically, it's nondenominational, but I wouldn't go to a chaplain, I would go to a [religious leader] in my church."

—Male Officer

"Some of the more conservative . . . Baptists or Catholics say a religious leader needs to be male. . . . Then, a female doesn't seem right."

—Male Officer

G. Opinions on the Number of Female Chaplains

When asked if they thought more women should be serving as chaplains, most Service members indicated that they were unconcerned about chaplain gender. Most said they were agreeable to the chaplain being either male or female as long as the person was qualified, met the right standards, and performed the job well.

"I don't think that it is something you can force. The chaplain is something people do, because that is your calling. You leave it like it is, and the people who enroll are the people who enroll. You take the best candidates because they're the best, not because they're male and female."

—Senior Enlisted Man

"I don't think the military should recruit female chaplains just because they're female. It's about relatability and personality."

—Female Officer

"It doesn't matter what gender you are. It matters what you bring to the table."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

1. Religious Barriers to Ordination for Women Were Mentioned

Some participants spontaneously raised the issue that women could face religious barriers to becoming chaplains because not all religions ordain women.

"Some people's religious disciplines—they don't think women should be in a pastoral role. How far they break that down is on the person, but some people from certain traditions would think it's not appropriate."

—Junior Enlisted Man

H. Chaplains and Gender Integration

Participants were asked what role, if any, chaplains should play in gender integration. Most participants believed chaplains should continue to support Service members as they have been doing and should not take an active role in the gender integration process. Participants expressed the opinion that chaplains should continue to serve as resources for Service members who need to talk to someone; a few participants noted that chaplains might be particularly useful for women entering into previously closed units and positions.

"Nothing different than what they're doing now . . . If they start doing anything different, people will say, 'Why are you treating females differently?'"

—Senior Enlisted Man

"I don't think they'll be any influence. It was already integrated before I came, but I feel like one person can't make much of a difference. . . . As long as they have support of command . . . , talking to chaplain might help them, but I don't think that would have a significant effect."

—Female Officer

"Female support . . . This is a new frontier. It can be somebody to talk to listen to and vent to, to tell them to push on."

—Junior Enlisted Man

“Just being a resource to be there. A lot of people are waiting for something bad to happen [with gender integration], and it could just be that people just integrate, and it might not be that bad. Having someone there who can know what is going on as opposed to Congress [could help].”

—Female Officer

Chapter 6. General Comments

When time permitted after the standard focus group protocol was completed, participants were asked if there were issues that might affect women in the Military Services that had not been covered in the focus groups. Participants were asked to name the greatest challenge women in the military face and to offer one recommendation to share with the Secretary of Defense. The majority of focus groups were able to address at least one of these two general questions. This section summarizes the most common themes from these discussions. Because of the overlap in responses to these two questions, this section reports the findings for both questions together.

Several of the themes covered here also were mentioned by participants in response to the primary focus group topics discussed earlier. Chapters 2 through 5 provide additional information on these topics. Several of the findings in this section mirror findings from DACOWITS focus groups in previous years.

A. Gender Integration

The most commonly discussed topic during the general comments section of the focus groups centered on gender integration. The findings were similar to those presented in Chapter 2: Participants brought up concerns regarding the alleged lowering of occupational standards, stereotypes held against women in combat positions, the effectiveness of gender neutrality in assimilating women, and the impact of gender integration efforts on recruitment.

1. Lower Occupational Standards Anticipated

Both men and women believed that the military has dropped or will drop standards to ease the integration of women into combat positions.

"We started off the wrong way [lowering] standards [prior to gender integration]. Now it has a negative feel to it already even though we will move past that at the unit. [Lowering] standards was a bad way to do it all. [That gave us] a negative starting point."

—Senior Enlisted Man

"They lowered the standards so the female could rise up. It's one thing if you kept them the same and a few women could do it. They used guinea pig females in [combat] and other fields to lower the standards."

—Junior Enlisted Woman

"A big concern I see is that standards will be dropped to get into combat arms. I would beg and plead that none of the current physical requirements are changed for females. Those who want to go in will make it, they will do the work—a female body can accomplish it, it just takes work to get there."

—Female Officer

2. Skepticism Expressed About Women in Combat

A small number of participants argued that women might not be capable of handling the hardships that came with combat positions.

"If a female goes down, a male will lay down his gun for a female before he will for a man."

—Junior Enlisted Woman

"I'd take it back to the whole combat aspect. I'll take it back to boot camp. My instructor . . . had many ribbons, two Purple Hearts. When he heard about them trying to integrate women into combat, he [said], 'Are women really built to handle the images in combat?' He had to go 7 months with no shower. There was a point where his . . . shirt was stuck to his body, and he was gross. Showers were a bottle of water. Could women really handle seeing the people next to them get blown up and seeing open wounds or get blown up and pick up a gun and take the fight? Even if they can handle the fitness test, could their bodies really struggle through combat? You can't know that in a fitness test. If a woman can prove that, then he's all for women in combat zones."

—Junior Enlisted Man

Several participants argued that stereotypes—not women themselves—were the real barriers for women in newly opened units and positions. Women and men argued that the real challenge is changing the culture of thought promoting the idea that women are not capable. These participants suggested culture change would happen only through fully integrating women and having them prove that they are fully qualified to serve.

"One of the bigger challenges is changing peoples' perspective. I don't think it will happen until they are shown. You can talk about it all day, but until it happens, there will be no change in perception. It will negatively affect the integration. Those women may be completely qualified and the best person at the time, but the influence of politics . . . will sway her legitimacy in the career field. She will have to work harder to prove herself, which shouldn't be the standard. I think they will have to work extra hard, especially in some combat roles."

—Male Officer

"The challenge is the precedent that was set over the past 100 years that certain groups and Services were all male and the reluctance to integrate females. I don't know a solution other than making it happen, but I think it comes down to Service members being more receptive to see that females can do the job."

—Senior Enlisted Man

B. Perceived Roles of Women in Society

Beyond issues of gender integration, many women touched upon how societal perceptions of women hindered their military careers. These women described being treated differently and being “babied” while concurrently being held to a different standard than men. This finding echoes that of DACOWITS reports from several previous years.

"I don't want preferential treatment. I feel like people walk on eggshells around women in the military, and I feel like sometimes we can get away with some things and sometimes we can't. It is a double-edge sword with that. I just want to be treated as a [Service member]. I don't want to be treated as a female. I was told before that as long as you can get comfortable being called a [expletive] for the rest of your life, then you will be fine. I don't want to be a pushover; I just want to be a strong [Service member] doing a [great] job."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

"Women get more put down in a command position than men do. It's like a downer. They should perform at the same level."

—Female Officer

1. Women Sometimes Perceived Primarily as Mothers and Caretakers

A common stereotype that some participants touched upon was the role of women as mothers. For those raising a family while in the military, these perceived gender roles had shown to be detrimental to both men and women.

"It's the perception of the female trying to get out of something because of her kids."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

"When you go the field, there are issues with childcare. For males, they are told to figure it out. I was told to have my wife watch the kids. I'm not going to make my wife do that with a newborn and the other kids. . . . The women aren't going in the field or training, and the men have to [go and then] come back, and that causes resentment."

—Junior Enlisted Man

"When my husband was in the military, he just got back from temporary duty assignment, and when my kid got sick, the commander said [to my husband], 'Well, your wife is the woman, she should be home with the kid.' I had heartburn over that. It's like my career isn't as important as the man's."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

C. Maternity/Paternity Leave Policies

On January 28, 2016, the Secretary of Defense announced a policy to give Service members 12 weeks of maternity leave across all Services. There were a number of focus group discussions concerning maternity/paternity leave. In particular, many participants discussed concerns related to evaluations of those on maternity/paternity leave, stigma surround leave, and staffing issues. Participants also complained about insufficient maternity/paternity leave; it was not evident if the perceptions shared related to the new 12-week policy or each Service's previous policies.

1. Concerns Expressed Over Conducting Evaluations During Maternity Leave

One possible effect of the 12-week maternity leave policy concerned evaluations of those who are on maternity leave. A few officers voiced concerns about how to conduct routine evaluations of

servicewomen on maternity leave. These officers explained that they were not provided guidance on how to perform a fair evaluation of a servicewoman on maternity leave.

"We are struggling right now. I think it is awesome and believe in it that we are giving women more time off post pregnancy, but one of the things I think we need to do is find a way to do it right. . . . I'm happy they can spend that time; is the expectation that I'm supposed to make things up [for the evaluation]? We need a mechanism by which we can forgo an evaluation without hurting the member. I don't like making it up as we go, I need to look at myself in the mirror for how I've evaluated that person, I don't want to hurt them."

—Male Officer

"Because of [the] rules of the evaluation, I can't talk about medical conditions or pregnancies; that would put in a bad report. I don't want to write a glowing thing, but I don't want to hurt them in the long term."

—Male Officer

"The evaluation system with the new 12-week [maternity leave] policy will be a challenge; I've already seen questions. I just went through a very challenging pregnancy and it was a very supportive command. If you got put on bed rest and pregnancy, you could be out the entire marking period. How do you give that person a fair evaluation to keep them eligible?"

—Female Officer

2. Stigma Surrounding Maternity/Paternity Leave Perceived

A small number of female officers suggested a stigma against both women and men who take all of their maternity/paternity leave.

"The perception is that if you take all of your leave, it seems that you don't work as hard."

—Female Officer

3. Staffing Concerns During Maternity Leave Noted

One explanation for this stigma may come from resentment about staffing shortages while women are out on maternity leave. A small number of male leaders highlighted the lack of policies in place to provide resources when individuals are out on maternity/paternity leave.

"At one point, three women were rolling through maternity leave. Had this policy been in place, the impact [on our unit] would have been huge. We will deal with it, but give us the tools. A blanket policy [is ok], but provide us with funding to bring on reservists to augment spots and establish that first."

—Senior Enlisted Man

"I would say retention and after pregnancy [is a challenge]. If they become mothers, to stay in the [Service] is extremely difficult. Even if they have a family care plan, they'll be deployed, then they'll have to leave their child. . . . They get out because they want to be a mom and don't want to face that point where they need to leave their children."

—Male Officer

"I want to touch on a sensitive issue happening now. The law that changed the maternity policy is huge. My boss just delivered a baby, and we've been in the office without a [senior enlisted leader] for several months. No one in the command wants to talk about how the law would affect and address people. They just left it to be, and as a culture, we don't address that. Socially, we are supposed to be progressive and are not supposed to complain that your boss is not around, or you will not be perceived as progressive. . . . When is that discussion going to begin, and where?"

—Senior Enlisted Man

4. Maternity/Paternity Leave Perceived as Inadequate

A few participants felt that the military does not allow enough maternity/paternity leave to adjust to the lifestyle changes that a new baby brings. They indicated that this is especially true for single parents. In some instances, it was clear that participants referred to the new 12-week maternity leave policy, but in other cases, it was unclear whether their opinions related to the new policy or the old maternity leave policies for their respective Services.

"[Military] leave is not adequate for a father to be around a child and help the mother out. You want to retain people, but it's difficult . . . , and pay is a huge issue as well. . . . Why would I stay in the [Service]? . . . If the benefits in the civilian world are better, then how can I compete with that?"

—Male Officer

"It takes 6 months [to recover from] a C-section. I'm a single parent and I've been deployed six times. To have a month when they were born, just the alone time. . . . I would love to have had 3 months."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

D. Work/Family Balance

As mentioned in DACOWITS reports from 2015 and prior years, women in particular are concerned with how to balance work and family and how this influences their decisions about whether to remain in the military. Participants discussed concerns about how the military supports dual-military couples and single parents. They also commented on child development center hours and how the childcare system is not compatible with Service members' irregular work schedules.

1. Dual-Military Families Faced Particular Challenges

A concern among many female officers was the lack of support for dual-military couples. These participants often felt forced to choose between their careers and their families. Participants noted the

lack of childcare support and the difficulty obtaining assignments that are both co-located with spouses and still beneficial for career progression.

"The ability to make that work/life balance work . . . [Being] dual-military with kids, that's one of the biggest things that women face, but people do, and it can work, but [it is hard], especially if you have a husband in the Services."

—Female Officer

"I don't have children, but my friends do, and they always think about when to get out: 'I don't know when to give this up.' Especially for military-to-military couples."

—Female Officer

"A lot of women choose family or career. The vast majority are not able to [do both]. Part of the assignment policy is also an issue—co-location and joint assignments. To do a job, you may or may not live or be with your family."

—Female Officer

2. Lack of Extended-Hours Childcare Was a Concern

Several participants spoke about the lack of childcare services to support the irregular work hours required for the roles some Service members hold, with particular emphasis on child development centers. They explained that the lack of availability of extended hours for care made it difficult to manage work and family life.

"We have days, graves, and swings [day, graveyard, and swing shifts]. It's extremely difficult to find care during [some] shifts."

—Senior Enlisted Man

"The CDC is open from 0400 to 2100. You can do a max of 12 hours, but it still doesn't help you if you are doing [training exercises at night] and they say to use the 24/7 center. . . . There is a waitlist. It is 24/7, but that's max of 24 hours during the week. You can leave your kids there for 24 hours, but then you've used your allotment for the week."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

"[In the military,] we're 24 hours per day, 365 days per year."

—Senior Enlisted Man

3. Childcare for Single Parents Was a Particular Concern

Several men and women, though mostly women, highlighted the lack of childcare and its impact on single-parent households. In particular, the childcare system did not ease the burden for those who work evening and overnight shifts.

"I'm having issues with single parents. We don't work a 9–5 or regular shifts. We get 24-hour [shifts]. Childcare is not available, especially in the evenings, overnight. [One single parent uses] the childcare on base, but it's not fair to others that she strictly stays on day shift."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

“My one thing was childcare for single mothers for women in the [Service]. I was [on active duty], but the law said no one can babysit for more than 8 hours. This has caused a lot of single moms to get out of the [military]. They don’t provide childcare for single parents.”

—Senior Enlisted Man

“My friend struggles to care for her child, and she’s succeeding, but she’s getting hated on because she’s never there because she has a 6-year-old. She’s getting hated on because one of the responsibilities she has is in the morning and the daycare’s not opening. That was her problem. When she found a place that was safe and trustworthy, they don’t open till 6 and close at 5:30. It’s every day and there’s nothing you can do about it.”

—Junior Enlisted Woman

E. Lack of Breastfeeding Support

Many female enlisted Service members touched on the lack of breastfeeding support in their commands. These women explained that there was stigma about breastfeeding, making it difficult for them to express milk while on the job.

“I didn’t breastfeed my first child because I wasn’t comfortable enough to say I needed a place to pump. With my second, I was like, ‘I’m gonna do this no matter what.’ . . . We need to be more open to women in the military breastfeeding, having children. I was pumping in a maintenance closet until I moved to the night shift and could use a conference room.”

—Junior Enlisted Woman

“We just had a few females who had problems pumping breast milk. There needs to be sensitivity training for males. Half the men didn’t even know that they were allotted time for that, and a place.”

—Senior Enlisted Woman

F. Uniform-Related Concerns

As discussed in previous years, mostly women mentioned the issue of military uniforms. Their main concerns related to how uniforms fit the female body, as well as pregnancy uniforms.

1. “Gender-Neutral Uniforms” Equals “Male Uniforms”

Several women spoke about how efforts to make the military gender neutral had affected their uniforms. A popular argument with regard to uniforms was that gender-neutral does not mean gender equal but rather is an effort to integrate women to live in a “man’s military.”

“Gender neutral means male.”

—Female Officer

"I think that women in the military, they try to uniform us like men. [For example], the [hat]. . . What's going to be next? They are transitioning amongst men to gender neutral."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

"If they want the uniforms to look similar, why don't they develop a uniform that will match all body types not based on male or female? But we do have different body types than a man, and to put us in a uniform that is a male uniform is not advantageous."

—Female Officer

2. Pregnancy Uniforms

A small number of women also discussed pregnancy uniforms and how they are difficult to find and wear.

"I didn't have mine when I was recruiting, and it was too tight, and I got so much backlash to get a maternity [uniform]."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

"Right now, it's hard to get pregnancy uniforms because there's a shortage."

—Junior Enlisted Woman

"I don't get to wear my patches with a pregnancy uniform, and it really bothered me. . . I come to work and everyone has their patches on, and I come to work and look different."

—Female Officer

G. Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault Issues

Similar to previous years, both men and women discussed topics related to sexual harassment and sexual assault in the military. Participants criticized what they felt was an excessive amount of sexual assault prevention training and, more generally, the high prevalence of sexual assault and sexual harassment.

1. Amount of Sexual Assault Training Was Deemed Excessive

Many participants argued that they were inundated with sexual assault prevention training and suggested that might make the training less effective.

"The more that they push [sexual assault prevention training], the less that it becomes effective. We've been talking about how people hear it and they tune it out. It's the same old story again."

—Female Officer

"It goes back to training, but some people aren't to going to change. It's just in them. Some people you can reach through training, and others you can beat to death with training and they aren't going to change."

—Senior Enlisted Woman

2. Sexual Assault Was Described as Highly Prevalent

Although several participants agreed that Service members should be subjected to sexual assault prevention training less frequently, many Service members acknowledged that sexual assault was still a major problem for women.

“Sexual assault—to be honest, it’s rampant, and one of the biggest issues for women in the Service. If I had a daughter thinking of going in, I would bring that up and make sure she’s aware that it is a big problem with the military.”

—Junior Enlisted Man

“I think if numbers of sexual assaults go up—why would I want to be in the military if those numbers go up?”

—Senior Enlisted Man

“The message is you need to dress like a man to not be a victim of sexual assault.”

—Female Officer

3. Sexual Harassment Was a Concern, Particularly for Women

A couple of participants—mainly enlisted men—also spoke about sexual harassment, stating that it is a real issue for women in the workplace. These men also argued that this was less of an issue for men.

“My wife [who is also a Service member] is harassed on a daily basis, and I ask why she doesn’t say anything—she doesn’t want to be looked at as a [expletive] in her command. She goes into work and has to deal with this.”

—Senior Enlisted Man

“I’m [the] only male in my office, and it’s been eye opening. One thing they will say that they hate the most is the random sexual things thrown around in a male-dominated world. A [man] came up and asked women what the hardest thing they face, and it is sexual harassment. . . . As men, we don’t notice these things, but she said it was all the time that she will most likely be harassed in some way.”

—Junior Enlisted Man

“It’s a man’s world. The man never has to worry about that. All that that entails is unnecessary sexual harassment, sexual innuendos. It’d be nice to be in a neutral world or make them live in our world.”

—Female Officer

H. Perceptions About Recruitment Practices

A few participants touched upon sexism in the recruitment process. Male participants argued that in an attempt to recruit the desired number of women, recruiters were not bringing in qualified individuals. Women voiced similar concerns, stating that during the recruitment process, they felt as if they were seen simply as a woman rather than judged on their merits as potential Service members.

"It begins with recruiters, with how many are bringing in women. Some males have the idea of going to the [military] after high school, and I saw far less females. It all comes back to the recruiters who are bringing in. There are going to be more females, but berthing [is limited]."

—Junior Enlisted Man

"[There is] difficulty attracting quality women. The civilian sector also wants leaders and people who are dynamic and can shift depending on need, and [works to determine] how to recruit quality people to begin with. How do we stay consistent with the civilian sector and get women to want to stay and create a career path that will stay competitive with the military? A lot join because of family, and we also need people who will join because it's not a bad career path and who want to stay 20–30 years. Once you get people in, then they have to stay. What can we do to improve retention and not look at it as if we have a quota or just have a meritocracy? . . . What can we do to improve the chances of a woman staying in the military?"

—Male Officer

"During recruitment, they look at you as a female rather than as a person."

—Junior Enlisted Woman

Appendix A. Installations Visited

Site	Members	Dates
Fort Lewis	Dr. Jackie Young and FLTCM (Ret.) Jacqueline DiRosa	April 5–6, 2016
McChord AFB	Ms. Sharlene Hawkes and SMA (Ret.) Kenneth Preston	April 7–8, 2016
NAVSTA Kitsap	VADM (Ret.) Carol Pottenger and MG (Ret.) Gale Pollock	April 11–12, 2016
Coast Guard District Thirteen	Dr. Kristy Anderson and Ms. Donna McAleer	April 13, 2016
Coast Guard Sector Puget Sound	Dr. Kristy Anderson and Ms. Donna McAleer	April 14, 2016
SUBASE New London	CAPT (Ret.) Beverly Kelley and Col John Boggs	April 19, 2016
USCG Academy	CAPT (Ret.) Beverly Kelley and Col John Boggs	April 20, 2016
NECC Little Creek	LTC Hae-Sue Park and SMA (Ret.) Kenneth Preston	April 26–27, 2016
Fort Lee	LTC Hae-Sue Park and Ms. Monica Medina	April 28, 2016
MCAS New River	LtGen Wilson and Gen (Ret.) Janet Wolfenbarger	May 2–3, 2016
Camp Lejeune	LtGen (Ret.) Frances Wilson and Rev. Cynthia Lindenmeyer	May 4, 2016
Cherry Point	LtGen (Ret.) Frances Wilson and Rev. Cynthia Lindenmeyer	May 5–6, 2016
Pope Field	CMSgt (Ret.) Bernise Belcer and MG (Ret.) John Macdonald	May 9–10, 2016
Fort Bragg	MG (Ret.) John Macdonald and Maj Gen (Ret.) Sharon Dunbar	May 12–13, 2016

Appendix B. Mini-Survey

1. What is your branch of Service?
 - Army
 - Navy
 - Marine Corps
 - Air Force
 - Coast Guard
2. Are you a member of a Reserve or National Guard unit?
 - Yes
 - No
3. How long, in total, have you served in the military? *Please round to the nearest year.*
_____ Years
4. What is your age?
 - 18–20
 - 21–24
 - 25–29
 - 30–34
 - 35–39
 - 40 or older
5. What is your gender?
 - Female
 - Male
6. What is your pay grade?
 - E1–E3
 - E4–E6
 - E7–E9
 - W01–W05
 - O1–O3
 - O4 or higher
7. Are you Spanish/Hispanic/Latino?
 - No, not Spanish/Hispanic/Latino
 - Yes, Spanish/Hispanic/Latino
8. What is your race? *Please mark all that apply.*
 - White
 - Black or African-American
 - American Indian or Alaska Native
 - Asian (e.g., Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese)
 - Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (e.g., Samoan, Guamanian, Chamorro)
 - Other race
9. Is your unit gender integrated (open to men and women) or currently in the process of integration?
 - My unit has been open to men and women for two or more years
 - My unit has integrated women within the past two years
 - My unit is currently undergoing the process of integrating women
 - My unit is not gender integrated at this time (i.e., is open to men only)
10. Have you sought services, whether religious or otherwise, from a military chaplain at some point during your military career?
 - Yes
 - No
11. Do you currently have, or have you ever had, a Service member mentor you? *Please consider both formal and informal mentorship relationships.*
 - I currently have a Service member as a mentor
 - I do not currently have a Service member as a mentor, but I have had one in the past
 - I have never had a Service member as a mentor
12. Have you ever participated in a mentorship program sponsored by your Service or unit?
 - Yes
 - No
13. Do you have a personal account on at least one social media outlet (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Linked In, Instagram, etc.) that you access at least once per week?
 - Yes
 - No

Appendix C. Focus Group Protocols

C.1. Focus Group Protocol A: Mentorship and the Chaplain Corps

Session Information

Location:

Date:

Time:

Facilitator:

Recorder:

Number of participants present for entire session:

Number of participants excused/reasons:

Focus Group Kickoff: Key Points to Cover

1. Welcome attendees

- ▶ Thank you for taking the time to join our discussion today. Please take a minute to fill out the name tent in front of you, writing whatever name you would like to be referred to during today's activities.
- ▶ I am **[INSERT NAME]**, and I am a member of the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services, known as DACOWITS, and this is **[INTRODUCE PARTNER]**, also a member of DACOWITS.
- ▶ We have **[INSERT NAME]** here with us from the DACOWITS staff.
- ▶ Our note taker, **[INSERT NAME]**, is with **[CONTRACTOR]**, a research firm hired to record these sessions, and s/he is part of the DACOWITS research team.

2. Introduce DACOWITS and its purpose

- ▶ DACOWITS stands for the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services. The Committee has been around a long time—more than 60 years.
- ▶ DACOWITS has put forth hundreds of recommendations to the Secretary of Defense over the years; many of these recommendations have resulted in policy changes that affect the lives of Service members.
- ▶ DACOWITS' charter is broad—to advise the Secretary of Defense on matters and policies relating to women serving in the Armed Forces.

- ▶ We are a civilian Committee, although some of us have prior military service. (**MODERATOR:** Do not share whether you were prior enlisted/officer or your former rank/title with the group; simply state you are a veteran).
- ▶ We are appointed by the Secretary of Defense. We are all volunteers and we serve without pay.
- ▶ Every year, DACOWITS selects specific topics on which to prepare a report for the Secretary of Defense.
- ▶ This year, the Committee is interested in hearing from you on several topics, including mentorship and the chaplain corps. [**FOR MALE GROUPS:** We are also meeting with groups of women.] We would like to spend some time discussing these specific topics, but we will also try to set aside some time at the end to discuss any other topics relating to women serving the military that you'd like to talk about.

3. Describe how focus group session will work

- ▶ A focus group is basically just a guided discussion. As the facilitator, I have a set of scripted questions that I'd like to cover today, but we would like to encourage open conversation. Our note taker serves as a recorder. S/he will generate a transcript of our discussion but will not take down anyone's name.
- ▶ The session will last approximately 90 minutes, and we will not take a formal break. Restrooms are located [**INSERT RESTROOM LOCATION**]. Please don't hesitate to step out at any time for whatever reason.
- ▶ We consider you the experts on this topic; your opinions and attitudes are important to us. While we would like to hear from everyone, feel free to answer as many or as few questions as you prefer.

4. Explain ground rules

- ▶ Please speak clearly and one at a time to make sure our note taker can capture everything that you say.
- ▶ There are no right or wrong answers.
- ▶ We want to hear the good and the bad.
- ▶ We respect and value differences of opinion.
- ▶ Please avoid sidebar conversations.
- ▶ I want to make sure we cover all our questions today. If I feel we've covered a topic, I'll move us along.
- ▶ Our note taker, [**INSERT NAME**], will also make sure we're sticking to the schedule and will remind me if we need to move on to the next question.

5. Emphasize that participation is voluntary and that privacy and confidentiality will be maintained

- ▶ Your participation in this session is completely voluntary.
- ▶ If you would prefer to excuse yourself from the focus group at any time, you are free to do so.

- ▶ If there are any questions you don't want to answer for whatever reason, please feel free to pass.
- ▶ We treat the information you share as confidential. That means we will protect your confidentiality to the extent allowable by law. We will not reveal the names of study participants, and no information will be reported that can identify you or your family. In fact, all members of the DACOWITS research team (members and staff) have signed agreements pledging to safeguard the confidentiality of the information we gather during these sessions.
- ▶ Your name will not be linked to your answers or to any comments you make during the discussion.
- ▶ There are some behaviors that we are required to report. If we learn that you are being hurt or plan on hurting yourself or others, or others are being hurt or plan on hurting themselves or others, the law requires that we share this information with someone who can help and the appropriate authority.
- ▶ If you would like to speak with your installation's Sexual Assault Response Coordinator, **[INSERT NAME]**, s/he is available to speak with you during or after our focus group session at **[INSERT PHONE NUMBER]**. You are also able to contact the DoD Safe Helpline by visiting safehelpline.org or calling 1-877-995-5247.
- ▶ Because this is a group meeting, it is important that each of you agree to respect and protect each other's privacy. We expect you to keep any information you hear today in the strictest of confidence and not discuss it with anyone outside of this group. We also expect you not to share the identity of other participants with anyone outside of this group.
- ▶ We will begin by passing out a couple of short forms.
 - The first is a participant rights form for you to read. If you do not agree to the terms in the form, we will not be able to include you in the group today. If you stay for the group discussion, this will indicate your consent.
 - The second is a short mini-survey that we ask you to complete anonymously. Please do not include your name. This mini-survey allows us to compile data on the number and kinds of participants we spoke with during our site visits. Because the mini-survey is anonymous, we will not be able to link any responses you make during the discussion today with your responses to the mini-survey. Please be sure to fill out both the front and the back of the form.
- ▶ After all of the focus groups at this and other sites we're visiting this year have been completed, our staff will compile the results into a report that we use in writing our annual report to the Secretary of Defense. **[SHOW COPY OF 2015 REPORT]** Copies of our annual reports are available on the web at dacowits.defense.gov. The focus group report compiles responses by broad categories only, such as female junior officers or male senior enlisted.

Warm-Up/Introductions

1. Before we get started with our discussion about mentorship and the Chaplain Corps, let us tell you a bit about ourselves (short introduction from DACOWITS members; e.g., My name is **[NAME]** and I'm from **[LOCATION]**. I am a **[RETIRED SERVICE MEMBER/CURRENT OCCUPATION]**. (**MODERATOR: Do**

not share whether you were prior enlisted/officer or your former rank/title with the group; simply state you are a veteran).

Now, let's go around the room and have each of you tell us: **[MODERATOR: Ask all these at once]**

- ▶ How many years you've served in the military
- ▶ Your job in the military
- ▶ How long you've been with your current unit

Mentorship

Let's begin by talking about mentorship. This is something the Committee has heard a lot about in past years. Many people have mentors or serve as mentors to others at different points in their lives. Today, we want to learn about your experiences with mentorship. As we proceed through the discussion, you are welcome to share any personal experiences you may have with mentorship if you feel comfortable doing so, but you don't have to share your personal experiences if you don't wish to do so.

2. When you hear the term mentorship, what comes to mind?
 - a. What are some of the things that mentors do for people?
 - b. Are the roles the same in every mentor-protégé relationship?
 - c. Do people typically have one mentor or do they go to multiple people for different needs?
 - d. How does the idea of mentorship differ by generation?
 - e. How do mentors differ from sponsors? If so, how?

Mentorship means different things to different people, but can generally be defined as a relationship where a person with more experience and wisdom (the mentor) assists a person with less experience and wisdom (the protégé) by providing advice and counsel on personal and professional issues. This relationship can be formal or informal and can include a senior- and a junior-level person or can be peer-to-peer.

3. Thinking about this definition, by a show of hands, how many of you have ever had a mentor?

[NOTE TAKERS: Count the number of hands]

- a. And how many of you have ever served as a mentor to someone? **[NOTE TAKERS: Count the number of hands]**
- b. For those of you don't have a mentor right now, how many of you are interested in having one? **[NOTE TAKERS: Count the number of hands]**

4. What makes for a good or bad mentor-protégé relationship?

- a. What makes a person a good mentor?
 - i. In what ways should the mentor be similar to the protégé (e.g., age, career field, gender, life experiences)? In what ways should they be different?
 - ii. [IF NOT PREVIOUSLY ADDRESSED:] Does it make a difference if the mentor and protégé are the same or different gender?

- What are some benefits and challenges of having the mentor and protégé be the same gender?
- b. What characteristics would make a person a bad mentor?
- c. Now, let's switch gears a bit and talk about the protégé. What makes a person a good protégé?

Next, let's talk about the structure of the mentoring relationship. There are different ways that mentoring relationships can be set up. There are more formal relationships that might be required by the Service branch, with the mentor and protégé assigned by someone else, regularly scheduled times to meet, and a formal relationship agreement signed by both parties. There are also informal relationships, where a junior Service member typically goes to someone more senior than them or more experienced in their career field for advice when the need arises.

5. What are some situations where a more formal mentor-protégé relationship would be best? When would informal relationships be best?
 - a. What are some benefits and challenges of each?
6. If you could develop a mentorship program for the current generation of Service members, what would it look like?
 - a. Would it be a Service-wide program or something at the unit- or career field-level?
 - b. How would protégés and mentors be matched (e.g., by age, by gender)?
 - c. What activities/interactions would be encouraged?
 - d. What guidance/training should be given to mentors?
 - e. Should anything be mandatory?

The Chaplain Corps

Next, we'd like to switch topics and talk about military chaplains. We understand that you may have a wide range of personal interactions with chaplains; some of you might turn to chaplains regularly, and others may not at all—we want to hear all points of view. Some of you may belong to congregations off of the installation—but today, we're focusing on military chaplains. As we proceed through the discussion, you're welcome to share any personal experiences you may have with chaplains if you feel comfortable doing so, but you don't have to share personal experiences if you do not wish to do so.

7. In your opinion, what is the role of a chaplain in the military?

Research has shown that people today are less religious than past generations. Do you think chaplains meet the needs of today's Service members? If not, how should the role of the chaplain be different? As you may know, chaplains are the religious leaders of the military, but they serve nonreligious roles as well. The chaplain's responsibilities include everything from performing religious rites and conducting worship services to providing confidential counseling and advising commanders on religious, spiritual, and moral matters.

By a show of hands, how many of you know who the chaplain is for your unit? **[NOTE TAKERS: Count the number of hands]**

8. Also by a show of hands, how many of you have had one-on-one experience with a chaplain, either in your current command or in a previous command? **[NOTE TAKERS: Count the number of hands]**
 - a. Also by a show of hands, how many of you have ever been in a command that had a female chaplain? Please tell us more about your experiences. **[NOTE TAKERS: Count the number of hands]**
9. A few moments ago, we provided some examples of the ways Service members and chaplains might interact.
 - a. What are some of the main reasons Service members might want to talk to a chaplain? Why might they not want to talk to a chaplain?
10. In your opinion, what are some ways, if any, that female chaplains might be perceived differently than male chaplains? Please explain.
 - a. In what situations, if any, might a female chaplain be preferable to a male chaplain?
 - b. In what situations, if any, might a male chaplain be preferred?
11. How, if at all, do chaplains influence or support Service members, commanders, and the overall command climate?
12. As you may have heard, women are being integrated into certain units and positions for the first time—primarily in combat roles. What role could or should chaplains play in the gender integration efforts of these newly opened units and positions/billetts?
 - a. Do you believe there should be more women serving as chaplains? Please explain why or why not.

General Questions

We're also interested in hearing about other issues that may affect women in the military that we haven't yet discussed. Is there anything else you'd like to talk about with us? We may use your ideas as future topics of DACOWITS research.

13. What do you feel is the biggest challenge to women serving in the military today?
14. If you could send one recommendation back to the Secretary of Defense, what would it be?

[MODERATOR: Reinforce confidentiality] We will keep your information confidential—please do so as well by not sharing what you heard with anyone else.

This concludes our discussion. Thank you for taking the time to share your knowledge with us. Your thoughts are valuable to our efforts to inform the Secretary of Defense on these matters.

Once again, thank you very much.

C.2. Focus Group Protocol B2: Successful Gender Integration and Strategic Communication Session Information

Location:

Date:

Time:

Facilitator:

Recorder:

Number of participants present for entire session:

Number of participants excused/reasons:

Focus Group Kickoff: Key Points to Cover

1. Welcome attendees

- ▶ Thank you for taking the time to join our discussion today. Please take a minute to fill out the name tent in front of you, writing whatever name you would like to be referred to during today's activities.
- ▶ I am **[INSERT NAME]**, and I am a member of the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services, known as DACOWITS, and this is **[INTRODUCE PARTNER]**, also a member of DACOWITS.
- ▶ We have **[INSERT NAME]** here with us from the DACOWITS staff.
- ▶ Our note taker, **[INSERT NAME]**, is with **[CONTRACTOR]**, a research firm hired to record these sessions, and s/he is part of the DACOWITS research team.

2. Introduce DACOWITS and its purpose

- ▶ DACOWITS stands for the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services. The Committee has been around a long time—more than 60 years.
- ▶ DACOWITS has put forth hundreds of recommendations to the Secretary of Defense over the years; many of these recommendations have resulted in policy changes that affect the lives of Service members.
- ▶ DACOWITS' charter is broad—to advise the Secretary of Defense on matters and policies relating to women serving in the Armed Forces.
- ▶ We are a civilian Committee, although some of us have prior military service. (**MODERATOR: Do not share whether you were prior enlisted/officer or your former rank/title with the group; simply state you are a veteran.**)
- ▶ We are appointed by the Secretary of Defense. We are all volunteers and we serve without pay.

- ▶ Every year, DACOWITS selects specific topics on which to prepare a report for the Secretary of Defense.

This year, the Committee is interested in hearing from you on several topics, including gender integration and how you receive information. **[FOR MALE GROUPS: We are also meeting with groups of women].** We would like to spend some time discussing these specific topics, but we will also try to set aside some time at the end to discuss any other topics that you'd like to talk about relating to women serving in the military.

3. Describe how focus group session will work

- ▶ A focus group is basically just a guided discussion. As the facilitator, I have a set of scripted questions that I'd like to cover today, but we would like to encourage open conversation. Our note taker serves as a recorder. S/he will generate a transcript of our discussion but will not take down anyone's name.
- ▶ The session will last approximately 90 minutes, and we will not take a formal break. Restrooms are located **[INSERT RESTROOM LOCATION]**. Please don't hesitate to step out at any time for whatever reason.
- ▶ We consider you the experts on this topic; your opinions and attitudes are important to us. While we would like to hear from everyone, feel free to answer as many or as few questions as you prefer.

4. Explain ground rules

- ▶ Please speak clearly and one at a time to make sure our note taker can capture everything that you say.
- ▶ There are no right or wrong answers.
- ▶ We want to hear the good and the bad.
- ▶ We respect and value differences of opinion.
- ▶ Please avoid sidebar conversations.
- ▶ I want to make sure we cover all our questions today. If I feel we've covered a topic, I'll move us along.
- ▶ Our note taker, **[INSERT NAME]**, will also make sure we are sticking to the schedule and will remind me if we need to move on to the next question.

5. Emphasize that participation is voluntary and that privacy and confidentiality will be maintained

- ▶ Your participation in this session is completely voluntary.
- ▶ If you would prefer to excuse yourself from the focus group at any time, you are free to do so.
- ▶ If there are any questions you don't want to answer for whatever reason, please feel free to pass.
- ▶ We treat the information you share as confidential. That means we will protect your confidentiality to the extent allowable by law. We will not reveal the names of study participants, and no information will be reported that can identify you. In fact, all members of

the DACOWITS research team (members and staff) have signed agreements pledging to safeguard the confidentiality of the information we gather during these sessions.

- ▶ Your name will not be linked to your answers or to any comments you make during the discussion.
- ▶ There are some behaviors that we are required to report. If we learn that you are being hurt or plan on hurting yourself or others, or others are being hurt or plan on hurting themselves or others, the law requires that we share this information with someone who can help and the appropriate authority.
- ▶ If you would like to speak with your installation's Sexual Assault Response Coordinator, **[INSERT NAME]**, s/he is available to speak with you during or after our focus group session at **[INSERT PHONE NUMBER]**. You are also able to contact the DoD Safe Helpline by visiting safehelpline.org or calling 1-877-995-5247.
- ▶ Because this is a group meeting, it is important that each of you agree to respect and protect each other's privacy. We expect you to keep any information you hear today in the strictest of confidence and not discuss it with anyone outside of this group. We also expect you not to share the identity of other participants with anyone outside of this group.
- ▶ In front of you are a couple of forms.
 - The first is a participant rights form for you to read. You do not need to sign this form. If you do not agree to the terms in the form, we will not be able to include you in the group today. If you stay for the group discussion, this will indicate your consent.
 - The second is a short mini-survey that we ask you to complete anonymously. Please do not include your name. This mini-survey allows us to compile data on the number and kinds of participants we spoke with during our site visits. Because the mini-survey is anonymous, we will not be able to link any responses you make during the discussion today with your responses to the mini-survey. Please be sure to fill out both the front and the back of the form.
- ▶ After all of the focus groups at this and other sites we're visiting this year have been completed, our staff will compile the results into a report that we use in writing our annual report to the Secretary of Defense. **[SHOW COPY OF 2015 REPORT]** Copies of our annual reports are available on the web at dacowits.defense.gov. The focus group report compiles responses by broad categories only, such as female junior officers or male senior enlisted.

Warm-Up/Introductions

1. Before we get started with our discussion about career progression, let us tell you a bit about ourselves (short introduction from DACOWITS members; e.g., My name is **[NAME]** and I'm from **[LOCATION]**. I am a **[RETIRED SERVICE MEMBER/CURRENT OCCUPATION]**. (**MODERATOR: Do not share whether you were prior enlisted/officer or your former rank/title with the group; simply state you are a veteran**).

Now, let's go around the room and have each of you tell us: **[MODERATOR: Ask all these at once]**

- ▶ How many years you've served in the military
- ▶ Your job in the military

- ▶ How long you've been with your current unit

Successful Gender Integration

To get started, we would like to talk about gender integration and hear your thoughts about efforts to integrate women into previously closed positions/billets and units.

2. By a quick show of hands, who here is working or has worked in a unit where women are being integrated into certain positions/billets for the first time? **[NOTE TAKERS: Count the number of hands]**
 - a. **[PROBE IF RELEVANT:]** For those who have had experience with gender integration in a previous unit, can you tell us more about that experience (e.g., when was it, what type of unit)?

We realize that, in our focus groups, some people will have personal knowledge of how this is going from working in recently integrated units, and others will not—but that's OK. Regardless of whether you have direct experience, gender integration is a military-wide issue and we want to hear your general reactions and impressions.

3. On December 3, 2015 the Secretary of Defense announced his decision to open all combat positions to women. How did you first hear about this official decision?
4. We realize that the official announcement about full gender integration was issued very recently, but we'd like to know if you've seen any early signs of progress or change. What changes have you noticed in your unit or Service since December 3rd, if any?

[PROBE IF NEEDED:] Changes in leadership? Training? Recruitment? Employment?

- a. Even if you haven't seen any changes yet, what have you heard about plans to make changes?
 - b. What changes would you expect to see by now?
5. What kinds of barriers do you think women face in successfully integrating into newly opened units and positions/billets?
 - a. Thinking about your Service, what barriers are there on an institutional level around preparing for gender integration?
 - b. **[PROBE IF NEEDED:]** Military culture? Structural barriers like berthing space? Stereotypical gender expectations, such as men feeling they need to protect women?

Strategic Communication: Impact, Effectiveness, and Channels

Next, I want to talk about communications and messages around gender integration. The Committee is interested in the different methods you use for communicating with your peers in your unit, your command, and your Service. We are also interested in how your peers, your command, and your Service communicate with you. We want to learn what methods are most effective and which are least effective.

6. In the military, who communicates with you about the full integration of women, and how do they do it?

[PROBE IF NEEDED:] Do you receive information from your command? Your Service? DoD? Others?

- a. What is the message(s) or image(s) being communicated?
 - b. Are the messages positive, negative, or both?
 - c. Which methods of communication are most effective? Which are least effective?
 - d. Which do you trust most? Are there any that you do not trust?
 - e. If you were looking for information about the full integration of women in the military, where would you go and why?
7. What are you hearing about possible changes to the standards or training requirements for units and positions that are being opened to women for the first time?
- a. Where did you get that information?
 - i. How accurate do you think the information is?
 - b. Who do trust for accurate information about this issue?
 - c. Has your command done anything to address rumors on this topic?
8. In your opinion, are there differences between physical fitness standards and occupational standards? **[NOTE TAKERS: Count the number of hands]**
9. What have you heard about the new gender-neutral standards that have been developed for each occupational specialty in the military?
10. Have you received any official communication from your Service or command on your new standards?

Just to make sure we are on the same page, physical fitness standards are used to assess Service members' fitness levels as it relates to their general health and wellness. Occupational standards however are different for each job in the military and are driven by the physical requirements of the job-related tasks. Over the past several years, each Service has been working to generate gender-neutral occupational standards for each occupational specialty.

11. If you were looking for information about your Service's gender implementation plans, where would you go and why?

Next let's talk about communication in a broader sense.

12. What are all the ways you communicate with people in your unit and command and how do they communicate with you?
- a. How do communication methods differ by generation?
 - b. Which methods are most and least effective, and when?
13. How, if at all, does communication influence unit cohesion, morale, and pride?
14. To wrap up, we've talked a lot about communications and messages surrounding some controversial topics. What recommendations, if any, do you have to improve how information on these topics is communicated?

General Questions

We're also interested in hearing about other issues that may affect women in the military that we haven't yet discussed. Is there anything else you'd like to talk about with us? We may use your ideas as future topics of DACOWITS research.

15. What do you feel is the biggest challenge to women serving in the military today?

16. If you could send one recommendation back to the Secretary of Defense, what would it be?

[MODERATOR: Reinforce confidentiality] We will keep your information confidential—please do so as well by not sharing what you heard with anyone else.

This concludes our discussion. Thank you for taking the time to share your knowledge with us. Your thoughts are valuable to our efforts to inform the Secretary of Defense on these matters.

Once again, thank you very much.

C.3. Focus Group Protocol C: Discussion Guide for Leaders/Trainers on Successful Gender Integration

Session Information

Location:

Date:

Time:

Facilitator:

Recorder:

Number of participants present for entire session:

Number of participants excused/reasons:

Focus Group Kickoff: Key Points to Cover

1. Welcome attendees
 - ▶ Thank you for taking the time to join our discussion today. Please take a minute to fill out the name tent in front of you, writing whatever name you would like to be referred to during today's activities.
 - ▶ I am **[INSERT NAME]**, and I am a member of the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services, known as DACOWITS, and this is **[INTRODUCE PARTNER]**, also a member of DACOWITS.
 - ▶ We have **[INSERT NAME]** here with us from the DACOWITS staff.

- ▶ Our note taker, **[INSERT NAME]**, is with **[CONTRACTOR]**, a research firm hired to record these sessions, and s/he is part of the DACOWITS research team.

2. Introduce DACOWITS and its purpose

- ▶ DACOWITS stands for the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services. The Committee has been around a long time—more than 60 years.
- ▶ DACOWITS has put forth hundreds of recommendations to the Secretary of Defense over the years; many of these recommendations have resulted in policy changes that affect the lives of Service members.
- ▶ DACOWITS' charter is broad—to advise the Secretary of Defense on matters and policies relating to women serving in the Armed Forces.
- ▶ We are a civilian Committee, although some of us have prior military service. (**MODERATOR: Do not share whether you were prior enlisted/officer or your former rank/title with the group; simply state you are a veteran**).
- ▶ We are appointed by the Secretary of Defense. We are all volunteers and we serve without pay.
- ▶ Every year, DACOWITS selects specific topics on which to prepare a report for the Secretary of Defense.

This year, the Committee is interested in hearing from leaders like you about gender integration. We will also try to set aside some time at the end to discuss any other topics that you'd like to talk about relating to women serving in the military.

In addition to this focus group with leaders, we are conducting focus groups on a range of other topics with groups of men and women of varying ranks at this installation. [If ASKED: Topics for those groups will include strategic communication, gender integration, the chaplain corps, and mentorship].

3. Describe how focus group session will work

- ▶ A focus group is basically just a guided discussion. As the facilitator, I have a set of scripted questions that I'd like to cover today, but we would like to encourage open conversation. Our note taker serves as a recorder. S/he will generate a transcript of our discussion but will not take down anyone's name.
- ▶ The session will last approximately 60 minutes, and we will not take a formal break. Restrooms are located **[INSERT RESTROOM LOCATION]**. Please don't hesitate to step out at any time for whatever reason.
- ▶ We consider you the experts on this topic; your opinions and attitudes are important to us. While we would like to hear from everyone, feel free to answer as many or as few questions as you prefer.

4. Explain ground rules

- ▶ Please speak clearly and one at a time to make sure our note taker can capture everything that you say.
- ▶ There are no right or wrong answers.
- ▶ We want to hear the good and the bad.

- ▶ We respect and value differences of opinion.
 - ▶ Please avoid sidebar conversations.
 - ▶ I want to make sure we cover all our questions today. If I feel we've covered a topic, I'll move us along.
 - ▶ Our note taker, **[INSERT NAME]**, will also make sure we are sticking to the schedule and will remind me if we need to move on to the next question.
5. Emphasize that participation is voluntary and that privacy and confidentiality will be maintained
- ▶ Your participation in this session is completely voluntary.
 - ▶ If you would prefer to excuse yourself from the focus group at any time, you are free to do so.
 - ▶ If there are any questions you don't want to answer for whatever reason, please feel free to pass.
 - ▶ We treat the information you share as confidential. That means we will protect your confidentiality to the extent allowable by law. We will not reveal the names of study participants, and no information will be reported that can identify you. In fact, all members of the DACOWITS research team (members and staff) have signed agreements pledging to safeguard the confidentiality of the information we gather during these sessions.
 - ▶ Your name will not be linked to your answers or to any comments you make during the discussion.
 - ▶ There are some behaviors that we are required to report. If we learn that you are being hurt or plan on hurting yourself or others, or others are being hurt or plan on hurting themselves or others, the law requires that we share this information with someone who can help and the appropriate authority.
 - ▶ If you would like to speak with your installation's Sexual Assault Response Coordinator, **[INSERT NAME]**, s/he is available to speak with you during or after our focus group session at **[INSERT PHONE NUMBER]**. You are also able to contact the DoD Safe Helpline by visiting safehelpline.org or calling 1-877-995-5247.
 - ▶ Because this is a group meeting, it is important that each of you agree to respect and protect each other's privacy. We expect you to keep any information you hear today in the strictest of confidence and not discuss it with anyone outside of this group. We also expect you not to share the identity of other participants with anyone outside of this group.
 - ▶ In front of you are a couple of forms.
 - The first is a participant rights form for you to read. You do not need to sign this form. If you do not agree to the terms in the form, we will not be able to include you in the group today. If you stay for the group discussion, this will indicate your consent.
 - The second is a short mini-survey that we ask you to complete anonymously. Please do not include your name. This mini-survey allows us to compile data on the number and kinds of participants we spoke with during our site visits. Because the mini-survey is anonymous, we will not be able to link any responses you make during the discussion today with your responses to the mini-survey. Please be sure to fill out both the front and the back of the form.

- ▶ After all of the focus groups at this and other sites we're visiting this year have been completed, our staff will compile the results into a report that we use in writing our annual report to the Secretary of Defense. **[SHOW COPY OF 2015 REPORT]** Copies of our annual reports are available on the web at dacowits.defense.gov. The focus group report compiles responses by broad categories only, such as female junior officers or male senior enlisted.

Introduction

As everyone here knows, Secretary of Defense Ash Carter announced his decision to open all previously closed U.S. military units and positions to women on December 3, 2015. The Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services, known as DACOWITS, has been following this issue closely for several years. We've received briefings and written responses on this topic from each of the Services, and we've conducted focus groups with military men and women from all ranks and branches regarding gender integration. Now that the decision has been made and full gender integration is moving forward, we'd like to hear from the people charged with making it happen. We specifically chose to visit this installation because of its role in training the first generation of female **[INSERT NAME OF NEWLY OPENED POSITION/UNIT]**, and we specifically asked to speak with you because of your leadership role in this process. Thank you for taking time out of your busy day to share your perspectives with us.

1. Before we get started, let's do some introductions. My name is **[NAME]** and I'm from **[LOCATION]**. I am a **[RETIRED SERVICE MEMBER/CURRENT OCCUPATION]**. (**MODERATOR: Do not share whether you were prior enlisted/officer or your former rank/title with the group; simply state you are a veteran**).
2. Now, let's go around the room and have each of you tell us: **[MODERATOR: Ask all these at once]**
 - a. How many years you've served in the military
 - b. Your job in the military
 - c. Briefly talk about your job/unit and how you are contributing to gender integration efforts

Successful Gender Integration

Thank you. It sounds like you will all have very interesting perspectives to share. To start off, I'd like you to think back to when you first found out about the Secretary of Defense's decision to open all previously closed units and positions.

3. As best you can recall, what was the first "official" communication you received from your command related to Secretary of Defense's decision to open all combat positions to women?
 - a. Who did you hear from? How and when did you hear from them?
 - b. What was the message in this initial communication?
4. How about the first official plans you received related to the gender integration announcement? What can you tell me about those?
 - a. Who did the plans come from?
 - b. What did they entail?

5. As far as you can tell, do women in your unit and Service branch seem interested in integrating into newly opened units and positions? Please describe their level of interest for me.
6. What kind of support are you currently receiving to carry out your Service's gender integration plans?
 - a. How is your leadership helping with this process? What kinds of resources do they provide?
 - b. How are your peers helping with this process? What kinds of resources do they provide?
 - c. **[IF RELEVANT FOR TRAINERS:]** How are the people who report to you helping with this process?
 - d. Is there anything else about your Service branch or unit that is making your job easier? Does anything about military culture make it easier?
7. What barriers or challenges do you currently face in carrying out gender integration plans?
 - a. Are you receiving any pushback? From whom/what? What kind? This might include pushback from individual people or groups, or at the Service level.
 - b. Does military culture pose a barrier in any way? This could include structural barriers, such as berthing space, or stereotypical gender expectations, like men feeling they need to protect women.
8. In your unit, what have the conversations been like surrounding the new gender-neutral occupational standards?
 - a. How informed do you feel about these new standards?
 - b. Have you been hearing questions from people in your unit about these standards?
 - c. What is being done to address rumors related to occupational standards?

[MODERATOR: Explain if needed] Just to make sure we are on the same page, physical fitness standards are used to assess Service members' fitness levels as it relates to their general health and wellness. Occupational standards however are different for each job in the military and are driven by the physical requirements of the job-related tasks. Over the past several years, each Service has been working to generate gender-neutral occupational standards for each occupational specialty.

9. Would you say your command is doing everything in its power to make gender integration successful? Why or why not?
 - a. What could your command do to better support you in your role?
 - b. What could DoD do to better support you in your role?

General Questions

We're also interested in hearing about other issues that may affect women in the military that we haven't yet discussed. Is there anything else you'd like to talk about with us? We may use your ideas as future topics of DACOWITS research.

10. What do you feel is the biggest challenge to women serving in the military today?
11. If you could send one recommendation back to the Secretary of Defense, what would it be?

[MODERATOR: Reinforce confidentiality] We will keep your information confidential—please do so as well by not sharing what you heard with anyone else.

This concludes our discussion. Thank you for taking the time to share your knowledge with us. Your thoughts are valuable to our efforts to inform the Secretary of Defense on these matters.

Once again, thank you very much.

C.4. Focus Group Protocol D: Mentorship

Session Information

Location:

Date:

Time:

Facilitator:

Recorder:

Number of participants present for entire session:

Number of participants excused/reasons:

Focus Group Kickoff: Key Points to Cover

1. Welcome attendees

- ▶ Thank you for taking the time to join our discussion today. Please take a minute to fill out the name tent in front of you, writing whatever name you would like to be referred to during today's activities.
- ▶ I am **[INSERT NAME]**, and I am a member of the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services, known as DACOWITS, and this is **[INTRODUCE PARTNER]**, also a member of DACOWITS.
- ▶ We have **[INSERT NAME]** here with us from the DACOWITS staff.
- ▶ Our note taker, **[INSERT NAME]**, is with **[CONTRACTOR]**, a research firm hired to record these sessions, and s/he is part of the DACOWITS research team.

2. Introduce DACOWITS and its purpose

- ▶ DACOWITS stands for the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services. The Committee has been around a long time—more than 60 years.
- ▶ DACOWITS has put forth hundreds of recommendations to the Secretary of Defense over the years; many of these recommendations have resulted in policy changes that affect the lives of Service members.

- ▶ DACOWITS' charter is broad—to advise the Secretary of Defense on matters and policies relating to women serving in the Armed Forces.
- ▶ We are a civilian Committee, although some of us have prior military service. (**MODERATOR:** *Do not share whether you were prior enlisted/officer or your former rank/title with the group; simply state you are a veteran*).
- ▶ We are appointed by the Secretary of Defense. We are all volunteers and we serve without pay.
- ▶ Every year, DACOWITS selects specific topics on which to prepare a report for the Secretary of Defense.
- ▶ This year, the Committee is interested in hearing from you about mentorship. [**FOR MALE GROUPS:**] We are also meeting with groups of women.] We would like to spend some time discussing these specific topics, but we will also try to set aside some time at the end to discuss any other topics relating to women serving the military that you'd like to talk about.

3. Describe how focus group session will work

- ▶ A focus group is basically just a guided discussion. As the facilitator, I have a set of scripted questions that I'd like to cover today, but we would like to encourage open conversation. Our note taker serves as a recorder. S/he will generate a transcript of our discussion but will not take down anyone's name.
- ▶ The session will last approximately 60 minutes, and we will not take a formal break. Restrooms are located [**INSERT RESTROOM LOCATION**]. Please don't hesitate to step out at any time for whatever reason.
- ▶ We consider you the experts on this topic; your opinions and attitudes are important to us. While we would like to hear from everyone, feel free to answer as many or as few questions as you prefer.

4. Explain ground rules

- ▶ Please speak clearly and one at a time to make sure our note taker can capture everything that you say.
- ▶ There are no right or wrong answers.
- ▶ We want to hear the good and the bad.
- ▶ We respect and value differences of opinion.
- ▶ Please avoid sidebar conversations.
- ▶ I want to make sure we cover all our questions today. If I feel we've covered a topic, I'll move us along.
- ▶ Our note taker, [**INSERT NAME**], will also make sure we're sticking to the schedule and will remind me if we need to move on to the next question.

5. Emphasize that participation is voluntary and that privacy and confidentiality will be maintained

- ▶ Your participation in this session is completely voluntary.
- ▶ If you would prefer to excuse yourself from the focus group at any time, you are free to do so.

- ▶ If there are any questions you don't want to answer for whatever reason, please feel free to pass.
- ▶ We treat the information you share as confidential. That means we will protect your confidentiality to the extent allowable by law. We will not reveal the names of study participants, and no information will be reported that can identify you or your family. In fact, all members of the DACOWITS research team (members and staff) have signed agreements pledging to safeguard the confidentiality of the information we gather during these sessions.
- ▶ Your name will not be linked to your answers or to any comments you make during the discussion.
- ▶ There are some behaviors that we are required to report. If we learn that you are being hurt or plan on hurting yourself or others, or others are being hurt or plan on hurting themselves or others, the law requires that we share this information with someone who can help and the appropriate authority.
- ▶ If you would like to speak with your installation's Sexual Assault Response Coordinator, **[INSERT NAME]**, s/he is available to speak with you during or after our focus group session at **[INSERT PHONE NUMBER]**. You are also able to contact the DoD Safe Helpline by visiting safehelpline.org or calling 1-877-995-5247.
- ▶ Because this is a group meeting, it is important that each of you agree to respect and protect each other's privacy. We expect you to keep any information you hear today in the strictest of confidence and not discuss it with anyone outside of this group. We also expect you not to share the identity of other participants with anyone outside of this group.
- ▶ We will begin by passing out a couple of short forms.
 - The first is a participant rights form for you to read. If you do not agree to the terms in the form, we will not be able to include you in the group today. If you stay for the group discussion, this will indicate your consent.
 - The second is a short mini-survey that we ask you to complete anonymously. Please do not include your name. This mini-survey allows us to compile data on the number and kinds of participants we spoke with during our site visits. Because the mini-survey is anonymous, we will not be able to link any responses you make during the discussion today with your responses to the mini-survey. Please be sure to fill out both the front and the back of the form.
- ▶ After all of the focus groups at this and other sites we're visiting this year have been completed, our staff will compile the results into a report that we use in writing our annual report to the Secretary of Defense. **[SHOW COPY OF 2015 REPORT]** Copies of our annual reports are available on the web at dacowits.defense.gov. The focus group report compiles responses by broad categories only, such as female junior officers or male senior enlisted.

Warm-Up/Introductions

1. Before we get started with our discussion about mentorship and the Chaplain Corps, let us tell you a bit about ourselves (short introduction from DACOWITS members; e.g., My name is **[NAME]** and I'm from **[LOCATION]**. I am a **[RETIRED SERVICE MEMBER/CURRENT OCCUPATION]**. (**MODERATOR: Do not share whether you were prior enlisted/officer or your former rank/title with the group; simply state you are a veteran**).

Now, let's go around the room and have each of you tell us: **[MODERATOR: Ask all these at once]**

- ▶ How many years you've served in the military
- ▶ Your job in the military
- ▶ How long you've been with your current unit

Mentorship

Let's begin by talking about mentorship. This is something the Committee has heard a lot about in past years. Many people have mentors or serve as mentors to others at different points in their lives. Today, we want to learn about your experiences with mentorship. As we proceed through the discussion, you are welcome to share any personal experiences you may have with mentorship if you feel comfortable doing so, but you don't have to share your personal experiences if you don't wish to do so.

2. When you hear the term mentorship, what comes to mind?
 - a. What are some of the things that mentors do for people?
 - b. Are the roles the same in every mentor-protégé relationship?
 - c. Do people typically have one mentor or do they go to multiple people for different needs?
 - d. How does the idea of mentorship differ by generation?
 - e. How do mentors differ from sponsors? If so, how?

Mentorship means different things to different people, but can generally be defined as a relationship where a person with more experience and wisdom (the mentor) assists a person with less experience and wisdom (the protégé) by providing advice and counsel on personal and professional issues. This relationship can be formal or informal and can include a senior and a junior level person or can be peer-to-peer.

3. Thinking about this definition, by a show of hands, how many of you have ever had a mentor?

[NOTE TAKERS: Count the number of hands]

- a. And how many of you have ever served as a mentor to someone? **[NOTE TAKERS: Count the number of hands]**
- b. For those of you don't have a mentor right now, how many of you are interested in having one? **[NOTE TAKERS: Count the number of hands]**

4. What makes for a good or bad mentor-protégé relationship?

- a. What makes a person a good mentor?
 - ii. In what ways should the mentor be similar to the protégé (e.g., age, career field, gender, life experiences)? In what ways should they be different?
 - iii. **[IF NOT PREVIOUSLY ADDRESSED:]** Does it make a difference if the mentor and protégé are the same or different gender?
 - What are some benefits and challenges of having the mentor and protégé be the same gender?

- b. What characteristics would make a person a bad mentor?
- c. Now, let's switch gears a bit and talk about the protégé. What makes a person a good protégé?

Next, let's talk about the structure of the mentoring relationship. There are different ways that mentoring relationships can be set up. There are more formal relationships that might be required by the Service branch, with the mentor and protégé assigned by someone else, regularly scheduled times to meet, and a formal relationship agreement signed by both parties. There are also informal relationships, where a junior Service member typically goes to someone more senior than them or more experienced in their career field for advice when the need arises.

- 5. What are some situations where a more formal mentor-protégé relationship would be best? When would informal relationships be best?
 - a. What are some benefits and challenges of each?
- 6. If you could develop a mentorship program for the current generation of Service members, what would it look like?
 - a. Would it be a Service-wide program or something at the unit- or career field-level?
 - b. How would mentees/protégés and mentors be matched (e.g., by age, by gender)?
 - c. What activities/interactions would be encouraged?
 - d. What guidance/training should be given to mentors?
 - e. Should anything be mandatory?

General Questions

We're also interested in hearing about other issues that may affect women in the military that we haven't yet discussed. Is there anything else you'd like to talk about with us? We may use your ideas as future topics of DACOWITS research.

- 7. What do you feel is the biggest challenge to women serving in the military today?
- 8. If you could send one recommendation back to the Secretary of Defense, what would it be?

[MODERATOR: Reinforce confidentiality] We will keep your information confidential—please do so as well by not sharing what you heard with anyone else.

This concludes our discussion. Thank you for taking the time to share your knowledge with us. Your thoughts are valuable to our efforts to inform the Secretary of Defense on these matters.

Once again, thank you very much.