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Institutional Review Board
Nancy Fox Edele
Interview Questions

1. Define the branch of the armed services that you joined, your position, your uniform, and how you felt wearing it. I was a Cryptological Technician, CT, Chief Petty Officer in the United States Navy. When I wore, my uniform I felt a sense of pride and professionalism. The uniforms were ill-fitting, one size fits all, and I lost my sense of being a female. Please describe your decision to enter the military. I joined the military because I was not ready to go to college. What were YOUR expectations of who you would be or could be, as a woman in the military? Where did they come from? When I first joined the military, I did not have any expectations. It took a couple of years for it to truly sink in, that being in the military could be a career and that there were women doing great things for and in the military. I didn't see many women in position of authority. Do you think you challenged sex and gender norms? Yes [I think I challenged sex and gender norms], my rating is extremely male dominated. There were challenge's; to be the best, work harder, to get promoted, and to make myself stand out. I didn't want to seem like a "typical female" in the military, that men looked at as being weak and incompetent.
2. Describe your experience as woman service member. How would you describe yourself at that time? It depended on the situation, I had to adapt my attitude, demeanor to each situation, but [throughout my career] I was always firm and fair. Were you aware of the demographic data, in terms of gender, in the U.S. military? Yes, I was aware of the demographics of data in terms of gender in the military, more so in the later years of my service. What was your work? I was a Cryptologist. What were your living conditions? On board ships, I had a coffin rack. My first ship berthing was a 100-man berthing, which means 100 women to a berthing. We did not have a head, bathroom, so we had to walk outside of the berthing to use the restroom and shower. If memory serves correct there were approximately 15 showers everyone had to rotate through. My second and third ship was a 20-man berthing and we had 2 showers. But this time the showers were in berthing. My last ship, I was senior enlisted, I shared my berthing with 4 people and we had 1 shower. How were you told, shown, or instructed about your particular identity in the military – who you were, what you could and could not say and do? How we should act was instilled in us in our P-1 days. When I went to boot camp, I made sure my hair was short before I got there. During P-1 days that's when it all started they taught us how our clothes, hair, and nail polish should be. You were no longer an individual you learned how to be a team, it was like they took away the fact you were a female, but would at time remind you that you were a woman and you would never be equal with a man. Did the male warrior trope construct the military community and sense of collective ethos? Yes, they [men] constructed the community and they still do, they are in charge.

How did you respond to these messages? (Specific questions will arise from this general topic, depending on the interviewee.) How I responded depended on the situation. I was always very vocal, I was a strong advocate for what women were doing in the armed forces particularly the Navy. I joined committees and boards where I could be apart and influence change. I took on the mentality “see something do something, don’t just talk about it”.

3. The U.S. military has been described, by scholars in the field of women veterans’ studies, (such as Alexis Hart, Mariana Grohowski, and others), as “a culture that salutes the marginalization and inequality of women.” What is your response to this statement and can you illustrate your answer with examples? Yes, they show [inequality and marginalization] in promotions. When the Navy got its first 4-star admiral, an African American female, they made a big deal about it. If a male was promoted to a 4-star admiral, they wouldn’t have done the same thing. They opened combat up to women they made a big deal, when women have been on the front line for years, just not in those jobs. Did you experience gender discrimination – if so, how did that experience affect your life within and beyond the military? Yes, I experienced gender discrimination. It made me work harder, I had to sacrifice some things for a promotion. I had to take the hard assignments to be promoted at the cost of my family. I don’t know how that has affected me, I feel I have become an advocate for women veterans who have lost their voice along the way, due to no fault of their own. I feel that the service taught me that I could persevere through anything.
4. After their deployment, female veterans have described themselves, in both public and private writings, as “invisible” and “underserved” – is that description true in your view? Yes, the descriptions true, so true. Women aren’t seen/viewed as veterans. What does your experience say about military culture? Our American culture? In the American culture, we are not seen as veterans, it is not until it is brought into the viewfinder that women can be veterans that people realize and give the respect and recognition that is due. When are we going to make those things synonymous? How might you be writing the genetic code for a new military, in language and action? I would remove gender, to me that is the biggest factor.
5. What questions should we be asking you? What is it like to be a double minority in the military? What is life like if you are in a dual military relationship, married? What is it like to raise a family in the military? What do you want folks to know? It’s hard, doubly so when you deploy and wonder in you are going to make it back home, and are you doing right by your kids.