

# DACOWITS

*Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services*



## 2018 Focus Group Report



# 2018 Focus Group Report

## Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS)



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# Executive Summary

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This summary outlines findings from the 2018 Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) focus groups. DACOWITS collected qualitative and quantitative data during visits in April and May 2018 to nine military installations representing all four DoD (U.S. Department of Defense) Service branches (Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, Navy) and the Coast Guard. During these focus groups, which were held at joint Base Charleston, Sector Charleston, Shaw Air Force Base, Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort, Marine Corps Base Quantico, Fort Gordon, Fort Stewart, Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay, and Naval Air Station Jacksonville, the Committee addressed four topics:

1. Marketing
2. Instructors
3. Career and family planning
4. Unit climate and culture

Chapters 2–5 discuss the findings from each topic and chapter 6 includes the general focus group comments.

## Marketing

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### *What were participants' sources of information about life in the military?*

Participants based their expectations of military life on a variety of sources, chief among them family and friends who had served, followed by recruiters and experiences with the Reserve Officers' Training Corps and Military Service Academies. The media was also a common source of expectations.

### *What were participants' expectations about military life?*

Participants had positive expectations about various aspects of military life. Most commonly, they looked forward to traveling and securing a

steady job. Other positive expectations included benefits, job assignments, adventure, camaraderie, and pride. Participants had negative expectations about some facets of military life. The ability to have a family in the military emerged as a primary concern, followed by leaving home, being a woman in a male-dominated career field, and the dangers of war and deployment.

### *How did participants' expectations about military life compare to reality?*

Although participants in many groups, especially female groups, reported that some characteristics of military life were as they had predicted, participants in all groups identified facets of military life that did not match their expectations—for example, the nature of the day-to-day work, the infrequency of deployment, and that military life was not as difficult as anticipated. Participants were often pleasantly surprised by the relationships they developed, the professional development they achieved, and the joy they experienced helping others. Other unexpected positives included the benefits and support programs offered by the military, the travel opportunities afforded to Service members, and the personal growth and physical accomplishments they had achieved.

### *What were participants' perceptions of recent military marketing efforts?*

Participants in most groups reported that life in the military was nothing like military life as it was portrayed in the advertisements. At best, the advertisements were seen as potentially accurate for a small percentage of Service members, but certainly not for the large majority. Participants in many groups could not say whether the commercials or other advertisements accurately portrayed life for women in the military because women were not featured in the advertisements they had recently seen about their respective Services. However, among those who had seen women in

commercials about the military, participants in some groups felt the commercials were honest representations of life for servicewomen.

### ***What were participants' suggestions for improving marketing efforts to women?***

Participants in some groups indicated the commercials accurately depicted the lives of servicewomen. Participants in most groups felt recent advertising tended to focus on just a few jobs commonly considered exciting. They recommended other approaches that would inform prospective servicewomen about the wide array of careers offered in the military. Participants in many groups proposed diversifying the channels used to advertise the military to women; emphasizing the military's family-friendliness, including more honest and accurate portrayals of military life; and highlighting the available benefits. Participants in some groups suggested emphasizing professional development opportunities, leveraging recruiters more effectively, and depicting the personal lives of servicewomen. In contrast, participants in many groups argued that current marketing efforts were appropriate and should not be changed.

## **Instructors**

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### ***What were participants' recent interactions with instructors?***

Participants in most focus groups reported interacting with military instructors within the past 1–5 years. Hand-count data revealed that slightly more than half of participants had a female instructor during basic training, and approximately three-quarters had a female instructor during other courses in the military.

### ***What roles did participants report instructors play?***

Focus group participants most commonly reported that instructors serve as mentors and role models. They also noted that instructors provide practical instruction, teach specific skills, and sometimes provide administrative support, and that it is important for instructors to serve as subject matter experts. Participants

reported that instructors sometimes advise them on personal development as well as set and enforce standards for job performance, and suggested instructors should draw from and share their own experiences.

### ***What did participants perceive to be the characteristics of good and bad instructors?***

Focus group participants indicated that an instructor's credibility, demeanor, level of professionalism, ability to communicate, adaptability, and level of enthusiasm determine whether the individual will be a good or a bad instructor.

### ***What experience did participants have with instructors serving as mentors?***

Participants indicated that instructors who become mentors have approachable personalities. They indicated that mentors provide guidance, encouragement, and career and life advice to Service members. Mentors often lead by example and share their valuable experience with their students/protégés.

### ***What effect did participants report female instructors have on the training experience?***

Participants in most focus groups indicated that female instructors are perceived differently than male instructors. Participants explained that sometimes, female instructors treat their students more harshly than their male counterparts do, and women in the military often have to work harder and achieve higher standards than men to succeed. Other participants posited that female instructors are valuable in that they offer a different perspective than men and can inspire other women in the military. Participants in most groups reported that having a female instructor would positively affect training. Participants in many groups believed that having a female instructor does not or should not affect the quality of the training experience, but others felt that having a female instructor could be detrimental to the training environment.

### ***Did participants have preferences for instructors of either gender?***

Participants in most groups indicated that for certain classes, they would prefer to have a same-gender instructor. These included courses for basic training, physical training, sexual assault and prevention training, and survival training. However, participants in many groups felt that gender is irrelevant provided that the instructor was experienced and credible. Competence, quality of instruction, and credibility were cited as the most important attributes of an instructor regardless of gender. Participants also stated a belief that there should be greater diversity among instructors and that they may prefer female instructors for women-specific issues.

### ***What were participants' perceptions of the number of female instructors in the military?***

Participants in most groups felt the number of female instructors was too low, a situation they theorized could be a result of variance by occupational specialty or the fact that several occupational specialties had been opened to women so recently that they had not had sufficient time to attain instructor-level experience. Participants in many groups said that the number of female instructors does not matter as much as the qualifications of the instructors and that women should not be pushed to serve instructor roles to fill a quota.

## **Career and Family Planning**

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### ***How did participants make decisions about if and when to have a family?***

Although participants in many focus groups did not plan when to have a family, others did plan and considered factors such as financial readiness, deployment or relocation schedules, and career progression while planning. Female participants described receiving advice and support about career and family planning from female Service members, family members, unit leaders, and mentors.

### ***What challenges did participants face with career and family planning?***

According to mini-survey data, female participants (74 percent) were more likely than male participants (55 percent) to find it somewhat or very difficult for members of their Services to have a family and continue to advance their careers in the military. Officers were more likely than enlisted participants to find it somewhat or very difficult to pursue having a family and a career (76 percent of those in ranks WO1–WO3, 71 percent of those in ranks O1–O3, and 63 percent of those in ranks O4 or higher found it somewhat or very difficult compared to 69 percent of those in ranks E4–E6 and 55 percent of those in ranks E7–E9). Participants in all groups described challenges with career and family planning. These included childcare, waiting too long to start or expand a family because of career demands, difficulty for dual-military couples, and pregnancy and breastfeeding while serving.

### ***Did participants perceive differences in career and family planning for those in operational units, support units, military service, and the civilian sector?***

Participants believed those in operational units had more unpredictable schedules and faced greater challenges planning a family around their careers as well as their spouses' careers. When compared with civilians, participants considered some aspects of family planning easier for military personnel (e.g., better benefits) and some more difficult (e.g., frequent moves and deployments).

### ***What experiences did participants have with career and family planning resources and training, and what improvements did they suggest?***

Approximately 1 in 10 participants reported ever receiving formal training on career and family planning. Approximately 7 in 10 felt training on career and family planning should be voluntary, and 3 in 10 felt it should be mandatory. To better support Service members in career and family planning, participants suggested the Services offer the following:

contraception education, domestic violence prevention, empathy training, financial training, marriage counseling, mental health training, preparing for adulthood/life skills training, professional military training, resiliency training, spiritual training, and workforce resiliency training.

## **Unit Climate and Culture**

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### ***What factors did participants believe affect unit climate and culture?***

Participants cited leadership, communication, community, respect, trust, teamwork, motivation, and favoritism as factors that affect unit climate. Participants in many groups perceived differences in climate between operational and support units; the most common sentiment was that operational unit climates are more difficult for parents and women. Participants provided a variety of suggestions for improving unit climate and culture. These included improving leadership and communication, increasing accountability, learning from climate surveys and taking action from findings, showing appreciation and rewarding hard work, holding morale-building social events, continuing opportunities for training on sexual harassment and assault, and providing additional support for parents and dual-military couples.

### ***What were participants' perceptions of and responses to gender discrimination?***

Participants' definitions of gender discrimination varied. Gender discrimination was most commonly described as differential treatment based on a person's gender. Participants described a range of responses to gender discrimination: many reported doing nothing or brushing it off, some said whether they take action depends on a range of factors, and some described taking action. Participants also described mixed levels of satisfaction with how gender discrimination was handled: most felt it was not addressed at all or was handled improperly. Participants believed gender discrimination can have a negative effect on the unit by creating a negative working

environment and fostering negative perceptions of women.

### ***What were participants' perceptions of and responses to sexual harassment?***

Participants described sexual harassment as different from gender discrimination but potentially related. The most commonly offered definition was that sexual harassment was unwanted physical or verbal advances of a sexual nature. Participants in some groups described a perception that sexual harassment can occur between two people of the same gender, whereas gender discrimination cannot. Participants described a range of responses to sexual harassment: many felt it occurred less often because of increased training and was handled quickly and effectively, and many reported doing nothing or brushing it off. Some said whether they take action depends on a range of factors (e.g., the unit's climate and culture and the age and rank of the victim), and some described handling it directly and informally. Participants described mixed levels of satisfaction with how sexual harassment was handled: many felt it was handled well, whereas some said their satisfaction depended on the unit's climate and leadership. Participants believed sexual harassment negatively affects unit cohesion, mission readiness, and morale.

### ***Did participants perceive differences in responses to and effects of gender discrimination, sexual harassment, and other inappropriate behaviors that fall into the gray area?***

Participants described differences in responses to each type of behavior. Responding by doing nothing was more commonly mentioned when discussing gender discrimination and less commonly mentioned when discussing possibly problematic, "gray area" behavior. DACOWITS defined actions that fall into the gray area as "inappropriate behavior that may make a person feel uncomfortable but may not necessarily fall into the category of either gender discrimination or sexual harassment." For those who reported taking action, telling leadership and talking to the perpetrator

directly were more commonly mentioned in response to gray area behavior versus gender discrimination. When asked about their satisfaction with how these behaviors were handled, most participants felt that gender discrimination was not addressed properly, or at all, and that sexual harassment was handled well. Participants described how they believed the handling of sexual harassment had improved, but they did not mention improvements with respect to gender discrimination. Participants also described differences in the effects of these behaviors on the unit. They reported that gender discrimination creates a negative perception of women and leads to a toxic environment, but these themes did not emerge in response to sexual harassment. Compared with the impact of gender discrimination, participants more commonly mentioned that sexual harassment lowers morale and negatively affects readiness and unit cohesion.

#### ***How did participants describe the relationship between inappropriate behavior and unit climate?***

Participants in many groups felt that their units discouraged inappropriate behavior by providing trainings and disseminating policies and guidelines. Some felt their units encouraged them to report inappropriate behavior. However, perceptions and experiences varied between home station and deployed environments. Participants in many groups felt that inappropriate behavior was worse while units were deployed, largely due to a perceived lax environment and perceived weaker enforcement of rules and behavior standards. Still, participants in most groups had received mandatory, regular, Service-specific training or guidance on inappropriate behavior, some including information on how to report it, and some including training on what to do if you witness inappropriate behavior as a bystander. Participants in some groups reported that the mandatory, Service-specific training they attended included information on inappropriate behavior and unit climate.

## **General Comments**

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#### ***What were participants' perspectives on gender integration?***

When asked how well they thought the gender integration process was going, in general, participants saw the status of gender integration as positive, and their comments tended to mirror those from previous years. Although many thought the process was going well, participants in many groups also raised challenges to gender integration and cited the importance of ensuring women are able to meet the job requirements. Participants in some groups acknowledged that gender integration was still in its earliest phases and would likely succeed in due time.

#### ***What challenges for women in the military did participants report?***

Issues related to work-life balance were the most frequently cited challenges for women in the military. This theme was more prevalent among women. Another commonly reported challenge was dealing with lingering perceptions that women are unequal to men. Women felt they had to work harder than men to prove their worth. Finally, participants in some groups reported challenges related to the male-dominated military culture, including difficulties women have faced adjusting to military life and ensuring their voices are heard.

#### ***What were participants' suggestions for the Secretary of Defense?***

When asked what suggestions they would make to the Secretary of Defense, participants offered recommendations on a variety of topics. Participants from some groups suggested changes to military standards, including the implementation of universal physical fitness test standards and physical fitness standards based on job requirements, as well as modifications to female height, weight, and body fat requirements. Some participants proposed alterations that were already implemented by the military, suggesting the need for more education about standards.

Participants from some groups recommended strategies to improve gender integration in the military; these included reviewing successful military gender integration efforts from other countries, highlighting success stories of women in the military, and promoting women into leadership positions.

# Chapter 1. Introduction and Methods

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This report outlines the findings from the 2018 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 marketing, instructors, career and family planning, unit climate and culture, and general focus group comments, respectively.

## A. Focus Group Overview

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DACOWITS collected qualitative and quantitative data during site visits in April and May 2018 to nine military installations<sup>1</sup> representing all four U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) Service branches (Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, Navy) and the Coast Guard (see Appendix A). During the focus groups at these sites, the Committee addressed four topics:

1. Marketing
2. Instructors
3. Career and family planning
4. Unit climate and culture

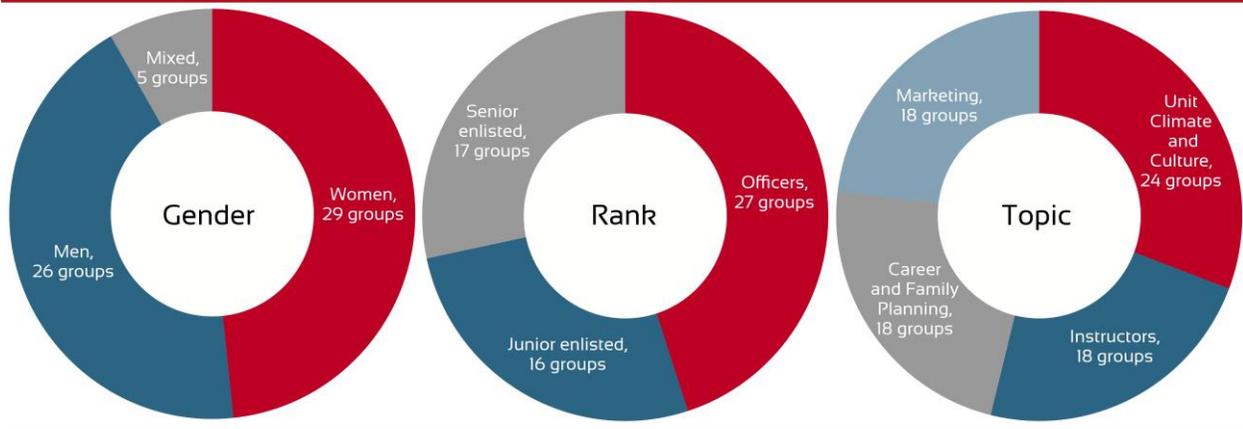
In partnership with researchers from Insight Policy Research and ICF, the Committee developed a series of focus group protocols (see Appendix C); each protocol consisted of either one or two topic modules to ensure each study topic was addressed by each Service, gender, and pay grade group. The protocols for the discussions on instructors, career and family planning, and unit climate and culture were used for 90-minute focus groups; the protocol for the discussion on marketing was used for 60-minute focus groups. Committee members facilitated focus group discussions to elicit and assess the views, attitudes, and experiences of Service members regarding the selected study topics. The Committee also distributed mini-surveys to participants to determine the demographic composition of groups (see Appendix B). 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 2018, DACOWITS conducted 60 focus groups. Of the 60 groups, 26 were held with men, 29 were held with women, and 5 were composed of participants of both genders. Sixteen groups were conducted with junior enlisted participants (E1–E5), 17 groups were held with senior enlisted participants (E4–E8), and 27 were conducted with officers. There were 560 participants with an average of 9 participants per session. DACOWITS addressed the marketing topic in 18 groups, the career and family planning topic in 18 groups, the instructors topic in 18 groups, and the unit climate and culture topic in 24 groups. Participants were asked to indicate their responses for selected questions by raising their hands, at which time focus group staff conducted a hand count of respondents. Each installation was responsible for recruiting focus group participants from the demographic categories specified by DACOWITS (see Figure 1.1).

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<sup>1</sup> The nine installations were Joint Base Charleston, Sector Charleston, Shaw Air Force Base, Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort, Marine Corps Base Quantico, Fort Gordon, Fort Stewart, Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay, and Naval Air Station Jacksonville. The focus group protocols were pretested at Fort Belvoir.

**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 the participants were men (48 percent), and half were women (52 percent). Four Services—the Air Force (23 percent), the Army (26 percent), the Marine Corps (24 percent), and the Navy (19 percent)—were nearly equally represented; the Coast Guard was least represented (8 percent). The majority of participants (98 percent) were Active Duty. Participants ranged widely in age, from 18 to 40 and above. Participants in the youngest age category (aged 18–20) and the oldest age category (aged 40 and older) composed smaller percentages of the group.

Enlisted Service members represented more than half of focus group participants (59 percent): Service members with pay grades E4–E6 made up the largest proportion of enlisted participants (39 percent), followed by those with pay grades E1–E3 (10 percent) and E7–E9 (10 percent). The largest subset of officers was composed of those with pay grades O1–O3 (31 percent), followed by those with pay grades of O4 or higher (7 percent) and those with pay grades WO1–WO5 (3 percent).

Focus group participants represented varying levels of tenure in the Military Services and were relatively equally distributed across all categories. Those with 20 or more years of service were least represented (7 percent), whereas the remaining tenures were nearly equally represented (range of 14 to 22 percent). A majority of participants identified as White (67 percent); smaller proportions identified as Black (21 percent), Asian (4 percent), American Indian or Alaska Native (1 percent), or multiple races (6 percent). About one in six participants identified as Hispanic (15 percent). 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
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	267	0%	267	48%
Female	292	100%	292	52%
Missing	1	0%	1	0%
Total	560	100%	560	100%
<b>Service Branch</b>				
Air Force	69	24%	128	23%
Army	67	23%	146	26%
Coast Guard	31	11%	47	8%
Marine Corps	65	22%	132	24%
Navy	60	21%	107	19%
Total	292	100%	560	100%
<b>National Guard or Reserves</b>				
Yes	6	2%	8	1%
No	285	98%	550	99%
Total	292	100%	560	100%
<b>Unit</b>				
Operational	115	40%	239	43%
Support	176	60%	319	57%
Total	291	100%	558	100%
<b>Occupation</b>				
Operational	91	32%	224	41%
Support	196	68%	325	59%
Total	287	100%	549	100%
<b>Age</b>				
18–20	27	9%	30	5%
21–24	51	18%	101	18%
25–29	92	32%	171	31%
30–34	47	16%	96	17%
35–39	44	15%	105	19%
40 or older	30	10%	56	10%
Total	291	100%	559	100%
<b>Pay Grade</b>				
E1–E3	42	14%	57	10%
E4–E6	115	39%	216	39%
E7–E9	29	10%	57	10%
WO1–WO5	78	27%	176	31%
O1–O3	22	8%	37	7%
O4 or higher	6	2%	17	3%

Participant Characteristic	Women		Total (Men and Women)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	292	100%	559	100%
<b>Length of Military Service</b>				
Less than 3 years	65	22%	97	17%
3–5 years	59	20%	121	22%
6–9 years	61	21%	120	21%
10–14 years	40	14%	81	14%
15–19 years	52	18%	101	18%
20 years or more	14	5%	39	7%
Total	291	100%	559	100%
<b>Race</b>				
Asian	10	4%	20	4%
Black	68	24%	113	21%
American Indian or Alaska Native	3	1%	6	1%
Pacific Islander	1	0%	2	0%
White	187	66%	365	67%
Other	0	0%	1	0%
Multiple Races	16	6%	34	6%
Total	285	100%	540	100%
<b>Hispanic</b>				
Yes	242	84%	470	85%
No	47	16%	84	15%
Total	289	100%	554	100%
<b>Relationship Status</b>				
Divorced	42	14%	59	11%
Married	135	46%	313	56%
Never married	106	36%	175	31%
Separated	8	3%	12	2%
Widowed	1	0%	1	0%
Total	292	100%	560	100%
<b>Dependents</b>				
Yes	168	58%	299	53%
No	124	42%	261	47%
Total	292	100%	560	100%

Some percentages do not sum to 100 because of rounding.

Missing data for all variables other than for gender were excluded from the estimates in this table.

N/A = not applicable

Source: DACOWITS mini-survey (data from all groups)

## C. Analysis

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The focus group analysis process involved several steps. During each focus group, research staff captured verbatim discussions between focus group participants and Committee facilitators; the research team cleaned transcripts and redacted the transcripts to remove identifiers from participants' quotes. 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 11), 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. The quotes provided throughout the report were chosen from hundreds of illustrative examples to exemplify the findings for each theme.

### Strengths and Limitations of Focus Groups as a Methodology

Focus groups are a key tool for DACOWITS to gauge Service members' perceptions and assess their knowledge, attitudes, and opinions. They provide an interactive way to explore topics deeply and obtain detailed information in Service members' own words. Focus groups also allow researchers to collect data on groups that are underrepresented in the military, such as women, that may not be represented statistically through surveys that examine the military as a whole.

Unlike 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 does not gather information on concurrence across all respondents, and findings are not generalizable to a larger population. Furthermore, the recruitment of participants for a focus group cannot be replicated, it is difficult to ensure identical questions are asked in each group, and the results for one group cannot be compared precisely with those for other groups. Despite these limitations, the results 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.

As a result of the small sample size, the groups might not represent the larger population accurately; this effect can sometimes be beneficial if the desire is to obtain data from underrepresented groups that may not be represented statistically through surveys and other means. Group discussions can be difficult to direct and control, and many subjects are addressed during each discussion; as a result, 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, several key terms and phrases are used throughout the report. For example, to indicate how frequently a theme was raised during the focus groups that addressed specific topics and in which a question was asked, the report uses "all" for themes that emerged in all the groups in which a question was asked; "most" for themes that emerged in at least 75 percent of the groups in which the question was asked; "many" for themes discussed in 40–74 percent of the groups in which a question was asked; and "some" for themes covered in 25–39 percent of the groups in which a question was asked. To ensure the report focuses on the most commonly reported themes, rather than those that emerged in only a few groups, aside from lists of participant suggestions, this report does not include themes that emerged in fewer than 25 percent of focus groups in which a question was asked. When comparing multiple responses for a given question, the report uses phrases that give a rough sense of the proportion of participants who expressed a given opinion—such as "nearly all the participants who responded to this question" or "the

most commonly mentioned theme”—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 precisely measure the frequency and types of responses.

## Chapter 2. Marketing

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DACOWITS has studied for many years the factors that influence potential Service members' propensity to serve. The Committee examined the accessions of female officers in 2013, the accessions of enlisted women in 2014, the accessions of women overall in 2015, and propensity more broadly in 2017. To enhance its understanding of ways the Services may increase propensity, the Committee chose to conduct an examination of marketing to potential Service members in the 2018 focus groups.

The Committee conducted 18 focus groups with junior Service members (i.e., E1 through E5 and O1 through O3) on the topic of marketing (see Appendix C.1 for the focus group protocol). This chapter discusses the focus group findings on marketing and is organized into the following sections:

- ▶ Sources of expectations about the military
- ▶ Expectations of military life
- ▶ Reality of military life
- ▶ Perceptions of recent marketing efforts
- ▶ Participants' suggestions for marketing to women

When interpreting the findings outlined in this chapter, it is important to consider that these focus groups consisted only of participants who had joined the military. It is possible that individuals who did not join the military would provide different perspectives on these topics.

### A. Sources of Expectations About the Military

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DACOWITS asked focus group participants how they learned about what life was like in the military before they joined. Participants based their expectations of military life on a variety of sources, chief among them family and friends who had served, followed by recruiters for and experiences with the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) and Military Service Academies (MSAs). The media was also a common source of expectations.

#### 1. All groups reported learning about military life from family who served

Family experience consistently emerged as a source of expectations about the military. Participants in all groups reported learning about military life from growing up in military families or witnessing extended family members' military service.

*"My family on my mom's side was from Texas and bounced around in the military. My aunt and grandpa [were in], and I saw how they traveled and moved and what their life was like."*

—Male officer

*"It was family for me. My stepfather was a drill sergeant at [installation], so I was used to it growing up, and it kept me interested."*

—Female officer

*"[I had] family in the military. They've given us their experience, immediate and secondary. [My] cousins, uncles, and father [served]."*

—Junior enlisted man

*"My parents were in the military, so I've learned about it since I've been little."*

—Junior enlisted woman

## **2. Many groups reported learning about military life from friends who served**

Participants in many groups mentioned that friends were a source of expectations about the military. Women were more likely than men to say they based their expectations on information from friends.

*"Grad school was when I got the exposure. Some of my classmates were veterans, so I learned about it and got interested."*

—Female officer

*"I had friends in [the military]. I reached out to them."*

—Junior enlisted man

*"The people you knew [could be a source of information]. Seeing what they did."*

—Female officer

*"I asked my friend whose sister was in the [Service]. That's how I went [into the Service]."*

—Junior enlisted woman

## **3. Some groups reported learning about military life from recruiters**

Information conveyed by recruiters informed expectations about the military for participants in some groups. Men were more likely than women to say they based their expectations on information from recruiters.

*"My recruiter told me it would be a 9–5 job."*

—Junior enlisted man

*"I heard through word of mouth, and there were recruiters at school."*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"In law school, there were [Judge Advocate General's Corps] recruiters. They would come to 'lunch and learn' events."*

—Female officer

*"I had no plans to join until a [Service] recruiter came into English class."*

—Male officer

## **4. Some groups reported learning about military life through their time in ROTC or an MSA**

Participants in some groups based their expectations of the military on their ROTC or MSA experiences. Women were more likely than men to mention these experiences affected their expectations.

*"I was in [Junior Reserve Officer's Training Corps (JROTC)] and ROTC. They told me about scholarships and to go in as an officer. I just rolled with it."*

—Female officer

*"My JROTC instructor was like, 'I love the [Service]!' I went to the Academy during an intro program between junior and senior year in high school."*

—Female officer

*"I did JROTC in high school."*

—Junior enlisted man

*"I was in a cadet program."*

—Junior enlisted woman

## 5. Many groups reported learning about military life through the media

Media portrayals were a source of expectations for participants in many groups, especially those who did not have family or friends in the military. Men were more likely than women to say they based their expectations on media portrayals.

*"That's all I had to base it off of for me. What I saw on TV and movies and YouTube was it. I had no word of mouth."*

—Junior enlisted man

*"[For] a good portion of military life and the job, you have no expectations because you don't know what it all is, so you only know what you see in the media. You don't have anything to compare it [with]."*

—Male officer

*"I had no family exposure until a year before my brother joined. Before that, it was television and movies."*

—Male officer

*"When I got interested in the [Service] or the military in general . . . , I watched YouTube videos about people's lives and [occupational specialties] and went from there and picked what I wanted to do."*

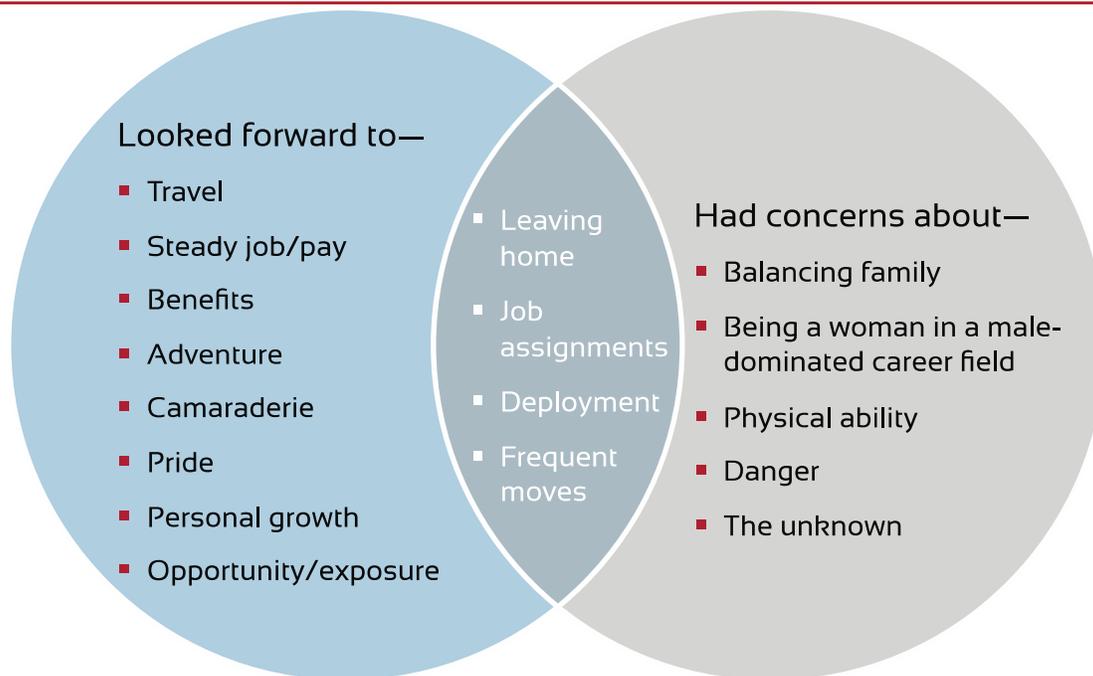
—Junior enlisted woman

## B. Expectations of Military Life

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DACOWITS also asked focus group participants what they thought military life would be like before they joined. Participants in many groups reported they had no expectations. However, when asked, all groups described aspects of military life they anticipated with either enthusiasm or apprehension before they joined. As shown in Figure 2.1, a source of excitement for one participant could sometimes be a source of worry for another.

**Figure 2.1. Facets of Military Life Participants Looked Forward to or Had Concerns About Before Joining**



Source: DACOWITS focus group transcripts (data from groups participating in marketing discussion only)

## 1. What participants looked forward to when joining the military

Participants had positive expectations about various aspects of military life. They most frequently looked forward to traveling and securing a steady job. Other positive expectations included benefits, job assignments, adventure, camaraderie, and pride.

### a. Most groups looked forward to traveling or leaving their hometowns

Travel was a common draw for participants in most groups, whether they imagined traveling the world or simply hoped to see the world beyond their hometowns. Enlisted participants were more likely than officers to mention they looked forward to traveling.

*"I was ready to not be within 20 minutes of everyone that I knew. I put overseas and West Coast [as my preferred locations]. . . . Getting out of Wisconsin and Illinois and school [was] my big thing."*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"I expected to travel and deploy a lot and to see a lot of countries."*

—Junior enlisted man

*"[I hope to travel and see] places I've not seen before . . . other countries, other cultures."*

—Female officer

*"I wanted to travel and knew I would get that."*

—Male officer

### **b. Many groups looked forward to a steady job and income**

Participants in many groups mentioned positive expectations regarding job security and consistent pay in the military.

*"Not having to wonder if you are going to get fired the next day. A constant paycheck to plan on having and knowing how much you are going to get. Not [having to worry about] how many hours will I get this week . . ."*

—Junior enlisted man

*"I worked for a company for 6 years with one pay raise. I was told the next raise would be in 8 years. I said, 'Bye.'"*

—Junior enlisted man

*"I was looking forward to job security . . ."*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"Job security right out of college [was a positive draw]."*

—Male officer

### **c. Some groups looked forward to receiving health and education benefits**

Participants in some groups indicated they looked forward to utilizing the health and education benefits offered by the military. Men were more likely than women to mention this positive expectation.

*"When I was younger, it was the benefits. Once you turn 18, and your parents retire, you lose access to base and everything. I couldn't give that up. . . ."*

—Female officer

*"You can gain a lot from the military, in addition to the benefits, but you have to make the most of it."*

—Junior enlisted man

*"I think [I looked forward to] learning a skill that was marketable on the outside and paying for college."*

—Male officer

### **d. Some groups looked forward to their job assignments**

Participants in some groups mentioned positive expectations regarding their job assignments. Officers were more likely than enlisted participants to mention looking forward to the work they would be doing for the military.

*"I think [I looked forward to] getting to do this job. It's hard to do that as a civilian, being an aviator—this chance is in your pipeline. So, I walked into the [Service]. I wanted it for the job."*

—Female officer

*"[I wanted] an introduction to a profession that I wouldn't have access to without the military."*

—Male officer

*"For an attorney starting off in the Judge Advocate General's Corps (JAG,) it's alluring instead of jumping into a civilian job behind the desk, where you have a quota requirement for billing. That's not that appealing—the firm life. Being a JAG and traveling and not having that sense of billing hours. It's more relaxed, you can do your work, travel, and meet great people."*

—Female officer

### **e. Some groups looked forward to a life of adventure**

Participants in some groups indicated they expected to live exciting lives in the military.

*"I thought it would be adventure-based, lots of moving around."*

—Male officer

*"I like moving every couple of years, and I don't want to be tied down."*

—Female officer

*"For me. It was actually doing [Service] stuff—going to the field, being on the line."*

—Junior enlisted man

### **f. Some groups looked forward to a sense of camaraderie**

Participants in some groups anticipated developing meaningful relationships and a strong sense of community in the military.

*"For me, it was . . . the closeness you get with peers."*

—Female officer

*"I expected a close brotherhood once you join."*

—Junior enlisted man

*"I was looking forward to . . . a community like they talked about in the recruiter office."*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"I wanted kind of a bond. . . . In my small hometown in Mississippi, you see flags flying everywhere, and I wanted to be part of that culture."*

—Male officer

### **g. Many male groups looked forward to a sense of pride and service**

The pride that comes from serving one's country was incentivizing for male participants in many groups. This positive expectation was not mentioned in any female groups.

*"It's . . . being a part of something. You will see the news and know you supported that. It gives you a good feeling, at least for me."*

—Junior enlisted man

*"[I looked forward to] being able to serve. I grew up around that, so it was a way to do my part."*

—Male officer

*"I think there's a sense of service. For me, personally, I thought if you can serve, then you should in any flavor of service you want to do. . . ."*

—Male officer

### **h. Less commonly reported facets of military life to which participants looked forward**

Participants also eagerly anticipated the following aspects of military life:

- ▶ Deploying
- ▶ Achieving personal growth
- ▶ Gaining opportunities/exposure

## **2. Participants' concerns when joining the military**

Participants also had negative expectations about some facets of military life. The ability to have a family in the military emerged as a primary concern, followed by leaving home, being a woman in a male-dominated career field, and dangers of war and deployment.

### **a. Most groups reported concerns about the challenges of having a family in the military**

Participants in most groups mentioned the potential hurdles of having a family in the military. They frequently described growing up in military families, thus gaining first-hand experience with the challenges military families often face. Women were more likely than men to indicate concerns about their ability to balance families with military life.

*"I think [I worried about] life-work balance and balancing work and kids. I had a family before I came in, so I was thinking about being away. . . ."*

—Female officer

*"I was concerned about not being able to have a family."*

—Female officer

*"[I worried about] how my wife and kids were going to adjust. The hardest thing for me growing up [in the military] was constantly moving. Now we're here, and maybe they can't deal with it. They think it sucks."*

—Junior enlisted man

### **b. Some groups reported concerns about leaving home**

Participants in some groups were apprehensive about leaving their homes and loved ones and worried about their ability to be able to return home as needed. Women were more likely than men to cite concerns about leaving home.

*"It was good to be on your own, but at the same time, I didn't want to leave [my family]."*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"I didn't want to leave my girlfriend, my parents, or friends because it was what I was used to."*

—Male officer

*"I didn't have kids and still don't. It's still a concern . . . just figuring out regular life and work; how to deal with deaths in the family, other life events, etc. I have a close-knit family. I was hearing from friends that they missed funerals because they couldn't get home."*

—Female officer

### **c. Many female groups reported concerns about being a woman in the military**

Participants in many female groups worried about being a woman in a male-dominated military career field context. This theme was not mentioned among any male groups.

*"I talked to [Service members], and they said I'd have to work about twice as hard to get the respect from men."*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"[I worried about] discrimination. I saw a lot of it in my hometown. There would be rumors and other garbage they'd have to put up with."*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"Having not seen a plethora of women who had served, I was concerned about who to talk to about what to expect."*

—Female officer

### **d. Some groups reported concerns about war and deployment**

Participants in some groups mentioned they or their loved ones had concerns about how dangerous military service can be.

“ . . . We are all in the military, especially for those of us that are on the gate, and . . . there are people that want us dead. If you come into the military, and you aren't openly acknowledging that, then you are openly blind.”

—Junior enlisted man

“My father cried when I told him I was joining. He thought I was going to go to war and die. . . .”

—Male officer

“Going to war [is a concern].”

—Junior enlisted woman

“[It is a challenge for] my husband and I deploying back to back. We won't see each other for 2 years and we just got married 6 months ago.”

—Female officer

### **e. Less commonly reported concerns**

Participants also mentioned the following concerns about military life:

- ▶ Moving frequently
- ▶ Not having control over job assignments
- ▶ Not being physically fit enough
- ▶ Fearing the unknown

## **C. Reality of Military Life**

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DACOWITS also asked focus group participants how their expectations before joining compared with what happened when they actually started their service. Participants overwhelmingly responded that military life was not what they had expected.

### **1. All groups reported that reality was inconsistent with their expectations**

Although participants in many groups, especially female groups, reported that some characteristics of military life were as they had predicted, participants in all groups identified facets of military life that did not match their expectations—for example, the nature of the day-to-day work, the infrequency of deployment, and that military life was not as difficult as anticipated.

#### **a. Many groups reported the day-to-day work was not what they hoped**

Participants in many groups reported feeling disappointed when they realized what their job assignments would actually entail.

“I came in [to do] open electrical. The job descriptions aren't what the job is. They don't tell you the other stuff that goes along with it. [You don't have] a clear picture of the daily tasks. That could be done better.”

—Junior enlisted woman

*"The expectation when you sign up is to be doing your [occupational specialty], and when we got here, we're doing everything but our [occupational specialty]. As a medic, I'm doing logistics and not even touching patients."*

—Junior enlisted man

*"You never really know what you're getting into, and then, it's too late. I thought my life would be spent [training or deployed]. We're not good as an organization about getting information out there, about the law enforcement side of things or other areas."*

—Female officer

*"I thought I'd be doing more. [There is] something I've been worried about—a few years ago, someone said when you go active duty as [an O-3], your job will be to learn. I like getting hands on and doing things, so right now, this learning phase can be frustrating. I am learning, and I need to, but I just want to get after it."*

—Male officer

### **b. Many groups reported deploying less often than they expected**

Participants in many groups overestimated the frequency of deployments before joining the military. Women were more likely than men to cite being surprised by the infrequency of deployment.

*"I thought we would go to war and stuff, not sit at a desk."*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"I thought I'd be deployed more and that the deployments would be more challenging. . . ."*

—Junior enlisted woman

*". . . It's like you're doing all this training for a big football game, and the closest you ever get is maybe to scrimmage. It's not what I anticipated. . . ."*

—Male officer

*"I thought I would deploy every year, but [I've deployed] only once in the 8 years I've been in."*

—Junior enlisted man

### **c. Many groups found military life less difficult than they anticipated**

Participants in many groups expected military life to be much more challenging than it was. Enlisted participants were more likely than officers to report military life was less difficult than anticipated.

*"It's a lot easier. I expected a very hard transition to the culture and lifestyle. . . . The uniform is really the hardest transition to the culture. Hollywood was my source for knowing what life would be like, and it's nothing like that. Weekends are mine. I'm off at 4:30. [Life is] pretty simple."*

—Junior enlisted man

*"It's not as hard as people make it seem. It's pretty simple. Be at the right place, at the right time, in the right uniform, and you can survive."*

—Junior enlisted man

*"I think it's easier than people expect it to be. Everyone is less gung-ho than you think. It's not like basic training all the time. It's just a normal job most of the time where you just wear a uniform."*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"I thought it would be worse, much harder. In the movies, it's all war and boot camp."*

—Male officer

#### **d. Less commonly reported inconsistencies between reality and expectations**

Participants also mentioned the following inconsistencies between their expectations of military life and reality:

- ▶ More difficult than expected
- ▶ Not as much travel as hoped
- ▶ Had not anticipated how difficult it would be to have a family
- ▶ Not as difficult to have a family as anticipated
- ▶ Encountered less gender discrimination than expected
- ▶ Not as much emphasis on physical fitness as expected
- ▶ Had not anticipated how political things would be/emphasis on rank structure
- ▶ Training not as high quality as hoped
- ▶ Camaraderie not as strong as hoped
- ▶ Had not anticipated how tough the schedule would be
- ▶ Leadership not as good as hoped
- ▶ More time doing nothing than expected

## **2. Unexpected positives of military life**

DACOWITS also asked focus group participants to describe any unexpected positive experiences or accomplishments achieved while in the military. Participants were often pleasantly surprised by the relationships they developed, the professional development they achieved, and the joy they experienced helping others. Other unexpected positives included the benefits and support programs offered by the military, the travel opportunities afforded to Service members, and the personal growth and physical accomplishments they achieved.

### **a. Most groups were pleasantly surprised by the relationships they developed**

Participants in most groups indicated they had not anticipated the bonds they would develop and comradery they would experience in the military.

"Everybody says you will meet great people, and then, once [I joined], almost every single person I have talked to has been the best. You can't fathom what it will be like until you get there."

—Male officer

"I [didn't expect] the comradery and people looking out for people for the betterment of others [without having] hidden motives. People who care who want to see you succeed and are willing to help you out."

—Male officer

"It's more family[-oriented] than I expected. Everybody treats you like family. I have not had a negative experience yet."

—Junior enlisted man

"You meet someone, and then you grow a bond in a short amount of time. In the civilian world, you don't get close to someone that fast."

—Junior enlisted woman

### **b. Many groups were pleased with the professional development they achieved**

Participants in many groups reported they had attained professional goals that they could not have imagined prior to their service.

"[I didn't expect] being a young leader and having huge expectations. I'm a brand new nurse, and [I'm assigned to be a] charge nurse. In the civilian sector, you have to wait 5 years to do that."

—Female officer

". . . I learned another language . . . ; that was awesome. I didn't know if I could pick it up as well as I did. . . . There's stuff I never thought I could do or thought about doing before. It's cool stuff."

—Junior enlisted woman

"I think [I was surprised at] the responsibility, being the mission commander. There's nowhere else we can [do] that at this age. We do these huge things with huge international implications, all at 27 years old. You can't do that anywhere else, and it's pretty darn cool. . . ."

—Male officer

"I wasn't much of a computer guy before; now, I can do things with a computer that I couldn't even imagine."

—Junior enlisted man

"My husband is active [Service, and we have] three children. I have a lot to do as a mom. Sometimes, I wake up and can't believe I'm doing all this on my own. I've done a lot of things. I've worked with [Service A, Service B, and Service C]. I made good friendships with other Service members. I cherish that. I've been deployed. I look back at my high school friends, and you can't compare [what I've accomplished to what they've done]."

—Junior enlisted woman

**c. Many groups were pleasantly surprised by the joy they experienced helping others or making a difference**

Participants in many groups had not anticipated the positive impact they would have on others while serving.

*“ . . . People are taking care of each other and making a difference in people's lives.”*

—Junior enlisted woman

*“Before joining the military, I didn't have perspective on how the military reaches out to the community. We have the Special Olympics in [city]. I think the . . . effect in community is positive, and I didn't see that before joining the [Service].”*

—Junior enlisted man

*“You get [satisfaction] from leading young [Service members]. Speaking as a [unit] commander leading young [Service members], unfortunately, some guys don't have fathers in their lives, and it's up to us to step up and provide support and wisdom. There's satisfaction in leading young members, regardless of their [occupational specialties].”*

—Male officer

*“[I didn't expect to be] helping other cultures. For example, my first duty station was in Guam. I've been to the Philippines, and I've done Habitat for Humanity. We spent an entire day building huts so that they have a place to live in. For me, when you see a house you helped build for a family . . . , that makes you feel good.”*

—Junior enlisted man

*“I was surprised probably more about the touchy-feely side. I wouldn't have imagined [affecting] as many [Service members] underneath me and mentoring. I was a teacher before, but it's a different type of inspiration. I didn't expect to have that coming in to the military.”*

—Female officer

**d. Some groups were pleasantly surprised by the health and education benefits available**

Participants in some groups had not anticipated taking advantage of the health and education benefits offered by the Services.

*“I'm sitting here at 27; I didn't think about this when I was 19. I have health insurance; the military sells the package of benefits, and it's a huge selling point, but I think it could be sold more. I'm dual-mil[itary], and I can't imagine paying for that baby out of pocket. You can take sick leave, and you get 30 days of paid leave after your first year in service. Where else can you get that?”*

—Junior enlisted man

*“I had the feeling people would tell me I couldn't take classes, but everyone tells me to take classes online.”*

—Junior enlisted man

“. . . I [had] grad school paid for, and I had the opportunity to go. I hadn't expected there'd be that, not at all."

—Female officer

"[I didn't expect to have] VA benefits and healthcare. I'm not going to lie, TRICARE is pretty good for healthcare. [Coming from] the civilian side, I came from the Reserves, and I was paying more than \$400 per month—not including vision—for healthcare, so what we have now is good."

—Junior enlisted woman

#### **e. Some groups were pleasantly surprised by the support programs offered**

Participants in some groups reported being pleased to learn of the depth and breadth of the support programs available to Service members. Women were more likely than men to mention being pleasantly surprised by the existence of such programs.

"I was surprised by all the services that are offered, like having my taxes done for free . . . I'm grateful for all the help."

—Junior enlisted woman

"I had a friend that had no idea how to buy a car, and they helped her figure out what type of loan you should have."

—Junior enlisted woman

"There [is] a plethora of different programs that can be utilized. I didn't know about that before, but knowing I have access is good."

—Female officer

"[The Family Readiness Group] can be such a great program to support families, especially when you're gone, they're picking up the slack."

—Male officer

#### **f. Some groups were pleased with the travel opportunities**

Participants in some groups included their travels among the accomplishments they could not have imagined before joining the military.

"I've been to Dubai. I never thought I would ever go there. I went there for free. And I got to go multiple times and experience things like riding on camels, go on sand dunes, [go to] resorts I've only seen in magazines. I have pictures there, and that was the through the [Service] that I got that opportunity. That was huge for me."

—Junior enlisted man

"I've seen and been to a lot of cool places in my first 2 years. I think that's something they should definitely market more towards, like, 'Yeah, we go everywhere!'. . . I didn't know that coming in."

—Female officer

**g. Some groups were pleased with the personal growth they achieved**

Participants in some groups took pride in having developed confidence, humility, maturity, and responsibility since joining the military. Enlisted participants were more likely than officers to mention experiencing unexpected personal growth.

*"[I now have] confidence [for things] like handling business, like the [Department of Motor Vehicles]. Little things I couldn't accomplish without worrying about how to figure it out. I've been taught you have to go figure it out. At the end of the day, you will accomplish tasks no matter what."*

—Junior enlisted man

*"Being humble—it has been eye opening. I feel like I can have conversations with anyone and still get a job done. My communication has completely opened. Not that I was closed-minded, but when you meet someone from somewhere else, it's new and refreshing."*

—Junior enlisted man

*"It helped me find my voice. I was very shy and to myself. I think I found my voice. A lot of people told me that you have to find your voice and get a thick skin to be in the [Service]."*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"I've handled more stress than I thought I could. In high school, I thought I could not do it."*

—Female officer

**h. Some groups were pleased with the physical accomplishments they achieved**

Participants in some groups mentioned finding strength they did not know they had and attaining physical goals that they could not have imagined prior to their service. Women were more likely than men to mention physical accomplishments.

*"I didn't think I would be able to do [the physical stuff] and that I would enjoy it so much. I love running now."*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"I'm small, and [when I joined my Service's Martial Arts Program], I didn't think I could shoulder-throw someone, and I do, and it's like, 'Oh, snap!'"*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"After having a child, I never thought I'd do 10 pullups, [but I did]. I guess there is life after having a child."*

—Female officer

*"Coming in, I didn't have to [do pullups]. . . . ; now, you have to do 10 pullups. Eventually, when the time came, I was able to do it."*

—Female officer

### **i. Less commonly reported unexpected positives**

Participants also mentioned the following unexpected positive aspects of military life:

- ▶ Equal opportunities for women
- ▶ Earning degrees or certificates
- ▶ Deployments
- ▶ Financial accomplishments
- ▶ Completing moves
- ▶ Level of autonomy/responsibility offered
- ▶ The pay
- ▶ The variety of job options
- ▶ Family accomplishments
- ▶ Respect/honor/pride

## **D. Perceptions of Recent Marketing Efforts**

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DACOWITS asked focus group participants how accurately the commercials or other advertisements they had seen about their respective Services portrayed life for women in the military. Participants most commonly responded that the advertisements were inaccurate portrayals of servicewomen's lives, and some could not even answer the question because women were not featured in the advertisements. By contrast, some thought the advertisements authentically depicted life for servicewomen.

### **1. Most groups perceived advertisements to be inaccurate**

Participants in most groups reported that real life in the military was nothing like military life portrayed in the commercials. At best, advertisements were seen as potentially accurate for a small percentage of Service members, but certainly not for the large majority.

*" . . . They were far-fetched. The two that stick out in my mind was one [where] they were in this command center with satellites on the screen and dodging asteroids. And the other was special ops folks using these tablets to call in air strikes and [unmanned aerial vehicles]. That's cool, but it [represents] 0.1 percent of the branches. [It's] unrealistic. . . ."*

—Junior enlisted man

*"No one is actually jumping out of planes except for .5 percent of the people. It's unrealistic."*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"[In] the posters I have seen of women in the field—I don't look like that in the field. I think it's a skewed representation of living in the outdoors."*

—Female officer

*"The [military advertising campaign] was the last one I saw, and I laughed. It was about travel. It made it seem like we were doing these touristy things. Deployment is great because you do get to travel, but you're doing these scary missions too. That was not what my life looked like while deployed."*

—Female officer

## 2. Many groups had not seen women portrayed in advertisements

Participants in many groups could not say whether the advertisements accurately portrayed life for women in the military because women were not featured in the commercials or other advertisements they had recently seen about their respective Services.

*"On TV, they show all the [Service members] going through [Vocational Training and Certification] courses, and . . . there are not a lot of female roles advertised. With families, my husband is in the [Service], and people always think it's him serving, but it's us both. I wish it was common knowledge."*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"[Advertisements show] people crawling through the mud, and it's always men."*

—Female officer

*"I don't really see [women portrayed in advertising] much. They might rarely show a female submariner walking through a passageway. That's it. It could have been any gender, but we don't really see much."*

—Junior enlisted man

*"I've never seen a [Service] commercial or other things with a female, unless it's just the token female on the poster."*

—Male officer

## 3. Some groups perceived advertisements to be accurate

Participants in some groups felt commercials were honest representations of life for servicewomen.

*"I think it's pretty accurate. . . . There are not a lot of women shown in those roles, and it would be great to have more women there, but it would be frustrating to me to see these commercials where they grab all women pilots and show them together."*

—Female officer

*"I did see an ad for JAG on the JAG Corps website. I looked at it, and I am traveling, and I am doing it. The travel was why I turned away from it at the beginning of law school. The ad—they had women discuss their experiences and how they felt and what they were doing, and I was like, 'I can relate.'"*

—Female officer

## E. Participants' Suggestions for Marketing to Women

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DACOWITS also asked focus group participants what they would tell the marketers who develop the commercials and advertisements about their respective Services; for example, how to encourage women to join the Service and choose operational or front-line career fields.

### 1. All groups suggested highlighting women successfully serving

Participants in all groups advocated putting the spotlight on successful servicewomen, whether real or fictional, as a way to entice prospective servicewomen.

*"[I recommend] showing independence and that women can take charge. . . . When I came in, I was the only woman in my shop. After Korea, I went to Italy, and [my shop] had one other female. Here, there are a lot of us. You don't see that shift in advertising—showing women in power to show them they will have a voice."*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"How many female civilians know the [senior Service leader] is a woman? I don't know if that is an avenue to attack, but I wouldn't have known if I wasn't in the [Service]. If I was a woman and saw a commercial saying this is the leader of the [Service], as a woman, that would make me think I could do it, too."*

—Male officer

*"Show [successful women] in it, being successful, someone of higher rank. Retainability is a big issue, too. These same women are getting out. [Have] commercials showing . . . that you can have women and men make a career out of it. If I see a commercial [featuring a woman] and think she has a lot of stripes, what I see is she can do that [career] for a long time."*

—Junior enlisted man

*"[Show] more women in those types of commercials in those roles. You'll see a token female pilot out of 10 guys, but women trying to go into the military don't see that as an attainable goal because they don't see a lot of females in those roles."*

—Female officer

*"We had females that went through [special warfare school], and they passed, and they got tabs. Once that happens, have you heard anything else about these females that went through? I think if they followed up and put information about that out, it could show women out there that it can be done."*

—Junior enlisted man

*"[Show] women leading infantry units or troops—[show] women leading the way and being a commander or an operational officer."*

—Female officer

## 2. Most groups suggested showcasing variety of job options

Participants in most groups felt advertising tended to focus on just a few jobs commonly considered exciting. Instead, they recommended approaches that would inform prospective servicewomen about the wide array of careers offered in the military.

*"... You have to show the distinction between jobs. You have to find the right job for the right person. For the 10 different people in a room, you could find a job for every single one of them in the [Service]. There's a job for everybody."*

—Male officer

*"I thought only thing offered in the [Service] was infantry-related. . . . The different jobs should be portrayed more often."*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"The [Service] is putting out more ads about what [infantry members] do, so that deters other people from joining. The [Service] and National Guard show women in the hospital on radios when electricity goes down. They show more technical [units]. We are more geared toward confrontation, and people don't want that, and [so they] join other branches [instead]."*

—Junior enlisted man

*"I would feature more [occupational specialties]. There's law enforcement, cooking, administration, logistics; it's not just jumping out of helicopters. . . . There are lots of other things happening. I had no idea about the preventative side of it."*

—Female officer

## 3. Many groups suggested diversifying advertisement channels

Participants in many groups reported that television is a less popular medium among young people today and, therefore, suggested diversifying the advertisement channels used to include—

- ▶ Facebook
- ▶ YouTube
- ▶ Twitter
- ▶ Snapchat
- ▶ Hulu
- ▶ Netflix
- ▶ Amazon video
- ▶ Pinterest
- ▶ Instagram
- ▶ Podcasts

"I don't think [my Service] capitalized on social media. Most people don't watch TV anymore—they do streaming—so commercials are less likely to work because people won't see them. . . ."

—Junior enlisted woman

"I'd [suggest] maybe extending beyond the TV medium [to push] out this information. Maybe try more YouTube instead of pamphlets and TV. . . . I think social media should be leveraged more."

—Male officer

"Advertise on social media, Twitter, Pinterest. Pinterest is huge. It targets women absolutely, absolutely has ads, and I totally watch the ads on Pinterest, and I don't care how long they are because they don't have sound. I would make it so it could be silent and make sense, relatively short, and put it on Pinterest and Instagram and social media sites."

—Female officer

"My younger sister is always on Snapchat. They have . . . commercials and ads on there. People just go through and see what's happening. If the marketing was in an ad on Snapchat, that would give them way more exposure."

—Female officer

"I'd just put YouTube videos on there. Every kid is on YouTube now, and they can just rewatch it."

—Junior enlisted man

#### 4. Many groups suggested emphasizing the military's family-friendliness

Participants in many groups believed marketing to potential servicewomen should include portrayals of family life in the military. Participants believed women might be more likely to join if they knew it was possible to balance a family with a military career.

"Show women in uniform who have babies. That's a real thing. We run the house and our shop and . . . the world, not to quote Beyoncé. . . ."

—Junior enlisted woman

"Combine [the current commercials for my Service] with a [United Services Automobile Association] commercial. Show that there is more. . . . You're [a Service member], but then you go home, and you take that with you. Part of it is that you are a military family. . . . If I'm a kid that doesn't know about military, I see that life, and it looks pretty cool."

—Male officer

". . . Show you can be a female in the military but also be there to pick your child up from the [child development center] or sit and do homework with them. Talking about marketing to women, that is something not really touched on at all [in current marketing efforts]. You don't show career and family is important and that they can mesh."

—Female officer

*“Show both sides of what you do during the day and then when you get home. . . . Show the events on post for families, too, and advertising that you can have a family. If you’re trying to entice women to join, show that [family] matters to the [Service].”*

—Junior enlisted woman

*“I think [advertising makes it look as if] everything is combat related, and it’s a big part of it, but show something in [home station]. Show that 9-to-5 job. Show that the [Service] has [resources for families]. Show the family activities and that it’s family-oriented. Switch it up and show the [home station] side.”*

—Junior enlisted man

## **5. Many groups suggested including more honest and accurate portrayals of military life**

Participants in many groups encouraged more truthful advertising. Participants believed not only that potential Service members should be able to make an informed decision about whether to join but also that some women may be deterred by the action-packed, combat-focused life often portrayed by the media. Women and enlisted participants were more likely than men and officers to suggest greater honesty in advertising.

*“Just [show] actual videos of what happens. It’s not all peachy keen. I’ve had to work really hard—still have to—but you have to show them . . . ‘Hey, you can do all of this!’ You can be an engineer, you can stand watch, you can drive the boats. . . . So, they can show . . . women doing paperwork, but also show the boats and everything. . . .”*

—Junior enlisted woman

*“Why not attach a GoPro [to a Service member who is] going to a range or something? There are crappy parts and unfortunate parts [to being in the military], but there is also cool stuff. Basic [training] isn’t all just yelling or screaming; you can see cool stuff. There are field exercises too—we do satellite communication in the field. Highlight the cumulative effects of what [a Service member] does. I had no idea what I was going to do before I joined. . . .”*

—Junior enlisted man

*“It’s hard [for advertising to convey all the necessary information] because it’s a commercial and only so many seconds. If possible, everything should be included—the good, the bad, combat, humanitarian. The [Service] is everything. You don’t want to sugarcoat anything or want people to feel lied to because it will rub people the wrong way. Have them decide what is good for them, and if they don’t like it, they don’t like it.”*

—Junior enlisted man

*“. . . Follow someone around and see their actual job. Not that glamorous stuff, but day-to-day things. [Seeing] counseling and things that make an officer an officer would be more realistic and wouldn’t [portray us] like we are action heroes. Follow someone around and see them hit the gym, working out because [physical training] is important, but [don’t show them] going through the obstacle course in the rain.”*

—Female officer

## 6. Many groups suggested highlighting the available benefits

Consistent with the finding that participants had not anticipated the health and education benefits that would accompany military service (see section C.2.d of this chapter), participants in many groups posited that potential Service members might be enticed if these benefits were better advertised. Men were more likely than women to suggest this approach.

*"More [advertising should point] toward the benefits. Everyone gets that. Not everyone will have the same jobs they show on the TV, but education, steady pay, medical—that would bring more people in. Not everyone wants to drive satellites."*

—Junior enlisted man

*"I think stability is huge. Show maternity leave and those benefits like giving your GI Bill to your kid. [The advertisements should] say, 'We're here for you, and we want to take care of you.'"*

—Junior enlisted man

*". . . Educational opportunities are good for everyone, not just with the GI Bill, but going to grad school on the [Service]'s dime. I did that, and it was great! [The advertisements should say.] 'Hey, you might get free grad school or college!'"*

—Male officer

*". . . There are education options, and I don't think they highlight enough on benefits. That would have definitely [interested] me. If I would've known that, I would've jumped in sooner."*

—Junior enlisted woman

## 7. Some groups suggested emphasizing professional development opportunities

Consistent with the finding that participants attained professional goals that they could not have imagined prior to their service (see Section C.2.b of this chapter), participants in some groups suggested emphasizing professional development opportunities in marketing efforts.

*". . . Show progression. The commercials should have a starting point and then an end point. Show a female just getting out of high school, then show the career progressions. Show her making [E4 rank], then maybe [Noncommissioned Officer Candidate School]. Show that you can make those moves in your career. . . . Show that you can get to more places. It should be more than just the initial hook. Show the accomplishments along the way, including family."*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"I think one opportunity is that there are a lot of women commanding on our ships. [The Service] empowers very young people by giving them tons of responsibility. Anyone who is qualified can do that. You can run your own stations. You're running the [Service]! At a very young age, if you're a hard worker, you can do that . . . I get to stand bow watch! . . ."*

—Female officer

## 8. Some groups suggested better leveraging of recruiters

Participants in some groups recommended improving advertising in not only the media but also the recruiter's office.

*"Educate recruiters more."*

—Male officer

*". . . Recruiters [should not just say], 'Here's this [job] or that [job].' Just show all of the [options]. We have recruits coming down all the time and asking what they want to do, and they can actually talk to members and see what we do."*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"Marketing is more than just advertising, so it has to start at the recruiter's office."*

—Junior enlisted man

## 9. Many female groups suggested showing life out of uniform

Participants in many female groups thought it would be beneficial to include depictions of Service members at home as well as at work to emphasize that they are just regular people. This theme was not mentioned among any male groups.

*"Have them in their job doing stuff and then showing their job at home as well. Whether it be corralling [Service members] to get a job done or cleaning up the shop, you do those at home, too. Show the back and forth. If you do it at home, you can do it at work, too. . . . The skills relate."*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"It's always cool when you see commercials that show what a person looks like in civilian life and then in uniform. I might do that. Have an ad that shows a person in the mirror with their civilian clothes and show that the job is transferable. That would be cool."*

—Female officer

*"I think it's good to show women doing something operationally but also doing personal life [activities], too. At the Academy, I decorated my personal shelves really girly because I'm a girly-girl, so they took pictures to show that you can be both."*

—Female officer

## 10. Many groups suggested continuing to use the current approach

Not all participants offered suggestions for improving marketing to women. Participants in many groups argued that current marketing efforts were appropriate for attracting the kind of women the military needs.

*“The [Service] has always done a good job of selling the intangibles: the pride and camaraderie and other aspects, instead of the benefits. I think that approach is what draws the type of people the [Service] is looking for. That’s where it starts, for men or women, that’s where it sets us apart. I [absolutely] think it’s the right approach to keep that as the foremost focus of the ad efforts.”*

—Male officer

Others believed that, although not necessarily accurate, the action-packed scenes featured in current marketing are necessary to grab potential Service members’ initial attention and interest.

*“If I wanted them to join, I wouldn’t show them the stuff I did. When I was [in aircraft maintenance], the job [was] terrible. If I show them that, they won’t want to join. If I show them the job [I have] now, in communications, they might want to [join].”*

—Male officer

*“Commercials are to grab attention and get them to research it. They are not going to use a [support occupational specialty] to grab attention. Make it look cool, and then get them to research it. For someone in high school to think about the benefits, they might not think that far ahead.”*

—Junior enlisted man

*“Honestly, I would tell them to keep doing what they are doing. If you post what we all do all the time, then no one is going to join.”*

—Junior enlisted woman

Others thought the Services should not change their respective approaches to advertising because they did not like the idea of targeting women specifically.

*“I’ve never watched a [Service] commercial and thought it spoke to women . . . , but I think it should be that way. None of us joined to be special; we joined to do the job.”*

—Female officer

## **11. Other suggestions for marketing to women**

Participants also made other suggestions for improving marketing to women:

- ▶ Show that servicewomen can maintain their femininity
- ▶ Emphasize pride
- ▶ Highlight the relationships that Service members build
- ▶ Emphasize personal growth
- ▶ Advertise different paths to service
- ▶ Highlight helping others
- ▶ Emphasize service
- ▶ Highlight equal opportunity for women
- ▶ Improve the Services’ websites

- ▶ Advertise the day-to-day activities rather than combat to make service seem less intimidating
- ▶ Highlight the travel

## Chapter 3. Instructors

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**D**ACOWITS investigated Service members' experiences with and perceptions of instructors—particularly female instructors—in each of the Services. The Committee was interested in learning about the impact female instructors have had on Service members at various stages of their careers, particularly in the wake of full gender integration of all occupational specialties.

The findings in this chapter relate to Service members' recent interactions with instructors, the roles instructors play, the characteristics of good and bad instructors, and Service members' perceptions of female instructors. The Committee conducted 18 focus groups on this topic (see Appendix C.2 for the focus group protocol). This chapter discusses the focus group findings on instructors and is organized into the following sections:

- ▶ Service members' recent interactions with instructors
- ▶ Roles of instructors
- ▶ Characteristics of good and bad instructors
- ▶ Mentorship
- ▶ Effect of female instructors on training
- ▶ Factors affecting perceptions of instructors
- ▶ Preference for instructors of either gender
- ▶ Number of female instructors in the military

When interpreting the following findings, it is important to recall that questions about instructors were asked of Service members at the senior enlisted (E4–E8) and officer (O1–O5/W1–W5) ranks only. Several participants described their experiences as instructors, and others described their experiences as students. Therefore, the findings presented in this chapter should not be generalized to this or any other population.

### A. Service Members' Recent Interactions With Instructors

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DACOWITS asked Service members to indicate when they had most recently interacted with an instructor in a military class. Participants in most focus groups reported interacting with military instructors within the past 1–5 years. Of those who specified the ways in which they most recently interacted with instructors, women were more likely than men to report they interacted with instructors in officer training or leadership courses. Participants in many focus groups reported they interacted with instructors while learning a specific skill (e.g., pistol range) or participating in occupational specialty-specific training (e.g., flight school). Some female groups reported having such interactions more frequently because they, too, were serving as instructors.

Hand-count data revealed that slightly more than half of participants had a female instructor during basic training, and approximately three-quarters had a female instructor during other courses in the military (see Figure 3.1).



## 1. Most saw instructors as mentors or role models

Participants in all but one focus group saw instructors as serving a mentorship role. This sentiment was voiced more often by women than men. Instructors who became mentors were seen as role models who demonstrate ideal behavior and lead by example, often inspiring others to follow in their footsteps.

*" . . . I saw them as mentors because they have been in the career field. The textbook is not necessarily real life. . . . You can go to the instructors to get resources to handle that. They are a spokesperson for the [Service] and your career."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"In aviation, instructors are [senior ranks]. They're definitely informal leaders inside the aviation troop because of the expertise aviation requires. They're a hub for officers to look to [if they ask themselves,] 'Who am I supposed to be as a professional and a pilot?'"*

—Female officer

*"[An instructor's job is] to mentor and to serve as an example and [give] guidance."*

—Male officer

*"[An instructor can be a] mentor [and] role model. When you're playing the student role, especially right out of [initial entry training], you don't know what to expect."*

—Senior enlisted man

### a. Instructors evolving into mentors depends on the context

Participants in many groups noted that whether an instructor becomes a mentor or role model depends a great deal on the context. This perspective was expressed nearly exclusively by officers.

Participants in some focus groups indicated that the likelihood of an instructor serving as a mentor to Service members depends on the instructional context. For example, in Officer Candidate Schools, instructor roles are clearly defined, and each position includes unique responsibilities that dictate the likelihood that an instructor will serve as a mentor. Others noted that whether an instructor becomes a mentor depends on where the Service member is in his or her career trajectory.

*"For [Officer Candidate School], we have separate roles: instructors, evaluators, [unit] staff, including [educational occupational specialty]. We do not interact with the candidate on a daily basis on personal level. We have a set of courses that we teach them, and we are supposed to be in a sanitized environment. . . . We are supposed to model what they are supposed to be doing. On the other side, platoon staff is definitely responsible for discipline, for mentorship, as they continue. Those instructors have a different role than academic instructors."*

—Female officer

*"It matters where you're at in your career. [For] basic training for enlisted or officers, so much is regimented, and you have separate roles, like when you do go to the pistol range, or if [Service members] are working with you in your shop. You serve as . . . an informal leader to other [Service members]. Young [Service members] progress through their careers, and you're expected to be instructors and mentors, too. Ingrained into the development of [Service members] is that they are expected to be instructors at some point."*

—Female officer

## **2. Many groups thought instructors offer practical instruction and teach specific skills**

Participants in many groups—and twice as many men as women—noted that an instructor's role is to provide practical instruction and to teach students how to better perform a given skill. Instructors must also have the ability to correct students when they make errors. Focus group participants also emphasized that instructors should convey the most updated, relevant information in a given topic area to Service members to give them the knowledge and skills they require to be successful in the future.

*" . . . If [a student is making mistakes], the teacher needs to correct that action."*

—Female officer

*"Our role is that you are not only supposed to present the material, topic, and subject but [also] do a lot of team training. We not only do things correctly and make sure they don't do it incorrectly but making sure they are able to do the skill correctly when they are out at sea."*

—Male officer

*"[Instructors] provide the tools we need, depending on the type of training. [Professional military education] is not like a test you take, so I look for [instructors] to provide the tools or to get us reenergized, refocused, more reintegrated with the core things they are trying to convey—tools for us to be successful."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"[Their role is] to give the most current instructions and information about what the [Service] has put out on the topic."*

—Senior enlisted man

## **3. Many groups indicated instructors sometimes provide administrative support**

Participants in many focus groups noted that in some cases, instructors are ultimately responsible for their students' administrative needs. This sentiment was more common in female groups. "Administrative ownership" could include keeping the Service member on task or ensuring proper time management. If needed, instructors can also provide or connect their students with additional resources. Ultimately, whether an instructor will provide administrative support depends on the nature of the course (e.g., this type of support was more commonly mentioned in reference to longer and more structured courses) and a given instructor's role.

*“So, for longer, structured [professional military education] settings, [instructors] own you administratively as well as your problems, issues, and concerns. They cannot just be your instructor.”*

—Female officer

*“In some instances, [instructors] don’t need to be a subject matter expert, but they keep people on task [and assist with] organization [and] time management.”*

—Senior enlisted woman

*“I reach back constantly to my [course] instructors, like when I set up a new job or need a new resource.”*

—Female officer

*“. . . They intend to give you not only instruction, but if you have something going on, they [serve as] . . . a faculty advisor, and you go to them with payment issues or for right instruction. They are supposed to be role models. As good stand-up role models, they teach you life skills as well. You can [have] sidebar [conversations] with them or ask them after class.”*

—Female officer

#### **4. Many groups thought instructors should be subject matter experts**

Participants in many groups indicated they expected instructors to be subject matter experts in the areas they teach. Ideally, there should be alignment between an instructor’s area of expertise and the content taught; gaps can diminish an instructor’s credibility.

*“[An instructor should be] an expert or [knowledgeable] in what they teach to pass that information on in a way you understand.”*

—Female officer

*“[Instructors should have] subject matter expertise in their topic of what they train you in. As a [occupational specialty], I am an expert in my career field. I know that when I train them, they can be in my position and do what I do, eventually. They will get to my point to where anyone can ask them to do that, and they can do it with no help.”*

—Senior enlisted woman

*“[An instructor should be] a subject matter expert. The person has been trained. If I’m a martial arts instructor, and he’s [in information technology (IT)], and he [tries to teach] me to be a martial arts junkie, that will not work. [If] I need to brush up on new techniques [in IT], I go to [the IT instructor].”*

—Senior enlisted man

*“As an instructor, you need to be a subject matter expert in what you’re instructing, but because students tend to ask questions outside of the outline, you need to show competency in what you’re teaching outside the outline and in the classroom.”*

—Senior enlisted woman

## 5. Many groups reported that instructors sometimes advise Service members on personal development

Participants in many focus groups indicated instructors sometimes advise Service members on matters related to their personal development, such as career path and advancement. This sentiment was most commonly voiced by officers. Other participants reported that instructors also sometimes make themselves available to Service members who might need more general, informal advice. Service members value instructors who will share life advice because it provides an opportunity to see a situation from a different perspective.

*"[The role of instructor is] to teach, mentor, and lead students in an academic environment to develop them for their future."*

—Male officer

*"From the other side of being a student, you definitely use them [instructors] for getting knowledge outside the course, whether it's career oriented or life oriented . . . in general."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"[Instructors] facilitate career opportunities for career advancement."*

—Male officer

*"For my instructors, I have had no negative experiences in the last 15 years. They've gone out of the way to make themselves available for informal conversations. They try to have the understanding perspective [for] both genders. As an instructor, I make myself available to discuss things, professionally and personally."*

—Female officer

## 6. Some groups reported that instructors set and enforce standards for job performance

Participants in some focus groups noted it is an instructor's responsibility to set and enforce standards for job performance. Instructors must not only teach their students but also demonstrate to them the correct standards of performance and conduct. This issue was raised more frequently in focus groups with men versus those with women.

*"[An] instructor goes above the standard. [They provide] technical expertise. They are going to be right at the top, and they are going to exceed the standard of someone on the ship and in the training."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"Sometimes, they even serve in the [Service] as quality assurance checkers in a variety of capacities, so they can [offer different types of] subject matter expertise."*

—Female officer

*"They ensure the integrity of the program, they make sure everyone is following the standard, and if you pass, you've shown you're able to do the job."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"[Instructors] set the standards for the training. They observe how well the info is absorbed by that class and how well it is used, and then they give feedback on whomever they report to that makes the courses and then make them better."*

—Senior enlisted man

## 7. Some groups believed that instructors should share their own experiences

Participants in some groups noted that because instructors need to be experienced and knowledgeable in their fields, it is important that they share their experiences with their students. Mentioned most commonly by men, participants reported they expect instructors to be able to draw upon their deep institutional knowledge and pass it along to less experienced Service members.

*"[Instructors are] the guys that have been there, done that. [They bring] experience for younger troops that don't have it."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"My [perception on the] difference and uniqueness about military instructors is they have done [what they teach]."*

—Male officer

*"[Instructors] give institutional knowledge."*

—Male officer

## C. Characteristics of Good and Bad Instructors

DACOWITS asked participants to describe the qualities that characterize a good instructor and those that define a bad instructor. As Table 3.1 illustrates, similar themes emerged from both the “good instructor” and “bad instructor” lists of characteristics. Focus group participants indicated that an instructor’s credibility, demeanor, level of professionalism, ability to communicate, adaptability, and level of enthusiasm determine whether the individual will be a good or a bad instructor.

**Table 3.1. Characteristics of Good and Bad Instructors**

Characteristic	Good	Bad
Credibility	Knowledgeable, experienced, credible	Inexperienced
Demeanor	Approachable, personable	Bad attitude: arrogant, abrasive
Professionalism	Exhibit professional behaviors such as fairness and adhering to standards	Exhibit unprofessional behaviors such as profanity and bias
Communication	Ability to communicate clearly and listen	Inarticulate
Adaptability	Adapt teaching methods to suit different learning styles	Inability to convey material using alternative methods of instruction; regurgitation of content
Enthusiasm	Enthusiastic, motivating	Monotone, “checking the box”

Source: DACOWITS focus group transcripts (data from groups participating in instructors discussion only)

## 1. Credibility

An individual's level of credibility emerged as the most commonly cited attribute of a good instructor. Participants in most focus groups indicated good instructors are knowledgeable and credible in their chosen fields. Focus group participants felt the instructor's level of experience relative to the topic being taught was an extremely important factor.

*"A good [instructor] is someone who has experienced it."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"There are a lot of people who aren't warfighters and don't have the credibility of what they are trying to teach. You can tell by the way they carry themselves. Everything we do is warfighting."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"If you don't have depth of knowledge, then how can you teach the 'why's' of anything? If you don't know why, then you won't be able to impress the 'how.'"*

—Male officer

Conversely, a lack of experience and knowledge about a topic emerged as one of the most commonly cited characteristics of a bad instructor. Participants in many groups said bad instructors are deficient in experience or knowledge about the topics they teach. Sometimes, individuals who may do well in their professions are called upon to teach but end up being poor instructors. It is not simply a lack of knowledge or experience that makes a bad instructor, but the inability or unwillingness to keep up to date on the relative content area.

*"[A bad instructor is] told 30 minutes before class that they have to teach. It's not their fault, but they are not the subject matter expert. So, [Service members] aren't getting the information they should be getting. It happens every week. We have training that has to be done—maybe classes, or a safety stand down on motorcycle safety—and there might be a guy teaching who's never ridden a motorcycle in his life."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"[An instructor should be] somebody who knows what they are talking about. You have those teachers who just read off the board, they don't know what they are talking about. . . . How are you going to teach me [something] if you have never done it?"*

—Senior enlisted man

*"Not being willing to learn where their topic is advancing. Some people learned things 20 years ago, so things might have changed since then, and they need to keep up-to-date on everything."*

—Male officer

## 2. Demeanor

Participants in most groups, most commonly senior enlisted Service members, indicated good instructors have a pleasant demeanor and are very personable. Good instructors demonstrate a positive attitude by remaining humble, patient, understanding, relatable, and approachable.

*"[Good instructors] have expertise in humility. Students may have different experiences. I'm the instructor right now, and sometimes, [I] don't know everything. [Instructors] have to be open to learning, like all the new stuff."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"[Good instructors are] patient and understanding. Not everyone learns at the same pace and level."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"[Good instructors are] approachable. If they're not, you can't have that two-way interaction, and that's not how most people learn best."*

—Female officer

In contrast, some groups mentioned that poor instructors often have a bad attitude. These instructors are unapproachable, standoffish, and unwilling to answer questions. Participants were more likely to view these instructors as arrogant and condescending. Moreover, instructors with a bad attitude were seen as more willing to utilize abrasive or coercive teaching methods.

*"[A bad instructor is] someone who says they'll take the time to help you if you need it, but when you ask them, they'll make excuses why they can't."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"[Bad instructors are] aloof. I've had some instructors that [think they are] are too smart and don't want to discuss anything with you."*

—Male officer

*"[Bad instructors are] standoffish and prickly."*

—Male officer

*"[Bad instructors show] SCARF: sarcasm, criticism, antagonism, ridicule, and fear."*

—Male officer

*"Someone who's manipulative and coercive [is a bad instructor]."*

—Female officer

### 3. Professionalism

Participants in most groups indicated that an instructor's level of professionalism correlates with the quality of his or her instruction.

*" . . . [Good instructors] also have some professional distance [and] don't act like [they're] my buddy."*

—Female officer

*"They need some level of tact, professionalism. It's off-putting and makes students shut down if [instructors] repeatedly use phrases or words that expose a bias. That becomes obvious in your teaching."*

— Female Officer

*"[Bad instructors are] unprofessional. I've known instructors who have made really bad jokes, like racist jokes, offending jokes, trying to be funny. I'm not sure what they're doing. It's a distraction. . . ."*

—Senior enlisted woman

### **a. Accountability to standards**

One dimension of professionalism is the ability to hold others accountable to a set of standards. Good instructors must be assertive and authoritative enough to hold Service members accountable for subpar performance and be able to correct Service members when they make mistakes. When providing such feedback, good instructors deliver constructive criticism in a respectful manner.

*"[Good instructors] hold people accountable and correct them if needed."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"[Good instructors are] there to teach and have the communication skills and then hold people accountable using assertiveness and professionalism to go with it."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"[Good instructors have] tact. [They are] able to express [feedback] in a way that is understood and doesn't seem condescending or negative."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"[Good instructors excel at] giving positive and critical feedback. There is a positive way of getting feedback. . . . Flying off the handle isn't going to make anything better, it's just going to make [students] nervous. It has to be constructive feedback. It makes you feel better about it."*

—Female officer

### **b. Fairness**

Another component of a good instructor's level of professionalism is the ability to remain unbiased and fair despite one's personal feelings. Bad instructors exhibit unprofessional behaviors such as favoritism, unfairness, and bias; in turn, these behaviors are perceived as inflexibility and closed-mindedness. This opinion was expressed mostly by female groups.

*"[Good instructors] do not [bring] too much personality or their personal feelings. [They are] more open to being able to give different viewpoints and not be biased."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"I have run across some that push their personal [opinions], and [their teaching] was not as effective as it could have been. I lost respect for them."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"[Bad instructors show] favoritism. I've seen that a few times. [They should] treat everyone the same, fairly."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"[Bad instructors are] closed off and not willing to accept feedback."*

—Female officer

*"[Bad instructors are] closed-minded. They have no flexibility and are very rigid. . . . Some are just stuck in the 'I'm the [subject matter expert]' mode."*

—Senior enlisted man

### **c. Profanity**

Female Service members viewed the use of profanity while teaching as unprofessional.

*"Profanity. This is a personal thing. If you're in front of me instructing, and you use a colorful word, I look at you like you're less intelligent. It's a turnoff and a distraction. Did you not know what else to say, so you just threw that in there, or is this personal? This is where I need you to be more professional, because that's what we are doing in [this] level of instruction. Now, if you're out in the field, and you get a modification to your order, and your language is different and colorful, that I understand. But if we are in here and you [are teaching], when I get [explicit language], it's a turnoff."*

—Female officer

*"[Bad instructors] can be biased. Some [may] have . . . a teacher's pet, [but] at the same time, to somebody else they don't like, they'll be harder on them, cuss them out."*

—Senior enlisted woman

## **4. Communication**

Another attribute of good instructors that participants in many focus groups identified was the ability to listen and communicate. Participants indicated the best instructors communicate well by articulating clearly and speaking with ease in front of large groups of people. Conversely, poor instructors struggle with public speaking, making them less effective teachers.

*"Communication [is important]. You need to be able to actually instruct on whatever platform to get the information across. You have to know the audience, who you're talking to."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"[Good instructors] communicate well. It's one thing to know and understand the material, and another to make sure you're understood."*

—Female officer

*". . . I've had some instructors that were shy. They were not very engaging. . . . [If they] deviated from reading the PowerPoint, then they weren't very comfortable in their own skin. To be a good instructor, you have to be able to interact and engage."*

—Male officer

## **5. Adaptability**

Another feature of good instructors that was mentioned in many focus groups was the ability to teach effectively to students with different learning styles. Good instructors demonstrate flexibility in their

teaching methods to reach all kinds of students, often by adapting existing instructional materials. Good instructors also emphasize how the material being taught can be applied by providing real-world examples, thereby making the content relevant and conveying why it is important to Service members' jobs.

*"[A good instructor is] someone that is able to understand how someone best learns and able to apply information that is applicable to them in a way they are able to understand and comprehend and to carry out. [They]make it applicable to their learning style."*

—Female officer

*"A good instructor is someone who can take something technical and . . . show why this is practical. We are in the [Service], and so everything has a practical application. [Instructors need to be able to explain how you use something and why it's important]."*

—Male officer

*"You have to keep them engaged. We used 'WIFM'—'what's in it for me.' Why do we need to learn this? Why is it important? How will it help me in the future in my job?"*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"[A good instructor] teaches tactics [to show you different ways to complete tasks]."*

—Male officer

*"[Good instructors are adaptable]. I've done two different tours at . . . school. One way works for one student, and another way works for another student. You have to be able to change your teaching style for each student. You have to be very adaptable and think on your feet and adapt as an instructor."*

—Male officer

Whereas good instructors are flexible in their teaching styles, participants in many focus groups indicated that bad instructors simply regurgitate content rather than modify their strategies to reach students with a range of learning styles. Bad instructors are either unable or unwilling to teach content in different ways.

*"[Bad instructors are] only willing to explain it the way they see it or understand it."*

—Male officer

*"[A bad instructor is] someone who doesn't understand the different ways that people learn [e.g., visual, audio, kinesthetic] and aren't able to teach to those ways."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"[Bad instructors have an] . . . inability to effectively teach the person they are instructing. [They can't] connect in a way that they can figure out how to change their teaching method if needed to get the information across effectively. [They lack] the ability to say, 'This may not be the best career choice or option for you,' or, 'There may be something else for you.' [They are unable to] help someone succeed."*

—Female officer

*"A bad one teaches just what's in the book—they can't break it down."*

—Senior enlisted woman

## 6. Enthusiasm

Participants in many focus groups said good instructors are often engaging and passionate about the subject they teach, making even the most uncomfortable or boring material seem relevant and interesting to students. This sentiment was mentioned most frequently by men. Good instructors also inspire others to learn and generally enjoy the role of being an instructor.

*"[Good instructors are] passionate about what they're doing. You don't want an instructor who isn't passionate; you want them to explain stuff in a way that makes other people passionate."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"Even the best instructors can take the driest material and make the setting relaxed. That qualifies especially in sensitive subjects. When we talk about civil rights or sexual assault topics, people tense up, and we need those instructors to get people to relax and engage."*

—Male officer

*"A personal characteristic [of a good instructor] is the ability to keep interest and inspire people to learn. That's hard to teach and is inherent to a personality. That's what makes a good instructor as opposed to an assigned instructor."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"I think it's being receptive to information they are putting forth. You can always tell when someone likes what they are doing and when someone doesn't. There's a passion when they're teaching because you care about it. . . . Students gravitate toward that. If you are simply checking a box . . . , that genuine piece is missing and is seen by students. . . . You need to enjoy [what you are teaching], and you need to know the subject you're teaching. Be prepared."*

—Female officer

Instructors that lack enthusiasm for teaching were perceived by many focus group participants as being bad instructors. This was voiced most often by senior enlisted Service members. Many reported that the worst instructors are those who are teaching simply to fill a position or “check the box” and have no real desire to teach. This lack of enthusiasm can have a detrimental effect on students; it demonstrates that the instructor does not care about their learning.

*"If someone is not interested in teaching, you can tell. They are not passionate about it. You can see that in the way they engage with people in the classroom."*

—Female officer

*"[Bad instructors show a] lack of passion in their work. They don't care if you absorb it or not."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"Someone who doesn't have interest in the topic [is a bad instructor]. They're just doing it because they were told to."*

—Senior enlisted man

“Someone who is passionate is something people want to look up to, so if you don't care or are forced to be in that position, [they will notice]. . . . I know people who didn't put in for it or [don't] want to be there, and it came across in everything they did. It turned off students.”

—Senior enlisted woman

“I've had a few instructors who are just here for the paycheck. [Their attitude was,] 'It's going to put me ahead in my career. I don't want to be here.' They were short with their students. They . . . wouldn't go into detail [about their topics] and pushed you off from the route you wanted to go down.”

—Senior enlisted woman

## D. Instructors as Mentors

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DACOWITS asked focus group participants to describe their personal experiences with instructors who became mentors. Service members noted that some instructors evolve into mentors over time, are approachable, and often provide guidance or advice to their students.

### 1. Many groups reported that mentors are approachable

Participants in many groups indicated that instructors who become mentors have approachable personalities. Often, mentors are empathetic and can relate to Service members' situations and make themselves available when necessary. Moreover, instructors who become mentors are attentive, reaching out to Service members when they notice a need.

“For me, [my mentor] was an instructor. I was new to the unit, and she gave me guidance on how to progress to the next level and navigate through the system. I was in the military before and got out and came back in. That was good because it helped me to get acclimated to military life again but also someone to relate to and who understood the struggles [is helpful].”

—Female officer

“Overall, whether they're civilians or in the military . . . , it's [important to be] able to mentor and relate knowledge to livable situations.”

—Senior enlisted man

“She heard me talking about height and weight issues, so she took me aside to tell me she's been there. It helped me to know there are [other] people out there that do have that problem, it's not just me. Everybody has that thing where they go through that moment.”

—Senior enlisted woman

“Good [mentors] have made themselves available. They've given out their contact info, especially at the end of the course.”

—Male officer

## 2. Many groups said that mentors help Service members by providing guidance and advice

Participants in many groups said mentors provide guidance, encouragement, and career or life advice to Service members. This sentiment was expressed more often by women.

*"My instructor saw I was having some problems and was about to be a single parent, so she took me [under her wing] and showed me that I don't need a man to be in the [Service]."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"[Instructors provide] guidance in [personal and professional] development."*

—Male officer

*"I had an instructor who checked on me even after he wasn't my instructor anymore. He was like, 'Hey, what's promotion board looking like for you? What's keeping you from being promoted?' He constantly called to be like, 'You need to check; you need to do this.' Today, we are still friends."*

—Female officer

## 3. Many groups felt instructors often evolve into good mentors over time

Participants in many groups indicated instructors do not always occupy formal "mentorship roles" and often unexpectedly evolve into mentors.

*"Sometimes, when you're connecting with a person, they become instructors incidentally, and that's how a mentorship relationship is created. I had people I connected with because of their passion, their personality, their convictions, and they became my instructor through their own personality, their own charisma. I think sometimes a good instructor has those things, but also when someone has those things, they become an instructor incidentally. I had someone who was never formally my instructor, but I connected with him, so he became one for me."*

—Female officer

*"[The mentorship] just kind of happened. It was during the course and after."*

—Male officer

*"[I had an instructor who] took me under her wing to dumb down [the topic] for me and explain the responsibilities. She reached out to me after the course ended to see if I was okay in my position and give me someone who could help me. It's not always that way, though. Sometimes it's just death by PowerPoint. But this [leader] saw something in me, and she might end up being the person who talks me into staying in the [Service] past 20 years."*

—Female officer

*"I knew people who never had the intention of utilizing their instructor as a mentor, but because our Service is so small, that initial instructor relationship led to me connecting with them and them becoming my mentor. I looked up at the Academy to an O3 who was really [accomplished], and now I'm a commander, and I've maintained those relationships and have friendly rapport with them and know I can connect with them if I need to."*

—Male officer

#### **4. Some groups indicated mentors lead by example**

Participants in some groups noted mentors do not always have official mentorship roles but instead lead by example. Participants stated that mentors who provide this kind of leadership can inspire others to emulate them, thereby elevating the quality and status of others.

*"I can find something good in all instructors that I've had . . . in particular, the more direct supervisors that I've had. . . Throughout all the courses I've been through, there's been at least one instructor that I can look up to or look towards as more of a role model than some of the others. None have been completely awful, but usually, at least one stands out more than the others to follow their lead."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"There was one guy who I was envious of the amount of knowledge he had. Leading by example—he is something that I could aspire to be one day."*

—Male officer

*"You're not going to like every single instructor, but you can always take something good from the instructors, something to appreciate, and apply that to who you are as a person."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*". . . When you talk tactical aviation, you meet a guy or gal [in the unit], and you approach it like they do, and you see how they did, and you want to be like them and emulate them."*

—Male officer

*"It goes back to that person invested in my success, and that resonated with me and made me want to succeed even more. As far as being a role model, I wanted to be like that when I became an instructor."*

—Female officer

#### **5. Some groups indicated their mentors were knowledgeable and shared their valuable experience**

Participants in some groups described how they appreciate when mentors share their perspectives and insight. This sentiment was voiced exclusively by males.

*"Absolutely. My instructor here, there are a lot of times when I [ask him for] insight. He has good experience with my job and is good at breaking things down to explain them."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"I had an instructor in [my occupational specialty who] ended up . . . at my first duty station. The same way he was as an instructor, he continued to be that way. He had been in for 24 years total, and this guy knew everything. He was very humble; he would tell you his mistakes and answered all questions you asked. Even mentors teach."*

—Senior enlisted man

## **E. Effect of Female Instructors on Training**

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DACOWITS asked focus group participants whether they thought having a female instructor would influence their experience in training, and if so, how. DACOWITS also asked focus group participants how they thought female instructors would influence women's military training experiences, if at all. Participant responses to these questions varied.

### **1. Most groups said female instructors are perceived differently than male instructors**

Participants in most focus groups indicated that female instructors are perceived differently than male instructors. Responses about these different perceptions varied. Female instructors were described as sometimes being harder and tougher than their male counterparts on their students. Participants also felt women in the military often have to work harder and achieve higher standards than men. Others suggested female instructors are valuable in that they offer a different perspective than men and can serve as a role model for other women in the military.

*"I have heard a couple of times where people think that if you have a female instructor, she will be tougher, more strict on you than on any of the others. Some of us love that and need that. It's based on each person and if they want a female or not."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"I've heard a lot of people say [the females] are more strict, by the book. . . . They are more the bulldog of the group, will chew you out quicker."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"It gives you another perspective, but as to . . . the gender of the person, I don't care. Just like diversity in any place—racial, gender . . . It adds another way to look at things."*

—Male officer

*"I was an instructor a couple of years ago, and the females' feedback said that they were [affected] by how far I had come. They were like, 'I can be in that position X years from now if I do A, B, and C.' So, [I was] a good role model for someone to follow in their footsteps."*

—Female officer

### **2. Most groups reported that having a female instructor would positively affect training**

Participants in most focus groups thought having a female instructor for a military course would have a positive effect on training. Although most groups indicated female instructors are a positive influence on the training environment, explanations for how the training environment would benefit varied.

### **a. Role models for other women**

Female instructors frequently serve as role models who other female Service members can look up to and emulate. This rationale was offered more often by women.

*"It can be humbling for males to have a female instructor. We had guys look at us like, 'I don't know why you're here.' Then we had a female who was killing it, and the males were like, 'Okay, let me shut up now.'*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"For me, it's important to have that role model. . . . I guess I could have gotten through it if all of my attendings were male, but it made me more confident to look [up to] the female [attending]. I could see myself there. That would not have changed my outcome on paper, though."*

—Female officer

*"I think it would be beneficial. Times are different now, and sometimes, it would help to have a female mentor to get your foot in the door and succeed."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"I think [a female instructor] could be a positive role model. If [a woman] sees . . . a female teaching a subject, they could think, 'Maybe, one day, I could do that.'"*

—Senior enlisted man

### **b. Shared female experience**

Participants believed that female instructors not only provide encouragement and support but also serve as a resource for women on women-specific issues.

*"Yeah, [having a female instructor] would be good; they may feel like it's a shared experience. They might be more empathetic. Women could not feel as comfortable approaching a male instructor."*

—Male officer

*"In basic [training], it's a benefit because I noticed girls trying to use female problems to get out of [physical training] and things like that. We had a [female] instructor who said you can handle it, keep going. I think in those [situations], it is beneficial. As far as training in general, it should not matter either way, unless you need someone to relate to on a different level."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*". . . Males and females are totally different. Why . . . have someone who is going to assume or guess; why not have someone who knows what [women] are going through?"*

—Senior enlisted man

*“At a [junior officer] conference, we had the [occupational specialty] junior officers to talk about mentoring, training, and what we do differently at our commands. It was a 2-day conference, and we didn't hear from any senior female people. Our [commanding officer] asked us what we would have liked to see. There was a teleconference later to talk to senior women. Anyone could call in—a lot of people asked family planning questions. I've never worked for a female officer; all the guys I work with are single and don't have kids. They don't understand I have more responsibilities, so it's good to have someone who's willing to talk about it and has that experience.”*

—Female officer

### **c. Diversity**

Participants believed the presence of female instructors is important to increase the diversity of instruction. This diversity is important because it normalizes different perspectives. Female instructors also have a unique and valuable leadership style. This rationale was mentioned more frequently in female focus groups.

*“It has more to do with balancing the group personality. There are always things a male or female can add to the team. The diversity can add to the group, or detract, depending on the person. Representation from both genders is important, but it's not a check mark in the box that makes it balance and equal. They add different components to the group.”*

—Female officer

*“With the current mindset, the earlier you get female leaders in front of male [Service members], the sooner you can start changing their mindset, the culture, and the masculinity of our society. . . . There's a lot of discussion and a lot of efforts to get females in front of [males] earlier for the exposure. It's that we are out there trying to build that respect early.”*

—Female officer

*“If you look at exposure theory for any minority group, it's the same. If I never meet anyone from a group, race, gender, whatever, it's easier to believe the stereotype, but if I meet people from those groups, it's like, wait a minute, so-and-so doesn't conform to those stereotypes, so maybe it's not true. It could be with gender, sexuality, race . . . ; that's how you dispel stereotypes.”*

—Female officer

*“I've worked with them frequently, and their perspective is different than males. At the end of the day, I glean a lot from the females.”*

—Senior enlisted man

### **3. Many groups believed that having a female instructor does not affect the quality of the training experience**

Participants in many groups felt that the gender of an instructor does not have an impact on the training experience as long as the instructor is credible and experienced. This opinion was most common among senior enlisted Service members.

*"The instructor role is either you understand and [have] lived what you teach, or you don't. If I am an effective instructor, I'll show you I know what I'm teaching. The gender of the instructor, it doesn't matter."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"I don't know if it's necessarily having a female instructor that would make a difference. I think it's important to have diversity in general: different levels of experience, different backgrounds. Coming in to do training is important because you're learning from different backgrounds, so if that's a female, then yeah, but it could've very well been a male. Diversity in general is important."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"I don't benefit more from a female than a male instructor. Each have individual battles that they bring to the table, so it doesn't matter whether the instructor is female."*

—Senior enlisted woman

#### **a. Most groups valued alignment between an instructor's experience and the course being taught**

Participants in most groups indicated that alignment between an instructor's course material and experience in that area strongly influences their perception of that instructor. Instructors with experience in what they are teaching are viewed as more credible in the instructor role.

*"[An instructor's career field matters] very much. [An instructor has] different experiences and points of view and understanding that applies to their instructions. If I want instruction on flying, it makes a difference if [the instructor is] a dentist or a pilot."*

—Male officer

*"[The importance of an instructor's experience] depends on the topic. I obviously want an intelligence person to teach intelligence things, or an infantry person for infantry things."*

—Female officer

*"I wrote [a female instructor] off in the beginning by looking at the specifics of what she's teaching. . . . She was teaching something she has not actively done and not trained to do."*

—Male officer

#### **b. Many groups said that gender or career field is less relevant than the instructor's credibility**

DACOWITS asked participants how, if at all, an instructor's career field influenced their perception of those instructors. Participants in many groups felt male and female instructors are not perceived differently if the instructor is credible in terms of experience and knowledge. Participants suggested that how a female instructor is perceived is based on factors such as the instructor's role, experience, and temperament. This sentiment was most common among officers.

*"My last female instructor was an oral surgeon. She was good at her job. It's not just female or male, but good at her job."*

—Male officer

*"I would expect any instructor pilot to be the subject matter expert, and that is the only standard; [an instructor's gender] doesn't matter to me. [I would take] the same approach with both. But for [Senior Officer School] or something like that, it might be a little bit different."*

—Female officer

*"It is nice to have someone who can actually relate and have someone put stories to what they are actually teaching about."*

—Senior enlisted man

### **c. Perceptions of female instructors in previously closed occupational specialties**

Obtaining an optimal level of credibility as an instructor can be particularly difficult for women who are teaching in occupational specialties that were previously closed to them. In these cases, female instructors fight against a perception that women have not had sufficient time to gain the expertise necessary to competently instruct in those areas.

*"If you are bringing in a female to teach [in a newly opened career field], I won't think they will have the knowledge because there are no females in that position yet. We are just starting to let women into the gun line, so there's no way she has experience on the gun line."*

—Female officer

*"It's a male-dominated career field. Females may just not want to come in. But whatever the percent is, that's how it'll show up in the classroom."*

—Senior enlisted man

## **4. Many groups indicated having a female instructor could sometimes be detrimental to the training environment**

Participants in many groups remarked that female instructors were sometimes much stricter than male instructors for a variety of reasons, including that they might feel they must be tougher than other women and men to succeed. Participants thought that female instructors were often harsher than their male counterparts because women must expend much more effort than men to achieve the same level of success in the military. Other participants reported that female instructors were sometimes unfairly perceived as being tougher than male instructors because of the male-dominated nature of the military. Focus group participants emphasized that females should not occupy instructor billets simply based on gender or to fill a quota. This sentiment arose most often in female focus groups.

*"Men are respected for acting that way and standing up for themselves, [but] females are looked down upon—they call us the 'b word.'"*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"I had a terrifying female drill sergeant. I can relate to what everyone is saying about having a positive female role model, but to me, I found it a little sad. . . . Women are teaching young people in the world that you need to be terrifying to make it in a man's world."*

—Senior enlisted man

*“For [mentoring], females will be harder on females. Sometimes, it’s over the top.”*

—Senior enlisted woman

*“In leadership positions, there’s a tendency [for women] to go overboard. I assume it’s to compensate for that [assumption some people make], ‘Oh, she’s going to be [a pushover],’ . . . They assert authority or knowledge. I think [it’s] a cultural thing that aggressive women are a bad thing, and it [reinforces] that internal thought process of the men—‘She’s in charge, but why does she have to be like that?’”*

—Senior enlisted man

*“In my field, it has to do with the culture of medicine. Witnessing women work harder for something than a man in the same situation. I think that creates women that have to be better or tougher, and that is how I always see it. Of the female role models, a lot have been tough. But in residency, I also had to sit and watch a woman say something and get ignored and then a man say the same thing and it’s seen as a great idea. Or a woman who doesn’t know the answer to a question, and she’s seen as incompetent, but a man is seen as just learning in that situation. I see why they are hardnosed—because they have had to be better than their [male] colleagues. . . .”*

—Female officer

*“You don’t want to put a female there just because she’s female; then you do a disservice.”*

—Female officer

## **F. Preference for Instructors of Either Gender**

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The Committee asked focus group participants to describe situations in which a male or a female instructor may be preferable. Participants described specific situations or courses for which a same-gender instructor may be preferable but emphasized that the instructor’s competence is more important than gender. They also indicated that there should be greater diversity of instructors in the military.

### **1. Most groups prefer to have a same-gender instructor for certain courses or trainings**

Participants in most groups indicated that there are certain classes for which having a same-gender instructor would be preferable. These included courses on basic training, physical training, sexual assault and prevention training, and survival training.

*“Ours comes down to some hand-to-hand training, like hand-to-hand combat, rolling-on-a-mat type of training. Other parts come down to specific field training where it’s awkward at times, especially with new troops teaching them how to grapple on the ground, so they are comfortable. You give them a same-sex partner—otherwise, they won’t get the learning objective.”*

—Senior enlisted man

*“With drill instructors, I would prefer a male, because most females probably don’t want a male drill instructor running them through showers.”*

—Senior enlisted man

*“Maybe because it’s the norm, but I couldn’t imagine going through those 3 months [of basic training] with that kind of schedule and that routine with a male instructor. That’s just not how it is. I would say I would prefer females in that case.”*

—Senior enlisted woman

*“[For sexual assault prevention and response] training . . . , females might not be comfortable with a male or vice versa. I had a male and female [sexual assault prevention and response] training, and I preferred the male because you always see the women as victims, but it showed the opposite—that every woman is not a victim. Sometimes women mess up too. I like that because it’s not a woman saying I’m a victim. It’s a male saying, ‘My wife did something to me.’ It was nice not seeing [a] woman as a victim.”*

—Senior enlisted woman

*“During [survival]] training, I didn’t have any female instructors. That would have been nice. The ratio of men to women [students] was about 20 percent female. It would have been nice to see a female in that environment.”*

—Female officer

## **2. Many groups reported that they do not prefer to have an instructor of a specific gender provided that the instructor is credible**

Participants in many groups reported that the gender of an instructor is not a concern as long as the instructor has the necessary credentials. Competence, quality of instruction, and credibility were cited as the most important attributes of an instructor, regardless of gender.

*“[I would consider an instructor credible] only if they were qualified to be an instructor, but only if they were good enough to be an instructor.”*

—Female officer

*“Regardless [of gender], you have to be able to reach each student. You can have a crappy female instructor, or a crappy male instructor, if they can’t get the information out.”*

—Senior enlisted woman

*“Regardless of male or female, it’s who teaches it better.”*

—Senior enlisted man

*“I don’t care [about gender] because there will be female [instructors] that will [take me down], no matter what it is.”*

—Male officer

## **3. Many groups argued that there should be a greater diversity of instructors**

Participants in many groups suggested that there should be more diversity with respect to instructor gender, race, and other attributes.

*"It's really important in certain fields to have women represented, especially when it's few, and they need the passion and expertise for getting through that."*

*—Female officer*

*"I've had quite a few female instructors who were really, really good. I don't care either way [about gender] as long as you want to give me the information and then show me how you know it after that. I don't care who they are—black, white, female, male, transgender, whatever. If they have good information, they're good."*

*—Senior enlisted man*

*"I think it's good for the organization, absolutely, [and] for some younger folks coming up, to be able to show that you can do anything you want in the [Service]. While some rates or types of operations may not be dominated by females, [it's good] to have someone in a senior position to say, 'Hey, I did it, so you can do it, too.'"*

*—Male officer*

#### **4. Some groups mentioned a preference for female instructors for dealing with women-specific issues**

Participants in some groups said that for some women-specific issues such as pregnancy, lactation, and menstruation, they would prefer a female instructor. Participants who said they would prefer a female instructor for topics specific to women explained that their preference was related to the credibility and relatability of the female instructor in those cases: male instructors do not have experience in these areas.

*"[For] pregnancy [physical training]—a female would know how to teach that better than a male."*

*—Senior enlisted man*

*"[I'd prefer a female instructor during pregnancy physical training]. I had my daughter in December. [The instructor] doesn't necessarily always have to be a female, but a female who had a child in the military would know more. Also, all pregnancies are different. I don't think some of the male instructors are knowledgeable—they're just like, 'No, you'll be alright.' They don't understand you have your good days and your bad days. You need a female who has been through it in the military."*

*—Senior enlisted woman*

*". . . Who would I rather talk to [than a female instructor about lactation rooms? . . . If there's instruction that a male physically can't experience, I would prefer to hear about it from a woman. I've gone to women about childbirth and lactation because I'm more comfortable talking to women about that."*

*—Female officer*

*"Yes, [women prefer female instructors] because they will be alike. Male and females are totally different. Why not have someone who is [not] going to assume or guess; why not have someone who knows what they are going through?"*

*—Senior enlisted man*

## G. Perceptions of Number of Female Instructors in the Military

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DACOWITS asked focus group participants for their thoughts on the number of female instructors in the military. Participants felt that the number of female instructors in the military was low but that an instructor's credibility and competence were more important considerations. Participants also discussed what should be the optimal ratio of female to male instructors in the military.

### 1. Most groups felt that the number of female instructors was low

Participants in most groups agreed that there were too few female instructors in the military. Participants offered a variety of explanations for that outcome.

*"... At our leadership course, there were no female instructors. That's where it would have made a difference—when teaching us how to be a leader."*

—Female officer

*"I don't think I would have felt different with a female instructor. . . . You don't come across them often, especially in higher ranking positions. . . . Courses I've taken with all males, dealing with specific female issues that came up, because we are different, they weren't able to give me guidance on that because it wasn't something they had dealt with before. It's different with females in high rank and in charge. It would have been nice to see."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"I've had 15 years and multiple trainings and one female instructor. That's pretty telling."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"With the integration we are dealing with, there needs to be more [female instructors]."*

—Senior enlisted man

#### a. Number of female instructors varied by occupational specialty

Participants offered that the military's female instructors, although few in number, varied by occupational specialty; some occupational specialties—such as medicine—had greater numbers of females.

*"... With [occupations] like maintenance, you need some females in there."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"I'm medical; I've always had predominantly female instructors. Other [occupational specialties] have never encountered them. In mine, most of my coworkers are females. [There is an] uneven spread among [my Service] in career fields."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"They're mostly males. I've seen one [female instructor] in my career field. I've applied for them, but they're all men. We're all equal—but [the instructors are] all men."*

—Senior enlisted woman

## **b. Low number of female instructors a result of recently opened pipeline**

Other participants noted that the lack of female instructors could be because the pipeline of occupational specialties was only recently opened to women. In their view, there are fewer female instructors for these positions because women have had less time to attain instructor-level experience in these occupational specialties. This explanation was offered more frequently by male focus groups.

*"I think there have to be more female [Service members] first so they can become instructors. You don't see too many female [Service members] because it's awkward when they're around. We have one female in our class right now, and I had one at my first duty station, and it is weird because everyone acts different. I wish there were more females in the military because then they would feel represented."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"I would say [the number] is low right now, and that is because the first wave of females in submarines is just getting through. The initial screening process for women is coming through. . . . As that goes through and this becomes more the norm, then I believe [having women as part of] the instructor process will become more the norm."*

—Male officer

## **2. Many groups felt that the number of female instructors matters less than the qualifications of instructors**

Participants in many groups thought the number of female instructors does not matter as much as the qualifications of the instructors. In other words, participants felt that there should be more female instructors, but only if they were capable and competent.

*"There should be [more female instructors], but they have to be capable first."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"I've applied for instructor duty before. I've seen instructor billets filled with people who are [not competent]. They have to come and learn everything and then teach people. My female instructor had never been on the helicopter she was teaching before. She did her research, and she got it. . . . She had to work that much harder to get that info and do the job."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"As long as they are qualified, I'm for more females. When you're breaking ground, like when they integrated [occupational specialty], they integrated at the higher level first with qualified females as a deliberate move to set the tone and focus for junior [Service members] to look to. I don't think an exact number is good. Quality is more important than quantity."*

—Female officer

## **a. Women should not be pushed to be instructors to fill a quota**

Participants also argued that women should not be forced to instruct simply to fill a quota for female instructors, which could lower the quality of instruction. The quality and capability of an instructor is

more important to Service members than the instructor's gender. This sentiment was more common among males.

*"If you can get quality instructors, do not force them. If they don't want to be there, you will have poor results."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"I don't think we should force a female [into] a job just because now you have a [Service member] doing something that they don't want to do. It sets a standard for poor instructors."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"It doesn't matter. Whoever is in the instructor seat [it is important] that they know what they are doing but if you are purposely looking to fill a seat with a female to check that box, then you open yourself up to criticism. [It looks bad if a woman gets the job because someone] 'had to [fill the spot with a woman] because this follows regulation.' I don't care who or what they are, as long as they know their stuff."*

—Male officer

*"If they're the best, they should be teaching people. It's not about the numbers of gender."*

—Male officer

### **3. Many groups discussed the perceived optimal ratio of male to female instructors**

Participants in many focus groups discussed what the optimal ratio of male to female instructors should be in the military. Service members struggled with determining whether the appropriate ratio of males to females in the classroom should reflect the overall population or the ratio of males to females in the military context. This opinion was voiced more often by officers.

*"There's a lot fewer women in any career field except for medics, so I think it depends on what you mean. Is there 50/50, or is it representative of the population in the military in general? I'm not surprised to be in a room full of military and 90 percent of them are white males."*

—Female officer

*"Only 2.5 percent of the population between 18 and 25 are eligible to be in the military, so if we're talking about that 2.5 percent who can join—and we talk about females and instructors—we're going to have a hard time keeping anybody."*

—Female officer

*"If the expectation is to be a slice of life, should we have 14 percent of instructors be women? Do we put the women there, or do we put the competent people there? And when is that the same?"*

—Female officer

*"From my view, the proportion does reflect the ratio we have. I feel that there are more women that do teach, but it's really who can teach that topic the best."*

—Male officer

## Chapter 4. Career and Family Planning

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To build upon its 2017 study of childcare, family care plans, and other family planning-related considerations, DACOWITS explored Service member experiences with career and family planning. The Committee was interested in learning about participant experiences with balancing career and family obligations and how they have affected both individuals and units. The Committee conducted 18 focus groups on career and family planning (see Appendix C.2 for the focus group protocol). This chapter discusses the focus group findings on career and family planning and is organized into the following sections:

- ▶ Planning around starting a family
- ▶ Perceived challenges with career and family planning
- ▶ Perceived differences in career and family planning for operational units, support units, military service, and the civilian sector
- ▶ Experiences with career and family planning resources and suggestions for training

When interpreting the findings outlined in this chapter, it is important to consider that these focus groups consisted of individuals with a range of family backgrounds, including single, married, or divorced; some participants had children, and some did not.

### A. Planning Around Starting a Family

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When asked how they make the decision about if and when to have a family while serving in the military, participants' responses varied. Although participants in many focus groups had not planned when to have a family, others had planned their families and considered factors such as their financial readiness, deployment or relocation schedule, and career progression.

#### 1. Many groups had not planned when to start a family

DACOWITS asked participants if and how they engaged in family planning during their service. Participants from many groups described a lack of family planning during their time in the military. Participants commonly described personal or second-hand experiences with unexpected pregnancies.

*"My son wasn't planned, and I think a lot of the instability in the career with constant deploying was holding it back. My wife was bugging me. Then, one day, she said, 'I'm pregnant.' [I said,] 'I guess we're doing this.'"*

—Senior enlisted man

*"By accident, I got six kids. Four of the six were accidents. Well, five were; the last two were twins."*

—Male officer

*"In my situation, my daughter was unexpected. I wasn't planning it. I wanted a child, but she was unexpected."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"[T]he first one, she was unplanned. And it worked out well. I was very young in [the Service], and I was very new, and I didn't understand the [Service] at all. My leadership was great. [They said], 'Here's the order, familiarize yourself with your rights.' It worked out well with what was available, and my leadership was helping me, [noncommissioned officers] were helping me, telling me what to do. That made that pregnancy easier."*

—Female officer

## **2. Many groups did plan when to start a family**

Participants from many groups described actively planning for a family during their time in the military, which included taking into account their family's financial readiness to support a child or children, the military benefits that would enable a growing family, and their or their spouses' deployment schedules.

### **a. Decision making based on expected deployment and assignments**

Participants in many groups, particularly men, described making family planning decisions based on expected deployment and assignment schedules. Participants reported planning pregnancies before deployments, timing a pregnancy for when they would be assigned to a slower paced unit, and learning lessons from being pregnant in a fast-paced work environment.

*"My first was born while I was in a high-paced operational tempo. I was in an operational unit. That was difficult to manage. . . . In that kind of job field, being pregnant . . . was a little difficult. I had my youngest . . . 5 months ago. It's been much easier here at [installation]. If, in the future, I want more kids, either I do it now while I'm here, or say, 'Hey, can you send me to a support [unit]?' When you're pregnant, it's just easier, you don't have [to worry] about being in the field. . . . You have a standard of 0730 to 1700 job with consistent hours, which makes it a lot easier to do."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"I'm 4 months pregnant, and my daughter is 15 months old. I have to get warfare qualified. But to go to a deployable unit, you can't be pregnant. I had to have another kid right away when I came here . . . , so when we rotate, I can be in a deployable unit. If we have more [children], there will be a 5- to 6-year age gap. We decided that as a family, but we had to take it into account. My job is demanding now, but my family comes first, and I'm able to do that right now."*

—Female officer

*"When I was in an operational unit, our next deployment was planned before coming back from another [deployment]. If I hadn't come home from [installation], we wouldn't have had [our] one child planned. I wasn't able to see [my] first four kids at all."*

—Male officer

*"I did it the right way for the military. I went to shore duty, and my pregnant tours were combined, so I didn't lose out on sea time. Then, I went back to sea duty for my first deployment away from my daughter. It was hard, but she was young. But now, wanting to have another child, my family situation has changed. In same-sex marriages, the [Service] won't pay for anything. We pay \$2,000 a month for [in vitro fertilization]. . . . Planning doesn't work well. I'm going to try until I can get pregnant."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"I think about stability: when's my next (Permanent Change of Station) or deployment? It's all about stability for my family. I'm weighing decisions right now about whether to retire, and my oldest is about to go to college. He wants to go to [university]. If I stay in the military, I might have to move, and he'll be by himself here for college. If I leave the military, I can stay near him."*

—Female officer

### **b. Decision making based on financial readiness**

Participants in some groups described making family planning decisions based on their family's financial readiness and current benefits that would support a child. Participants reported considering job opportunities and timed their families around the increased earning potential available with newly attained degrees or education and the amount of money they made or could make with upcoming promotions.

*"I planned for my one. I did the Green to Gold program<sup>2</sup> . . . , and then, financially, we figured we could try for one more. We finally made a plan and [decided] we could afford it."*

—Male officer

*"[Service members have a family] if they are financially ready enough or in the right place in their careers."*

—Male officer

*"[Service members have their families] when they feel like they make enough money to support that."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"In my situation, my daughter was unexpected. I wasn't planning it...I have a comfortable way of living, and the only way I could raise my child that way was to raise my hand [to reenlist]."*

—Senior enlisted woman

## **3. Some groups sought advice and support surrounding career and family planning**

DACOWITS also asked focus group participants who they consulted for advice and support and who had been most helpful when making decisions about balancing a military career and family. Participants said they obtained advice and support from other female Service members, family members, unit leaders, and mentors.

### **a. Some groups sought advice from other female Service members**

Participants in some groups, particularly women, described seeking or receiving advice about career and family planning from other female Service members. Female participants described how they reached

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<sup>2</sup> A 2-year program that provides eligible, active duty enlisted Service members an opportunity to complete a baccalaureate degree or a 2-year graduate degree and earn a commission as an Army officer (Source: military.com)

out to Service members within the same career field, those who had experienced situations similar to theirs, or women in leadership roles when seeking counsel.

*"[For advice, I go to someone of the] same gender, same career field, but more advanced in their career."*

—Female officer

*". . . I went to [a] female who was a step ahead of me. I talked to some instructors at the school house, and my rugby coach at the Academy was sort of my consistent mentor. . . . I have 40 rugby sisters of all branches. Some stayed in, some [got] out, some married men, some married women, some adopted, some did in vitro [fertilization]—everything you can think of."*

—Female officer

*"[I turn to] other people who have been in similar situations. I look for other women who have been in an operational [specialty] who can relate to the experience I'm going through. [For example,] I'm expecting my first child, so how's [breastfeeding] going to work? . . . I talk to people in similar situations."*

—Senior enlisted woman

#### **b. Some groups sought advice and support from family members**

Participants in some groups described family members as a common source of advice and support surrounding career and family planning decisions. Participants said they reached out to spouses, parents, relatives, and other family members.

*"I went to my dad, a veteran."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"I wouldn't go to anybody in the military [for advice on] a life-changing decision; it would probably be my family."*

—Female officer

*"[I sought advice from] relatives and friends who have been in the Service."*

—Male officer

*"[I go to] family. They have to be on it. Both of our sides are prepared."*

—Senior enlisted female

*"Mentors and leaders can tell you what they've done, but they won't ultimately help you. Our parents and families will be the ones to step up if you both need to go and enact a family care plan."*

—Male officer

#### **c. Some groups sought advice from unit and installation leadership**

Participants in some groups reported reaching out to leaders in their unit and installation for support and advice surrounding career and family planning decisions. Participants said they consulted senior officers, commanders, and other leaders.

*“Senior officers who have the same family makeup [can provide advice].”*

—Male officer

*“If you have a senior leader you trust, they more than likely went through the same thing you went through, whether it be at home or in the military. They have the blueprint to their failures and they can guide you.”*

—Senior enlisted man

*“[I would ask] female [unit] commanders. They [have done] really well, and you can go to them to ask, ‘What did you do?’”*

—Female officer

*“When I was in boot camp, I'd go to a [noncommissioned officer] . . . ; if they can't take care of it, they'll bring it higher [up the chain of command].”*

—Senior enlisted man

## **B. Perceived Challenges With Career and Family Planning**

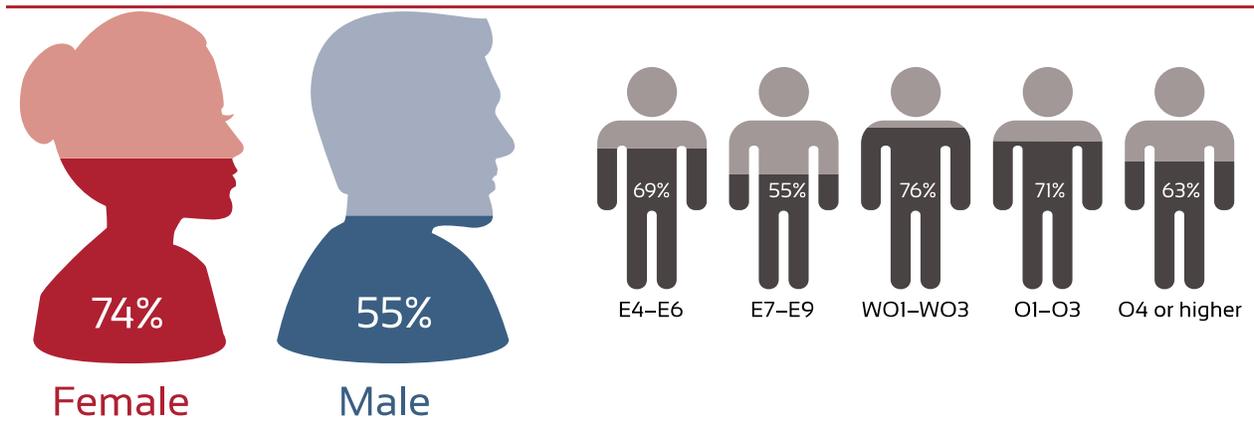
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Using the mini-survey questionnaire, DACOWITS asked participants for their perceptions on the ease or difficulty for members of their Services to have a family and continue to advance their careers in the military. Participants could select from the response options of very easy, somewhat easy, somewhat difficult, or very difficult. Female participants and officers were more likely to consider planning a family and advancing one's military career somewhat or very difficult. Participants in all groups identified challenges with career and family planning.

### **1. Women and officers found career and family planning more difficult than their peers**

As shown in Figure 4.1, when comparing differences in the perceived difficulty of having a family and advancing their careers across all participant demographic groups, the most significant differences were by gender and rank. Female participants (74%) were more likely than male participants (55%) to perceive career and family planning in the military as difficult ( $t(551) = 3.44, p < .05$ ). When comparing across ranks, officers (76 percent of those in ranks WO1–WO3, 71 percent of those in ranks O1–O3, 63 percent of those in ranks O4 or higher) were more likely than enlisted participants (69 percent of those in ranks E4–E6, 55 percent of those in ranks E7–E9) to find it somewhat or very difficult for members of their respective Services to have a family and continue to advance their careers in the military ( $t(552) = 3.07, p < .05$ ). There were no statistically significant differences when comparing by Service branch, years of military service, dependent children at home, marital status, unit type, specialty type, or career intentions (see Appendix D for the full distribution of responses for each subgroup).

**Figure 4.1. Proportion of Participants Who Found Planning a Family and Advancing One’s Military Career Somewhat or Very Difficult by Gender and Rank**



Source: DACOWITS mini-survey (data from groups participating in career and family planning discussion only)

## 2. All groups described challenges with career and family planning

Participants described challenges surrounding childcare, serving while pregnant or breastfeeding, waiting too long to have children, and living separately from spouses and family.

### a. All groups listed childcare as a challenge

Participants in all groups listed childcare as a challenge for career and family planning. In particular, as DACOWITS has heard in previous years, the cost of childcare, access to childcare, misalignment of childcare center hours with work hours, and long wait lists were mentioned as common challenges. Participants believed single or dual-military Service members faced more challenges than their peers with career and family planning.

*“No daycares are available until summer, so one of my [noncommissioned officers’] wives keeps [my daughter]. But, some days, she can’t, so I just go pick her up and bring her to work with me, and she’s in her walker while I work.”*

—Senior enlisted woman

*“In command, I had [Service members] who were dual-military. It was always female [Service members] who couldn’t work nights or had to go pick up their kids from childcare. Childcare hours seem to be business hours, but we have lots of night shifts. I guess it was the agreed-upon relationship, but it was always the female [Service member] who was accommodating. Why couldn’t the childcare be open nights? Then I could spread out the female [Service members] so they’re not all on first shift.”*

—Female officer

*“I’ve been a single dad since 2010. . . . I have to find someone who I can trust [to ask,] ‘Can you watch my kid overnight so I can go on duty?’ After a while, you have a routine and build trust in who can watch and pick up your kid from school. It’s tough.”*

—Senior enlisted man

*“I have someone who works with me, and her significant other got deployed and was gone, and she’s in an operational job and now has her young son by herself. . . . She works with me and is supposed to be on-call to go on at 2:00 in the morning to go on law enforcement missions. We were able to make it work . . . to temporarily give her a different position. . . .”*

—Male officer

**b. Many groups mentioned delaying having a family or “missing an opportunity” to start or expand their families because of their careers**

Participants in many groups noted that they had waited too long to plan for a family while building their careers. Participants discussed age in relation to the decision to start or expand a family and how this factor affected their ability to biologically have children. Participants also said they had aimed to achieve a certain rank before they had children.

*“Every [one of my senior enlisted leaders] had no husband or kids because they waited [until the right time in their career], and now they cannot have kids. When people focus on [having kids at] the right time, they wait too long. If you wait for the right time, it is never.”*

—Senior enlisted woman

*“My daughter was planned. . . . I wanted . . . to be in [the military] a decent amount of time prior to starting a family. I didn’t want to plateau in my career, so I decided about 6–7 years in was a good time to have her. We want another child, but because of some of career options, it may not be feasible now, especially on my behalf. If I want a commission . . . , and because of the timeframe . . . , I might have to stick with one child, because being pregnant after 30 will bear on my body. . . . As the female in the situation, I have to worry about carrying the child and the after effects.”*

—Senior enlisted woman

*“if you wait, you’re going to have issues. The people who wait have fertility issues, and then it becomes a massive stressor and money problem.”*

—Female officer

**c. Some groups mentioned challenges for dual-military couples and the difficulty of living separately from their families and spouses**

Participants in some groups noted that living apart from their spouses, also known as “geo-bacheloring,” was a difficult aspect of career and family planning. This theme was often mentioned as a challenge for dual-military families. Others described challenges associated with being away from their families in general.

"I'm a quasi-single mom. [My husband] doesn't move here for another year and a half. That was daunting at first, but people at my command are supportive. But. . . I can't do late-night meetings or anything. It's fortunate that I have a command that's supportive and understanding. With husbands, they say, 'Oh, you have your wife.' That's a constant thorn in my side. Guys can go do whatever [they want], and the wives are just at home. The woman takes care of the house . . . , takes care of the kids. You're doing both. I don't see a lot of single men in the military with kids. I see family-oriented men, but their wives are usually stay-at-home."

—Female officer

"I'm [dual-military]. This is our first duty station together. We have spent a lot of time apart. It gets crazy. Sometimes, you lose that focus, and you have to really want to be in whatever situation you are in. Sometimes, he works until 1900, and you have to find a way to talk, [like using] Facetime or something. You fight to try to get together, and you're still in high [operational] tempo."

—Female officer

"We had a [dual-military] couple, and they [were] dropped in different spots. They were splitting the difference living [between two cities], had a 2-hour drive every morning because the systems didn't match, and nobody said anything. She does her job [very] well, so nobody knew until I found out. [They spent 9 months trying to move]. . . . On a 12-hour shift . . . , she had to stay with friends sometimes just from being worn out."

—Senior enlisted man

"My husband and I are both [Service members], and I can see the difference. We have different concerns. What if we both deploy at the same time? The timing of certain courses we might take [could conflict]. Is childcare available? Will we be placed in different duty stations? . . . It's a lot we consider as dual-military. If there was one Service member with a civilian spouse, it might be different, a little more flexible. We get a lot of support, and we are lucky and blessed with where we have been throughout our careers. It hasn't affected us, but I can see some concerns."

—Senior enlisted woman

"I've seen dual-military [spouses] not see each other for 1 to 2 years."

—Senior enlisted man

#### **d. Some groups mentioned being pregnant or breastfeeding as a challenge**

Participants in some groups cited challenges related to serving while pregnant or breastfeeding. Several Service members noted these challenges are particularly relevant for females serving in operational units. Service members described being judged by others, the potential increased workload their pregnancies caused for peers, negative repercussions (e.g., being sent to another unit) for becoming pregnant, and the difficulties of being pregnant or breastfeeding when working.

*"I'm [preparing for a Permanent Change of Station] in the next couple of months. We are planning to have our third and last child, and I'm considering the timing of that because I do not want to arrive on station pregnant with people judging me about when I'm going to be out [on maternity leave] and trying to figure out coverage [for my job duties while I'm out] before I even get there. That's one of the primary reasons why we have not gotten pregnant yet. I want to assess the leadership there first and then choose to pursue pregnancy."*

—Female officer

*"I'm in an operational [unit] right now, and I'm pregnant. That's thrown a wrench in a lot of things. . . . I gave up the opportunity to be an instructor, [and] . . . we're also dual-mil[itary]. . . . I could fly, but I've been sick every day . . . , [and] you can't fly in the first or third trimester. That is also putting my [unit] in a manning problem, so there's a lot to consider. It makes it more difficult planning [a pregnancy] and not feeling guilty. This [pregnancy] was not fully intended—it was sooner than expected. . . . If it were a shore tour, I'd like to think it'd be easier. There's a lot to think about. . . . Where do I go next, and how [will it affect] my career progression? It's stressful."*

—Female officer

*"[It's difficult] having to go out for 12-hour responses when you need to pump [for breastfeeding], and you can't."*

—Senior enlisted woman

## **C. Perceived Differences Between Operational and Support Units and Between the Services and the Civilian Sector**

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DACOWITS asked focus group participants about the factors that affected their family planning decisions and what differences they perceived, if any, between those in operational units compared with support units and between those in military service compared with the civilian sector.

### **1. Some groups felt family planning was more difficult for those in operational units than support units**

Participants believed those in operational units had more unpredictable schedules and faced greater challenges planning a family around their careers as well as their spouses' careers.

#### **a. Some groups noted unpredictable schedules were common in operational units**

Participants in some focus groups, particularly men, noted that the work schedule and tempo in operational units made family planning difficult. Some participants noted that the long or irregular work hours and fast pace made it difficult to spend time with family and spouses and plan for children.

*"[People in operational units could be tasked at any moment. They have to have a plan together already. . . . I see it all the time. . . . You never know when something will come up."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"[Operational units have temporary duty assignments]. Deployments. Shift changes. All that, especially shift changes. One quarter, you will be day shift, and then you end up covering someone else on mid-shift. You have to tell the family [that your schedule has suddenly changed], and the wife can kick and scream, but that's time away while under the same roof [as opposed to time away due to deployment]. You can go 3 to 6 months without time with family because of sleeping."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"In an operational unit, the [operations] tempo is really high. I'm stationed at [installation] now, and the clock is constant. . . . I knew what I signed up for. You have to come early or stay late, or stay all night because people are using sensitive equipment. I've never been in a support unit, but it depends on where you are and the leadership."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"I don't work 9 to 5, and I get off [after the] airplanes get fixed. I'm always switching shifts with day and night, and there are married [Service members] that switch off. It's hard for my wife to get a job since we don't know her hours with childcare. In a support unit, they know when they are coming in and getting off."*

—Senior enlisted man

**b. Some groups mentioned how dual-military couples in operational units needed to carefully balance family planning with two careers**

Participants in some groups noted that it was difficult to plan for a family while at least one spouse was serving in an operational unit. In particular, participants in some groups noted that one spouse needs to “step back” his or her career to accommodate family planning with a spouse that serves in an operational unit. This concept commonly emerged in reference to dual-military couples.

*"I see a lot of dual-military [couples]. We lose a lot of good [Service members] because they decide to be the one at home. We're not only losing females, but males, too. We have a Family Care Plan, but no one really cares about those but me. I always hear, 'I want to stay in, but I'm just going to get out.' We lose good people that need to be retained that aren't being retained because of the family situation."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"With member-to-member in the same field . . . typically, the female is consciously going to make the change to [go to] another career path, and we have to make that decision. I was an assignment officer and had to help people make those decisions."*

—Male officer

*"My husband and I, we've been married 17 years. All through my career in the [Service], we had to agree that my career would come before his, so we agreed he would drop everything he's doing to come with me. As far as being in an operational unit, I don't feel like male spouses have as much support—as far as community—as female spouses. There aren't as many male dependents as female ones. He was always a [occupational specialty], so we developed . . . supports for dependents. He has struggled with our marriage because of the stigma."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"It comes down to whose career is more important. My commander has two little boys and recently almost got out because she was pregnant and . . . briefing the [senior officer] 5 days before she went into labor. She goes home, pops out a kid, and her husband got out of the [Service] to be with the kids so she could do the career that she wants to do. It was a struggle, but she made it happen."*

—Female officer

## **2. When compared with civilians, participants considered some aspects of family planning easier for military personnel and others more difficult**

DACOWITS also asked participants to describe any differences they perceived between planning a family and balancing a career for those in the military compared with those in the civilian sector. Commonly mentioned differences included deployments, frequent moving, and military versus civilian employment benefit packages.

### **a. Many groups noted the frequent moving required of Service members**

Participants in many groups, particularly male officers, noted that military personnel were more likely to plan their career and family around frequent moves (related to installation changes, deployments, etc.). Some participants noted that frequent moves made it difficult for nonmilitary spouses to secure meaningful jobs, reenter the workforce, and complete their education.

*"My wife has complained about this for a while: every 2–3 years, we move. She is an accountant. She would go job to job to job, and then [she] decided to stay home with the kids and then go back to the workforce. When we first got married, she made twice what I did, but . . . having to move it made it impossible to have a stable career field."*

—Male officer

*"My wife was in the middle of school when I commissioned. She put school on hold. Then, we had kids. She never finished her degree. She's a stay-at-home mom now."*

—Male officer

*"My dad was a retired [senior enlisted leader] in the [Service]. We moved around to different Headquarters positions. [But some] parents accept a different position [to stay] somewhere for their kids' sake, like not moving in [their kid's] senior year of high school."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"It's hard to meet people to create a family with who want to move around a lot. . . . You could be in three different countries in 2 years."*

—Male officer

*"As a civilian, you can know if you need to move States for a job, but with the military, if they say you have to go, then you don't have a choice."*

—Senior enlisted man

### **b. Some groups described challenges of deployments for military personnel**

Participants in some groups noted that military personnel are more likely to plan their careers and families around deployment and duty schedules.

*"In the civilian workforce, the deployment factor is not there. They don't have to worry about that or an extended [temporary duty assignment]. The unpredictable nature of the job [is different compared with civilian jobs]."*

—Female officer

*"In a civilian job, you don't face [deployment]. Even if your unit is accommodating, you could be deployed."*

—Female officer

*"The difference is that I could get deployed overseas. I can't say no."*

—Female officer

*". . . Some [civilians] do have to go to different places, but it is hard to do certain things. [For example,] will you be there for graduation? Should you move [your family] with you?"*

—Senior enlisted man

### **c. Some groups believed the benefits in the military were better than in the civilian sector**

Participants in some groups, particularly men, noted that compared with the civilian workforce, military personnel had a more favorable benefit package that was conducive to planning for a family. Some participants noted that health insurance for adults and children was more affordable in the military versus the civilian sector and that flexible leave was more common and easy to use in the military than in the civilian workforce.

*"I have a friend who hates the [Service] but is staying because she thinks it's better to have a kid in the [Service] than out. Her command lets her go at the end of the day to get her kid, where a lot of civilian jobs don't. Generally, a lot of the [Service] understands family stuff better than the civilian side does."*

—Female officer

*"If I wasn't a [Service member] and having children, I wouldn't get the same amount of time off for maternity leave. I wouldn't get as much as a civilian, which made a big difference for me. [When I had] my first daughter, I took 6 weeks, and with my second daughter, I had 12 weeks. If I was on the civilian side, I wouldn't get that much time, and have that paid time off on top of it . . ."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"I think the military works more with you than civilian people. I see people roll up late for any reason, and they're like, 'Oh, it's fine!' I don't think you can do that in [the] civilian world. The military is more willing to work with you in that sense."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"I've had to take off more in the last 4 years because [my husband] has a job, but he doesn't have time to take off. . . . I'm always the one like, 'Hey, I have to go,' and they're very accommodating."*

—Senior enlisted woman

## D. Experiences With Career and Family Planning Resources and Suggestions for Training

DACOWITS asked participants about what training, if any, members had received around family planning and followed up by asking what type of training surrounding career and family planning they would like to receive. Participants in some groups reported that they had received formal training on career and family planning. When asked if they preferred mandatory training or voluntary training on the subject, more participants preferred voluntary training over mandatory training, as shown in Figure 4.2.

**Figure 4.2. Experiences With and Perceptions of Training on Career and Family Planning**



Source: DACOWITS hand counts (data from groups participating in instructors discussion only)

### 1. Approximately 1 in 10 participants reported ever receiving formal training on career and family planning

DACOWITS asked participants to raise their hands to indicate how many had received formal training or guidance to support decisions around balancing career and family. Hand-count data revealed that fewer than 1 out of 10 participants received formal training on the topic.

*"I did a lot of research on things myself. There is a [Service member] in my [unit] who is pregnant and comes to me [for information on] maternity leave and childcare. [For a long time.] I was the only person [who had been] pregnant in my [unit]. . . , so I had to do the research on [pregnancy-related] time off, [temporary duty assignment] deferment, etc."*

—Female officer

*". . . The workforce resilience training is on our management training. . . . That was it: resilience, work-life balance. I don't know if it was effective, but it did exist. They reduced training requirements. I think it's been axed. It's on the website still, but not required. It didn't touch on career and family planning, but it did work-life balance, more on managing stress."*

—Female officer

*"Family Readiness provides counseling and pamphlets if you seek it out."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"Yeah, [the Service does] a lot of different things. They have the family advocacy group. . . . We do training quarterly."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"[T]he resiliency training is the most formal training we get."*

—Senior enlisted man

## **2. Approximately 7 out of 10 participants felt training on career and family planning should be voluntary**

DACOWITS next asked participants to raise their hands to indicate whether they thought a unit or Service should provide voluntary or optional training surrounding balancing career and family. Hand-count data revealed that approximately 7 out of 10 participants desired voluntary training.

*"You should start with an optional training before you jump into mandatory. Everyone is different, and I don't think I'd need one on that right now."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"I think if it's voluntary, that would be good. If you want it, you can take it, but if not, you don't have to. My chaplain has a retreat available, and you get Friday off to go, so I'm going to go. If you think there's info that could help, why not? I think there are many different ways to address it. If it was mandatory training, they'll make it one set way. Voluntary training makes it different."*

—Male officer

## **3. Approximately 3 out of 10 participants felt training on career and family planning should be mandatory**

DACOWITS then asked participants to raise their hands to indicate whether they thought a unit or Service should provide mandatory training around balancing career and family. Hand-count data revealed that 3 out of 10 participants desired mandatory training.

*"On the flip side, sometimes, people don't understand because they don't have personal knowledge of what women need. One way a mandatory training would help is to train folks who have no experience so that they can empathize."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"I think it should be somewhat mandatory but with caveats. Do it at a time where they will sit down and pay attention and digest that information."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"[Training should be mandatory] for people with children."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"[I]t should be mandatory on work life balance in general. People in and out of the military struggle right now with that. . . . They are transitioning to adulthood. They need some help with transitioning and work-life balance."*

—Female officer

#### 4. Participants' suggestions for content to include in training on career and family planning varied

DACOWITS asked participants what else their respective units or Services could do to help their members balance a military career and plan for a family. Participants suggested several trainings and resources, listed in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1. Participants' Suggestions for Content to Include in Training on Career and Family Planning**

Family Training	Family and Career Training	Career Training
Contraception education	Empathy training	Professional military training
Domestic violence prevention	Mental health training	Workforce resiliency training
Financial training	Preparing for adulthood/Life skills training	
Marriage counseling		
Resiliency training		
Spiritual training		

## Chapter 5. Unit Climate and Culture

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**D**ACOWITS investigated Service members' perceptions about unit climate and culture and certain behaviors that may negatively affect a unit's climate, including gender discrimination, sexual harassment, and other inappropriate behaviors that fall into a "gray," or ambiguous, ethical area. The Committee was interested in learning about the factors that affect unit climate and how climate affects the occurrence of and response to instances of inappropriate behavior in a unit. The Committee was also interested in how effectively Services are handling the instances of inappropriate behavior.

The Committee conducted 24 focus groups on unit climate and culture and inappropriate behavior (see Appendix C.3 for the focus group protocols). This chapter discusses the focus group findings on unit climate and inappropriate behavior and is organized into the following sections:

- ▶ Factors affecting unit climate and culture
- ▶ Perceptions of and responses to inappropriate behavior
- ▶ A comparison among gender discrimination, sexual harassment, and other inappropriate behaviors that fall into a gray area
- ▶ Relationship between inappropriate behavior and unit climate

### A. Factors Affecting Unit Climate and Culture

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DACOWITS asked participants to discuss the climate and culture in their units. For the purposes of the discussions, DACOWITS defined culture as "shared beliefs and behaviors adopted by a group like your unit," and defined climate as "the environment those beliefs and behaviors create." DACOWITS asked participants to describe positive and negative unit climates, to describe actions that affect unit climate, and to give suggestions for improving unit climate.

#### 1. Perspectives on positive and negative unit climate varied

DACOWITS asked participants to describe positive and negative unit climates. Participants shared a range of opinions on the factors that most influenced unit climate. Participants cited leadership, communication, community, respect, trust, teamwork, motivation, and favoritism as factors that affect unit climate (see Table 5.1).

**Table 5.1. Elements of Positive and Negative Unit Climates**

Element	Positive Climate	Negative Climate
Leadership	Leaders are caring, responsive, and enforce clear expectations	Leaders do not perform duties well; they are argumentative, controlling, absent, unresponsive, opaque, disrespectful, and do not work for best interests of unit
Communication	Communication is clear and open between ranks	There is a lack of communication across and within ranks
Community	The environment is family-like, and members interact and take care of each other	Not applicable (participants did not mention community in reference to a negative climate)
Respect	Unit members feel valued	Not applicable (Participants did not mention respect in reference to a negative climate)
Trust	Members feel trust among both leadership and peers	Members feel distrust between ranks, within ranks, and in the unit as a whole
Teamwork	All members of the unit work together	Individuals are focused on self-advancement, competition
Motivation	Not applicable (participants did not mention motivation in reference to a positive climate)	Leaders and unit members are not motivated to do their jobs
Discrimination and favoritism	Not applicable (participants did not mention discrimination or favoritism in reference to a positive climate)	Members receive unequal treatment; favoritism and discrimination is linked to gender and racial discrimination

Source: DACOWITS focus group transcripts (data from groups participating in unit climate and culture discussion only)

**a. Many groups held leaders responsible for creating a positive or negative unit climate**

Participants in many groups shared that both positive and negative leadership behavior affect the unit as a whole. Participants mentioned leaders’ actions directly relate to their leadership duties as well as general behaviors and attitudes.

**Many groups thought it was important for leaders to care for their units and respond to members’ needs**

Participants in many groups said leaders create a positive climate by encouraging and being receptive to feedback from unit members. Participants indicated these actions by leaders made members feel valued and respected and allowed members to put more trust in leadership. This resulting positive climate trickled down to general unit interactions and better enabled individuals to accomplish tasks with quality and efficiency. To the opposite effect, participants in some groups said leaders create a negative climate when they do not care about or listen to their unit members.

*"Knowing you're being listened to, [and that] your opinions are being considered [by leadership, creates a positive unit climate]. Not just, 'I'm listening, but only because I have to.' A leader is present—they make themselves visible because they actually want to see what's going on up there."*

—Female officer

*"Definitely trusting your leadership [creates a positive unit climate]. If anything's going on in your life, positive or negative, you shouldn't be doubtful to go to higher ups to tell them this is happening and having them help you. That is a foundation of trust where you need to start."*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"I had a [commanding officer] that pulled in all junior [Service members], all males and females, and was real and asked, 'What am I doing wrong? What can we fix? You can say what you need to say and won't have anything held against you.' That was when I was here the first time. He's one of my mentors, and he's still the same. Like have someone like that to bring [Service members] up [to create a positive unit climate]."*

—Female officer

*"When command doesn't care about you, that sets the tone for a negative climate. If a [Service member] gets sent to the mental hospital, you go visit. If there's a sexual allegation, you take it seriously. You have to care because it turns back really fast."*

—Male officer

*"Used to be that 20 years ago, our . . . commanders used to take us out on forced fun outings. In that long hump, they sat us down and talked to us. A lot of times now, it is 'do as I say, not as I do.' They're not engaging; some unit commanders, senior leaders, and [noncommissioned officers] don't engage with [Service members] any longer. If we could bring that back, it'd help unit climate."*

—Senior enlisted man

### **Many groups said poor leadership could negatively influence unit climate**

Participants in many groups thought that poor leadership could create a negative climate. Conversely, participants in some groups thought that strong leadership could create a positive climate. Participants shared anecdotes of how individual leaders' behavior had negatively influenced general unit climate. These accounts included instances in which leaders (1) did not perform their duties well, (2) argued with other leaders, (3) were overly controlling or did not allow opportunities for flexibility or failure, (4) were absent or did not provide guidance, (5) did not respond to unit feedback, or (6) did not treat unit members with respect. In these cases of poor leadership, respondents felt that leaders did not act in the unit's best interest. This opinion was expressed more frequently by junior enlisted participants.

*"Incompetency [creates a negative unit climate]. When I first got [to this unit, my leader] was incompetent, and so taking direction from him was difficult. I tried to have my [Service members'] best interests at heart, and he didn't do that. He ended up getting relieved, and I had to take over for him for a few months . . . ; in my opinion, the company was way better off."*

—Female officer

*"[It creates a negative unit climate] when [the members of] your chain of command don't get along. That can make everyone in the same department take sides. If you have the same vision within the department, it's more family-like. When mom and dad argue, the kids argue."*

—Junior enlisted man

*"When leadership is not around or available, it has detrimental effects [on unit climate]."*

—Male officer

*"Sometimes, it's not that they don't give clear guidance; it's that they don't know. . . . They spend so much time trying to cover up that they don't know because they want to look like they know."*

—Female officer

*"I think the biggest thing that affects the climate is the mentality from the leadership and . . . forgetting where you came from. A lot of times, us as leaders, we forgot what it felt like when we were treated a certain way, and when we treat people in that light, we expect them to be able to function when [we] didn't like it—the hypocritical mindset."*

—Senior enlisted woman

### **Most groups indicated leaders, along with the unit as a whole, are responsible for establishing and maintaining a positive unit climate**

When DACOWITS asked participants who they thought is responsible for establishing and maintaining a positive unit climate, participants in most groups responded that a combination of leadership and the unit as a whole creates and maintains unit climate.

*"Leadership plays a big role . . . , [but] you need to try to establish that yourself also. If you don't work in a good area, try to make it better. . . . Senior leadership will really drive that. Of course, your officers do, too, but each [unit] leader is more [important in driving that climate]."*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"Everyone is responsible for maintaining [a positive climate] . . . , but leadership has to establish it and walk the walk; otherwise, it will not exist."*

—Female officer

*"Everybody can influence the climate. It's the front-line supervisor [that has the most responsibility for unit climate]. If they never bring the issue to light, the leadership will never know about it. Everyone in the [unit], but especially front-line supervisors and up, [are responsible for unit climate]."*

—Male officer

*"Everyone has a role. You can't put it all on leadership to make the whole thing work cohesively. It starts with personal responsibility, so if everyone is doing what they need to do and asking questions, then you can work from there and build on that."*

—Junior enlisted woman

### **b. Many groups thought communication could influence unit climate**

Participants in many groups thought that clear communication could positively influence unit climate and that a lack of communication could negatively influence unit climate.

#### **Many groups emphasized the importance of clear and open communication**

Participants believed open communication could maintain and build a positive culture. This was more common among women and officers. Participants emphasized the benefits of clear communication up and down the chain of command to ensure the opportunity for Service members to express themselves without judgment or fear of repercussion.

*"[In a positive climate,] everyone feels comfortable to speak their mind and not leave a conversation thinking they're being judged or it will come back to haunt them, professionally or socially. Set aside those barriers."*

—Male officer

*"You will not always have everybody happy, but the freedom to express yourself openly without being judged or put down [is part of a positive climate]."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"The first thing [in establishing a positive climate] is communication—it has to go up and down the chain quickly and clearly. That gets that first wicket out of the way to function, whether it's personal or work related."*

—Male officer

*"Clear communication of intent, what is expected of you and others is constantly emphasized and reassessed, [is part of a positive climate]."*

—Female officer

*"[In a positive climate,] you feel open to bringing problems up and you can tell people things."*

—Junior enlisted woman

#### **Many groups thought a lack of communication could negatively influence unit climate**

Participants in many groups said a lack of communication could contribute to a negative unit climate. This was more common among women and officers. Participants' discussions about poor leadership fell into three categories: (1) overall unit communication, (2) communication between junior and senior unit members, and (3) communicating with leadership.

*"Lack of communication in a unit [contributes to negative unit climate]. When you have that, a lot of things get lost, trust gets lost, accountability gets lost. In a dysfunctional unit, communication is an issue."*

—Male officer

*"I just came back from a negative environment. The communication was not on the same page. The junior people don't trust the senior people, the senior people are not being there for the junior people, and there's no communication."*

—Junior enlisted man

*"A lack of effective communication [contributes to a negative unit climate, such as] when a leader doesn't fully explain their intent or objective, and then it gets taken out on everyone else when it's not executed the way that they wanted."*

—Female officer

### **c. Many groups valued closeness and community**

Participants in many groups said that a sense of community could positively influence unit climate. Participants enjoyed experiencing a family-like atmosphere in their units. They liked it when unit members interacted with each other and took care of each other. Participants thought that these behaviors could increase morale in a unit and help people accomplish their work.

*"[In a positive climate], unit members feel like they're taken care of, that they matter, and if something happens, we'll take care of them. It's like a family thing."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"Getting to know each other on a personal level allows you to relate to [other unit members], which trickles down into professional relationships."*

—Female officer

*"There are two things that make you feel appreciated and wanted: recognition, and a sense of belonging, community. For my guys . . . , we are close knit. Building [a] sense of belonging helps them to feel like they belong and that we recognize their hard work."*

—Male officer

*"[A positive climate is] when you feel when you walk in that everyone knows each other; there's not a tense feeling, it's just relaxed. Everyone does their work, you talk to some people, and you get the job done."*

—Junior enlisted man

### **d. Many groups thought trust and respect could influence unit climate**

Participants in many groups believed that trust and respect could enhance unit climate; while distrust among and between unit members and leaders could negatively influence unit climate.

#### **Many groups believed respect could enhance unit climate**

Participants in many groups thought that respect was part of a positive climate and expressed a desire to be valued and heard by all members of a unit.

*"[A positive climate is] respectful—where everybody respects each other. Good positive attitudes. It spreads. People like to be there."*

—Senior enlisted man

*“People want to feel valued where they work and feel like what they do has a purpose [and] is intentional. If you feel valued, you can do the mission in a way that is good for the culture.”*

—Male officer

### **Many groups believed trust between leaders and unit members could enhance unit climate**

Participants in many groups thought trust could positively influence unit climate. Participants said that it was important for unit members to trust both leaders and fellow unit members. This opinion was most commonly held by women and junior enlisted participants.

*“If you don’t trust leadership, it will create a poor climate.”*

—Senior enlisted woman

*“Having good morale and trusting the people you work with [creates a positive climate].”*

—Junior enlisted woman

### **Some groups felt distrust among unit members could negatively influence unit climate**

Participants in some groups said distrust could degrade unit climate. They described how distrust could occur between ranks, within ranks, and within a unit as a whole. This sentiment was most commonly expressed by men and officers.

*“Trust . . . goes both ways; for the negative [unit climate], distrust [goes both ways]. If the unit leadership distrusts the [senior] leadership and vice versa, that builds or adds to the negative environment.”*

—Senior enlisted man

*“[In a negative unit climate, there is] no trust in the environment—[for example,] if a leader doesn’t trust you, or if you don’t trust that leader has your best interest at heart. An environment of unprofessionalism is hard to put into words.”*

—Female officer

### **e. Some groups believed teamwork could influence unit climate**

Participants in some groups thought that the presence or absence of teamwork could influence unit climate.

#### **Some groups said teamwork was important for creating a positive unit climate**

Participants in some groups thought collaboration could contribute to a positive unit climate. This opinion was more common among men.

*“A unit that everybody works together [has a positive climate]. Not necessarily one person trying to get ahead of another. So, work to push each other up.”*

—Junior enlisted woman

"I would say teamwork is probably the biggest positive in a command climate. . . . If they're working as [a] team, everyone is willing to help each other out and is less likely to get stressed out."

—Female officer

"[In a unit with a positive climate,] everybody [is] working toward [the] same common goal. A bunch of individuals trying to find their own way and not really being after the same thing, that's a bad climate."

—Senior enlisted man

### **Some groups thought a lack of teamwork and individuals focusing on their own self-advancement could negatively influence unit climate**

Participants in some focus groups pointed to the detrimental effects on a unit when unit members focus on their own self-advancement instead of on the well-being of their team. These participants thought that competition among unit members could damage unit climate and mentioned that these behaviors occurred at both junior and senior levels. This opinion was held most frequently by women and officers.

"[In a negative unit climate, unit members are] undermining each other. Hoarding information. Throwing each other under the bus."

—Female officer

"[In a negative unit climate, unit members are] not there to get the mission done, but to check a box [they] need for personal advancement. Our culture creates that type of individual."

—Male officer

### **f. Some groups thought low motivation could negatively influence unit climate**

Participants in some groups felt low motivation could be bad for unit climate. They said this applied to both leaders and unit members. This opinion was more common among men.

"[In a negative unit climate], nobody wants to come to work."

—Senior enlisted woman

"Doing the minimum [contributes to a negative unit climate]."

—Senior enlisted man

"[A negative unit climate is] when there's low morale and a lack of desire to be there. When people are not feeling like part of a team."

—Senior enlisted woman

### **g. Some groups said discrimination and favoritism could negatively influence a unit**

Participants in some groups thought discrimination and favoritism could lead to a negative unit climate. Women were most likely to voice this concern, as they felt that they were often treated differently from their male peers and that leader favoritism was linked to gender discrimination.

In some groups, participants focused on age and experience when discussing differential treatment. They mentioned that in units with negative climates, leaders might apply punishments and rewards unequally. Senior enlisted participants were most likely to mention this concern.

*"Typically, as a female or a minority of a group, maybe [in] a male-dominated group, [the unit] tend[s] to have a negative climate where [unit members] have a 'good old boy' system where 'I like you because you are similar to me.' [This creates a] negative culture across the board."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"[A] man is fat, but he's a man, so he's better than a fit woman. There's always that mentality overshadowing everything [in a negative unit climate]."*

—Female officer

*"Favoritism [contributes to a negative unit climate]. Instead of treating the unit as a whole, you have [Service members] who pick and choose and treat others separately."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"Favoritism [negatively influences unit climate]. One individual gets off lighter or catches more flack than the other. [The boss and the favorite] might have similar personalities. . . . I'll use myself as an example. My boss likes me, so I might get off easy for stuff because I go sit in his office, and we're buddies."*

—Male officer

*"I've been in units where the hypocrisy was thick. A junior guy does something wrong, he gets hammered. All of a sudden, an officer does something wrong, and they sweep it under the rug. Then, people give up quickly. They're not after the same goal after something like that, and it tends to get convoluted."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"Toxic leadership [creates a negative unit climate]. I've run into both sexist and racist leaders, whether it's males that are sexist against females, or a female sexist against males, or someone racist against certain groups. They were putting this behavior on display, but nobody would do anything about it. It was the 'good old boy' club where they'd sweep it under the rug."*

—Senior enlisted man

## 2. Perceived differences in climate between operational and support units

DACOWITS asked participants if they perceived differences in climate between operational and support units and which they considered more difficult for female Service members. Of those who participated in discussions on unit climate and culture, 44 percent reported serving in an operational unit, and 66 percent reported serving in a support unit. Male participants were more likely to serve in an operational unit (49 percent) compared with female participants (40 percent)<sup>3</sup> Many participants perceived differences in climate between operational and support units; the most common sentiment was that operational unit climates are more difficult for parents.

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<sup>3</sup> Source: DACOWITS mini-survey (data from groups participating in unit climate and culture discussion only)

**a. Many groups felt that parents faced more challenges serving in operational units than support units**

Participants in many groups described operational units as more challenging for Service members with children. This was more common among female groups. Participants described parents' challenges with childcare as a result of long hours and more frequent deployments in operational units.

*"You're working so much that when you get home, the kids are asleep. When I got to the [installation], my son was 2, and now he's 6, and you've missed all that time. Now, [in a support unit,] I see more of him than I have in the last 5 years."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"It's harder [for servicewomen] to be operational simply because of the family aspect of it. Bringing in kids is harder, especially without a family care plan, or without that support structure. Yeah, you got a regular schedule, with some random hours . . . but you pretty much have a structure, a schedule, so it's a lot more easy for [women] to work in a support unit."*

—Male officer

*"I've lost some very good [Service members] to the civilian world because they were brand new mothers in their first 2 years and got an order to go to a [operational command] and said they aren't leaving the baby behind. I think that's the difference on the male side. It's easier for males to [deploy] in the first 1 or 2 years [of their child's life]."*

—Senior enlisted man

**b. Many groups felt that operational units were more challenging for women**

Participants in many groups reported that operational units were more challenging for female Service members for a variety of reasons.

*"Originally, I was going to be a navigator. A first thing someone told me was you will have to work twice as hard because you are female and black. He gave me advice on that because of the career field."*

—Female officer

*"It's more difficult for [women]. They are expected to do favors for the guys. I have one friend in an [operations] unit, and [she told me] one girl [there] just got in trouble for giving guys [sexual favors] as they were getting ready to fly. The guys will say, 'I'm doing this job, you should help me out.' They expect that. They become like a nasty incest family."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"Operational would definitely be harder [for women]. I'm coming from an all-male [occupational specialty]. They think that they don't want females because that's the way it's always been. They're not accepting them as much, so it'll be harder on [women] in operational [units]."*

—Junior enlisted man

## **Male-dominated culture in operational units**

Participants in some groups felt that operational units were more difficult for female Service members because of traditionally male-dominated cultures in those units.

*“When I . . . enlisted many years ago, I told myself I would go to a medical field or administrative field. . . . I avoided the infantry base because it was too much to know I was going to a base with all males. I thought about that all the time [when] making career choices.”*

—Female officer

*“The ease [of serving] will be dictated by the unit. If you’re in the infantry or more traditionally male organizations, they haven’t been around a lot of females in the military. The likelihood of experience taking orders from females is low.”*

—Senior enlisted woman

*“This may sound sexist, but I feel [that] in a combat unit, there has to be that macho mentality because for a lot of infantry men, that’s life or death. You don’t have time to be like, ‘Oh my god, what do I do?’ You have to have the mentality, ‘This is your job; do it, or you will die.’ You have to get to the point where you live for this. I don’t want to put my life on that line. But there are females who do. Kudos to them. . . . We don’t have time for you to think about whether you want to kill someone or not when that’s your job.”*

—Junior enlisted woman

*“I have experienced both [operational and support units]. In a combat [occupational specialty] environment, you did have females, but the mindset of the females was a lot different than [the mindset of those] in a support environment. They’re accustomed to a certain type of culture, so some of the things you didn’t see in support [units], you did see in operational. . . . You also have an abundance of females in a support environment, so the culture is different.”*

—Male officer

## **Typically, fewer women served in operational units than support units**

Participants in some groups also felt that operational units were more difficult for female Service members because there were typically fewer women serving in such units. This perception was more common among female groups.

*“In the support [unit], when you have a lot of females in leadership, they will say [inappropriate behavior] will not happen here. . . . As you get more women in [operational] leadership positions, [you might see] less tolerance for [inappropriate behavior in operations, but] right now, support [units have] more females in leadership positions.”*

—Female officer

*"I don't personally feel that [women have a harder time serving in operational units], but my friend who is maintenance does. She was the only female in her shop at one time. She was like, 'Now, I have to represent my entire gender performing in my job.' It wasn't even lifting stuff, just being mechanically inclined. She felt she had to prove herself in that way. I don't think I would feel like that."*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"I've been in small [operational] units, but not [deployed]. . . . I think it would be more difficult for women with more men on board for a long period of time with restrictions. You have less women to compare stuff to or vent to. If you have one interaction with another woman and you don't get along, then who do you go to?"*

—Female officer

### **c. Some groups described comradery as a positive aspect of operational unit climate**

Participants in some groups perceived there was more comradery in operational units than support units. Participants reported how operational units may be closer because members of the unit spend more time together and rely on each other more to achieve the mission in comparison to support units. Participants also mentioned that deployments typically bring members of operational units closer.

*"In operational [units], you're on the ground. It's a different type of comradery. They're ground pounding every day, so they take better care of each other. We're a team. . . . If [one person in a support unit] doesn't come [to work], someone else fills in. But [in an operational unit,] I can't move this vehicle without her. The comradery is very different."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"I think the culture is different [in operational units] for sure. On shipboard duty, the crews are closer. When you're on a land unit, you go home every night. When you're on the ship for 3 months at a time with 120 people all the time, you tend to be closer."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"On the [operational ship], there is more comradery compared to a maintenance [ship]. On a maintenance [ship], it is the worst. You almost need a time out to decompress."*

—Female officer

## **3. Participants provided a variety of suggestions for improving unit climate and culture**

DACOWITS asked focus group participants what suggestions they had for improving unit climate. Participants offered a variety of strategies for improving overall climate, improving climate in operational and support units, and improving climate in relation to inappropriate behavior:

- ▶ **Improve leadership.** Participants in many groups recommended that leaders take the time to listen and engage with Service members to better support their well-being.
- ▶ **Improve communication.** Participants in some groups emphasized improving communication across and within ranks to address unit issues.
- ▶ **Increase accountability.** Participants in some groups proposed increasing personal accountability to unit values and holding other unit members accountable to the same standards.

- ▶ **Learn from unit climate surveys, and take action from findings.** Participants in some groups suggested that the first step in improving unit climate was to identify concerns, but that once this had been done, units needed to discuss the issues and address them with care.
- ▶ **Show appreciation and reward hard work.** Participants in some groups proposed doing more to recognize unit members' hard work.
- ▶ **Hold morale-building social events.** Participants suggested hosting events for Service members and their families to socialize outside of work. This was particularly common in reference to improving the climate in operational units.
- ▶ **Continue opportunities for training on sexual harassment and assault.** Participants proposed continuing to hold and improve sexual harassment and sexual assault prevention training.
- ▶ **Provide additional support for parents and dual-military couples.** Participants believed their Services could do more to assist parents and dual-military couples.

## B. Perceptions of and Responses to Inappropriate Behavior

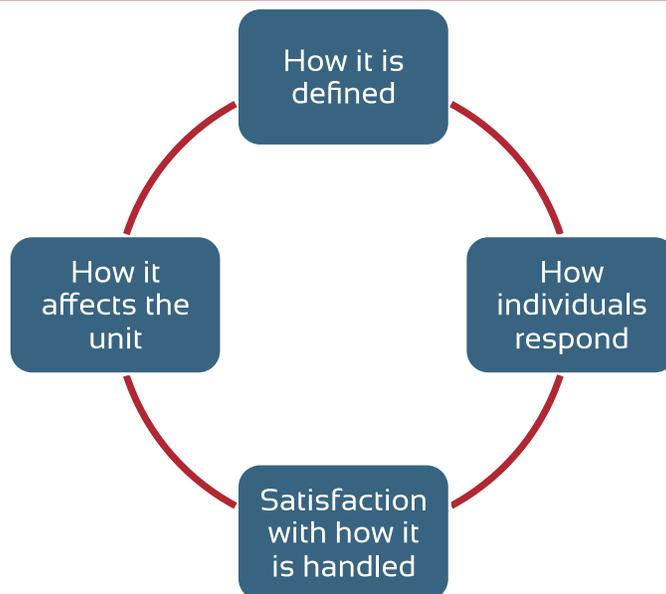
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DACOWITS has a long history of studying inappropriate behavior in the Services. In 2011, the Committee hosted focus groups among active duty Service members to inquire about the prevalence of sexual harassment and sexual assault, prevention programs, reporting procedures, and the impact of sexual harassment and sexual assault on mission readiness. During its 2013 focus groups, the Committee studied the increase in reports of sexual assaults at the MSAs and examined the effectiveness of programs to prevent sexual harassment and sexual assault. In 2014, the Committee focused on initiatives aimed at preventing and responding to sexual harassment and sexual assault throughout DoD and the Services. The Committee's focus in 2015 included military culture and the elimination of sexual harassment and sexual assault, and the facilitators and barriers to reporting sexual harassment and sexual assault.

To reduce duplication with other DoD efforts such as the Defense Advisory Committee on Investigation, Prosecution, and Defense of Sexual Assault in the Armed Forces, DACOWITS focused on gender discrimination, sexual harassment, and other inappropriate behavior that falls into a "gray" area in 2018. The Committee asked participants how they defined gender discrimination and sexual harassment; how they responded when they experienced or observed gender discrimination, sexual harassment, and actions that fall into an ethical gray area in the workplace; how satisfied they were with how the instances of gender discrimination and sexual harassment were handled; and how the instances of gender discrimination and sexual harassment affected units (see Figure 5.1 for a visual depiction of these topics).

**Figure 5.1. Aspects of Gender Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, and Other Inappropriate Behaviors Discussed by Focus Group Participants**

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## 1. Gender discrimination

The Committee asked participants how they defined gender discrimination, how they responded when they experienced or observed gender discrimination in the workplace, how satisfied they were with how instances of gender discrimination were handled, and how instances of gender discrimination affected units.

### a. Participants' definition of gender discrimination varied

The Committee asked participants to describe what gender discrimination looked like in the workplace and how they would define gender discrimination. Most commonly, participants described gender discrimination as different treatment based on a person's gender.

#### **Many groups described gender discrimination as different treatment based on gender**

Participants in many groups described gender discrimination as generally treating someone differently based on their gender.

*"I feel like discrimination looks the same, whether it's on race, gender, [or] whether you went to college. . . . It's treating someone differently or unfairly based on gender."*

—Junior enlisted man

*"[Gender discrimination is] different treatment for people [or] towards people based on their gender. Typically, treating women differently than men."*

—Female officer

## **Many groups described gender discrimination as assumptions about job-related ability based on gender**

Participants in many groups described gender discrimination as making assumptions about a person's ability to do an assigned job and/or task based on the person's gender. This response was more common among enlisted groups. Participants typically described this as members of a unit perceiving that men were better suited to physical tasks, and women were better suited to do administrative tasks.

*"[My occupational specialty] is mostly male. In tech school . . . , my whole class only had two girls. A lot [of men] were like, 'We'll do this because women can't handle it. Women should just vacuum.'"*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"We had a ruck march a couple of months ago with [lighter equipment] and [heavier equipment]. And I put [heavier equipment] on to ruck, and all the males were like, 'We don't want to set you up for failure, so we'll give that to a male.'"*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"Doing a ruck march, I saw a leader once put all the females up front because you know they're going to fall out. Usually, females are slower, so put them up front to buy some time instead of waiting for them to come in. [The leader would] send them out ahead so we'd all finish at the same time."*

—Male officer

*"[Gender discrimination is] giving out jobs based on someone's gender and [having] differing perceptions about their skill level. For example, [thinking] females are [administrative staff] because they are 'good' at words, or all men go out and do all the hard work. Or, it's excluding [women] from participating because you don't think they can do it."*

—Senior enlisted man

## **Some groups described gender discrimination as different job or task assignment based on gender**

Participants in some groups described gender discrimination as assigning job assignments or tasks based on a person's gender. This response was more common among male groups.

*"[Gender discrimination is] not assigning certain tasks to females because you don't think they can do it."*

—Male officer

*"[Gender discrimination is] favoritism, or possibly being tasked with different projects or certain jobs because you're male or female."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"I've seen it [gender discrimination]. One of the gals [in my unit] is smaller and shorter, and . . . they tried to assign her to paint the buoys with heavy [paint] guns, and she couldn't lift it because it was so heavy, so they started to give her job to men."*

—Senior enlisted man

## **Some groups described gender discrimination as different career/professional opportunities based on gender**

Participants in some groups described gender discrimination as having access to different career and/or professional opportunities based on a person's gender. This response was more common among female groups.

*"[Gender discrimination is] not having the same opportunities as others in the [unit]. At my last unit, being Reserve, it was more difficult to get on [active duty] status. I would go to the [senior enlisted leader] as a civilian and offer to drive on my own . . . or do something to get proficient and get better [at my job], and he'd say, 'We can't, we don't have the funding. We can't have more people come on.' And then, 3 weeks later, a gentleman in the unit with less time and skill levels went to the training."*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"[Gender discrimination is] not having the same access to the same opportunities, solely based on being a woman. Or, you don't get certain qualifications because of gender and because you're a woman."*

—Male officer

Participants in some groups described unit leadership as having a bias or predisposition against women. This was described as potentially affecting how leaders evaluate women and whether women are sent to trainings and schools that are in high demand, which can affect Service members' career progression.

*"Beyond opportunities, it's also evaluations, a lack of gender equality, males being rated higher or the other way around, bias from a supervisor, maybe. Our rating systems are fairly subjective. Your supervisor is going to have a bias one way or the other; it could be small, but it could be big."*

—Male officer

*"I think there are certain commands in the [Service] that are perceived to harbor some sort of a predisposition to prefer males over females. For example, in my last unit . . . , I was called on to be a witness in interviewing the command, and it turns out that multiple females were told they weren't wanted . . . because we weren't strong enough to work on the crew, so they weren't able to get their qualifications to get past their current rate, and their perception was it because they were females."*

—Senior enlisted woman

### **b. Participants' responses to gender discrimination varied**

The Committee asked participants how they responded when they experienced or observed gender discrimination in the workplace, what factors went into deciding what to do, and how often it was reported. Participants in many groups reported doing nothing or brushing it off. Participants in some groups reporting taking some sort of action, and participants in some groups reported that whether they took action depended on several factors.

## **Many groups reported doing nothing in response to gender discrimination or dismissing it**

In response to experiencing gender discrimination in the workplace, participants in many groups reported doing nothing, brushing it off, or not reporting the incident. This was more common among female groups. Participants described not reporting the instances because of factors such as fear of reprisal and fear of peer response.

*"People just brush it off. It's not reported as much as it should be. It's happened for so long now that people just laugh and move on. It should be reported whenever it happens. We can do as much as . . . guys can do."*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"We don't have many females; if we do, they are young. The tendency is not to respond because they are afraid of reprisal and, [if] it is a male field, on how others would treat them. If they will open a can of worms. I have seen that. We have gender discrimination; [there was] a very young female [Service member] who was initially scared and nervous and didn't want to affect the workplace and people to get mad at her even though she felt discrimination. People made comments to her that she can't do [her job] right because she's a girl."*

—Female officer

*"I'd say it's not reported enough as well. If we report it, we're [viewed as,] 'That girl is whiny or emotional.' We would be afraid to report it because of how others would feel about us or think about us."*

—Junior enlisted woman

## **Some groups said whether they take action in response to gender discrimination depends on a range of factors**

Participants described how whether they act in response to gender discrimination depends on a range of factors, including the rank or age of the victim, the perceived seriousness of the offense (more common among men), and the perceived clarity of proof.

*"I've seen with the younger [Service members] that they really do shut down. They don't know how to handle themselves in that environment because [women] are few and far between. You may have one senior [noncommissioned officer] who [is older than] you by a decade [and who is the only other woman in your unit]. They don't know how to handle themselves. I will come to defense for myself and them, but that's few and far between as well."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"I think it [depends on] rank, unfortunately. A [Service member] who doesn't feel like they have enough pull with a supervisor who can help them take action—they just won't say anything. Female junior [Service members] get shy; maybe they don't understand the best approach."*

—Female officer

*"It depends on the person. Junior [Service members] like to complain to their peers, but . . . senior folks would say something most likely. [Junior Service members] complain but won't push it further than that."*

—Male officer

*"[Whether I take action depends] on the severity of it. There's an informal resolution system where you handle it at the lowest level possible. It could be just between three people or go all the way up the chain of command. It depends on the severity and [frequency of] occurrence. So, if something happens once, is there sufficient grounds for it to be blown up? If it happens more than once, that's probably a pattern. Everybody knows how to address it."*

—Junior enlisted man

### **Some groups described taking action in response to gender discrimination**

Participants in some groups acted in response to gender discrimination. They described handling it themselves, talking to their leadership, talking directly to the offender, or talking to peers.

*"We had a pretty serious case in our [unit]. It started as discrimination with a female [Service member] who didn't want to go into the mission because she wasn't good at her job. Later, it turned into sexual harassment, and they both lost their [credentials] over it. It was dealt with expeditiously by our leadership. There is no tolerance for it."*

—Male officer

*"For females, it's nipped in the bud. It's handled immediately. For instance, if someone recognizes—anyone, [a] supervisor, anyone—talking or either tasking a female in a way that they wouldn't or that's out of the norm, they would address it on the spot. Me personally, I've never seen it escalate to a serious degree when handled immediately. I'm sure it does, I just have not personally seen it escalate higher."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"When I first got there, there were a lot of rumors that [another Service member] and I were sleeping with everyone, and I went to one of my [noncommissioned officers] and talked to him, and it helped. The [junior officer] put a stop to it."*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"In my unit, we do a good job [of addressing gender discrimination], especially within a peer group. I've seen my [Service members] correct each other, and if they've done all they can do, they come to us. That's a good quality about them."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"In my career field and in others, you have a lot of people talk about it amongst themselves but not take it to the people who can change it. They will talk, but not take it further than that. There are times where they do, and leadership should take the actions necessary to rectify it or at least discuss it. It depends on the situation. You will hear people talk about it rather than do something about it."*

—Senior enlisted man

### **c. Participants described mixed levels of satisfaction with how gender discrimination was handled**

The Committee asked participants how satisfied they were with the handling of gender discrimination in their units. Although participants in many groups felt cases of gender discrimination were not handled well, participants in some groups had the opposite opinion.

#### **Many groups felt that gender discrimination was not handled at all or handled rarely and ineptly**

Participants in many groups reported that instances of gender discrimination were not addressed or addressed infrequently and improperly. This perception was more common among female groups (it was not raised in any male groups) and junior enlisted groups. Participants described units brushing off reports for reasons such as attempting to avoid scandal and requiring evidence that the incident occurred.

*"I don't think they get handled at all. It's up you to handle it individually. If I went to leadership, they would want proof. [They would say,] 'No, they didn't say it because [you're] a female.' . . . You have to have a recording or picture or something for it to be taken seriously. You've got to develop thick skin. You shouldn't have to do that, but it's the truth."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"No, [they are not handled well]. For instance, I had a colleague get reported for inappropriate comments during [Service sexual assault prevention training], and nothing ever came of it. They said it's just his personality, and he continued to display that as a [noncommissioned officer]. He was popular in the unit, so it got brushed off."*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"They don't want to be the [unit] that has the incident. They try to handle it in house and try to mastermind how they mitigate this so that we are not on the cover of the [Service newspaper]. The system is degraded because they don't know how to handle [offenders]."*

—Senior enlisted woman

#### **Some groups felt that gender discrimination was handled well**

Participants in some groups reported that instances of gender discrimination were handled properly. This perception was much more common among male groups (it was not raised in any female groups) and officer groups.

*". . . There was another incident in our workplace about 3 years ago—a comment made by a supervisor in the workplace. Others heard the comment, and people said, 'Hey, this is an issue,' and within . . . 2 weeks, the individual was gone, so the reports worked! The comments made were reported, and the individual was gone. I wasn't involved, but I heard."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"We don't have a lot [of gender discrimination] going on in our unit, and those that are [happening] are [handled well]."*

—Male officer

#### **d. Participants described how gender discrimination could negatively affect a unit**

The Committee asked participants how instances of gender discrimination affected units. Although responses varied, participants in all groups reported the effects of gender discrimination on a unit as negative. The most common response was that gender discrimination creates a negative environment in the unit by lowering morale and eroding trust.

#### **Many groups felt that gender discrimination created a negative unit environment**

Participants in many groups felt gender discrimination created a negative or toxic environment. They described how it lowered morale and eroded trust (a perspective expressed more commonly by women).

*"It poisons the water. . . . A handful of females come around, the temperature drops, camaraderie drops. . . . Some things [happened] that there were no consequences for females, but males had to suffer repercussions and were punished. . . . It's not the females' fault for not being punished, but it's on leaders for not having the same standards across the board, equal consequences for the same action. It's not their fault, but it's leadership's lack of insight. And it poisoned everyone against the females."*

—Male officer

*"It brings morale down. Generally, when you have someone going through that, it brings people down. You want to help them. The people making those comments—you don't want to be around them."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"It breaks down trust and a chance at comradery when you don't face those issues. Toxic leadership is toxic environment breeding."*

—Senior enlisted woman

#### **Some groups felt that gender discrimination fostered negative perceptions of women**

Participants in some groups felt that gender discrimination created a negative perception of female Service members. This response was more common among female and junior enlisted groups. Participants described how some Service members perceived women as purposefully becoming pregnant to avoid deployments, receiving recognition because of their gender rather than their achievements, being too physically weak to serve, among others.

*"Being in a female-dominated field, we have a lot of young people on maternity leave, and that shuts down some of our clinics, [which leads to] underlying anger . . . at the females, like, 'Here we go again. The clinic will be shut down because you all have to be pregnant at the same time.' [It creates] resentment. Another assumption that doesn't get talked about, but [exists, is] that they will get pregnant to avoid deployments. Sometimes some of that you hear; not as much as you used to hear it, though."*

—Female officer

*"If you work hard in that field, and [people assume you got the recognition] 'because they need a girl,' they can't give you credit."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"I don't ask a female to do anything. It's like putting her on the spot, and you know she's going to fail. . . . She might be able to [do the job]—but why would I put her on the spot to fail? I just don't ask."*

—Junior enlisted man

*"With the negativity I see, it's generally [a belief] that females are weak and shouldn't be in the [Service]. When it comes to more direct things, it's opposite than what you expect. I feel like I'm put on a pedestal and treated too nicely, and I don't like that because I want to be an equal."*

—Junior enlisted woman

## 2. Sexual harassment

The Committee asked participants how they defined sexual harassment and whether it was different from gender discrimination, how they responded when they experience or observe sexual harassment in the workplace, how satisfied they were with how instances of sexual harassment were handled, and how instances of sexual harassment affected units.

### a. Participants perceived sexual harassment as different from gender discrimination

DACOWITS asked participants if they thought sexual harassment was different from gender discrimination and, if so, how. Participants in many groups described sexual harassment as distinct from gender discrimination. However, participants in some groups viewed them as potentially related behaviors. The most common definition of sexual harassment was unwanted physical or verbal advances of a sexual nature. Participants in some groups described a perception that sexual harassment can occur between two people of the same gender, whereas gender discrimination cannot.

*"I think [there is a difference]. Sexual harassment is, as the definition says, sexual in nature. Gender discrimination is boy or girl. Sexual harassment is attraction or tension or touch[ing] or verbally get[ting] satisfaction out of saying some nasty things. I think it's different."*

—Female officer

*"I think the difference between them would be the advances that they don't want of a sexual manner. Discrimination is I'm not letting you do that because of gender."*

—Junior enlisted man

*"Yes, [there is a difference]. With sexual harassment, we are talking about a sexual advancement, whether it be verbal or physical. Gender discrimination is about gender and not a sexual act. With sexual harassment, there is unwanted sexual advancements and definitely a major difference."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"You can be sexually harassed by somebody of the same gender, so it wouldn't be discriminating against that gender. I wouldn't see it as gender discrimination per se."*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"I think sexual harassment could lead to discrimination. When you discriminate, you say one is better than the other. That's the premise. If you sexually harass someone, you will set yourself up to discriminate against them even if that started as sexual harassment. They are different but potentially related."*

—Senior enlisted man

### **b. Participants' responses to sexual harassment varied**

The Committee asked participants how they responded when they experienced or observed sexual harassment in the workplace, what factors went into deciding what to do, and how often it was reported. The most common response was that the number of sexual harassment incidents had decreased, largely because of the increased training on the subject. The next most common responses were that (1) when sexual harassment does occur, it was dealt with quickly and effectively, and that (2) instances of sexual harassment were not reported frequently enough.

#### **Many groups felt sexual harassment frequency and reporting has improved because of increased training**

Participants in many groups felt the Services and their individual units have successfully reduced the occurrence of sexual harassment because of the increased training and reporting on the subject. This sentiment was more common among senior enlisted and officer groups.

*"In officer training, we get briefings, and then [we get] more [training] in active duty. There is a lot of education on this matter. People are for the most part aware of it and have learned to [walk] back that culture."*

—Male officer

*"If you have a strong unit and a strong foundation, you will have less [Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention] complaints. Here, we have a pretty strong command structure, so trends are better. It has to do with the relevance of the training that you do and the strength of the foundation."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"The [Service] has gotten better about educating the young [Service members]. Maybe the reporting is better. . . . Because we are more senior, a lot of times, we didn't hear much [about an incident], and it was swept under the rug. I remember those times because that's how it was. You won't fix every [Service member], but the education [of] the young leaders is only going to groom us to be better."*

—Senior enlisted woman

#### **Many groups felt that sexual harassment was handled quickly and effectively**

Participants in many groups also expressed the perception that instances of sexual harassment were handled quickly and effectively by units and the Services, and that the instances were taken seriously. This perception was more common among male groups.

*"It gets shut down quickly these days. They usually say, 'You need to shut that down. We're all going to get in trouble.'"*

—Female officer

*"In my old unit . . . , one person got kicked out. He got an Article 15<sup>4</sup> because of sexual harassment. He cornered a female, took out his private parts, and she didn't like that, so it got reported. It was less than 30 days, and he was out. They take it pretty serious."*

—Junior enlisted man

*"For the most part, I think most people knock it down when it happens. I was prior enlisted and with a predominately male unit and four guys on board, and the discussions . . . sometimes, even I was afraid to get on the boat! Now, I feel like it's a lot different. I don't hear it in my office. I'm sure it happens in some places, but I think people nip it in the bud pretty quick."*

—Male officer

### **Many groups reported doing nothing in response to sexual harassment or dismissing it**

Although many groups expressed the feeling that instances of sexual harassment were being handled better and more effectively than in the past, participants in many groups felt that instances of sexual harassment were not reported often enough and that numerous instances of sexual harassment were ignored. This feeling was more common among female groups.

*"For the most part, when I see it, they let it slide. As a younger [Service member], I experienced a lot of that. I always let it slide. The older I have gotten and less willing to put up with things, I will shut things down quickly, but when I was younger, I just let it go."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"I feel like in a perfect world . . . , everyone is good at communicating and not being a bystander. But realistically . . . , I don't know by personal experience, but a lot of times, it's swept under the rug. You hear so-in-so is having sex with so-in-so or harassing someone or giving favors for a better evaluation, and everyone kind of brushes it off. . . . That thing happens even now today. We've gotten better, but it still happens all the time. In a perfect world, it'd be great."*

—Female officer

*"It's not just male to female, it's also males to males. . . . Every now and then, you'll hear them say, 'Do you think that was kind of foul?' Most of the time, everyone else is laughing it off, so they are not going to go against what everyone is doing."*

—Senior enlisted woman

### **Some groups reported that whether they take action in response to sexual harassment depends on a range of factors**

Participants described the factors influencing whether they take action in response to sexual harassment. These included the unit's climate and culture as well as the age and rank of the victim.

Participants in some groups said that whether and how they respond to sexual harassment depends on the climate and culture of the unit. Participants often mentioned that the way leadership responded to such instances helped define the unit climate surrounding sexual harassment.

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<sup>4</sup> A section of the Uniform Code of Military Justice allowing commanders to give nonjudicial punishment

*"It depends on the organization and position. I'll be honest, 3 years ago, my senior [leader] made some statements that I did not appreciate, and I let him know, so he stopped. But how does it look [to report it]? I'm not going to [report it] or say anything because how would people look at me? They would say, 'Oh, she didn't earn that number one spot.' So, of course I wouldn't say anything."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"I think it depends on the climate. In an infantry unit, compared with intelligence, it's more likely to report in the intelligence unit, partially because of command. . . . In an infantry unit, it's more you don't snitch on people. [Regarding] little comments that could be construed a certain way, people are more likely [not to report] anything in an infantry unit. That's just based on those two units."*

—Junior enlisted man

*"Maybe 2 months ago . . . , I was doing an inspection at a different unit's organization, and a female [noncommissioned officer] reported that her [leader] made advances toward her. Apparently, it was known that this was the toxic environment of the leadership at that unit. Several females had reported it before. It was so prevalent in the unit that it was accepted, and no one felt comfortable reporting it. We know we're not supposed to do it. But some people don't care, they still do it. You'll have those people in any type of profession."*

—Male officer

Participants in some groups expressed that whether an instance of sexual harassment is reported depends on the age and rank of the victim. Participants expressed the perception that younger or more junior-ranking Service members would be less likely to report sexual harassment than their older or more senior-ranking counterparts.

*"I had a male [leader] make a comment recently calling me promiscuous in front of three senior [Service members] I work with. None of them said anything about it; they laughed. It was hard for me to come back from. That's just a small example of what women [Service members] sometimes deal with."*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"Young kids have a hard time—younger enlisted members—have a hard time taking the initiative to say something because they have to step out of the comfort zone."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"When it comes to junior [Service members], they are brand new. I never [tolerated sexual harassment] because of the way I was brought up in my culture. If they're brand new, and they've never been guided or expected, and are scared because they don't know what to do and don't have female higher ups to guide them, they take it because they don't know what to do."*

—Junior enlisted woman

### **Some groups reported that sexual harassment was handled directly and informally**

Participants in some groups reported that instances of sexual harassment were handled directly by either the victim or bystanders in an informal manner rather than through formal reporting avenues. This response was more common among female groups.

*“People take actions every day. If they hear a comment that goes too far, they might say, ‘Too far.’ That’s addressing the situation. ‘That’s over the line, not appropriate for work.’ I think those corrections are the lowest level. People at all levels that prevent it from getting a little too far. If you keep it at that level, then you have the egregious threshold up here and then assault up here (indicating with hands). If you keep it at the joke or ‘too far’ level, then you prevent the discrimination and assault levels.”*

—Male officer

*“In my experience, it is . . . directed right back at [the offender]. I literally had a [senior enlisted leader] when I was [a junior Service member] tell me to go up the ladder before him, and I didn’t. I waited in the hottest part of the ship because I didn’t want to give in to that, but I didn’t report it because I didn’t want to waste the time.”*

—Female officer

### **c. Participants described mixed levels of satisfaction with how sexual harassment was handled**

The Committee asked participants how satisfied they were with the handling of sexual harassment in their units. Most commonly, participants felt instances of sexual harassment were addressed properly. The next most common response was that their level of satisfaction depended on the climate and culture of the unit.

### **Many groups felt sexual harassment was handled well**

Participants in many groups reported that instances of sexual harassment were handled effectively and were taken seriously. Many participants said that knowing the outcome of investigations into reports and increased training gave them the perception that the reports were being handled well.

*“With [education], we are empowering all [Service members]. The male [Service members] are more intuitive with self-preservation about [Service] values . . . , that we will take care of each other. I think that is the good thing about the integration, that it’s not about ‘She’s a girl,’ but [rather], ‘That’s my counterpart, and we have to do this together.’ With education, we are getting empowered [Service members] across the board.”*

—Senior enlisted woman

*“Well, it’s relative because they will investigate. Just because something is unsubstantiated doesn’t mean that nothing happened. It turns into a ‘he said, she said,’ and you can’t do anything. They are being handled seriously. [A high-ranking leader] was dismissed for it, so that’s good.”*

—Female officer

"You look at the order and discipline that comes out with the statistics and information on discipline in the [Service], so you see people losing rank, getting kicked out, getting put in the [military prison] for sexual assault. I don't know about harassment, but people are accountable for their actions."

—Male officer

### **Some groups reported that their level of satisfaction depended on the unit's climate and leadership**

Participants in some groups reported that their level of satisfaction with the handling of sexual harassment depended on the climate and culture of the unit and the unit's leadership. This was more common among female groups and junior enlisted groups.

"I think it is all the dynamic of the unit. . . . My previous commander before this one didn't take any action, but this one has zero tolerance for this. You say, 'This is sexual harassment,' and they take action. If you don't have a good team, you don't have a good outcome. If you do have a good team, they will stand up for you; they will put the entire unit in its place."

—Senior enlisted woman

"It depends on the leadership. When I have more females in leadership, there is less of it. I'm seeing that right now with the change of regime recently. It was a completely different environment. Now that we have a different leadership, it's night and day. When leadership participates in stuff, it's great. Women in positions of power . . . makes all the difference in the environment that you set, especially when you are in the shops. It nips that in the bud from the start."

—Senior enlisted woman

### **d. Participants described how sexual harassment could negatively affect a unit**

The Committee asked participants how instances of sexual harassment affected units. Although responses varied, participants in all groups reported the effects of gender discrimination on a unit as negative. The most common response was that sexual harassment damaged unit cohesion and led to division in a unit. Others mentioned how sexual harassment lowered morale and negatively affected mission readiness.

### **Many groups felt sexual harassment negatively affects unit cohesion**

Participants in many groups described sexual harassment as negatively affecting unit cohesion and creating division within a unit. This response was more common among male groups.

"It was a very demeaning thing for the overall morale of that organization. You could see the sadness in the environment because it was demoralizing. And it split the people, because people take sides. It's 'I'm upset with you because you told on him.' Then you have new people coming in who don't know anything about it but are forced to pick a side."

—Male officer

*"I've seen it—if it does get reported, that is when everyone closes up and no one wants to talk to anyone, and that's a bad thing. So, when it does get reported, no one wants to talk about it . . . or hint at it because it gets uncomfortable."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"if not handled properly by leadership, I think it divides a unit."*

—Senior enlisted man

### **Some groups felt sexual harassment negatively affects mission readiness**

Participants in some groups described sexual harassment as negatively affecting mission readiness or distracting the unit from the mission or goal. This sentiment was more common among male groups. Participants expressed that instances of sexual harassment can sometimes result in the removal of one or more Service members from the unit, which makes the unit less capable and ready.

*"Obviously . . . , it affects the ability to accomplish the mission . It affects those women [victims]; sometimes they are removed from the work center. Then the perpetrator can be removed as well. It affects our ability to accomplish the mission from the littlest up."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"I think in general, in an accusation, people are moved. Then people are worried about qualifications. With the [Service], you may only have one person to do a job. If that person is removed, you're moving a lot of people around. Operationally it might be an issue. People have a hard time saying something. . . . It makes it more difficult for the military to deal with it."*

—Male officer

*"It takes you away from your mission. We have to stop what we are working on . . . , so it takes one out of the fight, and now they don't want to work in the area, so that's two [Service members] out of this section that can't get the same mission accomplished due to manpower, plus extra time and manpower putting into it to make sure it stopped . . . ; it takes away from mission."*

—Junior enlisted man

### **Some groups felt sexual harassment lowers morale**

Participants in some groups described sexual harassment as damaging morale in units.

*"We had a case of sexual harassment. We weighed the issues and got resources, and it stopped work [in] the [unit]. Nothing else happened [in] the [unit], so it affected everyone and morale because it goes beyond the victim and person who took the action. The whole [unit] was affected. It's probably the case in most units. If someone [in] a [unit] gets hurt or mistreated, it affects all. You could see it. Usually everyone is upbeat, getting coffee, shooting the breeze, but it absolutely does bring everybody down unless you're heartless. Nine out of ten times, it affects the whole unit."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"It lowers morale and self-confidence."*

—Senior enlisted woman

### **Some groups felt the impact of sexual harassment depends on how it is handled**

Participants in some groups reported that how an instance of sexual harassment affects a unit depends on how effectively the instance is addressed by the unit. This response was much more common among male groups (it did not come up in any female groups).

*"I think how it's handled has the biggest impact and whether it's handled quickly and accurately. That sends a good signal out that it's not being tolerated. On the other side, if it's false, it sends the signal not to play with this."*

—Male officer

*"I think it severely affects [the unit] negatively if it's happening. And one of the problems is that it starts lots of rumors, and a lot of time the resolution is never clear even if it was dealt with correctly because it never should have happened in the first place. They won't get faith that it is dealt with correctly if they don't get the full view of how it was dealt with in the past."*

—Male officer

### **Some groups felt sexual harassment erodes trust**

Participants in some groups felt that instances of sexual harassment erode trust between members of the unit. This response was much more common among female groups (it did not come up in any male groups).

*"When we talked about good units versus negative, that's a trust factor. If the trust is gone because of harassment, that will make work much harder to come to. That would kill morale. We have [units] that have had issues with sexual harassment and sexual assault and still struggle to come back from that."*

—Female officer

*"It hurts trust. You don't know who to trust or who you can hang out with. I don't trust anyone anymore after this whole situation. These were people I used to hang out with. If I can't trust them, I'd rather be alone."*

—Junior enlisted woman

## **3. Responses to inappropriate behavior that falls into a gray area**

The Committee asked participants how they responded when they experienced or observed behavior that falls into a gray area in the workplace, what factors went into deciding what to do, and how often it was reported. DACOWITS defined actions that fall into the gray area as "inappropriate behavior that may make a person feel uncomfortable but may not necessarily fall into the category of either gender discrimination or sexual harassment." The most common response was that participants dealt with the behavior directly and informally. Another common response was that taking action depended on the unit climate and culture and the precedent set by the unit. Participants in some groups reported taking action by telling leadership about the incident.

**a. Many groups reported handling inappropriate behavior in the gray area directly and informally**

Participants in many groups reported responding to experiences with or observations of inappropriate behavior that falls into a gray area by having a frank and casual conversation with the perpetrator.

*"I don't care how 'gray' it is—I just say, 'Shut it down, I'm not going to jail today.' They laugh when I say it, and that is the intention, but I usually then don't have to readdress it. If I saw it again, then it would be a different story, but I haven't had to address it more than once."*

—Female officer

*"Having the conversation is the big thing. It's not black and white. You have to have the conversation. Why did it happen? How can we fix it? If you can't do the mission because you're uncomfortable, then I don't know. It's hard. If it prevents you from doing your job in the unit, then it's a hard conversation to have. You have to have open communication."*

—Male officer

*"If it is [serious], I will immediately call them out and say, '[That] is inappropriate. This isn't the environment for that,' but it all depends on the circumstances of what is being said and how."*

—Senior enlisted woman

**b. Some groups reported that whether they take action in response to inappropriate behavior that falls into a gray area depends on a range of factors**

Participants in some groups described how the unit's climate and culture and the precedent set by the unit affects their decision on whether to respond to inappropriate behavior that falls into a gray area.

Participants in some groups reported that whether they decide to act depends on the climate and culture of the unit. This was more common among male groups.

*"It [probably depends on] the career field you work in. I'm a [occupational specialty]. In this unit, we have mostly girls. . . . The culture of the career field [has an impact]—you don't see [inappropriate behavior] as much as in [civil engineering] or maintenance."*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"Leaders are not robots, we will mess up. The [Service members] will mess up. . . . If something gets said to one person, and that individual knew the line was crossed, then at that point, it would be [addressed]. If it's just, you know, friends talking offline, online, whatever, but among themselves, they know what that line is. As a leader, you should establish that line of zero tolerance. Within the shop, you will have that . . . family-like unit. When that line is crossed, that impacts morale. You have to know your people. If someone says something and they go back and forth, cool. . . . If it's brought forward, and someone's feelings got hurt, then it needs to be channeled up and action taken."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"A command climate that's supportive of coming forward [is important]. Get buy-in from your guys so that they know they can trust you and come to you. As a leader, you want buy-in from people who you support and to be truly approachable."*

—Male officer

Participants in some groups reported that whether they act depends on the precedent set by the unit for how the instances had been handled in the past or how likely they were to be believed. This was more common among female groups.

*“You also have to look at what type of precedent you set by allowing what would normally be a harmless exchange between two people who treat each other like that outside of work . . . , but by allowing it to take place, the next time it comes up and someone does get hurt, then you allowed it to happen because you allowed the first situation to happen.”*

—Senior enlisted man

*“All of them apply. There are some things that are blatantly wrong. Someone can say, ‘Hey, your butt looks good today.’ That’s blatant. It only takes one time, and someone will say something [in that instance]. But it’s also based on how they’ve seen it handled in the past and whether they’ve dealt with it before. There is a gray area. There was someone who had been assaulted before, and they stepped forward immediately because they understand. It’s about the example the unit sets.”*

—Senior enlisted woman

*“Another major factor is when stuff happens you are held accountable, and [Service members] seeing that the person guilty of this is being held accountable. That is a big factor in building trust and confidence in leaders and the whole organization in and of itself.”*

—Senior enlisted woman

### **c. Some groups told leadership about inappropriate behavior that fell into the gray area**

Participants in some groups reported taking action by going to a leader, typically a noncommissioned officer would tell an officer about the incident,.

*“Self-empowerment [is important]. . . . If there’s nothing wrong, or you’re in the gray area sort of, [use] the informal resolution process, but . . . make sure that leadership is aware. If someone doesn’t like something, (1) stop doing it, (2) respect that. It doesn’t mean keep doing it when they’re not around. There are some things you may not think someone would be offended by. Try to be respectful. Get the people that go too far, too, and the people that are always stirring something.”*

—Male officer

*“If you don’t know [if something is inappropriate], and you can’t distinguish whether it’s a gray area, just ask us and we can provide more insight to help you out—and this is coming from someone who is giving classes to all [Service members]. Whether it’s a first staff [noncommissioned officer], or whether or not you are in that position and don’t know how to answer it, go individually seek clarification. We are getting the info out there. These are the resources, and whether it’s anonymous or not, you know who you can talk to.”*

—Senior enlisted man

*“If I feel uncomfortable about anything, I’m going to say something, and I’m going to go up to my command and ask them if this is a situation [in which] I need to watch or say something.”*

—Senior enlisted woman

## **C. A Comparison Among Gender Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, and Other Inappropriate Behaviors That Fall Into a Gray Area**

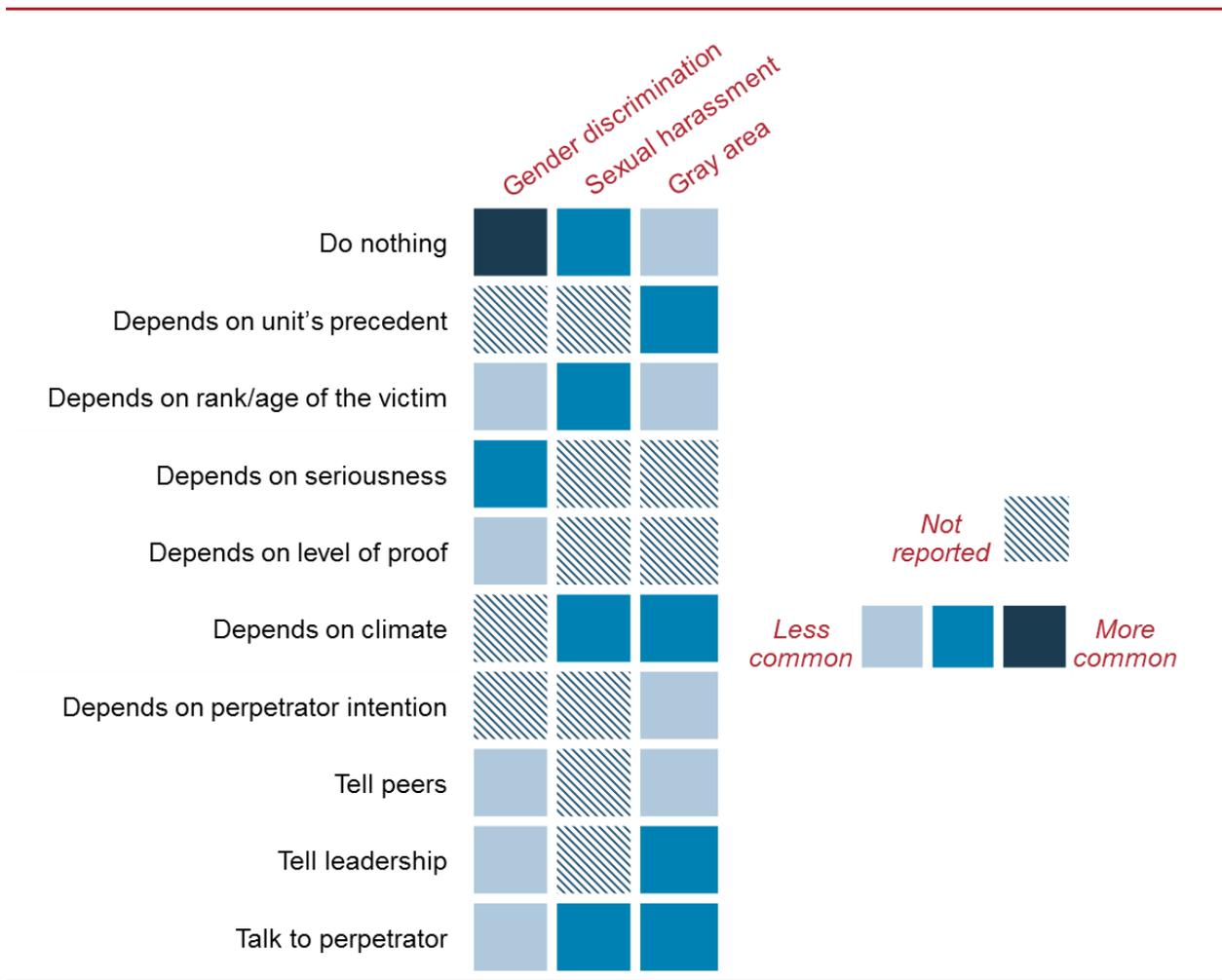
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DACOWITS asked participants to respond to a similar set of questions in response to gender discrimination, sexual harassment, and similarly unacceptable actions that fall into a gray area. A comparison of their responses is illustrated in Figures 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4.

### **1. Participants’ responses to each type of inappropriate behavior varied**

Responding by doing nothing was more frequently mentioned when discussing gender discrimination and less commonly mentioned when discussing gray area behavior. For those who reported taking action, telling leadership and talking to the perpetrator directly were more commonly mentioned in response to gray area behavior compared with gender discrimination.

**Figure 5.2. Reported Responses to Gender Discrimination and Sexual Harassment**

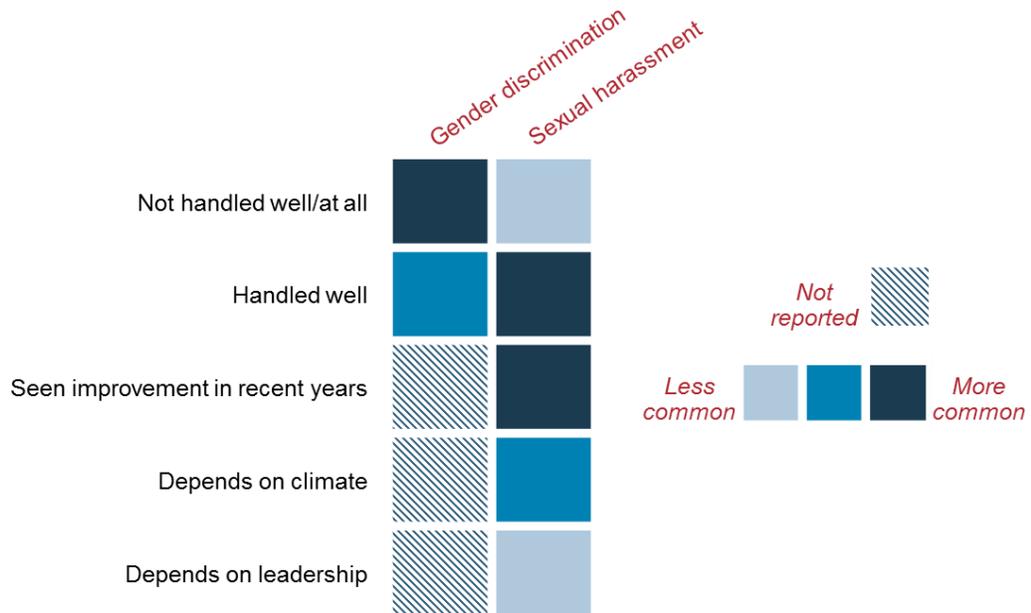


Source: DACOWITS focus group transcripts (data from groups participating in unit climate and culture discussion only)

**2. Participants reported varying levels of satisfaction with how each type of inappropriate behavior was handled**

Participants more commonly mentioned that gender discrimination was not handled well or at all and that sexual harassment was handled well. Participants described how they had seen improvement in recent years with the handling of sexual harassment but did not mention such improvements regarding to gender discrimination.

**Figure 5.3. Satisfaction With Responses to Gender Discrimination and Sexual Harassment**

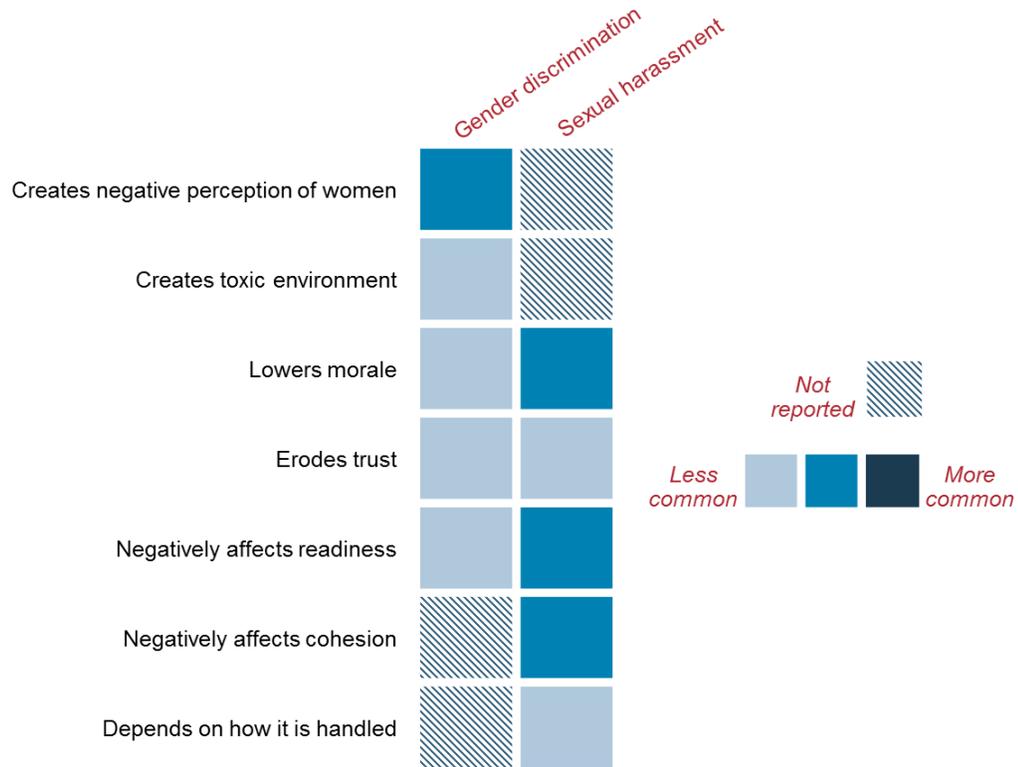


Source: DACOWITS focus group transcripts (data from groups participating in unit climate and culture discussion only)

### 3. Participants reported varying negative effects on the unit for each type of inappropriate behavior

Participants described how gender discrimination creates a negative perception of women and leads to a toxic environment, but these themes did not emerge in response to sexual harassment. Compared with the impact of gender discrimination, participants more commonly mentioned that sexual harassment lowers morale and negatively affects readiness and unit cohesion.

**Figure 5.4. Perceived Effects of Gender Discrimination and Sexual Harassment on the Unit**



Source: DACOWITS focus group transcripts (data from groups participating in unit climate and culture discussion only)

## D. Relationship Between Inappropriate Behavior and Unit Climate

DACOWITS asked participants whether the climate in their units encouraged or discouraged inappropriate behavior and reporting. Participants in many groups felt that their units discouraged inappropriate behavior and supported reporting it.

### 1. Many groups felt their units discouraged inappropriate behavior

Participants in many groups reported the climate in their units discouraged inappropriate behavior. Participants mentioned how training and dissemination of policies and guidelines helped to create a climate where inappropriate behavior was frowned upon.

*“I think it’s discouraged. In most cases, it’s done by steps. We know the training. We let people know what’s acceptable or not, and then we discipline from there. If people refuse to do the right thing, they need to know there are consequences.”*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"I'd say in my unit, it discourages it definitely. Our [commanding officer] is family based and treats everyone like his children. Before we go on leave, he gives us a speech like, 'Don't do anything dumb; don't drink,' and we don't want to let him down. Having that with our higher up is a thing where people think about doing something dumb then question if they want to let him down."*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"It discourages it. Like we all said, the policies and the [Service leaders] are talking about these things, [and] putting out there that anything that is not in our core values is not tolerated."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"We try to make sure we hold everybody accountable. I hold everyone to the same standard. It's basic stuff, from being unprofessional, to more serious things. . . . We hold you accountable [but also] recognize you on what you're doing."*

—Male officer

## **2. Some groups felt their units were supportive of reporting inappropriate behavior**

Participants in some groups reported that the climate in their units supported the reporting of inappropriate behavior.

*"My [unit]—they support taking action. My commander is super quick [to act] if it's at his level. He sets up a commander-directed investigation to go through everything."*

—Female officer

*"They make it known that as leaders, we are expected to take actions, and we trust them to take actions as well. They are willing to stand behind us and do what they need to do to make the situations right. They ask that of all the [Service members]. They are very vocal about this. It goes through our unit all the time."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"[My unit] supports it. Don't be the one not to say something. If you see something going on, you're just as wrong for letting it go on. Whether it's hazing or a sexual harassment case, you're just as guilty for doing it if you're seeing it and then letting it go on. . . ."*

—Junior enlisted man

## **3. Many groups described inappropriate behavior as being worse during deployments**

The Committee asked participants whether there were perceived differences in climate when units were deployed.

Participants in many groups felt that inappropriate behavior was worse while units were deployed, largely because of a perceived lax environment and perceived weaker enforcement of rules and behavior standards.

*“Accountability and being able to monitor how females are doing is hard when they’re deployed because you have to have female leadership to go into their tent, compared with in [home station].”*

—Senior enlisted man

*“Coming from [outside of continental United States location], . . . everyone says the incidence and culture there is different. I think it has to do with the living situation and the fact that there are a lot of first duty station [Service members] there. The statistics say the number of cases increases X amount when deployed. People start doing crazy stuff when they’re apart from their family. I do think the living situation and being overseas, away from traditional home life, affects [Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention] cases, potentially.”*

—Female officer

*“I just returned [from a deployment]. . . . In a combat zone, they’re not enforced. There’s danger because of the environment itself. . . . The standards would be higher if you were still stateside [and would be] enforced. You have to know where [Service members] are and if they have what they need to have. They usually heed to what they’re supposed to [do].”*

—Senior enlisted woman

*“Things are more relaxed during combat deployment. You could get away with it in a combat deployment because people are focused on other things. People might not be as strict as they are in [home station].”*

—Junior enlisted man

*“Back home, we have a lot of eyeballs watching you. There are rule enforcers around to ensure uniforms are on point. You have spouses looking out. When you’re overseas, you’re trying to stay alive, and you do it all together. . . .”*

—Male officer

#### **4. Perceptions on training related to inappropriate behavior**

The Committee asked participants about the training or guidance they received on inappropriate behavior and reporting, including whether or not participants perceived the training as effective. Participants in most groups had received mandatory, regular, Service-specific training or guidance on inappropriate behavior, some including information on how to report it, and some including training on what to do if witnessing inappropriate behavior as a bystander. Participants in some groups reported that the mandatory, Service-specific training they attended included information on inappropriate behavior and unit climate.

##### **a. Many groups perceived role-playing and scenario-based training as effective**

Participants in many groups described training that incorporated the use of vignettes, scenarios, or role-play as the most effective. Participants described these exercises as engaging and interactive, and many mentioned that scenarios presented to them in the training made them think critically. Participants in some groups described trainings that included an instructor simply reading slides in a PowerPoint as ineffective.

*“An effective [training] I had recently was a newcomers’ briefing for first time [Service members], a briefing for sexual harassment. It wasn’t so theories based, [it had] more actual examples and day-to-day things around the office. People would be shocked that it has happened before and might again. There are plenty of avenues to report it. . . . I think if someone doesn’t know, [they can] fall through the cracks and not know where to go. You’re always walking on eggshells. [There are] conversations you don’t bring up in the workplace because of possible repercussions. When you hear it, it pops out as, ‘Hey, this is not the right place or door to walk through.’ Know it when you see it or hear it.”*

—Male officer

*“The best training I’ve been [was] very interactive and was different than [Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention training]. They’ll put up actual scenarios and ask, ‘What would you do if that was your daughter or sister?’”*

—Junior enlisted woman

*“If I’m just sitting there and getting information, I will check out. The role-playing part of it—some people in the unit facilitate it. [They show] videos about the topics and then ask people questions. It’s [being] engaged versus hearing things—the same things as last year and the year before. That helps you regurgitate the information and be more interactive.”*

—Female officer

*“The PowerPoint ones are death by PowerPoint, but if you ask us questions and force us to talk, it’s more interactive. Realistically, as the [Service], we get a lot of PowerPoint training.”*

—Junior enlisted woman

## **b. Most groups received guidance on the appropriate use of social media**

The Committee asked participants if they had received training on the appropriate use of social media. DACOWITS also asked focus group participants about the Services’ training on the inappropriate use of social media in 2017 after the highly publicized Marines United scandal.<sup>5</sup>

In response to a hand count, approximately 9 out of 10 Service members who participated in the module on unit climate and culture reported receiving guidance on the appropriate use of social media,<sup>6</sup> but only a few of these participants reported that this training was focused on inappropriate behavior. Similar to what DACOWITS found in 2017 about social media training, according to most participants, the social media-related training they received pertained to topics such as operational security, basic privacy guidelines, guidance on politically charged social media content, and others.

*“The guidance I saw recently was you can be held accountable for what you post, and privacy concerns.”*

—Female officer

*“Anything you put on social media can be used against you.”*

—Senior enlisted woman

<sup>5</sup> In spring 2017, news outlets broke the story about the Marines United scandal, in which inappropriate photos of female Service members were posted to a Facebook group accessible to approximately 30,000 Marines.

<sup>6</sup> Source: DACOWITS hand counts (data from groups participating in unit climate and culture discussion only)

*"[The training was] mainly geared toward operational security. It's more about the sanitation of information."*

*—Male officer*

*"Due to the nature of my job, social media is huge, both in terms of who we work with and what we do. . . . You have to run everything through our social media section. You can't just post pics of the President or of the inside of an aircraft, so you really have to watch yourself. Social media is huge with what we do. In December, the President came to visit us, but pictures were taken that were not supposed to be and got some people relieved of duty because of the social media aspect of it. It's not a joke where we are."*

*—Senior enlisted man*

*"Social media is such a mess. You have those keyboard warriors who no one knows. You get away with stuff you can't get away with face to face."*

*—Male officer*

*"We talked more during the election, but not about sexual harassment. Guidance was given as to what you can or can't say as a military member, like don't post pictures of you getting drunk in uniform, or don't get yourself in trouble by [posting], 'I don't like so-in-so' [referring to a Presidential candidate] and, 'I'm in the [Service]' . . . right underneath [that other post]."*

*—Male officer*

*"It's another training—another training you did after [Equal Opportunity] and [Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention] training. That's the big thing right now. The [Service] is putting emphasis on that lately. I have a story—there was a guy who said some derogatory comments on social media, and the lieutenant colonel saw it and said, 'We're using you as an example.' He got an Article 15. He was out quicker than anyone. Units are checking social media. I don't have one, so can't check it."*

*—Junior enlisted man*

## Chapter 6. General Comments

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When time permitted after the topical focus group questions were completed, the Committee asked participants if there were issues that might affect women in the Military Services that had not been covered in the discussion so far (see Appendices C.1 through C.4).

This chapter summarizes the most common themes from these discussions and is organized into the following sections:

- ▶ Perspectives on gender integration
- ▶ Challenges for women in the military
- ▶ Recommendations for the Secretary of Defense

Several of the themes covered in this chapter were also addressed by participants as they discussed the primary topics for each focus group; Chapters 2 through 5 present these responses and provide additional information on each topic.

### A. Perspectives on Gender Integration

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When asked how well they thought the gender integration of the military was proceeding, in general, participants saw the status of the initiative as positive, and their comments tended to mirror those from previous years. Although many thought the process was going well, participants in many groups also raised challenges to gender integration and cited the importance of ensuring women are able to meet the job requirements. Participants in some groups acknowledged that gender integration was still in its earliest phases and would likely succeed in due time.

#### 1. Many groups shared positive perspectives on the status of gender integration

Participants from many groups provided positive perspectives on gender integration in the military, including positive stories of female leaders, perceptions of increased opportunities for women, and increased equality between genders.

*"The opportunity to go into [newly opened] fields is very encouraged. We have one [woman] in our unit trying out to be a [occupational specialty]. . . . Our unit is all about it. Her leadership is all male . . . , and they are all about it. That's good to see."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"My best friend from college was one of first girls integrated at [installation]. She said it's going well, and she hasn't had a problem with the fact she is a female. . . . She says she gets the same respect as the men."*

—Female officer

*"We had a female at [installation], and she deployed to [country] as a [occupational specialty]. She performed just as well as the men in that environment. . . . I think it's great . . . ; if they can meet the standards, then they should do it."*

—Male officer

*"[Gender integration is] . . . going fantastic. [My previous unit] showered in the same areas [as the males], hiked, and there was no difference. No one sees a difference. It's more the hierarchy that sees the difference and the political side. The lower ranks, they understand."*

—Junior enlisted woman

## **2. Many groups perceived challenges to gender integration**

Participants from many groups reported challenges to successful gender integration. The most frequently cited challenges to gender integration included women being unwillingly pushed into newly opened positions, a lack of acceptance of women in the military from older generations of Service members and veterans, perceived increased potential of sexual harassment for women, and challenges associated with the male instinct to protect women.

*"One female I talked to . . . voiced a concern about essentially being forced to place females into [unit] without them volunteering. I think that's kind of detrimental, because you're forcing people to do something. . . . I think contributing to this policy where we push people into these positions is just trying to change for change itself."*

—Male officer

*"I've had these conversations with male drill sergeants from combat [units]. They said, 'It's available now, so when are you going to do it? You're always talking about equal opportunity, well here it is.' And I'm like, 'Sergeant, equal opportunity doesn't mean I have to do it.' But it's like now they're looking for reasons. They're worried about having to come up with ways to shower; [they're] saying more men are going to die because they're wired to worry about women. Come on!"*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"I feel like it's the older people that have similar experience or even retired people that have the most issue with [gender integration]. Inside the Facebook groups or when they share the women that go through [training for newly opened positions] and they show the videos of them doing it . . . , it's mostly comments from older males, retired military males saying they shouldn't be doing it. That's not the newer age of the military. They're holding onto those ideas."*

—Female officer

*"I just [talked to] two of the first [female Service members] that are in the barracks. . . . They are terrified. They put them in the same barracks housing. They have already had knocks [from men at their doors] in the middle of the night saying, 'Hey, how are you doing?'"*

—Junior enlisted woman

## **3. Many groups cited the importance of ensuring women can meet job requirements**

Participants from many groups emphasized the significance of ensuring women can meet job requirements if integrated into a newly opened unit or position. A few participants shared concerns about some women being unable to support them in combat situations. This theme was most prevalent among male groups.

*"It's the first time in [my Service] I'm working alongside women. Honestly, if you can do your job, that's all that matters. I don't care about your ethnicity or gender. I've seen [bad Service members] who were male and [bad Service members] who were female, and I've seen the opposite. I think that's how most people feel."*

—Male officer

*"If you can carry me up 20 flights of stairs like this man can, then I applaud you. . . . If you can hold your own, I applaud you."*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"We are doing [a] good job to make sure we have equal representation across the board. We need to make sure we are maintaining a high standard. We don't just want to fill a quota. We want to make sure they are worthy. Have [females] do what the male [Service members] are going to do. Don't lower the standards to fill quotas so we have a strong fighting force. Whatever the [occupational specialty], you have to meet the minimum requirement."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"I was strictly against [gender integration] for a long time. As long as it's not forced, I agree [with integration]. Physically, there needs to be a standard. I've seen a small female out there, and there's no way she could carry me out. You have to be able to save my life the same way I'm going to save your life."*

—Male officer

#### **4. Some groups noted that gender integration is in its initial stage but is likely to succeed**

Participants from some groups reported that gender integration in the military is still in its infancy but that it is likely to improve and succeed over time.

*"It's hard in the beginning because it's a change, and people deal differently with change. When females first came in, I'm sure it was awkward because there aren't many. Now that we've integrated, [my Service] is still adapting."*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"Unfortunately, [my Service] is having a lot of growing pains. There is no [female] senior leadership in those combat roles, and I'm not looking to sign up to go over there for that purpose. . . . Once [the women] develop into the leader[s] that they are going to be, it'll be easier. . . . Some staff [noncommissioned officers] are going to start [supporting integration]. . . . This is just a time of growing pains. It'll get done, but we are on the front end."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"It's just new. . . . We have been dealing with women [in our unit] for 15 years now. . . . I think we put a lot of hype on how we are going to do it, but we will figure it out."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"We're all here because someone told us to be. Just talking about males, whatever our [occupational specialty], whatever the [Service] needs from us, is where we'll go. But [despite any initial resistance to integration], it's still early on, and things will change."*

—Male officer

## B. Challenges for Women in the Military

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As it has done in past years, DACOWITS asked participants to identify the biggest challenge women face in the military today. Common challenges included work-life balance, perceptions that women are unequal to men, and the male-dominated military culture.

### 1. Many groups cited challenges related to work-life balance

Issues related to work-life balance were the most frequently cited challenges for women in the military. This theme was more prevalent among women.

#### a. Some groups reported difficulty planning when to start a family

Participants from some groups reported that planning when to start a family was a challenge for people in the military, especially for female Service members. Some participants mentioned that the time required for planning and carrying a pregnancy to term could negatively affect their careers. This perspective was more prevalent among officers.

*"I thought about it a lot. When is anybody going to have the time [to start a family]? If I want a child, that's 9 months out of my career that I have to find the time for. That is huge. That is a lot of time."*

—Female officer

*"With starting a family, [there is] only one gender that can make a baby. It's about balancing that with [your Service duties]. . . . How do we get to where it doesn't affect your career? You shouldn't have to decide, 'I'm not having a kid, and that's how I'm going to be successful.' We have to be able to find a way to make it work."*

—Male officer

*"I think the biggest difficulty while being a woman in the Service is trying to have a family. But, for women specifically, right after maternity leave, right after baby, with post-partum depression. I think that is more difficult."*

—Junior enlisted man

*"It is easier to have a family if you get out [of the Service]. [I've] heard from my people that they wanted to get out because they want to have a family."*

—Male officer

#### b. Some groups cited challenges balancing professional and family responsibilities

Participants from some groups reported challenges related to balancing professional and family responsibilities for women in the military. A few participants highlighted that this challenge more often affects women than men, particularly those in dual-military relationships.

*“Work and life balance are . . . big issues. How many hours should I put in extra so that I can be . . . perceived as equal to my peers . . . versus how many hours should I spend at home taking care of my kids? In my younger days, I spent [long] hours at work, and my kids suffered because I was trying to be at a level with my peers. Now, I have a 20-year-old and 16-year-old, and I wish I could turn back the time and . . . spend more time being a mom rather than trying to be perceived as equal.”*

—Senior enlisted woman

*“. . .As a father, it's hard—I can only imagine what it is for the mother to do it. We have good female [Service members] that say it's not worth it. . . . There have been [Service members] that [said family needs] affected their work. Single moms with daycare—we work 24/7, but [daycare centers] can't accommodate the schedule—is that fair? If you have a sick child, you can miss training opportunities. That happens with men as well, but for the mom, it's a hurdle that's hard. People have done it, but it's the biggest challenge. You come in 18 years old, and it's amazing until you get married and have kids. The child is now more important than the [Service]. I don't know if you can fix that.*

—Male officer

*“I am divorced, but I was dual-military before. I experienced that if the kids were sick or if something happened or they got excluded from daycare, the responsibility was on me. I miss work, I stay home. My [ex-husband] would talk to his command, and he would be asked, ‘What about your wife?’”*

—Junior enlisted woman

*“The hardest thing is being a mother and [Service member]. It's juggling the civilian and military life.”*

—Junior enlisted man

## **2. Many groups reported a perception that women were unequal to men**

Participants from many groups described how women were sometimes considered inferior to men and found themselves working harder than men to prove their worth.

*“You have to constantly compete with [men] to show your worth, go those extra 6, 7, or 8 miles just to show you're almost as good as them. They just think we're not good enough, no matter what we do.”*

—Senior enlisted woman

*“Guys look at women as inferior, or lesser than. It's still a real mentality, in the world and in the military. If you're raised in an environment [where] mom stays at home and dad talks down to her . . . , it translates into the military.”*

—Junior enlisted man

*“[Women] feel as though the playing field is not level. The expectation [is] that she will not do as well as a guy. That is the way things are going. The culture needs to change and make it so that we think . . . the girl can do it as good as the guy.”*

—Female officer

“. . . When I was a [occupational specialty], we had a female command, and I was a [senior enlisted]. . . . Stopping and talking with the [Service members from a foreign country] . . . , they wouldn't speak to a woman. I kept having to tell them, 'She's in charge.'”

—Male officer

**a. Some groups reported a perception that women were incapable of performing certain jobs, causing women to work harder than men to prove themselves**

Participants in some groups described how women were sometimes viewed as incapable of performing certain jobs and felt they needed to prove themselves. This theme was reported more frequently among senior enlisted Service members.

“. . . There is still that perception with a lot of people of [in]equality. There is always some type of perception that women can't do certain jobs . . . , but when you compare the military to civilian sector, we're doing great because pay will be the same here. In the civilian sector, they still fight over equal pay.

—Senior enlisted man

“My girlfriend is an instructor . . . and she struggles with being taken seriously. It could also be her . . . male-dominated career field...But in the schoolhouse, these are folks just out of basic training, and she gets negative feedback. She struggles with proving she's credible. She's been doing this for 12 years, was hand selected to be an instructor.”

—Junior enlisted man

“From the time I was a staff sergeant on down, I felt I had to prove myself. I had to work twice as hard as male counterparts. The higher positions haven't been as difficult. I don't know what others think, though. For a good 15 years of my career, I truly felt that I had to work twice as hard to say that I earned the same thing. In a deployed environment, a male [Service member] came to me . . . [and] said, 'You really surprised me because I didn't think you were as competent as you are.' He thought I was given my position and grade because I was female and looked a certain way and not because I was good at my job. I had to show my [Service members] that I knew how to do my job and theirs so that they would respect me. It was about overcoming their bias.”

—Senior enlisted woman

**3. Some groups cited the male-dominated military culture as a challenge to women**

Participants in some groups reported challenges related to the male-dominated military culture, including difficulties women have faced adjusting to military life and ensuring their voices are heard.

“It's tough to be a girl in a large group of men. Guys say and act certain ways . . . when they think they are alone. It's very offensive. That's one of the biggest challenges [for women], is adjusting to that environment, whether they grew up with brothers or not—that social interaction.”

—Male officer

*"Maybe [women] feel [the military is] male-dominated, and because it is, they feel that their voices and opinions won't matter because it's all men."*

—Junior enlisted man

*". . . [The military] was initially just males only, and now, you have women in leadership roles. Not all are [older men] that think women should be in the kitchen. . . . You have to adapt to the fact that women are coming. It's making the [Service] better. It's not ruining your fun. It's improving it."*

—Female officer

*"This is still a man's world, and you have to prove every time you have to go somewhere, and that mentality is changing, but it's not changing fast enough."*

—Senior enlisted woman

## C. Participants' Suggestions for the Secretary of Defense

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When asked what suggestions they would make to the Secretary of Defense, participants offered recommendations on a variety of topics. Some of the recommendations stemmed from discussions held earlier in the focus groups related to the primary topics of interest as reported in Chapters 2 through 5.

### 1. Some groups made suggestions around military standards

Participants from some groups suggested changes to military standards; these included the implementation of universal physical fitness test standards and occupational standards, as well as changes to female height, weight, and body fat requirements. Some participants proposed modifications that were already implemented by the military, implying the need for more education about standards.

*"I'd say make the physical standards the same. I know there are differences, but I'd say the standards need to be the same. For certain jobs, they are required to test you. Keep them the same for both genders."*

—Male officer

*"My lowest physical fitness test score is 276 with an injury, and I fail the tape test. I was a gymnast, so I'm stocky. I will never meet weight. . . . It's ridiculous if you're short . . . and after having kids."*

—Junior enlisted woman

*"Part of the bigger problem is that it feels like the [Service] picks and chooses where women are equal. . . . If you want to have the same standard, you can't pick and choose. You can't drill into males that we are equal but [that] in certain cases, we don't have to do the same thing. There is a small percentage [of women] that can do the male physical fitness test and knock it out of the park, and I understand I can only do so much. . . . If we're equal, it's equal."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"[The military should implement] occupational testing standards. Realistic things . . . like carrying a 240 (machine gun) or a cratering charge for a certain amount of distance. [The Service should] make it mandatory for graduating [from specialty training]. Like, if you can't lift certain chains, you shouldn't be in that job. It doesn't matter if you are a man or a woman. Males and females alike should have to do realistic, specific things they have to do for that job."*

—Senior enlisted man

*"In [Service-specific physical fitness tests], females can whip my butt. It's crazy how different the standard is. We're all here to do [the] same mission, but they have a lower standard . . . ; talk about gender discrimination. There should be an equal, universal [Service-specific physical fitness test] standard."*

—Junior enlisted man

## 2. Some groups suggested strategies for improving gender integration in the military

Participants from some groups recommended approaches to improve gender integration in the military; these included reviewing successful military gender integration efforts from other countries, highlighting success stories of women in the military, and promoting women into leadership positions.

*"[Foreign country] has been studying women in combat positions for a long time. They have a lot of experience in this area. How come we aren't looking to what they are doing? . . . Why aren't we looking to our allied nations for insight as to the success of what amounts to a social experiment?"*

—Male officer

*"Focus on success stories, highlight female [Service members] who've been successful. Give [women] who are potentially interested in joining some inspiration."*

—Male officer

*"Having females in . . . top leadership positions would definitely [lead to] some changes for females. Even . . . our young [Service members] could look up and see there is a female up there."*

—Senior enlisted woman

*"Take women in the military seriously. They take men seriously. You can't judge people if they do good at their job until you see them do their job. If [women] need childcare and [other] services . . . , take us seriously."*

—Junior enlisted woman

## 3. Other suggestions

Participants also offered the following suggestions for the Secretary of Defense:

- ▶ Improve maternity uniforms
- ▶ Reduce the number of trainings and improve their effectiveness
- ▶ Improve Service member benefits and support programs, including childcare programs
- ▶ Improve leadership training

- ▶ Base career progression on job performance
- ▶ Increase length of paternity leave
- ▶ Take family circumstances into account for relocation and deployment decisions

## Appendix A. Installations Visited

Site	Dates
Joint Base Charleston	April 9–10, 2018
Sector Charleston	April 12–13, 2018
Shaw Air Force Base	April 16–17, 2018
Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort	April 19–20, 2018
Marine Corps Base Quantico	April 24–25, 2018
Fort Gordon	April 30–May 1, 2018
Fort Stewart	May 3–4, 2018
Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay	May 7–8, 2018
Naval Air Station Jacksonville	May 10–11, 2018

## Appendix B. Mini-Survey

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▶ **What is your branch of Service?**

- Army
- Navy
- Marine Corps
- Air Force
- Coast Guard

▶ **Are you a member of a Reserve or National Guard unit?**

- Yes
- No

▶ **Which best describes your unit type?**

- Operational (e.g., combat unit, sea duty, deployable unit)
- Support (e.g., training/school house, HQs, maintenance)

▶ **Which best describes your occupational specialty?**

- Operational (e.g., infantry, aviation)
- Support (e.g., admin, supply)

▶ **What is your age?**

- 18–20
- 21–24
- 25–29
- 30–34
- 35–39
- 40 or older

▶ **What is your gender?**

- Female
- Male
- Other

▶ **What is your pay grade?**

- E1–E3
- E4–E6
- E7–E9
- W01–W05
- O1–O3
- O4 or higher

▶ **Are you Spanish/Hispanic/Latino?**

- Yes, Spanish/Hispanic/Latino
- No, not Spanish/Hispanic/Latino

▶ **What is your race? Please mark all that apply.**

- White
- Black or African American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian (for example, Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese)
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (for example, Chamorro, Guamanian, Samoan)
- Other race

▶ **What is your relationship status?**

- Married
- Widowed
- Divorced
- Separated
- Never married

▶ **Do you have dependent children living in your home?**

Yes

No

▶ **How many years have you served in the military?  
Please round to the nearest year.**

\_\_\_\_\_ year(s)

▶ **If you have served 20 or more years in the military, assuming you could stay in the military, which of the following best describes your intentions regarding your military career?**

Not applicable; I have served less than 20 years in the military

Staying indefinitely, or as long as possible

Retiring as soon as possible

Undecided/Not sure

▶ **If you have served less than 20 years in the military, assuming you could stay in the military, which of the following best describes your intentions regarding your military career?**

Not applicable; I have served 20 or more years in the military

Staying until I am eligible for retirement or longer

Staying beyond my present obligation, but not necessarily until retirement

Probably leaving after my current obligation

Definitely leaving after my current obligation

Leaving the Active Component to join the Reserve or National Guard (any Service)

Undecided/Not sure

▶ **During basic/initial entry training, professional military education, leadership school, or other schools, have you ever had a female instructor?**

Yes

No

▶ **How easy or difficult do you feel it is for members of your Service to have a family and continue to advance their careers in the military?**

Very easy

Somewhat easy

Somewhat difficult

Very difficult

# Appendix C. Focus Group Protocols

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## C.1. Focus Group Protocol: Marketing

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### Session Information

Location:

Date:

Time:

Facilitator:

Recorder:

Number of participants present:

### 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 write your name on both sides of the tent card in front of you. Write in whatever name you would like everyone to use to refer to you during today's activities.
- ▶ Now, please take a moment to quickly silence your cell phones. Cell phones are not to be used during the duration of the focus group.
- ▶ 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 research contractor, **[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—since 1951.
- ▶ 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 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/an 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 studies specific topics and prepares a report for the Secretary of Defense.
- ▶ This year, the Committee is interested in hearing from Service members on several topics, including marketing the military to women. **[FOR MALE GROUPS:** We are also meeting with groups of women.] **[FOR FEMALE GROUPS:** We are also meeting with groups of men.] 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 encourage open conversation. Our research contractor 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. Although we would like to hear from everyone, feel free to answer as many or as few questions as you prefer.
- ▶ My job today is to listen, collecting information about your experiences and perceptions. My job is not to provide information. That means I will not correct any inaccuracies or misperceptions that may be shared by the group, so you should not assume everything you hear today is accurate.

### 4. Explain ground rules

- ▶ Please speak clearly and one at a time to make sure our research contractor 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 research contractor, **[INSERT NAME]**, will make sure we're sticking to the schedule and will alert 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.
- ▶ 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 identities of other participants with anyone outside of this group.
- ▶ In front of you are a couple of short 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 for you to complete anonymously. Please do not write your name on the form. 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 the front and the back of the form.
- ▶ After all 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 will use in writing our annual report to the Secretary of Defense [**SHOW COPY OF 2017 REPORT**]. Copies of our annual reports are available online at [dacowits.defense.gov](http://dacowits.defense.gov). The focus group report compiles responses by broad categories only, such as female junior officers or male senior enlisted.

Question number	Topic	Notes
<b>Warmup/Introductions</b>		
Before we get started with our discussion about marketing, let's do some introductions.		
1	<p><b>Short introduction by each DACOWITS member:</b> My name is <b>[NAME]</b> and I'm from <b>[LOCATION]</b>. I am a <b>[VETERAN OF SERVICE-BRANCH/CURRENT OCCUPATION]</b>.</p> <p><b>(MODERATOR: Do not share whether you were prior enlisted/an officer or your former rank/title with the group; simply state you are a veteran, if applicable.)</b></p>	

Question number	Topic	Notes
	<p>Now, let's go around the room and have each of you tell us:  <b>(MODERATOR: Ask each person all three questions before moving on to next person.)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How many years you've served in the military</li> <li>▪ Your job in the military</li> <li>▪ How long you've been with your current unit</li> </ul>	
<b>Marketing</b>		
Let's begin by talking about where people get their ideas about the military.		
2	<p>Thinking back to before you joined the military, how did you learn about what life was like in the military?</p> <p><b>[PROBE if needed:]</b> Commercials? Movies? Family experience? Talking to recruiters?</p>	
3	Thinking about your expectations before you joined the military, what did you think life in the military would be like?	
4	Before you joined the military, what were you looking forward to the most?	
5	<p>What were some of your concerns when you were thinking about joining the military?</p> <p><b>[PROBE if needed:]</b> How worried were you about completing basic training? Being away from friends and family? Being deployed?</p>	
6	<p>Thinking about the expectations you had before you joined, how do they compare with what happened when you actually started your service?</p> <p><b>[PROBE if needed:]</b> What was the same? What was different?</p>	
7	<p>What, if anything, is a positive part of military life that you were not expecting?</p> <p><b>[PROBE if needed:]</b> Not as physically challenging? More flexibility than you expected? Stronger sense of community than you thought?</p>	
8	<p>What have you accomplished in the military that you couldn't imagine before you joined?</p> <p><b>[PROBE if needed:]</b> Got a promotion? Traveled? Took on leadership roles?</p>	
<p><i>The Department of Defense devotes a lot of resources toward its marketing and advertising efforts. DACOWITS is interested in encouraging more young women to join the military and wants to know how to improve the messages we are using to advertise military life.</i></p>		
9	Have you seen any commercials or advertisements about your Service recently? Where did you view them (e.g., TV, social media, magazines, etc.)?	
10	<p>What do you think of the commercials and advertisements you've seen recently about your Service? How accurately do they portray what life is like for women in your Service?</p> <p>a. <b>[IF NOT:]</b> How should they be changed to be more accurate?</p>	
11	If you had a chance to talk to the people who make the commercials and advertisements about your Service, what would you tell them?	
12	<p>If you were to create a commercial to encourage young women to join your Service, what would it include?</p> <p><b>[PROBE if needed:]</b> What people, places, and activities would you show to best represent life in your Service?</p>	
13	How would you design a commercial to encourage women to join operational or front line career fields?	

Question number	Topic	Notes
14	Do you have any other suggestions to improve your Service's marketing efforts?	
<b>General Questions</b>		
We're also interested in hearing about other issues we haven't yet discussed that may affect women in the military. Is there anything else you'd like to talk about with us? We may use your ideas as future topics of DACOWITS research.		
15	One issue DACOWITS has been studying for years is the efforts DoD and the Services are taking to integrate women into previously closed positions/ billets and units. We would like to hear your thoughts about how these efforts are progressing to date. How well do you think the integration process is going?	
16	What do you feel is the biggest challenge to women serving in the military today?	
17	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: Instructors/Career and Family Planning

### Session Information

Location:

Date:

Time:

Facilitator:

Recorder:

Number of participants present:

### Focus Group Kickoff: Key Points to Cover

#### Welcome attendees

- ▶ Thank you for taking the time to join our discussion today. Please take a minute to write your name on both sides of the tent card in front of you. Write in whatever name you would like everyone to use to refer to you during today's activities.
- ▶ Now, please take a moment to quickly silence your cell phones. Cell phones are not to be used during the duration of the focus group.

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

#### 1. 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—since 1951.
- ▶ 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 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/an 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 studies specific topics and prepares a report for the Secretary of Defense.
- ▶ This year, the Committee is interested in hearing from Service members on several topics, including your experience with instructors and career planning. **[FOR MALE GROUPS: We are also meeting with groups of women.] [FOR FEMALE GROUPS: We are also meeting with groups of men.]** 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.

#### 2. 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 encourage open conversation. Our research contractor 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. Although we would like to hear from everyone, feel free to answer as many or as few questions as you prefer.
- ▶ My job today is to listen, collecting information about your experiences and perceptions. My job is not to provide information. That means I will not correct any inaccuracies or misperceptions

that may be shared by the group, so you should not assume everything you hear today is accurate.

### 3. Explain ground rules

- ▶ Please speak clearly and one at a time to make sure our research contractor 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 research contractor, **[INSERT NAME]**, will make sure we're sticking to the schedule and will alert me if we need to move on to the next question.

### 4. 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.
- ▶ 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 identities of other participants with anyone outside of this group.
- ▶ In front of you are a couple of short 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 for you to complete anonymously. Please do not write your name on the form. 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 the front and the back of the form.
- ▶ After all 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 will use in writing our annual report to the Secretary of Defense [**SHOW COPY OF 2017 REPORT**]. Copies of our annual reports are available online at [dacowits.defense.gov](http://dacowits.defense.gov). The focus group report compiles responses by broad categories only, such as female junior officers or male senior enlisted.

Question number	Topic	Notes
<b>Warmup/Introductions</b>		
Before we get started with our discussion about instructors and career planning, let’s do some introductions.		
1	<p><b>Short introduction by each DACOWITS member:</b> My name is <b>[NAME]</b> and I’m from <b>[LOCATION]</b>. I am a <b>[VETERAN OF SERVICE-BRANCH/CURRENT OCCUPATION]</b>.</p> <p><b>(MODERATOR: Do not share whether you were prior enlisted/an officer or your former rank/title with the group; simply state you are a veteran, if applicable.)</b></p> <p>Now, let’s go around the room and have each of you tell us:  <b>(MODERATOR: Ask each person all three questions before moving on to next person.)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many years you’ve served in the military</li> <li>• Your job in the military</li> <li>• How long you’ve been with your current unit</li> </ul>	
<b>Instructors</b>		
Let’s begin by talking about the instructors you have had in the military. By instructors, we mean teachers or trainers you had in initial entry training, professional military education, leadership schools, or other types of military schooling. Today, we want to learn about your experiences with instructors.		
2	<p>When was the most recent time you interacted with instructors?</p> <p><b>[PROBE if needed:]</b> During initial entry training? Professional military education? Leadership schools? Other?</p>	
3	<p>In addition to their role as teachers, what is the role of instructors in the military?</p> <p><b>[PROBE if needed:]</b> Do instructors serve as role models? Share knowledge? Did your instructors influence you in any other ways?</p>	
4	In addition to their ability to teach, what are some characteristics of a good instructor?	
5	What are some characteristics of a bad instructor?	
6	Have you had an instructor that served as a role model or mentor?	
7	By a show of hands, how many of you had a <u>female instructor</u> at initial entry training? <b>[RESEARCH CONTRACTOR: COUNT THE NUMBER OF HANDS.]</b>	
8	By a show of hands, how many of you have ever had a female instructor at any other course? <b>[RESEARCH CONTRACTOR: COUNT THE NUMBER OF HANDS.]</b>	

Question number	Topic	Notes	
9	Thinking of women in the military, do you think having a female instructor would influence their training or time at school? If so, how?		
	<b>[PROBE if needed:]</b> Would it be positive? Negative? Different in any way?		
10	For those who have not had a female instructor, do you think having a female instructor would have influenced your experience at training or school?		
11	In your opinion, what are some ways, if any, that female instructors might be perceived differently than male instructors?		
12	How if at all does an instructor's career field influence your perception of them?		
13	In what situations, if any, might a male or female instructor be preferable?		
14	What do you think about the number of female instructors?		
	<b>[PROBE if needed:]</b> Should there be more? Less? The same?		
<b>Career and Family Planning</b>			
Now, I want to shift to talk about career planning. Balancing a career and family obligations can be difficult and affects both individuals and units. Not everyone experiences this in the same way, so we'd like to hear about your experience either as an individual or as a member of a unit.			
15	Many people struggle with decisions about if and when to have a family while serving in the military. Thinking about your experience or those of people you know, how do people make this decision?		
16	Thinking of people in operational units, do they have different factors to consider when planning a family compared to people in support units? If so, what are the differences?		
17	What about dual-military families or single parents? Do they have different factors to consider?		
18	Do you or other Service members you know have different factors to consider when planning a family as compared to people in the civilian workforce? If so, what are the differences?		
19	When making decisions about balancing a military career and family, who do people go to for advice and support? Who has been most helpful?		
20	By a show of hands, how many of you have received formal training or guidance to support decisions around balancing career and family? <b>[RESEARCH CONTRACTOR: COUNT THE NUMBER OF HANDS.]</b>		
	a. <b>[IF YES:]</b> What was this training or guidance like? What did it entail? Who provided it? Was it useful?		
	<b>[PROBE if needed:]</b> What should it include? Who should deliver it?		
21	By a show of hands, how many of you think your unit or Service should provide mandatory training around these types of decisions? <b>[RESEARCH CONTRACTOR: COUNT THE NUMBER OF HANDS.]</b>		
22	By a show of hands, how many of you think your unit or Service should provide voluntary or optional training around these types of decisions? <b>[RESEARCH CONTRACTOR: COUNT THE NUMBER OF HANDS.]</b>		
	<b>[PROBE if needed:]</b> What should this training include?		
23	What else, if anything, could your unit or Service do to support members with balancing a military career and planning for a family?		

Question number	Topic	Notes
<b>General Questions</b>		
We're also interested in hearing about other issues we haven't yet discussed that may affect women in the military. Is there anything else you'd like to talk about with us? We may use your ideas as future topics of DACOWITS research.		
24	One issue DACOWITS has been studying for years is the efforts DoD and the Services are taking to integrate women into previously closed positions. We would like to hear your thoughts about how these efforts are progressing to date. How well do you think the integration process is going?	
25	What do you feel is the biggest challenge to women serving in the military today?	
26	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: Unit Climate and Culture

#### Session Information

Location:

Date:

Time:

Facilitator:

Recorder:

Number of participants present:

#### Focus Group Kickoff: Key Points to Cover

##### 5. Welcome attendees

- ▶ Thank you for taking the time to join our discussion today. Please take a minute to write your name on both sides of the tent card in front of you. Write in whatever name you would like everyone to use to refer to you during today's activities.
- ▶ Now, please take a moment to quickly silence your cell phones. Cell phones are not to be used during the duration of the focus group.
- ▶ 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 research contractor, **[INSERT NAME]**, is with **[CONTRACTOR]**, a research firm hired to record these sessions, and s/he is part of the DACOWITS research team.

## 6. 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—since 1951.
- ▶ 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 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/an 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 studies specific topics and prepares a report for the Secretary of Defense.
- ▶ This year, the Committee is interested in hearing from Service members on several topics, including unit climate and culture. **[FOR MALE GROUPS: We are also meeting with groups of women.] [FOR FEMALE GROUPS: We are also meeting with groups of men.]** 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.

## 7. 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 encourage open conversation. Our research contractor 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. Although we would like to hear from everyone, feel free to answer as many or as few questions as you prefer.
- ▶ My job today is to listen, collecting information about your experiences and perceptions. My job is not to provide information. That means I will not correct any inaccuracies or misperceptions that may be shared by the group, so you should not assume everything you hear today is accurate.

## 8. Explain ground rules

- ▶ Please speak clearly and one at a time to make sure our research contractor 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 research contractor, **[INSERT NAME]**, will make sure we're sticking to the schedule and will alert me if we need to move on to the next question.

## 9. 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 Equal Opportunity Advisor or your Command Managed Equal Opportunity Coordinator, he or she is available to speak with you after our focus group session.
- ▶ 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 identities of other participants with anyone outside of this group.
- ▶ In front of you are a couple of short 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 for you to complete anonymously. Please do not write your name on the form. 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 the front and the back of the form.
- ▶ After all 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 will use in writing our annual report to the Secretary of Defense **[SHOW COPY OF 2017 REPORT]**. Copies of our annual reports are available online at [dacowits.defense.gov](http://dacowits.defense.gov). The focus group report compiles responses by broad categories only, such as female junior officers or male senior enlisted.

Question number	Topic	Notes
<b>Warmup/Introductions</b>		
Before we get started with our discussion about unit climate and culture, let’s do some introductions.		
1	<p><b>Short introduction by each DACOWITS member:</b> My name is <b>[NAME]</b> and I’m from <b>[LOCATION]</b>. I am a <b>[VETERAN OF SERVICE-BRANCH/CURRENT OCCUPATION]</b>.</p> <p><b>(MODERATOR: Do not share whether you were prior enlisted/an officer or your former rank/title with the group; simply state you are a veteran, if applicable.)</b></p> <p>Now, let’s go around the room and have each of you tell us:  <b>(MODERATOR: Ask each person all three questions before moving on to next person.)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How many years you’ve served in the military</li> <li>▪ Your job in the military</li> <li>▪ How long you’ve been with your current unit</li> </ul>	
<b>Unit Climate and Culture</b>		
Let’s begin by talking about unit culture and climate. By culture we mean shared beliefs and behaviors adopted by a group like your unit, and by climate we mean the environment those beliefs and behaviors create.		
2	<p>First, let’s talk about what makes a positive unit climate. How would you describe a positive unit climate?</p> <p><b>[PROBE if needed:] How large is your unit?</b></p>	
3	<p>How would you describe a negative unit climate?</p> <p><b>[PROBE if needed:] Who is responsible for establishing and maintaining a positive unit climate? Officers? NCOs? Members of the unit? Your Service? Others? All of the above?</b></p>	
4	What actions and behaviors affect the climate in a unit?	
5	What are some things that can be done to improve the climate in a unit?	

Question number	Topic	Notes
<b>Responding to Inappropriate Behavior</b>		
<p>Now that we've discussed unit climate, we want to talk specifically about some behaviors that might foster a negative environment in a unit. Behaviors that breed a negative climate affect all members of a unit and can ultimately affect mission readiness. We want to discuss inappropriate behavior, including sexual harassment and gender discrimination. These behaviors can take many forms and can, at times, be ambiguous and difficult to identify. The Services have established organizations and procedures for addressing some challenges, but other challenges in the workplace, such as sexual harassment and gender discrimination, can be more difficult to address. We are interested in hearing about how Service members respond to problems like this and what support is available to Service members grappling with these issues.</p> <p>As we proceed through the discussion, you are welcome to share any personal experiences you may have on this topic if you feel comfortable doing so, but we don't want you to feel that you must share your personal experiences if you would rather not.</p>		
6	First, let's talk about gender discrimination. What does gender discrimination in the workplace look like to you?	
	<b>[PROBE if needed:]</b> How would you describe gender discrimination?	
<p><i>To make sure we are all on the same page, I will read a definition of gender discrimination: Gender or sex-based discrimination involves treating an individual differently or unfavorably because of his or her gender.</i></p>		
7	From what you've observed, how do people you know respond when they experience or observe gender discrimination in their units?	
	<b>[PROBE if needed:]</b> Do they let it slide? Have a private conversation with the person acting inappropriately? Report it to the chain of command? Talk to a friend about if/how to respond?	
8	How often do people say something or take action?	
	<b>[PROBE if needed:]</b> Is it being reported enough? Not enough? Too much?	
9	Are these instances being handled well?	
10	How, if at all, does gender discrimination affect your unit as a whole?	
11	Now, I want to talk about sexual harassment. In your opinion, is sexual harassment different from gender discrimination? If so, how?	
	<b>[PROBE if needed:]</b> How would you describe sexual harassment?	
<p><i>To make sure we are all on the same page, I will read a definition of sexual harassment: Sexual harassment involves making unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or obscene remarks.</i></p>		
12	From what you've observed, how do people you know respond when they experience or observe sexual harassment in their units?	
	<b>[PROBE if needed:]</b> Do they let it slide? Have a private conversation with the person acting inappropriately? Report it? Talk to a friend about if/how to respond?	
13	How often do people say something or take action?	
	<b>[PROBE if needed:]</b> Is it being reported enough? Not enough? Too much?	
14	Are these instances being handled well?	
15	How, if at all, does sexual harassment affect your unit as a whole?	
16	Sometimes a person's actions may make you or others feel uncomfortable, but you may not be sure if it is gender discrimination or sexual harassment. From what you've seen, how do people you know respond when they experience or observe behavior that may be inappropriate but falls into a gray area?	

Question number	Topic	Notes
	<b>[PROBE if needed:]</b> Do they let it slide? Have a private conversation with the person acting inappropriately? Report it to the chain of command? Talk to a friend about if/how to respond?	
17	What factors influence the decision about if/when/how to take action? <b>[PROBE if needed:]</b> Do you consider who was acting inappropriately? How bad/severe you thought it was? Whether it is the first time or if it has happened before?	
18	How often do people take action in situations like this?	
19	How are people in your unit trained to respond to inappropriate behavior, language, and/or hostile climates?	
	What was the training designed to achieve? Who conducted it?	
	a. Did you consider the training effective?	
20	<b>[PROBE if needed:]</b> Did you notice any differences in behavior? Did it have unintended consequences?	
	b. Did the training include guidance on how to respond when you witness inappropriate behavior as a bystander but are not directly involved in it?	
	c. Did the training address issues related to unit climate and culture?	
	d. Can you describe the best or most effective training you've participated in?	
21	How many of you have received guidance about the appropriate use of social media? <b>[RESEARCH CONTRACTOR: COUNT THE NUMBER OF HANDS]</b>	
	a. <b>[If yes]</b> What did that guidance entail?	
22	Think about the climate in your unit or Service. Would you say it encourages or discourages inappropriate behavior? How so?	
23	Did you notice any differences during combat or operational deployment?	
24	What about taking action to address inappropriate behavior, is that something that the climate in your unit supports or discourages?	
	What more could your Service or unit be doing to promote a positive unit climate?	
25	<b>[PROBE if needed:]</b> Are there any other approaches your Service could take to drive positive culture change and reduce inappropriate behavior?	
<b>Climate and Culture in Operational and Support Units</b>		
As we've just discussed, every unit is different and some create more positive climates than others. We want to hear your perspectives about some of the similarities and differences between operational and support units.		
26	Thinking about positive and negative climates, can you describe any differences you've noticed between operational and support units?	
27	Thinking about servicewomen you know, would you say it is more or less difficult for them to serve in an operational unit or a support unit? Why?	
28	What recommendations do you have to improve the climate in either operational or support units?	

Question number	Topic	Notes
<b>General Questions</b>		
We're also interested in hearing about other issues we haven't yet discussed that may affect women in the military. Is there anything else you'd like to talk about with us? We may use your ideas as future topics of DACOWITS research.		
29	One issue DACOWITS has been studying for years is the efforts DoD and the Services are taking to integrate women into previously closed positions. We would like to hear your thoughts about how these efforts are progressing to date. How well do you think the integration process is going?	
30	What do you feel is the biggest challenge to women serving in the military today?	
31	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.*

## Appendix D. Differences in Perceived Difficulty of Having a Family and Continuing to Advance One's Military Career

**Table D.1. Differences in Perceived Difficulty of Having a Family and Continuing to Advance One's Military Career**

Participant Characteristic	Ease of Advancing Career While Having a Family			
	Very Easy	Somewhat Easy	Somewhat Difficult	Very Difficult
<b>Gender</b>				
Female	14 (5%)	75 (26%)	153 (53%)	45 (16%)
Male	20 (8%)	95 (36%)	127 (48%)	23 (9%)
Total	34	170	280	68
<b>Service Branch</b>				
Air Force	5 (4%)	38 (30%)	66 (53%)	16 (13%)
Army	14 (10%)	45 (31%)	71 (49%)	14 (10%)
Coast Guard	2 (4%)	13 (28%)	26 (57%)	5 (11%)
Marine Corps	8 (6%)	41 (31%)	62 (47%)	21 (16%)
Navy	5 (5%)	34 (32%)	55 (52%)	12 (11%)
Total	34	171	280	68
<b>Pay Grade/Rank</b>				
E1–E3	5 (9%)	26 (46%)	21 (38%)	4 (7%)
E4–E6	16 (8%)	60 (28%)	116 (55%)	20 (9%)
E7–E9	4 (7%)	21 (38%)	24 (44%)	6 (11%)
WO1–WO5	0 (0%)	4 (24%)	7 (41%)	6 (35%)
O1–O3	7 (4%)	47 (27%)	97 (55%)	25 (14%)
O4 or higher	2 (5%)	13 (35%)	15 (41%)	7 (19%)
Total	34	171	280	68
<b>Years of Military Service</b>				
Less than 3 years	5 (5%)	35 (36%)	46 (48%)	10 (10%)
3–5 years	5 (4%)	32 (27%)	75 (63%)	8 (7%)
6–9 years	9 (8%)	30 (25%)	66 (56%)	13 (11%)
10–14 years	4 (5%)	27 (34%)	37 (47%)	11 (14%)
15–19 years	9 (9%)	31 (31%)	44 (44%)	17 (17%)
20 years or more	2 (5%)	16 (41%)	12 (31%)	9 (23%)
Total	34	171	280	68
<b>Dependent Children at Home</b>				
No	17 (6%)	95 (32%)	157 (53%)	27 (9%)
Yes	17 (7%)	76 (30%)	123 (48%)	41 (16%)
Total	34	171	280	68

Participant Characteristic	Ease of Advancing Career While Having a Family			
	Very Easy	Somewhat Easy	Somewhat Difficult	Very Difficult
<b>Marital Status</b>				
Divorced	2 (3%)	23 (39%)	26 (44%)	8 (14%)
Married	21 (7%)	97 (31%)	151 (49%)	40 (13%)
Never married	11 (6%)	46 (27%)	98 (57%)	18 (10%)
Separated	0 (0%)	5 (45%)	4 (36%)	2 (18%)
Widowed	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)
Total	34	171	280	68
<b>Unit Type</b>				
Operational	15 (6%)	70 (30%)	115 (49%)	33 (14%)
Support	19 (6%)	100 (31%)	165 (52%)	34 (11%)
Total	34	170	280	67
<b>Specialty Type</b>				
Operational	13 (6%)	69 (31%)	108 (49%)	31 (14%)
Support	20 (6%)	98 (30%)	169 (52%)	35 (11%)
Total	33	167	277	66
<b>Career Intentions for Military Service (for those who have served 20+ years)</b>				
Staying indefinitely, or as long as possible	1 (6%)	8 (47%)	5 (29%)	3 (18%)
Retiring as soon as possible	1 (7%)	3 (21%)	5 (36%)	5 (36%)
Undecided/Not sure	0 (0%)	5 (63%)	2 (25%)	1 (13%)
Total	2	16	12	9
<b>Career Intentions for Military Service (for those who have served less than 20 years)</b>				
Staying until I am eligible for retirement or longer	18 (8%)	81 (34%)	113 (47%)	28(12%)
Staying beyond my present obligation, but not necessarily until retirement	4 (7%)	16 (28%)	32 (56%)	5 (9%)
Probably leaving after my current obligation	3 (6%)	11 (22%)	32 (63%)	5 (10%)
Definitely leaving after my current obligation	1 (2%)	10 (23%)	24 (56%)	8 (19%)
Leaving the Active Component to join the Reserve or National Guard (any Service)	1 (6%)	3 (17%)	11 (61%)	3 (17%)
Undecided/Not sure	5 (5%)	29 (30%)	53 (55%)	10 (10%)
Total	32	150	265	59

Some percentages do not sum to 100 because of rounding.

Missing data for all variables other than for gender were excluded from the estimates in this table.

N/A = not applicable

Source: DACOWITS mini-survey (data from all groups)