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Women in the Military

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Abstract

Since the beginning of the United States military, women have served their country in one way or another. Even when women were banned from serving, they found ways. Through the years, women have faced and overcome many challenges that the military has exposed them to. Many of these challenges have caused medical issues in both mental and physical areas. Women have had to prove their worth and capabilities and continue to do so today. They have faced sexual harassment, abuse, and rape often to be ignored when they speak out and seek help from leadership. Females have faced many challenges in regard to physical fitness and body composition requirements. The military was designed in a manner to cater to men, even today (over a hundred years later) women are still pushing for uniforms and military gear that will appropriately fit the female body. Committees have advocated for women over the years and have been a big part of why positive changes have been made in order to integrate women into the military properly. The United States military is working towards creating a gender-neutral organization and while those changes are being made, they are happening slowly and will require not only policy changes but leadership support. Women should feel just as safe and respected in the organization as their male coworkers.

Keywords: Army, Air Force, Marines, Navy, Coast Guard, Women, Military

Introduction

Women have had to prove themselves time and time again in their military ranks and occupations. Often, women are looked at as physically and mentally weaker than their male counterparts, in turn making transition assistance when they return from a combat environment something they cannot adequately receive without discrimination. They tend to be viewed as being less able to fill the roles that are typically seen as “male only” occupations and continue to be the target of (gender) discrimination because of those outdated views and opinions. Women have been a permanent part of the United States military for seventy-three years and to this day female roles in war and their garrison service have often been recognized as less significant than those of men, both intentionally and unintentionally. Women continue to face various obstacles in their everyday military lives such as sexual harassment, meeting the current fitness requirements, struggling with body composition and grooming standards, and receiving proper health care. Motherhood and marriage continue to be major factors in women ending their time in service before completing a full twenty years of service. While there have been many advancements in the evolution of the United States military and its move towards becoming a gender neutral organization, there are still many changes that need to be made in order for females to be treated and respected in the same manner as their male counterparts.

Historically, women in the military held the role of “nurse”. Today, female roles have evolved to the point that they are accepted into combat arms. The military has had to change the way they test physical fitness of service members, open occupations that were previously considered male-only occupations, and institute sexual harassment initiatives. While, there continues to be a problem with the discrimination of females in certain military occupations, they continue to push forward in order to prove their abilities and equal worth. All branches of the

United States military will inevitably be forced to recognize the strengths and weaknesses specific to women who serve, in turn advancing the efforts of creating the gender-neutral military they are striving for. The military is continuously adapting, and women have played a significant role in that growth. To this day, with the efforts of women who are currently serving, many issues and concerns for military females have been brought to the attention of the Department of Defense (DOD), who create regulations in the military under federal law, and are being researched in ways to make positive changes.

Although women were not legally permitted to join the military until 1948, women have served in the ranks of all military branches for much longer than that. It is not known if other women secretly joined the military prior to this time but, according to Keith Hayes (2021), the following are on record as the first woman to serve in each branch. The secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels, opened the Marine Corps Reserves to women for clerical roles. Opha May Johnson joined the Marine Corps on August 13, 1918 during World War 1; she was later followed by 300 other women. Loretta Walsh is documented as the first official enlisted female to serve in the United States military, she joined the Navy Reserve Force on March 21, 1917. At this time, men were not enlisting in large enough numbers, so in an effort to entice more men to join, Navy Secretary Josephus Daniels began enrolling women into the Navy Reserve. Loretta Walsh was also the first female chief petty officer. Genevieve and Lucille Baker transferred from the Navy to the Coast Guard during World War 1, and Myrtle Hazzard became the Coast Guard's first female electrician on Jan 21, 1918. It is debated who of them was considered the Coast Guard's first female service member, but Hazzard was the first woman to take the oath of enlistment for her service in the branch. Esther McGowin Blake enlisted in the United States Air Force on July 8, 1948, the day the Air Force announced that women could serve. Blake was a

widow and both of her sons were serving, she served in the Air Force until 1954 when she began work at the Veterans Regional Headquarters in Alabama, working there until she died at age 82. Deborah Sampson joined the Continental Army in May of 1781 when women were not allowed to serve. Sampson disguised herself as a man named Robert Shurtleff. She successfully served undercover until 1775 when she became very sick, her doctor discovered her gender but kept it a secret. The doctor's niece fell for Sampson and because she did not want to lead the girl on, she wrote her a letter explaining she was a woman, Sampson's doctor ultimately turned the letter into her chain of command exposing her secret identity. General George Washington authorized Sampson an honorable discharge in 1784. Congress established the United States Navy Nurse Corps in 1908, though women had been working as nurses on Navy ships and in Navy hospitals for close to one hundred years. The Corps was an all-female unit until 1965. Women who did not serve in roles that revolved around military actions took on male dominant jobs in order to fill shortages of the men who left for various wars. These jobs were in factories and businesses and included roles such as typists, telephone operators, and clerks (Archer 2017).

Roles women have served in each war

World War I began in 1914 and lasted four years. At the time of the war, women were not permitted to vote or join the military. According to an article from the National WWI Museum and Memorial, with hopes of the war ending in more rights, women looked for ways to serve in the military and other occupations. While most of the men were gone at war, women had to fill in and occupy manufacturing and agricultural positions. They were a big part of war production, ammunition testers, switchboard operators, stock takers, and growing and canning food for future use. Female nurses in the United States Navy Nurse Corps were sent ahead of many of the troops and assigned to British forces. Because male doctors were able to serve their

country in the medical corps, female physicians had a difficult time finding a way into the war. They were refused the opportunity to serve in the medical corps and had to find other ways to use their skills, many of them contracted as civilians in the American Red Cross. Organizations, such as the Medical Women's National Association, raised money to send the female doctors overseas to work in hospitals. Nonmedical women assisted in the war as truck drivers, mechanics, and ambulance drivers. They often drove through lines of fire to retrieve the wounded. Marie Curie invented the first mobile X-Ray unit and trained 150 other women to operate the units on the battlefield. The Navy found a loophole in a section of the Naval Act of 1916 and recruited women as "Yeomen" to replace the men that had deployed from stateside. The Yeomen, around 12,000 women, performed clerical duties, worked as truck drivers, mechanics, radio operators, telephone operators, translators, camouflage artists, and munition workers. They had the same responsibilities as the men they filled positions for and were even paid the same (\$28.75 per month) until the end of the war and the men returned home to refill their original positions. "Hello Girls" were named after the creation of the Signal Corps Female Telephone Operators Unit. The Hello Girls were bilingual in French and English, operating switchboards on the Western front. Although they worked close to the front lines and were known for their bravery and focus, they did not receive veteran status or benefits when they returned home after the war. It wasn't until 1977 until they received their deserved recognition as veterans.

After seeing the involvement of women in World War I, according to an article written from the National WWII Museum New Orleans, Congresswoman Edith Nourse Rogers introduced a bill to create the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) in May 1941. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 27, 1941, the United States fully committed to

World War II and Congress approved the creation of the WAAC on May 14, 1942. President Roosevelt signed the bill into law on May 15th. After the law was signed, the Navy Women's Reserve; Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service (WAVES), the Marine Corps Women's Reserve (MCWR), the Coast Guard Women's Reserve (SPARS), the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPS), the Army Nurses Corps, and the Navy Nurse Corps became other branches that women served in during World War II. Nearly a month after the WAVES legislation passes, Smith College established a training school for officers and Mildred McAfee became the first female commissioned officer in the US Navy (Archer 2017). Although the women serving in WAVES could not work aboard the Navy ships or aircrafts, they recruited over 27,000 women in the first year to fill clerical roles and some filled roles in the medical, communications, and technology fields. SPARS and MCWR worked in the same manner as WAVES, it allowed women to fill the clerical roles so men could be deployed to overseas missions (Archer 2017). WASPS went on secret missions and risked their lives while doing so. These women who piloted planes for the Air Force during this time became part of the history that led to women serving in nontraditional military jobs. The Air Force set themselves apart from the rest of the services by allowing women to fill this male dominant role (Archer 2017). Fort Des Moines, Iowa was the first training site for the WAAC and over 35,000 women applied, though at that time there were only 1,000 positions anticipated. The WAAC presented an opportunity to test integration in the Army with public interest on civil rights. The first women to arrive at the training center were 125 enlisted and 440 officer candidates, 40 being African American. After officer candidate school, black and white officers were segregated. Once training was complete, the enlisted and officer personnel were placed in a 150-woman organization as clerks, typists, drivers, cooks, and unit cadre. A year after the creation of WAAC,

over four hundred jobs opened up to women. Because the WAAC was not legally part of the Army, they received the same basic rate of pay as men stateside but did not receive overseas pay and were not eligible for life insurance (when/if they were killed, their family could not collect death benefits). By June 1943, recruits had drastically slowed because women could find higher paying jobs as civilians, there were unequal benefits between men and women, and there was a lot of turmoil from the Army and its male population. Congresswoman Rogers introduced bills to drop “auxiliary” from the WAAC and allow women to serve overseas, President Roosevelt signed it in July 1943 which changed the name to Women’s Army Corps (WAC) and gave women the rank, privileges, and benefits of their male counterparts (Schaefer, Wenger, Kavanagh, Wong, Oak, Trail Nichols 2015). Females assigned to the Army Air Forces served as weather forecasters and observers, electrical specialists, sheet metal workers, link trainer instructors, control tower specialists, airplane mechanics, photo-laboratory technicians, and photo interpreters. Those assigned to the Army Ground Forces worked as radio mechanics, took care of radio equipment, repaired and installed radios in tanks, and trained men in field artillery and code sending and receiving. The Signal Corps used women as telephone, radio and teletype operators, cryptographers, cryptanalysts, and photographic experts. The Transportation Corps used women for in processing troops and delivering mail. Women served as medical and surgical technicians, and also conducted administrative services for the Adjutant General's Corps, Chemical Warfare Service, Quartermaster Corps, finance department, provost marshal and Corps of Chaplains. In 1945 the war ended and so did the WAC leaving them with no re-employment or peacetime component rights.

On April 16, 1947, President Truman signed Public Law 80-36, the Army-Navy Nurses Act of 1947, establishing the Women's Medical Specialist Corps and the Army Nurse Corps as

part of the U.S. Army. The Women's Armed Services Integration Act was signed into law June 12, 1948 by President Truman. Women could officially be recognized as permanent members of the armed forces for the first time. One month after the passage of the act, President Truman issued Executive Order 9981, which established equality of treatment and opportunity in the armed services, to include the starting point of racial desegregation of the Army. There were many who protested the idea of women being a permanent part of the military, the protests aligned with gender roles and the idea of the military revolved around the role of men (Archer 2017). Even with President Truman's orders, and the development of the various women's corps, there were many restrictions. The Women's Army Corps set strict guidelines of how many women could serve in each position for the first two years. The number of commissioned officers could not exceed five hundred, seventy-five warrant officers, and 7,500 enlisted women. In order to qualify for Army service, females needed to be citizens of the United States, at least twenty-one years of age, a good moral character, physically qualified for military service, and any other qualifications the Secretary of the Army prescribed. Females serving in the Navy and Marine Corps could serve in the reserve at age eighteen but could not enlist in the active unit under the age of twenty-one without the written consent of her parents. Numbers for commissioned officers could not exceed five hundred, no more than twenty warrant officers, and a limit of 6,000 enlisted women in the Navy and Marines in the first two years after the Act was signed. During the first two years after the Act was signed the number of women in the Air Force could not exceed three hundred commissioned officers, forty warrant officers, and 4,000 enlisted members. To qualify for the Air Force women needed to be citizens of the United States, at least twenty-one years of age, good moral character, physically qualified, and any other qualifications the Secretary of the Air Force might have prescribed. These numbers prove that while women

were officially part of the United States Armed Forces, they were limited to two percent of the total number of all enlistees.

Two years after the Women's Armed Services Integration Act was signed, the Korean War began (1950). It would be simple for people in the far future to believe women are not valued in America based off of the monuments displayed at the National Mall. The Korean War Memorial is no different than most other popular visited sites at the National Mall, all of the statues are of men. Just like many of the others, it does not reflect the sacrifices made by women both on the home front and in the war. Just as in previous wars, women maintained crucial roles during the Korean War; medics, caretakers, logisticians, and communications operators to name a few. In fact, around 120,000 women were serving on active duty during that time, eighteen died during the war.

According to the Vietnam Women's Memorial Foundation (2021), Vietnam began in 1955 and went on for nineteen years. During that time, approximately 256,000 women served in the war. The eight women who lost their lives to various injuries in the war were all nurses. Every woman who served in Vietnam volunteered to be there and their ages ranged from twenty years old to forty (average age being 23.6 years), many of them were mothers who left their children behind at home. A major role women played in the Vietnam War was treating soldiers and getting them back in the battle. Most of these nurses had just finished college and were some of the youngest medical personnel to ever serve in a war. Medevacs were created and first used in Vietnam, which meant more soldiers were able to be seen and saved because hospitals were more accessible with the use of helicopters. Because of the high volume of casualties nurses were seeing, they had to build up a mental toughness in order to deal with the stresses that came with everyday life on top of war. Nurses needed to be able to quickly triage patients in order to

categorize them in order of urgency, treating the most severely wounded first. It was also necessary for them to quickly determine the best treatment options for each patient. They worked twelve hour shifts six days a week until major battles brought in large numbers of casualties, increasing their shifts to twenty-four to thirty-six hours. These women had to treat some of the most mutilated injuries ranging from severely debrided wounds to emergency chest tubes, tracheotomies, and amputations. They went through emotions such as sadness from seeing people hurt, anger at the consequences of war, stress from the amount of work and hours of care they provided, and guilt from not being able to save them all. Women who did not serve as nurses worked as communications specialists, intelligence officers, and support personnel. Donut Dollies, officially known as the Red Cross' Supplemental Recreational Activities Overseas program, were a group of over 600 American women who volunteered to go into Vietnam, unarmed, in order to cheer up the service members. They showed up with various recreational activities (entertainment programs, games, books, and music to name a few) and snacks (coffee, Kool Aid, candy, etc.) in an attempt to bring up the overall morale during the war. According to a report done on female Vietnam veterans, forty eight percent of the women who served in the war have suffered from some form of post-traumatic stress disorder during their lives, very few of whom have sought help for it and some have committed suicide. Many others have suffered medical problems related to complications of Agent Orange exposure. Most have kept the experiences of what they saw during the war private, not even sharing their stories with loved ones. When the war ended, female medical personnel returned home to receive the same hostile treatment as the male combat service members from the Americans who did not agree with the war. Although women serving in the Vietnam War were not allowed in combat units, the courageous and skillful efforts of the nurses in Vietnam changed many of the stereotypes about

women and their ability to handle a combat scene. As a result, the United States military leaders began to reconsider the roles women play alongside their male counterparts. These reconsiderations have led to research on how women tend to adapt to situations they would encounter in a combat environment, leading to the presence of women in the Gulf War.

In the years that lead to the Gulf War, the service of women was reassessed. The Equal Rights Amendment was passed by Congress in April 1972. With the passing of this Amendment, Assistant Secretary of Defense Roger T. Kelly instructed all services to remove all unnecessary restrictions that applied to servicewomen. The Army and Navy doubled the number of women in their service, the Air Force tripled theirs, and the Marines moved to increase the number of females by twenty percent. In 1976, women were allowed to enroll into the Air Force, Army, and Navy Academies for the first time. President Carter signed Public Law 95-485 in 1978, this law ended the WAC and integrated women into the Regular Army, along with allowing women in the Navy to be assigned to duty on ships. Unfortunately, in the beginning of the Reagan administration, the Army temporarily back tracked and paused future advancements it had taken for women in the military during the Carter administration. After a study of the impacts of women on readiness, Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger sent out a memo instructing the Department to break down barriers that were preventing the military from fully utilizing capabilities women could bring to the United States military. As a result of the study, the Reagan administration put focus towards eliminating barriers for women in the military. In 1982 the Army assessed women's risk on the battlefield and as a result some jobs were opened to women while others remained closed, it was now encouraged to use females in all roles except for direct combat military occupations. A new risk rule passed in 1988 created 31,000 new positions for

women in turn opening over sixty three percent of all military positions to those female service members.

The Gulf War, also referred to as Desert Shield/Storm, began in August 1990 and ended in February 1991. Although women were still not serving in combat arms due to the combat exclusion law, they were the first generation of female service members (outside of medical personnel) who were deployed in large numbers alongside their male counterparts. The women in this war served in many of the same supporting positions as the previous wars and several were in command positions over brigades, battalions, companies, and platoons. Due to the nature of the Gulf War, women were often used in combat related positions because they were among some of the only qualified service members for the orders and missions at hand. In these cases, female service members in the Gulf War were often exposed to combat despite not being in combat related positions. Examples of female casualties include two women who were taken as Prisoners of War, five Army women killed in action, twenty-one wounded, and four marine women who took and returned fire from Iraqi troops. All female casualties were the result of indirect events, for example missile attacks, helicopter/vehicle accidents, and mines. One of the many discriminations women continue to face after their presence in the Gulf War is men feel the need to protect women and/or females in combat zones are a distraction to male service members. Both genders were exposed to the same housing, shower, and latrine conditions (Gebicke, 1993). They sometimes had to share housing and latrines. Although there were times when showers and toilets were not available, health and hygiene problems were minor and did not have any effect on mission completion. These circumstances demonstrated that women are able to successfully accomplish the requirements of a deployment in a combat zone without special considerations. The successful performance of female service members during the Gulf

War paved the way for women to be fully integrated into combat arms positions. This was the first war the Veterans Administration noticed a significant number of female service members seeking compensation from many of the same physical and mental injuries as their male counterparts. Not only did service members from both genders suffer combat related injuries, Gulf War Illness became a widespread service-connected condition amongst males and females. Gulf War Illness is a neurological condition that is accompanied by a large number of debilitating symptoms including but not limited to chronic fatigue syndrome, chronic skin conditions, recurring headaches, and gastrointestinal problems (Gebicke, 1993).

As a result of female actions during the Gulf War, Congress established a study on combat exclusion in 1991. After seven months, the study concluded and several recommendations were proposed; adoption of general neutral assignment policies, acknowledgement of physiological differences between men and women in regards to fitness, retention of the law that did not allow women into special forces, a new law banning women from air combat and excluding women from ground combat, and opening non flying positions to women on Navy ships while barring them from serving on submarines. In 1993, President Clinton ordered the services to allow women into combat aviation and to investigate other opportunities for servicewomen. Later that year, the women were accepted on Navy combatant ships, excluding submarines. By 1997, eighty percent of positions in the military were opened up to women.

After the attacks in America on September 11, 2001 the Global War on Terror launched and continues today (2021). Many of the changes females have faced in the military have happened during this war. They have continued to face many tribulations during their time in service, a lot of those revolving around discrimination and sexual harassment, but they have also

been among the first generation to see the military make some of their biggest advancements towards gender equality to date. In 2005, Sergeant Leigh Ann Hester was the first female to be awarded the Silver Star following her actions during a firefight. In 2010, the Navy expressed the desire to reverse the policy that prevented women from serving on submarines, the first female Navy service members were placed on submarine crews in 2011. During this time, General George Casey told the Senate Armed Services Committee that it was time to review the policy that prevented women from serving in combat roles. In the same year, the Army began using Female Engagement Teams and Combat Support Teams in Afghanistan, these teams are tasked to engage the female populations where male service members are prohibited due to cultural differences. These teams gather intelligence, build relationships with local female civilians, and engage in humanitarian efforts. In 2013, Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta signed a document to lift the ban on women serving in combat roles, in turn creating the opportunity for women to advance into the highest military ranks. Two years later, Secretary of Defense Ash Carter initiated the full integration of women in all military occupations following a thirty day review period. Captain Shaye Haver and Captain Kristen Griest became the first two females to graduate from the United States Army's Ranger School in 2015. As of January 2016, all military occupations were opened up to women, making it the first time in United States military history that women were able to serve without the barriers that prevented them from obtaining equality in the ranks. In July 2016, The United States Special Forces announced Elise Stefanik as the first female green beret.

Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS)

Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall established the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) in 1951 (Bowling II, Gaddes, Griffin, Jacobson,

Montgomery, Myers, Stangle, Williams 2020). DACOWITS began seeking fair and equal treatment for all females serving in the military right away. The goals of the committee were to provide advice and recommendations on policies relating to recruitment, retention, employment, integration, well-being, and treatment of women in the Armed Forces. In 1951, DACOWITS was made up of fifty civilian women, the first male members joined in 1978. Throughout the last 70 years, the terms members have been able to serve have varied from one to four years. Today, the committee consists of no more than twenty members and they come from many different professional backgrounds but are selected for their knowledge and experience with military service and/or women's workforce issues. The committee includes males and females both with and without military experience. Responsibilities are divided among members of DACOWITS in order to be sure all topics of interest receive adequate attention. When DACOWITS was established, its primary goal was to advise the Secretary of Defense on ways to improve the recruitment of women into the U.S. military during the Korean War. Two years later, the focus moved to promoting military service as an acceptable career move for women. DACOWITS has adapted to change over time constantly maintaining its focus on relevant topics of the time. In 1951, when the committee was established, it was composed of five groups: training and education, housing and welfare, utilization and career planning, health and nutrition, and recruiting and public information. Many changes have been made over the years, various task forces were created, leading up to today where the committee is structured into three subcommittees: recruitment and retention, employment and integration, and well-being and treatment. Each subcommittee has its own set of members who focus on their assigned topics. DACOWITS committee members have made approximately 750 installation visits between 1951 to 2020 (currently making about ten visits per year), the information they receive from both male

and female service members gives them qualitative data analysis through focus groups and mini surveys. They interact with hundreds of service members in informal data collection both virtually and in person observing where servicewomen work and live (Bowling II, Et Al 2020).

Gender equality and integration has been a core focus of the committee from the start of DACOWITS. The categories DACOWITS has made recommendations on are specifically related to gender bias, physical fitness standards, women in combat, and uniforms and equipment. The committee has made around eighty-two recommendations on the gender bias topic. In the 1960s and early 1970s, they focused on the Griffiths-Tower Bill, which addressed unconstitutional inequalities of benefits for the dependents of women. At that time, women could not claim their husbands as a dependent unless he was actually one hundred percent dependent on his wife and they could not claim their children as dependents if their father was alive. In the 1980s DACOWITS focused on training (JROTC/ ROTC), making sure admission standards for men and women were equal. Since 2012, the committee has made nine recommendations to the Department to establish/update policies on gender bias and discrimination. One of the first recommendations pertaining to physical fitness standards was introduced by the committee in 1975 but around fifty five percent were made between 2010 and 2019. The first recommendations focused on developing standards that were nondiscriminatory occupational physical standards and applying them equally for men and women in all positions. Since the 1990s, recommendations have been made in regard to height, weight, body fat measurements, and pregnancy and postpartum standards. The committee advocates for equal opportunity and women in combat is a topic that DACOWITS has made eighty-six recommendations on since 1975. The recommendations have varied from the exclusion of women in combat to the positions of women in combat, gender restrictions on training and military assignments, and most recently

opening up all combat jobs to women in December 2015. Military uniforms and equipment have been designed and tailored to men, DACOWITS has made twenty-eight recommendations related to ensuring they be designed with female service members in mind. Some examples of uniform and equipment issues are correct fit (design/size), boot designs made for the female foot, equipment for women when urinating in combat or training exercises, and personal protective equipment designed for women (Bowling II, Et Al 2020).

In 1967 and 1968, DACOWITS made one of its first recommendations regarding the involuntary separation of women because of pregnancy. There have been 187 recommendations made in regard to career progression for women in the military, and promotion and career advancement has been the only topic that has had a recommendation made every decade starting in the 1960s. Recent promotion and career advancement have focused on women's retention at senior levels with emphasis on racial and ethnic diversity, the goal is to increase female representation at the E-9 and O-7 and above grade levels. Recommendations DACOWITS has made pertaining to deployments are dependent entitlements, family support (legal, financial, childcare, psychological counseling, etc.), female health and hygiene, health assessments during deployment, and impacts of reintegration on military mothers (Bowling II, Et Al 2020).

Supporting work-life balance was prioritized by DACOWITS and this is to ensue equal benefits were offered to spouses and dependents of either sex, specifically dual military, family leave, family support, sabbaticals, child care, and domestic abuse. Examples of childcare related recommendations that have been sent to the Department are accommodating service members with childcare responsibilities, increasing funds for childcare services, and increased childcare availability and resources. In 1988, the committee recommended all military services provide women six weeks of uncharged leave to recover postpartum. Other recommendations made by

DACOWITS in relation to childcare include equal benefits for unmarried service members, and flexibility with caregiver leave. The committee has put focus in making recommendations pertaining to women's mental health, breastfeeding, pregnancy, and overall health and well-being. Some examples of recommendations during pregnancy are the implementation of antidiscrimination policies, operational deferment policies, and making sure pregnant women's careers do not suffer as a result of pregnancy. DACOWITS has been a consistent resource for women since being established in 1951 and continues to shift focus as time brings new challenges to women in the military (Bowling II, Et Al 2020).

Discrimination

In the seventy-three years of female military service, gender discrimination is one of the biggest burdens' women have had to endure. The traditional male-dominated culture is disappearing as a result of today's gender inclusive dynamic, but gender roles and cynicism remain points of contention. The fact is, although women have been unofficially serving the American military for over 100 years, defining movements towards gender equality did not begin happening until recent history. There are very few women in high ranking positions to this day due to them being barred from commanding men and promotion beyond Lieutenant Colonel until 1967, even then there was not a huge push to promote female service members. The first woman to be promoted to the rank of brigadier general was Anna May Hayes in 1970.

Throughout history, women have been able to adapt to their environments depending on who they interact with and where those interactions take place. As a result, women have a more gender fluid approach to their careers where males continue to understand gender as they see it, male versus female. The full integration of women in combat arms happened nearly six years ago and it is taking a lot of effort to change outdated views that women will disrupt the masculinity

of combat units, female service members are still concentrated in administrative, medical, and other support jobs. The opposing perceptions of gender roles continue to have negative impacts on unit climate, often leaving women afraid to speak up in male dominated commands. Another issue related to masculinity (or a man's role) is that gender bias has suppressed women from advancing beyond subordinate positions (Doan, Portillo 2016).

Women have always been held to a lower standard when graded on physical fitness and because of this were never encouraged to push themselves to the same level of fitness as their male counterparts, which has allowed the “women are weak and need protected” view to continue through the present day. Women are prejudged to be unqualified for the physical demands of combat based on generalizations and stereotypes, even after being proven otherwise on many occasions during the various wars. As a result, women feel the need to exceed the standard in order to prove themselves and are still often overlooked unless their work has a direct benefit for the males serving with them. In attempt to blend in women often take on the persona of their male counterparts by distancing themselves from other women, downplaying sexual harassment and assault, working harder to improve their overall fitness, and attempting to conform their identities as soldiers (Doan, Portillo 2016).

Supporters of gender integration argue against the idea that the ability to overcome violence is a social skill, not something that is genetically determined. In this case, women are capable of being effectively trained just as men are. Military leaders would benefit from researching and learning of the various struggles female service members face in their organizations, develop trainings, and enforce standards for their unit to achieve gender equality. Some examples of the attempt to break gender discrimination are; the Army has developed a gender neutral physical fitness test (currently still in the testing stage), President Trump signed

the National Defense Authorization Act in 2020 that required gender desegregation in Marine Corps training, President Biden has ordered that transgender individuals can openly serve in the United States military as of January 2021, and the Air Force is currently assessing combat gear specifically designed for the female body. Research has shown by integrating the genders in training, negative opinions of women have been combated with improved unit cohesion and increased physical readiness of women (Trobaugh 2018). In order to further increase the success of breaking gender discrimination barriers, the United States military needs to continue incorporate women into male dominate positions and enforce a no tolerance standard of mistreatment. Equal opportunity and Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention Programs need to be enforced and taken more seriously, and zero tolerance policies need to be enforced on service members who go against the regulations in place.

Gender-based Violence

Gender-based violence such as domestic abuse, sexual harassment, and rape is a common problem among the various military services. This type of violence directly goes against the institutional values of the military and in turn negatively impacts the overall readiness of the abused service member. Men tend to be viewed as leaders or protectors and women as the opposite, so through military training, men take on the identity as so while women maintain their more natural identity as a citizen, mother, wife, etc. Too often the military leaves men feeling entitled to control women, may it be due to jealousy or the expectation that a wife is to be submissive to her husband. When militarized men feel disrespected in their home, they take it as an attack on their masculinity in turn leaves them questioning their dominance which leads to violence. Domestic violence was amended into the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) in 2018, recognizing it as a distinct offense. Any military service member who is accused of

abusing their spouse, children, or any other family member can face military criminal charges for domestic abuse under the UCMJ (Domestic Violence 2019).

For the last thirty years, sexual harassment, rape, and sexual assault have been a primary issue in the United States military. This issue dates all the way back to the original incorporation of females in the service. During the Vietnam War, unwanted sexual advances towards women were seen as nothing more than men behaving like a “normal male” so there was no discipline for their actions (Ogden 1998). Women were expected to keep up their proper feminine appearance and continue their work knowing their perpetrator would not face any charges. According to Protect our Defenders (2020), in 2018 an estimated 24.2 percent of active duty women and an estimated 6.3 percent of active duty men indicated experiencing sexual harassment. In FY19, the Military Services received a total of 1,021 formal sexual harassment complaints, a ten percent increase from complaints filed in FY18. Of women who reported sexual assault, 59 percent were assaulted by someone with a higher rank than them and 24 percent were assaulted by someone in their direct chain of command.

Military sexual trauma often results in fear, numbness, sleeping troubles, concentration issues, drug and alcohol abuse, weight issues, eating disorders, gastrointestinal problems, anger, depression, family problems, PTSD, homelessness, and suicidal thoughts or actions. Unfortunately, over time there has been an increase in sexual harassment/assault cases among female service members and while reported numbers are high, the DOD estimates the unreported cases raise those numbers five to six times higher. The Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO) was created by the DOD in 2004 and is responsible for oversight of the Department’s sexual assault policy. SAPRO works with all of the military services to develop and implement prevention and response programs. In 2008, the Army launched the first of four

phases of the Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention Program (SHARP) in an attempt to stop sexual harassment/assault in the military. Various trainings have been developed over the last seventeen years but the problem remains.

76.1 percent of sexual trauma cases go unreported. Of those reported, retaliation is unfortunately a norm and a third of the victims are discharged within seven months of making a report. Despite the continued increase in sexual harassment/assault reports, convictions have decreased by sixty percent since 2015 (U.S Department of Defense 2020). Service members who are victims of military sexual trauma are often not taken seriously, being forced to continue working with their perpetrator or exiting the service early in order to escape the daily trauma of working directly with him/her, and/or take their reports to court ultimately to watch the perpetrator walk free of charges to continue their careers unscathed. Female service members tend to be stereotyped as promiscuous, so they not only receive backlash from members of their unit after reporting their sexual trauma, military wives also blame them for swaying husbands. Due to the fear nothing will be done during an unfair process, feared retaliation, and the lack of support from the chain of command, many women feel it's wasted time to report the crime and in turn attempt to live with the trauma. While steps have been taken, the only successful way for sexual harassment/assault to end is for military leaders to enforce a zero tolerance policy and follow through with the necessary consequences. Various military prevention and response programs and trainings are in place and are continuously updated through research, but until they are properly utilized, they are a useless mandatory check in the box.

Healthcare

Women currently make up around sixteen percent of the military force. As the United States military continues its efforts to recruit and retain women, it is critical they begin

addressing the specific medical needs of females. Health care needs for females changes dramatically throughout their lives. Adolescents, young adults, women of childbearing age and beyond, each require different solutions to health-related challenges. Physiological differences between sexes such as body composition, musculoskeletal, hormonal, cardiovascular, and respiratory function remain despite the movement to close the gap between roles. Furthermore, women require reproductive treatment for menstrual cycles, maternal, perinatal, and postnatal health. Sexual trauma may require treatment for both medical and mental health support.

Specific to hygiene, there tend to be many challenges women have to face. Deployment and field training environments tend to be very dirty with unclean bathrooms and no running water, a menstruating female may be at risk of yeast infections or other types of infection due to these conditions. The limited access to bathrooms may cause females to hold urine in as long as possible and even restrict water intake in order to avoid the need to urinate, in turn causing dehydration and possible urinary tract infections. A woman who is breastfeeding in those conditions is at risk of exposure to toxic elements that would be dangerous for her to pump in addition to having no access to clean facilities in order to clean and sterilize her pump parts. Sexual acts are prohibited but tend to happen, these acts can cause venereal diseases that lead to combat ineffectiveness (Byers 2019). Preventative medicine has not focused on women's health issues much in the past but most of these problems could be easily fixed. Educating troops, cleaner bathrooms, clean spaces for breastfeeding mothers, availability of hygiene products, and discussion of menstruation options with providers prior to training/deployment would prevent many issues related to unsanitary conditions.

According to an article written by Martha Blair, until recently, most physiological research has been performed using men or included women but did not differentiate the data in

the analysis. This resulted in the assumption there was little to no difference in the physiology between the sexes outside of the reproductive system. With the recent recognition of differences, studies of the differences between men and women are rapidly increasing. Women are more susceptible to many diseases such as osteoporosis, thyroid problems, lupus, and mental illnesses. Three prominent differences (aside from sex-based) that have been recognized are cardiovascular, musculoskeletal, and immune systems. While heart disease is the leading cause of death in both sexes, there are many differences in symptoms between sexes, and the risk increases significantly for women after menopause. Men have larger hearts than women but because they pump blood at the same rate, men are more at risk for strokes. Females have a lower resting blood pressure but a higher resting heart rate but as they age or reach menopause their resting blood pressure rises. Structural differences between the sexes in body composition are well known, males typically have proportionately more muscle mass, more bone mass, and a lower percentage of body fat than women. Men have larger lungs, wider airways, and greater lung capacity than women. Unlike in men, pulmonary capacity in women could limit maximal exercise capacity, especially as they age. In order to effectively meet the different physiological medical needs of women, the military should continue research on injury reduction and prevention, menstrual and reproductive changes, and physical fitness and body composition differences between males and females.

In August 2020, the Department of Defense conducted a Women's Reproductive Health Survey in order to assess the health care needs of female service members. The survey will be used to address and form policies on issues women face in military gynecologic and obstetrical healthcare. Menstrual cycle issues, fertility issues, prenatal, perinatal, and postnatal care are all areas of concern and differ among race and age. The lack of OBGYN care and sexual health

resources result in issues such as reduced readiness due to unplanned pregnancy, sexually transmitted illnesses, and overall degraded health (Atwell 2020). Issues due to lack of preventative care and adequate OBGYN access are resulting in increased specialty needs of female veterans (Committee Opinion 2012). Recognizing the specific needs for female healthcare by race, ethnicity, and age, prenatal/perinatal/postnatal care, expanding reproductive services, and more reliable contraceptives would help the overall readiness of the female forces.

Women are more likely to be treated for a mental health problem than men. This could be because women are more likely to report symptoms. Depression is more common in women and they tend to be twice as likely to experience anxiety than men. Dementia, eating disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorders are other examples that are diagnosed more frequently in females. The DoD and VA are focused on addressing the mental health needs of women in the military through continued research, policy examination, and working groups. Areas to research include the relationship between gender and resilience, prevalence of substance abuse, gender and suicide, gender specific treatment options for mental health, and pregnancy/postpartum mental health issues.

Physical Fitness

The five branches of the U.S. Armed Forces each have similar but different military physical tests and standards. Marines are required to pass an annual Physical Fitness Test (PFT) and Combat Fitness Test (CFT) (U.S. Marine Corps n.d.). The PFT includes a choice between pull-ups or push-ups, abdominal crunches, and a three-mile run. The CFT events include a eight hundred and eighty yard run in full battle uniform, lift a thirty pound ammunition can overhead from shoulder height for max repetitions in two minutes, a timed three hundred yard shuttle run where Marines are paired up by size to perform the following tasks: sprints, agility course, high

crawl, low crawl, body drag, fireman carry, ammo can carry, push-ups and grenade throw. Both of the Marine fitness tests are taken every six months and scored based on gender and age. The Army PFT (APFT) consists of two minutes of push-ups, two minutes of sit-ups, and a two-mile timed run. The APFT is executed every 6 months and scores vary based on gender and age. The Army is currently in the process of testing a new fitness test, the Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT), which will be graded the same for all soldiers no matter their age or gender. The ACFT consists of a three-repetition deadlift, standing power throw, hand release push-ups, sprint drag carry, leg tuck, and two-mile run. The Navy Physical Readiness Test (PRT) consists of forearm plank, pushups, and the cardio options are 2000-meter row, 12-min stationary cycle, 500-yd/450-m swim, or 1.5-mile run. The Navy PRT is scored based on gender and age (U.S. Navy Office of Information n.d.). The Air Force PFT Standards include a one-minute test of pushups, one-minute test of sit-ups, a mile and half timed run. The Air Force fitness test is scored based on gender. The Coast Guard PFT events include one minute of pushups, one minute of pushups, 1.5-mile run, sit and reach, five minutes of treading water, and jump off of a five foot platform into a pool and swim one hundred meters. This PFT is scored based on gender.

Policies that incorporate the changes women bring to the military have taken time and adjustments have been slow. Many people still believe combat roles should be banned from women, but the reality is that the standards need to be fixed. In general, a male body can handle more weight and physical stress than a woman's but that is no reason to ban women from combat roles. Most of America cannot meet the basic eligibility requirements to join the military but those who do join develop through proper physical training. Combat increases the risk of physical injuries in both genders, it is part of the job. It is agreed standards should be the same across the board but not lowered to qualify more women. Army Ranger School, for example, has

always had one gender-neutral standard. It is not based on age or gender, you either pass or you don't. As of 2019, only two out of thirty-six women had passed the Marine infantry officer training and three out of the first nineteen women passed the Army Ranger School. This proves the gender-neutral standards work. They are not set low so every female can pass but those who work hard and have determination will excel and overcome military fitness standards. It is not uncommon for males to fail these standards either, so they are not diluted to the point that any service member can qualify for the more elite groups in the military. Service members are all expected to carry the same weapons, perform the same tasks, and go on the same patrols in combat conditions, no matter their age or gender. Maintaining the same expectations across the board proves the current physical fitness standards are arbitrary. Males and females alike fall out of ruck marches, endure physical injuries or medical emergencies, and fail at meeting other basic fitness requirements. The solution is not to focus on women being the issue but to create appropriate and realistic age/gender neutral standards for combat arms.

Females have been serving in all combat military occupations for six years and among the main arguments against lifting the ban on women serving in combat are the differences in muscular strength as well as the increased rate of musculoskeletal injuries in female versus male service members. Questions addressing the abilities of women successfully being able to serve in combat have circulated over the last few years leading to further research in the differences between sexes in regard to physical fitness and ways to optimize physical training to adapt the physiological differences specific to women (Nindl, Jones, Van Arsdale, Kelly, Kraemer, 2016). The purpose of enforcing body composition standards is to increase and encourage healthy exercise and nutrition in order to maintain readiness and resilience among service members. Females have been reported to sustain more stress fractures and knee injuries due to overuse than

male counterparts. In general men have larger muscles, greater strength, and greater anaerobic power, but research has shown that if women properly train, they can increase their performance. As a result of proper training, women will increase their overall strength and decrease their chance of injuries. Along with strength training, service members need to follow a healthy diet in order to increase lean muscle mass and strengthen bones in order to prevent injuries (Nindl, Et Al 2016). The smaller lung capacity of women that reduces their aerobic capacity can be overcome by sprint training and explosive strength training. Ultimately, women should properly train and strengthen their bodies before considering joining a combat military occupation.

Traditionally, the standards are based on body mass index (BMI) measurements. A predetermined weight for each age/height group is used to determine who needs to be taped for BMI. For males the measurements are taken from the neck and abdomen; for women they are taken from the neck, waist, and hips. An equation is used to produce a body fat percentage based off of the measurements taken. BMI was created by an astronomer in the 1830s, using measurements of around two hundred white men, today the same method is being used for all ethnicities and genders (Britzky 2021). The taping method is outdated according to military medical professionals, it does not account for different body types and sizes in turn causing many women to fail unnecessarily. Another downfall to BMI checks is even if a female (or male) passes their fitness test, they could fail their height and weight. Fear of failure often causes women to take chug magnesium citrate the day before a weigh in, consume diet pills and laxatives, dehydrate and restrict eating, or other unhealthy methods in order to pass their height and weight check. Unfortunately, the military knows this happens and even allots up to seven days after a fitness test for service members to lose weight quickly in effort to pass their height and weight. Not only do these poor choices risk health issues, they prevent the service member

from doing their best on the fitness test because they have not consumed proper nutrients leading up to the test. Muscle mass is another factor that causes service members to fail tape, although they are visibly in shape. The ACFT, for example, is a fitness test that will encourage more muscle growth and could negatively affect forces if the military continues to use the outdated BMI standards.

Once pregnancy is confirmed in the military, a woman is exempt from taking the fitness tests and participating in height and weight. Each military branch has its own postpartum policy for physical fitness. According to the Air Force Instruction 36-2905 page 40-41, women in the Air Force have twelve months from their hospital discharge date before they are required to take a fitness test and pass height and weight standards, unless otherwise stated by their provider (Pregnancy Related Fitness Assessment Exemptions 2018). The provider during pregnancy will discuss physical activity that is appropriate for the woman to conduct throughout her pregnancy. Their doctor will medically clear a postpartum female to begin unrestricted physical training after twelve months postpartum. Navy servicewomen are clear from participating in fitness testing for nine months after their birth (Navy Physical Readiness Program 2021). They will receive physical fitness guidance from their medical provider while pregnant and after delivery until cleared. Once convalescent leave is over the female will participate in the Fitness Enhancement Program (FEP) in order to prepare herself to return to full unit physical fitness. Female service members in the Coast Guard receive twelve months to meet weight standards and six months to meet physical fitness standards after giving birth. The CG SUPRT provides the service member with a health coach who develops a plan to assist the female in losing weight in a healthy manner. The health coach may also refer the member to a nutritionist to provide additional assistance. The Coast Guard also provides resources from The Human Performance

Resource Center and health care providers to assist female service members with exercise and nutrition guidance in order to meet service standards after birth (United States Coast Guard 2019). The Marine Corps recently updated their standards from nine months to twelve months, after birth the woman has at least twelve months to meet fitness and appearance standards. The change was made to allow the postpartum Marines time for a better recovery, lower injury risk, prevent long-term issues, and eliminate potential risk on breastmilk production (MARADMINS 2021). The women will still be expected to continue a regular fitness routine throughout their pregnancy due to research that has shown positive effects on their health and their child's health. After approval from their doctor postpartum, the women are expected to pick up an appropriate fitness program that will prepare them to return to their unit fitness program. After the confirmation of pregnancy, women in the Army stop participating in unit physical fitness and join the Pregnancy/Postpartum Physical Training Program (P3T) (U.S. Army Public Health Command 2008). This program is to ensure the pregnant/postpartum women receive standardized physical training until they are released back to unit physical fitness. Post-delivery, the soldiers will participate in the P3T program for a minimum of four weeks, up to twelve months. They are given a diagnostic APFT monthly to assess their fitness and body composition, once they pass a diagnostic APFT and The Army Body Composition Program standards and are cleared medically, they are given approval to return to unit physical training. The Army is developing new guidelines for postpartum female soldiers to ensure the incoming Army Combat Fitness Test does not cause harm by taking the fitness test too soon after birth, but it is taking time due to the delays caused by the coronavirus.

According to the United States Army Center for Initial Military Training (2021), the Army is currently working towards the first military age and gender-neutral physical fitness test,

the Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT), which will replace the APFT. With this new test, they have turned their focus towards a new training style for physical fitness which now includes holistic health and fitness (H2F) that focuses on physical, nutritional, mental, spiritual, and sleep domains in order to prevent injuries and best prepare soldiers for the demands of war (Borgeson 2021). Field Manual 7-22 is the official H2F doctrine that describes each domain. Nutritional readiness is described as the ability to recognize, select, and consume the necessary food and drink to meet the physical and nonphysical demands of any duty or combat position in order to come home healthy. Physical readiness focuses on the ability to destroy an enemy on the battlefield in order to return home safely. No matter the military occupation, all service members have the potential to deploy and should be ready to do so. Muscular strength, muscular endurance, aerobic endurance, anaerobic endurance, and power are the physical components that should be trained in order to achieve that goal. Drills that improve these skills include agility, coordination, balance, kinesthetics, pace, perception, and reaction time. Strengthening all of these areas will develop soldiers with a well-rounded physical readiness (Borgeson 2021).

Because each branch has its own mission in keeping our country safe, it is no surprise that just as physical training standards differ, their overall looks differ as well. While they all hold the expectation of a professional look, the wear and appearance of military uniforms and other grooming standards differ among the various branches. The standards are in regard to each individualized uniform (to include undergarments), footwear, hair, make up, nails, tattoos, glasses/sunglasses and other accessories, and they each differ between males and females. Safety is one of the most important aspects of the military, the regulations that are in place are not only to achieve a professional look, but also for the purpose of keeping a service member safe while on duty. Females tend to have a more difficult time dealing with the grooming standards,

specifically in relation to hair. Women have increasingly reported issues of various skin disorders of the neck and head caused by overuse of hair products and tight hairstyles in order to achieve the desired look emplaced by the military. Traction alopecia, acne keloidalis nuchae, dissecting cellulitis of the scalp, and folliculitis decalvans are examples of problems related to military grooming standards. Tension headaches, migraines, scalp pain, neck and back pain, stretched out facial skin, and hair breakage are other issues caused by tight hairstyles (Lane 2020). While shorter hairstyles prevent most of these issues, many women prefer longer hair and would rather not cut it as a consequence of the military grooming standards.

Wear and Appearance of Military Uniforms

Navy regulation NAVPERS 15665I covers information about the proper wear of Navy uniforms and overall appearance of those serving. Headgear must fit snugly and comfortably, and hair cannot show from under the front of it. Hair cannot protrude from the back opening of the headgear unless the service member is wearing a bun or ponytail. Asymmetrical hairstyles are prohibited, and angled hairstyles may not differ more than one to one and a half inches between the front and back. Layered hair is allowed as long as it is presented smoothly. The length of medium hair may not fall below the lower edge of the back of the uniform collar, otherwise it is to be appropriately secured. Braids and cornrows must be neatly secured to the head and bang may not extend below the eyebrows. Hair bulk, not including a bun, may not exceed two inches from the scalp. A hair bun may not exceed three inches from the scalp and the diameter shall not exceed four inches, width and height. Hair colors may only resemble natural hair color; blonde, brunette, brown, black, red, and grey. Navy service women are allowed to wear jewelry as long as it remains conservative while in uniform and are not considered a hazard. In relation to piercings, women are allowed one earring per ear and it must be centered

on the earlobe. Earrings must be a plain ball with a shiny or brushed matte finish and measure four to six millimeters. Female Officers and CPOs are allowed to wear gold earrings in working and service uniforms while E6 and below are authorized to wear silver. White pearl and diamond earrings are authorized in Dress White and Blue Jacket uniforms. Body piercings, such as lip, nose, and belly button, are not authorized in uniform, while on duty (no matter the attire), while participating in military organized activities, or while aboard any form of military transportation (ships, aircrafts, vehicles). Makeup is allowed as long as it is applied in a conservative fashion. The colors must match the natural skin tone and enhance natural features. Cosmetic makeup is authorized for eyebrows, eyeliner, lipstick, and lip liner only. Faddish makeup and fake eye lashes are not permitted. Fingernails may not exceed one fourth of an inch (measured from the fingertip) and may be round, almond/oval, or square. Fingernails must be kept clean. Perfume is permitted as long as the fragrance is not overpowering. Tattoos are permitted but there are restrictions. A single neck tattoo is allowed and must be less than one inch in diameter and may not touch the hairline. Full arm and leg sleeves, hand, and ring tattoos are allowed. Service members are not allowed to have tattoos on their head, face, ears, or scalp. Offensive (to include origin and religion), racist, extremist, and sexist tattoos are prohibited. Tattoos that are gang affiliated or promote the use of illegal substances are also not permitted. Intentional body mutilation is prohibited, such as tongue forking, skin modification, burns specific to creating designs, or decorated dental work. Waivers can be considered and given to future sailors who may have any one of the prohibited items listed, these are given on a case by case basis.

Navy personnel assigned to the Marine Corps who choose to wear the Marine Corps uniforms will follow the Marine Corps grooming standards. So long as a Navy service member is wearing Navy uniforms, they will abide by Navy regulations. The Navy has six uniforms;

working, service, service dress, ceremonial, dinner dress, and training. They differ between officers, Chief Petty Officers, and enlisted who are E6 and below. The expectation while wearing the uniform is to maintain the public image of the Navy, reflected by attention to detail.

Uniforms are to be kept clean. Buttons, embroidered insignia, gold lace, and metal insignia are all to be kept clean, bright, and free of anything that might deface the item. Nothing should be visible or protrude from the uniform, examples include; pencils/pens, watch chains, keys, large wallets, and various smoking devices. Communication devices may be worn (one at a time) on the belt of the working/service uniforms and may not impede the overall functionality or appearance of the uniform. Communication devices are not to be visible while the service member is wearing a dress uniform. Civilian bags (not to include a purse) may be worn across the left shoulder with the bag hanging on the same side, or if two straps are available both will be worn. The bags must conceal all contents and can either be solid black or navy blue in color.

While in dress uniform, civilian bags will be hand carried only. Faddish glasses are not permitted and if retainer straps are used, they must be plain, black, and worn snugly against the back of the head. Sunglasses must be conservative and cannot be worn in formation. Contact lenses are permitted but may be prohibited in certain environments, tinted lenses must be a natural color.

Undergarments are to be appropriate in a manner in which to preserve the appearance of the uniform. Military creases on shirts are authorized but they cannot be sewn in. Uniforms can be tailored to fit so long as they do not detract from the military appearance. Maternity uniforms are worn when the standard uniform no longer fits correctly.

The Marine Corps is strict with their overall appearance and grooming standards. Service members are expected to present the best possible image at all times and set the example in military presence, according to Marine Corps Order 1020.34H. Females are to present a

professional appearance at all times. Hairstyles must not interfere with headgear; the headgear should fit snugly without distortion or excessive gaps. Hair cannot protrude from the back of the headgear unless it is in a bun or ponytail. Medium hair length can extend to but not fall below the lower edge of the uniform collar and must maintain a clean presentation. Hair bulk cannot exceed two inches, three inches in a bun. Asymmetric hairstyles are not allowed. Angled hairstyles may not exceed a one to one-and-a-half-inch difference between the front and back. Long hair must be secured so it does not extend beyond the collars lower edge. During physical training (while in PT clothing), short and medium length hair is allowed to fall naturally and does not need to be fastened or pinned. Long hair must be secured, ponytails are authorized (only in a PT environment). Braids are permitted as long as they are neatly secured and follow the rules of wearing headgear. Bangs may not extend below the eyebrows and hair must remain a natural hair color. Highlights, wigs, and other hair pieces must resemble natural hair color and appearance. Makeup, perfume, and jewelry standards follow the same restrictions as the Navy. Marine women may wear nail polish in service and dress uniforms, the shades can range from pink to burgundy but cannot be eccentric. Nail polish is not allowed while wearing the utility uniform. Tattoos are allowed anywhere on the chest, back, torso, upper arms, upper thighs, and groin (no half or full sleeves). There are no restrictions on size, shape, color, or number of tattoos as long as they can be concealed under the PT uniform. Tattoos that are visible outside of the PT uniform have restrictions, Marines are authorized four. They cannot be any bigger than the service member's open hand (fingers extended but joined together), and no tattoos within two inches of the wrist bone, elbows, or knees. Ring tattoos are allowed but cannot be more than three eighths of an inch wide and are restricted to one finger, no other tattoos are allowed on the hands. Tattoos are not allowed on the head, neck, face, or above the collar bone. Offensive (to

include origin and religion), racist, extremist, and sexist tattoos are prohibited. Tattoo waivers can be issued in certain circumstances. Body mutilation and affixing anything to the teeth or body (aside from permitted piercings) are prohibited.

The Marine Corps has three different uniforms, field, dress, and service. The service uniform has three variations, Alphas, Bravos, and Charlies. The dress uniform has four variations, Alphas, Bravos, Charlies, and Deltas. All Marines should wear their uniform with personal pride. It is expected that they maintain their uniforms and equipment in a neat and serviceable manner. Examples of activities that detract from the expected appearance are the use of chewing gum, chewing tobacco, cigarettes, and eating food while walking in uniform or while in formation. Undergarments must be worn to preserve the appearance of the uniform. Eyeglasses must be conservative, and restraints are authorized for safety purposes. Contact lenses must imitate natural eye color and shape and may be prohibited in certain circumstances. Sunglasses must be conservative but may not be worn in formation unless authorized. Alterations to uniforms to improve fit are authorized. Authorized uniforms for Marine officers are evening dress, blue dress, blue-white dress, service, and utility uniforms. Uniforms for enlisted Marines are blue dress, service, and utility. The evening dress and blue-white dress uniforms are authorized for wear by staff noncommissioned officers (SNCOs). Uniforms are to be kept clean. Buttons and insignia are to be kept clean, bright, and free of anything that might deface the item. Females are authorized to carry a purse/handbag. It must be natural grain black or synthetic leather and the hardware is to be brass plated or gold colored. The handbag will be rectangular with a flap free of any visible designs, logos, or decoration. It may not be any smaller than seven and a half inches wide by five and a half inches tall by two inches deep or any larger than twelve inches wide by eight inches tall by three and a half inches deep. It cannot be carried in formation

or while wearing the utility or maternity work uniforms. It will be carried over the left shoulder and the bottom of the handbag will be near the bottom of the uniform coat. Civilian backpacks can be worn but must be black, olive, brown, tan, or a combination of with minimal logo representation and must be worn over both shoulders. Gym/duffel bags, computer bags, and anything similar are to be hand carried. Maternity uniforms are authorized to be worn when the local commander determines the standard uniforms can no longer be worn.

According to Commandant Instruction M1020.6K, the Coast Guard has a zero tolerance for distorted headgear due to safety hazards. Hair is not allowed to be visible under the front brim and may not extend beyond the forward point of the garrison cap. Hair must be kept clean, well-groomed, and neat. Medium length hair can touch but may not fall below the bottom edge of the jacket collar. Hair that falls below the edge of the collar must be secured and cannot swing freely. Bangs may not extend below the eyebrows. Hair bulk, not including a bun, cannot exceed three and a half inches. Hair buns are permitted a maximum of four inches from the scalp and cannot be wider than the width of the head. Hairstyles such as braids, weaves, cornrows, and hair extensions must follow the clean and neat guidelines and cannot interfere with the wear of headgear. Hairstyles must remain conservative and color must be natural. Lopsided, asymmetrical, and faddish hairstyles are prohibited. Coast Guard personnel are advised to consult with their chain of command before considering a tattoo, piercing, and other body modification options. Medical alert bracelets or POW/MIA/KIA (only one may be worn) bracelets are authorized to wear on the wrist, ankle bracelets are prohibited. Women are permitted to wear one earring per ear and it must be centered on the earlobe. Earrings are allowed to be one eighth to one fourth of an inch in diameter. They can only be ball studs that are natural white pearl, white diamond, or plain gold or silver. Body piercings that are concealed in

uniform are not prohibited but are strongly discouraged due to the potential for infection or other complications. Fingernails can only be rounded or squared at the tips and cannot extend more than one fourth of an inch past the fingertip. The nails can only be one color with the exception of French manicures that have a white tip. Decorative, bright colored, and multicolored polish are prohibited. Cosmetics are allowed as long as they give a natural look, no bright colors allowed. Tattoos are not allowed on the face, neck, or head, and limited on the hands. There are no restrictions on the amount, size, or coverage and full sleeves are authorized. Chest tattoos cannot be visible about a crew neck t-shirt. Hand tattoos are limited to three per hand with a maximum length of one inch; one finger ring tattoo per hand, one finger tattoo along the length of the finger between the first and second knuckle, and one hand tattoo between the wrist and first knuckle (no bigger than one inch in diameter). Coast Guard service members are authorized ultraviolet, black light, and cosmetic tattoos, making it the only branch in the military that allows these types of body art, they also allow cosmetic tattoos to cover scar tissue or other medical issues. Female members are allowed permanent tattooed makeup, as long as it is conservative and in good taste. Tattoo waivers can be considered and granted in certain circumstances. Tattoos that promote racism/discrimination, indecency, extremist or supremacist philosophies, violence, lawlessness, or sexually explicit material are prohibited. Body mutilation and affixing anything to the teeth or body (aside from permitted piercings) are prohibited.

The Coast guard has a variety of uniforms, but the standard uniform of the day is the Service Dress Blue or Tropical Blue uniform. District commanders assign the uniform for the season, day, or special occasion for personnel within their district. All uniforms are to be kept neat, clean, pressed (as permitted), proper fit, in good condition, zipped, snapped, and buttoned unless otherwise authorized. Buttons, embroidered insignia, gold lace, and metal insignia are all

to be kept clean, bright, and free of anything that might deface the item. Coast Guard personnel should present themselves with pride and proper military decorum. For example, while walking in uniform service members are not allowed to smoke, eat, drink, use handheld devices (talk, text, read), or keep hands in pockets. Music headphones/earphones are prohibited while in uniform. Cell phones can be clipped to the waistband but must not interfere with the proper fit of the uniform. Umbrellas are authorized as long as they are plain black or dark blue, expandable, and straight handled. They must be carried in the left hand to permit salutes. Civilian bags (purses not included) may be worn within the following limitations; the bag must conceal all contents inside, it must be solid black or navy blue, no decorations attached to the bag (reflective material is authorized during low light situations), bag must be conservative and in good taste, may be carried on left shoulder with bag hanging on the same side, backpacks must be worn with both straps or with a single strap on the left shoulder, and must be hand carried in formal uniforms. Eyeglass frames will not be outlandish, and the size will not be so large or small that it detracts from the uniform. Eyewear retainers are authorized as long as they are plain black or blue and can be worn loose or fitted against the back of the head. The hanging of eyewear is authorized for short periods of time, but they may not be placed on top of or on the back of the head. Contact lenses are allowed as long as they are of natural eye color. Sunglass frames must be of black or navy-blue material, or gold or silver wire. Sunglass lenses may only be black or brown, mirrored lenses are prohibited. Sunglasses are not allowed in formation unless otherwise authorized, and they may not be worn on top of or on the back of the head. Undergarments must not detract from the appearance of the uniform, when wearing light colored uniforms this needs to be taken into consideration. Undershirts and bras are required to wear with all uniforms.

Maternity uniforms are authorized during pregnancy and up to sixty days after returning from maternity leave.

Air Force Instruction 36-2903 lays out the standards for grooming and the wear and appearance of uniforms. Females in the Air Force are authorized to wear their hair in up to two braids or a single ponytail with bulk not exceeding the width of the head and length not extending below a horizontal line running between the top of each sleeve inseam at the under arm through the shoulder blades. Multiple locks and braids may not exceed one fourth of an inch in diameter, must be uniform, and show no more than a quarter inch of scalp between each. Bangs may touch their eyebrows, but not cover their eyes. There is no minimum hair length and maximum bulk can be four inches from the scalp. When worn in a bun, it cannot go wider than the width of the head and all loose ends must be tucked in and secured. Hair is expected to be clean, well-groomed, present a professional appearance, and allow the proper wear of headgear. Hair color, wigs, hairpieces, and extensions should all appear natural, fit properly, and comply with safety regulations. Nail polish must be a single color with no designs and may not be an extreme color that distracts from the uniform. White tip French manicures are authorized. Nails may not exceed the length of a quarter inch from the tip of the finger and must be kept clean and well groomed. Cosmetics are authorized as long as they are conservative and in good taste, not authorized during field conditions. Tattoos are not allowed on the hands, head, neck, face, tongue, lips, eyes, or scalp. Tattoos that are obscene, associated with gangs, extremist, supremacist, advocate sexual, racial, ethnic, or religious discrimination are prohibited. Tattoos are authorized on the chest, back, arms, legs, and a ring tattoo on one hand. There are no size or placement limitations as long as they are in accordance with tattoo guidelines. Waivers can be requested and may be approved in certain circumstances. Cosmetic tattooing is authorized when

directed by qualified medical personnel to correct a medical condition, illness, or injury.

Tattooing makeup (i.e. eyebrows and eyeliner) is permitted for women as long as it maintains a natural appearance and is conservative and in good taste. Designs, jewels, gold/platinum caps, etc. are prohibited from being attached to teeth. Body mutilation and modifications are prohibited. Female Airmen may wear small conservative round or square white diamond, gold, white pearl, or silver earrings as a set in any uniform as long as they do not exceed six millimeters in diameter. Only one set of earrings are authorized and must be worn in the lower earlobes. The earrings must match and fit snug without hanging below the earlobe.

Airmen who wear eyeglasses and/or sunglasses will wear them in the manner for which they are made. They will not be worn around the neck or on top/back of the head. Eyeglasses and sunglasses may have conservative decor, may be made of black or brown material or of matte silver or gold wire. Slightly tinted, mirrored, or photosensitive lenses are authorized. Sunglasses are not allowed to be worn in formations unless otherwise authorized. Contact lenses will not change the color or shape of the Airman's natural eye. Electronic devices worn on the belt/waistband or purse will be plain black, silver, dark blue, or gray. Devices that are carried but not visible can be any color. Holsters that hold electronic devices on the waistband or purse will be plain black, silver, dark blue, or gray and only one handheld electronic device can be attached. Headphones and earphones are authorized during travel on public transportation and/or while wearing the Physical Training Gear during individual or personal training in a fitness center or designated running areas. Gym bags may be dark blue, olive, Air Force sage green, ABU or OCP patterned and carried in the left hand or on either shoulder (across body is authorized) as long as it does not interfere with the salute. Backpacks may be worn in any uniform, but authorized colors vary. Only solid-color black backpacks will be worn with blue uniform combinations.

ABU-patterned backpacks, olive, and Air Force sage green may be worn with the ABU. OCP patterned backpacks, tan and coyote brown may be worn with the OCP. Sling style and two strap backpacks are authorized. Sling backpacks are to be worn across the chest, or if carried on shoulder worn on the left shoulder. Two-strap backpacks can be worn on the left or both shoulders. Backpacks cannot have designs/decoration and cannot have anything hanging/dangling (i.e. chains). Handbags must be solid black leather or vinyl without design/decoration, may/may not include a fold over flap, may have up to two adjustable shoulder straps, and may be used with all uniforms. Umbrellas will be plain, solid colored black, and carried in the left hand. Bra and underpants are required in all uniforms. White V-neck or athletic tank tops are authorized when wearing open collar service uniforms. Females may wear the white V-neck, athletic tank top, or crew-neck style undershirt when wearing closed collar formal dress, mess dress, semi-formal dress, service dress and service uniforms. Under shirts will be tucked into slacks or skirts and will not have pockets. There is no mandated maternity physical training gear, pregnant members may be authorized to wear civilian clothing in the colors of blue, black, white, or grey. All authorized maternity uniforms are authorized to be worn during pregnancy and for up to six months after delivery. Breastfeeding Airmen are authorized to purchase and wear long/short sleeve breastfeeding t-shirts with their utility uniform.

Under Army Regulation 670-1, a Soldier in the Army is expected to present a professional image at all times and ensure their appearance reflects the highest level of professionalism. Hairstyles are expected to be neat, conservative, and allow the wear of headgear properly. Headgear must fit snugly and comfortably, without bulging, gapping, or distortion. Faddish haircuts and styles are prohibited, and hair color should appear natural. Female hair may be no shorter than a quarter inch from the scalp (unless due to medical conditions or injury) but

may be tapered to the scalp within two inches of the hairline edges. Bangs may fall to the eyebrows, may not be visible underneath the front of the headgear, and the width may extend to the hairline at the temple. Medium length hair may fall naturally in uniform as long as it does not exceed beyond the lower edge of the uniform collar and does not exceed one inch difference from front to back. Long hair must be secured above the lower edge of the collar and when a bun is worn, it may not exceed three and a half inches from the scalp and be no wider than the width of the head. Medium and long hair may be styled with braids, cornrows, twists, or locks and have a diameter no greater than half of an inch and present a neat and professional appearance. Each must have the same size of spacing between, must encompass the entire head, stop at a consistent location, and may be worn against the scalp or loose (ends must be secured inconspicuously). One hairstyle may be worn at a time. Hair extensions and wigs must appear natural. During physical training, long hair may be worn in a single ponytail centered on the back of the head. If a helmet is worn in a utility uniform, long hair can be in a ponytail and tucked into the uniform jacket. Cosmetics are authorized in all uniforms but must be conservative and compliment the soldier's complexion and uniform. Faddish cosmetic styles and colors are prohibited. Permanent makeup, such as eyebrow or eyeliner, is authorized as long as it conforms to the standards. Fingernails are to be kept clean and no longer than one fourth of an inch from the tip of the finger. Female soldiers are authorized to wear an American manicure, or single neutral nail colors. Earrings may be worn in the service, dress, mess, and evening mess uniforms. They may be screw-on, clip-on, or post-type in white pearl, gold, silver, or diamond and must be unadorned and spherical without exceeding a quarter of an inch in diameter. They must fit snug against the earlobe, match as a pair, and only one earring per earlobe is authorized. Earrings are not permitted in field or combat related environments. Tattoos are prohibited on the head, face, neck,

below the wrist bone, and hands, except soldiers may have one ring tattoo on each hand. Waivers can be requested and may be authorized in certain circumstances. Offensive (to include origin and religion), racist, extremist, and sexist tattoos are prohibited. Tattoo waivers can be issued in certain circumstances. Body mutilation and affixing anything to the teeth or body (aside from permitted piercings) are prohibited. Unnatural caps and faddish designs on teeth are prohibited.

Army Uniforms will fit properly and will be kept clean and serviceable. Soldiers may wear one device on their waistband and the device and carrying case must be black. Unless otherwise prohibited, soldiers may use headphones, including wireless or non-wireless devices and earpieces, in uniform only while performing individual physical training in indoor gyms or fitness centers. Maternity uniforms are authorized for the duration of pregnancy when regular uniforms no longer appropriately fit. Soldiers who are breastfeeding/pumping are authorized to wear a t-shirt specifically designed for that. Soldiers who are actively breastfeeding their child are authorized to unzip or remove the coat from their uniform and unbutton their shirt as necessary to permit breastfeeding. Soldiers are authorized to breastfeed anywhere they are authorized to be. Breastfeeding Soldiers are not required to use any additional items to cover themselves or their child while breastfeeding. Conservative eyeglasses and sunglasses are authorized for wear. Contact lenses may not be tinted, have designs, or change the natural shape of the eye and may be prohibited when safety is of concern. Civilian bags can be carried while in uniform with restrictions. The bag must be solid black with no other colors or logos if the soldier is to carry the bag on one shoulder (across their body is not allowed) or on both shoulders. There is no restriction on bag color if it is carried in the hand. Handbags are authorized for female soldiers, but they must be black and can only be worn over one shoulder (cannot cross body diagonally) or carried in the hand.

Retention

In recent history, there has been an increase of women serving in the military, but those numbers are countered by the twenty eight percent of women who are more likely to leave the military early (Dickstein 2020). Generally, female enlisted, and officer personnel end their time in service after their first or second enlistment in higher rates than males. Reasons for this are due to family planning, motherhood, marriage, sexism, sexual trauma, lack of dependent care, work schedules and deployments, discrimination, issues in the chain of command, and more (Myers 2020). While males experience all of these same scenarios, the experiences tend to influence them differently. Women often tend to be more hands on with family roles than men are, requiring more time and energy for family life. Due to fewer senior female personnel serving in mentor type positions, many women are left feeling like the military is led by men who do not support or understand the needs that come with having a family.

During the time period of 1951 through 1976, women would be discharged (without choice) from the military if they became pregnant, adopted, or had a minor in their home for at least thirty days out of the year. This policy changed in an effort to promote the integration of women into the military. The issues now are because the military moves its members around every few years, families do not have close friends and family who are available for childcare and the child development centers on post are often full, leaving thousands of families on the waitlist. The duty day for military members often begins and ends outside of the hours most daycares are open, to include the ones on post that are specifically available for service members' children. Twenty-four-hour duty is pulled for various reasons and often leaves single parents struggling to find someone trustworthy to care for their child. Family Care Plans are supposed to be in place, but the reality is those shouldn't be necessary outside of a deployment scenario. The

military promotes itself as family oriented so childcare is something, they could benefit from making it available 24/7, and possibly contract more out if they cannot create more centers on the posts that have long waitlists. Family Care Plans have been known to fail and leave single mothers in a situation where they lose custody of their children (Krajewski-Jaime, Whitehead, Kellman-Fritz 2015). Deployments and custody issues have caused struggles among many women that ultimately lead to them ending their enlistments early.

Military members often have a difficult time balancing their time between work and home. Often because of the requirements of the military, home and personal life tends to be neglected. Marital issues and distant relationships with children are two results that frequently occur in military households due to the lack of time for family. It is important for not only family relationships but for the mental health of the service members to find a good balance between work and personal life. Time management, leaving work at work, and dealing with family issues outside of work are some examples of keeping the work and private life separate (Bowman 2016). Senior leaders should ensure their personnel are given time away from work to unwind and have their personal life. In order for a person to be mentally/physically efficient and effective at work and at home, it is necessary they make the balance an obligation in their routine. This will prevent them from reaching a burn out and allow them to have quality time with their families and for their hobbies in order to keep a healthy mind. Senior Pentagon officials have noticed the rates of women leaving the military when they begin growing a family and because of this they have realized changes need to be made in order to retain females in the military (Bowman 2016). They realize work-life balance is important and are working on making changes in order to achieve that balance.

Gender roles are prevalent in the military to this day and because of the work-life balance issues, women tend to take on a higher stress level when it comes to the overall wellbeing and care for their children. Due to constant moves and a high percentage of time spent apart from spouses and children, female service members tend to face higher rates of anxiety and depression while constantly attempting to solve all work and family issues they may be faced with. Children are constantly leaving friends behind and adjusting to new schools, adjusting to parents who may be deployed, and other stressors the military puts on families. Mothers are put in the situation to best care for her children in those situations, all while trying to adequately accomplish their military mission, and serve as a good spouse (if she is married). As a result, women often find it better for their families if they leave the military in order to have the proper amount of time to focus on family life.

Conclusion

Gender is an everyday part of our human lives. The goal would not be to create a gender free environment, but gender neutral would be a fair move. What can be done in order to commemorate the sacrifices made by both men and women in combat? Sacrifices made by children, African Americans, and other groups that earlier generations have depreciated? In order to recognize and appreciate the complete histories of wars, we should begin by recognizing the contributions of everyone who has been involved, regardless of gender, race, class, ethnicity, etc. Women have served in the military in some way since the Continental Army and over time the number of women serving has increased. Through sexual trauma, discrimination, fitness and body composition standards, grooming standards, mental and physical health treatment, motherhood, marriage, and so much more, women continue to serve their country to the best of their abilities. "President Kennedy aptly noted in 1961 that American women always have, and

will continue to, serve and defend their country in various and hazardous ways (Kennedy 1961)” (Archer 2017). Even through the various struggles and challenges women face while serving, over 90% of female veterans believe the military service has had a positive impact on their lives and over 70% are satisfied with the military life (Southwell, Wadsworth 2016).

The military lifestyle is much like its own community and after serving, men and women have different social and psychological experiences and views than they did as civilians. Leaving the military adds a whole new stressor they many would not expect. Rejoining the civilian lifestyle as a veteran can be difficult because in the military you have a purpose, but once out, many women have struggled finding that purpose. To add to that stress and lack of purpose, there is only a small percentage of female veterans so there is not a large community of people who can relate to or understand the struggles of a female veteran. More female veterans tend to be single parents than male veterans so lack of childcare or financial instability are two other major factors female veterans struggle to deal with upon the completion of service.

Discrimination has held many female service members back from career advancements that not only would have added benefit to their personal lives but could have added to the overall benefit of the military. Currently and all the way back to the first United States military service, men (primarily white men) have been in control of how the military works, there has been little to no insight from women or other minority groups in the military when it comes to making policy changes in order to develop a more inclusive organization. As women are finding their voice in the military they are speaking up more for the gender in service by reaching out to leaders and utilizing social media to bring attention to the variety of struggles and issues women (and other minority groups) continue to face in 2021. It is because of these voices that changes

have been made to various maternity policies among the branches, physical fitness tests have been reexamined, and the Army is currently exploring changing body composition standards.

Men are often viewed as competent and capable without question, while females have to prove themselves from the start. When a female joins the military or changes units, she is not given the benefit of the doubt when it comes to her abilities, she has to work hard to prove herself. Women are often treated without respect and not only have to worry about working harder than male counterparts, they have to worry about unwanted sexual advances they may receive from the men she works around. In a way, female service members are very resilient, they have to be in order to hold their own in an organization that allows the struggles to go on without positive results, but over time that resiliency is chipped at and women end up with higher rates of anxiety, depression, and PTSD by the time they exit their service.

Many articles have been written and researched about the sexual trauma women face in the military. Women now have the opportunity to work in any military occupation they desire. With that opportunity comes many jobs that are very male dominant. The issues with this are not the jobs or women filling those positions but men making unwanted advancements on their fellow service members simply because they feel they can. The military is striving to be a gender-neutral organization and outside of dissolving gender discrimination, the priority is to end sexual assault and sexual harassment among service members. All members of the military should feel safe at work among their peers and superiors, there are far too many unsafe outside influences (such as war) that cause high amounts of stress, team members shouldn't be one of them.

Females who serve face the stress of losing spouses at higher rates than men. They carry the weight of the traditional gender roles of home life on top of the weight of their military

occupations. They do their jobs but are often the first to end their service before the twenty-year retirement mark in order to preserve their overall mental health and ability to function as a spouse or parent. It would ultimately be in the best interest of all of the United States military branches to develop a strong work-life balance, provide parents with better child care options, solve the discrimination and sexual assault/harassment issues in the ranks, and reevaluate the overall fitness and body composition programs for pregnant and postpartum soldiers. Women deserve to be encouraged to complete a full twenty years of military service and given all the same opportunities as men who serve receive. The United States military and people should recognize women as an important and influential part of military history just as all men who have been recognized. Gender is not the problem, creating a gender-neutral organization without excuses is.

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