

HARRASMENT OF WOMEN IN THE MILITARY BY MALE MILITARY  
PERSONNEL

By

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CAPSTONE ABSTRACT

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The focus of this project will be on the effects of verbal, physical, and sexual harassment of women in the military by male military personnel. Women in the military face many challenges, and they often manifest in many ways. These challenges are mainly due to the fact that the military continues to be a male-dominated institution. Women make up an appreciable number of service members and have become an integral part of America's military. The goal of this project is to elaborate on these challenges and develop recommendations for change. This paper will also demonstrate the economic and human costs associated to sexual harassment, and make the point that it is in the best interest of all concerned parties to prevent and mitigate sexual harassment in the military, especially against women. In order achieve this, the military must focus on changing the false perceptions against female victims of sexual harassment, and at the same time, develop and deploy a set of checks and balances designed to circumvent but not undermine the chain of command when dealing with sex harassment complaints.

Sexual harassment against women in the U.S. military takes on very a similar shape but in amplified form as compared to the civilian world. While the military faces the same difficulties in identifying, preventing, and disciplining sexual harassment, additional challenges exist for the military due to perceptions that are exclusive to our service members, as well as the military's unique power paradigm, a by-product of the hierarchy that is its chain of command. This paper will examine historical facts and events which may have contributed to forming the current status quo, as well as a survey designed to capture current and prevailing attitudes towards women in the military and how sexual harassment extends to them. This paper will also demonstrate the economic and human costs associated to sexual harassment, and make the point that it is in the best interest of all concerned parties to prevent and mitigate sexual harassment in the military, especially against women. In order achieve this, the military must focus on changing the false perceptions against female victims of sexual harassment, and at the same time, develop and deploy a set of checks and balances designed to circumvent but not undermine the chain of command when dealing with sex harassment complaints.

Often times perceptions against women in the military contribute to biased opinions on sexual harassment incidents. The unspoken perception that women are somehow less than, or unequal to men when serving in the military is widespread, but to accept or to reject its validity, we first start by examining the history of women in the military of the United States (Carreiras, 2006). Through the various times of war in American and international history, women could not freely serve. Instead, it was necessary to hide who they were and what they looked like in order to be allowed to serve their country and earn the same rights as men. Women have been a part of the war

effort since the Revolutionary War, but in the early days of our nation they had to cloak themselves in disguise to serve alongside men. Even when they were accepted into the military, women were given auxiliary roles as opposed to the physical combat roles that were desired (Carreiras, 2006).

Deborah Samson Gannett, from Plymouth, Massachusetts, was one of the first American woman soldiers. In 1782, she enlisted under the name of her deceased brother, Robert Shurtleff Samson. For 17 months, Samson served in the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War where she was wounded twice. In an effort to keep her identity hidden, she cut a musket ball out of her own thigh so a doctor wouldn't find out she was a woman. Years later, in 1804, Samson was awarded a pension for her service.

In the Mexican War, Elizabeth C. Newcume dressed in male attire and joined the military at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. In 1847, she battled Native Americans in Dodge City and then ten months later, she was discharged when her gender was discovered. In July 1848, however, Congress paid her the land and money she was owed for her service. There were many examples of women who felt it was necessary to disguise themselves as men in order to enlist and fight for the Union. Another example was Sarah Rosetta Wakeman, who enlisted as Private Lyons Wakeman, but later died during the war in New Orleans at the Marine General Hospital. At the time of her death, her true gender was not known. In fact, her headstone reads Lyons Wakeman. (Carreiras, 2006).

As the years went on, women slowly became more accepted into the military ranks, but it was clear that they were not always accepted. The fact that women would have to disguise themselves in order to protect their country as men were made to do shows the amount of distrust that society had on the abilities of women. The stereotypes

that women do not belong on the front line and are, instead, made to be housewives and mothers, has shown the challenges that women face when attempting to be equal to that of a man. With these challenges also comes additional concerns, such as the respect women would or would not receive in the future army as well as the acceptance of their presence.

### **U.S. Women in the World Wars**

During World War I, the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps allowed women to enlist, and as a result of women in the war, more than 12,000 enlisted and about 400 died during the war. Women also worked for the American Red Cross and the United Service Organizations, as well as in factory, office, transportation, and other jobs vacated by men who were off at war. By the end of World War I, women made up 24% of aviation plant workers. (Sowers, 2003)

In World War II, a remarkable total of 350,000 women served in the U.S. military. More than 60,000 of those women worked as Army nurses and over 14,000 served as Navy nurses. Even though they were far from combat, 67 Army nurses were captured in the Philippines by the Japanese in 1942 and were held as POWs for almost three years. Over a dozen Navy nurses were also captured by the Japanese during the war. Also in 1942, the Army created the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC). These women served overseas in North Africa, but a year later, the WAAC became the Women's Army Corps (WAC), in which more than 150,000 women served. For the rest of the War, WACs were present in England, France, Australia, New Guinea, and the Philippines. (Hagemann, 2011).

According to the Naval Historical Center, during World War II, the Navy, Marines and Coast Guard also established reserves for women. The Navy began Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES) in 1942. More than 84,000 WAVES worked in administrative, medical, and communication jobs. The Coast Guard set up a women's reserve, in 1942, called SPARS, meaning Semper Paratus / Always Ready. A year later, the Marine Corps Women's Reserve began. Most Marine women served stateside and by the end of the war, 85% of the personnel at the U.S. Marine Corps Headquarters were women. These reserves were created so that more men could go fight overseas. Also in 1943, the Air Force created Women Air Force Service Pilots (WASP). WASPs were civilians who flew stateside while male pilots served overseas. American aviator Jacqueline Cochran was instrumental in the creation of WASP as she wrote letters to various military leaders, suggesting that women pilots fly non-combat missions. Because of her dedication and efforts, she became the WASP director and later received the Distinguished Flying Cross and Distinguished Service Medal. In addition to these reserves, almost three million women worked to support the war effort at various factory, office and aviation jobs in the United States.

### **Women's Role in War Changes in Late 20th Century**

Women continued to break new ground in the U.S. military after WWII. Part of the reason for this was necessity. The way wars were fought changed over the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Due to modern weapons of warfare, such as scud missiles and roadside bombs, front lines were blurred and every soldier was at risk. Over 40,000 women served in the 1991 Gulf

War and engaged with enemy forces on an unprecedented level. On September 5, 1990, the U.S.S. Acadia left San Diego for the Persian Gulf; of the 1,260 on board, 360 were women. It was the first time American men and women shipped out together in wartime conditions. The 1991 Gulf War was also the first war where women served with men in integrated units within a warzone. However,

women in the military suffered a setback in 1994 when Defense Secretary Les Aspin implemented a rule that prohibited women from serving in units "whose primary mission is to engage in direct ground combat." (Fainaru, 2013).

Despite the 1994 rule, women continued to play more active roles in the wars in Iraq

and Afghanistan. In 2005, Leigh Ann Hester became the first female soldier to receive the Silver Star for exceptional valor in close-quarters combat. Serving in Iraq, Hester led her team in a 25-minute firefight. She used hand grenades and an M203 grenade launcher while maneuvering her team to cut off the enemy. In 2008, Monica Lin Brown also received the Silver Star. After a roadside bomb was detonated in Afghanistan, Brown protected wounded soldiers with her own body and ran through gunfire to save their lives. (Fainaru, 2013).

### **Women in the U.S. Military Today**

The Army Women's Museum in Fort Lee, VA has dedicated their efforts to the positive reinforcement of military women in history and in current times. They receive their statistics from a yearly consensus and record the information to keep the museum statistics accurate. According to the Army Women's Museum, as of 2012, women make up 14% of the U.S. military; and more than 165,000 women are enlisted and active in the

armed services with over 35,000 additional women are serving as officers  
([www.awm.lee.army.mil/archives](http://www.awm.lee.army.mil/archives)).

In February 2012, after a yearlong review, the Pentagon announced women would be permanently assigned to battalions. In these ground units, women would be assigned to such critical jobs as radio operators, medics, and tank mechanics. However, many women have already served in those jobs, in temporary status, due to demand in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Pentagon's new ruling only made these job assignments official and still upheld the ban on women serving in combat tank units, Special Operations commando units and the infantry. Regarding the policy shift, Executive Director of the Service Women's Action Network, Anu Bhagwati urged, "It's time military leadership establish the same level playing field to qualified women to enter the infantry, special forces, and other all-male units." ([www.http://servicewomen.org](http://servicewomen.org))

The playing field was in fact leveled in January 2014, when Defense Secretary Leon Panetta announced that the ban on women serving in combat roles would be lifted. In an interview held by DefenseOne News (Jan 2014), Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Martin Dempsey said, "The time has come to rescind the direct combat exclusion rule for women and to eliminate all unnecessary gender-based barriers to service." The move reverses the 1994 rule that prohibited women from serving in combat. The change will be gradual; some positions will be available to women immediately but each branch of the military has until 2016 to request exceptions to the new rule. (Wilson, 2010). As we can see in



this long history of service women, many improvements around gender equality have been made, but we still have a long way to go. These examples of valor and patriotism do also in fact demonstrate that women in the military are equally capable as men, in any and all functional areas.

The extensive description above of a brief history of women serving in the military is more than adequate to demonstrate that women are just as capable as men in productivity, intelligence, lethality, and all other aspects related to military service. Whatever perceptions which may work against female victims of sexual harassment in the military based on beliefs that they do not belong and that somehow justifies the crime have no factual legs to stand on. Undeniably, the trend seems to be appearing that women are becoming more and more accepted in the military. Over decades, they have grown from no women in the military, to women disguising themselves as men, to women publically able to join and support, to women making a positive impact on the force. It appears as if the past perceptions of women not belonging in the military began to dissolve and acceptance and responsibility became a more relevant role in the armed services for women. While it may seem that one discriminatory stereotype was no longer an issue, another was forming; and that is women and sexual harassment that they endure. As the years continue to go by, they will begin to see a downward spiral on the way women are treated and harassed by the “brothers” that they serve side by side with.

### **Sexual Harassment – Who is to Blame?**

In an environment predominantly male, the chances of sexual harassment and/or assault is highly likely to happen. The action is still inexcusable, yet it frequently occurs and is an ongoing issue in today’s military workforce. According to a New York Times

article from last year, about one in three women in the armed forces has been sexually assaulted, which is twice the civilian rate. The large number of assaults and frequency is a trend that is quickly rising and is the reasoning behind the perception of whether or not women in the military should be allowed, especially given the evidence of how women are treated. This exact treatment of women in the military has raised the question of why these instances happen, who is at fault, and what is the real perception of women in the armed forces – are women a liability or a strong addition to the military. Just recently, a ban has been lifted that allows women to serve in combat branches, however, this lift has also raised the opinions of others also serving. As many (particularly men) do not agree with this decision, their publically made opinions have resulted in the perception that women have been given in the past (CBS News, June 2013).

The below examples will show various instances where sexual behavior towards women has resulted in negative perceptions of their roles in the military as well as how those same behaviors do not have an immediate action taken against their offender. The importance of these examples are to show that although women are the victims in the situation, they are somehow also the ones being blamed. In addition to the historical examples, is also a survey that was personally created for the purpose of this study, which was then distributed to just over 100 members of a small military unit based out of Teaneck, New Jersey. The survey questions, which are located in Appendix A, focus on the opinion of women in the military, sexual assault/harassment opportunities, and opinions of what should be done. The purpose of conducting this research was to gain the knowledge and understanding of how today's soldiers honestly feel about the women they are serving next to and whether or not a woman's presence is a help or hinder to the

military. The results and analysis of the survey has also been completed in order to gather a more recent understanding of how today's service members actually feel with women serving and to show the threat of sexual harassment is constantly present.

### **Various Cases from Past to Present**

In this upcoming section, overviews of four historical examples, which involved sexual harassment and/or assault in the military, are provided. Each of these examples reflects a different perspective of how sexual harassment is handled and the severity of it, or lack of, amongst the ranks. From publically disapproving the existence of women in the military to the attempt of hiding forced relationships, the below examples will provide the reader with differing viewpoints of the gravity of the sexual harassment situation in the military, from past to present.

#### **The Citadel**

One cannot examine women's struggle in the American military without revisiting the Citadel story of the 1990's. The first example that provides a negative perception of women in the military is the well-known military institution, The Citadel. The Citadel was known as a male dominant school that legally banned women from its ranks. In the early 1990's, Shannon Faulkner, a high school senior from Powdersville, South Carolina, had asked questioned that rule which then began a court battle that stemmed over years. In an equal opportunity attempt, a federal judge ordered the Citadel to admit Faulkner to attend day classes during the spring semester of 1994 (previously women had only attended on a nighttime extension basis), and in July of that year, a U.S. District Court ruled that the Citadel must also admit her to the Corps of Cadets. (Janofsky, 1996).

As became clear in the testimony at Faulkner's court hearing, "female" was the ultimate insult among the cadets. According to Harvard.edu, "Faulkner and the Citadel," Rone Vergnolle, an alumnus and the top-ranking scholar in the class of 1991, was asked, "Approximately how many times over your four years did you hear the word woman used as a way of tearing a cadet down?" He answered: "I could not estimate a number. It occurred so frequently. It was an everyday part, every-minute, every-hour part of life there. (Harvard.edu, "Faulkner and the Citadel").

When discussing the Citadel creed of the cadet, former student Michael Lake quotes, "women have no rights. They are objects. They are things that you can do with whatever you want to." (Janofsky, 1996). The two statements above are clearly proof to show how women were viewed by men, students and their peers. The common shared idea that women are objects and can be used for 'whatever' are the basis for what today's women in the military have to deal with. Granted, this occurred over 10 years ago, however some of these thought processes still exist today and are negatively affecting how women operate in today's military. Several months before the Citadel's courtroom defense of its all-male admissions policy, Lake was explaining how excluding women had enhanced his gentlemanly perception of the opposite sex. "The absence of women makes us understand them better. In an aesthetic kind of way, we appreciate them more because they are not here." (Janofsky, 1996).

As reported by [www.hendrix.edu](http://www.hendrix.edu), December Green, who joined the Citadel in 1988, quoted "A lot of terrible things happened to me there," who was now teaching in Ohio recalled. The hostility ranged from glowering group stares in the hallway to death threats on the cadets teacher-evaluation forms. Green had to get an unlisted number and

eventually moved out to escape the harassment. The male faculty and administration offered little support. The department chairman instructed her to "be more maternal towards the students." When she submitted the written threats she received to the dean of undergraduate studies, he took no action and his office "lost" them, she said. A professor who was a proponent of an all-male Citadel stood by one day while his students heckled Green out his classroom window. "You get what you provoke," another staff member told her. If the cadets choose to use women as their whipping-girls, their elders made it abundantly clear that they would not stand in their way.

Students and cadets of the Citadel entered the institution with the mindset they women were inferior to them. Their peers taught them that women are objects and can be used at the disposal of men, and even more important, there wouldn't be repercussions based on the idea that all men, especially at the Citadel, felt the same way. Women were rejected before they had the chance to prove themselves and had a negative perception against them before they had the opportunity to prove that stereotype wrong. The Citadel is only one example of the many institutions clouded with such portrayals against women instilled at an institutional level. If such prejudices are not blatantly apparent at the institutional level, they are often times hidden but displayed at the individual level by a significant portion of the membership. Some other organizations which have practiced discrimination against women historically include West Point, various ROTC cadres, recruiting offices from all branches of the military, and military units in general. This makes the Citadel just one of many cases that show the unfair hand women have been dealt in history and still today.

**Jessica Lynch**

Jessica Dawn Lynch, a former Quartermaster Corps Private First Class in the United States Army, was a prisoner of war of the Iraqi military in the 2003 invasion of Iraq who was rescued by United States forces on April 1, 2003. Lynch, then a 19-year-old supply clerk with the 507th Maintenance Company (based in Fort Bliss, Texas), was injured and captured by Iraqi forces after her group made a wrong turn and was subsequently ambushed on March 23, 2003 near Nasiriyah, a major crossing point over the Euphrates River northwest of Basra. (Street, 2009) Although this should have been a story of bravery and courage for captured troops, this turned into a story about a ‘women who should have asked for directions.’”

The case of Jessica Lynch received an extensive amount of news coverage since she was the first female POW since World War II, and later to be known as the first female POW rescue ever. (Street, 2009). However, the news of her capture was not always in her defense. This was the first time in years, especially since women had started to become more accepted in their roles, that history began to repeat itself. This instance brought out the comments that many were probably thinking, but did not want to say; however those that did say it slowly influenced the people around them to think the same way. The comments that began to emerge slowly started off about women not knowing how to give directions; women need to stay at home; why are women trying to do a man’s job, etc... (Street, 2009)

Just as the American armed forces had started to see improvement in mutual respect for men and women, one instance turned it all around. The incident that involved Jessica Lynch had reverted everyone’s perception of women in the military back to how

they were decades ago – and how women in the military are not a good idea. In addition to questioning the abilities of women in the military, concerns then began to rise of what would happen Jessica Lynch now that she is captured. A woman, alone, and with the enemy, doesn't leave much room for imagination, which then led to the concern of a women's safety and the likelihood of assault and rape. Such ideas always lead to deeply rooted beliefs that women in combat are closer to burdens than they are contributors to the mission effort, that they are weaker and require protection. Because of this concern, many fellow soldiers and Americans felt that having a women serve will cause additional safety risks as the opportunity for assault does exist in this environment (CBS News, June 2013). Today, the amount of women being harassed and assaulted in the military is high, but that isn't the only problem. The next issue after perception and opportunities for assault, is now the fear of reporting that most women have and the negative results that came from that.

#### **Air Force Lt. Col Jeffrey Krusinski**

The following case serves the purpose of providing an instance where the power structure in the military impacts the reporting process and the obvious aftermath of sexual harassment incidents. Air Force Lt. Col. Jeffrey Krusinski is at the center of a military sex scandal from a few months back. Krusinski is a 41-year-old officer who was in charge of the Air Force's office of sexual assault prevention, until he was arrested this past May on a sexual assault charge. (Washington Post, 2013)

Days after he was arrested, the irony of the situation came to light. He was the military officer in charge of sexual assault prevention and was being charged with committing that very crime, which put pressure on the Pentagon to acknowledge the

military's sexual assault problem and pledged to do something about it. On the day his trial was supposed to start, Commonwealth's Attorney Theo Stamos dropped the sexual assault charge, making it officially a charge of "sexual battery." (Washington Post, 2013). Authorities then intended to pursue a charge of assault and battery, without the sexual component. This action made by Stamos is an action that is far too common when defending senior level military members with the accusations of assault.

In the Air Force alone, under Krusinski's preventive care, 792 sexual assault cases were reported last year. Throughout the armed services, a recent survey estimated that there were 26,000 cases of unwanted sexual contact last year ([www.sapr.mil](http://www.sapr.mil)). Thanks to Krusinski's arrest, the nation paid closer attention to congressional hearings on sexual assault in the military. At those hearings, some lawmakers even raised the idea of giving civilian prosecutors the power to investigate sexual abuse and other serious crimes in the military. And thanks to Krusinski's arrest, the Air Force appointed Maj. Gen. Margaret Woodward to replace him and gave her a larger staff to tackle the problem of sexual assault. It's no mystery that sexual abuse is almost always more about power than it is about sex, or that violence and sexual assault are usually intertwined ([www.sapr.mil](http://www.sapr.mil)).

### **BG Jeffrey A. Sinclair**

Prosecutors say he abused his command authority by sleeping with a subordinate officer, a taboo in the armed forces and a violation of military law (BBC, 2014). BG Sinclair was accused of allegedly forcing a female officer to perform oral sex. In addition, Sinclair faces charges that he had inappropriate communications with three other female officers, to which Sinclair pled not guilty to all charges. Besides the rare



spectacle of a general under attack, the case poses a critical test of how the U.S. military handles allegations of sexual assault and misconduct crimes that have long bedeviled the armed forces. Congress and President Obama have demanded a crackdown, alarmed by a recent string of scandals and frank admissions by military leaders that they have systematically failed to address the problem. A growing faction of lawmakers is pushing to rewrite the underpinnings of military law by giving power to uniformed prosecutors, instead of commanders, to oversee investigations of sexual abuse and other serious crimes. The Pentagon is resisting, arguing that commanders must retain the authority to enforce order and discipline in their units (Gould, 2014).

Throughout the trials and legal proceedings, Sinclair was accused of having multiple affairs with female officers and even threatening their careers if they made their relationship public (BBC, 2014). It was for this reason that the women held this secret close and chose not to divulge information of these events to anyone in their command. After information of the affairs came to light, military lawyers did their best to ensure the Brigadier General did not suffer nearly the amount of consequences as he should have had. To his benefit, his female accuser later redacted her statement and did not want to proceed with the charges because of her love for him as a person and her respect for him as a leader. With this new information, the charges of assault were dropped and the courts continued with the lesser charges against the General. Biesecker (2014) reported that in November of 2013, Sinclair's wife stunned many in the Army when she wrote an op-ed column in *The Washington Post* to declare that she was sticking by her husband and that she blamed his infidelity on "the stress of war."

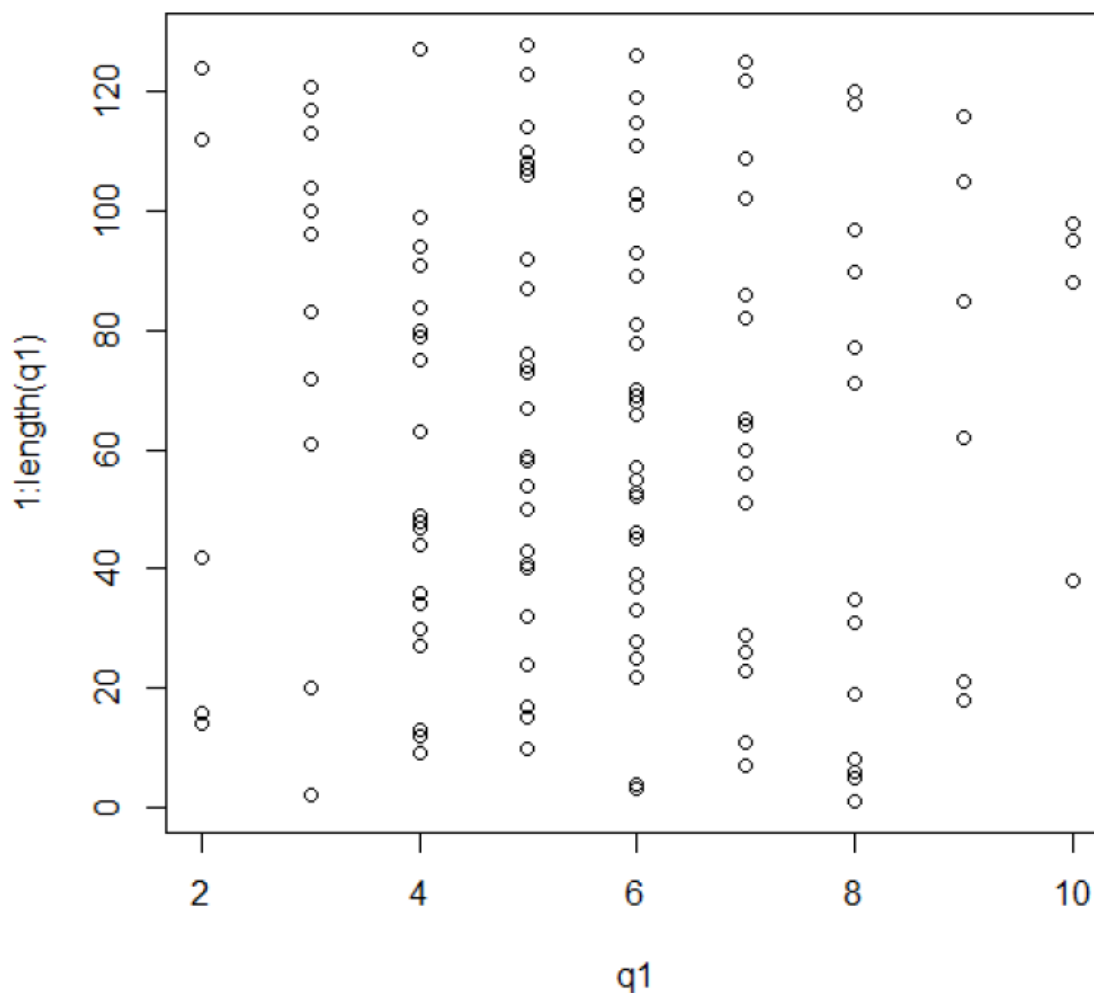
It is the support of spouses like the above that have given leaders and offenders the ability to continue this behavior without reaping any of the negative actions that should be held against them. Accepting this negative behavior and associating it with the stress of war or loneliness is all too common; as is justifying ones actions because of those same reasons. Without committing with the appropriate punishments, the perception of sexual harassment and assault is that of acceptability. Once again, the victim, which in this case happens to be a female, sees an injustice being done; not only because of the charges being dropped but also because of the forgiveness in which he has received (BBC, 2014). With this also creates the perception of the female who allegedly claimed to be assaulted and then redacted her statement because of her feelings. Actions like these are the reasons why sexual assault reporting is not taken seriously by commanders and not trusted by victims in the military.

It is examples like this which allow us to make the assumption that women are deterred from wanting to report an incident that they may be a victim of. Over history, perception was everything. As the military involves, there are additional factors that women must be aware of, such as the opportunities that exist for assault, reporting the assault and the lasting impression and stigma that will follow them around, even if they are the victim. The examples that were just given were from historical incidents, referenced by the British Broadcasting Corporation (2014) and The Washington Post (2013).

## **Research Results**

In order to determine how today's military perceives women today, a survey (Appendix A) was distributed to over 120 military service members and then analyzed to

gain a better understanding of how today's Army sees women in the military. Of the soldiers that were surveyed, 18 were officers and 109 were enlisted soldiers. Of those, the



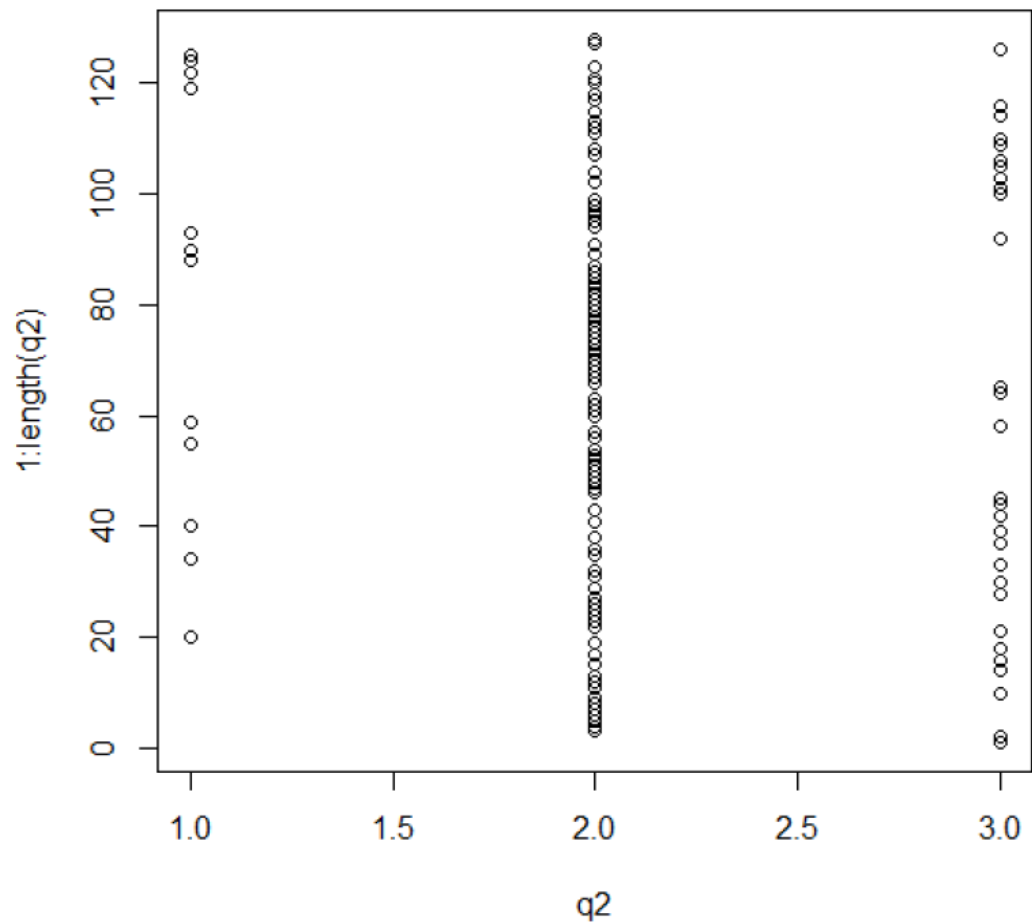
breakdown is 68 male soldiers, and 59 female soldiers. Below are the results:

**1. On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being most against and 10 being most for, choose a number that best reflects your stance towards women serving in the military:**

<b>Min.</b>	<b>1st Qu.</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>3rd Qu.</b>	<b>Max.</b>
<b>2.000</b>	<b>4.000</b>	<b>6.000</b>	<b>5.672</b>	<b>7.000</b>	<b>10.000</b>

Survey results indicate that, on average, current sentiment towards women serving in the military is slightly positive. As already shown in previous text, this is a change compared to how women had been treated in the past and shows the trust that they have eventually gained over the years.

**2. Choose the answer below which best reflects your opinion towards women's capabilities to serve the military:**

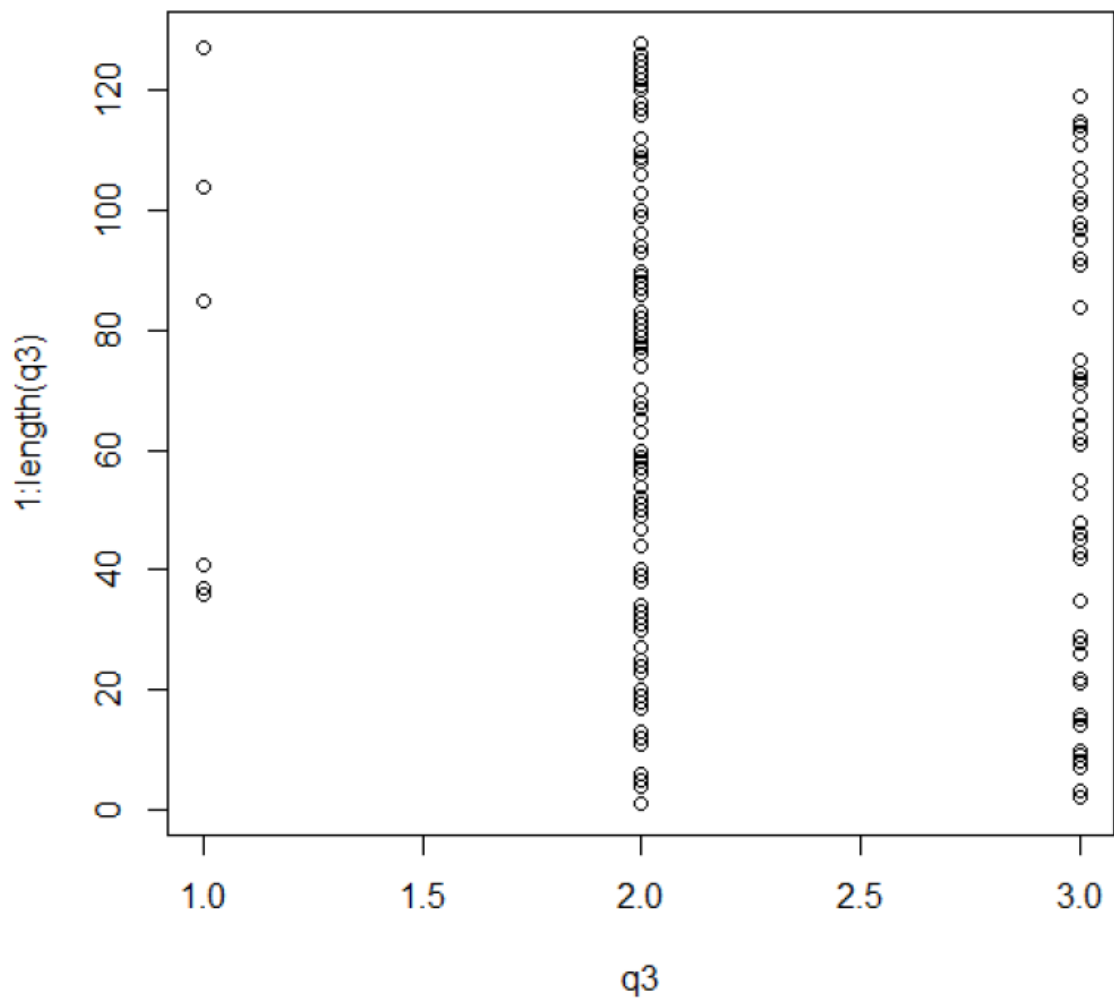


**Min    1st Qu.    Median    Mean    3rd Qu.    Max.**

1.000 2.000 2.000 2.133 2.000 3.000

Survey results indicate that on average, Soldiers believe that women can perform some but not all functions in the military. Results do indicate a slight tilt towards the belief that women are just as capable as men as compared to the belief that women do not belong in the military at all.

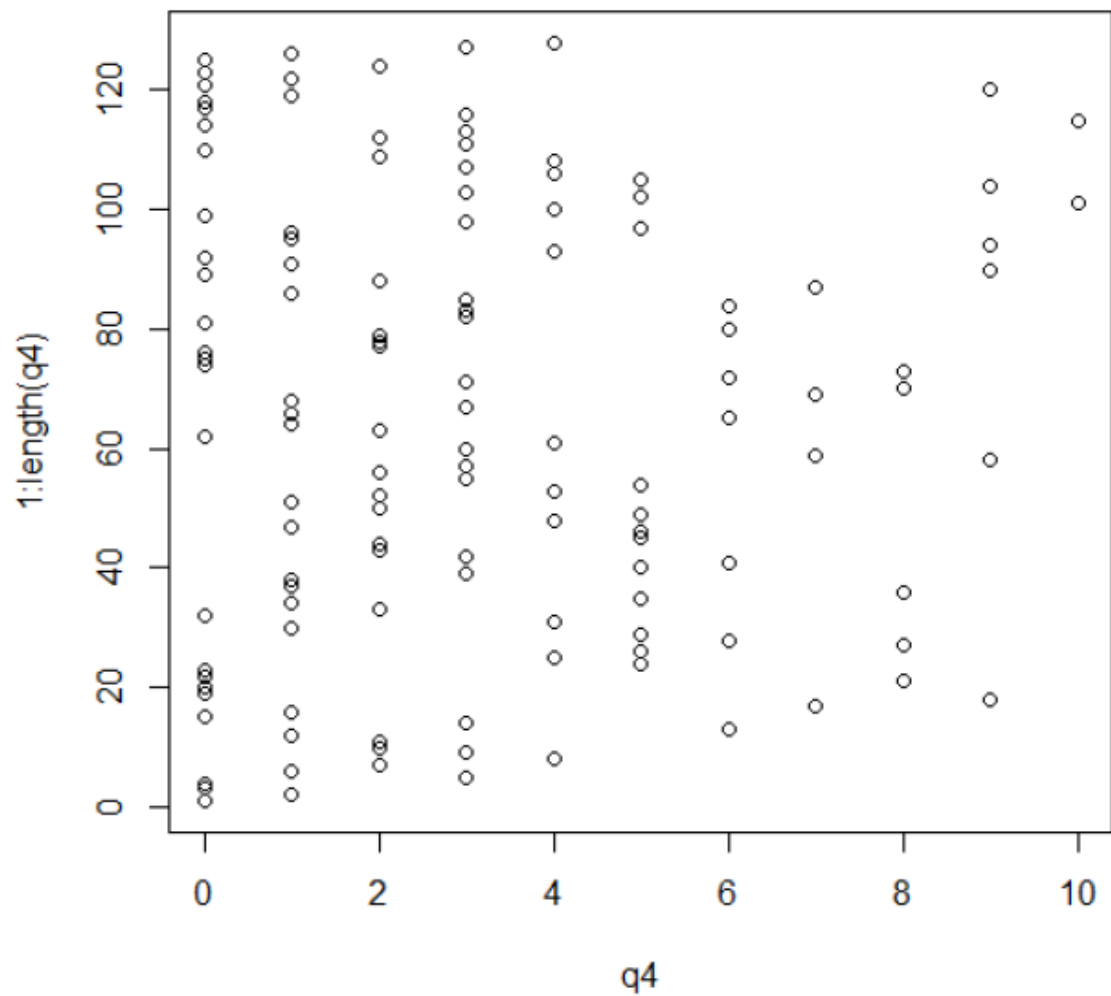
### 3. Describe your attitude towards sexual harassment/sexual assault towards women in the military?



Min.	1st Qu.	Median	Mean	3rd Qu.	Max.
1.000	2.000	2.000	2.312	3.000	3.000

Survey results indicate Soldiers on average believe that sexual harassment and sexual assault will occur, but should not be tolerated.

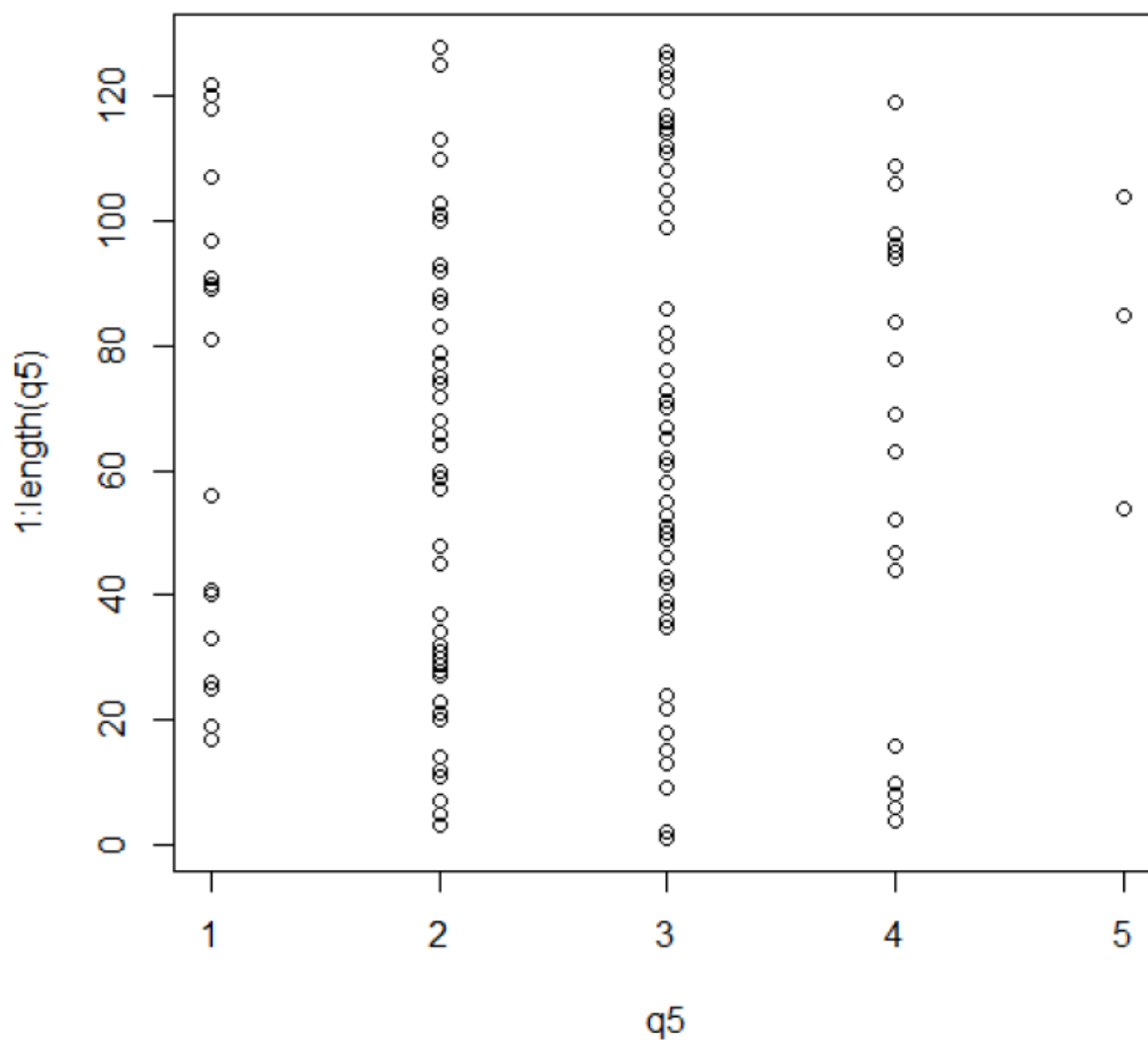
**4. On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being most inadequate and 10 being most sufficient, choose a number that best reflects your opinion towards the effectiveness of the Army's existing measures against sexual harassment and sexual assault:**



Min.	1st Qu.	Median	Mean	3rd Qu.	Max.
0.000	1.000	3.000	3.141	5.000	10.000

Survey results indicate that most soldiers do not believe the current measures in place towards sexual harassment and sexual assault against women in the military are adequate.

**5. Case Study: Choose the answer below which best reflects your opinion towards the following incident. A female Soldier was sexually assaulted in a secluded area after returning from a wild night of partying and drinking. She was wearing very flashy and revealing clothing. Although she did leave the bar with her friend, at the time of the assault, she was walking by herself.**



<b>Min.</b>	<b>1st Qu.</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>3rd Qu.</b>	<b>Max.</b>
<b>1.000</b>	<b>2.000</b>	<b>3.000</b>	<b>2.602</b>	<b>3.000</b>	<b>5.000</b>

Survey results indicate that Soldiers, on average, place the blame on the female victim.

## **Discussion**

The results of the above survey can be seen as disturbing. While service members are inclined to agree that women belong in the service and are somewhat capable of performing the same functions as their male counterpart, there is still a negative perception of females becoming victimized at some point in their career. What is also disturbing is the public knowledge and admittance that the current standards in place used to assist in the preventing of sexual harassment is not successful or respected amongst the service members today. With the lack of respect towards the measures put in place and the disregard for offenders accepting responsibility, the trend of sexual assault towards women will not decline unless other changes are made.

Aside from the human cost of sexual harassment and sexual assault, which can often times be hard to quantify, the heavy economic toll caused by sexual harassment and sexual assault against women in the military should be the forerunning justification why this issue demands improvement and our undivided attention. The results from the above survey are coming from today's soldiers, who if have not been the direct victim of sexual harassment, have likely known someone in that position. Soldier's today are aware that this behavior is not tolerated; however witnessing the lack of punishment that comes for attackers is discouraging for victims and opportunistic for offenders. This is a sensitive topic in today's Army and although measures have been put in place to assist in deterring these actions and behaviors, the measures are simply not enough (Koons, 2013).



Despite over 25 years of Pentagon studies, task force recommendations and congressional hearings, rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment continue to occur at alarming rates year after year (Koons, 2013). Sexual violence has devastating, life-long effects on service members and their families. Sexual violence also threatens the strength, readiness and morale of the U.S. military, undermining U.S. national security. Tens of thousands of unwanted sexual contacts occur in the military every year, yet only a fraction of those get reported. The problem is exacerbated by a command-centric military legal system that gives commanders and not lawyers the authority to prosecute and manage the criminal courts system. Furthermore, service members are prevented from bringing lawsuits against members of the military who either perpetrated these crimes against them or may have mishandled their cases (Koons, 2013).

The Pentagon has released new data about the reported number of sexual assaults in the military. Between July 1, 2012 and June 30, 2013 there were 3,533 reports of sexual assault; a 43% increase from the year before (Koons, 2013). This figure is already higher than last year's total of 3,374 and is now the highest reported figure since the Department of Defense's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office began issuing annual reports on the problem. These numbers come on the heels of months of pressure on the Pentagon to address sky high rates of sexual assault and widespread reports of a hostile reporting atmosphere. During the same period, there were 219 casualties in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Last year, soldiers were 15 times more likely to be raped by a comrade than killed by an enemy (Koons, 2013).

Over the last several years, the problem of sexual assault in the military has received a great deal of attention. The brilliant and terrifying documentary, *The Invisible*

*War*, ripped open the issue by interviewing survivors about their experience of military rape. The documentary encourages Americans to aggressively lobby Congress to address the epidemic of sexual assault amongst the troops. The Pentagon can no longer bury the statistics of abuse and expect there to be no questions. Yet the startling numbers released remind Americans how broken the system remains. According to the Department of Labor, between 20-48% of female veterans were sexually assaulted in the military. More women are leaving the military with post-traumatic stress disorder from rape than combat. The numbers should serve as a gut-wrenching reminder of the massive inexcusable problem in the United States military. These victims are women who volunteer to protect and serve the country they love. It needs to be the number one priority of service members to stop the sexual violence in the military and protect our troops by ending sexual assault.

The act of a sexual crime against women in the military has more effects than just that of a bad reputation. There are long term effects that follow victims for the rest of their lives and careers should they choose to stay in the military. The physical, mental and spiritual effects following sexual assault and rape are difficult to cope with and after a traumatic experience such as a rape or an assault; it is common for a survivor to feel shaken or unlike themselves. Some of the common mental effects of sexual assault and rape are post traumatic stress disorder, depression and disassociation ([rainn.org](http://rainn.org)).

**PTSD.** Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition that is triggered by a terrifying event. Some common symptoms associated with PTSD are flashbacks, nightmares, severe anxiety and uncontrollable thoughts about the event.

Many people who go through traumatic events have difficulty adjusting and coping for a while (rainn.org).

**Depression.** Depression is more than common feelings of temporary sadness. Symptoms can include prolonged sadness, feelings of hopelessness, unexplained crying, changes in appetite with significant weight loss or gain, loss of energy or loss of interest and pleasure in activities previously enjoyed. Depression can affect a person's outlook, which can lead to feelings of hopelessness. This, in turn, can impact his or her thought process and ability to make decisions. In extreme cases of depression, people may even experience suicidal thoughts and/or attempts (rainn.org).

**Dissociation.** Dissociation usually refers to feeling like one has “checked out” or is not present. In some instances of dissociation, people may find themselves daydreaming, but in situations where dissociation is chronic and more complex, it may impair an individual's ability to function in the “real” world, such as not being able to focus on work related duties or being able to concentrate (rainn.org).

Any of the above can affect women who fall victim to a sex crime. Depression, PTSD and disassociation, while personally debilitating, can also have negative effects on an individual's career. Once again, the stigma of a rape or assault not only follows a person for their career but also assists in ending that same career if the mental anguish cannot be controlled. It is clear that the armed forces have seen a dramatic increase in charges of sexual assault and harassment, and offenders have ranked from privates to Generals. Years ago, anyone willing to question or report the indecent actions of other soldiers were putting themselves in a position that would jeopardize their own careers;

today, the Army is working on no longer making that the case. With so many recent allegations of assault being performed by our armed forces, as mentioned earlier, the Pentagon has taken a stand and enforced certain rules that must be followed by all members of the military. While the American public has a high opinion of the Army from its decade and a half of combat, that trust is at risk of slipping away because of the internal struggle to prevent sexual assault and harassment within the ranks.

### **Solutions**

Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention, also known as SHARP, (<http://www.sexualassault.army.mil/index.cfm>) is a new mandatory training that is required to be completed every Fiscal Year by every member of the military. This is a course which is offered online or in a classroom setting that reviews the actions that qualify as sexual harassment and assault and the reporting process. The intention of this training is not only to help prevent sexual assault in the military but also to explain how to report it as well to encourage the reporting process for all members that may become a victim. Although a training course is not meant to stop the issue, it was put in place for awareness across the armed forces (Street, 2009).

Although required, has this really helped the issue of sexual assault and harassment in the military? No. SHARP is a required class to be taken, and it is done so that box can be checked. The difference between the numbers of sexual assaults versus the amount reported is an excruciating difference, as per the August edition of The Army Times. The stigma of reporting a sexual assault still follows the service member, which is the number one reason why a soldier would not want to report it. A simple training

session is not going to stop the problem that is continuously growing in the military, so additional measures have been put in place to try and stay ahead of the problem.

In addition to the training, units across the country have SHARP representatives within them. These representatives act as a counselor within the unit to discuss any incidents or concerns with both men and women for the soldiers within their designated unit. This measure was also set up as assistance to victims as is also not expected to solve the problem of harassment in the military. It is important to mention that while it may not be solving the issues, there are steps being taken to address them. In addition to SHARP training and representatives, a mandatory survey is given to all members of the military and is required to be completed on an anonymous basis in order to address each person's concerns with reporting and whether or not they feel comfortable doing so. This survey is called a command climate survey. The focus group of this survey was at the unit company level – a smaller group that allows for company commanders to reflect on responses and analyze answers to a deeper level.

To keep units accountable for maintain an environment that encourages reporting, but that is also inhospitable to sexual assault perpetrators, the Army has strengthened its use of command climate surveys. While such surveys have long been in use, until recently climate surveys were only at the company level and the results stopped at the desk of the commander they assessed, but that is no longer the case (Turchik, 2010). Climate surveys will be conducted at every level of command, and the results will go one level of command higher in the chain. By doing this, this allows a commanders supervisor to see how they are evaluated, and to watch for both positive and negative trends (<http://www.sexualassault.army.mil>). Keeping this policy will allow for

accountability to be measured and now also requires commanders to meet face to face with their next higher echelon of command to review the results of the surveys.

The results of these environment surveys are usually what would be expected.

The

embarrassment of admitting an assault, the stigma that will follow the service member, the vulnerability of their presence and the possibility of ruining their career are all reasons why someone wouldn't want to report an incident. The Pentagon, the President and the services are all adamant about making change in the military in regards to stopping these behaviors (Turchik, 2010), but the steps that have been put in place have not accomplished the task they were meant to do.

### **Recommendations**

The following issues must be addressed in order to improve the status quo on sexual harassment against women in the military as it exists today:

- 1) The perception that women do not possess the same soldiering capabilities as men, and therefore, do not belong in the military. There currently exist negatively re-enforcing mechanisms that perpetuate this notion. Including but not limited to, laws and regulations against women serving in certain military occupation specialties (MOS) such as those of the infantry (Turchik, 2010). Despite of countless instances of women serving on front lines, in duty positions other than infantry but are subject to identical hazards, the mentioned laws and regulations discredit women's past contributions as well as current and future abilities. Some examples of women serving in the same capacities as those of the MOS's prohibited to them are route security while serving as military police (MP); convoy operators and participants behind enemy lines while serving as transporters,

fuelers, and other types of logistics personnel; also a myriad of other duty positions which require the same level of combat readiness mentally and physically. These gender biased laws and regulations must be repealed.

2) Additional checks and balances must be introduced to further pacify the uneven landscape that is created by the rank power dynamic between the victim and perpetrator. As detailed in the mentioned cases, it is clear that in the aftermath of committed acts of sexual harassment and sexual assault, often times the defendant is tried by a jury consisted of similarly ranked officers and NCOs unacquainted to the defendant by just one degree of separation. The jury is also not without political conflict and tendency to decide the matter in the favor of the defendant regardless of the factual standings of the case. This is due to fear of direct or indirect retribution from the defendant and his peers (Turchik, 2010). The military justice system must ensure the creation of additional degrees of separation between the defendant and jury, such separation can be created by requirements to use jurors from other branches of military service. In the case that such requirements still prove to be inadequate, most likely at the highest levels of the armed forces, then serious considerations must be able to bring civilians into the military justice system.

3) Convicted perpetrators of sexual harassment and sexual assault must be swiftly and severely punished. Currently, the military advertises a “zero tolerance” policy on sexual harassment and sexual assault that is loosely enforced. Often times the perpetrators received inadequate punishments such as deduction of pay or simple duty position

reassignments. Many of the same individual become repeat offenders as they are allowed to remain in the system. Such occurrences are extremely damaging to troop morale and can be considered as serving as counter-deterrents against sexual harassment and sexual assault. The “zero tolerance” policy must be enforced without hypocrisy. Convicted offenders should be discharged after serving justified civil and criminal sentences without exception.

As mentioned in the above recommendations, there are key steps that the Armed Forces need to take in order to put an end to sexual harassment in the military. The already placed measures, although not entirely effective, are a step in the right direction but will require additional efforts in ensuring the matter of sexual assault is taken seriously. If the women in today’s Army expect to be seen as equals any time soon, then the issue of sexual assault and harassment need to eventually dissolve. After reviewing the status of women in the armed forces throughout the years, it is clear that leaps have been made. Women today are able to work in jobs and functions that they historically could not; standards for women have been made more similarly to men today than they have in the past; and the awareness for sexual assault and harassment towards women is more public today than ever before (Street, 2009). Although it may seem that strides in this area have been made, women will continue to be victims of these heinous crimes, until the military’s justice system can appropriately address the problem.

## **Conclusion**

The positive trend of acceptance of women serving in the armed forces creates new challenges for the military, especially in dealing with sexual harassment against women. Perceptions on women’s worthiness and capabilities as participants of the military must improve at the same pace as the growth of female population in the



military. The contrary led to and will continue to lead to unjust decisions and outcomes pertaining to sexual harassment crimes and incidents involving women as victims and men as assailants. This paper has demonstrated through factual history that women are equal to men in every manner as military participants; such facts should become rooted into fundamental military training and education to drive long term improvements and changes. To further ensure fairness and justice, systematic improvements around the military justice system and chain of command should be made according to the recommendations of this paper.

Appendix A:

**Survey #201401A**

**1. On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being most against and 10 being most for, choose a number that best reflects your stance towards women serving in the military:**

1 ( ) 2 ( ) 3 ( ) 4 ( ) 5 ( ) 6 ( ) 7 ( ) 8 ( ) 9 ( ) 10 ( )

**2. Choose the answer below which best reflects your opinion towards women's capabilities to serve the military:**

- a. This is a place for men, they do not belong here.
- b. Women are capable of performing a subset of jobs in the military, but not all jobs.
- c. Women are as capable as men in every way.

**3. Describe your attitude towards sexual harassment/sexual assault towards women in the military?**

- a. The number of occurrences can be reduced if women were not allowed in the military.
- b. It is bound to happen when both genders are allowed to serve in the armed forces.
- c. It should not be tolerated.

**4. On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being most inadequate and 10 being most sufficient, choose a number that best reflects your opinion towards the effectiveness of the Army's existing measures against sexual harassment and**

**sexual assault:**

1 ( ) 2 ( ) 3 ( ) 4 ( ) 5 ( ) 6 ( ) 7 ( ) 8 ( ) 9 ( ) 10 ( )

**5. Case Study: Choose the answer below which best reflects your opinion towards the following incident. A female Soldier was sexually assaulted in a secluded area after returning from a wild night of partying and drinking. She was wearing very flashy and revealing clothing. Although she did leave the bar with her friend, at the time of the assault, she was walking by herself.**

- a. Her choice of clothing, how late she stayed out till, and the fact that she was walking all alone by herself puts her at fault. She was pretty much asking for it.
- b. She should have been more careful and aware of her surroundings given the time and location of the attack.
- c. Although the attacker was definitely guilty of a crime, she was equally at fault due to her irresponsible decisions.
- d. She had the right to dress anyway she liked, and go out anywhere she liked, but she should have been more mindful of the dangers.
- e. She did nothing wrong.

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